IN MEMORY OF

THE REV. DR. REMSEN BRINCKERHOFF OGILBY
Trinity College Alumni News

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Edited by J. Bard McNulty, Acting Alumni Secretary
"Let us say that our function is to produce leaders of men"

President Ogilby's Inaugural Address
Among Dr. Ogilby's many friends it would be difficult to find two who remember him in the same way. Each has his own recollections of the man; each remembers different incidents in his relation with the President; each has his own reasons for loving and respecting him. Though many knew him well, all knew him differently. Such being the case, it is impossible to present a picture of Dr. Ogilby, here or elsewhere, which catches all the lights, gives all the colors, or shows all the sides of the man. His life was too varied, and his friends too numerous, to make it possible for one picture to do justice either to them or to him. All his friends agree that he was a many-sided man with a remarkable talent for friendship, but beyond this each man's memory draws a unique portrait of Dr. Ogilby.
The windows of the President's office look south across a broad sidewalk and across Trinity's green campus stretching beneath the tall arcade of elms. Hundreds of students — thousands, rather — on their way to classes and back again, have passed beneath the three leaded casements and have felt, even when they have not seen them, the alert eyes of Dr. Ogilby. Even at night there would be a light in the office, and the passing student, unobserved, could look in and see the President working at his littered desk. It was almost impossible to pass the windows, day or night, without casting a glance at them. Sometimes Dr. Ogilby could be seen, pacing to and fro, dictating, his face grave. Suddenly he would look up, smile, and give a friendly wave. Sometimes he would throw open a window and hail the passers-by, hold them for a moment in conversation, punctuated always by laughter; then the students would pass on, discussing in subdued voices the merits of the latest presidential joke.

Everyone looked for and cherished these encounters. It may be that there are some Trinity men who never knew Dr. Ogilby save in this casual way; but they are few. He was an easy man to know. He made himself respected; but never held himself aloof. Was a Trinity man in financial trouble? He could turn to Dr. Ogilby. Had he brushed with the Hartford police? Dr. Ogilby was there to plead for him. Were his grades slipping? There was Prexy to coax him, to frighten him, to push him into doing better. And was he sick and taken to the hospital? There was Prexy, even at his bedside. It was impossible to know Trinity without knowing Dr. Ogilby. For twenty-three years, night and day, often up before his students were stirring, and as often up after they had gone to bed, he poured his energies into the College he had helped to build. To Trinity he gave what William Wordsworth has called "... that best portion of a good man's life; his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

Nor was all he did for Trinity by any means little and unremembered. Much of the heart and spirit, much of the life of Trinity is a part of Dr. Ogilby's life and spirit. This every Trinity man knows. But even the tradesman passing in the street can see how the College has grown and waxed strong during the past two decades. Where once was a stony field there now stands one of the finest chemistry laboratories in New England. Next to it are three dormitories — Woodward, Goodwin, and Cook. Not far from these buildings stands the Trowbridge Memorial with its squash courts and swimming pool. Across the campus is a fourth
dormitory, replacing the gray rocks which once crowned the top of the
hill. And east of the President's office, on what was once a grassy sidehill,
stands the building which held the first place in his affections — the
Chapel, whose carillon he loved to ring to celebrate a victory on the
field, or to play on frosty afternoons for sheer delight. Many newspaper
accounts of Dr. Ogilby's death made mention of these bells, as if he
and they belonged naturally together in the memories of Hartford people.

Dr. Ogilby came to Trinity in 1920. The trustees of the College,
searching for a president to succeed Dr. Flavel Sweeten Luther, found
him at last in the person of a faculty member at Saint Paul's School.
The school teacher, soon to become college president, was thirty-nine
years old. To the trustees his record looked good. After graduating from
Harvard in 1902, he had taught for a while at Groton School, whence
he had gone first to New York's General Theological Seminary and then
to the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass., where he had
taken his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1907. In the same year Harvard
granted him a Master's degree.

In 1908, hearing the appeal of Bishop Charles H. Brent, he followed
that good man's call to the Philippine Islands. A tribute to Dr. Ogilby
which appeared in the Buffalo Courier Express is quoted below as an
account of the circumstances of the young clergyman's missionary minis-
try and as an example of the deep-felt tributes which followed the news
of Dr. Ogilby's death.

"When the Right Rev. Charles Henry Brent was Episcopal bishop
of the Philippines he attracted to him a group of young and vigorous
clergymen willing to forfeit ecclesiastical 'careers' for an ideal; willing to
risk health and life itself, to serve hostile natives who had been taught
by unhappy experience to distrust strangers from a Western land —
strangers who only excited suspicion the more by coming without guns.

"Those young men had to be broadminded enough to keep pace
with a bishop who had laid down these two rules: First, to offer the
ministrations of the Church — as well as food, medicine and other sup-
plies — to all in need, Christian, Moslem or pagan, with no strings
attached; second, never to proselyte among the Filipinos who already
had been Christianized by the Spanish Catholic missionaries or their
English-speaking successors. The young men also had to be vigorous
enough and courageous enough to keep pace with a bishop who had
been the first white man to go unarmed among the fierce Moro tribesmen.
Among the most adequately equipped, spiritually, mentally and physically, of these young clergymen was the Rev. Remsen B. Ogilby. Young Ogilby had been educated at Harvard, had taught at Groton and had been curate of a Boston church — hardly the sort of preparation which might be expected to fit a clergyman for the rigorous life of a missionary in the Philippines. But the kindly, penetrating eye of Bishop Brent saw in young Ogilby the stuff which was needed in a pioneer schoolmaster in America's new overseas empire — for that was the job to which the bishop assigned the young clergyman from Boston.

"Thus began a long and splendid comradeship between Brent, the spiritual adventurer, and his younger lieutenant — a comradeship which endured through so many and such long pilgrimages, first in the Far East and then through the years of World War I, that Bishop Brent called Remsen Ogilby his fidus Acheates. The bishop's affectionate classical allusion is perpetuated in the 'Aeneas window' in the chapel of Trinity College, Hartford — a window given by Dr. Ogilby in memory of Bishop Brent."

The first world war brought the Rev. Mr. Ogilby back from the Philippines. He enlisted in the army, hoping for overseas service with the American Expeditionary Force, and was so firmly determined to cross the Atlantic that he refused an offer of the permanent chaplaincy of the United States Military Academy. But the armistice was signed before he left American soil. From army service he went to teach at St. Paul's School.

The trustees of Trinity, studying this record, saw what the man was, believed in what he might become, and offered him the presidency of Trinity College. The new president, Trinity's twelfth, was formally instated in his office on November 17, 1920.

We cannot here trace the history of his twenty-three years as president. But we can tell of the joy he found in his life task. Fortunately, he has left an account (included in one of his annual reports to the trustees) of how he, himself, felt about his tenure of office.

"In closing this report," he wrote, "I should like to express to the trustees my satisfaction in my daily duties. At a time when American colleges and universities have reached Gargantuan proportions, it is good to be connected with a small college — small, and yet with just enough healthy growth to make it plain that its diminutive size is a matter of free choice and not of necessity. In an age when so many other colleges have given up as hopeless the responsibility for being the conservators of the truth and beauty of the past as crystallized in the classical
languages, it is comforting to be in an environment where twenty-five per cent of our men, one student in every four, have chosen a course in Greek or Latin. With much talk going on about the godlessness of our civilization and the absence of religion in college halls, I am happy in presiding over an institution which by its emphasis upon the College Chapel testifies to its conviction as to the importance of religion in the life of an educated gentleman. In a day when great stadiums draw crowds to see college teams exploited to make a Roman holiday, I am quite content to worry over the meagre budget of the Trinity College Athletic Association as long as our boys like their games. As for the frantic efforts of self-designated educational specialists who in the name of “progressive education” (God save the mark!) strive to establish some new method of instilling learning into youth, methods which if entirely new seem to ask for no further justification, it does not worry me to have our College jog along its humdrum path, convinced that there is no technique of education that will provide a satisfactory substitute for a class of twenty or twenty-five men, in charge of an able teacher. There are many worse things than being old-fashioned.”

Dr. Ogilby was a lover of sports. One newspaper commentator said, “I do not remember ever having covered a Trinity football, baseball, basketball game or track meet at which Dr. Ogilby was not present.” Nor did the President love sports only for themselves; he believed that they helped to develop Trinity’s most precious product—leaders of men.

Hundreds of Trinity men have reason to know that Dr. Ogilby’s influence upon them did not end with the end of college days. He married many a Trinity alumnus, and baptized his children. His littered office desk, which was as much a part of him as his hearty laugh and his pipe, was littered, principally, with correspondence from alumni. Especially during these past war years, Trinity men have written to him about their personal problems. To these men he offered the encouragement of his own religious experience and of his own vigorous optimism. Those who have heard Dr. Ogilby read service men’s letters over the air have felt the affection with which they were written and the gratitude with which they were received. Dr. Ogilby always answered his letters promptly and at length.

Many were the tributes which the President’s death evoked. Among them was one from Justice Arthur F. Ells of the Connecticut Supreme Court, and chairman of the Connecticut Highway Safety Commission of
which Dr. Ogilby was a member. A story which Justice Ells tells catches the spirit of the late President's life:

"Nearly twenty years ago the annual meeting of the Harvard Club of Connecticut was addressed by one of America's best known bankers. His thesis was that man's primary purpose is to make money, and that statistics, which he gave, proved that college men are a failure because they do not make as much money as non-college men. As the meeting was about to adjourn, a short man with a ruddy face and a firm jaw, rose and said, in substance, 'I cannot leave this meeting without saying that there is at least one in the audience who wholly disagrees with the distinguished speaker. His statistics, if correct, seem to me unimportant. I dispute his ideas as to the purpose of life. He is entitled to his opinion, but as for me, I shall continue to teach my boys, in my old-fashioned way, that the end and aim of life is a love of beauty, a passion for the truth, and the ability to live gallantly.'

"It is hardly necessary to say that there was a prolonged applause. I asked who the man was, for it was the first time I had seen Dr. Ogilby."
Resolution of the Trustees of Trinity College

The Secretary reported the death on the seventh of August of the President of Trinity College and that services were held in the Chapel on the tenth of August at half past two o'clock, attended by the trustees and other friends of the College and at five o'clock by the faculty and students. Thereupon the secretary was directed to inscribe in the minutes of this meeting the following minute and to send a copy to Mrs. Ogilby with an expression of the profound sympathy of the trustees:

Remsen Brinckerhoff Ogilby, Priest and Doctor of Divinity, became President of Trinity College in 1920 when the College was suffering the effects of the World War and had for years past spent more than its income. Under his administration expenses were controlled and income increased so that for the twenty-three years of his administration income exceeded expenditures by a large sum. The students increased in number and improved in scholarship.

Good men, Christian men and learned men have served as President of Trinity College, but Dr. Ogilby had more varied gifts than any of them. He carried his learning lightly and was known to make impromptu jokes in colloquial Latin when conferring learned degrees upon distinguished men.

His reports to the Alumni were informing and full of wit and charm. At times he could tell of amusing incidents of College life and then of deeds of heroism of his students and of sufferings nobly borne.

As was natural with such a leader, gifts came to the College—gifts of fine buildings, gifts to the endowment, and the gift of a noble Chapel. Dr. Ogilby describes the Chapel in "The Chapel of Trinity College." In the Foreword he says, "This guide is intended to tell a little of what this House of God means to the sons of Trinity." His faith and imagination gave the building of the Chapel the Spirit of the Age of Faith and multiplied the value of the great gift of the donor.

The enduring monument of Remsen Brinckerhoff Ogilby is what he has written in the hearts and minds of men, which will be passed on from generation to generation.
Resolution of the Faculty of Trinity College

We, the Members of the Faculty of Trinity College, meeting in regular session on September the fourteenth, nineteen hundred and forty-three, hereby make formal record of our sense of loss in the death of Remsen Brinckerhoff Ogilby, for twenty-three years our President.

During the period of President Ogilby’s administration and under his leadership, the College has more than doubled in size, in endowment, and in physical equipment. By his suggestion and encouragement several new disciplines have been added to our curriculum, others have been strengthened, and the service of the College both to its community and to the Country at large has been improved and extended. As a body of scholars and teachers we are proud to record that these successes have been achieved without any lowering of scholastic standards or any infringement of the true principles of academic freedom. We are grateful, moreover, that in his hospitality to contemporary change President Ogilby never lost sight of what is permanently sound in educational tradition. Thus it comes about that, after the longest presidential term that Trinity has known, he leaves the College stronger than it has ever been before and better prepared for the obligations of the future.

In our thought of the man who for so many years occupied the President’s chair in our committee meetings, at our sessions of the Faculty, and at Commencement, we shall recall his youthful enthusiasm and zest for life, the earnestness of his convictions tempered by a lively sense of humor, and the vigor of his bearing and speech. We shall recognize a monument to his memory in the beautiful College Chapel which he planned and loved and served. Many of us have personal reasons for remembering his Christian kindness toward those in trouble. Many more are aware that he maintained relations of warm and enduring friendship with hundreds of our undergraduates and alumni. All of us know that Remsen Brinckerhoff Ogilby lived among us a life of tireless and unswerving devotion pro academia, ecclesia, et patria.

Therefore be it resolved that this statement be spread upon the minutes of the Faculty, communicated to the press, and presented with expressions of our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Ogilby and her sons.