

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

CHILTON R. BUSH
(1896 – 1972)

During his 27 years of service to Stanford, Chilton R. Bush transformed a loose undergraduate program in journalism into an institute, then into a department. He introduced an interdisciplinary doctoral program, and three of the first four students he selected for it became deans or directors of major schools of journalism. He signed the diplomas of hundreds of students who went out to work on leading newspapers. Many of them continued to call on him as advisor and confidant throughout their professional careers. He retired in 1961, laden with honors, and on Tuesday, August 22, he died of cancer, leaving behind a wide reputation and warm memories.

Chilton Rowlette Bush was born in Pleasureville, Kentucky, in 1896. In his early twenties, from 1917 to 1923, he worked as a newspaper reporter in Kentucky, Tennessee, and New York City. He enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, in Madison, and there earned a B.A. in 1925, an M.A. in 1927, and a Ph.D., in political science, in 1935. He taught journalism at Wisconsin from 1925 to 1934, when he came to Stanford.

More than any other man he was responsible for building journalism into a respected academic field at Stanford and guiding it toward the broader field of communication. From the first he insisted, contrary to many of his contemporaries, that there was no contradiction between newspaper "work" and academic study. He arranged internships for his best students on San Francisco newspapers, later on such papers as the Wall Street Journal. His own scholarship was almost always aimed at helping newspapers and newspaper men to improve their product. Thus, his textbook on Reporting of Public Affairs, which went through a number of editions, guided a high proportion of the political writers, the city hall and courthouse reporters, of this country. He founded the California Editors' Conference. His chief technical accomplishment was the construction of a questionnaire instrument for measuring public attitudes toward newspapers, designed both to help the reading public say what it thought of the papers it read, and the newspaper editor and publisher to obtain unbiased measures of where they stood in their community. He was a pioneer in the field of measuring the readership of hometown newspapers; readership studies were common among large papers, but he made them feasible for smaller papers. When he retired, instead of relaxing, he became director of the News Research Center of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, where he supervised some field studies and edited a fortnightly bulletin of research results, rewritten for newspapermen, which was a model of the communication of behavioral research to the public.

After ten years successfully operating a professional M.A. program, he decided to begin offering the doctorate to selected candidates who wanted to study the social and behavioral sciences and become scholars and teachers in journalism and communication. This decision was ahead of its time. Most prior scholarship in journalism had been histories of newspapers and biographies of editors and publishers. But he sent his students to learn statistics from the redoubtable Quinn McNemar, psychology from Ernest Hilgard, sociology from Richard LaPiere and Paul Wallin, political science from Tom Barclay, and to other fields and other men where the students could learn to see the mass media through the eyes of behavioral scientists. There was relatively little research in Stanford's journalism program before the 1950's, but he lived to

see the development of the Institute for Communication Research, and students going out to distinguished appointments throughout the world from the graduate program he had initiated.

He leaves his wife Myrtle, one son John, and four grandchildren, to all of whom the Academic Council sends its sympathy in their loss.

But next to his family and a few close friends, Chilton Bush loved newspapers best. He recognized radio and grudgingly admitted the existence of television when it began to carry some of the Giants' games. Throughout his adult life, however, he carried on an open love affair with newspapers, imbuing students with his own feeling, scolding editors and publishers in salty language because they were less than perfect, helping them with all the tools at his disposal to do better. His aspiration and affection were reciprocated. The American Society of Newspaper Editors made him a Distinguished Member. When he retired, the California editors gave him a generous purse and a trip to Europe. But the deepest affection came from his former students, one of whom, the executive editor of a leading metropolitan paper, wrote as follows when he heard of the death:

Campus contacts were only the first in Chick's involvement with his flock. He continued as friend and counselor through the years of a man's career, with a unique capacity to pop up at exactly the right moment with a helping hand and a friendly ear ... Because of this personal dedication, Chick Bush was able to guide the standard he taught on campus into the practice of an enormously wide number of newspapermen. As he made the subtle transition from "Dr." Bush, your sage, to "Chick," your friend, he was always a voice of conscience at the editorial desk. We can never know the number of bad things in journalism avoided because somewhere someone thought "Chick wouldn't go for this," and, conversely, the number of good attempts made with the silent thought that "this would sure please Chick."

We never really left his classroom.

Bruce Bliven
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