

Board of Governors of Ak-Sar-Ben, Past and Present



E. Buckingham



Gould Dietz



C.E. Black



F.W. Judson



G.E. Haverstick



J. De F. Richards



L.C. Nash



George Brandeis



W.D. Hofsford



Chas. D. Beaton



Chas. L. Saunders



Randall K. Brown

Now that the twenty-first year of the reign of King Ak-Sar-Ben has about passed, more and more are the people marveling that the organization is still growing, and now fairly at a galloping pace rather than beginning to decline.

Men who took important parts in the Den shows the first years of the organization are retired men now who never go to the Den any more. Their sons are taking leading parts now. Men are taking leading parts there now that were babies when the first few shows were held. Men are taking parts who were small boys away out in the state somewhere when they first heard of Ak-Sar-Ben, and who wondered longingly at that time whether they would ever be so fortunate as to be in Omaha during the festivities or during the Den show.

Governors have come and gone. Seven of the old governors have passed away, and new timber has taken their place. The following past governors are now no longer living: Edgar Allen, Emil Brandeis, E. E. Bryson, E. J. Moriarty, William Glase, James M. Hendrie and J. C. Root.

Governors who have been on the board for some time grew reminiscent this year when reviewing the hardships of the earlier years.

"We used to go down and tend the gates ourselves," said Gould Dietz, longest term member now on the board of governors. "Yes, the governors used to get in the collar and tend gates and do the other work around the carnival grounds for we had no money to hire anyone to do these things. Now, this is all hired help, promptly paid and well paid for its services."

"Not only that, the few bills we did incur we had a hard time to meet in the early days. Bill collectors used to be after us all the time. We used to have to dig down in our own pockets and make up the deficit. Now we have all our debts paid and the money in the bank and are coming fine."

"Work, why there was no end to the work we had to do. One year we wanted to pull off an Ak-Sar-Ben stunt up at Fort Omaha. We got permission to use the grounds, but the grass had to be mowed and the big lawn cleared off for the occasion."

"We had no money with which to hire this done. So the governors threw off their coats and went to it. All day Saturday and Sunday we worked. There was Jim Martin pushing a lawn mower. There was Ed Allen sweating over a rake. Walt Jardine was swinging a scythe. Vance Lane and Fred Metz were hauling rubbish with a heavy cart, and I was poking at something or other. You would have thought we were a lot of track horses. We worked all day Saturday and Sunday to clean that up for the occasion."

"Dinner? No, I should say not. We even had to furnish our own sandwiches."

"And as for getting members—why, we used to have to get out and beg fellows to join. Now they fall over themselves to join. We used to have to labor like the dickens to pry fellows loose from their \$10. Then to get side subscriptions, that was some job. We had to beg and fight to get them and didn't get much at that. Times are certainly different now for Ak-Sar-Ben."

Next in order in length of service on the Board of Governors is Charles Black. "Twenty-one years have gone," said Black, "and it seems almost impossible. Yes, sir, we open the Den show in the summer now with more members on the very opening night than we used to have at the close of the season. The governors used to have to hustle all the members themselves and now we have an efficient hustling committee that does that work."

"This year we have completed the big adjoining shed to the Den, where all the floats are now built. This was a big improvement. I fought for that for years. Every time the board met I brought up the matter, until they threatened to call the police and have me taken from the meetings. I kept hammering at it until they saw it my way and I got half of it built last year and the other half this year."

"Before that the floats had to be built

right in the Den proper, and they took up so much room that we only had the center of the Den to hold our show in. It was awkward and we were always crowded for room. Now we have the whole Den for the show and for the ball, while at the same time we have the shed in which to build the floats and in which to house them after the parade.

"Formerly we had to haul the floats out in the open and let them stand out in the weather immediately after the parade, for we had to use the Den for the ball. Well, the kids used to jump on the floats and dismantle them as soon as they were left there, and we lost a lot in that way. It was a shame to have the floats destroyed and let them stand in the rain and weather. Now we drive them right back into the shed where they came from as good as new."

"It is interesting to notice that now and then a man along in years looks over the crowd at the Den and then remarks, 'It misses the old faces.' After that, 'Well, now that is easy to explain. That man must remember that many of the old faces have gone forever, since twenty-one years ago. The sons of those men are at the Den now, and are taking leading parts. Look at Charlie Gardner. He must have been just a kid in knee pants when the organization started. Look at Billy Lawrence. He couldn't have been much of a kid in the early

days. And Oscar Leiben. Why he was just a baby. His father used to be the official costumer for the Den show and the parades. His father was an actor in his time and very excitable. I remember when getting ready for a parade the old gentleman used to be wild with excitement, for everyone was running to him for pointers. Then we used to torment him just to work his excitement up higher. For that very reason I put a corset on backwards when I was making up for the parade. I presented myself before the elder Leiben for his inspection, and he fairly leaped off the floor cracking his heels and tearing his hair."

"Well, the elder Leiben is no longer a factor in our show, but we have his son, a first class amateur actor, in a leading role at the Den."

"Yes, it has been a father to son proposition, and the organization has thrived."

Two members of the board of governors have resigned during the last year, and new timber from the best business men in Omaha has been selected by the board to take the places.

The new governors are George Brandeis and Charles L. Saunders.

Joseph Barker was the first to resign, early in the year. Mr. Barker had been one of the most enthusiastic workers. Yes, that was what was the matter. He was too enthusiastic a worker in every line of boosting activities, until he sud-

denly found that unless he let go of a few places he would break down under the strain of activities or would be unable to attend to his own business as it should be looked after.

So with deep regrets he announced his resignation to the board. With deeper regrets still did the board read his resignation.

For a time they were inclined to table the resignation and make Barker continue to serve on the board, but when he insisted, they let him off.

They cast about for a few weeks for a man to fill the place. Then they decided

on George Brandeis, general manager of the Brandeis stores. Mr. Brandeis came to Omaha only something over a year ago from Chicago to take the management of the Brandeis interests here. He became popular at once with the business men, and is now considered a valuable asset to the board of governors.

Next the board heard from D. J. O'Brien.

"Why in the world should an old booster like Dave O'Brien want to resign?" they asked themselves. Was the very foundation of Ak-Sar-Ben tottering? Surely there was something wrong when Dave turned in a resignation.

But the next line explained the whole

matter. He was leaving Omaha, and was mighty sad about it, but had to go.

What was this man O'Brien doing but selling out the interests in the O'Brien Candy factory and moving to Connecticut as general manager of a Thermos bottle manufacturing plant there.

There was nothing to say. The resignation had to be accepted; for no man can serve King Ak-Sar-Ben and live in a realm so far removed from Quivera as the state of Connecticut.

Again it was up to the board to select another man that would do a business man, a booster, and a man of good judgment in matters relating to Ak-Sar-Ben. After scouting over the city for a few

weeks they again made a decision, and elected Senator Charles L. Saunders. Saunders has had a very brief term to date as he was elected scarcely two weeks ago. However, he got in just in time to find a lot of work to be done for he got in just as the carnival and general festivities of the fall were about to open.

The personnel of the present board of governors now stands, Everett Buckingham, Charles Beaton, George Brandeis, Charles E. Black, Randall K. Brown, Gould Dietz, George E. Haverstick, W. D. Hofsford, Frank W. Judson, Louis C. Nash, Charles L. Saunders and J. De Forrest Richards.



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