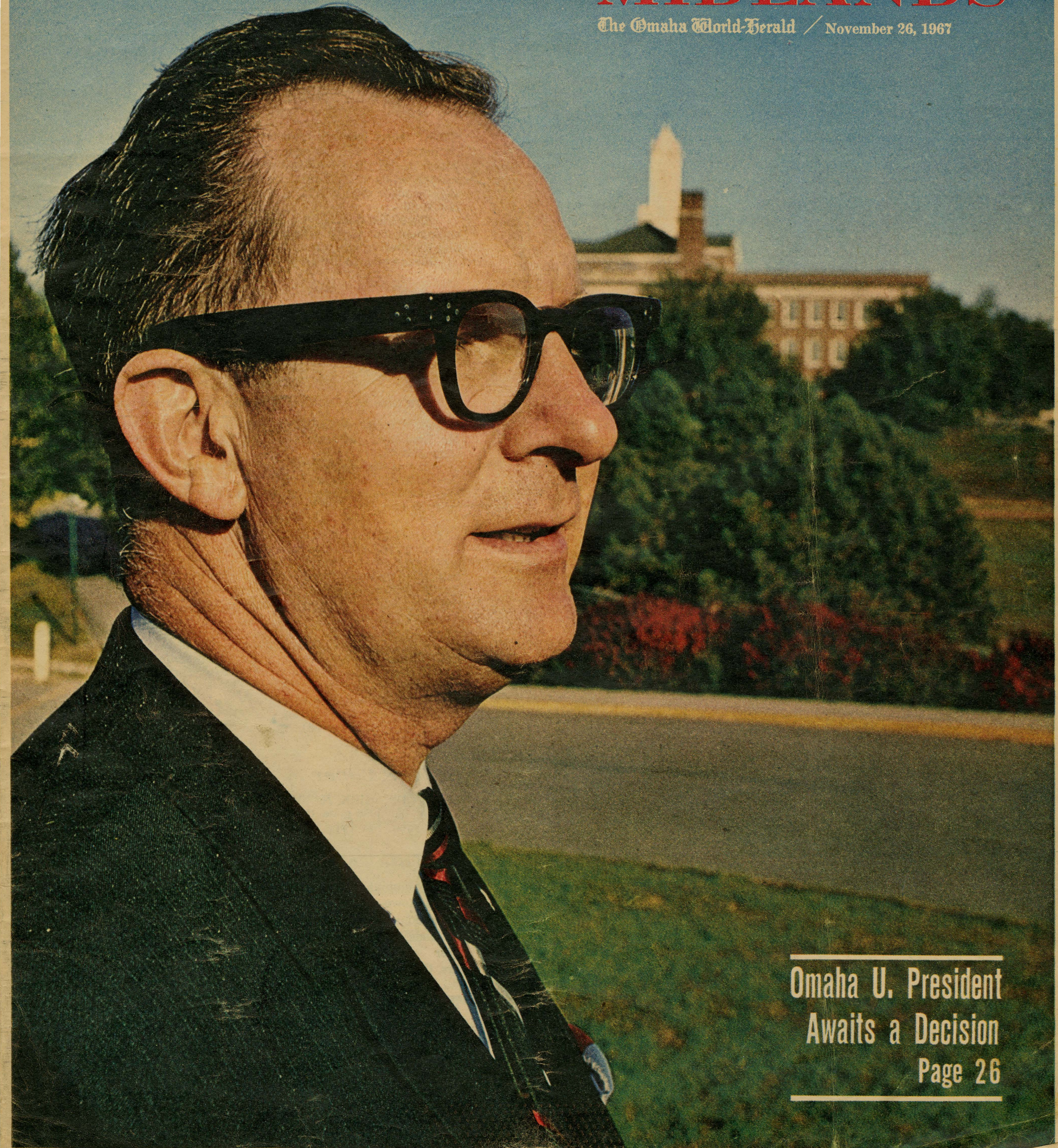


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Awaits a Decision
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The Man in the Middle of the Merger

Kirk Naylor's Busy Year



By Hollis Limplrecht

ON THE morning of December 13, 1966, friends and supporters of the University of Omaha heard some distressing news. Dr. Leland Traywick, president of the university, was resigning. Then, as more facts were uncovered, it developed that he was being fired. The board of regents was somewhat less than candid, the faculty was uneasy and the public was puzzled.

The University of Omaha, which had had its share of hard times during its 57 years of existence, was in trouble. Enrollment was beginning to decline, costs were skyrocketing and there was uncertainty in the leadership.

This year, on December 12, Omaha voters will decide whether to merge the University of Omaha and the University of Nebraska as the embryo of a statewide system of higher education. Meanwhile, enrollment has surged upward, fiscal stability is assured—with voter approval—and the hand at the tiller is firm.

It has been, in the words of the man who has had most to do with this change of direction, "a tremendously busy, exciting, confusing and rewarding year."

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THAT man is Dr. Kirk E. Naylor, 49, a one-time teacher in a one-room country school on the Kansas prairie, who has served as acting president and — since last June 5 — president of the University of Omaha during its most trying and most rewarding year.

The December 12 outcome is "iffy;" nothing is ever a sure thing in an election. But there is no "if" to Dr. Naylor. In his every day conversation and in his public speeches — and he will go anywhere, anytime to spread the gospel of the University of Omaha — the word is "when" merger is approved.

Assuming the "when," why should Dr. Naylor be for merger and why has he worked so hard for its accomplishment? After all, isn't he, in effect, voting himself out of a job, dissolving a small empire, relegating himself to a secondary role?

If so, he doesn't care. Son of a minister in the Church of the Brethren and himself an active Methodist lay leader, Dr. Naylor has shown an almost missionary zeal as he has worked for merger.

"I am dedicated to an expanding future for the University of Omaha," he said. "When I first sat in the president's chair (the day after Dr. Traywick left), I immediately saw the need for fiscal stability — to maintain high standards at a reasonable cost to the students, and to provide for appropriate development in the years ahead."

He gave no thought to pulling back and creating a small university — either municipally supported or private — for the sole benefit of Omaha residents.

"We had long outgrown those bounds," he said. "This great university (a term that slips easily and frequently from his lips) must serve the entire metropolitan area."

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THIS brings into focus just what will become of the University of Omaha. First, its name: It will be called the University of Nebraska at Omaha, for the very

good reason that that is what it is called in the legislative bill which set up the merger vote. Headline writers undoubtedly will soon change that to UNO.

Second, Dr. Naylor envisions the university as an arm of a developing statewide system of higher education designated to serve specifically Metropolitan Omaha.

"Someday in the future we probably will need student housing," he said. "When that will come about, I don't know." Meanwhile it will continue to be a commuter school, but young people residing in Ralston, Millard, Bellevue and the communities of Eastern Nebraska within easy driving distance of Omaha will be served at University of Nebraska resident tuition rates. This will be a reduction of approximately 20 per cent for residents of Omaha, of nearly 50 per cent for those outside Omaha.

Presently, tuition at the University of Omaha is 18 dollars a credit hour for residents of the city, 28 dollars for non-residents of the city. Resident tuition at the University of Nebraska is approximately 15 dollars an hour. In addition, Omaha taxpayers will be relieved of the two-mill levy. But there is more to the idea of "service" than lower tuition and better education.

In Dr. Naylor's opinion, the University of Omaha (or University of Nebraska at Omaha) stands on the threshold of becoming of great public service to the metropolitan area through its fledgling Urban Studies Center.

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UNIVERSITY assistance in solving the problems of urban living is inevitable. In rural America, the college of agriculture has been a vital part of state universities. Now, in urban centers, the universities are turning their attention, their talents and their resources to urban affairs.

Omaha U.'s Urban Studies Center was recently relocated in the graduate college under the college dean, Dr. Elton Carter, and its purpose is to help solve community problems — problems of education, housing, parks and recreation, race relations, transportation and housing.

"We should be in the forefront of studies and analyses of Omaha," said Dr. Naylor. "We hope the agencies of Omaha — public and private — will use us."

An Urban Studies Center is expensive; it takes qualified personnel and facilities.

"The merger will give us the financial stability to go and get the people we need," he added.

And there is more. Merger is not just something to serve Omaha and environs. Merger could benefit the entire state through co-ordination of all higher education, public as well as private.

This may take some doing. When merger is accomplished next July 1, the University of Omaha board of regents will be dissolved and the school will come under the

University of Nebraska board of regents.

WHY, asks Dr. Naylor — and this is a measure of his willingness to take on a battle — shouldn't all publicly supported institutions of higher education be co-ordinated? Can the state defend a system of separate and unco-ordinated universities, state colleges and junior colleges?

Dr. Naylor assumes that some persons connected with the state colleges and the junior colleges will oppose such a proposal at first. But he is ready to talk.

"I would be willing to start a dialog toward the co-ordination of all public colleges and universities," he said. "And I wouldn't leave out the private institutions unless they specifically want to be left out. Our state shouldn't duplicate efforts in the public area of education, unless duplication is needed."

Brave words. But don't sell the speaker short. In less than a year he has sold such diverse persons as Senator Terry Carpenter and the Omaha business and education community on the benefits of merger.

Faculty skepticism, founded on the confusion of events of a year ago, has faded. Dr. A. Stanley Trickett, chairman of the Department of History, who expressed concern over Dr. Naylor's appointment in January, made the nomination to appoint him president less than six months later.

"We are moving out of rough waters into smooth," said Dr. Trickett as the fall term began.

The University of Omaha board of regents named Dr. Naylor acting president on January 1, and less than a week later Senator Carpenter was ready to introduce a bill in the Legislature to combine O.U. with the University of Nebraska. Dr. Naylor and Robert M. Spire, president of the O.U. board of regents, hurried down to Lincoln to urge the senator to withhold his bill until O.U. officials could confer with University of Nebraska officials.

"The senator gave us 10 days," recalled Dr. Naylor. It was a busy 10 days, but out of the around-the-clock conferences came an agreement in principle for a merger of the state's two largest universities. Senator Carpenter introduced the new measure.

IT PASSED with little opposition, but more than that, the Legislature provided more support for the state's public institutions of higher learning than ever before. It voted a per student stipend for junior colleges (including freshmen and sophomores at O.U. whether the merger is approved or not), it established an O.U. budget in conjunction with the University of Nebraska on the assumption of a favorable vote, and it pledged one million dollars for building expansion.

The Legislature, through the

merger bill, also called for the establishment of a "resident administrator" in Omaha, to be appointed by the N.U. board of regents and to serve under Chancellor Clifford Hardin of the University of Nebraska.

Since the N.U. regents had endorsed the Omaha U. regents' action in naming Dr. Naylor president last June 5, thereby removing the "acting" from his title, it may be assumed Dr. Naylor will become president of the new University of Nebraska at Omaha. Chancellor Hardin told the Magazine of the Midlands:

"Dr. Naylor's concept of what a joint educational effort could do for not only the city of Omaha and its young people but for the entire state is clear and objective. His tireless efforts contributed greatly to giving Omaha citizens an opportunity to vote on this important issue."

"TIRELESS" is a good word to describe Kirk Naylor, a trait he inherited from his father. His father, besides being a preacher, was a school teacher and sometimes farmer in Kansas.

His father liked the letter K; named his three sons Kirk, Kurt and Kent. This tradition continues in Dr. Naylor's family, with his children named Kirk, Jr., Kalleen, Kevin and Kerry. They are, respectively, 21, 18, 13 and 11. Kirk, Jr., and Kalleen are students at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

After graduation from high school, at the age of 18, Kirk Naylor spent a year teaching all eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse, then enrolled at little McPherson College. His high school sweetheart, Margaret Wineland, attended Bethany College 14 miles away. Four years later each had a degree and they were married.

He has taught, been a principal and superintendent of schools in Kansas schools, with time out for service in the Air Corps in World War II, rising from private to major.

In 1952, he moved into the college field as associate professor of education at Fort Hays, Kans., State College, then moved to Southwestern Oklahoma State College. He came to the University of Omaha in 1960, and was dean of administration and professor of education when Dr. Traywick left.

LIKE most educators, he has held a variety of positions. Each is inscribed on the side of an old bell he found in a one-room Kansas schoolhouse closed by consolidation during his days as a school superintendent. He has been pretty busy lately and hasn't found time to send the bell to the engravers for the line: President, University of Omaha, June 5, 1967.

The way it looks, he might as well wait a while and get two lines added at once. The second line would read, of course: President, University of Nebraska at Omaha, July 1, 1968.

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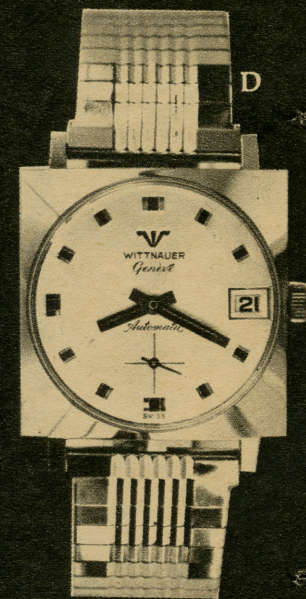


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