Splendid Audacity
The Story of Pacific University

BY
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AND
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In this provision for collegiate education [Tualatin Academy] preceded all educational institutions on the Pacific Coast. It may be regarded as one of the acts of splendid audacity with which the student of western history becomes familiar.

— JAMES ROOD ROBERTSON

"Origin of Pacific University"
Oregon Historical Quarterly, June 1905

President’s Foreword

Splendid Audacity, The Story of Pacific University draws us into the fabric of American history and the stories of the dreamers, pioneers, and visionaries who believed in preparing students to serve their changing society. Reading this story, we learn that Pacific University is linked through the founding Congregationalists to other significant colleges and universities in the United States, and to their legacy of excellence in liberal arts education.

Through the years, Pacific has been able to shape and focus its identity to include, within its core liberal arts heritage, the additional responsibility of preparing graduate professionals to work in the fields of health and education. Now, at the edge of the millennium, Pacific is a comprehensive university of almost 2,000 students, thriving as a connected and sustaining community.

The story of Pacific as researched and interpreted by our authors, Gary Miranda and Rick Read, demonstrates how Pacific maintained a sense of vigor and optimism despite many daunting challenges, and shows how it has gradually achieved a new level of maturity and self-confidence that will carry it through the next periods of transformation.

Our vision for the next years is expressed in our Strategic Plan 2004, which asserts that Pacific University “will be recognized nationally for its exemplary undergraduate programs that focus specifically on connecting the liberal arts with practical professional preparation, and for its outstanding graduate programs in health sciences and education.”

Splendid Audacity shows us how fortunate we are now, as in the past, to have the essential ingredients to carry us forward to accomplish this vision — we have gifted and dedicated staff and managers, an intelligent and creative student body, and excellent faculty who come together as a community to meet our challenges. Our university community is complex and vigorous — ever youthful in its optimism and energy, yet seasoned by challenges, disappointments, and hard-won achievements.

We understand from reading this wonderful book that our institution’s identity is a patchwork of dreams and ideas, stitched together by reflection and held in our memories over the generations. How appropriate that as part of the sesquicentennial preparations, a dozen women on campus made a quilt to recognize Pacific’s history. These women met every day for almost a year to design and create this quilt. As they sat together and talked, they, like their predecessors and the historians, pieced together patches of history, threads of...
their souls. The quilt is a wonderful metaphor, both as an historical artifact and as a story, for the spirit and reality, the theory and the practice, of living in community at Pacific.

Like its pioneering founders, Pacific is reaching today beyond its local boundaries to stay connected with its alumni, its friends and supporters, its faculty and staff. Partnerships with public school systems, with foundations, and with corporations are part of Pacific's new story, as is its enhanced ambition to be a regionally and nationally distinctive, comprehensive university.

As we embark on our next 150 years, Splendid Audacity reminds us to honor our past. 150 years is a long legacy in the Pacific Northwest, but as we continue to create new programs and envision others, it is clear that we are still vigorous, generative, and fully alive to new possibilities. In looking forward, I am struck by how fortunate we are to be a connected and sustaining community capable of audaciously splendid acts.

Faith Gabelnick
President
When I was invited by members of the Sesquicentennial Committee to write the history of Pacific University, I was both pleased and perplexed. Pleased that they thought I could do it; perplexed that they should ask me to do it when they might have asked a scholar or an historian — or, at the very least, an alumnus. I am none of these. Insofar as my credentials as a writer bear on the matter at all, I am a poet, a claim that will establish about as much authority in the present context as if I had declared that I am a Sagittarian.

Having completed the task for which I was chosen, I find the choice no less improbable but far less perplexing. To have made a more probable choice, in fact, would have been out of character, since Pacific has an established history of favoring the long odds. Tualatin Academy and Pacific University were founded by people for whom the only difference between the difficult and the impossible was that the impossible might take longer. All of this is reflected in the phrase, “acts of splendid audacity,” which was used by one of Pacific’s earliest chroniclers to describe its founding. Whether Pacific’s choice of its latest chronicler was as splendid as it was audacious, I must leave to the readers to decide.

Which is not to suggest that I produced this book single-handedly. Any such effort is necessarily the work of many hands and minds, and the present book is no exception. Allow me to acknowledge some of these.

First of all, I must acknowledge and thank my co-author and former archivist of Pacific University, Rick Read. Without Rick, the book you are reading would not have been possible — which is to say, it would have taken longer. Rick supplied much of the raw material, selected many of the photographs, provided preliminary sketches of key figures, wrote most of the sidebars, and painstakingly initiated me into the arcane mysteries of the archive filing system. He also reviewed and corrected successive drafts with the scrutiny of — well, of an archivist. In this last activity, our working relationship reminded me of the movie “Babe,” in which I played the porcine lead to Rick’s role as the benevolent overseer: with Rick’s high standards of scholarship ever before me, I would scamper to corral the sheepish facts into their proper contexts and then wait with Babelike docility for Rick’s approving, “That will do.” While I must accept both credit and blame for the voice that emerges from the narrative, Rick’s invaluable contributions to the present history have more than earned him the title of “co-author.”

My thanks to President Faith Gabelnick and the Pacific Sesquicentennial Committee for inviting me to tell the story of Pacific University and especially for having the good grace to let me tell it as honestly as I could. The Committee includes, in addition to President

Among these, a very special thanks to Chris Wilkes, director of corporate relations and my main contact at Pacific, whose urbanity and graciousness have been a constant delight. Chris' unfailing support and encouragement over the past two years have left me with only two grounds for regret: that our monthly meetings at Borders Books will be no more, and that I will never have a British accent.

Susan Blettel deserves special mention and thanks for designing and executing the layout of the book, while continuing to fulfill her many and demanding duties as manager of publications. The book project was conceived from the beginning as one in which the images would not merely accompany but complete the narrative, much as music completes the lyrics. Knowing that Susan was at her keyboard ready to work her magic on the delivered text greatly lightened my concern about its shortcomings.

A number of people already mentioned reviewed the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions. Larry Lipin, associate professor of history, was especially helpful in noting gaps and in supplying background on Congregationalism in the nineteenth century. Reverend Donald Sevetson, former Pacific University board member, devoted an entire afternoon to guiding me through the labyrinth of early missionary organizations. Others generously submitted to phone or in-person interviews with great patience, among whom are Christine Didway, Judy Sherman, Miller Ritchie, Ken Schumann, Doris Burlingham, Chuck Bafaro, Mike Clock, Gabrielle Byrd-Williams, Beth Woodward, Russ Donderso, Tom Beck, Kazuko Ikeda, Joe Story, Jim Currie, Susan Cabello, Charlotte Filer, Steve Sechrist, Tim O'Malley, and others whom I am probably forgetting.

Forest Grove City Recorder/Archivist Cathy Jansen and Whitman College Archivist Larry Dodd provided assistance, David Morelli helped with research on the picayune coin, and Merrill Johnson (George Fox University) lent us the original buttons from an Indian Training School uniform.

Among the several current students of Pacific University who contributed to the project in various ways, I must single out Julie Holcomb '99, who did yeoman's work in organizing the archive material and tracking down information that was either missing or well concealed.

I want also to thank the many alumni—too many to mention by name—whom I had the opportunity to meet and chat with on various occasions, including one reunion. The almost tangible affection that these former students had for Pacific University was a constant reminder to me that the task I had been given was much more than a writing assignment; it was a sacred trust. In light of that fact, I feel compelled to offer a final note, one that touches on the matter of scale.

To tell the story of the Battle of Gettysburg in a book devoted exclusively to that event is a very different matter from dealing with that same topic in a book about the Civil War or, again, in a book on the history of the United States. All three accounts may be accurate, but as the scale of the enterprise broadens, the Battle of Gettysburg is bound to become less recognizable to those who lived through it. Similarly, alumni from Pacific University may feel that the present history, which relies heavily on the broad strokes of presidential administrations, fails to capture the sense of what it was like to be at Pacific during a given period in time. This is regrettable but also unavoidable in sketching the history of an institution as old as Pacific University. As noted above, it is also why the Sesquicentennial Committee decided to enrich the broth of the narrative with generous portions of photographs and sidebars. The combined flavor, we hope, will satisfy the hunger for new knowledge even as it revives old memories of life at Pacific.

Bon appetit!

GARY MIRANDA