



Thomas E. Brittingham, Jr.  
1899-1960

*The University  
loses a great friend  
and benefactor*

**A**LUMNI AND FRIENDS of the University of Wisconsin were saddened this past Easter weekend when it was learned that one of the University's greatest benefactors, Thomas E. Brittingham, Jr., 61, suffered a fatal heart attack in Wilmington, Del., his home for the past 20 years. Brittingham succumbed to the fatal seizure the day before Easter Sunday while driving his car in metropolitan Wilmington—an eyewitness said he saw Brittingham slump over the wheel of the car as it veered out of control and struck a building.

When the news of Tom Brittingham's death was received, those who had known and worked with him during his many years of service to the University were quick to eulogize this man who had done so much for his Alma Mater.

The Brittingham name first became known at the University through the contributions of Thomas E. Brittingham, Sr., who came to Wisconsin from Hannibal, Mo., in 1855 to engage in the lumber business. By 1889 the senior Brittingham had incorporated his growing business and formed the Brittingham and Hixon Lumber Co., a move which solidified his interests and gave rise to the establishment of the Brittingham fortune.

Thomas E. Brittingham, Jr., was "born in the shadow of the University" in Madison in 1899. In the early days, the Brittingham family made their home on the present site of the Alpha Delta Phi fraternity house but later they moved to the Highlands, a beautiful 15-acre estate with a stunning vista of Lake Mendota off in the distance. The estate has formal gardens and a 15-room home which was given to the University, without restriction, in 1955 by Brittingham and his sister, Mrs. Bryan Reid of Lake Forest, Ill.

Tom Brittingham was educated at the Hotchkiss School and the University of Wisconsin where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1921. For two years after his graduation from the University, he worked for an oil refinery and then he entered the lumber industry and the investment field, an area where his acumen won him a respected reputation as an astute financier.

In 1925, Brittingham, along with eight other Wisconsin alumni founded

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an organization whose imaginative scope has produced an amazing benefit for the University—the organization is the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF). The nine original trustees of WARF, beginning with a total capital of \$900, wanted to provide an agency which would protect and develop the ideas and patents of the University faculty. Some of the most notable developments to bear the WARF protection are Dr. Harry Steenbock's method of synthesizing vitamin D in food by artificial irradiation which has been largely responsible for the virtual elimination of rickets as a children's disease and was the principal inspiration behind the organization of WARF; and Dr. Karl Paul Link's developments of Warfarin, which has served as a rodenticide and a therapeutic agent used to save human lives, and Dicoumarol, an anti-clotting agent used in the treatment of heart disease.

Brittingham, who still served as president of WARF when he died, astounded the financial world in 1957 when, writing in *Barron's*, the national financial and business weekly, he announced that WARF's original capital had been parlayed into a \$29 million gain through an aggressive investment policy. Brittingham attributed the amazing success to the fact that "Two basic principles have guided the operations of the WARF fund. First, it is invested almost entirely in common stocks at all times; second, the fund is fully invested, whether the market is high, low, or in between."

This approach was typical of Brittingham's investment philosophy. He didn't approve of money lying idle and insisted that it be working, even if it was accruing only a minimal gain. When the Alumni House Fund Campaign concluded, he immediately suggested that, in line with the policies of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, the money collected be put to work by investing in short-term government bonds or other forms of securities so that the funds accumulated will continue to earn interest for the benefit of the University until construction begins. Brittingham's own contribution to the Alumni House was \$33,333.33 a sum which encouraged fellow alumni to contribute and

put the Alumni House Fund over the top of its goal of \$235,000.

Aside from his activities with WARF, Tom Brittingham made a major contribution to University development as the administrator of the Brittingham Trust Fund left by his father, Thomas, Sr., who had been a member of the University's Board of Regents and his mother who was once a member of the Board of Visitors. The younger Brittingham took the original \$240,000 left by his father and built it into a fund worth over a million dollars.

The funds from the Brittingham Trust supported the work done by Prof. Alexander Meiklejohn in the Experimental College from 1927-31. They also provided for the establishment of the artist-in-residence program which has given the campus a tremendous cultural uplift by integrating such distinguished artists as pianist Gunnar Johansen, the Pro Arte Quartet, and painters John Stuart Curry and Aaron Bohrod into the University community. The Trust has further supported studies in medicine, biochemistry, and enzymes as well as the Industrial Management project and the Lake Research program. Through the addition of new apparatus to UW laboratories, it has helped facilitate research and train students in new techniques. Eagle Heights, the thriving 28-acre community of married student housing located west of the campus, is still another development made possible through the Brittingham Trust.

Perhaps Tom Brittingham's favorite project was the scholarship program he established in 1952 to bring Scandinavian students to the University of Wisconsin. Known as the "Vikings," these students were selected each year by Brittingham who underwrote their activities while they attended the UW. The Viking scholarship departs somewhat from the traditional form of scholarship in that the Brittingham students were picked for their qualities of leadership, personality, and *joie de vivre* as well as for their academic potential. While they attended the University, "Tom's Vikings" were encouraged to participate in the same activities that form a characteristic part of the life of an average American college student. The Vikings joined fraternities, they had

the opportunity to take academic courses that appealed to them rather than be restricted by a definite program of required courses, they attended parties and athletic events, and, whenever the opportunity presented itself, they took side-trips throughout Wisconsin and the United States. Tom Brittingham felt that this was the best way for his Vikings to assimilate the nature and character of American life.

Tom Brittingham's achievements were the result of what he considered was the only measure for success—"hard work." This attitude was reflected in the sign posted in his Wilmington office—"Danger! Man at Work." And he was truly a man at work, he was president of Lumber Industries, Inc., and WARF; a past president of the Wisconsin Alumni Association; he was secretary and director of the Metropolitan Merchandise Marts, Inc., and the Kingsford Chemical Co. of Iron Mountain, Mich.; a director of the Reliance Engineering Co., and the Vitro Manufacturing Co.; he was a member of the executive committee of the United Merchants & Manufacturing, Inc., and the Christiana Oil Corp.

For his work with the Vikings, he was honored by the various governments of Scandinavia: Sweden presented him with the Order of the North Polar Star; Norway honored him with the Medal of St. Olaf; Denmark awarded him the Cross of the Knight of Canneborg, first class; and he was named an honorary member of the Icelandic-American society.

The University of Wisconsin expressed its gratitude to its loyal son by presenting him with an honorary degree in 1952. The citation accompanying that degree commended Brittingham for his "alert and abiding interest in every significant phase of the University's activity" and praised him for being "ever ready with constructive suggestions for its growth and development."

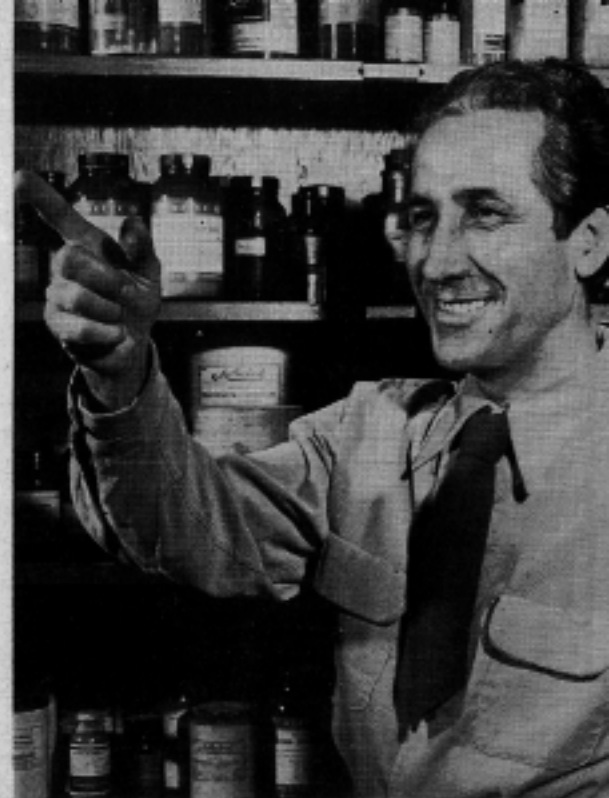
Brittingham is survived by his wife, the former Margaret Cummins; two sons, Thomas III, and Baird, both of Wilmington; his sister, Mrs. Bryan Reid; and three grandchildren.

His passing is mourned by all who have an abiding interest in the University of Wisconsin.



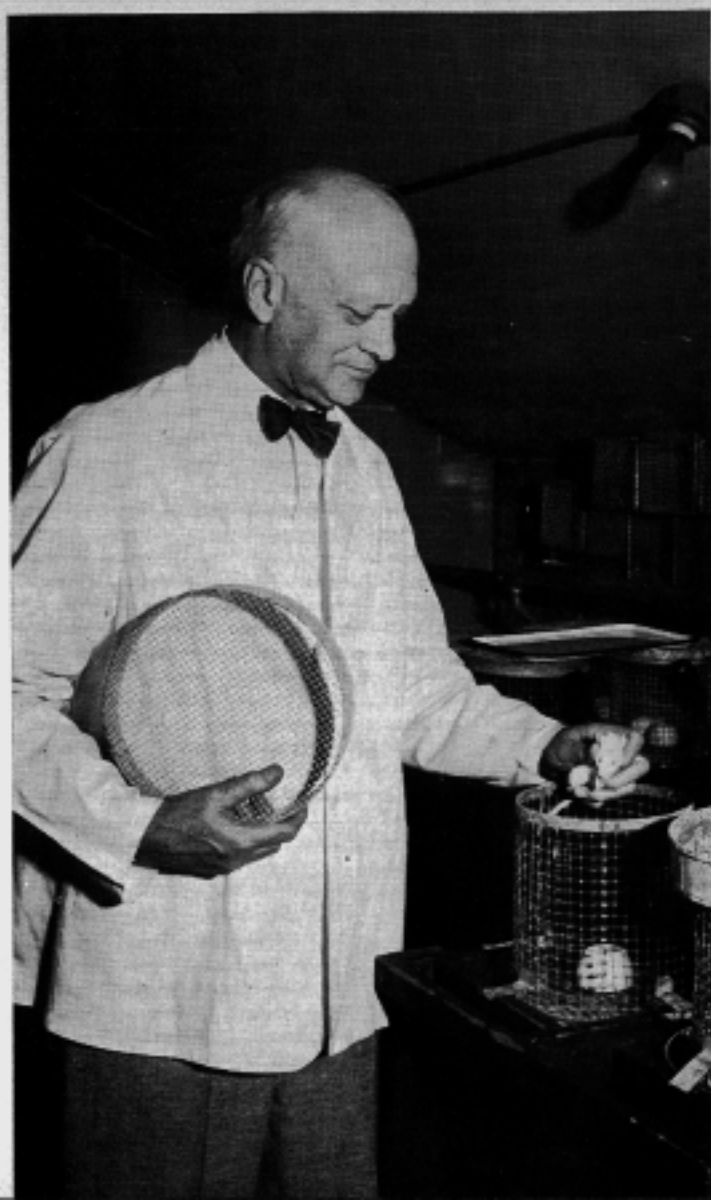
## *The Brittingham Legacy*

Pictured here are but a few of the many academic and cultural contributions to the University of Wisconsin made possible through the generosity and guidance of Thomas E. Brittingham, Jr.



Dr. Karl Paul Link, principal discoverer of Warfarin and Dicoumarol.

Tom's Vikings—Brittingham scholars selected from the Scandinavian countries.



Dr. Harry Steenbock—his discovery of Vitamin D was the major influence in the development of WARE.



The Eagle Heights apartments for married students.

artists-in-residence



Aaron Bohrod



Gunnar Johansen



John Stuart Curry

The Pro Arte Quartet—from left, Albert Rahier, Richard Blum, Lowell Creitz, and Rudolf Kolisch.

