

IN MEMORIAM
ROBERT E. ANDERSON

Robert E. Anderson wanted to start a new career, purchase a radio station, and live in a warmer climate. That was the plan. But when Robert E. Anderson came to Austin to look for a small communications company that he could buy, the plan changed radically. He joined The University of Texas at Austin as the new Director of the Management Development Program for the Graduate School of Business.

Bob was used to changes. Adapting to new situations, recognizing opportunities, and meeting challenges were things Bob had done all his life. However, this move from industry to academia was very unusual, especially for someone with Bob's background and experience. Because of his willingness to take on such a challenge, Bob made a lasting and invaluable contribution to our university and our state.

Robert E. Anderson was born in Brooklyn, New York, on June 1, 1912, and grew up in Buffalo, New York. He went to work at age 12 after school hours in the sporting goods shop of one-time tennis pro Johnny Macklin. While in high school, he worked summers at the Buffalo Evening News as an apprentice jack-of-all-trades. As a high school senior, he worked nights in classified ads, became a top classified telephone salesman, and was named the department's night manager. He earned his living throughout high school and college. Bob enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania as a pre-med student, but after meeting all the pre-med requirements in three years and being accepted to medical school, he changed his major and completed a degree in English.

Bob was enamored with the newspaper business, and, after graduating in 1932 during the Depression, he started working with the Westchester County Newspaper as a reporter covering sports and special events at Sing Sing prison. From 1934 to 1936 he sold advertising space for the Atlantic City Press-Union, later becoming national advertising manager for Gannett's Elmira Star Gazette in New York.

In 1936, he joined the Buffalo office of BBDO, an advertising agency, as an account representative. In 1940, he was named director of advertising and sales promotion of National Gypsum. His brilliant advertising career was interrupted

when he joined the U.S. Navy in 1942. He was a communications specialist and was honorably discharged in November, 1945.

Lieutenant Commander Anderson rejoined BBDO-Buffalo as an account executive in 1946 and handled some major industrial accounts. He transferred to Detroit in 1950, was named a BBDO vice-president in 1952 and was elected to the agency's board of directors in 1959. Among other advertising accomplishments, Bob is credited with developing the successful "Dodge Rebellion" and "Dodge Boys" campaign.

Bob, however, was not satisfied with reaching a top position in the advertising business at age 47. He had decided to retire from his demanding career at age 55 and go back to the publishing business in a temperate climate near the sea. He had heard about Austin, The University, and the new dean of its business school, Dr. George Kozmetsky, so he came to see what this city had to offer.

While Anderson had sought out Austin, Dr. Kozmetsky immediately saw the opportunity to use Anderson's talents and recruited him on the spot. So, in 1967, Bob joined The University at a salary about one-third of what he had been making and became the new head of the Business School Management Development program, a position he retained until 1978. His love for advertising, however, never subsided ,and he was a lecturer in the Department of Advertising from 1973 to 1985.

Robert E. Anderson brought to The University a rare combination of business expertise, pedagogical ability, and the respect for the knowledge of higher education. His expertise in communications and his ability to identify opportunities were keys to the success and growth of the program he directed.

Bob Anderson was above all an innovator. He had a "feeling" for what the future ought to be. His understanding of management education and development went beyond natural boundaries or professional specialization. He saw the opportunity to develop management skills and exchange business experience between Texas and Mexico. He perceived needs across continents when he took the Management Development program to Algeria and other distant countries. The fact that traditional management development programs did not sponsor or promote programs abroad never influenced his decision.

Management training, according to Bob, shouldn't be viewed as needed exclusively by business people. Aware of the fact that such skills would be important to many, he started a management development program for his church — a non-denominational program. In addition, he started what became known as "the short programs" — accelerated seminars which concentrated on a small number of topics and were custom-designed for particular management training needs. The faculty of The University of Texas was, by then, reaching over to corporate and academic clients in Monterey, Nuevo Laredo, and Mexico City, on a regular basis. Many of the long-lasting important relationships this state has with Mexico started then, through Anderson's management development programs.

Another unique characteristic of Bob's personality was the equilibrium he seemed to be able to achieve between the pedagogy and business experience. His respect and knowledge of education and his uncanny ability to communicate and empathize with people from all kinds of backgrounds allowed him to build the type of training program which was academically sound and immediately practical. Anderson involved faculty members and businessmen equally in his curriculum, and the results were extremely rewarding. He left a legacy to the program which is still respected and imitated.

A great believer in brainstorming, a technique he learned in the advertising industry, Bob never refused to work on a new idea or a complex problem. He became interested in the importance of Public Service Announcements before they were even noticed by scholars and researchers. He was an intent listener, even when he did not seem to concentrate on the matter at hand -- and later on, he would get back to the subject of previous conversations with questions, answers, and suggestions. Bob was discussing the importance of the environment and environmental "scanning" as a forecasting tool long before such a subject was considered by others and mentioned in the academic literature.

Bob was open-minded in every sense. He did not know the meaning of discrimination. He included women as faculty in his management development course when very few women were members of business school faculties. He always spoke to others with respect and treated everyone equally.

Anderson had a great thirst for adventure and a passionate love for life. His attitude was always positive, and his expectations were greater than those of anyone else. He was an avid boater and learned sailing later in life. He then became a dedicated sailor. At the age of 54 he took flight instruction and then became a licensed pilot. He approached work and pleasure with professional and unrestricted dedication.

Robert E. Anderson was a friend, an educator, a gifted decision maker, an enthusiastic supporter of education for business and, above all, a forward thinker. He directed one of the best management development programs in the nation and brought great credit to the business school. He taught college students what he had learned in advertising and what he believed, and he followed their progress and careers with pride and excitement. He was a very important member of the faculty of the Advertising Department since its formation in 1973, and his name is still remembered fondly by those in the advertising agency business who had an opportunity to work with him.

—
Robert M. Berdahl, President
The University of Texas at Austin

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H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Isabella C. M. Cunningham (Chair), Floyd S. Brandt, and Ernest W. Walker.

Distributed to Voting and Emeritus Members of the faculty of the department, the Dean of the college or school, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on