

**Southwesterner In Focus
RETIRED BANK PRESIDENT
FULFILLS AMBITION TO GET
COLLEGE DEGREE**

By Luis Villalobos
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Many people consider retirement the twilight of their years but not O.T. Parker, who at 71, has conquered the transition from former bank president of the Citizens State Bank of Ysleta to student of the University of Texas at El Paso.

In January he completed requirements for a degree in business administration. He retired as Citizens State Bank president in 1967.

The pride and the hard work that goes into obtaining a college education can easily be seen in the face of this elderly businessman who states that this marks the highest personal accomplishment in his life.

There was a lot of thought that went behind his decision to become a full-time student after retiring from being a full-time bank president. That thought was combined with an inner desire that Parker has "to continually learn."

Born in Arlington, Tex., in 1900 to parents with little education, Parker, through the years of the Depression and a brief farming stint in the Lower Valley, has maintained a drive and zeal for furthering his education. It will reach a pinnacle when he participates in commencement ceremonies at U.T. El Paso in May.

Behind him are active years in banking, accounting, farming and now college work. Ahead of him are still more years

of trying to help people because of his wealth of experience in business coupled with the culmination of a long sought after dream of having a college degree.

His parents, J.J. Parker and Jerusha Parker, were natives of Alabama who moved to Roscoe, Tex., where he attended high school.

O.T. PARKER



JOB PARAMOUNT

But the drive for a college education then was not as pressing as in present days, said Parker. Earning a living was the paramount concern in those days around the end of World War I.

In 1921 he did manage to attend the Draughons Business College in Abilene, Tex., and graduated from the school studying accounting.

He married the former Velma Kinsey, from Hilton, Tex., and has two sons, Phillip, who lives in Monahans, Tex., and George, also a bank executive in Tucson, Ariz.

Parker began bookkeeping in the Farmer State Bank of Roscoe and during the depression he moved to Sierra Blanca where he was assistant cashier at the bank there.

Of this time Parker commented, “My move to Sierra Blanca was just an effort to keep ahead of the depression.”

The move brought him closer to the El Paso Lower Valley area where he took up farming in between working for the First National Bank of Fabens. In Fabens, he worked closely with J.N. Hendricks, then executive vice president, and H.L. Barney, president.

Soon after 1945, he quit his position at the Fabens bank and organized the nuts and bolts of the Citizens State Bank of Ysleta. During his tenure as president of the Lower Valley banking institution, he studied law through correspondence and completed a course in the Blackstone School of Law, accumulating a substantial collection of law books. But the college education still eluded him through those busy years of running a bank.

ENCOURAGED

Shortly after his retirement he spoke with the then president of University of Texas at El Paso, Joseph M. Ray, who encouraged him to attend. Encouragements kept him going through the four grueling years of making the drastic transition from former bank president to college student.

Porter stated that a college education means being a better citizen, active in the community. This was a quality that he possessed prior to ever entering college.

He has served on the Tornillo Common School District Board and also the Fabens Independent School District Board. He has been active in civic clubs and holds a 15-year pin from the Fabens Lions Club and also was active with the

Ysleta Lions Club. He is a charter member of the Lower Valley Optimist Club and also of the Lower Valley Rotary Club. Parker was also instrumental in forming the Ysleta Lodge of the 1333 AF&AM where he also was a charter member.

High among his civic endeavors, Parker states that being co-chairman along with J.M. Hanks in leading the building committee of the Ysleta Methodist Church.

Some would say his years put a limit on what he can do. But it is quite the opposite for they seem to give him a boost into interests that were held back during his years of banking and farming. He may be 71 years old, but you couldn't tell it by the way he plays tennis, swims or rides his American Saddle bred horse.

INSPIRED VOTERS

During his year at the Citizens State Bank, Parker inspired many to seek the education he now possesses. To many he gave financial help. He has even donated the extensive law book library he accumulated through the years to U.T. El Paso.

The only drawback he can say from starting a college career so late in life is the “retention ability.” He said, “It’s a bit more difficult to concentrate and retain what you have read.” He sometimes dreads one hour exams.

But to hear him speak of the culmination of a dream, “it is all quite well worth it.”

He said talking of his early days, “My father worked hard and didn’t get much of an education. In those days, education wasn’t too popular.”

Commenting on the transition from full time bank president to full time student, Parker said, "Anything that a man grows up in is easy to handle as banking was to me but starting out into a new field and changing directions is quite another matter."

Parker said, "The only big problem in starting a bank is the acceptance of responsibility. You have to be responsible for the whole operation of the bank. It takes a certain amount of judgment—not so much skill—but judgment that has been developed over the years of experience.

It would seem that Parker falls into the world of the self-made man. He has seen hard times, lean years, struggling years but now rewarding years of fulfilling a dream.

He says with pride, "I've worked for myself most of my life.

"My going to college is just part of broadening myself. There is a great deal of satisfaction in earning this college diploma. As for the actual use of what I've learned—I don't expect to do anything with it right now. At least, I know I'm not looking for a job."

On the main objective of a college degree, Parker said, "One has to be unselfish and become part of the community . . . just being a good citizen, that's a big part after you get a degree."

OPENS NEW DOORS

However, the degree has opened new doors for Parker who maintains as many hopes and dreams as a man 50 years his junior.

His accomplishments in business and his knowledge of law have contributed to his handling of many estates. Although up in years, his mind is as discerning and quick as if he were still running a bank.

"The biggest advantage in having an education is the sense of helping someone. Much more satisfaction is derived out of it," Parker added.

Sometimes he has felt out of place attending college but for the most part he is grateful for the many students, both young and old, and professors who have helped him through the four years.

He has seen his fellow students enjoying something he has worked hard for. Of them he said, "Many of these young people should take time out to ask themselves where they are now and where are they going. College to me is the perfect place to think."

He said, "In banking a man's age doesn't keep him from thinking big . . . Many say in the retirement age, one doesn't have time to do things he's always wanted to do. Funny, but I've seen older men who were more ambitious than younger men. If one finds the medium among these things he'll reach his goal."

Parker and his wife reside at 9500 Desert Hills Lane.

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