

# GONE INTO HISTORY

90 YEARS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ARCHIVES

## They Made Us Great



William A. Schaper

ON MAY 11, 1957, the University of Minnesota received a grant of \$10,000, and this bequest, although not unusual in itself, marked the close of a unique chapter in the University's history.

The story begins in 1917, during the anti-German hysteria which characterized the whole country during World War I. Unknown informants accused Professor William A. Schaper, then chairman of the Political Science Department at the University of Minnesota, and a native American of German ancestry, of "rabid pro-Germanism." Subsequently, Professor Schaper was summoned before the Board of Regents for a hearing.

When he discovered that there were no specific charges against him, that no accusers were to be brought forward to face him, Professor Schaper's response was to uphold firmly the humanitarian principles in which he believed. Reiterating his unwavering

loyalty to the United States, he explained that he could feel no enthusiasm for a war the avowed purpose of which was to destroy the German government, and to demolish an army in which he had relatives.

Immediately after the session, the Regents passed a resolution that "his attitude of mind . . . renders him unfit . . . to discharge the duties of his position," and decided to dismiss him without compensation. Professor Schaper was given no opportunity to answer any of the charges in detail, since they were never put into writing.

Schaper went into business for a while in Minneapolis, and finally returned to the academic world as head of the School of Finance at the University of Oklahoma, where he remained until his death.

Fortunately for the prestige of the University of Minnesota, however, the story was not to end there. Thanks to the untiring efforts of Schaper's former colleagues, particularly William Anderson, professor emeritus, and the late Cephas Allin, and also to a marked reduction in the general fear and tension prevalent at this later date, the case was reopened in 1938. Passing a resolution notable in its support of the principles of academic freedom, the Board of Regents rescinded its earlier action, granting to Schaper the title of professor emeritus, and the sum of \$5,000 in lieu of his academic salary for the year, 1917-18. Liberals everywhere praised the action as showing that a great university was courageous enough to admit publicly mistakes and repudiate its earlier actions.

At that time, in Oklahoma, Professor Schaper wrote of his deep regard for the University of Minnesota, a place which evoked faithful friends and beneficial academic associations for him. He applauded the

resolution as "a step forward in the recognition of the sound principles of academic freedom and tenure."

Professor Schaper died in 1955, in Oklahoma, and his wife died six days later. Their will left a bequest of \$10,000 to the University of Minnesota, and an equal amount to the University of Oklahoma.

The story of Dr. Schaper's dismissal was highlighted in the December 1957 issue of *The Minnesotan*, a magazine for University faculty and staff.

The column also noted the generosity Dr. and Mrs. Schaper showed the University at the time of their deaths.

The University of Oklahoma  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
Norman, Oklahoma

Minnesota and the action of the  
Governor of the State who  
inspired it -

Respectfully yours  
W.A. Schaper

The University of Oklahoma  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
Norman, Oklahoma

Feb 10, 1938  
Mr. W. T. Middlebrook  
Sec. of the Board of Regents  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis Minn.  
My dear Mr. Middlebrook,  
This is to acknowledge  
the receipt of a copy of a resolution  
adopted by the Board of Regents of the  
University of Minnesota on January  
28, 1938.

I accept this significant resolution  
in the belief that it marks a step  
forward in the recognition of sound  
principles of Academic freedom  
and tenure. The award I accept  
as a token of mutual good will  
and respect. During the several  
years of my life, now in the offing, I  
shall cherish this resolution of the  
Board of Regents of the University of