

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS DENTAL BRANCH

The Texas Dental College was established in Houston in 1905 as a privately-financed institution. For many years it operated in upstairs quarters on the north side of Franklin avenue between Main street and Fannin street, the site now of a motor hotel. It was one of two dental colleges in Texas, the other being operated by the Baylor University College of Medicine in Dallas. In 1925 the dental college built a modern teaching facility at Fannin street and Blodgett avenue.

In 1929 the Texas Dental College was re-incorporated as a public trust under the direction of a board of trustees charged with the responsibility of providing quality training in the dental disciplines. The Houston Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in arranging the change-over to a public institution, and through the years gave its support to the college as a most important segment of the community's educational facilities.

The trustees in 1932 brought in Dr. Frederick C. Elliott from the University of Tennessee to serve as dean of the college. At the time of his appointment he was serving as superintendent of clinics and prosthesis at the University of Tennessee. He was graduated from Kansas City Western Dental College and remained as a faculty member. At the time of his moving to Tennessee, he was superintendent of clinics and professor of general and dental pathology.

Dr. Elliott came to Houston at a time when the depression had cast an economic blight over the land. He was fully confident that 30 to 40 students would register in the freshman class that September. It must have come as a great shock to him and his volunteer faculty when only 11 freshman students registered.

From this low point Dr. Elliott and his associates did indeed build an institution of the highest rank.

Dr. Elliott became active in Chamber of Commerce committee work and, through service on the Educational Committee, pointed to the community's needs for greatly expanded medical teaching and healing facilities. He developed a "total care" concept, calling for both public and private funds to provide facilities and services to meet the health and medical needs of all the citizens. He served in 1937/38 as chairman of Mayor R. H. Fonville's Public Health Commission, which laid the foundations for the City Health Department's expanded program of services to the community.

The dental college was fully accredited by the National Council of Dental Education, but it became known in the early 1940s that future accreditation would depend upon affiliation with a university. Dr. Elliott quietly started discussions with Dr. Homer P. Rainey, then president of the University of Texas, and others in the University system, to lay the groundwork for affiliation of the dental college with the university, with the dental college to remain in Houston as perhaps a unit in a medical teaching center which Dr. Elliott and Dr. E. W. Bertner sought for the community. (Dr. Bertner, prominent Houston gynecologist, was then a member of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and advisor to the trustees of the Anderson Foundation).

Dr. Elliott kept the Chamber of Commerce informed of his discussions with Dr. Rainey. On May 13, 1941, Harry B. Jewett, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Educational Committee, on which Dr. Elliott then was serving, jumped the gun when he informed the Executive Committee that the University of Texas would take over the dental college on Sept. 1, 1941, and operate it as a unit of the University system. Actually, the official announcement of the affiliation did not come until Aug. 29, 1942, contingent upon legislative approval and appropriation of state operating funds. The Legislature did approve, and on May 14, 1943, Governor Coke Stevenson signed the bill authorizing the affiliation. The University took over the dental college as of Sept. 1, 1943, with Dr. Elliott remaining as dean. Later, Dr. Elliott was named a vice president of the University system.

Dr. Elliott had been in contact with the Anderson Foundation trustees during the negotiations with the University, stressing the importance of the dental teaching facility to future plans for a medical center in Houston. With the state cancer hospital already assured for Houston, and as further inducement for the University to take over the dental college, the Anderson trustees agreed to provide a site in the proposed medical center for the college and to donate \$500,000 toward the cost of a building. In 1946 the Anderson trustees offered to provide an additional \$1.5 million to the cancer hospital and the dental college--- the two University institutions then approved for location in the medical center---on a basis of \$1 by the Foundation for each \$2 provided by the State of Texas. (As part of this program, and as will be detailed in another section of this report, the Houston Chamber of Commerce raised \$1 million in community support for facilities in the medical center for the two institutions).

Commenting on the announcement in 1942 of the affiliation of the Texas Dental College with the University of Texas, W. S. Cochran, Houston Chamber of Commerce president, said:

"This brings to a happy conclusion a project which has been very close to the heart of the Houston Chamber of Commerce for a number of years. We are deeply indebted to Dr. Elliott for his untiring efforts in bringing this important project to its successful conclusion.

"Houston is destined to become one of the nation's greatest medical centers and we shall continue our efforts to realize the dream of many of our most outstanding citizens in coordinating the various institutions and projects which will comprise the Houston Medical Center."

The dental college trustees, all of whom had been active in seeking the affiliation, were: Dr. Walter Henry Scherer, president; Dr. Joseph Phillip Arnold, vice president; Dr. Robert Henry Hooper, secretary; Dr. Paul Veal Ledbetter, Dr. Judson L. Taylor, and Dr. Elliott, ex officio secretary and dean of the college.

Legislative approval of the affiliation of the dental college with the University, and appropriation of \$109,000 for support of the college, remained to be accomplished in the regular session of the Texas Legislature, which convened early in 1943. Dr. Elliott met with the Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee on Feb. 2, 1943, to seek its

support in the legislature. The minutes of that meeting reflect the concern over whether the objectives could be accomplished in view of the wartime situation. The minutes of that meeting follow:

"Dr. F. C. Elliott, dean of the Texas Dental College, explained the situation of the college with regard to becoming a part of the University of Texas. Some 12 years ago the Houston Chamber of Commerce largely was instrumental in placing the Texas Dental College in a sound position and since that time the college has improved its finances to where it owes nothing. It has been fully accredited by the National Council of Dental Education. It has 166 students, of whom 160 are members of the armed services.

"The proposal to incorporate the Texas Dental College as a part of the University of Texas is dependent upon the legislature authorizing the Board of Regents of the University to take over the college and also the granting of a legislative appropriation of \$109,000. Because of the economy move in the legislature, fear is expressed that the dental college provision will be eliminated. If this is done, the Texas Dental College cannot operate since the Council of Dental Education requires that a dental college now

be affiliated with a university.

Withdrawal of recognition would kill
the school.

"It was moved by Mr. Clarke (Hiram O. Clarke, executive vice president, Houston Lighting & Power Company), seconded by Mr. Baker (James A. Baker, Jr., attorney, Baker & Botts) and unanimously adopted that the committee endorse wholeheartedly the effort to affiliate the Texas Dental College with the University of Texas and to secure an adequate appropriation for its operation, and, further, that the President be authorized to appoint a special committee with power to act to assist in working out the Texas Dental College situation. Committee appointed: George A. Butler (attorney), F. M. Law (chairman of the Board, First National Bank) and Gov. W. P. Hobby (publisher of The Houston Post and former governor of Texas)."

The special committee went to work at once contacting members of the Harris County delegation in the Legislature, and other legislators, in behalf of the legislation. Progress reports were made weekly to the Executive Committee. Dr. Elliott reported to the committee on March 16, 1943, that Senate and House committees had approved the legislation and complimented Representative Emmett Morse of Houston in handling the bill.

He reported that no opposition had been experienced and that "large support" had been gained from other parts of the state. He said a representative of the dental college at Baylor University made an appearance and urged favorable action. Dr. Elliott termed the outlook most encouraging. His optimism was not misplaced. The legislature gave its approval and on May 14, 1943, the governor signed the bill.

A paragraph in the June, 1943, issue of the Magazine HOUSTON, reporting on Governor Stevenson signing the Texas Dental College bill, said:

"Dr. Elliott credited the Chamber of Commerce for pushing the cause of the dental college in both the Legislature and at the Board of Regents meeting at the University of Texas, and was especially strong in his praise of the work done by W. N. Blanton, vice president and general manager of the Chamber, who, he said, gave much of his time and effort in promoting the merging of the college with the University of Texas."

A most important factor influencing favorable legislative action was the program embarked upon by the Texas Dental College to train dentists for the Army and Navy. The contribution being made by the dental college to the war program was reflected in enrollment figures announced early in 1944: Of 164 students enrolled, 95 were participating in the Army Specialized Training Program, 48 in the Navy V-12 program and

21 were civilian students. In order to meet the demands placed upon it, the dental college condensed its four-year program to a three-year calendar program.

On June 3, 1943, Dr. Elliott was honored at a dinner where he was praised for his devoted services to the community and for bringing about the affiliation of the Texas Dental College with the University of Texas. The Magazine HOUSTON account of the dinner follows:

DR. F. C. ELLIOTT IS HONORED

A large assembly of representative citizens of Houston honored Dr. Frederick C. Elliott, Dean of the Texas Dental College Thursday June 3 at a dinner at the Rice Hotel given by the Chamber of Commerce Educational Committee. It was presided over by F. M. Law and William Strauss Sr., the committee's chairman, acting as co-chairmen.

Speaking at the conclusion of a series of informal tributes to his years of public service in many fields, Dean Elliott said "I shall regard this show of confidence as a promise of continued help. Great things are in store for Texas, and we at the school will do our best to carry out the desires of the University of Texas and the Anderson Foundation, because it is you who will make it so."

"I should be remiss," Dean Elliott said "if I failed to pass these tributes along to those who deserve them." He then told how the Chamber of Commerce executive committee sent its members to Austin to urge passage of the legislation accepting the 38-year-old Texas Dental college as the university's school of dentistry. Aid to the college, he added, has been freely given by the Community Chest, the Council of Social Agencies, the Federation of Church Women, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the county medical and dental societies and the League of Women Voters.

"Our own board of trustees," the dean continued, "has served for many years without recompense, glory or credit, working to place the college in the university as a professional school. Thus, its members have worked themselves out of a job in service both to the school and the university.

"The faculty, too, has worked for most of 38 years without pay, and without them we could not have kept our

doors open. Our alumni, our students and the Houston newspapers have done their part. And so when you give me honors, I must pay them back to these groups."

"I shall ever remember these tributes he concluded, "with an extreme sense of humility. I am happy to accept them from the people who have made these things possible."

The University of Texas School of Dentistry today occupies handsome quarters in the Texas Medical Center, provided by funds from the State of Texas, the M. D. Anderson Foundation and the Houston Chamber of Commerce. It is without question one of the nation's outstanding schools of dentistry. It is fulfilling with distinction its role as one of the basic teaching institutions in the Texas Medical Center. Its stature today is in keeping with the hopes and aspirations Dr. Elliott had for it when he came to Houston in August, 1932, to take over the then struggling institution.