STORY OF THE BEADED BUCKSKIN DRESS

In the class of 1892, a man graduated from the University by the name of Colonel Welch. When I became President in 1942, Dr. Todd told me that he often visited Colonel Welch in Mandan, North Dakota, and that Colonel Welch always said that he was proud of being a graduate of the University of Puget Sound and that he had the University in his will. He discussed this at some length with Dr. Todd but Dr. Todd was never able to get him to tell him what the bequest was.

During the War, I often changed my schedule and reservations to go to Mandan to see Colonel Welch. He would come down to see me in a broad-brimmed hat, give me a bone-crushing handshake, and would tell me that he was glad to be a graduate of the University of Puget Sound and that he had his alma mater in his will. I, too, cajoled, wheedled and did everything I possibly could to get the word as to what the bequest might be, and I always had the feeling that it would be a major gift.

In discussing it with Dr. Todd, he kept saying, "Well, Dr. Thompson, I am sure it's a building--I'm sure it's a building," and I went on the assumption that it would be something of this nature, too.

In due time, I received a wire from a man in North Dakota that the University of Puget Sound was named in Colonel Welch's will and was a legatee. I wired back and asked the attorney to represent us. The next day, the attorney wired, "Today, the University of Puget Sound received
by bequest from the Estate of Colonel Welch one beaded buckskin Indian dress."

Naturally, we were very much perplexed and could not figure out how this had happened and what was the meaning back of it. After investigation, I found that Colonel Welch had been an honorary chieftain of the Blackfoot tribe, that this beaded-buckskin Indian dress was one of his most precious possessions and he felt he was rendering to his Alma Mater a very great service in making it available. It was shipped to us by express and it is in the vault now and weighs sixteen pounds.

Colonel Welch had some assets, most of which he left to the Shrine Hospital in that area, and he left his artifacts, which were many from his Indian collection, to the Shrine group in the Mandan area.

There is a way by which these things more or less balance out, however. In Walla Walla there was a very lovely lady with whom I talked about leaving a bequest to the University of Puget Sound. She said she wanted to leave $2,000 to a niece, $2,000 to a nephew and $2,000 to the Episcopal girls school in Walla Walla.

I said to her then, "You have in mind, then, exactly the bequests you want to make. What will you do with the residue of your estate?" and I suggested that she leave us $2,000 or the residue of her estate, whichever was greater. She thought this was a good idea, and went to the attorney for a codicil to her will. After she died and the will was read, we received a bequest of $68,000 from her estate. Somehow or other, I always felt that these two balanced out and made for an average in the history of the University of Puget Sound.