W. W. KILWORTH AND THE
HOWARD KILWORTH CARILLON

Mr. William W. Kilworth, who was Chairman of the Board of Trustees for many years at the College of Puget Sound, was born and reared in Kansas. He went to school in Kansas and to a normal school for the training of teachers at Emporia, Kansas. While in school, he carried papers for the famous Emporia Gazette Editor, Mr. William Allen White. Mr. White took a personal interest in Will Kilworth because he was fatherless, his father having died when he was very young. Mr. Kilworth appreciated that interest always. It was to engender a lifelong desire to help others, especially boys through the Boy Scout movement.

After he had finished his schooling, he saw the work of Abby Williams Hill who had been commissioned by the railroads to paint pictures of the Pacific Northwest, its mountains, its trees, its rare beauty. These were hung in the various depots with the idea that they would create interest in people to come West. This happened in the case of Mr. Kilworth and he had what was called an "immigrant's ticket" from Kansas to Seattle. I believe he told me he paid ten dollars for it, and he had to sit up for several days and provide his own food enroute.

He came to Seattle and there he engaged in business using his talents in real estate. He was exceedingly successful and accumulated considerable assets, ultimately in the neighborhood of seven million dollars.

Watching the lumber procedures here in the Pacific Northwest, he noticed that when the trees were cut there were very large slabs from the edge of the trees which were wasted and used for fuel to run the plants. He offered the mills a very minimum amount for these slabs and they were happy to sell them because
there was so much waste. He devised a plan for making broom handles. Inasmuch as he was born on Washington's birthday and was named William Washington Kilworth, he said he followed the tradition of George Washington, and his handles had to be "straight and true" and every handle was guaranteed. He traveled a great deal selling his handles all over the United States. He was often away six or eight weeks. Finally, he had the major portion of the market and sold at least 75 per cent of all the handles in the United States.

One of his trips took him to Florida; and on one beautiful Sunday morning while he sat in the park, he heard the Bok Singing Tower, which is one of the most beautiful carillons in the world. It is a genuine carillon having very large bells in the top of the campanile tower. Mr. Kilworth envisioned the possibility of someday having a campanile tower honoring his father and mother and himself, although at that time he was not connected with any university or any other institution. On this same trip, he also saw, in New England, a beautiful white chapel on top of a green knoll, and on many occasions told me it was one of the most beautiful sights he had ever seen. This was to make an indelible impression on him and to become a reality in the W. W. Kilworth Memorial Chapel on the campus of the University of Puget Sound after his death.

Mr. Kilworth had a brother, Howard, who was younger. There was enough difference in years that Howard looked upon Will almost as a father or certainly as an older person to whom he could turn for counsel, advice and help. Howard was an interesting person because he had gone from Kansas into Wyoming and Montana and lived the life of a typical cowboy. As such, he had not necessarily
created much of an estate for himself but had enjoyed that kind of life. When Will came to Tacoma and established the broomhandle business, it was very interesting because he felt he needed Howard to help secure the raw material while Will had the responsibility of selling the finished product. Howard had a very fine way of getting along with the loggers and the people at the lumber mills and was able to provide the raw material necessary to keep the handle company running smoothly. Therefore, Will brought Howard into the company and gave him half of the stock, which appreciated through the years. Neither of the Kilworths had any children. After Howard's death, Will mentioned to me one day that he would like to think in terms of some memorial to Howard because he missed him so much and had appreciated him so very much. I recalled his discussion sometime earlier when he said he had always hoped for a carillon, and he suggested at that time that we might be able to build a campanile on the campus, such as the one in the Bok Park in Florida. However, when we talked about it, it appeared that it would cost over $200,000 without the bells and Mr. Kilworthy decided that was too much money for a building that would have little utilitarian value so far as the University was concerned.

About that time, the Schulmerich Electronic Carillons became available and it was suggested that we might be able to compromise and have a Schulmerick set of bells on our campus. They had been very much in evidence at one of the World's Fairs. Will had heard them there and decided that this might be a compromise. He commissioned me to find out what the cost would be and it appeared that a set of bells that would be best suited for the campus would cost in the neighborhood of $25,000, if we had a place for the console and for the timing procedures. He said that amount was more than he had in mind for it and if I could get it for
$20,000, he would go ahead. We discussed it with the salesman and he said the best he could do would be $22,000, so Will told us to go ahead and get it for that amount.

The big console was established in the top of the music building and there is also a keyboard there from which the bells can be played; and for many years, on Sunday afternoon, we had a concert at 2:00 for approximately a half hour when the organist at the University would play pieces in keeping with the seasons—Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc. There is also an automatic player which can play these pieces and there are rolls, such as used on a player piano, to be used if there is no carilloneur available.

The bells were installed and dedicated on the 11th of July, 1954. We had a special banquet and a special carilloneur to play them. The banquet was held at the New Yorker and the carilloneur spoke. He was a very unusual person—not only an unusual artist but an unusual speaker because he talked about when it is foggy and the bells play "you can feel them dance on the atmosphere", etc. The group assembled on the front steps of the music building and listened to the concert which was exceedingly fine. There is a plaque in the music building dedicating the carillon to Howard Kilworth and Mr. William Kilworth was very pleased with this memorial which is still very actively used in the life of the University.

We set the bells so they ring ten minutes before the end of the class, which is a signal to the professors that the class period is about up. We had a very fine young English teacher from Cambridge University in England and on occasion he would stop and say to the students, "Has the music box rung yet?" and there
was some chuckling over his definition of the carillon, but through the years it has rendered outstanding service and it is a major influence and tradition in the life of the campus.

R. Franklin Thompson
Mr. Howard Kilworth was born in Kansas, a member of the Kilworth family. He was the brother of W. W. Kilworth who was for many years Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Puget Sound. Mr. William Kilworth brought Mr. Howard Kilworth into the Washington Handle Company and into other allied projects with which he was affiliated as a well-known businessman. Mr. Howard Kilworth died and Mr. William Kilworth said one day that he would like to have a set of bells on the campus as a memorial to his brother.

On many visits east in conjunction with his handle company, Mr. William Kilworth had stopped to see the Bok Tower in Florida. He always envisioned this as being one of the most ideal settings that he could imagine and he loved it very, very much.

He discussed with me the possibility of putting a tower like that in Volunteer Park in Seattle and having a set of bells established there as a part of his estate; however, this was not done although it was seriously contemplated by Mr. Kilworth.

Mr. William Kilworth then authorized me, as President of the University, to negotiate to secure a set of bells. We considered a good many different kinds--cast bells and other bells and we also submitted to Mr. Kilworth a notebook with pictures and examples of many bell towers, together with the various costs and specifications.
Finally, it was decided that we would get a set of Schumerlich bells consisting of 61 bells of the English type. The initial cost was to be $25,000. However, Mr. Kilworth said that he had allocated the sum of $20,000 for this set of bells and felt that the amount was ample.

After consulting with the Schumerlich Company, we found they would not sell the set of bells we wanted for $20,000 but would do it for $21,000, including installation. Finally, this was the price agreed upon and the price Mr. Kilworth paid to the University for the set of bells honoring Howard Kilworth.

There is a plaque in the library where the amplifier of the bells is located showing the date of dedication of the Kilworth Memorial Carillon.

Each Sunday afternoon at 2:00 there is a concert played on the bells and Mr. Kilworth came to the campus many times and sat in the area South of Jones Hall to listen to these concerts.

R. F. Thompson
circa 1970