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Olson to retire as University president

By Kathy George
Missourian staff writer

ROLLA, Mo — The University will have to interrupt its long-range planning to find someone new to implement those plans.

University President James Olson formally told the assembled Board of Curators here Friday that he will step down July 1, 1984. Before becoming president eight years ago, Olson had been chancellor at the University's Kansas City campus for eight years.

Olson said he doesn't yet know what he'll be doing after he retires, but he said he won't be retiring from life.

"My wife Vera and I have concluded that we wish to try new challenges and a different way of life while we are still young enough to make that possible," he said.

Olson said he might take up his writings on history once again. Or, he might even dig out the chalk and return to his old stomping grounds — UMKC — as a history teacher.

"I've still got tenure there," he joked.

He told the board he doesn't expect to coast into retirement.

"Vera and I have enjoyed our roles," he said of his years as president. "We will continue to fulfill them to the best of our ability during the remainder of my term as president."

Olson, who will be 67 in January, said he had expected to leave office at 65 — the mandatory retirement age established by the board But board members, faculty, public officials and taxpayers encouraged him to stay on and the board altered its mandate to make it possible.

But Olson said he's decided the time has come to move on. And he said he felt it best to give the curators plenty of time to find a successor. The early announcement also will give him and his wife time to decide what they will do when he leaves office.

Board President William Cocos said the board will decide how to choose Olson's replacement at its June meeting.

"I've never been involved in hiring a president of the University," he said. "It's a new experience for me and the other members of the board."

Before Olson thinks about what he'll do after he retires, questions about the University's future remain to be dealt with

Though he expressed optimism, he said the University's current problems will likely remain in the future.

Inadequate state support for higher education is a crucial problem, he said The House and Senate are haggling over the University's appropriation for next fiscal year. The House is proposing to appropriate more money than the University has received during each of the past three years, but that proposal faces opposition in the Senate

Olson warned that academic programs may have to be reduced if state appropriations continue to dwindle.

"The University can't be all things to all people," he said, and he added that the quality and demand for programs should be reassessed continually. At the same time, he lauded the system's success in maintaining quality programs despite the decline in available funds and a rising trend toward mediocrity on university campuses nationwide

A step toward preventing such mediocrity is the adoption of stricter admission standards now being developed by the faculty on each of the campuses.

"General admission requirements for first-time freshmen will not be implemented until they have been reviewed by the board," he said But he said he expects that stricter standards will be implemented and that they will attract better students to the University and stimulate classroom discussion

Not only may students have a tougher time getting in, but Olson told reporters students would likely have to pay more as well He said a student fee increase probably will be necessary for the 1984-85 academic year He declined to speculate on how much that increase will be

Long-range planning holds the key to solving University problems that require that type of solution, Olson said He added that the Long-Range Planning Committee's study of the University's administrative structure is a logical place to start the search for a new president

The board established the committee last June to set the planning process in motion The committee is designed to set system priorities within the framework of funds that will be available

Long-range plans are not a final solution, Olson said, but a continuous process. "You can't say stop the world, I want to plan "

Though a long-range planning process is just now being formulated, Olson set long-term goals of his own for the University eight years ago Among them were administrative decentralization, aggressive solicitation of grants and private funding, and faculty and staff salary increases.

Faculty believe Olson succeeded in acheiving at least one of those goals — reducing the number of system vice presidents from six to two

He said his proudest achievement was starting the Weldon Spring Fund for faculty research

Olson became system president in March 1977 after serving as interim president for nine months He replaced C Brice Ratchford, who had resigned A board selection committee unanimously chose Olson as president from a list of five candidates

Olson, who holds a bachelor's degree in history from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, earned master's and doctoral degrees in history at the University of Nebraska in 1939 and 1942, respectively He began his teaching career in 1940 at Northwest Missouri State Teachers College in Maryville

Before taking over as UMKC chancellor in 1969, Olson taught for 22 years at the University of Nebraska He was chairman of the history department there from 1956 to 1965 Between 1965 and 1968, he served as associate dean and then dean of the Graduate College, director of graduate program development and university research administrator In 1968, he was named vice chancellor for graduate studies and research

He also served as director of the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln from 1946 to 1956 and edited the society's quarterly journal Olson has published nine books — three of which focused on Nebraska and one he co-authored with his wife

University, state officials praise contributions of system's leader

By Gail Snider and Tom Dixon
Missourian staff writers

Faculty, administrators and legislators expressed disappointment Friday with the announcement of University President James Olson that he plans to retire next year.

Olson — whom former Faculty Council chairman David West termed "the faculty's president" — apparently has been considering retirement for more than a year.

"I wasn't completely surprised," said Shafia Aery, commissioner of Higher Education, when she heard Olson was resigning.

"I believe he was going to announce his resignation a year ago," West said, "but his concern for the University in a difficult time kept him here." West said that if Olson had retired a year ago, it could have been costly to the University because of the controversy surrounding the 1982-1983 budget.

"He certainly could have done without the hassles," said West, "but he is committed to the quality and academic excellence of the University."

West and Aery echoed the sentiments of others directly and indirectly involved with the University.

Board of Curators President William Cocos expressed the curators' gratitude to Olson for the president's contributions to the system.

"You have brought the highest level of dignity and respect to the office of the presidency," he said moments after Olson announced his impending retirement at the board meeting at Rolla.

University Chancellor Barbara Uehling issued a prepared statement.

"We, at UMC, appreciate President Olson's 16 years of service to the University of Missouri," it read in part, "and we wish him well as he looks to a new challenge."

Sen. Roger Wilson, D-Columbia and a member of the Senate Education Committee, said he hopes Olson will remain accessible.

"I hope he sticks around; we can use his expertise," said Wilson. "Jim did the absolute best job. He always shot straight with me."

Senate Appropriations Committee Chariman Edwin Dirck, D-St. Louis County, said he wasn't surprised by Olson's announcement. He had been aware of Olson's plans for some time, he added.

"He was very good to work with and is highly respected," said Dirck, whose committee currently is considering the University system's appropriation for next fiscal year. But Dirck doesn't anticipate any change in relations between the legislature and the University system after Olson's departure.

West said the faculty respected the relationship Olson forged with Jefferson City.

"Olson was not seen as the political horsetrader that (his predecessor, C. Brice) Ratchford seemed to be," West said. "Ratchford used the extension arm of the University to lobby the legislature and it backfired. There was a feeling that Ratchford was playing political games and he resigned after a faculty vote of no confidence."

Walter Johnson, professor of economics, recalled the dissension among the faculty when Olson took over

"There was a fear of a quite uncertain future," he said. "But in the short run, he united the University and rallied the faculties to the future with confidence."

West said the fact that Olson worked to elevate the University system's faculty salaries to levels equivalent to the average among Big Eight and Big Ten universities also contributed to his popularity. So did his academic qualifications

"The faculty saw him as a fellow faculty member who had grown up and advanced through the ranks," West said "He is seen from the faculty perspective as more an academic than an administrator."

Arvarh Strickland, chairman of the University's history department, said Olson relates well to the University's various constituencies.

"He's brought a sense of decentralization to the University," said Strickland, who explained that previous administrations had centralized the power in the president's office. Olson reversed the trend by giving the individual campuses greater autonomy.

"He's done an absolutely superb job," said Johnson of the economics department. "Who will we get to replace him?"

Retiring University President James Olson

Missourian Photo

Israel agrees to pull troops from Lebanon

United Press International

Israel accepted in principle Friday an agreement to withdraw its forces from Lebanon.

Secretary of State George Shultz, in the midst of diplomatic shuttles between countries, now will meet with Jordan's King Hussein and Syrian leaders in an attempt to gain that county's agreement to pull out its forces along with those of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But Syria has implied it would reject the agreement and urged Lebanon to do the same. "This agreement means Arab surrender, and Syria will not allow either Arab or Lebanese interests to suffer," the state-run radio said.

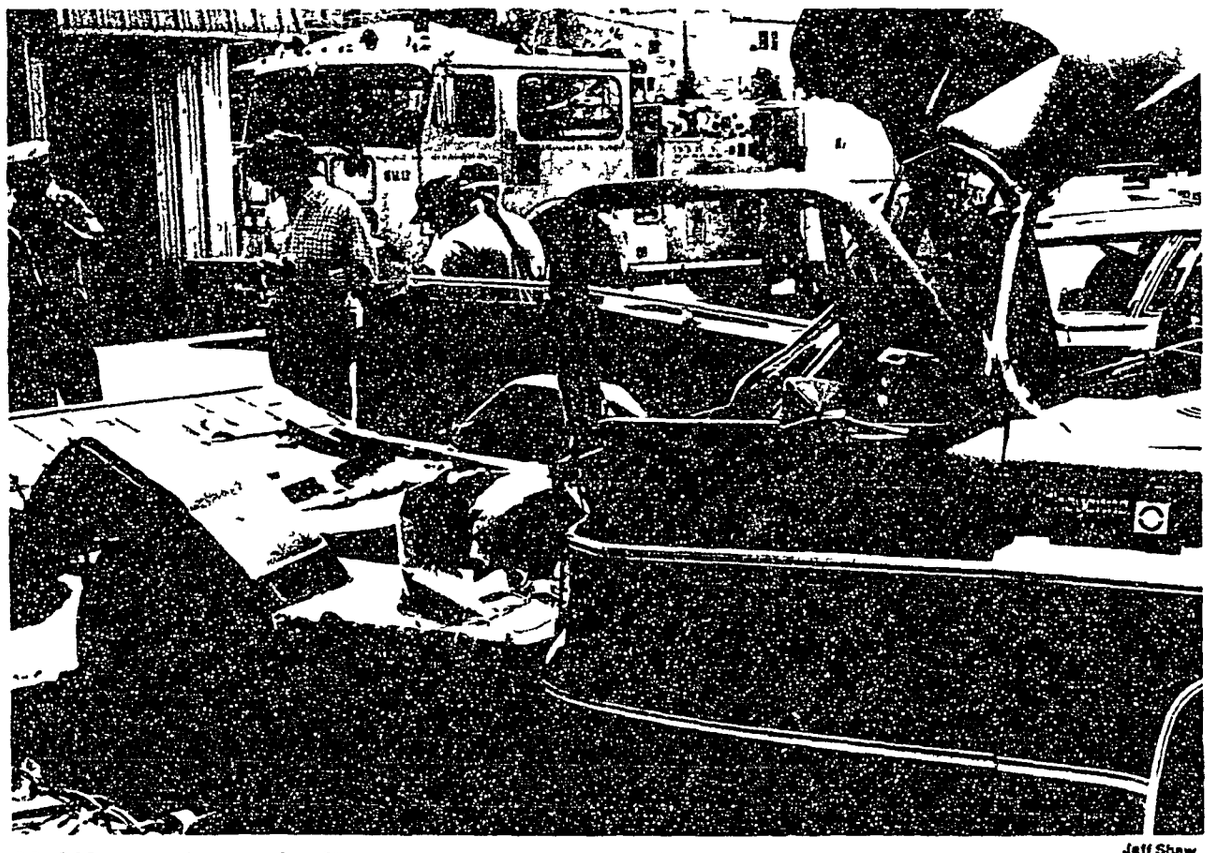
Lebanon made no comment on Israel's decision.

Israeli Cabinet Secretary Dan Meridor said Israel will ask for clarifications "with regard to several political and security issues." Some leaders voiced concern that the agreement might not guarantee peace for Israel's northern borders.

Israel has said it will not withdraw its 30,000 troops from Lebanon unless Syria pulls out its 40,000 men at the same time along with all 10,000 allied Palestinian guerrillas.

The agreement reportedly provides for withdrawal of all foreign forces within three months and a 27-mile security zone in south Lebanon that will be patrolled by joint Israeli-Lebanese teams.

President Reagan telephoned Shultz and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to praise their efforts, White House Press Secretary Larry Speakes said.



Mel Koonse's truck after a propane tank explosion.

Jeff Shaw

Propane blast damages parked truck

By Brent Franzel
Missourian staff writer

Mel Koonse says he's a lucky guy.

Koonse was working inside his glass shop at 300 N. Tenth St. Wednesday afternoon when the pickup he had left only 10 minutes before was destroyed by an exploding propone tank. No one was injured in the explosion.

"It was just real lucky no one was around," Koonse said. He added that people almost always work in the area where the truck was parked

Koonse usually runs his truck on propane, but the gas unit has not been working so he's been using gasoline.

"I was planning to take the tank out," he said "I [illegible] have to now."

Koonse said he filled the tank a few months ago. Warmer temperatures may have caused the gas to expand and explode.

Columbia fire inspector Don Christian said it's unusual for a propane tank to explode. "It expanded and either it did not have a pop-off valve or the valve malfunctioned," he said.

Fund drive does well at Columbia College

By Keith Campbell
Missourian staff writer

INSIGHT

Financial woes are nothing new at Columbia College, but administrators at the college are hoping the school will get a financial shot in the arm through its "Partners in Progress" fund-raising drive

Kathi Posch, director of the Columbia and Boone County campaign, says the three-year campaign will easily achieve its goal of $1,015,000. She also predicts the college will surpass the challenge goal of $2,060,000

In the winter of 1982, the school's Board of Trustees met and decided the college needed an extensive program to raise funds for several priorities The school had participated in telethons, which had typically raised $100,000 annually, Ms. Posch says

"The telethons were very successful," she says "But we wanted a campaign in which more thoughtful gifts were given, and we decided people would give more in a three-year campaign."

The board then hired Cargill and Associates, a Fort Worth, Texas, consulting firm, to determine a realistic campaign goal After compiling data from questionnaires sent out to students, faculty and alumni, the consultant recommended that the college raise $1 million.

The campaign is divided into five segments According to Ms Posch, all parts of the drive are doing extremely well

The five segments, their goals and proceeds are

- Trustees/Former Trustees. Goal $500,000 Proceeds $854,082.
- Faculty/Staff Goal $40,000. Proceeds $52,000
- Columbia and Boone County. Goal $300,000 Proceeds $119,250.
- Alumni Goal $100,000 Proceeds $127,346.
- Foundation Goal $75,000. Proceeds $5,000.

For the past 3½ years, Columbia College has operated with a surplus budget of about $7 million But this has been at the expense of some athletic and academic programs, including the English and music majors at the school The college is heavily dependent on enrollment; tuition and fees comprise approximately 70 percent of its revenue

The proceeds from the campaign will be allocated for academic enrichment, annual operations, campus maintenance and restoration, scholarships and debt retirement, Ms Posch says.

TODAY

Noon Missouri men s baseball v Oklahoma Bat Day, Simmons Field

6 30 p m "A Gap in Generations,' dinner theater, Stephens College Columbia Room, Stamper Commons

7.30 p m The King and I Hickman High School auditorium tickets $3 adults and $2 50 students

7 30 p m. Oklahoma," Rock Bridge High School, tickets $3 50 adults and $2 50 students