THROUGH FIFTEEN YEARS

by

George W. Coleman

Roger W. Babson achieved success, fame and fortune in early middle life. The outstanding elements contributing to this success were keen insight, penetrating foresight, unfailing courage, sterling character and a shrewd Yankee trading instinct. Brought up under Christian training he had a passion for service. For years he had been publishing business and financial reports for the benefit of thousands of clients scattered all over the United States and Canada. He wanted to find some way of passing on to the sons of these clients what he had learned in the course of his business life. He wanted the privilege of helping to train for business leadership young men who were likely to inherit or achieve power in the business world. He believes that if men are moved by the desire to serve and have been trained to think straight they are bound to be useful citizens and that personal success will inevitably accompany such a course of action.

Mr. Babson went at the solution of his problem like the statistician that he is. He found that few businesses survive the century mark while many schools and colleges function long after the century mark has been passed. He therefore decided to use a school or college rather than his own great business as the means for accomplishing the end he had in view.

Then the question arose as to whether he should endow professorships in schools of business that were already established or set up a new school. He wanted these prospective leaders of business to be trained the way a business man would train them and not along the lines of academic tradition. He wanted to set up a school of business that would be unattached to any college or university and free to pioneer its own way. When Mr. Babson and I were working together for Uncle Sam during the war in the Bureau of Information and Education of the Department of Labor under Secretary Wilson we used to discuss at length plans for such a school.

Mr. and Mrs. Babson were favored with only one child, a daughter, and having no son found themselves moved to put such a school as they were dreaming about in the place of a son. So the Babson Institute was born September 3, 1919 and naturally became the personal, private possession of its parents. While we were still in Washington Mr. Babson and I had picked out an outstanding pastor of a college church to be the first President of the Babson Institute. When this clergyman declined, Mr. Babson himself undertook the direction and management of the Institute during its first two years. Mr. Ralph B. Wilson, now for years Vice President of the Babson Statistical Organization, with Miss Eleanor Hayward, his secretary, who has been Registrar and Librarian of the Institute from its beginning drew up the first curriculum and sent out the original announcement of the Institute. Soon afterward Mr. S. A. Linnekin, one of the younger executives of the Babson
Statistical Organization, became Vice President of the Institute. It was near the end of the second year of the school that Mr. Dwight G. W. Hollister who had recently been serving the Babson interests as an accountant and auditor was made Treasurer of the Institute.

With all his many interests Mr. Babson found that he could not give the Institute as much attention as it required. It was in the spring of 1921 that he invited me to take the Presidency of the Institute and informed me of his purpose to incorporate it under the educational and charitable acts of Massachusetts like any other regularly chartered college organized not for profit. I assumed office the first of September, 1921, under the direction of a Board of seven Trustees. From the beginning Mr. Babson served as Chairman of the Board, continuing in that capacity for a number of years. Miss Nona M. Dougherty, an official of the Babson Statistical Organization, served as Secretary of the Institute and of the Board of Trustees for a number of years. Mr. Ernest T. Gundlach, a well known advertising man of Chicago who served with Mr. Babson and myself in Washington during the war, was the only distant member of the Board of Trustees. He has continued his active interest and co-operation as a member of the Board ever since.

A former home of Mr. and Mrs. Babson at 31 Abbott Road, Wellesley Hills provided the first accommodations for the new school. Shortly afterward when the Babson Statistical Organization moved into its present home the Institute took up its abode in the office building which the Statistical Organization had just vacated on Washington Street in Wellesley Hills, diagonally opposite from the railway station. Not long afterward Mr. Babson began to acquire a variety of properties including the larger part of the Lyon Farm as a permanent seat for the new and growing school. Then followed a vigorous campaign of laying out roads and building construction to provide for the future of the Institute. In an astonishingly short time the Institute moved up onto the new campus, occupying the Lyon and Bryant class room buildings, the Administration Building, and the dormitory now called Park Manor South. The campus had been carefully laid out by John Nolen, the famous landscape architect and city planner, and the series of buildings were all designed in Georgian Colonial style by the architect, Mr. George F. Marlowe. Provision was made for a Bird Sanctuary in the heart of the campus and an ornithologist, Mr. Lester W. Smith, was placed in charge. Few educational institutions have such a sightly, spacious and attractive campus within such a short distance from a great cosmopolitan city.

It was Mr. and Mrs. Babson who supplied the means that were essential for this rapid and generous expansion. Mrs. Babson herself made a special gift of the Auditorium which is named after her father Richard Knight, a Congregationalist clergyman. The Coleman Map Building was constructed to house the great relief map of the United States which is still in process of construction, and is the temporary home in both wings of the growing industrial exposition for which Dean Millea is largely responsible. Peavey Hall and Gymnasium is named after Mr. Leroy D. Peavey, President of the Babson Statistical Organization, who made a generous donation toward its building. Mr. Preston F. Bryant, who at the time was Sales Manager for the Babson Statistical Organization, together with his salesmen made a large
contribution toward the building of the class room structure that was natu­rally named Bryant Hall. Other contributions have been made from time to time by friends and alumni. The entire gymnasium equipment was presented by Mr. E. F. Price whose son graduated from the Institute and continued in residence for post-graduate work. Quite recently a handsome and commo­dious second dormitory known as Park Manor was built.

Mr. and Mrs. Babson were not satisfied with their generous gifts of land and buildings, equipment and road construction and began to provide endow­ments in generous amounts so that for every dollar that was put into land and buildings there was provided another dollar for endowments to take care of them. Within two months after I found myself in the saddle at the Babson Institute Mr. Babson made generous provision for the Institute through an annual payment of royalties to continue during his life time and long afterwards.

With all that the Babsons have done for the Institute they have never had one cent of return from it and indeed have insisted on paying the full price of tuition for members of the family who have taken the Institute training.

The teaching and administrative staff of the Institute is taken so far as possible from the business world. A practical emphasis is given to every course. The idea of small classes with secretarial assistance to students has been maintained from the beginning. A thorough training in the fundamen­tals of business in one academic year has always been the Institute’s ideal for young men with an adequate educational background. A two-year course is now under way for younger men with less background.

The Institute has been fortunate in its teaching staff, some of whom became associated with the work from its beginning. Miss Eleanor Hayward, Mr. Austin H. Fittz, Mr. John E. Millea and Dr. James M. Matthews are among the earliest comers on the staff. Among the student secretaries Miss Marion Wing, Miss Frances E. Burgess and Miss Carol B. Hitchcock are the oldest in service. Miss Carrie E. Mason, Assistant to Mr. W. R. Mattson, Director of Admissions, has been in the service of the Institute about as long as some of the student secretaries. From the beginning and even before the Institute took shape Mr. Frederick A. Libbey has been the guiding hand in the conduct of extension courses. It has always been the ideal of the Insti­tute to provide such courses for those who are unable to come to Babson Park for resident instruction.

Notwithstanding such generous contributions in the way of plant as has been provided by the Babsons the operating expenses are heavy because of our methods of instruction. And the dormitories are like a first-class hotel in country surroundings. The Institute believes that young men who come here should, through the tuition and dormitory charges, pay running expenses. Therefore the tuition and the dormitory charges are fixed at a price intended to permit a balanced operating budget. The idea is that future business men should begin business training by paying for what they get. In spite of these necessarily high charges students at the Institute have
realized that they were getting their money's worth and saving a year in their training.

The idea from the beginning was to have a small school and train only those who by inheritance, family connections or marked ability might reasonably be expected to become business leaders. We rarely have had as many as thirty in a class, twenty being the usual maximum, and even our present ample accommodations would be severely taxed with an enrollment of 150.

Alumni activities under the competent direction of Dean John E. Millea have resulted in local alumni clubs in Boston, New York, Binghamton, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Seattle and Montreal. The Bulletin of the Babson Institute Alumni Association, edited by Dean Millea, functions very successfully as a medium of fellowship and exchange of ideas between the alumni scattered throughout the United States and Canada with representatives in Sweden, Switzerland, China and Cuba.

At the close of its fifteenth year the Institute, having passed safely through four years of the great depression, looks forward confidently to unnumbered years of growing usefulness. It has been demonstrated beyond a doubt that there is a significant place in the educational world for a school of business administration with the characteristics of the Institute. The rising generation of business executives will carry on in an environment unlike that in which their fathers and grandfathers operated. They will have to meet new problems with new methods and in a new spirit.

Already there are nearly one thousand Babson trained men actively engaged in the business world and our records demonstrate that they are giving a good account of themselves. We take as much interest in their development and progress now as we did in their training when they were under our tutelage. And the goal of the Institute remains the same, to train young men for sound business leadership without any unnecessary loss of time. We want our graduates to be fit physically, intellectually and spiritually, to meet successfully all the conditions business men have to face. We want them to be able to function usefully and happily whatever may be the economic and political conditions of the period in which their active business life is cast.