

Bryan Clark

the students' union personified



—Neil Driscoll photo

BUSINESS MANAGER BRYAN CLARK ... a failure as a plumber

By **BERNIE GOEDHART**

Bryan Clark has become a permanent fixture of the students' union bldg.

And, like most permanent fixtures, people tend to take him for granted.

As students' union business manager, Clark has been doing the same hum-drum things for the past five years. These hum-drum things, however boring they may seem, are the backbone of the students' union operation.

Although Clark is primarily in charge of students' union finances, his duties range far beyond this. His position involves acting as advisor to student council, acting as a member of the students' union building committee, hiring and firing staff and generally acting as students' union handyman.

He first appeared on the U of A campus in 1956 when he enrolled in the faculty of engineering. This was a total disaster.

"I took one year of engineering," said Clark, "following which the faculty expressed the opinion that the academic year of 1957-58 could probably proceed without my attendance."

"I took their suggestion to heart and stayed out two years. During the second year out I began to feel although I had a pretty good job working in construction (supervisory clerical work), I wasn't really getting anywhere so I came back to university."

Clark chose commerce by a process of elimination.

While in engineering, he managed to fail math, physics, chem and mechanics.

"On that basis I decided I should look for fields other than those which were basically science," he said. This was where the process of elimination came in.

Clark began part-time duties Jan. 1, 1962 as assistant to the business manager who, at that time, was W. A. Dinwoodie.

"I worked part-time 'til May,"

said Clark, "when I think I took a day off."

He started working full-time as assistant business manager around May 1. "My duties at that time were everything but finances," he said.

"In the fall of '62 Dinwoodie fell subject to failing health and was in and out of the hospital several times.

"We felt we couldn't let the bookkeeping fall behind," said Clark. "We (Dinwoodie and myself) decided, during a brief discussion in his hospital room, we would appoint one of the secretaries as bookkeeper.

"We decided this one afternoon and she had to start the next day which meant I had that one night to figure out—from scratch—the entire bookkeeping system of the students' union.

"Luckily she was quite a good student," he added.

Dinwoodie was still handling all of the finances himself when he died Dec. 20. Following his death, council appointed Clark acting business manager.

"There was nobody else who could have taken the position," said Clark. "I, with the few short months I'd been here, was the most knowledgeable."

"The two girls in the office were excellent," he said. "The fact they had been here longer than I was a great help to me."

"During the period immediately following Dinwoodie's death, the assistance offered by people in other departments was really outstanding.

"They were more than just empty words," he said. "The people really meant it and there were many times I needed their help."

While he was at a conference in West Virginia in March, 1963 council appointed Clark permanent business manager and "gave me a rather nice raise to go with it."

Clark has been business manager since and has proved invaluable

to the smooth operation of the students' union.

Of his job, Clark said, "I don't think as a result of the four or five years here I could find a position that would give me as much job satisfaction as the one here.

"It's a fine kind of situation in which to work," he said. "It gives you some purpose in what you are doing that I don't think I could find elsewhere."

Clark has seen the U of A through ten years of growth. He has outlived ten students' union presidents. He has known countless students, faculty and staff. He is therefore well qualified to speak on the changes the U of A has undergone during the past few years.

Of students, Clark said, "I think they are in a peculiar position in the university community.

"I think it's an error to try to equate undergraduate students on the same academic basis with members of the faculty. I'm not sure they have the background and experience to try and place themselves on the same level as faculty.

"For example, take this question of Vietnam. I would feel more confidence and sympathy for a statement made by a graduate student or faculty member than for a statement made by an arts 2 student.

"Mind you, I'm not suggesting students shouldn't be concerned with these things. Thank God they are.

"They should just remember that they are still students.

"I feel more confident of the things I say today even though they may be identical to the things I said five years ago.

"I hope like hell students keep being concerned," said Clark. "In this way, they gain experience and it's part of the way they develop as members of the intellectual community, if you wish.

"But it's easy for young people to cast off too quickly the experience of others."

Were students concerned ten years ago?

"Not very damn much, I don't think," said Clark. "I don't think they felt as strongly about making their influence felt in the community."

"There's no question that the pressure of numbers has made this a much different kind of institution," he continued. "I think the larger institution unfortunately causes the loss of a good deal of the individuality of students.

"Also, I suspect the degree of interdisciplinary communication between students is less now than it was ten years ago.

"There is no way you can get to know 10,500 students, really. People tend therefore to gravitate towards more specific groups."

Clark has watched the university undergo a great number of physical changes. "I can remember the old covered rink," he said. "It was something of a central rallying point. Unfortunately this is not the case with the new rink."

During the ten years, he has been involved in several amusing incidents.

One of these incidents involved a trip to Toronto with the U of A marching band, cheerleaders and several football players. On the way home, the group was stranded in Winnipeg due to bad weather conditions in Edmonton and Winnipeg. During the several hours spent in the lobby of the airport, "after many cups of coffee, hands of bridge and about 4,000 folk songs," the band decided to hold a rehearsal—in the lobby. "I'll never forget the faces of the Air Canada crew when they walked into the supposedly deserted airport and found a 40-piece marching band," laughed Clark.

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