

Letter from John R. Brinkley to Minerva Telitha "Minnie" Jones

January 13, 1942

KHS BrinkleyJ-to-BrinkleyM-1942-January13

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For ENGL-618: Research Methods in English

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Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography was prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English degree program at Western Carolina University (WCU). The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate effective and ethical scholarship.
 - a. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
 - Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
 - b. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
 - Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correct and effectively.
 - c. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
 - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
2. Understand the process by which the texts we use are made available.
 - Students will be bale to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is present as submitted by the graduate students. While they take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are possible. As they learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires meticulous research and corroboration by authoritative sources. Our objective is to provide transcriptions and annotations of WCU's Special Collections materials that will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, patrons, and all users of our library's resources.

If you wish to submit an emendation or correction for this document, please email Dr. Brian Gastle (bgastle@wcu.edu).

Introduction

John R. Brinkley II, a self-proclaimed doctor, was born July 8, 1885. While he is best known for his practice of xenotransplantation of goat testicles in an attempt to cure related to the prostate and impotence. Brinkley was the founder of his own radio station, KFKB, which broadcast everything from gospel readings, to music, to comedy. Brinkley also ran for governor of Kansas. While he was unsuccessful in these attempts, he nearly won twice, and to this day he is remembered as one of the earliest people to use radio broadcast for political campaigning.

Throughout his life, John Brinkley accumulated many personal, professional, and political enemies. Within this letter, Brinkley mentions friends who have turned against him, including Dr. Horatio Dwight Osborn (a colleague of Brinkley's; it is rumored Brinkley had bitten his ear off during a misunderstanding), Dr. L.L. Marshall (a once medical friend turned foe once he began to steal Brinkley's patients), Dr. James R. Middlebrook (who also stole Brinkley's patients for a cut-rate price), and Sam Rorex (a district attorney for Little Rock, Arkansas who refused to assist Brinkley with his ever growing bankruptcy).

At the end of his life, Brinkley's luck had run out. He was eventually stripped of his fraudulent medical license in multiple states, lost his radio stations, and began to have many lawsuits filed against him due to his medical malpractice, and along with his wife and six other associates, he was sued for mail fraud by the federal government. Brinkley would never see a trial for this mail fraud, however, as his health was rapidly declined. After suffering three heart attacks, two of which were critical, and a leg amputation, John R. Brinkley died on May 26, 1942 in San Antonio, Texas.

Given the contents of the letter, "sugar" most likely refers to his wife, Minerva Telitha "Minnie" Jones. His wife, Minerva Telitha "Minnie" Jones, was born June 14, 1892 in Memphis Tennessee. On February 21st, 1916, she married John R. Brinkley at the age of 23. Their marriage lasted until Brinkley's death in 1942. Minnie would go on to live until the age of 82, dying on January 8, 1980.

This letter showcases how stressful the end of Brinkley's life was and how many enemies he was beginning to accumulate. We also get a glimpse into how these troubles impacted his marriage and Minerva.

Editorial Statement

This transcription is a diplomatic edition, approach to maintaining original writing elements such as spelling, punctuation, and errors. Explanatory notes are provided and special characters appear as can be seen in the original document. For example, Brinkley switches his spellings of "Dwight" and "Dwite," throughout the letter, and those spelling variants have been retained.

Throughout the essay, especially toward the end of the letter, there are many ink blotches, with a pronounced blot next to the signature “Daddy”. Another appears on the first page of the manuscript where the document is creased, likely caused by folding the letter while the ink was still wet.

Manuscript Description

This document is written on 8.5x11 paper and was written in pen. The letter itself includes handwriting that is shaky and ink blotches. This could be attributed to Dr. Brinkley’s declining health toward the end of his life.

Transcription

January 13 1942

Sugar:¹ Your letter asking my reaction to Wallace Davis.² It confirmed my opinion that he was a dirty skunk why Dwite³ was so shocked was a surprise to me, I guess Dwite thought Wallace and Marshall⁴ our friends. Marshall cheated me out of \$500⁵ on the house and a \$1000 on the office bldg that I bought through him. I never told Dwite why did Dwite not get a reaction when Carl Rice⁶ refused to loan you \$500 in Kansas City? Marshall stole my patients just like Middlebrook.⁷ Guess Dwight has forgotten. The only reason under God's sun why Marshall and

¹ Likely John R. Brinkley's wife, Minnie.

² Wallace Davis (July 12 1888 - October 23, 1965), a prior friend and attorney of John R. Brinkley. At the time of this letter, Brinkley had reached out for assistance from Wallace Davis as he and his wife, Minnie, were bankrupt.

³ Dr. Horatio Dwight Osborn (Born October 19, 1907). A colleague and eventual competitor of Brinkley's. During an altercation between Brinkley and Osborn, it is rumored that many witnesses saw Brinkley bite Osborn's ear off due to a misunderstanding.

⁴ Dr. L.L. Marshall. Longtime medical friend and colleague of Brinkley. Said to have supplied Brinkley's "secret serum" that would be used in his prostate surgeries and treatments. Worked at the Research Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas.

⁵ Approximately \$11,500 in 2025 USD.

⁶ Carl Rice (Born circa 1887). Attorney Brinkley kept on an annual retainer. They frequently worked together to attempt to fund Brinkley's Radio station, XERA.

⁷ James R. Middlebrook (Born circa 1884 - October 31, 1947) a competing doctor in Del Rio, Texas. Both he and Brinkley offered the same prostate related surgeries, with Middlebrook offering them at a cut rate of \$5.

Davis have been helping is they figure
we have money hid out and they would
get some more.⁸ Remember the Dept of Justice
wrote Roark⁹ asking for my file and the
case would be disposed of — then Roark went
to Washington¹⁰ and the tables turned that we
must get a letter from him etc. why did
Washington change its mind and put us
at the mercy of Marshall, Davis, and Roark?
To get a fee? Their other plan would not
give them a fee.¹¹ Wallace Davis can get favors in
Washington so can Rice Call this to Dwites

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attention. He was shocked silly when he
got back. I was amused at the at the Crooks boldness
and because I say nothing I guess they think I am
too dumb to catch on.

⁸ Wallace Davis was convinced Brinkley had money stowed away from all of his successful surgeries.

⁹ Sam Rorex (Born circa 1887), district attorney in Little Rock and friend of Wallace Davis.

¹⁰ Washington D.C. In January of 1942, the United States had been directly involved in World War II for roughly a month. Political turmoil would have been high.

¹¹ Money that Wallace Davis could use to persuade Rorex to have Attorney General Francis Biddle dismiss the indictment for \$6,000.

Doctor Lundgram corrected my diet¹² some more today.

Tell Dwite I will copy and rush airmail
papers to Baird & give copy to green and
send abe a copy.¹³

Glad John made 100 in Espanola.¹⁴ He
should make the same in all other
studies.

Doctor Lundgram says for me to not think
of these worries. He is so glad we have
hopes on the Gov.

All my love sweetheart,

Daddy¹⁵

¹² At the end of his life, John Brinkley was suffering from various ailments. It is likely that the doctor he refers to here is a doctor that was assisting in his care though there is no record of an end-of-life caregiver or doctor for Brinkley.

By January of 1942, John R. Brinkley had suffered a myriad of health issues including a leg amputation and multiple heart attacks. The change in his diet was presumably to attempt to address his health issues.

¹³ Baird, Kuntz & Hobson. Attorneys that advised Brinkley in many legal situations including property taxes in both Texas and Arkansas.

Abe Johnson, friend and potential patient of John R. Brinkley.

¹⁴ John Richard Brinkley III was the only child of John Brinkley who is commonly referred to as "Johnny Boy". He was 14 at the time this letter was written.

¹⁵ Nickname of John R. Brinkley. In a documentary titled *Goat Gland Doctor* (1986) they briefly show Brinkley's gravesite with his headstone. The headstone has the name "Daddy" just above his legal name,

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