

# **Letter from John R. Brinkley to W. Lee O'Daniel**

**1941**

KHS BrinkleyJ-to-ODanielW-1941

**Transcribed by Ari Carver**

**For English 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 correctly 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 able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented 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](mailto:bgastle@wcu.edu)).

## Introduction to Document

This document is a letter dated with only the year 1941 from Dr. John R. Brinkley to W. Lee O'Daniel. Dr. Brinkley was both a highly controversial and very successful medical figure in early 20th century. Known popularly as the "Goat-Gland Doctor," Brinkley built a multimillion-dollar empire based on the xenotransplantation of goat gonads into human patients to treat impotence and other ailments. He used radio extensively to promote himself and his practice. W. Lee O'Daniel served as governor of Texas from 1939 to 1941, when he ran in the special election for the United States Senate seat vacated by Morris Sheppard, who died in office on April 6, 1941.

Brinkley was an early adopter of radio technology and began broadcasting from his first radio station, KFKB, in 1923. The station had been built next to his hospital in Milford, Kansas, and he very effectively used it to draw in listeners as well as patients with his mixture of health advice and entertainment. However, in 1930 the Federal Radio Commission decided not to renew KFKB's license after finding that Brinkley was using the platform only for his personal benefit and not the public interest, though he was allowed to continue broadcasting until February, 1931 (Lee 118-120). The decision to not renew his radio license was followed shortly by a decision to revoke his Kansas medical license (Brock 154).

In September, 1930, Brinkley announced that he was running for Governor of Kansas. He was unable to add his name to the ballot since he announced his candidacy only five weeks before the election, so he ran as a write-in candidate and heavily used his radio station to promote himself. He still won 29.5% of the vote and likely would have won if an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 votes for him had not been disqualified due to not specifically being written as "J. R. Brinkley" (Brock 162).

After his political defeat and the loss of his radio station, Brinkley began construction of a new radio station, XER, in Villa Acuna, Mexico, across the border from Del Rio, Texas (Lee 182). In 1933, he and his family permanently relocated to Del Rio and opened a new hospital there (Brock 193).

Despite being declared bankrupt in February of 1941, he decided to run in the special election for United States Senate against O'Daniel, among others. In this letter, Brinkley pledges to withdraw his application for candidacy and support O'Daniel for the office instead.

O'Daniel went on to win the election, beating out Lyndon B. Johnson by a mere 1,311 votes (Lee 256). He remained in office until 1949.

## **Editorial Statement**

The letter is handwritten in pencil on 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper. The paper is worn and crinkled in areas. Some of the words are faded. Based on this document's similarities to manuscript KHS\_BrinkleyJ-to-LawsonW-1941, a letter from John R. Brinkley to the Texas Secretary of State, William Jennings Lawson, these documents may have been written as drafts at the same time. There are two holes where staples seem to have been removed in each document, which seem to line up with each other. Furthermore, the loose handwriting in pencil, abbreviations, and, in the case of this document, corrections, seem to indicate that both letters may have been drafts.

There are five words that have been added above other words, as noted in the transcription. The date 1941 is written in brackets at the top of the document in a different hand, but there is no indication of who added the year or when.

This transcription is an editorial edition which attempts to faithfully transcribe the original document, which means that spelling and grammatical errors, corrections, and layout have been preserved to the extent possible.

The most significant challenge in transcribing this document was the fact that it was written in pencil. The graphite is light in color and has been rubbed off in some areas along the sides and at the bottom of the page. Instances where words could not be accurately deciphered have been noted in the transcription.

[1941]

Gov Lee W ODaniel<sup>1</sup>  
Austin Texas

Mrs. Brinkley<sup>2</sup> and me [I]<sup>3</sup> have made a private poll of 50,000 of our friends in Texas and find them<sup>4</sup> overwhelmingly in favor of you as their next Senator.<sup>5</sup> We predict<sup>6</sup> your election with the same overwhelming [convincing]<sup>7</sup> vigor as you have received for Governor, therefore I am writing the Secy of State<sup>8</sup> to withdraw my application and Mrs. Brinkley and me [I]<sup>9</sup> are asking our friends to support you. With kindest personal regards Dr J R Brinkley

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<sup>1</sup> Governor W. Lee O'Daniel.

<sup>2</sup> John R. Brinkley's second wife, Minerva "Minnie" Telitha Brinkley, née Jones.

<sup>3</sup> "I" inserted above "me."

<sup>4</sup> "Them" is inserted above a mostly faded word that also appears to start with "th," possibly "they" or "that."

<sup>5</sup> Brinkley likely used his radio station in Villa Acuña, Mexico, XERA, to conduct the survey.

<sup>6</sup> "Predict" inserted above a partially faded word that appears to also be "predict," possibly as a correction.

<sup>7</sup> "Overwhelming" is underlined and "convincing" is written above it.

<sup>8</sup> Texas Secretary of State in 1941 was William Jennings Lawson.

<sup>9</sup> "I" inserted above "me."

## Works Cited

Brock, Pope. *Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam*. Crown Publishing, 2008.

Lee, R. Alton. *The Bizarre Careers of John R. Brinkley*. University Press of Kentucky, 2002. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2nwq9hd.10>.

A brief biography of O'Daniel.