John Panage, an English Professor at John Brown University from 1939 to 1974, kept a journal from at least 1942 to 1955 about his experiences as a teacher and life in Siloam Springs. Dr. Panage was born in Cyprus and moved to the United States when he was 20 years old. He had one goal once in the US: to get his Ph.D. in English. Though he had been a teacher in Cyprus, his first job in the United States consisted of working at a Chinese restaurant in New York City for sixty dollars a month. He found a better job teaching Greek in Boston, but this did not last long and he put himself through Boston University College by washing dishes. Panage lived a lonely and hard life during his first years in America as he struggled financially and had few acquaintances or friends. He received his master's degree in June of 1923, yet because of his perceived “inability to speak English fluently or correctly,” due to his accent, he could not get a teaching job at a high school, let alone a college. However, he was able to once again obtain a job teaching Greek, and did this while attending Harvard University. Throughout the next few years Panage worked many odd jobs to stay financially afloat, including working as a dummy-man at the Vanderbilt Hotel. He was finally able to secure a job at the Greek School of Minneapolis for three years while he attended the University of Minnesota. Finally on June 18, 1939 he graduated with his Ph.D. He remarks that his “good fortune held” as he was soon thereafter hired as the head of the English Department at John Brown University, a position which he held for thirty-five years.

Dr. Panage’s time at JBU was not only filled with long hours of teaching but also people, such as John Brown Sr., and experiences unique to the 40s and 50s in Siloam Springs. Since he had achieved his goal of a Ph.D., Panage’s next ambition was to write a book and become a great author, and throughout his journals are sprinkled short stories and ideas for novels. Shortly after his arrival at JBU, Dr. Panage, like most of the other men at JBU, was drafted for war. On November 22, 1942 he recalls, “Last Sunday I was Dr. John H. Panage; today I’m Private John H. Panage.” He never left the US during the war but was stationed at different camps in America. When he returned home to the small town of 3,000 people, he worked to “leave [his] footprints on the sands of time.” One of the ways in which he did this was by being highly involved in the expansion of the JBU library by adding to the book collection.

Dr. Panage was not just a thoughtful English professor, but a quirky one as well. Dr. Panage did not believe in marriage, yet he was often in the company of women. The woman in his life during his time at JBU was fellow English teacher Miss Sherbourne, with whom he spent many hours. He was also fastidious about cleanliness. He noted that he could “do without sugar, meat, potatoes, and underwear, but not without soap.” He constantly noted the dirtiness of the local restaurants, but still dined out often because he could not cook. Panage not only loved to read, but saw reading as a necessity. He required himself to read 100 pages daily and once read War and Peace in a week. Dr. Panage devoted his life to English and to sharing his knowledge with others. His lifelong dream of writing a book was finally realized when his journals were published under the title of The Panage Papers. This book is circulated through both the JBU library and Archives and has been a valuable insight into history. Dr. Panage’s dream of becoming an author and leaving his footprints may not have been realized until after his death, but even he knew, “It seems that it is too late, but it is never too late.”

All quotes used were taken from The Panage Papers.
Milestones

October 10, 1941
A scoreboard was installed in the gym by the engineering club. The scoreboard was 8x4 feet, and contained forty electric lights.

October 14, 1960
Soulima Stravinsky, a concert pianist from Switzerland, came and gave a concert at JBU. Since being in the States Stravinsky had played in many fine orchestras. He also gave a lecture to music students while on campus.

October 9, 1986
A group of JBU students, faculty, and alumni went skydiving. The group contained people such as Joe Walencjak and Holly Paul. When the group first formed they called themselves the JBU Skydiving Club, but since JBU offered no liability they had to change their name to the Siloam Glee Club.

Echoes of the Past

Excerpt from the 24 of February 1939 Threefold Advocate

Ten Rules for Success and Happiness

1. Keep skid chains on your tongue; always say less than you think. Cultivate a low, persuasive voice. How you say it often counts more than what you say.
2. Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully, no matter what it cost you.
3. Never let an opportunity pass to say a kind and encouraging word to or about somebody. Praise good work done, regardless of who did it. If criticism is needed, criticize helpfully, never spitefully.
4. Be interested in others; interested in their pursuits, their welfare, their homes and families. Make merry with those that rejoice; with those who weep, mourn. Let everyone you meet, however humble, feel that you regard him as one of importance.
5. Be cheerful. Keep the corners of your mouth turned up. Hide your pains, worries, and disappointments under a smile. Laugh at good stories and learn to tell them.
6. Preserve an open mind on all debatable questions. Discuss but do not argue. It is a mark of superior minds to disagree and yet be friendly.
7. Let your virtues, if you have any, speak for themselves, and refuse to talk of another’s vices. Discourage gossip. Make it a rule to say nothing of another, unless it is something good.
8. Be careful of another’s feeling. Wit and humor at the other fellow’s expense are rarely worth the effort and may hurt where least expected.
9. Pay no attention to ill-natured remarks about you. Simply live so that nobody will believe them. Disordered nerves and a bad digestion are a common cause of backbiting.
10. Don’t be too anxious about your dues. Do your work, be patient and keep your disposition sweet, forget self and you will be rewarded.

Insights

Quotes from John Brown, Sr.

Someday, possibly, the nation will awaken to the realization that you cannot trifle with the thinking of our American youth—their thinking concerning God and virtue and honesty and work—without trilling with the honesty and honor and characters and morals of our American youth. When skepticism in the schoolroom changes the thinking of the average boy or girl concerning the necessity of truth-telling and the importance and beauty of honor and virtue, skepticism, inevitably so, cuts away the foundation upon which true greatness is built.

A father sat in my presence in tears, asking, “What am I to do? If I don’t send my boys to school they will send me to jail. If I send them to school they will be under the influence of a man who laughs at the God of their father and makes a joke out of everything their father considers sacred and beautiful.” Repeatedly I have declared, and truly so, that if America drives God from the schoolroom and takes from our youth the restraining, ennobling influences of the Word of God, America will someday awaken to the fact that the nation has a youth organized for unrighteousness...I would rather my boy should grow up in ignorance than that he should become wise with a godless wisdom, out of which he passed out to the world to laugh at the fact of God, to make a joke of the virtue of womanhood, and to live as a parasite or a fool...Unless a student has knowledge—definite, workable, acceptable knowledge—of the age in which he lives, and is able to adjust himself, successfully so, to that age, he is not educated and is not cultured.

-Excerpt from: The American Crisis and the Way Out