

Thomas Winston Briggs

October 15, 1886

March 2, 1964

When a man reaches the stature of a Thomas Winston Briggs—when he combines the qualities of a humanitarian and a business genius in the creation and development of a great international institution of almost worldwide fame—he becomes a figure of tremendous public interest, and even curiosity.

What kind of man was he? What qualities motivated his vision of a Welcome Wagon which would extend its benevolence to cities, towns, and communities all over the world? What about his early life?

Many who did not know Mr. Briggs personally but do know Welcome Wagon, either as recipient of its benefactions or by reputation, have recognized a reflection of the man in the work to which he dedicated so many years of his life. Welcome

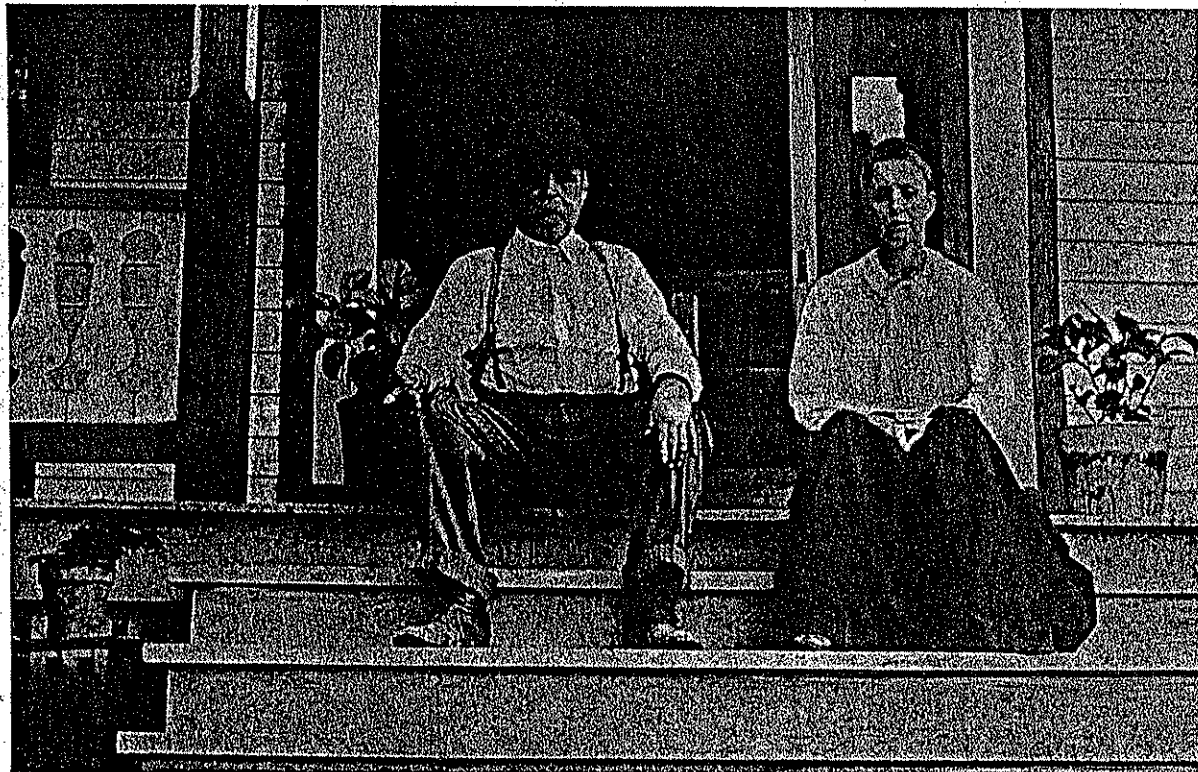
Wagon became the medium through which he expressed his love of people and his desire to help build a better world—through which he opened the doors of opportunity to many thousands of fine women to share in the rewards of serving the needs of family, of community, of government, and of business.

In planning this issue in honor of Mr. Briggs, it is our purpose to lengthen and preserve our memories of this great man who became a legend in his lifetime and who made so important a contribution to the civilization of the world—yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Mr. Briggs was the oldest of eleven children born to Thomas Jefferson Briggs and Elizabeth Kauerz Briggs.

Thomas Jefferson Briggs was born in DeWitt, Arkansas, where his parents established a cotton plantation, and built a school which was attended by thirty pupils. While he was still very young, the family moved to Marshall County, Mississippi. He

Parents of Mr. Briggs at their Memphis homestead in 1902



was graduated from the University of Mississippi and then taught school. Later he became a cattle buyer, traveling in the Southwest and Northeast for seven years before he married Elizabeth Kauerz, a native of Memphis who was of German descent.

Thomas Winston Briggs grew up on a farm in an area which is now well within the city limits of Memphis. From his earliest days he exhibited the tremendous energy, the love of people, and the original thinking that were to mark his career.

His father was a dairy and cotton farmer and employed many farmhands who lived on the place. All of the Briggs boys milked cows, and sometimes their sister did too. In time, mechanical milking devices took the place of hand milking. A big garden produced a bountiful harvest of vegetables. At one time, also, the farm had a very large number of hogs.

As his first introduction to meeting the public, young Thomas W. Briggs delivered milk in a one-horse wagon. He also sold watermelons which were raised on the farm, and later, in his early teens, with his mother's help manufactured his own sausage and sold it.

While all the family worked at many tasks, and there was much to do, they enjoyed the plenty of a successful American farm in the wonderful era of the turn of the century.

All of the Briggs children went to school in a little red schoolhouse called Terry's—a one-room school that went through six grades. After Terry's, Mr. Briggs attended the old Market Street School in Memphis. With his brothers and sister he walked nearly a mile from their home to what is now the corner of Vollenline and University Streets in Memphis to catch a street car to school. In the winter Mr. Briggs stayed with his grandmother, Mrs. Kauerz, who lived on North Main Street in Memphis. A woman of strong character, she exerted a considerable influence on him.

Mr. Briggs' sister, Mrs. Wright Dreibelbis (Elizabeth), in telling about their "lovely life on the farm," and of the good times they had together, commented on the prodigious amount of reading done by Mr. Briggs and the great fund of information which he packed into his facile and retentive mind. Particularly interested in history, he knew the life histories of nearly all the Presidents. "We all looked up to him," she said, pointing out that, in many ways, he seemed like a father to the others—although he didn't like for any of them to make such a reference.



Thomas Winston Briggs at the age

Perhaps from his mother's love of fun, Mr. Briggs developed an early interest in the stage, and even had a brief career in it. Like most young men just starting out in life, he sought adventure and at the time going on the stage seemed to offer a great deal of adventure.

It was back in the early days of the century when vaudeville and the Orpheum Circuit were in their heyday that he began his brief adventure in the performing arts. Mr. Briggs' partner in the adventure, Trammel T. Skinner of Memphis, now a retired business executive, recalls the events with pleasure and the hearty laughs that go with the memories and misadventures of youth. "Oh but we had a lot of fun," Mr. Skinner chuckled in recalling the events in a recent conversation. Their act was billed as Briggs and Skinner. The main scene consisted of a hypnotic performance in which a girl was apparently hypnotized, placed in a coffin, and then raised up from the coffin and suspended on nothing in midair over the stage. Mr. Briggs and Mr. Skinner purchased the act from its previous owner and after a two-week practice period in Memphis, set off for a series of bookings that took them to Oklahoma City and other points in the Southwest. Mr. Skinner relates that the act had a successful four and a half months' tour, winding up in Jackson, Mississippi. By that time, Mr. Briggs and Mr. Skinner, both of whom were destined to be outstanding business executives, had decided they had enough of the stage and sold the act back to the original owner.

Mr. Skinner's recollections of Mr. Briggs are enlivened with various incidents that took place between the two friends over a period of many years. He recalled playing baseball with Mr. Briggs and others during their youth when the Briggs brothers almost made up a complete team by themselves. Mr. Briggs was first baseman. "Tom had a wonderful personality," Mr. Skinner said. "I never did meet anybody who didn't like him right away." After a brief span as the owner of a Memphis tailor shop, Mr. Briggs was soon to put that unlimited capacity for winning friends into other more worthwhile enterprises. Through his aunt, Mrs. Annie Briggs Johnson, he met Miss Mable Elizabeth Jones of New Orleans, who came to Memphis with her father, J. O. Jones, who was in the business of promoting special sections for newspapers and state historical books. Mr. Briggs was attracted to the young lady and on April 8, 1909 they were married in Limestone County, Texas.

Mr. Briggs went into business with Mr. Jones, forming the Jones-Briggs Company, which in 1919

became the Thomas W. Briggs Co., specialists in industrial advertising pages for newspapers and special editions. More than 30 years after this marriage, Mrs. Briggs died.

In 1948 Mr. Briggs married Mrs. Kathleen Soden Morris.

The Thomas W. Briggs Company was a highly successful firm. An early printed folder cites 100 leading American daily newspapers which used the Thomas W. Briggs service. The service consisted of special pages run by the newspapers. On these pages special articles and pictures were published about news of business firms. Newspapers liked the special pages because they increased income on days of light advertising volume and advertisers liked them because the format with editorial presentation was often more productive than regular advertising.

During the years he was building this business, Mr. Briggs brought other creative ideas to fruition. Among them was the publication of two books, "The Mid-South and Its Builders," which he published in 1920 in conjunction with the late C. P. J. Mooney, famous editor of the Memphis Commercial Appeal; and "Distinguished Folks," which featured cartoons by the late J. P. Alley of leaders in Mid-South business and civic affairs. Everything about these books, editorial content, accuracy, art work, and printing was of the highest quality, and they are widely seen and used in libraries today.

In 1928 Welcome Wagon was founded. It is said that while on a business trip, Mr. Briggs heard some friends remarking that an acquaintance who had been transferred to another city would have to start his social and civic life all over again. Sensing the growing mobility of American people, Mr. Briggs could see at once that here was a problem that should be dealt with in a warm and human way. He launched Welcome Wagon as a sideline to his regular business and friends recall that few, if any, of those who first heard about the project gave it any chance of success. Yet, Mr. Briggs, because he had the vision of what Welcome Wagon would contribute to society and to the happiness of human beings, knew from the first that it would succeed. From Memphis, Welcome Wagon quickly expanded to Nashville, then to other cities in the Midwest and Canada, and it was not long before Mr. Briggs took the organization to New York.

In the inception of Welcome Wagon, Mr. Briggs envisioned the natural role of women as hostesses.

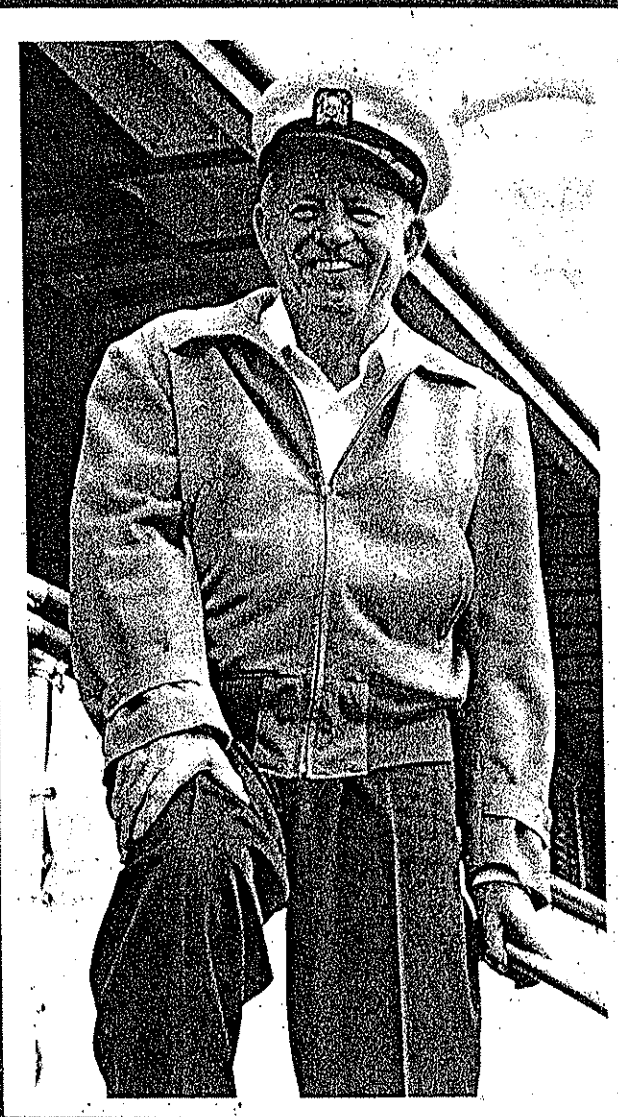
However, in the early days of development, he started out by employing men to sell the sponsors. Perhaps the only thing he did not anticipate at that time, was the astonishing success women would have as supervisors and executives. It was Mrs. Rosanne Beringer, the first hostess in Pittsburgh, who opened the way for women to pioneer in this phase of Welcome Wagon progress. She offered to take over for a salesman who was ill and sign up her own sponsors. Her success was instantaneous, and thus ended the day of men in Welcome Wagon sales, and began the career of the organization's new president, who worked at Mr. Briggs' side for many years.

In subsequent years, as Welcome Wagon maintained its rapid growth, Mr. Briggs often said, "I am continually surprised by the ability of women." In the building of Welcome Wagon, Thomas W. Briggs was challenged to the fullest extent of his resourceful mind, heart, and will. Had it not been for his tremendous love of people, his iron determination, his complete self-discipline, his high standards of morals, and his ability to bring out the best in all those around him—had it not been for these personal characteristics, there could have been no Welcome Wagon as we know it today.

Although he was fond of referring to Welcome Wagon as "our little business," he never thought of it as small. His vision for it stretched around the world and he never ceased looking for people who had the ability and interest to help him realize his dream. He was just as positive of its success in other countries as he was of its success in the United States and Canada back in the early days of Welcome Wagon development. In 1949, along with Mrs. Briggs, he personally visited and researched thirteen countries of Europe in the interests of Welcome Wagon, and just last year Mr. and Mrs. Briggs spent four months visiting South America, the South Sea Islands, New Zealand, and Australia reviewing the opportunities for Welcome Wagon expansion. Wherever they went they were gratified by the numbers of people who were familiar with Welcome Wagon—gratified, too, with the favorable conditions they found for organizing Welcome Wagon in a number of the countries they visited.

Of course, Mr. Briggs had many other qualities which distinguished him as a leader. He had showmanship and style and the talent of not only holding the attention of his audience when he spoke, but of being convincing. He was eminently practical and his common-sense approach shows in the standards he used to select hostesses for Welcome Wagon. He did not require that they have extensive business experience. Rather he looked for a record of activity and leadership in church and civic affairs. Thus, women of the highest type have been brought into and left their mark on Welcome Wagon.

In maintaining a smoothly operating organization, Mr. Briggs was a perfectionist. His door was always open to anyone who had a problem and his first concern was to make sure that the hostesses and supervisors in the field were being taken care of. From the very beginning he took the attitude that they are the most important people in Welcome Wagon. He earned a reputation for being fair and won the confidence of all. Anyone who wrote a personal letter to him received a personal reply within three days. Even in his later years, Mr. Briggs dictated almost daily for two and three hours at a time.



"Captain" Briggs on board the Coronet in 1957

Mr. Briggs loved seafaring and it was in 1946 on board the *Alliancia*, his first yacht, that he had one of the most harrowing experiences of his life. The yachting party had started out from Carrabelle, Florida, for St. Petersburg, when a bad storm suddenly came up. Tremendous waves drowned out the batteries, the motors went dead and the vessel was pounded by heavy seas that went over the pilot house for 48 hours. When the storm abated, the yacht was 100 miles out of position, and although the motors finally did start, the ship ran out of gasoline. They drifted helplessly at sea for

seven days and seven nights until they were finally sighted by a B-17 and eventually rescued by an Army crash boat. At the time the story was reported in great detail over the various wire services and under four and five-column headlines in many of America's leading newspapers.

When later the *Coronet*, a substantially larger yacht, was acquired, Mr. Briggs was able to engage in the practice of entertaining Welcome Wagon personnel and sponsors to a much greater extent than had been possible on the *Alliancia*. He particularly enjoyed extending the hospitality of the *Coronet* as permitted by its size and more ample facilities, and never went into port that he didn't arrange to have a party of Welcome Wagon personnel aboard from as many nearby cities as possible. Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, whether entertaining at home or aboard the *Coronet*, were most gracious and thoughtful hosts. There was always fun and good times, never anything that would not be suitable in any home.

In establishing policies and in all of his thinking about Welcome Wagon, Mr. Briggs' concern was for the hostesses and other members of his organization, and how their jobs could be maintained and improved.

On his trips about the country, one of his favorite games was to spot Welcome Wagon emblems on sponsors' stores, then go in and ask the merchants what they stood for. He often ended up by getting a full-blown sales talk from a merchant on Welcome Wagon.

From the very first, he viewed Welcome Wagon as a self-perpetuating institution, not his personal business enterprise.

Early last year Mr. Briggs donated the remaining 34-acre tract of his "old home" property to Southwestern College, a gift which will make it possible for the college to erect a new building on the campus which will bear the name "Thomas Winston Briggs Student Center," and will be a place where students can gather, visit, and make friends, much as Mr. Briggs enjoyed meeting new people and making friends.

When Mr. Briggs died on March 2, 1964, a life of almost unbelievable productivity came to an end. Yet, all of us in Welcome Wagon are heirs to his life of abundant spirit and goodwill through service.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 23, 1964

Dear Friends:

The President and I were sad to learn of the passing of Mr. Briggs. The wonderful work he initiated will continue through the years to serve as a tribute to his concern and compassionate understanding for his fellow man and a better way of life.

Everyone who has been visited by a "Welcome Wagon" knows and is grateful for all the heart and hand that goes into making a warm introduction to a new community -- the pleasant memories of a friendly welcome and the glowing feeling of belonging.

Mr. Briggs will remain in the hearts of many whose lives have been touched by his meaningful service.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson

Welcome Wagon International, Inc.
685 Fifth Avenue
New York 22, New York



TENNESSEE
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
NASHVILLE

April 28, 1964

FRANK G. CLEMENT
GOVERNOR



**"ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST
SUCCESS STORIES"**

Tribute to the late Thomas W. Briggs, President
Welcome Wagon International

In behalf of the people of Tennessee, it is a privilege to pay tribute to the late Thomas W. Briggs, President of Welcome Wagon International, in whose words and deeds the spirit of public service lived.

The State of Tennessee and the City of Memphis are justifiably proud of this native son and are richer because of the vigor and fullness of his contribution to worthwhile endeavors.


Frank G. Clement

FGC:e



Norfleet Turner, Chairman Of
Board, First National Bank of Memphis, Tennessee:

"Memphis—and indeed, the whole nation—is poorer because of the death of Thomas W. Briggs. The loss will be felt alike by those who

were privileged to know him and those who only knew of him; for Mr. Briggs was a most extraordinary and dedicated man whose accomplishments have intimately touched the lives and the hearts of millions of people in towns and cities throughout the land.

"Mr. Briggs has been described often as a dreamer, and so he was; but unlike most dreamers, he devoted his entire lifetime to the fulfillment of his dreams. The unique and world-famous business which he founded — Welcome Wagon International — stands as an enduring monument to his deep understanding of people and his faith in the American way of life. His selection of Memphis, his home city, as Welcome Wagon headquarters reflects the strong bond of affection which, from the start, has existed between him and those whose encouragement and support helped make possible the realization of his dream.

"Mr. Briggs, with his gentle but vibrant personality, will be sorely missed; but the heritage he left in the form of one of America's greatest success stories will continue to inspire both those he left behind and others yet to come."

**"EXEMPLIFIED THE AMERICAN DREAM
OF INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT"**



J. E. Brown, Chairman and President, Union Planters National Bank, Memphis, Tennessee:

"Of all men who have ideas, Thomas W. Briggs was one of the rare individuals. His energy and drive transformed a concept of

friendship and understanding into an international reality. Yet, his success was more than this. He exemplified the American dream of individual achievement.

"The fine work of the organization he founded reflected Mr. Briggs' personality. Welcome Wagon International was an extension of his concern for his fellow man. Personal success never over-shadowed this.

"Mr. Briggs deserves a place among the pioneers of American enterprise — and certainly he had this even before his death. All of us will miss him, for those who were not fortunate enough to know him knew of him and were proud of him as a fellow Memphian."

**"THOMAS WAS A SYMBOL OF AMERICA,
ITS FREEDOM AND ITS OPPORTUNITIES"**



Merwin Lewis, Attorney, Olvany, Eisner & Donnelly, New York City:

"I learned with much sadness of the passing of my friend, Thomas W. Briggs. Over the years I only saw him infrequently but it was

enough to prove that he was a man of principle who dealt fairly with his associates, his employees and with the outside world.

"Thomas was a symbol of America, its freedom and its opportunities. Armed with nothing but a high degree of integrity, a desire to work, and a creative mind, he rose to great heights in the business world and built a fine business and reputation that you can very well take pride in. He will be missed by many."

**"REPRESENTED AMERICA IN THE FINEST
AND NOBLEST MANNER"**



Rabbi Charles E. Shulman, Riverdale Temple, The Bronx, New York:

"In the passing of Thomas W. Briggs the world has lost an individual who represented America in the finest and noblest manner.

Not only did he make possible the gainful employment through honest industry of thousands of women throughout the country, but the very manner of their employment is uniquely related to the American way of life — economic independence and idealism.

"In some fifteen years association with his enterprise, Welcome Wagon, I have understood why clergymen like myself, who frequently spoke at the graduation exercises of his institution, were glad to share in them. In addition to the livelihood open to the Hostesses trained faithfully by Mr. Briggs and his associates, there was the opportunity for service to individual human beings and to communities at large presented to them. It is too seldom that public service is linked to private undertaking these days. This is why the institution he built so painstakingly and well has rendered significant service.

"His memory will continue in the hearts of those whom he has deeply touched to serve as a blessing to his co-workers and associates in days to come."

**"A MAN OF DYNAMIC PERSONALITY
AND SHREWD BUSINESS ACUMEN"**



The Reverend Adrian Hebert, S.S.S.,
Pastor, Church of St. Jean Baptiste,
New York City:

"The ingenuity and resourcefulness of the late Thomas W. Briggs bring to mind a statement by Ralph Waldo Emerson to the

effect that any institution is but the prolongation of a dynamic man's ideas. This profound truth is perfectly exemplified in the work of Welcome Wagon International which continues to flourish because of the ideas and ideals of its founder, Thomas W. Briggs, a man of dynamic personality and shrewd business acumen.

"I have witnessed the work of Welcome Wagon International in many parts of the country, and have been amazed at the results of this combination of philosophical ideals with the practical wisdom that made it worthwhile. Newcomers to any district in which the organization functions are made welcome by the gratuitous offerings of the various business and social organizations of the locality. This in turn builds goodwill for the community, and advances its economic growth.

"I am confident that the ever-widening growth of the dynamic work begun by this man of vision and fortitude, Thomas W. Briggs, will carry on to ever greater dimensions internationally, building one more bridge in the world structure of peace and prosperity. No man could ask for a greater tribute to his memory."

"HIS GREAT ORGANIZATIONAL GENIUS"



Frank R. Ahlgren, Editor, The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Tennessee:

"One of the first persons I met when I arrived in Memphis in 1926 was Thomas W. Briggs. Our friendship endured over the

years, and I treasure his memory. He was exceptionally nice to a brash young reporter from Wisconsin and he was of great assistance in my period of adjustment from Northern customs and mores to Southern. Through his intercession I avoided many unhappy incidents. I am sure. He was always ready to lend a hand, and his suggestions and tips (news, that is) proved reliable.

"It was my good fortune in later years to introduce him to Rotary and I know that his fellowship there was a source of keen enjoyment.

"Others in this volume will describe his great organizational genius and his indefatigable pursuit of business matters; I will content myself with proclaiming he was indeed a friend in all that term implies."

**"ONE OF MEMPHIS' MOST DISTINGUISHED
AND USEFUL CITIZENS"**



Wallace Witmer, President, Memphis Chamber of Commerce, Memphis, Tennessee.

In a letter addressed to Mrs. Rosanne Beringer:

"The death of Thomas W. Briggs on March 2, 1964 closed not only a remarkable business career but

removed from our midst one of Memphis' most distinguished and useful citizens. Welcome Wagon is the product of his genius and as the Welcome Wagon service has grown, it has spread goodwill among millions of people.

"I know the passing of Mr. Briggs leaves a great vacuum in the Welcome Wagon organization and is a source of sadness to many individuals. All who have worked with Mr. Briggs can take justifiable pride in having been associated with him during his lifetime and participating in the growth of the great firm he founded.

"I am confident that under your leadership Welcome Wagon will continue to expand in size and usefulness and maintain the high standard set by Thomas W. Briggs."

"ONE OF THE LEADING CITIZENS OF MEMPHIS"



Walter Chandler, Attorney, Chandler, Manire, Johnson and Chandler, Memphis, Tennessee. Former Mayor of Memphis and former Congressman.

In a letter addressed to Mrs. Briggs:

"Thousands of Tom's friends are deeply saddened over his passing away, and I am sure that they share your loss and sympathize

with the family in their sorrow.

"As you know better than we do, Tom made a great record. He stands out as one of the leading citizens of Memphis who made a success beyond the expectations when he started out with the Welcome Wagon.

"There is little that anyone can say, but I feel that we shall remember for a long time to come a true and warm friend."

"IT IS A GREAT THING TO TAKE NOTHING AND MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF IT"



Abe Plough, President, Plough, Inc.:

"Having known Thomas W. Briggs for more than fifty years, his passing is a distinct loss to me. Our friendship and affection for

each other never wavered.

"Someone once said that every business is the length and shadow of a man, and if there was ever an individual who typified this remark it was Tom Briggs. In the development of Welcome Wagon world-wide, he left his footprints in many towns and all states of the United States and many foreign countries. It is a great thing to take

nothing and make something of it. I knew Tom Briggs when he would buy a page in the local newspaper, merchandise it to more than 25 advertisers, knew how to give them value received, and in this way laid a foundation in his own mind to give the other fellow a break, thus proving that faithful cooperation as he practiced it all his life brought to him not only financial success but the self-satisfaction that comes from helping his fellowman to grow and prosper along with him. Many people owe their success in life to their personal contact with Tom Briggs, so in the final analysis he did more than anything else in life when he helped so many people to help themselves."

"A WELL ESTABLISHED AND INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN BUSINESS SUCCESS"



Charles C. Crabtree, Attorney, Crabtree, Morgan, McKnight & Merrill, Memphis, Tennessee:

"Having known 'Tommy' (as he was affectionately known to me) for more than forty years and esteemed during that time his personal interest, painstaking guidance, boundless energy and

loyal friendship, I have presumed to write you of my deeply felt personal loss in his passing.

"When I first knew Mr. Briggs he was reaching the culmination of a highly successful new approach to newspaper advertising by interspersing news articles emphasizing new products or procedures, with paid advertising of established firms, on a page entitled 'Weekly Business Review.' With his typical aggressive, energetic and forward

looking business acumen, he began the founding of Welcome Wagon at this apex of an already successful career. I was fortunate in being the junior member of a law firm which furnished legal assistance to this new enterprise, and the friendships growing out of this genial, novel and welcoming venture have continued through the years. Needless to say, through Mr. Briggs' tireless efforts, this activity, originally new and uncertain, is now a well established and internationally known business success.

"This success, both of your company and its founder, was built upon the rocks of personal contact, personal interest, personal service, and personal communication, designed to bring people, communities, states and even nations, closer together through mutual comprehension of the other's problems and mutual esteem from working together.

"I shall always think of Tommy, as did Mark Twain of a departed beloved friend, of whom he wrote editorially:

'He had outgrown the narrow citizenship of a state and become a citizen of the world'."



William B. Ingram, Jr., Mayor, City of Memphis, Tennessee:

"It is with profound sorrow that the City of Memphis learned of the passing of Mr. Thomas W. Briggs, Founder and President of

one of the finest organizations in the country.

"Through this fine Memphis gentleman flowed deeds of kindness and mercy which will forever be embedded in the minds of many and imprinted upon the pages of history. A feeling of deep reward was the proud possession of this great philanthropist as he went about doing good through closer ties of friendship and understanding with all those with whom he came in contact.

"As Mayor of the City of Memphis, I reverently salute the memory of Mr. Thomas W. Briggs whose footprints in the sands of time have left for us a pattern that would make our lives more meaningful if we would pause long enough to find purpose in our daily living, thereby placing first things first."