

TJCL - Its Origin

The year was 1953 and the place was Miami University at Oxford, Ohio. Though there was as yet no Tennessee Junior Classical League, at this place was laid the groundwork that would eventually lead to the TJCL.

Twenty years ago Alex Poston and Thomas Sproles, two students of Dobyns-Bennett High School in Kingsport, Tennessee, attended the national planning session at Miami University. Through the efforts of these two, and other Latin students across the nation, the National Junior Classical League was first organized. Also, Poston was elected the first NJCL vice-president.

In 1954, Tennessee again sent two delegates to the national convention which was held in San Antonio, Texas. By 1956 Tennessee was represented nationally by eight students from two schools. The small but important participation of the Tennessee delegates led to an enthusiastic desire to form a state-wide organization similar to the national one.

In 1957, work began on the organization, spurred on by the efforts of the Dobyns-Bennett High School. Questionnaires were sent out to determine the number of JCL chapters and possible future chapters in the state. Then a second correspondence was sent out asking all chapter sponsors to bring two top Latin students to a state planning convention.

On May 4, 1957 the sponsors and students met at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Panel discussions were held and a committee studied the possibility of having a state publication. The first state officers were elected. They were: James Price, president; Julia Freeman, vice-president; Catherine Payne, secretary; Bea Beach, treasurer; David Briley, parliamentarian; and Patricia Terry, chairman of pages. It was decided that the first convention of the Tennessee Federation of the Junior Classical League would be held the following year at Vanderbilt.

At the May 4 meeting a constitution for the new organization was written. This constitution outlined the purpose of the Federation, its organizational arrangement, the powers of the different branches, the method of electing officers, their powers, and the process for amending the constitution of the TJCL. Thus was the Tennessee Junior Classical League born.

Later in this same historic year, around December, the first issue of the *Tennessee Torch* was published by Whitehaven High School in Memphis. A contest was held to choose another, better name, but as none was found the name *Tennessee Torch* has remained to this day. This issue was six

pages long and announced all state news.

The first convention was held on a Friday evening and a Saturday. It contained a get-acquainted party, business transaction meeting, a lecture, and a play.

Participation in NJCL conventions rose to seven schools. Tennessee distinguished itself by heading numerous workshops. In 1959 Lynn Hutton of Kingsport captured Tennessee's first national ribbon, a 2nd place in Derivatives III. Since then Tennessee has captured seven national sweepstakes contests, the first in 1964, and tied for one other sweepstakes championship.

The year is 1973. The TJCL has participated in twenty-one national conventions. It has held seventeen

conventions of its own, counting the organizational conference. The state convention has expanded to include art, academic, and athletic contests. The constitution has undergone slight revisions. The *Tennessee Torch* has gone from a six-page mimeographed newsletter to a printed eight-page publication containing illustrations and photographs. In short, the TJCL has advanced tremendously in its brief seventeen year history.

The year will be 1974. The Tennessee Junior Classical League must and will, as the 1957 constitution stated, continue "to hand on the torch of classical civilization in the modern world."

... And Founder

TJCL's founder, Miss Grace Elmore, was and is a truly remarkable person. Miss Elmore has always been characterized by her vitality and service, and these qualities have not diminished in her during forty-four years of teaching and twelve years of retirement.



Miss Grace Elmore
TJCL Founder

Grace Elmore began the study of Latin when she was twelve years of age and it has been the keystone of her life ever since. At various times she has served as sponsor of the Dobyns-Bennett chapter of the Junior Classical League, national program director of JCL, TJCL state chairman, chairman of the TEA Latin Department, and chairman of the ETEA Latin Dept. Miss Elmore was instrumental in the formation of both the NJCL and the TJCL. An account of her efforts in the area can be found in the related article on the

establishment of the TJCL.

Miss Elmore was active not only in JCL but also in all other phases of student activity at Dobyns-Bennett High School. In addition to being JCL sponsor, she founded the school's first Beta Club. Also, she served as director of the senior play for several years and she even wrote the script one year.

Writing has also been a source of great enjoyment for Miss Elmore. The National Guard motto (Spectamus Servamus-We watch and we save) was written by her and may be seen flying on flags around the world. Miss Elmore has met several outstanding writers and has had the honor of being entertained twice at the home of Robert Frost.

Travel has also been a source of great enjoyment for Miss Elmore. She has visited a variety of places around the world, including Rome several times.

Those who fear retirement need do no more than look at Grace Elmore for courage and reassurance. Her multiplicity of interests precludes a humdrum existence and her twelve years of retirement have been the continuation of a most fascinating life.

At the present time Miss Elmore is very active in church work. She is also active in a book club, a supper club, a bridge club, and the Kingsport Retired Teachers' Association, which she organized and was president of during the first three years of its existence.

Grace Elmore, a truly remarkable woman, enjoys the excellent health her demanding schedule requires. TJCL can still learn from Miss Elmore. As long as the Tennessee Junior Classical League shows the same vitality and willingness to serve as its founder does, it too will enjoy a profitable and meaningful existence.