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# UIL ONE-ACT PLAY: THE EARLY YEARS: 1926-1937

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## INTRODUCTION: Before 1926

The One-Act Play contest of the University Interscholastic League was not initiated until the 1926-1927 school year. There was, however, some interest in theatre related to the League's activities prior to that time. An article carried in the Interscholastic Leaguer, the League newspaper, March, 1919, was titled "Amateur Dramatics Fit In Well with County Meet." This title is perhaps somewhat misleading since the activity was actually a production of a "Womanless Breach of Promise Trial" by the Tuleta Farmers Dramatic Club.<sup>1</sup> The first editor of the Leaguer, E.D. Shurter, or the Managing Editor and later (1922) Editor, Roy Bedichek, published numerous articles related to the production of plays and the use of dramatics in the community and public schools.

The November, 1919, issue of the Leaguer produced a rather lengthy editorial concerning "Home Talent Plays."<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to tell the source of this material, but the responsibility for its publication might well fall to the Managing Editor, Roy Bedichek. An article in the November, 1920, Leaguer by Miss Amanda Stoltzfus, the Associate Editor, mentions the possibilities of amateur dramatics as a community builder.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Shurter authored an article in the April, 1921, issue of the Leaguer concerning a new course for the University of Texas Summer School dealing with high school dramatics that was "intended especially to assist teachers who have to deal with dramatics in the schools."<sup>4</sup> Mr. Bedichek described interest in the 1923-1924 school year in his book Educational Competition published more than twenty-five years later:

Even very early in League history there was a mild demand for contest in dramatics. In October 1923, Howard Mumford Jones, then associate professor of comparative literature at the University of Texas, began a series of articles in the

<sup>1</sup> March 1919 Leaguer. Page 1 and 2 (Amateur Drama).

<sup>2</sup> November 1919 Leaguer. Page 1 and 2 (Home Talent).

<sup>3</sup> November 1920 Leaguer. Page 3 or 4 (Stoltzfus's).

<sup>4</sup> April 1921 Leaguer. Page 2 (New Couire Given).

Leaguer, which ran in consecutive issues, ending in the April issue of 1924. High-school teachers of dramatics were given sound advice on such topics as “Selecting a Play,” “Casting a Play,” “Working Out the Action,” “First Rehearsal,” “Middle Rehearsal,” “The Final Rehearsal,” and so on.

In November, 1924, the Leaguer published an article headed “Contest Promote Interest in Plays – Competitions Prove Valuable Aid in Establishing Community Theater.” The article describes in some detail contests among community theaters held in New Rochelle, New York. Other propaganda in dramatics appeared from time to time, and discussions of such a venture occurred in various meetings of League members and particularly in the sessions of the Texas Speech Arts Association.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Bedichek was responsible for much of the propaganda he mentions in the above commentary since he became editor of the Leaguer in 1922. His association and interest in drama extended outside the pages of the Leaguer.

Bedichek taught a special course in the summer of 1925 at the University of Texas that included contest methods, organization, and administration and gave special emphasis to Interscholastic League work. At the same time, a course in dramatics was being taught by Gregory Foley of the public speaking department. Mr. Bedichek titled an article in the March, 1925, Leaguer “Dramatics and Pageantry Course in Summer School”.<sup>6</sup> The association, at least to this writer, seems obvious. He continued his efforts for a contest in dramatics by publishing “Rural Folks Stage Contest in Drama” in the middle of the front page of the September, 1925, Leaguer. This article was a description of a play competition in Butler County, Ohio, and details its popularity and success. Roy Bedichek expressed a clear opinion of this venture by saying “We believe that something of this nature might meet with great success at some of our county Interscholastic League meets.”<sup>7</sup> Mr. Bedichek’s interest in dramatics was continually reflected in editorials and articles that mentioned dramatics and play production as a part of good

<sup>5</sup> Roy Bedichek, Educational Competition: The Story of the University Interscholastic League of Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956), p. 288.

<sup>6</sup> March 1925 Leaguer. Page 4, Col 4.

<sup>7</sup> September 1925 Leaguer. Page 1 (Road Talks).

extracurricular activities and he took part in some of the discussions of the Speech Arts Association.<sup>8</sup> He described some the earliest discussions concerning the use of drama in some form in an Interscholastic League contest:

Earnest discussions of proposals to include some form of drama among the League contest-activities began in the early twenties. Records disclose that there was a sharp division of opinion among members of the League concerning the advisability of undertaking a dramatics contest of any kind. Interest among member schools was slack. Few Texas colleges even pretended to prepare teachers for directing plays. Competent judges were scarce. There were not many high-school buildings with adequate stage...

As a student activity, except for the Commencement play, production of a play was rare. As a subject in the curriculum, dramatics was practically nonexistent outside the large centers. The selection of a play was difficult and costly, since the school-or, in most cases, the teacher-had to buy many plays in order to find a suitable one for the talent available. There was no way of telling whether a production was creditable or not, since there was no organized plan for making critical comparisons between the performances put on by schools of approximately the same size. If an energetic director here and there did do outstanding work, he was in no way assured of receiving other than merely local recognition.

The stock argument in League meetings against scheduling a play contest was that there were not enough trained directors in the public schools of Texas to make it worthwhile. It was argued, very logically, that many teachers not really equipped to direct a play would be compelled under the stimulus of competition to try anyway, and that this would discourage student groups naturally interested in dramatics, debase standards, and waste time- in short, many believed that the proposed competition would actually do more harm than good.

Those favoring the contest argued that competition always engenders interest, and interest produces effort. It was conceded that many atrocities would be committed. However, experience in other fields proved there is no quicker way of improving performance than by subjecting it to comparative judging under agreed standards between equal or near-equal competitors. It was pointed out that "atrocities" were already being committed and that the proposed contest would force them out into the open. The argument went on for several years, but the proponents finally won.<sup>9</sup>

There were other influences that perhaps paved the way for the beginning of the One-Act Play contest. One of the major problems that faced such a contest was the availability of

<sup>8</sup> October 1925 Leaguer. Page 2 Col. 6 (Speech Teachers).

<sup>9</sup> Bedichek, pages 284, 285.



play scripts. As early as April, 1921, lists of plays were being published in the Leaguer.<sup>10</sup> In the Fall of 1923 the Bureau of Extension of the University of Texas, through the Extension Loan Library, offered a new service to the teachers of Texas. The November, 1923, issue of the Leaguer described this service and began publishing a list of available plays. There were actually three play lists published in that issue, one on page one following the description of the library service, another on page two following one of the Howard Mumford Jones articles on dramatics, and a third compiled by Amanda Stoltzfus on page three.<sup>11</sup> A single list of plays continued consecutively in issues of the Leaguer through April, 1924. Another list was published in November, 1924, and an article attesting to the popularity of the service was published in the "Extension Loan Library" column of the December, 1924, Leaguer:

As soon as the November Interscholastic Leaguer was mailed out, requests began to come to the Library for the plays listed - the latest date at which they can examine the plays so that we know whether to put their names on the waiting list. It will prevent delay if a second and third choice is indicated. It is hoped that all who are interested will send to us for a complete annotated (sic) a list of Christmas plays and order them as soon as possible. It will take time to get the plays from the publishers after a selection has been made from those we send out for examination. It is particularly requested that plays be kept as short a time as possible, so that all may have a chance to use them. Under no circumstances will an extension of time be granted.<sup>12</sup>

It is sufficient to say that there was some interest in dramatics and the Extension Division was trying to fill the need for play scripts through the Loan Library. All the play lists published from 1921 through 1924 were annotated and well over one hundred one-act plays were listed. Little more is written in the pages of the Leaguer concerning the availability of plays until after the beginning of the first year for the One-Act Play contest.

<sup>10</sup> April 1921 Leaguer. Last page, Col. 1.

<sup>11</sup> November 1921 Leaguer. Three pages.

<sup>12</sup> December 1924 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 3 (Ext. Lib.)

- STATE DIRECTORS OF DRAMA -

1928 - 37	Morton Brown (State Meet Contest Manager - 1928- UIL Staff 193 -1937)
1938	J. Howard (Tony) Lumpkin
1939-42	F. Loren Winship
1943-45	Mrs. James Moll (U.T. Drama Staff) Mrs. Mae Ashworth (UIL Staff) No drama director during war years - Winship on leave
1946	Melvin E. Pape (U.T. Drama Staff)
1947-57	Bruce Roach
1958-61	Jerry Rollins Powell
1962-63	F. Loren Winship
1963-66	Roy M. Brown
1966-67	W. Lynn Murray
1967-70	Roy M. Brown
1970-2002	W. Lynn Murray

## 1926-1927

The purpose of this contest is to assist the teachers in creating interest among the students in dramatics and aid them in using the drama as a social and moral force in their respective communities. It is believed that the theater has tremendous educational possibilities and "the future strength of the drama and the theater lies in their adoption and development in our universities and public schools."<sup>1</sup>

In the seventeenth year of the Interscholastic League, the One-Act Play tournament was instituted. The tournament was first formally proposed at the annual meeting of the Texas Speech Arts Association in Dallas at the Baker Hotel.<sup>2</sup> This proposal probably took place during the general session on Saturday, November 28, 1925. Mr. Bedichek discussed League activities and a round-table discussion followed.<sup>3</sup> On Saturday, May 8, 1926, in the Public Speaking section of the State Meeting of Delegates; with Professor Ellwood Griscom, Associate Professor of Public Speaking in the University,<sup>4</sup> presiding; the delegates unanimously adopted a resolution recommending that the State Executive Committee of the League undertake a one-act play tournament.<sup>5</sup> Evidently the tournament idea was approved by the Executive Committee, although the records of their meetings from May to September do not mention the action.

The response to the one-act play tournament was surprising. By January 15, 1927, the final day for notifying the State Office of entry in the One-Act play contest, there were over one hundred fifty schools entered. This number created the necessity for a series of eight regional tournaments held in Canyon, Abilene, Brownwood, Commerce, Dallas, Belton, Houston, and Kingsville. This was a surprise to those who thought no more than twenty schools would enter

<sup>1</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> October 1925 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 6. "Speech Teacher's Program."

<sup>4</sup> April 1926 Leaguer. Page 1, Col. 4 "Gen. Program."

<sup>5</sup> Op. Cit.

the first year<sup>6</sup>, although the one hundred fifty entries did not participate.

The record books in the State Office indicate eighty-three schools entered that first year<sup>7</sup> and Mr. Bedichek enters a different figure:

As had been predicted by the proponents of the drama contest, there followed an immediate quickening of interest. Eighty-nine schools entered plays the first year. Performances were generally crude and the plays selected ranged from the very good to the utterly frivolous, with occasionally one that was positively vicious.<sup>8</sup>

There is some evidence that a great number of schools withdrew from the tournament before the first round, but failed to notify the State Office before the printing of the program for the April State Tournament.<sup>9</sup> This is not particularly surprising, since this type of discrepancy in the number of participants in One-Act Play continued to appear in State Meet records for a number of years.

The One-Act Play contest was open to all standard member high schools, but the first notice was sent to those schools with an enrollment of more one hundred students. The rules of the contest were not printed in the Constitution and Contest Rules at this time, but were available on request.<sup>10</sup> The mimeographed rules for the first two years of the One-Act Play contest are no longer in existence in the State Office History or Printing Files of the University Interscholastic League.<sup>11</sup> The following list is an attempt to give some idea of the rules for the year of operation:

1. Eligibility of Schools. Any high school that is a regular member of the League. (An announcement of the contest was sent to the principals of high schools enrolling more than 100 students during the 1925-1926 school year.)<sup>12</sup>
2. Eligibility of Contestants. All members of competing casts must satisfy the general eligibility requirements contained in Article VIII of the Constitution and

<sup>6</sup> State Tournament Program 1927.

<sup>7</sup> State Meet History Book.

<sup>8</sup> Bedichek.

<sup>9</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>10</sup> September 1926 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 1, Editorial.

<sup>11</sup> September 1926 Leaguer. Page 3, Col. 3. "I.L. Publications."

<sup>12</sup> September 1926 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 1 Ed.

Contest Rules. Participation in the one-act play contest will not debar the participants from competing in either debate, declamation, or extemporaneous speech contest.<sup>13</sup>

3. Eligible Plays. Plays entered in this contest must be one-act plays, require not more than ten characters, and consume not more than 30 minutes for performance. Only plays fulfilling these requirements and listed in “A List of Plays for High School Production” issued by the Playground and Recreation Association of America, or in “Plays for High Schools and Colleges”, compiled by joint committee of the National Council of Teachers of English and the Drama League of America. (1923)<sup>14</sup>

The One-Act Play plan provided for adding plays to a supplemental list by submitting them to the State Office. A supplemental list of fifty plays was published in the November, 1927, Leaguer<sup>15</sup> and four additional plays were listed in the “Official Notices” column of the December Leaguer.<sup>16</sup>

There were perhaps other rules dealing with entry and procedure. January 15, 1927, was the last date for notifying the State Office of entry in One-Act Play.<sup>17</sup> The rules, probably under “Eligible Plays”, also provided judges grade the plays on merit. Mr. Bedichek vividly described the problems created by this rule:

This revealed wide differences of opinion among judges regarding what constitutes merit. The same play was disqualified in one tournament, accepted in another, graded down here and up there. In the case of Suppressed Desires, several judging committees threw it out, others permitted it to proceed in the series, and finally it was declared winner in the state meet.<sup>18</sup>

Suppressed Desires won second place at the 1927 State Tournament and there were two productions of this play at the state meet, one from San Angelo and one from Sinton.<sup>19</sup> There was likely no rule concerning the number of judges for the One-Act Play contest. Available

<sup>13</sup> September 1926 Leaguer. Page 4, Col. 1. “Off. Notices.”

<sup>14</sup> November 1926 Leaguer. Page 1, Col. 3. “Supplemental List.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> December 1926 Leaguer. Page 3, Col. 5. “Off. Notices.”

<sup>17</sup> October 1926 Leaguer. Page 1, Col. 1. “League Calendar.”

<sup>18</sup> Bedichek, page 289.

<sup>19</sup> State Meet History Book.

records indicate more than one judge in every case. Mrs. J. Lloyd Mecham, Director of the Austin Civic Theatre, and one of the One-Act Play Executive Committee members for the State Tournament, was also one of the judges for the regional tournament held in Belton.<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to tell whether the State Tournament was judged by the Executive Committee or the judges indicated by the 1926-1927 Financial Statement entry as “Expenses of judges (W. Dwight Wentz, John W. Dunn)-----\$41.00”.<sup>21</sup>

The general organization of the One-Act Play Contest for the first year was quite simple. It was organized independently and was not scheduled at the same time as the County, District or State meets.<sup>22</sup> There were eight regional tournaments and one tournament at the state level.<sup>23</sup> This arrangement did not fulfill one of the primary motivations for the initiation of the contest. Bedichek described the situation in the October, 1927, Leaguer:

During the last school year (1926-27), the League enlarged its public speaking schedule by including a One-Act Play Contest with very promising results. The contest was, however, conducted on the tournament plan, which took the competing casts away from their home communities for the contests, and this interfered seriously with one of the desirable results which it was hoped would be accomplished, namely, the interest of the community at large in the production of plays and affording the opportunity to the school casts of appearing before a home audience in an actual contest.<sup>24</sup>

Bedichek had previously listed some of the organization difficulties of that first year and posed some questions of re-organization in the September, 1927, Leaguer:

1. With only ten district centers, many schools were compelled to travel unreasonable distances in order to participate.<sup>25</sup>
2. In a tournament in which as many as ten teams participate, preliminaries must be held, and it is difficult to procure an audience for the preliminary performances. Even in the State Tournament, there were few people attending the preliminaries.

<sup>20</sup> March 1927 Leaguer. “OAP Contest Proves Popular.”

<sup>21</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules. June 8, 1927, UT. Bull #2722. Pg. 59.

<sup>22</sup> September 1926 Leaguer. Page 4, Col. 1. “Off. Notices.” OAP.

<sup>23</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

<sup>24</sup> October 1927 Leaguer. Page 4, Col. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Note: There were only eight regions.

3. All schools were thrown into one division, making small schools compete with the largest high schools in the State. The question arises, should there be two divisions in the contest, made on the basis used in dividing schools into two divisions for football competition, that is, high schools enrolling 500 or more in one division, and less than 500 in another division.
4. Again, a few small schools competed. Some of them were greatly discouraged. Would it be a good plan to limit the competition to high schools having, say, at least 100 enrolled, or should a school, no matter how small, be allowed to enter this competition?
5. Should there be a list of prescribed plays, or should general requirements be laid down, and the schools allowed to choose any plays meeting these general requirements. Or, should a school be required to submit its play for approval, and if so, what central authority? If so, should the same play be allowed to enter [more] than once. In North Carolina, no school is allowed to choose a play that has already been chosen by another school.
6. Dramatic coaches are urged to send in lists of plays, with preferences indicated in one, two, three order. Lists should name the publisher, and state whether or not it is a royalty play, and how much the royalty is.<sup>26</sup>

These questions were not posed until after the end of the first year of competition, but they reflect the organizational problems of travel, larger tournaments, school size, and play selection encounter that first year.

The eight regional meets were probably organized in a manner similar to that of the State Tournament. If more than ten plays were in competition, preliminaries were held.<sup>27</sup> Four plays were selected from those preliminaries to be presented in the finals.<sup>28</sup> The Regional Tournaments for the first year of the One-Act Play Contest were listed in the State Tournament program as follows:

Regional Tournament No. 1: Canyon, West Texas State Teachers College; W.E. Lockhart, Tournament Manager. Miami was the winner.<sup>29</sup>

Regional Tournament No. 2: Abilene, Simmons University; Miss Olivia Hobgood, Tournament Manager. Abilene was the winner.

Regional Tournament No. 3: Howard Payne College; Miss Antoinette Sparks, Tournament Manager. San Angelo was the winner.

<sup>26</sup> September 1927 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

<sup>29</sup> September 1927 Leaguer State Meet Tournament History, "Process of Deductions."

Regional Tournament No. 4: Commerce, East Texas State Teachers College; Miss Maude Webster, Tournament Manager. Forney was the winner.

Regional Tournament No. 5: Dallas, Southern Methodist University; Miss Mary McCord, Tournament Manager. Palestine was the winner.

Regional Tournament No. 6: Belton, High School; Superintendent Paul Baker, Tournament Manager. Mexia was the winner.

Regional Tournament No. 7: Houston, San Jacinto High School; Miss Jessie Millsapps, Tournament Manager. San Jacinto H.S. was the winner.

Regional Tournament No. 8: Kingsville, South Texas State Teachers College; Miss Vernita Stewart, Tournament Manager. Sinton was the winner.<sup>30</sup>

These Regional Tournaments were likely held in March.<sup>31</sup> The Leaguer published a report on only one of the eight tournaments. The report was a reprint from The East Texan, which listed the six participants, the three winning plays, the individual acting awards and something of the quality of plays besides those that won as being “creditable”.<sup>32</sup>

The first State One-Act Play Tournament of the University Interscholastic League was held April 15 and 16, 1927, in the Austin High School Auditorium, with Dr. L.W. Payne, Jr., Professor of English in the University of Texas, presiding. The first preliminary was April 15, at 8:00 p.m. and the second preliminary was April 16, at 2:30 p.m. At the close of the second preliminary the four plays, two from each preliminary, selected for the 8:00 p.m. finals were announced.<sup>33</sup> The finalists were Mexia, San Angelo, Sinton, and Abilene.<sup>34</sup> The order of presentation is not known, but likely was determined by lot as were subsequent State Tournaments.<sup>35</sup> Mexia; with a production of Riders to the Sea by J.M. Synge, under the direction

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> September 1928 Leaguer. Page 3 “College Fosters.”

<sup>33</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

<sup>34</sup> State Meet History Book, 1927.

<sup>35</sup> State Tournament Program, 1929.



of Tillie Naomi Kruger; was the first winner<sup>36</sup> and was presented with the winner's trophy made possible by a \$25.00 donation<sup>37</sup> of the San Antonio Express.<sup>38</sup>

The silver shield to the winning school and a small shield to the runner-up, San Angelo, were permanent trophies. The third and fourth place schools, received only recognition.<sup>39</sup> The Financial Statement of the League for 1927, reflects a sum of \$40.20 paid to the Star Engraving Company of Houston for State Play Tournament pins.<sup>40</sup> There were eleven members of the all-star cast, six girls and five boys, and the pins were likely given to this group.<sup>41</sup>

The only other available financial references concerning the State Tournament were in relation to the rebates. Since the One-Act Play Tournament was organized separately, casts did not participate in any of the State Meet rebate. The State Tournament program offered the only possibility:

It is hoped that the proceeds of the tournament will reimburse, in a measure, travelling expenses incurred, in some cases amounting to hundreds of dollars.<sup>42</sup>

Expenses for travel to the several Regional Tournaments and to the State Tournament were obtained in numerous ways. Mr. Bedichek made a comment about finances and put in a "plug" for dramatics in an editorial in the April, 1927, Leaguer:

We are in receipt of a neatly printed program from the Sinton High School announcing a performance by the high school cast of "Suppressed Desires," by Susan Glasspell. The announcement reads in part: "This play will be presented in Kingsville, at the South Texas Teachers College, Regional One-Act Play Tournament March 11, and this program is being presented to raise funds to finance it." The high school orchestra is on the program for several numbers.

We are glad to note that some high schools are using the money derived from the dramatic organization in the high school for the benefit of the organization itself. Too often the dramatic group is exploited for some other activity – to raise money for the

<sup>36</sup> State Meet History Book.

<sup>37</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1928. Financial Statement.

<sup>38</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927

<sup>39</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1927. Page 62.

<sup>40</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1927. Page 59, Financial.

<sup>41</sup> State Meet History Book.

<sup>42</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

school annual, for sending off contestants in other events to some meet or other, to buy athletic equipment and so on. We take it to be sound principle to make every activity stand as nearly as practicable, upon its own financial bottom.<sup>43</sup>

Although financial records do not reflect payment services rendered as in 1928, there were numerous people responsible for the operation of the State Tournament in addition to the already mentioned Dr. Payne and the Executive Committee. There was a large entertainment committee with Ruth McMillan as Chairman; and Helen Beisner, Dorothy Holmes, Helen Frances Giradequ, Mildred Robinson, Randley Ridley as members. There is no record of the type of entertainment provided. The lodging arrangements for boys and girls were made by Aro Nowohtny and Bernice Green. The four major technicians for the operation of the tournament were Bob Massengale, Stage Manager; J.C. Williams and Tully Florey, Stage Properties; and Bob Colthorp, Electrician. The Swann-Schulle Furniture and Carpet Company of Austin, provided many of the stage properties, free of charge.<sup>44</sup>

The only pictorial record of the 1927 Tournament can be found in two issues of the Leaguer. In the March, 1927, issue there is a picture of the cast members of Not Quite Such A Goose produced by Palestine High School.<sup>45</sup> In the February, 1928 issue, there is a group picture of State Tournament participants that includes most of the students and some of the faculty directors.<sup>46</sup> There are no actual production pictures of the first State Tournament plays available in the issue of Leaguer or in the State Office.

There is little additional factual information concerning the first year of the One-Act Play Contest. Numerous pieces of propaganda concerning dramatics found their way into the pages of the Leaguer. This material had some bearing on the contest in terms of publicity of information,

<sup>43</sup> April 1927 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 1. Ed.#3.

<sup>44</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

<sup>45</sup> March 1927 Leaguer. Page 1.

<sup>46</sup> February 1928 Leaguer. Page 1.

and served the purpose of the contest. One such article was “The Study of the One-Act Play,” published in the October, 1926, issue.<sup>47</sup> Beginning in November, 1926, a column in the Leaguer, titled “Books and Magazines,” reviewed words related to the theatre. Almost all of these book reviews were initialed by L.G.B., Mr. Bedichek’s wife.<sup>48</sup> This practice continued for some years. Morton Brown, the first Director of Dramatics of the League, suggested candidly that Mrs. Bedichek occasionally reviewed books and plays that he did not think worthwhile.<sup>49</sup> There was also an occasional mention of dramatic clubs. One of the more notable was in the February, 1927, Leaguer. There was a two-column picture of a cast of the Belton High School Dramatic Club that had a membership of one hundred two and used all their profit for purchasing theatrical equipment. This is especially significant since one of the eight regional meets of 1927 was held in Belton.<sup>50</sup>

Likely the most interesting item to develop from the first year of One-Act Play in the League was described by Bedichek in Educational Competition:

Announcements of training courses began to appear in the summer catalogues of Texas Institutions. The summer following the first state play-tournament, Miss Sarah Lowry, head of the Dramatics Department in Baylor University, told me that registrations in her course in directing increased as if by magic.<sup>51</sup>

The first of many steps had been taken toward the “tremendous educational possibilities”<sup>52</sup> of secondary educational theatre in Texas.

<sup>47</sup> October 1926 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 5. “Study OAP.”

<sup>48</sup> November 1926 Leaguer. Page 4, Col. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Telephone conversation with Mr. Brown. Friday June 20, 1969, in Austin, Texas.

<sup>50</sup> February 1927 Leaguer. Page1, picture & comment.

<sup>51</sup> Bedichek, Page 287.

<sup>52</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.





1927 One-Act Play  
State Tournament Participants



## 1927-1928

The second year of the One-Act Play Contest began with a questioning editorial by Mr. Bedichek concerning the changes that might be made. He questioned the long distances traveled, the number of participants at each tournament, the sizes of schools in competition, and the plays to be produced.<sup>1</sup> The rules of the Contest were not yet published in the Constitution and Contest Rules of the League, so, Bedichek published a lengthy article outlining proposed rules in the October, 1927, Leaguer. The tentative play was submitted to all interested schools and a “specific” response was requested:

Eligibility of Schools. –Any senior high school that is a member of the League and which has (or can obtain in its home town) stage facilities for presenting a simple one-act play with an auditorium capable of seating at least 200 people comfortable, is eligible to enter this contest.

Eligibility of Contestants. –All members of competing casts must satisfy the general eligibility requirements contained in Article VIII of the Constitution and Contest Rules for other non-athletic contestants, and must not be entered in any other public speaking events of the League during the current year.

Eligible Plays. –The judges shall be instructed to eliminate from consideration in judging a contest:

1. Plays requiring more than forty minutes in presentation.
2. Plays that use other than simple settings, or depend at any point for their appeal upon purely scenic effects.
3. Plays that require more than ten individuals in the cast.
4. Purely farcical plays, or plays predominantly frivolous in tone.

(NOTE. –The judges shall be instructed to grade “the choice of play” in such a way as to give a distinct advantage to casts which exercise good judgment in selecting a play of intrinsic merit. With this safeguard, no prescribed list of plays will be issued.)

Faculty Sponsor. –No cast will be accepted which does not have a duly appointed faculty member as sponsor. This sponsor may be also the coach, or may secure the services of some other person to coach the cast. However, in all dealings with the League, the cast shall be represented by the sponsor.

Royalty Plays. –In case a royalty is used, the school using it is required to pay the royalty. Since in the elimination scheme given below, a school will be required to present its play quite a number of times, this matter should receive serious consideration. Don’t attempt a play you cannot afford.

Eliminations. –For the purposes of this contest, the State shall be divided into two sections, East Texas and West Texas, respectively, the dividing line following approximately the north and south line of the M.K.&T Railroad. When the entries are all in, January 15, the schools

<sup>1</sup> September 1927 Leaguer. Page 2, Col.1, Editorial.

shall be grouped into triangles on the basis of distance and convenience of communication for the first series of eliminations beginning early in February. The winners in each of the triangles shall be again grouped into triangles for the second series of eliminations and so on until championships are decided in each section, one in East Texas and one for West Texas.

City Eliminations. –In city systems of schools with either two or three schools entered a city championship shall be decided first, and winner scheduled to participate in the second series of eliminations: in city systems having more than three schools entered, a city championship shall first be decided, and the winner scheduled in the third series of eliminations.

Triangular Meets. –Schools grouped for eliminations (usually three in each meet) shall be notified and directed to hold a contest by a given date. The authorities of the respective schools shall then arrange a contest in the home auditorium of one of the schools and shall agree upon a competent and unbiased judge. The school entertaining the meet shall charge admission and, after deducting the expenses of the meet, shall pro rate the balance remaining to the visiting schools on the basis of traveling expenses incurred. The results of the meet shall be communicated by prepaid wire to the State Office of the League immediately after the results are known.

State Championship. –The final contest between the East Texas Champion and the West Texas champion shall be arranged by the authorities of the two schools involved. These two schools will be invited to meet at the University of Texas during the annual meet of the League, and the members of the cast, coaches and sponsor, may participate in the apportionate of the rebate fund on the same basis as other qualified delegates and contestants at the State Meet.

Final Date for Entry. –No school will be admitted to this contest whose formal entry blank properly filled out is not received in the State Office by January 15.

Awards. –The State winning cast and the runner-up shall be awarded appropriate trophies, respectively. The three male actors and the three female actors adjudged the best participating in the final contest shall each be awarded a gold medal.

Awards will also be made for each sectional winner and runner-up; i.e., one for each team participating in the semi-finals.<sup>2</sup>

In the “Explanations” of this plan, it was noted that “one judge was prescribed because judges were scarce, it was less expensive, one “good” judge could do a better job than three ordinary judges, and ties could not be tolerated in this contest. The State Office thought three triangular meets would bring East and West to a semi-final meet and any school entering the contest should be willing to hold one of the meets if necessary. It was also stated that Miss Gladys de S. Bates, of the T.C.U. Public Speaking Department would be on the program of The Texas Speech Arts Association Program in November to discuss the contest.

<sup>2</sup> October 1927 Leaguer. Page 4, Col.1.

The anticipated twenty-seven entries in each section with only three playing dates was not realistic. There were over two hundred original entries<sup>3</sup> and one hundred and twenty-nine schools actually participated in the 1928 tournaments.<sup>4</sup> “Specific” responses concerning the new plan were forthcoming. Editor Bedichek published a letter of “constructive criticism” from Mrs. H.D. Thompson of Strawn. She agreed with the use of one judge, but disagreed with the “Eligible Plays” section. Mrs. Thompson questioned the ability of a judge to evaluate “merit” except as a matter of personal taste. She also pointed out that the proposed system of elimination would likely take “five givings” rather than the proposed three and would involve greater travel, expense, and numbers of days out of school than the previous year.<sup>5</sup> As Mr. Bedichek had reported, there was a discussion in the Texas Speech Arts Association’s Houston meeting November 25, 1927, led by Miss Gladys de S. Bates.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Bedichek noted this meeting in Educational Competition:

In the same issue of the Leaguer the program of the November convention of the Texas Speech Arts Association is published. One number on this program provides for a kind of round-table discussion of the “Interscholastic League Theatre Tournament,” led by one of the prominent high-school teachers of dramatics, Miss Gladys De Hichey Bates.<sup>7</sup> In the course of discussion many objections were developed to the “Triangular Meets,” and the resulting pressure on the League to alter the “plan” prevailed.<sup>8</sup>

From this meeting described by Bedichek, specific recommendations were made to the State Executive Committee.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> State Tournament Program, 1928.

<sup>4</sup> State Meet History Book.

<sup>5</sup> November 1927 Leaguer. Page 1, Col.7. “Criticizes League 1-Act Play Plan.”

<sup>6</sup> October 1927 Leaguer. Page 1 (Texas Speech Arts Assoc.)

<sup>7</sup> Explanation of Bates. The State Meets records of the first year indicated that Mrs. Gladys de S. Bates was the director of the second-place play, Suppressed Desires, from San Angelo. She moved to the Department of Speech at Texas Christian University before the following September. Her name is recorded in the State Meet Records as Gladys de S. Bates and the Leaguer published her name at different times as Miss Gladys de S. Bates and Miss Gladys De Hichey Bates.

<sup>8</sup> Bedichek, Page289.

<sup>9</sup> December 1927 Leaguer. Page 4 Col.3. “Many Changes.”

Although the official minutes of the State Executive Committee meetings of November and December do not record this event, the changes made by the State Executive Committee were published in the December, 1927, Leaguer:

For the purpose of this contest, the State shall be divided into two sections – East Texas and West, Texas, respectively – the dividing line following approximately the north and south line of the M.K.T. Railroad. When the entries are all in, March 1, the schools shall be divided into twelve districts, six in East Texas and six in West Texas, in each of which districts there shall be designated a district center, preferably in a higher educational institution, for holding a district tournament to decide district championships. The district winners in each of the respective sections shall then be brought to a central tournament for deciding the two sectional championships. District tournaments shall take place by the first week-end in April, and sectional championships by the third week-end in April. District centers and tournament managers shall be designated by the State executive committee of the League.

(NOTE. –The State Office reserves the right to lessen the number of district tournaments in case there are not enough entries to justify twelve districts' tournaments.)

#### City Eliminations

In the city systems of schools with four or more schools entered and participating, a city championship shall be decided first, and the winner scheduled to participate in the appropriate sectional tournament.

Other minor changes have been made, and the Revised Plan is now printed and is being circulated among high schools. Coaches interested who have not received the Revised Plan dated December 15, should write to the State Office for a copy at once.<sup>10</sup>

The “Eligibility of Schools” rule must have been one of minor changes. The revision eliminated the necessity of having stage facilities in all participating schools and this section of the rule does not appear in subsequent publications of the rules.<sup>11</sup> The February, 1928, the Leaguer indicated that a definite decision had been made in relation to holding the State Tournament at the State Meet in May.<sup>12</sup> The “One-Act Play Folder,” which contained the revised version of the rules was listed in publication lists in the Leaguer, beginning with November, 1927.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> December 1927 Leaguer. Page 4, Col.3. “Many Changes.”

<sup>11</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules. June 8, 1928.

<sup>12</sup> February 1928 Leaguer. Page 1. “Revision.”

<sup>13</sup> November 1927 Leaguer. Page 4, Col.1. “Publications.”



Another item in the “Folder,” or at least in the materials sent to Tournament Managers, was the “Instruction to Judges.” These instructions appeared in the 1928 State Tournament program and could have been the basis for the controversy over the “merit” system of judging plays used in the first year of the One-Act Play Contest:

The judge is instructed that this contest is to decide which cast of the group he is judging produces the most effective performance. Do the characters live their parts? Or do they wait and watch for cues? Is there abandon between the characters? Do they “put it over” creating the illusion in the audience that it is witnessing an actual scene, not mere play-acting? Hamlet’s advice to the players is an excellent guide in judging acting. Approximately, and, of course, percentages in such matters must always be approximate, the judges should give:

Choice of play— 25%

Pantomime— 40%

Diction—35%

This is equivalent to saying that the choice of the play should be given 25%, and the presentation of the play (omitting any consideration of stage setting, or so-called stage-craft) 75%.<sup>14</sup>

There was an added paragraph to these instructions that was not printed in the State Tournament program. It further detailed the responsibilities of the judge:

In considering the “choice of the play”, the judge is instructed to note carefully the paragraph entitled “Eligible Plays” above,<sup>15</sup> and be governed thereby.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most controversial of all the rules, other than the judges’ evaluation of the “merit” of the play, was Article VII, Section 6, which barred students participating in One-Act Play from public speaking contest.<sup>17</sup> Mr. Bedichek did not particularly like this rule because he believed that it was “good policy to engage as many different pupils as possible” in all contest. The reason for the rule was quite practical. The play tournaments were not held at the same place

<sup>14</sup> State Tournament Program, 1928.

<sup>15</sup> See “Eligible Plays” page 16 [\*\*page 14 in the hardcopy.]

<sup>16</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, June 8, 1928. “Instruction to Judges” likely followed the “Rules for the Contest” and “Explanations and Cautions” in the “One-Act Play Folder.” This was the case in the first printing of “One-Act Play Contest” in this issue of the publication.

<sup>17</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, June 8, 1928, page 13.

as the county meets and made it difficult for one person to be at two places at the same time, if he were engaged in both. Bedichek published a letter from Superintendent H.D. Thompson of Strawn because he felt that there was “a good deal of sentiment against the rule.”<sup>18</sup> Mr. Thompson said that the rule was totally unreasonable was penalizing the student and the smaller school. He felt the student should be able to enter the play contest for the training and speech contest points<sup>19</sup> toward the all-around championship of the country.<sup>20</sup>

There were other propaganda and publicity materials that reflected the history of 1927-1928 One-Act Play. Mr. Bedichek made a particularly interesting editorial comment in the February, 1928, Leaguer:

One-Act Play aspirants may still enter, but they should so indicate to the State Office by March 1. This contest touches an entirely new group of students with the inspiration of League contests. Even students who take no interest in public speaking events often turn with enthusiasm to the play. The play's the thing for this type student. It is a contest readily adaptable to any number of contestants. If you have a large group chose [sic] a play with as many as ten characters if you wish. If you have but few pupils, choose a play with a small cast. The winning play in the State Tournament last year had but three characters.<sup>21</sup> No great time is needed for preparation.<sup>22</sup> In some schools, groups present a new play every two weeks. The League State Office will send on request a mimeographed list of plays which have been found to be adapted to high-school needs. If, Mr. Superintendent, you have a teacher in your employ who is capable of coaching dramatics and are not utilizing his or her services in this field, you are overlook a valuable asset.<sup>23</sup>

There are no records in the State Office to help describe all twelve district play tournaments held in 1928. The only available description of one of the districts was a July, 1928,

<sup>18</sup>Sept. 1928 Leaguer. Page 3, Col. 6. “Objects etc.”

<sup>19</sup> Only certain athletic and literary events winners were awarded points that were computed toward an all-around championship of each of the four classes of schools competing in the County Meet. One-Act Play was not one of the point events.

<sup>20</sup> September 1928 Leaguer. Page 3, Col.6 “Objects.”

<sup>21</sup> This is an incorrect statement. The two plays with three characters at the State Tournament were productions of Suppressed Desires and they won second and fourth places.

<sup>22</sup> This writer doubts that Mr. Bedichek really believed this statement. Certainly, no director in the One-Act Play Contest today could possibly agree.

<sup>23</sup> February 1928 Leaguer. Page 2, Col.1. “Editorial.”

article published in The East Texas and re-printed in the September, 1928, Leaguer. This District contest was held at East Texas State Teachers College in Commerce.<sup>24</sup> The article actually covered both the 1927 and 1928 contest and the author thought the 1927 contest was stronger:

This year the group of plays given was not as strong as that of the preceding year. The plays were lighter and gave but little chance for outstanding acting on the part of the individuals; however, the plays as a whole showed efficient coaching on the parts of the directors. One encouraging note in this year's contest is that some of the smaller schools in the State are entering the contests, showing the growth of drama among the schools.<sup>25</sup>

This same article lists the winners as: (1) Trifles given by Cleste, (2) Not Quite Such a Goose given by Pecan Gap, and (3) The Florist's Shop given by Commerce. Bonham awarded first place with The No Count Boy, but was later disqualified because of an ineligible player.<sup>26</sup>

The story of the "Misadventures of The No-Count Boy" was published in the same September issue of the Leaguer. The story sent to the League by Mrs. Bryan Henderson, director of the play, described two automobile accidents and a near miss with a train. Mrs. Henderson was not aware of the ineligible player when she wrote the letter. Mr. Bedichek noted this final irony at the end of the article.<sup>27</sup>

There is a complete description of the "West Texas One-Act Play Tournament" held April 14, 1928, at Howard Payne College in Brownwood. The September, 1928, Leaguer published a re-print of an article in the Texas Speech Arts Magazine, May 15, 1928. The article was written by Antoinette Sparks, probably the Tournament Manager.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The Regional Contest of 1927 and the District Contest of 1928 are essentially the same level contest. They are the first level contest in each case, although there were three levels in 1928.

<sup>25</sup> September, 1928 Leaguer. Page 3, "College Fosters Play Tournament," quoting The East Texas, July, 1928.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> September, 1928 Leaguer. Page 1, "Misadventures of The No-Count Boy."

<sup>28</sup> Her name is listed in an unpublished report of the 1929 Contest as the Manager of the district contest held in Brownwood.

April 14 dawned ill-favorably with a deluge of rain and sleet. This being the day set for the West Texas One-Act Play Tournament, the six participating casts arrived in Brownwood with spirits untouched by the elements. All through the air tingled the excitement of the plays soon to be presented. Each cast confident that their play must win.

At 6:30 o'clock in the Fine Arts Auditorium of Howard Payne College, the contest opened with Comanche High School presenting "Dust of the Road," by Goodman. The play showed careful and meticulous workmanship on the part of the director, Mrs. Walker, and the actor (sic). With the initial play creating an impression so forcibly the way was blazed and challenged for the succeeding plays.

Plainview was second with the "Valiant" and they succeeded in making the conquest of the silver shield. To have seen the presentation and to feel its dramatic power, motivated by the heroic valiant, Mr. Meldo Hankins, is explanation enough why they placed first, not to mention in the background, the untiring little director, Miss Ferguson.

Following this tense play came "Figureheads," a riot of color and rhythm. Weatherford High School was the contestant in the performance and Mrs. Hutchison was their director. Manifestation of beautiful voice and diction, as well as gesture work was the outstanding contribution.

The Tulia cast, Miss Carmack directing, delighted us all with "Not Quite Such a Goose," a buoyancy, freshness and abandon was the keynote of the performance.

Seymour High School placed second with O'Niell's "Where the Cross Is Made." Miss Taylor and her cast revealed to us what depths and emotional powers high-school students might portray.

The curtain parted on the final play of the evening. "Trial," a North Carolina folk play. Brackenridge High School, of San Antonio, with Miss Dickey as director, gave us splendid characterization, atmosphere, and insight into the lives of these queer mountain folk. It was well balanced cast which intelligently and feelingly conducted the spectators through the "Trial" centering around one of the rudimentary principles of life.

Miss Eral (sic) Thompson, of Brownwood, acted as judge. Miss Thompson, who was graduated from Howard Payne College, studied in the American Academy of Dramatic Art in New York and worked with the Carolina Playmakers at the University of North Carolina. Her role was the most difficult of the evening with such amazing odds confronting her. Each play, players and director deserved merit. We are grateful to all who so diligently and with such good "cricket" made the tournament at Howard Payne a success.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>September, 1928 Leaguer, Page 3, quoting Antoinette Sparks, "West Texas One-Act Play Tournament," Texas Speech Arts Magazine, (May 15, 1928).

State Office records do not tell where the East Texas Tournament was held. The Winner of the East Texas One-Act Tournament was Temple with a production of Two Crooks and a Lady by Eugene Pillot, directed by Miss Mary Holsapple.<sup>30</sup>

The program for the State Tournament on Friday evening, May 4, 1928, at 8:00 p.m. at the Austin High School Auditorium, made an explanation of the elimination rules up to the State Finals. The “Judges Instructions” were also printed in the program and audience members were asked to vote as to their opinion of the best play and their choice for members of the all-star cast. Members of the audience from Plainview and Temple were not supposed to vote and each ballot had to be signed with a name and address. The explanation made it clear that the vote would in no way affect the decision of the Judge or the All-Star Cast Selection Committee. The result of the balloting was to be published in the Leaguer.<sup>31</sup>

Plainview’s The Valiant by Hall and Middlemass, directed by Annie Kate Ferguson won the 1928 One-Act Play title. The casts from both Plainview and Temple are pictorially recorded in the March, 1929, Leaguer.<sup>32</sup>

A single judge, Miss Katherine Wheatley, was used to select the winning play, but a committee of three, Professors Gates Thomas, L.E. Derrick, and L.N. Wright, was used to select the all-star cast. Dr. L.W. Payne, Jr. presided at the State Tournament for the second year and Morton Brown, the soon to be first Director of Dramatics for the League, was the Tournament Manager.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> March 1929 Leaguer, Page 4.

<sup>31</sup> As far as I can discover by reading all issues in the Leaguer to date, the results were never published.

<sup>32</sup> Op. Cit. page 4.

<sup>33</sup> State Tournament Program, 1928.

There were fragmentary financial records kept for the 1928 State Contest. The total amount collected was thirty-nine dollars and twenty-five cents. Robert Coltharp, the electrician, was paid three dollars. He was the only member of the 1928 technical staff recorded in any State Office records and the only one paid. The three all-star cast judges were paid nine dollars for expenses and refreshments were provided by Lorena Hillyer at a cost of one dollar and fifty cents. Morton Brown was advanced eight dollars for operation of the box office, but was not paid for managing the contest.<sup>34</sup> Records do not indicate that the expenses of Miss Wheatley, the play judge, were paid.

There were a few other events noted in the Leaguer that reflected the history and influence of the Play Contest. There were cases where play contests were held at County Meets that were not tied to the State Contest. One such case was reported in the January, 1928, Leaguer in a report from Parker County. The report state that the play contest was open “only to students from one- and two-teacher schools.”<sup>35</sup> There were doubtless other contest of this type that made one-act play participation much broader than official records indicate during the 1927-1928 school year.

<sup>34</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, June 8, 1928. Page 88-91.

<sup>35</sup> January 1928 Leaguer. Page 4, “League Busy In Parker County.”

Reduce to 4"



Ask Studio  
Plainview  
Tex.

1928 State One-Act Tournament Champion  
Plainview High School's *The Valiant*

## 1928-1929

It was not until June 8, 1928, that the One Act Play Contest was recorded, with rules, in the Constitution and Contest Rules of the Interscholastic League. In the University of Texas Bulletin No.2822: June 8, 1928, the contest was elevated to a permanent place in League activity. The bulletin justified the contest as follows:

That it is desirable for a community to be able to entertain and instruct itself is granted by everyone. The average American community, especially if we accept the larger centers of population, is more or less deficient in this very important matter. The circus, the carnival, the motion-picture, the Chautauqua and other commercialized forms of entertainment are all imported, and the form they take is necessarily dictated by commercial considerations. Some are good, some bad, some indifferent. They offer no development and little inspiration for the native talent that resides in every community.

For many years, the Interscholastic League has organized interschool competitions among Texas public schools, and through the natural human interest which people have in competitions of all kinds, much wholesome and instructive entertainment has been provided. Public speaking and athletic contests have been successful in enlisting the interest of the school patrons and citizens of the community generally; and these activities have tended to constitute the school a genuine community center.<sup>1</sup>

This justification was first written in 1927 and printed in the Leaguer in the October, 1927, issue along with the "Tentative Plan."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Bedichek identifies himself as the editor of these comments in Education Competition.<sup>3</sup>

There were major changes in the organization and operation of the contest. The following is a composite of all the rule changes taken directly from the Constitution and Contest Rules:

Time-Keeper. –There shall be an official time-keeper for each contest, and in case any play requires more than forty minutes in presentation, the time-keeper shall so notify the judge of the contest.

Faculty Coach. –Only casts with a regular faculty member as coach are eligible to participate.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules. June 8, 1928, U of T Bulletin #2822, Page 55.

<sup>2</sup> October 1927 Leaguer. "UIL OAP Contest," Page 4.

<sup>3</sup> Bedichek, Education Competition

<sup>4</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules. June 8, 1928, U of T Bulletin #2822. Pages 55-56.



This rule eliminated the practice of securing the “services of some other person to coach the cast.”<sup>5</sup>

Eliminations. –There shall be two series of eliminations prior to the State contest (exclusive of city eliminations prior to the State contest (exclusive of city eliminations mentioned below):

1. District eliminations in which schools entered shall be grouped into convenient districts and Tournament Center and Manager designated for the competition.
2. The winners of this first series shall be grouped for four regional contests, and Regional Centers and Managers designated. The four winners in this series shall be eligible to compete in the State Tournament held at the University of Texas during the State Meet.<sup>6</sup>

This plan was essentially the same as the year before, except there were two sections, East and West, rather than the four regions.<sup>7</sup>

City Eliminations. –In city systems of schools with three or more schools entered and participating, a city championship shall be decided first, and the winner scheduled to participate in the appropriate district tournament.<sup>8</sup>

This practice reduced the level of the city tournaments. The previous year, the city tournament was the same level as the district.<sup>9</sup>

Entry and Selection of Play. – Schools desiring to enter this contest must notify the State Office and request an Entry Form. When this is furnished the school shall fill in the information requested thereon and return to the State Office.

Only one school shall be allowed to select any given play. As soon as a given play is selected and the State Office notified of the selection, the play is assigned and further entries of this play shall be denied.

No entries will be accepted after January 8, 1929.<sup>10</sup>

These rules were changed before the play deadline was reached. The Texas Speech Arts Association meeting in San Antonio Friday, November 30, 1928, under the chairmanship of

<sup>5</sup> October 1927 Leaguer. Page 4, “UIL OAP Contest.”

<sup>6</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules. June 8, 1928, Page 56.

<sup>7</sup> December 1927 Leaguer. Page 4, “Many Changes.”

<sup>8</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>9</sup> December 1927 Leaguer. Page 4.

<sup>10</sup> Op. Cit.

Bessie Lee Dickey, passed “A unanimous protest against limitation in the selection of one-act plays.”<sup>11</sup> They explained the action as follows:

Inasmuch as there will be at least 250 entries in the contest it would be impossible to find 250 worthwhile one-act plays, suitable for amateurs. Therefore, even though duplications are bound to occur the coach should be left to his own discretion in the selection of the play which best fits his own needs and material.<sup>12</sup>

The State Executive Committee studied this protest in their December 3 meeting and voted to eliminate “only one school shall be allowed to select any given play” from the rule.<sup>13</sup> In the same December, 1928, Leaguer that reported the “protest” of the Texas Speech Arts Association, the “Official Notices” column noted the elimination of the rule.<sup>14</sup> In the next issue of the Leaguer the “Official Notices” column indicated that the date of entry for member-schools was extended to February 1.<sup>15</sup> These changes returned the deadline and play selection to just about the status of the previous year.

State Championship. –Winners, respectively, of the four regional tournaments above provided are eligible in the final State Championship tournament held in Austin during the State Meet, and may participate in the appointment of the rebate fund on the same basis other qualified [sic] delegates and contestants at the State Meet.<sup>16</sup>

The only change here was the number of regions sending winners to the State Meet.

Those rules governing eligibility of schools, contestants, and plays were kept the same as the 1928 contest. The rule governing the payment of royalty was dropped and the awards rule was retained.<sup>17</sup> The “Explanations and Cautions” were substantially renovated, although the “one judge” prescription was retained. Each play cast was required to bring their own small properties and they were required to “furnish the tournament manager a list of all the heavy properties” ten

<sup>11</sup> “Speech Arts Teachers Request Alteration of League Rules.” Leaguer, December 1928. Page 1.

<sup>12</sup> Same.

<sup>13</sup> Board Volume of the Minutes of Meeting of the State Ex. Comm. December 3, 1928.

<sup>14</sup> December 1928 Leaguer. “Off. Notices.” Page 3.

<sup>15</sup> January 1929 Leaguer. “Off. Notices.” Page 2.

<sup>16</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1928. Pg. 56.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

day's prior the contest.<sup>18</sup> It was necessary to report the name of the play and names of cast members on entry blanks provided by the State Office two weeks before the date of the district tournaments. The "Instruction to Judges" printed in the 1928 State Tournament program was also included in the Constitution and Contest Rules.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult to determine the exact number of schools that participated in the 1929 contest. The State Tournament program<sup>20</sup> and an editorial in the April, 1929, Leaguer<sup>21</sup> say two hundred fifty casts enter the contest. An article, "Big Registration for Play Contest" stated that there were more than two hundred participants and listed the names of two hundred and six.<sup>22</sup> A "List of Entries One-Act Play Tournament – 1929 Arranged by Tournaments" in the State Office History Files listed two hundred and ten participants, but it was noted at the end of the list that "about forty schools entered and later withdrew participation."<sup>23</sup> This leads one to the conclusion that the one hundred seventy-five noted in the State Meet History Book is a relatively accurate figure.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules. Page 56.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 56-57.

<sup>20</sup> State Tournament Program, 1929.

<sup>21</sup> April 1929 Leaguer. Page 2. Editorial.

<sup>22</sup> March 1929 Leaguer. Page 4. "Big Registration for Play Contest."

<sup>23</sup> State Office History Book, February. 1929.

<sup>24</sup> State Meet History Book.

Listed below are the twenty-four District and four Regional Tournaments, the Tournament Managers, and the winners of each tournament:

District Number and Location	Tournament Manager	Winner	Number of Participants
1. Buda	W. E. Marshall	Lockhart	9
2. Edinburg	Katherine Erwin	McAllen	7
3. Kingsville	Mildred Pecaut	Alice	11
4. Yoakum	Nannie Ray Baker	Gonzales	10
5. Houston	Frances Fox	San Jacinto (Houston)	13*
6. Beaumont	Mrs. Ruth G. Francis	Beaumont	5
7. Nacogdoches	Mary J. White	Jacksonville	4
8. Marshall	Julia Garrett	Marshall	7
9. Paris	Hope Ridings	Bonham	7
10. Commerce	Maud Webster	Forney	9
11. Dallas	Mary McCord	Garland	14*
12. Ft. Worth	Prof. W. E. Lockhart	Ft. Worth Central	15
13. Seymour	Nancy Jo Moore	Seymour	7
14. Crowell	Supt. I. T. Graves	Chillicothe	10
15. Canyon	Prof. W. E. Ebckhart	Tulia	15
16. Lobbock	Ina Jo Pendleton	Levelland	16
17. Sweetwater	Arvy F. Eigon	Abilene	10
18. San Angelo	C. H. Kenley	San Angelo	6
19. San Antonio	Miss Jeston Dickey	Brackenridge, San Antonio	6
20. Cisco	H. V. Nigro	Strawn	6
21. Belton	A. P. Thomason	Temple	12
22. Brenham	Arthur Niebuhr	Brenham	6
23. Fort Stockton	Unknown	Fort Stockton	2
24. Brownwood	Antoinette Sparts	Brownwood	8

Regional Tournaments	Tournament Manager	Winner	Number of Participants
1. Denton, College of Industrial Arts	Emory G. Horger	Ft. Worth Central	6
2. San Marcos, Southwest Texas State Teachers College	Prof. John W. Dunn	Brackenridge, San Antonio	6
Abilene, Simmons University	Miss Willie McDonald	Tulia	7
4. Huntsville, Sam Houston State Teachers College	P. M. Kenley	San Jacinto, Houston	5

*1930  
changed  
for 1932*

\*City Tournaments were held in Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, qualifying one cast for the District Tournament. <sup>25</sup>

The number of participants indicated in the above list suggest that it was necessary to hold a preliminary round in more than half the tournaments, although there wasn't a specific rule that

<sup>25</sup> Unpublished "List of Entries One-Act Play Tournament - 1929 Arranged by Tournaments" 1929 OAP History File.

required a preliminary. The contests were still called “Tournaments” and one can safely assume they followed practices established in previous years.<sup>26</sup>

The State Tournament was held in the Austin High School Auditorium Friday, May 3, 1929, during the State Meet. Morton Brown again the Tournament Manager and Dr. L.W. Payne presided. The “Judge of Plays” was James H. Parke, later to be the Chairman of the Department of Drama at the University of Texas, and Lydia M. Kirk was listed as the “Judge of All-Star Cast.” Roy B. Henderson, the League Athletic Director, was listed as the first State Tournament “Official Time-Keeper”.<sup>27</sup>

The 1929 State Tournament program offered this “Explanation” of the One-Act Play Contest:

The third annual One-Act Play Contest of the League has been conducted in a series of tournaments. Two hundred and fifty casts entered the twenty-four district tournaments, and the winners in these districts, respectively, competed in four regional tournaments...

The casts present in this, the State Championship Tournament, are winners in the four regional tournaments. The order in which plays in this tournament are presented was determined by lot.<sup>28</sup>

The financial records of the 1929 One-Act Play State Tournament seem to contradict the State Tournament program. John W. Dunn, Regional Tournament Manager from San Marcos, was paid thirteen dollars for “expenses of five judges from San Marcos.” Undoubtedly these people judged either the plays or the All-star cast. A.H. Evans and Guthrie Taylor were paid for “services” five and six dollars each. Star Engraving Company was paid twenty-four dollars and twenty cents for “One-Act Play medals”. C.A. Dahlich was paid eight dollars and six cents for rental of furniture for the tournament. Morton Brown was paid twenty-five dollars for managing

<sup>26</sup> State Tournament Program, 1927.

<sup>27</sup> State Tournament Program, 1929.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

the contest.<sup>29</sup> Mr. Brown stated that this was the first time he was ever paid for working with the State Tournament or doing other work related to the operation of the One-Act Play Contest.<sup>30</sup>

The League play contest received a generous amount of coverage in the Leaguer during the first four months of the 1928-1929 school year. The program of the “Tenth Annual Interscholastic League Breakfast and Section Meeting,” Friday, November 30, 1928, was published in the September issue. Dr. E.C. Mabie was the main speaker.<sup>31</sup> Mr. Bedichek made a strong editorial plea for attendance at the League Breakfast and made a “pitch” for dramatics at the same time in the October Leaguer.

Public speaking teachers will be interested to know that the League has secured one of the foremost authorities in their field for the principal address at the League Breakfast and Section Meeting, which will be held in the Pan-American Room of the Gunter Hotel, San Antonio, Friday, 7:45 A.M. This is the tenth annual meeting of the League at the Texas State Teachers’ Association meeting, and it is hoped that we shall have a record attendance. Dr. Edward Charles Mabie, Head of the Department of Speech, University of Iowa, will make the address. His subject is “Theater and School.” Not only should public speaking teachers hear this address, but school superintendents and principals as well. The possibilities of dramatics as a high-school activity are not generally appreciated. Some of the more progressive high schools of the State are finding dramatics an effective agency for linking the home more closely to the school. They find this activity attracts certain students who seem to care for no other school activity, and they find that it correlates well with studies in literature...<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Mabie was also noted as the feature attraction at the Speech Arts Association meeting later the same day as the League Breakfast. His topic for this meeting was “A Teacher-Director.”<sup>33</sup> Mr. Bedichek made another editorial comment about Mabie in the December Leaguer in which he pointed out the necessity of selecting “worthwhile” plays. This editorial

<sup>29</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1930 – Check financial statements.

<sup>30</sup> Telephone conversation with M. Brown.

<sup>31</sup> September 1928 Leaguer. Page 1

<sup>32</sup> October 1928 Leaguer. Page 2, Col. 2&3. Ed.

<sup>33</sup> October 1928 Leaguer. Page 1 “Speech Arts Program.”

reflected Bedichek's concern for finding a method of insuring the "presentation of worthwhile plays."<sup>34</sup>

Bedichek published several other editorials during the 1928-1929 school year. One titled "The Play's the Thing" appeared in the October, 1928, Leaguer. The theme of this writing was the idea that play production created community unity.<sup>35</sup> Bedichek advocated "Exchange Programs" between schools, using one-act plays as a means of "good fellowship and community entertainment," in an October Leaguer editorial.<sup>36</sup> He also editorialized concerning play selection in the November Leaguer. The numerous play lists available and those published in the same issue were mentioned. This editorial was written before the play selection rule was changed.<sup>37</sup>

Other articles relating to dramatics and the history of the Contest were published in the Leaguer during the same year. The December Leaguer carried two more lists of plays. One of the lists was the plays produced during the 1928 contest.<sup>38</sup> The March Leaguer "Books and Magazines" column written by Roy Bedichek carried reviews of books of plays and How to Produce Amateur Plays by Barrett H. Clark. The final issue of the year in April carried a letter by Marcia Wells of Cuero that advocated limiting play selection to either comedy or tragedy.<sup>39</sup> This letter was the last Leaguer comment on the 1929 One-Act Play Contest and was to be again advocated in the later years.

<sup>34</sup> December 1928 Leaguer. Page 2, Editorial.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> October 1928, Leaguer. Page 2.

<sup>37</sup> November 1928, Leaguer. Page 2, Col.1 #4.

<sup>38</sup> December 1928 Leaguer. Page 1, "Plays used in 1928."

<sup>39</sup> April 1929 Leaguer. Page 1, "Letter Box and Personal Items."



1929 State One-Act Tournament First Runner-up  
San Antonio Brackenridge High School's  
*Where the Cross is Made*

875



## 1929-1930

There were numerous changes in the second publication of the One-Act Play Contest rules in the Constitution and Contest Rules published for the 1929-1930 year. For the first time the rules followed the same organizational practices used by all other League contests. All of the important changes in the rules were printed in bold-face type and each major rule was numbered for easier reference.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the more important changes were made in Rule 3 “Eligible Plays.” A note was added which explained that the elimination of “Purely farcical plays” did not “exclude comedy”. The note further explained that “high class comedy is better suited to this contest than tragedy.”<sup>2</sup> The most publicized change was Rule 3.e. added under the same rule which stated that “Plays which require the use of a gun or any other firearm in any way” were to be eliminated from consideration. The reason for this rule change was discussed in an editorial by Mr. Bedichek in October 1929 Leaguer “Dangerous Contest.” An accident had occurred in District Tournament No.1 at Buda the preceding April 4. The editorial quoted the following account:

Though still in danger, Benno Neuse, 18-year-old New Braunfels High School boy, seriously wounded in the abdomen by gun wadding during an amateur student play Wednesday at Buda, was holding his own Friday, according to the attending physician.

Young Neuse was enacting a role in a Civil War drama, which was entered in the district meet of the Interscholastic League. His part called for him to drop at the gun shot of a fellow actor. This he did. When the curtain went down it was discovered that he had actually been wounded by gun wadding. It had been thought that the gun was loaded with a blank cartridge.

The boy was rushed to an Austin hospital and operated upon.

The editorial stated that the boy had recovered but that the accident had been a “near-fatality” or a “close call, according to attending physicians.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1929-1930, Page 62.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> October 1929 Leaguer. Page 2 editorial. “Dangerous Contests.”

Rule 3.f. was also added under “Eligible Plays,” which rendered ineligible any play which violated the following rule.

f. Plays that use a curtain at any time during the performance to indicate passage of time, change of scene or for any other purpose. In a strictly one-act play the curtain rises at the beginning and is not lowered until the end.<sup>4</sup>

In each of the “Eligible Plays” rules the judges were responsible for eliminating the play from consideration. This is likely the reason for the addition of a footnote to rule 3.b. which reads “judges are instructed to eliminate from consideration any play that uses other than simple setting, or that depends at any point for its appeal upon scenic effects.”

\*Some coaches seem to delight in taking a “sporting chance” on this rule, choosing a play which runs as close to the line as possible. A coach who takes such a chance should not complain if the judges choose to rule the play out.<sup>5</sup>

J.R. Burton, Director of Dramatics at Austin High School, responded to this rule in an article in Player’s Magazine.

A colored light, a lighted candle, or a decided change in scenery often leads to a contention which League officials are called upon to settle, no matter how simple the effect secured may have been. The rule is followed, however, because the League officials insist that it places all schools on an equal footing in the contest, although it does much to hamper originality and effectiveness in production and eliminates many worthwhile plays from the contest.<sup>6</sup>

There was a minor change in Rule 6.b. Eliminations. The State Tournament date was set as “Thursday, 8 P.M., May 1, 1930.” This date was later changed to May 2. Under Rule 7 City Eliminations the city champion was to compete “in the appropriate district tournament.”<sup>7</sup> The “Official Notices” column of the September, 1929, Leaguer noted a change in this rule.

City winners under this rule are allowed to participate in the Regional Contest, not required to enter the district tournament. In the last line of Rule 7, read “Regional” for “District”.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1930, Page 62-63.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Page 62.

<sup>6</sup> J.R. Burton, “Texas One-Act Play Tournament.” Player’s Magazine. Jan-Feb, 1931. Pg. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Op. Cit., Page 63.

<sup>8</sup> September 1929 Leaguer. Page 3, “Official Notices.”

The last day to enter the contest was changed from January 8 to “February 1, 1930” in Rule 8.

Entry and Selection of Play.<sup>9</sup>

The remaining changes made in the One-Act Play Contest rules for this contest year were of major importance to the operation of the contest. Parts of the rules had appeared before, but most of the organization and operation of the contest that appeared in Rules 10 through 14 were new to the contest.

10. Judges.— One, three, or other odd number of judges may be used in judging one-act play contests, the number and selection being left to the discretion of the Manager. It is unwise to select judges who are citizens of the home town of any cast in the competition.

11. Penalty for Non-appearance.— A deposit of five dollars is required of each cast entering any district tournament to be sent to the Tournament Manager at the time the entry-notice is sent in. If the cast appears, the deposit shall be returned to the cast making it; but if the cast fails to appear, the deposit shall be forfeited and counted in with the receipts of the tournament.

12. Receipts of the Tournament.— An admission free shall be charged to district tournaments performances and the proceeds used to defray the expenses of the tournament. The remainder, if any, shall be pro-rated to the more distant terms on the basis used in determining rebates to the State Meet, for which see Article XIII of the Constitution and Rules.

13. List of Properties.— It is very important that each school entering a district tournament give the Manager thereof a complete list of heavy properties needed.

(Note.— Coaches should not be unreasonable in their demands for properties. One Tournament Manager writes: “One school listed an extra piano to be placed in a living room. The only use made of this was when a character desired to express anger she ‘banged’ on it once.”)

14. List of Plays.— A list of plays is mimeographed and furnished member-schools upon request. The fact that a play appears on this list, however, does not assure its eligibility. A play must as presented conform to requirements above set forth. Note also lists of plays appearing in the Leaguer from time to time.<sup>10</sup>

The first list published after the publishing of these rules was by Morton Brown, the League’s new Director of Dramatics, in the February, 1930, Leaguer under the title of “The Teacher’s Guide to Good Plays.”<sup>11</sup> This practice continued, under the same title, until the late 1950’s.

<sup>9</sup> Op. Cit. Page 63

<sup>10</sup>Op. Cit. Pages 63-64.

<sup>11</sup> February 1930 Leaguer. Page 3, “Guide.”

The structure of the District and Regional contest were much the same for the 1930 contest as they had been for 1929. The State Meet program noted that the contest had “been conducted in a series of twenty-nine district tournaments,”<sup>12</sup> but the Leaguer notes only the addition of districts up to No. 26. The February, 1930, Leaguer published these changes:

One-Act Play District Tournament Center No. 11 has been moved to College of Industrial Arts, Denton, with Emory G. Horger as Tournament Manager. One-Act Play District Tournament No. 8 has been moved from Marshall to Longview with Supt. H.L. Foster as Tournament Manager.

A new One-Act Play District Tournament has been established (No. 26) at Pearshall with Supt. George P. Baron as Tournament Manager.<sup>13</sup>

District No. 25 at Plainview with President G.W. McDonald, Wayland College, had been added in the first publication of “One-Act Play District Tournament Managers and Centers—1930” in the 1930 Constitution and Contest Rules.<sup>14</sup> The only other recorded change in district operation was in District Tournament No. 20, at Cisco, where Principal L.H. Hartsfield was made Tournament Manager instead of H.V. Nigro.<sup>15</sup> The three additional tournaments indicated in the State Meet program were probably City Tournaments held in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston. These tournaments were the same level as the district, since they were allowed to go directly to the regional level. San Antonio would not be added to this category because they were already organized into District No. 19.<sup>16</sup>

There are no records of the District winners of the 1930 contest. Over three hundred schools probably entered the contest<sup>17</sup> and approximately two hundred and seventy-five participated.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> State Tournament Program, 1930.

<sup>13</sup> February 1930 Leaguer. Page 3, “Changes in District Organizations.”

<sup>14</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1930. Appendix VIII, Page 119.

<sup>15</sup> March 1930 Leaguer. Page 4, “Changes in District Organizations.”

<sup>16</sup> Op. Cit., page 119 [#3 in hardcopy].

<sup>17</sup> Players Magazine, 1931. Jan.-Feb., Pages 7. J.R.

<sup>18</sup> State Meet History Book.

The Regional Meets were held in the same manner and in the same locations as the previous year. The Regional Tournaments and winners were: Denton—Terrell, with The Finger of God by Percival Wild, directed by Mrs. Eleanor Tartt Wood; San Marcos—Austin, with El Cristo by Margaret Larkin, directed by James R. Burton; Abilene—Abilene, with The High Heart by Adelaide C. Roswell, directed by J.H. Williams; Huntsville—West Columbia with Pink and Patches by Margaret Bland, directed by Miss Naomi Hunt.<sup>19</sup>

The State Tournament was held in the Austin High School Auditorium Friday, May 2, 1930, with the above mentioned schools participating. Morton Brown, now the Director of Dramatics for the League, was again the Manager and Dr. L.W. Payne, Professor of English at the University of Texas, presided for his third and final year. The “Judge of Plays” was Dr. C.M. Wise, Professor of Dramatics, University of Louisiana and the “Judge of All-Star Cast” was Dr. J.B. Wharey, Professor of English, The University of Texas.<sup>20</sup>

Abilene won first place and West Columbia placed second in the 1930 State Tournament. Each of the four participating casts had at least one member on the All-Star Cast. Girard Kinney of Austin High School won the Samuel French Award<sup>21</sup>, which was given for the first time, for his performance in El Cristo as Jose Valdez, a young Mexican.<sup>22</sup>

The quality of the State Tournament was described by Dr. Wise, head of the Speech Department of Louisiana State University, when he wrote Mr. Roy Bedichek as follows:

In connection with what I said about the League, I should like to add that I was very favorably impressed with the quality of the acting in the four plays I saw. In each of the four productions, there was one actor, and sometimes as many as two or three, whose

<sup>19</sup> State Meet Program, 1930.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Although the State Meet program indicated that the Shield and the Samuel French Medal went to the winner, the Samuel French medal went to the actor who was judged as “giving the most finished performance in the tournament.” Player’s Magazine, 1931. Jan-Feb.

<sup>22</sup> State Meet History Book.

work, while retaining all of the verve and enthusiasm of the amateur, still would have stood up entirely favorably beside the performance of professionals.

It is gratifying to note that each play was a good piece of literature. It is entirely impossible to measure the beneficial influence toward choosing good literature instead of cheap and trashy literature, that is sure to result from you contest series.

I hope that your work may go on through long and successful years. I hope too that your state may presently find a way of following the example of Missouri, North Carolina, and other states in getting dramatics, debating, interpretative reading, and other speech subjects into the state course of study. As soon as students may earn regular credit for this very valuable sort of work, high schools will become justified in employing special dramatic teachers, whereupon the quality of the work will improve by leaps and bounds.

I returned yesterday from Mississippi, where I had the opportunity, in some public addresses, to tell of your organization. I have reasons to believe that your example will do them a great deal of good.<sup>23</sup>

From all accounts, Mr. Bedichek himself was highly enthusiastic over the improvement in play choice and acting since the first year of the contest.<sup>24</sup>

The financial records of the League show that Dr. Wise was paid sixty dollars, advanced by Mr. Bedichek, to judge the Fourth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament. These same records list the personnel used to operate the contest and the amount each group was paid. The "Ticket Takers": Joseph Malouf, J.W. White, J.C. Jackson, J.H. St. Clair, and Eugene Forrest were paid seven dollars and fifty cents. The "Ticket Sellers," Elsie Trenchkman and Nellie Brown, were paid five dollars and fifty cents. The "Stage" crew: Carl Ellis, J.W. Haskell, Fred Meredith, and Horace Akin were paid eleven dollars and fifty cents. The only other item of cost listed in the financial records was a sum of three dollars paid to T.H. Fagan for "Drayage."<sup>25</sup>

This was the first year that the contest production staff was paid as a group. In previous years a few key people were paid, but most were volunteers. The One-Act Play receipts of one hundred thirty dollars and seventy-five cents<sup>26</sup> may have had something to do with the change in

<sup>23</sup> September 1930 Leaguer. Page 4, Vol. VIV, No.1. "Noted Authority Commands League."

<sup>24</sup> Player's Magazine, Jan-Feb 1931. Note in office & conversations with M. Brown.

<sup>25</sup> Constitution & Contest Rules, 1930-1931. Page 100.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Page 99.

operation, or it may have been simply necessity. The major increase in total receipts over previous years was likely due to the participation of Austin High School in the 1930 State play contest.

As in previous years, there were a few one-act play contests that were not a part of the State competition. Mr. Bedichek published a report of such a contest taken from the Stratford Star.

The one-act play contests arranged and sponsored by the Sherman County Interscholastic League will be held in the Stratford High School Auditorium, Friday night, at 7:30 o'clock.

At least three and possibly four of the rural schools will present plays in the contest. Stratford will have two teams, one elementary and one high school, which were to have competed with the Texhoma teams. However, the Texhoma teams cannot be here on account of their school having been closed for a short time, so the Stratford teams will not have any competition. But don't let that keep any away. They have some snappy little plays that are absolutely good.

The rural schools will have live competition, and they have something to compete for. The League is presenting the winner each contest a beautiful cup to be held by that school for one year and the first school in each class to win the cup give times will keep it as a permanent trophy.

You certainly cannot afford to miss this play contest. It will be funny, variable, and long enough but not a dull minute. Come and boost for your favorite team.<sup>27</sup>

There were a few other mentions in the Leaguer that related to the promotion of the One-Act Play Contest or dramatics in general. The October 1929, Leaguer published the "Speech Arts Program" which listed a speech by Miss Wilhelmina Hedde of Sunset High School of Dallas titled, "The Next Steps in High School Dramatics."<sup>28</sup> "The Value of the One-Act Play" by W.E. Marshall, the Principal of Buna High School, was published in a very prominent position on the front page of the January, 1930, Leaguer. This article deals in detail with the literary value of

<sup>27</sup> December 1929 Leaguer. Page 4, "Sherman County Arranges County 1-Act Play Contest."

<sup>28</sup> October 1929 Leaguer. Page 1.

the one-act play and describes Mr. Marshall's accomplishments in creating interest in the one-act play form and the one-act play contest in Buna.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to "The Teacher's Guide to Good Plays" published by Morton Brown in the February, March and April Leaguers, a list of "Fifty One-Act Plays" recommended by Joh F. Baird was published in the April Leaguer. This list was originally published by Northwestern University and was directed toward high school groups interested in plays.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Brown also reviewed The Gateway Series of Tested Plays edited by C.M. Wise, 1930 State Meet judge, in the November, 1929, Leaguer.<sup>31</sup> The problem of play selection was of major concern in any discussion of the One-Act Play contest. This problem was the first to be attacked by Morton Brown, even before he was employed by the League. The addition of the "Teacher's Guide to Good Plays" in the Spring of 1930 was an attempt to solve the problem, but it was undertaken after months of writing publishers and reading individual plays and evaluating anthologies.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that the majority of the works reviewed by Mr. Brown in the first three columns were volumes of one-acts, but the first item in the first column, February, 1930, was a review of The Valiant by Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemass. This play was reviewed as "Hokum, but good theatre."<sup>33</sup> The Valiant, which began its career in the 1927 contest and won the 1928 State Meet, has been one of the most often produced plays and one of the most frequent winners of Interscholastic League One-Act Play Contests.

The argument concerning the "One Event Rule" continued through the 1929-1930 school year. In the November, 1929, Leaguer, a letter from Dona Hardin, of Groom High School, was

<sup>29</sup> January 1930 Leaguer. Page 1, "The Value of the One-Act Play."

<sup>30</sup> April 1930 Leaguer. Page 3.

<sup>31</sup> November 1929 Leaguer. Page 3, "Books & Magazines."

<sup>32</sup> Telephone conversation with M. Brown. Thursday August 9, 1969.

<sup>33</sup> February 1930 Leaguer. Page 3.



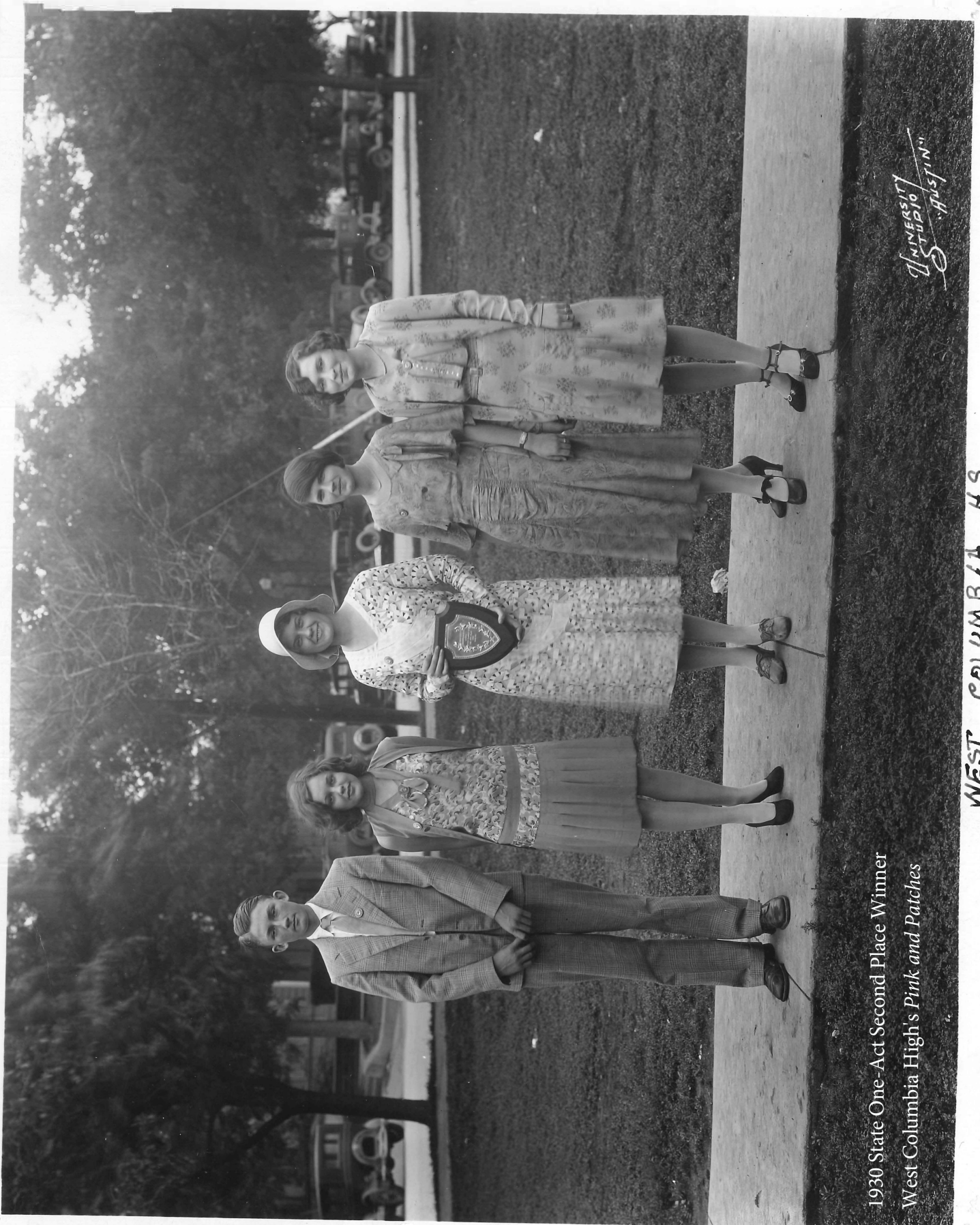
published. It was similar to letters published previously and received the same stock answer. Mr. Bedichek noted that the play tournaments and other events took place at the same time and at different places, which meant that the rule would have to stay as it was.<sup>34</sup> Another similar article was published in April, 1930, Leaguer, but a slightly different answer was given. Mr. Bedichek indicated a change was possible.

However, with the new arrangement in debate, it is possible to allow debaters eliminated from participation in the county meets to enter declamation or extemporaneous speech, or the one-act play. The present arrangement provides for a round-robin conducted before the county meet and allows the two teams having the highest percentage to participate in the final county championship debate at the county meet. There is possibly little objection to allowing teams thus eliminated before the county meet to participate in some other public speaking event at the county meet.

In a note at the end of this article, Mr. Bedichek suggested that someone present this matter to the State Meeting of Delegates in Austin, May, 3.<sup>35</sup> Although the One-Act Play Contest was organized and conducted independently of any other contest or meet of the League, except at the State Meet, it was still looked upon as one of the speech contests. This rule and the attitude were not to be long tolerated.

<sup>34</sup> November 1929 Leaguer.

<sup>35</sup> April 1930 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4, "One Event limit Rule attacked."



1930 State One-Act Second Place Winner  
West Columbia High's Pink and Patches

UNIVERSITY  
STUDIO  
"Austin"

WEST COLUMBIA H.S.

## 1930-1931

Morton Brown was now the Director of Drama for the League, beginning his first full year in the State Office. Mr. Brown was employed in January, 1930, by the Extension Division, Extension Loan Library, but it was associated with the Interscholastic League Bureau with the title of Director of Dramatics to work with the State One-Act Play Contest. His responsibility to the Library was to revive a service that started as early as 1923, but was allowed to drop from lack of funds. The operation was instituted to give aid to schools and communities in the matter of play selection. The first account of Mr. Brown's responsibilities and the library operation was published in the September, 1930, Leaguer.

With more than 1,200 titles in the Extension Loan Library, the one-act play department of the University of Texas Interscholastic League has begun the year's work. This year is the first time a play loan service has been offered to the schools in cooperation with the Extension Loan Library, to which application for the service should be made. This service will make it possible for schools intending to participate in this event to secure plays for examination and selection without having to order and pay for a large number of pieces.

These plays are not to be used for rehearsals, but any school may secure as many different plays from the Loan Library as necessary in order to find one suitable for presentation. Plays are loaned for a period of one week. When one has been selected, it may be ordered from the publisher. The service is in charge of Morton Brown, for years a member of the American Laboratory theatre group of New York. Mr. Brown has been in Austin for several years and has superintended the final contest in the one-act play event for the League for the past three years...<sup>1</sup>

Largely due to Mr. Brown's efforts, prior to his official employment<sup>2</sup>, a large number of plays were added to the library before the above article was published and two hundred and ninety-one groups of plays, made up of 1,740 individual plays, were circulated during the 1930 contest year.<sup>3</sup> This service has continued since that time.

<sup>1</sup> September 1936 Leaguer. Page 4, "Library Offers New Loan Services."

<sup>2</sup> Telephone conversation with M. Brown August 9, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> October 1930 Leaguer. Page 3, "Extension Loan Library."

Few rules changes were adopted for the 1931 One-Act Play Contest. The change that had been suggested by Mr. Bedichek that would allow debaters “who lose in preliminaries previous to the county meet” to compete in One-Act Play or other speech contest was adopted.<sup>4</sup> Rule 3.g. was added to the “Eligible Plays” rule. The plays that appeared in the previous State Tournament were “barred for one year.” The plays that were declared ineligible for the 1930 contest for that reason were El Cristo, The High Heart, The Finger of God, and Pink and Patches.<sup>5</sup> The only other change in the 1930-1931 Constitution and Contest Rules was in the date for the State Tournament. The date set was “Thursday, 8 P.M., May 7, 1931”<sup>6</sup>, but the contest was held on Friday, May 8.<sup>7</sup>

The only rule change during the progress of the year was Rule 5. “Faculty Coach.” The “Official Notices” column of the January, 1931, Leaguer published the following interpretation.

Rule 5, p.62, “faculty coach” is complied with provided the School Board by formal action designates a person to be a dramatic coach. Such formal designation by the School Board constitutes the person so designated as a “regular faculty member” and a cast coached by such person is eligible to compete.<sup>8</sup>

There is no indication of the reason for this change in the Leaguer or the records of the State Office.

No other rules changes were made during this year, although there was still much discussion of the limitation of a student to one contest in public speaking, which included one-act play. Mr. Monte Draper, speech teacher at Childress, pointed out one of the obvious flaws in the rule in a letter to the Editor published in the September, 1930, Leaguer. He clearly pointed to the

<sup>4</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1930-1931, Page 61.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Page 62.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> April 1930 Leaguer. Page 1, Gen. Program.

<sup>8</sup> January 1931 Leaguer. Page 3, “Off. Notices.”

lack of conflict in public speaking events and the One-Act Play contests in many districts.<sup>9</sup> The rule relating to judges received some attention during the 1930-1931 school year and those that proposed use of three or more judges in the One-Act Play contest were heard. Miss Jeston Dickey was one of the major influences in the action. Mr. Bedichek published the following comment in the editorial column of the Leaguer:

At the state meeting of delegates in May, Miss Jeston Dickey, of Brackenridge High School, San Antonio, offered the following motion, which was not discussed or posed upon, owing to the lateness of the Hour:

“Moved that as many as three judges be required in all public-speaking events in the League, including the one-act play contest.”

How many public-speaking coaches in the League think this would be a good rule? Please send in your opinion in publishable form to the Leaguer<sup>10</sup>.

The response was likely not great enough to warrant space in the columns of the Leaguer. Mr. Bedichek failed to further air the proposal in subsequent issues of the Leaguer during the 1931 contest year. However, enough agreement with the idea was found so that the State Meet had five judges instead of the single critic used for the past three years.<sup>11</sup>

The rules still prescribed a mimeographed “list of plays” published by the State Office and furnished member-schools upon request. The rule noted “also lists of plays appearing in the Leaguer from time to time.”<sup>12</sup> This list of “One-Act Plays Adapted to High School Production” was compiled by Morton Brown and was published October 1, 1930. Over one hundred and sixty plays were listed, with almost one hundred marked with an asterisk, which indicated they were available for loan from the Extension Loan Library. It was clearly indicated that the list was not “prescribed” but “merely suggested” and that the plays on the list were not necessarily eligible

<sup>9</sup> September 1930 Leaguer. “Letterbox.”

<sup>10</sup> September 1930 Leaguer. Page 1, Editorial.

<sup>11</sup> State Tournament Program, 1931.

<sup>12</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931. Page 63.

for contest.<sup>13</sup> The same type of caution appeared at the beginning of each of the “Teacher’s Guide” columns. Roy Bedichek offered this foreword to the first play list compiled by Morton Brown.

Lively interest has been shown by high schools throughout the State in the Interscholastic League One-Act Play Contest. Last school year more than three hundred schools participated. Indeed, the work has grown to such proportions that the League, in cooperation with the Extension Loan Library, has employed one person who gives his entire time to this work. This position is filled by Mr. Morton Brown who has devoted many years to dramatics both as an actor and as a director. For three years, he was a member of the American Laboratory Theatre group in New York, played many difficult roles there and appeared in more than a thousand different performances. He directed the Curtain Club at the University of Texas, and was for a number of years connected with the Austin Little Theater. High School directors are invited to discuss their problems by correspondence with Mr. Brown...<sup>14</sup>

Morton Brown’s article, “List of One-Act Plays Now Ready,” made the following comments concerning the List and the Extension Loan Library:

A list of one-act plays adapted to high school production has recently been compiled by the League Bureau, a mimeographed copy of which will be sent free to the director of any school entering the one-act play contest.

The League has always stood for fine plays. If you know of plays that should be on our list write in that we may add them. And if you think that some of the plays on our list should not be included write us that, too, and why. Many of the plays included are slight, but we have tried to include plays that are easy to do and well within the range of actors not yet ready for more difficult things.

If teachers and directors will write us of plays they think should be included in the play collection in the Extension Loan Library, we shall try to acquire them as rapidly as possible. Plays recommended need not necessarily be confined to those adapted to high-school production. Let’s have the best traveling play collection in the country.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Brown continues to write “The Teacher’s Guide to Good Plays” column in each of the Leaguer issues, September through April. This column included, not only plays of all descriptions, but production books on every aspect of theatrical production. The “Guide” was conducted as a brief review of each play or book listed. In addition to this column, other play

<sup>13</sup> “OAPs Adapted to H.S. production.” Compiled by Morton Brown. Memo. October 1, 1930.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> October 1930 Leaguer. Page 1, “List of One-Act Plays Now Ready” By Morton Brown.

lists were occasionally published. On the front page of the December, 1930, Leaguer an article titled “Eleven Actable One-Act Plays Are Here Listed” by Morton Brown, reviewed eleven plays published by Samuel French because they were “especially suited to amateur production and actable, in addition to affording a wide range in choice.”<sup>16</sup> Another list of five plays, suitable for contest by the Walton H. Baker Company, was reviewed by Brown in the February, 1931, Leaguer. Mr. Brown also published a detailed review, “Among Drama Magazines,” of all of the major theatre magazines being published.<sup>17</sup>

The popularity of the new play loan service was reflected in the “Extension Loan Library” column of the December, 1930, Leaguer. It noted that in three months “230 groups of plays were sent out.”<sup>18</sup> Mr. J.R. Burton, director at Austin High School, said that the popularity of the play service could be judged by “one glance at the daily correspondence that comes to Mr. Brown’s desk.”<sup>19</sup>

The organization and operation of the 1931 contest followed the same structure as the previous year. There were still twenty-six districts and four regions prior to the State Meet. The only changes made in the 1931 listing of “One-Act Play District Tournament Managers and Centers” were in the Managers of about six of the districts. The “Regional Tournament Managers and Centers” remained the same.<sup>20</sup>

The State Meet History book records three hundred and thirty-seven schools as having entered the contest.<sup>21</sup> The only other records in the State Office simply indicate that district

<sup>16</sup> December 1930 Leaguer. Page 1, “Eleven Actable One-Act Plays Are Here Listed” By Morton Brown.

<sup>17</sup> March 1931 Leaguer. Page 3, “Among Drama Magazines” By Morton Brown.

<sup>18</sup> December 1930. Leaguer. Page 2, “Extension Loan Library.”

<sup>19</sup> Player’s Magazine, 1931. Jan.-Feb. Page 7, “Texas One-Act Play Tournament.” By J.R. Burton.

<sup>20</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931. Page 120-121, “Appendix VII.”

<sup>21</sup> State Meet History Book.

tournaments were held prior to the regional tournaments. All of the accounts of these tournaments were similar to a brief article in the April, 1931, Leaguer.

With over three hundred schools entered the State One-Act Play Tournament approaches the finals of its fifth annual contest. After a series of eliminations, the four winners of the regional contests enter the finals held in Austin during the State Meet.<sup>22</sup>

The State Meet program described the sequence of development of the contest.

Each of the casts appearing on this program has qualified for this, the final State tournament, by willing first, in a district, next, in a regional tournament to which only district winners were admitted.<sup>23</sup>

By virtue of the State Meet Program and the Constitution and Contest Rules, the winners of each of the regional meets can be determined. The winner of the Region No. 1, held at Texas State College for Women in Denton, was the Polytechnic High School, Fort Worth, with Thursday Evening by Christopher Morely, directed by Margaret Cameron. The winner of Region No. 2, held at Simmons University in Abilene, was Plainview with Submerged by Cottman and Shaw, directed by Eppie Irons. The winner of Region No. 3, held at Southwest Texas State Teachers' College in San Marcos, was Austin High School, Austin, with Casualties by Martin Flavin, directed by J.R. Burton. The winner of Region No. 4, held at Sam Houston State Teachers' College in Huntsville, was Jacksonville with Submerged by Cottman and Shaw, directed by Zula Holcomb.<sup>24</sup>

The four Regional Tournament winners met in the Fifth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament in the Austin High School Auditorium Thursday, May 7, 1931. Morton Brown continued to be the Manager of the State Tournament. A panel of judges was used for the first

<sup>22</sup> April 1931 Leaguer. Page 3, "300 High Schools in Play Contest."

<sup>23</sup> State Meet Program, 1931.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. [ C&CR 1931, page 121. Explanation: The State Tournament program and the State Meet History Book list B.R. Mathews as the director the Jacksonville play. The director was Zula Holcomb, later Pierson. Mr. Mathews was the school principal. Corrected copies of the program and news reports of the contest support Mrs. Pierson as director.]



time since 1927, the first year of the contest. The judges for the selection of the winning plays were Mrs. Gertrude Hill Styles, Houston; L.W. Payne, Jr., University of Texas; Maude Webster, East Texas State Teachers College; Earnest Hardin, Southwestern University; and Emory Horger, College of Industrial Arts. The judge for the “All-star cast selection and best individual acting” was J.B. Wharey, University of Texas.<sup>25</sup>

Although there were only two awards listed for the play winners of the 1931 contest in the State Tournament program<sup>26</sup>, there were three winners recorded in the State Meet History book. The winners were Austin, Polytechnic (Fort Worth), and Jacksonville.<sup>27</sup> The October, 1931, Leaguer published an account of the State Tournament.

In the finals held during the State Meet in Austin on the evening of May 7, Austin won first place with Fort Worth second. This year for the first time since 1927 two schools entered the finals with the same play. Places on the program were drawn by lot and it happened that one "Submerged" followed the other, giving opportunity for an interesting comparison between the two productions. Unusual too was the fact that of the nineteen actors engaged only four were girls. Two casts were made up of all boys, one cast used one girl only, and one cast used three girls and one boy, resulting in considerable competition among the boys for place on the all-star cast. Harry Garner of Austin was awarded the Samuel French medal for the best individual acting; the all-star cast being as follows: girls—Margaret Dickson and Ophelia Lobdell, Fort Worth, and Wheeler Lyon, Austin; boys—Ferdinand Dawson, Jacksonville, and Harry Garner and Maurice Weed of Austin. Increase in interest in this event continues from year to year but possibly the most noteworthy thing about the contest has been the steady growth in the quality of acting and finish in the productions offered.<sup>28</sup>

A production picture of the Austin High School cast was published in the September, 1931, Leaguer.<sup>29</sup> This was a rare occasion for the Leaguer, since the last such publication was of the winners of the 1928 contest.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> State Meet Program, 1931.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> State Meet History Book.

<sup>28</sup> October 1931 Leaguer. “Boys Predominate in Play Contest.”

<sup>29</sup> September 1931 Leaguer. Page 3 (Picture)

<sup>30</sup> March 1929 Leaguer. Page 4.

The general operation of the 1931 State Tournament was recorded in the instructions given by Morton Brown to Joe Malouf, the House Manager. These notes are the earliest remaining records of the operations of the contest under his supervision and offers some insight into the organization of the State Tournament Staff under his control.

Five single seats were reserved for the judges and a sealed envelope with the judge's instructions and the ballot was given to each judge upon his arrival. Two single seats were reserved for Dr. Wharey, judge of the all-star cast. At the conclusion of the last play, each judge prepared his decision and held up his ballot. The ballots were collected, three by Mr. Malouf and three by Mr. Scott, and delivered to Mr. Brown in Mr. Wells' office.

Mr. Zack Scott was the head usher and directed the activities of all the other ushers. Each house member was instructed to admit "no one" while any play was in progress. The intermission at the end of the first play was not long enough for anyone to go out, but late comers were seated at the same time. The intermission at the end of the second and third plays was longer because some change in scenery was necessary. The intermissions were kept as short as possible. The doorkeepers instructed all passing out during these intermissions that the time would be very short. Students from the School for the Blind were allowed free admission and were seated in the balcony.

Each director was advised to have their cast in readiness and that the curtain would not be held. Unless each was ready to go on in their proper order, they were to be ruled out of the contest. Directors were told to have their cast ready well ahead of time in case the cast coming before them was ruled out for non-appearance. If they were not ready, they also would be ruled out and the next cast in order would be called. The directors were instructed to confer with the State Manager during the afternoon as to lighting, curtain cues, etc.

The Stage Manager was instructed to make sure all judges were seated before the start of the contest. The House Manager reported this information to the Stage Manager in order to avoid a mistake. A stage doorman was used for the backstage area. Specific instructions were issued to “not use a high school man for this job or the job of the ticket taker.” A policeman, Officer Kullenberg, was on duty in the building during the contest and another officer was on the grounds outside.<sup>31</sup>

The payroll records of the 1931 State Tournament indicate that, except the Ushers, all members of the State Tournament Staff were paid for their services. The total personnel cost for the State tournament was thirty-six dollars and fifty cents. Seven dollars and forty-seven cents was paid for furniture rental and materials used during the State Tournament and the expenses of the panel of judges, excluding E.W. Payne, totaled fifty-five dollars and eight-seven cents.<sup>32</sup> The 1931 League Financial Statement shows one hundred eleven dollars and twenty-five cents as One-Act Play Receipts.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to Morton Brown and the above mentioned, Joe Malouf and Zack Scott, the State Tournament Program lists six ushers; Billy Margaret Starnes, Rosalie Stern, Mary Alice Simmons, Rose Alice Roberts, Grace Jones, and Jessie Mary Ramsey. The Stage Manager was Elmer Gustafson and the Electrician was Robert Colthorp. The program also lists the Stage Crew as Carrol Lusk, Ed Gault, and Forrest Adrian<sup>34</sup>, but omitted Oscar Thompson who was added in State Office copies of the program and was listed on the payroll.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> History files, 1931. Notes to Mr. Maloaf, House Manager.

<sup>32</sup> History files, 1931. Payroll.

<sup>33</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931-1932 Revision. Appendix I. Financial Statement. September 1, 1930-31. Pg. 104.

<sup>34</sup> State Meet Program, 1931.

<sup>35</sup> History files, payroll.

In addition to the State Tournament Staff listed in the program, there were several other staff members listed in the financial records of the League. Joe Okies, Michael Okies, J. Claud Jackson, and J. Harris St. Clair were employed as doorkeepers. Miss Frances Martin and Miss Nellie Les Brown were paid as ticket sellers. John Garcia was paid four dollars for drayage and carpenter work and T.H. Heaton, janitor at Austin High School, was paid five dollars, the highest sum paid to any one individual.<sup>36</sup>

The pages of the Leaguer held several other articles of note during the 1930-1931 school year. The October Leaguer ran a reprint from the October, 1930, Theatre Magazine titled “The Little Theatre of the Last Frontier Carries On.” This article described the operation of a community theatre in Texas with its membership drawn from the seventy-five mile length of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The organization was composed of over a dozen local units with a board consisting of a representative from each. Mrs. Katherine Oliver McCoy, director, guided this organization through twenty-six performances in twenty-six high school auditoriums during its first year.<sup>37</sup>

The October Leaguer also carried an excellent article by Katherine Ommanney, taken from the Denver (Colo.) Public School Bulletin, Vol. III, No.7. This two-column article dealt with the use of drama in our educational system and a philosophy of education theatre.<sup>38</sup>

The February, 1931, Leaguer reviewed a scholarly translation of the text of the Oberammergau Passion Play and told the history of the play.<sup>39</sup> The March issue carried an editorial “pitch” for J.R. Burton’s article published in the January-February issue of Players

<sup>36</sup> History files, 1931. Payroll. (Also: Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931.)

<sup>37</sup> October 1930 Leaguer. Page 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> February 1931 Leaguer. Page 3.

Magazine.<sup>40</sup> The last two propaganda articles published during this school year appeared on the front page in the April, 1931, Leaguer. The first article, "School Presents Drama Week Play," was a description of the tactics used by Miss Jeston Dickey to interest the people of San Antonio in plays.<sup>41</sup> The second article, "Takes Leaf From Movie Notebook," was written by Morton Brown and was a description of the motion picture device used by J.R. Burton, Director of Dramatics at Austin High School, to publicize productions.<sup>42</sup> Both of the April articles were directed toward the idea of how to get an audience.

<sup>40</sup> March 1931 Leaguer. Page 2.

<sup>41</sup> April 1931 Leaguer. Page 1.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



1931 State One-Act Play Tournament  
Austin High's *Casualties*

## 1931 - 1932

No major changes were made in the 1932 One-Act Play Contest rules. Rule d. under 3. Eligible Plays, which rendered ineligible plays that were “purely farcical” or “predominately frivolous in tone,” was deleted.<sup>1</sup> An explanation was added to e., which became d. because of the deletion that explained the “gun rule.”

A wooden model painted to represent a real gun is permitted. Discharge of a gun off-stage is not permitted nor is the use of any explosive to represent the discharge of a gun allowed. The purpose of this provision is to protect children from the danger of using guns or explosives.<sup>2</sup>

The plays barred for one year under the same rule were Submerged, Thursday Evening, and Casualties. Only three plays were listed, since there had been two productions of Submerged at the 1931 State Meet.<sup>3</sup>

There were several deadline dates established under Rule 6. Eliminations. The district tournaments had to be held between March 4 and April 3. City eliminations, also, had to be completed by April 2. A notation was made that the Tournament Centers and Managers would be published in the January issue of the Leaguer.<sup>4</sup> A list of “city” tournaments appeared at the end of the rules. There were four City Tournaments listed, with the manager of each.

Houston: W.E. Moreland, Principal, Albert Sidney Johnston Junior High School.

El Paso: Miss Fannie Foster, El Paso High School.

Fort Worth: E.S. Farrington, 409 E. Weatherford.

Dallas: L.V. Stockard, High School Supervisor.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931-1932. Page 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 66.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 68.

“Awards” were listed as rule 15. For the first time, although there were no changes made in the Constitution and Contest Rules.<sup>6</sup> There was, however, an addition made to the “Awards” described in the January, 1932, Leaguer.

A new award is offered in the State One-Act Play Contest this year. The University awards a shield to the winner with a smaller shield to the runner-up and a gold medal to each of the six chosen as an all-star cast. For the past two years the boy or girl chosen as the best individual actor has also received the Samuel French Award. This is a very fine bronze medal with a motif of the tragic and comic masks, and is suitably mounted for use or display on a desk. This year the winning school will also receive a \$25.00 Make-Up Kit, complete in every detail and packed in a handy and permanent metal case, from the Max Factor Make-Up Studios, Hollywood, California.<sup>7</sup>

This was the first time in the history of the Contest that any award, other than symbolic medals, had been given.

Rule 16. Districts and District Centers was the last addition to the 1932 Rules.

Besides “city” tournaments listed below, note in January Leaguer the districts, districts centers and district managers for the one-act play tournaments given under each of the regularly numbered Interscholastic League Districts.<sup>8</sup>

For the first time, the One-Act Play Contest was organized as a part of the other League “Spring Meet” activities, although this revision was not as great as it seemed. Twenty-one of the twenty-six 1931 One-Act Play District Centers remained in the same location. Only three of these twenty-one Centers had a change in Tournament Managers. Three districts; No. 2: Weslaco, No. 8: Longview, and No. 12: Waxahachie; were dropped and five new District Centers and Tournament Managers: No. 7, Texarkana; No. 11, Hillsboro; No. 15, Huntsville; No. 19, San Marcos; and No. 26, Edinburg were added. There were twenty-six regular Interscholastic League

<sup>6</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931-1932, Page 67. A change was made in Rule 8, Entry and Selection of Play. Each school must send a duplicate 8 entry card to the Manager of the Tournament in which the school expects to participate (Page 66).

<sup>7</sup> January 1932 Leaguer. Page 2. “New Award One-Act Play.”

<sup>8</sup> Op. Cit.



Districts, but there were twenty-eight One-Act Play Centers. Although the “District Centers and District Officers” column was first published in the January Leaguer, the same column published in April, 1932, was more complete. The following explanation concerning the “One-Act Play Centers” was printed in this column.

It will be noted that one-Act play centers and managers are entered in the following list according to the districts served. In a few instances, the one-act play center for a given district is located outside the district, as District 19, where the center for this contest is at San Marcos. Again, in certain of the regular League districts, there are two one-act play centers, as in Districts 2 and 23. Any school which desires to be transferred from the district in which this list places it, should notify the State Office prior to February 20, and the transfer will be made, unless the center to which the transfer is requested is already too crowded to admit other entries.<sup>9</sup>

Twelve of the twenty-eight One-Act Play Centers were located in a town other than the District Center, but were within the district.<sup>10</sup>

The only other change in the One-Act Play Contest information that appeared in the Constitution and Contest Rules was in the “Instruction to Judges.” The “intrinsic merit” note that had appeared under Rule 3, Eligible Plays since 1928 was superseded by an addition to the judge’s instructions.

In considering the “choice of the play,” the judge is instructed to so grade this item as to give a distinct advantage to casts which choose a play of intrinsic merit and one suited to production by high school pupils.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> April 1932 Leaguer. Page 4, “District Centers and District Offices.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1931-1932. Page 68.

COPY OF LETTER AND REPLY CONCERNING THE JUDGING  
OF ONE-ACT PLAYS

MAR 19 1982

To All Tournament Managers:

"There is one point concerning the one-act play contest on which I should like to have your opinion. Where three or more judges are provided for the tournament, should they not make their decisions without consultation, in the same manner that the other public speaking contests are judged? When the judges go into conference on the decision, it is possible for the play which has the most eloquent and persuasive champion on the judging committee to win the decision and still not be the most meritorious play. It seems to me that the best collective judgment of the committee could be determined by each judge's recording his own decision and then by tabulation of all of the decisions. This is the way the other speaking contests are judged, and I think it is right.

"But this is not the way the tournaments are conducted. When several judges are provided, they go into conference, and after a long period of earnest discussion, they agree on which play should be given the decision. At least, this is the procedure in the tournaments I have observed, where several judges were used. What do you think of it?"

Answer: You are quite right. Judges should vote without consultation.

Roy Bedichek

There are no remaining records of the district contests or their winners. The Leaguer mentions only two district entries. One was a brief editorial comment in the November, 1931, issue. Mr. Bedichek suggested an early beginning.

Last year's winner in the State One-Act Play Tournament is the first to enter this year's contest, Austin High School having entered a fine comedy in this event on September 26. This school was the first to enter last year—and winner in the finals. And by the way, in looking over our records we find that those entering the finals have almost invariably been early in entering the event. This probably means that those directors select their plays and their casts well in advance, giving both directors and actors every opportunity to thoroughly saturate themselves with the play. There are many directors who already have their entire play program for the year mapped out—no haphazard last minute selections for them.<sup>12</sup>

The State Office records show two hundred and ninety-three entries in the 1932 contest.<sup>13</sup> This was a drop of some forty-four schools from the previous year and the first enrollment drop for the One-Act Play Contest since its beginning.

Very little can be determined about the Regional contest. The April, 1932, Leaguer listed the Tournament Managers and Centers.

Region No.1: Professor F.W. Emerson, College of Industrial Arts, Denton.

Region No.2: Miss Nena Kate Ramsey, Simmons University, Abilene.

Region No.3: Professor Monroe C. Lippman, Southwest Texas State Teachers College, San Marcos.

Region No.4: Professor P.M. Kenley, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville.<sup>14</sup>

There were changes in the Tournament Managers in the first three Regions and Region No.1 was moved from Texas State College for Women.<sup>15</sup>

Although there are no official records of the Regional winners, they can be determined from the above list of Regional Centers and the State Tournament program. The winners were:

Region No. 1, Central High School, Fort Worth, with Where the Cross Is Made by Eugene

<sup>12</sup> November 1931 Leaguer. Page 2, Col.1, Editorial.

<sup>13</sup> State Meet History Book, 1932.

<sup>14</sup> April 1932 Leaguer. Page 4, "District Centers and District Offices."

<sup>15</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1930-1931. Page 121.

O'Neill, directed by Mary Sweet; Region No. 2, Abilene High School with El Cristo by Margaret Larkin, directed by J.N. Watson; Region No. 3, Brackenridge High School, San Antonio, with The Hour Glass by William Butler Yeats, directed by Miss Jeston Dickey; Region No. 4, Beaumont High School with Evening Dress Indispensable by Roland Pertwee, directed by Mrs. Mary Lipscomb Reed.<sup>16</sup>

The four Regional winners met in the Sixth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament on May 5, 1932, 8:00 P.M. in the Austin High School auditorium. A panel of judges was used for the second year in a row. The judges were Ernest Hardin, James. H. Parke, L.W. Payne, Jr., W.E. Marshall, and Mrs. Geraldine Hill Styles. The judge for the all-star cast selection and best individual acting was Professor J.B. Wharey for the third consecutive year. Dr. William. J. Battle, later President of the University of Texas, presented the awards.<sup>17</sup>

The first -place shield went to the Brackenridge, San Antonio, production of The Hour Glass and the second place award went to the Abilene production of El Cristo. Brackenridge dominated the All-Star Cast with three members, Mildred Arno, Gordon Tubbs and Arthur Higgins. Arthur Higgins was also the winner of the Samuel French award for his portrayal of The Fool in The Hour Glass. Beaumont placed a boy and a girl, Ruth Steagall and John Blough, on the All-Star Cast, while Abilene had one representative, Sue Carrol.<sup>18</sup>

The State Tournament program listed only six people on the State Tournament Staff, in addition to Manager Morton Brown, Director of Dramatics. These six were Stage, Robert Coltharp; Electrician, Melbourne Coltharp; Assistant Electrician, Oscar Thompson; Properties, Carrol Lusk and Elmer Gustafson; and House Manager, Joe Malouf.<sup>19</sup> Payroll for the 1932 One-

<sup>16</sup> State Tournament Program, 1932.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Page 4.

<sup>18</sup> State Meet History Book, 1932.

<sup>19</sup> State Tournament Program, 1932.

Act Play Contest listed six bookkeepers; Herbert Powlosky, Joe Okies, Mike Okies, August Watmlavick, and Thad Sanders. In addition to these, there was L.A. Winke, Police Officer; T.H. Heaton, Janitor; and Miss Frances Martin, Ticket Seller.

The entire group was paid a total of forty-three dollars and fifty cents. The total expenses of running the 1932 One-Act Finals was forty-seven dollars and ninety cents. The additional four dollars and forty cents was for furniture rental and supplies.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the above figures, the State Office financial records show One-Act Play receipts of seventy-six dollars and seventy-five cents and the payment of expenses for thirteen dollars and fifty cents for Mrs. Geraldine Hill Styles for judging the contest.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Brown's instructions to Mr. Malouf, House Manager, were much the same as the previous year. Seats were reserved for the Timekeeper, as well as the judges. The doors were closed at eight o'clock and those inside the doors were seated before the curtain opened. None were admitted while the plays were in progress. There were three types of admission tickets: delegate's tickets (the delegate's badge without the ticket did not admit the holder), contributor's ticket, and tickets sold at the door.

All directors were asked to make early appointments to confer with Mr. Brown and the Stage Manager. Two of the rehearsal were held during the morning hours and two in the afternoon. An extra person was hired as Property Master in order to handle late request for extra properties. This left Mr. Brown and the Stage Manager free to watch rehearsals and assist the directors and the stage crew.

Directors were assigned to a dressing room and were told to remain in these rooms until called; then come quickly, bringing their props with them. They were warned that the curtain

<sup>20</sup> State Office History files.

<sup>21</sup> September 1932 Leaguer. Page 3, "Financial Statement of the UIL."

would not be held for them and they would be ruled out of the meet if late. All directors were told to give the Stage Manager all orders they wished executed. The Stage Manager gave all orders to the stage crew.

Mr. Brown noted in the files of the State office that the 1932 House Manager, Stage Manager and Crews were entirely satisfactory and efficient. The actual running time of all shows was two hours and thirty-four minutes and the intermissions were twelve minutes, thirteen minutes, and fourteen minutes.<sup>22</sup> The conclusion that can be drawn from these intermission times is that the play shifts were more difficult than those of the 1931 State Tournament. Likely, more emphasis was being placed on the use of stage properties or a more liberal interpretation of the “scenic effects” rule was being taken. Several mentions to this effect during 1932-33 referenced in the school Leaguer. Morton Brown’s notes clearly stated that “all intermissions between plays will be as short as we can make them.”<sup>23</sup>

Morton Brown’s “Teacher’s Guide to Good Plays” continued to be a regular feature of the Leaguer. This column appeared each month, from September to April, during the 1931-1932 school year, except for February. The “Guide” reviewed all types of plays, production books, and other theatre materials of use to the high school teacher. Mr. Brown’s association with the Extension Loan Library was quite busy during the early part of the year. During the period from September 1 to the middle of November, over one hundred and thirty groups of plays were mailed. There were also one hundred and forty packages mailed dealing with school entertainments, some of which were undoubtedly plays.<sup>24</sup> About 8,000 plays were mailed out during the 1931-1932 school year.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> State Office History files. Morton Brown’s notes.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> December 1931 Leaguer. Page 2, “Extension Loan Library.”

<sup>25</sup> February 1933 Leaguer. Page 3, “Extension Loan Library.”

There was a notable shortage of information about one-act play or about theatre in general in Leaguer editions of the 1931-1932 school year. In addition to those already mentioned, there were only three articles and a brief editorial comment related to things theatrical. Mr. Bedichek published an article titled “No Guns in League Plays” in the September, 1931, Leaguer. This article was a news account of a fatality during the rehearsal of an amateur production in Quincy, Illinois. The story was published as a reminder to those directors who objected to the no-firearms rule.<sup>26</sup>

Mr. Bedichek inserted the following paragraph in the “News from Leagues in Other States” column published in the October, 1931, Leaguer.

It will be interesting to one-act play coaches in Texas, who are apparently always in search of a new play, to know that the Oklahoma rules restrict plays to a list of ten, chosen each year by the State Director with the advice of the Board of Governors. Moreover, not more than three schools may use the same play in the district tournaments, so when three schools have selected a play, the choice for the remainder is limited to nine, and so on.<sup>27</sup>

A rather lengthy article by Ernestin Songer of the Fort Worth Little Theatre was printed on the front page of the December, 1931, Leaguer. This material was an account of the Fort Worth Puppet Theatre and how puppetry might be done in schools.<sup>28</sup>

The last mention of the One-Act Play during the 1931-1932 school was a simple editorial comment by Mr. Bedichek that rural schools were not eligible for the One-Act Play Contest.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> September 1931 Leaguer. Page 3, “No Guns in League Plays.”

<sup>27</sup> October 1931 Leaguer. Page 2, “News From Leagues in Other States.”

<sup>28</sup> April 1932 Leaguer. Page 2, Editorial #3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



1932 State One-Act Tournament Champion  
San Antonio Brackenridge High's *The Hour Glass*



## 1932-1933

The One-Act Play changes for the 1933 contest were published in the 1932 Supplement to Constitution and Contest Rules. Only those changes that were absolutely necessary to operate the contest were printed on this supplement.

Page 66.—Substitute for Rule 3.f., the following: Plays barred on account of having appeared in the last State Tournament are: "Evening Dress Indispensable," "Where the Cross Is Made," "El Cristo," and "The Hour Glass".

Alter dates in Rule 6.a. as follows: District tournaments shall be held from March 3 to April 1, 1933.

Alter dates in 6.b. as follows: The State Tournament shall be held in Austin, Texas, May 4, 1933.

Alter date in Rule 7 to April, 1933.<sup>1</sup>

Alter acceptance date in Rule 8 to February 1, 1933. Note: It is important to note this date. Positively no school will be accepted for this contest which does not file an acceptance card with the State Office giving full data called for thereon by the date above specified.<sup>2</sup>

The "set" or "scenic effects" rule received a great deal of attention during the early part of this year. Mr. Bedichek offered the following editorial explanation of the necessity of the rule:

One-Act Play Coaches should be careful this year to select plays that can be presented with very simple settings. While in some of the district and regional tournaments there are facilities for storing sets backstage and making quick changes, no such facilities exist in the State Tournament. We are often compelled to deny directors the privilege of bringing special sets for the reason that the stage facilities are quite inadequate. After all this contest is one primarily in acting. It would be a fine thing to have a contest in stage-craft, but that would be another matter. Rules would have to be provided for ensuring original work, or schools with the stronger financial backing could easily outdistance the others by the simple expedient of employing professional help...<sup>3</sup>

An abbreviated version of this explanation appeared in each of the "Official Notices" columns of the Leaguer, beginning in October, 1932. These notices stated clearly that schools could not furnish their own sets at the State Meet and that all schools competing in the State Tournament would be "required to play against the cyclorama of neutral drapes" available at Austin High

<sup>1</sup> This was the final date for the Competition of the City Tournaments.

<sup>2</sup> 1932 Supplement to Constitution and Contest Rules. Page 7.

<sup>3</sup> September 1932 Leaguer. Page 2, Editorial.

School. Each school was allowed to use the necessary door and window units, along with suitable properties.<sup>4</sup>

A clarification of the “curtain rule,” 3.e. appeared in the “Official Notices” column of the December, 1932, Leaguer.

Plays may use a “blackout” to indicate lapse of time, change of scene, or for a “flashback” but no actual change of setting may be made. “Spots” and other simple lighting devices may be used.<sup>5</sup>

This interpretation represented a major change in the standing of the “set rule” since its institution.

There were numerous discussions of the rules for the 1933 contest, beginning with the state meeting of delegates May 7, 1932. At that meeting a motion carried “Recommending” a prescribed list of plays for the One-Act Play Contest. Morton Brown opposed this recommendation to the State Executive Committee and so stated in an article in the September, 1932, Leaguer. He believed that such a list would “hamper the alert and ambitious director” and destroy initiative and originality. Brown also believed the play directors were “choosing rather well” and that their choices were improving each year. He did not want to be placed in a position of having to recommend many of the plays that directors would demand having on such a list.

Mr. Brown believed that such a censorship on the director was “a difficult and impossible thing” and such action would not “curb the fellow who is determined to shock the public and flaunt himself at his school’s expenses.” He believed that most directors could be trusted to choose the proper type of material for his students and community and the responsibility of controlling the wayward director should be the duty of his superintendent and principal.

<sup>4</sup> October 1932 Leaguer. Page 2, “Official Notices.”

<sup>5</sup> December 1932 Leaguer. Page 2, “Official Notices.”

Morton Brown felt that it would be impossible to keep on good terms with many of the publishers who were providing plays that made the “drama service possible” if a prescribed list was instituted.<sup>6</sup>

The minutes of the meeting of the delegates were recorded by B.M. Dinsmore, secretary of the meeting, and were published in the September, 1932, Leaguer. The following minutes are those related to the history of the One-Act Play Contest.

Much discussion took place relative to the character of plays entered in the play contest. In speaking on this subject, Mr. Francis B. Dunn said that a questionnaire was presented to fifty schools about the selection of judges for the play contest. He said that eight-nine percent of the schools desired a change of method of selecting judges and were in favor of one expert judge. Furthermore, he reported that a majority of the schools answering this questionnaire were opposed to the \$5.00 entry fee which was suggested in Mr. Dunn’s report.

Mr. Dunn spoke in favor of letting the tournament managers secure the approval of the majority of the play coaches as to whom should serve as judges of these play contests. Mr. Dunn made a motion that the tournament manager should use only judges receiving majority sanction of coaches involved. This motion was duly seconded. In discussing this motion Miss Dickie of San Antonio expressed her approval of such a plan. Mr. Bickley, of Alice, moved that we table the above motion. This motion to table was seconded and passed. Mr. Bickley made a motion that the meeting pass to a discussion of the suspension of schools for infraction of any of the Interscholastic League rules. This motion was seconded but did not carry. Mr. Knapp, of North Dallas High School, in a spirited talk remarked among other things, that the public speaking contests should be given as much attention as any of the athletic events received. Furthermore, he called attention to many of the evils resulting from the way some of the tournaments were conducted and then moved that the tournament managers should not be coaches of any of the plays. This was seconded. Miss Kinsey, of Wichita Falls High School, remarked in discussing this question, that it was very difficult some times to get a tournament manager who knew how to carry out the work unless we selected someone who was a coach of some of the plays. She was opposed to the motion. Mr. Hulse, of Nacogdoches, asked that the one-act play be placed on the same basis as the debate. The above motion carried 42 to 26.

The question of the “sexy” character of some of the plays was then discussed. Mr. Roy Bedichek of the University Interscholastic League staff, said that the “sexy” character of plays has been severely criticized by the people of Texas and that such plays had been undoubtedly emphasized in some instances. Mr. Knapp, of North Dallas High School, made a motion that the State Executive Committee be authorized to pass on the propriety of plays. This motion was seconded. He made a spirited appeal for the passing of this motion. Mr. Price, of North Dallas, made a substitute motion that we submit all

<sup>6</sup>September 1932 Leaguer. Page 1, “Director Objects to List,” By Morton Brown.

plays not on the recommended list of plays to the State Executive Committee for their approval. This was seconded. Miss Dickey, of San Antonio, said that she hated to see a limit placed on the kind of plays to be used. She appealed to those present to not limit the plays to comedy alone, but to leave the matter as it now stands in order that the schools could have a variety of good plays. She said that good plays are hard to find and asked why limit the plays to one type.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Betts, of Wharton, remarked that comedy stands no chance to win against other forms of plays. If this motion is carried comedy will have a chance. Mr. Hayes, of Mission, spoke against the motion, contending in his argument that tragedies are easier to act than comedy and therefore easier to secure proper characters from high school pupils. This motion carried.

Mr. Backey moved that all plays of distinctly “sexy” character be omitted entirely. The motion was seconded and carried.<sup>8</sup>

It is impossible to tell exactly what happened in this meeting or how much influence these motions had on the State Executive Committee; however, some of the recommendations that appeared in this meeting became a part of the rules of the One-Act Play Contest in later years.

The Texas Speech Arts Association was also giving some consideration to the contest of the League. In their annual meeting in 1932, they voted to create a committee on the educational values and objectives of the activities of the League and to study the report of the committee at their next annual meeting. Miss Sarah Lowery was appointed the chairman of this committee and its members were Wilton W. Cook, Monroe Lippman, and Mary K. Sands.<sup>9</sup>

The report of the “Interscholastic League Committee” was given to the general session of the Texas Speech Arts Association Saturday, November 26, 1932 and an open discussion of the “Interscholastic League One-Act Play Tournament” followed later the same day.<sup>10</sup> There are no records of the report or the discussion. This meeting may have had some influence on the numerous changes that came about in the 1934 contest.

<sup>7</sup> There had apparently been a motion to limit the types of plays produced to comedy.

<sup>8</sup>September 1932 Leaguer. Page 1, “Members of the State Meeting of Delegates, Austin, May 7.”

<sup>9</sup> September 1932 Leaguer. Page 1, “...to Study Speech Contest.”

<sup>10</sup> November 1932 Leaguer. Page 1, “...Announces Speech Programs.”

A “List of 155 Plays for 1933 Contests” was published in the October, 1933, Leaguer and was later made available in circular form for anyone who failed to clip the list from the Leaguer. This list was recommended rather than prescribed plays.<sup>11</sup> The following explanation appeared at the beginning of the list.

These plays are basically eligible, but directors are warned that a play which is so presented as to violate any of the restrictions enumerated in Rule 3, as amended by the 1932 Supplement, may be disqualified.

Mr. Bedichek added an “Editor’s Note” at the end of the list that provided further explanation:

The above list by no means exhausts the plays eligible for League contests. For plays outside this list, Directors are advised to submit copy to Morton Brown, Director of Dramatics Interscholastic League, Austin, for his judgment on eligibility.<sup>12</sup>

Thirty of these plays from the 1933 list have survived the scrutiny of time and the several Directors since Morton Brown and remain on the “Approved List of One-Act Plays for Contest” published in the 1967-1969 Handbook for One-Act Play. Several of the 1933 plays also appear on the “Ineligible Plays” list from the same Handbook.<sup>13</sup>

The structural organization of the 1933 districts was essentially the same as 1932. District No. 27 with Mrs. Arch Pearson, Manager, was added bringing the total number of One-Act Play Tournament Centers to twenty-nine. Three Tournament Centers were relocated and there were seven changes in Tournament Managers.<sup>14</sup> These twenty-nine Centers did not include the City Tournaments held in Houston, El Paso, Fort Worth, and Dallas. This meant that there were thirty-three contests prior to the Regional Tournament.

<sup>11</sup>November 1932 Leaguer. Page 3, “The Teachers Guide to Good Plays.” Notice Box.

<sup>12</sup> October 1932 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 3.

<sup>13</sup> Handbook – 1967-69.

<sup>14</sup> March 1933 Leaguer, Page 3, “District Centers and District Officers.”

There are no official records of the plays presented or the schools that participated in these contests. There are, however, several Leaguer mentions of directors, schools, and plays that were a part of the 1933 contest. An article of particular interest appeared in a two-column box in the March, 1933, Leaguer titled, "Is Your Snake Dramatically Inclined? Abilene Wants One."

Wanted.—A bull snake, between three and four feet long. "Well-bred and dramatically inclined, if possible."

That was the s.o.s. call sent out last night by John N. Watson, dramatic instructor of Abilene High School. The reptile is needed by Thursday evening, when tryouts will be held for "The Serpent's Tooth" (Keple), which will be the local entry in Interscholastic League play competition this year. Shortness of time and inconvenience make it impossible to secure a snake sent from one of the zoological farms in the state, Mr. Watson said.

The play is published by Baker Play Company of Boston. It will be used in the District Tourney at Sweetwater, March 18, and if successful there, in the regional tourney to be held at Simmons University on March 25.<sup>15</sup>

The needed reptile was obtained and the Abilene cast eventually was one of the State Tournament participants. There are no records to show whether or not the snake was counted as one of the members of the cast, but its name did not appear in the State Tournament program. In an article taken from the Timpson Times, published in the November, 1932, Leaguer, Mrs. J.F. Oliver was named as the director of Timpson's one-act play.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Kabot Baker, in a story written at Mr. Bedichek's request, identified herself as the director of the Carthage High School one-act play for 1933.<sup>17</sup> These few references to participants in the 1933 One-Act Play Contest were a small percentage of the three hundred and twenty-six schools entered.<sup>18</sup>

The winners of the Regional Tournaments were: Region No. 1, held at College of Industrial Arts in Denton, was Crowell with The Severed Cord by Maxine Finsterwald, directed by Mrs. I.T. Graves; Region No. 2, held at Simmons University in Abilene, was Abilene with A

<sup>15</sup> March 1933 Leaguer. Page 1.

<sup>16</sup> November 1932 Leaguer. Page 1, "League Leaders Designated in Tennyson Public Schools."

<sup>17</sup> March 1933 Leaguer. Pages 1-2, "Teacher Recall 1912 State Meet."

<sup>18</sup> State Meet History Book, 1933.

Serpent's Tooth by Essex Dane, directed by J.N. Watson; Region No. 3, held at Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos, was Austin with Master Wayfarer by J.E. Harold Terry, directed by James R. Burton; and Region No. 4, held at Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville, was Beaumont with Figureheads by Louise Sanders.<sup>19</sup>

The four Regional Tournament winners met in the Seventh Annual State One-Act Play Tournament of The University Interscholastic League on May 4, 1933, 8:00 P.M., in the Austin High School auditorium. A panel of judges, Mrs. Geraldine Hill Styles, Professor Everett G. Smith, Dr. L.W. Payne, Jr., Dr. Thad W. Riker, and Mrs. Martin White was used for the third consecutive year. Dr. J.B. Wharey was the judge for the "All-star cast selection and best individual acting" and was responsible for the presentation of awards.<sup>20</sup>

The first-place shield was awarded to the Crowell production of The Severed Cord and the runner-up award was given to the Austin production Master Wayfarer. Austin won and lost the first-place award in a twenty-four hour period. The first prize was announced for Austin at the completion of the State One-Act Play Contest on Thursday evening. The award was contested on Friday and a recount of the votes of the panel of judges resulted in a reverse of first and second places.<sup>21</sup> Crowell, Austin, and Abilene each placed a boy and a girl on the All-Star Cast. Robert B. Laws of Austin was the winner of the Samuel French award for his portrayal of The Wayfarer.<sup>22</sup>

The State Tournament program listed the six main people on the State Tournament Staff, in addition to Manager, Morton Brown. These six for the 1933 Tournament were: Stage

<sup>19</sup> State History files, State Meet Program (1933) "Regional Tournaments."

<sup>20</sup> State Tournament Program, 1933.

<sup>21</sup> State Office History Files, 1936. An unidentified newspaper article covering the 1936 State Tournament. "Austin High Director Takes to State Meet for 5 Times in 7 Years."

<sup>22</sup> State Meet History Book, 1933.

Manager, Carroll Lusk; Assistant Stage Manager, Melbourne Coltharp; Electrician, Duncan Whiteside; Properties, Buck Langford and Glenn Martin; and House Manager, Joe Malouf. The payroll for the 1933 One-Act Play Contest listed, in addition to the staff above, six Doorkeepers: August J. Watzslavick, Hatton Simpson, Tony J. Daleo, Michael Okies, and Gerald J. Rodriguez; a ticket seller, Miss Frances Martin; and three Stage Assistants, James Swanzy, M.C. Hynds, and Tom Baughman. In addition to these, there was the usual police officer, Guy Smith and janitor, T.H. Heaton.

The entire staff was paid a total of thirty-one dollars. The total expenses for furniture rental, drayage, and supplies was seven dollars and ninety-eight cents. This brought the total expense for running the contest to thirty-eight dollars and ninety-eight cents.<sup>23</sup> The “Financial Statement” of the League showed listed an additional expenditure of ten dollars and forty cents paid to Mrs. Geraldine Hill Styles for her expenses in coming to Judge the One-Act Play Contest. The One-Act Play receipts totaled seventy-two dollars and seventy-five cents.<sup>24</sup>

The State Office files do not reflect any changes in the operation or procedures for the State Tournament. Instructions to the Staff and to participating directors followed the same pattern as previous years.

Mr. Brown continued to conduct the “Teachers Guide to Good Plays” in each Leaguer from September to April, with the exception of the March issue. He reviewed almost everything he received from publishers<sup>25</sup>, although the column was mostly one-acts, three-acts and play collections. There were no production or general theatre books reviewed during the 1932-1933 school year.

<sup>23</sup> History Files Payroll sheet.

<sup>24</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1933-1934. Page 9, “Financial Statement of the UIL.”

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Morton Brown.



The Drama Loan Service continued to develop. Mr. Bedichek made a brief editorial comment about the service in the November, 1932, Leaguer:

The Drama Loan Service, in charge of Morton Brown, Director of Dramatics in the Interscholastic League, working in cooperation with the Extension Loan Library, announces that there are on the shelves of the Library to be loaned to public schools free of charge seventeen hundred thirty-three individual titles of plays and pageants and eight hundred sixteen duplicate copies. There's no use crying about scarcity of material. There's plenty of it. These books are constantly circulating. Get your share.<sup>26</sup>

The plays being mailed by the Drama Loan Service were sent mostly to schools and many of them were being used for choosing the contest play.<sup>27</sup>

Several articles of interest appeared in the pages of the Leaguer during the 1932-1933 school year. One of the most interesting was a letter from Maxine Tindall from Ganado. Miss Tindall was a member of the Palestine cast which appeared in the first State One Act Play Tournament. Mr. Bedichek published the following:

Although I do not presume that you remember me, I might mention that I was a member of the cast of the district-winning play from Palestine High School the first year that one-act plays were introduced into the League activities. Miss Anna Marcia Barrow (Now Mrs. L. K. Barry of Midland) was our coach.

Since then I have attended both the University of Texas and the Rice Institute, being graduated from the latter school this past June. I am teaching English in the Ganado High School at the present time and have been appointed coach for the school dramatics.

In addition, I am to serve as director of the One-Act Play Contest in the Jackson County Meet.<sup>28</sup>

This letter suggests that there were One-Act Play contests outside the State organization that determined a county champion or there was some type of preliminary that was held on the county level prior to the district meet. Jackson County was a part of District No. 24 with its One-Act Play Tournament Center at Yoakum and was managed by Miss Nannie Ray Baker.<sup>29</sup> There

<sup>26</sup>November 1932 Leaguer. Page 2.

<sup>27</sup>February 1933 Leaguer. Page 3.

<sup>28</sup>November 1932 Leaguer. Page 2, "Letter Box."

<sup>29</sup>January 1933 Leaguer. Page 3, "District Contest and District Officers."

are no records in the State Office that give any indication of one-act play participation on the county level.

The November, 1932, Leaguer published an article, "High School Drama Comes Alive" which discussed the necessities of decent material, balanced cast, and practical staging and prerequisites for high school use.<sup>30</sup> The December, 1932, Leaguer published two stories related to the theatre. "Keep Your Faithful Fidos Away From Play Rehearsals" was an amusing article that described the rescue of the heroine by her pet collie rather than by the hero. The villain required some medication.<sup>31</sup> The second article from the same Leaguer by L.E. Dudley, Principal of Abilene High School. Mr. Dudley's high praise of the work of the League included a paragraph concerning the theatre.

The little theatre movement, so popular in recent years, has spread to the schools. Students are natural actors; they get a great deal of pleasure in presenting one-act plays and occasionally the more ambitious comedies and tragedies. Under the guide of play-acting the students learn much of expression and diction almost painlessly, for with them, as with real actors, the play is the thing, and an amount of practice is regarded as a burden if only it is a means to the desired end of putting the play over.<sup>32</sup>

The final issue of the Leaguer for the 1932-1933 school year carried two mentions of drama. Mr. Bedichek published the basic ideas presented by Miss Ethel T. Rockwell, director of the University of Wisconsin extension bureau of dramatic activities, in a radio broadcast. She strongly defended the need for the fine arts and drama as "important for maintaining a balanced intellectual and spiritual adjustment."<sup>33</sup> The last article was an editorial. Mr. Bedichek appealed for the elimination of explosives from play production.

At the OK School sixteen miles from Lamesa a few weeks ago a child was killed by a fragment of a gun-barrel which had exploded in the hands of the principal of the school as he fired a blank cartridge to make the noise of a bomb explosion of which was

<sup>30</sup> November 1932 League. Page 4, "H.S. Drama Comes Alive."

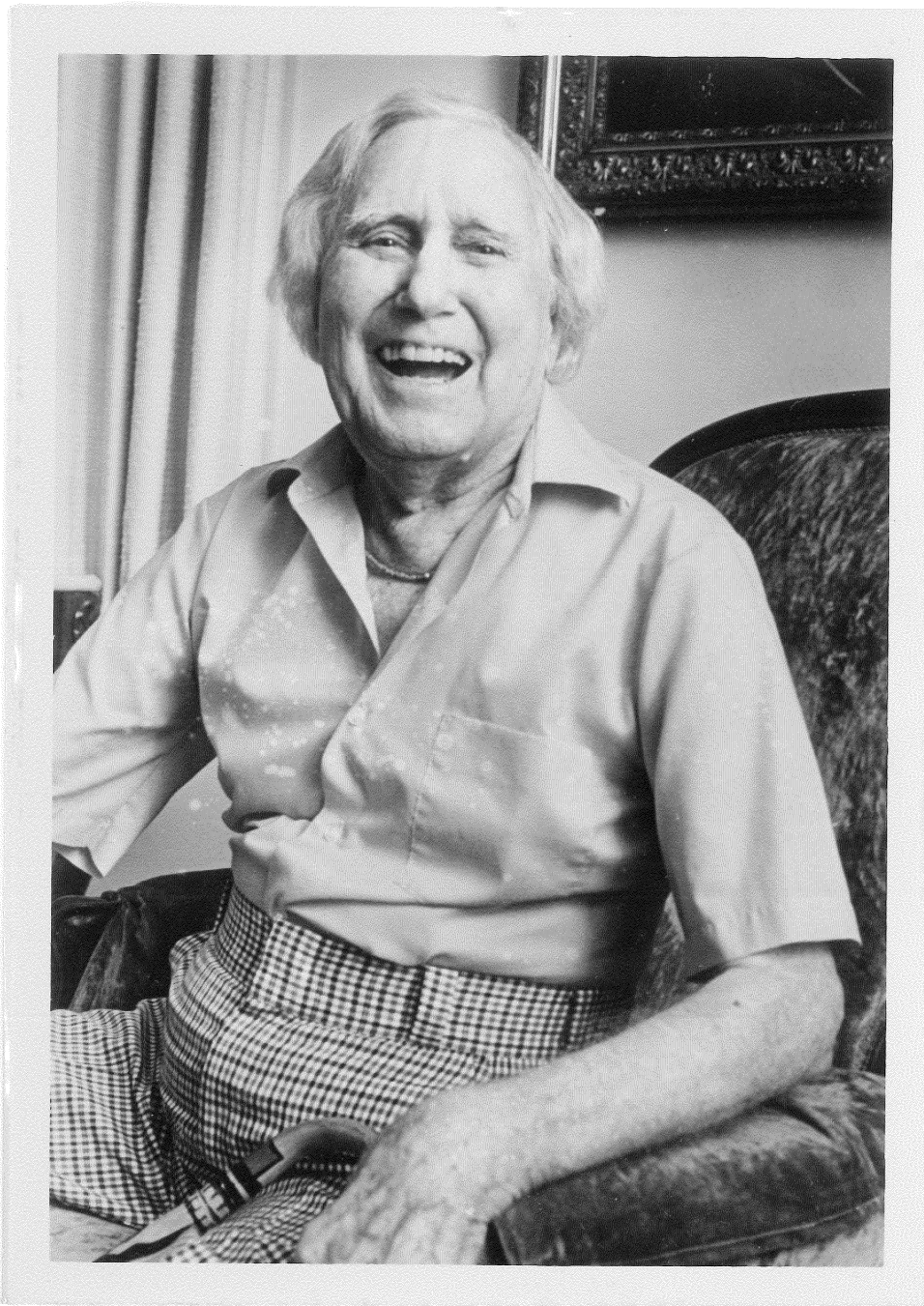
<sup>31</sup> December 1932 Leaguer "Keep Your Faithful Fidos Away From Play Rehearsals."

<sup>32</sup> December 1932 Leaguer. Page 1 and 4. "Experienced... Says Student Activities Valuable."

<sup>33</sup> April 1933 Leaguer. Page 1, "So-Called 'Frills' Warmly Defended."

required by the action of the play. A few years ago, in one of the district one-act play tournaments, a boy was seriously wounded in gun-play on the stage. It was then that the League made its rule against guns in play tournaments. This recent tragedy should be another warning: do not select school plays that require explosives.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> April 1933 Leaguer. Page 2, Editorial.



Morton Brown  
1928 UIL State One-Act Tournament Contest Manager  
1930-1937, UIL's first State Drama Director

## 1933-1934

The rules printed in the Constitution and Contest Rules for the 1934 One-Act Play Contest represented a major renovation from the preceding year. Rule 9, "State Championship," was consolidated with the new Rule 7, "Eliminations." The rules dealing with "Penalty for Non-Appearance," "Receipts of the Tournament," "Awards," and "Districts and District Centers" were deleted.

Rules 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 12 of the Constitution and Contest Rules had undergone modification.

1. Classes.—This contest shall be conducted in one class and in one division.
2. Representation.—Any member-high school shall be entitled to enter one one-act play cast in the county contest.
3. Eligibility.—Each member of a one-act play cast shall be eligible under Article VIII of the Constitution.<sup>1</sup>
4. Eligible Plays.—The judges shall be instructed to eliminate from consideration in judging a contest:
  - a. Plays requiring more than forty minutes in presentation.
  - b. Plays that use other than simple settings, or depend at any point for their appeal upon scenic effects.<sup>2</sup>
  - c. Plays that require more than ten individuals in the cast.
  - d. Plays which require the use of a gun, pistol, or any other firearm in any way.<sup>3</sup>
  - e. Plays that use a curtain at any time during the performance to indicate passage of time, change of scene or for any other purpose. In a strictly one-act play, the curtain rises at the beginning and is not lowered until the end.<sup>4</sup>
  - f. Plays appearing in the last State Tournament are barred for one year. These plays are: "Figureheads," "A Serpent's Tooth," "The Severed Cord," and the "Master Wayfarer."
5. Time-Keeper.—There shall be an official time-keeper for each contest, and in case any play requires more than forty minutes in presentation, the time-keeper shall so notify the judge of the contest.
6. Faculty Director.—If a director of one-act play in any school is not a regular faculty member, the cast is not eligible to participate in this contest unless the director is formally designated for this work by recommendation of the superintendent and approval by the school board.

<sup>1</sup> This rule continues to state that a student is eligible in only one "public speaking event" or OAP is considered as such. (a note at the end of article VIII Candidates).

<sup>2</sup> The interpretation of this rule remained the same as previous years.

<sup>3</sup> A wooden model of a gun was permitted, but the use of any explosive was strictly prohibited.

<sup>4</sup> "Blackouts" could be used as long as there was no change of setting. Simple lighting devices were permitted.

7. Eliminations.— In case two or more casts enter in a given county (or city-county unit), the Director General shall appoint a Director of One-Act Play whose duty it shall be to conduct county eliminations in this contest, reducing county representation to district contests to one cast.

The District Director of One-Act Play may reduce the number of casts entered in the district contest to eight, by requiring pre-district meet eliminations, if in his judgment such reduction is necessary.

Each district is entitled to enter its winning cast in the regional meet, and each regional winner is entitled to enter the State one-act play tournament.

8. Entry and Selection of Play.— Schools desiring to enter this contest must notify the State Office and request an Entry Form. When this is furnished the school shall fill in the information requested thereon and return to the State Office and send duplicate of entry card to the Manager of Tournament in which the school expects to participate.

No entries will be accepted for the current school year after February 1, 1934.

9. Judges.— One, three, or other odd number of judges may be used in judging one-act play contests, the number and selection being left to the discretion of the Manager. It is unwise to select judges who are citizens of the home town of any cast in the competition.

At the close of the contest judges shall rank contestants and the Manager shall compute the rankings and announce the winner in accordance with the procedure prescribed for the same in "Declamation" rules, pp. 34 and 35.<sup>5</sup>

10. List of Properties.— It is very important that each school entering a tournament give the Manager thereof a complete list of the heavy properties needed.

11. List of Plays.— A list of plays is mimeographed and furnished member-schools upon request. The fact that a play appears on this list, however, does not assure its eligibility. A play must as presented conform to requirements above set forth.

12. Royalty.— No manager assumes any responsibility for payment of royalty. A school which presents a royalty-play without having paid royalty or received permission from royalty-holder shall be suspended from further participation in this contest for the remainder of the current school year.

A list of 183 plays eligible for the 1934 League contests was published by the League Office.<sup>6</sup> This was an addition of twenty-eight plays over the previous year. Some of the plays on the 1933 List were deleted and new plays were added.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The "Declamation" ranking system provided the winner of each place to be ranked in that position by a majority of judges. If there was no majority in the ranking, then the winner of each position was determined by the lowest score. This system would apply only when three or more judges were used. The judges would rank each play by numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. A play ranked first by a majority was awarded first place. The "sum of the ranks" was not used unless there was no majority. The play ranked second or higher by the majority of judges was awarded second. Since there were usually only two places awarded in the One-Act Play Contest, there was likely no problem.

<sup>6</sup> October, 1933 Leaguer. Page 1, "2,000 Titles in Drama Loan List."

<sup>7</sup> Notations were made on a copy of "List of 155 Plays for 1933 Contests" found in the State Office files.

There was some consideration of the One-Act Play Contest rules at the “15<sup>th</sup> Annual League Breakfast and Section Meeting” in December, 1933. A group attending the meeting organized under the head of the “State Forensic Society.” They voted to recommend that the rules for the One-Act Play Contest require all directors of one-act play be full-time teachers in the schools. This group also recommended a set system of scoring be used in judging all speech contest and established a committee to study the field of judging in speech contest and make recommendations at the meeting in May, 1934.<sup>8</sup>

One rule interpretation was published in the “Official Notices” column beginning with the January, 1934, Leaguer. Rule 4(c) limiting the cast to ten individuals was clarified in the following manner:

Musicians off-stage, members of mob, or other individuals making off-stage contributions to the play are considered members of the cast and must be eligible, and they count towards the ten individuals allowed to make up an eligible cast...<sup>9</sup>

The new plan of “Eliminations” instituted by Rule 7 was a major re-organization. This plan was worked out to economize school time and traveling expenses. The first completed list of the District and Regional Centers with the Director of One-Act Play recorded was in the March, 1934, Leaguer. The following Districts and Directors taken from that list:

REGION I— Canyon, Mr. C.W. Bachelder, West Texas State Teachers College, Canyon.  
District 1—Amarillo, Supt. C.H. Dillehay, Herford.  
District 2—Pampa, Mr. Ben Guill, Pampa.  
District 3—Lubbock, Miss Anna Jo Pendleton, Texas Technological College, Lubbock.  
District 4—Childress, Supt. T.C. Graves, Crowell.  
REGION II—Abilene, Mrs. Etta Fleming Harwell, Simmons University, Abilene.  
District 5—Sweetwater, Miss Ethel Harkins, Sweetwater.  
District 6—Breckenridge, Mr. J.F. Bailey, Breckenridge.  
District 7—San Angelo, Prin. A.F. Ligon, Ballinger.  
District 8—Brownwood, Mrs. Leta Newby Shelton, Howard Payne College, Brownwood.  
REGION III—Denton, Prof. F.W. Emerson, College of Industrial Arts, Denton.  
District 9—Wichita Falls, Supt. Joe R. Humphrey, Olney.

<sup>8</sup> December, 1933 Leaguer. Page 1 and 4, “State Forensic Society Formed.”

<sup>9</sup> January, 1934 Leaguer. Page 3, “Official Notices.”

District 10—Ft. Worth, Miss Corinne K. Lewis, Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth.  
 District 11—Dallas, Mr. W.M. Longnecker, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.  
 District 12—Waco, Miss Vivian Lewis, Waco.<sup>10</sup>  
 REGION IV—Jacksonville, Mrs. Arch Pearson, Lon Morris College, Jacksonville.  
 District 13—Commerce, Maude Webster, East Texas State Teachers College, Commerce.  
 District 14—Texarkana, Supt. H.W. Stilwell, Texarkana.  
 District 15—Tyler, Miss Ruth Claire Syper, Longview.  
 District 16—Nacogdoches, Miss Mary Thomson, Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, Nacogdoches.  
 REGION V—Huntsville, Mr. C.O. Stewart, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville.  
 District 17—Bryan, Mrs. J.P. Wheeler, Bryan.  
 District 18—Huntsville, Mr. E.L. Carroll, Huntsville.  
 District 19—Pasadena, Miss Ella SoRelle, Pasadena.  
 District 20—Beaumont, Mrs. Mary L. Read, Beaumont.  
 REGION VI—San Marcos, Monroe Lippman, Southwest Texas State Teachers College, San Marcos.  
 District 21—Uvalde, Supt. W.W. Few, Pearsall.  
 District 22—San Antonio, Mr. Tom Portwood, Jefferson High School, San Antonio.  
 District 23—Georgetown, Mr. Pascal Buckner, Southwestern University, Georgetown.  
 District 24—La Grange, Miss Caroline Adams, La Grange.  
 REGION VII—Kingsville, Miss Mildred Pecaut, Texas College of Arts and Industries, Kingsville.  
 District 25—Victoria, Miss Bertha Horton, Edna.  
 District 26—Robstown, Miss Lenora Hayes, Kingsville.  
 District 27—Laredo, Mr. C.M. Mouser, Laredo.  
 District 28—McAllen, Mr. Arthur Hayes, Mission.  
 REGION VIII—Alpine, Annie Kate Ferguson, Sul Ross State Teachers College, Alpine.  
 District 29—El Paso, Mr. Paul Heigis, President, Little Theater, El Paso.  
 District 30—Ft. Stockton, Supt. G.E. Walker, Pecos.  
 District 31—Midland, Mrs. L.K. Barry, Midland.<sup>11</sup>

New Regional contests were established at Canyon, Jacksonville, Kingsville, and Alpine, where previously district contests had been held. Eleven of the twenty-nine 1933 One-Act Play Tournament Centers were retained. Only seventeen of the contest sites were newly established, since city contests had been held in Dallas, Ft. Worth, and El Paso. There were seven changes in Tournament Managers of the district and regional centers retained from 1933. Of the thirty-nine

<sup>10</sup> Won by Waco, South Jr. H.S. Waco. See: September 1934, Leaguer.

<sup>11</sup> March 1934 Leaguer. Page 3, "District, Regions, Centers, With Restrictive Committees."



district and regional contest held in 1934, there were twenty-seven new Contest Managers. These organizational changes were the most massive since the origin of the contest.

State Office records of the district and regional One-Act Play contest for 1934 have not been retained. The issue of the Leaguer for the 1933-1934 school year identify a few of the schools and the directors participating in One-Act Play. The November, 1933, Leaguer identified Mr. Howell, Farmersville; Miss Howard, Pharr-San Juan; and Mrs. G.A. Fisher, San Benito, as being the play directors.<sup>12</sup> An article in the December, 1933, Leaguer, identified Mrs. W.R. Quinn and Mrs. Frank Cheatham as the directors of the Beeville entry.<sup>13</sup> The February issue published an article listing Mrs. Rhoda Kelly as director of the Ft. Stockton entry in One-Act Play.<sup>14</sup> Miss Jackson was listed as the play director at Petersburg in the February, 1934 Leaguer.<sup>15</sup> The September, 1934, Leaguer carried an article that described the success story of Mrs. Richard Allen, director of dramatics at South Junior High School, Waco. Mrs. Allen won the One-Act Play contest in District 12 of Region III with eighth grade students and competed in the Regional meet at Denton.<sup>16</sup>

The district and region won by each of the eight plays participating in the State Tournament can be determined by a close analysis of the district and region previously listed.

The following eight schools qualified for the State Tournament by winning first in a County Contest, next in a district elimination tournament, and finally in a regional tournament. They represented the three hundred forty-six original entries in the contest:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> November 1933 Leaguer. Page 1, "Letterbox."

<sup>13</sup> December 1933 Leaguer. Page 1, "Debate and Drama Clubs are Active." (Taken from Bee Picayane of Beeville.)

<sup>14</sup> February 1934 Leaguer. Page. 1, "Pupil Writes of Activity in League at Ft. Stockton." (Taken from the Ft. Stockton Pioneer.)

<sup>15</sup> February 1934 Leaguer. Page 4, "Closing Date Finds Many Late; Others Far on Way."

<sup>16</sup> February 1934 Leaguer. Page 1, "South Jr. High School Waco Wins District in Drama."

<sup>17</sup> State Office history files.

Region I: District 2—Pampa, Smokescreen by Robert Kasper, directed by Ben Guill.

Region II: District 7—San Angelo, The Grill by Edward Johnston, directed by Leola Campbell.

Region III: District 9—Wichita Falls, The End of The Dance by Hudson Strode, directed by Juanita Kinsey.

Region IV: District 13—Bonham, The Rope by Eugene O'Neill, directed by Roy W. Fletcher.

Region V: District 20—Beaumont, The Birthday of an Infanta by Stuart Walker, directed by Mrs. Mary L. Reed.

Region VI: District 23—Austin, The Giants' Stair by Wilbur Daniel Steele, directed by James R. Burton.

Region VII: District 27—Laredo, The Slave with Two Faces by Mary Carolyn Davies, directed by Mrs. J.L. Tenney.

Region VIII: District 29—Austin, El Paso, Across the Border by Colin Clements, directed by Mrs. Lydia M. Stark.<sup>18</sup>

The Eighth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament was held May 4 and 5, 1934, in Hogg Memorial Auditorium. This was the first State Tournament for the new facility. The plays were divided into two groups of four: Group I: Bonham, Laredo, Pampa, and Wichita Falls, played on Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 P.M.; and Group II: Austin, Austin (El Paso), Beaumont, and San Angelo, performed Saturday morning at 9:00 A.M. There were three judges for each of the preliminaries. Two schools, Bonham and Pampa, were selected from Group I, and two, Austin and Beaumont, from Group II. These four casts competed on Saturday evening in the finals.<sup>19</sup>

Pampa was the winner in the finals and Austin was awarded second place. Bonham did not win in the finals, but dominated the All-Star Cast selections with one girl and two boys. Pampa placed one boy and one girl in this group, while Austin had only a female representative on the All-Star Cast. The Samuel French award was won by Edwin Bent of Bonham for his role as Luke in Eugene O'Neill's The Rope.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> State Office History Book, 1934.

<sup>19</sup> State Office history files.

<sup>20</sup> State Meet History Book, 1934.

It is impossible to determine the judges for each of the preliminaries or the finals. Annie C. Irvine, Monroe Lippman, Mattie Allison, Thad W. Riker, and Ernest R. Hardin were listed as the judges in the State Tournament program.<sup>21</sup> Maud Webster, Sarah Lowrey, Jessie Millsapps, Mattie M. Allison, Monroe Lippman, Earl C. Bryan, and Thomas M. Marsh were recorded in the 1933-1934 "Financial Statement of the University Interscholastic League" as having been paid sixty-nine dollars for judging the One-Act Play Contest.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that three different judges were used in each session and one judge (Wharey?) was used to select the All-Star Cast. This was definitely the method used in later years. This method would necessitate a total of ten different people which is possible by combining the two lists.

The State Tournament Staff for 1934 was twice as large as the previous year. The program listed the following positions and people: Manager, Morton Brown; Technician, Carrol Lusk; Electrician, Henry Barton; Crew, Vernon Rodgers, Joe Barton, Mel Coltharp, and Al Mason; House, Tommy Baughman, Joe Malouf and John Shepard; Tickets, Miss Frances Martin.<sup>23</sup> The financial records list three additional people, August J. Watzskavick, Holton Simpson, and Eli Wallach. The entire group, excluding Morton Brown, was paid a total of ninety dollars and sixty cents for their services.<sup>24</sup>

The financial records indicate that Street Furniture and The Dahlich Company were paid fourteen dollars for furniture rental and drayage.<sup>25</sup> The known expenses of the One-Act Play Tournament totaled one hundred seventy- three dollars and sixty cents, making this the most

<sup>21</sup> State Tournament Program, 1934. Preliminary Group I.

<sup>22</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1934-1935. Page 97, Appendix I.

<sup>23</sup> State Tournament Program, 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Op. Cit., Page. 98, Appendix I.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.\_Page 95.

expensive State Tournament up to this time. The total One-Act Play receipts was one hundred thirty-one dollars and seventy-five cents.<sup>26</sup>

Pictures of each cast were made for the first time by Mr. McCaskill of University Studios. They were taken at the end or beginning of each rehearsal period, with the exception of the Beaumont cast. Their picture was taken at the end of the preliminaries because the full cast and properties were not available at rehearsal.

Rehearsals began at 8:00 A.M. Friday morning and continued through the day. Mr. Brown noted that it would be helpful if one cast could rehearse on the day before in order to make it easier to get through the rehearsal schedule. He also noted that the number of staff members was correct and that they did a good job operating the contest.

Morton Brown's notes in the State Office files provided some insight into the 1934 Contest. The technical operation of the State Tournament was much the same as the previous year. The auditorium was secured the day before the rehearsals in order to arrange the cyclorama and the properties conveniently. Each cast was allowed one hour for rehearsal and each was responsible for off-stage effects. They played against a neutral cyclorama and each cast brought their own hand props. Heavy props were furnished by the contest management. Mr. Brown was especially impressed with the discipline and cooperation from each cast and director in the tournament.<sup>27</sup>

Morton Brown's notes provided the statistical basis for an article by Evelyn Calhoun Miller, a witness of the State Tournament, published in the October, 1934, Leaguer. She had witnessed the State Finals since first contest in 1927.

<sup>26</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1934, Page 95.

<sup>27</sup> State Office History files. "Notes on the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual State OAP Tournament, 1934."

In keeping with a national trend, Texas high schools during the year 1933-1934 have manifested widespread dramatic activities. County competition in the Interscholastic League One-Act Play Tournament brought forth 364 entries, with some 3,600 children involved—either in the actual performance or at work backstage. When, after a series of eliminations, eight schools competed in the finals at Austin, literally the four corners of the State were represented by El Paso, Beaumont, Pampa and Laredo, while Bonham, San Angelo, Wichita Falls, and Austin served at means between the extremes. The contestants traveled a total distance of 2,623 miles from towns ranging in population from 102,421 to 5,655.

But while statistics are quite a spectacular factor in the Eighth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament, they are not as significant nor as useful as a few observations concerning the plays that reached the finals. Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the contest was the prevailing type of play, that is, tragedy-realistic or fantastic. To some of the spectators it seemed unfortunate that there was no break or relief from the tragic atmosphere that pervaded Hogg Memorial Auditorium the night of the play contest finals. A dope fiend, a hunchback, several idiots, imbeciles or morons, and a couple of murderers, all groveling, prancing, or shrinking around the most sordid of stage sets, appeared scarcely felicitous roles for high school players, even particularly gifted ones, and it was obvious that the children so abnormally cast were screwing themselves up at a terrific rate, then letting go with a resounding crash. Eugene O'Neill's "The Rope," Wilbur Daniel Steele's "The Giant's Stair," Robert Kasper's "Smokescreen," and Stuart Walker's "The Birthday of an Infanta," given respectively by Bonham, Austin, Pampa, and Beaumont, were the selections reaching the Saturday night finals. As those familiar with the plays will see, not one is without its monstrosity; cynicism is the dominant tone.

Yet the performance exhibited a great deal of merit, in spite of such an initial handicap. The acting, always of paramount importance, was in general convincing, carefully thought out, and characterized by great sincerity. That the Samuel French Medal for individual acting honors was won by the boy portraying Luke in "The Rope" is, I believe, some evidence of the success high school students can achieve in parts demanding neither high comedy nor yet start tragedy interpretation. Luke's role comes close to being that of a rather magnified conception of a troublesome adolescent high school student. It required no gamut of emotions to be run, no well-poised, scintillating lines to be crisply delivered. Hence, it was quite within the scope of a secondary school actor.

Great strides forward were shown in the management of routine and backstage affairs. The discipline in the dressing rooms and wings was excellent. The waits between plays ranged from only six to twelve minutes. Against a neutral cyclorama, effective illusions were wrought by the use of a minimum number of heavy props—and only slightly more small properties. Along with mention of stage sets, much credit should be given to Beaumont High School for the fact that everything, from the stage furnishings to the players' costumes was designed and executed in various departments of the institution: the manual training department made the furniture, while the art and home economics students created the wardrobes.

Another feature of this year's contest is the infinite amount of labor and ingenuity expended by the directors whose plays reached the finals. Ben Guill, coach of "Smokescreen," winning play given by Pampa, rehearsed as many as ten casts before he

chose his competing group. Several other directors held contests within their schools to select the most suitable plays and cast. In every case, all the casts in the final event were, as Morton Brown, director of dramatics of the Interscholastic League, says, "seasoned troupers, cooperating remarkably with directors, stage crews, and each other.

To sum up the conclusions that might be drawn by an eye witness of the 1934 finals of the one-act play tournament, one could praise the great sincerity and the high plane of acting found almost uniformly, the excellent results achieved by the most simple stage properties, incidentally, an item that serves to equalize the changes of poor and rich school districts, the back-stage attitudes and spirit of cooperation evidence by both casts and directors, the smooth performances so desirable yet so rare in amateur production, the result, no doubt, of unstinted effort by all concerned. Never[the]less, despite the progress shown in so many phases of the tournament, it is the opinion of a number of its well-wishers that plays having a somewhat more normal and cheerful not be given every consideration by directors in the coming year.<sup>28</sup>

Some record of the 1934 State One-Act Play Tournament was published in the November-December issue of Player's Magazine<sup>29</sup> and pictures of the 1934 winner<sup>30</sup> and finalist<sup>31</sup> were published in the March and April, 1935, Leaguer. These pictures were taken during the rehearsal period for the State Tournament and represent the first complete pictorial record of the State Tournament Play, as well as being the first One-Act Play pictures published in the Leaguer since September, 1931.

The Drama Service of the Extension Loan Library continued to play a vital role in the operation of the One-Act Play Contest. By October, 1933, there were over two thousand plays and numerous production books available for loan. "The Teacher's Guided to Good Plays" column continued to operate in close coordination with the play loan service. Mr. Brown reviewed most of the plays sent to the library by almost all the major play publishers and an occasional production book or theatre history made available through the library.

<sup>28</sup> October 1934 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4, "Foot-Light Notes on the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual One-Act Play Contest" by Evelyn Calhoun Miller.

<sup>29</sup> February 1935 Leaguer. Page 1, "National Magazine Features League One-Act Play Contest."

<sup>30</sup> March 1935 Leaguer. Page 1.

<sup>31</sup> April 1935 Leaguer. Page 3.

Mr. Bedichek, editor of the Leaguer, published two significant articles during the 1933-1934 school year relating to the use of dramatics. The first appeared in the September issue titled, "Study Shows Wide Use of Dramatics." This article was an "abstract of an unpublished Master of Arts thesis by Ruth Young Foster, Colorado State Teachers College, Greeley, 1932." It was a description of the leading practices in dramatic activities in the junior and senior high schools of the United States. Mr. Bedichek suggested that the material would offer some "valuable suggestions for those interested in dramatics in Texas high schools."<sup>32</sup>

The October, 1933, Leaguer carried an article by R.P. Reeves, Superintendent of Schools, Acuff, which strongly supported the One-Act Play contest as contributing factor in keeping students in school.

The one-act play contest has at last spread to the schools. Since students are natural actors they get much enjoyment in presenting one-act plays. Students are trained in as many as six or eight ways. They learn to memorize, speak plainly, poise, to carry out thoughts of the character in a realistic manner, and above all to become accustomed to appearing before the public, which often proves futile through any other source. Thus, future citizens are being trained to speak in public in such a way that students themselves are unaware of the process of training. So the little theatre movement has at last become a part of our school system.<sup>33</sup>

This article, similar to others published previously, reflected the continuing support by the school administrator of the League One-Act Play Contest.

<sup>32</sup> September 1933 Leaguer. Page 1, "Study Shows Wide use of Dramatics."

<sup>33</sup> October 1933 Leaguer. Page 1, "Writer Lists Advantages of League Contests for Schools."



1934 State One-Act Champion  
Pampa High's *Smokescreen*



## 1934-1935

The changes made in the contest rules for the 1934-1935 school year were minor. The “musicians off-stage” rule already added by the Official Notices column during the previous year was added under Rule 3 Eligibility.<sup>1</sup> The eight plays that appeared in the 1934 State Tournament were “barred for one year” under Rule 4<sup>2</sup> and Rule 5. Time-Keeper, was modified to require the time-keeper to report to the “Director of the contest” infractions of the forty minutes maximum for presentation, rather than notifying the judge.<sup>3</sup> The “One” was dropped from Rule 9 Judges. This made the rule read “Three, or other odd number of judges may be used in judging one-act play contest.” This rule seems to require the use of a panel of judges, but no official interpretation was ever offered to that effect.

A brief addition was made in the instructions to the judges:

Plays built on sordid or morbid themes and those introducing as characters, hunchbacks, epileptics, idiots, insane persons, or other revolting impersonations, are not considered suitable for high school students.<sup>4</sup>

The addition was likely made as a result of the plays and characters in the 1934 State Tournament. Evelyn Calhoun Miller, whose article appeared in the October, 1934, Leaguer was certainly an influence in this addition. Mr. Bedichek noted the relationship between Mrs. Miller’s criticism and the “addition to the instructions to judges” in an editorial comment in the October, 1934, Leaguer.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1934-1935 Revision. Page 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 60.

<sup>5</sup> October 1935 Leaguer. Page 2.

No other changes were made in the rules for the 1935 Contest, although there were suggestions made for changes. The Public Speaking Section of the State Meeting of Delegates was organized during the 1934 State Meet and they made the following recommendation:

All plays in any division of the League (county, district, etc.) should be played before the same neutral setting, a cyclorama preferred. (Motion by Miss Dickey, seconded by Mr. Clay.) Note: Any desired adjusting of doors, windows, etc., is permissible.<sup>6</sup>

There had been much discussion of play selection since the beginning of the One-Act Play contest. That discussion had brought about several suggestions of what might be done to control play selection in the League contest. One of the most popular suggestions was the limitation of plays to comedy, since many believed that comedy was more suitable for production by high school students. Mr. Bedichek published an article by Miss Juanita Kinsey, a participant in the 1934 State Tournament and a director of both high school plays in the League and one-act plays in the junior college contest. The junior college league had experimented with the exclusive use of comedy for one year and Miss Kinsey offered her opinion as follows:

I really believe the experiment for one year with comedies will be quite helpful. From the personal standpoint, I much prefer leaving the choice of plays to individual directors. However, since there has been so much discussion of the subject and such a preponderance of tragedies, I believe the use of comedies only for one year will be the proper solution.

I believe, however, that one year of such ruling will be enough and at the end of the year there will be just as much agitation for 'local option' as there is now for comedy.

That has been the situation in the Junior College Public Speaking Association. For years we had no rule specifying that one type play be used. Soon nothing had a chance but tragedy. Then we tried comedy for a year. At the end of that time directors pleaded for a return of the old plan of individual choice. The plea was granted and again we have more tragedies than anything else, but all seem satisfied, for many that desired the change didn't like it when they got it!

I believe the same would be true in the U.I.L. but that many would be satisfied only after having tried another play. I believe the comedy rule would brighten up the spring. Let's try it and see.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> September 1934 Leaguer. Page 4, "Speech Teachers and Coaches Organize at host State Meet."

<sup>7</sup> October 1934 Leaguer. Page 1, "Experiment With Comedies One Year."

This rule was not instituted for the 1935 Contest, nor for the following year, but it did find enough favor to be enacted for the 1937 Tournament.<sup>8</sup> Another article, “Stanislavsky Warns Against Heavy Parts for Young Actors,” was published in the April, 1935, Leaguer. The preface to the article seems to be an editorial comment by Mr. Bedichek of Morton Brown, in support of a move to a lighter genre in League play contests.<sup>9</sup>

In a meeting of the speech teachers of Southwest Texas, held at Breckenridge High School in San Antonio, there was a round table discussion of the League One-Act Play contest. Mr. Bedichek was one of the speakers at this meeting and took part in the discussion.<sup>10</sup> The following point of contention discussed at that meeting was listed in “The Speech Arts In Texas Schools” column in the February, 1935, Leaguer:

Why include in the judging of the high school one-act play contest the 25 percent for choice of play when the teacher chooses the play and the pupil has to try his best with the play he is given. It was suggested that good plays can be found and that suggestive and degrading plays should be avoided.<sup>11</sup>

The January, 1935, Leaguer carried a Bedichek comment on participation by junior high schools in the One-Act Play contest:

The Henderson Junior High School introduced a course in Speech three years ago. It is compulsory in the sixth and seventh grades and elective in the eighth grade as a dramatic course. This school competed successfully in League one-act play contests with casts from senior high schools. We doubt, however, the wisdom of the League rules which permit this kind of unequal competition. It will be found that for every case of successful competition of a junior against a senior high school in dramatics there will be dozens of cases of unsuccessful competition. The trained actors of the junior high school are promoted to the senior high school and are then turned back against the school in which they received their training. It will eventually become the old story of juniors in high school competing against juniors in ward schools. The League was finally forced to

<sup>8</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1935-1936, Revision. Page 58.

<sup>9</sup> April 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, “Stanislavsky Warns Against Heavy Parts for Young Actors.”

<sup>10</sup> December 1934 Leaguer. Page 1, “Speech Teacher Conference Set.”

<sup>11</sup> February 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, “The Speech Arts In Texas Schools.”

abandon this practice. It seems to us that a special division should be created for junior high schools not only in dramatics but in other events as well. They have come to be a special kind of school for administration purposes and should perhaps have a special division in the League. The great difficulty is that there are so few of them in any one county that an interesting competition could hardly be arranged on a county basis. It is possible to take in a larger geographical unit than the county, but that, of course, involved travel, and long trips for immature children brings up another problem.<sup>12</sup>

State Office records prior to the 1934-1935 school year do not reflect the number of junior high schools competing in One-Act Play. Only four of the four hundred eighty-three schools entered in the 1935 contest were listed as junior high schools.<sup>13</sup> There were, perhaps, a greater number in the list of entries that were not labeled as such.

Although one record indicates only four hundred and thirty-five high schools entered the One-Act Play contest<sup>14</sup>, a list of schools participating in the 1935 contest found in the State Office files totals four hundred eighty-six<sup>15</sup> and the State Meet History book records four hundred and eight-three schools entered.<sup>16</sup> These schools entered the fifty-four county contest recorded in issues of the Leaguer from October, 1934, to March, 1935. The names of the County Directors of One-Act Play are recorded for the first time<sup>17</sup> and are no longer available in any other State Office record sources.

The districts contest following the county meets were increased to thirty-two, one addition to the 1934 number. District 32 at Van Horn was added and the One-Act Play Director was Supt. T.R. Chesser of Ft. Hancock. Region VI was moved from Jacksonville to Longview and Miss Ruth Clair Sybert of Longview was the Director of One-Act Play. Miss Neda Kate Ramsey of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, became the Director of One-Act Play Region

<sup>12</sup> , January 1935 Leaguer. Page 2.

<sup>13</sup> (State Office Files) Participants Book. "OAP Schools 1934-1935".

<sup>14</sup> September 1935 Leaguer. Page 1, "Play Gets Warm Hand Back Home."

<sup>15</sup> History files, State Office. "One-Act Play Schools 1934-1935". Monographed list.

<sup>16</sup> State Meet History book, 1935.

<sup>17</sup> October 1935 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4. "Many Counties list Officers and Organize for Leaguer Work."

II. There were ten changes in district One-Act Play Directors for the 1935 contest. The changes that were made were as follows: District 1, Miss Lucille King, Amarillo College, Amarillo; District 6, Principal I.B. Herring, Breckenridge; District 7, Principal C.H. Kenley, San Angelo; District 11, Professor David Russell, Southern Methodist University, Dallas; District 17, Miss Ruther Rucker, Bryan; District 24, Mr. Leroy Herder, Weimar; District 25, Supt. John B. Hayes, Goliad; District 29, Principal W.W. Wimberly, Austin High School, El Paso; District 30, Supt. R. Henry Blackwell, Pecos; District 31, Miss Kathlyn Zant, Midland.<sup>18</sup> Some of the 32 districts had as many as ten entries.<sup>19</sup>

State Office records of the district and regional contest for 1935 have not been retained. There is however a complete list of the schools participating in the contest.<sup>20</sup> Only a few district and region contests won by each of the eight plays participating in the State Tournament can be determined by an analysis of the "District, Regions, Centers, With Respective Committees" column beginning in the January, 1935, Leaguer.<sup>21</sup> The following had won previously in county or city-county, district and regional contest:

Region I; District 3—Lamesa, Boccaccio's Untold Tale by Harry Kemp, directed by Mrs. Carriewood Stephens.

Region II; District 5—Abilene, The Princess Marries The Page by Edna St. Vincent Millay, directed by Clarence B. Ford.

Region III; District 10—Polytechnic, Fort Worth, The Sweetmeat Game by Ruth Comfort Mitchell, directed by Margaret Cameron.

Region IV; District 15—Longview, Moist Earth by Malcolm Stewart, directed by Ruth Claire Sybert.

Region V; District 18—Trinity, Grandma Pulls The String by Edith Delano and David Carb, directed by C.W. Washburn.

Region VI; District 23—Georgetown, Riders to The Sea by John Millington Synge, directed by Margaret Hull.

Region VII; District 28—Mission, Sparkin by E.P. Conkle, directed by Arthur R. Hayes.

<sup>18</sup> March 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, "District, Regions, Centers, With Respective Committees."

<sup>19</sup> November 1935 Leaguer. Page 4, "Discussions From the Field."

<sup>20</sup> History Files (State Office). "One-Act Play Schools, 1934-1935" (Book of Participants).

<sup>21</sup> January 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, "District Regions, Centers, With Respective Committees."

Region VIII; District 30—Iraan, When The Whirlwind Blows by Essex Dane, directed by Mrs. Ruby Gentry.<sup>22</sup>

The Ninth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament was held May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in Hogg Memorial Auditorium.<sup>23</sup> Group I: Abilene, Mission, Polytechnic (Fort Worth), and Trinity, played Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 8:00 P.M. They were judged by Miss Sarah Lowrey, Paul Baker and Thad W. Riker.<sup>24</sup> Group II: Georgetown, Iraan, Lamesa, and Longview, played Saturday morning at 9:00 A.M. and were judged by Earnest R. Hardin, Monroe Lippman, and Everett G. Smith.<sup>25</sup> There were two schools, Abilene and Mission, selected from group I and two, Georgetown and Longview, from Group II. These four schools competed in the Finals, Saturday, May 4, 1935.<sup>26</sup>

Mission was the winner in the finals and Georgetown was awarded second place. Pictures of each respectively were published on pg.1 of the September and November, 1935, Leaguer. Mission placed a boy and a girl on the All-Star cast and Abilene was awarded two male positions. Georgetown and Longview each placed one girl, but Longview's member, Helen Leaverton, was awarded the Samuel French award for her role of Marta in Malcom Stewart's Moist Earth.<sup>27</sup> Her picture appeared on pg.1 of the February, 1936, Leaguer.

The Finals of the State Tournament may have been judged by five judges,<sup>28</sup> although it is difficult to determine their names since the program can no longer be found in the State Office Files. The "Financial Statement of the University of Interscholastic League" lists Sarah Lowery, Mrs. Geraldine Hill Styles, Jessie Millsapps, A.H. Nolle, and Emory Horger as having been paid

<sup>22</sup> State Meet History Book, 1935.

<sup>23</sup> April 1935 Leaguer. Page 4, "General Program."

<sup>24</sup> Preliminary Group I, May 3, 1935.

<sup>25</sup> State Tournament Program. Preliminary Group 2.

<sup>26</sup> State Meet History Book, 1935.

<sup>27</sup> State Meet History Book, 1935.

<sup>28</sup> September 1935 Leaguer. Page 1, "Play Gets Warm Hand Back Home."

forty-nine dollars as fees for judging the One-Act Play Contest.<sup>29</sup> Since none of these judges were listed in the Preliminary Group II program, and only Sarah Lowery judged in Preliminary Group I they could have judged the finals. It is also entirely possible that a separate person was used to select the All-Star Cast and only three judges were used. The most likely candidate for judge of the All-Star cast was Dr. J.B. Wharey, since he performed that task in the finals 1930 to 1933 and in 1936, and the finals programs listing the judges are 1934 and 1935 are missing.

The State Tournament Staff was structured the same as the previous year. The programs listed the Staff as follows: Manager, Morton Brown; Technician, Carrol Lusk; Stage Manager, Mel Coltharp; Electrician, Lloyd Jeffress; Assistant Electrician, Al Mason; Crew, Eli Wallach, Henry Ratliff, and Herbert Mason; House, Thomas Baugman, Beverly Laws, Harold Eitze, and Bud Hill; Tickets, Miss Frances Martin.<sup>30</sup> The expenses sheet for the State Tournament does not include Lloyd Jeffress, although he was present,<sup>31</sup> but adds Nicholas Lyon to the Stage Crew. This same record indicated the Staff, excluding Morton Brown, was paid approximately seventy-three dollars for their services.<sup>32</sup>

The financial records show expenses of thirty-five dollars and twenty cents for rental, drayage and expenses. The cost of pictures is not known since University Studio made photographs of many of the winners in the State Meet. The total known expenses from available records was one hundred fifty-seven dollars and thirty-five cents.<sup>33</sup> The One-Act Play receipts totaled one hundred two dollars and fifty cents.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, Page 94, Appendix I. "Financial Statement of the UIL."

<sup>30</sup> State Tournament Program, 1935.

<sup>31</sup> Office Memo. Morton Brown to Roy Bedichek, May, 1935.

<sup>32</sup> State Office History files.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, Page 93, Appendix I. "Financial Statement of the UIL."

The organization for operating the finals in the Stage One-Act Play Tournament were described in detail by Morton Brown in a letter to Roy Bedichek, Chief, Bureau of Public School Interest, Division of Extension. Mr. Brown provided this information for Bedichek because he believed the Chief would be interested, since the organization was "functioning properly." The information provided was as follows:

Our technician has complete charge back-stage. It is his duty to secure a reliable and dependable stage crew, to take down the cyclorama that is to be used for our plays and put it in proper place to cut the stage down to the proper proportions, to arrange the properties and props so that they can be used in the correct order and to re-arrange them after they have been used so that there will be no confusion when they are wanted again. Our man this year was the most helpful and efficient that we have yet had. In addition to greasing the back-stage machinery he was helpful in securing props and was on hand at the Auditorium early Monday morning to see that all furniture and props were checked out.

Lloyd Jeffress reported for duty as Electrician at 8 A.M. Friday and stayed on the job until after 5 P.M. Lights for production were set during rehearsal so that no time was lost. Each Director was asked to sit with Mr. Jeffress during his rehearsal until lights were set. A telephone placed in the auditorium connects with the switchboard, enabling Jeffress in the auditorium and his assistant at the switchboard to set any simple lighting easily and quickly.

The Stage Manager is our Contact man. He takes charge of each Director and his cast, assigns dressing rooms for rehearsal, shifting rooms as rehearsals and performances proceed. It is his duty to assist the director in any way needed, to check up on his progress in getting his cast ready for rehearsal and performance, to time each play in rehearsal so that in performance he can check on the time and apprise each director of the approximate time before his cast goes on. It is his duty to educate the director in our methods and ways, so that there may be no delay in getting a cast on or off the stage. It almost invariably works if each director is privately tipped off that his play will stand a much better chance if the intermission preceding is as short as possible. We tell him that both the judges and the audience is surprised and pleased to find the curtain going up on a new setting and a new play in a shorter time than they thought possible.

The House Manager has complete charge of the doormen and the box office. He assigns the doormen to their posts, instructs them as to their duties, reli[e]ves them of tickets, etc. placing all tickets taken up in large envelopes after each performance. These are later brought to the office and carried over to the power plant to be destroyed. The House Manager meets the judges at the door, gives them their ballots and escorts them to their seats. He reports to the Manager of the Contest when all judges and the Timekeeper are seated. The man used this year was a ticket taker last year...<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> State Office History files, letter from Morton Brown to Roy Bedichek written sometime after the 1935 State Tournament.



Mr. Brown provided a further insight to the operation of the 1935 Tournament with the addition of the following comments:

It so happened that all of the directors this year gave us immediate and complete cooperation. It is sometimes extremely difficult, in the short time that we have, to educate them to the necessity of losing no time either in rehearsal or in performance. It does sometimes happen that a director is utterly selfish and inconsiderate of others. Under the present system, I think that after all of our wiles are used the only alternative would be to get hard boiled. So far, I've never had to do that but once. Last year I ordered the Beaumont director off the stage and ordered the curtain up. However, I had a very pleasant conversation with her after the contest was over and she very sensibly took it like a man. Fact is she learned something and went away with a real respect for our Bureau.

This year we were enabled to get in touch with the various directors of the casts qualifying for the State Meet in sufficient time to get necessary information from them and to instruct them what to do on their arrival here. Your plan to register them at Hogg Auditorium is excellent, as it is vital that we get in touch with them immediately on their arrival here. If all Regional Meets can be held two weeks ahead of the State Meet and we can get results at once, it smooths the way for the Finals here. Last year we had considerable difficulty in getting necessary information from the play coaches, but this year we had sufficient time to write them and get a reply.

Another plan for pictures would be to take only the four casts in the finals. In that case, we would take them immediately after the preliminaries on Saturday morning, taking first the one that played last. This would necessitate holding all these four casts in their dressing rooms in costume until after the preliminaries. We could also have to hold the stage crew and electrician, but would gain quite a bit of time lost during rehearsal waiting for the photographer and getting ready for the pictures.

To me one of the finest things about the contest this year is the fine spirit of the coaches and casts, their immediate understanding of our plan for running off the finals, and their wholehearted cooperation. May the eight regions of Texas send their likes again.<sup>36</sup>

Mr. Brown's notes on the 1935 State Tournament indicated the necessity for some improvement in certain parts of the tournament operation. He suggested that seven or eight crew people, besides the electrician, should be on hand for all rehearsals and performances and that all crew members should understand that "school is out for the two days of the meet." Someone was needed in front of the auditorium to prevent the selling of contributor's tickets by scalpers. An extra man should be used as doorkeeper at the South fire exit and Curtain Club members should

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Morton Brown to Roy Bedichek, May 1935.

be instructed by Mr. James Park, sponsor, or the president of the club not to use this door.

Curtain Club members need to be instructed to stay out of the backstage area and to cooperate in helping to keep all visitors away from this area. The programs were handled well by the program committee because they came early and their early arrival should be encouraged in the future.

Mr. Brown indicated that the greatest difficulty in operation was getting the judges in the theatre on time. His plan was to write each judge in the future explaining why he must be there ahead of time.<sup>37</sup>

The finals of the 1935 One-Act Play Tournament were widely acclaimed. An account of the State Tournament was carried in the September-October issue of the Player's Magazine.<sup>38</sup> Samuel French Bulletin, Volume 10, Number 2, distributed in 1935-1936 carried a two-page account of the 1935 State Tournament and paid particular tribute to the Mission cast and director. The Theater Arts Monthly in the "Tributary Theater" issue of July, 1935, carried a reference to the contest.<sup>39</sup> One of the most revealing accounts of the State Tournament came in the form of a note from Roy Bedichek to Morton Brown written the Sunday morning following the Saturday night Finals.

You did a splendid piece of work on the finals last night. It was perfect. But where was your dramatic judgment when you told me before the tournament that you were apprehensive about the quality of the plays? They were the best we have ever had.<sup>40</sup>

The quality of the One-Act Play Contest was praised in a letter to Bedichek from Jesse Millsaps, head of the Studio of Effective Speech in Houston, who attended the 1935 State Tournament. Her evaluation was as follows:

<sup>37</sup> State Office History files. "Notes on 1935 Finals One-Act Play Contest" by Morton Brown.

<sup>38</sup> October 1935 Leaguer. Page 2, Ed.

<sup>39</sup> February 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, "600 Start Race For Play Crown" by Morton Brown.

<sup>40</sup> State Office History files. Note from Roy Bedichek to Morton Brown. Sunday Morning, May 5, 1935.

I think there was a decided improvement in the plays this year. First, the choice of plays as to theme, plot and characterization was of a much higher cultural tone than last year, and on the whole the material was better suited to the high school actor's ability and experience. As a result of this, the acting was more artistically effective, because it was more natural and there was a complete absence of strain that is felt when the actor has a bigger job than he can handle.

The stage sets were unusually well worked out, beautiful in simplicity and choice of essentials, without the suggestion of clutter that generally crowds the amateur stage.

But the thing that was the most outstanding was the showing in general of considerably better diction, more refinement in voice quality, more melody in conversational form, and more accentuation in progressive thinking, which seems to show that our educational dramatics are being handled by more experienced and better trained directors. I noticed this advance in our city meet, also district meet; hence, I believe the work of the League has had a splendid influence for better, higher type material and more refined interpretation of not only drama, but other speech activities the League is fostering.<sup>41</sup>

Evelyn Calhoun Miller was much more pleased with the 1935 Tournament than she had been the preceding year and she responded with a very favorable article published in the January, 1936, Leaguer. After some introductory remarks, she provided an evaluation of the 1935 State Tournament Finals and offered suggestions for the 1936 contest.

First of all, the tournament was almost universally regarded as a model for future generations to pattern themselves after. The choice of plays, long a subject for acrid debate and zealous proselyting, offered diversity enough for devotees of the buskin or admirers of the sock. Indicative of the attitude of audience and judges alike was the decision giving Mission High School, with its rollicking presentation of "Sparkin'" by E.P. Conkle, first place. It was such a play as exponents of the Tournament have for several years been waiting to see reach the Finals.

"Riders to the Sea" of Synge, presented by Georgetown, was given second place because of the well-balanced performance by its entire cast. "The Princess Marries the Page of Millay" and Malcolm Stewart's "Hoist Earth," performed respectively by Abilene and Longview, were the other two plays to reach the finals. The latter has two interesting sidelights: its author is a native Texan, the locale the rice fields near Houston, and second, Helen Leaverton, playing the role of Marta, became the first girl in nine years of Interscholastic League Play Contest to win the Samuel French Medal for best individual acting.<sup>42</sup> Feminists please not[e] and rejoice therein!

Important roles for girls in the four plays presented in the Finals outnumbered those for boys in the proportion of nearly three to one. It therefore seemed something of an injustice that the All-Star Cast should be made up as usual of three boys and three girls. I don't want to be at all derogatory of the boys' performance, but it did at least aim

<sup>41</sup> November 1935 Leaguer. Page 1, "Critic Says Plays on the Upgrade."

<sup>42</sup> The Samuel French Award was not instituted until 1930; consequently, Miss Leaverton was the sixth recipient.

to raise the question in the minds of a good many as to the wisdom of there being an inflexible rule fixing the 3-3 representation of boys and girls on the All-Star Cast.<sup>43</sup> Possibly, in some cases, the judges should be given permission to divide the masculine and feminine members of the stellar group somewhat in proportion with the predominance of important parts. Perhaps the stipulation that five-one be the extreme and that as a general rule the 3-3 choice is most desirable might be added as a guide to the judges. In all events, as a hangover from the 1935 Contests, I believe the point will bear further discussion...

That "plays are for pleasure" is becoming a much more important factor in the director's choice of play was evidenced by the wide variety of selections offered in the 1935 Contest. It is to be hoped that the 1936 Tournament will again give the spectators a chance to come away feeling that they have had "grand entertainment."<sup>44</sup>

Evelyn Miller also provided some interesting historical information concerning the preparation of the Mission cast for the One-Act Play Contest.

In the Mission High School Mr. Hayes sponsors the Dramatics Club in which membership is restricted to 50 odd junior and senior students (mainly because facilities for taking care of larger numbers are unavailable). There is also a workshop of 10 work benches at Mr. Hayes' s disposal, while properties and materials, valued at \$600 have been collected over a three-year period. Like many other directors who believe in preliminary "finger-practice," Mr. Hayes had his group produce "Sun-Up" to get atmosphere and choice of material for his contest play.<sup>45</sup>

The history of the Mission cast of E.P. Conkle's Sparkin', directed by Mr. Arthur R. Hayes did not end with the State Tournament. This cast returned home to produce their play for the people of Mission in the local theatre. The September, 1935, Leaguer carried the re-print of a local news article that appeared in the Mission paper. The cast was identified and members of the All-Star Cast at the Tournament, including the two from Mission, were named. Additional information was provided, as follows:

In winning the State Meet the Mission players were up against the stiffest competition in the State with winners of seven other districts represented. Georgetown was second in the meet.

<sup>43</sup> Evelyn Miller was the first to publicly oppose a practice that has continued with only two exceptions since the second year of the Contest. The exceptions were judged by Dr. Springer in the 1962 3A Contest and by Mr. Clive Hambald in the 1963 4A Contest. Tradition has always been the controlling factor. There is presumably a rule concerning the selection of the All-Star Cast.

<sup>44</sup>January 1936 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 2, "Writers Paves 1935 Plays Best in League Tournament History."

<sup>45</sup>January 1936 Leaguer. Page 2.

Four of five judges at the meet awarded the first prize to Mission and of seventeen judges that the Mission group has faced in their climb to the top fifteen have awarded them first place. The Mission cast depended wholly on their acting, taking all their 'properties' to Austin in a bushel-basket.

Out of 435 high schools that entered the one-act play contest Mission was awarded the prize as having the best. There are 1,078 approved high schools, Mission is the first South Texas city to win in the State meet. No other school south of San Antonio has ever won the meet before.<sup>46</sup>

This article could have been carried one step further in praise of the Mission cast. This was only the second time that a South Texas school had ever competed in the State Tournament. Laredo was the South Texas regional representative in the 1934 State Tournament, but they failed to qualify for the Finals.<sup>47</sup>

Mr. Bedichek later paid tribute to Mission High School to support one of the basic concepts of the "set" rule.

That costly and elaborate properties are not necessary in the League's One-Act Play Contest was proved during the last State Tournament won by Mission High School which shipped all its properties to Austin in two bushel baskets...

Players Magazine, official publication of National Collegiate Players, September and October issue, contains, page 21 and 22, a column long account of the last State Tournament of the University Interscholastic League, illustrated with a fine stage scene from "Sparkin'," as presented by the Mission High School, winning cast in the tournament.<sup>48</sup>

Roy Bedichek made another major contribution to the distribution information about drama and the theatre when he provided space for a new column, "The Speech Arts In Texas Schools," in the Leaguer. A Bedichek editorial in the January, 1935, Leaguer, which introduced the column, commented as follows:

Speech Teachers should turn to the column of this issue in which is recorded the convention meeting of the Texas Speech Arts Association held recently in New Orleans. This was really an enthusiastic group with a true professional outlook. The column devoted to speech arts is an experiment. It may pan out and it may not. If enough of those teachers who are primarily interested in speech training take a hand in it, and if the

<sup>46</sup> September 1935 Leaguer. Page 1, "Play Gets Warm Hand Back Home."

<sup>47</sup> State Meet History Book.

<sup>48</sup> October 1935 Leaguer. Page 2.

material furnished is of a genuine educational nature, it will be continued; otherwise not...<sup>49</sup>

In three issues of the Leaguer - February, March and April - this column served as a source of information for what was being done in educational theatre on both the college and secondary levels. News of plays being produced, drama classes being taught, drama activities being undertaken, new facilities provided, conferences in all areas, and contest play work was the major focus. The "Speech Arts In Texas Schools" provided a wide view of state activities for those interested in theatre. About half of its information was directly related to dramatic activities. The column was edited by Miss Jeston Dickey, Brackenridge High School, San Antonio.<sup>50</sup>

The "Teachers' Guide to Good Plays" by Morton Brown continued to be a regular feature of each Leaguer through the 1934-1935 school year. Mr. Brown reviewed over one hundred and fifty plays and books during the year. Brown also wrote one article of major interest to the high school director. He encouraged the directors to study play production and provided a list and explanation of some of the basic books and magazines on theatre production. He suggested that these books and magazines might be added to the school library.<sup>51</sup> During the 1934-1935 year the "Play Service" of the Extension Loan Library, operated by Morton Brown, circulated three thousand one hundred and nine packages containing about nineteen thousand plays. Either as a partial result of the play service or by its own impetus, 1934-1935 was a productive year in the League One-Act Play Contest. Its growth in quality and quantity was the greatest it had experienced since the beginning of the Contest in 1927. This productivity was likely due to the effort of Morton Brown and Roy Bedichek.

<sup>49</sup> January 1935 Leaguer. Page 2.

<sup>50</sup> January 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, "The Speech Arts In Texas Schools."

<sup>51</sup> February 1935 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4, "Suggests Book-Shelf for Helping School Dramatics" by Morton Brown.



UNIVERSITY  
STUDIO  
JUSTIN

1935 State One-Act Second Place  
Georgetown High's *Riders to the Sea*

GEORGETOWN

823

## 1935-1936

One-Act Play rules changes for the 1935-1936 year were minimal. Rule 4f automatically “barred” the eight plays that participated in the 1935 State Tournament. (Sparkin’, Riders to the Sea, Moist Earth, When the Whirlwind Blows, Boccaccio’s Untold Tale, The Sweetmeat Game, The Princess Marries the Page, and Grandma Pulls the Apron String were ineligible for one year.)<sup>1</sup> The irrelevant warning that had served as an interpretation of the “set” rule since the 1930 contest was deleted but the rule requiring the use of simple setting remained.<sup>2</sup> The single critic judge was eliminated from the “Judges” rule, making it necessary to use a panel of judges in every contest.<sup>3</sup> There was no discussion of this change in the Leaguer during the preceding year and the State Office records offer no explanation. There was one further change made in the rules with the addition of the following:

13. Drawing a Tournament.—The one-act play Director is authorized to “draw” the tournament when the entry-date for a given tournament is passed and so assign the places for appearance of casts on the tournament program.<sup>4</sup>

There were numerous discussions of the One-Act Play rules during the year. A lengthy discussion of play choice and the neutral setting was held at the State Conference of Speech Teachers during the 1935 State Tournament. J.R. Burton of Austin High School led the discussion and Roy Bedichek was an active participant.<sup>5</sup> Letters were received in the State Office requesting a modification in Article VIII which prevented participation in one-act play and public speaking events by the same student.<sup>6</sup> Those that complained about this rule believed the problem could be solved by scheduling. A conflict could exist between any two contests, yet only

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1935-1936, Revision, Page 61.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1934-1935, Page 59.

<sup>4</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1935-1936, Revision, Page 62.

<sup>5</sup> September 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, “State Conference of Speech Teachers Held During Meet.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Page 4, “Discussion from The Field.”



participants in public speaking events, including one-act play, were denied “double representation”.<sup>7</sup> This discussion continued for several years and this rule was not modified until the 1942 tournament.<sup>8</sup>

Frequent letters were received in the State Office asking why points toward the “all-round championship” were not allowed for one-act play. There were four all-round championships determined at each county meet. There were as follows: (1) Class A high school, (2) Class B high school, (3) rural school, and (4) ward school. The all-round championship was awarded to the school in each class which won the highest number of points over other schools competing in its class. To win, the school had to compete and place in at least three different contests. The contests had to be in both athletic and literary events. The points allocated the school that won first, second and third places in each contest were determined by an exact schedule published in the Constitution and Contest Rules.<sup>9</sup> Since the One-Act Play Contest was open to “any member high-school,” this automatically eliminated the rural and ward schools.<sup>10</sup>

A letter from Mr. J.F. Kemp of Seymour was published in the “Discussion from the Field” column in the November, 1935, Leaguer. It suggested prior correspondence with Mr. Bedichek relating to points for One-Act Play and held the point of view of many that favored a change. Mr. Kemp’s opinion was expressed as follows:

At our District Meet at Wichita Falls ten plays were entered, one for each of the ten county and city-county units. None of these schools entering winning plays for their several units and winning first, second, and third, respectively, in the district were allowed any points toward the district championship. This seems to me to be unfair discrimination.

Your objection to the few schools in certain counties entering the One-Act Play and the resulting advantage to the one or two schools entering seems to apply equally to certain other speech events as debate and extemporaneous speech. Your suggestion for

<sup>7</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1935-1936, Revision, Page 21.

<sup>8</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1941-1942, Page 23.

<sup>9</sup> Op. Cit., 1935-1936, Pages 25-28, Article X. “All-Round Championship.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 1935-1936, Page 61.

points awards in counties having as many as three entries would be satisfactory to me, although I think that it would be better to make it two entries.

Regardless of the counties, I think there should be a schedule of points worked out for the district.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Kemp could have, as some did, noted that first place points were awarded by default in other contests when there was only one entry in the contest.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Bedichek replied to one of “many inquiries” in a brief article in the April, 1936, Leaguer:

We replied to Mr. Roberts letter, as follows, although we do not feel at all sure of our ground and would like to receive further suggestions for publication.

“Relative to points for dramatics in the county meet, the latter<sup>13</sup>, many small high schools are not equipped with stage facilities, and hence cannot train pupils for the one-act play contest... Of the two, there is more argument for points in the play contest than for points in typing, and still I am of the opinion that we would be handling the larger schools a great advantage in giving points in either of the contests.”<sup>14</sup>

The discussions over the merits of awarding points in one-act play toward the all-round championship continued over several years. It was not until 1943 that a change occurred.<sup>15</sup>

The most controversial of all rules discussions was the matter of play choice. In order to try a new approach in play selection a referendum vote was taken among the directors participating in the 1936 contest to decide for or against the proposed plan of making 1937 a “comedy year” or limiting entries to comedies for one year. The decision to limit entries to comedies and farces was made as a result of this vote.<sup>16</sup>

The tenth year of one-act play in the League produced over six hundred entries and five hundred and ninety-one actual participants in the seventy-five published County or City-County One-Act Play Tournaments.<sup>17</sup> This was an increase of twenty-one Counties and one hundred and

<sup>11</sup> November, 1935 Leaguer. Page 4, “Discussion from the Field.”

<sup>12</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1936-1937 Revision, Article X, Section 1: “All-Round Championship.”

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Roberts had made comment about both typing and one-act play.

<sup>14</sup> April 1936 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4, “Points in Typing and One-Act Play.”

<sup>15</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1943-1944, Page 22.

<sup>16</sup> State Office History Files, 1936. Morton Brown notes.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

eight schools. The County's participating and the names of the One-Act Director of each was published in issues of the Leaguer from October, 1935, through March, 1936. A list of five hundred and eighty-two of the 1936 "One-Act Play Schools" was recorded in the State Office.<sup>18</sup>

The winners of the County Tournaments appeared in contests preliminary to the districts or in the thirty-two District One-Act Play Tournaments held in 1936. There were only two changes made in district centers: District 18 was moved from Huntsville to Livingston and District 19 was moved from Pasadena to Houston. The District One-Act Play Directors listed in the March, 1936, issue of the Leaguer represented a change in fifteen of the thirty-two district directors. The same list recorded changes in four of the eight Regional Directors of One-Act Play. Those Regional changes were as follows: Region I, Canyon, Mr. Leon Lassers; Region II, Abilene, Mrs. Nora Levy; Region IV, Longview, Miss M.J. Harris; and Region VI, San Marcos, Mr. Buren C. Robbins.<sup>19</sup> These changes represented about a fifty per cent change in the administration on the state-wide level.

There are no remaining official records of the winners of the district and regional contest, but the eight winners of the Regional Tournaments can be determined by the schools participating in the State Tournament. The following had won previously in county or city-county, district and regional contests:

Region I; District 2—Pampa, Dust by Ben Guill and Archer Fullingim, directed by Ben Guill.

Region II; District 5—Sweetwater, Harlequinade in Green and Orange by Glenn Hughes, directed by Mrs. Isla M. Bickers.

Region III; District 11—Adamson (Dallas), The Conflict by Clarice Vallette McCauley, directed by Wanda Banker.

Region IV; District 15—Palestine, God Caesar by Marjorie Price, directed by Wayne Craddock.

Region V; District 19—John H. Reagan (Houston), The Tangled Web by Charles G. Stevens, directed by Mrs. Vernon Johns Grimes.

<sup>18</sup> State Office History Files, 1936. "One-Act Play Schools, 1935-1936."

<sup>19</sup> March 1936 Leaguer. Page 3.

Region VI; District 23—Austin, The Cajun by Ada Jack Carver, directed by James R. Burton.

Region VIII District 25—Boling, Pink and Patches by Margaret Bland, directed by Mattie Stroud.

Region VIII; District 29—El Paso, The Last Flight Over by Allean Lemmon, directed by Lucia P. Hutchins.<sup>20</sup>

The Tenth Annual State One-Act Play Tournament was held May 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Hogg Memorial Auditorium, Austin, Texas.<sup>21</sup> Group I: Reagan (Houston), Boling, Pampa, and Adamson (Dallas), played Friday, May 1, at 8:00 P.M. and were judged by Ernest R. Hardin, Mrs. William Kay Miller, and Dr. J.B. Wharey.<sup>22</sup> Group II: Palestine, Sweetwater, El Paso, and Austin, performed Saturday morning May 2, at 9:00 A.M.<sup>23</sup> and were judged by A.M. Shampley, Emory C. Horger, and Mary K. Sands.<sup>24</sup> Boling and Pampa from Group I and Austin and El Paso from Group II were selected for the finals, Saturday, May 2, at 8:00 P.M.

El Paso High School presenting The Last Flight Over by Allean Lemmon won first place, and Austin High School's production of The Cajun by Ada Jack Carver won second. The winner of the Samuel French Medal for the best individual acting was Mary Adams as Sarah Anderson in the Pampa cast presenting Dust by Ben Guill and Archer Fullingim. One additional member of this cast, Arvo Goddard, was selected for the All-Star Cast, together with Martha Thomas and Jimmie Hayes of Boling, and Alice Ann Nitschke of Austin. The winning play, El Paso, was represented by Joe Ball in this group.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. J.B. Wharey was judge for the All-Star Cast and the Samuel French Award and the winning plays were selected by Dr. George L. Joughin, James. H. Parke, and T.H. Marsh. Capt.

<sup>20</sup> State Meet History Book, 1936.

<sup>21</sup> April 1936 Leaguer. General Program.

<sup>22</sup> State Tournament Program. Preliminary Group 1.

<sup>23</sup> Unidentified newspaper article, State Office History files.

<sup>24</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1936-1937 Revision. "Financial Statement," Pag.90.

<sup>25</sup> State Meet History Book, 1936.

Everett G. Smith presented the awards.<sup>26</sup> Fees for judging the One-Act Play Contest were paid to A.M. Shampley, Emory C. Horger, and Mary K. Sands who were the judges of Preliminary, Group I. They were paid a total of forty-three dollars.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to Morton Brown, Manager, the State Tournament Staff totaled about sixteen members. The State Tournament programs listed the Staff as follows: Technician, Mel Coltharp; Stage Manager, Jack Sucke; Electrician, Lloyd Jeffress; Assistant Electricians, Bertram Hill and Ed Goldberg; Crew, Fred Simmons, Tom Caldwell, Eli Wallach, Hubert Mason, Ed Oberholtzer, and Ned Epps; House Manager, Thomas Baughman; Assistants, Jesse Coleman and Orval Sessums; and Box Office, Miss Frances Martin.<sup>28</sup> The "Financial Statement" did not list Ed Goldberg and Hubert Mason and excluded Dr. Lloyd Jeffress, a faculty member for the second year in a row, although he was the "Light Man" for the tournament. This record added Perry Dickey as a member of the Stage Crew. The Staff was paid a total of one hundred sixteen dollars and eighty cents for their services.<sup>29</sup>

The financial records show an additional seven dollars and fifty cents paid for furniture rental. This cost, added to the judges and staff expenses, totaled one hundred sixty-seven dollars and thirty cents. This figure did not cover the cost of pictures made by University Studios of each participating cast. The One-Act Play receipts produced a revenue of two hundred seven dollars and twenty-five cents, making the 1936 State Tournament financially the most successful in history.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> State Tournament Program Finals, 1936.

<sup>27</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1935-1936. Appendix : "Financial Statement."

<sup>28</sup> State Tournament Program, 1936.

<sup>29</sup> State Office History Files, 1936. "Time Sheet."

<sup>30</sup> Op. Cit.

All contestants in the State Tournament were required to use the same set of grey drapes, practical windows and doors. These were used whenever and wherever necessary. There were no cluttered stages and the simplicity seemed to be an asset to all productions. Due to the simplicity of the settings a record was established in changing the settings in both preliminaries and finals. The scene change time varied from four minutes and forty seconds to six minutes and thirty seconds. The curtain went up on time for the Saturday morning performances but was held Friday and Saturday evenings because the judges were late.<sup>31</sup>

Mr. Brown's notes reflect his opinion of the operation of the 1936 State Tournament:

The Stage Manager, Technician, Electrician and House Manager did a most excellent work and ran the show with a precision and smoothness that is necessary, but not always easy to attain. After things got under way our machinery functioned with an oiled ease that was pleasant to watch. All of our helpers (excepting Box Office) are Students in the University. Dr. Jeffress, Electrician, is a faculty member. His assistants are both students. Next year we shall use as many of these boys as are available—they are good ones. Waiting for the photographer consumed a good deal of valuable time. It is expensive to keep a stage crew waiting, and besides that the several casts are held up when they would like to be somewhere out on the campus. I suggest that if possible another camera be used, or perhaps another photographer may be used for the taking of certain groups. Making the pictures was the only hitch in rehearsal this year, as the directors cooperated beautifully. Some of them also used so much less time than we had allotted them that we got way ahead on our schedule, only to lose that and much more time waiting for McCaskill...

Personally, I think this was a grand contest and I thoroughly enjoyed my part in it. I suggest that we have a watchman (Kenneth Smith if Possible) outside next year for ticket scalpers and to keep people out of the windows. Plan some way of inducing the judges to get to the auditorium ahead of time. Ask the man who makes the Awards to call all four casts on the stage before making the awards. Apprise directors of this well beforehand so that they will have their casts ready to go on stage at the final curtain without delay. This is to make a better finish to the finals, and to encourage a good sportsmanship in winner and loser.<sup>32</sup>

Morton Brown also recorded a few interesting facts about the participants in the 1936 Tournament. Among the schools that entered the finals, only Austin, Pampa and Palestine had

<sup>31</sup> State Office History Files, 1936. Morton Brown's Notes on the "State One-Act Play Tournament, 1936".

<sup>32</sup> State Office One-Act Play History Files, 1936, Notes by Morton Brown.

entered before, though other schools in both Houston and El Paso had brought plays to the finals. San Jacinto of Houston entered the finals in 1927 and 1929 and Austin High of El Paso entered the finals in 1934. Palestine returned to the finals for the first time since 1927, the first year of the contest. Pampa had won first place in 1934, with Smokescreen by Robert Kasper. For the fifth time in the past seven years an Austin cast directed by James R. Burton competed in the State Tournament. This tied the record for school appearances established by Abilene in 1935. Mr. Burton became the only director in Texas to have placed productions in the State Tournament. He did not enter a play in 1935, and in 1932, his Austin High School entry lost to Brackenridge of San Antonio in the regional contest. Mr. Burton had also had three Samuel French Award winners since the award was instituted in 1930. Pink and Patches by Margaret Bland, presented by Boling and directed by Miss Mattie Stroud, was the only play of the eight entries that had been previously produced in the State Tournament.

Mr. Brown stated that the cast average for the eight plays entering the finals was five and one-fourth and the five hundred ninety-one schools that participated in the contest produced an estimated three thousand actors and almost three thousand stage crew members. This totaled approximately six thousand pupils involved in the contest.<sup>33</sup>

The State Tournament was reviewed for the third year by Evelyn Calhoun Miller, a critic who had seen the State Finals since 1927. Her article in the October, 1936, Leaguer carried pictures of the winners and a listing of all the participants. She was favorably impressed by the “cooperative spirit” of all the participants, the “simplicity of stage settings,” and the efficiency of the operation of the contest. She believed that the scenery limitations of the contest allowed the small towns to compete with the city school and the emphasis of the contest was “truly one of

<sup>33</sup> State Office History Files, 1936.

acting”. Evelyn Miller was greatly disturbed by the behavior of the audience and bluntly stated her displeasure:

Most unfortunate it was, however, that the spirit of cooperation among the directors did not extend to the audience on the night of the finals. That students and parents of students in the host town school should display so little consideration during the performance of a visiting competitor is not only reflection upon the school but a flagrant violation of the aim and ideals of the League in its attempt to foster sportsmanlike rivalry, with a zest for the game as well as the trophy. A claque is hardly ever a thing of which to be proud; and when it becomes an organized mob to create hostile disturbance, the claque can have recourse to nothing to justify its use...<sup>34</sup>

Evelyn Miller suggested that directors should avoid dialect plays, use a small balanced cast, and play comedy broadly but keep it under control. Her analysis of comedy and how it should be played was completed with references to the 1936 Finals:

Regretfully, I must confess that the comedies that reached the 1936 Finals on the whole were not in a class with the serious plays. The juvenile qualities of the actors in the former were much more apparent. It’s going to prove a stiff test for coaches if the 1937 Finals don’t pall on an audience used to variety; however, the playing of comedies only will bring solace to many directors who have contended that comedies have no chance to win and to those of the audience who wish more plays appropriate for high school thespians.

But, to all you 500, 600 or whatever number you are entrants in the 1937 League One-Act Play Tournament, I must say, you’ve got a real gain accomplished if you better the record of the 1936 Finals in artistry of performance, cooperation, mechanical efficiency, and fascinating entertainment...<sup>35</sup>

The 1935-1936 issues of the Leaguer continued to publicize dramatic activities throughout the state although there was some modification. “The Speech Arts In Texas Schools” column was dropped after the September issue. This column was not much more than a social column for members of the association.<sup>36</sup> Although the column was not carried, information concerning the activities of the Speech Association and its members was carried periodically and the “Letter

<sup>34</sup> October 1936 League. Pages 1 and 4, “A Backward and Forward Glance at Play Tournaments” by Evelyn Calhoun Miller.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 4.

<sup>36</sup> September 1935 Leaguer. Page 3, “Speech Arts In Texas Schools.”



Box and Personal Items” column took up the social notices.<sup>37</sup> The League continued to cooperate with the Speech Association in all its activities.<sup>38</sup>

The “Teacher’s Guide to Good Plays” by Morton Brown was published in each issue of the Leaguer from September, 1935, through April, 1936, except for the January issue. Brown reviewed over one hundred twenty-five books and plays during the year. Mr. Brown continued to spend a good part of his time working with the “Play Service” of the Extension Loan Library. During the peak months of January and February his office received an average of twenty to twenty-five letters requesting plays or information. From September, 1935, through February, 1936, Mr. Brown processed over two thousand packages containing about thirteen thousand plays that went to the high school play directors over the state.<sup>39</sup> Morton Brown described the operation of the “Play Service” in the February, 1936, Leaguer:

Through the ready and generous cooperation of leading play publishers, a drama service has been established in order to assist directors in finding suitable material. While the service was established primarily to assist directors in finding suitable contest plays, the service is open to anyone in Texas, free of charge, the borrower paying the postage both ways. It is not the intention of the service to furnish plays for actual use, either in production or for class work, but merely to acquaint the director with the material and its source. After the play has been chosen the borrower is advised to order it directly from the publisher. About four thousand titles are now available, including both full length and one-act plays. In requesting plays, address the Extension Loan Library, University of Texas, Austin, as this service, instituted by Bureau of Public School Interest, is operated in cooperation with the Extension Loan Library.<sup>40</sup>

Several articles of interest to directors in League One-Act Play were published in the Leaguer during 1936. Sara Lowrey, President Speech Association of Texas, sent an open letter to all speech teachers that had any association with the League. She urged teachers to not “lose sight of the real purpose of the league, which is to train the child.” She noted that more stress

<sup>37</sup> January 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, “Letterbox and Personal Items.”

<sup>38</sup> December 1935 Leaguer. Page 2, Editorial.

<sup>39</sup> State Office History Files, 1936. Unidentified newspaper article.

<sup>40</sup> February 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, “600 Start Race For Play Crowns” by Morton Brown, Dramatics Director.

should be placed on training and “less stress should be placed on winning.”<sup>41</sup> Sara Lowrey also wrote an excellent article for the March, 1936, Leaguer which graphically described the over emphasis placed on the decision of the judge. She provided an example from her own experience to show “judges are just human beings” that differ in experience and taste and are seldom guilty of many of the faults of which they are accused.<sup>42</sup> Another article by Sara Lowrey issue of the Leaguer was a plea to all teachers of speech to seek professional training and recognition.

The same March, 1936, Leaguer carried re-print of an article by Althea Hunt, Associate Professor of English and Dramatic Art, College of William and Mary, published in the February, Lagniappe. This article, “Choice of Play Criteria For Contest Selections” was an endorsement of the present “Instruction to Judges” in the League One-Act Play Contest. She urged the choice of a good play on the basis of subject matter, characterization, artistic challenge, and opportunity for ensemble playing.<sup>43</sup> The “Letter Box and Personal Items” column of the April, 1936, Leaguer carried a brief statement by Althea Hunt which indicated that she agreed with the League’s “grading on the choice of play.”<sup>44</sup>

The efforts in dramatics of Denton High School were praised in the January, 1936, Leaguer<sup>45</sup> and those of Mexia were noted in the March issue.<sup>46</sup> Mr. Bedichek took both these items from articles published in their local newspapers. This practice was common to Mr. Bedichek’s editorial operation of the Leaguer and he encouraged local papers to copy articles from the Leaguer without permission.

<sup>41</sup> January 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, “New President Sends Open Letter to Speech Teachers.”

<sup>42</sup> March 1936 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4, “Judge Pleads for Rational View of Speaking Contest” by Sara Lowrey.

<sup>43</sup> March 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, “Choice of Play Criteria for Contest Selection” by Althea Hart.

<sup>44</sup> April 1936 Leaguer, Page 1, “Letter Box and Personal Items.”

<sup>45</sup> January 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, “Denton High Schools Enrolls 125 in its Speech Classes.” Denton Chronicle.

<sup>46</sup> March 1926 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4, “Mexia High Comes Back in Dramatics.” Mexia News.

There were occasional theatre book reviews by someone other than Morton Brown. One such review appeared in the March, 1936, Leaguer in the “Books and Magazines” column. This review was of Directing For The Amateur Stage by Leslie Crump. This review was provided by Ernest R. Hardin, one of the 1936 State Tournament judges of One-Act Play.



1936 State One-Act Tournament Finalist  
El Paso High's *Last Flight Over*

## 1936-1937

The referendum vote taken among the play directors participating in the 1936 contest decided that entries in the 1937 contest be limited to comedies and farces and this provision was added as rule 4g. This rule made ineligible all “plays that are neither comedies nor farces.”<sup>1</sup> The rule was difficult to interpret and quite controversial. Appendix III, “Official Interpretations”, of the Constitution and Contest Rules offered the following:

One-Act Play Rules.—The following definitions govern the use of the terms “farce” and “comedy” in the rules:

Comedy.—A drama of light and amusing rather than serious character and typically having a happy ending; ...the phase of drama expressing the comic or depicting scenes of amusing or cheerful nature. —Webster’s New International Dictionary.

Comedy, the general term applies to a type of drama the chief object of which, according to modern notions, is to amuse. It is contrasted on the one hand with tragedy, and on the other with farce, burlesque, etc. As compared with tragedy, it is distinguished by having a happy ending (this being considered for a long time the essential difference), by quaint situations, and by lightness of dialogue and character drawing. As compared with farce, it abstains from crude and boisterous jesting, and is marked by some subtlety of dialogue and plot. It is, however, difficult to draw a hard and fast line of demarcation, there being a distinct tendency to combine the characteristics of farce with those of free comedy. —Encyclopedia Britannica.

Drama.—A form of literary art designed for the direct representation of human actions and characters before an audience. —New International Encyclopedia.

A farce is an exaggerated humorous play which does not represent life, but which reminds us of life.

True farce occupies a very high place, but poor farce (the kind more often seen) is hardly worth consideration. Of course, the exaggeration must be something more than mere absurdity; farce has its roots as deeply planted in the truths of life as are the roots of high comedy. Only the expressions is extreme—and even this must not be overdone.

Farce is not, like comedy and tragedy, a representation of life. It is too exaggerated and too improbable for that. Yet it should, through all its ridiculousness, remind us of life. And in so far as it reminds us, it is good. If we form a proper conception of the terms “exaggerate” and “reminds”, and apply to it our conceptions of humor and a play, we shall have a working definition of farce. —Bruce Carpenter, in “The Way of the Drama.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1936-1937. Page 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 103.

Rule 4.g. also provided for “disputes” over the qualifications of a specific play and left the interpretation to the judges. The final judgment was “a vote shall be taken by the judges and the decision shall be final.”<sup>3</sup>

Morton Brown cited further difficulty with the rule in “Comedy Is Not Easy to Define” published in the January, 1937, Leaguer. He presented differing definitions of comedy by Groucho Marx, Alfred Lunt and Bruce Carpenter. Brown’s conclusion was that it was easier to play drama or tragedy with high school students than it was to play farce or comedy and without the emotional motivations of the serious play, and that the 1937 contest would call “into action all the ability and finesse at the command of the directors.”<sup>4</sup>

A “List of 160 Plays for 1937 Contests” was published by the League as provided by Morton Brown. These plays were eligible under the “comedy” or “farce” rule, but the directors were warned that they must meet all other rules of the contest to be fully eligible. The “List” and a copy of each play on the list could be borrowed from the Drama Loan Services, and provided the royalty, cast and publisher information for each play. An Editor’s note explained the necessity of submitting a copy of plays not on the list to Morton Brown for “his judgement on eligibility.”<sup>5</sup>

State Office records do not show the resulting controversies over this rule, but there was evidently some dissatisfaction since the rule was retained for only three years.

There were no other rule changes published in the 1936-1937 Constitution and Contest Rules. There was, however, an interpretation of the February 1, One-Act Play entry deadline

<sup>3</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1936-1937, Page 58.

<sup>4</sup> January 1937 Leaguer. Pages 1 and 4.

<sup>5</sup> “List of 160 Plays For 1937 Contest” by Morton Brown. Monographed bulletin in State Office History files.

published in the February, 1937, Leaguer. Mr. Bedichek provided the first available public record of practice that probably had been allowed for several years.

One-Act Play entries should all be in by February 1. However, the usual three days of graces is allowed, and no entry will be denied that reaches the State Office with a clear postmark showing that it was mailed no later than February 3. All entries postmarked February 4 or later will have to be rejected, and all received at the office later than February 3 with a blurred and indecipherable postmark will be rejected.<sup>6</sup>

From numerous other comments made by Mr. Bedichek in the Leaguer and in the State Office files, it seems to have been the policy of the League Office to allow a grace period of three days to all entry deadlines.

The names of six hundred schools appear in the State Office history files as having entered the One-Act Play Contest, on the county or city-county level.<sup>7</sup> There were sixty-four known city-county or county contests (a drop of seventy-five from the previous year) listed in the issues of the Leaguer from November, 1936, through March, 1937. The winners of these contests appeared in preliminary district contest or in the thirty-two District One-Act Play Tournaments held in 1937.

There were fewer changes made in the management or location of the District and Regional contests than in any year since the reorganization in 1931-1932. The April, 1937, Leaguer showed that District 1 was returned to Canyon and there were ten changes made in District Director of One-Act Play. Mr. P.M. Kenley became the Region V Director in Huntsville and was the only change made on the Regional level. He had previously served as a District Manager in 1932 before Huntsville became a Regional center.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> February 1937 Leaguer. Page 2, Editorial #3.

<sup>7</sup> State Office History file typed list, "Schools Entered in One-Act Play 1936-1937".

<sup>8</sup> April 1937 Leaguer. Page 3, "District, Regions, Centers, With Respective Committees."

State Office records do not reflect the winners of the County or District Contests. The eight regional first place winners can be determined only by State Tournament records. The following State Tournament participants had won in county or city county, district, and regional contests:

Region I; District 2—Pampa, Cabbages by Edward Staadt, directed by Kenneth Carman.

Region II; District 7—San Angelo, A Wedding by John Kirkpatrick, directed by Leola Campbell.

Region III; District 9—Wichita Falls, A Wedding by John Kirkpatrick, directed by John N. Watson.

Region IV; District 15—White Oak (Longview), Grandma Pulls the String by Edith B. Delano and David Garb, directed by Ray W. Maberry.

Region V; District 20—South Park (Beaumont), The Boor by Anton Chekhov, directed by E.C. Blackshear.

Region VI; District 22—Thomas Jefferson (San Antonio), His First Dress Suit by Russell Medcraft, directed by Ethel Orrell

Region VII; District 26—Kingsville, Wisdom Teeth by Rachel Lyman Field, directed by Lenora Hays.

Region VIII; District 30—Alpine, Sparkin' by E.P. Conkle, directed by Merle Smith.<sup>9</sup>

The Eleventh Annual State One-Act Play Tournament was held May 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in Hogg Memorial Auditorium, Austin, Texas.<sup>10</sup> Group I: Kingsville, South Park (Beaumont), Pampa, and Wichita Falls, performed Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 P.M. and were judged by Mrs. C.F. Arrowood, Everett G. Smith, and T. Bush Morgan.<sup>11</sup> Group II: Alpine, Thomas Jefferson (San Antonio), San Angelo, and White Oak (Longview), performed Saturday morning May 8, at 9 A.M. and were judged by Katherine Wheatley, Francis W. Emerson, and Maud Webster.<sup>12</sup> Pampa and South Park from Group I and Thomas Jefferson and San Angelo from Group II were selected for the Finals, Saturday, May 8, at 8 P.M.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> State Meet History Book, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> April 1937 Leaguer. Page 2, "General Program."

<sup>11</sup> State Tournament Program. Preliminary Group I.

<sup>12</sup> State Tournament Program. Preliminary Group II.

<sup>13</sup> April 1937 Leaguer. Page 2, "General Program."



Pampa's production of Cabbages won first place and South Park's The Boor was awarded second. The winner of the Samuel French Award was Coleen McMahan for her portrayal of Mrs. Gossmeier in Pampa's play, Cabbages. One additional member of the Pampa cast, Dick Kennedy, and two players from South Park, Marjorie Hoffman and Dewey Magee, together with Emily Delle Beard (Bean in the State Meet History Book) of San Angelo and Bob Netting of Thomas Jefferson were named to the all-star cast.

The "Finals" program for the 1937 State One-Act Play Tournament is no longer available in the State Office. It is highly likely that Dr. J.B. Wharey, again, selected the all-star cast and the Samuel French Award winner. The One-Act Play State Meet History book indicates the use of three judges for selecting the winning play,<sup>14</sup> but only two, Mrs. Arch Pearson and T.H. Marsh, can be found in the "Financial Statement of the University Interscholastic League." It is possible the third member of the panel was not paid for any expenses. A total of sixty-one dollars in fees for judging the One-Act Plays were paid to H.B. (or T. Bush) Morgan, Maude Webster, Mrs. Arch Pearson, T.H. Marsh, and Francis W. Emerson.<sup>15</sup> Since Pearson and Marsh did not judge either of the preliminary groups, there is a good certainty they judged the finals. Since Arrowood, Smith, and Wheatley were not paid for their services, it is entirely logical that the third member of the "Finals" panel was not paid, likely being a local person.

Morton Brown had resigned his position as Director of Dramatics for the State Office in February of 1937 for family and health reasons<sup>16</sup> and the responsibility of managing the State Tournament was given to Jack Sucke, a student, who had served as Stage Manager the previous year. The State Tournament programs listed the State Tournament Staff as follows: Technician,

<sup>14</sup> OAP State Meet History, 1937.

<sup>15</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1937-1938, Appendix I, Page 92.

<sup>16</sup> Morton Brown interview (?).

Hubert Mason; Stage Manager, Perry Dickey; Electricians, Dr. Lloyd Jeffress and Assistant, Bert Hill; Stage Crew, Bruce Grant, Frank Bryant, Henry Hamilton, Bill Edmundson, and Caswell Dunlap; House Manager, John Peck and Assistant, Elliot Small; and the Box Office, Mrs. Bee Grissom.<sup>17</sup> Several other names, Pape, Baldwin, Powers and Everette, appeared on the 1937 Staff timesheet and the group was paid well over one hundred ten dollars for their services.<sup>18</sup>

Complete financial records are not available for the 1937 State One-Act Play Tournament. Street Furniture was paid eight dollars and twenty-five cents for furniture used in One-Act plays and drayage, pictures and misc. expenses added to the cost. Four dollars were paid to Mattie Stroud for two photographs on the play contest sent to Morton Brown. The total One-Act Play receipts were one hundred twenty-two dollars and twenty-five cents.<sup>19</sup>

There are very few records of the operation of the 1937 State Tournament. Gold medals were provided for the first time for each member of the all-star cast. The audience attendance was not as large as the previous year, but the program request was the same as 1936. Twelve hundred were printed for the "Finals" and six hundred for each of the two "preliminary" groups. A watchman was provided outside to keep people out of windows and to watch for ticket scalpers. Since Morton Brown was no longer with the League, no evaluation or description of the State One-Act Play Tournament was written<sup>20</sup> and issues of the Leaguer published only one article after April, 1937, that offered any historical account of the 1937 contest.

The "Teachers' Guide to Good Plays" by Morton Brown was published in the Leaguer from September, 1936, through February, 1937, when Mr. Brown left the League. He reviewed over one hundred fifteen plays during this period. There are no known records of the operation of

<sup>17</sup> State Meet Program, 1937.

<sup>18</sup> State Office History Files, 1937.

<sup>19</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1937-1938. Appendix I, Pages 92-93.

<sup>20</sup> State Office History Files.

the Drama Loan Service of the Extension Loan Library, but the record six hundred entries in the One-Act Play Contest must have increased the demand for plays and information.

Articles in the Leaguer continued to serve as motivation and education for one-act play directors. “How to Get Most Out of 1-Act Play Tournament” by Magdalene Kramer, reprinted from Players’ Magazine, was published in the September, 1936, issue. This article advocated student involvement in play selection and casting and focused on the idea that the play tournament should “grow out of the curriculum and return to enrich it.” Magdalene Kramer proposed a greater amount of critical evaluation and discussion.<sup>21</sup> The main objectives of play contests were discussed in “Writer Discusses Ends and Aims of Dramatic Contests” published in the December, 1936, Leaguer. This was an article by G. Harry Wright, Department of Speech, Kent State University, that was first published in the 1936 May-June Issue of The High School Thespian. Mr. Wright stated that the one of the most important objectives was “to put on better shows.” He believed that all other educational good of dramatic contests could best be served by raising standards of dramatic production. Mr. Wright provided a summary for this stimulating article by stating:

First and foremost, the raising of standards of dramatic activities in our schools, with everything else subordinated to that and ample recognition granted; second, the awakening of the creative impulse; third, training in appreciation of fine drama; fourth, through this training the creation of intelligent workers and audiences for the future.<sup>22</sup>

G. Harry Wright believed that play contests were the best medium to achieve these goals.

“The Speech Arts In Texas Schools” column appeared again in a few issues of the Leaguer, but seldom offered any assistance to the play director. The November column offered “some pertinent pointers for dramatic coaches” by James R. Burton, director at Austin High

<sup>21</sup> September 1936 Leaguer. Page 1, “How to Get Most out of 1-Act Play Tournament.”

<sup>22</sup> December 1936 Leaguer. “Writer Discusses Aims of Dramatic Contests.”

School.<sup>23</sup> This column, like most of the article dealing with the Speech Arts Association of Texas, was generally dedicated to speech activities and personal notices.

The only other articles of interest to play directors were those dealing with the organization of a “Speech Institute” to be conducted by Texas State College for Women in the summer of 1937. This workshop advertised for actors that were participating in the one-act play tournament of the League and offered them “free tuition for a six week’s period of training.”<sup>24</sup> This institute was primarily directed toward the play director and offered training in directing, stagecraft, children’s theatre, and plays. Articles about the “Speech Institute” appeared in the February, March, and April issues of the Leaguer. Mr. Bedichek offered an editorial appeal for this work in the April, 1937, Leaguer that provided some insight to Emory G. Horger’s relation to the League.

The Speech Institute described in another column of this issue is an interesting enterprise. It attempts to assemble the more ambitious coaches and directors and the more gifted pupils for an intensive six weeks work in speech. Much inspiration will be generated by the mere gathering together of such a group. The Texas College for Women has provided sound instruction and with ample facilities, we see no reason why this experiment should not prove to be a great success. Emory G. Horger, who will direct dramatic activities in the Speech Institute for high-school play directors which will be held at the Texas State College for Women, June 1 to July 10, has taken part in the activities of the Interscholastic League since he competed in Junior declamations. His connection with the one-act play tournament dates from the year this contest was inaugurated when he served a tournament director of the Central Texas region at Belton, Texas.<sup>25</sup> He later served for a number of years as tournament manager of the North Texas region. For the past several years he has taken active part as judge in county, district, regional, and state tournaments. Mr. Horger has had wide experience in the public schools of the state over a period of fifteen years. He has worked in the capacity of teacher, principal, and dramatic director and his experience includes grammar school, high school, and college teaching. As a director, Mr. Horger has worked for two seasons in community theater and for four years directed dramatics in high school. For the past seven years, Mr. Horger has been director of the College Theater at the Texas State College for Women.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> November 1936 Leaguer. Page 3, “The Speech Arts In Texas Schools.”

<sup>24</sup> February 1937 Leaguer. Page 3, “State College Announces 6 Weeks Speech Institute.”

<sup>25</sup> This statement does not agree with the State Tournament Programs in 1927.

<sup>26</sup> April 1927 Leaguer. Page 2. Editorial.

With this editorial Mr. Bedichek continued to strongly support the One-Act Play contest and any approach to betterment.



1937 State One-Act Tournament  
Pampa High's Cabbages

Student → Eugene Franklin → Mr. Marble  
 ↑ Mrs. Williams Grossinger → Annie Johnson-Maid  
 ↑ Colleen McInelton  
 ↑ Mrs. Lena Fischer → Richard Kilgus - Reporter  
 (Dick Kennedy - Curquet Grossinger (Pup))  
 → Alton Debbly → Tilly

### 1937-1938

For the first time in the history of the One-Act Play Contest there were no rules changes. One editorial change, “For awards, see Appendix II.”<sup>1</sup>, appeared under Rule 7 in the Constitution and Contest Rules and this addition, “Samuel French medal for best individual acting, and gold medals for all-star cast”<sup>2</sup>, was made to the appendix.

### 1939 -- ----

In 1939, F. Loren Winship, from Carney, Nebraska, was employed as drama director. Few changes were made through 1941 when Winship was called into military service. One-Act Play was administered by the UIL Administrative staff, Department of Drama faculty, faculty wives, and a variety of imported theatre specialists through 1945. Thus, ended the early years. Many unpublished theses and dissertations have covered the modern era of the history of the One-Act Play.

<sup>1</sup> Constitution and Contest Rules, 1937-1938 Revision. Page 60.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Pg. 97, Appendix II: “Prizes In Final Contest.”



El Paso High School  
University of Texas

1938 State One-Act Champion  
*El Paso High's Pyramus and Thisbe*





1939 State One-Act Champion  
Wichita Falls High's *The Happy Journey*

**Appendix I: November 1970 Leaguer Article “Second Year of One-Act Play Brings Evaluation, Changes”, (Part 2 Review) by Lynn Murray, State Drama Director.**

In the final analysis, what are the real purposes and values of the One-Act Play Contest? Bedichek’s analysis of the values and attractions of the contest reflected his many years as director of League. In Educational Competition he wrote, “Indeed the most important contribution scholastic drama can make to culture lies in its power of vitalizing minds and heart of performers and spectators ‘that habitual vision of greatness without which...all moral education is impossible.’”

Roy Bedichek justified play contests as being classical, naturally competitive, a public interest contest, a “team game”, and one that provoked growth in allied areas. The Constitution and Contest Rules states: “The object of this League is to foster among the public schools of Texas, interschool competitions as an aid in the preparation for citizenship.”

The Handbook for One-Act Play has set forth the following objectives for the One-Act Play Contest:

1. To satisfy the competitive, artistic spirit with friendly rivalry among schools, emphasizing high quality performance in this creative art;
2. To foster appreciation of good acting, good directing, and good drama;
3. To promote interest in that art from readily usable in leisure time during adult life;
4. To learn to lose or win graciously, accepting in good sportsmanship the judge’s decision and his criticism with a view to improving future productions;
5. To increase the numbers of schools which have adopted educational theatre as an academic unit in school curricula.

Over the years several studies have been made, evaluating both teacher and student response, to analyze realistically the aims or objectives of the One-Act Play Contest. Students and teachers alike have ranked high teamwork, ability to accept criticism, appreciation of the theatre, respect for others, sportsmanship, and initiative as being qualities they felt were achieved by participation in the contest.

### **Teamwork Vital**

The attribute of teamwork has been realized by most participants in One-Act Play because they learned to function as a well-directed group seeking a common goal. They have always had to subordinate themselves of individual recognition for the good of the company. Bedichek believed in this educational objective when he wrote, “Directors have found such powerful motive for co-operation, or teamwork, in the dramatics contest that many justify the competition on this ground alone.”

### **Criticism Goals**

Being able to accept criticism has also ranked high in importance for the students and directors. Improvement in all play production is based on constructive criticism by directors, or in the case of contests or festivals, good directors and competent judges. The ability to accept criticism is recognized as a valuable asset and profit from criticism must be a part of the One-Act Play Contest. Since the position of the single expert critic judge has already been justified, it should be sufficient to say that the critique of the critic judge is one of the major educational values of the contest.

### **Theatre Appreciation**

More recent studies have revealed the primary goal of the play director as being appreciation of the theatre. Students' recognition of this attribute is the natural outgrowth of improved quality of play production in recent years. Since drama is now on a sound academic basis in the Texas secondary schools, appreciation of theatre has been the natural consequence of higher standards for both teacher and student. The aim of encouraging the adoption of educational theatre as an academic unit has made much progress, but is by no means complete.

The teacher of educational theatre is no longer willing to produce a play just to raise money or just to "do" a junior play. The primary objective of the director in educational theatre is to develop an appreciation of good theatre and to obtain for his students the educational values of play production.

### **Respect for Others**

The elements of learning respect for others, accepting decisions graciously, initiative, sympathetic understanding, and learning to use leisure time productively have been recognized in studies of One-Act Play Contest participants. It should be quickly recognized that few participants in this contest have much leisure time during their high school careers, but most students recognize play production as something that will be used in later life.

Studies have shown that a very high percentage of these students hold elected positions in school or organizations and many hold more than one position. In addition to one-act play, these students are involved in almost all phases of Interscholastic League, including band, baseball, football, track tennis, annual and press staffs. There are cheerleaders, choral club members, and members of most clubs available in the high school.

### **Student Leaders**

One recent study of a large percentage of the over 700 companies in the One-Act Play Contest revealed that over 80 percent of the students held elective offices in their schools. The statistical evidence of the same study indicated that students successful in dramatics were successful in many extracurricular activities and that they were the student leaders of their schools. Similar studies have found scholarship among the participants extremely high, almost 70 percent in the "A" average group. This clearly indicates that students who are active in contest plays are students of high scholastic achievement. This is particularly interesting since the

demands of this contest on time and energy are great. Several studies outside Texas have produced the same evidence, so obviously, this is not a unique situation.

An objective evaluation of the results of the history and progress of the One-Act Play Contest is at best a difficult job. It is not difficult however to justify its existence and to summarize such a justification with the motto of the contest: "In a well-planned one-act play contest, there are no losers."

## History of the Presentation of the Samuel French Award and the State One-Act Play Competition

- 1927-29 First 3 years of the State One-Act Play Competition
- 1930 First presentation of the "Samuel French Award" to one of the participants. One award presented each year following through **1937**.
- 1938 First presentation of two "Samuel French Awards" at the State OAP competition; two again presented in **1939**.
- 1940 First designation of the two "Samuel French Awards" as Best Actor and Best Actress. These presentations - two per year - and designations continued through **1947**.
- 1948 First year State One-Act Play Competition divided into 4 conferences. The Samuel French Awards, designated as before, accordingly increased to two per conference, upping the total of the awards to eight per state competition. These awards and conference designations repeated in **1949** and **1950**.
- 1950 Last year of the "City Conference;" award designation this year: "Samuel French Best Acting Awards."
- 1951-52 Conferences competing reduced to three (AA, A & B); two "Samuel French Best Acting Awards" presented in each conference, for a total of six.
- 1953 Awards became again simply the "Samuel French Awards" and two per each of the three conferences were presented through **1958**.
- 1959 First year that the State OAP competition was divided into five conferences; the award, designated as in the previous six years, presented to the Best Actor and Best Actress in each conference, for a total of ten awards.
- 1960 Samuel French Award reduced to one per conference (for a total of five presented for the state competition) and designation became "Most Outstanding Actor" or "Most Outstanding Actress." This same number of awards and the same designations were repeated in **1961**.
- 1962 The designation of the recipient of the Samuel French Award changed to "Outstanding Performer" and was either the person named Best Actor or Best Actress in each conference. The five awards per competition and this designation continued through **1971**.
- 1972 In this year's competition the "Outstanding Performer" designation for the Samuel French Award became essentially a third separate and distinct acting award, apart from the Best Actor and Best Actress award. This practice continued through the **1990** state meet.
- 1991 The Samuel French Award, still designated as "Outstanding Performer," was once again presented to either the Best Actor or Best Actress named in each conference.

## **W. Lynn Murray**

W. Lynn Murray served as President of the Texas Theatre Council, the Texas Educational Theatre Association, and the Secondary School Theatre Association of the American Theatre Association. He served as the first Executive Director of TETA, and he received the TETA Founders' Award in 1980 and the SSTA Founders' Award in 1985.

The UIL Drama Program, under his direction, received the first annual F. Loren Winship Award for outstanding contribution to educational theatre from the American Association of Theatre in Education in 1989. In addition to being UIL Drama Director, he also served as director of the UT-Austin Department of Theatre and Dance Summer Theatre Workshop for Texas high school students for thirty-seven years and was Associate Director of Student Teaching in the Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Texas.

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