

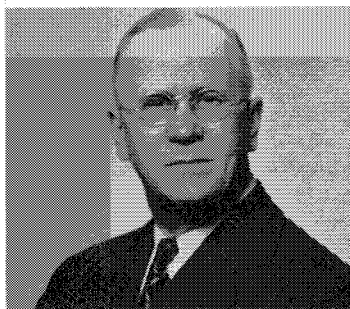
The groups, including especially Hesperia, were rigidly disciplined by their own rules. Attendance was required; decorum was demanded; preparation was painstaking, and criticism severe and constructive. There was no Faculty supervision. Hesperia's archival records include the detailed analysis by elected critics of the orations, essays and debates. Decision of the members decided the questions each Friday night, and were carefully recorded in the records of the club. Procedures changed little during the 50 years which preceded Mr. Hagenah, except that provision had to be made for expanding membership and an increasing number of debating participants.

It is inevitable that these lively competitive groups would be joined in combat with the debaters and orators from other colleges, both within Wisconsin and beyond its borders. In 1880, for example, the late Senator Robert M. LaFollette, then a student, represented Wisconsin in a great inter-state contest at the University of Iowa. The results were awaited at the telegraph office by a large crowd and word of his triumph touched off celebrations in all the eateries and drinkeries between the capitol and the campus.

Aimed, as these debates came to be, at outside audiences, the preparation that went into them was intensive and extensive, viewed by some Faculty members as much more valuable than the more formal studies available to students. In 1893, for example, a study of the municipal ownership of street railways elicited correspondence all over the world. Participants spent weeks in Chicago and other great cities studying management practices in the field of urban transportation. The ensuing debate was widely covered by the Chicago newspapers. An-

other study in the public utility field was published with the help of Professor Richard T. Ely (a University giant in economics), who declared it to be the "most extensive study" ever made.

Hesperia was part of a well-established and influential tradition, when Mr. Hagenah hit the campus, and he was, for his years in college and in Law School an important part of it.



William J. Hagenah

Born in Reedsburg in 1881, he lived on the east side of Madison for thirty years. He received a bachelor's degree in 1903 and his law degree two years later. While enrolled in the Law School in 1904, he was chosen to represent Wisconsin, along with Michael Olbrich and E. R. Minahan, at the great debate with the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. It was a crucial contest; Wisconsin had never beaten Michigan. Accordingly, the selection of the team was not made by the usual elimination procedures, but rather by the Faculty, in order to insure all-star participation. The *Daily Cardinal* covered the event in minute detail, headlining on March 24, "When M. B. Olbrich, E. R. Minahan and W. J. Hagenah meet the Michigan team tomorrow night, there will be a battle royal at Ann Arbor."

The question was, "Resolved that states should relinquish the personal property tax," and preparations were intense. Mr. Hagenah recalls that he was excused from writing a senior thesis that year, because of his preparation for the debate.

As they had gathered at the telegraph station twenty-three years earlier to await Bob LaFollette's victory, a crowd of several hundred gathered on March 25, 1904. Word was late—and there were still many waiting between 2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m., when announcement of the victory was received. Others were waiting in the Library and downtown restaurants, and the celebration was immediate.

It was, according to the Cardinal, a clear-cut victory; attended by a "goodly crowd", with stirring speeches paying tribute to the winning team.

The Madison *Democrat's* editorial on March 25, 1904 was entitled True College Honors. It concluded: "All hail to Olbrich, Hagenah and Minahan! Their achievement brings lustre to the University in a field where fame counts the highest. Their portraits may not adorn the walls of the gymnasium, but their names will ever occupy honored places upon the literary scroll of their *Alma Mater*."

It is no wonder Mr. Hagenah remembers Hesperia.

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There were 336 men participating in 56 debates in 1903. Many of these became lawyers, several judges; a number of professors were among the number, and 2 became Governors of Wisconsin. They joined previous graduates,

such as Robert LaFollette, William F. Vilas, and John C. Spooner, all of whom were prominent debaters and all subsequently U.S. Senators. All three of the team which won against Michigan graced the Bar with great distinction. Mr. Olbrich, in his brief life, served also as President of the Board of Regents. Another contemporaneous Hesperian was William T. Evjue, the late renowned editor of the *Capital Times* of Madison.

Mr. Hagenah himself is a sterling example of the first goal of the society: that of providing training for leadership.

After graduation, he became a research investigator for Governor LaFollette, and in 1906, he was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Labor. He served as Finance and Law Expert for the Railroad Commission of Wisconsin until 1910, when he undertook, for the Chicago City Council, a study of franchises and rates of the Chicago Telephone Company and the Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company. He began private practice in Chicago in 1912, and established the firm of Hagenah and Erickson, specializing in the field of public utility regulation.

His practice took him all over North and South America, and western Europe. He represented cities, states, corporations in single metropolitan areas and statewide and inter-state utility systems. He later represented Standard Gas and Electric Company, a holding company with utility properties in over a thousand communities. In 1942, he was appointed by the U.S. Government Chairman of the Board of Schering Corporation, a German Pharmaceutical firm, seized during World War II.

He retired from active practice in 1945, after two heart attacks. Nearly thirty years, and several heart attacks later, he is still an active man, interested in the world around him, and the accomplishments of his retirement years are legion. He has been Vice-president and Director of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, and a Life Trustee of the Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center of Chicago. He was a founder and for many years president of the Board of Trustees of Alonzo Mather Ladies' Home of Evanston. From 1952-1960, he served as president of the Board of Trustees of Glencoe, his home since 1922.

In his native state he is recognized as a friend of education—most especially to his *alma mater*, which awarded him an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in 1965. He has contributed enormously—to the Elvehjem Art Center, the Medical School, the Department of Communication Arts and the Law School, where special scholarships to the editors of the Law Review bear his name. It is clear, as he discusses them, that his gifts are carefully considered and studied to be sure they are useful. And they always are.

With perhaps one exception. The fountain on the lower campus was to be simply a beautiful replica of one in Paris, designed only to add beauty to the campus. But it is not complete, he says. Still it serves an important purpose, in spite of his intentions. Little children play in it on sultry summer days, and weary students stop to cool their feet there as they cross the campus.

When asked about his constitution, which has permitted him to live on toward five score years, Mr. Hagenah says "it has been amended several times", he's "living on the by-laws now".

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One can only speculate about why debate, which had been such a lively, educational, absorbing, challenging and exciting activity eventually disappeared at Wisconsin and elsewhere. Surely it is not sufficient to explain that other distractions entered student life. It is not sufficient that the rigidity of formal debate caused its death—for rigidity is not a fatal disease; it can be cured. Students are as interested in the great affairs of the day as they ever were. Some of them are as bright and able as Mr. Hagenah, Mr. Minahan and Mr. Olbrich were. What causes these changes in the activities of people?

It is a question to ponder, for in the Law School's attempt to provide practice in oral argument, we may be sowing the seeds of another great era in the organized communications of people on subjects of major importance.

### In Memoriam:

### John R. Collins

On May 25, members of the *Serjeants' Inn* of Milwaukee presented a gift to the Law School in memory of their deceased member, John R. Collins. Mr. Collins, Class of 1951, a partner in the firm of Foley and Lardner, died on April 4, 1973.

*Serjeants' Inn* is a group of 40 lawyers which meets every Thursday to discuss matters of mutual interest. "As an alumnus of the University of Wisconsin Law School, John was committed to making the excellent education he received available to as many persons as possible," wrote Mr. Gordon Smith, Jr., on behalf of *Serjeants' Inn*.