

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XLIV

ISSUED IN APRIL 1963

No. 4

Copyright 1963 by the State Historical Society of Iowa



Six Girls Had a Dream

The philanthropic accomplishments of the National T.T.T. Society are known from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from Minnesota to Florida. But back in 1911, the Society and its good works were just a dream in the hearts of six young women in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

In 1963, fifty-two years later, the T.T.T. Society, with nearly 6,000 members in nineteen states and the District of Columbia, owns its own summer camp for girls in Eden Valley, Minnesota; provides camping facilities for deserving girls in California and Arizona; participates in local and national philanthropic projects, and, unobtrusively, lends willing, helping hands to needy folk at home.

Seated on the steps of the clubhouse at Oakland Mills, near Mt. Pleasant, after a picnic, June 30, 1911, the Stewart girls, Gladys, Ethel and Mabel; Mary Firebaugh, Bess Cook and Merle Krieg made plans for a club which would provide pleasant association for congenial young women in their home town of Mt. Pleasant. Credit for the

idea is attributed to Gladys Stewart, who had recently been graduated from Northwestern University.

Before returning home, she and two college friends had considered seriously what their college life might mean to their respective home communities. "Like all college graduates," Gladys recalls, "we were full of ambition to do something for the betterment of mankind. We had a genuine desire to be of service. I suggested that each of us form a club in our home town."

Her home town friends cooperated eagerly. It was agreed that the Y.M.C.A. furnished recreation for the young men of the town, and that high school and college girls had plenty of extra-curricular entertainment. But they felt that young, unmarried women — particularly those who had been away at college and had lost contact for a time with home folk — were a "forgotten group."

Mary Firebaugh was the first president. Bess Cook was vice-president; Ethel Stewart, secretary, and Mabel Stewart, treasurer. The new secret society members chose *service* as the keynote for its activities. The six founders proposed to expand their membership, specifying that there would be "no restrictions as to politics, race or religion."

The first initiates into the T.T.T. Society were E. Mae Grau, Grace Roberts (Cobb) and Inez King (Jeffs). Early minutes of the Society show

that guests were invited to parties and to picnics in "the Firebaugh Grove," and that pledges wore ribbons to indicate their affiliation with T.T.T.

The last records of the original group were dated October 2, 1914. Then, for several years, the Society was dormant. Gladys Stewart married William E. Walters and moved to Chicago. Bess Cook lived for a while in West Liberty, returning to Mt. Pleasant to live, after her marriage to John Budde. Ethel Stewart graduated from the University of Iowa, married Charles Foster and went to Bismarck, North Dakota, to make her home. The marriage of Mary Firebaugh and Gilmore Swaney (after her graduation from Iowa Wesleyan College) ended in tragedy when he was killed in Brighton, where they were living. Mabel Stewart graduated from the University of Iowa, where she met Vern Bales, to whom she was married in 1915. Myrl Krieg had moved to San Francisco after her marriage to George Fern. She died there in 1913.

The flame which had inspired the six founders of T.T.T. had not been extinguished, however, and two younger sisters, Helen Firebaugh Rogers and Anna Stewart (Caris), fanned the dormant embers when they promoted the re-organization of the Society in March, 1917. During the inactive years, the former members who had remained in Mt. Pleasant had matured, married, managed homes, and established pleasant social relation-

One of Six Who Founded Society in 1911—

Iowa Citian Sees T.T.T. Grow to 6,000

When the two Iowa City chapters of T.T.T. celebrate the 52nd anniversary of the founding of the society Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at the Mayflower inn, they will have one of the original club of six women in their midst.

She is Mrs. Vern W. Bales, 28 Highland drive, who as Miss Mabel Stewart of Mount Pleasant joined with her two sisters and three friends to form a philanthropic organization that since has spread from coast to coast.

The history of the T.T.T. society is told by Dorothy Ashby Pownall, Iowa City feature writer and former woman's page editor of the Press-Citizen, in the April issue of *The Palimpsest*, published by the State Historical Society of Iowa.

* * *

MRS. BALES, the first treasurer of the 1911 club, and her companions chose "service" as the keynote of their activities. They also proposed to expand their membership specifying that there would be "no restrictions as to politics, race or religion."

In 1963 T.T.T. has nearly 6,000 members in 19 states and the District of Columbia; owns a summer camp for girls in Eden Valley, Minn.; provides camping facilities for deserving girls in California and Arizona, and participates in local and national philanthropic projects.

The golden anniversary celebration of the society at Chicago in October, 1961, found the four living founders as honored guests: Mrs. Bales; her sister, Gladys Stewart Walters, Des Plaines, Ill.; Bess Cook Budde and Mary Firebaugh Swaney, both of Mt. Pleasant. Mrs. Bales' other sister, Ethel Stewart Foster, died in 1960. The sixth founder, Myrl Krieg Fern, died in 1913.

* * *

SINCE 1952, the T.T.T. chapters have supported the Eden Valley summer camp, where deserving ten- and eleven-year-old girls are given two weeks of outdoor living, including directed camp activities.

Buildings on the site include a main house, barbecue house, handicraft center, infirmary, recreation hall, and cottages. Adding to the camp setting is a rose garden, which was the gift of Mrs. Bales.

Iowa City Chapters AL and CL will send two campers this summer. Money has been raised through several projects.

* * *

IN ADDITION to their national camp project, local T.T.T. chapters help the needy and participate in community activities. In Iowa City food baskets are given to needy families at holiday time, particularly Christmas.

Mrs. Herb Scott is president of Chapter AL. Mrs. James Sangster heads Chapter CL.

In charge of the Founder's day event are Mrs. William Olney from Chapter CL and Mrs. H. J. Thornton from Chapter AL.



For Mrs. Vern W. Bales, left, the April issue of *The Palimpsest* has particular interest, for it retells the history of the T.T.T. society, of which Mrs. Bales is a founding member. Pictured on the cover are the six founders, including Mrs. Bales at lower center. Sharing her copy are Mrs. James Sangster, center, and Mrs. Herb Scott, presidents of the two Iowa City chapters, CL and AL respectively. (Press-Citizen Photo.)

ships. Now they were fired with plans for community service, and the two "little sisters" called them together to "decide by what means the club would broaden and grow."

Elizabeth Hagie (Swafford) was named president of the new group. Violet Ashe (Campbell) was treasurer and Helen Firebaugh Rogers, secretary. The members decided to investigate Red Cross work, or some similar branch of charitable activity. The constitution was amended and married women made eligible to join T.T.T. A "spread" followed this history-making meeting.

Early records reveal that the T.T.T. Society rejected the proposal to do Red Cross work, but mention was made of providing bedding for a child's bed for the Henry County Child Welfare Association. News that the Society was re-organizing was disseminated, and on May 4, 1917, six new members were initiated.

They were Esther Sutherland, Lillian Huebner, Miriam Rineheimer, Esther Gilfillan, Helen Keith and Aletha Orn. Besides this group, the T.T.T. membership in July, 1917, included Flossie O'Neil, Ruth Logan, Martha Porter, Grace Upton, Laura Fraker, Anna S. Caris, Alma Talbot, Bess Cook Budde, Helen F. Rogers, Elizabeth Hagie, Grace Hagie, Maude Mathews, Mae Grau and Gladys Munger.

Emphasizing *service* and *charity* at its meeting May 17, 1917, T.T.T. enthusiastically endorsed a

plan to "adopt a deserving child to care for and help educate." Mrs. Huebner, Mrs. Sutherland and Martha Porter were appointed to investigate the possibilities of this project. During this summer period, Mary Firebaugh Swaney was organizing a new T.T.T. chapter in Brighton, and in June, eight members of Chapter A, the founding group, attended the installation of Chapter B.

Meantime, quiet investigation had been in progress, and at its meeting June 26, 1917, the Mt. Pleasant group joyfully agreed to care for a handicapped girl, Hazel S—, a Mt. Pleasant child who spent much of her time in the hospital in Iowa City.

Minutes recorded in 1917 and 1918 contain many references to Hazel:

June 26, 1917 — Hazel S— to be cared for. Committee appointed to see her parents and find out her needs. Write to inactive members for donations. Have candy booth in Park, Saturday, June 30.

July 10, 1917 — Martha Porter reported on Hazel S. Committee appointed to see about clothes for Hazel.

August 21, 1917 — Letter from Martha Porter said she would take Hazel back to Iowa City. Clothes we are making o. k., but make nothing but plain things.

September 3, 1917 — Martha Porter asked to buy hose and a suitcase for Hazel S.

September 13, 1917 — Collect, mark and finish garments for Hazel.

September 18, 1917 — Two letters a week will go to Hazel. Helen Rogers and Mrs. Huebner volunteered to write first letters. Gladys Wenger and Grace Upton the next.

November 13, 1917 — Letter read from Hazel S.

November 20, 1917 — Plan to send Thanksgiving box to Hazel S. December 12 — Plan to send Christmas box to Hazel. Each member to bring a present for Hazel.

March 20, 1918 — Allowed \$8.60 for taking Hazel back to Iowa City.

May 29, 1918 — Discussed bringing Hazel home. June 25 — Committee to see Hazel as she is to go to the hospital again. September 10, 1918, — Decided to bring Hazel home and start her in school. September 23 — Report that Hazel has gone to Des Moines and will no longer need our help. Committee appointed to find another worthwhile child to take for charity work.

Besides caring for Hazel, the Society held food sales, dressed dolls, assessed five-cent fines against members for non-attendance, and welcomed suggestions for fund-raising to carry on their charitable work. Their projects included participation in a financial drive for the college gymnasium, aid to needy families and even a gift of a fifty-dollar sewing machine to the Henry County Hospital.

Within the next few years, several new chapters of T.T.T. were organized. Chapter C, Boone (now inactive), in 1926; Chapter D, Des Moines, 1927; Chapter E, Fairfield, 1928; Chapter F, Packwood, 1928; Chapter G, Wapello, 1930; Chapter H, New London; Chapter I, Eldon; Chapter J, Wayland, and Chapter K, Newton, 1931.

An important milestone was passed January 10, 1931, when T.T.T. Chapters gathered in Mt.

Pleasant for their first National Convention. Helen Firebaugh Rogers, one of the Society's reorganizers, became the first National president. Other officers chosen were Leona Whisler, Brighton, vice-president; Margaret Crail, Fairfield, corresponding secretary; Mary Myers, Packwood, recording secretary; Helen Miller, Wapello, treasurer; Lillian Huebner, Des Moines, historian; and Blanche Thorson, Mt. Pleasant, organizer.

At its second National convention, held in Brighton, October 2, 1931, officers were re-elected and the high point of the meeting was the decision of the National Society to adopt for its altruistic project a summer camp for girls. Also at this meeting, eighty-three copies of Volume I, Number I, of *T.T.T. Tidings* (first titled *T.T.T. Convention News*) were distributed. The publication, issued quarterly, now goes to almost 6,000 members of the Society.

The growing Iowa membership soon was clamoring for a state organization, prodded by Margaret Hinderman, the instigator of the idea. Serious discussions were held in 1948, most chapters agreeing that Iowa, where T.T.T. was founded, was the logical location of the first State Society. However, while the fifty-six Iowa Chapters were considering the plan, the fifteen Illinois Chapters were able to conclude their negotiations and announce the organization of a State Chapter December 3, 1948. Iowa followed with the estab-

lishment of its State organization May 5, 1949. The Minnesota State T.T.T. Chapter was formed in 1956, and California State Chapter in 1958.

Delegates from forty-eight of the fifty-six Iowa Chapters of T.T.T. attended the founding of the Iowa State Chapter in Centerville. It was a gala occasion, with luncheon for one hundred guests at the Centerville Country Club. Here they were entertained with a "T.T.T. Roundup." There were cowgirls on foot, and one on horseback to greet them. Members of the Centerville Chapter, AS, served the luncheon, clad in jeans, plaid shirts and western hats. National officers present were Mrs. Doris Smith, Ft. Dodge, president, and Mrs. Edna Eland, Mt. Pleasant, organizer.

The first officers of the new Iowa State Chapter of T.T.T. were Mrs. A. W. Hinderman, Wapello, president; Mrs. Fred Weber, Des Moines, vice-president; Miss Beulah Bower, Ames, organizer; Mrs. Harold McCormac, Letts, recording secretary; Mrs. Ben Stockdale, Pocahontas, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Don Pullman, Centerville, treasurer, and Mrs. Garrett Van Vranken, Winfield, historian.

Subsequent Iowa State Chapter presidents have been Mrs. Weber, Mrs. Elouise Sorden, Mrs. Pullman, Mrs. Van Vranken, Mrs. Lois Boylan, Mrs. Margaret Stoutner, Mrs. Darlene Donohue, Mrs. Ethelyn Bennett, Mrs. Theresa Spellman and Mrs. Isadore Moxley.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of T.T.T. was observed in Mt. Pleasant June 30, 1936. Members from all chapters were on hand for the luncheon, held in the dining room of Hershey Hall at Iowa Wesleyan College. Feature of the program was a playlet written by Helen F. Rogers and Mae Grau, commemorating the founding of the Society.

Founders Gladys Stewart Walters, Bess Cook Budde, Mary Firebaugh Swaney, and Mabel Stewart Bales were honored guests at the Golden Anniversary celebration in Chicago, in October 1961. Formal ceremonies highlighted the event, and on the Friday evening "fun night" six members in Gibson Girl costumes reminded the founders of their 1911 meeting on the steps of the Oakland Mills clubhouse.

This amusing program, commemorating "Fifty Frolicking Years," included a parade of bathing beauties, Charleston and soft shoe dancing, and a description of an old-time movie, in Swedish dialect.

Guiding the far-reaching affairs of the National T.T.T. Society in 1963 are Mrs. John R. White, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, president; Mrs. Paul R. Fry, Omaha, Nebraska, vice-president; Mrs. Boyd F. Stoutner, Keota, Iowa, organizer; Mrs. A. W. Hinderman, Washington, Iowa, recording secretary; Mrs. Clarence H. Schafer, East Peoria, Illinois, corresponding secretary; Mrs. C. Thomas

Dean, Long Beach, California, treasurer; Mrs. Elmer Nellett, Davison, Michigan, historian, and Mrs. W. K. Rogers, Mt. Pleasant, life member.

Mrs. Carl F. Willits, Wapello, is in charge of the National T.T.T. office, while Mrs. Roy H. Eng, Racine, Wisconsin, heads the National Project Board. On the board of trustees for the National office are Mrs. Schafer, Mrs. Sorden and Mrs. H. E. Hoover, Wapello.

Thousands of men, women and children have been given a lift by T.T.T. members in the past half century. One of the founders, Mabel Stewart Bales, feels this little poem expresses the ideals of T.T.T.:

If you would *add* to life's pleasures,
And a lot of your worries *subtract*,
Divide happiness, share it, full measure —
It will *multiply* as it comes back.

DOROTHY ASHBY POWNALL