IN MEMORIAM

WALDEMAR ERIC METZENTHIN

Waldemar Eric Metzenthin was born in Berlin, Germany, February 24, 1875, the son of Ernst and Marie Pank Metzenthin and died in Austin, September 18, 1942. His father, a Lutheran pastor, moved with his family to this country when Waldemar was a small boy and held various pastorates, among them Saint Martin's at Austin, then on East Thirteenth Street, close to the Capitol. The family was large and very early Waldemar had to contribute to his own support. In fact, he secured his college and university education entirely by his own efforts. He entered Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1896, and graduated there with the degree of A.B. in 1899, receiving the Senior German Prize. The breadth of his interests showed itself from the beginning. He had some military training; he took part in athletics and dramatics; he was active in the college glee club, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity.

Leaving Franklin and Marshall College in 1899, Mr. Metzenthin worked and saved with a view to graduate study at Columbia University, New York. Thither he went in 1903 and stayed till 1906, all the while working for his living in various ways, among them, playing the organ at church. Again he took a lively interest in sundry fields besides his studies. He played on the Varsity football team and was President of the Columbia Union (Earl Hall) and President of the Deutscher Verein. Receiving the degree of A.M. in 1906, he was offered a Teaching Fellowship for the following year but preferred to come to the University of Texas as Instructor in German. It was like going home.

At the University of Texas after a year as Instructor in the School of Germanic Languages, Mr. Metzenthin was made Adjunct Professor and in 1917 became Associate Professor. By 1919, on account of the First World War, the enrollment in German had fallen so low that it became necessary to reduce the staff in Germanic Languages and Mr. Metzenthin was given leave of absence with the promise of return when conditions should justify it. The war had ended the year
before and there was no question of disloyalty or of any dereliction whatever. In 1927 he was recalled by the Regents as Associate Professor but was unwilling to accept the invitation then because he understood that another member of the department had been dropped to make way for him. In 1928 the other member was reinstated and Mr. Metzenthin returned with the rank of Professor, to hold this position till his death. For the last two years he was Chairman of the Department. The summer of 1910 he studied at the University of Chicago, that of 1934 he spent in travel and study in Germany.

During the years of his absence from Austin, Mr. Metzenthin was in Dallas till 1923, as Executive Secretary of the University Club, at the same time also teaching German three years in Southern Methodist University and one in the Dental branch of Baylor University. In 1923 he became Professor of Education at the North Texas State Teachers College, Denton, and held this position till his return to Austin.

Mr. Metzenthin was married February 13, 1914, to Aileen Sykes of Galveston, a graduate of the University the year before. Of their three children, two grew to manhood, George, how a Captain in the Marines and John, a senior Engineering student.

As a member of the Faculty of the University of Texas, Professor Metzenthin's interests were as manifold as they had been in his student days. Next to his teaching came athletics. In his very first term, he was Assistant Football Coach, for two years he was Head Coach and for another year Assistant Coach again. As Head Coach he enjoyed a popularity that was quite unprecedented. "He won his way into the hearts of all" says one Cactus; "in every sense of the word he is both man and coach" says another. But he was not a football man only. For two years he was Head Basketball Coach and for two more Head Track Coach. From 1910 to 1913 he was Director of Physical Training for Men. For many years he was a member of the Faculty Athletic Committee, from 1930 to 1936 he was chairman of the Athletic Council. For a time he was a member of the Executive Council of the National Collegiate Athletic Association and one year was Vice-President of the Southwest Athletic Conference. He was an enthusiastic Scoutmaster and two
summers was director of a boy’s camp. In every capacity he stood for clean, manly athletics, and his influence was as wholesome as it was wide.

Next to athletics in Professor Metzenthin’s affections came music. He had an excellent, well-trained voice and he played the organ competently. His tastes and standards were high. For ten years he was Director of the Glee Club and was long organist said choir-trainer, first at All Saints Chapel, then at St. David’s Church. He was an honorary member of the Austin Saengerrunde.

Because of his lively interest in the teaching of German in the high school, he went often to the meetings of the Texas State Teachers Association. For the year 1939-1940 he was Chairman of the German Subdivision of the Division of Modern Languages.

As a teacher, Professor Metzenthin was simple, clear, and vigorous. He did not display his learning but he loved his subject and brought it home to his students. -His knowledge of the German language was thorough, his enunciation beautiful. He had a keen literary appreciation and was an effective reader, especially of poetry. He was a good speaker and often was called on for addresses in his field, especially after his visit to Germany in 1934.

Professor Metzenthin published divers newspaper and magazine articles and contributions connected with things German. The manuscript of a German Reader was prevented from publication by the outbreak of the First World War. But his interest was in life rather than in research. He left no long list of scholarly articles and books. The fruit of his life is to be found in the characters of the men he influenced in teaching, in music, on the athletic field; his memory abides in the men he loved and who loved him in return--a great company never ceasing to grow through all the thirty-six years of his life in Texas.

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