



1949

## Eva Q. Black

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[Wire recording made of a speech by Mrs. Eva Quindry Black April 1949 at a Los Angeles alumni meeting. Mrs. Eva Quindry Black was a member of the graduating class of 1930. The recording was made by Edward K. Waters '37 and converted to a digital format by Media Preserves, Summer 2009. Attempts were made by archives staff to verify spelling of names but some could not be confirmed. These names and some inaudible words are noted by marking the presumed word in brackets.]

Dr. Hubert Hodgens: [Recording cuts out, begins abruptly] —representatives for the years in between. You will remember some of the pictures which we saw a few moments ago of the developments through the years—1910 the Science Hall, 1921 the Memorial Gym, 1922 Buck Memorial Library, and we have though a letter from Dr. Fagerburg [Frank B. Fagerburg '20] who was mentioned a while ago. He could not be here but sent us this letter tonight: “Dear Illinois Wesleyan University friends, Guinevere [Guinevere Byrns '23] and I are very sorry that we cannot be present on Friday evening. I hope that you have a wonderful time. It looks just now as if I shall be back at the alma mater for commencement time. I have been asked to give the baccalaureate address on June 4. It will also be the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my class. I hope that I may be able to meet with you the next time. Very Sincerely, Frank B. Fagerburg” So we bring you this as representing the class of nineteen hundred and twenty it would be, nineteen hundred and twenty. Then we come down to 1930 in our representation and we have Eva Black with us tonight from the class of 1930, Eva...

Eva Black: Fellow alumni and friends of Wesleyan, much of this, you know—this program brings to mind the story of what happened to a soldier during the war. This boy, in civilian life, was quite a comedian and a very successful entertainer in a small way and when he got into the army, it wasn't long before his buddies found out about his talent. And one evening, before quite an audience, he was called upon to take part in the program but he refused. They, however, wouldn't take no for an answer and a group of them just picked him bodily and pushed him up on the stage. He was so frightened that he stood there trembling and his knees actually knocked together and he said his legs would hardly support him, but the audience mistook this for part of his act and cheered him so that he regained his composure and was able to go ahead and put on quite a successful performance. As for me, I'm not a comedian, so I'm afraid my nervous actions can't be construed as part of the program. They'll have to be taken for what they are. To begin with, I'd like to quote a short verse that I read recently: “Fully half of life is spent in soaking the mind with countless facts as needed. The rest is passed in vainly poking to pry them loose again when needed.”

[Laughter]

Eva Black: It is a fact that, during the early part of our lives, especially our college days, whether we're at Illinois Wesleyan or elsewhere, we spent that time in acquiring knowledge and then, in the later years, of trying to apply that knowledge to the facts of life. The most successful men and women, I think, are those who are best able to apply that knowledge that they acquired. And we become educated by coming in contact with great minds and we had the privilege of meeting quite a number of those in our years at

Wesleyan. During the time that I was in school, they—Wesleyan was under the leadership of President Davidson [William J. Davidson 1922/23 – 1931/32] and other professors of that time and men who had been prominent in Wesleyan leadership for many years that I recall were President—excuse me, Professor Ferguson [Wilbert Ferguson 1895/96 – 1943/44], Professor Muhl [Frederick Lewis Muhl 1910/11 – 1954/55], Dean Wallis [1921/22 – 1953/54], Dean Westbrook [Arthur E. Westbrook 1922/23 – 1938/39] of the Music School. At the time I was in school, I believe the enrollment was between seven and eight hundred and in looking over my yearbooks I find that there were 107 in my graduating class of 1930. I'm rather curious to know if there is anyone else in the graduating class of 1930 here tonight. Would you please stand if there is? I guess I'm the only one...[laughs]. Many changes have taken place in the years since I graduated. In fact, you might say that was a fifth of a century ago but that would sound like we're old and none of us are old. At that time the buildings on the campus were Main Hall as we called it, now known as Hedding Hall, which has since burned as you know, and Main Hall at that time was the administration building and housed many of our classes and as it has been mentioned, the chapel services were held there. Then there was Science Hall, the library, the gymnasium, and Old North Hall we still used for classes. I remember climbing those three flights of stairs for many a class in Old North Hall. And then it was during these years that Presser Hall, the new music building, was completed. It was in 1928 that the financial drive was opened to complete the raising of funds and then the building itself was completed in 1929. I have here, and I found among my memos, a copy of a program for the laying of the cornerstone in the Founders' Day program, the laying of the cornerstone of Presser Hall dated January the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1929. When Presser Hall was completed, they moved the chapel services from Main Hall to the new recital hall in the music building. At that time, we met three days a week for our chapel services. We had one religious program a week and then at the other two services we often had [other] speakers or a music program. And then just before a big game, I remember we always had student mass meetings and pep meetings for our services. And speaking of athletic games reminds me of one rather humorous incident that happened one year on the eve of a homecoming game. I remember that we had planned a big mass meeting, a pep meeting, and our pep committee had, as an added attraction, planned a big bonfire at our evening meeting and they worked all day gathering boxes and fuel, piling together and putting it on a vacant lot near the campus for the big fire. The meeting was scheduled about eight o'clock in the evening and then much to our chagrin, just shortly after dusk, we looked out to find the fire burning away fully two hours before any of us had gathered. If you could imagine it was a rather hot time in the old town that night but it wasn't all due to the bonfire because the mischief was attributed to a bunch of students from our rival, the State University of Normal. It was in 1928 too that we had the privilege of having John Philip Sousa lead our college band. He was—Mr. Sousa was in the city for a concert and came out for the homecoming game and conducted the band in the playing of one of his famous marches. It was also 1928 that I was privileged to be one of the first of a group to take—of economics classes—to take a fieldtrip to Chicago. I think that was the first of a series of annual fieldtrips that they took at that time. This was a short weekend trip of a class that's sponsored by Professors Beadles [William T. Beadles 1924/25 – 1950/51] and Ferguson to Chicago. We toured parts of parts of interest there to us—the stockyard, stock

exchange, International Harvester Company, and places of that sort. And then one thing of interest—it was the first time that a group of many of us got our first view of the inside of a broadcast studio because we were allowed to sit-in at the broadcast given by a comedy team known as Sam ‘n Henry over at station WMAQ, and you know Sam ‘n Henry are now the famous Amos ‘n Andy. We were also proud when in 1929, the Apollo Club, Wesleyan men’s glee club, was given nationwide prominence when they were the first college glee club to sing over NBC’s network from the Chicago studio. In the—then the next year, they sang a return engagement and at that time they shared the honor, I believe, with groups from Notre Dame and Yale. We’ve all had the privilege I’m sure of hearing noted speakers at one time or another when we were in school. Two of these people come to my mind that I remember of having had the privilege of hearing—these two were former Vice-President Dawes and Branch Rickey. I remember Mr. Rickey spoke at our alumni back the year I graduated, 1930. When—many of us have heard speakers of note—they leave with us a single thought while the rest of their speech often fades from our memory. I’m not able to attribute it to any one speaker but someone left this idea: “When in life you are confronted with a problem and do not have at hand the article, the method of the formula to solve that problem, be able to substitute something else to serve the purpose.” That is what I feel that we have tried to do with—during our college days and with the knowledge that we acquired then. We spent those years acquiring knowledge and then in the later years trying to apply it in the best of our ability to the problems that we have met. And in closing, let me quote again the verse: “Fully half of life is spent in soaking the mind with countless facts as needed. The rest is spent in vainly poking to pry them loose when needed.” Thank you.

[Applause]

Dr. Hubert Hodgens: Thank you Eva.