Chapter II

The Beginnings to 1920

The beginnings of speech work at the University were decidedly unpropitious. In 1881 there was a listing of the Science of Rhetoric and Elements of Rhetoric, using D. J. Hill’s Rhetoric. In 1883 there was the usual listing of Rhetoric, with an added interesting comment: “Daily instruction and drills, without extra charge, are given in Penmanship, Vocal Music and Elocution, by Professor O. P. Lee, whose marked success in the art of teaching, both in the east and in Oregon, is a sufficient warrant that the University of Washington, Territory, is fortunate in securing his services.” In the following year Elocution was included as a part of the preparatory phase of study for the Classical Course, which included Rhetoric, Cicero’s Orations, Orations and Essays. The Scientific Course was similar in this area, including Orations and Essays, Rhetoric and Logic and Orations. The normal course requirements were fewer, Rhetoric, Elocution and Essays. In the Commercial Course,

Elocution and English Composition were included. In the 1885-86 Catalogue there is an elaboration of the Elocution area:

Elocutionary training is made a prominent feature of all the courses. The object is to produce accomplished and effective readers. In addition to earnest and careful training in articulation, pronunciation, voice culture, analysis, gesture, and callathenics, special attention will be given the following important subjects: conversational reading, expressive delivery, dramatic reading, artistic recitation. Oratory and Rhetoric are taught as supplementary branches to elocution proper, and afford a fine finish to this line of study.

For the record it should be noted that for years D.J. Hill’s Rhetoric and Robert Kidd’s Elocution were used as texts. Prizes were offered for the best performances in Original Orations and Elocution.

Changes in the organization of the curriculum were frequent and seemingly somewhat haphazard in the early years. In 1888-89 ten Departments of Instruction were listed: I Greek and Latin, II Natural Sciences, III Mathematics, IV Literature and History, V German, VI Rhetoric and Elocution (In Rhetoric and Elocution the student’s time is about equally divided between the study of rules of composition and practical work in writing and criticising). Elocution is described as before in paragraph two above, VII Pedagogics, VIII Psychology and Ethics, IX Art, and X Conservatory of Music.

The following year a couple of changes were made. A Department of Philosophy, including psychology was formed, and Greek and Latin became the Classical Department.

During the preceding few years Elocution had become a part of the regular curriculum instead of being
restricted to the preparatory. In 1891 the Latin Scientific Course and the English Scientific Course both included Elocution, and by 1892 a one-year course in Elocution was required in the Classical Course. Further, during 1892-93 the Latin Scientific and the English Scientific courses included Forensics.


By 1893-94 there was a Department of English and History into which Rhetoric and Elocution had been placed, as a separate division. Under Rhetoric was included: English Composition, Critical Studies in Description and Narration (study of selections from Addison, Burke, etc.), Rhetoric (using J. F. Genung's 

The 1894-95 catalogue lists the parent department as English Literature and Language, with a division including English and Rhetoric and another including Elocution and Oratory.

The English and Rhetoric division included Forensics: Analysis of Argumentative Masterpieces and Preparation of Briefs. Elocution and Oratory included two courses in Elocution, Shakespearian Reading and Study of Great Orations. In the 1895-96 academic year there was no listing of Elocution or Oratory. Rhetoric continued under the title of English Composition. In 1896-97, under English, there were two courses, Elocution and Oratory: the former was described as theoretical instruction once a week, with students also trained personally at hours set by the instructor, in the right use of voice, gesticulation, reading and declamation, and composition and delivery; the latter was principally the composition and delivery of orations.

In the 1897-98 year a new Department appeared titled Mental and Moral Science and Oratory, and included such far-ranging subjects as Logic, Mental Science, Ethics, Comparative Philosophy, International Law, Theism and Science (the subjects had an ethical orientation), and Elocution and Oratory. The last were described as in the previous year. The lifetime of this arrangement was brief; in the following year the Department was not listed.

The 1898-99 year saw a different structure, a Department of Language and Literature, with a Division of Rhetoric and Oratory under Arthur Ragan Priest. Mr. Priest. A.B. DePauw 1891, came as a Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, having taught at the University of Wisconsin, DePauw and elsewhere. He was also to become Dean of Men and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University. Under his leadership changes were soon to be made toward strengthening the curriculum. In this Division were included Rhetoric, Rhetorical Analysis, Principles of Vocal Expression and Literary Interpretation, Oratory, Forensics, and Rhetorical Seminary, the last a new type of course. "Elocu-
tion" was no longer used as a course title.

Not all University activities were limited to formal instruction. In the 1880s student organizations were being formed and by the turn of the century about two dozen active groups existed. As was the case with most of the early colleges there was little social activity off campus, or on campus for that matter, and student clubs provided what social life was available. Literary and debating clubs in universities had been popular since colonial times. The first of the University of Washington debating clubs of which there is a formal record was the Johnswonian Society, the record running from January 16, 1889 to May 8, 1891. The first topic discussed or debated was: Resolved "That the Johnswanaian Society should be the best society in the University." This high resolve was in part at least, reflected in the meticulous minutes kept in a hard cover book. After a year or so the minutes became less complete and carefully done until the perfunctory notes dated May 8, 1891 ended the record. The eclectic interests of the group are reflected in a sampling of the debate topics: That the capital of the Washington Territory should be moved to Seattle; Fire is more destructive than water; A young man entering business should have a college education; The navy yard should be situated on Lake Washington; France is a greater nation than Germany; Indian territory should be opened for settlement at once. ¹

Literary societies, debating clubs, musical clubs and fraternities developed rapidly in the 1890s. Listed among these was the Oratorical Association formed for the cultivation of interest in elocution and oratory. It was a member of an intercollegiate association which sponsored annual oratorical contests in which each institution was represented by one speaker. A Dramatic Club was organized in the fall of 1898 for the purpose of encouraging the study of drama and cultivating dramatic talent among its members, and occasionally putting on plays. By 1901 there were two debating clubs, the Stevens and the Badger, which were organized for improvement in the art of debate; the latter club was limited to 30 men students so they could have frequent practice. One or more inter-society debates was held annually, and mainly from these contestants were the representatives chosen for the intercollegiate debates. There was also the Crestomathian Literary Society, described as an organization of preparatory students, the purpose of which was to give members practice in addressing an audience, and to familiarize them with parliamentary proceedings.

Public performance had been of wide interest through the years. In 1886, the King County Bar Association offered a cash prize of $100 to be competed for in oratory by students in the Universities of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. It later became known as the E. F. Blaine prize in oratory, after its original sponsor. Also early on, The Honorable Alden J. Blethen offered annually the sum of $100 for prizes in declamation, one in oratorical declamation, and one in narrative and dramatic declamation. And Judge Alfred Battle offered an annual cash prize of $75 to the Washington debating team chosen to meet debaters from the University of Oregon.

While in 1896 there had been the College of Literature. Science and the Liberal Arts, organizational structure changed such that in 1901 there was a College of Liberal Arts, which included a Department of English Language and Literature and a Department of Rhetoric and Oratory. In 1899 the latter included: English
Composition, Interpretative Reading, Oratory (study of British and American Orators, and one presentation of an original oration), Forensics, and Oratorical Seminary. In 1900, courses were changed so the Department offered Rhetoric (practical rhetoric, description, narration, exposition, argumentation, persuasion), Rhetorical Analysis, Principles of Vocal Expression and Literary Interpretation, Oratory, Forensics and Oratorical Seminary. With the penchant for changes, 1901 brought the following classification: English Composition, Oral Expression, Oratorical Delivery, Dramatic Reading, Oratory, Forensics and Oratorical Seminary.

Under Professor Priest the curriculum in Rhetoric and Oratory was simplified, the term elocution had disappeared and with it the refinements of physical and vocal technique, and the studies more content oriented. Professor Maynard L. Daggy was also a strong influence in these directions. He received a Ph.D. from DePauw in 1896, had attended Indiana Law School for a year, and the University of Chicago the summer of 1901. He had taught in high schools, had been an instructor in Rhetoric and Oratory at the University of Wisconsin, and Director of the Bayview School of Expression in Michigan the summers of 1902 and 1903.

In 1904-05 the Rhetoric and Oratory curriculum consisted of English Composition (basic and advanced), Grammar and Rhetoric (for students interested in preparing for the teaching of English), Oral Expression, English Oratory (study of Edmund Burke and contemporaries), American Oratory (study of Webster, Hayne, Calhoun, Everett, Sumner, Beecher. . . and others) and Forensics.

It is clear that writing and speaking were considered closely related skills. It is interesting to note that the Lincoln Literary Society, which had been active for several years, stated as its goals the developing of proficiency in public speaking and knowledge of various forms of English composition. This relationship becomes particularly notable in the 1905-06 curriculum in Rhetoric and Oratory. The introduction states: "The objects sought for in the courses here outlined are: (1) to secure a skillful use of English in writing, and an appreciation of it in literature; and (2) to develop skill, power and readiness in oratory and debate. To those ends there will be much writing, and frequent practice in prepared and in extemporaneous speaking." The courses listed are: English Composition, The Short Story, The Essay, Dramatic Composition, Forensics, The Lyric, Oral Expression, Dramatic Readings (all of the above being two semester courses), English Oratory and American Oratory.

This list of courses remained fairly stable for a few years. The Short Story and the Lyric went back to Literature. By 1908-09 Advanced Prose Composition had been added, as well as Essays and Orations, Forms of Public Discourse, Advanced Argumentation, Debating, and Practical Public Speaking. The faculty of the Department consisted of Arthur Ragan Priest, Professor, Maynard Lee Daggy, Loren Douglas Milliman, Vernon Louis Parrington, Assistant Professors, and Ida Katherine Greenlee, Instructor.

During the 1909-10 year the Department of Rhetoric and Oratory was at its peak. The faculty consisted of one professor, one associate professor, three assistant professors, and five instructors. All writing courses and studies of prose style were in this Department, as well as all forms of speech: English Composition (two semesters, with much writing), Eighteenth Century
English Prose, Nineteenth Century English Prose, Essay and Oration (study of the essay and oration as types of advanced composition), Forms of Public Discourse, Advanced Argumentation, Debating (prerequisites: English Composition, Advanced Argumentation, Oral Expression), Oral Expression, Practical Public Speaking, Dramatic Reading (two semesters), English Oratory and American Oratory. It is interesting to note the importance given to public oral discourse, as evidenced by the courses provided and the prerequisites for studying debate and engaging in public debates.

An awkward situation, however, had been developing. English courses had been expanding, several faculty were listed in both the Department of Language and Literature and the Department of Rhetoric and Oratory, and there was growing concern on the part of some of the faculty about the appropriateness of the emphasis given the subject matter of the latter. Doubtless changes had been contemplated for some time and drastic changes were made for the 1910-11 academic year. English Composition and studies of prose style went to the now Department of English with, of course, the faculty. The concerns to which this change gave rise are well presented in a letter dated January 3, 1911 from Professor Daggy to President Kane. It is worth quoting in its entirety since it is not a little prophetic, revealing problems that are still with us.

President Thomas F. Kane
University of Washington

My dear President Kane:

Your letter of December 23, containing a copy of the letter of the same date to Dr. Padelford has been received.

Of course, I am ready to accede to any plan of organization you may consider necessary for the continued efficiency and future growth of the work in Rhetoric and Oratory. However, in accordance with the request of your letter, I wish to give you a full and frank statement of the situation as it appears to me.

I agree heartily with you that Dean Priest has taken a justifiable pride in the work in debating, oratory, and public speaking. I know also that he is just as proud of the work done in Rhetoric and is equally anxious to see it continued with the present degree of efficiency.

Personally, I believe that the proposed plan of division will be injurious to both the oral and the written work. Under the traditional division of our department, it has been our policy to maintain the closest relationship between the written and the spoken word as different forms of the same fundamental creative process. Should this division be made as suggested, I fear that the tendency will be to subordinate the rhetoric work. Will not the instructors selected to teach rhetoric be men whose interest is in literature, historically considered, and who, therefore, will center attention upon literary masterpieces to be critically studied?

The overwhelming majority of our students need the work in rhetoric not because they expect to be authors, but because they need to have a definite working knowledge of English Composition. Hence, the great importance of keeping this work under the direction and under the instruction of men who have specialized in rhetoric and who are primarily teachers of rhetoric. Those who are fitted for authorship, or who may wish to acquire "literary English," can make use of the advanced courses in rhetoric which are now offered by the department of Rhetoric and Oratory, or which may be offered in the future. I fear that the proposed change will result in the slighting of the rhetoric work on the part of the instructor and will lead students to regard the required Freshman English as a necessary evil.

This will likewise have the effect of lowering the quality of the work in debate, oratory and public speaking because the rhetoric furnishes the right foundation for the oral work. The work in public speaking, based on rhetoric, is both cultural and "practical": cultural in that it aims to establish standards of taste and of criticism, and endeav-
ors to secure the comprehensive grasp of the principles of
oral expression necessary to successful teaching of English in the secondary schools: "practical," in that it gives
the basis for the every day use of the spoken word which
all students will need in practical life.
It has been the constant aim of the department to keep the
work in oral expression, public speaking, dramatic reading,
etc. separate and distinct in purpose and in quality
from the work usually done by so-called "Schools of
Oratory." If the work be separated, I am afraid it will not
only make it difficult to maintain the present standards
but it will also place the proposed new department in such
a position that it will become the object of adverse criticism
from the men who do not understand the academic
character of the work and who do not appreciate its
scientific basis.
I trust that I have made myself clear in my theory concern-
ing the matter. Doubtless there are other angles from
which the subject should be viewed, and other phases of
the question which have not appeared to me. I shall
indeed appreciate any suggestions that may help to set me
right on any point in which I may be in error."

Respectfully yours,

[Maynard L. Daggy]

Another statement, unaddressed and unsigned, presumably the draft of a letter, reveals more of the circumstances:

Notice has been received from the President's Office of the
resignation of Associate Professor Daggy, who has been a
member of the department of Rhetoric and Oratory since
1904. Professor Daggy has given the greater portion of his
attention to the work in debating and public speaking and
has been so successful that when recently the department
of rhetoric and oratory was divided and the rhetoric work
united with English literature, under the new department
title of English, there was established a separate depart-
ment, known as the department of public speaking and
debate, with Associate Professor Daggy as its head. The
President has shown his high regard both for the instruct-
ion in this line of work and for Professor Daggy in the new
arrangements which were made.

There has been a good deal of criticism on the part of a
large number of the members of the faculty, on account of
what they considered an undue emphasis upon what
many have regarded as work of minor importance when
judged by severe university standards. While these criti-
cisms have not been directed against Professor Daggy
personally, he has been aware of their existence and has
felt that the future success of this line of work was
hampered by this feeling and by the separation of the work
in public speaking and debate from the rest of the English
work. Furthermore, it is likely that Professor Daggy's
success as a platform speaker is such as to warrant him
in devoting his entire time to it.
Professor Daggy will take with him when he leaves the
University at the end of the present semester, the good will
and best wishes of his faculty associates.

The attitude of a portion of the faculty expressed in
this statement about the "minor importance" of the field
of speech has been persistent, and probably still with
us today, although the field has gained greatly in its
academic standing the past few decades.
The work in the new Department of Public Speaking
and Debate suffered severely from the resignation of
Mr. Daggy. He had resigned in the middle of the year,
and this left Mr. Julius C. Herbsman as instructor in
charge, with two graduate assistants, to fill out the
year. Herbsman had received his A.B. degree from
Mckendree College in 1901 and his LL.B. from the
University of Illinois in 1909, and had a few years of
teaching experience. The curriculum remained essen-
tially the same as the previous term except for the
English Composition courses, and one interesting ex-
ception: separate courses were listed for men and
women in Advanced Argumentation and Practical Pub-
Public Speaking, but this turned out to be for the one term only!

For the following year, 1911-12, the Administration intended to hire an older man with more experience to take over Public Speaking and Debate. Mr. Herbsman, however, made a strong appeal to be given a try at the headship and the Administration reluctantly agreed to give him a chance. Unfortunately things did not work out well. In his report, August, 1912, to Governor M. E. Hay, President Kane spoke of Mr. Herbsman (presumably to explain his departure): "When given this longer trial, he began to show marked irregularities both in his work and conduct which finally forced us to the conclusion that he must not be given a permanent appointment in the Department." The statement goes on to say that at a freshman class meeting, a celebration known as "freshman cap burning," Herbsman was the Master of Ceremonies and told some stories that much offended the women present, and they strongly protested. His conduct in general toward his women students was such that they did not want to go singly to his office for a conference. He was often late to class and at times missed classes entirely, did not pay his faculty club bills often, and seemed to be irresponsible in his relations with the business office, the University library and the city library. He had wanted to teach in the summer school, and urged the administration not to judge him relative to the work by the distinguished Professor S. S. Curry of the Boston School of Expression, who had taught in the summers at the University of Washington for some three sessions. Herbsman was given the summer appointment but he did not appear for his classes.

Mr. Herbsman's conduct had been of such concern on the campus that on June 24, 1912, a group of older professors and heads of departments sent a letter to President Kane saying that "... his [Herbsman's] further continuance as a member of the faculty is entirely inimical to the best interests of the University." Professor Emerson Lee Bassett replaced Herbsman for the 1912-13 academic year, but resigned on March 3, 1913. Bassett had graduated from the Connock School of Expression in 1898, studied at the Boston School of Expression, received his A.B. degree from Stanford in 1901, and later studied at the University of Chicago, and Oxford. He had been an assistant professor at Stanford from 1905 to 1912, and came to the University of Washington as an associate professor. It would appear that the University had acquired a first-rate faculty member—he probably found the situation too depressing and unpromising.

While the academic Department had fallen on evil days, debate continued to be a thriving campus activity. By this time there were five active debate clubs, the Stevens, Badger, and Chinook Clubs for men, and the Athena and Sacajawea for women, each putting on debates within the Clubs, and engaging in interclub and collegiate debates.

Several annual debates were held with Universities and Colleges of the Pacific Coast. The University was active in the Pacific Coast Triangular Debating League which included Washington, Oregon and Stanford, and the Northwest Triangular Debating League, which included Washington, Washington State and Whitman College. There was also annually a Washington-Whitman Women's Debate and a Washington-Oregon Women's Debate. Further there were annual debates held between representatives of the Law Schools of the
University of Washington, University of Oregon and the Law School of Vancouver, B.C. Ever since the inception of the debate clubs the faculty teaching oratory, argumentation and debate had been officially called upon to assist the clubs. The relationship between the formal teaching of debate and the club activity is suggested in a statement by the Board of Regents in their 1913 report to the Governor of the state: "... it is doubtless due to the success of the work in this Department [Public Speaking and Debate] that there is such a wide and general interest in the work of the debating and literary societies in the University." 8 We should note that The Lincoln Literary Society, which had been active for many years, had the following statement in the catalogue: "The Lincoln Literary Society offers to students in all departments of the University an opportunity for developing proficiency in public speaking and a knowledge of the various forms of English composition. Active membership is limited to twenty." 9 A close relationship between speaking and writing seems to be assumed here!

The 1913-14 year opened with Professor William Pierce Gorsuch and William LaFollette constituting the faculty in Public Speaking and Debate. Mr. Gorsuch, A.B. Knox College, 1898, had extensive teaching experience, including instructor in Public Speaking at the University of Chicago, 1903 to 1913. He came here as an Associate Professor in charge of Public Speaking and Debate. Mr. LaFollette, A.B. DePauw, 1912, came at the instructor level. As usual the course offerings changed, now becoming Practical Public Speaking, The Oration, Dramatic Reading, Argumentation and Debating, Forensic Oratory, and Vocational. The "practical" orientation is evident. The following year there was little change, only the addition of Advanced Argumentation and Debating and Advanced Reading (required, unless excused, of English majors who expected to teach).

Mr. LaFollette resigned in the Spring of 1915, after having taught here for two years. He evidently had done very good work. In a letter to Mr. LaFollette the Acting President stated:

When you began your work here two years ago, interest in your department was at a very low ebb and the standard of work was below par. You have shown unusual ability in organizing and in lifting the standard of work to a point where it compares favorably with that in neighboring departments. Your work has been marked by a quiet dignity and lofty character which has stamped it as of the truest quality.

For the 1915-16 year Professor Priest returned to the Department to be Professor of Debating in addition to being Dean of Men. The curriculum was reduced to Practical Public Speaking, Argumentation, Advanced Argumentation, Dramatic Reading and Advanced Reading. It remained the same through the next two years, with some slight reshuffling of wording. Debating continued actively, as before, with four clubs and the Triangular Leagues, with the addition of men's Dual Debate Leagues with Reed College and Whitman, and similar Dual Leagues for women with University of Oregon and Whitman.

Another significant change occurred as well. A letter from the President to Professor Gorsuch reads: "My Dear Professor Gorsuch: At a meeting of the Board of Regents, held March 14, 1919, the Department of Public Speaking and Debate was designated as the 'Department of Dramatic Art' and transferred in its classification from the College of Liberal Arts to the
College of Fine Arts. Very truly yours.  

The catalogue orientation to this new Department stated that the work in this department is planned for three classes of students: (a) those who need some knowledge of dramatic art as a part of a liberal education; (b) those who need some knowledge of dramatic art as part of their technical training; and (c) those who wish to pursue the subject more intensively than either of the former groups. The curriculum consisted of courses in Dramatic Literature, Shakespeare (dramatic reading and interpretation), Contemporary Drama, and Practical Public Speaking, all of which were taught by Professor Gorsuch. It was stated that work in Dramatic Composition, Producing, Stage Craft, Acting would be announced later. Argumentation and Debate went to the Department of English. The following year Dramatic Art added an instructor, Glen Arthur Hughes, A.B. Stanford, 1916, A.M. Washington, 1920, who was ultimately to become the highly successful Director of the University School of Drama. More drama courses were added; Practical Public Speaking remained. There was no change in the Speech courses in the Department of English. Indeed, there was little change for the next few years.

Notes

1 Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the University of Washington.
2 Manuscripts and University Archives, University of Washington Libraries.
4 Presidents' Letters File, University of Washington Libraries.
5 Presidents' Letters File, University of Washington Libraries.