

William M. Phillips—Eisteddfod Winner Beaumont Man also Coached Four Children to Win



Will Phillips, immediately behind the trophy, is surrounded here by members of Hillside Lodge I.O.O.F. of Edwardsville, a group he coached years ago to win forensic honors throughout the State.

By Vivian McCormick

Mrs. McCormick is the wife of Fred McCormick, district representative for Hallmark Cards. They have a five-year old son, Brad, and live at Shrine Acres where they moved five years ago from Carlisle. They grew up in Irwin a suburb of Pittsburgh. Mrs. McCormick is a graduate of Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, where she studied journalism.

It was a pleasant afternoon as Will Phillips sat in his immaculate home, at Beaumont recalling tales of the Cynofardd Eisteddfod of years past as well as the 73rd Eisteddfod held Saturday, March 16 at T. C. Edwards Memorial Church in Edwardsville, where he won first place with a recitation, "Sometimes".

At eighty-seven he is still exhibiting his exceptional talent in all phases of speech, elocution, and interpretive poetry.

Will has fifteen Eisteddfod first prizes, including a gold medal.

A man of remarkable memory, he has breezed through as many as twenty-two verses to capture a first place, as he did when he recited, "Hostler Joe" at fourteen.

Will was one of eleven at the 73rd Eisteddfod who were present at the very first one seventy-three years ago.

He has attended most, competed in many and acted as judge several times. Two of his first place prizes were won with Shakespearean readings.

Speech judge of the recent Eisteddfod, Natalie Nyhart, English supervisor of Hanover Township Schools, said, "Will Phillips' delivery was remarkable; he spoke with the voice of authority".

Will proudly reflects that he has never experienced nervousness but has always had the confidence which carried him so often to the winners' circle.

He occasionally cups his ear with his hand to better catch his visitors' words but this is the only evidence of his eighty-seven years.

As this tall, slender man rises briskly to take a picture from the wall and point out a detail of half century ago, it is easy to imagine the many interests that made up his robust youth.

Born in Edwardsville in 1875, he lived most of his married life in Kingston, then in Dallas before moving to Beaumont fourteen years ago. Both he and Mrs. Phillips, the former Celia Davis, celebrate mutual birthdays on January 23rd. Their twenty-seventh birthday anniversaries were also the birthdate of their son, Bill, the late well-known radio announcer.

The Phillips' had a fine family of seven children, two of whom are deceased; Mrs. Beverly Symons and Bill. Mrs. Anna Lloyd now lives in Endwell, New York, Tom, Johnstown, David, Newark, New Jersey, Mrs. Elizabeth Walters, Vestal, New York and James, Kingston.

There are also fifteen grandchildren and thirty-four great-grandchildren.

Will is a lifelong member of T. C.

Edwards Memorial Church as were his parents.

He recalls his visit to Wales between the ages of two and seven with his parents, when his father died of apoplexy. The late Rev. T. C. Edwards, who was also in Wales, conducted the funeral there and in later years buried Will's mother in Edwardsville.

The "Little Red Schoolhouse", now a playground in Edwardsville, was the source of Will's entire formal education. He attended first and second grades in what was then a four room building and recalls his second grade instructor, George Powell, who was a "wonderful teacher". Beyond the second grade, Will is entirely self-educated and leaves many listeners in awe when they learn that he never had formal speech training.

He has taught many speech students, and one of forty years ago is a Baptist minister in Harrisburg.

Four of the Phillips children have been Eisteddfod prize winners through the patient coaching of their father. Among them "Little Bill". Will began his children's speech training at an early age. He was very proud of Little Bill's success as a radio announcer.

Will began working in the mine of Kingston Coal Company at fourteen. He was a shaft engineer twenty-eight years and after thirty-five years as a company engineer.

Always enthusiastic and active, Mr. Phillips did not limit himself to speech training although he did coach the degree staff of Edwardsville Odd Fellows Lodge in inter-county recitation competition.

Three of four teams coached by him took first place and the lodge then boasted of the best rated teams in all Pennsylvania.

He sang baritone with the Gwent's Glee Club of Edwardsville for twenty-five years and was vice-president for fifteen years. He was also with the Columbian Volunteer Fire Department in Kingston. He always enjoyed sports and played tennis until he was sixty-three.

His most pleasant memory is his first visit to Harvey's Lake. He was twelve when his group walked from Edwardsville to Luzerne where they took the Lehigh Valley train as far as Alderson. From there a steamboat took them to the Lake Grove House, now torn down, owned by Captain Rice who enjoyed entertaining children. Will remembers with pleasure that never before, nor since, has he seen more delicious food than on that wonderful Sunday.

Today Will credits his wife's excellent cooking for his good health. He would make only one change in his life if he could go back through the years; rather than going to work in the mines, he would enter private business, probably real estate.

The Phillips' home does not have television but he keeps abreast of current events through newspapers and radio and intently followed Colonel John Glenn's orbital flight. Will feels our nation's space program is a necessary and wonderful project.

A well-loved husband and father; an admired and respected teacher; an eloquent public speaker; a help-

ful friend and neighbor—these phrases only begin to sum up the fine gentleman that is Will Phillips.

WORTH REPEATING:

"Great ideals and principles do not live from generation to generation just because they are right, nor even because they have been carefully legislated. Ideals and principles continue from generation to generation, only when they are built into the hearts of children as they grow up."

"Sometime"

— May Riley Smith

This is the poem which all contestants were required to recite at the 1962 Eisteddfod.

*Sometime, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash before us out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue;
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.*

*And we shall see how, while we frown and sigh,
God's plans go on as best for you and me;
How, when we called, He heeded not our cry,
Because His wisdom to the end could see.
And e'en as prudent parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now
Life's sweetest things, because it seemeth good.*

*And if, sometimes, commingled with life's wine,
We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink,
Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine
Pours out the portion for our lips to drink;
And if some friend we love is lying low,
Where human kisses cannot reach his face,
Oh, do not blame the loving Father so,
But wear your sorrow with obedient grace!*

*And you shall shortly know that lengthened breath
Is not the sweetest gift God sends His friend,
And that, sometimes, the sable pall of death
Conceals the fairest boon His love can send.
If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife
And for each mystery could find a key.*

*But not to-day. Then be content, poor heart;
God's plans like lilies pure and white unfold;
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.
And if, through patient toil, we reach the land
Where tired feet, with sandals loosed, may rest,
When we shall clearly know and understand,
I think that we shall say, "God knew the best!"*

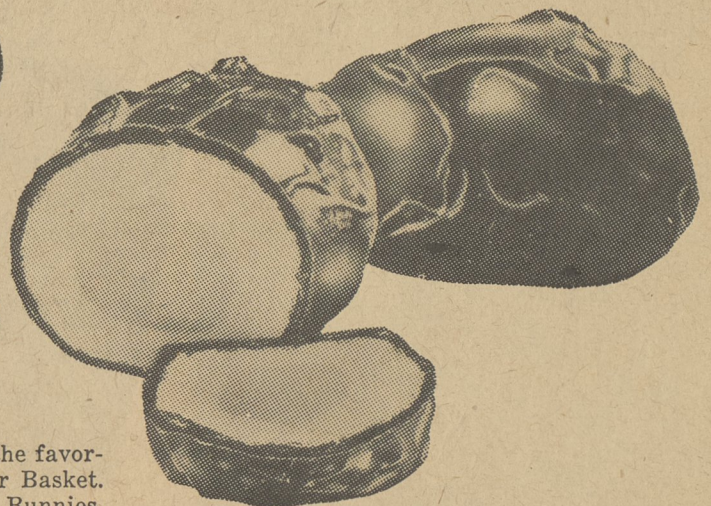
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