



## *Dads Club History*

The *Dads Club* of Western Reserve Academy is a voluntary non-profit association that provides financial support for Reserve and the student body. The club serves as a conduit through which the Head of School may communicate with the parents and through which the parents may offer comments and suggestions to the Academy. The fundraising activities of the *Dads Club* are intended to augment, not replace, the normal operating budget of the school, the Annual Fund and other special campaigns. The intent is to allocate funds in such a way to maximize the benefits to the entire student body. Funds are provided annually for academic, cultural, athletic, social and community awareness programs.

The idea for such a group came about because of the arrival of Headmaster Dr. Joel B. Hayden and WRA's new Athletic Director (and Football coach), Roscoe J. Theibert (fondly known as "Tebby"), both of whom arrived on campus in the fall of 1931. Both would have long careers at WRA and have noted impact on the school. Dr. Hayden was Headmaster during the Depression and World War II, and retired in 1946. Tebby went on until 1959, finishing up after 28 years of service.

By the fall of 1932, the annual Father and Sons Sports Banquet with its presentation of awards for both football and soccer had been launched under the leadership of Coach "Tebby" Theibert. It appears that the origin of the *Dads Club* emerged from this much-anticipated fall event. The *Dads Club* was organized on November

10, 1937 to coincide with the annual sports banquet. An announcement signed by J.R. Silver, Jr., one of the five men who founded the club, was sent to the fathers of all WRA students (the school was all boys at this time.)



*(Former Athletic Director and Football Coach at Western Reserve Academy, Roscoe J. "Tebby" Theibert.)*

*Thank you for supporting WRA's student organizations and activities.*



The founding fathers were 1) Dr. Loyal E. Leavenworth, M.D. of Canton (three sons at WRA); 2) J. Robinson Silver, Jr. of Akron (two sons); 3) Joseph S. Wood of Cleveland Heights (one son); 4) Dr. Fred Martin Rankin of Akron (one son); and 5) Willard P. Dickerson of Cleveland Heights (four sons). Of those eleven sons of the club founders, one is still alive today, namely Dr. David E. Leavenworth '40 of Canton who spends his winters in Naples, Florida. Of those eleven sons, they sent five sons of their own to WRA in the 1950's & 60's. The first meeting of the *Dads Club* was held on November 29, 1937 with the five founding members and Dr. Hayden, and they drew up a Code of Regulations calling for officers, an Executive Committee, and the fact that dues would be voluntary, "and in no event shall exceed the amount of five dollars". (Tuition for 1937-38 was \$850). Dr. Leavenworth became the first President with Mr. Silver as Vice President. By the time of their second meeting on January 8, 1938, they had already raised \$135 and signed up 157 members. There was much animated discussion about what improvements could be done with the help of the *Dads Club*.

By the fall of 1938, they had become the official sponsors of the Sports Banquet and even presented an award to Coach R.J. "Tebby" Theibert. In the spring 1939 when J. Robinson Silver, Jr. became the club's

second president, the code had been amended to allow a 10-member board; three officers, seven members at large. The first *Dads Club* pamphlet (to solicit members) was distributed on May 1940 when the club proposed building a cabin for outdoor recreation in the school's North Woods (about where the Ohio Turnpike crosses our upper lot today.) During WWII, the club sponsored a series of Chapel talks called "Symposium on Freedom." In the spring of 1941, Edwin J. Thomas of Akron became club president. He would later become President of Good-year Tire, an Akron civic leader, and would have a performing arts center named in his honor at the University of Akron. During these early years, the *Dads Club* used their resources to buy musical instruments for the for the music program and invested much in the improvement of the school's Bicknell Gym by providing money for athletic equipment, locker room furnishings, and drinking fountains.

During the retirement of Headmaster Joel B. Hayden in 1946, the *Dads Club* commissioned an artist to paint his portrait that was unveiled at the Father and Son Sports Banquet in November. That was also the year they established a memorial fund in honor of Dr. Phillip C. Leavenworth '38, the son of the club's first president, who had died in a tragic car accident at the age of 29.

The *Dads Club* has been continuously active over the decades and amending its code when needed. By 1965, its board had 15 members, including long-time faculty member E. Mark Worthen, who acted as Secretary to the club. In 1972, WRA opened its doors to young women, and the first female students to graduate in modern times were the six members of the class of 1973. Of course membership was extended to the fathers of co-eds.

Throughout the years, the *Dads Club* has continuously supported WRA and its students. It funded the press box at the old football stadium for the 1985 season. In the 1990's, the Fall Auction/Party at the Bicknell Gym became the benefit of choice and has had a very successful run, nearing 20 years, and with modification and enhancements added every year.

Here is a statement from the membership pamphlet published in May, 1940, which still has resonance today: "The *Dads Club* of Western Reserve Academy is a voluntary association of fathers of Academy students for the purpose of giving organized support to Academy and student activities, to act as a medium through which the Academy may consult the parents through which the parents may offer suggestions to the Academy. The underlying purpose is to assist in bringing closer together the Academy, the parents, and the students."

*History Provided By Thomas Vince, Western Reserve Academy Archivist and Historian*