

Monday, September 4, 1961

Dr. Harold Clapp, Prominent Educator Succumbs Sunday



Dr. Harold Clapp

Dr. Harold L. Clapp, 52, a member of the Grinnell College modern foreign languages faculty since 1939, died of cancer early Sunday morning in a local hospital, where he had been a patient for the past week.

Memorial services for Dr. Clapp, who had willed his body to the State University of Iowa medical school, will be held in Herrick Chapel on the college campus Tuesday at 4 p.m. The Rev. Dr. Winston L. King, dean of the chapel, will officiate, assisted by the Rev. Robert Dewey, minister of the First Congregational church, Grinnell.

Kenneth W. Hart, senior from Ottumwa, will provide organ music for the service.

The family suggests that me-

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morial contributions may be made to the local Community Hospital Building Fund or to the Council for Basic Education, 725 15th St., N.W., Washington 5, D.C.

Grinnell President Howard R. Bowen said of Dr. Clapp: "His service was not only long but fruitful. His efforts within the councils of the college were directed consistently toward high academic standards and emphasis on the intellectual and cultural aspects of education.

"Outside the college, he engaged in many professional activities and achieved leadership in the American Association of University Professors and the Council for Basic Education. He was deeply interested in education at all levels and was one of the pioneers in the influential movement toward greater emphasis on basic academic subjects in the elementary and high schools.

"Professor Clapp was distinguished for clarity of thought, dedication to educational standards, and intellectual integrity. He was at the same time a warm human being and a good neighbor. His death is a great blow to the college and to the academic world."

Dr. Clapp, whose primary teaching field was French but who also taught Spanish and Italian on occasion, had been a full professor at Grinnell since 1944 and had been appointed this year to the Seth Richards Chair of Modern Languages.

He served as elected chairman of the faculty from 1958 until the beginning of his illness caused him to resign that office in March, 1960, although he continued to teach for another year.

Besides his full career as a college teacher and faculty leader, Dr. Clapp was an eloquent, vigorous critic of educational "frills" and "educationists" in public schooling at the elementary and secondary levels. Writing with a pungent and scholarly wit, he authored frequent articles on these subjects and others for national journals.

In 1956 he was a founder and served in 1956-57 as first executive secretary of the Council for Basic Education, a national organization devoted to improving educational methods and standards, with offices in Washington, D.C. He served as president of the group in 1959-60.

He was also active in the American Association of University Professors, serving on the National A.A.U.P. Council from 1952 to 1955 and as president of the Iowa A.A.U.P. Conference in 1953-54. In 1946-47 he was president of the Iowa Foreign Language Association.

He was a member of several other professional organizations, including the Modern Language Association, and of Phi Beta Kappa, national honorary scholastic society. He was affiliated with the local Congregational church.

Born June 14, 1909, in Jamestown, N. Y., Dr. Clapp was the son of Marvin L. and Mary L. White Clapp. He was graduated from Jamestown high school in 1926 and received his B.A. degree from Colgate University, Hamilton, N. Y., in 1930, after spending his junior year in France, at the University of Nancy. He obtained his M.A. in 1933 and his Ph.D. in 1935, both from the University of Wisconsin.

His teaching career began with an instructorship at Colgate University, from 1930 to 1932. After receiving his advanced degrees, he taught four years at Lake Erie College in Painesville, Ohio, just before coming to Grinnell in 1939.

He had traveled frequently in Europe, most recently in the summer of 1960, when he did research in France and Switzerland. In 1947-48 he was on leave from Grinnell to serve as director of the University of Delaware's junior-year-abroad group in Geneva, Switzerland.

In 1931, Dr. Clapp married Laura M. Rice, and they became the parents of three sons, all of whom have attended Grinnell—Charles M. Clapp of St. Louis, Mo., a 1958 graduate; Robert A. Clapp of Custer, S. Dak., who was graduated this year; and James E. Clapp, now a sophomore in the college.

Besides Mrs. Clapp and the three sons, Dr. Clapp is survived by a brother, Dr. George Edward Clapp of Washington, Pa.