

MUSKOGEE SERVICE LEAGUE  
Wheatley Branch Library  
Saturday, August 19, 1961  
7:30 P.M.

Invocation - - - - - Mr. Adam Herbert

Introductory Remarks - - - - - Mr. John Cooper

Speakers for 1961:

Dean Kenneth S. Tollett  
First Outstanding Male

Dr. La Forest Garner  
Man of 1951

What the Service League Means to the Youth of Muskogee--Mr. George Jones, Jr.  
Man of 1959

Presentation of Citations:

Attorney Kenneth S. Tollett, Jr.

Attorney Cecil Robinson  
Assistant County Attorney

Dr. La Forest Garner

Dr. H. E. Tollett, Jr.  
Local Dentist

Honorable J. J. Simmons, Jr  
Man of 1948

Mrs. Ruby Stanback  
Woman of 1959

Presentation of Service League Gift:

Mr. Allen Counts  
Man of 1961

Mr. Hoyt McIntosh  
Man of 1960

Honorable Mentions - - - - - Mr. H. M. Hodges  
Guidance Counselor

Mr. Maurice Lee  
Man of 1956

Mr. Booker Warren  
Man of 1957

Miss Edna Rose Brown  
Fisk Graduate, 1961

Mr. Herman Totten  
Honor Graduate, Wiley, 1961

Miss Juanita Fue  
Sophomore, OSU

Mr. George Jones, Jr.  
Man of 1959

Congratulatory Messages - - - - - Miss DeVonne French  
Outstanding Young Lady

Summation - - - - - Mr. L. R. Kirkpatrick  
Principal, M.T.H.S.

Acknowledgement of League officers, presentees, parents and friends

Films--Reception

It is very pleasant to return home under these circumstances. I am somewhat embarrassed by the warm praise that has been bestowed upon me. Frankly, I do not feel that I have accomplished anything significant. I say this in no sense of false modesty. Everyone has something to be modest about. It has been said that modesty is the gentle art of enhancing your charm by pretending not to be aware of it. Certainly, I am not a charming person. Nevertheless, I find it almost overwhelming to be cited for meritorious achievement. All one needs to do is read Mr. Cooper's column weekly in the Oklahoma Independent and he will find enumerable accomplishments reported that indicate that Manual Training High School has produced singularly outstanding citizens and graduates.

I should apologize for speaking from a script. When I was in high school and before I attended law school, I found it no great chore to speak, so to speak, off the top of the head. Then I didn't know very much. It seems remarkably contradictory that as, perhaps, I have learned a little more, I find it difficult to talk without notes. Law is a rigorous discipline. It teaches one to be cautious of the glib statement; it teaches one to beware of the premature generalization. Therefore, in the midst of my increased, in quotes, "learning" I beg your indulgence to permit me to speak from a script.

What can I say of importance in this gathering?

So many of you have precociously and without great effort accomplished many significant things. I should first point out that it is a tribute to Mr. Cooper, the President of the Muskogee Service League, that you are gathered here, for to a great extent he is responsible for us being here. Last year I tried in my limited way to spell out my high regard for Mr. Cooper. Being inadequate in verbal facility, I will not try to re-spell out how much he has meant to the community of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

~~Now, I must warn you that you are conferring a citation on one who, through his many activities, has acquired the reputation for being somewhat controversial. I have the unhappy vice or virtue of being a person who has no qualms about speaking his mind in blunt and unadorned terms. The judicious man keeps silent in the face of corruption and ignorance. I suppose my legal training has not made me a judicious man. I have no patience with those who would temporize and procrastinate with the problems that confront modern man.~~

Let me think out loud with you about some of the responsibilities of those who have the vision to see and the ability to carry out their visions.

The world is suspended on a perilous precipice. Mankind is challenged with the choice between destruction and

peace. The sins of imperialism and colonial exploitation have placed the western powers in a most precarious predicament. We read with despair the annihilation of hundreds of Tunisians at Bizerte. We writhe in agony with our brothers in South Africa under the scourge of a remorseless, unchristian subjugation. The human dignity and personal sanctity of many peoples over the world are unrecognized. The world is striving for a new day. It is seeking the realization of the dreams that have been held in the bosom of man. It wants the absence of hunger, privation, and the lack of shelter. The world is confronted with two conflicting and competing ideologies: will man dedicate himself to freedom, or will he submit himself to the tyranny of brutal government? In the words of President Roosevelt, "America has a rendezvous with destiny." It can only fulfill that destiny, as far as the world is concerned, if it erases, eradicates, exterminates, expunges, and destroys all of the obstacles and hurdles that it has placed before the Negro in his effort to realize his human dignity in this harsh and cold world.

We have a disturbing responsibility. We must assist and facilitate the realization of the dreams that were inscribed in the Declaration of Independence more than 180 years ago. What we do to rectify the evils of our society

is for more than just the realization of our personal dreams and aspirations. We must correct the evils of our society so that we can spread throughout the world the ideals of our glorious, that is, our intended glorious democracy. Until we have made democracy and freedom in America a living reality, we will not be able to sell our way of life to the rest of the world.

Therefore, what we do is not just immediately concerned with our personal destinies, but it is concerned with the destiny of mankind. In the face of this overwhelming and awful responsibility, we must rededicate ourselves to a fearless, indefatigable, all consuming assault against second class citizenship. Certainly, Mr. Simmons has set a good example in this area. *negroes must be ready to reap Mr. Simmons' harvest.*

In charting our careers, we must always keep in the forefront of our aspirations the desire to improve the lot of our fellowman. One of the greatest sins of the modern Negro is that when he receives a little financial gain through his strenuous effort, he forgets that there are millions of brothers, black brothers, who are still denied a chance to live as human beings. How many Negroes are kept out of the main stream of our society; how many of us are doing what we can to see that the American Negro is put into the main stream of the American Society?

I say in whatever you do, in whatever you plan, in whatever you prepare yourselves for, you must keep in your vision the necessity and duty of correcting the evils of our society so that we can transplant in the virgin and uncorrupted communities of the world an affection for and dedication to democracy and the betterment of mankind.

Fortunately the youth of America, the black youth of America, have become impatient with the slow processes of the law's delay and the insolence of office. They are sitting down for their dignity, they are facing incarceration, deprivation, physical harm, yes, even death in order to make plain and clear to the powers that be that they will no longer accept second class citizenship in these United States. We must succor them, we must give aid and comfort to their dedicated action, we must develop skills within ourselves to assist in the war that must be waged against second class citizenship.

I am <sup>h</sup>exorting you, I am not spelling out specifically the weapons that are necessary in this war, but I desire to inspire in you a desire to fight, with whatever weapons you might have, against the bigotry, race prejudice, and discrimination that we are subjected to in these dear United States.

My remarks were to be short. I have hardly begun to say what I wish. Perhaps, at another time I might be able to say more about our responsibilities. Intelligence and courage are the vital weapons for our struggle. Intelligence enables us to know **WHERE** we are, **WHAT** we must do, and **HOW** we must do it. Courage transforms thought into action. The time for intelligent and courageous action is at hand.