

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION**  
**LEE EMERSON BASSETT**  
**(1872-1959)**

Dr. Lee Emerson Bassett, Emeritus Professor of English and Head of Speech and Drama in the Division of Fine Arts, was born in Salem, Wisconsin, on November 26, 1872, and died in Palo Alto, California, December 19, 1959. He commenced his higher education at Lawrence College, but later transferred to Stanford University, where he graduated with honors and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1901. In his senior year at Stanford he was invited by President Jordan to assist the debaters and the student players. After his graduation, he was appointed Instructor in English, with special responsibilities in the oral interpretation of English literature. During 1907-08, he studied at Oxford University, specializing in phonetics. In 1919 he attained the full professorship and was appointed chairman of the Division of Public Speaking in the Department of English. Shortly before his retirement in 1938, he became Executive Head of Speech and Drama in the Division of Fine Arts, and was invited by President Wilbur to remain in that capacity for a year after his retirement.

During his thirty-nine years of service at Stanford University, Professor Bassett emphasized the need for a scholarly approach to the study of Oral English Literature and Dramatic Literature. One of his articles in the Quarterly Journal of Speech, "Adapting Courses in Interpretation to the Academic Mind", clearly and cogently expressed his belief that Speech can and must be an essential discipline in a university of high degree. In his Handbook of Oral Interpretation, and again in his Handbook of Extemporaneous Speaking, he continued to stress scholarship as the most important factor in effective oral communication.

He took an active part in regional and national professional organizations, serving as President of the Western Speech Association and the Speech Association of America. Northwestern, Colorado, Washington, Utah State, and the University of Hawaii invited him to teach during the summer or for the year if Stanford could spare him. Even after his retirement, his wise and friendly counsel was sought by various groups in the community and state. During 1939-40, he served as a consultant with Max Reinhardt, in order to establish a school of the theater in Hollywood. Upon his return to northern California, he continued his interest of twenty years in the Palo Alto Toastmasters' Club, renamed the Lee Emerson Bassett Chapter in his honor.

In addition to his intense interest in Public Speaking and Oral Interpretation, Professor Bassett was active in the theater. Among many plays which he directed in the early years of his appointment at Stanford, one of them, The Knight of the Burning Pestle, performed in 1903, was revived in 1953 by the Stanford Players as a fiftieth anniversary commemorative production in his honor.

Professor Bassett was married in 1903 to Florence Jackson, and they celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary before her death in 1954. They had two sons. William, the elder, lost his life in the naval service during World War II. The younger son, Dr. David Bassett, was Professor of Anatomy at Stanford prior to his appointment as Head of the Division of Gross Anatomy at the University of Washington.

Lee Bassett was a modest and unassuming man, not disposed to pre-empt the center of the stage. He was a good listener, with a knack for the interjection of a witty remark at the appropriate moment. Former students who remember him with affection are legion. All Stanford Presidents, from Jordan to Sterling, considered him a pillar in the structure of the University.

The entire staff of the present Department of Speech and Drama sent a message of deep appreciation to Professor Bassett at the approach of his eighty-eighth birthday, and his colleagues, who often visited him, fondly recall his fine mind and courteous manner up to the time of his death. Hundreds of students will gratefully remember the amiable professor with a deep voice and a quizzical smile who combined exacting standards with unfailing helpfulness.

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