

Emmett Trumbull ILJCL Interview

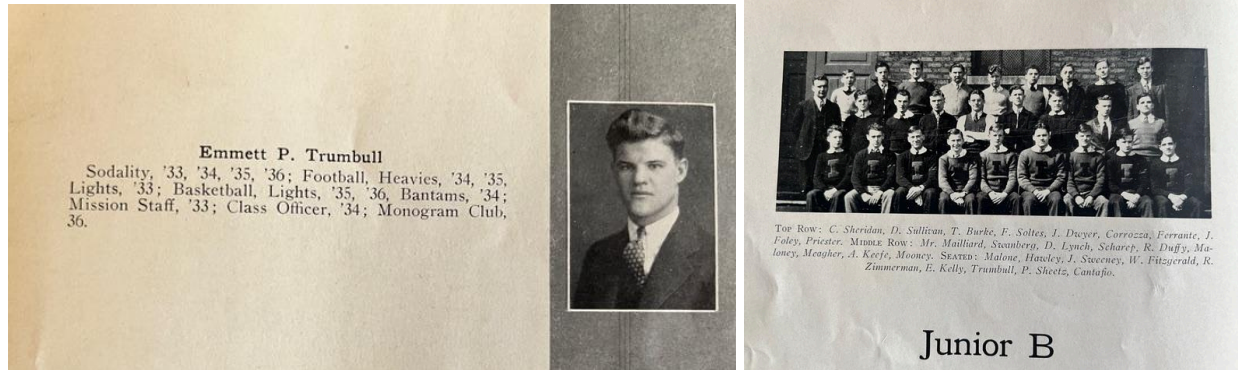
A little time before the 2025 ILJCL State Convention, then-Historian Elsa Pacelli received an interesting email from Bill Trumbull, the son of Emmett Trumbull, graduate of Saint Ignatius College Prep and member of the ILJCL. Mr. Trumbull shared that he had recently found an old JCL pin from the 1930s that belonged to his father, and agreed to discuss his dad's story in an interview. Below is a photo of the pin and of Emmett in his Ignatius sweater.



St. Ignatius in the 1930s

Emmett Trumbull was a first generation American, the son of Irish and Scottish immigrants. He was the youngest of 8 children, and was one of the only members of his immediate family to go to high school. He attended St. Ignatius High School from 1932-1936 at the height of the Depression. Emmett was extremely proud going to St. Ignatius and of the opportunities his education provided him with.

During his time at St. Ignatius, Emmett participated in a variety of activities. One, of course, was the JCL, but he was also a member of the football and basketball teams. In his yearbook, he is referred to as "the man with the Popeye jaw". Throughout his life, Emmett maintained his friendships with many of his Ignatius buddies, something many St. Ignatius graduates have also experienced. Below are some yearbook photos which his son Bill shared.



Post-High School Career

After graduating, Emmett joined the army and served in WWII. Once the war ended, he got a job with the Eastman Kodak Company. There, he met his future wife, Nadine. They had 7 children together. He continued to work for Eastman Kodak for 40 years, and retired from there.

Impact of a Classical Education On His Life

In the words of his son Bill, Emmett “was always proud of saying he studied Latin for 4 years in high school”. This influenced his son Bill and daughter Joan to both take a Classical language in high school. Bill studied New Testament Greek and Joan studied Latin. After graduating, Joan pursued a career as a nurse, and said that her knowledge of Latin helped her to learn and understand the medical terminology.

Some wise words Emmett loved to say to his kids were “reading is the key”. He would say that his love for reading was based on his studying Latin because he could figure out the meanings of the words based on their roots. This interest in the etymology of English words is a big part of what connects classicists worldwide.

The ILJCL Board would like to extend their thanks to the Trumbull family, especially Emmett’s son Bill, for sharing their father’s story with us. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to delve into the history of our organization as well as the benefits of a classical education. This was such a great way to say true to our JCL Creed by “looking for lessons through stories of old”. Thank you for trusting us to keep the memory of your father alive.