

## THE COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

What is now the Columbia High School Scholarship Fund began in 1923 when the members of the Columbia High School Home and School Association initiated the "Columbia Student Aid Fund" to help Columbia graduates who needed financial assistance with their post-high school education.

The organization derived funds from fund-raising activities and from individuals and groups within the community. The Unity Club of Maplewood and the Village Club of South Orange were two of the civic associations whose support goes back to the very early days. There were memorial funds established as well: The Henry Foster, the Tedlow Memorial, and the Redpath Memorial scholarships - trusts set up so that the interest could be released to eligible students each year - and memorials for staff and community members as the need arose.

The Ida Grace Alexander Memorial Scholarship, established in 1953, was to have a far-reaching effect on the Scholarship Fund, now dignified as the Columbia Home and School Scholarship Fund. Ida Grace Alexander was head of the English Department at Columbia; she returned to school in the fall of 1953 seriously ill. She died in December of that year, and her sister, Gladys P. Alexander, contributed \$2,000 to the Scholarship Fund in Gladys' memory, the interest on the contribution was to be given each year to a female graduate to help with her education. Each December Miss Alexander forwarded a contribution to augment the interest from the initial gift in order to provide what she considered to be "meaningful" financial assistance. In the early 1970's she learned that thanks to the care exhibited in the oversight of her contribution it had grown substantially, she was delighted and asked that some of the augmented principal be released to help more than one student.

Miss Gladys Alexander died in the late 70's and left her residual estate to the Scholarship Fund, stipulating only that the principal remain intact and in interest be given annually to graduates of Columbia High School who needed help with their education. This bequest, which totaled more than \$100,000, made it clear that the previous careful, but informal nature of the operation of the Fund needed to be formalized. Accordingly, legal steps were taken to incorporate the Scholarship Fund, with a Board of Directors made up of residents of South Orange and Maplewood, representatives from the high school, the superintendent's office, and the Board of Education. At this time, the permanent memorial funds were incorporated into the principal.

There are few major criteria governing the granting of funds; the first is that the applicant be a graduate of Columbia High School. This eligibility extends beyond the usual four-year educational plans of most graduating seniors. Alumni returning to school long after graduation are still eligible to apply if they meet the formal criteria:

**Financial need**

Demonstration of the probability of success at the chosen school  
(This information comes from the guidance counselors in the case of seniors, from information on the application from other applicants.)

Indication of some responsibility on the part of the student -  
i.e., savings from work experience, willingness to take student loans, etc.)

Applicants may apply for renewal grants as long as there is financial need, with the understanding that since older students often have longer vacations and have a wider job market, first priority each year is for the graduating seniors.

Applications are available during two designated weeks in March, with completed applications due shortly after April 15th. The Liaison Committee of the Board of Trustees, with the addition of a representative from the Home and School Association, reviews each application, consults with the guidance counselors, and the group arrives at a consensus about the need of each individual student and the amount that the Fund should earmark for her/him.

Each year approximately 10% of the senior class files applications, along with a number of renewal applications from previous recipients; roughly two thirds of the students who apply are awarded funds.

Civic and service organizations still support the Fund; Unity Club and Village Club are still involved, as are the Maplewood Rotary Club, the South Orange Civic Association, Maplewood UNICO, the American Association of University Women, the Maplewood Garden Club, the Maplewood Woman's Club, and Maplewood Service League, and many others.

When students are notified of their awards, the Trustees ask that each recipient write a letter of appreciation - either to the person who chairs the particular group that has contributed to the award, or to a member of the Board of Trustees. Some results of that request follow:

"My parents did right in bringing us, their children, to this 'land of the free', a place full of opportunities and blessed by people who care about people. ... I am very proud of Columbia and all the people like you that made it the high school that it is. They are the best things that ever happened to me in this country when I needed them most."

"I spent four happy years at Columbia and will always remember my teachers and especially their attentive care for every one of their students. My family and I came to the United States from Russia. Your care shows some of the best qualities of the American people."

"Without financial help from scholarships, I know my dreams ... would never come true."

An important point to note is that any kind of education beyond high school is eligible; awards are not limited to college education. We welcome applications for study at nursing schools, technical schools, computer schools, etc. as well as those for matriculation at a college or university.

The by-laws of the Fund require that funds be designated for transmittal only to the relevant school, not directly to the applicant. These funds are sent in semester installments, one in September and one in January.