

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

*"Leadership is not the ability to lead others. Leadership is the ability to get others to lead themselves." —FBLA-PBL Founder Dr. Hamden L. Forkner*

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION BEFORE FBLA**

Business “clubs” did exist on high school and college campuses throughout America prior to the founding of FBLA. These business “clubs” also known as “commercial clubs” operated loosely in the schools across the country. Commercial or business clubs prior to the founding of FBLA were almost exclusively female, mainly due to the kind of courses that were offered at the time. In those days, the courses taught in the “commercial department” were primarily typing, office procedures (old calculator, adding machine, Monroe rotary calculator, ditto machine), and shorthand.

## **THE FBLA CONCEPT**

Dr. Hamden L. Forkner developed the concept for a national organization that would unite the thousands of business clubs in existence across the country. He proposed his vision to the nation’s high schools and colleges at the United Business Education Association (known as NBEA today) in 1937. In December of 1940, after 3 years of work championing the cause for a national organization, the Executive Committee of UBEA approved the sponsorship plan. The name selected for the new organization was “Future Business Leaders of America.”

## **THE EARLY DAYS OF FBLA**

Early plans for FBLA included local chapters, a state chapter in each state and territory and a national organization headquartered in the UBEA Washington office. Any student enrolled in one or more business subjects either in office (business) or distributive education (marketing) could join if they met the requirements of the individual chapter.

**FBLA—A College Based Organization.** FBLA was a collegiate organization in its early days. In 1940, twenty colleges and universities agreed to assist in the establishment of state and local chapters across the country. These pioneering states included:

- |                 |              |                  |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|
| ■ Alabama       | ■ Arkansas   | ■ Colorado       |
| ■ Connecticut   | ■ Indiana    | ■ Iowa           |
| ■ Kansas        | ■ Louisiana  | ■ Minnesota      |
| ■ Missouri      | ■ New Jersey | ■ North Carolina |
| ■ Ohio          | ■ Oregon     | ■ Oklahoma       |
| ■ Tennessee     | ■ Texas      | ■ Virginia       |
| ■ West Virginia | ■ Wyoming    |                  |

### **Who Was**

#### **Dr. Hamden L. Forkner?**

*Dr. Hamden London Forkner was a business leader and an education leader. He was a professor at Teacher’s College, Columbia University, New York. He was the first national president of the United Business Education Association and one of the longtime leaders of a national effort to unify business education organizations around the country. He selected the name “Future Business Leaders of America.”*

*Education Leader. Dr. Forkner was an education leader who taught business teachers at Columbia University and pioneered one of three popularly used shorthand methods. In those days there were three major systems of shorthand: The Gregg System was the standard and most popular. The Forkner Method was the second most common system followed by the Pittman System. The Forkner Method is still in use and taught today as “speed writing” in colleges and high schools. A course in Forkner’s Method of speed writing at National College is \$575 today.*

*Business Leader. Dr. Forkner as a business leader wrote several text books based on his shorthand method (eight books on the Forkner Method are available from Amazon.com). Dr. Forkner was a businessman and shrewd investor who made a fortune investing the proceeds of his book sales into silver and gold.*

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

---

**The Early Years.** The first years, beginning in 1942, were difficult because of the impact of World War II. FBLA activities reflected the times: paper and bond drives, and blood banks to name a few. Dr. Benjamin Haynes at the University of Tennessee began a campaign among high schools of the state to join FBLA with the result that the first charter was granted on February 3, 1942 to Johnson City High School. A second chapter was chartered two days later on February 5 in St. Albans, West Virginia. By the end of 1942, 39 chapters were started; within three and half years, another 38 had joined; and 80 chapters were chartered by 1946.

**Official Sponsorship of FBLA.** In July 1946, UBEA became the official sponsor of FBLA. With this official sponsorship came more time and support from the organization and FBLA grew quickly. By 1947, the first state chapter was chartered in Iowa with Indiana and Ohio quickly following. Within the next three years, FBLA state chapters would total ten.

The leader of UBEA was the executive secretary. This person was also the director of FBLA. Dr. Hollis Guy was the first executive secretary of UBEA as well as FBLA. Together with his wife Kitty, the Guys worked closely with Dr. Forkner to continue the development of FBLA and business education.

## **EARLY FBLA OPERATIONS & PROGRAMS**

FBLA originally had four kinds of memberships

- **Active**—any student not over the age of 25 enrolled in all-day, day-unit, or part-time business subjects approved by a majority vote of the chapter.
- **Associate**—following the termination of active membership status, a member automatically became an associate member.
- **Collegiate**—any student enrolled in a business subject or preparing to teach business subjects after receiving a majority vote of the local chapter. Former FBLA members who enrolled in college were also eligible after making their presence known to the secretary.
- **Honorary**—instructors, school principals, superintendents, business leaders, and others who were helping to advance FBLA and business education could be elected to Honorary Membership at any regular meeting of the chapter or in the national conference's business session.

**Membership Degrees.** Membership cards had a bronze seal for members who held the “helper’s degree,” a silver seal for the “supervisor’s degree,” and a gold seal for the “leader’s degree.” Achieving each level was explained in the FBLA Constitution and Bylaws.

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

---

**Publications.** FBLA publications grew from a dedicated section in the UBEA (NBEA) magazine to their own magazine called the *FBLA Forum* in the 1950's; the larger magazine re-named the *Future Business Leader* in the 1960's; to the *Tomorrow's Business Leader* which was created in 1969. TBL originally contained information on both the high school and college program. In 1989-90, the *PBL Business Leader* was created. Other publications included the Adviser's Hotline and a middle school newsletter. In 1949, FBLA advisers organized a committee to develop FBLA's first manual and handbook to encourage chapter growth and development.

**Chapter & Membership Dues.** The fee to charter an FBLA chapter in the early days was \$1. Membership Dues were .25 cents per semester. To charter a chapter, a list of members, officers, the sponsor and school principal was required along with the description of a proposed business project.

**Conferences.** FBLA conferences in the early days were definitely much simpler affairs than they are today. National conferences were generally under 1000 in attendance with state conferences under 100. The NLC lasted 3 days and 2 nights. SLC's were only 1 day. Competitive Events of the day included Typing I and II, Business Math, Public Speaking, Shorthand, and Office Machines. There was not much in the way of activity or entertainment. Conference format included an opening session, competitive events, elections, closing banquet and awards.

**First NLC.** The first FBLA National Leadership Conference was held at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago May 30-31, 1952. Over 300 delegates attended the first NLC. At the conference, FBLA elected their first National President Jerome LaFarge from Louisiana. FBLA chapters total 600 high school and college chapters. The second national conference was held in Washington, DC in May of 1953.

By the 1954 National Leadership Conference, 1000 FBLA chapters had been chartered. Over 400 delegates attended the NLC in Dallas, TX. At this conference the FBLA National Board of Trustees approved new regulations regarding registration, candidates for national office, and state delegates. They also decided to fund partial payment for two delegates from each state to the conference.

## **Phi Beta Lambda Concept**

By the 1957 National Leadership Conference held in Dallas, TX FBLA had grown to more than 40,000 members. In that year, the FBLA chapters on the college level were authorized to use the Greek letters Phi Beta Lambda to distinguish themselves from the high school members.

At the 1958 National Leadership Conference in St. Louis, MO FBLA had their largest conference to date with over 700 members in attendance. The major item of business that year was the recognition of Phi Beta Lambda as its own collegiate division of FBLA.

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

---

*"...the world of inventions is just around the corner and business education and FBLA will be at the threshold of a tremendous development in the business of tomorrow." —Dr. Hamden L. Forkner addressing the 1958 NLC*

**Forkner Addresses the 1958 NLC.** At the 1958 NLC, Dr. Hamden L. Forkner addressed the delegates. He challenged them to grow so that by the 1968 there would be 400,000 members (compared to 40,000 at the time). He further said, "When we started FBLA, everyone said, 'Oh you may get a hundred chapters in 10 years.' Now there are nearly 2,000 chapters." He also commented that "...the world of inventions is just around the corner and business education and FBLA will be at the threshold of a tremendous development in the business of tomorrow." Keep in mind the microchip had not even been invented yet. Twenty years after Dr. Forkner had the vision for FBLA, he continued to have a vision for the role FBLA could play in the business world of invention and innovation.

**Separate Awards for FBLA & PBL.** Until 1965, FBLA and PBL held their conferences jointly and presented awards to both organizations. The 14<sup>th</sup> NLC in Cincinnati marked the beginning of separate awards for the two divisions. By the end of 1965, FBLA membership totaled 86,000 members.

**PBL Defined.** Fifteen hundred college and high school members attended the 1966 NLC in New Orleans, LA. A definition was given to PBL that year which stated: PBL is a professional organization for business students above the secondary school level who are preparing for careers in business or in business education. The overall purpose of PBL is to provide the experiences essential in the areas of leadership, cooperative enterprise, scholarship, occupational understanding, and professional development; thus, assisting in the preparation for the student's chosen profession.

**Dr. Hollis Guy Retires.** 1968 marked the first year that FBLA and PBL held separate National Leadership Conferences. PBL met in Washington DC in June of 1968 with FBLA holding theirs to months later in August. That year Dr. Hollis Guy, retired as executive director of NBEA (formerly UBEA). At the NLC, Hollis and his wife Dr. Kitty Guy received life membership in FBLA and PBL. FBLA also renamed the local chapter merit awards to be the "Hollis and Kitty Guy Gold Seal Chapter Award of Merit" and PBL set up a scholarship in their honor.

## **NEW LEADERSHIP OF NBEA AND FBLA**

Dr. O.J. Byrnside, Jr. was appointed to executive director of NBEA in 1968. In this position he also assumed responsibility of FBLA and PBL. In 1969, Edward D. Miller was appointed associate director of NBEA in September of 1969. In this position, he also served as associate director of FBLA.

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

## **BREAKING AWAY: THE BIRTH OF FBLA-PBL, INC.**

From July 1946 to July 1962, the administration of FBLA fell under the umbrella of UBEA. In 1966, UBEA became NBEA and that organization retained sponsorship of FBLA. Dr. Hollis Guy was the association's executive director from 1946-1966.

To truly grow and meet Dr. Forkner's original vision of a one million-member organization the Board of Directors for NBEA concluded that FBLA and PBL needed to be a separate organization. FBLA and PBL Associate Director Edward Miller after being on the job less than a year led the cause for FBLA-PBL's independence and was supported fully by Dr. Forkner (then a national board member of NBEA) and NBEA Executive Director Byrnside.

In 1969 FBLA and PBL signed its articles of incorporation at the Dallas, TX NLC and officially became FBLA-PBL, Inc. a nonprofit educational student organization with its own Board of Directors and full-time staff led by executive director Edward D. Miller. This separation from NBEA gained FBLA-PBL recognition by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Coordinating Council for Vocational Student Organizations. Members were entertained and enlightened that year by Kentucky Fried Chicken and NLC keynote speaker Colonel Sanders.

## **FBLA-PBL STARTING OUT—AGAIN**

When FBLA-PBL incorporated in 1969 all assets, facilities, and equipment that FBLA-PBL had been using until 1969 was the property of NBEA. When FBLA-PBL became an independent entity FBLA-PBL it lost these resources. NBEA, however, did provide office space for FBLA-PBL.

**FBLA-PBL—An Entrepreneurial Enterprise.** FBLA-PBL began essentially as any entrepreneurial enterprise begins with limited resources (one staff member, one desk, three pencils, one IBM Selectric typewriter, and a chair). But, what FBLA-PBL did have was a powerful name, a over 25 years of excellence developing business leaders, 80,000 members in 4,500 chapters, and the autonomy to pursue a vision and goals that would grow FBLA-PBL into the premier organization for student leaders preparing for careers in business.

### **Who Is**

### **Dr. Edward D. Miller?**

*Dr. Miller was the first president and chief executive officer of FBLA-PBL, Inc. He grew up as an entrepreneur working in his father's shoe store on the gulf coast of Florida. Dr. Miller, himself a former FBLA member, also started several successful businesses of his own and later partnered with his father to create Mr. Formal a formal wear rental store which quickly grew to be one of the largest in the Sarasota/Bradenton area of Florida.*

*Dr. Miller had a passion for entrepreneurship as well as for education. Following two years of U.S. Army service and honorable discharge in 1957, Dr. Miller went into education first as a junior high school teacher, then as a junior high assistant principal, and on to teaching business education at Palmetto High School in Palmetto, Florida. He was an FBLA adviser loved by the students for his energy, enthusiasm, and innovative ways he brought the mission to life.*

*Dr. Miller's work in business education brought him to the Florida Department of Education where he served as a business education consultant and the state chair of Florida FBLA and PBL. Dr. Miller then applied for the position of associate director of NBEA and FBLA-PBL. He was interviewed by NBEA executive director O.J. Byrnside and Dr. Forkner himself and was granted the job on the spot. Dr. Miller with support from Dr. Hollis Guy, Dr. Forkner, and Dr. Byrnside led the effort for FBLA and PBL's autonomy and became the association's first president and chief executive officer. He served in this position until 1997 when he retired after nearly 30 years at the helm of FBLA-PBL.*

*During his tenure as president and CEO he was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to serve as the chair of the National Council on Vocational Education and served on numerous industry and business boards. Under Dr. Miller's leadership FBLA-PBL more than tripled in size from 80,000 to 250,000 members. Chartered chapters grew from 4,500 to over 12,000. He founded the FBLA Middle School Division. His crowning achievement was the opening of a permanent home for FBLA-PBL in 1991. After decades of sharing and renting space from other nonprofit organizations, Dr. Miller led the charge for FBLA-PBL's own national headquarters facility. Together with financial support from business and industry and generous contributions from FBLA-PBL chapters, the FBLA-PBL National Center stands as a testament to the power student leadership excellence.*

*He is now FBLA-PBL Chairman Emeritus and Professional Division Life Member #1. Dr. Miller is enjoying retirement in the Northern Virginia area. His entrepreneurial and educational spirit still thrives. In 1999 he co-founded Millennium Bank in Reston, Virginia and continues to privately tutor and advise young entrepreneurs about the world of business.*

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

---

Under executive director Edward Miller's leadership, FBLA-PBL virtually began again. As a one person staff member, Edward Miller performed all operational functions of FBLA-PBL including finance, marketing, conferences, publications, membership services, with administrative assistance from NBEA. Director Miller advised the national officers, answered phones, and served chapters until FBLA-PBL had grown enough to hire additional staff members to share these roles.

In 1970, Dr. Miller hired a former Florida PBL state president, Edward Burakowski to help manage and serve the growing FBLA-PBL state and local chapters. In 1971 Pat Morrel (Pat Allen at the time) was hired as Dr. Miller's administrative assistant followed by membership assistant Kathy Greenaway in 1974. FBLA-PBL's growth also meant outgrowing facilities in the Washington, DC / Northern Virginia area. From one desk in the NBEA building, the organization grew to the basement and then to the ground floor of the National Teachers of Mathematics and later to the National DECA building which would be FBLA-PBL's home for the next two decades.

## **THE 1970'S.**

**Stars and student success abounds.** The seventies were a fast growing and fun time for FBLA-PBL. FBLA-PBL enjoyed the friendship and support of a virtual "who's who" of enterprise, entertainment, and political supporters. Legendary singer and former member Jonny Mathis sang at an NLC, First Lady Patricia Nixon gave the keynote address at an NLC, the Jackson Five performed and presented the March of Dimes awards, and Kentucky Fried Chicken Founder Colonel Sanders spoke and presented awards at yet another NLC. During this time, FBLA-PBL grew from 80,000 to 174,000 members, expanded the National Awards Program, kicked off the March of Dimes Project H.E.L.P. partnership with close to a \$1 million fundraising effort. The Alumni Division was founded in 1979 with James Price of Illinois becoming its first national president (he was also a former FBLA and PBL national president). FBLA-PBL also enjoyed increasing support from business and government leaders with the establishment of the Congressional Advisory Committee and the Business Advisory Committee. Business leaders and close business associates of Dr. Miller as Dave Thomas (Wendy's Founder), T. Boone Pickens (petroleum and investment wizard), Eric Hilton (son of Hilton Hotel's founder Conrad Hilton), and Helen Boehm (president and CEO of world renowned Boehm Porcelain) among the many government and business friends supporting the work of FBLA-PBL.

The seventies also marked a sad moment in FBLA-PBL history with the passing of FBLA-PBL Founder Dr. Hamden L. Forkner in 1975. From 1937-1975 he championed the cause of student leadership excellence in business and founded the premier organization for student leaders in business. His vision and the flame of FBLA-PBL leadership lives on each year as thousands of future business leaders and teachers join the FBLA-PBL family and continue the legacy of building the world's best business leaders.

# FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS

---

## THE 1980'S.

**Building to be the Best.** In 1980, after nearly 40 years of building business leaders, it was time for FBLA-PBL to build its own headquarters. The vision was to provide a permanent home for FBLA-PBL. FBLA-PBL's strength and success would finally end decades of renting and sharing space with other nonprofit organizations. This was a significant step for the association. Designs were commissioned and funds began to be raised. The association took a significant step toward its future home when Dr. Miller secured the major grant from the Conrad Hilton Foundation to purchase the last parcel of land on Association Drive. Over the next 10 years, businesses and individuals, alumni and members would donate nearly \$1 million to the building of the National Center.

During the 1980's FBLA-PBL began holding *Management Series* the national, state and local chapter training conference held in annually in August in Washington, DC. Conference growth and attendance continued to thrive during the 1980's as well reaching a high point with 6,300 members in attendance at the 1989 NLC in Orlando, a dramatic jump from 300 members at the first NLC 35 years earlier. FBLA-PBL membership continued to grow briskly in the eighties. In 1987, FBLA-PBL membership topped 200,000 for the first time. In 1989 the Professional Division was formed and now included all alumni members in addition to business leaders and supporters of FBLA-PBL. During this decade, total membership increased from 174,000 to 239,000 members in over 10,000 chartered chapters throughout the world.

## THE 1990'S

**Moving Toward the Millennium.** In the 1990's, FBLA-PBL has continued to set the pace for student leadership excellence. 1990 saw the groundbreaking of the FBLA-PBL National Center as 300 members, officers, advisers, staff, and friends joined together at Management Series in August of 1991 for the Grand Opening of the National Center. Incredible contributions from states and region's include:

- |                          |                                 |                               |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ■ Arkansas with \$75,000 | ■ Pennsylvania with \$50,000    | ■ Florida with \$35,000       |
| ■ Georgia with \$35,000  | ■ Virginia with \$20,000        | ■ Nebraska with \$10,000      |
| ■ Southern with \$50,000 | ■ Mountain Plains with \$50,000 | ■ North Central with \$35,000 |
| ■ Eastern with \$35,000  | ■ Western with \$35,000         |                               |

An interesting note about the National Center, it was structurally designed and built to support a second story complete with elevators. Dr. Forkner and Dr. Miller still envision a one million-member organization one day—and we'll need to build again!

In 1992, FBLA-PBL celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the National Leadership Conference in Chicago. One of the highlights of that year was the presentation of all the former national officers from the past 50 years. The theme for anniversary was "*50 Years Investing in Futures.*" In 1994 the FBLA Middle Level division was founded for students in grades 5-9 and again the Hilton Foundation contributed thousands of dollars to the development of curriculum and materials for this new division. In 1996, FBLA-PBL members raised over

# **FBLA-PBL HISTORY & TRADITIONS**

---

\$500,000 for the March of Dimes 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary partnership bringing the organization's total contribution to saving babies to over \$10 million. In 1997 FBLA-PBL founded the Institute for Leaders national leadership achievement program held in conjunction with the NLC. With more than 1000 graduates, the program has tripled the number of leaders involved in national leadership training. In 1997, Dr. Edward Miller retired after nearly 30 years as president and chief executive officer. After an exhaustive search yielding more than 200 applicants, Ms. Jean M. Buckley from Colorado, formerly an executive with Junior Achievement was appointed FBLA-PBL's second president and chief executive officer.

## ***FBLA-PBL TODAY.***

Today FBLA-PBL is a multimillion-dollar business leadership organization of nearly 4 million alumni members, 250,000 members in 4 divisions located in over 13,000 chartered chapters from around the world. From Guam to the Canal Zone, to Europe and the Virgin Islands, wherever freedom and enterprise come together, FBLA-PBL will be there supplying business with its leaders.

## ***FOUNDER'S CHALLENGE***

Founder Dr. Hamden L. Forkner said long ago that "Leadership is not the ability to lead others. Leadership is the ability to get others to lead themselves." On the eve of the new millennium those words still ring true. For nearly 60 years, FBLA-PBL has been working to realize his vision of a world filled with trained and talented business leaders making a difference in the careers, communities, and country. Today FBLA-PBL members serve in every area of business, government, and community. From the U.S. Air Force securing the skies over Kuwait to international trading in Hong Kong, and Governor of Mississippi to Fortune 500 executives, FBLA-PBL members are leading and teaching others how to lead themselves in every aspect of enterprise. Every member, adviser, and partner of FBLA-PBL past and present is this vision realized in grand form. They are the FBLA-PBL goals, pledge, creed, and motto brought to life.

There is only one part of Dr. Forkner's vision still left undone and a challenge left for all of us to achieve—reaching the one million-member mark. *Are you ready to lead?*

*Developed by:*  
Ryan Underwood  
2000

*Sources:*  
History of the National Business Education Association, August 1992  
Tomorrow's Business Leader magazine, January-February 1992  
FBLA-PBL Chapter Management Handbook, 1998-99  
Interview with Dr. Edward D. Miller, April 1998