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34 Years
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Minot State Teachers College

By Mrs. Eva Hartnett

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The sun was shining when I awoke this morning. I didn't have a care in the world. I could just roll over and sleep a little longer if I wanted to, but dutifully I got up and made breakfast and saw my husband off to school. Eventually, I dressed rather casual-like in blue jeans and an old shirt (my husband calls it Left Bank), did a few household chores and sat down to draw. About 10 o'clock my eyes became tired. I put on the heavy, wool, king's blue sweater which Gary K. gave to me last spring and went out into the yard.

All the while I was picking beans, cutting chard, pulling beets, I kept thinking about the wonderful life of Riley I was leading. "It's 10 o'clock in the morning," I said to myself, "and I'm not sitting over at MSTC registering students, trying to arrange programs around closed classes, wondering about how many mistakes I have made and how many schedules will have to be changed, etc. I won't ever have to worry about what to do in this class or that, about that set of papers which should have been checked last night, about studying harder than the students to keep one leap ahead of them, about arranging a new display in the hall, or about making a new test."

"All that is in the past," still continuing to talk to myself and thinking, "I have no obligations whatsoever to teaching and its problems. I'm as free as the

wind," which was plenty free that day. I continued to pick beans. I was planning what I would do next, perhaps go back to my drawing when all of a sudden I thought, "I'm not through with college responsibility as I've been so blightly thinking. I promised Jim Francis I would write my college "obituary" and I better be getting at it. No more drawing for me today."

I am grateful that when your editor called, he asked for a review of my years as art instructor at the college. The past of MSTC does have its merits and its traditions which are so rapidly disappearing, and are held only in the memories of some of us who have devoted much of our lives to working there. Without the ground work and those traditions of success, failures and achievements the present would not exist.

I am grateful, also, that he did not ask, "What do you plan to do with your retirement?," which irks me somewhat. I feel that my retirement is more in the form of a graduation, a commencement, in which I am making a new beginning. I know that the present relaxation and lack of routine cannot go on forever, that after living and working on an organized schedule for so many years another kind of one will soon be worked out. I am not happy unless I can feel that I have accomplished something worthwhile with my time.

It is a bit difficult to remember all of the activities and projects with which I have been associated at

the college. Besides, this story would be too long, if I could remember. Among the hundreds of things which I have accumulated and kept, (ask any of my students) the one thing I have not kept is a diary.

I felt at the time, and still do, that I came to the college position rather well qualified for it. I had my Standard Diploma from MSTC, had grade school teaching experience in North Dakota which included all grades from fourth through eighth and a principalship. I had taught art in a platoon system for one year and had been an assistant art supervisor in the Minneapolis Public schools, responsible for thirty-five grade school and a Junior and Senior High School. My degree from the University of Minnesota was in Art Education and I had graduated with honors.

The college teaching was not entirely new to me. I had taught for two summers at MSTC before becoming a regular staff member. There had been two previous art teachers, Mrs. Amy Simpson and Miss Verdia Miller. President McFarland, a gentlemen of the old school with a fine classical education was a believer in the value of the arts, and had already established good art and music departments. There was Miss Mabel Ennor, teaching art and music in the campus school, and joining with me was Miss Alida Jacobson, now Mrs. McGregor of Fargo. Imagine an

art staff of two and a half teachers and a college enrollment of about 500 students! When Miss Jacobson left to do children's museum work in New Jersey, Mrs. Ruth Fuller joined the staff. When Mrs. Fuller left to join her husband who was teaching at Pullman, Washington and I left to do my graduate work at the University of Oregon, Miss Isabel Johnston and Miss Robson came to the art, faculty. Upon my return, I found alone in the art and continued to be alone until my retirement. Not that I was so extremely capable, I'm sure but because the depression years of the 1930's were upon us, and as has been the history of art education always, art is the first thing to be cut as an economy measure. At no time since has the administration felt a second teacher possible or necessary.

The economy which we were forced to practice in money and materials during those years left a deep impression on me. Naturally thrifty, after this struggle to save, to this day it is difficult for me to throw away a bit of broken crayon or a scrap of clean paper. To my classes I called these bits "the hole in the doughnut" they might be used again.

Though the curriculum which I inherited was largely methods, required of every student, the work had a fine art's flavor. It consisted of pencil, charcoal and some water color. Miss Miller was a graduate of the

Art Institute of Chicago. Art was indicated in the catalog as Art R5I, R5II, R5III meaning required and primary, intermediate, and upper grade methods. Each instructor taught a section or two of these and in addition, art in the corresponding grades in the campus school and an elective or two. A special certificate was issued by the state department to a student earning 36 hours credit in art. Enough electives were offered so that an interested student might qualify for this. This certificate still exists. There were no set majors or minors at MSTC then. Having been a grade teacher, I understood the needs of one, and as rapidly as possible put things into the methods courses of immediate usefulness. The pencil, charcoal, water color and so forth were built into new electives such as sketch, still life and composition. The present art major requires 56 hours.

I have kept all the class record books for the department. I have enjoyed going through them. They have revealed many things of interest. Names and faces have been recalled; class enrollments were as high as fifty; as many as thirty projects were completed in one course in a quarter's time; grading was done by the numerical system; campus school records in art were as carefully kept as the college grade and I have found that the art instructors usually taught eighteen or twenty hours each term.

Did students and teachers work harder (how could they?) in those days or were there less things to occupy their time than now? There was no student union, of course, and all college classes were held in the Main Building, which included the library and physical education department. Early class books list a course in Basketry and Needlecraft in which we completed seven baskets and pieces of needlecraft. The 1st time I taught needlecraft alone the students had all they could do, or so it seemed, to finish three projects and start a fourth.

When the rural department was added the students were required to take a non-credit course in art. The groups met once a week for lecture and were so large they had to meet in the auditorium. Gradually it became a two credit course and finally was made into a four credit one. A study of the catalogs will show that courses have been added and dropped from time to time to meet the changing demands of art education.

In the early days we had an art club, called the Daubers, which was open to anyone on the campus. We held weekly meetings in the evening from 7:00 to 9:00 o'clock. Under Dr. McFarland all campus activities ceased at 9:00 and students supposedly went home to study. The Daubers took themselves seriously, setting up a study club program with reports

and papers, followed by a work or creative period. We always started with a large, enthusiastic group, but by the end of the winter quarter we would have dwindled to four or five faithful few. As more student activities were developed, and though a careful check was made to see that students did not become "Joiners," the art club passed out of existence.

There were at one time Saturday classes for children, ages 9-14, which met from 9:00 until noon.

We planned to and did bring in about three outside exhibits every year during the first years. This became a discouraging venture and it too, passed. To set up and arrange an exhibit and possibly a tea and open house, lost its incentive when only ten or fifteen people from outside the college would come to see it. The campus was too far out then and not many folk in Minot were interested enough to put forth the physical effort required to go to an art exhibit.

A course in Puppets and Marionettes was taught and when it was dropped we organized a club. In addition to putting on shows for college convocations and local clubs, we travelled to many of the smaller communities around Minot with our productions. My creative thesis for my advanced degree was a marionette show and I had a keen personal interest and enthusiasm for this type of theatre and expression.

I have always considered travel of great educational value and long before my first trip abroad in 1928 I had visited most of the western United States and Canada. The first European trip was a conducted art tour specifically to attend a two week International Art Congress at Prague, Czechoslovakia, but included visits to the great art centers of Britain, Holland, Germany, Belgium, France, Austria and Italy. It was a wonderful and enriching experience.

Dr. Quinter Lyon should be credited with conducting the first college tour to Washington, D. C. Having gone as chaperon with his second group, I sort of inherited the project when he left MSTC. Since then Mr. Hartnett and I have organized and taken seven groups to Washington, New York and Williamsburg, two to Mexico, one to Florida and Cuba, one to Alaska via the Canadian National Parks to our north, one on a Great Lakes Cruise and to the four large eastern Canadian cities and two groups to Europe. The last European tour in 1955 included two weeks in the Scandinavian countries and two weeks in Spain. All of this has been of educational and cultural value to us and at the same time afforded many people an opportunity to travel which otherwise they might not have had.

Travel pictures and souvenirs always interest those who have to stay home. I wonder how many hundreds

of slides we have on file, how many we have shown and how many talks and lectures we have given to clubs and P.T.A.'s in the past year? Not all of the talks I have given have been on art or travel. My note books show a variety of subjects.

An art teacher is often called upon to do many "extra" things, such as posters, costumes for plays, convocation programs and settings designs for catalog and bulletin covers, themes and illustrations for the Beaver, party favors for banquets, decorate floats, and the old gym for some gala occasion like Homecoming, and I have done my share of them in the past year.

Our first organized Homecoming was in 1928 and Dr. McFarland appointed me as Faculty Chairman, and I continued in that capacity, with the exception of the year when I was gone for graduate study, (when I believe Miss Hoffine took over) until President Swain came in 1936. He then appointed Miss Hazel McCulloch as Alumni Director and also organized the first Student Council on our campus. Gradually students began to take over the Homecoming responsibilities, and it was well. It was no small task for one person, as your student chairman knows, to arrange for all the activities and to be responsible for their success or failure, and I had no regrets when the responsibility was no longer mine.

I became an adviser to Sigma Delta, local sorority group, in 1928. When that group became National Pan Hellenic in 1947 as Sigma Sigma Sigma, I continued my affiliation. I have enjoyed a association with this group and am proud of the part it has taken on our campus. What would social life at MSTC be like without the sponsorship of the Greek letter groups?

I have tried through the years to progress in my methods, through further study, through building a large personal art library, and through my membership in the National Art Education Association, the Western Art Association, Delta Phi Delta Honorary Art Fraternity, and the National Committee on Art Education. I have attended several of the conventions of these groups, as well as the other professional education groups, when time and finances would allow.

I have never claimed to be an artist, though not without some skill. It is my belief that too often art teacher training is in the hands of artists who are more concerned with products than they are in theory and practice. In art education I believe it is important to be first a teacher and secondly an artist. In my years at the college, all courses offered were planned to give students a nice balance of history and appreciation, skill in design, drawing, painting, and some crafts and fundamental vocabulary and knowledge with

which to teach art. I tried always to set scholastic standards high and resented the flock who thought art was a "snap" major or minor, especially if the student had some skill. I am sure that any student transferring to another school from the MSTC art department has always had all credits accepted without question. Many of these folks have become successful commercial artists, a few have found places in the fine arts, and most of them are in art teaching.

Happy as I have always been with the achievements of these talented few, I think my greatest happiness had come from those students who had to take art, who had their first contact with it in a methods course, who "couldn't draw a straight line," who had "eyes and no eyes," and found that art was not necessarily something beyond the average but was all around us to share and to enjoy. I remember one student who said, "I never would have finished college if I had not found the art department." Among my greatest disappointments have been those students who remained skeptical in spite of constant harping on the part of instructors, who have had no faith in the creativity which is a part of every individual, and who have in their teaching continued to copy, to direct, to use patterns, to turn out thirty identical things in order to have something "pretty" to put up in their rooms. Modern art education gives emphasis to the individual and the satisfactions derived from being al-

lowed to be creative and imaginative, and not on the product. I believe all work should be exhibited when it is completed, not just that which the teacher considers good at the end of the year in one grand spectacular display.

It is my hope that the art department at MSTC will continue to be a place where emphasis is on teacher training, where students of average art ability will find encouragement and inspiration to explore and examine the many phases of art, "to draw out rather than to pour in" in their own teaching methods, where they will be made aware of the beauty around them and to be able to help others in their turn, to find and see it.

When the time comes when the administration and finances allow for a second and possibly a third teacher, in an expanded and well equipped space, and scheduling that allows for laboratory hours, and when our college becomes the University of N.W. North Dakota I should like to see some emphasis on the fine arts. Until such time I believe the department should remain as art education department, emphasizing always in every course, the why, the what, the when, and the psychology and philosophy of art teaching and training.

The years at MSTC have passed rapidly. It is hard to believe the number, but figures don't lie. When Mr. Hartnett and I were married, I asked per-

mission to teach two more years in order to complete requirements for my retirement, knowing that the Board of Administration had a policy against husband and wife teams on the same faculty. The request was granted and then came the war and teachers were needed. I even taught Freshman English for a quarter—and continued as art instructor. They have, for the most part, been happy, pleasant years. I have enjoyed the friendship of the students and the fellowship of faculty members. But I am glad that I decided to retire at this time. I shall miss the teaching, but not the sleepless nights I spent wondering about what more I could have done for "Tom," or about how to arouse enthusiasm and interest, etc. Teaching is more than standing up in front of a class. It is not something that is cast off with the closing of a door and I know that I shall continue to teach in some fashion for the rest of my life.

And now, Mr. Editor, having fulfilled this obligation to you in this summary of my work at the college, may I go back to picking beans, to working in the yard and with my flowers, to the drawing and painting which I have long wanted to do, to leisure for reading and enjoying our home, to my stamp collecting, to dreaming and planning for the extended travel which Mr. Hartnett and I hope to enjoy? Retirement? What's that?