

Interview with Olive Fox at her home 2/73

Miss Fox chose not to have the interview recorded, but she didn't mind notes. Cora Harris's family moved here from Ishpeming after she was already on the staff of Northern. Her father stayed on as janitor after she went downstate. She was a good teacher, and she didn't think there was anything she could learn in school that would make her a better one, so she had to resign. She was a critic teacher when I was first here.

I got my teaching certificate in 1920, taught in Ironwood, 5th and 6th, trained teachers a year in the county Normal and was principal at Muskegon. I came back in 26 for my B.A. and taught 4-5-6 there.

During the summer of 26 I planned to take a vacation, I'd been ill. Munson called me in and offered the 2nd grade training school position. I told him I wanted to do more graduate work before I did critic teaching, and he encouraged me to start the second summer session at Chicago the following Monday. When I went to see him to confirm my decision to take the job, he talked for a few minutes then just sat there--he seemed to give himself and the person he was with time to think about things. I asked him if I should sign a contract or anything and he said, "No, we don't have contracts.... Makes it easier to get rid of them that way." I had hope to finish at Chicago, but when an assistantship at U of Mich. opened in 1931, Munson saw that I got it and I finished my M.A. there in 32.

Our students did all their practice teaching in the training school--there were many too many of them. Sometimes we had 15 students a day--three each hour. Each one would take the class for 20 minutes to continue a project or unit she'd developed. Each had to have a lesson plan approved for every day she taught. We tried to protect our pupils, to make the student teachers a help, not a distraction. And we were concerned that the students get practical experience--each one had to start a picture file she could use when she got out on her own.

The summer of 1919 the legislature announced that because of the teacher shortage anyone who completed the six weeks course at a state Normal would be certified to teach. All sorts of people came here that summer. I was president-elect of the Student Girls League, Miss Swann was the advisor, But she'd gone out to her cottage at Middle Island that weekend and my two sisters and I started meeting trains at 5:30 a.m. We had a list of people with rooms to rent, but those were filled early in the day and each train that arrived had another crowd of students on it. We walked the streets with the girls all that long hot day, asking people who'd taken one or two students if they'd be willing to get another room ready for a couple more. We ended up just ringing doorbells and asking householders if they'd help us out. A good many took in students that summer who never expected to! A good many of the girls should never have even tried to come to school. I was glad I didn't have to hire any of them.

On Tuesday President Kaye called me into the office, Miss Swann was with him, and they thanked me and the SGL for the effort we'd had to put in to see that every student had a place to sleep.

Relations between the teachers in the Ed. department at the Normal and the critic teachers were very cordial. We knew what they were doing in their classes and we arranged demonstrations of topics and projects they wanted illustrate. Our students shared our point of view too, on the whole. Once in a while there'd be a lazy one who didn't want to do the work and tried to get away with less than was expected of her, but on the whole, they were an earnest and hard working bunch. Not many of the students were coming back--they were mostly young. The older ones had usually had their practice teaching--they were taking course in the Normal. When you did a demonstration--in developing class-room dramatics, for example, the audience had a background in what you were trying to do,

Interview with Olive Fox--3

The faculty of the training school was a team of friends working together. We used curriculum guides that had been developed by the staff--you could suggest changes, but we didn't make many. For one thing, the objectives and subject matter were related to the books we had on hand--the state was in no position to buy a whole new set of books very often. We were careful with materials. We knew at the beginning of the year how much we could have for the whole year, and we had to make it last.

During the depression, student's with BA's began to come back to get teaching certificated in hopes of finding a job. Many who already had jobs, in Detroit, particularly, lost them, or didn't get paid for the work they did...they were paid in scrip. Salaries went down at Northern. In 1932 I took off for a year to get my MA, and when I came back, it was at 10% reduction. In 1935 we had a 14% cut.

That year Munson went down to Ypsi. He told me a little about what would be facing him there--there were a good many husband-wife combinations on the staff. He was expected to get rid of a good many people. When I told him I wouldn't like that kind of a job he admitted, "I kind of like to fight." He ~~was a stern face~~ ^{had a stern face}, but there was often a twinkle behind it.

When Miss Bates left, I thought I'd like to try teaching kindergarten, ^{just} so I asked President Pearce for the opportunity. He said, "I know you can teach second grade, what guarantee do I have that you can teach kindergarten?" "None at all, Mr. Pearce. Never mind.", I said as I left. Two days later he told me the job was mine if I still wanted it. I stayed there till 1943 ~~1939~~ when Supertendant Whitman asked if I'd join the public school staff as elementary supervisor to be sure there was some uniformity in what was taught in the different city schools. I supervised 35 teachers--there were 75 by the time I retired in .

resident Kaye wanted the girls to act like ladies. He'd come out in the hall if voices were too loud and he didn't like to see girls hanging over the Kaye Hall balcony railings. We did it anyway, it was the best way to keep in touch with what was going on. ✓

We took care of our students--helped them get good jobs and expected them to do well. I used to visit in their schools during spring vacation to see how they were getting on. The Saginaw supervisor was particularly pleased with Northern girls. She said our students were more serious and well-trained than the ones she could get down state. She came up early in the spring and hired our A and B students. Students like to go down-state, on the whole, the salaries were better. I can remember when it was exciting to get \$1,000. Ironwood paid that in 1926. Gwinn and Wakefield were offering 1,100 in hope of upgrading their schools. (Ten of us went to Ironwood in 1920.) ✓

When I came to Northern in 1926, President Munson offered me \$2,300--later he called me in to say there was a little more money available and my salary would be set at \$2,400. He could be very encouraging. When he saw a class program in the training school, he wrote the teacher and students a letter afterwards saying how much he had enjoyed it.

Della McCallum's domestic science girls were a close-knit group. She insisted on proper behavior--they always had to wear hats and gloves down town and each class made its own uniforms.

Doris King was my younger sister's Campfire leader--we did a lot of that sort of thing, and she always invited me along on their outings, even though I was older than most of the girls. She made quite a name for herself as author of a series of Spanish textbooks, they're published under her married name, it's Spanish.

(In the background, Miss Fox's sisters were trying to identify members of a faculty group. One said, "He's that man who used to pull his wife around on a sled--you know, Snodgrass.")

