

LETTER FROM A PRAIRIE CHICKEN

{Background: Irene Ahner came into possession of the 1944, '45 & '46 Greystone books; the history books of graduates of the U of S. With the help of other sources she found a legacy left by these women.}

Last winter the annual Piapot Lions Club Antique Show in Maple Creek attracted collectors and history nuts alike. Each year I looked forward to seeing Dave Spencer '69 C, from Medicine Hat who always had a booth, with his wife, Arlette, with items he continually found in a wide variety of places. Unfortunately we lost Dave to cancer in late December.

Every year at this event a well-known lady from Swift Current, Cecile Blanke, brings a table full of antiques and old books. She is a pillar of the Metis community in the southwest and has recently published a book Lac Pelletier: My Metis Home which you should all read. I was pleased that she still had some books for sale that day. Upon looking through what else she had, I found three old Greystones, 1944, 1945 and 1946. They now reside in our house.

When I began studying the Agriculture sections of these books I found several female Agros, most of whom I had never heard of till this point. I also found a great many names of grads who were in their prime of life and occupations in agriculture or politics around the province and on U. of S. staff when those of us from the '60's to '80's were in college. I am sure that most of the grads I am about to tell you about are no longer with us but I would really like to know if some are still present. After all, they were all younger than our friend, Harold Chapman '43 C. I have spent a lot of time going through Forever Young, U. Of S. Alumni Directories, AIC Membership Directories and SAGA Empty Saddles, trying to find mention of these women in later life.

It appears that there was a custom to add brief bios of each grad in the Greystone. I have left grammar & spelling in bios as found. I was startled to find what was considered appropriate at that time for female grads. I thought our readers might like to see how times have changed. **Alice Mary Wall**, '44 C, '46 MSC, Saskatoon, majored in Field Husbandry. Quote: "A leading light of the Agro Amazons, Alice played a prominent part in organizing the Agro Girls' basketball team. A staunch crusader for the emancipation of women within the college." Alice was secretary of the ASA for 1943-44. The 1998 Alumni Directory tells us she was now retired in Lethbridge, widow of Frank Harper. There is a picture in the 1946 book of their team consisting of B. Murray, A. Caton, G. Davis, M. Onerheim, A. Wall and M. Fredeen. The caption reads, "The Agro-ette basket ball sextette agrees that it owes its wins this year to the enthusiastic coaching of Murdoch Nelson. The team has been managed by M. Fredeen; floor captain is B. Murray. A. Wall holds top honors for shooting records on the team. Agros are indebted to Arts & Science for M. Onerheim and to Engineering for G. Davis." Imagine an Agro women's intermural team in any sport in the '60's !!!! I wanted to curl with Derald in 4th year and we were informed that this was impossible as there was no mixed category.

Speaking of curling, in the 1945 Greystone, the following quote appeared for Interfaculty Curling: "This year curling came into its own as an organized sport. Women's teams were entered in the bonspiel. These teams were 'skipped' by boys but next year we hope to have a sufficient number of proficient curlers to be able to have women's teams 'skipped' by women. The teams were arranged on an Interfac basis. Three teams reached the 'eights' in the general bonspiel." Muriel Fredeen, Agriculture, was the manager for Womens' Curling. We've come a long way with womens' curling since those days.

Muriel Joyce Fredeen, '47 C, came from Macrorie. I found her in the Alumni Directory in 1998 as Muriel Welling, retired at Macrorie, with five children listed.

Roberta Irene Phillips, '44 S, Herschel, SK, was the School of Agriculture Sheaf Rep. that year. I have not found her in any other references.

Kathleen Joyce Hodson, '44 S, Rosthern, was the School of Agriculture Executive secretary. In the 1998 Alumni directory she is listed as Joyce Alexander, retired farmer, Olds, AB. with two children.

Beatrice Estella Murray, '45 C, Young, SK, had the following bio quote: "Hard-working, conscientious Bea in basketball, politics and is an authority on Flax. She is a staunch member of the ASA, being 1st Year Rep and frosh banquet convenor. She was Agro Rep. in the PKD and this year managed the Agro girls basket ball team and was women's editor of the handbook. It is believed that Bea would rather be a man than be with one." I was really taken aback by that last remark in print!!! Bea obtained her MSC in 1947 and a PHD in 1955. She is listed as Dr. Beatrice Murray, P. AG., of Watrous in the AIC Directory, 1992. I hope someone will let us know more about her.

Olive Marion Churchill, '46 S, Regina, is mentioned in the 1998 Alumni Directory as Olive Erb, retired in Victoria, BC. with husband, John. They had three children.

I have left the only one I knew till last. **Ann Talbot (Caton) Saville**, '47 C, Robsart, SK, was the ASA Dramatics Rep. in 46-47 as well as playing basketball. {**Postscript – Nov. 2020** I recently found a section of "Forever Young" that I had missed last spring. If those of you who own this book will look at Page 50, you will find Ann Caton's reply to a toast at their Graduation Banquet in Apr., 1947. There is also a picture of her and Muriel (Freedon) Welling at their 50 year reunion.}

Ann was a very lively, vibrant person and remained that way all her life. She worked at the Lethbridge Research Station from 1947 through 1950 until marrying Bill Saville from Ravenscrag, SK. They ranched in that area till retirement, moving to Eastend in 1999. She was a community historian and a free-lance writer with a weekly column in the local papers. She edited the Ravenscrag History book, Between and Beyond the Benches and its sequel. Ann was a member of the U. of S. Senate from 1981 – 84. She worked as a mediator for the Farm Debt Review Board and also for the Saskatchewan Farmland Security Board. She received a SAGA Honorary Life membership in 2004, perhaps the first woman to receive this honor. Ann passed away July 14, 2011, survived by her husband and four children. She will be long remembered in southwest Saskatchewan.

Reading the old Greystones was like going through a community history book. You can't just read one area and quit. An hour can go by while you keep turning the pages. I found mention of many familiar names that we've known either at university or later in life. These books are very elegant with special photo protector pages and contain many pictures of the campus at that time. As it was war time, there are large sections picturing officers & cadets of the Armed Forces. Among them I found Harold Chapman, Prof. Hadley Van Vliet, Dr. Wm. J. White and E.W. Griffiths, Men's Physical Director, for whom the Stadium is named. There are many pages in the 1944 and 1945 books of names on active service while at college. Each book also has a page or two of those lost in action.

Helen H. Hunt was already Dean of Household Science and L. E. Kirk was Dean of Agriculture. It was curious that in 1944 and 1946, the Diploma course was in the School of Agriculture but in the 1945 book it was called Farm School. The first year enrollment in 1946 was massive and contained no women.

Undergrads from 1944-1946 that many of you over 60 will remember are **Mark Kilcher, '49 C, Don Rennie, '49 C, Ben Blacklock, '46 C, Ed Docking, '48 C, Oral Young, '46 C** and **Jack Braidek, '51 C**. My reaction when I found **Herb Clark, '45 C** was one of disbelief. He had been in the same college as most of the women mentioned above but was the one who persuaded me not to go into Agriculture in 1st year. "What do you think a woman would be able to do with a BSA?", said the 4-H Extension Specialist. Fortunately, I decided to ignore him and join the college in 2nd year. Ten years later he behaved as though my being a grad was all his own idea.

Of course there were many more colleges in each book to study and there were more familiar names. One in particular was W.H. (Harry) Broley, '48 B. Ed., North Battleford. When I started school in 1949, he was the Superintendent for all the schools in Unity & rural areas. There have been many stories about strict superintendents from nervous young teachers but Mr. Broley was well-respected by teachers, parents and students.

Researching history has been one of my joys for most of my life and I hope you have found all this interesting. If you have further knowledge of those women mentioned above, please let us know. The SAGA website is missing a great many Empty Saddle names and obits which we would like to have for our records.

Irene Ahner '65 C

EDITOR'S Addition: *Irene's writing of the earliest women Ag Grads piqued our interest. So we perused the Historical Review & Forever Young books to discover the pathfinders.*

Margaret Gerorgina Landes 1936 C, Langham SK, was the first woman to graduate from the College of Agriculture.

Followed by:

Edna Malinda McConnell '38 C, Petersfield MB,

Dorothy Wilda Lawrence '40 C, Vera SK,

Irene Agnes Doll '43 S, Aylsham, Sk,

Betty Carolynn Myrick '43 C, Davidson, SK. Betty graduated with our elder statesman, Harold Chapman.

If anyone knows the history of any of these 5 graduates, such as Irene discovered in her Greystone books, we would be extremely pleased to publish it in *The SAGA*.