

Ranice W. Crosby: A Tribute to Fifty Years of Teaching

John Cody, M.D.

Ranice Winifred Crosby (1915-2007) *Hopkins Medicine magazine* began its notice of her passing with the statement, "For an astounding 62 years, every student in the School of Medicine's Department of Art as Applied to Medicine was just a pen-stroke away from Max Brödel." Indeed her students, graduates, co-workers, the Hopkins community, and every professional medical illustrator will miss her presence in the profession. No other individual provided more to enhance medical art in the communication of medical science than Ranice. The legacy she provided to the field of medical illustration will live on through her graduates and the ideals she instilled in them.

The following article and conversation with Ranice, written by Dr. John Cody, was published in a limited edition for alumni and presented to her at 'A Tribute to Fifty Years of Teaching' on June 12, 1993. It is our sincere hope that this two part series in the *Journal of Biocommunications* will not only stand as a testament of her value and guidance to the profession but also remind all that knew her how "lucky they were to have a Ranice in their life... to love them, guide them, instruct them, and scold them. To listen to them, understand them, and befriend them."



A TRIBUTE TO FIFTY YEARS OF TEACHING

Forward

Those of Ranice Crosby's friends who are sharing this happy occasion with her here are enjoying a special privilege. Many more of her admirers, unable to be here in person, are celebrating with her in thoughts and memories.

There could be no clearer indication of the wide horizons of Ranice's work and influence than the mere listing of a few of the categories in which her far flung friends and beneficiaries fall.

Her **Students:** Carefully selected, superbly trained and imbued by her with the scientific spirit of accuracy and with artistic sensitivity to beauty, they have assumed positions of importance and responsibility nationwide.



Her Co-workers: Catching the spirit of her devotion to the ideals of Brödel and Didusch, they have collaborated in making The Department of Art as Applied to Medicine into a lineal descendent of its great progenitors. But this has not been done in slavish adherence to the past. She and her staff have been on the cutting edge of modern techniques and methods, paying

Brödel and Didusch the tribute of carrying their influence into the modern era where indeed they would have belonged.

Mrs. Crosby's **Historian Colleagues:** have admired and emulated her not alone for her writings in the field but more importantly and creatively for her remarkable work as historical detective, restorer, conservator (assisted by innumerable lay helpers) and as administrator of the Brödel Archives. Nothing has been lost from the precious collection and no facet of the great work has been forgotten or ignored.

In the long line of authors of articles and books who have been **Beneficiaries of Ranice Crosby's Talent:** I am proud and grateful to have been a member. To our dry writings her pencil has given flesh and life. She has immersed herself deeply in the content of every assignment, often ending up knowing more about the subject than the author, himself, and helping him explain his own work!

Her generosity and graciousness have made every joint project a rich experience and we have each become possessors of an invaluable work of scientific integrity and real beauty.

For these contributions to "art as applied to medicine," we honor her and lovingly thank her.

Elizabeth M. Ramsey, M.D.

June 12, 1993

Five Golden Scratchers

The scratcher, a traditional engravers' tool introduced by Max Brödel at Johns Hopkins, seemed the appropriate symbol to commemorate Ranice Crosby's five decades of honing her students' skills for professional success.

Tribute Logo designed by Joseph M. Dieter, Jr.

If human personality can be compared with a body of water, as it often is, Ranice Crosby resembles the Mediterranean. Her currents are warm without being tropical. She is deep and dependable, and the quirky, impatient white caps that ruffle her surface come and go without disturbing the vast underlying reserve. Her color is undoubtedly blue, a clear, opaque ultramarine, combining purity with remoteness, presence with detachment.

Some people are Caribbean. Their every quality is accessible to the observing eye in a rainbow of hues. Sunlight pervades their depths and makes it possible for others to know them almost as well as they know themselves. Even the occasional shark or barracuda haunting their reefs can be seen occasionally to emerge from sequestered grottoes that have light in them. I am speaking here of the personality's more interior aggressions and its deeper fears.

Ranice Crosby is not like these transparent Caribbean people. Those who have known her for many years feel that she is a woman who holds much of herself back, whose large inner resources are kept private and not readily shared. She carefully conserves her strength and as a result may sometimes give the impression of being indomitably strong, iron-willed and even impervious. In her younger days her eyes were round and very blue. People said that they saw right through you. It was a one-way look, like a psychologist's mirror; you knew she could see you, clearly and objectively, but you saw only your own reflection.

Looking deep into Ranice Crosby is not easy. Yet she is in no sense secretive or deliberately misleading. Ask her a direct question and you will likely get a direct answer, though in her never-failing discretion she may not always offer the whole answer. Sunlight, nevertheless, does not usually reach the ultimate levels of her private Mediterranean. Though overtly open, warm and expressive in manner, often charming and beguiling, she yet retains an aura of enigma that never quite goes away and that everybody senses. It flows from that intuition one can not escape — not of anything deliberately kept hidden — but rather of a vast reserve, an intimation of terra incognita beyond viewing. When Neil Hardy asked me to write this profile, I worried that I did not have enough to go on, even though Mrs. Crosby and I have been good friends for over forty years. There seemed so much I did not know about her.

So I had to delve. I fashioned precisely 200 "buckets" in the form of questions that I presented in an organized list. My idea was to lower these into the depths on long ropes and dredge up samples. Perhaps then I could form some idea of the temperature, currents and denizens of the obscure region. Whether Mrs. Crosby recorded her responses on tape or in written form, I left up to her; she chose to write them out in longhand, and this she did in her characteristically thoughtful, conscientious and idiosyncratic way in her exquisitely neat and graceful script. Though some

of my buckets were poorly fashioned and leaked, coming to the surface empty, most proved satisfactorily watertight, capacious and informative.

What follows is in part my summary of what I retrieved; the rest consists of my questions and her verbatim responses.

She was born Ranice Winifred Varcoe Birch on April 26th, 1915, in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. The "Ranice" is a feminized derivative of "Ranny," the nickname of her father whose real name was Randolph. "Varcoe" was her mother's middle name. "Winifred" seems to have been, like "Ranice," sui generis. Her ancestry was 25% English and 25% French (the paternal contribution), the other 50%, Irish. Her father's paternal grandparents were George and Ellen Birch of Stratford-upon-Avon and Stratford, England; on the



Ranice Winifred Varcoe Birch with Grandma Lent

maternal side, Francois LaFleur and Edice Bebe de Clemenceau of France. The Birches' son, John Edward Birch, married the daughter of Francois and Edice, Georgina LaFleur, and became the parents of Ranice's father, Randolph William Philip Birch. Ranice's father was therefore half English and half French.

Ranice's mother, Olive Varcoe Henderson, was all Irish, the daughter of Joseph Henderson and Mary Jane Greenfield, both of Ireland of Irish-born parents. Joseph and Mary Jane had another daughter besides Ranice's mother named Ethel. Joseph earned his living as a merchant in Rosemont, Ontario, but he died young (of tuberculosis?) and Mary Jane remarried and had two more daughters, Cora and Frances Lent, Olive's half-sisters and Ranice's half-aunts. Ranice knew her mother's mother only as "Grandma Lent," Mr. Henderson having died long before her birth.

Half-sister Frances had a rather colorful career and was much admired for her spunk by Olive. She married a physician who later gave up medicine to become a rancher, without much success. Impelled by financial necessity, Frances went on to become the personal secretary to the Governor of Colorado, next taught school for a while, then enrolled in Osteopathy School and at length opened up her own practice. Frances' determination to make it on her own, her independence and self-sufficiency, may have provided a role model, even if unconsciously, for Ranice later in her life when she found herself in similar circumstances.

Randolph's father, John, arrived in Canada from England in 1842 with the English army when it was sent over to quell the

Indian rebellions. He never went home again. Mustered out in Canada, he married Georgina LaFleur who had followed her two older sisters from France to Canada. John and Georgina settled in Winnipeg where he ran a store of some kind; Mrs. Crosby believes he sold hardware.

Ranice's father, Randolph, was twelve years older than her mother, Olive. Before their marriage they each had been wed to other spouses, both of whom died of tuberculosis. Olive's first husband, a friend of Randolph's, was an American working in Canada. Randolph's first wife was a Canadian school teacher. These early marriages were childless and Olive's, in particular, tragically short. It is against this background of losses from tuberculosis that one must estimate Ranice's parents' probable alarm when Ranice herself contracted the disease as a teenager.

Ranice was Randolph's and Olive's second and last child; she was preceded by three years by a sister, Olive Georgina Mary Birch (now Mrs. Lillich) who was born on April 17th, 1912. Both girls were kept in ignorance of their parents' first marriages and when sister Olive, as a teenager, found out about them and told Ranice, their father was dismayed — "crushed" is Ranice's word. As he loved their mother intensely and without reservation, perhaps he was fearful that his girls would jump to the mistaken conclusion that she was a substitute, a mere second in his affections.

"Ordinarily, Ranny," says Mrs. Crosby, "had the snappy, happy quality of the name.

He had a super-salesman personality: friendly, jovial, a lively conversationalist." He worked as the district representative of the Gurney Foundry Company which engineered heating systems. Later, when the family moved to New England, he switched to the Eljer Enamelware Company. Both jobs entailed covering large territories and he did a great deal of traveling (an activity loathed by his younger daughter). In Canada he went by train, in New England by car. The first job kept him from home a week at a time, the second, three or four days every week.

Ranny had blue eyes, light brown hair, was slender before middle age, and stood at a little less than average height. He was an enthusiastic fan of ice hockey and knew many of the professional players and coaches on Canadian and American teams. He often took the family to hockey matches; these were rather exceptional outings as they were, as a family, rather the reverse of sports-minded. When tired, he walked with a slight limp from an old lacrosse injury.

Ranice was a little intimidated by him. He had a quick temper and, when it burst forth, his wife and the girls would remark that "the French was showing." When he scolded her,

Ranice ran to her mother and he had to work very hard and long to get back into her good graces. Sister Olive, in contrast, was relatively unaffected by his outbursts. "In no time," says Ranice, "she would be laughing and eating ice cream with him."

Mrs. Crosby seems to have received some of her aesthetic sensitivity from her father, as well as that feeling for the importance of historical data that manifested itself in her work on Max Brödel's biography. Ranny collected paisley shawls and cameos, and he loved fine jewelry, acquiring many pieces from Rhode Island designers for his wife and daughters. Among his good friends were antique dealers and auctioneers. After moving to New England he took pains to read all the historical road markers and, armed with an excellent memory, thoroughly informed himself about the past events they commemorated. He loved flowers also and had an old-fashioned English garden. As with so many male gardeners, he particularly liked the large and robust dahlia with its wide range of saturated color. (This contrasts with his daughter's love of neutral and muted hues.) Until Randolph's retirement, when he and Olive bought a house in Woodland Hills, California, the family always rented.

Ranny was imaginative. When his girls were little he made up stories about the Willie Faloo bird that Mrs. Crosby remembers as "spontaneous" and "wonderful." They considered him a veritable magician. One of his tricks involved the girls holding the corners of a

page of newspaper and dancing around in circles, while Ranny materialized celluloid animals out of thin air and brought them to view from under the paper, to the children's astonished delight. Ranny's flair for color and surprises made Christmas an exciting time at the Birch household. A little on the negative side, however, may be his practice of giving them painful pinches in church when they wiggled. He also playfully teased them, an interaction Ranice never appreciated. "I don't think that I understood this form of endearment," she dryly notes. Later, he was outspokenly critical of his daughters' boyfriends, which was hard on the love-struck teenagers.

Ranice's mother, Olive, if less mercurial and exciting than her husband, was more comfortable and soothing. Ranice felt intensely close to her, and this closeness was undoubtedly enhanced through Ranny's being out of town so much. Olive was never angry or peevish. She never gossiped, was always ready to listen and help, and she took a more tolerant view of the boyfriends. Ranny, with two brothers and one sister, came from a family where the masculine element predominated. Olive, one of four sisters, had the opposite experience and, perhaps, as



Ranice with her father Randolph

a result, was more in touch with the feelings of her daughters. This was especially important in Ranice's case. Olive junior was "rough and tumble," a popular, socially-assertive, extrovert,



Pictured left to right: Sister Olive, Mother Olive, and Ranice

taking perhaps, after Ranny. The two girls, separated in age by three years, were not at all alike, and Mrs. Crosby as a youngster was not emotionally close to her older sister.

Mother Olive was a handsome woman with fair, slightly curly hair, lovely blue eyes and clear skin, and Ranice much admired her. In contrast to Ranny's slight limp, Olive strode with an easy gait and excellent carriage, shoulders and back straight, but not stiff. Her hair grayed slowly and late, so that she always looked much younger than her age. She loved clothes, getting her hair fixed, and attending the Turkish Bath. She wanted the very latest style in attire, and Ranny indulged her and took pleasure in her shopping sprees. She had a keen eye for quality and leaned more toward the conservative than the extreme. Mother and Ranice had a parting of the ways in the realm of shopping. As a budding artist, Ranice developed criteria for style and color that differed greatly from those of her mother. "She found shopping with me exasperating . . . I was slow, slow, slow." One gets the impression of an introverted young girl trying to take her first uncertain steps toward a separate identity. Ranice must have felt great encouragement in this from her mother's unreserved admiration of the decisive, independent Aunt Frances, the Governor's secretary turned osteopath. There was nothing wishy-washy about Ranice's mother, either. She had "very positive opinions about certain people or incidents," recalls Ranice, "and once she made herself known, she wouldn't discuss the matter further."

Ranice admired her assertive older sister and regarded her

with an emotion she designates as "awe." "She was VERY social," says Mrs. Crosby, "with all the qualities which that implies. She entered new schools with a bang, had boy friends instantly, joined school clubs; her calendar was full. She made her wants and needs known, and her displeasure heard." Ranice says she was dependent on Olive but "not envious particularly." If she asked Olive for help with something, Olive would be patient and kind and would always carry through for her. But Olive had her friends, activities and secrets apart from Ranice and did not relish the inclusion of her younger sister. "I don't think she worried about my reticence," recalls Mrs. Crosby. "She never criticized me, but was never my great champion either." Olive never was her sister's confidante: "I didn't have one until years later."

Mrs. Crosby believes that a crucial formative influence in her early life was her family's allowing her to have pets. As a small child she was taken to see Blackstone, the famous magician, who invited her up to the stage as a participant, along with some other children her own age. Blackstone astounded the children by pulling rabbit after rabbit out of an empty box and, best of all, distributing the rabbits to them as gifts. "Wow!" exclaims Mrs. Crosby in recollection of that peak moment. She received one of the rabbits and her parents agreed to let her keep it, provided it stay in the basement. "I spent HOURS with him there," she writes. Later, they had a house cat confined strictly to the kitchen. As with the rabbit, she lavished attention on the beloved animal. With a father away most of the time, a mother consequently burdened with more than her share of responsibility, a sister uninclined to include her in her games, the young girl must have found in the animals a great source of comfort and company. When she arrived in Baltimore at age 22, she acquired a dachshund puppy and kept her for 15 years. "I've had animals with me ever since," she writes, "and most of the time in the bed, too."

She remembers distinctly "Lady Slippers," a black cocker spaniel, given to her by her future husband, Garrie Davis. The puppy was not the most practical gift as Ranice was living in the residents' quarters of the Women's Clinic at the time. "I had to hide her," she recalls, "and teach her never to bark when in the building! When she was ten, I entered her into a dog training class and she excelled over every dog there. She obeyed hand commands, barked on signal and 'stayed' forever until I recalled her." The image of the long dead pet is as vivid as ever in her mind. Thinking about Lady Slippers she exclaims, "I can't wait to be in heaven with her"!

In time, along came "Mardi Gras," a dalmatian; followed by dachshunds: "Dido," "Punch," "Pitty-Pat," a miniature wire hair, "Pup Pup" (also grandly nicknamed "The Vicar"), and "Shamus," another miniature wire hair called, affectionately, "Moose." "I can't imagine being without a dachshund," she writes. She also has had cats, a parakeet, "PeeKay" and a cockatiel, "Tutu."

Except for Punch, who was killed by a car at age eight, all her pets lived to ripe ages — testimony to her conscientious and loving care.

Family values were conventional, middle class, conservative. The function of the husband was to provide a safe, comfortable, well-maintained home. It was essential for Randolph Birch to earn the respect of those he worked with, share social activities with his wife, and attend church regularly, if not always with the family. His wife was expected to maintain a clean, attractive home, manage the budget, and supervise the health and activities of the children. Big decisions were to be made jointly. It was important to be honest, keep personal and family information private, and be pleasant to everyone. The maxim, “Be nice, or people won’t like you,” prevailed. Academic achievement and personal accomplishment were also stressed. Education was deemed important primarily as “income-making protection.” According to Mrs. Crosby, “There was more thought given to our education than to social activities,” this being “in case you had to support yourselves.” Ranny preferred the Anglican Church but Olive disliked it (in deference, perhaps, to her Methodist minister stepfather) and they first went to the Methodist, then the Congregational Church. On special days such as Easter and Christmas, Ranny went alone to the Episcopal Church which he preferred above all the others. Ranice was baptized by the Archbishop of Canada.

She was not given help with school work. While mother prepared meals, the girls were expected to study, but, they did the cleaning up afterward. She had few heroines and no heroes as she grew up. When quite young, she used to daydream about designing clothes for Greta Garbo. Later, she admired Georgia O’Keeffe and what she knew of that artist’s life style in New York. Indians, as a group, exerted a spell for a time, and she did some basketry, as well as some beadwork on a little lap loom. She hoped to go to a Camp Fire Girl summer camp but, somehow, that never materialized.

Olive, senior, found it hard to endure the bitter winters in Regina so, over a period of years, she took the girls to California at the onset of cold weather and settled them in another school. Ranny remained in Canada at these times. Grade school was thus frequently interrupted and, in fact, Ranice’s last year was completed in Providence, Rhode Island. For a shy girl who did not find it easy to make friends, these moves can only have further

delayed her socialization. They also provided a demonstration of how well an able woman could cope without even the intermittent presence of a man, a lesson not lost on Ranice. No teacher or other adult outside her family seems to have had any decisive influence on the young girl, at least “not enough that I can recall it with pleasure or apprehension now.” She and sister Olive were given dancing lessons in California — an “awful” experience. The lessons struck the girls as comical and they were ultimately dismissed from the class for excessive giggling, combined with lack of interest and ability. On weekends they had swimming lessons. “I was terrified of the undertow and waves,” writes Ranice, “so Mother took me to a great indoor pool.” As

an occasional Saturday treat they were given money for a hamburger and a matinee movie which they attended with friends: “but they were Sister’s pals and I don’t remember anything about them . . . I think I was a follower and did whatever Sister and the others were doing.”

To the question, “Were you noticed at grade school for any particular abilities or characteristics?” Ranice writes: “I never created any problems!” Then she goes on to say, “I was one of the quiet middling group. I do remember drawings that I made being put up on bulletin boards, so I guess that that part of me was seen. I sometimes illustrated parts of homework and got a penciled note of approval on these.”

Two areas that were prime sources of stress to her were athletics and mathematics. “In high school,” she recalls, “I was on the basketball team and was humiliated in causing our team to lose the championship — one point

down! I held on to the gym bloomers of a player on the opposing team: Penalty — one point! I never spoke about it and suffered in silence.” She was never a tomboy, “but, secretly, I think I wanted to be.”

In math she was “dreadful” and it caused her to want to run away. “One year we had ‘mental arithmetic’ first thing in the class. Each student stood by his or her desk and was permitted to sit down only after answering the problem correctly. Every day I was the last one standing. I didn’t even try — too frightened. I never told Mother, and the teacher never offered help.” Oscar Wilde once remarked that mathematics is never congenial to truly artistic natures. Though there are undoubtedly exceptions, there is truth in the observation, especially when performance is demanded under pressure. These devastating experiences made



Ranice and Lady Slippers

Mrs. Crosby determined to protect her daughter from teacher excesses. “I’ve had friends whose children were frightened by nuns or priests. My daughter might have been at Grace and St.



Peter’s Episcopal Day School, but I stepped in quickly when I learned the children had to learn *all* the books of the Bible — or else.”

As a young adult, Ranice made efforts to overcome her athletic ineptitude. After coming to Baltimore, she recalls, “I started horseback riding and was very proud of jumping about a three foot jump. But my parents were not very impressed when they watched — not knowing the courage it took for a beginner equestrian.” In athletics, too, she would try to spare her daughter the painful shortcomings

of her own growing-up. “Social athletics being an important part of youth interaction,” she writes, “I was eager for my daughter to become a good swimmer and athletically involved — she is both a participant and knowledgeable observer of many sports.” Her own mother had no athletic interests or ambitions for her daughters. “Perhaps,” writes Mrs. Crosby, “I was directed by her thoughts of its being ‘unladylike.’” Because Ranice was considered “delicate” she was easily excused from “Phys Ed” — that this constituted a social handicap she did not appreciate at the time.

Ranice’s high school career was even more disrupted than her grade school education. The family moved to Providence, Rhode Island when she was thirteen where she finished grade school and then enrolled in Classical High School. The school was downtown and she took a streetcar to get there. There was minimal social life. After school, as she says, her classmates simply “dispersed.” On Saturdays, she studied at the Rhode Island School of Design — a highlight of her teen years. Then one of her mother’s sisters died, and Olive moved for the next two years to Portland, Oregon, taking the two girls with her, where she looked after her brother-in-law and his daughter, leaving Ranny by himself in the East. (A pattern of intermittently doing without a male presence in the family seems a dominant feature of Ranice’s childhood). Ranice was enrolled in Grant High School, an extremely large, co-ed., integrated facility that she found overwhelming. She was extremely relieved to get back East again for her last year of

high school. Now the family was reunited again, this time in New London, Connecticut, where Ranice attended the Williams Memorial Institute which was exclusively for women.

As long as she can remember Ranice has been drawing. As a very young child she made little books of 6 to 8 pages expressing in pictures and words her thoughts about her life. She remembers one drawing showing her mother with a rolling pin and captioned, “Sometimes Mother gets MAD” (which contradicts her altogether tranquil memories of her mother). By the time she started high school, she was identifying with “being an artist.” Drawing was, she believes, “an escape from the frightening and terrible mathematics.” She illustrated story situations, especially those that occurred in some of her history and literature assignments. Beautiful forms and lines enthralled her and she took delight even in the Spencerian penmanship period “when most students were agonized.” Later, under highly classical instruction, she enjoyed antique cast drawing and still-life painting. Unlike her exuberant father who loved color, she preferred those cooler qualities — form and composition. Surprisingly, her favorite instructors were always the painters (who, of course, worked in color) and not the designers and print makers.



Both her parents endorsed her artistic pursuits, a support that, in view of their usual emphasis on the realistic and utilitarian, puzzles her to this day. “Maybe,” she says, “it explained to them why I did dumb things, like *always* putting my purse down somewhere when shopping and forgetting it.” Her lapses resulted in “many lectures!” until — lo! — the *artistic temperament* surfaced and partly exonerated the absentmindedness. Of her mother she writes, “I think she felt artistic.” Olive knitted and crocheted well, and as a senior citizen she took classes in enamelling and did skillful work. Sister Olive was musical and, as she

studied both piano and violin, the parents obviously supported that interest also. “BUT,” says Ranice, “I don’t know how they thought of art and music as an income career . . . It was all right to be an art major at college — as long as the degree reflected an academic experience. Sister’s music was on and off during her college emphasis on chemistry and during her graduate studies at Duke.” She doubts that artistic ability is inborn, but believes that an innate need to express oneself graphically in some form can be very strong.

Between her seventeenth and eighteenth years Ranice came down with tuberculosis, was sent to a sanitarium and kept in bed

for a year where she went from 100 pounds to 140. She still feels grateful to a male neighbor for the “love and insight” that caused him to subscribe to *Vogue* magazine and have it sent to her during that time.

Despite its crises and relocations, adolescence did not seem to her an unhappy time but, “it just wasn’t exciting. I had no money of my own. We had no ‘allowance’ system. Clothes and activities were paid for without question, but Sister and I were expected to account for our money requests. I wanted to buy secret things, like lipstick. I got a job addressing envelopes; no one objected, and I was surprised.”

Adjustment following the year-long isolation was not accomplished easily, as she recalls “the difficulty of working my way back into any social life, especially one without group activities involving sports.” She gives credit to the year in the sanitarium, plus the later experience of being a day student at college, for setting “a pattern of self stimulated activities which did not involve social involvement.” One suspects, though, that the ability to amuse and occupy herself in the absence of companions began even earlier. She now discovered that she “was not at ease with ‘boy friends’ and had no ability at flirting.” (It should be remembered in this context that she was very good-looking.) She “had only a few friends at any one time. Moving from one school to another limited long term friendships.”

She did not maintain contact with classmates as none of them were interested in the arts. Her girlfriends “longed for dates, engagement and marriage;” as a result, Ranice shared with them “only incidental interests and activities.” Not that she was incapable of sustained friendships; after she left home and established herself in Baltimore, she acquired in the person of a female classmate and student of Max Brödel, Hazel Kastner, her first confidante. They have remained close friends now for some 55 years. Another friendship has continued for an only slightly shorter interval. Clearly, the problem earlier had simply been the difficulty of finding others who understood her and shared her interests.

On recovering from tuberculosis, she was offered a scholarship to the Rhode Island School of Design. Her parents, however, decided that she needed a broader education and sent her instead to the Connecticut College for Women where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1937. (Later she would study Studio Art and, at Hopkins, receive a Master’s degree —

MLA, 1974.) During two summers, while enrolled in college, she studied with the celebrated realist painter, Robert Brackman, a wonderful, illuminating experience that she considers a highlight of her life. To earn money for tuition she also posed for him. One admonition of Brackman’s that always remained with her is the somewhat cryptic: “Add to, take from — but — don’t change!” which she says she has used often in her own teaching. One can imagine the bewilderment (stimulating and thought-provoking as that emotion is) of her students when she repeats it to them.

She considers her strengths as an artist to be in the areas of draughtsmanship, optical realism, portraiture and critical judgment, and regards graphite, pastel, and oils as her best media. In her opinion, her weaknesses involved the difficulty of developing a personal style and statement. Also, she found it hard to experiment with media and to escape the too tight hold of graphic design and abstraction.

During her formative years as an artist, the masters she admired were O’Keeffe, Kunioshi, Brackman, Bellows, and Luks. Of the older schools she leans today toward Impressionism, the Pre-Raphaelites, Lumaism (American) and 19th Century American and French Landscape (Corot, Innes, and Homer.) She also loves the 17th and 18th Century Spanish artists, especially Goya and Velasquez. And, finally, she admires the English and

Italian 18th Century “conversation pieces” of George Stubbs, Hogarth, Canaletto and Guardi. She is especially fond of Stubbs’ equine art. It is interesting that, with a few exceptions, color is not predominant in these works so much as draughtsmanship, realism and perspective. She is relatively indifferent to the Baroque, Italian Renaissance, and 17th and 18th Century English portraiture. She greatly admires the prints of Whistler, Degas, Cassatt and Rembrandt. Among the decorative arts she enjoys pottery, porcelain, quilts, coverlets, weavings and embroidery. Obviously, fine craftsmanship and a certain restraint characterizes the art she finds most congenial.

Given the chance to own a famous canvas she says, “I’d reach for one by 1) Whistler, 2) George Stubbs (equine), 3) Cezanne (still life), 4) Watteau (late), and 5) Degas (pastel portrait or equine piece).” The question, “What is your favorite work of art?” she considers a “painful” one, yet answers it rather unhesitatingly: her pick would be Whistler’s “Girl in White” at the National Gallery. But then she waffles and admits, “I’d die if



Ranice portrait by Robert Brackman

I hadn't selected one of Stubbs' equine paintings!"

To a question as to what artistic maxims impressed her, she quotes Van der Rohe's "Less is More," certainly a dictum to which Rubens, Tintoretto, Gauguin, Breughel, Bosch and many other great artists, for whom *much is more*, would not assent. One must, however, give her high marks for consistency! She does not recall any one maxim of Max Brödel's that influenced her. What did make a profound impression, however, was his insistence that the artist *know* his subject thoroughly before attempting to depict it.

And where in all this are Picasso, Braque, Miró, Kandinsky and Matisse? About these celebrated iconoclasts she says she empathized with the "rebellion" but not with the "destruction." "So, I was more comfortable and emotionally satisfied with realism."

Just before Ranice entered college, the Chairman of the Art Department died, and it was Ranice's good fortune that the deceased was replaced by an interim artist whose methods proved peculiarly congenial. He was an elderly man from the Old Lyme Art Colony who agreed to take over until the school could find a permanent replacement. The convalescent girl and the old man would walk together at the same slow pace up the many flights of steps to the studios. The teacher's art came out of the great American landscape tradition with a touch of European Impressionism. "I painted hundreds of strawberry boxes in various still life arrangements under varying light sources," she recalls, "and was happy as a lark!" Her ambition was clear, if a little vague around the edges. "I wanted to be a painter: portraiture, still life — who knows? — anything, everything." She was, she says, "unrealistic enough not to worry about life after my senior year!" But, again, a certain estrangement from her classmates set in. "As the period of abstraction, non-objective art and abstract expressionism arrived, I found I no longer had similar painting goals and could not discuss current paintings

with other artists. I felt quite isolated in what was considered an out-dated attitude (realism)."

When asked how a young person can determine if he or she is inclined toward a career in medical art, Mrs. Crosby posits this question: "Do you sit on the fence, trying to be comfortable and satisfied? Are you afraid to fall in the science or art pasture and never see over the fence again? You've got it!" She herself first

heard about medical art from the female chairman of the Zoology Department at Connecticut College who knew of the field and of the work of Max Brödel. "Being aware of my dual interests, she suggested that I look into specialized study after graduation." Prodded by the professor, Ranice wrote to Brödel during her junior year requesting an interview.

As with most such institutions, there was no interdepartmental discourse between art and science at Connecticut, and Ranice did not talk much to her art teachers about her considering medical art as a profession. The elderly artist who first headed the Art Department had been replaced by a print maker and etcher. When she raised the issue with him, he made the off-the-wall suggestion that medical treatises would be much improved by the addition of etchings. "I did not mention my interest after that," she says.

The more she considered it, the more attractive medical art became for her. It felt good "to find that there was a place to sit happily 'in the middle of the fence' and not be accused of fault or indecision. Art and Science as symbiotic fellows was recognized as the genius of Da Vinci and was thought to have died with him!" Accompanied by her sister, she went to Baltimore for her meeting with Brödel. She reflects on this, saying, "I suspect my parents thought I'd never be able to get to Baltimore alone and carry out my mission. Perhaps they were right!"

To be concluded in the next issue of the JBC.



College graduation day 1937