

## Basic Psychology

Without a doubt, writing is one of the most difficult arts. Therefore, it was with no little reservation that I joined a writing group at Chowan College last winter. The evening of registration revealed that the group would be composed almost entirely of women—this could be quite nice but it was disconcerting at that time. Then to have this veritable paragon of silver-haloed femininity sweep regally in to lead this group, and knowing her to be the literary colossus she is, was enough to put to flight any remnants of equanimity retained up to that point. True to expectations however, the omnipotent air which accompanies all royalty was abundantly evident around Mrs. Bernice Kelly Harris and besides subduing all noise and inattention it quickly calmed all fear. With Churchillian eloquence she spun a warm cloak of reassurance out of soft golden words for each member of the group and as a body we fearlessly fell in behind this woman to march off on a journey of unknown destination.

Like a devoted archeologist sifting and probing for artifacts in some silent tomb, she immediately began to explore each member's mind for small sparks which she might fan into a first-fruit of literary endeavor. Collectively, the few sparks must have appeared no brighter than the transient flash of a fire fly, but with painstaking insistence she nurtured each one into as bright a flame as was possible.

There is much to be said in favor of undertaking creative writing amidst a group of women, and this can be understood simply by comparing the basic psychology of men and women.

By his highly public nature man is constantly required to act on the public stage, thus he tries to see himself as others see him. By her highly private nature woman is impelled to view her inward self as only she knows herself to be. Man is compelled to know, to feel and to do, and he is measured by his accomplishments in knowing, feeling and doing. Woman is simply compelled to be, and she is measured simply by what she is. Throughout time man has spent all his effort learning about and conquering the universe. Woman has been quite content to expend all her energies on spiritual selfdevelopment. Man alone built society out of cold rough hewn blocks but woman warmed it. She polished and painted it. She planted flowers in it for beauty and fragrance, and she rules it from her throne of grace and charm. By virtue of her supreme spiritual development she is its rightful ruler and long may she reign.

This basic psychology of man and woman permeates the writing of each. Man's most intimate thoughts are revealed in his love letters, and even here we always see his true nature come through

At the far end of his pen he sees the world reading his prose and poetry with envy for his masterful style. He summons up his very best effort in order to write something worthy of preservation for posterity. He feels that he must paint a picture of words so fair that even the air will become visible. Great Wagnerian rhapsodies must float disphaneously up from his written pages. On the other hand, read a woman's love letters and what do you find? Nothing really—except a small sweet portion of the writer. Her letters will be pages devoid of deep ponderous thoughts but filled with little glittering gems of things she has seen or done or heard—little pieces of honey-colored life itself. Man reveals through his writing what he knows and what he can do. Through her writing woman simply reveals what she is.

If the preponderant gender of this group and its instructor who represents the utter quintessence of womanhood has taught me to practice just a little female psychology—the will to Be—then my time has been well spent regardless of anything else which might have been accomplished.

—John H. Stanley, M.D.  
Woodland

## Wonderful Oasis

As a college student I denied myself the golden extra that should be an integral part of education. I never seized the opportunity of taking a college course for the joy and pleasure it would bring me. The majority of my courses were required either by college credits or state teaching certificates. Some studies became bearable, almost enjoyable, but never completely satisfying because the freedom of choice was not the motivation.

I can remember only with a nightmarish feeling the pressure of grades, exams, overdue assignments, the sweating out process for a certain grade required for my respective major. I do remember with gratitude, however, certain professors that were interested in me as a student, a prospective citizen, a future teacher and most important, as a person. For this reason I have always held sacred the small college that has left place in its curriculum and administration for the small class led by qualified, normal adult teachers; the kind of dedicated persons that are ever on the alert for a potential among those who maybe have not yet scratched the surface of promise; those that hold fast to the belief that an average student often makes the most useful contribution in the adult world he is soon to live in. Whatever their reasoning, their interest in my college education as opposed to my being a student with just a class number was the deciding factor making my dream of a college diploma a reality.

Interwoven in my effort at

seeking identity, understanding myself and preparing to make a living, I accidentally stumbled upon a new and wonderful oasis towards the end of my college career. With no consciousness of purpose, I enrolled in a journalism course, and there I had my first taste of self-expression. The joy and satisfaction I experienced from this course was as if I had found a spring of water that quenched my thirst after two years of endless desert wanderings. What I did not know at the time was that after those few delightful swallows I would thirst again for the same water, purified by springs of creativity.

Life has a way of unfolding in the least expected place. Mixed in with the thousands of words of print in our daily paper, my eyes as if guided by radar came upon an unobtrusive paragraph informing its readers that a course in creative writing would be taught at Chowan College by the well-known writer and novelist, Bernice Kelly Harris. I knew immediately I must enroll in this course. The next step was to read a book written by my future teacher. I fell in love with the book and its author long before the anxiously awaited classes began.

Was my mind completely in mothballs? Had all my alertness been doused completely with the dozens of diapers I had washed in the past few years? Could I, who had a difficult time getting the lid off a Clapp's baby jar, make any contribution to a class of students?

Wasn't this the opportunity I had been unconsciously searching for when I promised myself some refreshment when at long last I had my four sons enrolled in public school? I wasn't satisfied with being a professional clubwoman, a bridge hound, a casserole-crazy housewife. Nor must I become unbalanced with an all-church activities program. These questions I asked myself, knowing the decision to enroll in the class could afford me a taste of fresh water again.

I could almost see the faces of my former classmates hiding in the shrubbery that outlined the classroom building. It was as if I heard them chiding, "I thought you were never going to school again. That is what you said a thousand times. You told a story!" I felt myself shouting back, "But this is because I want to. The course is not taught for credit. Don't you understand? Come on with me, it is going to be fun."

Inside I found a lovely soft-spoken professor keen on human behavior with its many complicated outlets, knowing without asking there was some reason why a housewife had chosen to come to her class. Her manner was so full of inspiration and belief that in a short time I knew she had turned the faucet on full force, flooding out self doubt, boring routine, daily frustrations, pettiness that had split my personality because I had not taken time to express myself or be myself.

Immediately I became refreshed. Words flowed from my pen in effortless thought. Praise along the way was sweet and welcome. Self-confidence was buoyed with encouragement. Fellowship was found among students sharing common interest and success. An ordinary Tuesday became the best day in the week. Pulling out the old college dictionary began to sharpen the wits. Learning to type again was a challenge. Completion of a play was a personal satisfaction, though it was a crumb compared to the real publishing of my teacher. However insignificant a crumb may be, it was a royal banquet for me, myself and I to feast on. These three are pretty important, you know, because the three of us — me,

## DISCOVERY

I'd like to be a writer,  
But I guess I never will,  
For when I try to concentrate  
The telephone grows shrill.

When I get right down to work  
To plan my plot, I set the clock.  
Then, Bang-bang! Bang-bang!  
At the door a loud, loud knock.

I've made a great discovery:  
Why, I may be a poet,  
And all because of static  
I may simply never know it!

—Ethleen Underwood

myself and I — live together twenty four hours of every day, and each of us had been bound back together as a much happier individual than the estranged components had been.

Through creative writing, a teacher giving of herself and a group of friends interested in one another, Humpty Dumpty was put back together again. I'm grateful to all three for the high plateaus I've been able to stand on this year and I feel special gratitude to Mrs. Harris for the cup of water from the spring of creativity. I shall know where to find it again when I am thirsty, and so will the others.

—Ann Basnight  
Ahoskie

## Meaning for Words

The Creative Writing Class that I am attending is an experiment for me. I had wanted to write for a long time, and tell about some of the places that I had visited, the people I had known and my own reactions to both. I wanted others to read what I wrote, but I did not know the first thing about the mechanics of writing a story.

A friend of mine who had attended a class in Creative Writing last year, persuaded me to come and visit when the group met for the first time this Spring. I did this and during the evening I became very much interested in the teacher and her ideas, as well as the men and women who had signed up to take the course.

While talking with the teacher, Dr. Bernice Kelly Harris, who is a published author, I explained that the only attempt that I had made to do any writing, was about seven years ago when I traveled across the United States with four children. I drove one car and my son drove a station wagon and pulled a boat on a trailer behind it. So many funny things happened to us on the trip, I knew I would want to relate to my husband later, that I decided to keep an account of the happenings. When I did read it to him, he seemed to enjoy the story, as well as the way that I had written it. The laughter and praise provoked by my humorous travelog was heady stuff to me, and my desire to write grew out of this reaction.

No sooner had I mulled aloud the question as to whether or not I should go to a night class in writing, than family insistence began. First from my husband and then from the children. Of course I should go. It would be good for me. Here's the money for it, go sign up! I was told. I discovered later that this class was to be not only a source of great pleasure and information to me, but a therapeutic outlet as well.

After an interview with Philips Russell, a retired professor of Creative Writing at the University

of North Carolina, a fellow student quoted him as saying, "Seek out the unique experiences in your life and write a story around them—". All of the dozen or so students in my class have revealed part of themselves through the stories they have written. Their "unique experiences" are sometimes presented in a factual way, but more often than not, they are the background for a good fictional story.

A doctor in our class wrote about a poor couple with little education, whose child-bearing capabilities far exceeded income and the wife's health. The doctors knowledge of, and concern for, this condition seems to indicate his first hand experience with the problem. One of the women students, who spends much of her time as a civic leader and part-time business executive, writes poignant stories about her past life, which has included the greatest of tragedies and joys.

A prominent hostess and young mother writes stories that point out the falseness and wrong sense of values which is prevalent in her social group. Another young woman with very strong religious convictions has created out of her own beliefs, poems and stories of great moral character.

We are fortunate to have in our class, a minister who has written a play concerned with a religious point of view. He is now revealing himself and his own "unique experiences" in a series of essays that he hopes will be published some day.

No mention of my fellow students would be complete without a word of admiration for the lady who has so aptly written about her childhood home with an ability to combine its' history with description and make it delightfully palatable. Or for the wife of a newspaperman who enrolled to learn more about the art of writing.

There are several college students in this class, who find the time spent in it so rewarding that they are willing to give up their free time in the evening once a week for the sake of expressing themselves on paper. One of these, a young lady, wrote a play which is to be produced at Chapel Hill in competition with other plays written by older and more experienced authors. Still another student writes of his experiences in a relaxed and easily understood manner.

I wish I knew more about the other members of this fraternity of apprentice writers. I cannot attempt to guess their motivations, but I believe each one of them is putting some of his and her personal experiences into their writing. All of us are experimenting with some form of Creative Writing in our own manner. We are learning to use words correctly, utilize our own unique experiences, and satisfy the gnawing urge that we all have — to write creatively!

—Billie L. Robinson  
Murfreesboro

## Six Months After Dallas

Thatch-headed teaser, tongue-in-cheeker  
Brash Irishman, unabashed vote-seeker  
You made it big. You were my kind of president.  
I liked the way you wouldn't try on cowboy hats  
For anybody, even Texans. I know,  
I tagged along to Dallas when you went.  
But I don't go any further. Not to Arlington.  
For me the script, the film-clip stop right here  
The top down, the hand up, the crowd's excited cheer.  
I nurse my graphic scar, my unhealed Texas brand  
My Dallas memorandum is giant ampersand  
That linked me to every other loser in the land.

—Eunice M. Brown