

Mrs. Fitz-Simons: 'The Archetypal Grandmother'

By MARYA COLUMBIA
and ROBIN DREYER

Essay Staff Reporters

"I am I suppose the typical archetypal grandmother. I will miss this school very much, and there will be a hole when I walk away and leave it, but I think it's time to do that."

In her jovial manner, Marion Fitz-Simons answered the questions of a recent interview which took place in her cheerful office. She sat amidst the clutter of papers and books as she spoke of herself, the school and her plans for the future, gesticulating with her hands like a grande dame of the theatre.

Mrs. Fitz-Simons, who is sixty-two, is taking early retirement for a variety of reasons. "It's just about high time I got back to that house in Chapel Hill. I have been separated from my three grandchildren, who have been born since I've been here, and have not been a part of their growing up. You can't buy back those years. I also have had a very strong connection with handicrafts and would like to get back to doing that work. Also I've not been able to do much with theatre and I've enjoyed doing at least a play a year at Chapel Hill. That would be fun to do again before I get so old that I can't memorize lines."

The theater has played a major role in Mrs. Fitz-Simons' life. She began about the age of thirteen in Little Theater Productions which her mother was actively involved in. She continued to pursue her interest in drama throughout high school, and later while attending UNC at Chapel Hill. "I wandered by the Playmaker Theater and saw a notice of auditions on the back door. I wandered in one day and never wandered out. I met the man who is my husband at an audition there."

Fascinating Idea

It was in Chapel Hill that Judy Mueller, the first academic dean of the newly formed N.C. School of the Arts, talked to Mrs. Fitz-Simons about coming here to the school to teach Theater History and College English. "The whole thing was a fascinating idea and I have not grown any the less fascinated with it. Theater is my major interest, but having married a dancer, dance is also a very strong interest. I've lived my adult life on the fringes of the dance world. One can't be concerned with theater of dance without a major concern with music."

Her husband, Foster Fitz-Simons, danced with Ted Shawn and the men's company for six years and was Miriam Winslow's dance partner for four years. "He's done one-night stands all over this country. There's not a state in the Union that he has not performed in."

Stand Up, Deliver

Our conversation then turned to the school and its students. "In a liberal arts university background, you stand up and deliver and the students busily write it down and go to the library and tread the assigned parallel reading and they regurgitate the same on quizzes. Not so in this school. It becomes a whole business of learning how to teach in this school, as totally distinct from teaching in a liberal arts situation."

She said the students, "are turned on, but they are not necessarily turned on to what you are teaching. It becomes a great salesman's job of diverting some of



Essay Photo by Bill Wren

Marion Fitz-Simons

that 'turned-onness' to what you're doing. Once you can achieve that, the results are startling. I am certain I've been spoiled."

Mrs. Fitz-Simons referred to this last period of the school as an important one of physical growth. She said however, that, "in all this brick and mortar period, the school lost a little of its sense of unity and identity, which it had."

When asked if this was due to the growth of the school, she compared UNC at Chapel Hill, which has nineteen thousand to NCSA, saying, "I think those students have a stronger sense of the identity of that school that a number of students at this place have of the identity of this school at this particular period."

Loss Of Unity

She felt that this loss of unity is really a reflection of, "what's been going on in the country and the world. There's been a general shattering of the American strong sense of identity. I think that has seeped down to all levels of the people in the country."

Mrs. Young: 'Take My Shoes Off'

By MARYA COLUMBIA
and ROBIN DREYER

Essay Staff Reporters

"I was born in Norway and came to this country as an infant. I grew up in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which is a hearty country and one which I have always appreciated coming from."

So began our interview with Mrs. Gerd Young, who is to retire at the end of this year. The interview was conducted in Mrs. Young's tiny and impeccably neat office. On the wall hangs a Norwegian weaving, and a wooden bird of her own design is perched on the bookshelf. She answered our questions in a frank and friendly manner although she was at first reluctant to be interviewed.

She attended college in South Dakota and after graduating, became the program director and announcer at a radio station. During the depression, she went on the road with a professional theatre group, later travelling as director of home talent plays, "which will test anybody's stamina. That was sheer madness." After that she went back to school and earned her Master's degree in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Then she moved to East Orange, N.J., to head the drama department of a new high school there. She married a musician and taught school in Boston while he was at Harvard. Her husband has accepted a position as head of the voice department at UNC-Chapel Hill.

During that time, she met Mrs. Fitz-Simons, whose husband was also on the faculty there. "Actually, we had known about each other for years. She preceded me at Chapel Hill. She was an actress and I came down and I was an actress. Although everybody knew her and everybody knew me, we never met until we were both married, and her husband was at Chapel Hill and my husband was at Chapel Hill. That was thirty odd years."



Essay Photo by Bill Wren

Gerd Young

Subsequently, the Youngs went west where he taught at the University of Illinois, later returning to North Carolina so he could teach at Duke University. While in Durham, Mrs. Young served as executive director of the Allied Arts and also taught at Durham Academy.

In 1965, she was asked by Bill Trotman, then head of the drama department, to join the faculty of the new School of the Arts in Winston-Salem. "It was an exciting idea. I thought what a wonderful opportunity to have been able to go and get some training in the area that was of prime interest along with the academic work."

She organized and taught a course in theatre history with Mrs. Fitz-Simons, but - after the first year switched entirely to the academic department. "Having taught for quite a number of years, mostly in the private schools, the first thing so very hard to encompass was the lack of intent desire to do high level academic work. I remember pushing so

We asked Mrs. Fitz-Simons how this feeling might be regained at the school. She said that there have been "fewer gatherings of the whole school for constructive purposes. If there is a gathering it is nearly always for a crisis. Surely the kind of gathering that bolsters this feeling of unity, this feeling of purpose, this feeling of having a direction, is one of the things that could be done about it."

"I have confidence in this young man who is coming here, Dr. Suderburg. I hope this school, the student body particularly, will be receptive to him and not keep him off. He spoke strongly of having an open door to all members of the student group, the faculty, and the entire community. I think that could be the kind of rallying point, a new kind. I like the idea that he's thirty-eight years old. I like the idea that he's not a very practiced administrator. He will be growing along with the school. I think he will learn things from the school as the school will learn things from him."

hard trying to have the students do the quality and quantity of work that I'd been accustomed to. That just wasn't possible. That doesn't mean, and I learned it early and I believe it truly, that the academic program in this school is in any way to be downgraded. I think the quality is high, provided the students want to work."

"If a child is self-disciplined, he can have a fine time here," Mrs. Young continued. "Any person who has a combination of talent and discipline to develop that talent, will also have the ability to carry it over into the other area of the school, the academic department."

Speaking about the changes that have occurred since the school's inception, she commented, "I think that when the school was completely new, possibly the level of student ability was less." Explaining this, she said, "The process has become more selective and even though we get some lemons, the overall level of the students coming here is higher than it was. I think that will continue."

Asked about change in the school as a community, she replied, "Every year students come and they bemoan what used to be. In contradistinction to that are the numbers of students who come back, having gone away, and speak of this place with such warmth. I don't think the purpose of the school has changed."

When asked what she would do after her retirement, "I'm not going to dress up. I'm going to be as un-deanlike as it is possible to be. I hope I can get back to the hobby that I used to do, woodcarving. Other than that, I'm not going to look ahead. I'm just going to enjoy having freedom."

Is there anything in particular that she will regret leaving? "Oh my heavens, I'll miss the students. I have never known a group of students who were a more endearing people. Nobody here is just an apathetic dodo. Everybody is somebody. I shall miss them enormously— 'cause they're grand."

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SCA Budget Making for Next Year to Begin

By JOHN HUBBARD

Essay Staff Reporter

Formulation of next year's budget for student activity fees will begin in the next few weeks.

As a student, you pay \$15 in a term in student activity fees, and this multiplied by the number of students here, comes to a total of about \$23,000.

A committee, headed by Bill Williams, business secretary, and consisting of Dave Belnap, student activity director, Brad White, the new SCA president, and four SCA representatives to be chosen by White will meet in the next three weeks to construct a budget based on that of the previous year. Then they will take it to an SCA meeting where every line will be reviewed. This meeting will be one of the last couple of weeks of April, or the first week of May, and can be attended by any students who want to offer ideas as to where that money is going to go.

This year, Marshall Thomas, editor, and Sonny Linder, managing editor, of The Essay will be requesting more money for the paper. They have requested a jump from \$2000 to \$4000 for next year, but other than this, no major battles are expected. A few line items will be added for next year under the heading "Earnings." The SCA has been making money on things like refrigerator rentals, and Prudence Mason has been doing so well with Applause, a student talent promotion agency under the SCA that she can take a percentage of the money for the job she found, plus pay dividends to the SCA in return for their sanction. This simply means more money in the pot.

This year's expenditures included: \$2400 for the film series, \$1300 for dorm open houses, \$3000 for off-campus social events, \$1200 for materials for the gym, \$1300 for SCA salaries and phone bills, \$500 to feed and train the RA's (resident

assistants) during the summer term, \$1000 for maintenance and repairs on the bus and car (not counting gas) and \$3000 went to pay off a foundation loan that was needed to get the snack bar in the Student Commons building paid off.

Tickets for things like the Wake Forest Artist Series, Film Friends, the Winston-Salem Civic Ballet, and the Wake Forest Chamber Music Society have cost almost \$2500.

The student activities fees also pay for some community services. This year \$320 is being given through the Creative Learning Center, for scholarships for the appropriate children in this area. Two hundred-and-fifty dollars will go to help buy costumes and supplies for the Black Arts Festival which is scheduled for May 6th and 7th of this year.

This year, \$3000 was left under the heading "Surplus" for unplanned expenditures. \$1000 of this money went to refurbish the dorm lounges, and \$900

bought tickets for the American Film Theatre. It turned out that chemicals for the swimming pool cost about \$400, so this was also taken out of surplus.

When talking with Belnap and Susan Summers, outgoing SCA President, they both expressed concern over the lack of student interest in deciding the kind of activities that go on around the school. Every Wednesday morning at 10:30, about six or seven students meet with Karen Shortridge, director of housing, Belnap, and Paul Trivette, of the Student Affairs staff in the Commons building to think up events, says Belnap. He said that a lot of money is spent for student social events, and it is the students that decide on these events specifically.

Susan Summers thinks that there ought to be 50 or 60 students at those meetings for "really good ideas" to be brought up. The beer blasts and coffee houses have just about broken even this year, indicating that there can be more of these events in the future, said Ms. Summers.