



Jean (Moriarty) Hutchinson (1898-1986)

“Mrs. Hutch”, as she was called by the students at The United Church Training School, was a Maritimer. While a B.A. student at Dalhousie University, she was president of the Student YWCA and was a participant in the founding conference of the Student Christian Movement in 1921. She served as Secretary of both the McGill and University of Toronto Student Christian Movement and was Associate Secretary of the SCM of Canada from 1926-32. She edited *The Canadian Student*, the magazine of the Canadian SCM. She received an M.A. in English and History from Dalhousie. She graduated from Emmanuel College in 1938, choosing not to be ordained. She received the highest marks in her class, but because she was not being ordained, was not awarded the gold medal. She was Director of Christian Education at Sherbourne Street United Church in Toronto until 1945. Jean’s husband,

“Hutch” was a top executive at Simpson’s, a prominent department store, and was frequently at the School. Hutch and Jean were very generous, both in terms of gifts to the School and inviting students and staff to their home.

Jean was a member of numerous United Church committees including the Board of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Board of Christian Education, Commission on Faith and General Council Executive. She was the first chairperson of the new Board of Women (formed by the amalgamation of the Woman’s Missionary Society and Woman’s Association) from 1962-64. She received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1962, the first woman to receive such a degree from Victoria University, Toronto.

It was not for her work as Principal that she has been remembered most by former students. It was her New Testament course on the Synoptic Gospels, following Henry Burton Sharman’s *Records of the Life of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1917) (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._B._Sharman). Jean learned Sharman’s Socratic method of question and discussion, using the insights of depth psychology, especially of Carl Jung. Jessie Oliver, who graduated in 1950 remembered: “I recall her sitting quietly with a smile on her face while we argued about some of the things said by one another.” Her laugh was memorable for many, and she was described as a perfect or great lady.

Joyce (McMaster) Scott was among many graduates who found Mrs. Hutch’s course her most significant experience at the School.

She worked us awfully hard! I think she made us do the thinking. One day we were debating something and different people had brought different materials and different opinions. There was quite a difference of opinion on how it should be interpreted, and finally one of the girls said to her “but what do YOU believe about it?” and she said, “don’t you know what I believe about it?” and the girl said “no” and she

said “good”. She was not going to let us fall back on letting somebody else make our decisions for us.

Jean’s interest in academic achievement meant that she valued intellectual pursuits. Helen (Burlton) Lowenburger, a student in 1949, said,

I always felt she was too damned independent for the United Church. She did what she felt was right and I think she did that in her relationships with the students....She could handle individuals of very different natures and keep them into one – we were one body and helped each other very much. But some of the students didn’t have the sophistication to see Christianity as the reality intellectually as well as doing the good things – and I think some of the students had difficulty considering things at this level that Mrs. Hutch liked to do...

Many of the students who were not university graduates felt overwhelmed by Jean – they felt they couldn’t speak up to her the way the university graduates could. Some of these felt that Jean favoured the graduates and had her special group of students.

In the 1955 UCTS Year Book, Harriet Christie wrote a tribute to Jean about her time as Principal:

While she was leading the way, she too was bringing her gifts—gifts of memos and memoranda, speeches, committee meetings, articles, telephone conversation, committee meetings, teaching classes, considering architect’s plans, [for the new building opened in 1953], more committee meetings, canned salmon for dinner, speeches.

Jean died on November 25, 1986. Bessie Lane, on behalf of the Centre for Christian Studies, described Jean as a wise, gracious, superb teacher with special skills as a leader.

She refused to give answers. She questioned, encouraged, probed, handed out resources. She also journeyed with us in our search for *truth* and never ceased to learn and grow herself...Her pithy one-liners are famous for keeping one thinking for weeks. They were not only funny, but helped us see situations in a new light.

This profile was written by Gwyn Griffith in 2006. An edited version of it appears in her book, Weaving A Changing Tapestry, the story of the Centre for Christian Studies, published in 2009. The photo is from the United Church of Canada National Archives.