Memorial Resolution

Esther Jensen

Esther Jensen was a buoyant, warm, colorful person and a consummate teacher. She enriched the lives of those around her through her caring, her optimism, and her gentle grace. Her sensitivity to human potentials, interests and talents enabled her to bring out the best in all who came in contact with her. Esther Jensen was truly a master teacher who may never have imagined the richness and depth of her influence on others.

After earning a two-year diploma from Milwaukee State Teachers College in 1925, Esther, at age nineteen, began a teaching career which lasted forty-six years. Her first teaching position, in Iron Mountain, Michigan, included kindergartens, first, and second grades. She taught for a year in Dallas, Texas, and then returned to this area. From 1929-1964 she taught kindergartens in the Shorewood Public Schools except for the year 1959-60 when she was a Fulbright Exchange Teacher to Norwich, England. Esther earned a bachelor’s degree from Columbia University in 1940 and a master’s degree in developmental psychology in 1951 from the same institution.

In 1964, when UWM expressed a need for an outstanding educator to work with pre-school and kindergarten student teachers, the Shorewood Public Schools graciously "loaned" Esther to us for one year. She stayed at UWM for seven years until her retirement in 1971. During those seven years, Esther worked with students in the preschool and kindergartens student teaching program, sharing with them the knowledge and wisdom gained from her successful career as a kindergartner teacher at the Lake Bluff School in Shorewood. She believed strongly in John Dewey's idea that young children learn best by active involvement and prepared teachers of young children to teach in such fashion. During the summers, she taught in the highly successful workshop, "Living with Young Children." While colleagues worked with parents, Esther taught the children.

Esther was active in professional organizations, serving as president of the Wisconsin Department of Classroom Teachers; a part of the Wisconsin Education Association; as elementary teacher representative to the Wisconsin Teacher Education and Professional Standards Commission; and as representative of the Commission on the advisory councils of the Schools of Education at both Milwaukee and Madison campuses of the University of Wisconsin. She took an active part in the work of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and of the School of Education, including serving on Campus Elementary School committees and on planning committees for the Early Childhood Conferences which were held annually.
during the 1960s and early 1970s. She also served as advisor to the campus Student Education Association. Outside the university, Esther served on the boards and the planning groups for several day care centers, most of which were located in the inner-city of Milwaukee. She maintained an active interest in international matters, especially as they related to education. Esther numbered among her friends persons from throughout the world. Contact and correspondence with these friends brought her great pleasure.

The quality that pervaded all of Esther's professional life was her great interest in and sensitivity to people. Combined with a fine sense of humor, a strong work ethic, and a joie de vivre, Esther brought joy as well as learning to students of all ages and to her colleagues in the department.

Farewell to you, dear Esther Jensen. Those who knew you are better for it. Those who were taught by you are changed by it. You made this world a better, more humane and sensitive dwelling place.

Martin Haberman
Richard Larson
Bette Peltola

for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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