



## REMINISCENCES Miss Mary MacDonald \*

Professor James Aitchieson upon his appointment in 1948 as first University Dean and Director of Dental Studies, was entitled to a University secretary. Mrs Gebbie served for a few months and was followed by Miss Mary MacDonald who occupied the post for the next 35 years. The first letter in her shorthand notebook remains clear in her memory - a letter from Professor Aitchieson to the father of Trevor Harrop (LDS 1950) congratulating him on his son's success as a back-stroke swimmer in the 1948 Olympic Games.

In charge of the main teaching departments at this time were Dr Gibson - Prosthetics, Dr Ireland - Conservation and Dr White - Orthodontics. All became professors and two served for a period as Dean. Colleagues on the Hospital staff remain firmly fixed in her memory - Mr Johnston, the Registrar who completed a long term of service under the previous Dean, Dr J Forbes Webster, by continuing for eight years into the University era. He was followed by Mr Alec Wilson and in turn by Mr G Lewis. The Assistants, Mr Calvin Cole, Mr Douglas Telfer and Miss M McKay who married to become Mrs Scott also made their mark before moving on to other commitments. Theatre staff were represented by Sister Paterson and Nurse Dakers while radiographers included Miss Maureen Guthrie who stayed with her parents almost on the premises in a comfortable flat above Hampton and McMurray in Sauchiehall Street. Miss Guthrie was followed by Miss Carson who accompanied the department from Renfrew Street into more spacious quarters in the new extension. Miss Helen Shanks was her successor, whilst the position of Hospital Engineer was filled by Mr Slade who was followed by Mr Urquart.

There were opportunities for a more relaxed approach to the division between the Dental School and the Dental Hospital in the early days and on rare occasions when work allowed, Miss MacDonald would stand in for Mrs Flannagan or Miss Murray at the reception desk or assist Miss Guthrie in the Radiology department when an extra pair of hands was required to help with a handicapped or difficult patient. On the other hand, Miss MacDonald being the only University secretary available did work for the other University lecturers such as typing class lists, timetables and examination papers.

This pressure was relieved when more University secretaries were appointed and Mary received her first assistants, Cona Beatson and later Isobel McGuire who became Professor Mason's secretary and who eventually took over from Mary on her retirement. There continued to be frequent periods of very hard work such as when a 'Clinical at Home' was being organised, when a University Grants Committee visitation was due, when the General Dental Council visitation of examinations was in the offing, when the curriculum was being modified or latterly when the endless Departmental lists of existing and new equipment were required for the move from Renfrew Street into the Sauchiehall Street extension.

There was no separate admissions department in the early days and Mary would answer enquiries, issue application forms, arrange interviews and intimate acceptances. The School always arranged for a qualified volunteer to serve each year with the Grenfell Mission in Labrador and Mary liaised with Miss Seabrook in the London office and later with Miss E Peden Fyfe in Kilmalcolm to provide many graduates who commenced distinguished careers in this way.

The preparations for the above-mentioned 'Clinical at Home' were relieved for Mary by an opportunity to view a cine-film prepared by Dr Ireland of two operations performed by Mr John Orr. One was the removal of a large cyst and the other involved reduction of the mandible in a severe Class III malocclusion case.

Under Professor Aitchison, Miss MacDonald recalls being involved in several non-dental interests, The Professor was a great supporter of the University Boxing Club and enlisted Mary's secretarial help in the preparation of papers in favour of tighter medical control of the sport. Concern about the part played by dog breeders in the perpetuation of maxillo-facial deformities in certain breeds again called for assistance in the preparation of articles for publication. She typed plays written by Professor Aitchison, one a farce and the other a historical episode concerning Robert Burns.

Mary served four Deans in her career, Professors Aitchison, White, Ireland and Mason. Professor White was very fond of his garden at "Five Acres", Drymen and each Spring produced buckets of daffodils for distribution among the staff.

She remembers Professor Ireland as a golfer, gardener and pianist who enjoyed framing paintings by his wife Denise. Her outstanding memory of her time spent with the Professor however, was the Final Year Dinner just prior to his retirement when the students mounted a " Professor Ireland - This is Your Life" sketch. Mary was involved in the cover-up and deception which necessarily preceded this occasion when elaborate evasions were required to explain the disappearances of many of his personal possessions, commandeered for a memorably successful student sketch.

Mary's central position resulted in many casual requests for assistance. Dr Andrew Tindal occasionally requested a few drops of perfume in his efforts to disguise an anaesthetic gas for an apprehensive patient. She also remembers the stream of very young babies in portable plastic incubators who came from the Sick Children's Hospital in response to the pioneering work of Dr C Kerr McNeil upon cleft lip and palate. And at the request of Dr John Campbell, Mary typed the entries over a period of a year in a diary kept by an asthmatic patient who had been fitted with a removable appliance to assist breathing. A record of its daily use and instructions were also included.

The original close-knit group of University and Hospital staff tended to loosen as the size of the building grew and the numbers of staff and students but there was always a sympathetic and supportive attitude to the Dean's office. These recollections confirm Mary's general assertion that the Dental Hospital and its staff formed a friendly environment, where periods of intense and demanding occupation were interspersed with opportunities for the human contacts and relationships which form the substance of her memories.

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\*Miss MacDonald was interviewed by Henry Noble PhD FDS and Bob McKechnie BDS DDO FDS.