

Reminiscences from a College of Idaho Centurion

From discussions with Burton Cecil Newbry '47

As I prepare to celebrate my 101st birthday in August, I wanted to share some recollections of my time as a student and faculty member at The College of Idaho. My time there established the direction for the rest of my life. At the College, I pursued my dream to teach, found my bride Ella Stone '47, and established life-long friendships.

I grew up in rural Idaho in various locations around Twin Falls. Although this was during the depression and my parents were very poor, my high school principal and my mother both encouraged me to pursue higher education, saying I would find a way to make it work. Among other jobs, I worked on a tie-gang on a railroad crew earning \$1 a day to pay for school. Then I enrolled in classes at Albion State Normal. I lived in a boarding house where we all shared the little we had, and was blessed with support from the college president. When I first showed up with \$35 in hand, I told him that was all I had and he said, "come back and see me when that is gone." I did so, and he allowed me to continue in school and also found me jobs as caretaker of the Presbyterian Church and as night-watchman at the local elementary school.

At the onset of WWII, I eagerly joined the army and served in the Army Signal Corps. After the war I returned to Idaho, and thanks to the GI Bill providing a full scholarship for my education, was fortunate to be able to continue college classes and chose to attend the C of I where I found a substantial number of veterans.

With the return of the male student WWII veterans, in the first year back Margaret "Babe" Boone (daughter of the college's founder, William Judson Boone) had us dancing around the May pole. What a refreshing change it was from the pressures of war, although a rather silly thing to do. Another humorous recollection is when my friend Art Hart and I chased a pig all over campus—there were several inches of snow on the ground and we

were slipping and sliding all around. We never did catch that darned thing, though I don't recall having a plan for it if we had.

When I met my future wife Ella, she was a student and also working as secretary to the president of the college. What she saw in me I don't know, especially after I had reached over and snipped a lock of her hair off (as a keepsake) as she sat at her work desk. She was going with another guy at the time, but I "beat his time" as the saying went. Ella's roommate, Barbara, and her future husband Louie Attebery became life-long friends of ours. Louie also went on to teach at C of I. Many decades later we have kept in touch.

Ella was keenly interested in math and science, but pursued a political science degree when advised by a professor that "girls don't study math." I'm quite sure she would have chosen a different major today, such as engineering.

My short two years as a student were formative for me. I still recall how my history professor, Paul Murphy, made history so fascinating. My physics professor put up with me, even though I found the subject incredibly difficult and was happy just to pass. Additionally, my English professor (Anna Eyck) exuded a passion that was contagious, which inspired me to continue my studies in English and education, aligning with my interests in poetry and writing. Dr. George Wolfe was another favorite professor.

After graduating in 1947, I started a Master's program at Montana State University but returned to Idaho before completing that degree when my father fell from a ladder and broke his back. While helping with his recovery, Ella and I both took jobs teaching high school in Gooding. I taught English, history, and of all things, physics! I was the only teacher at the school who had taken college-level physics, and on the first day of class told the kids, "we are going to learn this together, for I was a very poor student in my college physics class." At the end of that year, Babe Boone visited us and offered me a position teaching English at the C of I, which I gladly accepted.

I spent two years teaching at the College, during which time Ella and I were dorm parents of Finney Hall, a boys' dorm at the time. We also had our first child, Brooks, while living in Finney. I loved working with the students and with the extremely talented faculty and staff during those teaching years, and a favorite memory was when I co-authored a radio play called "The Storm" which was played nationally on CBS radio. The only negative at the C of I during my teaching years was the presidency of Paul Pitman, and I think it was only due to the complete dedication of the outstanding staff of the College that enabled it to survive his tenure.

I completed my Master's degree in the summer while teaching at C of I, then relocated to the University of Oregon where I earned a doctorate in Education. I then taught in the Education Department at the University of Nevada until joining the U.S. Agency for International Development, where I worked from 1960 until 1980. I had a fascinating career helping to develop high school and college-level education programs in several foreign nations, such as Korea, Nigeria, Thailand and Nepal. Much of my focus was on creating comprehensive schools, somewhat like current technical colleges, as I further put to use my passion for education.

As I look back on it, I have very fond feelings for The College of Idaho. I met the love of my life and we started our family there, and I learned so many valuable lessons as both a student and professor. What a rich history I got to be a part of! In later years, Ella and I were proud to see our son Burton, along with our granddaughters Jennifer and Melissa, all attend C of I.

Thank you, College of Idaho!

This text is from discussions between Burton Cecil Newbry and family members Burt '80 and Melissa Newbry.

Footnote: Dr. Newbry established the Ella S and Burton C Newbry Scholarship at the C of I with the dream of helping financially-challenged students, like he was, pursue college.

