

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### MARY YOST (1881 – 1954)

In the death on March 4, 1954, of Mary Yost, Stanford University lost one of its best loved faculty members. Born in Staunton, Virginia, on September 25, 1881, she received her A. B. degree at Vassar College in 1904. She was a Graduate Scholar at Vassar during the year 1904-05 after which she became an Assistant in English at Wellesley College for a year. She then returned to Vassar where she was Instructor in English from 1907 until 1913 and where she received the A. M. degree in 1912. She then went to the University of Michigan to carry on further graduate work and was a Fellow there during 1913-15 when she returned to Vassar as Assistant Professor of English, remaining there until 1921. In 1917 she was awarded the Ph. D. degree by the University of Michigan. From 1912 to 1921, she also was a reader for the College Entrance Examination Board, and she held the title of Head Reader and Examiner from 1918 to 1921.

She came to Stanford University at the invitation of President Ray Lyman Wilbur in 1921 as Dean of Women and Associate Professor of English; and in 1946, after twenty-five years of distinguished service, she retired with the title of Dean of Women and Lecturer in English, Emeritus. At that time she was awarded the LL. D. degree by Mills College in partial recognition of the many contributions she had made to women's education.

The wisdom in selecting a woman who could bring to the developing program of women's activities at Stanford University the special insight gained in her work at women's colleges, who could be close to the academic interests and problems of students by participation in the teaching program, and who could take a full share of responsibility in the work of her colleagues in faculty committees and in administration was amply demonstrated in Miss Yost's unusually significant contribution to Stanford life. Her work with the women students was never a thing apart from the stream of academic life; she made it, in every way, part and parcel of the full purpose of the University. She always believed that the solution to every problem of a student was to be found somewhere within the total education program of the University. Miss Yost's active services as Dean of Women coincided approximately with Stanford's second twenty-five years, a period that saw much of the transition from a relatively small and intimate college to the larger and more crowded institution of today. But with the increase in numbers, Stanford has not lost that intimate touch; that it has not is in no small way traceable to the influence of Miss Yost and the attitude of friendly counsel, adherence to high standards both of academic performance and of conduct, and faith in young people that she so notably exemplified. Her influence upon the ever advancing university was great, but it was exerted quietly, unobtrusively, humanly, and as much by example as by precept. In this work, especially with her faculty colleagues, her keen analysis of cause and effect, her ability to penetrate quickly to the heart of a problem, her wit and good humor, were invaluable.

In her primary concern for the welfare of students, Miss Yost brought to her work a strong faith in student self-government. Her support and interest in the growing framework of student government were indispensable in fostering its development in the direction of strength and responsibility rather than of weakness and casual irresponsibility. In everything she insisted, in her quiet way, upon the importance of a sense of values, a discerning of the true among the false, a reliance upon high principles of living. She encouraged students to find for themselves a set of values, or a standard of value by which to judge and to which any action might be referred. She not only encouraged this; it was her own approach to handling the many problems she faced. However, understanding she might be in any given set of circumstances, ultimately the right must prevail; she was steadfast in her belief that weakness is not changed to strength by indulgence, but by support in the direction of right.

Her activity and influence were not confined to this campus or to the interest of Stanford students - men as well as women. She was a national figure in women's education; for example, she was a member of the national board of the American Association of University Women, an officer of the National Association of Deans of Women, and a president of the California Association of Deans of Women. Wherever there was a gathering concerned with the educational needs of college women, her name was known and her influence felt.

Her many achievements might seem formidable if we did not know that they were clothed in a personality of grace, dignity, and most of all, of human warmth. She was close to the problems, and to the hearts, of generations of Stanford women, and after her retirement her campus home became a focal point for "her girls" who thought of her as the embodiment of Stanford's traditions and friendliness. When she retired she modestly said, "It pays a hundred times over to have the satisfaction of knowing that you have had listening ears for the troubles and perplexities of young people. Because in the telling, they leave clarified and perhaps solved their own difficulties. You merely stood by." But she did far more than "stand by", because Stanford students knew that her own life exemplified the ideals she held up to them. Integrity, intellectual curiosity, academic excellence, honesty, kindness, consideration of others, courage, and conviction tempered with tolerance - these qualities she believed men and women should work to achieve.

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