Fannie Melcer Remembers: 
From Eye Grounds To Arabesques

by Laurence J. Sasso, Jr.

If Texas City, Texas hadn't exploded in a tragic accident in 1947, Fannie Helen Melcer might still be an optometrist and Rhode Island College's history might be substantially different than it is today.

In her thirties, she had her own practice. She had been caring for people's vision for nine years. On the morning that a ship loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer blew up in Texas City, setting off a series of explosions which killed hundreds of people, Fannie Melcer was scheduled to see a patient.

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The patient was a stickler for punctuality, however, and to her everlasting good fortune Fannie reluctantly went straight to the office. The area where she would have been with her camera was near the center of the blast.

While the catastrophe unfolded around her - office, miles from the fires and explosions, was damaged by the shocks - she was struck by the arbitrariness of life.

"I was over 30 years old and it was the first time I ever truly thought of dying," says the very much alive retiree from Rhode Island College's Gerontology Center has been commissioned by Providence ETA to launch a study on the "Educational Opportunities for Senior Citizens" in the city.

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"It was quite an experience," she recalls.

Then and there amid the rubble and the smoke she decided that from that point forward she would do what she wanted to do with her life.

She had been involved in a recreational dance group for underprivileged children - in fact her studio was used for an evacuation center to house Mexican American families after the explosion.

The dance company had given her more pleasure than her optometry practice. So, she made up her mind to go back to school and get a master's degree in dance. New York University was her choice for the program. She got the degree.

"I took the first job that came along. It was in New Mexico, half time in sports, half time in dance," she tells.

After three years she returned to New York University and earned her Ed.D. in administration and supervision.

Although she had danced at Ohio State University, where she received her undergraduate degree in physics and optics, surprisingly, she did not like to dance as a young woman. She appreared with the company there as a guest rather than a member of the company.

"I hated dance," she points out with an ironic smile. "I loved sports. My mother made me take dance or else she wouldn't let me take sports."

At Ohio State she had discovered that the only activity that met in the evening, which was when she had free time, was dance. She went to the dance company meetings because little by little the director, Geneva Watson, got her interested in performing and she did appear with the group.

"If you want to dance, you dance because of the6ght and passion in it," she says today. "But you have to take it in balance."

Fannie has been taking dance in balance with life for more than three decades, and to many at RIC her name seems synonymous with the college dance company. Yet, when she came to Rhode Island College in 1960, it was health and physical education that brought her. Anxious to get into administration, she accepted the college's offer of an appointment.

It made her the first female director of health, physical education, recreation and athletics in a coed program in the entire state. In fact, she was only the second such appointee in the country.

Her specific charge was to develop a major in health and physical education at RIC. Research, including a statewide survey, proved that the need was unreasonable for such efforts.

"We had some successes," she says.

Melcer was the chair of the committee which designed Walsh Center for Health and Physical Education. She takes pride in pointing out that she insisted the building be constructed with "floating floors" all through the teaching areas.

"We didn't want students getting shin splints," she explains.

(Continued on p. 2)
Grants and Awards

The Northeastern Gerontological Society, whose formation was initiated by Rhode Island College in May of 1980, has recently received a $12,000 grant from ACTION to support its first annual meeting. The meeting will be held April 30, May 1 and 2 in Newport, Rhode Island.

A year ago the Gerontology program was named Leonard B. Moore Gerontology Program at RIC, as interim president. This year the program was named the Leonard B. Moore Institute of Gerontology at RIC, as interim president. The purpose of the program is to study the aging process and the role of people in society.
Ayers, president of Massasoit Community College, Dr. David W.D. Dickson, president of Mustang State University, and Dr. Reatha Clark King, president of Metropolitan State University. The conference will break at noon for lunch and resume at 1:30 p.m. with an address by Dr. Herbert Williams, associate superintendent of schools, Little Rock, Arkansas. His topic will be "Increasing Minority Enrollment in Postsecondary Education: The Role of Secondary Education."

Panels will be six different workshops on subjects such as "Financing Increased Minority Enrollment"; "Minority Women's Needs"; and "Success and the Hispanic Student."

Dr. Jerome Jones, superintendent of schools for the city of Providence, will offer the closing address. His subject will be "Working within the Educational System: Our Challenge."

Eleanor McMahon, vice-president for academic affairs at RIC, will do a "wrap up" of the day's activities.

Conference participants must register by March 25. Registration should be made through the UEC in care of Anne Borge.

Further details will be included in the March 23 issue of What's News.

Counseling Center Offers Workshops

The counseling center, in cooperation with other campus offices, will offer several workshops - some already in progress - during the 1981 spring semester. All workshops are offered free to RIC students, faculty and staff.

Life/Career Planning, offered in conjunction with the office of Career Services, will be held Thursdays, 7-9 p.m. March 12 and 26 in the counseling center conference room, and Wednesdays, 2-4 p.m. April 8, 15 and 22 in Craig-Lee 053. These three-session workshops will provide an overview of issues relevant to vocational planning. Among topics to be discussed will be value clarification, goal setting, interest testing, and seeking information about the world of work.

Behavioral Weight Control will meet on Tuesdays, March 3 through April 28, and Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30 p.m. March 4 through April 29 in the counseling center conference room. This eight-session program will focus on helping individuals change their eating habits and attitudes. Behavioral methods to alter unhealthy eating habits will be discussed. A screening interview is required.

The four-session workshop on Assertiveness Training will be held on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 4 p.m., March 3 through March 24 in the counseling center conference room. This workshop is designed to increase inter-personal power and will focus on examination of behavior, development of a plan, and acquisition of skills related to proper assertive behavior.

Relaxation and Stress Management, which will meet on Thursdays from 2:44 p.m., March 12, 26 and April 2 in the counseling center conference room. Training and practice for coping with everyday anxiety and stress will be discussed. Also included will be an outline of relaxation and methods for dealing with tension-producing thought patterns. Advance registration is required and enrollment is limited.

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English Long Term Care Gerontology Center to Hold Conference

The English Long Term Care Gerontology Center will hold a conference on "Continuing Education in America" on April 2 and 3 at the University of Rhode Island. The conference will take place all day April 3 at Gaige Hall, RIC. Keynote speakers associated with the conference, who will address the three seminars on April 3 will be Dr. Frederick S. Hum- bly, professor of social work, and Dr. William H. Bishop, professor of gerontology, both of the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Robert A. Beraldo of the New England Gerontology Center will also address the conference.

The conference will focus on "Continuing Education in America" during the 1981 spring semester. The conference will be held all day April 3 at Gaige Hall, RIC. The conference will take place all day April 3 at Gaige Hall, RIC. Keynote speakers associated with the conference, who will address the three seminars on April 3 will be Dr. Frederick S. Hum- bly, professor of social work, and Dr. William H. Bishop, professor of gerontology, both of the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Robert A. Beraldo of the New England Gerontology Center will also address the conference.

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Focus on the Faculty and Staff


Dr. William A. Small, associate dean of graduate studies, has authored a paper, "The Spiritual Needs of the Aging: A Study of Spiritual Gregariousness," which will be presented on May 15 at New Martinsville at the first annual meeting of the Northern Gerontological Society.

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Dr. William M. Jones, assistant professor of music, will attend the Eastern Division In-Service of the Music Educators National Conference to discuss "Continuing Education in Music," his most recent article, "Four Techniques for the Instrumental Rehearsal," was published in the Wisconsin School Musician.

Changing Perceptions

Changing perceptions of the photograph and the photographer in the 19th and 20th Centuries will be the subject of a lecture Wednesday, March 25 from 2-4 p.m. in Room 5 of the Art Center by William E. Parker, professor of art and history of photography at the University of Connecticut.

The lecture is sponsored by the art department and the College Lecture Committee.

Legislative Alert

Passed By The Senate

Education: S-100, a resolution creating a member legislative study commission to study the entire field of education of gifted children (with a Jan. 1, 1993, reporting date).

New House Business

Meetings - Handicapped: H-505 by Dr. Asbell, a bill providing employment opportunities for public bodies held in localities accessible to handicapped persons.

New State Business

Teaching: S-495 by Hickey, a bill reducing the number of years of service after which a teacher may retire on retirement allowance and increasing the percentage allowance for those serving more than 20 years.

Referenda: S-495 by Hickey, a bill prohibiting the use of referendum questions from being placed on the ballot at a subsequent special election. Special Legislation.

-March 2
Media Consultant To Speak

Jean Kilbourne, media consultant and lecturer, will address RIC audiences today and tomorrow on the effects of advertising on women and alcohol abuse.

Becoming involved in the women's movement in the late 1960s, she began doing research on sex role stereotyping in the media. In 1970 Kilbourne began collecting advertisements and created the first version of what was to become "The Naked Truth: Advertising's Images of Women" which she will present today in the Student Union Ballroom at 8 p.m.

Alcoholism is another of Kilbourne's concerns, particularly as it affects women and young people, and their relationship to self-image and self-esteem. Her slide presentation tomorrow, also in the Student Union Ballroom at 8, is "Under the Influence: The Pushing of Alcohol via Advertising."

To Discuss Econ Ed Need

In conjunction with the Joint Council on Economic Education's 50th anniversary on March 10, a group of New England business leaders will meet in Boston to discuss the necessity for economic education.

The keynote address will be given by National Council President Robert M. Selow of MIT. "Dimensions, Directions and Demand for Economic Education."

On Prison

Mary Ann Hawkes, professor of sociology, will present a history of standards in corrections Wednesday, March 11 at 2 p.m. in Alumni Lounge, Roberts Hall.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the development of standards in our prisons over the past 10 years since the Attica Prison riots.

Welcome Letters

WHAT'S NEWS AT RIC: welcome the receipt of letters from college-wide interest will be published every Saturday in the Student Union. All letters are subject to editing at the discretion of the editor. The Bureau. All letters must be signed by the author and date. We look forward to airing readers' views and concerns and continue the expansion of internal communication at Rhode Island College.

Calendar Of Events

MARCH 9 - MARCH 16, 1981

MONDAY, MARCH 9
7:45-8:30 p.m., Student Council for Exceptional Children Arts & Crafts Program. Student Union, Game Room.
8 p.m., Programming Lecture. Featuring Jean Kilbourne who will give a slide demonstration/lecture on the "Naked Truth," a discussion of how advertising in the mass media portrays women as sex objects. Student Union, Ballroom.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10
8 a.m., Orr Day, Recruiting Schedule. Roger Williams Hospital - Nursing Majors Navy Officers Program - All Majors. Craig-Lee Hall, Room 054.
12 Noon-1 p.m., History Department Lunchtime Colloquium. "WHO ARE THE IRISH?" The first film in the "Heritage of Ireland" series is beautifully made. The series was made by Louis Marcus. Discussion will follow. Gage Hall, Room 201.
12 Noon-2 p.m., Student Union Board of Directors Sub-Committee on Space Allocation Meeting. Student Union, Chambers.
1 p.m., English Department Colloquium. "Wonderland and the Escape into Childhood." Featuring Dr. Gila Reinstein, Rhode Island College, Craig-Lee Hall, Room 205.
1 p.m., Rhode Island Philharmonic Conductor Forum. Featuring Alvaro Casotto, Roberts Hall, Room 138.
1-2 p.m., Anchor Christian Fellowship Meeting. Student Union, Room 310.
2 p.m., Philosophy Department Colloquium. "Contemporary Curriculum Theorizing in Britain and Ireland." Featuring Maureen T. Lapan, Ph.D., Fogarty Hall, Room 120 (Louise).
7-10 p.m., Philosophy Department Colloquium. "Annual St. Patrick's Day Teach-In." Featuring Mary Ann Hawkes, professor of sociology. Roberts Hall, Room 138.
8 p.m., Programming Lecture. Featuring Jean Kilbourne who will speak on how the media misconstrues the use of alcohol. Slides will be shown. Student Union, Ballroom.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11
2 p.m., Disenchanted Film Series. "Between the Lines." Mann Hall, Room 193.
2:45 p.m., ERA - What Impact on Women's Lives?" Featuring Patricia M. Dwyer, R.I. Coordinator of N.O.W., a frank discussion of what ERA will and will not do for women. Student Union, Chambers.
2:45 p.m., Women's Center Meeting. Student Union, Chambers.
2:45 p.m., Anchor Christian Fellowship Meeting. Student Union, Lounge F.
2:45 p.m., Class of '91 Meeting. Student Union, Room 310.
2:45 p.m., WRC Radio Meeting. Student Union, Room 310.
6-9 p.m., Sigma Mu Delta Meeting. Student Union, Lounge F.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12
6:30-8 p.m., Philosophy Department Lunchtime Colloquium. "Annual St. Patrick's Day Teach-In." Featuring Paul Anghinetti, Ph.D., James White, Ph.D., Ridgway Shoff, Ph.D., Maureen Lapan, Ph.D., Raymond Houghton, Ph.D., Fogarty Hall, Room 120 (Louise).
6-9 p.m., Workshop in Acting. Sponsored by the Department of Communications/Theatre will feature Maxine Klein, director of Little Flats Theatre. Admission is free and open to the public. Honny Barnard School, Cafeteria.
4-6 p.m., "Windfall." Sponsored by Department of Communications/Theatre in conjunction with College Lectures Committee and Little Flats Theatre of Roxbury, Mass. Admission is free and the event is welcome. Gaige Hall, Auditorium.
6-9 p.m., Sigma Mu Delta Meeting. Student Union, Lounge F.
7-10 & 10 p.m., Film Series. "The Blues Brothers." Admission: $1.75 general, $1 with a RIC I.D. Gaige Hall, Auditorium.
8-10 p.m., RIC Performing Arts Series Presents: "Emlyn Williams As Charles Dickens." A solo performance of scenes from Dickens' novels and plays. Admission is $6.50 general, $3 with a RIC I.D. Roberts Hall, Auditorium.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13
6:30 p.m., Women's Basketball. E.A.I.A.W. Finals.
6:30-9 p.m., Sigma Mu Delta Meeting. Student Union, Lounge F.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14
6:30 p.m., Women's Basketball. E.A.I.A.W. Finals.
8 p.m.-10 p.m., L-A-S.O. Cultural Dinner Dance. Student Union, Ballroom.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15
10 a.m., Sunday Mass. Student Union, Ballroom.
1-4 p.m., Sunday Evening Meeting. Student Union, Chambers.
7:10 p.m., Kappa Delta Phi Meeting. Student Union, Chambers.
7:30-10 p.m., Kappa Epsilon Meeting. Student Union, Lounge F.