What ever happened to industrial arts?

As a 1978 graduate of TCNJ in industrial arts education, I have many fond memories of Armstrong Hall. Yet, I have a concern that I believe needs to be addressed.

I have been an industrial arts instructor for nearly 28 years. I pride myself that I received my diploma from TCNJ. But my concern is that my alma mater no longer offers the same curriculum it did when I graduated. As a teacher of the trades, I have many students who want to follow my footsteps. As great a compliment as this is, I am dismayed that I can’t recommend them for this curriculum to TCNJ. I have spoken personally to one of the professors at the school and once again I am dismayed to find the college no longer offers this degree.

I vividly recall planning to attend Trenton State 30 years ago and I was informed that this would be the place to pursue this career. Have we forgotten that the Industrial Revolution molded us into a society that only computer technology? Unlike the industrial age, measured by greater inventions (mechanical) or the “information age.” Unlike the industrial age where education, teachers must continually upgrade their curriculum to reflect the contemporary knowledge base of the discipline. Is this especially true in the sciences and technologies. The developed world is no longer in the “industrial age” (measured by greater than one-half of the population working in industry). Beginning in 1956, the United States moved into its “information age.” Unlike the industrial age, where capital was power, knowledge is power in the information age.

Fortunately, being comfortable with a broad range of tools, materials, and processes, understanding how society designs and makes things, as well as learning to work to high standards, are all necessary for mastery. Both of us benefited, my sister as a professional musician and myself as a fairly accomplished amateur. Our children as well distinguish themselves in the music world.

Recollecting two heroes

I am writing on July 4th in regard to your obituaries of professors Tod Treuting and Joseph Carroll in the spring 2004 issue. I feel it is a fitting date to reflect on the passing of these two gentlemen because they were war heroes. I had professor Treuting for a science course and can recall his distinguished tweed jackets and his gentle, very effective manner of teaching. My memories of Dr. Joseph Carroll include his explanations of “freedom.” He told us, “Yes, we all have freedom, but your freedom ends when you swing your arms in the air and they touch another person.”

Mabel Bray’s legacy

Miss Bray, the person my mother referred to so often I had to assume she was mother’s college education! The article about her in the spring issue brought smiles and memories to 90-year-old Elizabeth (Satterfield) Staats.

Part of the Class of 1935, my mother is now a 70-year alumna. Known then as “Skippy” to her friends, her family has always called her Betty. For three years after graduation she taught public school vocal music for all grades in theAudubon, NJ, system—apparently one of those successful placements during the Great Depression referred to in the article.

Upon marrying my father, a young Methodist seminarian and beginning minister of a church, she had to relinquish her teaching job. No married women in such positions at that time!

From then on she directed church choirs, played church organs, taught piano lessons in our home, and passed on to my sister and me an understanding and love of music, invoking Miss Bray’s name concerning the discipline

Looking Back

Out of our photographic archives we offer this scene from memory lane and wonder if any readers can identify who this group of young scholars from yesteryear might be. They appear to be celebrating something, but what? The flowers suggest a formal dance, but who are the girls in white seated on the grass wearing some sort of headdress? And what about the motley crew at the right in the background who could they be looking at? Please let us know what, where, and when of this picture by e-mailing magazine@tcnj.edu.

What is remarkable is that neither man ever mentioned how he served in World War II. It is right that today, the 4th of July, I say it was a pleasure having these “unsung” heroes affect my life in school. These men remind me of my mother’s brothers (my uncles Stanley, Casey, and Eddie) who also served their country with courage and quiet dignity. I am grateful to all these heroes who were part of my “free” life.

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Letters Policy: We encourage, welcome, and hope for letters from readers on topics in the magazine. All letters are subject to editing to fit available space and to ensure clarity and civility. They must include the name and address of the writer and provide a phone number for contact. Submit letters via the Editor (TCNJ Magazine, Green Hall 302, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ 08628-0718) or by e-mail to magazine@tcnj.edu. The deadline for the fall issue is April 3, 2006.

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