

Some of the Significant People in my Professional Life

During my high school years and work life, many people had an impact on me and my development. Here are a few of them and how they influenced me.

Ethel Torgerson



The person who had the greatest impact on my educational life was my high school Math teacher, Ethel Torgerson. Since Newfolden was a small school, we only had one Math teacher. I took all her courses during high school and learned to love Math. In my mind Ethel taught us everything she knew about Math in her upper-level classes. She strongly encouraged me to go to college and become a teacher and encouraged me to join the Future Teachers of America. Ethel wrote in my senior yearbook “It’s been a pleasure working with you. I hope you can continue your education. I firmly believe you should make a very fine teacher.” Notice that she said “working with you” which was her philosophy of teaching. Following my first quarter at MSC, I went to see her at the school. Based on my ACT score and the math test given to freshmen, I was placed in sophomore Calculus. While talking about what I was learning, I suddenly realized that she was learning from me as much as I was from her. I am still grateful to her for all her efforts. One day in a math class, we had a test and I finished and was sitting waiting for others to finish. I was innocently watching the student in front of me completing her test when I saw she was making some errors. I leaned forward to point it out when Ethel said “Lester, what are you doing?” to which I replied “she is doing it wrong”. Ethel reminded me that it was a test!

My yearbook also included this comment from my English teacher “I have enjoyed having you in class, Lester. Your philosophies have been interesting.” I think she saw something in my class writings that was somewhat different. I agree that she was right.



Wayne Ulferts

Wayne Ulferts was my coach in basketball and baseball while in Junior High and was always supportive and encouraging. Wayne was also my history teacher and instilled in me a love for History. When I enrolled in college, I was first a history major. However, after being placed in sophomore Calculus, I realized options for a math graduate were far better than a history major, so I changed. Wayne was also our career counselor, teachers had multiple roles at Newfolden High School. He also strongly encouraged me to go to college, provided guidance in choosing a college and helped me apply. Several years later,

Wayne's daughter, Lori became a friend when she was hired as MSUM's women's basketball coach. Several times I got to ride on the players' bus to out of town games.

May Larson



May Larson came to Newfolden while I was high school and had a significant impact on me. She was a person of great energy and was our speech teacher and drama coach. I enrolled in her speech class and was able to develop a strong background in public speaking. I was mostly interested in athletics, yet she convinced me to compete in extemporaneous speaking, I went to our regional contest. She convinced me to perform in plays as well. I was in our junior and senior class plays and one act plays. May worked with me personally to get rid of my strong Norwegian accent, although I am still able to do it when telling Ole and Lena jokes. I think I may have been type cast in plays. In our junior class

play, I played the part of Sawbuck Sam, passing phony ten dollar bills. My partner and I were arrested at the end of the second act. In the one act play that year, six of us were on a boat that hit a rock and was sinking. My character stole the only life boat and left the rest of the passengers. It is a good thing the characters were only in the play!

Eileen Hume



My first job at Moorhead State College was that of Veterans Service Officer. My duties were to process applications for Veterans' GI Bill benefits, certify attendance of those Veterans, help recruit Veterans and provide any other help I could. We had 713 Veterans enrolled under the GI Bill; almost 10% of the college enrollment. My supervisor was Robert (Bob) MacLeod, Vice President of Student Affairs. Bob, Robert Hanson Academic VP and Dean Nelson Counseling Center Director were on my interview committee.

Eileen Hume, Dean of Women was in the same office as I. Eileen was perhaps the first feminist at MSC and had very positive impact on many of our students and staff, including me. I enrolled in her "Counseling Women for Equality" as part of my graduate program. She was influential in my understanding that we should

treat all people equally, something I also learned in the Air Force. Eileen was also the coordinator of international students. One Christmas break she organized a trip to Montana for our international students and needed another van driver, so I volunteered, and we had a great time. We stopped at Bozeman, Montana and went skiing at Big Sky. We had an impromptu race down the bowl, I couldn't let an older woman beat me. She did with much more grace and style than I had. On her obituary site, a former student wrote "You showed by example how women could be strong and opinionated." That best describes Eileen.



Don Engberg

While working as Veterans Service Officer, Don Engberg, Registrar must have seen something about me that he liked. He offered me a position of Associate Registrar with the responsibilities of moving paper record keeping to computer processing. This was in the mid-1970s and was a very forward-thinking plan. Don was a very strong person, and he would see a better more innovative way of doing things and would work to get it done, even if it was outside the responsibilities of the Registrar. It seemed that Don and I thought alike on most of these areas. For instance, we were discussing options with one of the Deans and Don would say “I think we should...” and I would be able to respond “yes, and we could also do ...” and Don and I would be on the same page. I did learn that the best way to get Don to agree to a plan was to convince him that it was his idea in the first place. In 1983, Don managed to get me promoted to the

new position of Computer Center Director without a search. Don and I managed to get our registration moved to a computer process becoming one of the first campuses in Minnesota to do so. Don lived in Detroit Lakes about 50 miles from Moorhead and would drive to work each day, including blizzard days. MSU became the first college or university in Minnesota to have a web-based registration process. Our students loved it and adapted at once, faculty and staff took a bit longer.

Rick Langrand

Rick was hired by Moorhead State University as a consultant to the Alumni and Foundation office. His role was to develop a plan for a more effective fund-raising program at MSU. Rick had an engineering degree, had worked in Hollywood in the movie industry before working as a consultant. He came to MSU after a consulting role at Carnegie Mellon University. Rick was at MSU for about nine months and developed a plan for fund raising. During that time, Rick and I became friends and often would go to local watering hole where he had a couple glasses of wine, and I had a couple beers. We talked about all topics, and I learned much of what I know about fund raising. The most important lesson I learned from Rick was that in order to be successful, you had to have an ego so big that it didn't show. In other words, you had to know in your mind that you did a great job, even though you got no public credit. His example was that a fund raiser could work for a year on a corporate gift of \$100,000 and get the commitment. However, that President of the University would accept the donation from the President of the company. They would get their photos in press releases and get the credit for the donation. You had to be

strong enough to know that you had made it happen. I realized that this also works well as a supervisor; always give credit to the people who make it happen. Rick moved on to the University of Missouri and I stopped to see him there while driving to Mississippi to see my first wife who received her Doctorate from Mississippi State University.

Bette Midgarden



Bette Midgarden, University Math professor became the VP for Academic Affairs while I was IT Director. Bette, David Crockett (mentioned later) and I formed a very strong team to continue to move MSUM to the forefront of computer processing. We even moved our system office in St. Paul to a relational database for institutional research. Bette was extremely intelligent, the only class she did not get an A in her college career was the class she dropped. Interestingly, it was a computer class. I believe Bette was the first woman to hold the position of Academic VP and I reported to her for three years while Crockett was doing both Administrative VP and Business Dean work. I'm sure it came from her math background, Bette took a very logical approach to situations and problems, developed possible solutions and picked the best one. I did many statistical analysis projects for her,

providing her with data to make decisions.



David Crockett

After owning his own business for several years, David Crockett came to MSUM first as the Dean of Business and then as VP of Administrative Affairs. As VP he was my supervisor, and we were a great team. Perhaps one of his greatest accomplishments was his talent for getting MSUM facility funding from the System Office and from the Legislature. David was not a morning person. I remember one day he asked if we could meet on Saturday to work on a special project. I said great, how about having breakfast at 7 o'clock. His response was 'In the morning?' We settled on 10:00. During a budget crises, David saved MSUM money by serving as Finance VP and as Business Dean for three years and did a great job of both, getting national certification for our business program.

Larry MacLeod

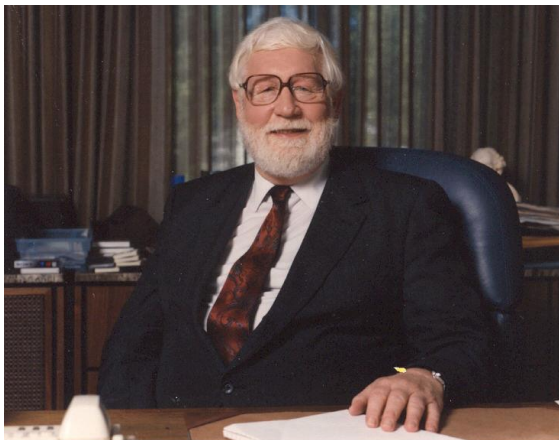


While playing pick-up basketball at Nemzek Hall at MSC in 1963, I met Larry MacLeod. Larry was the men's basketball coach at the time, and he must have seen something in me that interested him. Larry encouraged me to do my best. He became my favorite faculty member, although as a Math major, I took no classes from him. When I returned to MSC following my military service in the Air Force, Larry and I renewed our friendship. Larry served in the Army Air Corps during WWII, seeing combat in Europe. Throughout my years at MSUM and following into retirement, Larry would always take time for me. By his actions, he always reminded me why we were at MSUM, for our students.



Margorie (Marge) Corner

Marge Corner, English faculty member was another person who knew why we were at MSUM, to help our students succeed. Knowing I needed to improve my writing skills as Computer Center Director, I enrolled in Marge's Technical Report Writing graduate class. I enjoyed the class and did learn about writing in a technical field. Writing in a technical field is different from writing fiction because we needed to be more succinct and on-task. Marge was a strong supporter of women's athletics. It was at this time that I started attending women's basketball games along with men's football and basketball. During many games, Marge Beth Dille and I were the only fans other than the players' families attending games. Later, Lori Ulferts was hired as basketball coach. Lori's father was Wayne Ulferts, my high school coach and counselor.



Roland Dille

Roland Dille became president of MSC on 1 July 1968. I was honorably discharged from the Air Force on Friday, 12 July 1968 and enrolled at MSC the following Monday. After his retirement, he and I had some very interesting conversations about MSUM. The most interesting thing I learned from him was that during one of the student unrest times, the National Guard was in Dilworth ready to come to campus and restore order. Roland Dille ordered them to stay in Dilworth because he could communicate with our students and keep peace on campus. He was right, the guard was not needed. This story and others he shared with me after his retirement. He even told me about some of the mistakes he made during his tenure.



Roland Barden

Roland Barden replaced Roland Dille as campus president. Roland Barden had an academic background in the sciences and addressed problems as a scientist would. Similar to Bette Midgarden, he did careful analysis of the situation, developed possible solutions and choose the best one. His leadership was quite different from Roland Dille's; Dille had a Liberal Arts (English) background. Many of our administrators had a difficult time working with Barden's style, I did not.