

Acceptance Address-- Jean Rush

"They will say you are on the wrong road, if it is your own" (Porchia, 1969).

You may be looking at a dinosaur. Not a ferocious Tyrannosaurus Rex, which sounds a little too macho (as we say in Arizona), but perhaps a Brontosaurus, the dinosaur with the big body and long skinny neck and teeny-weeny head that spent its days eating flowers. Dinosaurs used to roam around the Southwest before the climate changed, and they all became extinct.

I didn't realize it, until I had received it, what a good barometer the McFee Award is for imminent extinction. Receiving the Award changes my professional climate. It puts me into the past tense, over the hill in a certain way; since extinction is always possible when the climate changes if there are no flowers blooming on the downward slope. Professional climatic change--as I have experienced it--is the topic of my remarks tonight.

There's a generation gap in art education, and the Award puts me on the far side of it. Up until now, on my road, I've been trying to figure out where I'm going. The Award asks me to look backward and say where I've been. It's a shock to feel myself bump into the past, but the fact is, I belong there. I'm 51 years old. I have four children from a first marriage, three sons and a daughter, all grown up; the youngest has just turned 21. Six more children that came with a second marriage have already made a grandmother three times over. My generation gap is real, and I have something real in common with the dinosaurs: age.

Age as a professional art educator may be particularly hard for me, however, and for other academics like me, because the university environment these days is geared to faculty extinction rather than to survival and growing old gracefully. Academically speaking, I'm a young professional: I hold the rank of Associate Professor. I entered academic life in middle age, as art educators of my chronological generation often did; but my professional generation, both young and old, has found a university environment facing economic hardships in which competition for recognition and rank, the academic flowers, has become intense. Many of us who are left may have worked hard professionally, but in terms of university status we have remained eternally young. During my life I have experienced a number of climatic changes. For as long as I can remember, I've known artists, art, and teachers. I grew up in Illinois in a Frank Lloyd Wright house. My mother, both an artist and an elementary school teacher, took me as a little girl to Saturday art classes and gallery tours at the Chicago Art Institute. She considered art an excellent career for women because they could work at home, thereby combining career with marriage with least effort and most reward.

I also remember with gratitude the encouraging art specialists at every level of the suburban public schools that I attend, particularly Arthur Pelz at Oak Park-River Forest High School, whom you all know as an author of the NAEA position paper *The Essentials of a Quality School Art Program* (1973). I'm here to say that art education works.

I won a scholarship from the National Scholastic Art Awards to Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington. A young instructor there named Fred Brian convinced



me that I could be a university painting teacher if I went to the University of Iowa for graduate work. In the middle 50's, Iowa enjoyed the afterglow of having originated the MFA degree; its professors were "real artists", like Mauricio Lasansky, and the program attracted inventive students like my classmate sculptor, Frank Gallo, and your new NAEA President-Elect, Chuck Qualley. Besides teaching professional studio skills, the Iowa MFA gave the equivalent of a master's degree in art history (30 graduate units); we produced both a studio exhibition and a written art history thesis.

Studying art at Iowa taught me two things about professionalism: to appreciate excellence and to work hard. The MFA program gave its students a sense of elitism: if you could succeed at Iowa, you could succeed anywhere. The price of the success was commitment to the discipline. Hard work in the service of excellence would have its proper reward. Artistic talent, as Iowans saw it, was a God-given gift: if you were unwilling to give your art work your best efforts, do something else; don't play around at being an artist.

My art studies also taught me about the status of women as university teachers of art: I don't remember any women on the regular art faculty either at Wesleyan or at Iowa. All of my role models were men. At Iowa, I felt especially honored to hold the only graduate assistantship given to a woman student in the art department. Since university policy excluded women from teaching assistantships, however, I was put to work in the slide library, repairing and filing art history slides. I graduated without any conviction that I knew how to teach.

I married an Iowa MFA student, a printmaker who was Lasansky's teaching assistant. We lived with the large Lasansky family for a year, during which our first son was born. In 1959, when the baby was six weeks old, we sailed to Florence, Italy, to spend a year living and studying on my husband's Fulbright scholarship; a fellow scholar was our Dallas general session speaker Phil Pearlstein. The following year, my husband obtained a teaching position at The University of Arizona.

When I arrived in Tucson in the fall of 1959, hoping to do some teaching myself, I found that the University had an antinepotism policy: wives of faculty members could not be hired as faculty members themselves. My husband taught printmaking; I stayed home. My mother was right about combining an art career and marriage: within five more years, I had four children (I always have been an overachiever) and a much more modest exhibition record. The antinepotism rule at The University

of Arizona was in effect for the first 12 years that I lived in Tucson.

For seven of those years I continued to think of myself as a painter. I directed my professional efforts to exhibiting, to teaching private art lessons to adults and children, to helping my husband run a business that manufactured etching presses, and to participating in starting four private schools in which art played a central role. These included a summer school of printmaking in Florence, Italy, affiliated with The University of Arizona; an adult and children's education program at the Tucson Art Center, forerunner of Tucson's present Museum of Art; an alternative school with adult art classes and with a Montessori preschool for children from two to five; and an artists' community and school called Linda Vista Ranch, located on an 80-acre former guest ranch in the foothills of the Catalina Mountains near Oracle, Arizona, 40 miles north of Tucson, known to some of you as the place where Andy Warhol filmed *Lonesome Cowboy*.

Impending divorce was the catalyst that began my formal university career. I set out to earn a secondary teaching certificate in order to support myself, but while taking certification courses at The University of Arizona I became a graduate assistant on a research study of young children's perceptual processes used in reading. I changed my goal to pursue a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology. As a result of my degree program, my research experience, and the resignation of my husband from the Department of Art (just before a lawsuit by several faculty wives caused the university to rescind its antinepotism rule), I began to teach art education classes there in 1971.

I was thrilled at having achieved my original career goal after waiting for 12 years. I was the second full-time, tenure-track woman in an art department of about 25 men. There was one other art education professor, a man who taught all of the art education majors. For three years my entire teaching load was multiple sections of the same class, an introductory art course required of all elementary education students. Eighty-five percent of all of the students that I have ever taught have been enrolled.

My experiences have been my own, and therefore different from yours. Nevertheless, the overall pattern of my professional life parallels the pattern of many women my age. I came late to the university environment. It took me a long time to change my self-image from that of a wife, mother, and painter to a university-based art educator and a researcher interested in visual perception. When I did, I gave my university the same kind of devotion previously directed at my family. I loved being part of The University of Arizona and wanted my colleagues' approval, so I tried to succeed on the university's terms: research, teaching, and service. I wanted my success to reflect well on my institution. Initially I put a low value on my abilities; I later came to want more acknowledgement of my contributions to my department. I underestimated the resistance that my change in attitude about myself would cause among some of my older male colleagues.

About eight years ago, I decided that I deserved to be paid the salary that I would earn at The University of Arizona if I were a man who had a professional record similar to mine. My research skills had allowed me to

determine, by analyzing campus salaries, that university men earned more than equally qualified women. Two years ago, the Association for Women Faculty enlisted the cooperation of university administrators to remedy the situation. A faculty review committee last spring awarded salary equity adjustments to women faculty all across campus; in the process they raised my salary by 30%, one of the most substantial increases given to any woman. My male department head has consistently paid his (now five) women faculty less than his 25 men faculty. I've confronted him publicly and unsuccessfully on this issue for the past four years in my attempt to achieve personal salary equity. By going outside the Department of Art I was successful in achieving a large salary adjustment, but the award was made despite my department head's objection that my work did not merit a higher salary. Later this year he also argued against my promotion to Full Professor on the same grounds--that my record wasn't strong enough. My department head has assured me (and university administrators) that his negative decision about promotion is absolutely unrelated to my having confronted him about salary equity and having received a high salary equity award.

Of concern for our mutual survival as art educators is this: the faculty committee in my department unanimously supported my promotion on the basis of assessments by outside reviewers. However, the promotion review hierarchy beyond the Department of Art, which consists of the dean, faculty committees at the college and university levels, and ultimately the Provost, agreed with my department head's assessment of my professional standing--rather than with the department committee and my art education outside referees.

I think this says more about the status of art education on my campus and, perhaps, on others, than it says about me. The kinds of work that art educators do have little academic value, a point that Ken Lansing made so well in his 1985 *Studies in Art Education* Invited Lecture. Most of our best art education programs, moreover, are at universities that faculty members outside of art education do not consider prestige institutions. The only exception is Stanford. Had my outside referees written their recommendations on letterheads from Harvard, Cal Tech, or MIT, perhaps internal reviewers might have found them more credible.

Receiving the McFee Award at this particular time is a paradoxical moment in my life. It represents both an acknowledgment of certain accomplishments--an acknowledgment I regard as one of the greatest honors our field can bestow, and the greatest likely ever to be bestowed on me--and my simultaneous realization that the direction of my work until now is of little interest to the men who run my university, at least when tested against campus economic and political realities.

As a result, I regard my lack of promotion at The University of Arizona as a distinction equally honorable and inseparable from the McFee Award. It represents the same condition: a change of professional climate that in a sense has jumped the generation gap and put me into the past tense. Tonight is one of those moments in life when the issues are absolutely clear. In

that clarity--the view from the top of the hill--it seems that some dinosaurs, given the chance to survive, choose to keep their landscape barren. I suggest that the rest of us wholeheartedly follow our own directions, the wrong roads, because they are the ones that lead to the flowers growing in abundance on the other side of the hill.

JOIN WOMEN'S CAUCUS-SEE PAGE 6 -