

Memories of Delores Johnson on the 50th Anniversary of the Graphic Design Program- 2020



The Interview:

When I interviewed with Bob Eicher & Carroll Bennett (both now deceased) for the job as the first and only instructor/Program Chair of the Commercial & Advertising Art Program in August of 1970, I told them in the interview that I knew they were looking to hire a man and found out later that I was a finalist with Dick Ramsell (also now deceased) who later taught Advertising classes for us as a part-time instructor. Anyway, I had been employed as a Commercial Artist for Northwestern Bell Telephone Company in their Marketing Department and was, at the time, working in the Promotion Art Department at the Des Moines Register and Tribune newspaper. Our photographer, Jerry Bruning (Bruno also deceased) came in to announce that they were starting a Commercial Art Program at DMACC. I decided to apply for the job as I had always wanted to teach. Little did I know the challenges ahead! This Art Department was made up of all creative type people including, designers, illustrators, copywriters, photographers, and a boss (Roy Follett) who was a fine artist. One of the copywriters, Bob Buckley, had a flair for teasing me constantly so he sent this recommendation letter to me as a copy (fake) of the letter he supposedly sent to Bob Eicher & Carroll Bennett. I think you will get a kick out of it. Even as recently as 2019, it was being shared by Carroll as one of his most funny facts about me. Anyway, they offered me the job even with my pilfering problem! JK! AND those spotted bugs are still in my life! Bob, btw, is now an author. He is retired and living in Marion, Iowa. We have been in touch and still both remember the time we sneaked out of the office to go to see Barbarella at the River Hills movie theater (now Wells Fargo Arena). Notice how he misspelled my name every way possible! I was the only female Program Chair in my department at DMACC. That lasted for many years!



Delores Johnson



Bob Eicher



Carroll Bennett

DeeDee: Best of luck. Thought you might want to know what Mr. Eicher will be reading right at this very moment. bb

Dr. Robert Eicher
2006 Ankeny Blvd.
Ankeny, Iowa

Dear Dr. Eicher:

It was a pleasure talking to you on the phone recently and, as requested, I am putting my recommendation of Mrs. Johnson down in writing for your files.

I had the pleasure of working with Delores at the Register and Tribune. We were both members of the Promotion Department and worked together on many various projects.

I am confident you will find her a very talented and witty person. I am reminded, for example, of the day Delores and I snuck away from work to see "Barbarella"

... and how we giggled the rest of the week. We were always doing something silly like that. She's that kind of gal.

She does, however, have one hang-up. Those goddamn bugs of hers. No doubt you've noticed by now. They're everywhere. I could only suggest you keep a keen eye on her finished projects to be certain there isn't one of those dotted beasts lurking some where.

Other than that, Deloris has a great ability to work with people and a dedication to her profession that is a credit to the world of artist-type people. I am sure her pilfering problem will pass with time.

In conclusion, Dr. Eicher, I think you have made a wise choice. I, for one, am completely at rest knowing Deloros is on your staff. She will be working in Ankeny, won't she?

Sincerely,
Robert E. Buckley

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## My First Day & More At DMAcc:

So hard to believe that the Program started 50 years ago this month. So many memories and stories to share. We started in a grocery store out in West Des Moines and shared space with Dennis Marten and the Secretarial Program. We had little classroom desks with the table and chair all one unit because the drawing boards had not been delivered. I had a huge drafting board that had a flexible top which could be adjusted to be completely upright and facing the students so I could do demonstrations. I think the brand was Mayline. They still make similar ones, although I would have no clue who in our field would use them. That first day was a complete shock to me as I had planned an activity that I thought would take all day long to complete. I had brought paper, pencils, pastels, and other materials from home because I had literally only a week to get ready for class. They had the students before they hired me. I guess they wanted to make sure the Program was going to have enrollment before they bothered to hire someone to head it up! More about my interview later! So the students arrived at the Grocery Store with all their expectations, and I gave them their first assignment which was to create a self portrait. They were done in 30 minutes! So what to do with the rest of the day.... hmmm! Well, it was time to take our first field trip! So off to the Art Center we went, and then a discussion followed. The art tables arrived the following day, so the students each assembled their own table and stained them as they were made out of wood! The odor from the stain made the business students sick so they let them go home! No kidding! In about a month, we moved out to the Ankeny campus into the Health Occupations Building which was brand new with sidewalks under construction using plywood sections to get into the building. I was in an office with Dee Benning who headed up the Operating Room Technician Program and came to know all the students and instructors in those oddly unfamiliar programs to art students. At the end of that first term, I was so overwhelmed with teaching all the Commercial Art classes that I required each of the students to create a portfolio containing projects from each of the subjects. Those courses were Life Drawing, Color & Design, and something called Design & Composition. They also took a class called Human Relations which was taught by a related instructor. That is what they called them. I had never even done a Life Drawing in my life, so I took a class at the Art Center and would go to class and teach what I learned the following day! So, it was nearing winter, plywood sidewalks and me in the building all alone grading each one of the students at the end of that first quarter. The wind came up and blew the plywood sidewalk boards across the parking lot and smashed the windshield of my 1955 green and white chevy! It was considered a total loss, and so was that first semester! The only good part was that I treasured teaching and mothering these students even if they were sometimes older than me! I picked up after them every day after they left the classroom and listened to all their life stories. We suffered through it together, and somehow, I think I learned more than they did!

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The CARE Program:

In 1971 admissions made a mistake and accepted 36 students when our lab would only hold 20 drawing tables so we had students sitting on the back counter and everywhere in that lab on the first day! I remember telling them "Look to your right and look to your left... likely one of you will not be here at the end of this term!" It was the beginning of having two sections of students for every one of the first-year classes. Yes, we did lose about 18 of those students by the time they reached their second year of training, but it sure made us think about how we might better inform the incoming students about the career field. We came up with a program we called CARE which stood for Commercial Art Realities

Experience. Every candidate for the Program spent a Saturday with us going through a learning experience which involved activities designed to inform them what they were getting into. We had our Advisory Committee there to review their portfolios and to meet each candidate and answer questions about this Career Field. We also developed a kit which had activities in Creative Imagination, Paste-up, Personality Profile, and followed up with a personal and portfolio review. It was an entire day devoted to educating them about Commercial Art. Each candidate would receive a follow-up letter of evaluation and advise to assist them in making a decision about further pursuing training in this field. These CARE days changed over the years, but our Advisory Committee instructors all gave of their Saturdays to inform and give students the information they needed to get into this challenging career field. The main objective of this, of course, was to increase the retention rate and to get students into the Program who knew what they were getting into. It ended up creating a "Waiting List" of up to a year or more before they could start and an even bigger class size. We had all kinds of experiences over the many years we held this program including one kid who came in with some lettering on a Styrofoam cup that was his portfolio and having others who brought in huge paintings and pottery. We got to know about all the Art Programs in high schools all over Iowa. As far as I know, there were no other Career & Technical programs at DMACC that EVER did anything like this. We had wonderful Advisory Committee members who were involved with our students throughout their training and even some who hired our students after graduation. Those students became members of the Advisory Committee later in their career.