

Evelyn Dickenson Swensson, President, Class of 1947

"I loved being at Belmont in the 40's and I appreciated being at a school for girls where we concentrated on our studies without competition or interference by men. Being a leader in that atmosphere gave me confidence to 'make it' in the outside world," said Evelyn Dickenson Swensson.

And make it she has. Swensson has had a varied career as an Orchestra Conductor, a Vocal Soloist, and the Director of Education for Opera Delaware. She has a lovely soprano voice that is continually in demand for recitals. In both 1992 and 1993 she performed selections from the works of Gian Carlo Menotti at his Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston. She has conducted concerts in locations as prestigious as the National Cathedral in Washington, DC; Independence Hall in Philadelphia; and Riverside Church in New York City.

Swensson, who has a special interest in music education, has done some innovative programs in conjunction with live performance of opera. Over a twenty year career with Opera Delaware, Swensson has directed and conducted numerous family operas for which she has also produced

educational study guides for teachers across the state. The Reading Council of Delaware supports her work. In 1988 she received the International Reading Council's award for bringing an operatic production of *Charlotte's Web* by Joseph Robinette and Charles Strouse to 12,000 students. She has written other adaptations of works of children's literature such as Oliver Butterworth's delightful story "The Enormous Egg" and "The Adventures of Beatrix Potter and Her Friends," based on Potter's life and stories. She is currently working on "The Phantom Tollbooth" with music by Arnold Black, lyrics by Sheldon Hayrick, and libretto by the book's author Norton Juster, an architect in Amherst, Mass., to be premiered in March, 1995 at the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, Del.

Swensson displayed musical ability at an early age and began taking piano lessons at age nine. However, she enthusiastically states that her talents were shaped by outstanding teachers while she was a student at Ward-Belmont.

in 1944-46. She studied voice under Sydney Dalton and piano and choral arrangement under Alan Irwin. She credits Irwin with introducing her to Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS



Pinafore. Four years later, in Waynesboro, Va., Swensson conducted her own production of the same opera.

Evelyn Dickenson was born in Woodstock, Virginia. Her family moved to Nashville in order to be near her father when he was called into the Fifth Armored Division in 1944. Her mother, who had

enrolled Evelyn in the High School Junior class. During the war years, her younger sister and brother attended Peabody Demonstration School and her mother even went back to school at Peabody College. When their father returned from the army, he was transferred to Virginia Technological University, Blacksburg, Va. As a result, the family moved and Evelyn completed her studies at Hollins College, a private women's college in Roanoke, Virginia.

It is a delightful coincidence that Evelyn's younger sister, Sue, lives in Nashville today. She is married to prominent Nashville architect Earl Swensson, the younger brother of Evelyn's husband Sigurd. "Sig" Swensson, who recently retired after 38 years as a manager with Dupont, is now supervisor of Birmingham Township and they live in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Sig and Earl, both studying at Virginia Tech in the late 1940s, met the Dickenson sisters, whose father was Dean of Rad/Tech (Radford College and VPI were combined briefly

during the post-war years) and the rest is history.

In addition to sustaining two full-time careers, Evelyn and Sig reared four children who have pursued a wide diversity of exciting work options. Lisa is chief curator for the State Museum of South Carolina at Columbia. Karen, who lives in Greensboro, NC, owns a business called Accents Abroad, which specializes in importing French antiques. Erik is a surgeon in Richmond, Va. Jon is a pro hockey player for the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Evelyn's memories of Ward-Belmont are very much what one hears from many fond alumnae. Everything was done beautifully, she says, and she saw first hand the elegance, politeness, and nice manners of Southerners. The food was fabulous and she still has and uses her Ward-Belmont cookbooks. She can picture the round tables, each with a hostess/teacher, and smell the cinnamon rolls served at lunch. The Ward-Belmont atmosphere inspired one to want to dress up and behave like a lady.

It is obvious that Evelyn Dickenson Swensson has carried with her the spirit of elegance and accomplishment that she learned at Ward-Belmont. *

by Susan W. Knowles

Leave Your Legacy For Generations to Come!

You have gone from Ward-Belmont into the world and have taken your values, accomplishments, education, leadership abilities, feminine qualities of grace and kindness, and concern for social issues. You have left an indelible mark wherever you have gone and have made a priceless contribution to society.

Now it is time to document your contributions and leave your legacy at Belmont for the thousands of people who come through the doors, and the thousands of future students who will grace these halls.

A permanent exhibit, which will be called The Heritage Project, will capture

the way you were, who you became and illuminate the virtues and values that were at the heart of Ward-Belmont.

The permanent exhibit will provide a shining example for future students and teachers by paying tribute to the individuals who influenced your thinking and affected your life.

The permanent exhibit will provide an opportunity to memorialize family members or friends who are gone.

In the next few months, we will begin to raise monies for the Heritage Project. You will be given the opportunity to contribute by mail, phone or through a personal visit.

Giving Levels

North Front Society

A gift of \$1,000 or more will provide:

- A commemorative opportunity to sponsor a photographic portrait in honor of a distinguished Ward-Belmont alumna, teacher or administrator. (Subject to approval by Heritage Committee.)
- Special invitation to the Exhibit Grand Opening reception.
- Complimentary admission to historic Belmont Mansion.

Singing Tower Society

A gift of \$500 or more will provide:

- Your name or listing of your gift in honor of a friend, family member, teacher or administrator on an Honor Roll of Donors to be displayed in Exhibit Hall.
- Special invitation to the Exhibit Grand Opening reception.
- Complimentary admission to historic Belmont Mansion.

Acklen Society

A gift of \$100 or more will provide:

- Listing as a donor in a Heritage Project publication.
- Special invitation to the Exhibit Grand Opening reception.

Hyphen Society

A gift up to \$100 will provide:

- Special invitation to the Exhibit Grand Opening reception.

A Tribute to Barbara Shields Kelley

Barbara Shields Kelley ('35) died on September 1, 1993. She bequeathed \$5,000 to the Ward-Belmont Restoration Project at Belmont University in her will.

Mrs. Kelley loved Ward-Belmont and came to Nashville to the 1986 Reunion. A family friend and executor of her estate, Mr. H. J. Schmidt Jr., was kind enough to share some information about Mrs. Kelley's life. She was a shining example of the Ward-Belmont graduate who was well-educated, accomplished, devoted to friends and family and made a significant contribution to the community in which she lived.

After graduating from Ward-Belmont in 1935, Mrs. Kelley attended Vanderbilt University and graduated with a B.A. degree. She was trained as a pilot and, in turn, trained pilots in air navigation in Nashville during World War II. She was in the Civil Air Patrol and flew search and rescue missions.

Miss Shields visited her mother in California in 1942 and decided to move there

soon afterward. She went to work for North American Aircraft Company as a draftsman for P-51 bombers. She married a McDonald Douglas employee by the



Roland and Barbara Dillihunt

name of Roland Dillihunt. Together they ran a very popular ice cream parlor in Pacific Palisades in Los Angeles. On hot nights it was the place to be.

After Mr. Dillihunt's death in 1950, she worked as Assistant Dean of Women at UCLA. The 60's demonstrations forced the administration to become non-sexist and the Dean of Women's Office was closed. She then became a graduate advisor in the History

Department and began a long, happy association with graduate students.

Mr. Schmidt relates that she was very well liked and quite popular with the students because she could successfully help them through the labyrinth of graduate study.

In addition to her position as graduate advisor, Mrs. Kelley was in charge of the Panhellenic Council at UCLA, and the young women were enthusiastic in their remarks about how effective she was.

Later, she married John Kelley. Sadly, both he and her only daughter preceded her in death.

After retiring, Mrs. Kelley remained active at UCLA. She founded the Friends of History; held Salons; was a docent at the J. Paul Getty Museum, serving as program chairman, education chairman and secretary. When she died, the UCLA Retirees Association wrote a moving tribute to her.

Mrs. Kelley made a noble contribution to the world around her. We are touched and proud that she remembered Ward-Belmont. *

Excerpts from the Scrapbook of Mary Stewart Carter ('19)

Friday was quite a milestone in the history of Ward-Belmont, with the excitement caused by the soldiers who are lanch (excuse me, dinner) with us. About 550 soldiers of the 114th, who have just returned from France, covered with glory, were the favored ones. They arrived about 12:30 and were welcomed by flags, banners, bands and people. ...We surely were glad we were college girls! The Seniors, Senior Middle and college special officers lined up on the south front gallery and conducted the men to their places in the dining room. ...A lovely dinner was served them. ...The soldiers all agreed that dinner at Ward-Belmont was worth a few months of fighting in France.



"Mai Noy" Reminisces

by Mary Kay Carmichael

Mai Flournoy Van Deren Van Arsdall—she is an interesting as her name.

We called Mrs. Van Arsdall a few days before our trip to Centre College. Kelly and I had been scheming and dreaming about the Ward-Belmont historic exhibit and we wanted to talk it over with some alumnae in Central Kentucky.

Mrs. Van Arsdall graciously invited us to have tea at her home.

Mr. Benedict would have been proud. Mai Noy Van Arsdall was the perfect hostess. She served tea and coffee and cookies and created an atmosphere that was relaxed, fun and friendly. We sat in her kitchen and felt as if we were

being entertained by royalty. We listened to stories and laughed and talked. Two hours later, we left feeling like we had been at Ward-Belmont with "Cayce," Sig and Mai Noy. "We used to die laughing," Mai Noy said. "We wore bloomers, and if your bloomers and stockings didn't match, you got a demerit. A girl could get expelled for smoking. We went to church in a bus, dressed in black, and, of course, with no make-up."

In spite of the strictness of Ward-Belmont, it was apparent that Mai Noy loved the school. After graduating in 1933, she went back as Alumnae Secretary. She was in charge of "The Hyphen" and Milestones. (See "A Trip Down Nostalgia Lane" on the back page.) She was also responsible for publicity and alumnae relations. From 1937 through 1939 she traveled and visited alumnae and prospective students for Ward-Belmont. Later in her career she taught at Georgetown College.

What was special about Ward-Belmont? Mai Noy did not hesitate to tell us that the school was way ahead of its time. It was so good academically that W-B was one of thirteen schools whose graduates could get into the Seven Sister Schools without an entrance exam. In fact, the English instructor, Miss Linda

Wray was so outstanding that English was a breeze when Mai Noy and other Ward-Belmont girls went on to Duke University.

In addition to the fine academic preparation, Mai Noy related that Ward-Belmont helped its students to establish a way of life of manners and graciousness.

As I read back through my notes from our visit with Mrs. Van Arsdall, familiar themes were evident. She talked about the same qualities that we have heard from so many other alumnae. She said:

- At Ward-Belmont there was an emphasis on excellence.

- We learned study skills that carried us through the hardest colleges.

- Ward-Belmont was religiously oriented. There was not a specific doctrine taught, but there was an emphasis on values which was taught in programs and in chapel service.

- We were introduced to good music and learned to appreciate fine art. Cultural enrichment was a priority.

- We all had to play sports, whether or not we were athletic. We played water polo, basketball, field hockey, and jumped in with both feet.

- We never felt isolated. There were lots of options for extracurricular activities.

- The goal was to prepare girls for life—culturally,

academically, physically and spiritually.

Ward-Belmont reached its goals in Mrs. Van Arsdall. She is accomplished, kind and gracious, relaxed and funny. Kelly and I felt a real fondness for her after our pleasant Sunday afternoon visit. When I shared my experience with Mary Elizabeth Cayce, she gave me some new insights. "Mai Noy," she said, "was a devoted wife to an invalid husband for many years. She suffered through the death of her son and her only grandchild in a boating accident. She has not had an easy life but has maintained her optimism and devotion to friends and family and community and is a blessing to all who know her."

Mai Noy Van Arsdall is like so many other Ward-Belmont girls that I have met. She is well educated, a career woman, a devoted family member and a gracious and cultured person. It is my hope that we can capture the essence of her and her classmates through the Heritage Project.

The latest news on Mrs. Van Arsdall:

She says, "I'm busy as all can be. I can't stay home long enough to knit. I am involved in too many organizations and I have new twin grandchildren. All babies are cute, but this little boy and girl are really cute!" *

A Paean to Robbie Shackelford

Ward-Belmont's pantheon of outstanding teachers includes many accomplished faculty who have lighted the path of achievement for their students. One of those, Robbie Allison Shackelford, who began teaching mathematics in 1928, went on to a second teaching career at Vanderbilt University, where she stayed until 1970, at first encountering many Ward-Belmont alumnae as college students.

Shackelford, who now lives outside of Nashville with her daughter, reveals the sharp mind, bold attitude, and clever wit that her former pupils will remember. In a recent interview, she delighted in telling tales of so many years ago. Shackelford must have been the first Nashville "superwoman" of her generation. She did it all, conducting a full and challenging career throughout



Robbie Shackelford, today, at age 88.

her life while married and raising a family.

Needless to say, she is brilliant. She entered Vanderbilt in 1922 at age 16 after graduating from Hume-Fogg—at that time Nashville's only public high school. She graduated third in her high school class.

After four years at Vanderbilt, majoring in French and Spanish with a minor in

by Susan W. Knowles

mathematics, Robbie Allison took a position at East Carolina Teachers College in Greenville, NC. In 1927 Robbie Allison began at Ward-Belmont as the dean's assistant and a "day teacher." She taught in both the high school and college.

She found her niche teaching mathematics in 1928. The following year she married James R. Shackelford, Jr., an osteopathic doctor. Their wedding, July 6, 1929, was the first wedding in Scarritt College's chapel. Ever the trailblazer, she recalls going to Scarritt College President Cuninggim requesting special permission to use the chapel. She was granted her wish under the condition that no decorations be used inside the sanctuary.

Robbie Shackelford, who had wanted to teach since she was six years old, continued to

work after her marriage. She told her husband that she didn't like to cook or clean house, so they agreed to use her salary to pay a seven-day-per-week cook, who came before breakfast and stayed until after dinner. When she took time out from teaching, 1935-1941, to have their children, the arrangement continued and she had assistance at home. James III was born in 1937 and Allison in 1940.

Ward-Belmont persuaded her to return in 1941. After three years more at Ward-Belmont, Shackelford again took time out for her young family. When she returned to teaching, it was at Vanderbilt University in 1946, and she was one of only two women on the faculty. When she began, there were twenty-five students to a class. By the time she retired in 1970, she was commanding lecture halls filled with 200 students at a time and had become a tenured faculty member.

Shackelford says that she learned to be sarcastic at Vanderbilt as a way to keep order in the classroom. She was

so hard, she says, that only one student ever intimidated her. That student was a Ward-Belmont student. She chuckles as she recalls the name of one who was so dogged and whose manner was so gruff that she could prevent the continuation of the class until she understood the lesson.

Robbie Allison Shackelford is a proud part of Ward-Belmont's history. As a young teacher engaged in her own life, she was a wonderful role model for Ward-Belmont students. She is a woman who believed in her own abilities and never wavered. Her personal accomplishments are great. By example, she refuted the notion that women typically do poorly in mathematics. While she never applied for a faculty position, she ended her career as a tenured faculty member at Vanderbilt University while holding only the B.A. degree. She had a long, happy marriage and reared a family while teaching full-time. And she used her considerable intellect to teach others, preparing them for the mathematical/computer revolution to come. *