Faculty Profile: Atara Macnamara

One of this year’s new faces on the faculty is Atara Macnamara, assistant professor of Psychology. A one-time resident of Spokane, Macnamara was raised on the fabled shoreline of Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. She graduated from high school near the nation’s capitol and went to work as a keypunch operator.

For those too young to remember a keypunch, it was a machine that manually prepared data for the rustic computers of the day. “Actually,” Macnamara explained, “I was the first woman to work in the computer section of a large corporation. “The computers were big in those days,” she recalled. “As big as this building and they were largely the domain of men.” That, she knew, would change!

Also a product of the generation characterized as “the hippies,” Macnamara one day simply decided to move to California. She packed her car and without telling a soul hit the road for the golden shores of the Pacific.

She ended up in Santa Monica where she landed another keypunch job, found a place to live, and finally called her parents to let them know she was well and happy. While she lived in southern California, Macnamara learned to sail, bought a couple of successive sailboats, and “sailed up and down the coast.”

She also took some college credits and got married. Those several accomplishments, she hurriedly explained, were not necessarily listed in order of their importance.

Her husband was a publisher and a dealer in fine, rare books. The couple moved into a cabin in the town of Sierra Madre, where Macnamara turned her attention to book designing. It was a happy fit for her skills and interests.

“We worked together for a while, but I wanted my book designs to go a more artistic direction,” Macnamara noted. “So I bought an old Vandercook SP15 Cylinder press.” The antique is still a favorite of high-end artistic press shops, despite the need for mostly hand-set type and a sheet-by-sheet hand feed system for pages.

“I had three books reach the top 50 nationally for design and printing,” she confessed with obvious delight. She bought an old hot-lead linotype machine to add flexibility to her small shop.

She and her husband later moved their operations to Spokane. There, Macnamara returned to college and earned a BA in psychology. As her life situation changed, Macnamara spent the next 11 years in college, either studying at the University of Utah or teaching in Idaho. At the UofU in Salt Lake City she earned an MS and PhD degrees in social psychology, which she prefers to call “positive psychology.”

Macnamara came to Centralia College to interview for a job and liked what she found. “I was so impressed with the people who interviewed me,” she said. “And I found the community warm and inviting. I knew I wanted to be a part of this college.” She also confessed that the weather was part of her reason for coming here. “I don’t really like hot, hot weather,” she smiled. “I enjoy a little rain and cool, so both the place and the climate offered me a lot.”

She characterized her feelings about Centralia College as, “I’ve just finished one of the happiest periods of my life. I feel this job was created just for me, in a place where people are genuinely interested in each other.”
Dixie Rogerson-Bill again featured in winter art exhibit on campus

One of the area’s best-known and most respected artists has returned for another holiday period show in the gallery of Washington Hall. Dixie Rogerson-Bill’s paintings and prints hang in countless homes across the county, adding a note of whimsy and a special “lived-in” look to their surroundings. They are joyful, colorful, and often touching pages from a generally small town or country perspective that Dixie knows and captures in a most pleasant way.

Although Rogerson-Bill is recognized as a skilled and accomplished artist, her greatest success—and her favorite pursuit—is an art form described as “naïve.” The Rogerson-Bill works touch a common chord in almost every viewer, making Dixie Rogerson-Bill again featured in winter art exhibit on campus almost every painting or lithograph something of an old friend to whoever may be looking at it.

This year an extraordinary number of pieces are on display in Washington Hall, with several in each division of the gallery corridor. Most of the lithographs in this show are available in Dixie’s studio in Centralia, so those who simply must have one for a gift can call her directly to arrange a new home for one of their favorites.

Be sure to drop by and spend some time with the Rogerson-Bill exhibit off the lobby of Washington Hall. It is expected to remain on display until early January. You can get information on any of her works by calling 360 736-5584.

500 Business Week students come to Centralia College next week—

One of the most aggressive hands-on business leadership training programs available to high school students runs Dec. 15-19 at Centralia College. The week-long Business Week offering will involve more than 500 students from Centralia, WF West, and Winlock high schools.

This year’s Business Week is expected to see the largest turnout of high school participants since it began in the area seven years ago. This is the first year the program will be staged on the Centralia College campus.

Business Week is the bringing together of business leaders and educators to teach high school juniors about free enterprise, leadership, teamwork, ethics, preparing for the future, and other skills and knowledge critical for success in any career.

“This program gives young people a tremendous opportunity to find out what it takes to be successful, not just in business but in life,” said Larry McGee. He and Vernadel Peterson, president of The Chamber, are prime architects of the Twin Cities-area program. The program will replace the normal high school course work for the week and students will be in sessions in buildings throughout the Centralia College campus Monday through Friday. The leadership at the three high schools is committed to the program and all three schools have actively been involved in planning for Business Week.

“A strength of the program is that students work directly with leaders in business and non-profit organizations from the Twin Cities to create a life-changing experience. It’s education that places the students in an actual business environment and they learn what it takes to bring a product to market,” said McGee.