

IN MEMORIAM
MARY E. GEARING

Seldom is it given to an individual to serve an institution and a state with the distinction that characterized the service to The University of Texas of Mary R. Gearing. The General Faculty herein expresses its sorrow over the death and its grateful appreciation of her distinguished, devoted and unselfish service.

Miss Gearing inaugurated one of the first home economics programs in secondary education in Texas in the Houston Public Schools in 1906. Later she became Head of the Department of Domestic Science at New York University. In January 1912 she was brought to The University of Texas to teach courses in Domestic Ecology. Virtually her only resources at that time were her own ideas, ideals, her faith in herself and in Texas, and her ability to bring things to pass. The first courses she taught in a two-room shack but, through her ceaseless efforts, long-time planning, and patience with small gains, the shack was gradually enlarged and the courses grew in number and in popularity until a School of Domestic Economy (later called the School of Home Economics) offering a Bachelor of Science degree was developed. When the University organization was changed the then called "School" became a department of the College of Arts and Sciences.

At the time of her retirement in 1942 the Department of Home Economics had a curriculum providing a major in Homemaking as an integral part of a general University education, six professional majors leading to a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics, a well developed graduate program, and a food technology research division. The organization, building and equipment which she left to her associates and successors and the state wide - even nationwide - confidence in her and her work furnish the most convincing proof of her success and stand as an enduring monument to her memory.

Miss Gearing's pioneer spirit was active not only in Texas but throughout the country. She was a member of and a moving force in a small group of educators interested in the education of

women for more satisfactory home and family living. This group met yearly at Lake Placid, New York, from 1906 to 1910 and formed the nucleus for the American Home Economics Association) an organization which now numbers more than 16,000 members, and which elected her in 1939 to Honorary Life Membership, in appreciation of her contributions to its development. An additional recognition came at the time of her retirement in her election to National Honorary membership in Omicron Nu, an honor society in home economics.

During Miss Gearing's early days at the University she was also on the staff of the Extension Division. In that position she rendered a unique and valuable service to the institution and to the women of the State through the "Home Economics Weeks". Under her intelligent planning the University sponsored meetings in Austin and other cities of the State and invited national authorities to speak on topics related to the cultural, artistic, economic, social, and health problems of the home.

The University granted her a leave-of -absence during World War I to work with Herbert Hoover in the War Food Administration. Again in 1929 she was called to Washington to participate in the White House Conference on Child Care and Protection.

Miss Gearing saw as a major function of Home Economics the education of women in the care and training of young children in the home. Under her administration the first nursery school in Texas was established in the Home Economics Department at the University to serve as a laboratory for the training of prospective parents. This served as a stimulus to her efforts in 1930 to start a campaign to raise funds for a Foundation for Child Welfare and Parent Education at the fare and Parent Education at the University of Texas. Her work in this direction was just beginning to show financial results when the Depression temporarily halted attempts to raise funds. Her own generosity and her confidence in the ultimate success of the campaign prompted her bequest of her home to the University with the stipulation that it be sold and the proceeds used "to further the aims and purposes of the Child Welfare and Parent Education Foundation of the University of Texas." Her hope and plan had been that after her retirement she would devote her time and

energies to achieving the goal of a fund of \$500,000 for "The Foundation." In recognition of her contribution to her profession and to this particular endeavor the Texas Home Economics Association in 1941 presented The University a scholarship in her name, which provided tuition for two years for a child at the Nursery School.

One of her major interests, and perhaps her greatest material contribution to the University, was in connection with its building program. From 1925-1937, throughout the period of bond issues, she was a member of the Faculty Building Committee, untiring in her attendance at meetings, fruitful in ideas, sound in her judgment. In particular the pattern set and the standards held in the furnishings in the University Residential Halls reflect her rare taste and artistic ability.

Personally she was extremely modest, and her aversion to publicity was almost an obsession; yet, throughout her life she proved herself a woman of dauntless courage, indomitable will, tireless perseverance, and the highest sense of integrity and loyalty. Dominating her philosophy in teaching and in her contacts with people was her interest in the development of individuals. A large part of her happiness was in association with groups of young people in her home where the traits of the graceful and gracious hostess were ever apparent.

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