

IN MEMORIAM
LORA LEE PEDERSON

Professor Lora Lee Pederson, one of the real pioneers in social work education, was born on August 15, 1904 in Matador, Texas. She died in Austin, Texas in August, 1966. Between these dates she produced an amazing record of professional and human service which left her influence on countless numbers of men, women, and children from all walks of life in communities throughout the country.

Miss Pederson was a person of great warmth and depth of feeling, with a ready sense of humor. People responded to her warmth because of her basic concern about each person she met. She communicated with people at their own level but with no suggestion of condescension. Her love of beauty was reflected in her home and her garden which she shared freely with her many friends. A pioneer in social work education, she was flexible and willing to consider change, yet at the same time she would cling tenaciously to the things she held basic and fundamental. Her friends were many and came from all ages and groups and all walks of life. Her friendships with children were truly remarkable. She loved them and thoroughly enjoyed sharing their special joys and interests. And children, who are so very quick at sensing who is phony and who is not, responded to her sincere interest and love with deep and lasting relationships.

Students quickly sensed and responded to her interest in them and concern for them as individuals. When former students returned to the campus or saw school people across the state, they always visited her or asked to be remembered to her. She never failed to remember their names, no matter how long it had been since they had been in school. Her commitment to people permeated her whole life. When a friend or colleague was ill, she was always the first to appear. Her love of the profession and of the School of Social Work was such that no assignment was either too large or too small for her to give fully of herself in working on it. She had a deep religious faith which included love of her church and natural expressions of faith in her daily

activities.

Professor Pederson graduated from Sayre High School, Sayre, Oklahoma. She began her college education at Oklahoma A and M College and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Oklahoma City University in 1926. She held two graduate degrees, a M.A. from Scarritt College in sociology and a professional social work degree from the School of Social Service Administration, the University of Chicago. She undertook additional graduate study at The University of Chicago. Her educational career was marked by honors. She received the Stockwell scholarship at Oklahoma City University and graduated there Magna Cum Laude. She was awarded the Leila Houghteling Fellowship at The University of Chicago.

Miss Pederson began her social work career as Girls Club Director and Head Resident of Wesley House, a neighborhood center, in Nashville, Tennessee in 1928. After serving six years in this capacity, she became Supervisor of Casework at Spofford Receiving Home, a child welfare agency, in Kansas City, Missouri. She became Supervisor of the Foster Home Division of the Missouri State Department of Child Welfare the following year, 1936. She left this position in 1937 to begin her distinguished career in social work education.

Professor Pederson had the distinction of providing leadership in the establishment of two professional schools of social work. After serving for five years as Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Social Work at Scarritt College, she became Professor and first Director of the Nashville (now the University of Tennessee) School of Social Work in 1942. Her tremendous impact on students, faculty, and others associated with the Nashville School during her eight years of service there is suggested by the reference to her "clear vision, depth of wisdom, patience, a sustaining sense of humor, thoroughness, and devotion to a cause" by the Board of Directors of that School's Alumni Association in a memorial resolution drafted soon after her death.

Miss Pederson began her duties as first Director of the School of Social Work at The University of Texas in 1950. Under her leadership, the School was accredited in 1952, the minimum time possible for such an accomplishment. In addition to her many administrative

responsibilities, Miss Pederson taught several social work courses, and served in a number of important capacities in the University community. With all this, she was never too busy to provide personal encouragement and help to individuals whoever and wherever they might be.

Professor Pederson was in great demand as a speaker, discussant, and workshop or institute leader. She taught many public welfare and other social service workers in short-term sessions in more than ten states. She presented significant papers at such meetings as the International Convention of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority, the National Conference on Social Welfare, regional conferences of the American Public Welfare Association, conferences of the Southern Regional Education Board, and countless meetings of state social welfare, health, and educational agencies and organizations.

Miss Pederson was called upon often to serve on important committees and commissions. She was a member of the Commission on Accreditation and the Commission on Graduate Schools of the Council on Social Work Education, the Regional Commission on Research and Training in Mental Health and the Social Work Commission of the Southern Regional Education Board, the Governor's Committee on Aging and the Governor's Committee on Mental Health. She served on the Board of Stewards of the University Methodist Church in Austin.

Her dedication to the profession of social work and her concern that it develop increasing strength and maturity led her to take active leadership in professional organizational affairs at the local, regional and national levels. One of her most important contributions was in the area of professional ethics. She received a grant from the National Association of Social Work in 1961 to undertake a pilot project concerning the ethics of social workers. She served as member and Chairman of the local professional association Committee on Ethics for several years. She was in the process of preparing an ethics case book when death terminated this important endeavor. Miss Pederson held office and served on numerous committees of the National Association of Social Workers. She occupied many leadership roles in the Texas Social Welfare Association.

Professor Pederson provided consultation to numerous community, state, regional, and

national organizations throughout her professional career. Included was consultation to the Council on Social Work Education, the Social Security Board, the Southern Regional Education Board, the National Commission on Christian Social Concerns of the Methodist Church, the Southwestern Regional Association of the National Federation of Settlements, and many state and local social agencies.

Many awards and honors were presented to Miss Pederson in recognition of her distinguished professional and humane contributions. She was elected to membership in Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, presented the annual award for leadership and contributions to social work by the Texas Social Welfare Association, the annual outstanding service award in family life by the Texas Council on Family Life, and the Woman of the Year award by the Austin Soroptionist Club. She was included in Who's Who in America, Who's Who of American Women, and Who's Who in the South and Southwest. There is no doubt but that she appreciated most the honor bestowed on her by ex-students of the School of Social Work who during her lifetime created the Lora Lee Pederson Scholarship Fund.

Professor Pederson was the editor of Regional Planning for Social Work Education published in 1950, and author of a number of professional articles and book reviews.

The great loss felt so deeply by all who knew Lora Lee Pederson perhaps is expressed best by Dr. Jack Otis, Director of the School of Social Work, "In a period when universities too often have become impersonal mechanisms, Miss Pederson was known and loved by students, faculty, and staff as someone who genuinely cared for them. To Miss Pederson this was of even greater significance than her professional achievements. It is because of these special qualities that all of us feel her loss so keenly."

Professors C. Laughton, Joseleen Lockhart and Robert L. Sutherland (Chairman)

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