My Glassboro State College Teaching Years

Although I had been a graduate teaching assistant for many years before, my actual teaching career began at Glassboro State College (now Rowan University) in 1972. when I took a position to replace a professor who had become ill. I began by teaching courses in mathematics such as advanced algebra and calculus. My wife Joanne began teaching at the college as well. Soon, I began to teach various computer courses, something I had never done before.

I soon realized that the way one teaches is just as important as what one teaches. To a great degree the education of a student is a partnership between the professor and the student. Realizing that after a student graduates and seeks a job in the real world, that they must essentially sell themselves to an interested listener, I began many classes requiring the students to write a resume about themselves. If they had not decided the type of career they wished to pursue, I asked them to pick a likely choice and use that as the basis for their resume. This became a regular homework assignment which I collected and analyzed with them. My goal was to foster a relationship of mutual respect between me and my students.

As time went on, I began to teach only computer science courses. Many of these courses could be taught in a project-oriented manner. By that I mean, toward the end of the class, a major project was assigned, teams were chosen and each team picked a leader. The team would then meet and divide the project, one part for each student. Students would work on their parts, and the team would get together and assemble the parts into a complete solution. This would then be tested and debugged. Finally, each team would fully document their project.

Since each faculty member was expected to advise a certain number of students to guide them through their education, I came to know many personally. To this day, I maintain contact with some and follow their careers. A few names come to mind: Roseanne, Linda, Fred, Donna, Jon, Rudy, Paul, Ted, Jema, Debbie, Sue, John and Dayton. There are many others. Some became teachers, some joined well-known companies in various capacities, and a few started their own businesses. Their success is my success, and to this day, it is very rewarding to see the results of mt teaching years.

After teaching several years, it became apparent that, in addition to a major in mathematics, a computer major was also needed. As a consequence, several faculty members got together at my house and began to develop a master plan for a major in computer science. Over the next few weeks this proposal was refined considerably. It was then submitted to the state for approval. After approval, the major was established and the department name was changed to Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. Eventually, the two departments separated. Today, the major in computer science is a dynamic program with a large student enrollment.

As I look back over the years of teaching, many faculty members come to mind. In math and computer science: John Sooy, Fran Masat, Don Stone, Seth Bergmann, Tom Osler and Jack Cimprich. In the Music School, my good friend Bert Greenspan is someone I speak with regularly today. Marvin Creamer in the Geography Department, who sailed around the earth without the use of navigation instruments, became a good friend. He is the subject of another memoir. Joanne and I frequently played Bridge with Rose Glassberg, the head of the local branch of the American Federation of Teachers, and Muriel Onni from the Romance Languages Department,

In 1982, as I was about to leave my teaching position, the idea occurred to me that it would be very interesting to bury a time capsule to be opened in fifty years. The math computer science club undertook this project. A 6 ft long piece of PVC sewer pipe of diameter 12 inches was purchased, painted, filled with nitrogen gas and a drying agent, capped at both ends and buried six feet down. It is to be opened in the year 2032. I hope to be there!

I close this memoir by saying, "These years were an important part of my life."

Article in February 18, 1980 Philadelphia Bulletin

Bulletin Photo by Carl A. Bro

Benjamin Trimble, an assistant professor at Glassboro State College, works at home in Turnersville as he instructs student

Rudy Borkowski Jr. on the computer. Trimble's wife uses other computer to communicate with a student on campus.

Students can call terminals

Professors teach with computers

By THERESA J. DANNA
Special to The Bulletin

Turnersville — A red telephone rings in a small upstairs room at the home of Benjamin and Joanne Trimble, but neither of them moves to answer.

One of their two computers answers instead. At the other end of the line 10 miles away, a Glassboro State College student begins programming a homework assignment, which shows up on a terminal screen at the Trimbles' as well as on the student's terminal.

The Trimbles are assistant professors of math and computer science at Glassboro State College. The 75 students they're teaching this semester sign up for half-hour intervals to use the Trimbles' personal micro-computers.

As a string of symbols appear on the home terminal, Joanne interrupts by typing in a message to the student, explaining an error to the student. The student can then respond.

The Trimbles say they spent nearly $16,000 for a total of seven computer components:

two memory banks, two terminals and one printer that is used for both systems.

They purchased the first computer in the fall of 1978 and began using it to help students last spring. Many of their students enrolled in a field-experience course show up at the Trimbles' two-story townshouse to use the computers.

The Trimbles also use their home equipment for business consulting. Thus far clients' fees have paid for one of the computers, Trimble said.

"The professional experience that we've gained and all of the help that the students have received has more than equalled our investment," said Trimble, 39. He sais he is also using the computer to record a book he is writing.

Mrs. Trimble, 40, is an advisor for the math department at the college and she uses the system to record what courses each student has taken and what requirements must still be filled.

"The advantage of our system is that stu-

dents can do certain projects on ours [that] they can't do on the college's," Mrs. Tri[mble] said.

"We want them to learn as much as [they] can," she added.

Her husband added that "the college te[rmi]nals are hooked up to a main system in [New] Brunswick, which the students never g[et to] see." He said he can pack up his small [sys]tems and carry them to class for prac[tical] demonstrations.

"Besides, the state system is unrelia[ble]," he said.

In the past, terminals would shut off [while] students were using them and there wa[s as] much down time as up time, Trimble sai[d. He] said it wasn't a "hands-on" system. The [ter]minals were in Glassboro, but the rest [of the] computer was in New Brunswick.

Trimble said the college is now install[ing a] new computer system and that those [prob]lems should no longer occur.

Even so, he said, he still expects their [home] system to get a lot of work.