

Tacoma, Washington,  
April 12, 1938.

GREETINGS FROM A MEMBER OF THE FIRST CLASS, JUNE, 1879;

To those who are gathering on May 3rd to do honor to the River Falls Normal. It is "Alma Mater" for those of us in that first class under Warren D. Parker, the first president.

Many changes have come in these fifty-nine years. In the first place, we were a class of six, three young men and three young women, as contrasted with the number that have now to be counted in two, three or more figures.

We were a varied assortment of youth on that first day, many coming from two to four miles, but all filled with enthusiasm for what we hoped was in store for us. We were first gathered in the large assembly room of the old Normal, the one that was burned later, but after a few days of exams in various subjects, we were finally divided into five sections, number five being given first place. The primary children were gathered in a room on the first floor.

One of the first incidents that stands out in my memory was our first fire drill when we were told to march down the two flights of stairs at the sound of the gong. As many from the country had brought their lunch in tin pails and in the wild scramble to get to the outside door, many of these were dropped and many of us dropped our hats and coats, etc. It was not an orderly march but a wild scramble to see who could get to the outside first. In later years I often wondered what the teachers thought of this mob that they saw. They must have realized that their first task would be to teach us that "Order is Heaven's first law."

Our courses of study were quite different from today. While we gave a full measure of attention to reading, writing and arithmetic, most of the sciences had to be compassed in a six week's course. In astronomy we learned what the text books gave us with a few practical lessons, as we climbed to the roof on cold, starry nights in winter and had the Big and Little Dippers pointed out with Venus and other celebrities. But we learned these lessons thoroughly and I think none of us ever forgot them. And at nearly eighty, I think I can still point them out.

I would like to say a word in passing, in appreciation of that first faculty. First was the president, Warren D. Parker, a man of high ideals and rare executive ability. No student ever forgot him. And his faculty were men and women who gave of their best to help us along the road we had chosen to travel.

The most startling change that I think of is the difference in the dresses that we girls wore. We honored our graduation day by wearing black silk dresses with modest trains that swept the floor clean as we

walked. These were made festive by knots of red ribbon and each had a corsage bouquet of bright red geraniums, although I doubt if that word was in our vocabulary. When I see the knee length dress of the sweet girl graduate of today, I can only exclaim, "Times do change." I think the three boys wore the conventional black.

Yes, verily, much water has gone over the dams of time since 1879. I will not weary you further. I am now an old lady of almost eighty and living on the shore of lovely Puget Sound. Many of my happiest memories are of those years at Dear Old Normal, I loved it then - I love it now.

Good-bye,

"God bless us all," says Tiny Tim.

Hattie Powell Ensign.

HPE/A