

A Tribute To A Man And To Agnes Scott

When he came there in 1905, fifty-nine years ago, it had been only 16 years since it was Decatur Female Seminary, and it would be two more years before Agnes Scott Institute would become Agnes Scott College - the first Georgia school and the second independent woman's college in the South to be invited to join the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

Christian W. Dieckmann was 24 then. Tall, straight and possessed of music degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati's Metropolitan School of Music, he was sought for Agnes Scott music faculty by Joseph Maclean, then department head. Fully as important as his outstanding musical qualifications was that Dieckmann met the last half of point 3 of the "Agnes Scott Ideal" - "thoroughly qualified and consecrated teachers."

Forty-five years later, in 1950, after heading the Agnes Scott Music Department for most of those years and teaching organ and music theory to three generations of Agnes Scott girls, he became professor emeritus. Later, he became organist emeritus of Atlanta's Redeemer Lutheran Church, where his choirs for 23 years held his ability, tact and great dignity in something approaching awe.

Dieckmann will not be forgotten. As long as Agnes Scott girls and the thousands of alumnae gather for chapel or for annual Founders Day ceremonies, held each year on Feb. 22 in remembrance of Col. George W. Scott, voices will be lifted in song - particularly "God of the Marching Centuries," the Agnes Scott hymn, written by Mr. Dieckmann in honor of the 1925 centennial of Decatur Presbyterian Church, "mother church" of Agnes Scott. The hymn tune Mr. Dieckmann called "Gaines" in tribute to Dr. Frank H. Gaines, first president of Agnes Scott. The words are by the Rev. D. P. McGeachy, then pastor of the church.

There were two Mr. Dieckmanns, but there was no duplicity. There was the always proper, always dignified and understanding Mr. Dieckmann known to hundreds of music students - the Mr. Dieckmann who won two national first place and first-place tie awards in hymn contests sponsored by Monmouth College. There was the Mr. Dieckmann who in 1914 was a charter member and founder of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, in which he held the degree of fellow, highest of the three categories. There was the Mr. Dieckmann who was an honorary member of the Decatur Rotary Club.

It is the third dimensional Mr. Dieckmann that makes him even more appealing. This is the Mr. Dieckmann who, shortly after coming to Scott in 1905, built what some say was the third automobile to run on the streets of Decatur. The car, a light affair which had no reverse gear

and had to be manually lifted around when it got in tight corners, was eventually sold to a "deaf and dumb" man from Rome, Ga., and Mr. Dieckmann good-naturedly took the ribbing from fellow teachers that the only person he could palm it off on was "deaf and dumb." Mr. Dieckmann, who never took lightly his obligations, laughed with his protagonists, but while laughing pointed out that he had given the purchaser a written guarantee as to what the car would do.

Then there was the Mr. Dieckmann who culminated a long friendship with a stunning brunette of the classic Agnes Scott mold and married her in 1915. She had been one of his graduate music students, the former Emma Pope Moss, daughter of a Marietta attorney and now teacher of four 11th grade English classes at Decatur High School. The young couple were allowed to live in "East Lawn," a cottage still standing at the northeast corner of the Scott campus - shaded now by four 60-foot-plus magnolias which Mr. Dieckmann dug up with his pocket knife near "Old Main" and replanted when they were tiny seedlings.

Always a devoted tinkerer, Mr. Dieckmann rebuilt antique clocks, perhaps experiencing something akin to the excitement involved in his probing of the contrapuntal intricacies of the music of his favorite composer, Bach. He also built a canoe from patterns - built it so well that it served many years in Florida after he had cruised rivers with it and sold it. There was also Mr. Dieckmann, the devoted father. His daughter, Adele, listed in a recent Scott brochure as among the school's outstanding alumnae, is director of music and director of five choirs at Trinity Presbyterian Church, a magna laude Master of Music graduate of Union Theological Seminary, a former teacher at Northfield (Mass.) School for Girls, and holds an M. A. from Wellesley. While at Scott, she was an organ and theory student of her father, and, says she, "He tried not to show favoritism."

Among the most treasured possessions in the Dieckmann home are books inscribed to the family by poet Robert Frost, who, being a creature of habit, always visited the home for a meal following his annual lecture at Agnes Scott. There is a Frost book inscribed to Adele "For Her Latinity," recognizing her Latin studies. There is one inscribed to Mrs. Dieckmann with Jan. 19 underlined. "Know what date that is?" Mrs. Dieckmann recalls Frost asking. (He was always trying to catch me, she said.) Fortunately, she knew, and replied it was Robert E. Lee's birthday. This book, she believes, is one of the few, perhaps the only one, inscribed, Robert Lee Frost. Comparing Frost and her husband, Mrs. Dieckmann said both were interested in people as individuals and in

people of all kinds. She recalls Frost as being "easy to feed," and she would cater to his fondness for shrimp and steak. He also loved her brandied peaches, and often took a jar of them back to the Alumnae House or wherever he was spending the night.

Much of Dieckmann's musical-Christian cast evolved from his early family life in New Bremen, Ohio. The son of a minister father and musical mother, he was an early participant in the family musicales. His brother, Dr. W. C. Dieckmann of Dexter, Mo., played the coronet; a sister, the piano; and Mr. Dieckmann the clarinet, piccolo and violin. The family music later poured forth in Belvedere, Tenn., and, in still later years, the family musical gatherings in Dexter, Mo., "used to take the lid off the little town," recalls Mrs. Dieckmann.

"Fine Christian gentleman," "Tops," "a truly great man" are the things you'll hear about Mr. Dieckmann. Searcy B. Slack, a neighbor for 34 years, said of him: "There never was a finer neighbor or warmer friend." The Rev. C. F. Schwab, pastor of the Decatur First Christian Church, recalls someone not affiliated with Scott saying that Dieckmann "probably knew more about music than anyone in Atlanta." Rev. Schwab also treasured his sense of humor. He recalls, prior to paying tribute to Dieckmann as an honorary Rotary Club member, asking him why he joined the club. "So I could cuss," laughed Dieckmann. "All there is at Agnes Scott is girls, girls, girls." Rev. Schwab told the story at the meeting and nodding to Agnes Scott emeritus president, Dr. James Ross McCain, said he bet McCain didn't know he had such a man on the faculty.

Miss Roxie Hagopian, an associate professor of voice and elementary music at Scott, and a Julliard graduate who later sang with the

Dusseldorf and Dresden opera groups, called Mr. Dieckmann "wonderful, just the finest sort of Christian gentleman."

It was Christmas Day that Dieckmann's faltering heart finally stopped after 83 years. Last summer, he had had an attack, and, typically, he was writing music with daughter, Adele, only 3 days later. Mr. Slack says, "The way he faced the last 6 or 7 months of life was the most courageous thing I ever saw." Dieckmann liked to help around the house, too, and he was helping prepare dinner when stricken.

The funeral was held in neo-Gothic Redeemer Lutheran Church, where Dieckmann had contributed so much to services for some 23 years. At the organ, playing his own compositions, was Adele, daughter and devoted student. The Rev. Dr. Robert E. Lee of Redeemer, and the Rev. Dr. J. Davison

Phillips, of Dieckmann's own Decatur Presbyterian, officiated. Although there was grief, there also was much pride and inspiration devolving from an exemplary life well lived. His "God of the Marching Centuries," the Agnes Scott hymn, which literally may be sung for centuries, swelled under the adept hands of Adele at the great organ:

"Thankfully now we courage take. . . Humbly we pledge our all. . . If we may service find with Thee. . . If we may hear Thy call. . . Here where we see our brother's need. . . Here where he must not die. . . There we shall find fellowship. . . And will not pass Thee by."

At Westview Cemetery, after the graveside services, Julia Mae, the Dieckmann family's longtime cook, was heard to say: "Didn't they put him away handsome." Truly, they did.

Mechanical Genius

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OF IT THIS MAN
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That's the fame of William Henton Crowe, who for years has had a shop at Gloster, east of Tucker, equipped with machinery he built himself. He designed and built one of the first home-made tractors, using a 1910 Buick automobile engine and binder wheels. As early as 1936 he

was building push-type, rotary blade lawnmowers - the type to become popular 20 years later.

He is pictured on a motor-driven hobby cart he built in 1960.

His philosophy: "We inherit the desire to do something, and it is up to us to learn," and his by-word is "necessity is the mother of invention."