

Acceptance Speech for Mary Rouse Award
The (Qualities of Listening, Perseverance, and
Cooperation in Ethnographic Research by Mary
Stokrocki, Associate Professor of Art Education at
Arizona State University

I am deeply honored to have won The Mary Rouse Award and grateful to Lynn Galbraith, who nominated me and to Enid Zimmerman, Kristen Congdon, Maurice Sevigny, Kathy Connors, and Maryl DeJong who supported this nomination. This occasion marks my 22 years of teaching art and 12 years of microethnographic research. This type of research is arduous in data collection and analysis, complex in reporting, and difficult in convincing the field of its importance. Through it all, the qualities of listening well, perseverance, and cooperative ventures have been important for success.

As a post-war baby, I was born in Poughkeepsie, New York of a Polish father and an Italian mother. My dad worked for IBM as a tool and dye maker, while my mom was a housewife with the equivalency of a sixth grade education. One of 10 children, she had to quit school and work after her mother died, when she was twelve-years-old. I have two younger sisters, one with severe emotional problems. My mother was extremely shy and so was I as a child. In our family, my dad was the a joker and quite a talker - the chief entertainer of the family. Children were seen, not heard, and we bottled-up our feelings.

As a product of 12 years of Catholic education, I learned to listen quite well. In school, we were never asked our opinions, so art became a means of expression? escape? and dreaming. I loved to draw pictures for the seasonal bulletin board, the only art we ever had in elementary school. At home, I played with paper dolls and made their clothes. In seventh grade, my class was split in two sections: an accelerated and a slow division. Seating was assigned according to one's grades, which was humiliating. Even though I was at the top of the slow group, I shall never forget being labeled as "dumb." In high school, my dad bought me paint-by-number kits. One day, he bought me the Walter Foster book on how to paint a still life. My first copied painting, I gave to my grandmother. Not until I was a senior in high school, did I have an official art course. I remember doing color studies and wanting to decorate the nun's pottery, which she sold to raise money for her program.

I was scared to death of the nuns and one in particular made my life miserable. Not only did I have her for home room, but for religion and history as well. She had us reading the newspaper for current events, in which she drilled us. I walked to school for 20 blocks each morning with my eyes

glued to my notes, trying to review my homework. If we didn't know the answer she embarrassed us publicly. I was a sensitive soul and spent much time in the bathroom crying over such indignation. On the other hand, I received a strong background in the Classics Latin, French, and literature. I graduated sixteenth in my class, which shocked everyone.

Indeed, my plans were to become a fashion designer and I was accepted by New York's Fashion Institute of Technology in Textile Design upon graduation. The big city was overwhelming with no contacts and no money, so I ended up at the local community college in the commercial art program, down the street from where I lived with my parents. I won a New York State Regent's Incentive Award, but it was hardly enough money. A second generation immigrant, no one in my family had ever gone to college.

I loved my classes in commercial art and did fairly well. My male teachers used to grade us on how well they thought we would succeed in the commercial art world. Being a female that meant that I wouldn't do much. because I would, by their estimates, be married in a few years. This attitude didn't stop me. I needed experience and volunteered to work on the college yearbook and soon became the Editor. No one wanted the job, which paid nothing. This experience, however, gave me a traveling publication and portfolio. By this time, my art teachers were taking my work more seriously. I was working full time, paying for my own education, and still living at home. I nearly had a nervous breakdown. I was working too hard. Someone told me then that the college had scholarships for which no one ever applied. Because of my work on the yearbook, I won a Lodge of Masons Scholarship, which allowed me to relax. Upon graduation from such a program, I learned one of education's serious downfall - "promise you everything and get no job upon graduation."

I worked for Montgomery Wards in the fashion department upon graduation for half a year. I was a stock girl and cashier. The only art related thing I got to do was to dress the mannequins. I also worked for Dell Comics in the bindery assembly line. I left my 8 hour a day job with swollen and cut hands from the litho and punch presses. We prepared the famous Mary Poppin's pop-up books for publication. At break time, the other women would tease "the college girls" who preferred to read a book. So much for my career in commercial art. I vowed that I wasn't going to do this the rest of my life. I applied to the art education program at the State University of New York at New Paltz, across the river from my town. I knew nothing about art education and wondered how I would ever become a teacher when I was so shy. Life in Poughkeepsie was very boring

and education was my escape.

I knew nothing about abstract art, the rage of the School of Art at the time. Those Woodstock days were full of crazy studio teachers who slopped paint around, hardly ever came to class and taught me nothing about the fundamentals of design. I got this information from my experience working on year-books. Not until I was senior, did I finally begin to understand painting. Again, I volunteered to work on the university yearbook and ended up being Editor-in-Chief. In 1968-69, I still lived at home and worked on the weekends at the Catskill resorts to support myself. The National Defense Education Act helped me finance the rest of my schooling. Although the University promised students that credits would transfer, I spent an additional three years catching up with degree requirements. My undergraduate program took five years. One of the highlights of my senior year was the opportunity to make a super-8 animated film, due to an art education professor who lent me his camera. No one knew anything about animation at the University, so I learned through trial and error. I was making my own animated movie! While motivating my junior high students during student teaching to make one at the same time. Only when I student taught, did I realize that I had found my profession. In spite of my shyness, I realized that I had an incredible amount of knowledge about the commercial art world, which interested high school students. I had an enthusiasm for my subject and spent my energy on learning. My first teaching job was an hour away from my parents in the small rural town of Dover Plains at a junior/senior high school. The highlight of my week was traveling to town to shop on the weekends. I did a lot of textile design in those days. On my first day of teaching, I had a mouth full of new braces and I asked for my students' sympathy. Again, I taught the new commercial art techniques and was advisor of the high school yearbook.

That summer I flew to Europe and traveled around by myself and sleeping in the youth hostels. England, with its old architecture, fascinated me so I left my job and moved to Boston to live with friends near Copley Square. Luckily, I got another job through a teaching agency. The position was in Blackstone-Millville, a rural school system, one hour out of Boston. At times, I commuted from Boston and at others, I lived in Blackstone. The area, dominated by aging textile mills, was so deprived that the new regional school buildings were considered the center of town.

Unknown in Massachusetts, I had to build new teaching references. I began taking graduate courses at Massachusetts College of Art, the only place to get part-time credits, while I was teaching. My first time around, I was refused admission

because my portfolio was too broad and I didn't do well on the Graduate Admissions exam. So I set out to specialize in an art area, namely photography. I took 30 credits beyond my Bachelors degree before I was accepted into the program. I remember the admissions officer telling me that I didn't need a Masters Degree, I would make it anyway. I, of course, believed that I had financially deserved it. I was a student of Al Hurwitz and Dave Baker at that time.

Upon acceptance into the new program and "a changing of the guard," I had to write a thesis when other M.A. candidates were getting certified. I complained about the inequity but like most students in my position, I learned to "grin and bear it." I studied child art under Judy Burton, one fine teacher, and BJ Sacca, a marvelous interpersonal communicator. Then I had to write the thesis without having a research course. David Pariser, all-but-doctorate student at Harvard, became my new advisor. We suffered together with my "so-called" poor writing skills and his sarcastic comments. Experience in writing the new experimental style of research would have helped immensely. In hindsight, I feel that graduate students need research writing experiences first. I graduated and returned to Mass Art to take research methods with Diana Korzenik, who clearly explained some of the difficult terminology. For me, it should have been the other way around, but at least, some of the fear had been alleviated.

In 1979, my teaching position, due to state-wide tax cuts, was eliminated, even though I was, by then, Chair of the Art Department. After 10 years of advanced schooling, I now decided that I had to do something to alleviate the stress and anger building inside me. I joined a health club, started the doctorate program at Penn State, and returned earlier than expected for my residency. At 35 years old, I was living in a freshman dorm for the first time in my life.

My years at Penn State were memorable but difficult. The very first course that I took was with the legendary Ken Beittel. He had us reading Habermas's Knowledge and Human Interest and Heideggers Origin of the Work of Art. I would spend all week reading 10 hours a day. Kathy Connors, Ralph Raunft, and I would stumble into class shaking from exhaustion and overwhelmed with the ideas. I sometimes think that Beittel was building stamina and survival techniques. He would explain that this was part of the Great Tradition to which we needed exposure. We had no philosophy courses before this, and here we were reading a critique of philosophy. I must admit that this experience started my inquiry into philosophical readings. I also started reading the anthropological ideas of Victor Turner's Rites of Passage at Brent Wilson's insistence

My dissertation became an in-depth study of

Ken Beittel as a Pottery Teacher. This summer study was one of my most memorable experiences as a participant observer. As a participant, I was able to make some small pots. I remember Ken looking at my "wabi-sabi" (a Japanese aesthetic term meaning wobbly and rustic) pot and telling me that that was the way the pot wanted to be, in his usually positive and polite way of criticism. I used my skills in photography and drawing as documentation tools in the dissertation. Later, the world of visual sociology and anthropology, notably, the work of Margaret Mead, opened for me. This was my first multi-cultural study of teaching, since Ken Taught in an Oriental tradition. I am most grateful to Bob Ott, my Chair, and Alice Schwartz who nurtured me through difficult times.

Beginning in 1981, I taught for 10 years at Cleveland State University and supervised both student teaching situations and practicums. When I arrived in Cleveland, I needed to learn about the context of the inner city. I started in the Cleveland Museum of Art one summer documenting its most popular program - art for the preschooler. For nine weeks, I followed the tiny tots around the museum observing and photographing their actions and documenting what they said or what their mothers and their delightful teacher interpreted. This enjoyable experience resulted in several articles, notably "The Aesthetic Experience of the Preschooler." The Cleveland Museum of Art historically has been noted for its art programs for children.

Getting published in the research world was not easy for me. Participant observation or microethnographic research was extremely unpopular at the time. Battles over quantitative and qualitative research were raging in education proper as well as art education. Many art educators did not appreciate phenomenological research at all, let alone that strange word "hermeneutics," meaning interpretation theory. Following in Beittel's footsteps, my writing was labeled unclear and disorganized. I had to learn to write more succinctly and simply. I got married in 1983 to a philosopher William Vallicella. We had met at a conference on hermeneutics, sponsored by The University of Dayton, where he taught. I wanted to learn more about this interpretive stance and had offered my services to the conference organizers for free room and board in the rectory. I met this intense recluse who was also very bohemian...a mixture of Kant and Bobby Dylan. After the honeymoon was over, we spent six weeks that summer, every day, from 9:00 to 5:00 in the library writing. I dragged my portable manual typewriter with me, while my husband wrote in his private carol. After one summer of his criticisms on my writing, I hired a private editor. Never let your husband criticize your work if you

want to stay married. The problem was the different writing styles. I soon learned that philosophers were very wordy and unclear. We survived that ordeal.

During the next year, I met Jean Sommer, a remarkable English art educator teaching in a working class community in Cleveland. I remember one occasion, when I had to write a position statement on excellence for the Ohio Art Education Association. Dumbfounded and new to Ohio, I asked Jean, who was very involved in the state leadership, to brain-storm ideas with me. I finally realized that I didn't need to do this all alone, but that I could have help, if not support, if I needed it. A wonderful friendship evolved between us. This woman who was noted as an outstanding art teacher became the subject of my next study. In doing such research, the researcher is humbled as both parties negotiate ideas. Not only did I publish my first "Portrait of a Working class Elementary Art Teacher, but also "The Artworld of the Elementary Child." A few years later, I convinced Jean to join me part time at the University. One reason why I was successful in this research, was because my background was so similar to the teachers and students. The art teachers in Cleveland were becoming my best friends.

I realized that I needed to spend time watching the art teaching in the inner city to understand the problems and the subculture. My student teachers would report back to me about the outstanding art teachers that they encountered in the inner city. For example, I met Sandra Noblet, a Black art teacher, when supervising my students in her classes. Many of the Black teachers had not been members of the OAEA and had not been encouraged to join. Sandy was enormously "gutsy." My experience documenting her teaching resulted in fantastic insights on teaching art to children of color. My reviews of the literature were also giving the art teachers information, which they didn't have. A few years later, Sandy, who was getting her MA in administration, became Supervisor of Art for the Cleveland Public Schools.

Finally, such cooperative liaisons with art teachers in the schools enabled me to put my insights into practice. Dr. Anna Araca, a close friend from the Euclid Public Schools invited me to do a "Residency in Art Criticism" in her school system. In this way, I could experiment with some of my findings. The resulting games which students were designing and the videotapes of their critiques were exciting. Anna introduced me to the "contradictions and complexities of teaching art" in her school system. As a result, I proposed to the OAEA that the organization feature a leadership conference on "Teaching Art to Culturally-Diverse Students." I was able again to put some of my research ideas into practice and to generate new ones. At this conference, I invited Bernard

Young to be the keynote speaker. Such leadership conferences in Ohio inspired thought, cooperation, controversy, and new challenges. Kristen Congdon and Doug Blandy both rose to the occasion to promote their ideas on democracy and folk art. Kristen and I had spent many hours when she was unemployed in Cleveland sharing ideas. Art teachers in rural areas were asked to share their ideas. Through Linda Lowe, the new President of the Ohio Art Education Association, the leadership Conference was held in Kerhonkson, a folk village. The chance to relax and share ideas in this quaint town was desperately needed by all. I myself met former students, one of which was teaching art in the nearby Amish public school. Her teaching and problems teaching art to Amish children later became the focus of my research.

The summer of 1985 was spent at Indiana University, Bloomington with my husband, who was attending an NEH Seminar in philosophy. I wrote to Gil Clarke and Enid Zimmerman for permission to study one of their teachers. I ended up documenting Guy Hubbard's computer graphics course for adolescents and two other computer courses for art teachers. This experience resulted in three research studies and my learning to teach computer graphics. Most memorable were my meetings with Gil and Enid, as I sat in their summer institute, listened to their ideas, and shared my insights. This collaboration over the years has been most fruitful, because Enid and Gil often would comment on my work. Enid became interested in the participant observation method and used it in her study of an outstanding painting teacher, which she published later. Many of the new professors in those days owe their publishing survival to Enid and Gil and later to Rogena Degge and Georgia Collins, both of whom were open-minded and willing to edit such complex studies.

My teaching at Cleveland State formulated my early career, but left me with acute anxiety problems. After Betty Copland left, who taught me how to survive an irascible group of studio artists and art historians, I had to supervise 42 students and teach 6 art education courses a year. Bounced into a basement art room, due to the computer takeover in the college of education, I often lost my voice while competing with a loud exhaust fan and poor ventilation in the entire building. I was given an office over the glass-blowing kilns and under a leaky roof. After a half year of the soot-and heat, I moved my things into a vacant office and proclaimed "squatters rights."

Cleveland was a very gloomy place indeed. My first season there consisted of nine weekends of rain. I lived down the street from the striptease joint and the Black Panther's headquarters and was

accosted in my building one bright sunny Sunny afternoon. One learns the ropes fast in the inner city. After I got married, we bought a house in Cleveland Heights in an inter-racial neighborhood not far from the Cleveland Museum of Art. We loved the neighborhood and Cleveland by then but my job was getting harder and my morale was diminishing. My husband and I had a commuting marriage for over eight years. I worked harder and the stress increased. No one told me to slow down.

Much of my research had not been published; politically it was unacceptable at the time. I eventually learned that I could argue with the editors. All these survival skills one learns the hard way. I would be upset when *Studies* would not publish my work, even when I paid to have my work edited. I felt like a voice wandering in the desert. Eventually, my views were heard. Through my interpretive research, art teachers would bare their problems and complaints, such as published in my article "A Cross-site Analysis of Problems of Teaching Art to Adolescents," including perspectives of eight art teachers as well as my own. My 1987 sabbatical research in Holland resulted in a study of "Teaching Art to Multi-cultural Students in Rotterdam: The Teacher as Intercultural Educator" (1989). Since then Harry Berk the bi-cultural art teacher whom I studied has been invited to teach at the university. I am most grateful to Johan Ligvoett who set up the contacts, arranged for my stay with his family, and invited me to teach my results in a "Seminar on Intercultural Education" at the Tilburg Academy. In 1990, I published my review of "A Decade on Qualitative Microethnographic Research in Art Education" in *Visual Arts Research*. Unhappily, I realized that I was one of few people doing ethnographic research in art education.

A few year ago, Lynn Galbraith, a fairly new researcher and another lonely soul, introduced herself to me at one of the National Conferences. Lynn shared her research ideas with me previously, when I was editing the Seminar for Research Abstracts. She was developing portraits of pre-service art teachers in Nebraska. She encouraged me to write about my own teaching as well. My reflections on the tribulations of teaching art to classroom teachers for 10 years will be included in her new anthology on pre-service art education. She is responsible, along with Bernard Young, in enticing me to Arizona. Through her weekly long distance pep talks and weather reports, she encouraged me come. We have a nice liaison of researchers now to do cooperative field research. I am indebted to Lynn for nominating me for this award.

Maurice Sevigny also has been very supportive of my research over the years. Maurice is famous for his five-year participant observation research of

university drawing professors. Maurice used to send me references in my early days. His concept of "in-process appraisal" is quoted in every one of my articles as the dominant type of instructional behavior in art education over the past 10 years. On a personal level, Maurice and I would drive eight hours to Hardiman & Zernich's research conferences at The University of Illinois when we both lived in Ohio. I usually managed to get us lost.

My most recent work has been a study in tenacity. This involves the ethnographic research of the teaching of art on the Navajo Reservation in one public school system. Under a three-year ASU Arts and Sciences grant, I traveled six hours on Thursdays, once a month, to the Canyon DeChelly area to spend Fridays intensely documenting the teaching. Two female graduate students also traveled with me this past year. One studied the high school students and the other the junior high teachers and students, while I focused on the elementary level.

Our ordeals in traveling are ethnographic stories themselves. In the beginning, we left the university after my 2:00 class, picked up the rental car at the airport, drove the long, lonely road by moonlight, and arrived at midnight on the reservation, which lies in a different time zone. On another occasion, because all the hotels were booked, we rose at 4:30 am in Winslow to get to school in the morning two hours away. Still another time, our rental car broke down and we suffered food poisoning and the flu. In February, I was covered with mud as I walked between schools after Gretchan Boyer, Arizona's State Art Supervisor, dropped me off. In May, my graduate students and I were covered with dirt as we experienced a horrendous three day sandstorm. We usually returned to Phoenix dead tired. On the positive side is the gorgeous scenery of the national monument, the friendly art teachers, and the peace and quiet and reflections that this time away from the university afforded us.

The Navajo school system was highly recommended by the State Art Consultant. My first year pilot study focused on the Anglo teachers, all male and mostly new, because they were the most amenable. The pilot study gave an overview of my experience, assumptions, and findings discovered during the first year of a school system in transition. The pilot study consequently has been subtitled "An Anglo View of Running Water" to be published in *Recent Trends in Art Education in Diverse Cultures* (In Kauppinen & Diket, 1990). I have found that these students are non-traditional and well assimilated in this system.

My present second year study focuses on the new Navajo female elementary art teacher and her successes/problems adjusting. As many new art teachers, she admits to problems with time manage-

ment and tasks that are difficult for young students, although she has excellent interpersonal skills. She feels that she teaches respect for people and nature, appreciation of music, and careful listening and concentration and cooperation skills.

My third year study will focus on the art teaching in a Navajo Christian boarding school in New Mexico, where students are the most traditional. The male art teacher is Navajo and a graduate of the school. We have already visited him once and carefully documented his philosophical beliefs. The boarding schools have changed greatly~ but every lesson still begins with passages quoted from the Bible.

New research cooperatives are forming for me. Mary Erickson, my congenial colleague at ASU, has traveled to the Navajo Reservation with me, partly as company and partly for research. I observed her experimental teaching of art history in determining the Navajo students' capacity for historical understanding. It was fun watching the children ask her what clan she was from and listen to Mary's tales about her grandfather. The Navajo children loved the storytelling.

My third year work, which is a comparison of art education at three levels in this school system, will result in an in-depth triangulated study from three different perspectives. A cross-comparison of four other sites on the reservation will also be undertaken. A traveling ethnographic art exhibit of "The Changing Artworld of the Navajo Student" is in its planning stage.

I am still wrestling with issues from previous studies and have written about the "Socio-cultural Problems in Interpreting Multi-cultural Settings." I still believe that our field needs to first understand a context through portraits of art teachers. Then we need to help teachers improve a situation, if needed, at their invitation. I have found that I cannot be the objective researcher in some situations. Research is a dialogue of interests and personhood. Albeit, participants, whom I study, are just as curious about me as I am about them. It is insulting not to answer truthfully about one's intention and life. I tell the children that I am a student and want to learn from them about teaching. But I am also a teacher of teachers and need to learn the folkways of teaching in different contexts. Some findings are similar, others are unique, such as pacing differences. The microethnographic researcher's influence is subtle.

Participating art teachers have told me that they have learned much from my studies. One teacher mentioned that the problems her preadolescents faced indeed sounded like the lack of sanctioned "rites of passage" that I interpreted from her situation. One of the Anglo males on the Navajo reservation never knew of the research that backed

up his "gut" feelings about his students as independent learners. On the other hand, my probing made him feel guilty that he wasn't teaching enough. Even the new female Navajo teacher felt that she needed to learn more about teaching the young elementary child. Some of the references and resources that I included in my studies were adopted by teachers. Participating students also received a great deal of encouragement, as I always gave copies of my photographs to the teachers. The questions that we asked of students usually helped them reflect on what they were doing. Art teachers later received publicity as other studies of their students' work were published. In the long run, both I and the participating teachers were humbled and enlightened by our Greater Tradition, as new insights evolved in the literature and are negotiated.

In spite of the resistance to this type of research, the quality of perseverance has helped me. My work is only an interpretation and stands to be corrected. For political reasons, such original studies cannot be overly critical, but they can be re-interpreted, as long as the original version is respected for its uniqueness. The quality of listening enables me to find taken-for-granted aspects of folk-teaching. Perseverance enables me to continue. To the newer researcher in art education, I extend the invitation to join me in this lonesome endeavor.

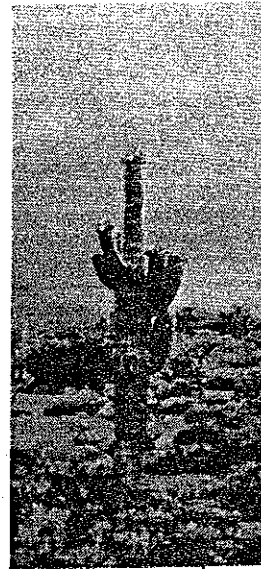
To my colleagues, who are interested in maintaining respect for such folk teachers of all kinds, I offer "The Four Seasons of a Women's Life" written by a Navajo woman. I find it applies to the evolution of a field researcher as well: the age of learning, the age of sharing and teaching, the age of involvement, and the age of wisdom.

Winter: The Age of Wisdom It is the highest honor in the tribe. She has earned her right to have authority. She is a disciplinarian, a problem-solver, a story teller and she is a spiritual leader.

Summer: The Age of Involvement She now becomes changing woman ready to experience life. She is mysterious, exciting, challenging. She works in the interest of her family and above all, she does the very best for herself. She is highly skillful in art, speech, culinary arts, and spiritual life.

Fall: Age of Sharing and Teaching The beloved woman is the first educator of her children. She also helps teach her grandchildren.

Spring: The Age of Learning She is taught the ethics of life by her mother and grandmother. She is curious and seeks knowledge.



Native American Basket Maker