

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Kay Christensen
God of Creation and Creativity
18 Oct 2010

Reflection/Meditation:

I have worked, here, at the Augustana library for 15 years. Over there is the door by which I enter and leave most days.

A year ago, my husband and I helped his 86 year old aunt, Harriet Hybertson, move. As I was packing this, I asked Harriet about it. In particular, I was especially drawn to the scene of the two figures with a book. Harriet said, "Well, you know, those are the sculptures on the east side of the library." Really? They looked vaguely familiar, but I was certain I had never seen the two figures with the book. **I did not immediately recognize that the scenes on the sides of this piece were the same as these.** The next time I entered the library, I looked – really looked. Of course, Harriet was right – they were the same. This realization threw me. I think of myself as a person who pays attention to detail. In fact, paying attention to detail is a big part of my job as a cataloger. How could I have walked past these "Creatures of Creation" practically every day for almost 14 years and not really seen them? If I missed seeing them, what else was I not seeing?

Well, I also missed the significance of this. I recognized that it was from Augustana but did not realize what it was – the Tuve Award. Named in honor of Anthony G. Tuve, Augustana president from 1890-1916, it is the college's highest form of donor recognition for those who have given \$100,000 or more to the college. What generosity from a woman who taught in the Education Dept. at Augustana for over 30 years!

God of awareness, open my eyes!

So what about the two men, Ogden Dalrymple and Palmer Eide, who designed this Tuve Award and created the “Creatures of Creation?” You can see the work of these two artists all over the Augustana campus. Somewhat unusual is the fact that for many of the sculptures, the two men worked together. If you look closely, on the north side of each of the 4 panels, you can see Palmer Eide’s initials and on the south side, Ogden Dalrymple’s. Can you imagine the trust the two must have had in each other? Steve Thomas who was an Augie student at the time said it was a wonderful thing to go into their studio and see the two of them together – they knew everything about each other.

Based on the Genesis creation story, the panels represent the fish and creatures of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the earth signified by a bison, and man and woman who are given trust of the earth. Commissioned by the Augustana Fellows, the library sculpture was begun in May of 1975 and completed in June of 1976. However, the limestone blocks were part of the original 1954 construction when the library was built. For 21 years just the limestone blocks graced the east side of the building. Consider it another way – when construction of this building began in May, 1954, I was 3 years old. By the time the limestone blocks were actually carved, I was in my mid-twenties, through college, married and with a 2 yr old.

I only know about Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple through what I’ve read, seen and heard. Palmer Eide is one of the professors in the “Faculty Videos from the Past” on the Augustana Sesquicentennial page. Interested in art from an early age, he grew up on a farm near Baltic, SD, attended Augustana and graduated in 1930. In his senior year, the Augustana yearbook describes him as “The most versatile man on the campus.” A year later, in 1931 he returned to Augustana to teach art and began a career which spanned 40 years. In the beginning, Eide was a one-man art department.

Ogden Dalrymple, on the other hand, was a native of New York City. A champion swimmer, his interest in art didn’t develop until his college years. He met Palmer Eide in the summer of 1946 at Cranbrooke Academy near Detroit where both were studying. Eide, who had been teaching alone in the art department since 1931, persuaded the administration to add a second person. It was Dalrymple.

The two formed a partnership and friendship that lasted a lifetime. Dalrymple was a member of the art department from 1947 until his retirement in 1973.

The two continued to work together on projects after their retirements.

“Creatures of Creation” was one of those projects. Their final collaboration was the sculpture of three owls, commissioned by the college’s 125th Anniversary Committee. When Eide was asked about the work involved on the owl sculpture, he responded, “It’s never a task if you like what you are doing.”

The two friends died within 5 months of each other in 1991. Palmer Eide was 85 and Ogden Dalrymple was 83.

Speaking at chapel isn’t something I normally do but I think the process I went through can be compared to what happens in the classroom. I got an assignment – Janet asked if I would be willing and I agreed. The assignment was followed by doubt and uncertainty – I didn’t know anything about the panels or Palmer Eide or Ogden Dalrymple; how was I going to do this? However, I did know some really good reference librarians and the library has this wonderful new resource, the Augustana Album. In addition, there are people on campus who did know Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple. It took some effort for me to get the thoughts in my head written down. Revision is always important so I shared my first draft with Pastor Paul for feedback. I thought I was pretty much finished but Paul gently pushed for more – he said I had a good start but...

So, this morning, I would like you to consider creation in two ways – capital letter “C” Creation and lowercase “c” creation. For me, and I hope for you, the “Creatures of Creation” are a visual reminder of the miracle of God’s Creation – capital “C.” Life is a gift and we are incredibly blessed to be here, at Augustana. Open your eyes to the beauty of God’s Creation and really see what is in front of you.

Consider learning as lowercase “c” creation. Learning is hard work – it requires effort on the part of both the teacher and the student. While viewing the current alumni art display in both the Center for Western Studies gallery and the Eide/Dalrymple gallery, I was struck by the artist statements that mention the positive impact of these two men on the lives of Augustana art students.

As we celebrate the sesquicentennial of Augustana, it is appropriate to pause and reflect on the history of this place and give thanks for the dedicated professors like Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple who have touched so many students and helped them learn.

Let us be grateful for the gifts of creation, both capital and lowercase “c.”

Thank you to Janet and Paul for having the vision for these walks and for taking the risk to try them. Thanks to all of you for walking with us today.

WALKING WORSHIP

Monday, October 18, 2010

Welcome

Invocation

Prayer: God, we thank you for your boundless creativity...for the creativity of your creatures and especially for all who create in this place. Help us see all the ways you and the artists you inspire create learning, imagination, community and faith. Once again stir awe and wonder at these your gifts. In Christ our Lord, Amen

Hymn *“When Long Before Time” (we’ll sing 2 vs, then sing as we walk.)*

