

My Tribute to Eloise Gary
Ronald Starr Burdick
February 2012

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. - Albert Schweitzer

Several months ago, I had a surprise visit from Eloise Gary's daughter Lynn. During that visit, I was able to share with her my gratitude and affectionate memories of the inspiration and support I received from her mother as a student and aspiring art teacher.

Lynn visited me at Breaux Bridge High School where I am an art teacher. I was able to show her the linoleum blocks and prints made by my art students, as well as their perspective drawings and still life paintings on display in my classroom. I shared fond memories of creating these same art forms at the hands of her dear mother.

I first met Eloise Gary as a fifth grade student at Glasgow Elementary School in Baton Rouge. When I was chosen to visit her art class at the nearby junior high school, she helped me carve a linoleum block I used to print a Christmas card. It was a golden moment that sparked an interest in an art form that continues to be a hallmark project I teach my art students.

Mrs. Gary was my art teacher through junior and senior high school. She taught me to love and create art in many styles - painting, drawing, perspective, color, and printmaking. Years later as an art student at LSU, I enrolled in an advanced printmaking class. My dear art teacher was now a classmate. Together we etched and engraved copper plates, the highest level printmaking course offered at LSU. It was a true joy to work side by side with the wonderful lady who had inspired and influenced me for so many years.

This chance encounter was instrumental in shaping both my life and career. Mrs. Gary inquired about my plans after graduation and she told me about an opportunity to teach high school art in St. Martin Parish. This opportunity evolved into the teaching career I've had for 42 years.

I never had the opportunity to properly express my appreciation and gratitude to Mrs. Gary. But her love of art and teaching lives on even though she is gone. It lives in me. And through me, it lives on in my students and in generations to come.

Ronald Starr Burdick