

Muriel Brasie

March 18, 1895 — September 1, 1975

After retirement in 1950, necessitated by crippling arthritis, Muriel Brasie continued to share her teaching talents and enthusiasm with others just as she had at Cornell University where she attained the rank of associate professor in the New York State College of Home Economics (now the College of Human Ecology), Department of Textiles and Clothing. She was a creative contributor and an active participant in all phases of the college's program: research, resident teaching, and extension teaching.

Born in Monticello, Minnesota, Miss Brasie earned a teaching diploma from Stout Institute, Menomonie, Wisconsin, in 1916. At Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, she earned the Bachelor of Science degree in 1922 and the Master of Arts degree in 1928. Her deep interest in progressive education prompted further study at Columbia and Cornell Universities during two sabbatical leaves.

Muriel Brasie came to Cornell University in 1928 following several successful teaching experiences in Illinois and Wisconsin, the last five years at Stout Institute. Former students recall her as a real friend, as deeply interested in their personal welfare as in their academic achievement. The return of one loan given to help a student in financial need was refused with the comment, "That was money well spent; pass it on to help another person in need."

After nine years of resident teaching, during which she and a departmental colleague experimented with exchanging assignments in resident instruction and extension teaching, Miss Brasie began to direct her energies and teaching expertise to extension and its 4-H Club program. For seven years before she again returned to resident teaching and research, 4-H Club members and their leaders were captivated by her enthusiasm and ability to help them solve difficult problems by separating the problems into easily achieved tasks. She did this during our nation's great depression when individuals and family groups were working to conserve and reuse every available textile and clothing resource. For years, teaching materials and bulletins developed by Miss Brasie at that time were among the most widely distributed by the college.

In teaching, both resident and extension, Miss Brasie valued quality workmanship in all that she did, and she expected the same from her students. She encouraged them to see themselves as individuals with unique and varied qualities and to choose or design clothing that expressed the style and personality of each. To her, clothing, with its color, design, and construction, was truly an art form.

In research as a collaborator in *The Consumer Speaks* project, a federally funded pilot study conducted in twenty-two states during the mid-1940s, Miss Brasie, writing in *The Journal of Home Economics*, concluded that the study, though limited in scope, provided “a valuable technique for consumer education and an excellent method for focusing consumer opinion and making consumers articulate as a group.” Business considered the findings significant, and the data released were in demand among manufacturers, retailers, trade associations, and advertising agencies, according to editorial comment in the journal.

Miss Brasie maintained memberships in educational and professional organizations, among which were Pi Lambda Theta, Kappa Delta Pi, American Home Economics Association, and the National Education Association. She traveled to Russia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Guatemala, and Mexico, studying textiles and accessories as art forms.

Upon retirement she moved to San Francisco where in spite of her painful affliction she was actively engaged until a few months before her death in volunteer work. Sharing her talents were the United Nations Information Center, Indian Affairs Council, American Friends Service and Legislative Committees, and the Crafts Department of the United States Public Health Hospital.

At her request her ashes were scattered on a slope of the Marin Headlands near Golden Gate. A friend’s tribute on that occasion included: “... you yearned for distant horizons ... to learn and then to lead the way for others toward a life with meaning and a growing understanding among earth’s people”

A sister, Robin Bruce, Mill Valley, California, survives.

Orrilla W. Butts, Natalie D. Crowe, Vera A. Caulum