

A VERY UNLIKELY PRESIDENT

Introduction

Harold Hyde, the tenth President of Plymouth's college, saved Plymouth Teachers College from possible extinction in the middle of the Twentieth Century. He was the most recent, but he was certainly not the first to rescue the college. That honor goes to Silas Pearl, the first president, who in 1873 died from overwork rather than let the new Plymouth Normal School fail.

In 1878 Miss Ellen Reed was the only faculty member to stay when all the others left due to the state's decision to spend no money on the Normal School that year. She single-handedly ran the school and taught the remaining students until the state came to its senses the next year. Dr. Ernest Silver, the longest serving president, several times had to call in favors from his many admirers to stave off forces looking to close down the school due to budget disputes or pressure from people in more populated areas to move the school there.

Hyde became President of Plymouth Teachers College in September of 1951. He had been appointed by the New Hampshire State Board of Education. He was barely forty years old and had no experience in higher education administration. However, he knew teaching and understood the state of education in New Hampshire very well. He had been Chief of the State Bureau of Educational Research for three years and had headed up a major study of schooling in the North Country.

Hyde did have administrative experience in several New York state school systems, all of which were larger than the 271 student college he was to lead. He had started teaching in Spencer, N.Y., and later taught in Nyack, Vestal, and Endicott. He had just earned a doctorate in education from New York University. He had taught many high school and some college courses.

The real reason he was appointed President of PTC was the combination of intelligence, good sense, sincerity, and drive to serve that others saw in him. He worked incredibly hard to help his team reach high goals. He got results. Though strict, he was also very likeable. New Hampshire Commissioner of Education, Hilton Buley, his mentor and former superintendent in New York, had brought Hyde to New Hampshire several years earlier. He and the Board of Education were convinced that if anyone could save Plymouth Teachers College, Harold Hyde would.

Why did PTC need saving? Its enrollment was declining and some NH citizens and politicians wanted to combine Keene and Plymouth into one teachers college in the more populous southern part of the state. Some wanted to abolish the teachers colleges altogether or limit them to preparing teachers for elementary grades alone. PTC's former president, Howard Jones, who had started the first graduate program there, had left to become a professor and later Dean of Education at Iowa State University. PTC's faculty and offerings were strong, but they needed much more support and a new leader.

New Hampshire Governor Sherman Adams spoke at President Hyde's inauguration in December of 1951. His words shocked some in the audience. Looking at Hyde, Adams said the new president had

better “put Plymouth on its feet ... or there won’t be any PTC.” Hyde remembered Adams charging him to “build rapidly the enrollment and the quality of the college.”

PTC faculty, students, and supporters bristled. No one could deny that the enrollment was now small, but many took issue with Adams’ low estimate of the quality of the education. PTC had a reputation for developing excellent teachers across many disciplines. Mrs. Speare wrote, “The reputation for high standards spread widely. When a graduate who resided in Washington, D. C. applied for a position to teach in the schools of that city, she was asked for her credentials. She stated that she held a diploma from a small teacher-training institution in New Hampshire. The official replied that her institution was well known as one of the best in the country and her diploma was all that was required.” Speare added, “a system that rated institutions for training teachers throughout the nation from records by superintendents, usually listed Plymouth as one of the highest three, and often the school was number one.” On the occasion of PTC’s 75th Anniversary in 1946, Robert Frost, who had taught there, said “It warms the heart with reassurance to look on anything that persists so successfully in this world of broken pieces.”

In his address to the audience, the newly inaugurated President summed up what he saw as his responsibilities.

“I must keep myself and the fine body of professional men and women who are my co-workers constantly alert to the public’s wishes for its youth. Also, I must spare no opportunity to advocate firmly to that public those things which for the present seem to be desirable in schools which really serve a democracy.”

Hyde followed those principles his whole 26 years as Plymouth’s president. He respected the faculty. He led them but also listened carefully to them. He stressed the public’s interest and wishes. However, he never hesitated to tell the public what he thought the schools should be doing and what they needed. His ideas were guided by his belief that excellent schooling was essential to the maintenance of American democracy, in which he firmly believed.

In one of his last interviews as PSC President, Hyde noted if the United States is to have representative government “ we will need well educated people, not just those who know how to make a living in just one occupation.” He stated that Americans must know history, economics, philosophy, and even anthropology. (Dr. Hyde’s Presidency Comes to an End,” Manchester Union Leader, Ken Gould.)

On his death in 2001 one newspaper headline read: “Without Harold Hyde There May Have Been No PSC.” My dad would have disagreed. He would have credited the team of faculty and other administrators with whom he worked as well. He’d have said he couldn’t have done it without them.

First Years

While the low enrollment was definitely a problem, the small size made Plymouth a very friendly school. Hyde cherished getting to know many of the faculty and students well. In 1951 the entire college, including faculty, ate dinner together many nights in the formal Dining Room in the south wing

of Mary Lyon Hall. Unlike in modern college cafeterias, these meals were served family style. Starched white tablecloths covered each table and starched cloth napkins sat at each setting.

As a little girl of five years old I was excited to climb up on a chair at the Faculty Table. The white dishes were bordered in PTC Green. Each faculty member had their own unique sterling silver napkin ring. Our family ate at Mary Lyon several times a week in the early days. I had a grand old time since many of the faculty and students doted on me. When I grew a little older, I got to play ping pong with other faculty kids in the adjoining lounge. We also watched the students playing pool in the next room. Sometimes the students would give us lessons and let us play.

My dad wrote, "Dining with the faculty members who lived on campus or came in for the occasional meal enabled the new president to become fairly well acquainted with not only the professional side but the social and personal side of much of Plymouth as well. "

I got to meet many of the faculty members who were already legends at Plymouth from Dr. Silver's time. Geneva Smith, "Miss Mathematics" whom generations of students loved, "seemed always just on her way to do something else and walked and talked as if she were perpetually in a great hurry," my father said. She was a great role model and inspired many students to teach math. Marion Seavey, who was smart and sweet and an expert on teaching reading, gave me a book of Robert Frost's poems signed to me by the poet himself! Norton Bagley taught English and eventually filled many administrative positions. He was a brilliant teacher even though he stuttered at times. My mom loved learning from him when she was getting her Master's degree in English education.

Other faculty whom I admired greatly included John Foley, English professor, superb coach, and indispensable administrator. According to Bagley, Foley was what Dr. Silver called "a natural teacher... who knew instinctively how to teach," unlike most people. I learned about flowers from Mr. Robert Boyd, for whom the science building is named. He inspired generations of conservationists, scientists and teachers. He also kept college gardens blooming and took charge of Langdon Park. My favorite faculty member was Karl Drerup because he leaned or sat way down to listen to me and the other children. He was an extraordinary ceramicist and art professor. Dartmouth tried to lure him away, but failed.

Miss Dee O'Neill would become my third grade teacher. Most of the teachers in the Plymouth schools were also faculty members at the college, employed as teachers and supervising teachers in the Model Schools run by PTC. I got to see Miss O'Neill and her friend Miss Spitzner at dinner and at a few faculty parties so I knew that besides being an inventive and very effective teacher she could also be the life of the party. She was using the "inquiry method" for teaching us long before it became the recommended approach to take.

Because the faculty was so small in the early fifties, each professor had to take on additional tasks that are today done by several full time staff members. Regis Horace, a business education professor, was also the head of the of alumni relations. She instituted "Conning Tower Gleanings," the alumni newsletter, which most of the faculty helped put out. They also worked on the annual alumni fundraising drives, thus acting as the college Advancement team. Professor Bagley was assigned to head up Public Relations on top of his teaching and advising duties.

At first President Hyde focused on building programs and faculty resources in order to attract more students. One of his first faculty hires, in 1952, would particularly impact Plymouth's reputation around New England and beyond. Roi White would become known as the Father of PTC Theatre. He was working at the University Theatre at Stanford University when Hyde called to ask him to organize a theatre program at Plymouth. The president confessed to White that the young man would be starting from scratch and that the only theatre currently was a stage in an aging third floor lecture hall. White said he would have to have a free hand to do what he wanted. Hyde agreed and from that collaboration the Plymouth Players were born.

In 1960, the Players and the Boston University School of Theatre were named as the two most pioneering programs in training school theatre teachers. The Plymouth Players became community favorites for the diversity and excellence of the plays they presented. The community also pitched in with props, costumes, and skills, a precursor to ETC today.

James Hogan was recruited to teach Social Studies. He became popular among students for information packed courses with intense discussions. Hogan also became well known around the state for his lively presentations in his specialty, international relations. Other young faculty were hired in English, Education, and Science. Many became as engaged as the older faculty and stayed their whole careers.

The First New Building

President Hyde also had some aging buildings to repair and new ones to build. Worried about Livermore Hall, the third floor of Rounds Hall, where the Plymouth Players performed and many assemblies and dances were held, Hyde noted a particularly unsettling experience. "At that time the 'Bunny Hop' was a popular dance. One night I was downstairs in Rounds Hall while a dance was going on upstairs. I looked up and saw the ceiling visibly sagging every time the dancers came down on the hop. Needless to say I was much relieved a few years later when Livermore Hall was converted into two stories of classrooms and offices with sufficient cross-bracing to bear the load"

In the early fifties the only gymnasium at PTC was in the basement of Mary Lyon Hall, which also boasted a two lane bowling alley. The gym was really too small and crowded for the high quality play of Coach Foley's basketball teams. Ever since 1929 Plymouth presidents had wanted a building with a real gymnasium. In one of Robert Frost's letters to President Ernest Silver he asked, 'Did you get your gym yet?' Dr. Silver never did get the gymnasium he wanted while he was alive. However, he was honored when the new gym was finally built in 1956 and named Silver Hall (now the Silver Center for the Arts). Roi White did finally get the stage he wanted because Silver Hall doubled as a theatre and concert hall. It was often filled to capacity for plays, performances by PTC's concert and a cappella choirs, as well as visiting artists and speakers from around the world, including my dad's favorite, Louis Armstrong.

Hyde was so excited about the new building that he rashly, though not unreasonably, promised the Class of 1956 that they would be having their graduation ceremony in the new auditorium. This was before he had fully absorbed the number of delays that can bedevil construction in New Hampshire. When graduation day 1956 arrived, the building was standing, but the auditorium was not yet ready. Dad was a man who believed in keeping promises. Wearing his academic robe and hood, he led the graduating seniors, clad in their graduation robes and mortarboards, down the long hill from Mary Lyon Hall and into the dirt floored, leaky, unfinished auditorium. There he had them turn their tassels,

ceremonially making them graduates, before they processed to the official commencement ceremonies at the Plymouth Interstate Theatre, now The Flying Monkey.

Though he had never been a college administrator before, President Hyde did bring with him unique experiences in building a small college from scratch. He was a member of the founding class of Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY. It was established by classics and liberal arts professors who had been at Hartwick Seminary, a Lutheran institution which had also offered high school students like dad in Hartwick, NY a classical curriculum. In 1928 Hartwick College opened in Oneonta with a distinguished faculty and a few buildings on a very high hill. A scholarship student, Hyde worked all through college but remained active in college affairs. He helped form a club to link scholars and local business people. He brought in speakers from area businesses and clubs. He wrote in the college paper and served on its business staff. He promoted Hartwick College whenever he could. He brought those experiences to PTC.

Growth

Five years into his presidency, Hyde and the faculty had nearly doubled the enrollment of Plymouth Teachers College to 500 students, completed an important new building, and added 10 new professors. How had they done it? By an incredible amount of travel throughout the state, lobbying the legislature, appeals to alumni, and a nascent public relations team that publicized all the good programs going on.

President Hyde travelled frequently to the North County and to towns large and small all over New Hampshire to sing PTC's praises and encourage applications. He even brought his family along to gain good will. I remember rides to Lancaster and Whitefield on dark winter nights. We would arrive at a school auditorium, Dad would sit me and Mom in the very front row, and start off his talk by introducing us. Since Mom was uncommonly pretty and at that age I was tiny and cute, it seemed to immediately encourage good thoughts about PTC. Dad was a fluid speaker, sometimes a little corny, and backed up his points with apt examples and evidence. He also spoke at countless high school graduations, again getting the word out about PTC. Many evenings I would hear him typing away on his Smith Corona typewriter in his home office at the top of the stairs in the President's House, writing up a speech for yet another presentation on the state of higher education in general or PTC in particular.

In the nineteen fifties when people from the Plymouth area drove to Concord to lobby the legislators, the governor, or some other authority, it was not a 40 minute drive. Dad and others made the trip often as they tried to convince enough of the legislators, as well as the Governor, that PTC needed and deserved more support. Some weeks it seemed as if my father was in Concord more days than he was in Plymouth.

Faculty also hit the road, the phones, and any other means to attract positive attention to PTC. Some taught extension courses in the North Country, like Dr. Kinney's Twentieth Century America course given in North Conway. Jim Hogan remembers getting to classes held above Franconia Notch could be tricky: "If a blizzard occurred enroute, or stormy conditions prevailed, I was advised to meet Mother Nature's wrath head on. The roads could become impassible; few cars would be seen." One night he left for home at 9 p.m., right after class ended. He arrived in Plymouth at 2 a.m. Hogan also gave speeches on history and international relations around the state, occasionally stirring up controversy when a John

Bircher or certain columnists from the Manchester Union Leader objected to his support of the United Nations or some other “radical” idea. But it got PTC’s name in the papers.

Though not technically on the faculty or staff, my mother also worked tirelessly to grow PTC. She was definitely part of the unofficial college Advancement team. She had some help from the college kitchens at times, but she hosted hundreds of luncheons, teas, and receptions for students, faculty, politicians, and dignitaries. Not having much idea of how much work this all took, I just “circulated” in my party dress at the functions, enjoying talking with all kinds of new people and sampling the savory tarts, cookies, and cakes. My favorite receptions were in the big back yard of the President’s House. The manicured lawn was large, eventually sloping down to formal gardens that had been planted by Mr. Boyd and his student workers.

Mom also went to countless dinners, conferences, and other events as First Lady of PTC. Some were fun, like the annual board weekend at the Crawford House or the proms every Spring. Others were deadly dull, but through it all she smiled, chatted, and talked up PTC. Her motto, frequently repeated to me, was that you must “make the effort.” If I complained about a chore or going to some dull (to me) college function, she gave me one of her looks and said, MTE Mary Anne, MTE!

In the early sixties my mother became the 11th Grade English (American Literature) teacher at Plymouth High School. She grew to be as well known in the community as my dad was. A skillful and well liked teacher, she helped strengthen the ties between the college and town.

Students were also excellent ambassadors for PTC. The Plymouth Players attracted large audiences and traveled all over the state. After Player’s Magazine named BU and PTC the best educational theatre programs in the US, the Players became even more well known. The Foleymen, Coach Foley’s winning basketball team, also gained fame all over New England and attracted students to PTC. Performances by the A Cappella Choir, later the Polyphonic Choir, and smaller groups like the Collegians and the Collegianettes delighted audiences and raised awareness of PTC. Once, when the A Cappella Choir sang The Battle Hymn of the Republic for The General Court in Representatives Hall of the New Hampshire Capitol, President Hyde remembers, “I found tears of pride and appreciation rolling down my cheeks.” The choirs also presented a Christmas Candlelight Service each December for the Plymouth Community, always before a packed audience.

The International Relations Club ran the PTC Model United Nations, which had been organized by Dean Kinney back in 1948 and grew under the supervision of Professor Hogan. Hundreds of high school students from New Hampshire, Vermont and Quebec descended on Plymouth for a packed weekend of debate, committee proclamations, and speeches from actual UN officials. The IRC held a dance every year for the student delegates, who attended dressed as if from their “country.” One year a student Fidel Castro in combat camouflage could be seen twisting with the very fashionably dressed student UN Ambassador from France. Some of the high school students who were delegates returned as students to PTC, many helping to run future model United Nations. That weekend each Spring, the flags of hundreds of countries flanked the walkway up to the entrance of Mary Lyon Hall. The flags waved above flowering apple trees, lilac bushes and tulip beds, creating a very festive and international atmosphere. Plymouth felt connected to places all over the world, a harbinger of things to come.

The Model UN program was co-sponsored by the Plymouth Rotary Club, who enthusiastically endorsed the international outreach program of Rotary International. It created a strong bond between

Rotary and PTC. Dad was an active member and a President of Rotary. The club and college also sponsored several music series together, notably one that brought jazz greats to PTC, as well as other events.

While Plymouth had come a long way, Hyde and the faculty knew there was much to do to secure its future. In 1956 he predicted four big decisions that would have to be made soon. Would Plymouth remain a teachers college or become a state college, adding a full liberal arts and business curriculum? Even before that decision was made, would the college institute majors in physical education, art, and music? Should the college develop a testing and diagnostic center for pupils with educational problems? Would PTC be able to get the necessary funds from the state to improve the physical plant and equipment needed for expansion?

Unexpected Help

One thing the president didn't predict was that the Russians would shortly cause funds to start flowing to pre-college and higher education. In October of 1957 The Soviet Union shot Sputnik into space. That little 184 pound satellite rocked public confidence in American education. In November the USSR launched Sputnik II, which weighed 1,120 pounds and carried a dog named Laika. People panicked. Why hadn't we beaten the Soviets into space? What was wrong with our scientists, mathematicians and the educational system in general? We were supposed to be best in the world!

Where pleas to the NH legislature from alumni and friends of PTC had failed to increase needed funds sufficiently, Sputnik spurred a huge increase in federal spending on aid to education and a slight increase in aid from the state. Plymouth, like most educational institutions, benefited. Congress passed the National Defense Education Act to encourage more study of science, math, and foreign languages.

A little of the NDEA's almost one billion dollars in funds made its way to NH. Hogan writes, "President Hyde stretched his scanty budget to the limits to put more emphasis on the target areas. Gwen Smith in the Mathematics department, George Salmons and Mark Sylvestre in Sciences, and Madie Barret in Foreign Languages exhorted their students to meet the Russian challenge." The sense that we were all fighting the Cold War extended to the lab schools where even we elementary students knew we had to work hard to beat the Russians. When the PTC science professors and lab school teachers hosted the New Hampshire State Science Fair I was excited to enter my project on enriched uranium. Some students actually dreamed of becoming rocket scientists.

Social studies also benefitted. Our nation needed not only scientists, but diplomats and linguists and experts in foreign affairs as well. At age 11 I decided I wanted to join the Foreign Service or be a translator at the UN. When Madie Barret brought a state of the art language lab and her student teachers into our elementary schools to start early training in French, I was more than ready! At last everyone was paying attention to our education.

Teaching itself was more carefully scrutinized and the already progressive lab school teachers at PTC tried new ways of reaching students. The NDEA gave grants for both college and primary school teachers to attend workshops and summer institutes that focused on both content and better methods for teaching it.

By 1959 Plymouth Teachers College had over 500 students. By 1963 the enrollment had grown to almost 800 students, and would reach close to 2000 by the end of the decade. Even more important, the

whole structure and purpose of the college was changing. The academic divisions at PTC for most of the fifties were Humanities, Professional Education, Mathematics and Science, Business Education and Physical Education. A departmental structure was established in February of 1959, consisting of Business Education, Education – Demonstration School, Education, Fine Arts, Languages, Mathematics, Physical Education, Science, and Social Studies.

Highways and Hoopla or Books and Brains?

In his November 1959 letter to alumni in Conning Tower Gleanings, “Progress and Problems,” President Hyde summed up the progress of the college, highlighting faculty growth and accomplishments. He noted that Dr. Robert Mattison was experimenting with a new “streamlined and integrated methods course in the elementary curriculum, allowing us to move a little further in the offering of strong subject matter for our elementary students.” Hyde explained, “The State Board of Education has recently instructed the college presidents to move as far as possible in the direction of a strong liberal education without sacrificing professional competency.” The faculty at PTC constantly juggled teaching subject matter content with teaching best practices to reach students. Both were crucial, but time was limited.

Both professors Monier and Sylvestre had presented offerings on the new Channel 11, WENH, the educational TV station, of which Plymouth was a founding member. Monier headlined on the geography of Russia and Sylvestre was coordinating that year’s Continental Classroom offering in Chemistry. Roi White had been chosen as the year’s editor for “The Players” magazine.

Then the tone of Hyde’s letter changed abruptly: “So much for progress – now come the problems. How do we retain such a fine staff and recruit equally gifted new members with salary levels which are far behind the New England and national pictures?” He noted that the state legislature had granted raises to faculty at UNH while forcing the teachers colleges’ faculties to stand still for two years. “No – not stand still – but actually slip backwards since most other colleges are increasing stipends for staff members?”

Hyde asked, “how can we continue to care for increased students in an adequate manner without foresight and courage in authorizing expenditures for the capital improvements which increased student bodies necessitate? We were granted but one major capital request in this session of the legislature and that because of being finally able to overcome what looked like almost insurmountable obstacles in a policy which places highways and hoopla ahead of books and brains.”

Into the Sixties and PSC

Tension over funding and recognition continued in the early sixties. At the turn of the decade, few people would imagine that by 1970 Plymouth’s enrollment would be over 2000 and ten new buildings, including a new library, science building, a field house, and five new dormitories would be built. The “building boom” actually included all aspects of campus life. As Plymouth changed from a teachers college to a liberal arts institution, new programs, faculty appointments, and opportunities for students took off.

In July 1963 the New Hampshire Legislature passed a bill reorganizing public higher education in New Hampshire. Plymouth and Keene teachers colleges were designated as state colleges. They were now divisions of the University of New Hampshire and would be governed by its Board of Trustees. Each new state college would become “a multipurpose college by expanding the current program to provide instruction in the arts and sciences and in selected applied fields to better serve the needs in its respective area of location.” Plymouth and Keene would still train teachers, but now they were charged to do so much more.

While the faculty and students were enthusiastic about the new opportunities and the hoped for funds, they were also worried. Would Plymouth and Keene become just satellite campuses of UNH? Would they be swallowed up by it? How could a board of trustees mainly for UNH know what Plymouth and Keene needed? Would they even care? The new Board of Trustees included alumni Trustees for the two state colleges and UNH, the Presidents of PSC and KSC, and the State Commissioner of Education. It grew from 15 to 22 members.

The challenge to transform from a teachers college to a liberal arts college almost overnight was daunting. Changing the name was only a start. The college would have to add many new departments, and hire more faculty for each. PSC now needed professors of philosophy, psychology, and specialists in History and the social sciences. These new hires should include a large percentage with doctorates. All of this also required an expanded and better library, classrooms and labs, as well as specialized equipment.

Then there was the Catch-22 of accreditation. It takes a ten year period for a college to receive full accreditation from NEASC, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. How could PSC attract students to a program that wasn't yet fully accredited?

Although Plymouth had a reputation for producing excellent teachers, it had no clear track record yet as a liberal arts or business school. The reputation would have to be built as the programs were. Two big challenges were the usual paucity of funds and a certain snobbery many of those in liberal arts had for education programs. Plymouth was not alone in facing this problem. All over the country teachers colleges were becoming liberal arts colleges. The growing pains were common. Those at the “flagship” state universities often considered themselves superior. As my dad put it, although the three presidents met as “equals,” there was the sense that the UNH president was the “more equal of the equal” administrators.

To build the new liberal arts and business programs around 20 new faculty and staff positions were added each year. New majors were added in Art, Music (later Music and Theatre), Social Science, Philosophy and Psychology. The faculty for existing majors was expanded as enrollments increased. The new Lamson Library was built in 1964 and grew quickly. A new science building, Boyd Hall, was added in 1968. Silver Hall was expanded and upgraded. To house and feed all the new students five new dormitories and a dining commons were built, including Grafton Hall, Plymouth's first seven story building.

An All College Committee on Academic Excellence, headed by Dr. Mark Sylvestre, devised standards and methods to inspire student achievement in 1965. They established criteria for academic year

programs and scholarships and awards, as well as a detailed system for awarding honors. Faculty and many students wanted to make sure that PSC maintained the same kind of high standards for its liberal arts and business programs as were in force for education majors.

Hyde's efforts to recruit excellent new faculty were hampered by the state's miserly expenditures for professors' salaries, among the lowest in the country. However, PSC did have one enormous advantage that motivated some to overlook the lower pay. Its setting was absolutely beautiful and a huge draw for those who loved mountains, lakes, and gorgeous vistas.

By 1964 Plymouth, it would seem, was certainly out of the woods and long beyond the threats to close it down that Dad had heard in the early fifties. Well, not entirely. Although the UNH Board of Trustees had approved a substantial expansion plan to accommodate 1500 students by 1968, President McConnell of UNH was not convinced Plymouth State College should continue as it was. Noting the limited space for expansion and campus beautification, he wondered if the present buildings should become a junior college serving mostly commuters, while PSC moved out to land west of the Baker River. Even more alarming, he suggested that perhaps no new site should be built in Plymouth, but that a new college be "located in a faster growing population center." Alumni and friends of Plymouth waged a campaign to keep it where it is.

UNH President McConnell may not have been entirely pleased with PSC President Hyde either. According to Douglas Robertson, former PSC Alumni Trustee to the UNH Board, McConnell wanted dad out. The reason is not entirely clear, but my guess is that McConnell did not think that a person with a background mainly in education, with an Ed.D., rather than a Ph.D., should be heading up a liberal arts institution. Perhaps he felt the arriving liberal arts faculty would only respect someone who had the same liberal arts background that they had. According to Robertson, PSC board members, faculty, and alumni strongly objected to the idea of losing President Hyde. McConnell relented, but relations between the two presidents, while outwardly cordial, were never chummy.

President Hyde, the faculty, and students waged a campaign to get salaries at Plymouth closer to those at other state colleges. One problem, which persists today, is that New Hampshire is fifty out of the fifty states in what it allocates per capita to public higher education. As my dad noted in one letter to alumni and friends of PSC, the situation was not due to New Hampshire being a poor state. It was about in the middle of the states in terms of per capita income. How could the colleges offer an excellent education if citizens were unwilling to pay for it? At that time PSC got about 50% of its funding from the state. Today PSU gets around 10% of its funds from the state.

It became clear that PSC needed to start raising more money from sources other than the State of New Hampshire. Increasing tuition and/or room and board would mean hardship for many students and might discourage others. By the mid-nineteen sixties Hyde had convinced the university system that Plymouth needed more resources for fund raising. One particular problem faculty faced under the bare bones budgets was a heavier teaching load than in most colleges and no or little sabbatical leave. In 1966 the President of the Alumni Association, Bill Marston, led a major effort to raise funds from Plymouth grads. Bernie Sweet became Director of Public Relations and John Foley became Dean of Instruction. Both men helped increase fund raising from alumni and from other private sources, the latter a source that was relatively new at state schools.

Protests and Unrest

The late nineteen sixties were particularly trying for colleges everywhere. Plymouth was no exception. College presidents were the targets of widely opposed groups, especially students who wanted academia to help change society NOW and conservatives who didn't want colleges to give even an inch in meeting student demands. Dad tried very hard to listen and to understand why so many students wanted change fast. His own daughter wasn't shy about telling him. It was difficult because he felt the very existence of the college he loved was at stake. He faced numerous challenges, but two stand out.

In October of 1968 Dick Gregory, a black comedian and social commentator, was scheduled to speak at Silver Auditorium. Many conservative groups and the Manchester Union Leader were in an uproar because Gregory believed in major social change and wasn't bashful about the remarks and jokes he used to call for it. Conservatives wanted him banned from campus. Dad said the First Amendment protected Free Expression and the show would go on. People came from all over the state. According to Hogan, "There were 2,200 who attended with at least another 200 turned away." State police and sheriff's deputies were stationed around the area to prevent violence. Dr. Hyde and a towering Dick Gregory, lightly "protected" by a few deans, walked to Silver Hall. Hogan notes that once they were inside, "Dick Gregory's monologue went along smoothly, interrupted by spontaneous applause and sporadic laughter. The only activity outside the hall was a banner waving in the breeze advertising an oncoming intramural football game." The Plymouth Record remarked of the speech, "From what we witnessed in Plymouth last Monday evening, Dick Gregory, with all his faults, may be better tuned in than we care to admit." (Hogan, p. 99, PR, Oct.24, 1968, p.1)

By the fall of 1968, 520 Freshmen were entering PSC. This entering class was twice the size of the whole school in 1951. While it was still a very friendly college, it was no longer the intimate academic community where everybody knew your name.

Dad was also spending more time networking with other college presidents and educational leaders as problems became even more complex. He had been on the Board of Directors for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) since 1964. In 1971 he became its president. He had also helped form the New Hampshire College and University Council (NHCUC), and was frequently asked to serve on accreditation teams for NEASC.

Dad often traveled to Washington, DC to lobby for federal grants and for policies favorable to public higher education. As a leader of the AASCU he served on several national committees regarding higher education. One such committee, devoted to student concerns, was meeting in Iowa City on May 4, 1970. Also in the meeting was the President of Kent State University and there the news reached them that four Kent State Students had been killed by National Guard troops. It was a day Dad never forgot.

He rushed back to PSC where students and faculty were meeting. Governor Walter Peterson called to ask if PSC needed National Guard troops for protection. Dad reported, "I informed him I thought we were handling the situation peacefully and cooperatively and that there was no immediate danger that would require a military presence that might exacerbate the situation." Plymouth remained peaceful and held both classes as usual and workshops devoted to the Vietnam War abroad and at home. Somebody did throw a rock through the kitchen window of the President's House with a note threatening our family if dad did not shut the campus down. He was furious. He gave the note to Campus Security and nothing more happened. Later that year he was one of six college and university

presidents appointed to a White House Advisory Council on “selected problems in higher education in the 1970’s.” He kept an open mind and tried to uphold what he saw as American ideals. When as a USNH Trustee he was polled for his vote on whether Yippie leader Abbie Hoffman should be allowed to speak at UNH, he voted “yes.” For this and for the many other times he upheld free speech, he was roundly denounced by the Manchester Union Leader.

In 1970 the fall enrollment was 2030 students. As the administrative staff grew it needed new quarters and moved into the old Speare Elementary School, which had been bought, along with Plymouth High School and the Memorial School, from the town. Now the president had a much larger office, which had been one of my classrooms back in the early fifties. At this point Frank Olcott came aboard as Assistant to the President, a new position we couldn’t even have imagined in the fifties when everyone was doing everything. Olcott had many tasks, but he could also contribute to the perpetual need for raising more funds, not only from alumni and foundations, but also from private donors. The college was getting ready for its centennial year.

The Seventies

1971 marked the 100th Anniversary of the college, starting as Plymouth Normal School, now PSC. Celebrations started on March 9 with the lighting of a gigantic 15 foot birthday cake sculpted out of snow and ice in front of Mary Lyon Hall. People flocked to an ice cream smorgasbord in Prospect Hall and cheered the talent show put on by students and faculty. Dr. Chong, transformed into “Elvis Presley” was the emcee. Over a week of celebrations followed, including dinners, art displays, music performances, and speeches, as well as old movies of the college. An old time beard contest was judged and Dr. Hyde won the Good Sportsmanship prize “for his stylish beard and the role he played in the week long festivities.” Dad remembered it differently : “It was so seedy and scruffy that I apologized to the House Appropriations Committee for it as I appeared before them, telling them it was not because I was becoming a hippy but that it was a sign of the proud history of the college. Maybe they felt sorry for me, but they were quite generous in their appropriations for that biennium.”

During the Centennial Convocation the 20 year President and First Lady were surprised by a cake, honors, and presents marking their roles in advancing Plymouth State. Governor Walter Peterson announced he was recommending the largest ever capital improvement appropriation for the Plymouth campus. Five million dollars would go toward a new academic building and new student housing. In November of 1971 at a testimonial dinner specifically to mark Dr. Hyde’s 20 years at Plymouth, the over 500 attendees cheered when Dr. Norton Bagely displayed a bronze plaque that would be mounted on the new academic building. It was to be named Harold E. Hyde Hall.

In the mid-seventies the student body continued to grow. Increasingly, students majored in a wider variety of disciplines. Eventually the number of liberal arts and business majors outnumbered education majors, though the education program remained strong. Academic and athletic programs also changed. There was even more interdisciplinary cooperation and creativity. One example was the Medieval Studies Program which drew on the English, Social Science, and Art departments to form, soon drawing in many more faculty and students. The business program expanded quickly. In 1974 an MBA program began. Intercollegiate football had started up and grew so fast that by the middle of the eighties, PSC Running Back Joe Dudek was on the cover of Sport’s Illustrated as a contender for the Heisman Trophy.

In 1973 Plymouth State University was officially accredited as a liberal arts institution by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the major accrediting agency. It also won continued accreditation by the American Council for Colleges of Teacher Education. Hyde and the faculty were very pleased. All their hard and skillful work had been recognized by the organizations that counted the most in determining the status of the college. Dad wrote "one of my greatest satisfactions was to win accreditation from (NEASC). Both Lloyd Young, President of Keene State College, and I later became presidents of that organization. We both worked hard to get acceptance of public, state assisted colleges as worthwhile institutions, emphasizing that they did a special kind of job well and furnished many of the leaders in our country."

In June of 1977 President Hyde officially retired. An editorial in The Record Citizen stated, "In the annals of educational history, Dr. Hyde will be remembered as the educational builder in Plymouth. From an enrollment of 250 in 1951, Plymouth State College has grown to 3200 in 1977 ... There simply are not many administrators who answered the telephone without calls being screened. Harold Hyde was such an administrator. If he did not have a ready answer, he would hunt until he found one. If he knew his response would prove unpopular, he would give it anyway, explaining it to the best of his ability, but unafraid of speaking what he believed was right." (April, 1977 in Hogan, 205)

Perhaps the one accolade Dad cherished the most was the following statement that was unanimously passed with a resounding ovation at the final faculty meeting in 1977. The faculty also presented him a framed parchment with the statement written in graceful calligraphy. It remained above the desk in his home study for the rest of his life. It remains there still.

The faculty of Plymouth State College in recognition of Harold E. Hyde's twenty six years of service to this college and in commemoration of his retirement from his duties as President of the College, does clearly call to mind the enduring traits which marked those years.

His dedication to duty,

His unflagging diligence,

His honesty of view,

His independence of judgement, and

His upright heart.

It was Pericles who said, "One's sense of honor is the only thing that does not grow old, and the last pleasure, when one is worn out with age, is not, as the poet said, making money, but having the respect of one's fellow man." President Hyde has that respect from this academic community.

Let our goodbye be a noble one,

Tinged not with sadness or regret;

Our common goals have now been won;

Your standard furled, your burden met,

May you fare well. Godspeed.

