

[REDACTED]
February 4, 1988

Mr. James O. Freedman
President
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

Dear President Freedman:

I am a member of the Class of 1978 and currently serving on the Alumni Council. I am also among the many people who are extremely excited to have you serving as President of Dartmouth College and have applauded your arrival. I hope that your first year has been a gratifying one.

At the December meeting of the Alumni Council, I was fortunate enough to meet Steve Calvert at one of our Council luncheons. We began talking about the concept of society's need for heroes and Steve mentioned that you were interested in the idea of young people, i.e. college students, having heroes. I mentioned to Steve that a hero in my life is a very special member of the faculty at Dartmouth named Hannah Croasdale of the Biology Department. Steve suggested that I write to you and tell you about the impact she has had on me and other students.

I met Hannah during my sophomore summer on campus in her well-known phycology (the study of algae) course. Needless to say, most students immediately grew attached to her. She was and is the finest example of someone who loves her work and is able to communicate that to her students. With that kind of introduction to a subject, it was impossible not to be fascinated by it ourselves.

Hannah is among a rare and diminishing breed of classical descriptive biologists whose self taught knowledge of Latin has made her known world-wide as an authority in Latin diagnoses for new taxa. Hannah is known in both the freshwater and marine science communities, although her main research has been in freshwater algae. She is well-remembered as a collector of biological samples and instructor at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole during her many summers spent there between 1929-1941.

Hannah completed her Ph.D. in 1935 at the University of Pennsylvania and started as a Research Assistant in the Medical School of Dartmouth soon after. Later she joined the Department of Biology, serving as a technical assistant, instructor, and research associate for over twenty years. Finally in 1959, she became an assistant professor and in 1964, an associate professor at which time she was given tenure. She was the first woman to "move through the ranks" at Dartmouth during an era when Dartmouth was far from being a hospitable place for women. In 1971, Hannah retired as a professor emeritus, but continued to teach her phycology course for seven years afterwards. For the last ten years she has actively pursued her research in her laboratory in Gilman Hall during

*1968 Full
professor*

the summers and in Florida during the winters. Last year, the Hannah T. Croasdale Fellowship was established by the Phycological Society of America to honor her contributions to science. The purpose of the Fellowship is to provide financial assistance to graduate students wishing to study phycology at biological field stations. Hannah was also one of the founding members of the Phycological society in the 1940's and served as its 21st president in 1967.

In her life outside of science, Hannah has been a firewoman on the Hanover Fire Department, an amateur carpenter, avid gardener, and a poet. I have always admired Hannah's "matter of fact" attitude about being a woman in a scientific field at a time when most women were not even going to college. She has perservered in her field without ever harboring bitterness about the inequitable circumstances for women. However, as a result, she has never received the full recognition that she deserves. She has been such a pioneer and an inspiration to many Dartmouth students as well as the people around her. The college hardly realizes what a unique and wonderful teacher it has had in its service for over 50 years.

I have been very fortunate to have had Hannah as a dear friend for the last ten years since graduating from Dartmouth. There are several of us who keep in touch with her. During the recent Alumni Council meeting in December, I visited Hannah. For the first time in all my years of knowing her, I heard her remark that her health was beginning to fail her. Mind you, she has never been the sort to complain. But lately she has had problems with her eyesight and she has been terribly concerned that she won't be able to finish the third and last volume of "The Flora of New Zealand - Desmids" which she has been co-authoring with a colleague in New Zealand. At the age of 83 she has done extremely well despite her numerous physical ailments. However, even the greatest of our heros eventually get on in years.

I've written about Hannah so that you, as a new member of the Dartmouth community, will realize what a treasure you have at Dartmouth. Those of us who have had our lives touched by Hannah can't thank her enough. Many of us have continued in science and research because of her. As one of her former students, I am groping for ways to thank her adequately. I know that she is now working as hard as she can to finish her book on desmids despite her partial loss of sight. Other sources have informed me that she is also short of funds--approximately \$15,000--to complete the project. Have you any suggestions as to how a group of loyal alumnae who love Hannah dearly could possibly help her at this time? I would welcome any ideas you might have.

Well, I hope that you will someday have a chance to meet Hannah. Thirty minutes spent with Hannah will provide you with a portrait of Dartmouth's finer qualities as telling and vibrant as you are likely to find anywhere in Hanover. Perhaps one of your now famous "brown bag lunches"!. Hannah is quite a remarkable woman and scientist. I only wish that the present students at Dartmouth could get to know her and have their lives enhanced the way that many of us have. Since she no longer teaches her phycology course, she has very little contact with students. In many ways that is a shame for Hannah as well as for all those

interested budding biologists. It would be an invaluable experience for students to be able to learn from her as I was fortunate enough to do during my tenure at Dartmouth. I know that she would welcome the opportunity to share her laboratory and her wealth of knowledge with an interested student.

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to read this letter. Good luck to you in your coming years at Dartmouth. I look forward to reading about your endeavors and possibly having a chance to meet you.

Sincerely,



Celia Y. Chen
Class of 1978