The two Macs

Building a college in turbulent times

By Allen W. Croessmann

This 1909 postcard of Illinois Women's College declared it to be the largest women's college west of the Alleghenies. McClelland wanted to make it the greatest.

They were an unlikely pair. One was a Missouri farm boy, a self-made man, who sold metal strapping for boxes, turned that into a successful Chicago manufacturing business and spent the last quarter of his long life engaged in philanthropy and world travel. The other, 21 years younger, grew up just outside New York City into a cultured, well-established family. After a brief stint in the insurance business, he became a successful minister and then turned to academia. For 18 years, from 1925 when Clarence P. McClelland, the New Yorker, was named president of Illinois Woman's College until 1943 when James E. MacMurray, the Chicago industrialist and the college's board president and chief benefactor, died, these two men of Scottish ancestry forged a remarkable partnership that ushered in a period of unprecedented expansion at the institution, renamed MacMurray College for Women in 1930.

Their vision was audacious: It was to build the greatest college for women west of the Allegheny Mountains. During the MacMurray-McClelland years enrollment more than doubled, the campus burgeoned with the construction of five major buildings, gross annual income tripled, total assets climbed five-fold, the number and quality of the faculty improved, and the college's reputation as one of the finest women's schools in the country was established.

The two men corresponded regularly during those 18 years. Hundreds of their letters are housed in the McClelland Papers at the Henry A. Pfeiffer Library on MacMurray College's campus in Jacksonville, Illinois. It began when MacMurray, the president of the Illinois Woman's College board of trustees and head of the search committee, recruited McClelland, president of the Drew Seminary for Young Women in Carmel, New York, to become the college's eighth president. It continued during the years when MacMurray infused the institution with over $4 million in cash, securities, and real estate (more than $60 million in today's dollars) to construct several of the Georgian-style buildings that more than doubled the size of the campus, to cover deficits during the Depression, and to build endowment.

Their rich correspondence is erudite and measured (on McClelland's part) and folksy, pragmatic, and opinionated (on MacMurray's) and covers topics as varied as: campus expansion; the renaming of the school; the economic challenges of running a small college; the price of corn; a tragic 1929 gymnasium fire; the Great Depression, the New Deal and World War II; educational and business philosophy; the school's relationship with the Methodist Church and with the crosstown institution, Illinois College; and personal values and family matters.

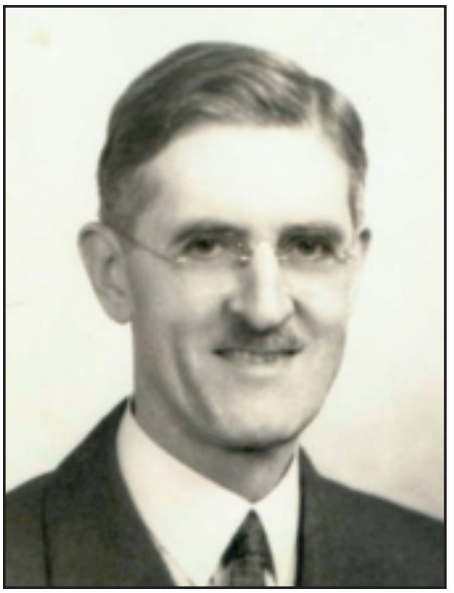
"Greatest woman's college west of the Alleghenies"

McClelland referred to himself as the junior partner in this relationship, but it was he who had the vision for what the college could become. In MacMurray he had an engaged and generous collaborator who left the management of the college to the president. The exceptions were when MacMurray encountered an issue, such as indebtedness, that raised his hackles.

Correspondence between the 63-year-old MacMurray and the 42-year-old McClelland began in the spring of 1925 when MacMurray wrote the Drew Seminary president, then in his eighth year at the college preparatory school, about the possibility of his assuming the presidency of Illinois Woman's College following the announced retirement of the venerable Dr. Joseph R. Harker, who had led the college since 1893. "The college is in fair condition, both financially and scholastically…It has been able to balance its budget every year since Dr. Harker has been there." Enrollment was about 275 in the four-year program with approximately an equal number in special courses.

McClelland accepted in early July 1925 with a $6000 salary plus moving and living expenses.

Clarence Paul McClelland (1883-1974) was an Easterner to the core. He was born in Dobbs Ferry, New York. His father was a prominent lawyer and judge. He attended private school in New York and prep school in New Jersey and then interrupted his education to work for Mutual Life in New York City for four years. McClelland earned a bachelor of arts from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and then a bachelor of divinity degree from Drew Theological Seminary in New Jersey.



A young McClelland. He arrived at Illinois Women's College in 1925 at the age of 42.

He held three pastorates in the New York Methodist Conference before assuming the Drew Seminary for Young Women presidency in 1917. His stellar work there caused Syracuse University to grant him an honorary doctor of sacred theology degree.

McClelland was slightly over six feet tall, with dark hair in his youth that grayed as he aged. He was dignified and professorial in bearing but had a kindly face and friendly smile and was eminently approachable. He was known as "C.P." to his close friends and "Dr. Mac" to everyone else.

Moving to the Midwest was a significant decision for McClelland. MacMurray wrote to Harker, "I have no doubt it is quite a shock to these Easterners who have lived so close to the place they were born to go so far, far away in Illinois." McClelland arrived in Jacksonville for the start of the fall semester with his wife Mary, a Philadelphia native, and five children, ages four to fourteen, in tow.

MacMurray was not present for the opening convocation in September 1925, nor did he attend the inauguration and commencement in the spring of 1926. He wrote in June 1926 that while he was disappointed to miss the inauguration, "plans were made and I thought it best to complete them…" MacMurray and his wife Jane had recently returned from an around-the-world cruise.

James E. MacMurray at 40. He served as president of the board of trustees from 1921 until his death in 1943.

James Edwin MacMurray (1862-1943) was born in Missouri in 1862 into a farm family, attended Chaddock College in Quincy, practiced law locally for a time, then went into business, parlaying a small steel parts manufacturing operation into a merger with another enterprise in Chicago. The new company, Acme Steel Company, which he headed until his retirement in the 1930s, employed some 6,000 people and became the source of his wealth. MacMurray was also active in Republican politics and served as an Illinois state senator from the 5th district in the 52nd, 53rd and 54th General Assemblies in the early 1920s.

A passport application from 1921 listed him at five feet, ten inches tall, with iron gray hair. Photographs of MacMurray show a dignified man of medium build, stylishly attired with stickpin and watch fob, with a well-trimmed mustache and beard and a slight twinkle in his eyes. He went by "Edwin" to his family and close friends.

MacMurray's interest in the small college for young women in Jacksonville began in the first decade of the twentieth century. His elder daughter Miriam attended during the 1903-4 school year. Over the years Harker and MacMurray became friendly. The Chicago man joined the board in 1916 and became its president in early 1921. Upon MacMurray's election, Harker wrote, "Nobody can ever know how long and earnestly I have worked and believed and hoped for the college, and how it encourages me when I find one like yourself who is willing, and I trust happy, to be associated in such a wonderful opportunity as we have here." During the Harker years the Chicago steel executive gave some $45,000 to the institution.

The vision for the institution was McClelland's, enthusiastically supported by MacMurray. The model was the prestigious women's colleges in the East. "We believe it is better for women to have their own colleges where the curricula are designed to meet woman's needs as distinguished from men's, and where the extracurricular activities permit of their full participation and offer them opportunities for training in leadership such as are impossible in coeducational institutions," McClelland proclaimed. In a 1927 pamphlet entitled *Woman*, he set out an aggressive development plan for the college that included the raising of $1.5 million for new buildings and $3 million for endowment to support faculty hiring, salary increases, and building maintenance. The plan would be completed by the college's centennial in 1946. In 1926 Illinois Woman's College enrolled 326 students in its regular college curriculum and approximately the same number in music, art, and other special programs. Its campus consisted of four principal buildings: the multi-purpose Main Hall; Harker Hall, a residential and classroom building; a fine arts building; and a gymnasium.

McClelland (left) at his inauguration as Illinois Woman's College president in 1926.

Cornerstone laying for MacMurray Hall in 1927. Standing next to MacMurray are Mrs. MacMurray, Mrs. McClelland, Mrs. Harker, McClelland and Harker.

Many college and university presidents endorsed McClelland's vision and program. Ada Comstock, the president of Radcliffe, wrote, "The colleges for women are, for the most part, in the East. The eastern women's colleges are overcrowded. There is certainly a field for women's colleges in the Middle West." Mount Holyoke's president Mary E. Woolley lent her support: "I am in favor of increasing the efficiency of foundations already established like the Illinois Woman's College."

McClelland was a builder. During his eight years at Drew Seminary he had doubled enrollment, added new buildings and increased the size of the campus three-fold. The most pressing physical need at Illinois Woman's College, President McClelland felt, was for a new science and classroom building. When the two men met at Old Brae, MacMurray's home in Barrington, in 1926, McClelland asked MacMurray for a gift of $125,000 to cover half of the cost of the new structure, the other half to be raised from other donors. He agreed. As early as July 1926, the president expressed his partiality for what the new building should be called: "I would prefer, of course, to have the building called MacMurray Hall, but we will leave that matter in abeyance for the present."

The new science building was an important first step: "This I believe is going to give the college the greatest forward impulse it has had; it will mark the beginning of the greater Illinois Woman's College, which will soon be the greatest woman's college west of the Alleghenies," McClelland exuded in September.

The facility would contain ten laboratories, nine classrooms, a lecture hall, and five conference rooms. Planning for the new science building advanced through the fall of 1926 and MacMurray was quick to offer his opinion about construction details, such as the heating system. "I think there is a lot of bunk in the modern so-called scientific heating and ventilating of public school buildings that enables architects and engineers to make a lot of money for a little bit of benefit." Why not put up a good, solid building and put in some radiators furnished with steam? "If we get too hot, we will open the window; if we get too cold, we will turn on the steam."

In April 1927, President McClelland wired MacMurray in Los Angeles: "Will you allow us to name new building MacMurray Hall? Inscription to be placed in frieze over main entrance. Decision must be made at once as inscriptions are cast with stone." MacMurray replied: "Would be pleased to have building named for me." MacMurray Hall was dedicated in June 1928. One of the speakers at the event was the famed Chicago social worker Jane Addams.

"We are handicapped in holding our students"

President McClelland wrote regularly to MacMurray about the financial performance of the college and, occasionally, to paint a contrast between the last years of the Harker regime and the first years of his own: "You will remember that the year before last was rather a poor financial year. Last year was a good one, and it looks as though the present year would be equally good," he wrote in the fall of 1926. Enrollment was improving. It climbed from under 300 at the end of the Harker years to 342 by 1928. Yet McClelland was concerned with student attrition. There was a ceiling on the college's ability to achieve the vision: "We are handicapped in holding our students by certain limitations of campus, buildings, and instruction…"

The relationship between the two men was developing, and personal matters found their way into the correspondence. McClelland was hospitalized in November 1926 with an enlarged gall bladder, and he was on the fence about whether to have surgery. "Having always lived within striking distance of New York, where some of the best medical advice is to be had, I feel remote here in Jacksonville; but, perhaps, these doctors know enough after all." MacMurray tried to be helpful: "If there is serious trouble, it may be necessary to try and remedy it at once; however, never having been sick, I think my judgment in such matters is not much good." As McClelland's illness lingered into late November, MacMurray posited this: "I always think of the little boy whose father was a surgeon and his mother a

The completed MacMurray Hall, the first of five major buildings constructed on campus between 1925 and 1943.

Christian Scientist. When he got the stomach ache, he said he did not know what to do—father said 'cut it out'—mother said 'forget it'." In June 1927, after McClelland informed MacMurray that he would be embarking on a vacation trip back east, the Acme Steel chairman joked, "When I heard there were to be eight of you in the Dodge [the seven McClellands and a nanny], I wondered who stood on the running board, and which one sat on the top of the car."

James Edwin MacMurray loved to travel and during the second half of the 1920s, he embarked on two world cruises with his wife. His travels are described at length in his "as told to" book, *The Man from Missouri*, written in collaboration with a friend and published in early 1943. On the first cruise that began in November 1925 the MacMurrays posted letters from San Francisco, Shanghai and Calcutta and wired McClelland from Paris. In a February 1926 letter MacMurray, displaying a paternalistic racism characteristic of the times, contrasted the lot of Oriental women he had encountered with women back home: "Every girl in Illinois Woman's College should thank the Almighty every day, first, that she was born with a white skin, second, in a Christian country, and thirdly that that country was the U.S.A. and that she was prompted to attend the I.W.C." The second cruise was in early 1928 and McClelland's letters reached MacMurray aboard the steamship *Resolute*. McClelland was also a world traveler. During his youth he accompanied his father to his native Scotland and then in 1933 and again in 1937 he visited several countries in Europe, including England, Russia, and Germany.

With the dedication of the new MacMurray Hall in June 1928, MacMurray and McClelland were on to new projects. Typically McClelland would put an idea into MacMurray's head, let it percolate for a while, and then attempt to close the sale. The president proposed a new residence hall in early 1928 to accommodate the growing enrollment but did not get MacMurray's commitment to fund it until a meeting over the Christmas holidays at the Drake Hotel in Chicago. In January 1929 McClelland wrote, "I am going to announce your gift of a new dormitory to the students this morning." The residence hall project became joined with a separate dining hall project. The total cost to MacMurray was $343,000 for the two buildings

The morning after the 1929 gymnasium fire that killed three.

"At first I thought she had been killed"

As the planning for the dormitory and dining hall moved forward, the institution sustained one of the greatest tragedies in its history. During a Washington's Birthday pageant in the school gymnasium, a flash from a photographer's camera started a fire with unusually intense heat. Three women—a student, the librarian, and a matron of the college—died, and 15 others were injured. In a remarkable five-page letter to MacMurray and his wife, McClelland described in detail the fire and its aftermath. Some of the more poignant paragraphs deal with the fate of Mrs. McClelland who in an effort to escape the blaze jumped out of a gallery window. McClelland wrote, "At first I thought she had been killed. She had a deep gash in her forehead, her face was covered with blood, so were her legs, and her right thigh-bone was protruding through the flesh." He went on to write that she would not be out of danger for three weeks, that she would be hospitalized for many months, and that full recuperation might take a year. In 1938 McClelland remarked that his wife had never been the same since the fire and that it had taken a toll on her both physically and emotionally.

The college closed for two weeks after the fire but when it reopened all students returned. What followed, however, was a less than inspiring examination of the college's legal responsibilities by the trustees. In a letter to Jane MacMurray on March 30th, McClelland wrote that within a day or two of the fire, "it seemed to be pretty well established in people's minds that the college would pay the expenses of those who were injured." The president presented the matter to the local trustees. "Their sentiment was that they did not want to do anything that would involve them in any legal way, although they expressed themselves as being sympathetic and desirous of paying the expenses of those who were in the hospitals." McClelland concluded that the funds to help pay for medical treatment—approximately $10,000—could not be obtained without a special campaign and that because his wife and his children's nanny would be among the beneficiaries, the loss in self-respect would be too great. He told the trustees "not to count me in." MacMurray and others helped out with fire victims' expenses.

The catastrophe created a financial hardship for McClelland personally: "I shall have to borrow the money to meet [the medical expense] and pay it off as I can over a period of time. This indebtedness, coming at a time when the demands of my growing family are very heavy, will be a great handicap to me."

MacMurray picked up on the anxiety the president was feeling. In a May 6th letter, he enclosed a check for $1000 to help defray the McClellands' expenses. "I do not care for the finance committee to know it," he stated. McClelland was appreciative: "[It] helps to lift a very heavy burden from my shoulders…Your kindness and Mrs. MacMurray's to us all has put us under everlasting obligation, and I trust that I for one may prove in some measure worthy of it."

"There has been panic here and in New York"

By the fall of 1929 there were signs of uncertainty in the financial markets. MacMurray remarked in late September that the market in Acme Steel stock was "exceedingly thin." The stock market crashed in October. MacMurray wrote

Jane Hall, named for MacMurray's second wife.

on October 29, 1929, "There has been panic here and in New York for the last three days and thousands of small investors have been wiped out. The chance to buy bargains has never been equaled, but it is my luck to have already obligated myself all the money I can raise to, among others, Illinois Woman's College." Yet in that same letter he enclosed a check for $25,000 to apply to the new buildings. He urged in December, "May the good work go on, but may it speedily be completed as cash is the scarcest thing in Cook County." Although both the economy and his own personal financial situation had weakened, MacMurray did not want to skimp: "I think it would be an unpardonable mistake to build a beautiful building and furnish it with junk in order to save $5,000 to $10,000." Yet in late April he wrote, "I nearly gasped for breath when you said there would probably be $65,000 due yet…" Most of MacMurray's contributions to the college over the years were in the form of Acme Steel stock. The MacMurray-McClelland correspondence contains numerous Acme Steel stock trading confirmations, and they both watched the price of the shares carefully. In August 1929 Acme Steel traded at $137 per share. In October 1936 it was at $67 and in March 1938 in the $30s.

As the new buildings' construction neared completion and dedication, set for May 1930, loomed, McClelland broached the subject of names. For the new residence hall, which would house 100 students, he recommended "Jane Areson Hall" or "Areson Hall" in honor of Mrs. MacMurray. Jane MacMurray herself became involved in the decision. She was MacMurray's second wife. His first wife, Kate Merrill, with whom he had three children, died in 1907. The next year he married Jane Areson Rubel, a native New Yorker, a widow and an acquaintance from their church in Chicago. Jane MacMurray wrote to McClelland in April 1930 about an error in the printed program for the upcoming dedication. "I am not Jane A. Areson MacMurray, but Jane MacMurray. However, I think I told you in my last letter…that I wished the dormitory to be called 'Jane Hall'." Jane Hall it was. The dining hall, which accommodated about 600, was dedicated but remained unnamed until 1935, when it became McClelland Hall.

In the late 1920s, Illinois Woman's College was governed by a 26-person board of trustees, headed by MacMurray. Eighteen of the 26 resided in Jacksonville or Springfield. MacMurray and one other trustee lived in Chicago, and only one resided out of state, in Indianapolis. McClelland and his small team of administrators ran the institution on a day-to- day basis with input from local trustees. But no major decision was made or program enacted without soliciting MacMurray's opinion or approval. MacMurray himself had little use for institutional committees, either in business or the academic world. "My only suggestion would be to have at least one member who will work and do something. Most committees are only for decoration."

McClelland considered himself and MacMurray the visionaries and that others associated with the institution were more traditional in their thinking. In February 1928, the president wrote, "I do not forget your caution against allowing the influence of the old guard of the faculty to become dominant." Their influence, he wrote, "if long continued, would mean calamity." And in July, he noted, "They have not quite caught a vision of the kind of college you and I have in mind, and, although I frequently get rather disheartened, I know upon reflection that these persons are friendly, that their views are broadening, and that already considerable progress has been made." As far as the board of trustees itself was concerned, McClelland also had reservations. "Our trustees should be more active and carry a larger part of the burden in the administration of the affairs of the college," he wrote in January 1931. "Perhaps I am expecting too much of them."

MacMurray understood McClelland's wish to improve the quality of teaching and to add faculty members who had earned their doctorates, but to him ability and energy were more important than a Ph.D. "Some of these Ph.Ds. are homely, thin, cold handed old maids who haven't any more snap to them than a fish." The college went from having one instructor with a doctorate in 1925 to 16 by 1942.

Illinois College, founded in 1829, sat across town from Illinois Woman's College. There was both cooperation and competition between the two schools. As early as 1920, President Harker complained to MacMurray, "If Illinois College were for men only and we had all the educational interests for women here…it would be the door for one of the greatest opportunities we have ever had…." In early 1928 the largely redundant music schools at the two colleges were combined into a new entity, the Illinois Conservatory of Music, under the direction of Illinois Woman's College.

President McClelland wrote about the larger issue of the relationship between the two Jacksonville institutions: "Two or three times I have seized the opportunity to let some of the trustees of the other college know indirectly that the only reason for com-

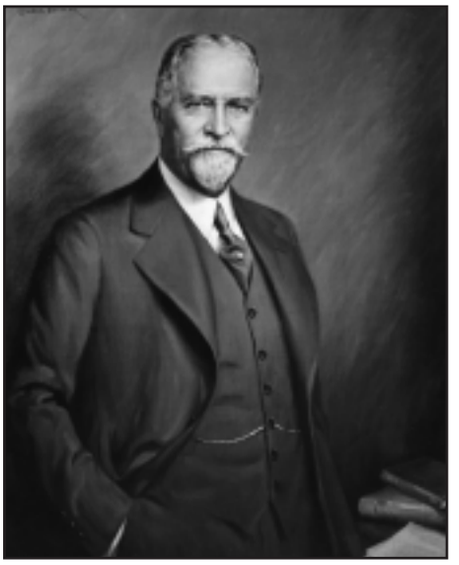
petition and irritation now between the two colleges lies in the fact that there are girls there." He continued, "If they could just get rid of them, the city of Jacksonville could unite enthusiastically in supporting both institutions. Let us hope and pray that the day is not far distant when they will feel that it is expedient for them to give up their girls." MacMurray commiserated: "I wonder if the Illinois College is not ready to give up women and make themselves an outstanding distinctive college for men only. If they would do this, could Illinois Woman's College afford to give up the name 'Illinois' so as to avoid all confusion between the two schools and find some other acceptable name?" Of course that day never came. Illinois College did not "give up women," and in 1957 the renamed college on the other side of town yielded to the societal, cultural, and financial realities of higher education at mid-century and admitted its first male freshman class.

"You will then be sure of a moment which will last for all time"

Much more important to McClelland than the name of the science building, residence hall, or dining hall was the name of the institution itself. As early as 1928, McClelland put the idea of a name change for the college to MacMurray: "I want you to allow us to suggest to the board this summer the name of MacMurray College for Women in place of Illinois Woman's College." The argument was that the current name was not distinctive and created confusion in a town that was home to both Illinois College and Illinois Woman's College.

> It is most fitting that we should name the college for you, since you are making it the chief object of your benevolence…In the long run, I believe you will feel that MacMurray College is a greater achievement even than Acme Steel, although the former would not have been possible without the latter...

In February 1930, McClelland wanted to make the announcement in conjunction with the dedication of the residence and dining halls. "You will then be sure of a moment which will last for all time—a living, growing monument, too—bringing joy and happiness and enrichment to the lives of generation after generation of young women." Through his wife, MacMurray reluctantly acceded to the request. The name "MacMurray College for Women" was approved in September by the General Conference of the Methodist Church. Although broadly accepted, the change in the name of the college was not received favorably in some circles. In early 1931 McClelland called upon a wealthy former trustee in Portland, Oregon: "She has been very much opposed to the change in name and last summer protested vociferously against it. She was surprised to see me, of course, and at first was not at all friendly, but, after spending two or three hours with her, I think I won her over." In 1933 President McClelland was able to convince another former trustee who had been dissatisfied with the name change to rejoin the board.



Portrait of MacMurray presented to the college by Acme Steel Company.

Upon returning from commencement and the dedication, MacMurray chided the president for not yet cleaning up the final bills, and in the same letter he had some sharp words about the college's fee structure and pricing strategy. He felt the college was undercharging. "It makes me sick every time I think of spending half a million dollars to improve our facilities and then cut our price still lower." He warned of what this could portend: "Now we have fallen into the list of the ordinary colleges, with large insurmountable deficits which ultimately sink them, and the only way I see to prevent this is to charge a good stiff price, and then keep somebody on the job getting students at a price that more than pays expenses. Otherwise, we are ultimately sunk, and money put in is simply poured down a bottomless rat hole." The college's annual fee was $575 in 1930; MacMurray wanted to increase it to $650. The compromise was $600.

To assist with recruitment, MacMurray favored more widespread use of faculty members. He said that in other private colleges, faculty were on 11-month contracts, not nine or ten, and that they were expected to put in two months during the school's vacation in intensive work to procure students, "just the same as if they were selling goods." He didn't think all faculty would be suited to perform this kind of work, but some would. He also believed that the college needed to expand its market and that at some point half of the students should come from outside Illinois. "The Central West states should be our choice working ground, including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Texas, possibly Iowa and California."

"Money will be as scarce as water on the Sahara"

The economy had not improved by the summer of 1930. MacMurray was worried. "The stock market is still going down and I spent yesterday in Youngstown, Ohio, with steel people and they do not look for any recovery until about a year from this September; if so, everything in our line is going to be…scraping the bottom and money will be as scarce as water on the Sahara."

Just at the time he was watching his own financial condition warily, MacMurray became increasingly concerned about the college's finances.

In December 1930, he wrote to McClelland, "I am still a little uneasy about your debts. We must not run a deficit this year." McClelland was also worried. He wrote that he had experienced four distinct shocks since he became president of the college. The first was the fire, the second was the poor investment of endowment funds; the third was the deficit in the 1929-30 operating account of about $30,000; and the fourth was the excessive awarding of scholarship funds for 1930-31.

Management of endowment assets over the years had been bad. "We have allowed our endowment to get into a deplorable shape," MacMurray wrote in May 1930. "This has been our greatest fault," McClelland concurred. "To have allowed our treasurer to make most of our investments even without the approval of any committee of our board, is something we cannot be proud of." He went on: "I remember asking Dr. Harker about this, perhaps a year or so after I arrived, and he said that a finance committee had been appointed, but had never functioned. It took me some time to find out what had been going on." MacMurray was pessimistic: "I think we will find that most of our endowment has been lost. Maybe not all of it, and if there are any of these cats and dogs that we can get sixty cents on the dollar for, we had better take it and let the other fellow keep the cats and dogs." "One after another of our investments goes bad," McClelland wrote in January 1932. "We are struggling hard to prevent another deficit this year. I think we are going to come close to balancing our budget. If we succeed in this and prosperity returns in any measure, we shall be able to keep going; otherwise——!" By 1933, endowment stood at $719,000, down from $765,000 in 1928.

Income from student fees and endowment had grown from $165,000 in the last year of President Harker's tenure to $254,000 in 1928-9. But income declined to $214,000 in 1929-30. The problem was exacerbated by an excessive granting of student aid in the fall of 1930. MacMurray was annoyed and wanted to see a list of each student not paying full tuition

Joseph R. Harker, McClelland's predecessor as president of Illinois Woman's College.

and board, including address, amount of the discount and a statement of what was being done to cover it. McClelland countered that this was impractical.

Paying off the final bills for Jane Hall and the dining hall construction led to a testy exchange between the two men. MacMurray wrote on February 9, 1931, "Well, now I know that it is a real Methodist college!... It is just impossible to pay all the bills it has, and it will probably always be in debt. However, for the third time I send you a check for all the bills covering the two buildings…" McClelland replied, "I am sorry that the last bills for the new buildings came to you when you were 'broke'…I really thought you were prepared in your own mind to take care of these bills."

"When, oh when, will times be better!"

The early 1930s were extraordinarily difficult years for MacMurray College. Registering enough students during a time when farm prices were weak was a constant challenge. Even during the 1920s the farm economy in Illinois was unpredictable. Corn seldom rose above 55 cents a bushel and yields were poor. During the first part of the Depression the price of corn dropped to 13 cents a bushel. Although the multi-year enrollment trend at the college was up, McClelland noted that 20 to 25 girls had had to leave school, nearly all of them for financial reasons. The number of girls attending in the fall would depend in part on how good the crop season was. "There are a lot of girls from this way in the Valley of Decision, waiting for the returns from the harvests. The wheat and oat crops are good, but the prices low. The corn so far looks fine, and this crop may turn the scales towards a fair measure of prosperity for us," wrote McClelland. MacMurray used this condition to press his case that the college must expand its target reach: "…As rapidly as possible the school should draw its patronage from a wide range of territory, including many industrial districts and not from the local territory, especially a local agricultural territory." The college registered 420 students in the fall of 1931, down from 450 the year before.

The economy remained bad. MacMurray returned from a trip to New York where "commercially the entire neighborhood is an indigo blue" and McClelland was anxious about receiving an interest payment on some shaky bonds in the college's portfolio. McClelland reported that the president of Knox College had stopped all efforts to raise money to celebrate their upcoming centennial. "When, oh when, will times be better!" he lamented.

Balancing the budget, averting debt, and remaining open were never far from President McClelland's mind, and James E. MacMurray was always his sounding board and savior of last resort. "I am starting out today to see one or two more people but unless you can do a little more we shall not be able to balance the budget."

MacMurray helped to close a small operating deficit in 1932 although he said it is "like cutting off my left leg."

The two men continued their back and forth discussion on tuition and fees, with MacMurray always pressing for the highest fees possible and McClelland advocating more moderation. MacMurray was not swayed: "There is no college…that compares with ours in equipment and faculty or standing that does not cost more than our present rate."

After McClelland was named to Governor Henry Horner's study group

to look at revamping education in Illinois, MacMurray used the appointment to press his own somewhat elitist views about access to higher education. "Free education above the first two years of high school should only be granted to honor students, and any others that wanted to continue beyond that place should pay an increasing fee, so that above the first two years of university, the entire expense would be carried by the pupil that did not win it year by year by honor work." His plan was illiberal: "If you could help put such a regulation into Illinois, in the first place it would clear out a lot of young people that do not want, nor care for, nor use higher education...and secondly, would relieve the taxpayers of the state so that there would be some accumulated capital that could be used to push enterprise."

"Jacksonville is just about prostrate"

The college's prospects remained grim. McClelland wrote in November 1932, "In order to keep going until after commencement and to reopen next fall, we shall have to borrow some additional money. The question is going to be, where?" This served as a prelude to another appeal to the college's chief benefactor: "You are the only one I know of who can help us." MacMurray rejected the idea of additional borrowing: "Anybody that borrows money now is probably broke. If I were running a business institution I would not put up my precious collateral with any bank anywhere. Rather than borrow additional money, I would sell my Acme Steel bonds." The college, he said, had to get to a place where borrowing was not a necessity.

The failure of the Ayers Bank in Jacksonville became a matter of national attention, and its effect on the community was devastating. "Jacksonville is just about prostrate. It looks as though a number of the merchants would have to go out of business, and, many people, having had considerable money on deposit as well as stock in the bank, are nearly poverty stricken," McClelland wrote. He thought Illinois College would have to take a loss of about $300,000. MacMurray College had about $14,000 on deposit at Ayers. McClelland lost most of his personal savings. He noted in an end of year letter that Christmas gifts were less numerous and costly than usual but that the family had had a happy Christmas.

The president went to see MacMurray in Chicago in January 1933 to impress upon him the gravity of the situation, but the visit did not go well. MacMurray was short and preoccupied. Upon his return to Jacksonville, McClelland wrote MacMurray a remarkable letter in which he put his fears for the future on full display:

> I am fully aware of what is expected of me as president of the college and am conscientiously endeavoring to meet my responsibilities.
>
> One of my chief concerns is the maintenance of the morale of the faculty and students… [What] I dread most of all is getting to the place where we cannot pay the teachers' salaries. The psychological effect of that would be very bad. Word would go out that the college is unable to meet its financial obligations and was about to close; students instead of being attracted to MacMurray would be repelled, and general demoralization would follow, which would take years to overcome.

The chief problem, McClelland reiterated, was the decline in endowment income that had fallen off by some $30,000 a year. Looming was the possibility of not being able to borrow $25,000 to $30,000 to pay salaries and other bills. Then the request: "If ever the college needed the help of the board and your help, it is now; six months or a year from now may be too late. If the members of the board do everything within their power and fail, then they should not be blamed. But I think it would be very wrong for the board just to let matters drift along until disaster overtakes us." McClelland was sensitive to MacMurray's own financial situation. "You have had great losses and do not wish to be asked to contribute largely to the college at this time… I know that you are in a rather delicate position; the college has recently been named for you and naturally everybody expects you to stand back of it and see it through its difficulties…. I just want to know that I can count upon you to act as any president of a college board might act; that is, to enter sympathetically and earnestly into the problems of the college and to exhaust every resource in attempting to solve them and keep the college going in an efficient manner."

McClelland with secretary Margaret Fraser.

"Your gift will bring new courage and confidence"

MacMurray agreed to sign an appeal letter to be sent out to alumnae and friends that spelled out the college's weak financial condition but he noted that at his age and distance from the college he could not assume the responsibility for either financing or running it. "Of course I shall do all in my power, but must depend upon you to gather up efficient directors and run the institution," he wrote McClelland.

McClelland went to the banks to try to raise funds to avert another deficit, but with little success. He reached out again to MacMurray: "I do not know where to turn for help now but to you. If you can make it possible for us to borrow an additional $10,000 by May 1 and another $10,000 by July 1, I think that would pull us through." In the past, he wrote, local trustees would have signed their names to notes to borrow the money, "but no banks would take their notes now and they have no collateral to put up." MacMurray deflected the request. His

recommendation was to sell whatever securities were necessary to satisfy the debt and not to borrow more. "There is no point in having a lot of securities and a lot of debts…" MacMurray was not happy when McClelland informed him that the college had found a lender and increased its borrowing. McClelland defended the decision and contrasted it to the world of industry: "It came to a choice of where it was either a matter of incurring some debt, or closing, and to close down a college is very different from closing a factory; the results are much more serious." He predicted that the current year would be the college's low point financially. This proved to be correct.

MacMurray College's plight was not uncommon in the early 1930s. MacMurray himself, writing from Pasadena, passed along news that Stanford University was in trouble and might not be able to open the following year and that DePauw University had discharged over 20 professors and had imposed two 10 percent pay reductions on all other employees.

McClelland's frequent appeals and MacMurray's own loathing of indebtedness caused him in February 1934 to make a magnanimous gesture: He wrote a check for $85,000 (worth about $1.5 million today) to pay off the entirety of the college's debt of over $50,000 with the balance "to be used as carefully and made to last as long as possible."

President McClelland was relieved beyond measure: "Your gift will bring new courage and confidence to all the friends of the college." McClelland said later that this experience sobered him and that he vowed never again to incur a deficit, no matter what reductions in expenses were required.

"The New Deal proposes to cut off the leg"

There is little in the correspondence about national politics before 1933 although in the summer of 1928, prior to the Republican National Convention that MacMurray attended in Kansas City, McClelland wrote, "The Republican Party always has two great assets: good crops in a presidential year and the asininity of the Democrat Party." Herbert C. Hoover handily defeated Alfred E. Smith that year only to be routed by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. McClelland in 1933 praised the early efforts of Roosevelt: "His words and more particularly his deeds have cleared the atmosphere and started reforms which will restore confidence." As 1933 went on, MacMurray became increasingly distraught over the political and economic situation in the country. He noted sarcastically that Congress was voting millions of dollars to build unnecessary post offices while increasing taxes. "It will be absolutely useless for a corporation to try and run on a profitable basis for the stockholders."

MacMurray never wavered in his view about the folly of government intervention in the economic affairs of the country. He was rabidly anti-Roosevelt and anti-New Deal, and this sentiment found its way into his correspondence with McClelland for the rest of the decade. "The body politic," he said, "has a corn on its toe in the shape of excess stock gambling, imperfect distribution of produce…consequently, the New Deal proposes to cut off the leg."

McClelland for the most part supported Roosevelt's program: "If he keeps his word and gives private industry a chance, we'll have recovery, and if at the same time it is necessary to put two or three million men to work on needed public improvements, I'm for it." MacMurray bristled in January 1936, "Really, I think the man [FDR] is insane with his own personal conceit."

In August 1936 McClelland wrote: "My own opinion is that this country is going ahead economically and otherwise, regardless of the political parties. When I think of the great sums of money that have been spent by the present administration, I am reminded of the remark made by the sailor who was asked how he had spent his last month's wages; he said, 'Part of it on wine, part of it on women, and the rest I spent foolishly.'" In November Roosevelt defeated Kansas Governor Alfred M. Landon in a landslide. MacMurray never ceased his vitriol when it came to Roosevelt. "We are going straight into Nazism, and Hitler is now at Warm Springs, Georgia," he wrote in March 1938. McClelland mentioned that a man had challenged him to find any man in America who had a lower opinion of President Roosevelt than he did. "I suggested your name, but he would not surrender."

"May it be of use to young women for seventy years"

With the large gift to pay off the college's debt behind him, James E. MacMurray was looking to cut back on his activities. He had relinquished day-to-day management of Acme Steel and he was spending more time at his winter home in Pasadena. He hoped that his son, Donald, also an executive with Acme Steel, would carry on the family's involvement with the college. In a May 8, 1934, letter to Donald, MacMurray wrote: "This is a fine institution, nearly 100 years old… It bears your name as well as mine. The time has come when I must let go and lessen my cares and efforts. I would like to have you…take up a part of the responsibility in this institution…I do not know of any other way you can spend a little of your time better, and maybe some of your money."

At MacMurray's suggestion, the dining hall was named for President McClelland at commencement 1935. "Nothing could have made me happier, McClelland wrote, "I told the board that if a tablet was put there it should

McClelland Hall was dedicated in 1930 but not named until 1935.

Ann Rutledge Hall with its distinctive portico.

bear Mrs. McClelland's name as well as mine." All of the advances at the college could not have taken place without MacMurray's support, the president wrote. "You have given most of the money and have stood loyally by every endeavor we have made to advance the interests of the college…my part has been to plan, suggest, and lead."

The college seemingly had weathered the storm and its prospects were improving. Another new residence hall to house a larger number of students was moving to the top of the president's wish list. Enrollment had returned to early 1930s levels. He sent to MacMurray sketches of a new dormitory that would face Jane Hall across the athletic field. "I wish you could see your way to make the college a Christmas present of this building," McClelland wrote in December 1935.

All of this led to an unexpected offer by MacMurray. His plan had been to leave the college $100,000 at his death, but now he had another thought. "Unless we can change the tendency of the present government, it is better to give away what you have, in small dabs, rather than die possessed of something that the government is going to confiscate." Which would you prefer, he asked McClelland: a $100,000 final gift for endowment or $100,000 for a new residence hall?

McClelland ignored the "final gift" reference, preferring to call it a "next gift." He believed a new residence hall would bring in a larger net return to the college. "The final decision, of course, must rest with you," he wrote in December 1935. MacMurray remained skeptical about another residence hall. By his calculation, the college was losing about $50 annually per student. Going from 500 to 600 students would have the effect of adding to the red ink. "If you had 600 students your loss might be $30,000 per year, and your buildings would be sold for a Catholic old peoples' home." No, McClelland countered, that's the wrong way to look at it. The additional net income from students "is the only thing that is going to keep us from getting into the indebtedness which you so much dread." Bottom line recommendation from McClelland and the finance committee: A new residence hall accommodating 100 students should net the college at least $20,000 per year in additional income. "We believe that it would take at least twice as much endowment to produce an equal amount of income."

The cost of a new residence hall would be about $170,000. Yes, McClelland would try to raise one-third of the funding himself, "but I really think that in the end you would be much better satisfied to know that the building was your gift to the college," he wrote to MacMurray in January 1936. The president continued to make his case, hoping that MacMurray would agree to fund the building and that it could be announced at commencement. In a May 4th letter, MacMurray acquiesced. "Yes, I will give the college another dormitory. I don't want to cut down the size but it should be at least equal to Jane Hall and finished and furnished similarly." MacMurray threw in his architectural two cents: "I never have been pleased with Jane Hall or McClelland Hall as well as [MacMurray Hall]. They are set too flat on the ground. They look squatty. This new dormitory should be two or three feet higher on the foundation."

The new building ended up costing MacMurray about $218,000, and he was grumpy. "I am considerably disturbed about your figures. If the organization's finance people are no better on figures than that would indicate, they need a new set-up badly." But he wrote a check for $38,000 in January 1938 to cover an overrun.

Over many months there were exchanges between the two men over what the residence hall should be called. MacMurray offered "Illinois Hall" but without much enthusiasm. McClelland suggested "Edwin Hall" as a perfect companion to Jane Hall facing it across Clay Avenue. In June, McClelland proposed that it be named for MacMurray's mother although he did not know her name. "Cartwright Hall" for one of the school's founders, Peter Cartwright, appeared on some actual printed programs for the dedication. But just weeks before the dedication in October 1937, McClelland telegraphed MacMurray: "We think it better to name residence hall for Ann Rutledge as a typical young woman of pioneer days when college was founded. Can save Cartwright's name for future building." MacMurray wired back: "Go ahead with Ann Rutledge if you like the name better. I never thought much of Ann but Lincoln did and he knew her better than I did." On the eve of the dedication, McClelland wrote the benefactor: "Everything is set for the biggest celebration the college has ever had when we dedicate the new building tomorrow… I cannot tell you how I regret the fact that you and Mrs. MacMurray will not be with us." The MacMurrays telegraphed the president on October

30, 1937: "With the new building we give you, the college and faculty every good wish. May it be of use to young women for seventy years and may they be of use to the world for seventy times seventy years."

"It cannot exist as an asylum for broken-down Methodist preachers"

MacMurray, now in his mid-seventies, was having health issues. In March 1936 he was hospitalized with sciatic rheumatism and placed in a plaster cast. In June came word that MacMurray was again hospitalized and preparing for a major operation. McClelland was hoping to come out to California to see him. MacMurray's secretary discouraged that. He had been in the hospital for five weeks, was not strong, and some days were good and some bad. He was not seeing anyone except his family. He was released from the hospital in July. "My pain is all gone. I am desperately weak but am able to be downstairs an hour or two, and yesterday I walked clear around the house. It will be a couple of months before I will be able to get into any mischief to speak of," MacMurray wrote.

MacMurray, his health improving, was full of new ideas. One was a loan fund. "Could you raise a special endowment fund of $10,000 to be a loan fund to students not able to pay the full tuition, to be repaid, providing I gave you half of it? It seems to me it would be better to loan these students whatever they are unable to pay in full, rather than give it to them, and this money should be paid back in due time to help other students do the same thing." Yes, McClelland said: "We expect to get our loan fund in operation during the year." Some years later MacMurray pressed for the establishment of a pension fund at the college.

In January 1937 McClelland told MacMurray that he would like to write the story of his life: "I do not have in mind an exhaustive or detailed biography, but it seems to me that your experiences are well worth recording and the successes you have achieved should be an inspiration not only to your friends, but also to those who have never met you personally." McClelland's thought was that this could be published in connection with the centennial of the college in 1946. MacMurray said he was not sold on the idea, although years later he did undertake an almost identical project with his California friend, Dr. George R. Grose, the former president of DePauw University.

Another pet peeve of MacMurray's was the influence of the Methodist Church on the affairs of the college. Although he had a deep personal faith and was an avid churchgoer, he believed the church was of little assistance to the college. Perhaps the college should retreat from what he characterized as the domination of the regular Methodist Church. "It cannot exist as an asylum for broken-down Methodist preachers out of a job. It must always remain Christian, but not denominational." McClelland agreed that it made sense to pull away a bit from the Methodist Church. "The preachers and churches of the Illinois Conference do nothing for us. They do not even send us students." One change that MacMurray and McClelland effected was to the college's charter. Going forward, trustees would take the initiative in nominating and electing members; the Illinois Conference's role would be merely to confirm.

"Now I have a atartling announcement!"

On November 18, 1937, MacMurray's secretary conveyed to McClelland some shocking and sad news. Jane MacMurray, 70, had died the day before in California. Newspaper accounts stated that she was found in a half-filled bathtub with poison in her system. The coroner reported it as a probable suicide. McClelland in his address at a service honoring Mrs. MacMurray on campus noted that for three years she had suffered from a nervous breakdown. McClelland wrote MacMurray: "I gather from the papers that the manner of her passing was rather tragic, but that will soon be forgotten. Everybody will remember only her bright, cheerful spirit and her countless deeds of goodness."

The subject of Jane MacMurray's health had begun to appear in her husband's letters as early as mid-1934.

Jane A. MacMurray (1867-1937)

Kathryn T. MacMurray (1884-1969)

"Mrs. MacMurray is still sick. I took her down to the hospital at La Jolla a week or ten days ago, and she did not like it there very well so she is at the Coronado Hotel at Coronado Beach just now. She is not able to see anybody." McClelland empathized: "We are all so sorry about Mrs. MacMurray …. It seems almost inhuman to keep her isolated, but I suppose the specialist knows best." Although she returned home from the hospital in May 1935 and resumed many of her activities, she was never the same. MacMurray alluded to this a year after her death: "Companionship was greatly impaired for three or four years." McClelland recalled her vitality, her generous spirit, her kindness, and her love of beauty, the last manifesting itself in her selection of furnishings for the college's

residence halls. She loved flowers. She was a founding member of the Barrington Garden Club and the garden at the MacMurray home in Pasadena contained more than fifty varieties of chrysanthemums and other species.

It was a difficult time for the McClellands, too, as their daughter Janet, who was a French instructor at the college, had to relinquish her duties because of what her father described as a nervous breakdown aggravated by a severe fall that left her with several broken vertebrae. In March, Malcolm Anderson, the husband of MacMurray's younger daughter Isabel, died suddenly. The following year McClelland's mother died.

In August 1938 McClelland noted his predecessor's passing: "I have assumed that you knew about Dr. Harker's death. He failed rather rapidly in the spring, but was not obliged to go to bed until within a week of his passing. He was a most remarkable man. In my address at his funeral, I tried to express what we all felt about him."

Less than a year after the death of Jane MacMurray, MacMurray was preparing to wed his third wife, Kathryn Titus Smith. "Now I have a startling announcement! I have tried this thing of living alone for a year. With my temperament, it is no good. I do not like club life and I do not like hotel life, and have always had a happy home. I am to be married about the 4th of October." Kathryn Smith's first husband was the brother of longtime MacMurray family friend Dr. Merle N. Smith, a Methodist pastor, and she was the mother of two grown children. Mrs. Smith, 54, was the president of the Cornell (Iowa) College Alumni Association.

McClelland wrote in September 1938, "Naturally, we are all excited over your coming marriage. Without exception, however, we all feel that in winning Mrs. Smith you have added another achievement to the many that have characterized your career in the past." Following their wedding, the couple was off on an around the world cruise. McClelland wrote him in Singapore and Bombay.

The college's reputation was rising: In 1929 McClelland had written, "We are slowly but surely getting on the map." And now: "Everybody now speaks of this as the greatest women's college in the Middle West and one which could be considered as being on a par with the strong women's colleges in the East…Everybody now recognizes the superior quality of our work, and year by year our reputation is drawing us students from a wider area. I can think of no greater honor that could come to anyone than to have this institution bear his name."

"You must realize that I get rather lonesome"

In August 1937 MacMurray wrote, "You must realize that I get rather lonesome being the sole contributor to the college. I would like awfully well for you to find some company for me, as really it is not a private enterprise." Back in the fall of 1931 the college had received a proposal from an outside firm to assist with fundraising. MacMurray did not think much of it and used a football analogy to make his case. "If it were my business, I should hire my own man, who, together with myself, could do this job," he wrote. "They do not propose to tackle anybody but just sit around and make plans for you to tackle. If you have to do the tackling, you might as well make the plans." He believed that it was principally the job of the president to raise money: "I think the days of campaigns are long since gone by…. I am very leery of having anybody try to raise finances for the college except the president. The real business of all

At the 1940 Pfeiffer Library cornerstone ceremony.

presidents that I know is to raise and administer the finances. I think it cannot be done any other way…"

Finding major donors for the college was always a struggle, particularly during the Depression, but McClelland had some success. "I think I am going to get a library building from a woman in New York. She has promised me a substantial gift towards it and will let me know a little later whether she can give the whole amount, he wrote." The woman was Annie Merner Pfeiffer, wife of noted pharmaceutical executive Henry A. Pfeiffer. Although MacMurray had already agreed to endow the library at the $75,000 level, this was largely a McClelland-Pfeiffer project. MacMurray attended the cornerstone laying ceremony in October 1940 and Mrs. Pfeiffer was there for the formal dedication in 1941. Funds from her estate were the impetus for the construction of Annie Merner Chapel across the Rutledge green from the library after World War II.

In addition to providing the principal funding for MacMurray Hall, Jane Hall, McClelland Hall, and Ann Rutledge Hall, MacMurray, over the years, had also paid for the purchase and removal of small houses that interfered with the physical expansion of the campus and for a new heater and smokestack in the main heating plant. Wings were added to both ends of Jane Hall in the summer of 1939, with MacMurray supplying half the money.

In May 1939, MacMurray stated that he would attend commencement for the first time in several years: "I feel that I have put so much money into MacMurray College that I better go around once in a while and see what is being done with the money."

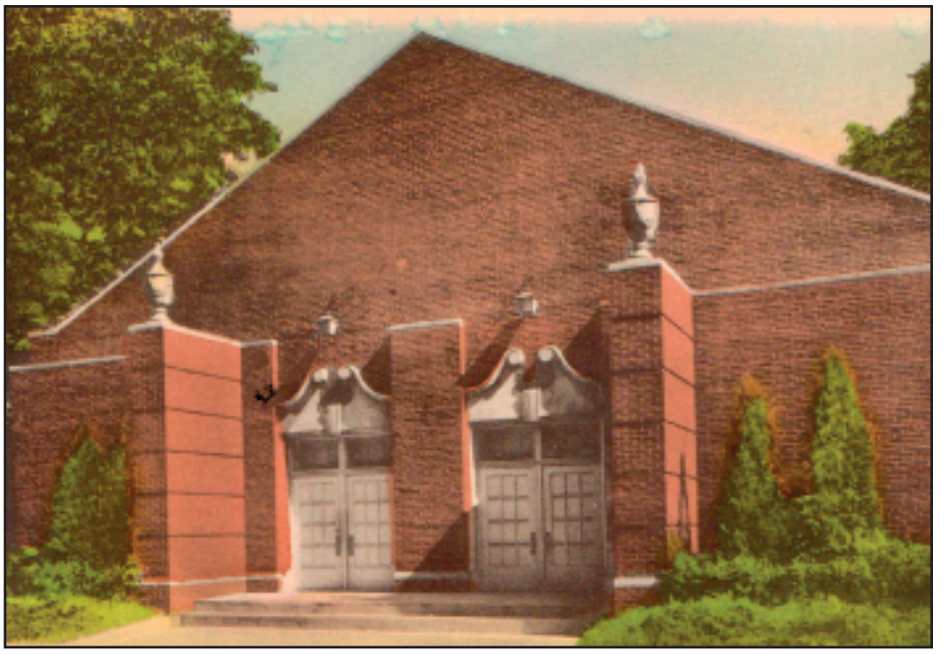
As James Edwin MacMurray entered his last years, his dedication to the college and his commitment to provide for it continued. His most generous gift took the form of a real estate transaction. As McClelland recounted years later, the project "involved the purchase and alteration of business property in the heart of the city of Los Angeles." It was a complicated matter that occupied lawyers, real estate agents, and insurance companies for many years and it contained income provisions for the college and for

MacMurray's children. The upshot was an addition to the college's endowment fund of $2.5 million, illiquid but very welcome. In February 1942, Marquis Publishing honored James E. MacMurray in its *Who's Who in America* for having made the largest single gift, as a percentage of assets, to any academic institution in 1940-1. MacMurray, despite his business successes and strong opinions, was a humble man who did not care for the publicity that this honor and his many gifts over the years brought.

In September 1939, Donald MacMurray, the 48-year-old son of James Edwin and his first wife Kate, died suddenly. Donald, for seven years, had been a member of the board of trustees. McClelland arrived in Chicago in time for the funeral service, but MacMurray's train from the West Coast arrived too late. "This must have added to your sorrow."

MacMurray encouraged the appointment of his daughter, Miriam MacMurray Martin, as a trustee, to succeed Donald. "I think she would enjoy it and make a valuable member. Will you please attend to it?" MacMurray wrote in February 1940. "I am assuming that she will accept," McClelland wrote. "If she does not, no harm is done." She accepted, although she proved to be an indifferent trustee. Sometime later McClelland wrote, "From a telegram which I received from Miriam last fall, I understood that she regarded herself as off the board. She has not shown any interest and, while I have given her an opportunity several times to contribute something, she has never been willing to do so."

An opportunity that arose to purchase a small hall to serve as a workshop for the speech department led to an interesting exchange between the two men on the direction of the curriculum. Initially, MacMurray wasn't enthused about a speech program. He was more interested in the development of the home economics department. "Hundreds of girls are in demand that know how to keep house, decorate a house, serve a meal, make a dress, a hat, etc., much more than one like we had reading to us here the other day, saying: "To be or not to be, that is the question." Everybody



Speech and drama activities were housed in the Little Theatre.

answered the question mentally by saying: 'Not to be.'"

No, McClelland wrote, drama was now a major cultural force. It was not a matter of teaching girls to recite pieces. "You have in mind the old elocution days which are gone forever." He reiterated his belief that the college was handicapped by the lack of an adequate stage and proper speech facilities. MacMurray agreed to put up $10,000 for the speech building. "This probably is a very nice trimming…but for real useful education, I recommend a lot of English, American and English history, political science, home economics, essay writing, debating, and plenty of social intercourse, well mixed up with a lot of fun." McClelland replied, "I agree with you that what you have indicated, with one or two additions, is the core of the curriculum; but the Little Theatre also has cultural value and serves the students in a practical way by providing a place for artistic and dramatic expression."

The McClellands visited the MacMurrays in Pasadena in November 1939. During their time there, McClelland contracted an infection that caused a brief hospitalization. Characteristically, MacMurray picked up the hospital bill. The entire January 18, 1940, issue of the *MacMurray College Greetings* was devoted to the accomplishments of President McClelland on his 57th birthday and as he neared the 15th anniversary of his presidency. A note from MacMurray appeared in the issue: "May your strength and interest and ability to serve the college and the world continue for many years."

MacMurray contracted pneumonia in Palm Springs in the spring of 1940. His two daughters flew out to be with him. The crisis passed and he returned home to Pasadena. MacMurray wrote in May, "At the speed at which I am going now, if I can succeed in not having any setbacks, it will take me until fall to get my normal strength, and it will be some time before I can go east again, if ever."

Subconsciously or not, MacMurray was preparing his valedictories. He wrote on June 1, 1940, "I hope that you have a good commencement and that you bear down on the board on my final farewell to them in my wire, namely: 'Never go into debt' and I mean it. The minute you start going into debt, you have put a cancer into your vitals that will either always make you an invalid or sooner or later a corpse. " MacMurray's health improved. "I am sure you will be as well as ever soon," McClelland wrote in June. "You may have to smoke a few less cigars and give up golf entirely."

MacMurray encouraged the McClellands to come out to California for a series of educational conferences and to take an extra week. It would be

MacMurray at a campus event about 1940.

good to "get our eyes and thoughts on something other than what is located in Jacksonville. It would be a good investment for the college. I always found such things a good investment for the Acme Steel Company. My best ideas and plans came to me while taking a vacation. You cannot see a mountain when you are too close to it."

MacMurray was concerned that the pressure of the job was taking its toll on the president: "I was afraid that carrying the exceedingly heavy burden of head of the college, together with the exceedingly heavy burden in your family for the past few years, would be getting you down, and the college cannot afford to have a man at the head who has lost his pep." MacMurray often gave advice to President McClelland based on lessons derived from his own business career. On personnel matters, he wrote, "As I look back over my experience, my worst mistakes were in keeping an almost good man too long." He also encouraged McClelland to delegate more: "I learned in watching my own business grow over a half a century, that constantly I was compelled to pass on heavy responsibility to my organization, and I was sometimes surprised to find that they took up the load with pleasure and carried it sometimes better than I would have, if I had retained more of it under my own hat."

"The war seems to be coming closer to us all the time"

In the summer of 1941, MacMurray recorded, "The war seems to be coming closer to us all the time and either this world is going to have to be cleaned up or we shall all have to be subject to direction by people we don't like." Four days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, McClelland wrote MacMurray and considered what lessons should be emphasized to the students. "If one of our students should graduate without understanding clearly what were the causes and effects of World War I and also the causes and present issues of World War II, it would be a sad reflection upon us." Stressing the great virtues of American democracy—liberty, tolerance, goodwill, and helpfulness—was critical, he thought. On a practical level, he said the college would be introducing a course in first aid, nursing, foods and nutrition, and would also be providing instruction in civil defense. He noted that some of the students were restless and wondering what they could do to help. This led to renewed worries about dropouts and about the prospect of gas rationing, particularly with 65 percent of the student body coming from outside Illinois.

Enrollment slipped from 641 in September 1941 to 585 a year later. There was attrition particularly among upper class students who were either drawn into the war effort or couldn't come back for financial reasons. One faculty member was drafted and another joined the Red Cross. MacMurray, as usual, took a great interest in enrollment. Why should there be a decline in students when Knox and Pomona showed an increase in the number of girl students? "Are you calling together and working the members of your board as hard as you ought to, and putting responsibility and authority in their hands?"

Mary McClelland suffered a severe fall in September 1942, resulting in a broken vertebra and requiring several months' hospitalization. Kathryn MacMurray wrote a note to President McClelland, expressing her concern. She and her husband were planning another visit east, one that would include the college. "It would seem very nice to be at the college for another visit together. If it so happens that I am the one left, then I shall always go back when I can possibly do so." MacMurray had wished that he could visit the college more often, "but a gradual slowing up of physical endurance makes long trips or anything of that kind less frequent." He was now spending about two-thirds of his time at a new home near the beach in La Jolla and a third in Pasadena. A visit for Founders Day 1942 would be James Edwin MacMurray's last to the college that he had been so instrumental in building. On this, as on other occasions in the past, he led the singing of *Illinois*, the song that had been adopted as the state anthem during his time in the state legislature.

In the winter of 1942, McClelland was considering documenting the history of the college: "I am looking forward with pleasure to writing the history of my administration, and perhaps Dr. Harker's administration… I enjoy doing this kind of thing, but it must be subordinated to my main

Mary A. McClelland (1884-1963)

work." MacMurray was involved in his own literary efforts. He was collaborating on an autobiography with his longtime friend, George R. Grose. McClelland received an advance copy of the chapter that dealt with the college. "You were very modest, indeed, in speaking of your gifts to the college, but that, I am sure, is all to your credit."

MacMurray wrote in January about the impact of the war: "Food in Southern California is becoming very short, including all kinds of meat, poultry products, and especially dairy products, and prices are high and look like they would be worse. We have not been able to go down to La Jolla since before Thanksgiving, on account of shortage of gas and rubber, so we are keeping very quiet." In one of his final letters in May 1943, MacMurray was still full of ideas—when to schedule board meetings to try to get better attendance from out-of-towners and recommendations on investments for the endowment.

"I should like to spend a day or two with him"

For some time James Edwin MacMurray's health and strength had been waning. He was able to vacation at La Jolla in late May, but a month later McClelland wired Kathryn MacMurray: "Greatly concerned over Mr. MacMurray. Trust he is better." She wired back on June 21: "Edwin making slow recovery. Pneumonia all gone. Heart strong. Still at hospital and very weak." President McClelland wrote Mrs. MacMurray on June 30: "Later in the summer—perhaps early in September—I should like to spend a day or two with him. Just overnight. I want to bring him a personal report about the college, and I am glad to say that it will be a most encouraging report; and, besides, I want to be with him a little while. You cannot imagine how different it is not to see him at least two or three times a year." At the top of the carbon copy of this letter is a handwritten note: "Received word of Mr. MacMurray's death July 2. Funeral July 6. Died July 1, 1943."

McClelland attended the funeral in California, and upon his return to Jacksonville wrote Mrs. MacMurray:

MacMurray's widow Kathryn succeeded him as president of the board.

"Mr. MacMurray's passing was a great shock to me. I had not seriously anticipated that it would happen so soon. I was emotionally upset until after the funeral service. Gradually, however, I became reconciled to his going and feel now that, while it would have been fine for us all to have had him with us for several more years, yet he might have become an invalid and that would have been almost unbearable for him and would have given very little satisfaction to anyone."

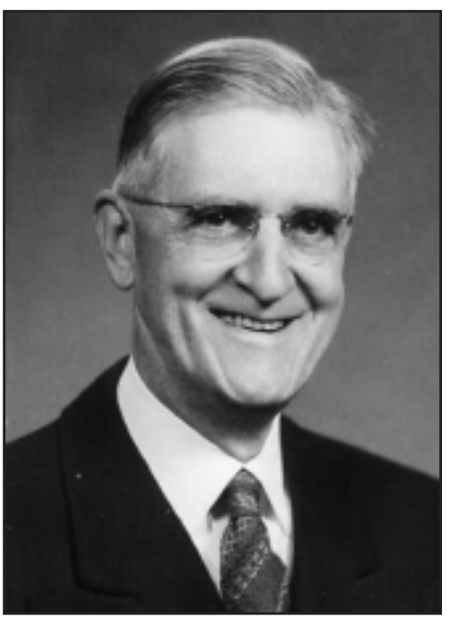
In addition to the large gifts to the institution James E. MacMurray made over his lifetime, there were many smaller ones, also meaningful: monetary gifts to the faculty at Christmas, draperies and furnishings for new buildings, books for the library, landscaping and plantings, occasional gifts and loans to students to help with their fees. The MacMurrays' visits to campus were always welcomed by the president and students. His widow Kathryn recalled that she had never seen him "in gayer, happier mood than when wandering through the campus and halls greeting and being greeted by 'his girls.'"

MacMurray wrote in his book, "MacMurray College has been more to me than I have been to the college."

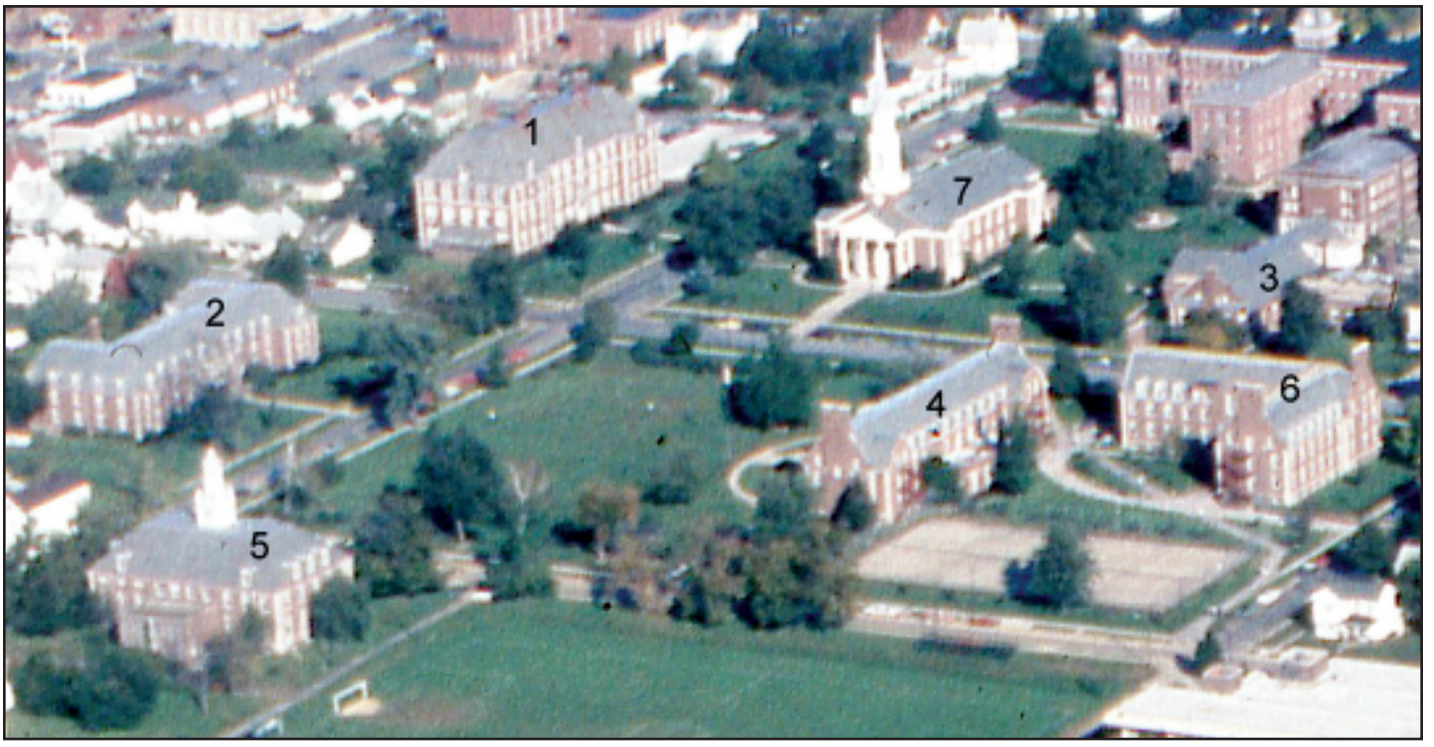
MacMurray's lifetime gifts helped to ease the tax burden of his estate although that burden was still sizable. His attorneys filed an estimate of the original inventory of the estate at slightly more than $4 million in February 1944, most of which was willed to family members with smaller gifts left to MacMurray College, Garrett Biblical Institute, and other institutions. The estimated California inheritance and Federal estate tax was about $1.09 million.

In 1944 Kathryn MacMurray was offered the presidency of the board, succeeding her late husband. "I am greatly honored by your telegram, but not wholly of its wisdom. Nothing would give me more satisfaction than to keep alive the interest Edwin had in the future of the college." She served in that capacity until 1960, and she died in Pasadena in April 1969. Kathryn Hall, at first a residence hall and now home to the administrative offices of the college, was completed in 1948 with proceeds from the James E. MacMurray estate.

Clarence P. McClelland retired from the presidency of MacMurray College in 1952 after 27 years at the helm, but continued to live in Jacksonville and attend college events until his death in 1974 at the age of 91. As his colleague, retired chaplain McKendree Blair, stated at his funeral service, McClelland was a progressive educator and "truly a great, noble, tolerant, broadminded man…The words of the college motto, Knowledge, Faith and Service, were actualized in his personal life and leadership."



McClelland at his retirement in 1952.



Seven major buildings were added to the campus during McClelland's presidency: (1) MacMurray Hall; (2) Jane Hall; (3) McClelland Hall; (4) Ann Rutledge Hall; (5) Henry A. Pfeiffer Library; (6) Kathryn Hall; and (7) Annie Merner Chapel.

What is the final assessment of the MacMurray-McClelland collaboration? From the standpoint of the 20-year development plan promulgated by McClelland in the late 1920s, it was a resounding success. All of the campus expansion projects (land purchases, new buildings, and renovations) were carried out, and they were done for $1.5 million, just as the plan had called for. Additions to the endowment fund, with the bulk coming from MacMurray's gift of the Los Angeles properties, totaled $3.3 million, which was $300,000 better than the plan. Enrollment doubled from 259 in President Harker's final year to 641 in 1941-2. Gross annual income increased from $200,000 in 1924-5 to better than $900,000 in the early 1940s, and total assets of the college climbed from $1.1 million in 1925 to $6.3 million by 1945.

But what of their aspiration to create the "greatest women's college west of the Alleghenies"? That vision ran up against the realities created by the Depression and World War II. By reputation, the school was stronger and garnered national attention, as evidenced by the fact that by the late 1940s, the college attracted students from 26 states, as well as several foreign countries. But MacMurray College could not escape the problems that faced other single-gender colleges in the post-World War II period. A low birth rate during the Depression years and young people's unmistakable preference for a coeducational experience pressured enrollment and ultimately led to a reduction in the number of women's colleges nationwide from almost 300 in 1940 to some 90 in 1986. Most women's colleges closed, merged, or became coeducational. MacMurray College adopted this last course of action in the 1950s. The vision that Clarence P. McClelland and James E. MacMurray had in the 1920s for a premier women's college was adjusted to the changing conditions of the post-war period. MacMurray College, of service to women since 1846, is now in its sixth decade of educating men.

For the sake of clarity, the author has standardized the correspondence's spelling, punctuation and grammar. Photos and postcards are from MacMurray College's archives. Special thanks to the library staff at MacMurray College and, in particular, to its talented and dedicated archivist Lauretta K. Scheller.

The author is a graduate of MacMurray College and received his M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Harvard University. For nine years he served as chairman of MacMurray's board of trustees.

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