

PORTRAIT OF A DEAN
A
BIOGRAPHY OF
NORA AMARYLLIS TALBOT

By

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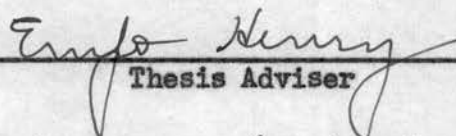
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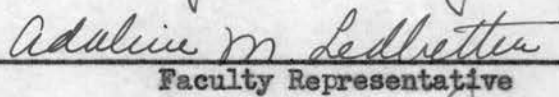
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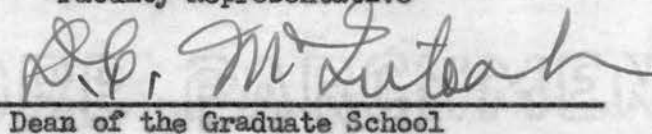
THIS IS AND ABSTRACT APPROVED:



Thesis Adviser



Faculty Representative



Dean of the Graduate School

278007



DEAN NORA AMARYLLIS TALBOT
1950

'Tis she: though of herself, alas!
Less than her shadow on the grass
Or than her image in the stream.

from "The Portrait"
by D. G. Rossetti.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was made possible by Dean Nora Amaryllis Talbot, who gave generously of her time and energy. For this the writer is deeply appreciative. The author is greatly indebted to Miss Empe Henry, associate professor, Department of Household Arts; to Miss Brenda Gould, associate professor of Household Arts; and to Mrs. Adaline Ledbetter, Head, Department of Household Arts, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, whose sympathetic interest, understanding, and useful suggestions were invaluable. Gratitude is extended to Mrs. Myrtle Little, sister of Miss Nora A. Talbot, whose contributions concerning the family history were most helpful.

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INTRODUCTION

"Biography can perhaps be most inclusively defined as that element in literature which narrates the lives of real people."¹ Several purposes have been acknowledged as stimulating the writing of biography. Some critics consider one purpose, the tribute, as a likely beginning of biographical literature. Related to this purpose is the idea that the lives of great men and women could be used as models of proper conduct for the young. Another purpose, more artistic in nature than the preceding ones, is the innate human desire of a person to share in the lives of others and thereby enrich his own. "This natural curiosity in men's lives and personalities has always been the main-spring of the appeal of biography."² This biography was written with these three purposes as its inspiration and ultimate goal.

The life of Nora Amaryllis Talbot tells a story of a pioneer girl, a zealous student, and a teacher, who has spent years of faithful service in the field of education in music and home economics.

This year one of the highest honors which can be given to a dean was bestowed upon Miss Nora A. Talbot. She now rightfully claims the title of Dean Emeritus. Her accomplishments on the campus of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College and in the state of Oklahoma are enduring contributions to mankind.

1 John A. Beckwith and Geoffrey Coope, Contemporary American Biography, p. 1.

2 Mark Longaker, Contemporary Biography, p. 10.

PART I

THE LEGEND

CHAPTER I

STELLA

The pioneering spirit entered the bloodstream of Levi Sommers, and he joined the surge of westward movement. In his unending desire to give his family the advantages he wanted for them, he migrated from Indiana, through Ohio, and into Nebraska. Just as many other ambitious farmers and men of the soil before him, he was searching for the land of opportunity. In Nebraska he bought a piece of land from a young farmer named Fuller Ramsey Talbot. With this exchange of ownership was born a lasting friendship. This friendship between the two families was later knitted closer by the union in marriage of two members of these families.

John Patterson Talbot was the second son of Fuller Ramsey Talbot. Levi Sommers had a very lovely, young daughter named Alice. Alice was eighteen and John was twenty-six when they were married in Falls City, Nebraska. This union was to be a fruitful and happy one.

Because of their desire for economic independence, John and Alice Talbot rented a farm four miles west from Stella, Nebraska. The house on the land was a small, frame, box-like structure with a shed on one side. The land was flat and the March winds blew the sand across the fields. Fortunes were not made overnight on sandy Nebraska farms. But this frugal, energetic, young man was consumed with the same desires that had brought his father to the West.

In his efforts to provide for the needs of his family, John raised corn, oats, and wheat. He owned a threshing machine, and during harvest time he threshed wheat for neighboring farmers.

The first home of John and Alice Talbot was the birthplace of their

first child, Nora Amaryllis. During their stay in and around Stella, three sons and four daughters were born into the family.

Alice Talbot was talented in the art of keeping her family busy and happy. Yet, she managed in such a way that there was time for play. Muddy Creek flowed through the area near Stella, and it was a source of real pleasure for this growing, active family. It was great fun to fish with hooks made by bending Mrs. Talbot's pins, that she used in sewing, into the shape of fish hooks. In the spring wild berries grew along the banks of the stream. The small, wild strawberries were sweet and delicious. Every fall the children filled a gunny sack with walnuts. These nuts imparted a good, rich flavor to the oatmeal cookies which their mother made.

John Talbot's name came from the English side of his family, but his appearance hinted of his Scotch ancestry. He sang in a hearty, full-toned, bass voice and knew many ballads which he learned by rote. The children were fond of their father's singing. He had a song for each of them and some left over. Nora's favorite song was "Old Grumble," which he sang especially for her. For Myrtle he sang, "Brigham Young." "Frog Went a Courting" was the favorite of another one of the children. "Yellow Gal From the South" was liked by one of the younger girls. "Three Graces" and the "Hunting Song" were popular with other members of the family.

"Old Grumble," Nora's choice, was one of J. P. Talbot's early songs and was typical of many folk songs which were sung at that time. These are the first two of the eleven verses of the song.

Old Grumble, he declared, by all the leaves of the trees, trees,
That he could do more work in a day than his wife could do in
three, three, (repeat last line.)

Mis' Grumble, she got up, this trouble I will end, end,
For I shall go and follow the plow while you and the house
shall tend, tend. (repeat last line.)

John Talbot enjoyed singing with a group and always loved to sing "Asleep in the Deep." His deep, bass voice came from the nethermost part of his being as he struck the low, resonant vocal chords that were required by the score of this tune.

Alice Talbot had never been allowed to dance as a young girl. One evening at a gathering of gay, young folk someone starting singing,

"I don't want any of your weevily wheat,
I don't want any of your barley.
It takes the very best kind of wheat
To make a cake for Charley."

This was a song with a skippety-hop, and soon Alice had joined the others in the gay activity. John always chuckled as he teased Alice about dancing and skipping.

During the years at the farm near Stella, Alice Talbot lost strength and became very ill. A doctor was summoned and he diagnosed her difficulty as tumor. But, because of its location, he would not recommend an operation for its removal. John Talbot's mother, a devout Christian Scientist, hurried to Alice's bedside and persuaded her to see the healer, as Christian Science practitioners were called then. John rode swiftly into town on an old spring wagon and brought the healer to the bedside of his wife. Soon Alice gained strength and courage. And, Miss Talbot related, her mother was completely healed with God's help. Since this demonstration of the works of faith in God, Christian Science has played a great part in the lives of the Talbot family.

Nora Amaryllis was a very timid and retiring child. She began her first primer in a one-room country school house. Because there were so many Talbot children, John and Alice moved into town so that the youngsters could attend school with less difficulty. The Stella school had three rooms, a room for the primary group, a room for the intermediate group, and

one for the highschool group. Superintendent Lawson and his wife, the intermediate teacher, showed much interest in the welfare of the Talbot children. The Lawsons were a great source of inspiration for these young impressionable children. They imparted the basic principles of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and planted seeds of graciousness and potential charm. Nora, Myrtle, and Amos Talbot enjoyed school in Stella, Nebraska, and gained much from the Lawsons.

In town Nora and Myrtle had fewer chores to do. Between household tasks they began to learn handwork. Mrs. Talbot taught them to embroider. They applied this decorative handwork as a border to aprons, which they gave to their Aunt Ellen and their grandmother. They learned many stitches, and were fascinated as they watched the rococo swirls evolve from quick, deft, finger movements with a needle, thimble, and smooth threads.

Nora and Myrtle each started a quilt. Nora's quilt was embroidered in turkey red thread on unbleached muslin. Some blocks contained the outline of an animal or flower. Others contained the words, "Nora Amaryllis Talbot" and "Stella, Nebraska." These nine inch, square blocks were feather-stitched together. Although Nora was very young, her quilt showed that she had an aptitude for stitchery.

One summer when Nora was about nine years old, Mrs. Talbot gave her enough money to buy the material to make her little brother, Alfred, a dress. It was quite a decision to choose the fabric for the first garment she was to make. She chose a red and blue plaid. As she was cutting out the garment, she did not realize that notches, when cut into the seam allowance, should be very small. One of her notches extended beyond the seam line. As a result of this mistake she got her first practical experience in patching and matching plaids.

The oldest child in a family with seven children has many responsibilities in the care of the younger ones. This duty fell upon Nora. She sympathized with her younger brothers and sisters in their troubles. She shared the problems of rearing a family with her mother. When Mr. and Mrs. Talbot were away from the home, Nora tended the youngsters.

The fourteen years in and near Stella, Nebraska, were years filled with many joys and hardships for the Talbot family. The problems concerning the feeding and clothing of this large family were tremendous ones. Their problems were typical of those of most pioneer families in the late nineteenth century in Nebraska. There were good times, too. School activities, community gatherings, and singing parties were events which brought smiles and laughter into the lives of settlers in this "corn husker" state.

The Talbot children, Nora, Myrtle, Amos, George, Gertrude, Stella, and Alfred were soon to be uprooted from their native state and transplanted to a new, raw land where Indians still danced around their campfires.

CHAPTER II

THE LOG CABIN

Oklahoma, properly described as the last American frontier, was opened to the white man late in the nineteenth century. Nora's father, who was working as express agent in Stella, heard that this new land was surely the land of opportunity. After some deliberation and hasty packing, John Talbot drove one team of horses and the hired man drove the other. It was spring, and as they passed through the barren land of the Cherokee Strip and into Oklahoma Territory, their wagon wheels cut tracks across the rolling prairie that was a part of the land of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. Less than ten years before, this land had been inhabited only by buffalo and coyotes and an occasional band of Indians who came to hunt. Their journey ended six miles south of Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory. John Talbot filed on a farm which had been relinquished by a homesteader. This farm was the Talbot home for the next five years.

It was June when Alice brought the children from Stella, Nebraska. They packed a lunch and traveled by train. After riding in the chair car all night, the exhausted mother and her brood of seven got off the train and stood on the soil of Oklahoma Territory for the first time. The town was Wharton, Oklahoma Territory. Later Wharton became Perry, Oklahoma.

John Talbot met the train and greeted his family with a big hug for each. They drove the spring wagon and two horses into Stillwater, and spent the night with friends. The next morning they drove to the homestead, which already boasted of a one room cabin about twenty feet square. John Talbot and the hired man soon built a new, log house, which consisted of a living room, an upstairs sleeping area, and a lean-to kitchen. They were, also,



TALBOT FAMILY AND THE LOG CABIN

a granary and a shed.

Nora was a skinny fourteen-year-old when the family moved to Oklahoma Territory. With nine family members the problem of sleeping quarters was not easy to solve. Mr. Talbot, the hired man, and two boys slept in the granary. The many mosquitoes made outdoor sleeping disagreeable. The first night on the homestead, Nora and Myrtle slept between the rafters in the attic on a feather mattress. The heat was intense. The next night they chose to sleep outside because, they believed, the heat would make them more uncomfortable than the mosquitoes.

The children attended a one-room, log cabin school located a mile and a quarter east of the farm home. This was the Lost Creek District Grade School. The school room was furnished with rough, home made desks arranged in rows toward the back of the room. A recitation bench stood in front of the rows of desks. A class schedule was adhered to, and at an appointed time the children in a particular grade marched to the recitation bench in front of the teachers desk for their lesson. Nora's favorite subject was arithmetic. Myrtle liked memory work best.

A clump of persimmon trees grew in a ravine near the school. In the fall after they had eaten their lunches, the children enjoyed eating the fruit from these trees.

The boys went to school barefoot when the weather was warm, but the Talbots did not permit their girls to go without shoes and stockings, although other girls did.

The obstacles concerning school work for the Talbot children were lessened because of their home training. Mr. and Mrs. Talbot stressed the importance of using correct English and encouraged the children in their school work.

At Christmas time the children decorated the little school room with evergreen boughs and colored paper chains. Several days before Christmas the teacher taught the children Christmas songs, and a program was presented before vacation.

The Christmas holiday on this frontier farm was a joyful occasion. Presents for the children were not abundant, but there was plenty of food. There were oranges for the children. Oranges were luxuries and were only eaten at Christmas. Christmas carols, which were sung while the family was gathered about the organ, highlighted the happy season.

In the evenings after school and during the summer vacation, Nora Amaryllis and the rest of the Talbot children helped with the chores. They gardened, harvested castor beans and broom corn, helped raise chickens and turkeys, fed the calves, and carried drinking water from a spring on Jim Fletcher's farm. On holidays they swam and frolicked in and around a small lake which was on their farm.

Nora's father rode in the race at the opening of the Cherokee Strip. He went to the line near Pawnee the night before the run. The family came in a lumber wagon filled with straw the morning of the opening. The children sat in the back on a blanket which covered the straw, and Alice sat on the spring seat with the hired man. Mrs. Talbot was holding the baby. They had brought their lunch and a couple of jugs of water. Water sold for five cents a cup on the line. Policemen rode on horseback trying to keep the hordes of people back from the line. Miss Talbot recalled this phrase, which was repeated by the policeman who patrolled the one-half mile stretch in which they were waiting, "Don't go beyond the line. A pistol shot at twelve o'clock. Don't go beyond the line. A pistol shot at twelve o'clock." Then soon some practical joker would yell, "Oh, Joe, here's your mule!"

Everyone looked, and laughed, and forgot the dust for a moment.

At twelve o'clock the policeman stopped and shot his pistol into the air. The wagons gave a lurch and away they went. Bonnets flew backward held to their wearers only by their strings. Each wagon contained a hammer and four stakes with white flags attached to one end. These stakes were used to designate property which was claimed by the farmer who drove them into the land.

John Talbot couldn't stake a claim for a farm because he owned a farm. He staked two town lots in Pawnee. These lots were later traded for a horse.

Mr. Talbot did much of the shopping for his children. He bundled all his children into the wagon and took them into town. When he paid for coats for the children one fall, he realized what a large family he had.

During the winter months he hauled freight from Guthrie, the rail center, to Stillwater. On these occasions, when the father was away, Mrs. Talbot and the children shouldered the responsibility for the farm.

A regular Saturday night activity was the preparation for Sunday school and church. The family laid out all the clothing needed so that everyone could be ready to leave the farm early. The whole family attended church and seldom missed a Sunday. This religious training helped Nora Amaryllis to live a good life and appreciate God and mankind.

The Talbot family helped to build the first Church of Christ Scientists in Stillwater and were charter members. This was the first church of that denomination dedicated in Oklahoma and the third in the world.

Later Nora was chosen to be reader of the church, a position of honor and distinction as well as one of humble service. She was reader for three years. She was a very active church worker all her life, and felt that her life could not have been so rich and her deeds so successful without a Being greater than she to guide her.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC IN THE AIR

The Talbot home was filled with music. Father Talbot encouraged the study of music early in the life of Nora Amaryllis. At the age of eight she played a snare drum with the women's band in Stella. It was a day of real celebration for the Talbots and their friends when an organ was placed in the living room of their home. Nora studied and soon learned to play the organ, which was later carefully moved to Oklahoma Territory. Their home was a meeting place for young people who loved to sing and play musical instruments. Almost every Sunday evening a group would gather around the Talbot organ. Nora's father loved to sing and encouraged such meetings. Nora inherited much of her father's talent for music. Several times she was invited to play the organ or sing on a literary program in the community.

John Talbot had been impressed with the women's band in Stella, Nebraska. He ordered several band instruments and hired a band instructor to teach the five oldest Talbot children to play. Mr. L. O. Woods, the Stillwater city band master, came to the Talbot farm to teach the lesson. Because of a lack of transportation it was necessary for him to spend the night. The "oom-ta-ta" of the Talbot band filled the evening air with the rhythm of ballads and marches. At times Gertrude Andrews, Daisy Brown, and the two Kirby girls, Rosie and Hattie, joined the Talbot family in the bi-monthly practice.

The Talbot band played at community activities, and was highly honored when it was invited to entertain at a fourth of July celebration held in Perkins, Oklahoma.

Nora played the cornet with the thirty-three piece women's band at

Stillwater. She was among twelve girls from Stillwater selected to play at the St. Louis World's Fair. The pressmen of Oklahoma paid the expenses. Nora's father drove the wagon to Oklahoma City and took Nora and her friends to catch the train for St. Louis. Theirs was the only all-girl band at the fair. They marched through the fair grounds and played every morning and every evening. Nora Amaryllis had free passes to all the events and exhibits except the big horse show. She was disappointed because she could not see this show. It was of special interest to her since she had lived on the farm. Nora's first ride on the roller coaster was a vivid experience. When she stepped onto the car and the wheels started moving, she realized that she would have to ride it all the way. It was breath-taking. When the ride was over, she was glad to feel earth under her feet again. The days she was there were ten of the most exciting days of her young life.

When Nora entered the State Normal in Edmond, she continued her study of music. Later she taught and supervised music in the Stillwater Public Schools.

Family participation in music knitted closer the bonds of love and fellowship. This appreciation for music, which was fostered by her environment, continued to be a source of joy and inspiration to Nora Amaryllis Talbot.

PART II

STILLWATER

CHAPTER I

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

In the fall of 1897, Nora Amaryllis Talbot entered the preparatory department at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. During her first years in "prep" school she studied, among other courses, etymology, drawing, rhetoric, and physical education. Physical education for girls consisted of exercises and marching drills. Music was played to set the tempo for the activity. This practice was proposed to teach grace and timing to the young women who were enrolled in the course. When Nora's physical education teacher learned that she could play the piano, she was asked to accompany these drills. They were known as the Delsarte drills, because they were adapted from a system of calisthenics propounded by a French teacher, Francois Delsarte.

Nora accompanied the students who were in voice classes, in exchange for voice and piano lessons. Her voice teacher directed a women's octet. Because of her unusually low, rich voice, Nora was chosen to sing with this group. On one occasion, for which the octet sang, Nora wore her first, long, white dress and white slippers with pointed toes. This was an event of keen anticipation for her. The octet sang on various programs at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. In the spring they hitched the horses to the buggies and drove to Guthrie, Oklahoma, where they sang at the State Intercollegiate Oratorical Contest.

The next year Myrtle and Amos moved into Stillwater with Nora and began their preparatory training. The three Talbot children and their friends rented a house on Husband Street. They shared the housekeeping and food preparation duties. Mrs. Talbot helped lighten the cooking load by sending

them light bread and other foods which she had prepared.

Classes were offered in three quarters, the fall quarter, the winter quarter, and the spring quarter. Students attended school until noon on Saturday, and there were no classes on Monday. Every morning about ten o'clock the student body assembled in the auditorium of Old Central for chapel. A few verses were read from the Bible, and the students sang songs from a small book of hymns. Programs for these chapels were varied. At one time Dr. A. C. Scott, the president, gave a series of lectures concerning common mistakes in grammar committed by the students in school. These lessons were valuable, because many students at that time had meager backgrounds in rhetoric.

Every Saturday evening the Omega Literary Society presented a program. There were debates, extemporaneous speaking, recitations, and many types of musical presentations. One evening Nora and a young man sang a duet for the Literary Society. The song related an amusing story of the romantic complications of a girl and a boy. It was well liked by the audience.

During Nora's third year at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, the Talbot family moved into Stillwater. Mrs. Talbot received an inheritance from her father and bought eight lots on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Knoblock Street. This corner became known as "Talbot Corner." Shortly after, Nora's mother built a large, modern house on the corner. The house was a two story, green, frame dwelling with white trimming and a wide porch on two sides. Here the family had the conveniences of living in a town home. The home became the center of activity for the Talbot children and their friends. Singing parties and games were characteristic of the entertainment for guests in their home.

The only great sadness was the passing of Amos and Stella.

The year before the new house was built, the Talbots returned to Nebraska for a visit. Their journey led them into Colorado to visit more relatives. When school was out they left Stillwater in two canvas covered spring wagons. Comfort was considered as Mrs. Talbot planned the fittings of these conveyances. A mattress and springs in the back of the wagon bed was provided so that if one of the children became sleepy, he could take a nap. The girls' cotton dresses and lightweight coats were placed in long boxes underneath the cot. The seat on which Mr. and Mrs. Talbot sat was over the "grub" box. They did most of their cooking on campfires. Mr. Talbot bought fresh fruits and vegetables when they passed through a town, and many stops were made at farm homes to purchase fresh, rich milk. Mr. and Mrs. Talbot and Alfred rode in the first spring wagon, and Nora, Myrtle, Gertrude, and George drove the other one. The girls were so tanned from the sun and wind on the farm that they made cloth masks to protect their faces from the sun's rays. They were trying to lighten their complexions before they arrived at their grandmother's house.

A highlight of the trip was the climb up Pikes Peak. Mr. and Mrs. Talbot remained at the timberline and the children walked to the top. The journey down was more difficult than the climb had been. The Talbot children appreciated their rest that night. They visited Mr. Talbot's sister, Abbie, and her family, who lived on a large ranch near Yuma, Colorado. The children enjoyed the tour of the silver mines near Pueblo, Colorado.

The last night of their journey was spent near Ponca City, Oklahoma. Old Flory, the bay horse, had pulled her share of the first wagon all the way. She seemed to sense that she was near home. She pawed the ground and expressed the joy of coming back home, which was felt by each member of the Talbot family.

When they returned to Stillwater the fall quarter had already commenced. Nora and Myrtle hastily searched through their cotton dresses to find one that was the least wrinkled, and hurried off to school.

Blanche Wise was one of Nora's best friends. On one occasion Nora was allowed to spend the night with Blanche. Nora wore one of her prettiest blue dresses to her friend's house. This blue dress was a complement to Nora's deeply tanned skin. Blanche had a lovely bright pink dress which Nora admired. The vogue seems to have always been universal for teen age girls to want to exchange garments with their best friends. The next morning Nora was clad in bright pink, and Blanche wore Nora's blue. When they attended physical education class, the instructor wouldn't let Nora take the exercise, because she didn't look well. Although she felt as well as usual, she went home. Her mother explained that the bright pink made her complexion look yellow and different. Mrs. Talbot suggested to Nora that if she went to Blanche's home and donned her own blue dress the rosy color would return to her cheeks. Perhaps this episode was the beginning of Miss Talbot's keen awareness of color. She has chosen dramatic colors which suit her coloring and individuality, and has used them wisely in her wardrobe and the furnishings of her home.

CHAPTER II

DOMESTIC ECONOMY

The home economics story at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College started at the turn of the century. Nora Amaryllis began with the first class. This field of study was very interesting to her. Many phases of domestic economy, as home economics was called then, were not new to her. Her mother had carefully taught her many principles of domestic science in the home.

In the pages of the fiftieth anniversary brochure, we find the following information concerning the inception of home economics on the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College campus:

Original courses, amounting to only ten hours of cooking and sewing practice were held in the basement of Old Central, one of the four buildings on the campus.

In the fall of 1900 Miss Maude Gardiner came to Stillwater from Kansas State College and organized the available work under the title of Domestic Economy. The program was expanded to include cooking, sewing, house sanitation, table service, and social observances. A kitchen laboratory, a sewing room and a dining room comprised the space allotted to this new department.¹

A big white apron with a bib was the uniform prescribed for students in foods laboratory. The students worked in pairs. It was a startling thing to Nora to prepare foods in such small amounts. She had been used to cooking food in such large quantities for the family. It was difficult for her to learn to measure one-fourth cup of milk into one-half cup of flour. At home she had filled a bowl so far with flour and poured in about so much milk without measuring except by memory gained by practice.

In the first lessons in sewing, students made sample books illustrating

1 Fiftieth Anniversary of the Division of Home Economics.

different stitches, patching, darning, and buttonhole making. These samplers were valuable teaching aids for Nora Amaryllis and the other students, when they began teaching home economics. Students learned to draft their own patterns, and made undergarments decorated with embroidery and ruffles.

The Home Economics Department was described in the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College annual catalogue of 1900-01:

This department is at present located in the basement of the Assembly Hall, and includes a kitchen laboratory, class dining room, sewing room and office. The kitchen laboratory has equipment sufficient to enable twelve pupils to work at a time, and consists of twelve conveniently arranged desks, furnished with all the dishes and cooking utensils necessary for individual work; two cases for the larger utensils and supplies and illustrative material; one gas range, one gasoline range, and three small gas burners on the work desks; charts and samples to aid in teaching and studying the composition and preparation of different foods. The equipment of the class dining room consists of a full set of dining room furniture and dishes used by the classes studying dining room management and serving. The sewing room is equipped with one large cutting table; six sewing tables, all made with drawers in which to keep garments and material; five sewing machines of different makes; a large mirror for use in dress fitting; illustrative material such as cotton, silk, and flax fibers, needles, etc., and twenty-four sewing chairs.²

Many Sunday afternoons three or four couples of young people rode out in the country for a picnic lunch. Horses and buggies and bicycles built for two were popular modes of travel. The young folk hunted a shade tree and spread their lunch beneath it. After the sandwiches were eaten, they sang songs, told stories, and talked about classwork while the peanut brittle, fudge, or cracked taffy was passed.

There always seemed to be a shortage of funds in the Talbot household, and Nora Amaryllis found various ways to earn money to help buy her clothing. She was handy with a needle and sewing machine. She made many of her

2 Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Catalogue, 1900-1901.

own garments, and embroidered designs on shirt waists for her younger sisters and for neighbor children. Nora learned to crochet and knit, and she made many "Kiss me" shawls and fascinators which were popular accessories. She made lovely angel food cakes for many of the weddings in town. On Saturdays she clerked in stores, where she was paid ten cents an hour.

Nora attended preparatory school and college from 1897-1901. She was employed full time in the business of selling dry goods from 1901-1906. The problems which customers brought to Nora concerning dressmaking were a challenge to her, and she enjoyed helping them choose patterns and materials suitable for their particular needs. This experience of working with fabrics and patterns was a fascinating one. However, her other and greater talents were not to be denied, and one of the strongest of them all at that stage of her life was music. She attended summer normals at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College and studied music, and when Myrtle Talbot established the first nursery school in Oklahoma at Stillwater, Nora played the piano for the musical games.

CHAPTER III

HIGHER AND HIGHER

In the summer of 1906 Nora Amaryllis Talbot entered the State Normal at Edmond, Oklahoma, where she majored in public school music. The months in Edmond were busy, happy months. She attended lectures and concerts which were presented by faculty, guests, and students of the college. She taught music to the children who attended the model school which was supervised by the school. She played the cello in Professor Lehr's orchestra. Although her school work kept her busy, she did not neglect necessary outside interests. She entertained friends with "forty-two" a popular domino game of the time. In the evenings on week-ends a group of young couples gathered about a piano, and their singing filled the halls with echoes of popular and college songs.

After she graduated in 1907, Superintendent C. L. Kezer offered Nora the position of music teacher and supervisor in the Stillwater school which she accepted; thus began her teaching career. She enjoyed teaching the youngsters to sing as she went from room to room. In the spring she gave a school cantata, "Brownie Band," at the Town Opera House, in which nearly one hundred children took part. The cantata was a grand success and, to accommodate everyone who wished to see it, arrangements were made to give the program a second night. The profit from this venture went into the library fund.

During the following two summers she took advanced courses in methods for public school music training at the American Institute of Normal Methods of Chicago. Nora stayed with cousins who lived in Chicago. Their home on Sheridan Road was quite a distance from the school in Evanston, which neces-



*NORA AMARYLLIS TALBOT, MUSIC
STUDENT AT EVANSTON, ILLINOIS*

sitated her taking the elevated train to class. She soon learned to transfer from local to express, and could go downtown by herself. The stores seemed immense to her. She was always thrilled with the beauty of the decoration in the stores and the unique display of the merchandise. One of the chief pleasures for Nora was being able to hear the large orchestras, as they played concerts at the beach or in a pavilion in many of the beautiful parks of Chicago.

When she returned from Chicago, she accepted a position at Parsons, Kansas. She resigned from this position and enrolled at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College in Stillwater in the winter quarter of 1909-1910, and finished work for her Bachelor of Science Degree in May, with a major in home economics. She previously had taken all the courses offered in home economics except canning. The department was called the Department of Domestic Science and Arts. One entire floor was set aside for home economics classes and laboratories in the new Women's Building.

That fall she was offered a position at Nowata, Oklahoma, where she established the Home Economics Department in the school. Here, for the first time, she taught home economics courses. The school board had bought chemistry desks for the room in which she taught foods classes. These were too high for their purpose. Immediately she began a planned program to raise enough money to purchase new equipment. She remembered the success of the "Brownie Band," and thought she might present it in this community. The cantata was again a financial success, and the proceeds from it were sufficient to build new desks. Miss Talbot drew the designs for the new equipment and took them to the cabinetmakers' shop in Bartlesville to be built.

Miss Talbot enjoyed her work in Nowata, and taught home economics there three years. When she was invited to teach in Muskogee, Oklahoma, she

accepted the position, because she realized it would be an advancement.

Included in the home economics curriculum were health and first aid, besides the courses which were related to foods and clothing. Students were encouraged to work on extra projects at home, such as making jelly or ruffled curtains. She taught boys, as well as girls. During the senior year each student was required to make something for home decoration, or plan some home entertainment. Students who graduated from the Muskogee High School in home economics were well versed in the art of home making, and were prepared for further study in many fields of home economics.

Her desire for additional education resulted in several summer's work at Columbia University, from which she was awarded the Master's Degree in the spring of 1921.

To strengthen her academic leadership, she studied educational administration at Harvard University, while on sabbatical leave during 1929-1930.

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PART III

THE GUIDEPPOST

CHAPTER I

DECISION FOR CHANGE

The 1915 fall term in the Muskogee school was in progress for the second week, when Nora A. Talbot received a long distance telephone call from Stillwater. Dr. J. W. Cantwell, the president of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, invited Nora to be head of the Domestic Arts Department of the school. She was proud and happy that Dr. Cantwell considered her qualified for the position.

Since 1915 the story of home economics and the Nora A. Talbot story have been so integrated that they cannot be separated. When she accepted the position as head of the Domestic Arts Department, she became a part of a valuable service which home economics at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College has given to the state.

The period between 1915 and 1925 saw many developments in Home Economics at Oklahoma A. and M. College. In 1915, the "Division of Domestic Science and Arts" became the School of Home Economics.¹

The School of Home Economics dedicated itself to the task of pioneering new and undeveloped fields of home making. New horizons appeared. Goals were established. Dreams came true.

"In 1917, following the approval of the Smith-Hughes Act, providing for vocational education, teacher training assumed a definite place in the Home Economics program."² In 1918, the first practice house was established at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. It was located on the west apartment in the House of Eight Gables. Two years later a baby was brought into the home makers cottage, and the school boasted of being one of the

1 Fiftieth Anniversary of the Division of Home Economics.

2 Ibid.

three colleges in the United States to make this advancement in its program.

In 1920 Home Economics moved into its own new building and in 1921 the already established departments of Domestic Arts and Domestic Science became known as Household Arts and Household Science Departments. A third department became a part of the school in 1924 when teacher training became Home Economics Education.³

Always vitally interested in the problems of the students, Nora A. Talbot gave freely and wholeheartedly of her time and efforts in building a well rounded program for her pupils. Her office door was always open. She was never too busy to confer with the students.

In 1923 Dr. Bradford Knapp, president of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, called Nora A. Talbot into his office in Morrill Hall to discuss the deanship of the Division of Home Economics. She had been selected to succeed Ella Nora Miller, when the post of dean was vacated. This was a big day in her life. She was glad to be considered worthy of this station.

Dean Talbot led home economics through many events in the years of progress that ensued. During her deanship, home economics grew from a small school, with five teachers on the staff and a student enrollment of two hundred eighteen, offering a few courses, to a division with sixty-eight faculty members, about nine hundred undergraduate majors, and over two hundred graduate majors. She was alert to the possibilities for expanding to meet the needs of the times in the home economics field.

This year, 1923, the first off-campus student teaching was begun.

The Stillwater Junior High School became a living laboratory of experience for practice teachers in home economics. In 1924 Oklahoma A. and M. College became the second land grant college in the nation to establish a nursery school.⁴

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

A child training course was begun in home economics with a laboratory for pre-school children. The nursery school afforded the students observation and actual participation in child care and training. From its inception in 1924 the college nursery school has held a two-fold purpose. It has served continuously as a laboratory for students in the various courses of child development and family relationships. The children attending the nursery school have benefitted vastly by the constant guidance and opportunities which are offered by specialists in this field. Interest in this area of home economics grew rapidly and the expansion of the program necessitated a separate department. In 1939 the Home Life Department was established.

The time when home economics catered to women alone was passing. Five or six men entered Dean Talbot's office in 1924, and surprised her by telling her that they felt they were missing something in college. Their friends in home economics talked about balanced diets, table service, and personal grooming problems. They wanted to know the answers to some of the particular problems of home making and personal appearance which had arisen in their minds.

For some time home economics enthusiasts had dreamed, talked, and studied about the importance of educating the men, as well as the women, to an appreciation of the standards of home life. Perhaps a greater understanding of home ideals among men would lead toward a more harmonious family group. Dean Talbot, who was always alive to the latest requirements of the student body, began to plan, with the men, a course for them which could meet some of their needs. In 1925 she included, in the home economics curriculum, a one hour elective course for the man on the aggie campus. The first semester one hundred twenty nine men studied personal grooming,

nutrition, food preparation, and the duties of a host. Since 1925 additional courses designed for men have been offered. Men entered professional fields in the realm of home economics and proved that they were interested in successful application of the principles they had studied.

The School of Hotel and Restaurant Management, a province of training established in 1938, was added at the men's request.

CHAPTER II

THE "ARABIC"

During these early years, Dean Talbot made many trips to schools in the East to secure teachers. She was in New York on such a mission in 1926 when she called her cousin, Herman MacNeil. The MacNeils invited her to visit in their home. The household was buzzing with excitement when Nora arrived at College Point, Long Island. Herman, his wife, Carol, and their daughter, Joye, were making plans to go abroad, and Nora was asked to accompany them. Nora returned to Stillwater, and made arrangements for her trip to Europe. On the ninth day of June she and the MacNeils had boarded the Red Star liner, Arabic, and were embarking on an adventure which Nora Amaryllis Talbot had never dreamed she would be sharing.

Nora and Joye shared a room adjoining the MacNeil's in the Hotel Roschambeau the first three days in Paris. Then Herman located an apartment at 144 Bis Boulevard Montparnasse, which suited their needs better during their stay in France. Paris was not new to the MacNeils, for they had spent four years in the capitol of France while Herman studied art.

A gratifying success as a sculptor had given Herman MacNeil the opportunity to compete for the commission to produce the statue of the Pioneer Woman which E. W. Marland was to place in Ponca City, Oklahoma. His portrayal in bronze of the Pioneer Woman is now displayed in the Library at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. Two tributes which were culminations of his artistic genius are the superb horse and rider commemorating the Pony Express, in Central Park at St. Joseph, Missouri, and the heroic statue of Washington, as General, erected on the east pedestal of the Washington Arch, New York City, New York.

With the MacNeils as guides through this fabulous city, Nora enjoyed Paris to the utmost extent. In a letter to her parents at home she wrote:

As the cousins are sculptors, we have naturally had the art bug, and I've enjoyed it, too. We have visited nearly every salon, museum, the Louvre, the Panthion, Notre Dame, the Madeleine, Triumphal Arch, etc.

Her trip abroad carried her through Belgium, Holland, and into England. Although she left the MacNeils in Paris, her trip into the land of the Dutch and the British peoples was not a lonely one. She was surprised at times by a tap on the shoulder, and when she turned, she found an acquaintance standing there. She attended the services of the Christian Science Church regularly while she was overseas, and gained new friendships. Many Americans with whom she conversed knew friends of hers. Her days were filled with too few hours to see and do all the things she wished. When she arrived in New York early in September the thrill of a wonderful experience was still shining from her eyes.

She returned to her duties as dean of the Division of Home Economics with the purpose and inspiration to lead the division through a program of tremendous accomplishment.

The years 1926 to 1950 have been the period of maturity and modernization. More than ever before the Home Economics program at Oklahoma A. and M. College, since it became a division in 1926, has strived to keep its goals and activities in tune with the modern world.¹

The steps of advancement in each department fulfilled progressive needs which were results of research and increased interest in the field.

In the Department of Household Arts the clothing classes paved the way for the fashion design and merchandising display courses. Interior decoration classes were enlarged and increased in number. Students put their

1 Fiftieth Anniversary of the Division of Home Economics.

theory notes into actual practice, as they were permitted to advise Stillwater home owners concerning their decorating problems. A plan was accepted, and the class members got practical experience in the construction of draperies, slip covers, or a similar portion of the job.

The Home Life Department made rapid strides in the different phases of child development and in the area of family relationships. Courses for men were revised and developed. Marriage became a popular course for men and women students who wished to prepare themselves to play their roles in the family with greater understanding.

The Department of Home Economics Education continued to graduate students who were well instructed in methods of teaching. Teacher training by actual practice on the job taught students that they learned best by doing. Interest was stimulated in adult education for home makers.

Research in the fields concerning foods has fostered interest in the Department of Household Science. This department has broadened its scope since 1925 and includes a number of varied courses concerning the preparation and serving of food, care and use of household equipment, health, and institutional administration.

The basic course for freshmen core curriculum in the Division of Home Economics was initiated in September of 1943.

The basic course was defined by the faculty as a cooperatively planned and conducted course which:

1. Attacks student problems rather than subject matter units.
2. Cuts across all Home Economics subject matter areas.
(through both semesters)
3. Provides opportunities for students to participate in the planning and evaluation of their own work.
4. Allows students to vary their learning experiences according to individual needs.
5. Emphasizes student progress rather than the learning of specific subject matter.

6. Provides learning experiences which extend beyond the class room and which are functional in the everyday life of the student.²

Because of the freedom Dean Talbot has given to her faculty members, the Division of Home Economics grew into a highly integrated, modern region of learning.

Dean Talbot encouraged her instructors to attend home economics conferences, and others which were related to home economics. She attended many meetings of the American Home Economics Association and the Land Grant College Association. In 1943 she was chairman of the home economics section of the Land Grant College conference.

In 1933 she established the Talbot award, a silver loving cup, for the outstanding sophomore student in home economics.

She was co-author of two high school home economics texts: Home Making for Boys and Girls, and Practical Problems in Home Life for Boys and Girls.

² Basic Course Yearbook. 1944-1945, p. 1.

CHAPTER III

403 SOUTH KNOBLOCK

The big house that was filled with so much Talbot happiness stood on the corner of Fourth and Knoblock for nearly forty years. In 1941 another Talbot house was constructed to take its place. Nora Amaryllis Talbot worked closely with the architect who drew the plans so that her house would fulfill her needs adequately. Much of the charm of the dean is reflected in this comfortable, red brick, Georgian style home. Many of the furnishings of her dwelling have a story to tell.

During the gold rush days in Colorado, a huge hotel, the Beuna Vista, was erected to meet the needs of the rapid growth of Golden, Colorado. The hotel was a gorgeous structure and was very elaborately decorated. In each bedroom there was a lovely marble fireplace. When the boom was over the hotel stood vacant, because there were no renters. The building was razed, and the decorations and equipment were sold. Dean Talbot secured one of the pink marble mantels and stored it for several years before she had the opportunity to use it. When her home was built, the mantel was used to adorn the fireplace in the wood paneled study.

Above the fireplace was hung the MacNeil coat of arms with its inscription which, when translated, means "victory or death," and the words "MacNeil of Barra." Barra is a small island off the mainland of Scotland, which was the home of the MacNeil clan. A cousin, Vernon MacNeil, tooled, in silver, the authentic coat of arms of the clan of their grandmother, Elizabeth MacNeil Talbot. He gave this silver on wood plaque to Nora as a reminder of their noble ancestry.

The beautiful old secretary in the living room was once a part of the

furnishings of the Sommers home in Nebraska. It was shipped by rail from the farm in Nebraska to Wharton, Oklahoma. The secretary was used in the green, frame Talbot home for many years before it found its place in the red brick home of Dean Talbot. Its wood is an excellent example of the fine grained Tennessee walnut, such as was used in good furniture by many of the enterprising cabinetmakers of the nineteenth century. The finish is still in good condition after many years of service in the Sommers and Talbot homes. Graceful lines and mellow tones of walnut combine to make this family heirloom a beautiful, treasured piece of furniture.

While Nora Amaryllis was in Paris she purchased a dainty, French powder table with slender cabriole legs. This powder table had a secret compartment in which, perhaps, some French lady once hid her treasured jewels. Dean Talbot also brought to America two blue vases from Paris. These pieces which were made into lamps became elements of decor and conversation pieces for her home.

Dean Talbot's home has been a favorite setting for receptions and teas for the faculty and students of home economics. With an air of casual formality it held an atmosphere of dignity and warmth for social gatherings around its fireplace. It was not just a place to hang a lovely, violet hat for Dean Nora A. Talbot. It was home. The home spirit which she always encouraged her students to strive for was included in the blueprint for the house at 403 Knoblock Street.

CHAPTER IV

AMARYLLIS

Nora Amaryllis Talbot was named in honor of a school mate of her father. She was especially fond of her middle name because of its lyrical quality. When she taught in Nowata and Muskogee, she signed her name, "N. Amaryllis," and she was pleased that her friends called her "Amaryllis." However, when she returned to Stillwater, friends and family had called her "Nora" for so many years, she was always "Nora" to them.

Shakespeare once asked, "What's in a name?" Nora Amaryllis found the suggestion for an absorbing hobby in hers. Her name suggested the possibility of a past-time which was particularly interesting to her, namely, growing amaryllis.

Her hobby began, as many do, in a very informal manner. Her interest in the flower prompted her to purchase a few common bulbs while she was teaching in Nowata and Muskogee. Although she bought only one or two a year, she stored the bulbs in the cellar, thus her collection increased. Many of these first plants put forth pale, small blossoms, but they were cherished by Nora just as much as the beautiful hybrid varieties were, which took blue ribbons at the 1951 Amaryllis Show in Oklahoma City. She has always shared these beautiful blooms with others. She took some of the flowers to school to brighten the office and classrooms. Others she took to shut-ins, who could not enjoy the spring flowers out-of-doors. She placed many in the church.

For the past seven or eight years, she has taken several of her blossoms to the annual amaryllis show which is sponsored by the Amaryllis unit of the Council of Flower Garden Clubs in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Each time she

returned with her share of the ribbons.

The following item appeared in the Sunday edition of the Stillwater Daily News-Press on March 20, 1949.

Probably her middle name has a lot to do with Nora Amaryllis Talbot's interest in growing amaryllis plants, but the fact remains that she is one of the most important growers in the state. On seven plants she took to the state amaryllis show in Oklahoma City last weekend, she received seven ribbons and the grand sweepstakes award. The flowers shown here include pink and red stripes on white, deep orange-red, and some of the usual salmon shade but much larger than the common household variety. Most of the bulbs Miss Talbot has chosen are imported.

She brought home five blue ribbons, one red ribbon, and one yellow ribbon from the show in 1951. Four of the amaryllis that were awarded first prizes were named, "Sweet Sixteen," a blushing pink blossom, "Scarlet Beauty," a deep red amaryllis, a light orange one, named "Lucifer," and "Royal Dutch," one of the striped varieties. After the show, which was held in the Will Rogers Park Green House, she brought her flowers home and had an amaryllis show all her own at her home, 403 South Knoblock Street. At this time, she showed sixteen blooming bulbs with a total of twenty-four blooms. Some blossoms measured as much as ten inches in diameter. Many names appeared on her guest book as an indication of the success of her one-man show.

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDEN YEAR

1950 was a busy year for Dean Nora Amaryllis Talbot and her faculty. On October 20 and 21, the division of which she had been a vital cog for thirty-five years celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, a half-century of golden progress. The fifty year span saw the Department of Domestic Economy grow from a handful of students and one instructor to a division which is recognized as the second largest Division of Home Economics in the United States. In 1950 the Department of Home Economics Education was headed by Dr. Millie V. Pearson. The Department of Home Life was headed by Dr. Virginia Messenger. Mrs. Adaline Ledbetter was head of the Household Arts Department. The Department of Household Science and the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management were headed by Dr. Daisy I. Purdy.

Richard M. Caldwell wrote these words of tribute to home economics for the Tulsa World, October 15, 1950.

This is the "golden year" for home economics on the Oklahoma A. and M. campus, one of America's largest, top ranking and most successful career fields open to young women...and, for that ultra modern trend, men.

One of the largest families in the state of Oklahoma had a reunion October 20 and 21. Members of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College's Division of Home Economics family met on the campus and relived the past fifty years. Many of the activities were centered around the new four and one-half million dollar Student Union Building. Registration was held in the lobby beginning at one o'clock, Friday, October 20.

The first day was an informal session of visiting. Former teachers and students met with the present staff and student body and chatted of new positions, husbands, children, and the many steps of progress in the history of



NORA AMABYLLIS TALBOT, DEAN EMERITUS

home economics. The anniversary tea, held in the Student Union Building, was the setting for this casual get-together.

There were tours of the campus including a visit to the Home Economics Building to view the exhibits. An important feature of the exhibits was the display of selected garments worn by Dean Talbot throughout her career as student and teacher.

Recognition of the first unit of the new Home Economics Building was scheduled at four thirty o'clock. The plan for the structure included class, laboratory, and research facilities, including two auditoriums, one which accommodates seven hundred and another designed for radio instruction. The new building was planned to be the headquarters for one of the most modern and commodious Home Economics school centers in the region. Frederick Vance Kershner, Tulsa, was the designer and architect for the modern and well equipped building which was estimated to cost two million five hundred thousand dollars when finished.

The first banquet served in the Student Union ballroom was served in honor of fifty years of progress of the Division of Home Economics at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. It was a memorable occasion for all present. Mrs. Muriel Tice Nelson, a graduate of 1924, presided. Dr. Henry G. Bennett, president of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Dean Nora A. Talbot, and Luree Jones, president of the Home Economics club, spoke words of greeting to the guests of the anniversary celebration. The response was given by Mrs. Maude Reichman Calvert, who graduated in 1916.

After the banquet, a pageant, which depicted fifty years progress of home economics at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, was presented in conjunction with the golden anniversary. The audience viewed, through an imaginary stereoscope, historical scenes as they were enacted on the stage.

Hit songs of yester-year added retrospective color and atmosphere to portrayals of young men and women on bicycles built for two and campus belles in their Gibson Girl attire.

The spotlight caught many accomplishments of home economics, with Dean Talbot at the helm, in its orbit and stressed the importance of blending the practical aspects with academic culture to train specialists who serve the broadest field of American economy.

As a fitting culmination of this historical tabloid, the narrator spoke, "This is your story, Nora Amaryllis Talbot." In brief resume, the parallel steps of her professional career with that of the progress of home economics on the campus were retraced. As a climax to the evening Dr. Henry G. Bennett announced Miss Talbot's appointment to Dean Emeritus of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Division of Home Economics with these words:

"Because of the faithful service to Oklahoma A. and M. College as a student, and instructor, as head of a department and as dean of the division of home economics, the board of regents for Oklahoma A. and M. colleges has authorized me to announce your appointment as dean emeritus of the division of home economics for life."¹

¹ The Daily Oklahoman, Saturday, October 21, 1950.

CHAPTER VI

FINALE

This is a story of Nora Amaryllis Talbot, who grew from a shy, reserved farm girl of pioneer parentage into a woman of national renown in the field of education in home economics. Speaking of her life's work, she says, "Any accomplishment along the lines of helpfulness has come through the direction of a higher intelligence than my own."

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