

Teacher plays games for students

By SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN

Jan Easterly is gaining notoriety in the field of education. The assistant professor at Oakland University has created three simulation games and is doing the last round of work on her fourth.

"Simulation games involve a slice of life with a set of rules," Mrs. Easterly said. "To simulate means to create part of society and reality. A game is anything that has a set of rules with constraints. It often gives people a chance to try out things before they try to do it in the real world."

Due to her background as a teacher, Mrs. Easterly developed her first simulation game, "Successful Student Teaching," to try to get certain things across to her student teachers that she wanted them to put into practice. Her desire to be a better teacher led her to create a game that allows student teachers a chance to practice their classroom teaching on a game board and helps cooperative teachers, with whom student teachers work, learn how to better help the young, inexperienced teachers.

"I'M UNIVERSITY supervisor so I visit cooperating teachers. When they ask me what they can do to help the new teachers, we play 'Successful Student Teaching.' They learn that if they don't give the new teacher required feedback, the teacher suffers from their mistake. This is important that they learn this in advance," said Mrs. Easterly, who has lived in Rochester for five years.

The game that took three years to create was published in 1975. "It's going out of print pretty soon. About 500-700 colleges have already purchased the game. I don't know if I'll revise it or not. It works just as it is now."

But the game that brought fame and national recognition to the woman who has her doctorate in education is "Access." Recently Myra Lee, national high school teacher of the year from La Mesa, Calif., was interviewed on television's "Today Show." Shown on the national program was a tape of Ms. Lee supervising her class as they played "Access."

"I was so excited about that. Here she was, the best high school teacher of the year, playing my game on television," Mrs. Easterly said.

DEVELOPED WITH Susan Ebel of the University of Michigan, "Access" is a game about feminine issues that was described in an issue of "Simulation-Gaming" as a "conscious raising."

Mrs. Easterly said the game attempts to simulate the slice of life that shows that it's not an even world for men and women. "It shows that what seems to be equal is subtlely not. When men and women enter the work force at the entry level, things are equal. But as they work their way up, there are subtle things that aren't equal."

"Access" tries to bring out the inequalities although Mrs. Easterly said many players don't realize what's going on during the game until the discussions conducted afterwards.

A spatial game played by 10-20 participants, it requires a large room that is taped into two sections with access lanes from one section into the other.

The players are given either green or red badges. Each group contains equal number of men and women in it. The idea of the game, according to Mrs. Easterly, is to earn chips, certain goals.

"In the green's territory is a section for playing jacks. The greens earn a

chip by picking up one jack without disturbing the others. The reds have to pick up one jack, then two.

"In the reds' territory is a game of throwing a basketball into a basket. This is more symbolic of the way men are raised while the jacks are exemplary of girls."

For greens to play basketball, they have to stand in line in one access lane and wait until they can squeeze in to the circle around the basket formed by the red players. After every fourth red player, a green is allowed to shoot for chips.

ONE OF THE SUBTLE inequalities of the game is that the reds have three access lanes into the greens' territory and the lanes are open. Reds are free to roam into the green area.

What the players aren't told is that the only thing that counts is the red chips. Each player needs one green chip to survive, but the real accomplishment in the game is to play poker, a status symbol for successful executives.

"But to play poker you need 10 red chips to buy the five red stars required before you can play poker," Mrs. Easterly explained.

"Once players learn this and see the inequalities involved, they'll do things like steal the jacks ball so no one can earn green chips. The reds need nurturing, food, tender loving care from the greens to survive but in order to get status, everyone needs the red chips."

There are several other details to the game, such as a red (male symbol) agreeing to watch out for a green (female symbol) and thus tying each other together with a rope, but overall the intricate game is merely a way of pointing out continued inequalities in opportunities between men and women.

Mrs. Easterly said she isn't sure how the game will be distributed. It will be marketed by Garry Shirts from California, probably in kit form with ropes, tape for marking off boundaries, chips and instructions.

"I have a stack of letters from people wanting copies of 'Access.' Although it has been given at several workshops all over the country, I hope there will be a time when it won't be needed."

Working on "Access" hasn't caused any friction between Mrs. Easterly and her husband Charles.

"He's as supportive as any husband can be," she said. "My working with liberation issues isn't threatening to him. We work out our own roles every morning—deciding who will do what job today."

The other two games the innovative woman developed are "Decisions" and "Pipelines."

"Decisions" was created for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students as a way to get them to deal with values underlying their behavior.

Participants learn that people who say one thing but act a different way need to take a closer look at their decision-making processes. They are also the ones who are the losers in "Decisions."

"PIPELINE" WAS developed with Dave Meyer, area chairman for Human Resources Development at Oakland University. Although it isn't quite finished, Mrs. Easterly has tested it and is very excited about the game.

Created under a grant from the federal government, it deals with teaching counselors the problems of training the hard-core unemployed.

"It's much, much more complex than any of the other games. It's also a spatial game, played in a large room."

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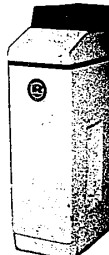
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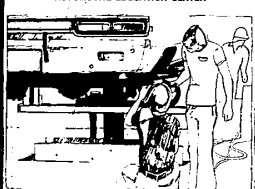
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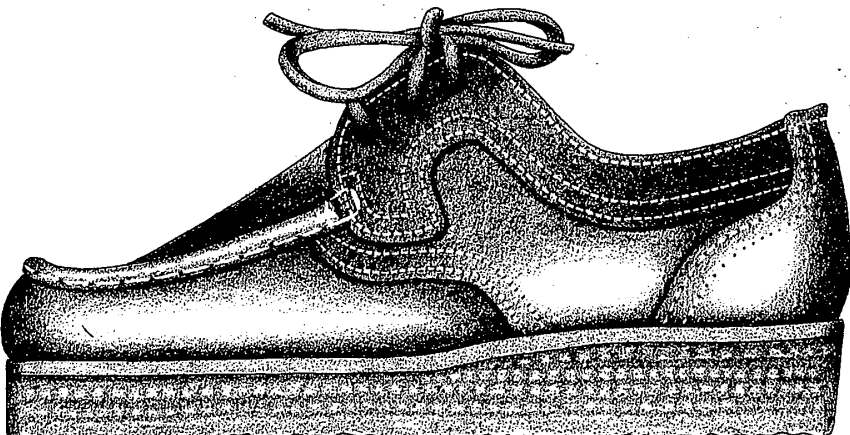
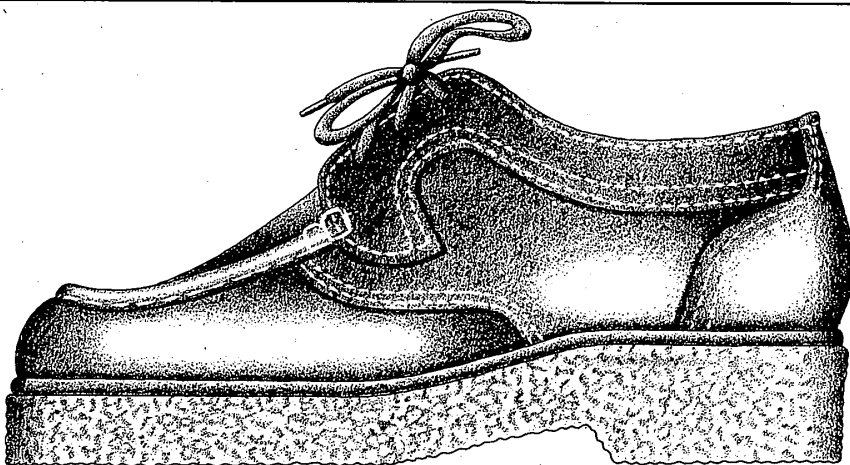
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