

Mrs. Redmond Nears Two-Score Mark As Secretary At College



MRS. RUTH BARKER REDMOND

By DALE GADDY
In quick, business-like movements, Mrs. Ruth Redmond thumbed through a faded copy of a 1928 "Rhododendron," the yearbook at Appalachian State Teachers College. "This was printed four years after I began working here," she smiled as her blue-gray eyes peered through the dark rimmed glasses which clung to her face.

"I came here to work for a 'short time,'" she explained as she pressed her lips together and cocked her head to one side. "That was November 2, 1924. And I'm still here!" She laughed the laugh of one who had had a trick played on her.

Although much has changed at the college and elsewhere in the county during the 39 years Mrs. Redmond has been a secretary there, the petite lady has changed little (see photos on this page). Were she not a modest employee, she might well explain it, saying, "I guess I just stay too busy to change much."

In 1924, Mrs. Redmond was Miss Ruth Barker and was working with the American Red Cross in Johnson City, Tennessee. The year before, she had completed a course of study at Draughts Business College in Knoxville. In the fall of 1924 she had no intentions of leaving the Volunteer State.

However, that autumn, while visiting in Boone, she was asked to take a temporary position at the college as secretary to D. D. Dougherty, co-founder of the institution. She volunteered.

"The campus was still quite new then," she recalled. "In fact the present administration building had just been completed and that fall classes were held in it for the first time."

Other buildings under construction then were White Hall (girls dormitory) and a gymnasium for girls. "Everything was segregated back then," the energetic lady related. "At the ball games, the boys sat on one side of the gym, the girls on the other side. In assembly, the boys sat on one side, the girls on the other. Even at the dining

hall (which was then in Lovell Hall) the boys were made to sit at one end of the room, the girls at the other.

"This was not remedied until the mid-1930's when a student strike was staged," she said.

Dougherty's office was in the Home Demonstration Building (now known as the Old Home Economics Building), "but we moved to the Ad Building that December, a few weeks after I began work."

Suffering from a heart condition, Dougherty was not always able to work during an entire day. Consequently, his new secretary roomed in the Dougherty home where she could help the aging business manager with the books and records "whenever he felt like working."

None of the county roads were paved at that time, much less on campus. Stepping stones acted as side walks, according to Mrs. Redmond. "One night when I was going to a party on campus, I, dressed in the finery of the day, began walking on those old stepping stones. It had been raining real hard all day and it was difficult to see just where the stones were and where the mud was."

"All of a sudden there I was up to my knees in mud! So, there was no party for me that night." Again she laughed her cheerful laugh.

"Back then the students and the college personnel were not allowed to date one another," she continued, a wry twinkle appearing in her eyes. "Well, Douglas—he's my husband now—was a senior at the normal school then. I couldn't really say that Mr. Dougherty forbade us to date, but he stood many a time on the front porch just to scare Douglas away!"

The plan didn't succeed, though, she confided. "I slipped out the back door and up the hill (where Justice Hall now stands) to meet Douglas, and we would go to the movies."

After Dougherty's death in June, 1929, the Tennessee girl quit her job and was married

to Douglas. The young couple lived in Illinois until 1931 when Mrs. Redmond's husband decided to return to the college to begin work leading to a degree.

"It was in March of '31 that we came back," she said as she propped her chin in her hands. "Mr. (James M.) Downum, who was the registrar then, was without a secretary. They asked me to help out temporarily. I accepted my second 'temporary' job."

After Downum's death, Mrs. Redmond was secretary to H. R. Eggers. Later she was made secretary to Dr. B. B. Dougherty, the college president. After serving in the latter capacity for five years, she was moved to the business office, the place of her original employment at the college.

"And I've been in this office (business) ever since," she added.

"And I might say at this point that I've enjoyed my work immensely. Mr. Bernard (Dougherty) is a wonderful person to work for, as have been the others for whom I've worked."

In 1924 as a recent business college graduate, Mrs. Redmond did all the secretarial work for the business office and for New River Light and Power Company. Today the power company is under separate operation, and instead of one secretary in the business department, there are ten.

Mrs. Redmond's official title today is "Secretary, Purchasing Department."

In 1924 the student body numbered approximately 300. "I knew them all by name," Mrs. Redmond commented.

This week, as registration for spring quarter classes opened, more than 3,000 students were enrolled. Said the secretary, "I've helped in every registration line at Appalachian since I've been here." For the first few years, she, alone, handled registration.

Now with at least five major registration periods during the calendar year and with the stu-



D. D. DOUGHERTY AND MISS RUTH BARKER . . . 1928 PHOTO
dent body as large as it is, it takes several more workers (including student help) and a unit of 15ms to do the job.

"We've had only one bad fright in the registration lines that I can recall," she continued. "Several years ago two men were overheard behind the bank threatening to hold up the registration line."

"At that time there was no campus police—why, I've walked to town many a time with \$35,000 to \$50,000 cash and had no thought of being molested."

"Anyway, the threat was not carried out. But afterwards, someone would go with me or take the money to the bank themselves."

The Redmonds have a daughter, Mrs. Carole Redmond Miller of Boone. "We're expecting our first grandchild in September," the college secretary beamed.

"One last thing," she began as her eyes gazed at the worn cover of the yearbook. "Since it's almost St. Patrick's Day, it might be of interest to note

"The students had been threatening another strike—for such privileges as dancing—and the college officials were concerned. Miss Brock, the home economics teacher, suggested to Dr. Dougherty that a dance be held on campus. So, on St. Patrick's Day, Miss Brock and Dr. Dougherty shocked the whole student body by leading off the grand march!"

Since then the annual St. Patrick's Day dance has been known at the college as the Home Economics dance.

Twisting her head to one side again, she said, thoughtfully, "A lot has happened since the mid-twenties. A lot of people have come and gone since then. It's been an exciting time, especially for those of us who have been able to see the college grow as it has."

Gazing out the window through the rainy mist which hovered over the sprawling campus, she repeated, "A lot has happened."

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