

Family tradition...

Euliss reflects on past 50 years

by Wilma Dixon
Entertainment Writer

"I refused to call my older sister Ms. Holt. Instead, I referred to her as Ms. Ruth," replied Mrs. Helen Euliss during her talk about the changes in education during the last fifty years.

Being taught by her older sister in the first grade, Euliss comes from a family of educators. Out of a family of nine children, six followed in the footsteps of both their parents and went on to become teachers.

After graduating from college at the age of 18 with a minor in French, and having taught herself how to type, Euliss went on to teach for the first time at E.M. Holt School in Alamance County. "I met all of the requirements. They needed a teacher that could teach French, English, and could type."

Her first year there was hectic. Not only did she teach two classes of French, she also taught three

classes of English, and was the advisor of both the yearbook and newspaper staffs. "That's where the typing comes in. I had to type the stencils for the staff."

Bringing in only 96 dollars a month, Euliss had set out to pay her mother back the total sum of her college education--only one thousand dollars, including books!

Euliss began teaching at Elon in 1969 after earning her master's degree in four summers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She taught literature composition, but for two years, she was at Walter Williams to help set up a composition program there. This is the only time Euliss has ever taught outside of Alamance County. The 1975 recipient of the Daniels David Award commented, "I was respected because I was a teacher. People didn't treat me as a 19-year-old. The entire community was very supportive."

Euliss has seen a lot of educational reforms. From the war

years until today, changes have constantly taken place within the school system. "I remember in 1943-44 when the legislature decided on a nine-month term and twelve grades. We decided not to have a graduating class that year."

Euliss has also witnessed other types of educational reform. Some of them include team teaching, open classrooms, and school consolidation. "With the school consolidation, we got less support from some of the parents and the community as a whole. The schools were sometimes farther away, and the parents weren't able to come as often."

In today's world, we have become accustomed to school consolidation and several other types of reform. "Parents are more critical of educators, and students have more advantages."

The mother of two credits her teaching to luck. With her daughter continuing the tradition of teaching in the family, luck seems to have nothing to do with it. Euliss was just "born to teach."



Model teacher: Mrs. Helen Euliss told about growing up in a family of teachers and also discussed educational reforms of the past 50 years. Photo by Denese Dele...

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