

# Esperanto and Eugene retire

By Beth Eakes

Eugene Thompson has seen many changes in Guilford College during his twenty years of teaching. This semester finds Thompson instructing courses in French and Esperanto. He has also taught Latin in year's past.

His philosophy in the classroom is "if the student is willing to learn, then he is willing to help." He gave an example of this thought in a recent interview which completes the Guilfordians series of interviews on retiring faculty members.

Thompson told of one young man who seemed to have little concern for his class. He made a D in the course and later left school to get married. Six years later the same young man returned to Guilford and became one of Thompson's best students.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, Eugene Thompson traveled to Europe, for his first visit after graduating from high school in

## Ecology corner

### What if I were twelve?

By Richard Fulton

Contemplating the near melt down situation at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Station near Harrisburg, PA and recent disputes on campus about the pros and cons of nuclear power during Energy Awareness Week, I figured this week's story should include a trip to the newspaper rousing community Middletown, PA, which is within three miles of the radiation releasing nuclear plant.



A innocent young lad I turned out to be, age a mere twelve years. A wild Wednesday it was last week. My mother woke me at the same 7:45 time as any other morning, but there was an increased urgency in her voice this time, and the words I heard were not comforting. She was talking about no school and that we would have to go away for a few days. I got the feeling it was not a planned vacation. As I turned around with my toothbrush and towel, Mom was practically in tears as she prepared Chris' diapers and provisions. Chris is my thirteen month old brother. We were in the car before Mom relaxed enough to tell me what was going on.

"That new power station up the river is run on nuclear energy, which means it creates alot of radiation, which can be very dangerous to people like us if we are in contact with it.

I was about to ask her a question, but she looked like she was going to say something.

"The radiation from that plant escaped somehow last night and since they built the plant so near to us, we would be in trouble if we stayed at home."

We both fell silent and many questions collected in my mind. The most recurring one was: When would we come back home? I had never slept away from home before.

We drove fifteen miles to one of the local high schools where Mom was stopped by a policeman who asked where we lived and five minutes worth of other questions. We spent the day talking inside the high school gym.

When it came time to go to sleep Mom came over to ask if everything was alright. I told her I missed my night light, but that I'd be O.K. I didn't lie to my Mom very often, but actually I was scared as anything that night, because something felt very wrong.

A dreamed filled night followed, with overwhelming feelings of bigness and unsurmountable power. Startling myself awake, I sat up on my bed contemplating the feelings felt in this weird dream, last felt when I was half my present age, and wondering if this is some kind of warning that my future is being threatened by something very large and powerful.

1931. He studied language, visited with a French family and spent a great deal of time in Brittany during his January through September session abroad.

Neighbors of the Thompson family back in Lexington had given him the name of distant cousin to contact. Thompson met the relatives in Paris who were very helpful in familiarizing him with French customs during the 1930's.

Thompson spent part of his summer with a family living in Brittany. The family spoke French and the servants spoke Breton in which Thompson developed an interest after living with these people.

During his first trip abroad, Eugene Thompson met a young man who was studying for his baccalaureat and invited him to visit the United States. As it turned out, Thompson's family was investigated before the young man arrived. It seems that he came from an upper

class family that was curious as to why the Thompson's were so hospitable to a foreigner.

In September of 1931 Thompson enrolled in the University of Kentucky. Here he received his undergraduate degree in Philosophy.

In 1935, after graduating, Thompson decided to return to France. He applied through the Institute of International Education to study at the Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs de Loches. Upon being accepted, he departed the United States during the summer of 1935 to study at this highly competitive school. He received his master's degree in French from the University of Kentucky.

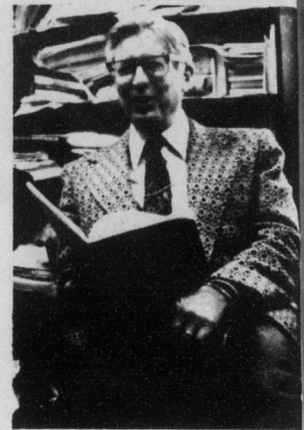
World War II found Eugene Thompson a member of the Civilian Public Service. He was stationed at Buck Creek, North Carolina where he met Cyrus Johnson, E. Kidd Lockard and Charlie Hendricks. Although he was a conscientious objector, Thompson led an exciting life during the 40's.

He was involved with the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Thompson also fought forest fires and inspected areas for erosion in California during the summer of 1943.

It was during World War II that Thompson lost contact with his French companions.

Between 1946-50 Eugene Thompson taught at the University of Kansas City. In 1950, after leaving UKC, Thompson enrolled in graduate studies at Duke University.

Here at Guilford Thompson teaches Esperanto. The language is designed for international communication and will not be offered after Thompson's



Thompson reflects on his years at Guilford.

departure. According to an August 16th 1972 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* (which Thompson shared during his interview) Esperanto is growing in America. It is now being taught in an ever-growing number of schools and universities.

In 1967 Thompson went to France for a visit. He studied in Paris at the Alliance Francaise, one of the world's best language institutions, teaching French to all foreigners.

Courses are taught at various levels and Thompson feels that he benefited greatly in this environment while at the same time improving his French studies. He received a degree entitled Diplome Supérieur d'Etrudes Francaise Modernes after completing his studies at the Alliance.

Thompson believes that there is no best method to teach a foreign language. He considers class attendance and daily work to be very important.

At the Alliance Francaise Thompson met Marie Hameau, a world famous language instructor. He has used a text written by Madame Hameau in

his own classroom.

Stamp collecting has been a hobby for Eugene Thompson during his career at Guilford. He now walks for his arthritis and exercises to relieve the pain. He also enjoys mowing the grass in his spare time.

During the interview Thompson exhibited some of his exercises which he performs religiously.

Other outside interests include genealogy, church history and international relations. He has also been involved in the American Friends Service Committee.

Retirement for Eugene Thompson means many busy activities. He will spend time with his wife Lucille whom he met at the University of Kentucky. He also plans to keep up with his languages, help in the garden and possibly travel.

Thompson feels a sadness in retiring from Guilford because it means an end to his Esperanto program. He feels that it is important for a Quaker school to encourage international understanding by offering courses in this language.

## Serious student digresses

So, April is the cruelest month the Poet tells us. Well, when old father Chronos gathered all his children together and told Jan to look both ways before crossing those indeterminate passages we wondered what might happen to the sanctity of his daughter the twelfth.

Pardon, old fathers, but Spring sprung out of a just month like April reminds me too much of Daisy Duck and the nymphs she waddled along behind her. Can't we have a little sanctuary from all this oppressing blackness, hands and all?

To speak of serendipitous events is blasphemy in hallowed halls such as these where words have cracked under the strain of supporting too many others in some unnatural erasable bond. I've often wondered if we put on their power before they drop us out into the real world -- it's a long way down from the top of the tower.

Speaking of towers, I wonder if we shall ever tower above

others or simply vanish into some self-constructed phallus reared in the back-country of Ireland -- a fitting demise for the demented.

Merlin himself must have gathered the stones together for that old and windy thing and he probably drove down the street to the flashing neon "Sato's Swords" to find the perfect piece to decorate. At any rate, I doubt the tower would ever cower beneath a spring shower



Superman in drag attempts a Binford rescue.

-- nay, it would only make us pine the more for what we hadn't had in years.

There is some stuff I will not eat (though to say that line I had to eat a word) and I find it much less convincing to speak of ambiguity of structure. It's a crazy gammon we must play or eat to talk of slabs of stone or that of meat and where all such beginnings come from as if they were conceived in infant form to be born(e) by us into the world and labored over in the unnatural light of library night.

I feel a little lame to talk of Spring when others have hobbled around dancing their descriptions out of sheperds' flutes. So by the waters of Sewerage I sat down and wept for I knew hnot how to sing Spring in a land so oft well-sung.

And with summer practically a comin' in I wondered if 'e, 'e wouldn't mind me dancing along the water's edge a bit or even plunging in, stopping first (of course) to remove my outer

Continued on page five