

Salem Professor Spends Her Time Teaching, Creating Interest In French, Entertaining



Mrs. Mary L. Melvin
By Eleanor Fry

"Come back anytime, girls," Mrs. Melvin said as she stood in the open door of her home on Waughtown. She always welcomes Salem students who frequently drop in to see her. The comfortable grey sofas in her living room, the open fire and the record collection of popular French songs are a pleasant change from dormitory routine. Mrs. Mary L. Melvin came to Salem to teach French less than two years ago, and already she has aroused a new interest among her students for France and the French language. She has formed a French table in the dining hall and has placed some of her own records in the listening room for her classes. Besides this she has open house every other Tuesday night

for her conversation class to give them an opportunity to speak every day French.

One wonders how she finds so much time to spend with her students, for she has three lively boys to mother and amuse in her "spare time." They are David, Butch and Ronnie, who continually turn flips over the backs of her grey sofas or play hide and seek in the cabinets under the kitchen sink.

Mrs. Melvin's greatest ambition is to go back to France. She spent a year there in 1939 teaching English at the University of Paris just after her graduation from Pembroke. Her first disillusion came the day that she asked directions in her "most perfect French," of a French policeman. He immediately replied in English.

She still insists that he must have recognized her nationality by her American-styled clothes and not by her American accent. "It is easy for the French to recognize Americans in their tweeds and flat shoes," she explained. "Parisien women have more of a flair for

clothes than we do."

When war broke out in Europe, she returned to the United States to tutor at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. In 1945 she was again in Paris doing special work for the OSS. After four years of this work, she came to Winston-Salem and accepted a teaching position here.

Mrs. Melvin was amazed when she heard several days ago that she was elected by the freshman class as their advisor, for she hardly knew what being an advisor meant. "I still don't know exactly!" she claims. But the students have no doubts about their choice. For one hardly thinks of her as a teacher but as a friend.

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