

The Meredith Herald

125th Anniversary Edition

March 17, 2016

Lecture Recalls "The Big Three" Professors of English

Macy Allen, Staff Writer

Founder's Week 2016 celebrated the 125th Anniversary of Meredith College. The week was filled with Crook Hunts, tea parties, lip synch battles, and special guest speakers to commemorate the distinctive qualities that have made Meredith College "Going Strong" for the last century and a quarter. On Monday, February 22, Founder's Week began with Dr. Betty Webb, who spoke of "The Big Three" in Meredith's English Department: Dr. Johnson, Dr. Knight, and Dr. Rose.

Dr. Webb entered Meredith College in 1963. She had heard of "The Big Three" from her Big Sis, who described the professors as "really, really tough, but excellent." Dr. Webb described herself as being "too naïve to be daunted" and asked to be placed into an English 101 class taught by either Dr. Johnson, Dr. Rose, or Dr. Knight. She was placed in Dr. Johnson's English class by Dr. Johnson.

Meredith's English department and curriculum were not what Dr. Webb expected as a first year student. Instead of reading novels she loved by authors like Austen and Bronte, Dr. Webb recalls reading essays by Carlyle, Ruskin, Bacon, Dequincy, and Hazlitt as well as writing essays—seven a week, to be exact. She recalled Dr. Johnson as witty: "she said, for example, about her unmarried status, that it took an awfully good man to be better than no man at all."

Dr. Webb then talked about her sophomore year at Meredith with Dr. Knight, who was a former student of

Dr. Johnson. Dr. Webb described Dr. Knight as "ferocious" with "bright blue eyes that never blinked." She was an amazing teacher who loved the literature: "She would get so excited about the passage under examination that she would leave the podium but continue to recite the lines. When she would eventually come to the end of what she knew by heart, she would blink herself awake and dash back to the podium looking somewhat embarrassed. We were not exactly sure where she had been, but we loved her for going. By sharing with us openly her love for language and literature, he taught us what would otherwise be unteachable—to feel it, as Wordsworth says, 'in the blood and along the heart.'"

It wasn't until Dr. Webb's junior year at Meredith that she had Dr. Rose as a professor. Dr. Rose was witty and loved comedy. She used her love for wit and humor to bring Shakespeare to life for her students: "None who studied Henry, IV, Part I with her could forget her swaggering, belly-slapping depiction of Falstaff." She always demanded excellence from both her students and herself. Her striving for excellence was illustrated in her perfect Palmer penmanship, because "anything worth doing, she thought, was worth doing well."

The Big Three were tough women, but they were kind, sweet, philanthropic women who were heavily involved in the Baptist church. They loved to teach Sunday school, and when they

weren't grading essays, they were teaching children and giving back to their beloved community.

The Big Three were, and always will be, big at Meredith.

Sitting behind a couple of my professors on Monday, I watched them nod their heads at Dr. Webb's observations and laugh at her stories of the Big Three. Although I never had the original Big Three as my professors, I've had pieces of their spirits embodied through my own professors and their unique take on the classics. After listening to Dr. Webb speak about these women, I know many professors who share qualities of the Big Three. I've had professors whose love and energy brought literature to life—even when those stories weren't told in modern English (I'm thinking of a man named Chaucer and a playwright named Shakespeare). Their portrayal of the Wife of Bath and King Henry V leave students on the edge of their seats in British Literature and Shakespeare. I've had professors whose profound knowledge in their chosen subject-matter enralls students and makes them want to further their own education through research projects and conferences. Their extensive knowledge pushes students to think critically about their own interests and favorite novels, whether it be analyzing Little Women through a feminist lens, or finding connections between Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway. I've had professors who

want their students to be well-rounded women, not only in their academics, but in their community, so they incorporate service learning projects into the curriculum by relating them to a popular young adult lit book.

The Big Three seemed to set the standards in the English Department at Meredith College. According to Dr. Webb, they didn't set the standard for curriculum or create a new tradition for the college. They set a standard for professors and for students. They were passionate teachers who were tough, ferocious, sweet, witty, sharp, and passionate. They held their students to a high standard, at times probably driving their students to an almost mental breakdown. Still, while looking into the crowd on Monday in Jones Chapel and seeing the alumnae who came to hear a tribute to their tough English professors, I know all those nights staying up to write their seventh essay of the week paid off. For in the crowd that Monday, I saw Meredith women who had survived Dr. Rose's Shakespeare class or Dr. Johnson's English 111 class, and they were smiling, nodding, and laughing along with Dr. Webb's anecdotes about the Big Three. Some of these women teach and work at Meredith today, keeping the spirit of the Big Three alive.

And who knows, maybe in fifty years there will be another speech given during the 175th Founder's Week about the everlasting impact of the Big Three.

"Make It Count for Meredith" Reaches More than Double its Initial Goal

Seung Pang and Kayla Kushner, Staff Writers

A special fundraising campaign planned in honor of Meredith's 125th Anniversary, "Make It Count for Meredith," raised 222% of its goal within 24 hours on Feb. 23. The 24-hour challenge, which aimed to raise \$125,000, surpassed its initial goal and raised more than a quarter of a million dollars by midnight.

"The campaign to raise \$125,000 has not only met, but blown past its goal,

before noon," said President Jo Allen. Along with her message of victory, she proposed the new goal, "Double It in a Day" to raise \$250,000 within the remaining 12 hours.

Hour by hour, funds increased steadily until midnight. A grand total of \$277,621 was raised for Meredith, pushing the Make It Count campaign to 222% of the initial goal. Director Erin Cleghorn said 1,765 donors supported

the campaign. "We are so enthusiastic about the love, spirit, and generosity of all who have given," said President Allen. 91% of the donations were given by alumnae; 6% by parents; 5% by faculty; and 3% by students and their friends. Allen noted that the donors wish to support the college's greatest needs, financial aid and scholarships, study abroad, academic programs, athletics, and more.

In response to the success of the fundraising campaign and generosity of so many in the Meredith Community, President Allen said, "just know that so many people out there admire you, your hard work, and your achievements—enough to do all they can to make sure that Meredith continues Going Strong!"

Meredith is Mad for Tea

Caroline Eggleston, Courtney Batts, Staff Writers



Photo Credit: Courtney Batts

Meredith's 125th Anniversary will forever be known as a weeklong celebration of events inspired by traditions, including an Alice in

Wonderland-themed tea party. The Mad Hatter's Tea, hosted in Belk Dining Hall, was an inspired by this year's play. Characters from the show joined guests to enjoy refreshments, take photos, and learn more about Meredith's history and traditions.

The tea party was held from 4-6 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 23 in BDH, where guests could come and go as they pleased. Tables were lined with teacups and refreshments such as sandwiches and cookies. Many of the faculty members who participated as characters in the play were present, including the Mad Hatter himself. The

actors remained true to character while mingling with guests.

The scenery of the event also reflected the Alice in Wonderland theme. BDH was transformed by the use of a bright and cheery décor, coordinated almost entirely by Dr. Diane Ellis. "It was a lot of fun putting this event together," said Ellis, "We really wanted it to be as authentic as it could be." Her inspiration behind the decoration stemmed from a personal love for tea parties. The teapots used as centerpieces were her own, which she had originally bought for her daughter while traveling through

Europe. Ellis also said she had crafted all of the flowers and chosen the color scheme for the event.

The finishing touch of the tea party's aestheticism was a six-layer, Alice in Wonderland-themed cake placed in the center of the room. The cake was made by UNC Chapel Hill pastry chef Stephanie Rosse. "The layers of the cake take you through the story," Rosse said. Each layer represented an important character of the story. Rosse used psychedelic colors to incorporate the "adventurous, topsy-turvy" nature of the story.