

Brevard Teacher Will Retire After 51 Years As An Educator

"It Doesn't Seem Like 51 Years, The Time Has Just Passed.."

By - Cal Carpenter

"Give our attention to the immediate present because everything comes to him who waits — if he worketh like heck while he waits!"

This is the half humorous but all true philosophy of a dedicated teacher with a sense of humor, an educator in the Transylvania School System who is retiring after a career of 51 years as teacher, principal, and administrator.

She is Mrs. Ethel Mills, who began teaching in Weaverville in 1923, came to Transylvania county to the old Rosenwald School that same year, became Principal of the new Rosenwald in 1949; and will retire this June 30th after eight years in the county school administration, in the job of organizing and coordinating the materials in all county school libraries.

Mrs. Mills was feated at the Retirement Banquet at the Old Brevard Country Club Dinner House, by the Transylvania County Association of Educators and the Transylvania County Classroom Teachers Association, last Friday evening. Her tribute was delivered by Mrs. Joanne P. Gordon, Transylvania County Schools Director of Media.

HISTORY OF A TEACHER

Said Mrs. Gordon:

"Mrs. Mills was born Ethelwyn Kennedy on February 20, 1902, in Franklin, N. C. As Mrs. Mills states it, she was just behind Lincoln and two jumps ahead of Washington. She learned from her father at a very early age that much of what you accomplished in life depends on your willingness to make it happen. Her father, an Episcopal minister, built with his own hands Saint Cyprians Episcopal Church in Franklin. He also built the first Black school and was the first teacher of Blacks in Franklin.

"In 1911, at the age of nine, Mrs. Mills moved to Asheville where her father became the minister at St. Matthias Church. In Asheville she attended Catholic Hill School. Catholic Hill burned in 1915. When it was rebuilt it was renamed Stephens Lee High School. Mrs. Mills graduated from Stephens Lee at the end of the eleventh grade.

"Upon graduation from high school, Mrs. Mills did not have to make a decision about becoming a teacher. She, finding no other way to state it, says that she was forced into it by the Supervisor of Buncombe County Schools. After passing the Buncombe County test for a teaching certificate, Mrs. Mills began her teaching career at Weaverville School. She taught at Weaverville for about two years at a salary of \$30.00 to \$40.00 per month.

PASSED EXAMS

"During this period of teaching history there was no certificate renewal but periodically teachers were required to retake the county examination. There was also a State teachers examination but Mrs. Mills' supervisor instructed his teachers to take only the county examination. He told them the State examination was too difficult and they would not pass. Mrs. Mills, showing the spunk that is still characteristic of her, went to David Millard School, the testing site, and passed both exams.

"Mrs. Mills' formal training for teaching came in the summers after her year's teaching obligations had been met. All of her college credits were earned through Winston-Salem Teachers College. For a time there was an extension center from Winston-Salem located in Asheville. Mrs. Mills attended the extension center and earned as many credits as possible. Later she attended classes on campus

to fulfill the residency requirement for earning a teaching certificate."

TO TRANSYLVANIA

"In 1923 Mrs. Mills came to Transylvania county to work at the old Rosenwald School. She worked at Rosenwald for one year and then moved to the Everette School on the Everette farm near Little River. For the next six years she ran a one-room, one-teacher school for the twenty or so students who lived on or near the Everette farm. She returned to Rosenwald and taught there until the school burned in 1941.

"For the next seven years—during World War II and the slow economic period that followed — the Black students in Transylvania County attended school in the Bethel Church, The Bethel A Annex and the Black Methodist Church, that once stood on Carver Street. During these years Mrs. Mills' salary was \$44.00 per month."

NEW ROSENWALD

"In the late 1930s the Ecusta Paper Corporation came to Transylvania County and operated free from local taxes for a number of years. When the late Harry S. Straus, Ecusta executive, became aware that there was no school for the Blacks he was instrumental in directing Ecusta tax money toward the building of a new school and the present Rosenwald School, commonly known as the 'Pentagon,' was built with stone left over from the building of Pisgah Forest School. The new Rosenwald School opened in the Fall of 1948.

"Rosenwald School usually contained grades one through nine but occasionally some high school courses were offered. About the year 1950 transportation was provided to take Transylvania County's Black students to Ninth Avenue School in Hendersonville where they could complete their high school education.

PRINCIPAL

"At the beginning of the 1949-1950 school term, Mr. J. B. Jones, School Superintendent, asked Mrs. Mills to become principal of Rosenwald until a man could be found for the job. Each time a male teacher came to Rosenwald Mrs. Mills tried, as she states it, to run out from under the job as principal. Each time she tried to run she got "no" for an answer. The principal's job she took on a temporary basis lasted seventeen years. During this time as principal she also taught first or second grade and sometimes both if a combination grade was necessary."

CONSOLIDATION

"In the Spring of 1966 the School Board decided to consolidate the schools and Rosenwald was closed as a school. Mrs. Mills 'retired' to other educational responsibilities.

"In the Summer of 1966 she worked in Head Start but Fall found her confronting a new challenge, that of helping to give some organization to the materials found in the school libraries. Many books and teaching materials had been purchased over the years, and, with the availability of Federal funds, they were being purchased in greater numbers. If materials were to be used they would have to be cataloged so that their availability would be known. Mrs. Juanita Lavender, an experienced Ohio librarian, had been hired to coordinate the organizational efforts and Mrs. Mills began working with her.

LAST EIGHT YEARS

"As an outgrowth of this library work, Mrs. Mills began eight years ago to process all the library books that went into our elementary schools. Three years later she added the processing of the high school books, and finally the processing of all of the audiovisual materials that go into our schools. This valuable service allowed our librarians more time to work with students in helping them to learn from these materials."

"TIME JUST PASSED"

"It doesn't seem like 51 years . . . Really, the time just passed," says Mrs. Mills. "I think that came from working with people—working together with people. There is no one thing anyone can say about the things that have been accomplished except it's a matter of 'we', not 'I'."

Says Eugene M. Morris, Chairman of the Transylvania County Board of Education, about Mrs. Mills:

"This lady has made one of the most significant contributions to our school system of anyone I've known in my 14 years on the School Board. She has been dedicated, loyal, and extremely competent in every task she's been asked to undertake.

"When I first came to the School Board," continues Mr. Morris, "she was Principal at the Rosenwald School. It was always a pleasure to visit her school, for it was an example of good school administration.

"Mrs. Mills will always be remembered for her great love and knowledge of people that allowed her to make such a tremendous, single-handed contribution to the integration



RETIRING AFTER 51 YEARS—Mrs. Ethel Mills, second from left, is shown receiving a plaque from Eugene M. Morris, third from left, Chairman of the Transylvania Board of Education, in recognition of her 51 years as an educa-

tor which will end in retirement on June 30th. Looking on are Harry C. Corbin, Transylvania County Superintendent of Schools, left and Mrs. Joanne P. Gordon, Transylvania County Schools Director of Media, right. (Times Staff Photo)

of schools in Transylvania County."

Says Harry C. Corbin, Superintendent of county schools:

"Mrs. Mills' positive influence on the young people of Transylvania County will be evidenced in many ways in the years to come. Her dedication, interest, and enthusiasm—her high ability and love for people—will stand as examples for teachers in this county long after we are gone."

RETIREMENT

What will Mrs. Mills do in retirement after 51 years of work?

"I guess I'll do the natural thing," she says

laughing, "I'll clean house. That's what most working women do when they have a little extra time. I think I'll be a fulltime housekeeper for a while.

"I also like to crochet, knit, and grow African Violets."

But there'll be some outside activity too. Mrs. Mills says she'll attend senior citizens' meetings — an organization she's supported since its organization here, and will continue to do some hospital auxiliary work.

Mrs. Mills and her husband, Fred D. Mills, a well-known retired rock mason, will continue to make their home at 303 W. Lane, in Brevard.

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