

Changes all around for C'ville teacher

Long-time instructor will be teaching new grade level in '10-11

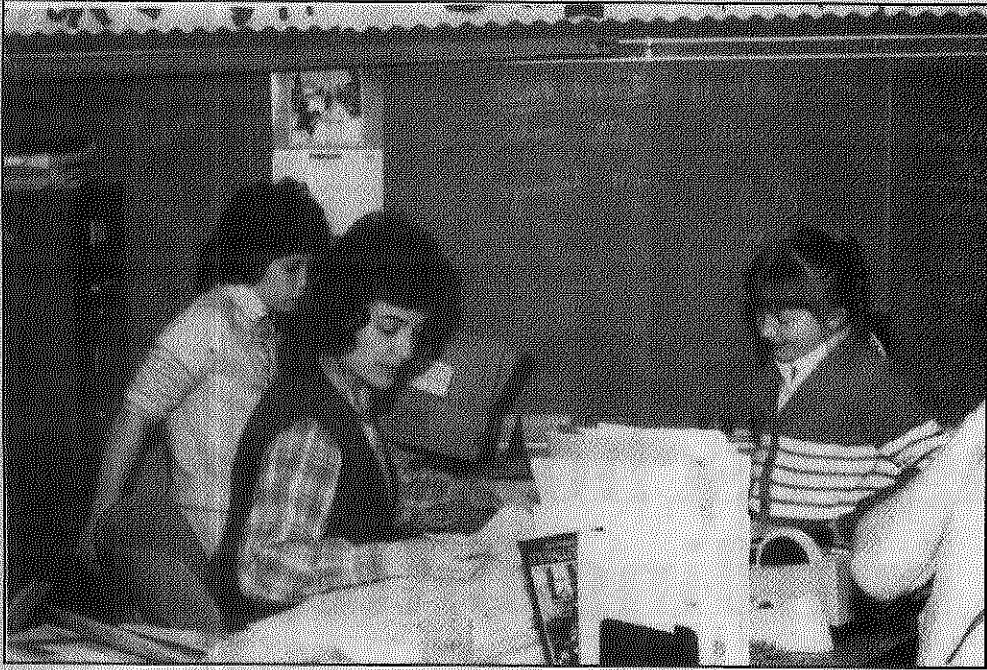


Photo provided

Barbara Eley reviews a section of a student's homework while conducting class at Cridersville Elementary School, her home for teaching for 35 years.

By MEGAN VEIT
News Correspondent

Entering her 35th year of teaching, Cridersville Elementary's longest standing teacher has seen a lot of changes in her classrooms — and she is not just talking about grade levels.

This year, Barbara Eley will teach a new grade level in a new school building.

"I've pretty much taught them all now," Eley said.

Through the years, Eley has taught first and second grades, but most of her career was dedicated to third grade.

"It's in my comfort zone. It feels like home," Eley said of her 25 years in the grade level. "Fourth grade is a little different, but it's a lot of the same kids."

Many of last year's students will carry over into the new classroom for their last year at Cridersville Elementary. She and her fellow teachers will spend more than a month prepare their classrooms.

"People don't realize how much time teachers spend getting their rooms

"When I first started, we never went back in the evenings. Now a lot of the teachers are there at 7 or 8 o'clock at night. ... Teachers just want to have everything perfect and everything ready."

Barbara Eley

ready," Eley said.

This year, on top of decorating and preparing the classroom, there is much unpacking to be done.

By mid-July, Eley said her hallway was already full of teachers' items.

"There are people there all the time," Eley said.

Eley sees her co-workers as friends, meeting for lunch in the months off. This makes the extra time in the classroom seem less like work. It's also a competition to see who can decorate their room the best.

"When I first started teaching, we didn't do that," Eley said. "You came in a day or two ahead of

time. There's so much stuff that we have to get them ready for."

Eley said that as the years passed, she was spending more evenings in the classroom. So many evening are spent there that her husband, Richard Eley, teases her about staying home.

"When I first started, we never went back in the evenings," Eley said. "Now a lot of the teachers are there at 7 or 8 o'clock at night."

While part of this extra time is due to increased achievement tests, Eley said that a large part of it is inner drive.

"Teachers just want to have everything perfect and have everything ready," Eley said.

"When my kids were little, I didn't stay at school at all," she said. "In just the last 10 years probably, I spend so much more time at school."

The shift happened gradually, almost without her noticing.

While Eley is originally from Hardin County, her husband and three children went through Crid-

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Together

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husband, Tony, originally from Jackson Center.

After graduation, the couple returned to the area. Nancy Meyer began teaching in Jackson Center. Five years later her husband, working at Honda, was transferred to Japan.

Nancy Meyer and her new baby spent the time leading up to her departure for three years in Japan with her parents.

"It was very hard to see her leave," Sue Hinegardner said. "We really bonded with the baby."

By this time, the other Hinegardner children had scattered across the region, stretching to Fort Wayne, Ind. to Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky.

But nothing could stop Sue Hinegardner from seeing her daughter. Recovering from surgery and overcoming a long-time battle with car sickness, she boarded a plane and flew for a visit to Japan — twice.

"They don't have yards per-say," Sue Hinegardner said.

The Hinegardners raised their children on a comfortable country lot on Seitz Road, surrounded by trees and farmland.

The Hinegardners were reflecting on others differences they've seen in their time together recently, many of them involving the changes in schools.

"It's 100 percent different," Sue Hinegardner said

of Japanese culture and city structure.

One difference Mrs. Hinegardner noticed was the lack of a private lawn, and it's no wonder.

Don Hinegardner remembers walking into his industrial arts class with guns when the stocks needed refinishing.

"They didn't hardly look at you," Don Hinegardner said.

The students didn't cause trouble. They took care of their equipment, respected the schools rules or faced trouble with their parents.

"Parents stood behind the school," Sue Hinegardner said.

Her husband agreed, saying "We didn't have

problems then ... never had anything like what goes on today."

Don Hinegardner also remembers leaving school. Students were able to go home for lunch and return to their afternoon classes. Sue Hinegardner has others memories of school lunch.

"Each week, my dad would lay out five one-dollar bills," Sue Hinegardner said. "That was our lunch money for the week, and a quarter was for our milk."

She and each of her sisters would pass the table and grab their dollar.

Sharing the school with her sisters is one of Sue Hinegardner's favorite memories. Four of the five girls graduated from Crid-

ersville High School.

"It devastated the town to lose their high school," Sue Hinegardner said.

She was able to share one more day with her sisters in Cridersville Elementary at an alumni celebration. Three sisters convinced their Missouri-dwelling sister to return. The youngest sister, who was moved to Wapakoneta High School before her graduation, was also in attendance.

"It was just like the old days," Sue Hinegardner said.

If students didn't want the schools 20-cent lunch, Don Hinegardner remembers being able to drive home from school for lunch and returning for afternoon classes.

While many things at Cridersville School have changed, for Sue Hinegardner one thing has stayed the same.

"It's still such a great school."

It devastated the town to lose their high school.

— Sue Hinegardner

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Spurs From Page 6C

are available by having the museum in the local area.

"There are several things I have tried to impress upon the director — one, this is not only a local or state thing, it's a worldwide museum that deals with something people around the world have a chance to experience," Zwez said. "We were in the middle of the Cold War, there were so many things going on but at that time the whole world paused. We need to keep that alive."

He said it is important for children and others to remember possibilities of careers and endeavors are endless.

"Maybe we can impress upon a youngster that they can move forward even if they are from a small town," Zwez said.

Zwez also mentioned he hopes Americans realize all that the space program has contributed to

modern day living.

"Over 500,000 people were involved in one form or another from manufacturing and technology the day we landed on the moon," Zwez said. "Through all of that there is so much that came out of it, miniaturization of electronics, heart pacemakers — a lot of technology came out of the space program. I think we need to get back to that."

He said a focus on the space program is now more important than ever as the years progress and moon landing progresses further into history.

"The amount of people that come now, they are a younger generation who did not live when Neil landed on the moon," Zwez said. "Twenty-five to 30 percent of those people think we never landed on the moon — that is ludicrous. It's crazy that people think it was all made up

and that is something else we need to fight at the museum."

Outside of his time at the museum, Zwez drives a school bus for Wapakoneta City Schools District during the school year.

"I drive a preschool route — I take children to the ESC (Auglaize County Educational Service Center) Center," Zwez said. "I find it really enjoyable."

He also runs a small lawn care business with his son, Michael.

"We wanted a little extra money, we both like playing video games, Michael wanted extra money for games and I needed to continue exercising and that's how it kind of started," Zwez said. "We enjoy doing it and make a little extra money."

In addition to being a "handy man," Zwez also considers another activity as his favorite hobby. He takes photographs for The

Evening Leader and has been involved with photography since 1972.

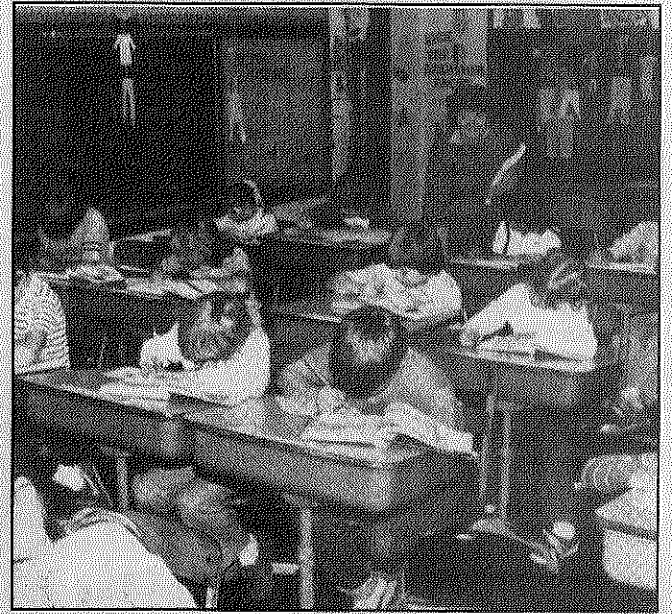
"It's been a long time, I have been working with newspapers for 15 years now," Zwez said. "I was still using a film camera back then. I really enjoy it, for me it's fun"

He said his hobby has gotten easier with the advancements of technology.

"It (digital) has helped tremendously," Zwez said. "You can make sure you got the shots right away and before with film you had to hope that you got those photographs. It's much easier to check lighting, focus and before you could shoot 10 rolls of film and not realize there was something wrong until you developed the roll."

Zwez lives in Wapakoneta with his wife, Deb, and his 13-year-old son, Michael. He also has a daughter, Amy and a son, Josh.

Moving From Page 4C



Ruth Doll works with a student during an assignment in class, while other students work diligently on completing the work assigned. She said when Cridersville Elementary School dropped some of the higher grades, she had trouble saying goodbye to her young pupils..

easier in those days. She would see her students grow for several years before moving to Buckland Elementary, a school designated for all fifth graders at that time.

When Cridersville cut back to kindergarten through fourth grade, the beginnings of summer breaks became a bit more painful.

"It really was goodbye," Doll said.

Her students walked out on the last day and entered a new school the following year.

Doll said that with smaller schools like Cridersville Elementary, the "close-knit community" allows current teachers to talk with students' former teachers to understand how to work with them best in the classroom.

While the new school will have classrooms more spread out, Doll knows the staff will stay close-knit and pull the new

teachers into the fold.

"There are a handful of new people," Doll said, "and they'll feel very warmly welcomed."

Attending the community ice cream social and open house at Cridersville Elementary deepened Doll's connection to the school.

"There were some hugs, some tears, a lot of just good reminiscing," Doll said.

Many of the former students, including the last class that graduated from Cridersville School in 1966, attended. Doll enjoyed seeing them share memories and said the open house was "especially good for that group of people."

When it came time to turn in her classroom key, Doll was surprised by how hard the moment was. She sat at her desk, looked around the room and "said a prayer of thanks for 30 wonderful years."

Teacher From Page 3C

ersville School. Matthew, 30, Sarah, 28, and Brett, 23, moved to Wapakoneta before reaching fourth grade.

"They still to this day say they wish they could have stayed at Cridersville," Eley said.

It is this love for the school, shared by students, community members and teachers, that keeps Eley at Cridersville Elementary.

"I wouldn't have left," Eley said when she thinks of other job offers.

She said the appeal of the school kept her in Cridersville, an appeal that often captures the hearts of parents.

"A lot of parents are upset when the have to go to Cridersville because of the drive, but once they get there they say, 'Wow.

We really like it here,'" Eley said.

She believes this is due to Cridersville's "best teachers, the most caring teachers."

"Colleges send their students to Cridersville to see what their doing," Eley said. "We must be doing a good job if people want to come see what we're doing."

It is for these reasons that she believed strongly in the new school.

"Cridersville people wanted their school," Eley said. "I think they deserve a school. It holds their whole town together."

While her class sizes

have gone from a record 30 to last year's 19, Eley said this is due to an effort to keep Wapakoneta elementaries and Cridersville Elementary classrooms evenly dispersed.

"There are enough kids and enough support for a school," Eley said.

The smaller class sizes have helped her increase time spent with each student, as have other changes along her teaching career.

In the beginning, Eley said teachers "did everything with the kids." Students and teachers ate lunch, had recess and spent the whole of the day

together. Now, she has her own lunch break and more time to get class materials together.

"You need time to get stuff together or work with just a couple kids while everyone else goes to recess," Eley said. "Then, there was no time to prepare anything."

Eley has a true passion for her students. Over the years, she has earned her guidance counselor and principal degrees.

"But I don't want to leave the classroom," Eley said. "A lot of us had talked about retiring, but we're not ready of that yet. As long as you enjoy your work."

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