



Sue Hinegardner sits at a cafeteria table with other workers in the Cridersville Elementary School cafeteria. She would later serve as cafeteria manager and as a member of the staff. She also helped students with their studies as an afterschool tutor. Her five children attended Cridersville School but graduated from Wapakoneta High School.



Photo provided



Cridersville School brings students, village together

By MEGAN VEIT
News Correspondent

CRIDERSVILLE — For one Cridersville couple, each phase of life has included school in the middle of the village.

Sue and Don Hinegardner were married one month after their high school graduation in the summer of 1960. Celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary recently, the Hinegardners are thankful for the school the brought them together.

The Hinegardners graduated with 24 other students, including several other engaged couples with to this day. Since graduation, the population of Cridersville School and the Hinegardner family have grown.

"We go away for weekends sometimes with eight or 10 couples," Hinegardner said.

The high school sweethearts stayed in the area, and Sue Hinegardner saw five children through Cridersville School. At that time, the school had scaled back its grades and become Cridersville Elementary.

Her children, Ernie, Michael, Dawn, Nancy and Chuck, graduated from Wapakoneta High School.

When the youngest children reached high school, Sue Hinegardner "wanted to get out and do something."

So Sue Hinegardner said she walked into the Cridersville Elementary cafeteria, and "22 years later I retired." During her

time there, she served as the cafeteria manager. She and a staff of four were responsible for feeding the school's 250 students.

This kept her school days busy, but Sue Hinegardner didn't stop there.

"I like kids so I decided to stay after and tutor," Sue Hinegardner said.

For the last 10 years, and continuing after her retirement from cafeteria management, Sue Hinegardner participated in an afterschool tutoring program. She works with

third- and fourth-grade teachers as needed, as well as individuals in the community and Otterbein Retirement Community.

"Cridersville as a whole has a great staff. ... It's a great area to raise a family."

— Sue Hinegardner

"Cridersville as a whole has a great staff," Sue Hinegardner said. "They're all considered the same. Lands yes, we got to be good friends. "It's a great area to raise a family," she

said.

Their youngest daughter shared this sentiment. While attending Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Nancy Meyer met her

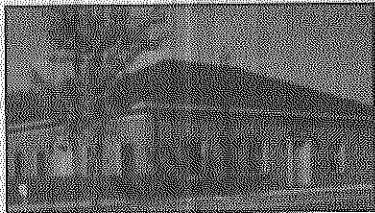
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Sue Hinegardner met her future husband at Cridersville Schools, when she attended high school in the building. The class's motto was "Build for Character, not for Fame." She would later return to work at the school in many functions — cafeteria manager and afterschool tutor.

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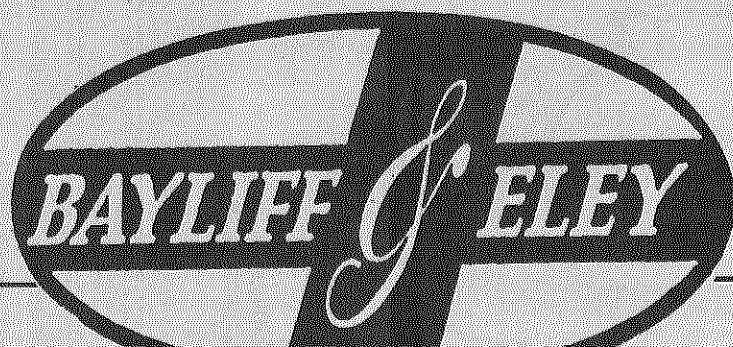
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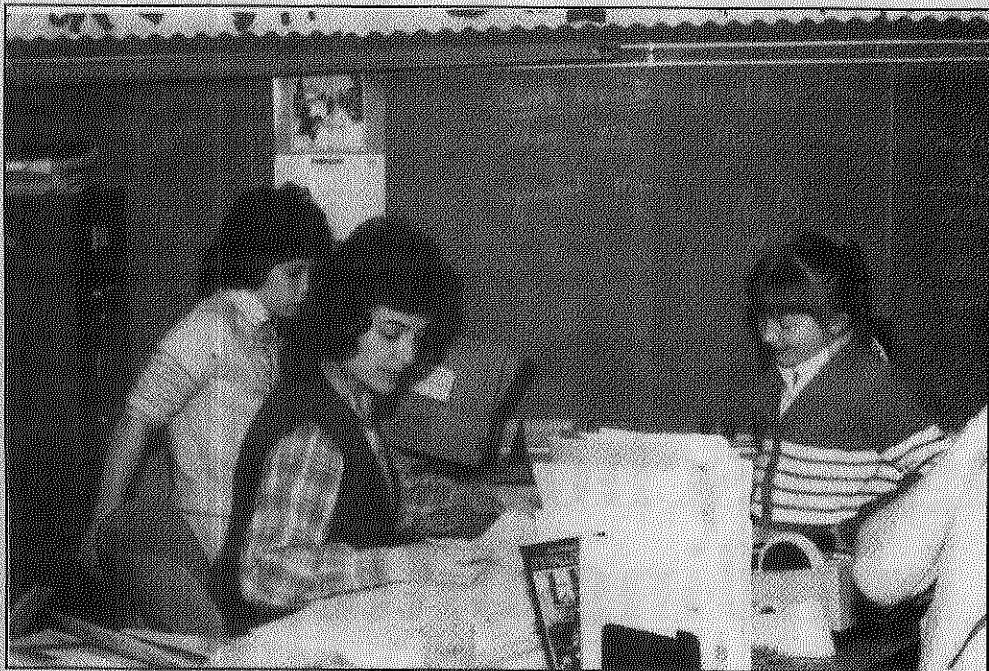
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Changes all around for C'ville teacher

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



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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