

School enters Hall of Fame

On Nov. 12, 1984, Centennial Elementary School was selected as an Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators "Hall of Fame" runner-up school.

The school which was recently evaluated for the award was one of 20 schools selected by the state organization for this award.

"We feel at Centennial that the runner-up 'Hall of Fame Award' is representative of all elementary schools in Wapakoneta," Centennial Elementary School Principal Joe Carter said, noting this was a group effort. "We work together as administrators, school board members, teachers, students, psychologists, secretaries, custodians, health nurses, cooks, teacher-aides, booster officers, booster members, RIF workers, bus drivers, Wapakoneta Education Association, police department, businessmen organizations and most important, the parents of the students."

A plaque is to be presented to Centennial Elementary at the Legislative Luncheon at the OAESA Professional Conference in Columbus.

Fast fact

So many students attended Centennial Elementary that a second elementary school had to be built — Northridge.



Photos provided
Thelma Musser, at left and above, continued on a family tradition. Her father taught in a one-room schoolhouse near Geyer. Thelma Musser attended United Local and Blume High School, but she taught at Centennial Elementary School.

For one teacher education was always more than an occupation

By MEGAN VEIT
News Correspondent

For one Wapakoneta woman, education is more than an occupation. It's a family tradition.

Thelma Musser began her life in Geyer, where her father had taught in a one-room school house. However, her own education began closer to Wapakoneta. She first attended school in St. Johns. She later attended United Local and Blume High School before moving to the new high school — which is now the Wapakoneta Middle School.

She, along with long-time teacher Sue Evans, was a member of the first class to graduate from the new high school. She and Evans would spend more

of their lives in school together, when both took positions at Centennial Elementary.

After starting a family with Larry Musser of St. Johns, Musser began working for Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

"I got a lot of my training that way," Musser said.

She held positions as a Brownie trainer, troop organizer, and troop leader.

"Thousands of cookies came to my garage," Musser said.

When she wasn't helping girls fill cookie orders, Musser was gaining paraprofessional skills that helped in her next job, one that she would hold for 23 years.

There was an advertisement in the paper for an aid at Blume to assist with

the Disadvantaged Pupils Public Fund. At the time, Musser's son, Jeff Musser, was attending Blume.

"If Jeff didn't want me there, I wouldn't do it," Musser said.

When her son seemed alright with the arrangement, Musser headed to Blume.

On her first day at the school, she saw a boy running down the hall with a friend. They'd been on a search for soda. Musser was surprised to see that the boy was her son.

"And I bet he was ready to get rid of me," Musser said.

He son was lucky. His mother stayed with Blume until November of 1984. She then moved to Centennial Elementary, taking a position as a teaching as-

sistant.

With her new responsibilities, she stepped down from her Girl Scouts post, but not without seeing her two troops through from Brownies to Cadets.

During the next 22 years, Musser saw many changes in Centennial, including four different principals and the introduction of the first copier. Musser laughs when she recalls the days of the ditto machine, a device that used stencils and purple ink to hand-crank duplicates.

One thing that Musser said never changed was the quality of teacher.

"People would ask me which teacher to request — I couldn't say," Musser said.

"We had a lot of fun to-

gether," Musser said of the Centennial Elementary teachers and staff.

Many of Musser's funniest memories stem from her unlikely love of Michigan deep in Buckeye Country.

"My daughter (Lori) want to the University of Michigan," Musser said.

Her maize and blue got her in a lot of trouble in the office.

"Oh they really put me through it," Musser said with a chuckle of the teasing.

After her co-workers covered her license plates with decorative Buckeye plates, Musser tried to convince them that their prank had earned her a \$50 fine.

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Centennial Elementary School teacher Sue Evans attended schools in several buildings while gaining an education in the Wapakoneta City Schools District, but she loved teaching students at Centennial Elementary School. She can often remember their name as well as their table and chair.

Photo provided



Teaching in home district

By MEGAN VEIT
News Correspondent

A Wapakoneta City School student, who spent her teaching career in her home school district, is quick to say she "lived in the same house, but I went to a lot of different schools."

Before graduating from the new Wapakoneta High School, now the Wapakoneta Middle School, Sue Evans attended elementary schools in Uniopolis, St. Johns and Wapakoneta.

While teaching for 25 years at Centennial Elementary in Wapakoneta, Evans watched each school from her childhood shut its doors.

Two have found new ways of existing. United Local now serves as home of the Famous Old Time Music Company. Blume became an apartment complex.

Her former teaching

grounds will not be converted.

To visit the school before its destruction, Evans attended the public auction on June 19. Evans said she loves auctions and their social atmosphere, but this one was different.

"I felt as though the crowd was a little sad," Evans said.

Evans settled into a classroom and watched as other teachers and community members bid on the furnishings. Evans recalled that one woman decided to purchase tables for her future daycare.

"It makes you feel good that all that's going to be used," Evans said.

She first learned of

plans for the new school through friends she made while teaching at Centennial.

There was "a little bit of sadness" in the conversation, but she and her friends started looking

"I felt as though the crowd was a little sad. It makes you feel good that all that's going to be used."

—Sue Evans

forward to the new possibilities the school would bring. "I hope to visit Wapakoneta Elementary School in the next two weeks," Evans

said. She intends to help a friend move into her new classroom and get her first glimpse of Wapak's newest school. Each room at Wapakoneta Elementary School

is equipped with a projector and a microphone system. Many have smart boards. The school has multiple computer labs. Evans remembers when these changes started taking place.

"I didn't know anything about it," Evans said of the first computer brought into her classroom.

Luckily, a savvy student was able to help her make the adjustment, booting it up and shutting it down. It's moments like these, when students and teacher work together, that Evans most enjoyed.

Another new adventure for Evans and her students came at the end of a nutrition unit. Evans worked with the cafeteria and a friend to bring in breakfast for her students. Among the miniature donuts, juice and milk were individual boxes of a new cereal.

"They got to try Captain Crunch before it was

ever on the market," Evans said.

Evans began her career at Centennial in 1973.

"I graduated on a Friday and started teaching on a Monday," Evans said.

The quick turnaround was a pattern with Evans in those days. After a year of college, she took time off to start her family. When it came back to school, she set herself to work double time.

Evans earned her bachelor's degree in education from The Ohio State University in 2 1/2 years while staying at home with her children.

After her graduation in St. John's Arena, Evans had a weekend before heading to her first first-grade classroom.

"My first day was a success," Evans said.

With a light laugh, she described the day.

She took attendance, got children to the restroom, got them to lunch, got them back to the restroom and back to the classroom — not to mention teaching. Not bad for a new teacher with the largest class she will ever have — 35 students.

"In later years, a lot of

parents helped," Evans said.

While parents kept students and classroom attendance more organized, an expanded staff gave Evans more time to dedicate to her teaching.

When she started, along with teaching first grade she was teaching her class physical education, supervising the cafeteria and holding the occasional recess duties.

That extra time was helpful when challenges came up in the classroom, like the year Evans had Megumi Onodua, a Japanese student that had yet to learn English. Evans and Onodua communicated through hand gestures and pictures.

Evans was invited over to Onodua's house for a doll festival, a cultural experience that the school later got to enjoy.

Evans still sees her students around town, though they've changed a bit since first grade.

While she may not recognize the face, or the man that now stands taller than 6-foot tall, she can usually place their name to their class, down to the table and exact chair.

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"I couldn't keep a straight face," Musser said.

Her game was up when they asked which officer had pulled her over.

"I said I was crying so hard I didn't know who they were," Musser said.

No one was buying it, and the teasing continued.

Musser decided that it was best to leave while still having fun. Her final day was Dec. 31, 2007.

More than anything, Musser enjoyed the times spent with students.

"I really liked the little

guys," Musser said.

She said she shares the sadness of many others in the community and hopes the school grounds are put to good use.

Her daughters, Lori and Darlene, continue their family's tradition of focusing on education. Both are teachers.

"I decided really quickly, it was time. I thought I'd see my grandkids more," Musser said.

It is yet to be seen if any grandchildren will follow in their family's footsteps and dedicate their careers to education.





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