

**Jeanene Merrell: Moving to Elkton**

JM: In 1951 I graduated from Middle Tennessee State University, and made the application for a position in the Giles County School system. When I received news that I had been hired as a commercial teacher at Elkton High School I was so excited. But I have to admit that we had always heard that Elkton was a rough place. After arriving here, I learned they felt the same toward Minor Hill. At that time there were eight high schools in the county and much competition in sports, which may have contributed to that reputation. I came down in early August to find a place to live. We were taught in education courses that it was very important that teachers live in the community. I found a wonderful place across the river, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Puckett. They took me in as one of their very own. They were wonderful cooks; a feast each evening and so very nice to me.

**Jeanene Merrell: First Classroom**

JM: I rode the bus to school. Mr. Vilas Rogers was the driver. I didn't have a car for a couple of years, quite different from today. If I had duties after school, faculty meetings, late bus duty, preparation for various school events such as festivals, etc., I walked home. At that time, the main building included a nice auditorium, classrooms, I believe five at that time, a library, an office, and the Ag classroom in the basement. The home economics department, the gymnasium, and the cafeteria were separate buildings. I might add, the cafeteria was a very, very old frame building, with screen doors, but wonderful meals, and an excellent staff. I was so happy with my room. I found manual Royal typewriters with covered keyboard, blackboards, a bookcase and my desk. And believe it or not, that was sufficient. I didn't expect anything else. As time passed we got one electric typewriter.

For the benefit of those who are younger than I, I might explain the idea of the covered keyboard. There were was not an alphabet visible. Students at that time were required to learn the keyboard without looking at their fingers. This is not to say that they didn't look at all. But they were to focus their eyes on the copy and this practice meant for increased speed, or this was the idea at least. I taught typing, shorthand, bookkeeping and social studies courses. Of course there were extra curricular responsibilities as well, such as class sponsor, doing the class plays, year books, trips, PTA, etc.

**Jeanene Merrell: Consolidation and Integration**

JM: More classrooms and a larger cafeteria were added to the building during this time. The number of high schools had been reduced to four, thus, many more students for us. Prospect, Minor Hill, and Beech Hill were destroyed by fire over a period of time. . . In 1966 we integrated schools in the county, which was another adjustment, but did well. Our building burned August 6, 1972. so sad, and to say an inconvenience would be an understatement. Portable buildings were provided until a new building could be completed. In 1978 we consolidated with only two high schools, one middle school, and four elementary schools in the county. We were given the choice to go to Giles County High School or remain here. Obviously, we decided to stay here. But this meant working with younger students. Once our high school was gone, the community as a whole felt the loss.

**Jeanene Merrell: A Teacher's Rewards**

JM: As we look back, they were wonderful years. Our rewards certainly were not monetary. Our rewards seemed to be students excel as many have, and class reunions always fun. When we here of students accomplishments in their chosen vocations, or various ways they had succeeded in their walks of life. When they come by to see us, thank us, and remind us or reminisce even, on days gone by. There have been many we've heard from down through the years, and many we see locally from time to time. Invariably as we visit, we go back to those years gone by. Just recently, two African American young men that were in the first senior class after integration came, came by to see us. They were here for Mrs. Driver's funeral. Robert Vincent, who now teaches in Atlanta. Yancey Bledsoe, in industry in Nashville. We were so appreciative of their visit and to hear what they were doing. So nice and polite. And expressed their gratitude to us. I'll always be grateful for the opportunity extended to me to work with young people as well as parents in the Elkton Community.