

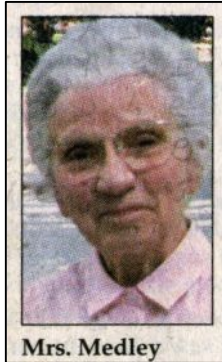
MOZELLE (SPAIN) MEDLEY:
A TEACHER'S LOVE GOES ON AND ON

By Jennie Ivey

FUNERAL SERVICES HERE FRIDAY:

Editor's Note: Mozelle Medley, a former teacher widely known in the Cookeville area for her civic enthusiasm, her generous smile and bright personality, has died. The following article is adapted from a feature on Mrs. Medley published in the Highballer, newsletter of the Friends of the Depot, in 1998. An obituary appears on page 3 today.

Mozelle Medley was a school teacher who loved her job and loves telling stories from her years in the 4th-grade classroom.



She is also a Friend of the Depot, the 1997 Cookeville Arts Council's 'Patron of the Arts Award' winner and an elder in her church but, first and foremost, she was and is a school teacher.

"I taught fourth grade at the Tech Campus School for 21 years," she said, "and those were some of the happiest times of my life."

The 'Campus School,' originally intended to serve the children of university faculty, was operated on the campus of Tennessee Tech from 1949 until 1976 and was hired by a former TTU president, Everett Derryberry, Mrs. Medley jumped into teaching with both feet. "I didn't really know much about methods or class discipline or anything else," she said. "The only teaching I'd ever done was in my home state of Mississippi, trying to teach veterans fresh from World War II how to read and write."

She chuckles as she recalls: "Fourth graders were really different from those veterans!"

She and other faculty members were continually looking for ways to enrich the curriculum. "We taught a little bit of everything," she said. "We knew that teaching is not spoon-feeding facts out of a book – it's helping students learn to do for themselves."

History, literature, foreign language, music, art and dance were constantly incorporated into lessons. "for instance, if we were studying France, we'd learn to say some simple phrases like hello and goodbye in French. Then we'd learn about their music and their art and their folk dances. Folk dancing was one of the children's very favorite activities.

"And we were always putting on circuses and plays. There weren't many days when a backdrop wasn't being painted in somebody's classroom."

Parental involvement was a key element in the success of the Campus School. "Parents would come for lunch, and then they'd stay for the math lesson or for reading time. Many times they'd end up being there for the rest of the day. Our students' parents backed us 100 percent because we all had one great thing in common – we really loved the children. That's what makes a school work!"

It was interest in 'enrichment' activities that got Mrs. Medley's students involved in efforts to save the Cookeville depot. "People wanted something worthwhile for their children to do during the summer, and since I was a widow with two children to rear and needed extra money, they hired me to come up with some ideas.

"Miss Amy Johnson, who taught third grade at the campus School and was one of my dearest friends, and I decided to lead the children in some non-book lessons about Cookeville. We persuaded Judge Ernest H. Boyd to take us on bus tours of historic Cookeville. We studied trees and old houses and of course the Town Spring.

“One of the things we saw on our tours was the heartbreaking condition of the depot. When passenger trains quit running to and from Cookeville in the mid-1950s, the depot had just been allowed to fall into a state of neglect. Weeds were grown up so high around it that they half-hid the building.

“It reminded me so much of the abandoned depots in Mississippi, places that used to be the center of social activity that were just in ruins. Amy and I decided we were just not going to stand by and let that happen here.”

The rest, of course, is history. Schoolchildren took part in letter-writing campaigns, and a few adults, with Mozelle Medley frequently leading the pack, began contacting those with the political and financial clout to help save the depot.

“It thrills me to see the current list of Cookevillians who are ‘Friends of the Depot’ – the list fills up a whole printed page.”

Mrs. Medley served as secretary on the very first board of directors of the Friends of the Depot, volunteered countless hours as a docent and was active in numerous fund raising events over the years. Not surprisingly, her interest has not waned in the least.

“I’m so proud of the whole place – the landscaping and the park benches and the cabooses. I think it is the most adorable spot in Cookeville, and every time I drive by it, I’m so happy I just can’t help hollering.”

Mrs. Medley resigned her job at the Campus School in 1972 to go to work for the federal government, heading a project with the goal of helping teachers throughout the Upper Cumberland improve their methods of teaching children to read. When that project ended in 1975, she officially retired from teaching.

But teaching is never far from her mind or from her heart. She still receives cards and letters from nay of her former students who have moved away, and several of those who remain nearby continue to stay in touch, dropping by her house to visit or making dates to meet her for a meal or play or a concert.

Many of the things she did for her students endeared her to them, but it is the “graduation letter” each of them received that they mentioned over and over again when asked what was most special about their 4th grade teacher. She saved notes and grade books and other mementos from each of the 21 years she taught, and every year at high school graduation time, those few seniors who had had the good fortune to have been in Mrs. Medley’s class eight years before would receive a personalized letter from her containing reminiscences about their particular class and always including a sentence or two that revealed some special memory she had of each child in the class.

Mozelle Medley’s eyes sparkle in telling this story, just as they sparkled over every other aspect of the afternoon’s visit. “You know, in my life, I’ve had a lot of good luck and a lot of good times,” she said.

And so have the hundreds of people who have had the good fortune to have her as a teacher and a friend.

Jennie Ivey is Cookeville writer and historian.

Mozelle (Spain) Medley Obt.

COOKEVILLE -- Funeral services for Mozelle Spain Medley, 93, of Cookeville, will be held Friday, June 27, at 11 a.m. at the Cookeville First Presbyterian Church.

Burial will be in Cookeville City Cemetery.

The family will receive friends at Hopper-Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home tomorrow (Thursday, June 26) from 5-8 p.m. and at the church on Friday from 10 a.m. until the time of services.

Mrs. Medley died Monday, June 23, 2003, at NHC Healthcare in Cookeville.

Born in Kosciusko, Miss., on Oct. 10, 1909, she was the daughter of the late Sidney Johnston and Texanna Temple Spain.

Mrs. Medley graduated from Kosciusko High School in 1927; attended Sophie Newcomb/Tulane University, Mississippi State College for Women and Hillman College (which became Mississippi College) and received a BS degree from Tennessee Tech University in Education/Curriculum and Instruction in 1950 and an MA from the George Peabody College for Teachers/Vanderbilt University.

She was a member of the Tennessee Tech Faculty Women's Club and **Old Walton Road Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution.**

Mrs. Medley was also a member of the Delta Kappa Gamma, Kappa Delta Pi, Phi Kappa Phi, Friends of the Depot, Depot Board of Directors and Tennessee Tech Community Symphony Guild.

She was involved with home-delivered meals, the Cookeville Regional Hospital Auxiliary/Pink Lady, the Study Club and was an elder at the First Presbyterian Church.

She received the 1997 Patron Award for the Cookeville Arts Council and was named outstanding contributor to the arts in Cookeville.

She taught fourth grade at the Tech Campus School for 21 years, was a part-time instructor at TTU and was the director of Title III, ESEA and the Upper Cumberland Reading Project for three years.

She was on the TTU Education Foundation Board, a member of the Cookeville Tomorrow Project/Education Group, Tennessee Tech Emeriti Faculty Association, Tennessee Retired Teachers Association, American Association of University Women and the Tech Garden Club.

Her family includes a daughter and son-in-law, Alice and Dr. James L. Snelgrove of Naperville, Ill.; a son and daughter-in-law, Dr. Adron and Sara Medley of Helena, Mont.; a sister, Lucille Spain Turner, of Kosciusko, Miss.; seven grandchildren, Mark Adron Medley, Lee Emmett Medley, Bryce Matthew Medley, Sara Leigh Medley, Shane Adron Medley, Anne Caroline Snelgrove and Dr. Sarah Margaret Snelgrove; and three great-grandchildren, Emily, Lia and Emma Medley.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Ralph Pedigo Medley, whom she married in Kosciusko, Miss., on April 8, 1934; a sister, Christine Spain Emerson, and a brother, Alfred Otto Spain.

Pallbearers will be Mike, Martin, Don, Shane and Michael Medley and Jim Snelgrove.

Honorary pallbearers will be Tennessee Tech emeriti faculty, members of the Putnam County Retired Teachers Association, the staff of NHC Healthcare of Cookeville, former 4th-grade students at Tech Campus School and elders of the First Presbyterian Church.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Tennessee Tech College of Education Foundation, P.O. Box 5047, Cookeville, TN 38505.

The Rev. G. David Campbell and the Rev. Ernest Robertson will conduct Friday's services.

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