



EILEEN BOWSER

Eileen Bowser celebrates anniversary at library

By ROSA HATFIELD
Guest Feature Writer

Eileen Bowser is a bibliophile (a person who loves books). Her love of reading has kept her at her job as assistant librarian at Bell Memorial Public Library, Mentone, for 29 years as of May 1. She also does the bookkeeping and for the past six or seven years has been the treasurer, too.

"I love to read," says Eileen. "I read everything I can get my hands on. I worked at the library for the first 10 years for \$1 an hour because that was all they could afford to pay me and I loved the job too much to quit."

Eileen says she reads labels, cereal boxes, signs — just anything and everything — but she really prefers heavy fiction.

One of three children born to Russell and Dove Kercher, Eileen is a native of Mentone. She has a brother, Jack, who lives in Warsaw, and one brother is deceased.

When Eileen graduated from high school in 1945, she went to work as a bookkeeper for Mack McKinley at the old lumberyard. In 1948 she married David Bowser and in 1950, she quit work to raise a family.

When she was ready to go back to work, Pearl Lackey needed someone to work a couple days a week at the library and Eileen applied for the job.

Eileen says she had no special training to work in a library except her love of books and her familiarity with the library as a patron.

"Mrs. Lackey needed someone to do the books, too," says Eileen. "She knew I had worked as a bookkeeper before and I got the job."

The Bowsers have two sons and one daughter. Their oldest son, Rex, is an American history teacher and football coach at LaGrange. He is married to the former Kathy Boggs and has two sons.

Their other son, Reid, is a health and fitness director at the Oklahoma City YMCA and is a former Air Force captain in an airborne warning and control (AWAC) unit. He is married to the former Patty Hurd and has one son and one daughter.

Their daughter, Amy, is a homemaker living in Alaska with her husband, Ryan Williams, and their two girls. Ryan is a civil engineer working for GE.

Eileen says she has passed her love of reading on to all three of her children. One of her sons asked her one day why she always watched television with a book in her hands. Now he confesses to doing the same thing.

"You know, when my kids were babies, I got up at 5 in the morning so I would have some time to read and it's a habit I've never lost," says Eileen.

She says one of the most interesting aspects of her job is seeing the grandchildren of the patrons she first knew as children come into the library now to get books.

"We don't require complete silence at our library," she says. "We want the children to want to come here. I've never had any problems with children in here that I couldn't handle. I've raised three of my own, you know."

As we were talking, she had to stop to lean down and receive a goodbye kiss from a little girl who had attended preschool story hour and was ready to leave.

Guest feature writer Rosa Hatfield is a Mentone resident.