

If you love to read . . .

go to the library

by Renee Norlander

The old fashioned image of the lady librarian with her hair pulled tightly back in a bun, wearing a long tightly buttoned black dress, is certainly not reflective of the lady librarian in Mentone.

Eileen Bowser has been working at the Bell Memorial Public Library for 16 years, and she in no way resembles the old ideal of librarian, except in one - she loves books and loves to read.

Loves reading so much in fact that recently she told me that when her children were young she used to rise at 5 a.m. just so she could read for awhile before starting her day.

As a wife and mother of three, Eileen has kept busy, but 16 years ago she began working one day a week at the library to relieve the full time librarian. Now, she works four days a week, makes many important decisions, does bookkeeping, and loves most of it. The one thing she hates she says is going through overdue cards. As she put it, "If everyone knew how I hate going through those overdue cards...!"

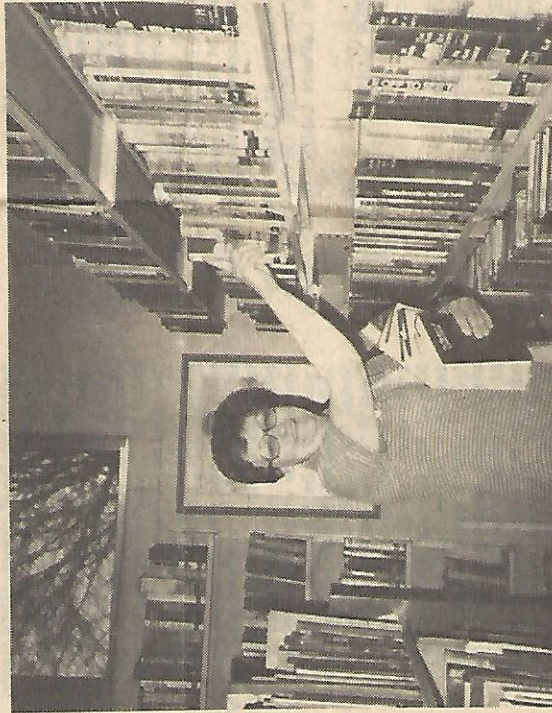
Eileen is not the head librarian, however. Several years ago, when a new head librarian was needed, Madeline Fisher came to the rescue for Mentone.

State law requires that a head librarian have two years of college education, and Mrs. Bowser had not attended college. Because Madeline wanted the library to remain open she accepted the position.

She teaches art at Triton High School, and holds a masters

librarians select the books they wish to purchase. Eileen showed me several catalogs that she receives everyday that describe books that are available from publishers.

The library budget of \$11,000 per year allows \$3200 for the purchase of books. It may



Eileen Bowser, Mentone Librarian, has been stacking books at the Bell Memorial Library for over 16 years. With over 22,000 books in the library collection, you can imagine how many books stacked that amounts to.

degree, but still found time to get two years of library science. She is at the library on Saturday afternoons, and she and Eileen make most of the decisions at the library together. I was curious as to how the

book selections carefully. How do they do it? "You have to know what your patrons want" says Eileen. Most are fiction, but they buy quite a few non-fiction, also. After 16 years, Eileen has quite a good idea of what people in Mentone want available.

The library, as of December 31, 1977, contains 22,677 books, with a selection of fiction and non-fiction for adults and children, reference materials including encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, and historical books, and many biographies.

New books at the library are on display in front so that readers become aware of them, and Eileen knows many of her patrons so well that she can recommend books for them that she thinks they will enjoy. She even knows many of their register numbers without even looking at her card file!

Many towns the size of Mentone are not fortunate enough to have their own libraries. But as Eileen said, Mentone's founding fathers were wise enough to realize the needs of a library in any community, large or small.

The first library was started in 1916 in downtown Mentone, and in 1959 the new building was built. Lawrence Bell, well

known aviator from Mentone, donated \$20,000 at that time for a memorial to his parents. He did not specify what it should be used for, and the town decided to use the money for the new library building. Funds were also raised through the sale of the old building, and in 1959 the new library became a reality.

The new shelves, purchased several years ago, were bought through community effort. The townspeople raised the money through donations, and they now have quite an accomplishment in their pockets.

The only requirement for using the library freely is that a person live in Mentone, Harrison, Franklin, or Seward Townships. Non-residents must pay \$4.00 a year for the services.

Since I am a real reader (when time permits these days) I decided to register. It was very easy; Jennifer Pyle, part-time employee, gave me a card to fill out, and then gave me a registered number. All I have to do is present that number when I want to check out books. It's that simple.

A limit is put at six books per checkout, and two weeks is the time limit. Unless you live in the country. Then you may keep them for one month, if you so request. New books though are only available for two weeks.

My interview with Eileen was quite pleasant, and I was relieved to find that a librarian can be a "real person".

As a child, I had always feared librarians. Mainly because I always had overdue books and



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sound like quite a bit, but as Eileen said, "ten years ago books cost \$4.95 or \$5.95, now they cost nine or ten dollars; the prices have doubled!"

With this in mind Eileen and Madeline must choose their



Jennifer Pyle, library assistant, is ready, willing, and able to help you when you visit the library.

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As a child, I had always feared librarians. Mainly because I always had overdue books and no money to pay the fines. My parents were strict about returning books on time, so I couldn't ask them for the money. The fines often waited until I had a babysitting job, and while the library waited, I sweat it out. Every night I would go to bed just knowing that the police would be coming for me the next day! As

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soon as the money was in my hand, I would run to the library to save myself.

Meeting Eileen relieved my fears for children and myself. As the mother of three grown children, Rex, Reid, and Amy, and grandmother of two, I doubt very much that Eileen would ever send the police after an overdue book holder. Especially a child!

She really seems to enjoy her job, and knows very well what she is doing. If you have ever hesitated about going to this library - don't. You'll be very happy you did!