

**Mary Lue Russler's talk to the
Administrative Assistants and Associates Club of USI
Wednesday, September 16, 2009**

SCHOOL HISTORY

In 1876, our country's 100th anniversary, a red brick building was constructed at the corner of Twelfth Avenue and Illinois streets on Evansville's Westside. It was called, Centennial Grade School, which served our community for almost 90 years. In 1965, USI was born in this building. Back then we were the Evansville Campus of Indiana State University, or Indiana State University Evansville (ISUE).

Plaster fell from the ceiling, sometimes during classes. The first student newspaper was called "The Roach" because many roaches took up residence in the old building.

Byron Wright was the school's business manager, and he hired me to help with registration in January of 1969. His budget was tight, but somehow he found the funds to pay me, and I stayed on full time (for 21 years).

There were tons of important work to be done. Accounting records were hand written in a big black ledger book. There was one fund number, No. 209. Some offices had manual typewriters. A lot of paperwork had to be sent to the ISU campus in Terre Haute. Paychecks were delivered to us from Terre Haute by Greyhound Bus.

The mimeograph room in the basement of the old school building flooded every time it rained. Our custodian sometimes slept on a cot in the basement to better tend to the boiler.

Coffee breaks and even some important meetings were held across the street at Sandy's, now Hardees. Enrollment was a little over 400 and only freshmen level classes were offered.

It was the year Lyndon B. Johnson was President, a gallon of gas was 31 cents, a loaf of bread was 21 cents. Songs were, "What the World Needs Now," and "I Got You Babe."

By 1966, sophomore classes were offered and plans were underway for a new classroom complex on highway 62 west. Ground was broken in June of 1968 for the complex, and the campus moved to its present site in August of 1969.

Parking lots were not finished...they were mud. Employees parked across the highway in a church parking lot and were driven over to the new building in an old army truck. There was no water at first. We used porta-potties. There was no air conditioning, and when doors were kept open, flies came in.

During and after that first year, many of us worked long hours, often wearing a lot of hats. When the business office worked on Saturday, Mr. Wright would go in town and purchase loaves of bread and cold cuts so we could eat and keep on working!

Since I previously worked for the University of Evansville and belonged to their secretaries club, I thought it would be good for the new campus to also have a club. Dean Rice approved, and I got copies of by-laws of similar clubs and wrote the bylaws for our club one evening on my front porch.

CLUB HISTORY

In 1969, About 12 ladies from the clerical/support staff, were thrilled to begin this organization. Officers were elected on October 21, 1969 and the constitution and by-laws went for final approval in February 1970. Since then our club has met monthly from September to June, and for the past 40 years and with a lot of hard work we have carried out goals of increasing our skills, raising funds to award scholarships, and becoming better acquainted through noon-time meetings.

FUND RAISERS

Through the efforts of many members, and even some non-members, and with approval and cooperation with university administrators and faculty, we raised a lot of money through our fund-raisers.

We held card parties and style shows. Our first card party was held in the Temporary Union Building (TUB), a portable building put up on the west side of the administration/classroom building. For several years we made and sold apple butter at the Virgil C. Eicher Barn on campus. Joni Jost was the first apple butter chairman in 1978. This venture was a success because of many people peeling apples, stirring, canning and selling. But most of all we could not have done it without the help of Harry Thompson, who brought his copper-lined kettles to the campus and showed us how to make the apple butter. Nearly 500 pints were sold at the University's open house each year for about ten years.

Over the years we sold candy, pizzas and flower bulbs. We held raffles, bake sales and craft fairs. We held Hacienda fund-raisers and Blue Jeans for Babies button sales. We sold food at the Ohio River Arts Festivals for several years. We sold cookbooks and USI pins and earrings, and we had numerous white elephant sales.

SCHOLARSHIPS

With our proceeds, we gave thousands of dollars in scholarships to needy and worthy students, and even gave scholarships to club members for a period of time. We established a scholarship endowment, the interest of which is used to award even more scholarships.

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Our monthly meeting programs have been both educational and fun with a wide variety of subjects including, telephone etiquette, travel, flower arranging, jewelry making, gardening, physical fitness, fashion, nutrition, and humor. We had our campus faculty and administrators talk about their field of expertise. Our members even took a ghost tour at Willard Library.

Bingos were a hit at many of our noon-time meetings. We were entertained by the Mid-America Singers and later the Chamber Choir. We have had speakers talk about business law, time management, and secretarial duties. And of course we were always encouraged to take a class and work toward a college degree.

Many of our meetings included a covered dish luncheon at the Westwood Lodge, and in June of each year a pot luck picnic at the Paul Grimes Log Haus. For many years, club members were invited to a luncheon at the University Home, hosted by Mrs. David Rice. This also included non-members. A meeting luncheon was also held at the Rice's home in New Harmony.

Our annual Christmas luncheons included great food, a gift exchange and holiday entertainment. The hostesses always made these holiday events extra special and really put us in the Christmas spirit.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The University paid for up to five members to attend the National Secretaries Association' annual seminars. We made new friends and gained even more knowledge.

We participated in numerous volunteer efforts as well. We served as ushers at many of the university's early commencement events. We volunteered at several sports events, and we sold T-shirts at the Varsity Club booth at the West Side Nut Club fall festival. We participated in the March of Dimes Walk and the Race for the Cure. Some members volunteered at the University Alumni Association's telefund and at the Channel 9 Auction.

Other activities included a petition to wear pants and pant-suits in our offices, and we sponsored the establishment of the University's Office Staff Council. We helped organize the Clerical and Support Staff Bicentennial Committee, which, with the help of donations from Evansville businesses,

constructed a large, flat in ground concrete sculpture of Indiana's official Bicentennial logo on the front lawn of the campus in 1976. We wrote letters to our senators urging the passing of the ISUE's Independence Bill. We also sold Bent Twig cards for the Westwood Garden Club.

For a period of time we held weekly exercise sessions. We entered two teams in Wheel's West tricycle race sponsored by ISUE's Student Union in spring of 1973.

DUES

In 1990 we voted to increase our annual dues from \$5.00 to \$10.00 and to allow past employees to be paid members. We also voted to allow retirees to become honorary members.

ANNUAL REPORTS

From 1971 through 2003, our club published annual reports, most of which included accomplishments, officers, committee chairmen, programs for the coming year, and by-laws. We also worked to recognize student workers.

BOSSES LUNCHEONS

We honored our bosses by having annual bosses luncheons, which was an annual event from about 1973 until 1990. Each year, we had a different theme, some of which were a 50's theme, Casino Day, Mexican Fiesta, Hawaiian, and one called the Big Round-up. Male bosses were given cigars and female bosses were given candy at the first bosses luncheon in 1973, which had a Valentine theme.

The last and most impressive bosses luncheon, "Go for the Gold", was held in 1990. The event was centered around the University's 25th Anniversary. It was held at the Western Sizzler. All the bosses received a hand-crafted medallion made by Lois and David Stevens. The medallions were 1965 quarters embedded in a gold circle, symbolizing USI's silver anniversary and the gold representing the year 2015, when the University celebrates its 50th anniversary.

We had 65 bosses in attendance with a total of 150 people. A special key was presented to President Rice, representing our past, present and future. To illustrate what our campus might look like in 2015, I drafted buildings in pencil on several sheets of paper and gave them to Ray Walker, who artistically drew the buildings on a large white banner. I gave each building a "'fitting" name, all in fun, for each boss and wrote a short explanation as to why the building was named for him or her, and projected where they would be in 2015. The large 2015 map of buildings was fastened to the wall at the bosses luncheon. (I had the campus photographer take a picture of it to put in the library archives.) The script was read by Judy Beck,

whom we called Ms. Golden Years. Some of my lighthearted building name examples included:

---John's John was named for John Baburnich for his installation of computer terminals in campus restrooms. In 2015 he would be manager of the USI greenhouses.

---Tim's Telescope was named for Tim Buecher, for always looking for new students. In 2015 he retired to Tim-Buck-Two.

---Deem's Dorm was named for John Deem, for registering all the sleepy students. In 2015 he is a great-grandpa and retired vice president for student affairs.

---Rice Rotunda is named for President David Rice for making dreams possible and in honor of being USI's first president. In 2015 he is president emeritus, mayor of New Harmony, and producer of Dave's Victory garden appearing weekly on USI-TV.

---Betty's Balcony was named for Betty Rice, for all the work she and her husband did. In 2015 she is First Lady Emerita and President of the USI Grandmother's Club.

---Fredrich's Fountain was named for Jay Fredrich for engineering the University's first hover-craft security cars. In 2015 he is president of Jay's Oil Recycling Plant.

(There are more. See me if you are interested in reading them.)

Sadly in 1990, the club voted to end the bosses luncheons, because it was felt nothing could top the "Go for the Gold" event. And probably another reason was the fact we were growing so fast and there had been a steady increase in the number of bosses.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Evansville business community has always been very supportive of our group over the years. At most events, especially the card parties and bosses lunches, and even our Christmas parties, local business have been very good at donating prizes. We gave out over 200 door prizes at one card party.

GOALS AND NAME CHANGES

Over the years, our goals stayed basically the same. We got educated a little, we became better informed workers, we felt we helped USI grow, we had fun, we assisted needy students with their college expenses, and we got to know one another a little better through membership in the Secretaries of ISUE. The club later became known as the Secretaries of USI after ISUE became USI in 1985. Later the club was called USI Secretaries and Associates, and still later, the Secretaries and Associates of USI. Now we are finally the Administrative Assistants and Associates Club.

40TH ANNIVERSARY

It took a lot of work and dedication of many people over the past 40 years to advance our club and advance the University. No matter how large or small a task you performed in our club, you and all those who came before us during the past 40 years share in this anniversary celebration.

Congratulations to all past presidents, all officers, all committee chairmen, monthly hostesses, and to all members who served over the years. Be proud of the excellent work you did and are still doing in what is believed to be the oldest existing club on campus.

CONTINUING THE TRADITION

Let us hope more employees will join our organization to help continue the traditions we created. We started with 12 people in 1969, and we had 21 in 1977, 36 in 1985, 50 in 1987 and 68 in 1990 and 46 in 1994. Now that the club invites those who work in various capacities, perhaps membership will increase.

As everything is going high tech these days, it is good to see the club keeps up with the times by adding a home page and sending information electronically---which will help promote our club, too.

I hope you have enjoyed your affiliation with this club and that it has inspired you to continue to be successful in the operation of this wonderful University, with making new friends along the way.

Thank you for inviting me. Keep up your great work.

Mary Lue Russler
September 16, 2009