

After 29 years, Ms. Allen leaving RCHS

Since beginning her career in 1972, when the high schools were consolidated, she has seen many changes--big and small.

BY TASHA VANZANT

After four years of high school, most students depart RCHS ready to begin the next phase of their life. Imagine being at high school for almost 30 years! Mrs. Ruth Allen Hamilton has been a part of the staff for 29 years, and she's retiring June 30th.

The first 25 years were spent teaching English and foreign language. For the past four years, she has been our administrator. After all these years of working with students Ms. Hamilton has decided to retire, having dealt with the peculiarities of teens for so many years.

Since Mrs. Hamilton has been loyal to our school for so many years, I hoped that she might share some of her memories with us before leaving. In order to do this, she agreed to answer some questions for me.

Q: Where did you graduate college from and with what degree?

A: "I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Eastern Kentucky University in the fall of 1971."

Q: When did you begin teaching?

A: "I did substitute teaching in the Rockcastle County School during the spring semester of 1972, and then (I) received my first teaching job in the fall of 1972. That job became a twenty-nine year career at RCHS."

Q: What changes have you witnessed while working at RCHS?

A: "The first major change for Rockcastle County students was the consolidation of the community high school into one county high school.

Students came from Brodhead, Mt. Vernon, Livingston and even one room schools. Rockcastle County High School at that time was in the building where the middle school is today. Students felt a genuine loyalty to their own community schools and it took a while to become "the Rock." Classes were larger and students probably did not get as much individual attention as they once did. They no longer knew all the students and teachers as they did before.

The consolidated high school



photo by Shana Noe

RCHS Principal Ruth Allen Hamilton continues to be hard at work, but the end is nearing. She will retire June 30 after almost 30 years with Rockcastle County Schools.

gave students more opportunities to participate in sports, clubs and organizations. There is now a county football program, girls' basketball in addition to the boys basketball, softball and baseball."

Q: Who/what did you find helpful when you first begin teaching?

A: "When I began teaching, I was assigned a classroom and given teachers' manuals to accompany the books the students were using. Mr. Cleston Saylor, our principal, kept

a close eye on my classroom and gave me advice. Ms. Diane Masters had been my student teacher supervisor at Brodhead the year before and was very helpful to me."

Q: What changes have been made for beginning teachers?

A: "...first year teachers now participate in the Kentucky Teachers Intern Program, which provides mentoring from a resource teacher, usually a colleague of the beginning teacher, the principal where the teacher is employed, and a teacher educator from a university. Beginning teachers must meet the standards of the internship in order to be certified. Therefore, beginning teachers are held to higher standards but they have the support they need to reach these standards."

Q: What was school like when you first began teaching?

A: "Students took six classes per day during the twenty-three years that we were where the middle school is now. The class offerings were pretty much the same as now. The classes that students now take on the block schedule that last eighteen weeks lasted all year, whereas nine weeks classes, such as health and P.E. lasted one semester.

Students that attended vocational school now had the convenience of walking across the street to classes rather than riding a shuttle bus from Brodhead, Mt. Vernon or Livingston. We had homeroom the first thing every morning. For a long time, I recall keeping attendance by hand-in a green book with Kentucky's state bird, the cardinal, on the front. We teachers referred to the attendance books as "bird books." They were a real hassle to keep because all of

them had to balance out, so not one teacher could make a mistake. Of course, some of us would make mistakes, and we would have to search and work until everything came out right."

Q: How do you feel about our new high school?

A: "We moved to our present site 6 years ago. We have a beautiful facility and campus. The rocket that has been our mascot for 29 years has been proudly placed near our entrance gate. Our school has continued to progress over the years, and we have been a school in reward three times. Our students compete at the state and national level in many competitions. Most of our students have successful careers and meaningful lives."

Q: What kinds of changes have you seen in learning?

A: "The Reform Act of 1990 brought the statewide mandatory testing and more accountability. However, with the accountability came more funding for schools particularly in overcoming barriers to learning. Students now had access to extend school services and Youth Service programs. More work began in meeting the needs of individual learners."

Q: What do you have to say about your career, overall?

A: "My career has been most meaningful and rewarding. I have enjoyed each year that I have been a part of Rockcastle County High School. If I have been a positive influence and helped guide students in the right direction, the years have been very worthwhile. I am very proud to have contributed to the "Rock" in any way that I might have helped students."

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