



Quad Scrapbook

Mary Spitzer Etter recalls the dedication of Wilson Hall

In March, JMU lost alumna Mary Spitzer Etter ('34), a proud Madison history aficionado, president of JMU's alumni Bluestone Society and a campus fixture since her graduation in 1934. Below, excerpted from the May/June 1993 Montpelier, are Etter's remembrances of the dedication of Wilson Hall in 1931. Following that is her obituary, reprinted from the *Daily News-Record*.

On the morning of May 15, 1931, day student Mary Spitzer Etter ('34) put on her best dress and accompanied her mother and sister to Harrisonburg State Teachers College. As they approached campus, they could already see the new white cupola peeking over the trees and roofs of Harrisonburg. They turned onto the Quad from Main Street and followed the sidewalk, past Ashby and Harrison on one side and Alumnae and Spotswood on the other, toward their destination at the head of the Quad.

Anxious, the Spitzer women climbed the grand steps of the brand new Wilson Hall, passed between its huge pillars and opened its heavy white doors for the first time.

The day was special, for inside awaited important guests and officials - the widow of Virginia-born President Woodrow Wilson, for one - and an auditorium full of faculty members, students and VIPs eager to celebrate the dedication of Wilson Hall.

"I still have the dress that my mother wore that day," Etter recalls with fondness. "Gov. Pollard was there, and so was the president of the State Board of Education, E. Lee Trinkle. Dr. Ben F. Wilson, the minister for First Presbyterian Church, gave the invocation and benediction, and the faculty came in wearing their academic robes. Dr. Julian Burruss, our first president, came back for the ceremony, and of course our current president, Dr. Samuel Page Duke, was there too."

"I enjoyed myself very much," says Etter. "It was the first time we could get in and sit in reserved seats in a real auditorium, instead of the old gym in Reed Hall. And everyone was so proud of the new building."

As president of JMU's Bluestone Society, Etter delights in entertaining folks in her childhood home and can still remember the festive night in detail. "There were speeches and music throughout the night, and

everyone was dressed so nice," she says. "It was really a big event."

Obituary

Mary S. Etter ('34)

Mary Spitzer Etter of Harrisonburg, died March 15, 2002, at Rockingham Memorial Hospital.

A daughter of the late Perry F. and Emma Mabel Baldwin Spitzer, she was born Oct. 26, 1912, in Harrisonburg, where she always lived.

Etter graduated from Harrisonburg High School in 1930. She received her B.S. degree from Madison College in 1934, (now JMU) and an M.A. degree from the College of William and Mary. She completed graduate study at Johns Hopkins University and at the University of Virginia.

She was a teacher for Waynesboro, Anthony-Seeger and Keister Elementary Schools in Harrisonburg for 39 years before retiring in 1973 from Keister.

She was a life-member of the Alumni Association at Madison College (now JMU) and was president of the association from 1964 to 1966. She also served as president of JMU Alumni Association Board, chaplain of Retired Teachers Association, scholarship chair of the Delta Kappa Gamma's Key Women Teachers Community. She was also an honorary member of the Bridgewater College Alumni Association.

She established the following scholarships at Shenandoah University: a music scholarship in memory of Ruth B. Spitzer; a psychology and education scholarship in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Perry F. Spitzer; and a scholarship for public school teachers. She also established an organ scholarship at Bridgewater College.

Etter was president of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Waynesboro and a member for over 50 years. She was an active member of First Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg and sang in the choir for 70 years. She was president of the Sallie Blosser Ladies' Bible Class and was an elder of the church.

On Nov. 18, 1953, she married Earl Driver Etter of Waynesboro, who preceded her death on Jan. 30, 1960. They had one son, Earl Drive Etter Jr., who died on Feb.1, 1998.

Surviving are a step-daughter-in-law, Nancy Etter, of Waynesboro; two step-grandchildren, Edward Etter and Carol E. Fox; and three step-great-grandchildren, Sara Fox, Tim Etter and Katherine Etter.

Rev. Dr. John F. Sloop officiated at graveside services March 18 at Woodbine Cemetery and a memorial service at First Presbyterian Church to be held at 11 a.m.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Sallie Blosser Ladies' Bible Class or the Chancel Choir of First Presbyterian Church, 17 N. Court Square, Harrisonburg, Va., 22801.