



# 50 years of Loving and learning

## Clendenon's teaching career spans half century and counting

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Betty Roach Clendenon has shared knowledge and love to over 1,200 students throughout her 50 years of working at Irving College School as a third-grade teacher.

She shows her kindness to students by saying, "I love you. I like you. And I think the world of you."

Clendenon was born Feb. 2, 1946 and attended Irving College High School. After high school, she attended MTSU, and took classes from Tennessee Tech and Cumberland University, receiving her master's degree in education.

Immediately after receiving her diploma, she came back to the place she called home, Irving College, where she's been ever since.

In the classroom, Clendenon teaches discipline where she is calm and collected. If her students are being too loud, she says her ears hurt so they know to be quiet.

She has implemented a reward system where the entire class has a bean jar. If students are good, she adds beans and vice versa. This teaches students the importance of a group effort and comradery for a common goal.

Irving College principal Rachael Graves refers to Clendenon as a true treasure, and feels she is a major part of the Irving College culture.

"Her work with students is founded in love – love for children and love for learning," said Graves. "With 50 years of experience, some may think they have seen and done it all, but she has never stopped adapting and growing in her profession."

Many memories have been made with her students, especially funny ones. One day in class Clendenon was teaching English where students had to fix multiple sentences. She noticed one student was crying. Naturally, she walked over and asked what was wrong. He looked up with tears in his eyes and said his doctor told him he could not write over 10 sentences.

Clendenon tried to hold back laughter knowing this was just an excuse for getting out of his work. Another student started laughing and that made the whole class laugh, including Clendenon. She just smiled and handed the student a box of tissues and told him he could follow "doctor's orders" for that day.

She comments on how kids have diversified through the years in her classes. She says students are more involved in extra-curricular activities than before. This can cause them to fall behind in their school work.

Climates have also changed in the classroom from Clendenon's first year to now. She feels more confident now she can handle and help with difficult situations like behavior problems and understanding medical situations. She feels more comfortable with students who need more love and attention to help them through hard situations in their life.

Along with the climate of the classroom changing, education has soared to new heights of learning. Today school is more focused on standards and constant aiming for TCAP or what she calls the "big spring test" at the end of the year.

She believes there is less time for the fun they used to have. Now it's more dictated by hurrying their learning to pass tests in shorter times. Education has a main focus on testing and meeting standards.

"Her impact is deep and is evidenced by the adults who come back to our school and community hoping their own children will have her as a teacher," said Graves.

Outside of her teaching life, Clendenon enjoys spending her time walking through her farm that she takes care of year-round. She loves reading and sitting on her porch and listening to the creek flow.

Summer break gives her a chance to clean her classroom and prepare for the upcoming year with new students and new adventures.

Her main message to teachers is they don't realize how things have changed from her time in the schoolhouse. She comments on the duplicating machines where ink would get all over their clothes because there was no copying machine.

Clendenon lived through more trying times. Everything she owned had value to her. She didn't let anything go, but made everything useful in her own way. She said she had to determine how to get stuff for her classroom and kept it as long as long as she could. She says she still has furniture her father built still in her classroom.

Betty Clendenon has no plans to leave her classroom and the kids she teaches. She says, "I want to make a kid's day at school the very best."



Margaret Hobbs photos

**Irving College Elementary principal Rachael Graves, right, presents a bouquet of flowers to third-grade teacher Betty Clendenon. She has just completed her 50th year of teaching, all of them at Irving College.**

**Top photo, third-graders of Betty Clendenon celebrates the milestone with her at the close of the school year. Students are, first row from left, Charles Langford, Chloe Wanamaker, Kaitlynn McBride and Kayleigh De-Long. Second row, Kailynn Walker, Eden Grissom, Ashlynn Graves, Hailey York, Ms. Betty, Jeshua Jimenez, Madisyn Petrovic and Jaxyn Petrovic. Back row, Blake McCormick, Ali Young, Jayla Hudson, Roxann Yanicki, Tala Landry and Jacy Lowry.**