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A Woman Inspired -- Edna Muldrow

by Betty Jo Jenkins Denton

She had a unique approach to teaching and challenged students to work or depart.

The first time I saw Edna Muldrow was in 1949. I was a student in the School of Cosmetology at Southwestern Tech in Weatherford.

Mrs. Ross, director and instructor of the beauty college, tiptoed quietly into the training area to tell us we had some VIPs waiting to be coiffured. She obviously was concerned that these "important persons" have the very BEST. To add to her dilemma, she had only two BESTS among her trainees. She chose me as her third emissary because, according to her, "You aren't the best hairdresser by any means, but you could sell gunnysacks for formals." What she wanted was a sales job. She wanted the three visitors from the college staff to be impressed with our School of Cosmetology.

This was my introduction to Edna Muldrow. She knew what she wanted in a hair-do and *how* she expected this to be accomplished. I must have pleased her because she returned the following week. In addition to fixing Mrs. Muldrow's hair, I gave a permanent to her eighteen-month-old granddaughter. It was a new adventure for the child, and Grandmother Edna playfully entertained her throughout the procedure.

The next time I became associated with Mrs. Muldrow was when my husband and I were students in the School of Education. We were enrolled in her

English Composition class.

I was a wife, working as a hairdresser, and the mother of a baby girl. To make up for the semester I had been out of school, I enrolled in eighteen hours and had three hours out by correspondence! This busy schedule took its toll on me, and my work suffered. I went from making A's and B's to C's. Mrs. Muldrow called me in to her office. I weepingly told her I missed class many times because my husband couldn't get to the house in time to take over the care of our baby so that I could make it to her class.

She questioned me about getting a babysitter but understood that on the \$135.00 a month G.I. payment we were getting, babysitting expenses must be kept to a minimum.

Mrs. Muldrow then made a suggestion that enabled me to stay in college. Perhaps it even altered the course of my life. I was to bring the baby to her office in the Education Building, leave her there, and go to my class. My husband, having class in the same building, was able to pick her up right away. This necessitated no longer than a ten-minute stay, but what a difference it made! Fellow classmates never knew that the English professor was sometimes five minutes late because she was babysitting.

Professor Muldrow's office continued to be the "pick-up place" long after we

weren't in her class. Our small daughter referred to her as the "college granny."

Edna Muldrow did much more for me than babysit. Those snapping black eyes and sharp tongue wouldn't allow me to quit. She encouraged me, she challenged me, but most of all she DARED me. She dared me to be the best I could be—to believe in myself, explore new horizons—yes, even to try writing.

The last time I visited with Mrs. Muldrow, she had been very ill, but the black eyes still sparkled. She referred to her diminished thinking capacity. I assured her that even if that were true, she was still ahead of most of us.

I admired Edna Muldrow because she never sought sympathy for her lot in life. She accepted, evaluated, and forged ahead. Her two fine sons and their families are testimony to her successful strategy.

True, Mrs. Muldrow was an exacting taskmaster. She was a perfectionist, but she asked nothing of others that she did not expect from herself. She was a teacher in the fullest sense. She imparted knowledge and inspiration through challenge. Her students had confidence because they knew they were well taught.

Mrs. Muldrow earned a special place in the lives and education of many, but to me she occupies an even more special place—in my heart!