

Preface: On July 9, on behalf of the Eureka College Development Office, I called Gloria McNett to ask her why she had invested so much time and effort on behalf of the College. I looked forward to the call because of my many connections with Gloria's family. Her husband Bill and I were in the same Survey of American Literature class in 1955. Professor Del McKeehan assigned Bill and me to give a class report on a poem by T.S. Eliot. I was a freshman at the time. Now can you believe that a freshman from the farm could possibly say anything intelligent about Eliot's poetry? Bill saved the day for me and earned my lifelong friendship. Gloria's sister Kathy and Bill's sister Joan were members of my graduating class in 1958. Then in the late 1960s Bill was a member of a graduate summer institute at Western Illinois University, and we had a reunion at that time. Later, when I started a teaching journal at Eureka College, I asked Bill to be an advisor and reader for the journal, and once again we joined forces. Both Gloria and Bill have had distinguished careers in education in Illinois, and they have also been generous with their support of Eureka College over the years. The depth of their gratitude is reflected eloquently in Gloria's answer to my question, given below in her own words.

Why I Am So Interested in Eureka College Gloria McNett

When Dr. Logsdon asked me to share why I have continued to remain so interested in Eureka College so long after my graduation, I realized that I could offer a brief, one-sentence response: I credit the campus and various components of that second home to changing my life and the course of my life. I am a different person today, and so much of the credit goes to my educational experience at Eureka College.

I almost missed that opportunity as my freshman year was meant to take place at the University of Illinois. My only knowledge of "Neath the Elms Upon the Campus" was that a close friend was entering as a freshman there. One early summer day, Margaret called to invite me to go to summer sorority rush there. I decided to accompany her to the campus that weekend and returned home telling my parents that I preferred to enroll at Eureka, thus this long personal investment.

Shortly after entering this campus and I was able to earn my green beanie, I met this special person with whom I was to spend 65 years and who shared this long-time campus investment with me. He, too, was very important in changing my life as he saw potentials that I didn't know I had and led me to develop them. Bill, like me, was very positively influenced by his alma mater, being admitted on probation (high school athletics had dominated) and graduated as student council president and with high academic honors. How fortunate that places like Eureka are willing to take risks on students in which they see promise.

As a student, the third area that created my investment was the personal relationships we could create with administration and faculty on such a small and intimate campus. I was a student helper in the dean's office and thus able to view that area of administrative perspective. Classes were small so not only did we share coffee or coke after class in the college "hang out," but it wasn't unusual to be invited as college couples or small numbers of students into the dining room of faculty for home-cooked meals and stimulating conversations. At that time there was no indication they would be my mentors and role models when I would return to campus later as a faculty member.

It was years later and after graduate work that both Bill and I took college level positions—Bill at the newly founded Illinois Central College and I on the Eureka College faculty. We decided to blend the two institutions with a scholarship in our names for ICC graduates majoring in education to transfer to Eureka College. Other financial investments continue via our many years of Alumni Board membership and Board of Trustees committee as the Alumni Board representative.

Yet perhaps the most personal investment came from an invitation to tutor a young Japanese coed in the areas of higher English vocabulary and in providing more background in the differences

between our culture and hers. What began as a one-hour-a-week session in the library evolved into a more mother-daughter role as she was far from home, had no family or close friends here, and was lonely. By her junior year she was spending Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas weekend at our home, including Christmas Eve church services and gifts from Santa. A shared farewell lunch before she left for her plane home was both happy for her graduation and accomplishments but sad for the goodbye.

To summarize, my investment in my alma mater not only changed my life but gave me the potential and opportunity to change the lives of others.

Celebration of Gratitude:

I thanked Gloria for her personal story. Later, after visiting with her, I realized how her experience is a good illustration of Robert Frost's famous poem "The Road Not Taken," which is about two roads crossing in a wood. Quite literally Gloria McNett chose the less traveled one, "and that has made all the difference," both for her and for Eureka College. Thank you, Gloria, for your generosity in paying the gift of education forward for others who choose the road to Eureka College.