

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
EDITH RONALD MIRRIELEES
(1878 – 1962)

Edith Ronald Mirrielees was born in Pittsfield, Illinois, on September 10, 1878, but she lived her girlhood in Big Timber, Montana, and she taught in the Montana public schools from the time she was eighteen until she was twenty-four. Near her twenty-fifth birthday, in September, 1903, she arrived at Stanford to take up the study of history.

From that time on, though the history shortly changed to English, the significant dates in her life are stages in a continuity, not points of change. She was graduated with the Stanford class of 1907, joined the Stanford faculty in 1910, retired from Stanford in 1944, continued to live and work on the Stanford campus for the remaining eighteen years of her life, and died in the Stanford Hospital, of a cerebral hemorrhage, on June 3, 1962. During the eighteen years of her retirement, far from severing her connections with the university and the intellectual life, she edited the Pacific Spectator from 1947 to 1951, published STANFORD, THE STORY OF A UNIVERSITY in 1960, and spent her eighty-third year editing STANFORD MOSAIC, a book of alumni reminiscences. The corrected galley proofs went back to the Stanford Press less than two weeks before her death.

In the course of her career, her great gifts as a teacher and her willingness to give herself to good causes led to her being called upon by the world outside the university. During World War I she served with the Stanford Red Cross unit in France; off and on during a period of more than twenty-five years she was an advisor on educational matters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and during many summers she taught both at the Breadloaf School of English and at the Breadloaf Writers' Conference. In the course of this last activity she helped to form and to disseminate a new kind of socratic, *ad hoc* method in the teaching of creative writing. Her text, THE STORY WRITER, remains one of the best things in its field.

Nevertheless, her life was Stanford's, and Stanford was her life. "I came here as an utter and complete stranger," she said once. "I knew nothing about California, nothing about Stanford University, nor did I know a single person ... I feel sorry for the student who doesn't come here as a stranger."

That was in line with her educational method of leading the student to make his own discoveries; she wanted others to discover Stanford as she had. Yet those who knew her will surely feel sorrier for the student who came to who came to Stanford during Miss Mirrielees' years there and failed to discover her. She was a great teacher of writing, as John Steinbeck, Howard Pease, Archie Binns, Allen Drury, and other distinguished students attest. It was to honor her contributions as a teacher that Mills College awarded her the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in 1961. But she was an even greater human being than she was a teacher, and she enlarged the understanding and the humanity of hundreds of students besides those with a gift for writing. They could not sit ten days in one of her classes without carrying something precious away.

She was very rare---rare in her person, in her delicacy and tact, in her generosity and kindness, in her mischievousness and capacity to take delight from life. It was a very old lady who died on June 3, but it was as young a spirit as ever inhabited flesh.

Wallace Stegner, Chairman
John Dodds
Robert Carver North