

Professor Profile

Betsy Epperly: English prof and Island lover

When the University of Prince Edward Island was established in 1969, it was a young woman from Martinsville, Virginia, who was the very first to register. Elizabeth Epperly was such a big fan of L.M. Montgomery and Anne of Green Gables, that she was determined to live and study on P.E.I. for just a year and then go back to the United States to become a geologist. That was the plan. But during that first year at U.P.E.I., Epperly soon discovered that she loved books so much that she wanted to study English, not geology, and she loved P.E.I. so much that she didn't want to leave.

So Epperly stayed at U.P.E.I. a little longer than originally planned. Actually, she stayed for four years, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts with a major in English. During this time she was also the first recipient of the English Prize- The Dorothy Cullen Award. After U.P.E.I., Epperly attended Dalhousie University, where she completed a two-year masters degree in one year. Her thesis was on Victorian Literature's Anthony Trollope. In 1974, Epperly moved on to the University of London, England, to begin work on her PhD. She completed this degree in 1977, but was awarded it in 1978, regretfully missing the ceremonies where she could have met the Queen Mother. Also in 1978, Epperly became a citizen of Canada, feeling it was unfair to be taking employment away from official Canadians.

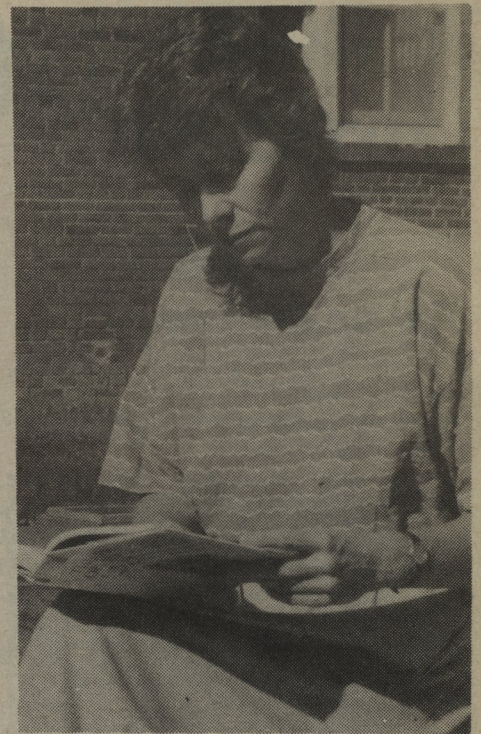
Dr. Epperly's first teaching job was at U.P.E.I., where she stayed for eight years, never tenured. During these eight years, she became a

full-time administrator, and taught part-time. After eight years, she applied for and received a research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), specifically awarded to administrators. Epperly did this research at U.P.E.I. (the award included eight months paid salary) and during this time, applied for a tenured position at Memorial University in Newfoundland. She taught at Memorial for eight years, and then was successful in her quest for a tenured position at U.P.E.I., trading her position as head of the English Department at Memorial for her love of the Island.

In her spare time, Dr. Epperly enjoys reading, writing, walking, and also travelling, especially to England. She has published four books: two on L.M. Montgomery, and two on Anthony Trollope. She is also currently working on two major projects. One is a children's book for which her sister, Carolyn, an artist, is working on the illustrations to accompany Epperly's story. The other project is a collaboration with another professor about New Zealand's Silvia Ashton Warner.

One of her top priorities is the L.M. Montgomery Institute Committee, of which she is chairperson. From time to time, Epperly also attends literary conferences, the most recent being the first-ever international conference on Elizabeth Barrett Browning in Texas, from November 4-6 of this year, at which she gave a paper entitled "Intimate Connection".

Dr. Epperly loves U.P.E.I., and feels that we have many strong programs here, but she thinks



Dr. Elizabeth Epperley deep in thought

the university lacks a certain self-confidence and a sense of community spirit among students. Part of the reason for this, says Epperly, is that we don't really have a student centre where we can really talk and get to know our fellow students. Also, Epperly feels that if we had a system of tunnels or a network of skywalks as well as lockers, students would stay around longer and perhaps study in groups, since we wouldn't have to drag our books all over the place.

Dr. Epperly is a true professional who loves her work, and this is truly evident when you meet her or take one of her classes. In this writer's opinion, the students of U.P.E.I. are very fortunate to have a professor so dedicated to her students, her career, and her love of this island.


PATRICIA MACDONALD



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