

IN MY OPINION**Caroline Porter****Nothing ever stays the same**

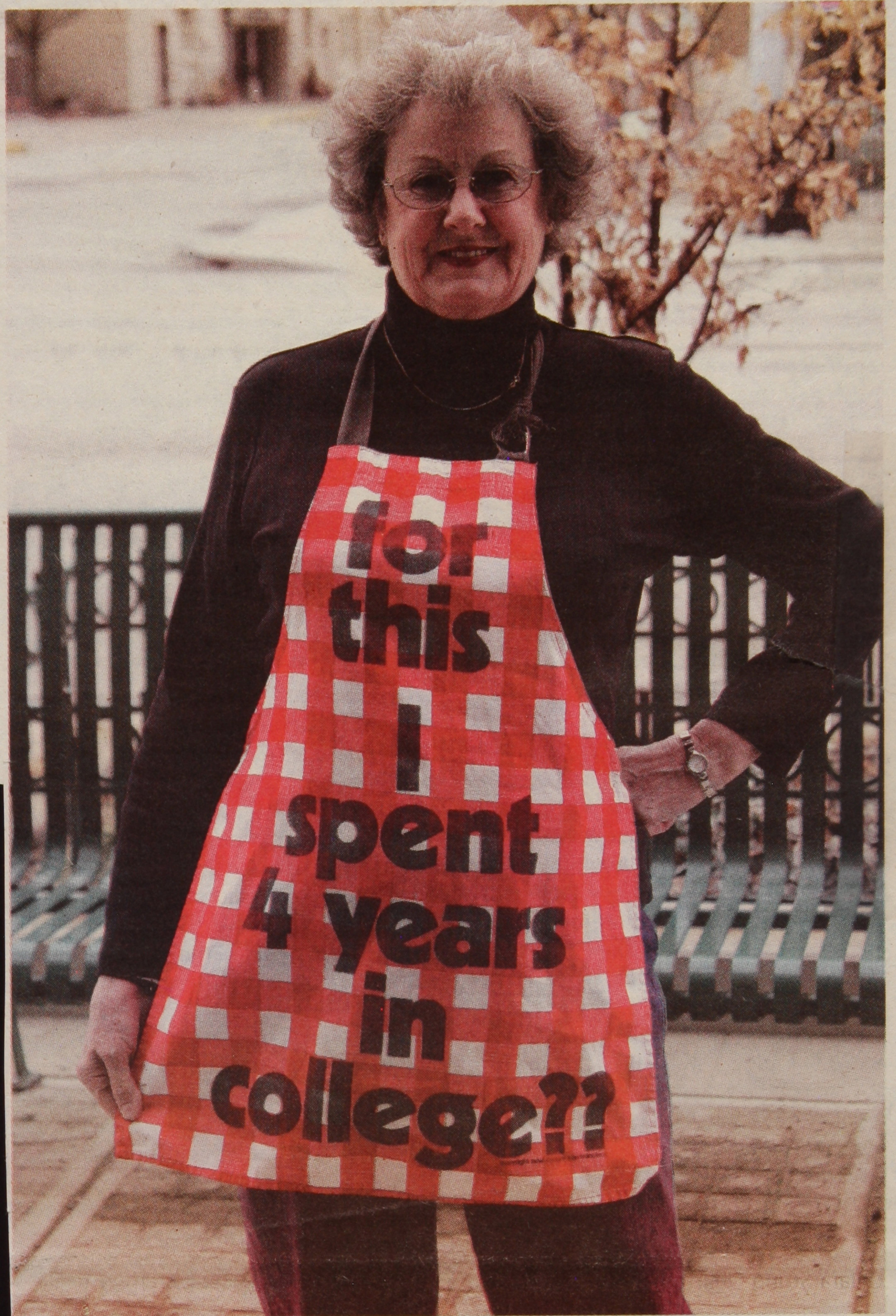
In the early 1970s I strolled by O.T. Johnson Department store in Galesburg and saw an apron on a mannequin in the window. There was a message on the apron, which was unheard of in those days. The craze of t-shirts, sweat shirts, bumper stickers, refrigerator magnets all sporting zippy little statements hadn't yet begun, so I stopped and chuckled and decided I had to have that apron. On the apron it said,

"For this I went through four years of college?"

I marched into O.T.s and asked if I could buy that apron. It was the only one, so they took it off the mannequin and sold it to me. One has to understand that in 1971 my children were aged seven, six and two and I had been home full time for nine years. My two daughters were born eleven

months apart (Irish twins, we call them), and there was a time when I was either changing diapers or feeding someone's face practically around the clock. This was a joyful time. I had wanted children for years. The diaper activity was so constant that when I was at a party with adults, the smell was still in my nostrils and I would joke that someone must have had an accident. Of course, in those days, we used cloth diapers and I did a lot of rinsing out and washing of hands. I was honestly like Erma Bombeck's description of herself at dinner parties, where she would start to butter people's rolls and cut up their meat.

Life was busy and I did what many young mothers did in those days, I bowled every week. It wasn't easy. I would pull into the parking lot in my Volkswagen bug - grab



my purse, a 12 pound bowling ball, a jumper chair and the two children, one of whom walked. So I carried the bowling ball, purse and one daughter while my oldest daughter dragged the jumper chair and hung onto what ever she could grab.

We moved to Galesburg from Rockford in 1971, but I had lived in Galesburg in the 1950s as a student at Knox College. It was a relief to be in a small town and a fine neighborhood on Bateman Street. We weren't far from Silas Willard School, where my mother went to grade school. My mother, born and raised in Galesburg, is aged 97 and remembers the department store well, although since her father died when she was twelve and my grandmother worked full time as a single parent, hanging around O.T.'s was probably a luxury they couldn't often afford.

So, while folks in the area are reminiscing about that wonderful department store that burned to the ground two week ago, I thought of my favorite apron. And I have another good memory from the store. I received my first campaign contribution right in the coffee shop. In 1971, I had just announced I was a candidate for the Knox County board, nine months after moving to town, no less. While I was sitting in the coffee shop eating one of those fabulous doughnuts, two distinguished looking gentlemen walked up to my table, introduced themselves and handed me a check. They were well-known Galesburg businessmen Ralph Hawthorne and Julian Mack, friends of my parents and grandparents and apparently glad I was jumping into the political fray.

GALESBURG LIBRARY FIRE

When fires happen in this town, I remember the fire at the Galesburg Public Library in 1958. What many Galesburgers don't know is the anxiety that fire caused some Knox College students, who were using the library

for research papers and studying for exams because the Knox College library was being renovated. I was a senior at Knox and lived in Whiting Hall, just a short distance away. Some students left notes and papers on the library tables while they left for supper and later stood in the crowd watching the fire, knowing their research was literally going up in flames.

We had been warned earlier not to use water because the pressure was low. When the fire started, the fire trucks pulled up, got their hoses in gear, turned on the water, and only a trickle came out. It was an awful sight. There was no way to stop the fire. And like the recent fire, if it had been windy, the whole neighborhood would have caught fire. Next to the library was Beecher Chapel, a beautiful, historic, little building between the library and Whiting Hall. It was an old building, like Whiting Hall, where my grandmother Andrews, from Kewanee, lived as a student in the 1800s.

One spark on that building and it would have been history. And that reminds me of the fire drills we had to conduct in Whiting Hall on a regular basis, much to the amusement of the Galesburg High School students across the street. As we traipsed down the fire escape on the West side in our rain coats and shoes (all that was required) we were greeted by jeers and laughter from the high school students, particularly the guys.

Nothing ever stays the same, particularly in this fast-moving world, but we have to keep going forward, whether we want to or not. That's why it's important to reminisce and remember the good times.

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