

A Notable Woman - Elizabeth Pfiffner DeBot



Elizabeth Pfiffner DeBot, dean of women at Wisconsin State University for 25 years, retired in 1965, saying she would miss her contacts with students. "I've thoroughly enjoyed working with young people. It gives me such a thrill each commencement, to see the students who have struggled financially and scholastically to get their education, finally succeed."

Upon her retirement, the university named one of the residence

hall dining facilities in her honor. In 1967 at the dedication of the DeBot Center, Professor Bertha Glennon said this about her colleague who was being honored: "Over the 25 years of her deanship here, I saw her genuine interest in the students, her warmth of personality, her constant giving of herself to others who needed help, her wise solution of student problems and her integrity."

A Stevens Point native, DeBot was an alumna of UWSP who earned a master's degree in counseling from University of Madison. She was one of the organizers and first officers of the UWSP Foundation and for her first three years on campus, director of Nelson Hall. When that women's dormitory was converted into a barracks for air corpsmen who trained on campus during World War II, she was in charge of USO canteen activities for which campus women students served as hostesses.

She was married to Anton Pfiffner in 1930. He died in 1931. In 1965, she married Elmer DeBot, president of Point Sporting Goods. He died in 1981. She was active in the League of Women Voters, the Progress Club, Business and Professional Women's Club and the Wisconsin State Deans' Association.

In 1969 she was one of the first recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award given by UWSP. She died in 1983 in Northbrook, Ill., where she had been living with her daughter. Each year since her death, a scholarship has been given in her name to a high-achieving nontraditional student.