

**Reminiscent Essay for SD Retired Teachers**  
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Dictated by Lolian Rehfeld,  
written by Diana Glover

I started teaching in 1938 in a rural school, the Thompson School, in my home township near Groton, SD. It was closed long ago. I had 5 grades which was a lot better than 8. I was never completely prepared. It just can't be done with that many grades. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> did things together, and so did the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. I taught there 2 years. I earned \$70 per month which was good pay. I was also the janitor, and we sometimes baked potatoes in the furnace for lunch.

I had one very likeable kid who never got his work done. He was very dear to me, and I tried everything to get him to finish his work, but nothing worked. I didn't want to keep him after school, but his parents finally said to keep him, (then they complained about that).

Days were so short in winter, and it was soon dark after school. I would walk ½ mile back to where I lodged, and as I turned around to look, I often saw the moon coming up.

I had 3 little boys in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and I really enjoyed them. We had a good reading book with a set of instructions for setting up lessons. They did well, and they had done well in 1st. I enjoyed them the most, the next year I had 2 1st grade girls and a boy. We had picture pages with short sentences, but then there was a page with no picture. The girl stood up and read all the sentences. I could have cried, I was so pleased. Other kids listened to the classes, and everybody was thrilled this girl could read. They all went home and told their folks that this girl could read.

That girl and her brother had lost their mother so they had come to live with their aunt who had 3 boys of her own. The aunt wasn't very interested in the new boy, but she liked the girl and adopted her, but she and her husband would not adopt the boy. I felt so sorry for him. He also had been held back a year so he could be with his sister. It should not have happened because he had been ready to go on. I pulled him aside and let him read special stories, etc so he could be more on his level.

After 2 years at Thompson School, I went back to college to get my state certificate which made me eligible to teach any elementary position in the state. I got lots of responses from my applications, but I had no car and no transportation to get there for an interview. So I went to another nearby rural school with only 7 students. I had 3 little girls and 4 older boys. I enjoyed teaching there. My father and brother had gone to California, then followed by more of my family.

A friend had gone to teach in Agar, SD on Highway 83 towards the big town of Pierre. She was leaving Agar to get married, so she wrote a letter to me and said, "Here's your

chance to get into a consolidated school". Most young men were off to war, and the young women took on many jobs, including the woman who drove the old school bus.

At the second rural school, I had never been given a contract so when it was time to make a decision to go to Agar, there was not even a contract to break. Two of the school board members had each thought the other one had taken care of the contract, but neither one had.

In Agar, I had 1st, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades with another teacher who taught the upper grades, and there was also a high school upstairs. As far as I can remember, it was called the Agar School. The community was very interested in their basketball teams. We were all expected to go to the games, even riding with others to the out-of-town ones. The gym was upstairs right over the grade school rooms. I didn't hear much noise at all from above. The gym was so crowded that usually we found ourselves standing for games. Sometimes I would rather have not gone to the games, but I did. I taught there 2 years.

The second year at Agar they needed a 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher so I taught algebra and all the other 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes. I had always done well in math so I enjoyed that. One assignment for the kids was to write a constitution for a club, then others decided if they would want to join the club. Someone wanted to write about cameras, so we used an old camera that I borrowed from my boyfriend, Les Rehfeld. They called it the Snapshot Club. We looked up some ideas for unusual pictures, such as the feet being posed in the front of a picture so the feet looked really big. At the spring open house, we had a fine display of our camera club activities.

From Agar, I got married to Les Rehfeld of Warner, SD. I had met him that second year when I went to college. He wanted to go back to the family farm to live with his mother, a widow in her '60's. He figured he would be called up (for the military), and he was called up several times, but he never went. Before we got married, I went to California to work in the summer at Douglas Aircraft building airplanes. I made 65 cents per hour, 6 days a week. I earned more per month than when teaching. Les wanted to take a train to California, but I always discouraged him. If he had been on a train with men in the service, and they saw he was a civilian, they would have beat him up.

On the farm, Les' mother lived in the same house as we did. She did have some rooms that were her own, and we made it work to all live together. When we had our first child, he soon found out Grandma was nearby, and he wanted to be with her a lot. She had a house in Aberdeen which she rented out. She would have moved there, but during the War, it was not allowed to put someone out of a rental house.

After my kids were born, I didn't go back to teaching until all of them were in school, the fall of 1959. We were in Rapid City then, and the kindergarten teacher at Pinedale Elementary School was pregnant. I had substituted there and got to know Principal Myrtle DeWald, and that helped a little bit. I had never taught kindergarten so I had a lot of things to learn. The previous teacher had been in the habit of talking louder and louder when the 36 (a.m. class) and 35 (p.m. class) were out of line. I found ways to change that

routine. There were lots of little blond boys, and I had a hard time keeping their names straight. I would call a child by a name from the morning class or vice versa. They didn't like that.

At the end of May or into June, we were out of school. We had to have snow days on the calendar, and we had to teach to the end of them, whether there had been real snow days or not. That got changed years later when the teachers association began negotiating the calendar.

The other school in Rapid City that I taught in was Meadowbrook Elementary. I retired from there in 1983. The principals I had there were Walter Lienau, James Ollinger and James Meszaros. The reason I moved from Pinedale to Meadowbrook was that we bought a house in the Pinedale district, and at that time, we teachers were not suppose to live in the same area where we taught.

I was at Meadowbrook at the time of the 1972 flood. After the flood, I was called and told that I had "volunteered" to help clean up the school. I didn't go for a day or two because I had had a shot and wasn't feeling too good. The water had come up to the top of the toe area under the cabinets, about 5 inches. I had to throw away all things with flood water on it. If something was only slightly damaged, I could take it home, but eventually I threw it all away. It just brought up too many bad memories.

In the fall of 1972 when school opened, my room didn't have the rubber tile replaced. It had to be replaced exactly as it had been. Anyway, both kindergarten teachers had to teach in the same room until the tile came in and was installed. The other kindergarten teacher was Marge Kenechne; Hazel Lee had just retired. This new teacher had had polio, and she had many pairs of shoes. Each foot needed a different size, so she bought 2 pairs at a time. She found another person who had the same problem but with the other foot. So when she bought shoes, she sent the other 2 to this friend. She didn't buy many shoes, but the other lady did, and she sent her many pairs, and thus she ended up with lots of shoes.

I retired in 1983. I could have taught another year, but I was not asked if I wanted to retire. In earlier years, they just published the names of the people who had reached 65 in the newspaper and said they were retiring.

That first fall my replacement needed a substitute because she was pregnant, and I heard from friends that I was wanted back at Meadowbrook, but I never got a call to be the substitute. I just didn't go back over there to visit or anything.

After my husband died, I did go back to Meadowbrook and volunteered for the teacher in my old room. The teacher had kept most of the supplies in the same place that I had kept them, so it was easy for me to find things. Mostly I took small groups and played all kinds of Lotto, alphabet, sounds, number lotto, things you couldn't do with a full classroom.

My daughter and granddaughter are teachers, and I think they work harder than I did. They are expected to do the impossible sometimes.

I would still choose to be a teacher if I were to do it all over again.