

## Memories

By Wanita (Painter) Phillips

Winner Area Retired Teachers Association

(Wanita is a Life Member of the Winner Unit. She is 95 years young and resides in the Elder Inn.

Wanita is a charter member of the Winner Unit which was organized on May 24, 1978. Wanita was the first treasurer of the unit and her essay also enclosed a copy of the clipping from the Winner Advocate.)

When I graduated from high school in 1930 the choice of careers was quite limited. In those days you could choose teaching or perhaps nursing. I knew I didn't want to be a nurse so I chose teaching. In our family it was more or less taken for granted that we would choose teaching. I had two sisters who were teaching at that time and they encouraged me to become a teacher.

I attended elementary school in a one room rural school known as the "Painter School" south east of Millboro, S.D.

There I had the opportunity to observe the teachers busy teaching all eight grades and all subjects. They also were responsible for discipline, play ground supervision and janitorial duties. I was quite familiar with the daily regimen of the rural school. The teacher's stressed phonics in the lower grades and I really used that later in my teaching.

I finished elementary school there, two years at Millboro High and graduated from Winner in 1930. By that time the "depression" had hit South Dakota. Dry weather, dust storms and grasshoppers had ruined the farms. There was no way my parents could spare the money to send me to college.

My sister Murrel (Painter) Hofeldt was teaching at that time and in spite of the hard times she offered to lend me the money for my tuition and books. I would need to work for my room and board. This I willingly agreed to do. She made it possible for me to be a teacher.

I attended Northern State in Aberdeen and graduated with a first grade certificate in 1931. Later through extension courses and summer school I graduated with a B.S. Degree in Elementary Education from the University of S.D. Springfield.

My teaching career began in a one room rural school in Todd County known as the Gabler-Diez School. Typical of all rural schools, it had four or five large windows on one side so it would be light, as we had no electricity. Inside on the opposite side were the blackboards and always a picture of George Washington.

In the hallway was a place for the pupils to hang their wraps and lunch pails were left there. A place to wash hands and the brooms and mops were stored in the hall.

Outside was the pump, coal shed and the two boys and girls "outhouse" rest rooms.

At nine o'clock we rang the bell and at four o'clock we dismissed. School began with the "Flag Salute" and registration.

The teacher preceding me was Bernice (Steele) Davis and she left her daily program and information about the pupils which indeed was most helpful. This was an eight month school and my salary was \$55.00 per month.

I married and did not teach for a few years. Then I taught the Verduin School in Todd County for two years. Married teachers had a hard time finding a job in those days in Tripp County.

During World War II I went back to teaching full time. There was a shortage of teachers due to the fact that many went to work in the ship yards or joined the armed forces.

The school board from Sully School came and asked me to teach their school I said I would if I could take my daughter with me as my husband was going into the Navy. They readily agreed. I went from there to Jordan for four year.

Other rural schools I taught were North Crystal Springs, Rosedale, Lincoln Hart, Carter, Sunnyside, Greenwood and Wewela. In Jordan, Hart and Greenwood I taught at different times.

Sunnyside was a two room school. I taught the lower grades and Ruby Williams taught the upper grades.

I taught one year at Edgemont, S.D. in the third grade room and the other city school was Colone Public where I taught third grade for five years.

My worst memory is the old coal stove, starting the fire and sitting around the stove freezing our feet until the first recess. Then at closing time, banking the fire to hold it until morning.

However there were good memories too. The pupils enjoyed all the activities. Some were sports, contests, track meets, Christmas programs and the school picnic.

Over the years the schools became well equipped with good teaching programs in all the subjects making it easy to have a well rounded program in all the grades.

Oil and propane stoves were added. Later we even had electricity for lights and telephones.

I enjoyed all of my years of teaching and indeed teaching turned out to be the best career I could have chose.