

## TEACHING ---- A WONDERFUL CAREER AND ADVENTURE

A career in teaching was quite the norm in my family. So, it was only natural for me to follow the pattern of my mother, favorite aunts, uncles and others close to me.

By that choice I found a wonderful 39 year career. One that kept me in the school room continuously from age 5, either as a student or teacher. It was a “calling” that brought me a great deal of happiness, opportunity and satisfaction.

I graduated from Colome High School in 1956 and went directly to summer session at Southern State Teachers College, Springfield, SD. I earned a two-year teaching certificate and then began my first teaching assignment, 7-8 grades at Corsica, SD. This was a wonderful beginning; those 12 students taught me a great deal! From there I was hired at Yankton elementary for a fifth grade position. But due to circumstances, we returned to Tripp County where I taught 8 delightful students in four grades at Plainview #21.

An opening in the city system brought me to the fifth grade, always a favorite age group. After that year, I made the decision to return to college to complete my teaching degree. Upon graduation I was offered a position in the language arts department at Winner High School. I continued in that area until my retirement in 1997. It was required that we continue to upgrade our teaching certificate so for the next 30+ years I continued to take courses on and off campus at South Dakota State, University of South Dakota, and Black Hills State College. I always enjoyed the courses that enriched my classroom experience in addition to renewing my certificate. Throughout my career I had many opportunities to work on curriculum development, the Principal’s Advisory Council, numerous task forces, etc. It was always a challenge to try to make the daily classroom assignments as timely and as relative as possible. During these years numerous innovative techniques were tried; however, it always came back to the same premise: if you want your students to learn you must provide the opportunity, the motivation and the reward and that was my approach to teaching.

Throughout my career at WHS, I saw many changes. I worked for seven superintendents and six principals. Early on, students were disciplined with a paddle when sent to the principal’s office. Women teachers did not wear “slacks” until 1967. Teachers were not granted maternity leave and often took very little time off before returning to the classroom. Women teachers generally received lower pay than their counterparts who were provided a ‘head of household’ bonus. It is of interest to note that my first teaching position was for \$200 per month. Salary negotiations were always a painful time. It seems to me that, as a people, we endorse the virtues of education but we’re not willing to pay the price in salaries and benefits. In contrast to the salary issue I always felt we had adequate supplies, updated textbooks and teaching materials, quality AV equipment, etc. For the most part I believe the school board and administration were very supportive of the staff and had the best interest of the students in mind.

Other changes included the increase of discipline problems, absenteeism, confusion in the court system and ethnic diversity of the community. In my opinion these challenges were a result of the changes that were occurring in our society. I was always glad that I had a sense of humor that often got me through a situation. I also felt that I always had a strong connection

with my students which helped to eliminate most potential classroom difficulties. My philosophy was to treat students the way I wanted to be treated - - with mutual respect and concern.

The former high school was located across from the post office in downtown Winner. The building was old but well cared for. After six years in that building I moved to the new high school in the fall of 1967. At that time, there were only three grade levels (10-12) with a population of 400+ students.

It was at that time I began my extracurricular duties. I was the cheerleading advisor for 25 years. I always said 98% of that experience was the greatest. I worked with the best our school had to offer and many of those young people became adult friends of mine. During those years the cheerleaders started the tradition of presenting gifts to the Princess and Warrior, hosting cheerleading camps for beginners and instituting a scholarship fund. These were all ways of helping young people to learn leadership skills. I also directed the spirit group (pep club). It seemed to me that if you had loyalty and respect for your school, you would also feel that toward your community and to your country.

During those years I directed over 20 school plays and introduced the concept of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade play. I always enjoyed working with the theater group and continue to believe it's a valuable part of our school. Another responsibility was to advise the school newspaper for over 15 years. The paper offered students opportunity to learn responsibility for their ideas as well as their creative interests.

I was very honored to be named the Jaycee Outstanding Young Educator, WHS Parade Marshal, to be prom speaker 10 times, graduation speaker 2 times, and an SDEA workshop presenter.

As I left teaching to move on to other interests and challenges, I can sincerely say that I had 39 wonderful years in education. I'm honored to have had this opportunity to teach so many lives and to be touched by them. I'd guess that over 4000 students passed through my gradebook. I feel satisfied that I did a creditable job...I have no regrets. I so enjoyed all the people that I worked with...they were my second family and will always be an important part of my memories.

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