

Reminiscent Teacher Essay
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My teaching career began in 1956 after attending Northern State College in Aberdeen for one year, including ten weeks of summer school. This granted me a First Grade Certificate. Previous to this, my education included attending a country school; Garfield # 2, three miles north of Corona. I graduated from Wilmot High School in 1955.

Choices as to what to do after high school graduation for a girl in 1955 were quite limited. I have always enjoyed working with children and decided being a teacher would be ideal for me. I also considered becoming a secretary, but my dad didn't think much of that idea. He held the profession of a teacher high on the pedestal, and therefore, he was very pleased and proud when I chose to be a teacher.

My first year of teaching was in a rural school in Roberts County on the reservation west of Wilmot. I was suppose to have eight students, but it turned out to be twenty students with three cultures represented! My beginning yearly salary was \$2250, which ended up being \$157 (after taxes!) each month. Amazing how money stretched back then! I even bought a 1947 Plymouth car with my first check! The school chairman would drop my check off at school and I had to drive to the other school board members to get their signatures on the check. My first check that I received could not be cashed in the bank as there was not enough money in the school account! The school's special money for being on a reservation had not come in yet. The bank filled out a note on the back of the check and I needed to go back to each school board member again for their signatures before it could be cashed!

Spring Grove # 1 was a typical, older style school. The bathroom was outside! There was no janitor, no hot lunch, no bus service, no pre-school or kindergarten, no Special Education for children who had learning disabilities, no counselor, no nurse, no physical education, no personal leave or substitute teachers to fill in when we had an emergency or illness. There were no calculators, computers, or any other technology devices. Many schools did not have a telephone. Water had to be carried in for drinking and washing purposes.

The students learned the basics, which were outlined in the Course of Study. The teacher made the rules and parents expected the children to obey them. Parents backed the teacher 100%. Students did not wear the latest brand of shoes or clothing. Drugs and alcohol were not a problem. The main discipline problem was gum chewing and whispering.

I remember having a dentist and his assistant set up a dental chair in the entry of my

first school to clean and fix all the children's teeth. I also took the children into Sisseton to the dentist a couple times during the school year. Native Americans received this service free, but all my students were given the opportunity for this service also.

One day, my three little first grade girls were outside playing before eating their noon lunch. As I was watching them, a car with a couple drove up and proceeded to take their picture. They thought it was so unique to have students from three cultures playing together.

We had a huge Christmas Program that year and people from miles around came to it. The plank stage had been set up and the curtains made from sheets were strung across the front of the room on a wire. I had discovered the old, broken, pump organ could be fixed with an elastic suspender from my dad's bib overalls, so I could play for the program!

The next three years found me teaching in Lockwood # 2, near Big Stone Lake. This was a more modern school with an oil heater in the middle of the room and chemical toilets. The County Supt. would come around once a year to visit. She would check the lesson plans, attendance book, and grade book and answer any questions we might have. She also brought library books and any supplies we might need. On one occasion, we had had a program the night before and we were slowly cleaning up the next morning. My friend, who taught down the road, called me to tell me the superintendent was on the way to visit my school. My wonderful students helped me get everything put back in order and out of sight before she arrived at our school. She was so impressed that we had a program the night before and we were already having classes!

We had a program every year in this school. We also got together with the other school two miles away and had ballgames and other activities on special afternoons. No bus; we walked!

It was in 1960 that I began teaching in the lower grades in Alban # 1. This school was about eight miles east of Milbank and in Grant County. I was back to outdoor toilets again and the school was an older, long style. We had an oil stove on one side of the room, and if the wind blew hard it was not always warm enough. The upper grades were in a school across the road. There was also a church and cemetery between the two schools. When the ladies of the church had Ladies Aid, they often invited the teachers for lunch. We had milk delivered to us once or twice a week. The milkman would come in and put the milk in our little portable refrigerator. One night the school was broken into and some of our YCL money was missing. It was in this school in Nov. 1963 that I remember a mother calling to tell us that President Kennedy had been shot. I sent a note over to my friend, Lorraine Lesnar, who was teaching in the upper grades.

We enjoyed a trip to the Hutterite Colony, programs, hikes, end-of-the-year picnics and many other fun things. The mothers would visit in the cars outside waiting for their children to get out of school. I taught in this school four years to make a total of eight

years in the rural schools. I loved the experience of teaching in rural schools as all the students were great and the parents were so cooperative. Times were changing and it was at this time that all the Alban Schools consolidated into Milbank. This is when I started my 35 years of teaching in Milbank.

I continued my education while I was teaching and raising a family. After several summer school sessions, extension classes, and some correspondence classes, I finally earned my BS Degree in 1968. I actually graduated three times from NSU. I received my first grade certificate in 1956, my two year or State Certificate in 1958, and finally the Bachelor Degree.

The first two years of teaching 3rd grade in Milbank found me in the annex of the old Methodist Church, which was where the Wells Fargo Bank is today. Koch School was having an addition built on and the other schools were preparing for growth in attendance also. Second grade classes were held in the Emanuel Lutheran Church and Seventh and Eighth grades met in the upstairs of the City Auditorium.

Physical Education was started in the lower elementary grades in 1966 and I was chosen to start that program. I taught first through sixth alone for a couple years and then team taught with Harvey Schaefer for nearly 18 years. Then after teaching in the Title Program for two years, I taught third grade for 7 years and then second grade for 5 years. After teaching 43 years, I decided to retire in 1999.

Teaching has been a rewarding profession. Everyday was always a little different and it had a challenge waiting to be tackled. It is important to teach students to be good citizens, to be kind, polite, and helpful. I not only wanted the students to learn, but also feel confident and to be successful. I always felt it was important to let children know I cared about them, not only while at school, but wherever they were.

I get a thrill when I meet former students and hear their success stories and hope I had a small part in his or her success.