

## My Memoirs of My Teaching Career

“ You have met all the requirements except as to age.” Those were the words on my first teaching certificate. I was only seventeen but would turn eighteen in December. I had gone the necessary six weeks of college and had passed the state test.

My first twelve years of teaching were in rural schools. The first year was at Freiling School south of Davis, SD. I has just the first six grades as there were no students in seventh and eighth . I had twelve students. I loved my students. I loved playing softball with them, ante-over the schoolhouse, steal sticks, pump pump pull away and the other games. I could run as fast as the biggest kids, could hit the ball and catch the ball.

In the twelve years I taught in five different schools. The first six were in Turner County and the other six in Lincoln County.

I did many jobs but I knew teaching was what I wanted to do. I had divorced my husband in 1964 and moved to Sioux Falls. I learned that if I went to school I could get \$175.00 a month from welfare. My daughter and I were paying \$110 a month rent and \$60.00 a month car payment and so if I cleaned buildings where we lived, my rent would go down \$20.00 per building. I do not know how we did it, but I got my degree from the University of Sioux Falls. I remarried and went job hunting. I was hired to teach fifth grade in Brandon, SD. I stayed there one year and was offered a job at Axtell Park in Sioux Falls, SD.

I loved the seventh graders. I remember when one of my students collected a nickel from each student in our class and bought me a lovely silver Christmas tree pin. I still have it and think of them whenever I wear it. I remember the boy from McCrosson Boys Ranch that was at my door every morning before school started, just to visit with me. I could not be rude and tell him I had work to do. The first day of the following year I remember thinking, “Well, Jim will not be here every day as his classes are at the other end of the building.” Guess what? Here was Jim, at my door. This lasted a few weeks and pretty soon, Jim was not at my door. I figured he found some other teacher to talk to.

I remember Jeff. He was failing my class. The last day of school I

entered my room to find a big bouquet of flowers. Looking at the vase I realized it had come from a cemetery. I went to the principal, Mr. Bauer, and told him what had happened. He said, "There is no way you can give an F to a student who brings you flowers, even from a cemetery. Give him a D," which I did.

I taught eighth grade at Patrick Henry, Junior First at Longfellow, sixth grade at Longfellow and third grade at Longfellow. One of my most fun writing lessons was entitled, "A Mouse Lives in My Desk". One of my third grade boys had taken his dad to see his room after a Boy Scout meeting and when he turned on the light, a mouse ran across the room. One boy wrote, "I like you but I am moving to Mrs. Leaders desk. She has candy in her desk."

Teaching Australia was not on our third grade schedule but when Mike Knutson traveled with his parents to Australia in December and January, I put up a map and each day we talked about where Mike was that day. His parents had left me his itinerary. It was an easy way to interest the children in Australia. When Mike returned to school he told how he missed Christmas Day because of the time change at the International Date Line.

Back in the late eighties, at night I would say to my third graders, "H or H" which stood for "Hug or Handshake". At first the boys took handshakes but after a few days they chose hugs. I remember one of my friend saying, "How can you hug a black child?" I remember so clearly saying, "They hug just like a white child." I was referred to as the hugging teacher.

I always told my little students that when they were following me down the hall they could truly say they were "following the Leader. {Leaders being my name.}

I remember this little girl saying to me as we walked down the hall, "Mrs, Leaders, you are everything a third grade girl could want in a teacher. Every other teacher I have ever had was bones, bones, bones." {I admit, I was a little on the chubby order.}

Sunday afternoons were used for putting up bulletin boards. We had one board of poetry, one for special writings from the kids, and one, a Math facts board.

These are just a few of my memories of my teaching career. After retirement I worked as an Education Assistant in third grade, second grade and kindergarten. Now I work approximately ten days a year evaluating the writing papers for the Sioux Falls School District. I love it because it helps me keep up with the thoughts of the children and the teenagers.

I knew from the time I was a little girl that I wanted to teach when I taught my younger sister Pauline to read and do Math. We played school at night and I was always the teacher.

I loved teaching. I could go on and on about the good memories of my students and coworkers. Maybe that explains why I am Co-president of the Sioux Falls Area Retired Teachers. It keeps me in contact with the many friends I made because I chose to be a teacher. {P.S. My only child, a daughter, is a teacher.}