

Reminiscent Teacher Essay

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I didn't go to college to become a teacher. I already was a teacher. I was born a teacher. I only went to college to get a piece of paper that said I was a qualified teacher to be able to get paid for doing it.

My first classroom was in the basement of my parents house. My first students were my nieces and nephews. My oldest nephew, who was about 3 or 4 at the time, was very compliant to my wishes. He was an outstanding student and very well behaved. Some of the others, not so much.

During my senior year in high school I joined the Future Teachers of America Association and because of this I was asked to substitute teach for the 3rd grade teacher for one week. That's how I got hooked on the 3rd grade. I thought they were the best because they were far enough along that they could do lots of things on their own and young enough to still think the teacher was the smartest one in the room.

In 1960, after high school I went up the road to Northern State Teachers College where I earned my two-year elementary teaching certificate. One day in the spring of the year when I was finishing up my work for my certificate, we were told there were recruiters on campus from Huron and Rapid City. We could go over and meet with them if we wanted to. So I went and interviewed with both. I could have been hired for either one there on the spot but I chose Rapid City. Thus began my teaching career that fall at Meadowbrook Elementary School as a 3rd grade teacher in Rapid City. Walter Lienau was the principal and Betty Neu was the school secretary and helper of all problems.

My salary that first year in 1962-63 was \$3000. The next year they raised it by \$200. Isn't it amazing that we thought we were lucky to get that much!

Meadowbrook was a new school with classrooms, gymnasium and everything needed on one floor but already they were feeling the population

growth. That first year my classroom, as well as the other 3rd grade rooms, were located in 4 buildings they referred to as the barracks. It was like a country schoolhouse with no bathrooms, no running water and an oil burning heating stove on one side of the room.

However it did have its advantages. We had a good view of the boardwalk, the principal did not walk by very often and it was handy to the playground. We four teachers had our own little world.

I was at Meadowbrook for 2 years. During my first year there I got married and during my second year I became pregnant. In those days they would not let you teach after the first 3 months but I was kept on til mid April when I was about 6 months along as they could not find a replacement for me. My daughter was born then on the 4th of July, 1964.

The second year the 3rd graders were moved inside the building and that was great.

You always remember where you were when you heard breaking news of world shocking events, such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. I was sitting in the teacher's lounge there at Meadowbrook having my lunch when the news came over the small black and white TV that the President had died. There came a great silence over the school and everyone was speechless. Of course, school was dismissed immediately and all went home.

In the meantime, my husband graduated from the Rapid City School of Business and had accepted a position for an accounting firm in Mitchell, SD. With me having only a two-year certificate, I was not able to get a job in the Mitchell School System. So I thought the best thing to do was to go back to college at Dakota Wesleyan. So I did but after the first year back in college, the school board from a country school south of Mitchell came looking for me. I never did know how they found me, perhaps, through the college. They needed a teacher for their school and asked me if I would be interested. So I taught at Tobin 18 School in Davison County for one year. It was in an old church that was no longer used. They made it into a two-room schoolhouse and there was another teacher who taught the upper grades. We had about 20 students. It was actually a lot of fun. We gave a fall school program and the patrons loved it. It was one of those where the students

performed plays, sang songs and there were games and plenty of food in the basement afterward.

The next year I returned to college at Dakota Wesleyan, receiving my Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1969. By this time, we were moving to Huron and then I remembered how easy it would have been back when I was at Northern to get a teaching job in Huron. But now, not so easy. I couldn't get hired in Huron so I ended up teaching in Letcher, Cresbard, Iroquois, and at a Hutterite School out of the Tulare School System. By this time I was given the opportunity to move into Title I positions at these various schools. I loved that work.

I would like to share some of my experiences at the Colony School. When I was first hired there I was a little nervous about how I was going to work with students who did not understand English. But after getting started, I realized it was not a problem. It was amazing how the older students helped the younger ones by interpreting for them what the teachers said. And it wasn't long at all before they were learning the English themselves. There was no special plans made for the little ones to learn, they just picked it up on their own.

I was a Chapter I teacher at the school there for six years. The children especially loved to be read to. They loved books and were always looking at books. One day when I went into the other classroom to get one of my first grade students, I found him sitting in a corner looking at the "A" encyclopedia. I told him to bring the book and we would look at it together.

He was intrigued by the pages about airplanes. There was a cut-away picture of a passenger plane showing the inside of a plane and the many passengers seated therein. Jonathan had a question for me which I was not fully equipped to answer. Because his English was not perfect yet, his question came out like this: "How do they do it up with so many guys?" My answer was "I was wondering that myself."

These children are curious, intelligent and eager to learn. I have many friends there to this day. Every now and then, I will run into someone from the colony and they are very friendly. Usually, they want to know when am I coming out to see them. My former students like to come up to me and want to know if I know who they are. That is a hard question as they have

grown up and changed. They think it is fun to call me by name but I can't remember their names!

There are many memories and stories from my teaching days to fill a book. Besides the memories, the best thing about my schoolteacher days is finding out in these retired years of my life how and what has become of some of my former students. One of them is a producer of his own acting company in California, one is a banker in Rapid City, and another is my mail carrier at this present time. Another one is a farmer in this area. His wife loves the story I have about her husband when he was in the second grade.

In closing, I would like to leave you this quote by an anonymous person. "No one gets rich teaching, but no one has a richer life."