

Reminiscent Teacher Essay, 2013

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I never wanted to be a teacher. When I was a senior in high school I told my dad that I wanted to be a lawyer! He told me that women were NOT lawyers!! This was in 1961. Then he suggested I go to Northern State Teacher's College for one year. Aberdeen was just twenty miles away. After that year, I could go to any college that I wanted to attend. I wasn't too excited as my older sister went to Northern to become a teacher. I was trying to pave a new way. I finally agreed and went to Northern the fall of 1961.

I enrolled in Elementary Education and signed up for classes at Northern State Teacher's College. I absolutely loved my Children's Literature class, my psychology class, my art appreciation class, and my favorite-a History class taught by the best teacher that I ever had in school. His name was Professor Thompson. Each class was like attending a play! I even took it at 8:00 in the morning which was against all my rules at that time!!

I think my dad knew I would love it there! He was so on target!! I buzzed through my two year elementary education degree and finished the first part of March because I had attended summer school. A principal from Winner, SD came to Northern to interview for a 5th grade position. I interviewed and got the job. I called my parents to tell them I was moving to Winner in two weeks!! They were totally shocked but did support my move.

Winner was a wonderful experience for me. I walked the six blocks to school each day enjoying the simple life style that I was graced with at age 19. My principal was terrific! I made wonderful friends, learned how to hunt and identify rocks and picked wild sumac for bouquets. I rented a room from an older couple for \$1.00 a night! They were a lovely couple that let me use the whole upstairs so I could sew in one room, correct papers in another and sleep in the other! I made \$250.00

a month!! It was a short three months there as I had signed a contract with Spearfish for the following fall to teach first grade.

In Spearfish I taught at what they called the Lab School. It was in the middle of the campus of Black Hills State College. It was a huge old beautiful building. My classroom was enormous! My fellow teacher and I had our students square dancing in my classroom. It had a large divider in the middle so I could have special place for desks and other furniture! I wish I could walk back to that old building. It was torn down years ago. I was twenty years old and the age of many of those attending college at that time. I loved my job!! The other first grade teacher was the age of my mother. She became my mentor and my good friend. She is still a good friend and I will be there to celebrate her 95th birthday on May 25th in Spearfish. I owe her so much as she helped me with all of my questions and concerns. I had many college students come to my classroom to observe a first grade classroom. My first contract there was for \$4,200.00. Everything about teaching in Spearfish was positive.

I continued taking classes working on my four year degree while I taught the next few years.

After a few years I moved closer to family in Aberdeen. I taught third grade at O.M. Tiffany. I taught with several women that I had gone to college with a few years before. I loved Aberdeen and learning about third grade curriculum. Another teacher and I were the first teachers to be pregnant and continue teaching! I see one former third grader on the news occasionally. He is the business manager for a large school in South Dakota

I had three sons and stayed home with them a few years before I went back to teaching in Pierre. I taught at St Joseph Catholic School for three years. It was a wonderful three years surrounded by people that cared about every teacher and every child. A first grade position opened up in the public school so I applied. I spent the rest of my teaching years at Washington School in Pierre teaching first grade. I loved everything about first graders! They believed they could do anything- and so they did! Their parents believed they could do anything- and so they did!! Nothing is more rewarding than bringing that first grader where he needs to be to succeed in second grade!

Now, I have been retired for a few years. It is so wonderful to live where I taught. I get invited to baptisms for children of former first graders. I run in to former first graders at social events and they tell me they are pregnant with their first or that they just bought Shel Silverstein's book for their child because they remembered the poems they learned in first grade. I watch college basketball games as a former first grader plays for SDSU. I see former students in the weight room at the Y when they are home for holidays! It is also rewarding to receive college graduation announcements! The last one I received was from a cute little boy I had in first grade. He was finishing college with a MBA! I have never forgotten this story about him. As we were heading out to recess one day he announced it was going to snow! I pointed out to him that it was spring and the sun was shining. He said, "If you don't believe that it will snow, do you believe I have six toes?" I told him he was kidding his teacher. Then he immediately took off his shoe and stocking to show me he DID indeed have six toes! Never doubt a first grader! His mother wrote me a wonderful thank you with the college announcement.

What other job can you have like that?? You are thanked 17 years later! The neatest thing is that I am married to a former teacher that feels the same way! We feel our lives are blessed everyday by former students.

Oh, my dad was right!! My teaching career has enriched my life in so many ways and continues to bring me happiness.