

**Reminiscent Teacher Essay**  
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### **Fond Memories**

*“Teachers were dedicated, parents were interested, and students were willing”*

**I attended a country school for my eight years of elementary education. La Valley School was located about twelve miles south of Sioux Falls on old highway 77. Our country school had a large enrollment and usually included all eight grades. I recall one year's enrollment being forty-two students. During these years, one could teach within a country school after attending a summer school session or having one year of college; consequently, some of our teachers were not highly educated nor much older than the various students who had failed a grade and had not yet reached the age of sixteen, the required age to leave school.**

**I am convinced that my experiences in La Valley School heavily influenced my understanding of the need for an individualized instructional approach during my forty years as an educator. I believe I was a fifth grader when the farmer boy decided that being an educator was to be my profession. We older students frequently helped other students while the teacher was busily conducting a class for a specific grade. We older pupils could use flash cards for others to learn addition, subtraction, times-tables, spelling, or new reading words. We older students could listen to the younger ones practice the reading assignment, check for math errors, etc. Because I was not aware of other male teachers, I chose not to reveal my decision for many years. Teaching was indeed my life. I truly do not regret any of the forty years of being an educator. Perhaps, my parents desired one of their four sons to be a farmer, but neither of us became farmers.**

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**I had anticipated attending Madison State for one year and becoming a country school teacher; however, when I was a senior at Augustana Academy, seniors from Augustana College came and individually spoke to each of us senior students. I was informed that if I attend college for two years, I could teach in a town school and have only one or two grades. Consequently, I chose to attend Augustana College for two years. At age nineteen, I began my two years of teaching grades seven and eight at Beaver Creek, MN. I then returned to Augustana College to attain my four year degree. I was thrilled to be hired to teach grade six in the Sioux Falls School System! Circumstantially, shortly before the school year started a ninth grade teacher from Axtell Park Jr. High requested a transfer to Washington High School; consequently, Axtell Park needed a ninth grade teacher to teach social studies, English and speech. The college background of various new-hirelings were reviewed. In my course of study at Augustana, it was noted that I had**

taken speech courses, consequently, I was transferred from grade six to grade nine. I was not told this until the day teachers began the school year. I had no knowledge of course work or schedules of a junior high school nor was I familiar with working with ninth graders.

As years passed, I became convinced that this was part of God's plan for me. I taught at Axtell Park fifteen years; I was thrilled and complimented highly when I was asked to become an elementary school principal. As a principal, I had many reports to write and submit. I have concluded that my fifteen years of teaching English greatly influenced and positively affected my writing of teacher's evaluations, letters, and reports. This was far more than this man was thinking with his heart! Also, to begin my new vocation in the elementary school, because I had been in a junior high school, I deem it wise for my being assigned as a teaching-principal at Renberg School. I again became acquainted/familiar with elementary curriculum and learned the responsibilities of a principal. God moves in mysterious ways.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declared God, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11*

Indeed, my educational career did prosper. Many a teacher has spoken to me about my being an effective, admirable principal. Teachers, whom I did not work with, have commented that they heard how much I was appreciated as a principal. I was a principal for twenty-three years. Several former students and parents continue to compliment my work as a teacher or as a principal. During one of my three years as the teaching-principal at Renberg, the school system did not have the funds to increase principals' wages; however, the administrators did have an amount to award the “outstanding” principals of the year. I was decidedly surprised that I was among those awarded. I am confident that part of the decision was because I was a teaching-principal; thus my salary was lower than that of other elementary principals.

Being the principal at Franklin Elementary was a definite challenge. In once sense, I could be complimented for being assigned there after only three years at Renberg. I continued at Franklin for eight years. I was told that discipline problems decreased and teaching at Franklin became easier during my years as principal there.

When I was transferred to Longfellow School, the enrollment there was over six hundred; thus, it was one of the largest enrollments in the system. There was a housing development in the south-east part of Sioux Falls, those students were bussed to Longfellow. Later, the John Harris Elementary was built in that area; consequently, the enrollment at Longfellow decreased. I truly enjoyed my twelve years at Longfellow.

Because I had been at Longfellow for twelve years, I anticipated being transferred to another building. Because I was close to retirement age, I deemed it unfair to another school that I be there only two or three years. Also, I had a distinct feeling that I was suppose to retire that year; thus I retired in 1996. Circumstantially, during the following

**year, both my Mother and my daughter needed my help; thus, “I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.” Also, due to heart surgery, Sid Stallings could not begin his school year at Lowell Elementary; I was his substitute, beginning a new school year in an unfamiliar building and among unknown teachers was a definite challenge. In January, John Gauer had heart surgery, and I was asked to be a substitute at Mark Twain.**

**Because of my continued unusually fine health, I surely could have continued to be an educator. At times, I have regretted that I haven't volunteered at a near-by school or retirement center, but I hesitate being on a schedule. I do some volunteer work – volunteering is a definite way of showing my appreciation to God for His many blessings to me.**

*“Teaching was an answer to my early dream.”*