

Dear Sally and Members of the Class of 1974:

I wish you a successful and enjoyable reunion! Your invitation came while we were away for three weeks, so I have not been able to respond until now. I am unable to change my plans for Sunday, but I am honored that you thought of me. I remember you and Robin and Frank Teall. Years ago I often saw Robin at the bank, and I have watched with great admiration as they have built their beautiful and unique home on Greiner Road. I probably have seen some of the rest of the class, but you have changed, as have I. If you should recognize me somewhere (with my gray hair), please remind me who you are. I would love to find out how your lives have unfolded.

I have tried to remember if I should be holding "grudges" for something, but I cannot recall anything. I have learned to remember the good things in life. I do not think anyone in your class did anything to deserve a grudge!! I know I learned from you all - I learned that hair length was not important; I learned to look past exteriors and look you in the eyes where I found your strengths of character. I was so intent on covering the required subject material that I may have missed some teachable moments, and I hope I am forgiven if that was the case. I learned that I thought of you as my kids, and that I really hoped to help be an integral part of preparing you for what life might hold for you. That was the reason for the discussions we had about the literature I chose for you to read. I hope I was fair to you all.

Just to bring you up to date on my journey: I taught full time in the early 60's right out of college. My first students in Clarence were only about six years younger than I, as I taught junior high at that time. Then I had a few years where I had three children, went to the university for my Master's Degree, and left teaching to attend to my family. I periodically went back when asked to take a year for someone on maternity leave, etc.

Meanwhile, I substituted regularly, so I would never lose sight of the students or education as it moved from side to side of that pendulum.... Then came the years when there were no openings in the education field unless someone died. Enrollment was down, and there were few openings anywhere. Students in education began to change their majors to another profession. Then in the 1980s an opening came at Clarence High School, and I began to teach English 10 and a course, which I created, called "A Walkabout through Literature " for juniors and seniors. It was a course, which appealed to the high school students, because I believed that participating in life's experiences could be an education, so we read nonfiction stories about people who had quests in life, and then each student found a quest of his/her own as a challenge. We traveled out of the classroom to Forest Lawn Cemetery for a day, to the

downtown Buffalo Library for the day, spent a day with an Indian philosopher, invited many guests to the classroom, all the time writing our reactions and responses to the experiences.

I believed that students would write better if they had an interest in what they were writing, rather than just responding to a topic assigned by the teacher. The final exam was taken at a cottage on one of the Finger Lakes over a four day period where the students had many cultural experiences like attending an old order Mennonite church service where the men sat on one side and the women on the other. After the service we would eat a large Pennsylvania Dutch meal together and then discuss the differences in our cultures. They walked beautiful Watkins Glen; they kayaked and canoed and swam. We sat around bonfires and read to one another the pieces we had written about our experiences, and then we discussed them. It was a wonderful course and one, which earned an award from Albany for "NYS Teacher of Excellence." Many of the parents have asked me to teach a course like it for adults, but I have yet to attempt that.

Along the way, I have had surgery for a brain tumor, which was not malignant, so I am still here. :) I retired in 2000, and I am busy doing volunteer work, gardening, reading, and enjoying my grown children and two grandchildren.

I am forever busy, but I am never too busy to take an interest in those around me, especially my former students. If you compile an information sheet from those at the reunion, I would thoroughly enjoy finding out where you have moved, what occupations you have had, news about your families, etc.

I wish you all happiness and safe journeys in your life's travels. I hope you have each found the purpose for which you are here, and that it has given you peace and satisfaction.

Love to you all,
Nancy Light
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(Please identify yourself as class of 1974 or I might not open the e-mail)

Again, thank you, Sally, for including me and for the lovely letter you wrote.