

A KINDERGARTENER'S MEMORY OF WOODLAND SCHOOL – 1955-56 SCHOOL YEAR

SHARED AT THE FOSD BOARD OF EDUCATION 'S RECOGNITION OF THE RENOVATION OF THE

FOSD ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER HELD IN THE NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING AREA

– ORIGINALLY THE WOODLAND SCHOOL

As an employee in the Fort Osage R-I School District Administrative Center, watching the layers of improvements fall away from this original part of the building during the renovation process has been especially interesting for me—seeing the big north windows emerging from behind office walls—seeing the worn old wood floor came to the surface—one day as I made one of many daily trips through this area, the sunlight was filtering in through the dusty haze that accompanies “tearing-out-the-old-to-bring-in-the-new” --and in that moment this room took on an old familiarity—like the face of a friend I hadn't seen for years—and my vision returned for a few moments to that of a wide-eyed five-year-old beginning kindergarten here almost 20 years ago! Woodland School and I shared that year . . . an end for one-- a beginning for the other. . .and I would like to take just a few moments to share some of the “remembering” with you.

I believe I must have been the ideal kindergartener at age 5, as I came here—one small absolutely open empty space READY to be FILLED with knowledge—thinking that I would RETURN home after MY FIRST DAY able to READ and that all the knowledge of the ages would soon be revealed to me. I CAME able to recite and print (in CAPITALS ONLY) the letters of the alphabet, but had not yet been confronted with the need to count past twenty (fingers and toes) or the need to add or subtract to find out how much I did---or didn't--have. I presented myself READY to enter the WORLD OF LEARNING with the highest expectation—everything that everyone else knew, I was going to START knowing any minute—and it was ALL going to happen right here in this room!

If these walls could speak, they would talk about the old upright piano that stood under the line of big, many-paned windows on the north side of this room—each morning our teacher played it while we sang, with the morning sun pouring in on us “arranged-by-fours” at well-worn but brightly painted little wooden tables and chairs. They could describe the long cupboards below the windows where our ‘school supplies’ --fat wooden pencils—8 even fatter crayons--and regulation blunt scissors--were kept in decorated cigar boxes, with individual “nap-rugs” for resting on the wood floor mid-morning lying neatly rolled side-by-side! (I have wondered in later years if this prescribed “rest-period” was more beneficial to US or to our teacher?) Rest periods would occasionally get off to a SQUEALING AND JUMPING START when someone retrieved their rug and a MOUSE jumped out and skittered for all it was worth across that slick floor into the coat-room! The walls would also undoubtedly remember the whispers and looks of consternation as we came to school the morning after Halloween to find BOTH the girls' and boys' white-painted “bathrooms” (there was no running water in the building!) which stood behind the school on the east and west sides respectively, had been overturned during the night as some big kids' Halloween prank!

They say that sometimes ‘even the walls have ears’—and I'm certain these walls remember the smiling face and gentle voice of our teacher during that vital “first experience” in our little lives—Mrs. Neola Jones—as she taught us that year the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and wonderful new songs (all with hand-motions!)—the Eeensy Weensy Spider – Climb, Climb Up Sunshine Mountain!—and my favorite, John Jacob Jingleheimer Smith—along with rudimentary reading, writing and arithmetic. A VERY special extra was our own early-day “teacher aide” in the person of her husband, Mr. Walter Jones, who brought Mrs. Jones to school each day and usually stayed for the morning's festivities. To us he was larger-than-life—walking with quiet measured tread he towered over us in his pale blue or gray shirt, gray jacket, string tie, and beautiful soft gray wide-brimmed hat, which I don't recall EVER seeing removed from his head. With his friendly laugh and guiding hand, he sat like a giant at our little tables, giving each of us assistance and encouragement in academics, as well as in tying our own hair-ribbons and shoe strings—encouraging lady-and-gentlemen-like behavior— instructing us in table manners and etiquette when someone brought treats—acting as on-