

- There were also a few “un-highlights”, like the day I was introducing the word DAMP on our weather chart because it was truly a damp day. After school I received a call from a parent insisting that her son had informed her that I had referred to the weather that day and as “damn cold.” I informed the parent that I had said “damp and cold” and we both laughed. I learned to speak more clearly.
- One day after we read Dr. Seuss’s “Green Eggs and Ham”, I played a song called “Anaconda Chicken” about a chicken who laid green eggs. At “Show and Tell” time the next day one little child said his father had said I shouldn’t be teaching children that some chickens lay green eggs. But, low and behold, the next day that very shy little boy, who never brought anything to “show” brought green eggs. He had an “Anaconda” Chicken.
- There was the day that Superintendent of Schools, Paul Snyder brought his son a big bucket with a big turtle to school. After talking about how the turtle was caught, Mr. Snyder began to take it out of the bucket and it bit him. He wasn’t aware that some turtles are “snapping turtles”.
- Perhaps my favorite teachable moments were the unexpected ones. One cold and rainy day just after a late fall storm, a flock of exhausted, bedraggled large geese-like birds landed on the patch of grass outside Miller School. For three days they laid there, during which kids and parents brought in food for them and just watched. On the fourth day, the leader of the flock stood up and the other birds arose and they all flew away on their journey. It was sad, and some of us cried, but were happy that we had the experience of helping them on their way.

My goal was to help children like school because they had a long way to go.



# Reflections of a Kindergarten Teacher



*Shirley Duval*

**HALL OF FAME**

**Kindergarten Teacher**

**Aurora City Schools**

**1966 - 1996**

## ***From Shirley Duval... ..***

### **EARLY LIFE and EDUCATION**

My mother was Belgian and my father was part German, French and American Indian. I was born and raised in Detroit and Grosse Pte., Michigan in the 1930's where the Detroit River enters Lake St. Claire.

Until age 17, I spent wondrous summers with my grandparents in the small town of Algonac on the St. Clair River roaming free, swimming in or rowing on the river - but not too close to the continuous flow of the freighters. There were no antibiotics available in those days so it was not unusual to lose a playmate to a childhood disease.

Education is formal and informal. Much can be learned by observing what is around you, listening to people talking and paying attention to what you are hearing and seeing. My father, who was physician for over 50 years, took a month off every summer and we went travelling. By the time I was 10 years old, in the 1930's, I had crossed the country on the original National Road, Rte. 40, the nation's first cross continental highway. I had seen the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, gone up Pike's Peak, and ridden a mule to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. I had also visited Yosemite and Yellowstone Park and had taken a trip to Cuba.

When I was 12 I received a large, lighted, standing National Geographic globe for Christmas. I began to collect stamps from around the world, many from countries that no longer exist. These stamps and the globe created a great interest in Geography. When I attended the University of Michigan I enrolled in the Geography Department and majored in Cartography (drawing maps). In those days (early 1940's) all maps were drawn from aerial photographs. Today, I still don't use a GPS.

In 1946 I graduated from U.M., married Len, and moved to Cleveland. We lived in Warrensville Heights for 8 years, but were running out of room with the arrival of our 4<sup>th</sup> child. That year, 1954, my husband was invited to golf at the Aurora Country Club, saw the then "village" of Aurora and we bought a house here.

### **TEACHING IN AURORA**

Aurora was small school system and occasionally anyone with a degree in anything might be asked to substitute in the schools, which I sometimes did. I lived next door to Sally Cook who was a Kindergarten teacher. She had MS and eventually had to stop teaching, unfortunately in the middle of a school year. The town had to find a replacement and Sally kept pushing me to apply. All my kids were in school. I was 42, not 22, and I had a degree. I could sing simple tunes on the piano, and I had taught catechism at the Catholic Church in Aurora. So, in 1966, I started teaching Kindergarten in the basement of the Catholic Church. At that time several grade levels were conducted in various churches throughout Aurora. I usually had about 35 area students. It was great except perhaps when there was a funeral mass above us and I had to keep 35 five year olds quiet. We had a lot of reading and whispering. After school on Fridays all the tables and chairs had to be moved out for Sunday activities in the basement. Eventually there was a room available at Craddock, and then at Miller School.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Every day was a highlight being with children. A real highlight was when you saw on a child's face the sense of accomplishment, whether it was the child realizing he could read, or know all the letters and their sounds, or could count to 100 or walk across the balance beam without falling off.
- It was a highlight when the kids were getting really good at observing when were outside looking around.
- It was a highlight when in the early part of the year the kids became comfortable in school and decided they liked it. So comfortable in fact that even though I put my name on the blackboard every day, and told them my name was Mrs. Duval, it was NOT unusual from them to call me "grandma" and ask me what color my hair was before it was gray.