

Harry Putnam
1620 38th St
Rapid City, SD 57702-3108

My Teaching Career

I was, and remain a product of the 1930's in Western South Dakota. My first 9 years of schooling were spent in a country school with two other students the last four years. I graduated from Pierre High School in 1940. After three years in the US Navy, I got a job with a cabinetmaker and moved to Rapid City. I was brought up to believe "the tougher it gets the harder you work". I learned that was not true.

By the time I was 38 I had exhausted myself. I had worked day and night at various jobs and was not making a living wage. Then my wife took control. She was caring for her aging mother and raising our two children. She got two bookkeeping jobs and sent me to college at Spearfish. By attending class winter and summer, three years later, I had a bachelor's degree and started teaching English in 1964. I had a Master's degree in 1968. By 1985 I had reached 62 years of age and retired. I found classes of 28 – 30 students five times a day exhausting so I quit.

Like everything else, education is changing. The wage problem remains. Computers were just appearing when I retired, and I am glad to have escaped a whole new world I knew nothing about.

My success as a teacher? It is always gratifying when someone identifies her or himself as an ex-student. Sometimes I remember them; sometimes, I do not. They are middle-aged now and have changed and are not the young people I knew many years ago. Some are fondly remembered and remain dear friends. Some have achieved considerable success. It is coincidental, but several of the medical people here in Rapid City were in my classes. I take no credit for their achievement, but it is a personal gratification I enjoy.