

**August 24, 2004**

Thank you Superintendent Jokubaitis, Dr. Coffin, Mr. Bourque, Board members, administrators, colleagues, and friends. It is an honor to have been selected the Torrington Teacher of the Year. As you all know, I do not stand here alone. As the teacher of a district program, I work very closely with the Forbes staff as well as those from the other elementary schools and the middle school.

With me is the knowledge and self-growth I have gained from so many of you. I thank you for that.

It was difficult to decide what message I had to offer my colleagues. As I wrestled myself into focusing on what that would be, I started to think about my own teachers and remembered so many educators who touched my life. Then I thought my message would be, ***“They will remember you.”***

Yes, your students will remember you. I can go back to first grade in March of 1967. I arrived at school sporting my home-made Tootsie-roll corsage for my 6<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mrs. Keene took one look at my delicious corsage and nicknamed me “Tootsie-roll” for the next two years. I beamed with pleasure each time she greeted me with , “Hey, Tootsie-roll”. *I* was special. I told my mom that Mrs. Keene was my favorite first grade teacher. Mom informed me that she wasn’t my teacher, that I had Mrs. Mapstone. “I like her, too” I said-“but I’m not *her* Tootsie-roll”. **I remember her.**

I was a science “bug” in second grade. Mrs. Bjorkland fed my passion for science. Set up on her desk were magnifying glasses, containers with tiny air holes and tight-fitting lids the day *after* my lady bug collection escaped throughout our classroom. **I remember her.**

It wasn’t unusual to find this third grader hiding under the teacher’s desk or swinging out from her closet hanger rod as she went to hang her coat after recess. I would screech and giggle, knowing I had scared her. Miss Liquee decided to make me recess equipment monitor. *I* felt important. **I remember her.**

I thought I would only recall Miss Russell's, "My Word!" when she became frustrated or disappointed with our class. But fourth grade brought space travel in space capsules that *we* built. We "flew" our rockets in crews as we snacked on Space Sticks and Tang! **I remember her.**

I can remember watching Mrs. Reszick's eyes sparkle as she read aloud to our fifth grade class giving each character it's own voice. I think this was when I learned to enjoy reading. **I remember her.**

Sixth grade brought Ms. Duboff, Edgar Allen Poe, and proof that it *is* okay for a girl to prefer pants over dresses. She sat cross-legged on her desk wearing her navy blue cords while reading aloud *The Tell-Tale Heart*. **I remember her.**

Mr. Romano and Mr. Alberino proved that laughter is the way to keeping the attention of their seventh grade students. Their sense of humor brought many wandering minds back to the classroom in a playful and kind manner. **I remember them.**

I remember reading *That Was Then, This is Now*, *The Outsiders*, and my eighth grade teacher absent with "The kissing disease!" I continued to learn from Miss Kennedy through letters long after she left our school. She described living and teaching in England and served as my "Dear Abby" for early teen dilemmas. **I remember her.**

In high school, Miss Nicolari taught me the meaning of fairness. With an "A" average and more interest in pitching a softball game than reading the assigned chapters in *James Joyce Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, I chose to skip the reading and take my chances. To my surprise, written in red near my only answer of the ten question quiz was, "For *that* answer, I'll grant you the A". **I remember her.** My algebra teacher actually said, "No one is *that* stupid! You're helping those retarded kids way too much!" Oh yeah, I remember her! But my memories of Mrs. Smith are fond memories. Her choice of words may not have been the kindest or most thought out, but she never gave up on me. She gave

unselfishly of her free periods teaching and re-teaching a frustrated student, *knowing* that I could succeed. **I remember her.**

Do I remember the teachers who failed to motivate? Who were inflexible? Who lacked interest in me as an individual? Yes, I do. But those memories are tucked far enough away so the teachers who had a positive effect continue to guide and nurture.

Yes, our students **will** remember us. It is our decision how we choose to be remembered. We can make our students feel special and important, we can feed their interests and give them the tools to learn, but most importantly, we must accept their individuality.

***They will remember you.***

Thank you and have a great school year.