

balcony, he said, ‘Goodnight, goodnight, parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say goodnight, ‘til it be the morrow.’” I went on to say most partings do have sweetness mixed with sorrow. Our sweetness at that time was our finishing high school, and the thought of entering adult life; but the sorrow was that never again after Graduation would we all ever be together in one place. I elaborated a little on the good times we had shared before ending my 10-minute speech with lines from Kipling’s poem, “*If*,” which is one of my favorites to this day.

“**If** you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you. **If** you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, and make allowance for their doubting, too. **If you can fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run**, yours is the earth and everything that’s in it; and what is more, you’ll be a man, my son.” (Of course this goes for the girls as well as the guys.)

Maybe writing my memories will help you think of your own **life lessons** that you have learned along the way.

**Now for News From the Philippines:** **Albert Cates** called Monday night (11/24). It was good news. The swelling in his legs has gone down and he has lost 33 pounds, has completely changed his diet, and is feeling much better. He cannot yet drive the Jeepney to pick up the children for school or the folks for church, but **Ito** makes 2 trips and **Leony** helps by packing her Jeep full. National School Teacher exams were given in Oct. 60,000 took the test and only 16,000 passed. However, of their 5 school teachers at Manaoag Christian School, 3 passed, while 2 did not. They will be able to take it again this month (Dec.). Everything is going well. They had 147 in church this past Sunday. Let us pray that this Daughter Church of ours will be a Lighthouse in their community. Pastor and I picked up the special box to send to the P. I., and hope to get it on its way sometime before Christmas.

One last word. We, here in this church, have just entered the wonderful Advent Season, leading up to the day we celebrate Christ’s birthday, and to the coming of 2009. Remember these events only come once a year, so don’t miss them. Soli Deo Gloria – Ruth

P.S. Our Christmas letter will be reaching you soon.

# Ruth’s Reflections

December 2, 2008

Three Sundays ago, a younger lady stopped me between S. S. and Morning Worship to tell me that her husband was reading the *Reflections* and said, “How does she remember all those things?” Then she went on to say that she liked it when I wrote about our past, and made it fit the present. So, since this is my next to the last *Reflections* which I’ll be writing in this format, I am going to take you back to the “dark ages” (ha!), and tell you some things I learned from my school days (especially high school). This won’t be the Readin’, Writin’ & ‘Rithmetic learnin’, but the “**life lessons.**” Some of these things I have never told before, and I don’t want anyone to think it is bragging.

I was 5 years old in January 1930, a few months after the stock markets had crashed, and the banks had closed in 1929. The Great Depression was quickly taking over. When the cold Michigan winter weather began to subside in March, my mother and I dressed warmly and trudged the one mile to Newhall School. Mother felt that since I knew all the colors and could count to 100, I should be in school; so I was enrolled that day. Then, for seven more years I walked that mile to school and back, through all kinds of weather. My sister Florence, was 4 years older than I, and didn’t much like me tagging along. About one-quarter mile from our house, down a dirt road, we would stop at Gracie and Elaine Van Dyke’s house, so they could walk with us. Florence would go up to their door, but made me stay by the road at the end of their driveway. I always asked, “Why. . . Why can’t I go with you?” But it never happened, and I guess that taught me the lesson that “**LIFE doesn’t always go the way you want it to go.**”

Skipping over the years, I found myself in the classroom of a very strict School Principal, Mrs. Skuitema, who taught both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the same second floor room. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders sat in the two-and-a-half rows by the windows. They had ink-wells built into the front corner of their desks. We 7<sup>th</sup> graders just had to use small bottles of ink, and wait a year to have all those “advantages.” However, everyone who passed through that teacher’s room came out with very neat hand-writing—both boys and girls. We had to use an 8-inch wooden handled pen with a removable metal point. It wasn’t easy to learn how to dip our pens into the ink without having so much ink that it would make blots on our paper.

We were taught the Palmer Method of Penmanship by moving our whole hand instead of just our fingers. So it was Mrs. Skuitema walking around the room, saying “push-pull, push-pull” over and over again. All the while we made up-and-down slanted lines, usually two spaces high. If

our lines weren't neat enough, we would have to start over. It was hum-drum, but it taught us that **life includes things we don't like to do**. We want to say, "What's the use of this?"-- but we learn that **if we don't do them, there will be consequences**.

Well, I never got to sit by the windows and never had a desk with a built-in inkwell. Because of an increased number of students when we became 8<sup>th</sup> graders, we were transferred to the Junior-High wing of Wyoming High School, three miles from our home. However, we now only had to walk a half-mile to reach the school bus. Sometimes we had to run the last few yards to catch it. This taught me **the value of being on time**. Very seldom could we stay for after school activities, because it would mean "no way home." Walking the three miles really wasn't too bad if you had someone to walk with, but my parents objected to it on a daily basis. However, those long walks taught me **the value of having friends**.

During my grade school years I made only average grades--B's and C's. The Dutch children nearly always got the "A's." This, no doubt, was because most of the teachers were also Dutch. We lived in a tightly-knit Dutch community. I didn't think much about this at the time, but when I got in high school, I started bringing home all "A's" without doing more work. My father, who never was able to go through more than the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in school, was so excited and pleased when I brought home my Report Cards. So I learned, **"Always do your best, especially when it makes those around you happy."**

I took the hard subjects in H. S.--2 years of Latin, 2 years of Speech and Debate, 3 years of Science, including Chemistry, 3 years of History, 3 of Math, one of Geography, 4 years of English and Literature, one year of Home Economics, plus Music and Phys. Ed.

From my Literature teachers **I learned that I wanted to some day travel to see places like the home of *Little Women*, even Shakespeare's Stratford-On-Avon, and the homes of the English poets. I learned to "Dream," and later, my dreams of visiting all those places came true**. During the Depression, NYA (National Youth Administration) was introduced by the government to help needy students. Our H. S. principal, who taught History and was also a Coach, asked me if I would like to work for him and make a little money. It was very little, but I learned to love grading papers, putting grades in his grade books, etc. I know that later this helped guide me into the Teaching Profession, where I too, used my better students to grade papers after I graded theirs. It taught me to **be willing to work for little or no pay, and like it**. But all was not "peaches and cream."

My Senior year was quite eventful. On Dec. 8, 1941, all of us students were called to go into the gym, where we sat in assigned sections of the bleachers. We were told in our Home Rooms that this was a momentous

occasion, and there would be no talking until we came back to our First Period classes. A small dome-topped table radio was brought in and set on the front of the stage. Finally, we heard the voice of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who called the day before (Sunday, Dec. 7) when Pearl Harbor was bombed, **"a day of infamy."** He then declared war on the Imperial Government of Japan. Some girls wiped tears from their eyes, knowing that brothers and schoolmates would be called up for military service, and some of these would give their lives for their country. Three from our class were killed in that war (World War II). I had gone to Newhall School with two of them, from Kindergarten on through Wyoming H. S.

It was also during my Senior year that the Faculty Sponsor of our class chose the Yearbook Staff and named me Editor-in-Chief. One day when our work was almost finished, I was working alone in the Atrium behind the Chemistry Lab, writing the Class Prophecy. The rest of the staff was gluing down pictures on the big mock-up pages; to be sent to the printer. They were also brainstorming about what "captions" to put under each senior picture. They didn't know I was in the next room. So when they came to my name, Ruth Hefler, someone said, "Here's one for her, it's from Proverbs: *"Wisdom is better than rubies."* Then one of the very popular girls laughed and said, "I suggest we change it a little. Let's put, *"Wisdom is better than diamonds."*" They all laughed and agreed. I knew what they meant. I did not date any of the fellows in high school, and they thought I'd never be given a diamond engagement ring. Although many boys who were just friends, came to sit by me in our last period study hall to ask me to explain their school work to them. Then they would stay, and we'd talk a little while.

However, no one laughed when I brought my handsome husband to an Alumni Dinner five years later. During the business session to elect officers, one of those same flirty girls said, "I nominate Ruth Hefler's husband to be president." She sounded a little envious. Don declined, of course, saying we were moving back to Indiana so he could go to Graduate School. I learned from that experience: **"Cutting remarks may hurt at the time, but later they don't mean a whole lot unless you let them linger and fester."**

When my Senior year was almost over, our principal called me into his office. "Ruth," he said, "I'm sure you know that you are the Class Valedictorian this year. You have earned the Alpha Beta Award all four years in high school. So you will need to prepare a speech to give at our last assembly of the year."

I began working on it, using things I had learned in my beloved Wyoming High School. It started out something like this: "Seniors, I'm sure we all remember from our Junior Literature Class, the story from Shakespeare of *Romeo and Juliet*. When Romeo was standing below Juliet's