FDR tour stresses preservation of documents

Editor’s note: Much emphasis was placed on establishing presidential libraries.

I had trouble with my camera and borrowed another’s which also gave me trouble—it lost all the pictures taken of the event! Space is given where a picture would have been placed, reinforcing the point made by the FDR staff about the importance of archiving and preserving important documents. Also note that I have since purchased a new camera to replace the damaged and borrowed ones so posterity can enjoy proper pictorial documentation of these historical and social events. Look for them in future issues.

HYDE PARK, NY—Education Assistant Ginny Marcus, WCRT member and tour guide, called attention to her tour as “a rendezvous with history,” also the name of the introductory film in the Wallace Center gallery. Happy Days Are Here Again music played through most of the film as 24 WCRT members and guests listened and watched before their walk about the facility and grounds.

Jeff Urbin, Educational Specialist at Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, stressed the importance of education and the future of our nation. As part of the presidential library system, FDR Library is a brand-new museum. Jeff is an RCKHS Class of 1982 who also taught in WCSD and at DCC.

Commenting about interviews he’s conducted with near-by neighbors, some have lived here 45 years and never visited the FDR campus. “FDR never carried Dutchess County even though he won four presidential elections.... Don’t just come here when a cousin visits from out of town; keep us in mind for over and over...C-SPAN will be here next week.

“George Washington had great leadership skills, while others might not. How will democracy live on? He created a presidency and set a precedent. He wanted to make his papers available and have other presidents use it....from Washington to FDR hidden documents needed to be saved by the Library of Congress; they allegedly didn’t have enough room....FDR built his own library in the 1920s and gave 16 acres for the purchase of Alaska from Russia. The FDR Museum is arranged chronologically. As one enters, a poster of Central Park during the Great Depression....FDR was a 10-lb. baby born here at his home. He was in the glee club, a cheerleader, he rowed crew, and played football....He got polio at 39 years old. As Secretary of the Navy, he knew Woodrow Wilson....He married in 1905....Uncle Teddy walked Eleanor down the aisle for the wedding after he marched in the March 17 parade.

“We have 150,000 photos with only four showing FDR in a wheelchair. He told the press not to photograph him in a wheelchair because he didn’t want to appear weak.”

POLITICAL ACTION COLUMN

Alice Ruffing, VW Junior High, chats with her former student Jeff Urbin who is friends with her son.

The FDR Museum is arranged chronologically. As one enters, a poster of Central Park during the Great Depression....FDR was a 10-lb. baby born here at his home. He was in the glee club, a cheerleader, he rowed crew, and played football....He got polio at 39 years old. As Secretary of the Navy, he knew Woodrow Wilson....He married in 1905....Uncle Teddy walked Eleanor down the aisle for the wedding after he marched in the March 17 parade.

“We have 150,000 photos with only four showing FDR in a wheelchair. He told the press not to photograph him in a wheelchair because he didn’t want to appear weak.”
From The President

SUSAN ROGER WCRT President

Dear WCRT Members,

I first met Diana Woermann when I was substituting in 1987 at Fishkill Plains School. At that time her name was Diana Kuhlmann. During lunchtime conversations I learned that Diana had graduated from Mahopac High School class of 1961 as did my husband, John, and that they had been friends. So we became friends and colleagues, but not really close.

Diana retired in 1998, John in 2002, and I in 2004. We then got together more often. Diana married Allan Woermann in 2001. We got together three or four times a year with about eight couples from that class. Some even got together in Florida. We got to know Allan and each other as adults after children, but discussed grandchildren.

When I was selling my mother’s house, I needed advice about the value of the furniture and collectables. I asked Diana to help me; she was very knowledgeable about antiques. She spent a long afternoon with us and was a fabulous help.

The last time we saw her was May 30. Five couples had lunch at Daddy's. She seemed fine. She was funny, talented, and creative. I’m not sure when she went into the hospital, but three weeks after that she was gone.

I miss her as many of you are. I feel blessed to have known her. If there is a lesson to be learned, it is to take advantage of times to get together with friends and former colleagues. Life is so precious, and we just never know when it will end. (See obituary on page 6.)

I look forward to seeing many of you at the luncheon on Sept 16 at Christos Restaurant.

Susan Roger

Newsletter distribution process, renewals, dues info

Some WCRT members who want to receive the Commentator and PostScript by email have not received them. Contact wct@frontiernet.net or Ronnie Dwyer at the WCT office for the WCT office if the problem continues.

Retirees give the WCRT their email address. The WCT maintains the email list for publication. Prohibitive U.S. Mail costs may soon force us to cancel postal mailings, so please consider going green to save money.

The Commentator and PostScript may be viewed at www.wcteachers.org.

Several retirees have almost had their NYSUT benefits cancelled because they neglected to pay their WCT dues. Calls to the office and checks sent in a panic have mitigated the problem. Make checks payable to WCT and mail to WCT.

Renewal notices have been sent out. Dues for 2013-2014 are:

- $20.00 Yearly
- $200.00 Individual Lifetime
- $325.00 Couples Lifetime

Pay Lifetime and alleviate the yearly task of renewing.

WCT & WCRT publication dates for academic year 2013-2014:

Commentator and PostScript ailing dates:

- Oct. 15
- Nov. 15
- Dec. 14
- Jan. 15
- Feb. 15

and one sometime in August.

WCT & WCRT Mission Statement:
To bring WCSD retirees together for mutual assistance and socialization, and to promote the best interests of retired educators.

WCT Officers and Board of Directors

JULY - AUGUST, 2014

Pay Lifetime and alleviate the yearly task of renewing.

SAVE THESE DATES
(future details coming soon)

July 17 Deadline for August, 2014 PostScript
Sept. 11 Executive Board mtg. 10:00am-12:00pm
Sept. 12 Meals on Wheels golf tourney Beekman Golf Club. (p.4)
Sept. 16 Fall Luncheon, Christos, 11:30am, $23p/p (see flyer, p.4)
Oct. 9 RC#13 Regional Conference, Wiltwyck CC, Kingston
Politicians running education and the backlash

The introduction of the Common Core standardized curriculum has shown what happens when politicians in Washington and Albany try to run our schools. The poorly created and even more poorly implemented plan may come back to haunt these same political leaders. An article in the July 14-17 issue of New York Magazine titled “Waiting for Super-Schism, For Democrats Education May be the Most Dangerous Issue,” points out how state and national leaders may see a negative reaction from their former teacher union friends.

The trouble started with the President’s Race to the Top, a $4.35 billion pool of grant money. The New York Magazine explains, “As the measure was tucked into the $840 billion stimulus, which passed very quickly amid a terrifying economic crisis, it escaped the partisan scrutiny that would normally surround such a thing.” It goes on to say that the President’s administration, “…has unleashed sweeping changes, pushing to expand charter schools and introducing accountability metrics, which threaten teacher tenure.”

In New York, the Governor jumped on the bandwagon with an inadequately planned-out implementation of the Common Core and its use in evaluating teachers. An article in the May 3, 2013, issue of the Poughkeepsie Journal shows the state blocking any deals between unions and school districts that would protect teachers from unfair evaluations based on student scores. An agreement in Buffalo, “…guaranteed teachers and principals would face no negative consequences based on evaluations this (2012-2013) school year.” However this and 50 other school systems had such protections blocked by Albany.

Interestingly, as parent and teacher pressure mounted, we fast forward to the Poughkeepsie Journal’s June 13, 2014 issue where the Governor, “…is open to temporary tweaks to the state’s teacher-evaluation system to account for concerns about the Common Core, but said a full moratorium would be overkill.” About a week later the Poughkeepsie Journal’s June 20, 2014 issue shows the Governor and Legislature going a step further. It states, “A bill introduced Thursday [August 14] would essentially exclude Common Core test results from some teacher evaluations through the 2014-2015 school year…shielding them from the negative consequences of poor reviews caused by the (student) scores.”

There is a potential backlash against the Democrats by the unions as a result of Common Core. The New York Magazine article mentions the NEA Convention this summer which had a motion put on the floor to call for the resignation of the Secretary of Education. Education activist Diane Ravitch spoke in strong words saying, “The administration is no friend of teachers or teacher unions…what is needed at this hour is a strong militant response to these attacks on teachers, public schools and, where they exist, unions.” The article brings up an interesting possibility, “The notion of an alliance between the unions and the Republicans may sound preposterous, but it is now grass-root Republicans who are leading the charge against Common Core teaching standards, arguing that they put too much power in the federal government’s hands.”

The New York Magazine speculates that, “Ultimately, the union backlash is likely to be channeled into the 2016 Democratic primaries.” The magazine wonders if Hillary Clinton has alienated the unions by backing Common Core and though she made it through the 2008 primaries, she “is not likely to get off so easy this time.”

If you want to see more evidence of this adverse response, you can go to the August 15, 2014, Poughkeepsie Journal where it was reported that NYSUT has not endorsed the governor of New York for re-election. NYSUT Executive Vice-President Andrew Pallotta stated, after being unable to come to a consensus on an endorsement, “I think the only peaceful place that we could find was a no endorsement in the governor’s race.”

We wonder whether in time educators will regain control of what happens in their classrooms or if big brother in Washington will dictate their day-by-day, page-by-page requirements. We also wonder if all teacher protections, such as tenure, will be removed by the courts or circumvented by Common Core-based evaluations. This battle is not over yet. We wonder how the political landscape will be affected in the coming years.

NOTE: If you are aware of a member’s illness, or the need to send a condolence card, please contact Ruth Ehlers at 831-6390.
New Hamburg Yacht Club Annual Golf Tourney for Meals on Wheels

Try saying that in one breath!!

As you know Bill, the NHYCAGTFMOWs is an event that is organized mainly by retired WCSD teachers and administrators: Charlie Powers and myself, Joe Corrigan, Rose Marie Gardner, and Skip Rottkamp.

Since its inception, it has raised over $150,000 for MoW.

This year’s tournament will be on September 12, 2014, at Beekman Golf Club.

There are many ways to contribute: as a golfer, a sponsor, a donor, or our "feed a resident" campaign ($25.00). For further information and a brochure, you may email Jack Devine at fox230@aol.com.

The Golf Committee has deliberately kept the prices low to attract as many people as possible. It's a great day for a great cause!

Jack Devine

Protect your WCRT, NYSUT membership

WCRT by the numbers:

WCRT membership as of June 17, 2014:

- 606 retirees
- 595 WCRT members
- 183 yearly members
- 9 yearly members not renewed
- 356 Lifetime members
- 44 Complimentary Lifetime members
- 12 Complimentary members
- 81 retirees don’t belong to WCRT & not entitled to NYSUT benefits
- 24 not paid this year & soon deleted
- 367 members email subscribers
- 235 members postal subscribers

Please consider email subscription. It saves us considerable spending on postage. Checks MUST be made out to WCT not WCRT. We cannot accept checks made out to WCRT. Our chapter charter is with the WCT.

You MUST belong to the WCT to be eligible for NYSUT benefits. One retiree, just last month, had her NYSUT insurance cancelled due to lack of dues payment. She subsequently paid and was re-instated. Lifetime is the best deal. Pay once and forget about it!

Thomas D. Macrini Sports Hall of Fame Inductees and Honoree for 2014

Row 1 (L to R): Gabrielle King, Amanda (Deppe) Scully, Barbara Deppe, Julia E. Urillo, Stephanie Kelly-Sambuco, Katie O’Brien Dunstan, Christina Semertzides, Maria Semertzides, Renee Foster.


Missing: Patricia Bruner, Ashley McGuire, Patrick Suarez, Peter Timmons, Kristen Turner.
E-mail subscribers sign up slowly

Help WCRT officers cut mail costs in half

NEW FIGURES SINCE LAST ISSUE: With 595 members, WCRT now prints and mails newsletters to 230 postal members, while sending 370 e-mails. It takes 6-7 new subscribers to lower the total by one percentage point. We’ve had six people added in October, six in December, four in February, two in May, and one in July. We now have 38%, down from 40% reading hardcopies! WE NEED MANY MORE!

To mail all 595 newsletters would cost $291.55. It costs us $112.70 to mail 230 every other month.

WCRT officers want to cut that cost to half the current number. Officers think 20%-25% is a reasonable goal to strive for since this initiative started in October 2013. Members wishing to go green can e-mail your name, address, city, state, zip, phone number, and e-mail address to wdourdis@verizon.net or the WCRT office at (845) 227-5065.

Sign up for WCRT’s bi-monthly e-mail PostScript newsletter, produced in color—you’ll do yourself and WCRT a big favor. It saves us money and time—two critical factors for non-profit organizations.

Members may opt to receive the newsletter in color by e-mail or black and white by “snail mail.” Fonts and pictures can be enlarged on your computer as a .PDF. WCRT newsletters have become magazine quality!

Newsletters arrive sooner by e-mail than postal mail. More importantly, the WCRT can have immediate contact with the membership via e-mail at no cost.

Your reply is appreciated and saves the WCRT money in mailings. It saves on printing, folding, paper, envelopes, mailing labels, and stamps. The volunteer crew would also thank you for cutting down on their time spent in preparation for the distribution process.

Look at our new website: www.wcteachers.org. Support the website and the WCRT by attending luncheons and tours, maintaining your membership, contributing to VOTE-COPE, and communicating with officers.

Editor’s note: Over 38 words were highlighted in four different colors. E-mail readers saw it. Hard copy readers had to be told. They only saw black and white. Subscribe by e-mail to enjoy the benefits listed above. (Not to mention 36 full-color pictures and graphics in this issue!)

Welfare Trust explained

Welfare Trust benefits include three different plans. Staff must sign up at the time of retirement. Registration is a one-time opportunity. You cannot sign up after retirement.

Plans available:
- Basic: hearing aids, dental, vision, and health advocate.
- Enhanced: All of the above plus a $200 prescription reimbursement on copays.
- Enhanced Plus: All of the above plus legal and financial.

For more information, contact Ronnie Dwyer, Welfare Trust Fund Administrator, at the WCT office, 845-227-5065.

Thanks from WCRT Administrative Assistant

July 11, 2014
Dear Sue & The WCRT,
Thank you so very much for the most generous gift.
It is a pleasure working with all of you.
Have a wonderful summer,
Ronnie

NYSUT VOTE-COPE DRIVE
Many WCRT members will receive a VOTE-COPE notice from NYSUT in the fall. This is a reminder for those who have not made a contribution or who wish to send an additional donation.

 REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY
ELLEN KORZ WCRT Rep. to WCT RA

Last RA Meeting for 2013-2014
June 17, 2014

It seems like this school year went so fast, but then I haven’t had to work under the stressful conditions of this year. There were still many unresolved issues; for example, many teachers were observed (both announced and unannounced) during the final two weeks of school, and some new teachers were never observed during the year.

Many teachers are still not sure what data needs to go on School Tool because not all test scores are in yet.

There are many questions about the future of tenure, if not challenged by the AFT, and its effect on the District. Still everyone was happy to have other issues resolved, like the approval of the contract and the reimbursement for our coinsurance.

The 50/50 Scholarship Raffle was picked, and the winner was Nora Bitting, an elementary teacher from Fishkill Plains Elementary.

Wendy Heuman, Social Worker for JJHS and Orchard View, will put together some presentations for the BOE during the summer. She is interviewing past and present students and parents and hopes to convince the Board how necessary this alternative is to students who attend there. Hopefully teachers, active and retired, will show their support when needed.

Pasquale was presented with his pin for 25 years of service, then we were all off to The Last Chance on 376 to celebrate another year coming to a close.

Until October,
Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Korz

[Contact information]
In Memoriam

James H. Robertson

MELBOURNE BEACH, FL - James H. Robertson, 75, of Melbourne Beach, died Sunday, July 13, 2014 in Kananaskis, Canada.

Born in Southbridge, MA, he was a retired Math teacher and Track Coach. [John Jay High School, retired 1995.]

James was the chairman of the Pairings committee for the Melbourne Beach Golf League, Chairman of the Architectural Control Committee and active on several other committees at Beach Woods. He was an avid golfer and loved to travel.

James is survived by his wife and best friend of 53 years, Ann; daughter, Liz and son-in-law, John Fuchs; grandchildren, John and Alexandra Fuchs and Victoria Robertson; daughter-in-law, Jackie Robertson; brother and sister-in-law, Bruce and Theresa Robertson; nephew, Eric Robertson and his wife Kathi; great-nephews, Chad and Kyle. Predeceased by his son, James A. Robertson, and sister, Jean Upchurch.

Funeral services are Saturday, July 26 at 11 a.m. at Brownlie-Maxwell Chapel. Memorial donations to charity of your choice in James’ memory.

brownliemaxwell.com

Correction / Addition

The June 2014 PostScript obituary for Judith G. Rubin, stated Judie served WCRT as Committee Chairperson for Constitution/Bylaws.

Alice Baker, WCRT Past President, checked past WCRT minutes and found that Judie also served as WCRT Recording Secretary from 1997-2003.

Diana Kuhlmann Woermann

Diana Kuhlman-Woermann of Mahopac, NY and formerly of Highland, NY died on July 21, 2014. She was 71 years old.

She taught in Wappingers for over 30 years. She briefly taught 2nd Grade in Brinckerhoff and Kinry Road Schools. For 23 years she taught Fourth Grade at Fishkill Plains School.

Diane was a wonderfully creative teacher with love of her students and had great patience with them. She was especially interested in the local history of our area and the Hudson River painters.

She retired in 1998 from Gayhead School where she taught Fourth Grade.

In retirement she loved looking for and reselling antiques on eBay. She and her husband Allan spent the winters in their home in New Port Richey, Florida.

Diane is survived by her husband, Allan, her son George, several grandchildren and a great granchild. She was predeceased by her daughter Sharon.


Submitted by Gene Breglia

Jeff MacNelly’s Shoe by Gary Brookins and Susie MacNelly

DO YOU THINK ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL WOULD BELIEVE WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE TELEPHONE?

NOT ONLY WOULD HE NOT BELIEVE IT...

HE'D BE SCROLLING IN HIS GRAVE.
Bill,

I've been communicating with Nancy Beiner. Nancy has been charged by Pasquale with "updating," "re-tooling," and improving the WCT website.

Nancy will make a presentation to the WCT executive board in August. Assuming the exec board is OK with her plans, proposals, etc., she'll then proceed with the makeover of the website, hopefully in time to have it up and running for the opening of school.

Nancy suggests we wait on my article about the website until she has done her presentation and has more info. With that said, she'll try and work with our deadlines.

So, what's the schedule for fall printing?

Roger

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Patience is a virtue

New webmaster named William

News since last issue

Robin Williams
1951-2014

Source: Poughkeepsie Journal

The world cup

Geneva Convention
Protection of Civilians

GOOD NEWS!!!
You’ve passed the background check.

CDC
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Animals that don’t exist in the real world

POVERTY

United States Supreme Church
Services again wont pardon you

Equal Justice Under the Bible

Ebolus is here, but there’s no need to panic!

Mid-east Peace Dove

Hessie
Unicorn

No copyright infringement intended. Comix are used for educational purposes only.
News since last issue

Source: Poughkeepsie Journal
Saranne Rap
A transparent view of issues
by Saranne Ratner

A Lucky Bunch of Retirees:
Health Insurance Changes Still Benefit the WCRT

Today I received the new insurance card from our new (revised) insurance plan Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield. It had a whole list of the new payouts – for co-pays, co-insurance, office visits, etc. And, not surprisingly, they were way more than they used to be. And I said to myself, “Thank goodness we are lucky enough to have this insurance policy.”

I know many colleagues are upset about the changes. Most of us don’t do well with change. DEHIC has maintained our same policy for 17 years without any major changes. In today’s world, that’s probably unheard of. Again, I am so grateful for this insurance policy. I don’t mind paying more for the coverage we have.

When I began teaching and my parents asked me what kind of insurance I was offered, I truly had no idea. I wasn’t very interested, and it was an entitlement in those days. We didn’t pay for the insurance. The District did. I was young, naive, and basically healthy. Forty-five years later, I’m not that nonchalant or uninformed person. I know how important our insurance is, and I consider myself lucky to have it.

So, thank you Pasquale (WCT President) and the negotiating team for keeping Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield for your members and for the WCRT members as well. It may not be the “Cadillac” policy anymore, but it is surely the top-of-the-line Buick. I am happy and appreciative to have this benefit!
Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2014     11:30 a.m.

Christos Restaurant,  
155 Wilbur Blvd.  Poughkeepsie, NY

Huge Hot and Cold Buffet Lunch served at 12:00noon  
Cost per person is $23.00.  
Soft drinks included.  Cash Bar.  
Free parking on the premises. 
All facilities ground floor accessible.  No steps or stairs. 

A short business meeting and a 50-50 raffle will be held. 
Bring non-perishable food items (cans, boxes, bags) and/or shampoo, soap, 
and other personal care items to be donated to local food pantries. 

Please send check payable to WCRT to 
 attn: Leslie Leventhal,  WCRT, Heritage Square,  
2537 Route 52, Suite 15  Hopewell Jct, NY 12533 
(and must be received no later than Sept. 9, 2014.  
Spouses and significant others welcome.

WCRT FALL LUNCHEON  
$23.00 Per Person     Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2014     Guests are welcome

Name(s):________________________________________________    Phone Number:_________________
Address:_________________________________________________________________________________
Number of Reservations: _______                     Amount Enclosed: $ _______________

(return this bottom part with your check)
President Obama recently invited four teachers to lunch at the White House, which means more teachers have now eaten salmon in the Blue Room than were involved in drafting No Child Left Behind and the Common Core. He wanted to know how he and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who joined them, could “support teachers in high need schools,” why his guests had chosen to work with “needy populations,” and what could be done to ensure that “students who need the strongest teachers receive them.”

Why had the President invited only teachers from urban districts? Yes, a lot of children attend urban schools, and those schools do have serious problems that need addressing. But education reformers have been addressing those problems for over four decades. Setting aside their notable lack of success, and the fact that many of their well-intentioned, bright ideas have made things worse, they’ve chronically made the mistake of imagining that city schools’ problems are all schools’ problems, and that consequently the cure for one is the cure for all.

Some common threads and issues characterize and trouble schools and students everywhere. But even for those commonalities, applying the same remedies doesn’t work in a nation as vast as ours. Hartford, Connecticut, is a radically different place from Hartford, Vermont, a small town on the same Connecticut River just two hours distant.

I can’t tell you how many 1990s workshops I endured where a traveling expert, fresh from researching urban schools, spent hours impressing upon my rural colleagues and me the absolute necessity of breaking our middle schools down into “houses” comprising no more than five hundred students.

We had forty eighth graders at the time. That didn’t stop the repeated, pointless sermons, the resulting committees and initiatives, and the gross waste of time, effort, and money spent on inappropriate action.

Reformers likewise noticed that many urban minority students were placed in lower ability groups. Their remedy was to ban ability grouping and place all students together in the same academic classes, regardless of effort, preparation, or intelligence, a practice they soon imposed on all schools, regardless of size or ethnic composition. This false pillar of modern reform has impeded teaching and learning for two generations.

Multiply that waste and error from coast to coast, and you’ll understand why I’m concerned that the President invited only teachers from urban schools.

I don’t entirely disagree with what his guests told him. They asked for “more say” over what happens in their classrooms. Instead teachers are increasingly constrained by the Common Core, burgeoning federal and state regulations, and supervisory edicts from ever farther away. They complained about excessive testing and regulations requiring that teachers be judged by those tests’ results, “data” that have proven chronically unreliable and that reflect factors in students’ lives and minds over which teachers have no control. None of that, of course, should have been news to the President or Secretary Duncan, since they’re the masterminds who’ve exponen-

I definitely don’t agree with the teachers’ assertion that “there’s nothing wrong with the kids.” While many American children of all cultures and colors are decent and hard-working, there’s plenty wrong with lots of kids. Many come from homes that are apathetic, even hostile toward learning, teachers, and school. Many lack everything from decent food to a decent night’s sleep. Many lack initiative and self-discipline, or. I try to help my students feel the same hopes to improve the academic climate and retain good teachers.

Mr. Obama’s guests also told him that only a “handful” of teachers “can’t or won’t get better” and that “bad teachers” aren’t schools’ primary problem. They may be underestimating the handful, but overall bad teachers aren’t the reason for America’s academic malaise any more than bad pediatricians are responsible for childhood obesity.

Teachers aren’t significantly better or worse than when I was a student. But the luncheon conversation reflected a change in how teachers are judged, where “bad teachers” are the ones who “don’t care about kids.”

I enjoy spending my days with my students. Many of my colleagues feel the same. But I’ve met some lovely, compassionate teachers who aren’t, and never will be, good at teaching. I’ve also had teachers who couldn’t have cared less about me as an individual but who taught me all there was to know about trigonometry and eighteenth century novels.

I don’t mean we should tolerate teachers who mistreat children, and it’s certainly more pleasant to deal with nice people, but “caring” isn’t the chief criterion by which we should judge a teacher.

I still find learning a satisfying endeavor. I try to help my students feel the same way. But acquiring knowledge and skill is an endeavor. It’s often hard, exhausting, and not instantly gratifying. Until we and our students reckon with that truth, they won’t learn much.

Whether my teachers cared about me didn’t matter nearly as much as whether I cared about learning what they had to teach.

Peter Berger teaches English at Weathersfield School. Poor Elijah would be pleased to answer letters addressed to him in care of the editor: eagletimes.com