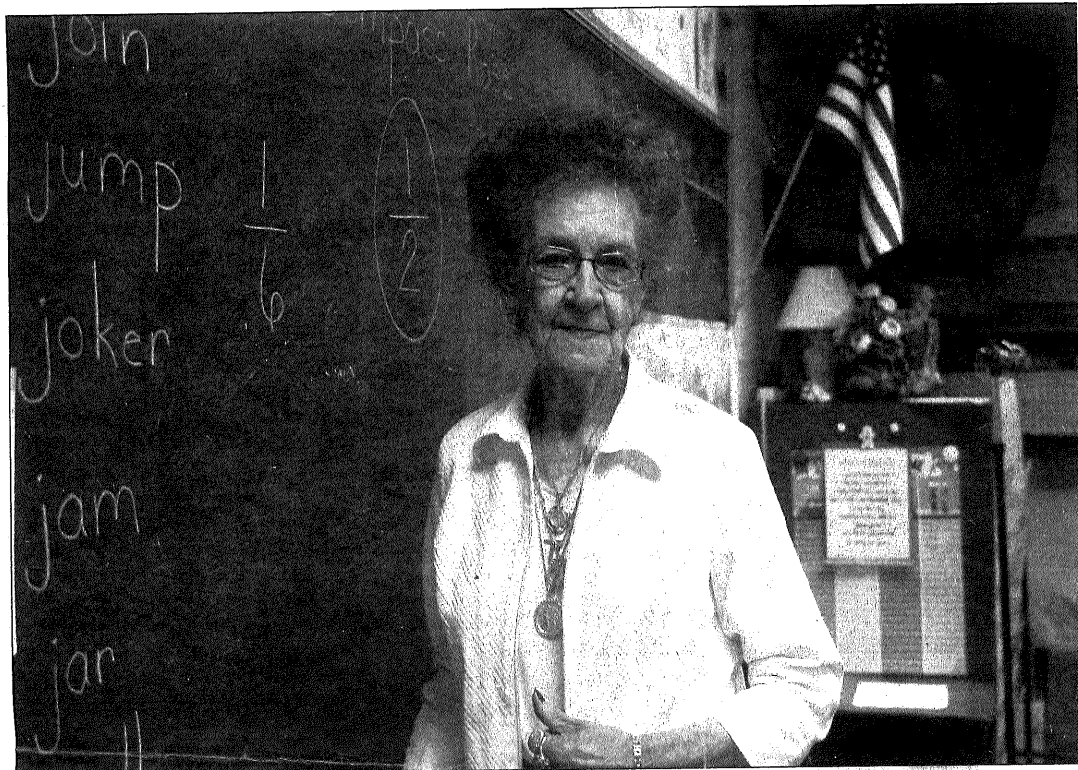


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ROSELLE SLAUGHTER | Wathena School District celebrates long career



JESSICA STEWART/St. Joseph News-Press

Longtime teacher has touched many lives

By JULIE WILLIAMS
St. Joseph News-Press

WATHENA, Kan. — If it's possible to rule with a relaxed fist, then Roselle Slaughter has mastered the technique.

Ms. Slaughter, who reached her 60th anniversary of teaching this year, commands the attention of a room of first-graders. With a gentle voice that spurs the students to action, her voice says sit in their seat or read from a book.

She starts each day by giving the students an opportunity to tell her what they have on their minds before quizzing them on numbers, days of the week and spelling.

"To see the kids advance, this is where they start to read, and by the end of the

She started in 1948

Roselle Slaughter, pictured above, a first-grade teacher at Wathena Elementary School, has been teaching for 60 years. Ms. Slaughter started teaching at the age of 19.

year you see you have some excellent readers," Ms. Slaughter said. "It kind of makes you happy that you've helped them get that far."

At a celebration for Ms. Slaughter on Wednesday evening, Wathena School District Superintendent Mike Newman said that after talking with the state department, he could find no other teacher with as a career as long as hers.

"There probably has not been a person who has touched as many lives (in Wathena) as Mrs. Slaughter," he said.

About 70 people attended the festivities, including former students, co-workers, parents of students and family members.

When she first began teaching in 1948, it was at the country school located east of Wathena. She moved to the Wathena School District in 1966, where she went from teaching all eight grades to teaching just sixth grade.

She made the move to first grade three

Longtime teacher has touched many lives

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years ago, and recognizes that the profession has changed since her country school days.

"You could meet the parents every day, they would always come to school — we had so many activities," Ms. Slaughter said. "Every year is different, every day is different."

Teaching second generations of former students isn't uncommon for Ms. Slaughter, and many students and parents request her to stay one more year to ensure that it will happen in their family.

"That makes you feel good," she said. "You kind of know that you're doing your job pretty well."

Before hitting the 60-year milestone, even a broken hip (which she said healed speedily thanks to her doctor, a former student) couldn't keep her from returning to her students last fall.

Now that Ms. Slaughter has hit that mark — which is a goal that has been in her mind for some time — she isn't sure how much longer she'll teach.

"Now you're to the point where what do you do if you quit?" she said. "You have to have something to do to keep you going. Probably the only thing that's really kept me healthy is just being around the kids."

Preschool teacher Erin Jackson, who still remem-

bers being in Ms. Slaughter's sixth-grade class, now works across the hall from her former teacher and shakes her head when she thinks that Ms. Slaughter also could have taught her dad if she had been at the right country school.

"She's just really relaxed with (the children) and lets them hang on to her and love her," Ms. Jackson said.

Leslie Rull, who also works with Ms. Slaughter and whose children were in her class, said seeing the teacher and her students in the hallway reminds her of a hen and chickens.

She said Ms. Slaughter is remarkable because she adapts to change as well as or better than other teachers, and even works on the

computer with her students.

In Wathena's other first-grade classroom, Barbara Laipple has even more connections, which include a husband and three children taught by Ms. Slaughter.

"I don't know of any others in my experience teaching that have taught that long," she said. "... Usually you see more 25 to 40 years, but 60 — that's quite a record."

Wathena resident Judy Studer remembered when her daughter, now 37, was a student of Ms. Slaughter's.

She said her daughter and her friends stayed after school every day just to be around their teacher for a little longer.

"(Ms. Slaughter) had to tell them it's time to go home," Ms. Studer said.

“She's just really relaxed with (the children) and lets them hang on to her and love her.”

ERIN JACKSON,
Wathena preschool teacher

Roselle Slaughter feted for 60 years of teaching

She has taught 1200, at least

By Paul Stewart
Chief reporter

Roselle Slaughter of Wathena -- like some educators who are parents -- has taught her son, Jerry, and her daughter, Nelita, during their elementary school years.

But, Slaughter -- wife of former mayor and city councilman Jack -- also has the rare distinction of having taught at least three generations of families during her 60-year career -- all within Doniphan County.

On Thursday, May 22, she was feted by USD 406 for this accomplishment. Superintendent Mike Newman, in speaking to a crowd of more than 60 well-wishers in the school cafeteria, noted that Slaughter "has touched a lot of lives in Doniphan County." He estimated that the number of students she has had in her classrooms totals at least 1200.



Roselle Slaughter is presented a gift by USD 406 Superintendent Mike Newman and Elementary Principal Cindy Murphy during a special recognition ceremony for her 60 years of teaching.

Newman said that, in preparing the celebration of Slaughter's teaching career, the school had attempted to find out if anyone else in the state of Kansas had taught as many years. No such information was able to be obtained from state records.

The Chief was able to sit down with Slaughter -- and her family -- last Friday, as she was answering telephone calls and opening mailed cards -- offering congratulations on her teaching accomplishment.

Slaughter was quick to point out two specific things. "My goal has been 60 years (of teaching). I wanted that record." She also frankly stated, "I have NOT retired -- yet!"

Asked to look back on both her personal, as well as her chosen career, life Slaughter said she has been a lifer.

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Wathena resident. Her formal education started at Lehman, a one-room schoolhouse on Columbus Road. "Kenneth Dryer was the teacher, of grades one through 8. I walked to school. It was probably a mile or so. Sometimes I cut across the fields." She then attended, and graduated in 1947 from, the Wathena High School.

"Like a lot of graduates, the first thing on my mind was to go out into the world, find work and make money. Well, I worked at Big Smith in St. Joseph for one year. But, I had three aunts -- Margaret Juhl, Inex Ramsel, and LeeEtta Schmille -- and all of them were teachers. So, I guess [teaching] school just rubbed off on me," she said.

Slaughter attended Highland College for 8 hours, and then took an additional 4 hours of correspondence courses. In 1974 she received a teaching degree from Northwest Missouri State College at Maryville, Missouri.

While still a teenager, she began teaching [for 6 years] at Columbus elementary, grades 1 through 8. Then, she taught 3rd grade at Elwood for one year. Then she went to the Gladden School, teaching grades 1-8, for 13 years. When consolidation took place in 1966, Slaughter moved to the Wathena elementary classroom, where she taught 6th graders.

"Three years ago, Mrs. [Cindy] Murphy [elementary principal] asked me if I would teach the first grade, and that's where I am now. I like ALL kids, but I do think the first graders are a bit more lovable," she said.

Reflecting back on the country school days, Slaughter recalled, "Back then, you got to meet and visit with parents more. Today, in a day's time, I think I'm with my students more than their parents are."

Asked about the early teaching days, Slaughter was quick to point out that -- even with grades 1 through 8 in the same school -- class sizes were much smaller. At Columbus, in 1948-49, we had outdoor plumbing. But, we also had a nice playground and ballfield. At Gladden, some of the kids rode their horse to school each day." Both of these former one-room schoolhouses are residential homes today.

Of those school years, Slaughter added, "The big kids helped the little kids. We had one-half hour recesses, in the morning and afternoon, and one-hour lunch. Every Friday we relaxed from our lessons. Then, we could go on a hike or go to another school and play ball." She admitted that during some student ballgames, she even served as the pitcher.

Slaughter, who said her starting teachers pay was \$75 a month, also addressed the longevity of her career. "Teaching is not just a job for a paycheck. You have to like kids. And, above all, you have to be able to relate to them."

The veteran teacher also admitted that she prefers math as the main school subject. "I had trouble with it when I was in school. But my dad helped me with it." Of today's world with computers, Slaughter remarked, "Computers -- I would have to say the kids know more about them than I do."

With son Jerry and daughter Nelita looking on, Slaughter remarked that she taught him from the second through 8th grade, and her from the 5th through 8th grade. Both were attending the Gladden School.

Son Jerry added, "There were two of us in the graduating class. I was the salutatorian, second to Chisty Bahr. And we were the last 8th grade class there."