

## **Influential Educators**

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Woodrow Wilson said, “Look out for the man who is indifferent to his own success but strong for the success of the thing which he represents. Stand out of his way, for behind him are the thoughts of the Almighty” (Quoted in *Success Nuggets* by Nathaniel Krum, Review & Herald, 1958). As I think of this statement, I recall the impact of some teachers and co-workers in my life who represent this statement.



Florence Moline, a fellow Canadian missionary, and I worked together for 7 years. In my first year of teaching, Miss Moline was on her 40<sup>th</sup> year. She treated me as an equal and inspired in me a determination to be as good a teacher as she was, if not better. We shared equally in experimenting with new approaches to the teaching of Mathematics—techniques I still use today which have proven effective in helping students build confidence in their mathematical skills. She would tell her students, “I am married to mathematics and you had better be too!” She expected excellence and led her students to achieve the best. Her reputation as a teacher has long outlived her life and continues in the life of every student who ever sat in her classroom. Her humility and care of everyone was demonstrated on a daily basis in her relationships with her students and peers.

For the first two years of teaching, she assigned me the lowest ability students at every grade level in the school. When I produced an A among those students on the government exams, she said that I had proved myself to be able to teach the top students in the school as well. She wouldn't trust an inexperienced teacher with the best students until they could prove themselves!

Margaret Pearson was also a coworker with me for several years. Her skills included a reputation as the best English teacher available anywhere, an excellent pianist, organist, singer, accountant, caterer, cake decorator, etc. Margaret was known for her humility. Whatever her hand touched was done to perfection. I've often wondered how she did it. Even though her students (including my own children) complained about the difficulty of her assignments, it wasn't long before they realized that she had taken them far beyond the curriculum, developing skills that excelled students in other schools. How we loved visiting in Margaret and Rex's home because everyone was treated like royalty. They were Grandpa and Grandma to many missionary children who didn't have their own grandparents to enjoy on a regular basis. Together they exemplified a life of service and sacrifice.

Ruth Murdoch was one of my professors at Andrews when I worked on my Masters. When I sat in her office or her classroom, I knew, as well as many others, that we were sitting in the presence of greatness. When we could not understand some concept in Psychology, Dr. Murdoch always told a story. Before the story was finished, we knew

the answer. She took time for people, cared about the families of her students, and would always take the time to listen.

The impact of a dedicated Christian teacher can never be over-estimated. Ruth Murdoch has an elementary school named in her honour. Florence Moline—the “Master Teacher”—has a scholarship named in her honour at CUC. Margaret Pearson is buried in a cemetery at Solusi University in Zimbabwe, unrecognized by the world in any way, but great in the eyes of her students.

It is a challenge for every Adventist teacher to uphold the statement of Woodrow Wilson. Can it be said of us, “Stand out of his/her way, for behind him/her are the thoughts of the Almighty.”