

Living in the Present

A favorite quotation from Walt Whitman furnishes a clue to Agnes Samuelson's attitude toward retirement:

"Youth, large, lusty and loving,
Youth, full of grace, force and fascination —
Do you know that old age may come after you
With equal grace, force and fascination?"

Miss Samuelson may enjoy her rocking chair occasionally — they have become fashionable — but for the most part her days are filled with exciting and challenging activities. She is called upon to speak at educational, church, civic, P. T. A., club meetings and workshops. One of her favorite themes is the contemporary scene — the destructive, distressing and dangerous elements, versus the favorable, constructive and encouraging signs and forces with implications for education.

During these so-called retirement years she also has appeared on television, given radio talks, and conducted seminars. She has written many articles and has served on key committees for many important organizations.

She has found time to serve on the Iowa Commission for Senior Citizens and the Polk County

committee which held a preliminary conference for the national conference on education sponsored by former President Dwight D. Eisenhower. She was a member of the committee which studied the overall organization of the Augustana Lutheran Church, and has been a member of the Board of Higher Education for that church body, as well as the Simpson College Board of Trustees.

Reminders of her extensive travels and friendships are found in beautifully planned albums of postcards collected in this country and Europe, and in photographs of colleagues with whom she has been associated. Scores of programs in which she participated are found in her scrapbooks. She cherishes, also, a collection of commemorative plates, and many letters from educators, government officials, parents, former students and other friends. These she affectionately calls her "dividends."

She has given generously of her time to advise various groups, including the Des Moines Branch of the American Association of University Women, the Des Moines Public Library, the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs and the Iowa Council for Better Education. She also has spoken at conventions of the Iowa Congress of Parents and Teachers.

She enjoys federated club meetings, church functions, P. E. O. programs and the Des Moines Professional Women's League. This group pre-

sented her as one of the stars in a "This is Your Life" program. Others honored were Miss Helen Irwin, now International president of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs; Dr. Helen Johnston and Miss Jessie Parker, Miss Samuelson's successor as State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Recently members of Miss Samuelson's family honored her with a reception in Des Moines, commemorating her years of service to the state and the nation. Relatives and friends from distant cities and states joined Iowans in paying tribute to this devotee of education. Family ties are still strong in this congenial group. The story of the family is being written by Miss Samuelson during these retirement years.

Letters from many notables are among her "dividends." Former Governor Leo Heogh wrote her in 1957, "I have enjoyed working with you, one of Iowa's most ardent supporters of good education."

And in a letter of appreciation, written at the time of Miss Samuelson's retirement, Willard E. Givens, executive secretary of the N. E. A. said:

You have given brilliant leadership to American public education in many capacities. Your wisdom and judgment have been invaluable in furthering the best in education through action.

Does Agnes Samuelson remember the mud

roads, district squabbles, long hours and that old, red caboose? Of course she does, but she likes to point out some of the changes she has noted in a single life span:

Once the hard, backless wooden benches. Now the adjustable, movable chair desks.

Once "boarding around." Now professional salary schedules.

Once the names of all the bones in the body. Now the rules of health and hygiene.

Once only dates in history. Now an understanding of American and world problems.

Once scales and finger exercises. Now good music to play in the school orchestra.

Once stitches on a sampler. Now a modish garment to be worn.

Once fox and hound problems. Now studies in space exploration.

Once jawbreakers in spelling. Now words most commonly used.

Once the birch rod discipline. Now pupil participation, study of child development and the importance of mental hygiene.

Once the curriculum of reading, writing and ciphering. Now flexible units of study based on the changing needs of modern living.

When Miss Samuelson thinks of the "good, old days" we may be sure it is with affection for schools, pupils and the vital profession of teaching to which she has given a lifetime of dedicated service.

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