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BEREA IS FAMILY

I am sure we have all heard the saying "everything I needed to know I learned in Kindergarten".

Well, when I started school at the age of 5 on a mountain top in Rockcastle County (which you can see if you look out across the green pasture from Dr. Roelofs' deck) there was no kindergarten. The only school was a one room building with a well out front where we could get water and two little brown buildings out back for the other Mother Nature necessities. There was always a couple of old Sears and Roebuck catalogs there, however, they were not to be used as wish books. To get to the school we had to walk over one mile on gravel roads and sometimes mountain trails

We carried our lunch to school in a brown paper bag. That lunch probably consisted of cold biscuits and jam (which my Mother had made from berries she had picked) or a cold slice of ham along with Kool-aid in a mason jar. Now, I know we have all had to drink from a mason jar before: mine always had Kool-aid in it: I won't ask you to tell me what yours had in it. We would all sit out under a big tree in the shade when it was hot outside and share our lunch together. When lunch time was over the teacher would open the door of the school building and ring an old fashion school bell and yell "books, books, time to come in for books".....which meant it was time to come inside to do school work. That was the beginning of my formal education as a first grader: because once again there was no kindergarten.

And then my "real life education" began

Even at the age of 5 when I came home from school I remember having to help my Mother bring in water for the night. She carried a huge bucket and I carried a smaller one to the spring just across the fence from our little three room house. We brought in enough water to cook supper, wash dishes have a sponge bath then have enough to make breakfast the next morning.

I had to practice writing my numbers and I learned to read using an oil lamp. There was no electricity at our fingertips.

From my Mother I learned how important it is to be helpful to everyone. I cannot remember how many times she has taken off at any time of day or night to be with families who just lost a loved one. The minute she heard of someone in need she did not ask how can I help she just helped them. She would immediately begin to cook meals for them, go to the store to purchase extra food for the family to have for that week. If she was called away in the middle of the night she would always wake me to tell me to get up a little earlier than usual to make breakfast for my Father and siblings. She taught me to make

homemade syrup and pancakes at an early age. I don't think my Father was very fond of pancakes and syrup but that was all I could make at the age of 8 or 10.

If a neighbor lost their home to a fire she was the first one there with items to replace what they had lost (blankets, pillows, bath towels, dishes or cookware) and once again always providing the family a meal.

I asked her once why she always did all of those things. Her reply was "honey, one of the important parts of healing is to just have someone to hold your hand". My Mother was great at holding hands.

Our home was the hangout for all of the local children. My Mother always made sure every child was fed and if necessary was invited to spend the night. My parents would stay up late and entertain all of us by playing games, popping corn and making homemade fudge.

Since coming to Berea more than 50 years ago I have realized how important it is to follow in her footsteps. Berea has provided me the opportunity to carry on her legacy of caring for and helping people. I always try to treat every student as if they were a member of my family (often times they do become an extended family member).

I have had more than one parent tell me that had it not been for my support and encouragement their child may have not finished college..... Just hearing that is truly a rewarding feeling

To the seniors I am happy I have had the opportunity to get to know you and to the freshmen I look forward to having the opportunity to learn something about you.

I always feel proud to be a part of the Berea family because my Mother taught me how to be humble and my Father taught me that it is Ok to laugh.