

*The following is a message from Jan Burton read by Owene Courtney at the dedication on April 3, 2013.*

I am deeply touched by Martha Milton and Grace Episcopal Day School honoring me with the dedication of the Transition-5 classroom and recognizing my contribution as founder of GEDS. There was a wonderful team of supporters from the outset, many of whom are represented by their families here today.

Ramona Archibald called me one Spring day in Atlanta where I was living and said "Guess what? The time has come! Gwen Courtney has learned that Mrs. Clemeyer is closing her kindergarten, since her children are off to elementary school. We want you to start a school! When can you come down? I'll call a meeting!"

I flew down that weekend and Kenneth Archibald met my plane. Ramona, Gwen, Fran Quaritius, Frica Masee and I spent several weekends planning. Jack Quaritius, Bill Courtney, Jon Masee and John Gilliland were on the vestry and voted in the school. By the next Fall, Grace Parish Day School was underway! Bishop Juhan, The Reverend Dr. Way and later Reverend McTammany were enthusiastic about the idea.

Many others, including Candy Bisbee and Marion Gilliland, continued the support by donating library books. Others gave funds for textbooks, reference books for teachers, school supplies, tables and chairs. Pat Abbott and others volunteered their help during the school day, while others drove children to and from Grace. When the diocesan examiner came to inspect, he was very impressed with our library and pleased that our program met the standards set forth by the diocese.

Our founding principles included being certain that each child was placed in the classroom with the correct level of work, suited to his or her abilities. Each child could learn at an appropriate pace, without skipping steps which are vital building blocks toward living a contented and productive life.

It is very special that you are dedicating the Transition-5 classroom to re-state the importance of the transition concept, as well as to honor my work. There has been great success in the Transition Classroom, which was truly innovative at the time it began. It allowed students a gentle transition between kindergarten and first grade, granting them time to mature, and time to learn how to be a leader, as well as how to cooperate in a group while others are leading. I send many thanks to Joy Johnson for her years continuing the spirit and success of the Transition Class.

Grace Episcopal Day School has always been exceptional because of the teachers and directors working together toward common goals which put the children first. We offered a balanced curriculum and activities for children to become healthy and strong with physical activity, confident with social interaction, and imaginative with quiet time, reading and art. They became curious with science, social studies and Spanish, and practical with typing skills and tying shoes. They learned safety while riding tricycles using hand signals and traffic rules.

I found a letter I wrote to parents who were considering enrolling their children in the early 1960's. I believe that so much of this holds true today. We introduced interested parents to the school by saying:

“The future holds unlimited opportunities for those who are trained and educated to meet the challenges of today's world. As a

beginning, we must accept the fact that as adults we can help and advise, but we cannot learn for our children.

The first responsibility is in providing an atmosphere in the home conducive to learning, which will stimulate a youngster's search for knowledge.

Secondly, in selecting Grace Episcopal Day School, you are providing a school of the highest standards. The emphasis is on the complete, well-rounded child and the fact that learning can be fun."

I was always happiest working toward my goals with Ellen Schifanella by my side and was thrilled when Ellen, Dodie Horsfall, and others became directors. I am delighted that many of our faculty and staff are here today. They have devoted years to Grace! Their tenure, dedication and commitment provided continuity for the school's principles and atmosphere.

I was so pleased when Martha Milton took time from her vacation last summer to visit me in Seattle. I enjoyed hearing current news of Grace and sharing stories with Martha. She has carried forward the traditions, and has brought energy and excellent ideas to Grace, allowing the school to grow in ways that truly benefit the children and support the faculty.

It brings me great joy that you attended this dedication. I wish I could be there to greet each of you personally and to thank you for what you and your families have given to Grace through its nearly 60-year history.

Many thanks, Jan Burton