



# Then and Now

## Memories of a Beginning Teacher

My introduction to the Stillwater Community Center was during the time it served as Stillwater Junior High School. I arrived as an anxious student teacher with hopes of learning the confidence and skill of a real teacher.

My two cooperating teachers were Bernice Parker, scientific geography on the second floor, and Grace Mueller, American History in the cafeteria/home economics building located in the present parking lot.

What a wonderful environment to learn how a classroom worked from the other side of the desk and how a school system worked. The school not only housed Principal Sanders' office, but also the Stillwater superintendent and school district finance offices.

The next year, with an infant at home, I substituted in many classrooms trying to fulfill teacher's instructions and quickly found my weaknesses. Any music class needed to be turned into a study hall!

During the summer, the principal Mr. Rhea contacted me to apply for an opening to teach 7th grade English and Oklahoma history/civics. I was hired and was given Room 100, which had two doors with glass windows onto the main hall. The superintendent's office was on the east, finance and principal's office on the west. A perfect place for a first-year teacher to be observed by administration, staff and the community.

Wanda Earnest was in the classroom across the hall. She taught 7th grade English and became my support and lifelong friend.

During the next two years, in addition to the 7th grade English and Oklahoma history, 8th grade English was added to my schedule. Many of my students were in more than one subject with me and some were in all three during junior high. A few were later in my world geography or American history class at Stillwater High School. The opportunity to work with these young people is a wonderful memory.

Years later I became a member of the Sister Cities Council and was delighted to find the meetings were held in Room 100 at the Stillwater Community Center – my first classroom as a junior high teacher.

This room is now named the Kameoka Room to honor our sister city of Kameoka, Japan.

The Japanese culture emphasizes presenting gifts, not only at official meetings, but individual contacts. The Kameoka Room, the lobby of the Lowry Activity Center (previously the girl's gym) and the display areas (outside the junior high library) at the south entrance of the lobby provide ideal display space for items from Kameoka – gifts from city officials, Japanese visitors and items collected by Stillwater residents.



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**Nelda Helt** served as a classroom teacher for Stillwater Public Schools. The first three years were at Stillwater Junior High Schools, now the Stillwater Community Center. The building was a wonderful place to begin a career.

The Stillwater Community Center Foundation and the Friends of Stillwater Community Center strive to provide supplemental resources for the Stillwater Community Center to ensure its accessibility, affordability and sustainability for its use by residents and visitors of Stillwater and surrounding area. Visit [www.sccfriends.com](http://www.sccfriends.com) for more information.

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