

Freedom and learning part of this class

"I don't think you can teach about everything with just books."

--Mrs. Marion Spencer

By NANCY STEIN

Happiness and good fortune is having Marion Spencer for your first or second grade teacher.

This "super lady" teaches a mixed first and second grade at the Flanders School. She's been on the job for 18 years and loved nearly every minute of it.

You know as you walk into her classroom that this is going to be different—because it looks different.

A colorful divider sets off a corner of the room which contains an over-sized sofa, a large easy chair, a long coffee table stacked with books and a phonograph with ear phones.

Hanging over the area is a colorful sign reading: "Quiet Stuff."

YOU CAN WORK in this quiet area when you like, or take a nap if you're tired. Mrs. Spencer recognizes her children as people who spend a long day in school.

"When they start school I tell them there is nothing that will happen in here that is worth crying over, and I mean it."

She also tells them on the first day: "I'll never spank, slap, send anyone out in the hall or to the principal's office as punishment, and I never have."

"After all," she continues with a gleam in her eye, "what can they learn in the hall except how to rearrange the coats and boots that are hanging there."

THAT'S MARION Spencer. cheerful, practical, friendly, full of energy and very down to earth.

There is a full sized, real skeleton in the room along with two very contented-looking gerbils, an extra large drum, and a sewing basket.

Children's art work hangs from

every light fixture and on every available wall space. The room is homey.

About the only spot that doesn't look well-used is Mrs. Spencer's desk. That's because she goes to the children instead of having them come to her.

It's not unusual for her to sit down next to a child at his or her desk to work out a problem. Her methods are successfully unorthodox. She teaches science but uses books.

"I don't believe a child should learn science from a book," she explains. "Science is exploring."

Science is experimenting and doing.

If they learn it from a book and then don't get the results the book says they will, they've failed.

"That's not science. They do it without the book, by taste, touch, feel, sight and common sense."

"This way they learn that if you do one thing you get one result and if you do another, you get another result. That's science."

Then she smiles and says, "How can you teach magnets with a book?"

The room is filled with weights, measures, clocks, weather guides and temperature charts.

The Xerox Corp. thinks her method is so good that they've asked her to test a non-book science program they've created.

Her kids don't know it, but they're trying it out right now.

THE CLASSROOM is relaxed and the kids are learning.

"I don't care where they work. They're welcome to leave the room anytime they like just so they tell me where they'll be."

Did anyone ever forget to come back?

"Just once. I lost a boy for a

while because he was so fascinated with a program going on in the gym that he lost track of time, but he was the only one."

How do her children fare in school later on?

"To my knowledge," she said, "there has only been one who didn't finish high school."

One of her biggest concerns is slotting children into categories.

In her classroom, children read all the books whether they're first- or second graders. As one little girl explained, "We have no grade books."

Mrs. Spencer asks, "Why should we tell a child he can't read a book?"

She also wishes there was less testing. "Adults don't expect to be tested on everything they read in the paper each day, and no one cares if they don't read every page. Why should children always have to?"

MARION SPENCER wasn't always a teacher.

She's the mother of two children, three step-children, 19 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. "I went to college for one year and then went off to join the WACs, but they wouldn't have me because I'm blind in one eye."

After that she married, had children and over a period of eight years of night school and summer school earned her teaching certificate.

"It took me 20 years from the time I left high school until I graduated from college."

She loves teaching so much that she has allowed it to separate her, on a part-time basis, from her husband.

"He's retired and we have a home in Port Sanilac.



A TEACHER AT WORK

Mrs. Marion Spencer emphasizes freedom in the classroom.

Community leader

Executive Glen Mingo Dies

Funeral services were held March 29 for Glen Mingo, 49, of 29331 Piper Lane, Farmington.

Mingo, chief financial officer of the Automobile Club of Michigan, died of a heart attack March 26 while playing basketball at Beechview Elementary School in Farmington.

He was active in the International Youth for Understanding Student Exchange Program and housed eight foreign students at his house in recent years.

MINGO WAS an active member of the Shepherd King Lutheran Church, in West Bloomfield, serving as a member of the church council, Elder for Education and was a former Sunday school teacher. He also served on the executive board of the Clinton Valley Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Joining the Insurance Exchange at the Auto Club in 1959 as an administrative assistant, he was named assistant treasurer in 1960 and treasurer in 1968.

He was a member of the Financial Analysts Society, the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis.

Surviving are his wife, Vera; three daughters, Mrs. Gloria McCracken, Julie and Barbara; three sons, Roger, Paul and Jack; three grandchildren; one brother and two sisters.

SERVICES WERE held at the Shepherd King Lutheran Church in West Bloomfield, with burial at Glen Eden Cemetery in Livonia.

Memorial tributes may be made to Shepherd King Lutheran Church, the Farmington Area Advisory Council or the Youth for Understanding Program.

Andy Campbell, Debbie Nymshack and Paul Breeding rehearse for the production.



FARMINGTON HIGH

Andy Campbell, Debbie Nymshack and Paul Breeding rehearse for the production.

Musical is coming to Farmington High

Farmington senior high will present "L'il Abner" April 4, 5 and 6 at 8 p.m. in the school auditorium.

All seats are reserved.

The play centers around the "nick town" of Dogpatch, U.S.A., where relaxation and lazy enjoyment are a must, according to the play producers.

Dogpatch has been named the "most unnecessary town in the whole U.S.A." in the play, and has been selected as a nuclear weapons testing ground.

The play is directed by drama instructor Ves Spindler and student teacher Susan Miles. Vocal direction is by William Feucht, and orchestral direction is by Hal Kacanek.

Leads are Daisy Mae, Debbie Peletier, L'il Abner, Andy Campbell; Marilyn Sam, Beth McKee; Earthquake McGoon, Geary Mayer; Mammy Yo-



GLEN MINGO

Farmington Observer & Eccentric
Published every Monday and Thursday by the Observer & Eccentric News papers, 3621 Schoolcraft Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48150. Second-class Postage paid at Livonia, Michigan 48151. Address all mail (subscriptions, change of address, Form 3579) to P.O. Box 242, Livonia, Michigan 48151. Telephone 261-3900.

Co-Publishers
Henry M. Hogan, Jr. Philip H. Power
Editor
Dan McCosh
HOME DELIVERY SERVICE
Newstand.....per copy, 15c
Carrier.....monthly, 75c

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