

“A WOMAN OF DISTINCTION”

For 38 years, my deceased twin sister, Sheila, and I had a wonderful career teaching children in Brentwood, and hopefully making a big impact on them to become caring, kind, helpful members of society. I feel that it was a job well done. When we retired in 1998, we continued our relationship with our beloved Brentwood and their inhabitants.

We had a “Life after Retirement” career as co-authors of children’s picture storybooks, and that kept us involved with teaching, kids and schools. It was a very exciting new part of our life.

When Sheila passed away in 2015, I refused to become a recluse or to avoid the goal of helping kids and their families. Everyone thought that I would not succeed, but I put on my “Happy Face” and began a new phase of my life. I still visit schools, both virtually and in-school, I have been a Mentor for the N.Y. State mentoring program, which hopefully will resume when our school life is more normal again, and I continue doing my volunteer work with ROBS’ Project Hope.

I’ve won a few awards throughout the years, mostly with Sheila. In 1978 we were chosen as “Brentwood’s Teachers of the Year.” Actually the board usually picks one winner, but when we were told that they wanted to nominate one of us and that we should decide which one, we politely told them, “It’s double or nothing” so we both won together. Our life and career was a team effort.

We also won awards from the Town of Islip for 1st place in the media category for four of our books. We were so proud!

At the beginning of October, 2022, I was in shock when I received an e-mail from Keith P. Brown, the Assemblyman of District #12. They were having a “Women of Distinction” Awards event, and I was one of the chosen winners. It seems that I was nominated by Eileen Pinto, a teacher at Laurel Park, the school I retired from. What made this so touching was that Eileen was my former Kindergarten student in the 1970’s when Northwest was an Elementary School. She said that Sheila and I were her role models from the time she was a youngster.

I was invited to an Awards Brunch at the Crab Meadow Country Club in Northport. I made it my “Brentwood Family “ Celebration, as if it wasn’t for the district I never would have had such a fruitful life. Of course Eileen was there as a friend, former pupil and nominator. Vivian Renta Skyer, another special former Kindergarten student, was also present. I am so proud of her as she became an Optometrist and came back to her town to practice there. Then I included Dr. Eric Snell, the present Principal of Laurel Park. I have never worked under Eric but have come to know him as a very responsible and dedicated administrator who just completed his doctoral degree. My group would not have been complete without paying homage to the parents that are such a great part of our education system. Jean Finfrock, friend and former PTA President of Laurel Park, was also my guest.

So they were there to honor me at this touching and delightful event. I felt so proud when I was called up by Assemblyman Brown to receive my award. I kept thinking, and actually said to the audience, “NOT BAD FOR AN 84 YEAR OLD!”

My certificate hangs proudly on the wall of my little home office. It is a reminder to me that I have been so fortunate in my choice of profession, and the support system that Brentwood has always shown for its educators.

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