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## Power, Fame, Hard Work

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# THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

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## Teach, If You Want

# Power, Fame, Hard Work

By Gertrude Herr

**T**EACH and see the world. That, I think was my motto when I said yes to a school superintendent who called me long distance during my senior year in college and asked if I would accept a position teaching mathematics in his high school.

Teachers are needed all over the world, so why not follow this fascinating profession; stay two years in one place (one year is not fair, for you do better work the second), then go somewhere else—teach and travel. It sounded like a good program. It was—but it hasn't worked for me.

The staying two years in one place, then moving on—that's the part that hasn't worked. Teachers, like doctors and ministers, push their roots too deep into community life to be frequently transplanted. Two years may not be long enough to give your best to a community which has trusted you to lead its young people into what they hope you can make alluring fields of knowledge.

When girls say to me, "I think I'll teach until I find something else to do," I always say, "I hope you do not succeed in getting a position." There is just one legitimate reason for teaching. You would rather teach than do anything else in the world.

**I** AM often asked, "Don't you get tired of teaching? It is so monotonous; the same old subjects year in and year out." It is true that the fundamental things in mathematics haven't changed much even in the years I've been teaching. That's one of the satisfying things about mathematics; its dependability and steadfastness. There is nothing "jittery" about it except as it affects the nerves of some freshman. The part that is new year in and year out is the reaction of each individual student as he sits in your class and cooperates with you in trying to make his own the knowledge

that is the result of hundreds of years of research and experience of others. It is a great adventure, this being guide in the hazardous pursuit of ideas.

If you want power—then teach. A man said to me recently, "I ruled my own

### The Ringed Moon

**T**HE moon is ringed tonight—  
Slow moving clouds have tried  
To dim the blurred pale light.  
A sudden breeze blows by  
From new turned fields, and trees  
Rustle softly. The air smells damp,  
Earthy, and fresh. One sees  
The clouds massed, a ramp  
Of black against the sky.  
Where once the stars had lain.  
Leaves and grasses breathe a sigh  
At the first faint rush of rain.

—Hilde Kronsage.

school until my daughter started to school. Now the teacher rules it." A teacher who has the respect and regard of her students has an influence which staggers one with its importance. My only temptation to resign came after my first two weeks of teaching. A mother came to me in great seriousness and said, "I hope you never do or say anything of which my daughter (a high school freshman) can't approve, for she has taken you as her ideal." I was petrified! Simple, unaffected living was difficult for a while, but I finally settled down to normal routine again without giving up my job.

If you like difficult situations—then teach. Before I decided to give up high school teaching and take up college work, I was about to accept a position in a big city high school. The superintendent, a gracious man of experience, was afraid I might make a mistake in leaving the principalship of a smaller

school to join the organization of a city system. He took me to the window of his office and pointed to the street below, lined on both sides by automobiles. "Every one of those," he said, "was parked by a student who is in this building now, but wishes he was out there in his car. Can you teach mathematics to compete with those cars?" he asked. "Probably not," I replied, "but it is a fascinating game to try, and if mathematics doesn't win it isn't the fault of mathematics."

If you want fame—then teach. Not in a college or large school, but in a rural school or small community. If you want to be talked of at every dinner table in town, be "the new teacher" next September. If you have red hair or are very tall or very short, or if you make any mistakes the first day your fame may even extend to the business districts, where merchant and purchaser may exchange ideas over the counter about your worth to the community.

**I**F you want wealth—don't teach. Teaching has never been highly paid. At present with the great over supply of those wanting positions, the salary level is very low. There are, however, encouraging signs that self-respecting communities are raising the salaries of their teachers to pre-depression levels as fast as taxes will allow.

Most teachers live well, save for a rainy day, and have three months of vacation that includes study or travel. In fact, the long vacation is one of the advantages of the teaching profession. It gives time to indulge in one's hobby interests. It is the vacations which have given me my chance to follow the second part of my early motto—travel. I spent the savings of my first year to take a trip to the Rocky Mountains. Every summer since, without exception, I have

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## If You Want

(Begins on page 1)

done some traveling. Tours in Europe and the United States have given me physical, mental and, I trust, spiritual relaxation.

My recipe for tired body or mind is a trip to the Rockies with days of long hikes or hard climbs or, if lazy, reading beside a log fire. There is nothing small about mountains. They rise to such mighty heights with such calm stability! They are so reassuring! Mathematics is like that, too. It is so old, so truthful, so difficult to scale if one would reach its heights. It is like the great peaks of the continental divide that determines the flow of streams to the east and to the west. Mathematics from its heights turns the streams of its usefulness into the avenues of other sciences and makes them powerful in their service to humanity.

If you want a job which will give you 100 percent returns in lasting satisfaction—then teach. I would add—teach mathematics. It is well that everyone does not agree with me or the field would be over-crowded. At the present time when educational costs are being cut, it is well to be prepared to teach subjects which are stable in the curriculum. Mathematics is still one of those. When combined with general science or home economics or some other required subject, it gives one dependable equipment for securing a high school position. College positions in mathematics are scarce for women and required advanced degrees and experience.

The greatest satisfaction I find in teaching either in high school or college is the chance to help individuals learn to trust their own mental powers. Seeing a student get a new combination of ideas, seeing him clear away unimportant things and arrive at the main issue, seeing him drop the closed mind attitude for one of open mindedness, seeing him experience the great joy of pushing his mind into new conquests—these are indeed satisfying experiences for a teacher.

After all, it is not merely a subject one is teaching. The great adventure is working with a personality. When I get to the place where I am sure I know the best way to teach my subject and just how to handle any individual student I shall resign. Such a condition is a sure sign one has fallen into the great hazard of the teaching profession—a rut. Any one of us who is in a rut is already half buried and some one should mercifully finish the job and thus help save the youth of the land.

Big buttons on children's clothing makes it easier for the child to dress himself. It's easier to get a good hold on a large sized button.

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