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**'I want to help people any way I can.'**

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For Julia Grandle, the city's retired teacher of the year, the end of her career didn't mean her life of service was over.

Pete Marovich / DN-R

## Grandle Gets Retired Teacher Award

By **JENNY JONES**  
*Daily News-Record*

**HARRISONBURG** — Nothing gives Julia "Judy" Nelle Blosser Grandle greater pleasure than to see her former Harrisonburg High School students excel in life.

Grandle, 82, a resident at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, taught mathematics at Harrisonburg High from 1963 to 1987. Throughout

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her 24-year career, she touched many lives and now, in retirement, she continues to serve the community.

On Wednesday, Grandle was honored for her work in education with this year's Harrisonburg City Schools Retired Outstanding Teacher Award. The Harrisonburg Education Foun-

dation and Summit Community Bank sponsored the award.

A former student, Jean Gearing, nominated Grandle for the recognition.

"Julia Grandle always had high expectations for her students," Gearing wrote in her nomination letter. "She was as active in not only her teaching requirements, but in student activities, also."

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# Grandle Found Her Way To Teaching After Interest In Architecture Was Quelled

Retired

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Even now, having been retired for more than 10 years, Grandle hasn't forgotten about her students. She often keeps an eye out for news about them. Some have become lawyers, politicians, doctors and teachers, she said.

"They didn't all turn out like that, but I do feel real good about some of them," Grandle said. "I'm so proud of what my students have accomplished."

## Top Priority: Teaching License

Grandle was born and raised in Harrisonburg and graduated from Harrisonburg High School in 1943 with aspirations of becoming an architect.

After graduation, Grandle married Jimmy Grandle and attended Madison College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a minor in social studies and psychology.

While her interest was in architecture, Grandle grew up with a father who believed "women had their place" so she didn't pursue a career in the field, which was dominated by

men. Instead, she stayed home to raise her three sons.

When her oldest son began kindergarten at Waterman Elementary School, the principal knew Grandle had a college degree and often requested that she serve as a substitute teacher.

"He would call me up and say, 'If you don't come to school today, your son won't have a teacher,'" said Grandle, whose mother was a math teacher and father was a businessman. "I found out that I did enjoy the classroom."

Around the same time, Grandle also became heavily involved in the Parent Teacher Association at the local, regional and state levels. Through that work, she learned that many teachers in the classrooms were not licensed and not qualified to teach.

Interested in becoming a full-time teacher, Grandle knew she couldn't do so without first earning a license. She worked out a deal with her oldest son to help her take care of her youngest son, who had spina bifida, while she pursued a master's degree.

In 1963, the same year her oldest son started college, Grandle graduated from Madison College with a master's in mathematics. That fall, she started as a full-time math teacher at Harrisonburg High.

## Admirable Gesture

Grandle has many fond memories of her work in education, but one of the most memorable students she can recall was a boy who took her consumer math class.

The class was one that Grandle felt every student in the school should take, but often the students who enrolled were academically weak, she said.

On this particular day, Grandle had given the class an exam. As she graded the tests, she noticed that this boy received a much higher grade than was typical for him. Grandle recalls thinking it was suspicious, but she didn't give it much thought beyond that.

As she finished grading the rest of the exams, Grandle said, the boy returned. "He said, 'I have to tell you something. I cheated on my exam,'" she recalled.

Although she was disappointed that he had cheated, Grandle said she was awestruck that the student walked back to school and faced the truth.

"I admired that guy, and I still do," she said. "That is something I will always remember."

## The Big Pen Box

Another experience Grandle said she would never forget was the time she and the students she worked with as a student council adviser spent the

day at Langley High School in McLean.

Langley's principal and John "Jack" Marsh, a former classmate of Grandle's who had become secretary of the Army, set up a VIP tour of the White House for her and

her students.

As the group looked into the state dining room, the wall parted and an official-looking guy walked through the opening. The official whispered into the ear of the man leading Grandle's class tour.

The guide then told Grandle and her students that President Gerald Ford wanted them to go to the Rose Garden. When they arrived in the garden, Grandle recalled the president was there with members of Congress and the White House press corps.

Grandle and the students got to witness Ford sign a bill into law. As if that wasn't special enough, Grandle said, the president gave her and her students each a pen from the Presidential Pen Box.

"We were all very impressed," Grandle said. That "was one of my real great experiences" as a teacher.

## Still Learning, Still Teaching

Aside from teaching math, working with PTA and serving as a student council adviser, Grandle also helped put on the first spring musical at Harrisonburg High and helped

found the Harrisonburg Educational Foundation.

Outside of the school, Grandle authored the book, "Pot of Gold," the true story of her struggle to raise a son with spina bifida. She also volunteered at Ottobine United Methodist Church, where she is a member, and served on several boards and committees throughout the community.

These days, Grandle continues contributing to the community. She sings in her church choir, volunteers at VMRC, works with students at Waterman Elementary School, tutors a Kurdish family in English, and knits clothing for newborn babies.

When she's not serving others, Grandle said she enjoys traveling and getting together with her friends.

"I have a reputation. My neighbors always say, 'Your car's never in the parking lot. You're always gone,'" Grandle said. That's because "I want to do things. I want to learn. And I want to help people any way I can."

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— JULIA GRANDLE  
ON HOW HER SON'S  
PRINCIPAL BROUGHT  
HER INTO TEACHING