

Linda Skinner, 100 - In a troubled corner of - Omaha World-Herald (NE) - May 27, 2016 - page 03B

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In the 1970s Kellom Elementary School sat next to the Logan Fontenelle housing projects, which teachers called "Little Vietnam."

Many of the kids there had parents who were absent or in trouble. But kindergarten teacher Pauline "Linda" Skinner could convey how much she cared and help them see a life outside of the projects.

"She made the kids feel like they were worth a million dollars, even though some were a little naughty," said Kathy J. Trotter, 63, of Omaha, who student-taught under Skinner in the early 1970s. "She sat them down and just talked to them, you know, just like they were little miniature adults. ... Momma Skinner was a role model for the kids."

Skinner, 100, of Winston-Salem, N.C., a longtime Omaha educator, died last week. Services were Wednesday in Eden, N.C., where she was born in 1915.

"She was no nonsense, but she was caring," said Trotter, retired principal at Druid Hill Elementary School and the first female principal at Jesuit Middle School, now Jesuit Academy. "The students knew that she loved them."

Among the things she would do for her students was take them home if their parents didn't come to pick them up.

"She loved to help people, especially kids. It wouldn't be anything to see her buying clothes for kids," Trotter said. "She was just a caring person you don't see a lot nowadays."

She graduated from Knoxville College in Tennessee in 1937 and taught in North Carolina for several years. It was there she met Eugene Skinner of Omaha. The couple married and moved to Omaha in 1941.

She retired in the early 1980s after teaching at **Howard Kennedy** and Kellom Elementary Schools in north Omaha.

"My 40 years teaching was a joy," Skinner told World-Herald columnist Janice Gilmore in December, as she turned 100. "I enjoyed every bit of it."

She trained a number of student teachers. Trotter credits Skinner with starting her off on the right foot; the two remained close, with Skinner becoming a mother figure to Trotter.

Before she started student teaching, Trotter said, Skinner told her there would be no time for her

to just watch. Instead she would have to jump right in and begin teaching classes on her first day as a student teacher.

Trotter, now the coordinator for the Single Parent Homemaker program at Metropolitan Community College, said she wasn't happy about that at the time. But it worked out well.

"It was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. ... I don't know about anybody else, but she just threw me" into the job, Trotter said. "She thought it was wasted time to spend two or three months just sitting around."

Skinner's husband Eugene, Omaha Public Schools' first African-American full-time teacher, principal and assistant superintendent, died in 1993, and she moved back to North Carolina in 2000.

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CITATION (APA STYLE)

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