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Subject: granfor
Date: Tuesday, May 4, 1999 at 6:55:11 am CDT
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Certify: N

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> Fourth grade at Lincoln Elementary has been etched in my mind as one of the best years of school ever. It wasn't my friends that made it great nor was it my newly acquired ability to skip 3 rungs per swing on the monkey bars on the playground, a feat that earned me the admiration of girls and boys alike. 4th grade was great because of my teacher Mr. Granfor. Although my memory has faded a bit, I can still see his gentle smile and hear his encouraging voice as the class practiced the math concepts of the day. The timed tests were my favorite because we competed for our seat in the royal court. The king sat in the last seat of the row closest to the door, and the queen sat immediately in front of the king. I was pretty good at math and usually made it to the queen's position each week, and the king was always the same smug boy named Chris. I was content for the first few weeks, but then I realized that I wanted more. I wanted to be KING!

> Mr. Granfor was encouraging. He told me to practice the times table every night (I really had trouble with the 11's) and one day it would work out. I practiced, but it never seemed to give me the edge over King Chris. I needed an edge and I knew what to do. Mr. Granfor liked plants and had a collection sitting on the window ledge. One day, I discovered that he didn't have any of my favorite plant, one I called a teddy bear plant because of its soft, fuzzy leaves. That night, my mother helped me repot one of the plants we had at home, and I brought it to school on Friday...TIMES TABLE TEST DAY! Surely this would give me the edge! As he corrected the tests at his desk, I sat nervously and glared at King Chris. As he read the results, I was horrified! Not only did I not get to be King...I was dethroned by someone else. I wasn't even queen anymore! Obviously Mr. Granfor couldn't be bought!

> I eventually did earn the King's seat (Chris was absent on test day which automatically earned you a seat in the front row,) but when I got there, it wasn't all that I had thought it would be. Why did I work so hard for that class? Why do I remember his name and so much from his class when I can't remember my home base teacher with whom I spent most of the day? I'm confident that Mr. Granfor's response on that day was no different from any other day. He was consistently wonderful and expected nothing less than my very best every day. He challenged me and always made me feel that I was important. There was no failure, just room for improvement. I cried on the last day of school when I realized that I wouldn't even be able to visit him the next year since I was going to a new school. Years later, as I sat in my teacher education classes at St. Olaf, I was asked to reflect back to a classroom that made me feel good. Mr. Granfor came to mind immediately. He made a connection all those years ago that remains today, and every day as I greet my seventh graders, I remember that and wonder if today will be the day that I make an unknown connection with one of my students. Thank you, Mr. Granfor, for not only teaching me math, but also for teaching me how to be a good teacher.