

# Jan Fluke retires with accolades from community, peers

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For 13 years, Jan Fluke has lived her childhood dream of becoming a teacher. June 27, she retired to the accolades of her principal, parents and her students.

Bob Owen interviewed the outgoing woman as she begins a new chapter of her life.

As a young woman, Jan Fluke dreamed of becoming a teacher or librarian. But, the realities of life got in the way. Her family needed the \$40 a week she brought home. Raising her two children, Jessica and Michael, she set her personal dreams aside.

In 1994, she realized her wish. Leaving behind jobs as a postmistress, retail clerk and receptionist, she headed off to the United States to St. Bonavista University for teacher training.

It was the launch of a whole new life, one that ended last week in Castleton.

Asked about the highlights of

her career in education, Mrs. Fluke responds.

"I loved working with the small staffs at Grafton and Castleton Public Schools. I loved working with the kids and seeing the light turn on.

"My biggest kick this year came when the kids came up to me and excitedly told me they had found 'a really cool word'."

The love of written language, and awareness of social justice were the two key gifts she hopes she has left with her children.

It was her father who introduced her to the library and gave the child of a poor family a passport to the world. Mrs. Fluke recognizes the value of reading — she was the first in her family to earn a university degree.

Contrary to popular convention, she sees the value in having children for more than one year, as often happens in a small school.

"You can build on what they have previously learned much



BOB OWEN / SUN MEDIA

Jan Fluke closed the door last week on a dream fulfilled when she retired from Castleton Public School.

more easily," she says.

It reminds her of some places in Europe where teachers have students for three years then start with a new group.

What is her greatest regret?

With a tinge of sadness, Mrs. Fluke reflects that she didn't become a teacher much earlier in her life, and that her mother didn't live to see her realize her goal.

What will she miss? The joy of the morning entry will bring fond memories. There was nothing like the excitement on the children's faces when they arrived in class, she says: "Every day was a new day."

So, too, every day there was something to chuckle about, she says.

She won't miss the report cards, the paperwork and the assessing for the sake of assessing.

What lies in the future for the new retiree?

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Both her children live some distance away. There will be time to travel.

Some time in the next year she plans to visit Italy "with some erstwhile teacher friends".

In the longer term, she can see herself teaching English as a second language either overseas or to immigrant women.

In those long spare hours ahead, she plans to bury herself in some delicious books, reading to her heart's content.

### A fulfilling career

It may not have been a long career but it was fulfilling, she says of her teaching career.

She is quick to thank the parents of her former students for being so supportive.

"Whatever I asked for, I got," she marvels.

Retiring is by no means a unique

experience. But, retiring to widespread praise is less common.

The principal at Castleton Public School, Michele Adams, was effusive in her praise of the retiring Grade 4-5 teacher, as were numerous parents.

Mrs. Adams described Mrs. Fluke as a wonderful caring person, dedicated to her students right to the last day.

Speaking more universally, the principal went on, stating, "she makes the world better by being in it. Mrs. Fluke is a super-nice person — the kind of person you would want to have for your child's teacher."

Speaking of Mrs. Fluke's teaching, the principal enthused, "She did it all — naturally.

"She is creative and goes above and beyond what is required."

In her Medieval Times unit, the kids dressed in costumes and acted out plays as their teacher brought the curriculum to life.

Mrs. Fluke's passion for literature did not go unnoticed. It affected staff and students alike. She was always out there finding the best book for a child.

Even Mrs. Adams' daughter, a student at another school, was hooked on books suggested by the retiring teacher.

The staff at Castleton thought of each giving her a copy of their favourite

books — then realized she probably would have already read them.

### The parents speak

Parents, too, had their say.

Kim Walker was categorical.

"Mrs. Fluke was the best thing that ever happened to my children. Losing her will be like losing one of the family. She is a beautiful lady who has touched hearts in the community."

Ms. Walker's daughter considers Mrs. Fluke to be a second grandmother.

Gladys Morris's child had Mrs. Fluke in Grafton, then in Castleton. Mrs. Morris remembers when the teacher brought a live, miniature horse into the kindergarten classroom. It was a real hands-on experience.

"There's something about her. She lights a spark in children," Mrs. Morris says, concurring with Mrs. Walker, "Once you meet her you love her."

Teresa MacDonald says Mrs. Fluke has done an amazing job teaching her daughter: "Everyone in the school is going to miss her."

Perhaps the final word should go to Mrs. Adams: "She's the kind of person I hope to stay in touch with."

Telling words indeed, in praise of the woman inspired enough by literature that she chose to pass her gift to others.

Anniversary



Shirley & Marvin McComb would like you to help us

celebrate

50 years of marriage

Saturday, July 26, 2008

2pm until.....

at their farm in Morganston.

We hope for a day of music, so bring your

instruments, a lawn chair and

something for pot-luck at six o'clock

Best wishes only.

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