

LaChance continued . . .

Q: How does it feel to be on the student side of the classroom?

A: It's great! In fact, it's a lot more fun than being a teacher. The pressure for me to keep the class going is off and I have the joy of participating in the intellectual banter. I discovered that being a student gave me fresh enthusiasm for learning and for teaching.

Q: Did you have to make any major adjustments in your personal life in order to go back to school?

A: Pursuing a graduate degree is demanding and the decision to return to school changes your lifestyle quite a bit. I have a 15-acre ranch and for the past several years, I raised and trained horses. Every day after work, I rode about four hours, and my weekends were devoted to keeping the fences repaired and taking care of the animals in addition to more riding. By 1981, my children were grown and I was beginning to feel the need for a change, so I started selling the horses and phasing out that part of my life. I returned to school and continued teaching until this year when I was granted a sabbatical. Now I have one horse that I ride for my own enjoyment and I stay home on weekends to study.

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Q: After you complete your graduate work, will you continue to teach at the junior college level?

A: Definitely. I enjoy the junior college system because the students are very enthusiastic about learning. Unlike high school, they are not forced to be there and they arrive with a lot of positive expectations. I think they feel that junior college is their second chance to learn, especially if they didn't do well in high school. About 75 percent of the students who attend a junior college will not go on to a four-year university, so we have the challenge of giving them as much guidance as possible in a two-year period. In my classes, I try to open the minds of my students and encourage them to evaluate their lives and the accepted values of their culture. I challenge them to think and to believe that their thoughts are worth being expressed well. It is possible to convince others that they are worthwhile and that they ought to develop themselves. It's even possible to save some from self-destruction. Sometimes I think educators have given too much emphasis to preparing students for a career. I believe that education should help people to become imaginative and help them to integrate skills that will enable them to learn throughout their lives.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A: I am planning to go to London and do research after I graduate and complete my sabbatical there. I want to study Jane Ellen Harrison's unpublished materials in Newnham Library at Cambridge. (Harrison is a feminist mythologist who wrote during the turn of the century.) I would also like to attend seminars at the University of London that deal with research in composition. Going back to school has inspired me to do some writing about teaching composition and some of my philosophies about education. I can see how completing my degree has created new opportunities for me to learn and grow as a person. I believe that every human being can improve if he or she is shown how.