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Jane Elwood... 102 and still learning

At 102 years old, Jane Elwood has taught hundreds of “kids” in Batavia. She retired from teaching in 1960 after over 30 years in education— a career that started in a one room schoolhouse in Batavia and ended in the “old-old” Grace McWayne School. Yet at

her age she’s still passionate about learning. At the age of 101, she asked her pastor if he could please start a new Bible study.

At the recent Jane Elwood Day celebration at the “new” Grace McWayne School, Rev. Michael Stoner, senior pastor of Batavia United Methodist Church where she has worshiped for 92 years, reminded the students in attendance that Mrs. Elwood started teaching when buggies and street cars were the modes of transportation in Batavia. “Now we have a Lexus that parks itself,” said Stoner. “She was alive when the first phone was invented, now she knows how to use a cell phone,” he adds. She has indeed seen a lot of changes in Batavia.

Her days as a teacher began in 1924 when she started substituting. She earned \$3 a day. At that time, teachers didn’t have to have a college degree, although she later earned a teaching certificate. A conversation with Mrs. Elwood about her teaching days is sure to raise eyebrows of many kids today. She started teaching in a one room school house near a pond where kids would ice skate at recess and their baked potatoes would cook during the day on the stove which also provided



Jane with her former 5th grade student Nancy McCloud. Nancy is the current second grade teacher who organized the Jane Elwood Day celebration.

heat for the school. Those were different times. She also recalls the “ditto” machine which came much later in her career. “You had to have a good vocabulary to use that machine,” she says in an interview, referring to the fact that it was a frustrating piece of equipment.

Oliver Wolcott and James Hubbard, both in their late 80s and former students have fond memories of Mrs. Elwood. Wolcott recalls her patience, “she put up with us,” he says.

Other former students attended the recognition day in June. One is Nancy McCloud, who retired herself at the end of this school year and helped coordinate the event. McCloud remembers when Mrs. Elwood invited the class to her wedding when they were in fifth grade. “She has always loved her town (Batavia) and is very proud and we learned a lot about the history,” says McCloud.

It’s ironic Jane Elwood’s recognition day would take place at Grace McWayne School. It was Grace McWayne herself who taught Mrs. Elwood to read when she was a child. She in turn has helped enrich the lives of several generations of school children in Batavia.