

Have you ever been so fortunate to have had a dream come true and turn out even better than you had wished possible? I have.

As in my dreams, my life has been filled with serendipity – the gift of finding something of value. Today I am most sentimental about it. As I walked into this conference center, I was flooded with a feeling of déjà vu and memories.

I remember **41** years ago I dreamed about being the best Kindergarten teacher I could be while having the most wonderful time with 5 year olds. I taught double session kindergarten and had double the fun with my two classes. However, I also found the isolation of kindergarten teachers caught in the differences of school scheduling, curricula, developmental needs and workshops for K-6 teachers. Kindergarten teachers had to make it all fit the needs of five year olds.

Then **25** years ago I found a special place for Kindergarten teachers at the New England Kindergarten Conference and dreamed it possible here. We founded the Bay Area Kindergarten Conference. I remember the \$500 in seed money from Alphaphonics, the file in the milk carton crate in the trunk of my car, volunteers, homemade tags with sticker balloons, 20 sessions, San Francisco State University support, 160 attendees and the wonderful mix of educators that I brought together to plan and organize. I remember the collaboration, consensus, fun, excitement, mutual respect, dedication, and vision of 13 kindergarten teachers determined to put on a conference – in six weeks! And then did it ever grow - from 160 to over 3000 teachers and into the Northern California Kindergarten Conference and then the California Kindergarten Conference.

**20** years ago I dreamed that we needed more, something that would perpetuate what we had started – a nonprofit based on the same founding principles and dedication as the conference. It took two years time with the dedicated conference committee to culture the climate to transfer oversight of the conference to a fledgling association.

Then **18** years ago the California Kindergarten Association was born and with it more dreams along the way. Each person's dream was first spoken in a whisper of wishful thinking and then given wings by the group:

I remember **Linda Becker's** dream to have a CKA art exhibit and art calendar.

I remember **Audrey Sanchez'** dream to have CKA workshops and institutes to spread kindergarten experiences across the state all year long.

I remember **Loretta Roach's** dream for CKA to publish a newsletter – *TAKE FIVE*.

I remember **Violet Robinson's** dream to publish a CKA professional journal.

I remember **Zelda LeFrak's** dream to have a national kindergarten organization.

**12** years ago I dreamed that my time had come to step aside and enable new conference leadership with fresh ideas to emerge. My successor Peggy McNeil emerged as an outstanding leader for this conference, followed by Sr. Judith Reagan, and Meredith Yeh and Robin Rees.

And then it was time for me to retire from leading CKA as founding president from its birth to a 5-year-old ready to take independent steps without “mom”. My leaving would enable and allow others to step up and begin their serendipitous journeys. In the last eight years I have been the quiet and proud observer of CKA as it has continued to develop and mature.

During this time a dream long set aside came true. After 34 years of marriage without children, my husband, Don, and I adopted Ionela, an absolutely wonderful, little girl born in Romania . Two years later when Ionela started school we experienced kindergarten from a wonderful new vantage point as parents.

Thank you for being a part of my dreams. Some years ago, I remarked in all seriousness that the marker of a job well done would be for me to step aside and at year 20 see CKA conference and association alive and well. Not only was that a reality, but here we are at year 25 with CKA vibrant, strong, renewed and dedicated. The torch has passed from me to Vi Robinson to Helen Faul and on to Zelda LeFrak, Gretchen Ross, Carol Gossett, Joann Arowosegbe, and their teams and continuing now with Armando Argandona and his. Indeed I am honored to be here to share in this celebration of 25 years of work in recognition of and tribute to kindergarten.

My CKA membership card with #1 is held close to my heart. Thank you for continuing my dream. Thank you for this very wonderful honor. I hope that for many anniversaries to come that more of you will continue to inspire new dreams and be inspired to work hard for kindergarten teachers and all the kindergarten students in California and beyond.

Together we made a difference! Together you will continue to make a difference!

Judith J. Brown

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