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This piece was written in November, 1985 as part of a salute to Christa in the New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies newsletter, Horizon. Bill Carozza who is now a member of the NHCSS Executive Board served his teaching internship under Christa at Concord High School.

A MEMORABLE INTERNSHIP

Picture this scene if you will: it is homeroom time. To my right there are myriad essays, quizzes, and tests grinning at me like a Cheshire cat; to my left, a 7th grader complains of a stomach ache she got while on recess from Bobby who meant to kick the ball but kicked her instead; I try to divide up the remaining solid milk chocolate Santas to those who sold some over the weekend for the Junior High fund raiser; meanwhile four kids from two different homerooms from three different classes simultaneously ask me to repeat what their homework is for tomorrow. How am I holding up under this familiar scenario? And why do I find myself in this field to begin with? Much of the credit belongs to a high school teacher/astronaut whom I first met in the fall of 1983. Christa McAuliffe was my cooperating teacher and I was her "intern."

The internship process is the ultimate learning experience. The prospective teacher is led into a pack of shrewd students who are well aware of the abilities and weaknesses of whomever dares to teach them. If the intern gains the respect of the kids, then all goes well. My advantage over many other interns was that Christa was the model of respect from staff and students. And, perhaps the main purpose of the cooperating teacher is to effectively model what a teacher should be.

From Christa I learned that a teacher must constantly search for new methods and ideas to reach each student effectively and individually. As much as any social studies teacher in New Hampshire, Christa is active in extra-curricular activities to help the students learn the importance of a social education as well as simply to generate interest. Of course, I had the advantage of tagging along on many of her journeys.

Many in our profession complain of lack of respect for teachers. I discovered in my year of interning that the best method of recouping that respect is maintaining a high level of professionalism in our dealings with each other, the public, parents and students. Christa modeled this attribute wonderfully.

Yet, ingenuity and professionalism will never educate the kids of today. The first and most lasting impression that I remember in that year was the high level of respect and love that Christa had for the students at Concord. I had visited many schools where the teachers were burned out so badly that compassion for the kids was nearly impossible to generate. Christa taught me that listening and dealing with school and personal problems, fears and joy about future life goals, and simply showing the kids you care is an innate part of our job description.

Now I look up at my wife as she glances over our wedding pictures. I chuckle as I see Christa's face in one of them. I'll always be able to say that the first teacher in space was at my wedding. Over on the bookshelf lies a video tape of Christa's appearance on the Johnny Carson Show. Am I surprised that Christa McAuliffe is becoming a household word? And, do I think that this newly found fame is going to somehow change her? No way. I bet right now Christa has pen in hand, devising a new unit or course and itching to teach the kids all the new things she's learned.

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