



nerelj

Thank you to my high school Algebra II teacher, Miss Fugel

December 01, 2010 - Northern New England

People who at the age of three knew what they wanted to be when they grew up have always fascinated me. I certainly wasn't one of them. I didn't even know what a real estate appraiser was or that such a profession even existed until I needed a job and was hired by an MAI appraiser.

My formative years were spent in a sleepy little town north of New York City. During those years, life was different than now-a-days. Working women were an oddity. Moms stayed home and took care of the kids, dads either worked for the railroad or commuted to the city for employment. Television consisted of four stations, and family life was portrayed in such shows as Father Knows Best, Ozzie and Harriet, the Donna Reed Show, I Love Lucy, Leave It to Beaver and the like. The woman's movement was in its infancy and the term Ms. had yet to be introduced.

The one thing my home town was known for was its public education system. The high school typically sent more than 95% of the graduating class to some form of higher education, an impressive statistic even by today's standards. The teachers, with a few notable exceptions, were top quality, particularly in the math department. I had the privilege of being in the advanced math program and took Algebra II in my sophomore year taught by Miss Fugel.

An older woman and the only lady in the math department, Miss Fugel was the most demanding instructor I ever had. She was strict and no-nonsense. Discipline in her classroom was not an issue. All she had to do was look at you just briefly, and you straightened up and paid attention. No note passing or talking in her class! And, no one, absolutely no one, came to class without completing their homework assignment. Even during the evening of the November 9, 1965 Northeast Blackout when more than 30 million people were without electricity for up to 12 hours, did her students even think about not doing their Algebra II homework. It didn't even cross our minds. That night the whole class did their math homework by candlelight down to the last student. The one treasure that Miss Fugel gave me was how to approach word problems. For this I am forever grateful.

After five years of math crammed into four years of high school, I was burnt out. Although I enjoyed math and that feeling of accomplishment after working on a long involved math problem and coming up with the right answer, I had had enough. The only math class I took in college was a statistics class needed to meet graduation requirements. When I was reintroduced to math as a nubile appraiser, it was like getting reacquainted with an old friend.

Now that I have been an appraiser for lo these many years, I realize that my appraisal assignments are really just advanced word problems readily attacked with the same approach as those Algebra II problems. I still get that feeling of accomplishment when the appraisal is done and goes out the door. And for this, I must thank Miss Fugel.

Pat Amidon, MAI, is president of Amidon Appraisal, Portland, ME.