

Meet Our Speaker - Dr. Don Weatherall

Our speaker for Alumni - 2014 is Dr. Don Weatherall, a committed and well-loved staff member of Platte Valley Academy. *Committed* is the operative word when referring to Don Weatherall; his entire life was dedicated to Adventist education. Below is the story of his career, told in his own words.

PVA Years: 1956 - 1964

“After graduating from Union College in June of 1956, we [Don and his wife, Ardyce] arrived on the campus of Platte Valley Academy on July 1. We spent the next eight years there. I started out by being in charge of the school maintenance program. This included the ad building, dorms, cafeteria, gym and staff housing as well as the lawns. Because I had graduated with emphases in Bible, history and physical education, I was allowed to teach World and American History, freshman Bible and all the P.E. classes – boys and girls. In addition, I was in charge of all recreation periods and taught gymnastics on the side. We were senior class sponsors seven of our eight years. I also did the student recruitment which included visiting all homes of academy age students in the state of Nebraska.

During my third year the board voted me to be vice-principal, and I held that title until I left. Actually at the end of my third year, Principal Carter took a call and Elder Peterson, the conference president, came out to see me and asked if I wanted to be voted in as principal. I told him no, but I would like to work on a Masters. He told me I could do it, and the Conference would pay. So I started at Kearney State College and finished a Masters degree in School Administration. When Mr. Vonhof came to be principal, I was still in maintenance for one year, and then he got someone else to do that job, and I became librarian and guidance director. He even sent me to Union one summer for a librarian workshop so I would know what to do.

It is interesting to me that I became a writer later in my career, writing many manuals and textbooks, and all of the Evaluation Instruments used in North America. It is interesting that I have done all this writing and editing, and my second year at PVA it was suggested that I teach English because my English was so poor that it was thought that I would do better if I studied with the students.

I remember my years at PVA with great fondness and enjoyed my times with the students and many of them are my friends to this day. Our times spent playing sports and traveling on tour with music and gymnastic groups were a source of developing relationships outside the classroom. These led to lifelong friendships. A great number of my students went into education, and I have seen them at teachers' conventions through the years.

Our close friends were the Elder and Mrs. Rhoads. I had gone to academy and college with him. We worked together developing a MCC program, and he helped me with my gymnastics program. I left PVA in the spring of 1964 to become the principal of Enterprise Academy at the ripe old age of 28."

After PVA

"I have been asked to tell what has happened to me during these years since I left Platte Valley Academy. It will be very difficult. How can one reduce to a short space, stories about evaluating an SDA Seminary in Croatia and hearing bombs exploding not far away, preaching seven times in seven hours in a Vietnamese refugee camp in Northern Thailand during the Vietnamese War, taking 300 teachers to South America and riding buses in the Andes with drivers racing one another around hairpin curves, or taking your wife on a bus tour in China and finding that you can only talk to or speak with an Australian couple who are cheap like you? How can you explain why the General Conference would ask you to go to Russia and start an SDA school system where you had to fly on Russian jets to cities where they want to start a school and meet with people who can't understand a word you say, or accept an invitation to a three-day teacher's convention in Lahore, Pakistan and find out after you arrive that instead of having the devotionals you would be presenting eight 90-minute sessions? Why would one want to explain why you would fly 10 hours all night and never sit in your seat, but spend the entire time in a special little office where there was just one seat and outside on the door was a sign that said "Occupied", all because of some stupid thing you ate before departing? How can you thank the Lord enough when you left \$500 worth of camera equipment in a cab in Hong Kong and find it three days later, or landing in San Francisco with \$3,000 worth of gifts that people have asked you to bring back and having the custom agent just wave you through? Speaking of Hong Kong (we have been there several times) where you have a wife who doesn't "*Don't Drink the Water*" and gets so sick she can't hold her head up. You have to get her to the airport with all your luggage, including a valuable vase

she bought, only to find it will not fit under the seat or in the overhead compartment. So you hide it under your legs with a blanket over it for 14 hours. How about being asked to visit a site to study and approve plans for a new SDA Seminary in Romania only to find that there were no ladies restroom facilities in the administration and classroom buildings? Talk about being at the right place at the right time. Well, enough. Too many to mention. It started like this:

Went to Union College, met and married Ardyce Kuhnke from Colorado. 60 years this summer. Three children (girls) and four grands. [Worked at PVA from 1956 – 1964. Then went to Enterprise Academy in Kansas.] When I became principal of Enterprise, I was the youngest principal in the denomination. Was principal also of Highland Academy (Tennessee) and Kahili Adventist School (Hawaii), then invited to move to Florida to be Associate Superintendent and later Superintendent of Schools.

I finished a PH.D degree while in Florida. In 1979 I was asked to be the Associate Director of Education for the Southern Union in Atlanta. My role was to oversee secondary schools. I became an expert in Technology when desktop computers came into being. I found many schools across North America that were about to close because of financial concerns. I went to a number of schools doing strategic planning to reduce spending and increase income. I started early in helping to evaluate schools to keep them up to date in curriculum and teacher training. Over time I chaired many committees visiting schools and spent much time writing and editing documents to evaluate schools in our system.

Eventually I was asked to be in charge of secondary schools for North America. While there we got the idea of asking the government to approve our system. I met with the Secretary of Education for the U.S. and several other private systems asked if they could join us. My role was to develop evaluation documents that would be used by schools that were applying for accreditation with us. This work led me to being asked to conduct workshops and to evaluate schools all over the US, Canada and then to other countries such as Iceland, Croatia, Austria, Romania, Russia, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, the Philippines and more. I retired in 2006 after 50 years in SDA education but have gone back and helped a number of times to work on specific projects.

We now live near Orlando, Florida in an SDA retirement center and are enjoying life to the fullest.”

Thank you, Dr. Weatherall, not only for your commitment to the students of PVA, but also for your dedication to the education of Adventist youth throughout the world. We know God has and will continue to bless your ministry for the young people of our church. Now in your retirement, may He surround you and your dear wife with His blessings. Thank you for coming to our 2014 - Alumni weekend to minister to us again. We appreciate and love you.