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The Development of a Journal Relating to Rural Schools

Richard I. Fisher

First Editor of the Rural Educator

In the mid seventies, I became interested in smaller schools with smaller classes. As an educator, I believed that students must have the opportunity to grow and develop in a "good" school environment. I started thinking about the value of being in a school where one learns about the virtues of the "American way" of life. I believe the American way included the teaching of the values of a democracy, loyalty to our country, the virtues of being a good citizen etc. I therefore, attempted to find the schools that were teaching what was then the American culture. I quickly learned that it was in the smaller schools where the values and virtues of American culture were being taught. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the culture of today has changed its focus to American diversity.

I realized that small school educators had no effective way to communicate with the general public and with each other. At that point, I founded and developed a journal entitled the Small School Forum published by the College of Professional Studies at Colorado State University. The intent of this journal was to encourage educators in small schools to share their ideas with other educators as well as the public. In addition, the journal provided a source for educators to communicate the values and worth of small schools. After about three years, I noticed that most of the articles were from non-rural schools. Therefore, I felt there should be a journal that represented just rural schools.

In the early eighties, I founded a new journal entitled *The Rural Educator*. The goal of the publication was to serve as a means of furthering communication between university faculty involved in rural education and rural educators in our public schools.

In the beginning, an editorial board was established whose purpose was to review potential articles for publication. At first, the board was composed of Roberta Anderson, Dean of the School of Education at the University of South Dakota; Robert Scott, Professor of Education at Kansas State University; and O. L. Dorsey, Dean of the School of Education at Southwest Texas State University. Later additions to the editorial board included John Evans, Associate Dean of the College of Education at Southern Illinois University; Jerry Horn, Assistant Dean of the College of Education at Kansas State University; and Alan G. Zetler, Dean of the School of Education at Western Montana University. All solicited articles were reviewed by one or more members of the editorial board.

The success of *The Rural Educator* was largely due to the members of the editorial board. Each of the members solicited articles from rural schools in their respective states. Articles ranged from successful techniques of teaching to administrative programs. The journal was published in the fall, winter and spring of each year.

After several years of publication the journal was adopted by the National Rural Education Association as their official publication. This adoption provided expanded coverage to rural schools nationwide. After the adoption, I remained as the executive editor of *The Rural Educator*. I promoted rural education for some twenty years until my retirement in 1993. My only regret was not being on the Board of the NREA.