



## **Labour Day Thoughts**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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My mother had limited options when it came to choosing a career. She could be a nurse, a nun or a teacher. She wasn't Catholic and didn't think she could handle the duties in nursing. The requirement at the time as preparation for holding a teaching position was to complete a one-year "Normal School" program which she did.

Mom taught in small Saskatchewan towns but when my maternal grandmother had both breasts and part of her throat removed because of cancer, she went before the school board to make a proposal. Family was a priority for her. She told her employer that she needed resign in order to nurse her mother but hoped that her younger sister would be hired in her place. They agreed.

Things have changed a lot over the years! Mom married and I still laugh about the fact that I was "expelled" from school before I was born. You see, it was not considered "proper" for young children to have a pregnant teacher at the front of the classroom so mom had to resign from her job because she was expecting me.

When my sister was born, mom was a full-time parent for a while but returned to teaching in order to improve our families' financial situation. The baby boom era changed thinking about the need for two incomes in a household instead of just one.

Teaching in a rural school meant that mom had sole responsibility for five rows of children, each at a different grade level. Many of the children rode horses or walked to class. When the weather was bad and roads were impassable, a farmer would drive her on his tractor to the schoolhouse.

Then, in the 1960s the Saskatchewan government changed their credentialing policy. Each teacher had a deadline to complete an additional five courses in order to hold a "Standard A" certificate or they would not be allowed to continue teaching.

I was in grade eight and saw first-hand how difficult this was for mom. She had to invest her time, money and effort in order to drive to and attend classes, complete assignments and write exams. There were nights when we were supposed to be relaxing at the cabin over the summer but she was reading textbooks by the light from a coal-oil lamp. She didn't have any natural musical ability so I tried to teach her how to play the flutophone! She got 51% in the class and I was so proud of her!

When dad died, mom continued teaching and it was a life-saver for her as she was able to both give and receive in the school setting! She carried on and retired with thirty-five years of seniority. My heart is still warmed every time I meet adults who tell me that she was their favourite teacher.

In those days, people usually had one job that they retired from after three decades at which time they were given a gold watch. The trend today is for individuals to make about six changes in their employment. Some work in casual or temporary positions while others are full-time. There are many who start businesses or sign contracts for their services. All of us labour in our personal lives for our family and for our own well-being.

This weekend we have an extra day off to celebrate Labour Day! What a good time to reflect on the way that our careers have evolved and taken shape.

What career choices did you have? Which did you choose? Who influenced or mentored you? What things were difficult? How have you grown as a person? Did your family sacrifice and/or benefit from your career?

Can you view your employment history with gratitude? If not, what are you planning to do about it?

Have a peaceful and reflective Labour Day!