

UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

GEORGE HESSER

(M.A. EDUCATION '60)

YOLA HESSER

(M.A. EDUCATION '72)

Florence, Ore.

**Profession:**

George: Teacher and reading specialist, retired

Yola: Elementary school teacher, retired

Greatest accomplishment:

George: Teaching people how to read. If you can't read, you're a sorrowful mess. People take reading for granted and don't realize what a complex process it is.

Yola: Seeing struggling children blossom.

Greatest challenge while at Cal Poly:

George: Taking my master's written exam. My handwriting wasn't very good. The test was three hours, there were four questions and I filled about 18 pages of a blue book. When the professors read my answers, they weren't too sure what I'd said. I had to explain all my answers, so I got a double dose.

Yola: Handling my work schedule, which included teaching school, attending classes, and studying.

How did you enter teaching?

George: I wanted to do something that would have a positive effect. I believe that teaching is the preeminent profession. Without teachers, no one would have a profession. I loved teaching. If I had to do it all over again, I'd do the same thing. In fact, Yola and I still teach. For the last 13 years, we've been teaching adults to read in our local literacy program.

Yola: I was planning to become a nurse, the year I graduated from high school in Stockton. I was accepted into a nursing program but didn't return my application forms until it was too late. So I started junior college. I guess I really wanted to be a teacher.

How does good public education help America?

George and Yola Hesser

Photo by Ned Hickson/Siuslaw News

George: We feel strongly about the importance of public education. Education is the keystone of a democracy. Without intelligent, well-informed citizens you can't have a democracy. Public education in K-12 has a major impact in educating the citizenry, in preserving America and democracy.

Your recent gift to the University Center for Teacher Education will support a lecture series on the importance of public education. Why is this series important?

George: The lecture series will bring in knowledgeable people in education and politics to speak and conduct workshops, to inspire lawmakers and school board members and school administrators to change our public school system. We need to lower the teacher-student ratios, to introduce special teaching techniques for children with special needs, to provide textbooks that are up to date and well written, and to dispense with programs that are secondary to real education. We need to transform the school system to what it once was, to remove political and social agendas and concentrate on good education, and

really fund our schools in those critical core areas of instruction.

What was your No. 1 reason for giving to Cal Poly?

George: We went to Cal Poly and have good memories of the school. I have faith in Cal Poly to handle the lecture series the way we want it done.

Yola: We met with Bonnie Konopak, the dean of the University Center for Teacher Education. She was sincere, and I felt she would get the right person to manage the lecture series in the way George and I envisioned it.

What advice do you have for Cal Poly students who want to become teachers?

George: It's important to get teaching experience early in your undergraduate years, to find out what teaching is and how it's done. You need to confirm to yourself that teaching is what you want to do. You should get experience early on in literacy programs, Sunday schools or at the YMCA or other organizations.

Yola: Get ready for hard work. It's a hard job, but the thrill is seeing the children grow in learning. Then it's all worth it.

– Nels Hanson