in the classrooms, in the halls, in the principals' offices — by the time he retired last year, Dan Tredway couldn't go anywhere in a school in the Colorado Rockies without bumping into a former student, one of the thou-
sand or so educators he had helped launch into the field.

His half-century career spanned what has probably been the most interesting and turbulent era in the history of public education. And he didn't even intend to be a teacher.

His mother was a teacher in the Flint Hills region of Kansas, where he grew up, so he knew how hard teachers have to work. He went all the way through college in the late 1940s at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas (in southeastern Kansas, of course), without really considering teaching as a career.

But the summer after graduation, he found himself working 80-hour weeks as a laborer on a powerline project. He was eating lunch under a tree in a farmer's front yard one hot day, when the farmer came out and started visiting. Learning that Dan had gone to college, the farmer asked if he had ever considered teaching. He was the board president of a two-teacher school district there.

Teaching looked pretty good that day, and that fall he took on 25 kids in five grades, for $10 a day, plus some travel money for using his car as a bus to haul some of the kids en route to school. He was all of four years older than the old-
est eighth grader. Having no formal preparation, he said, "I fell back on doing what I remembered having done as a student when I was in a rural school. The kids were very tolerant."

Five months into that school year, however, Dan got a draft notice for the Korean War. The school board appealed for a deferment till the end of the year, but it was denied, and Dan's first year of teaching was interrupted. He spent most of the next two years in Alaska as a soldier — "plenty of time for reflection and decision making about next steps."

He decided that teaching was what he wanted to do, and, on the advice of his cousin Alma Brown, also a teacher, shortly after his discharge in 1953, he enrolled in the graduate certification program at Colorado State College in Greeley — "one of the best education schools," his cousin said.

Fully certified to teach the next year, he considered going back to Alaska, but returned to rural Kansas instead, where he became a fifth grade teacher in El Dorado. He also renewed acquaintance with a Southwestern College student, Nancy Livingston, and at the end of his first full year of teaching, they got married.

Public-school teaching then was no more lucrative than it is today, and in his third year of teaching — with a family well underway — Dan applied to graduate school at the University of Wyoming, planning to move up to col-
lege teaching. They survived the grad-
school years in Wyoming by "teaching part time in the lab school, selling tick-
ets for the athletic department and whatever else was available."

He completed his terminal degree there in 1958 and headed back into the plains for an education faculty position at the Municipal University of Omaha — just about the time the "Baby Boom" began to hit the colleges.

"The job was very demanding," he said. "There were huge numbers of stu-
dents, large classes, and teaching loads were almost twice the standard college load."

But by the fifth year, he said, "the job was getting the best of me." He and

Tredway in 1957.

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Dan Tredway, in red box, in his one-room school in 1956.

Fifty years in rural public education

by George Sibiley

WSC Special Projects Coordinator & Part-time Faculty Member

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Nancy had four sons by then—Mark, Matt, Doug and Dave—and he was hardly seeing them. So he began sending the resume around, and was offered the position of Director of Student Teaching at the University of New Mexico.

"Life in Albuquerque was as different as one could imagine from Omaha," he said. "It was sunny and pleasant, and there was time for writing and recreation." He got to develop another elementary science service program—"Los Alamos—where community resource people were abundant.

But Dan's interest was primarily in training and working with teachers, and the University was a research school, so he began scouting for schools whose focus was teaching. After his first year, he offered a five-week stint at Western State College. He returned the next summer, and coincidentally, a full-time teaching position came open—with a 20 percent increase over the New Mexico pay—and in the fall of 1965, the Tredways found the place they wanted to stay.

Western was growing rapidly then; Dan was one of 30 new faculty in 1965. There were another 30 the next year and 20 more the year after that. There was also an element of culture shock in coming from Omaha and Albuquerque, where most of the streets were not yet paved, and the only radio station went off the air at 6:00 p.m. In addition, the school was experiencing the general unsettlement of the 1960s. Dan was one of half a dozen new education faculty with a greater level of school experience than most of the College's education faculty, and they began to push for some changes in the selection process for teacher candidates, and in their training, too.

One thing they pushed for was getting students educated to be teachers into the public schools early in their college careers.

"There were a lot of old-school people," he said, "who felt that early contact with the public schools might contaminate college students." But the new education faculty pushed for and got, practice time in the schools for elementary teacher candidates well before they were plunged into student teaching—although it wasn't until the 1980s that this was expected for secondary teacher candidates.

In 1970, Dan got his first sabbatical and went—where else?—back to a multigrade primary school in Albuquerque, mostly Hispanic, to teach Returning to Western, through the 1970s, he got increasingly involved in "helping teachers use community and public resources to improve kids' understanding of their local environment and their place in the environment." Rural public education, through the first two-thirds of the 20th century, had primarily been oriented toward what some parents characterized as "teaching our kids to leave."

The demographic trend in the United States from the early 1800s had been movement from the farm to the city; despite lip service to "our Jeffersonian roots" and the "family farm," the operant cultural belief was that those who were smart and well-prepared would leave the countryside and seek their fortunes in the city. Probably never in history has a cultural group paid so much to underpin its own foundations and continue as did the rural citizens in 20th century America—until around the 1970s. Dan was also well aware of the difference between resources provided for urban and rural schools; in Omaha he had seen that "teachers in ghetto schools in the city had infinitely more resources available than those who taught the rural poor."