

Grace Grebing: A Leader and Her Legacy

Everyone reading this knows about the Grace Grebing Library, but not many people know the history behind its namesake. Grace Grebing was a teacher, superintendent, principal and many more things during her time at Dell City School. Students of hers say she was a skilled, funny and patient teacher. Much of what the school is today is thanks to her.

Grace Grebing was born Aug. 17, 1899, in San Saba. She was married to Henry Grebing. Her husband was a farmer and veteran, and she was a teacher. Before coming to Dell City, she taught in Sierra Blanca, Mentone, Texas and many other places.

While she was teaching at another school, Dell City was taking form. In 1948, people first started populating Dell City, bringing their children with them. In the springtime of 1949, the parents of 18 children asked the Sierra Blanca School to send a teacher. They sent Mrs. Rogers. She taught 25 students for one school year, before leaving during December. Then, on New Year's Day, Ms. Grebing came.

In January, the school had 40 students enrolled. Parents asked Sierra Blanca for another teacher, and were denied. So Ms. Grebing taught them all, taking four classes in the morning and four in the afternoon.

Then, in 1950, the school received enough money to build a three-room schoolhouse – what is now the front office – and two more teachers were employed. Throughout the next two years, the school received more money, expanded and hired more staff.

By now in her life, Grace Grebing was actively Dell City's first superintendent. She would continue to serve at the school until 1973, mainly working as an English teacher, but also being principal, superintendent and fifth-grade teacher.

Ms. Grebing was known to be a good teacher. Minnie Lewis, who was a student of Ms. Grebing's in the early 50s, described her as a "very patient person, who knew how to get things across to her students."



*Grace Grebing, from the 1952
Dell City School yearbook.*

It was Ms. Grebing's method to help her students reach their own conclusions. Anne Lynch, of the Class of 1970, recalled this aspect of Ms. Grebing's technique.

"For example, I was the editor of *The Greasewood*," Ms. Lynch said, referring to the school newspaper, "and if I had questions I would go and ask her. Instead of giving me an answer – which would have been easy, because she knew everything – she would ask me questions until I answered it myself. It was funny to leave her office and realize I'd answered my own question."

Part of Ms. Grebing's success as an educator was that she respected her students. She didn't just consider them as students, but as people.

"There was something really important about Ms. Grebing," Ms. Lynch said. "When she was principal – that's when I saw her the most, because I was sometimes called to the office, for various reasons – she always sat quietly, smiled and listened and asked questions. She had a very good technique – she was just focused on who she was speaking with. I had a hundred percent of her attention."

*by Rhiannon Muise and Nicole Martos
Dell City School Seventh Graders*

Ms. Grebing was very supportive of her students – both inside and outside of school.

Julie Corral, of the Class of 1964, remembered an occasion when she was going to an out-of-school academic competition and happened to see Ms. Grebing in town beforehand. Ms. Grebing went out of her way to compliment the young Julie on what she was wearing – which Ms. Corral said boosted her confidence for the competition.

"You perform better," she said, "because you're proud of yourself."

Even while she was kind and respectful to her students, Mrs. Grebing also commanded their respect.

Gerald Gentry, of the Class of 1969, said "she was a very well-respected person. She was strict – but she was respected by everyone."

Ms. Grebing's students agreed that her very personality made them respect her.

"She didn't have to raise her voice," Minnie Lewis said. "I don't know how you would explain it, except people just automatically respected her enough that you just didn't cause problems in her class."

Anne Lynch agreed.

"She had a very effective technique," Ms. Lynch said. "She would walk up to the chair next to the people that were throwing things, talking, not reading, doing whatever you're not supposed to be doing in a library, and she would just stand quietly. And suddenly the kids that were acting up – it wasn't as convenient for them to keep doing what they were doing when she was standing right next to them."

Her teaching methods commanded respect, but despite being strict, Ms. Grebing also had a sense of humor, her students said.



Grace Grebing, from the 1971 Dell City School yearbook.

“She was always smiling,” Ms. Lynch said. “She had a gentle, mischievous laugh.”

Ms. Corral remembered a story about a classmate named Ben Jonas – who arrived late to class one day.

“Ms. Grebing asked him,” Ms. Corral said, “‘Ben Jonas, you’re late this morning. What is your excuse?’ And he said, ‘I had to wait for my Momma’s biscuits.’ And she didn’t get mad. She just smiled real bright and said, ‘Well, why didn’t you bring us one?’ I’ll never forget that she wasn’t mad at him, she just wanted a biscuit.”

Ms. Grebing influenced her students in lifelong ways.

Ms. Corral said she has used Ms. Grebing’s teaching techniques herself, while teaching catechism.

“She would look us right in the eye,” Ms. Corral said, “and say, ‘If you want to learn, look at me.’ And that to me was really important.”

And Ms. Corral said Ms. Grebing taught her an important lesson about perseverance.

“You don’t give up in life,” Ms. Corral said. “I’ve heard that a lot of times, but I first heard it from her.”

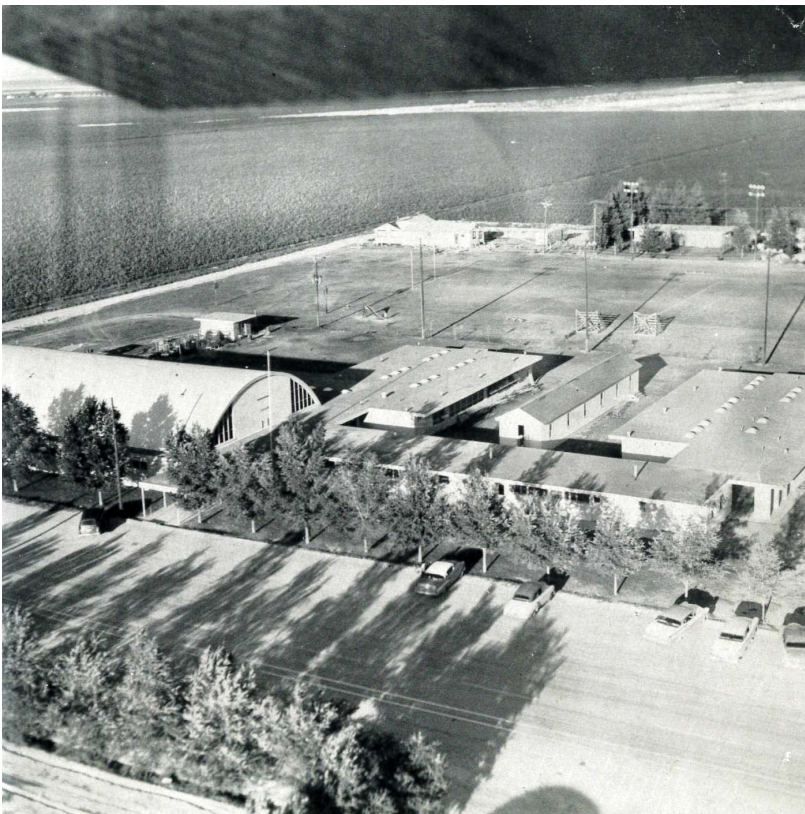
Ms. Grebing herself described the bond between student and teacher in a message she wrote in the 1953 edition of the *Ocotillo* yearbook.

“To you students,” she wrote, “your teachers and I will follow your life after school with much interest. Your success will be our pleasure, and your adversity our sorrow. Our aim has been to equip you to live a happy life, and to earn an honest living. Our success as teachers can be measured by your success in accomplishing these goals.”

Those who knew her say that Ms. Grebing’s work as a teacher made her joyful and fulfilled.

“She must have had a very good life,” Ms. Corral said, “because she showed it through her personality. She was a very, very happy person.”

The library was named for Grace Grebing for many reasons – first and foremost being her love for education and the school, and the hard work she did to make it better. Throughout her time in Dell City, she worked for the benefit of the students. Ms Grebing is a very important figure in our school’s history. If she had never come in 1949, who knows what our school would be like today.



The Dell City School in 1960.