



VERNA ELIZABETH (WENDELIN) KATONA

Verna grew up in Ludell, Kansas, a small town near Atwood in western Kansas. She received a B.A. in art and an M.S. in education from Fort Hayes Kansas State College while working two jobs.

She came to Mitchell elementary in 1957 where she taught kindergarten for seventeen years before retiring in 1977. She is remembered by her principals, Art Ohanian and Jack Seman, as being not only an excellent teacher, but a teacher who was very supportive of new and young teachers.

Verna's student teacher, Ruth Korthuis, says, "Fortunate indeed were the children who were in Verna Katona's kindergarten classes....so many interesting things to see and do." Holidays were special occasions to be creative, such as Thanksgiving when a live turkey joined the classroom. She even made a black paper silhouette of each child. "I hope that those parents will realize how very fortunate their children have been to have had such a talented, dedicated and caring teacher."

In 1971 Verna became involved with a group of citizens who wanted to save the Astor House. She was one of the founders of Golden Landmarks Association. The winter and spring of 1972 she even sponsored groups of students from Mitchell to work on the restoration, scraping paint and wallpaper. She was quoted as saying, "I wanted them to get the feeling that Golden was an important place, a unique place."

In 1975 she was influential in getting Guy Hill School moved to the Mitchell site from Golden Gate canyon. It became a 1976 Bicentennial project involving many students who participated in petitioning, fundraising, and assisting in the relocation process. For many years she conducted classes in the old school dressed in period costume, explaining how school was conducted in the old days.

In 1978 she signed up for the Peace Corps and was sent to teach on the remote Pacific island of Ponape in the Soloman Islands for two years. Her stories of her primitive life there left all of us marveling at her determination and resourcefulness.

Every superlative has been used to describe Verna: **dedicated, determined, talented, kind, joyful, concerned, and most of all loved. She is an unforgettable person.**