



Distinguished Educator - 2026

Rod Zimmerman

1972-1998

They Lit the Way



DISTINGUISHED
EDUCATOR

I was born in Traverse County Minnesota, on January 27th, 1938. No electricity or much else, it was 30 degrees below zero that morning. Around one and half years later my dad died from Polio. This caused my mom & 2 boys to move to Herman Minnesota. This is where I attended elementary and high school.

Upon graduating I chose to further my education at Moorhead State College, over a number of offers to play basketball (my brother was a senior there). I pursued a double major in math and physical science, not much in biology as DNA wasn't discovered yet.

After 4 years of varsity basketball, (3 as a starter) I graduated with a BS degree in education and set out to find a teaching and coaching position. I landed in Eagle Bend Minnesota teaching math, physics and chemistry.

It was a good choice for me as I met a young lady, who was to become my wife! We were married August 25, 1962. I then took a teaching and assistant coaching position in Pipestone Minnesota in the fall of 1962. Three years later, the grass was much greener on the other side as I accepted a sales position with Scott-Foresman & Co. selling textbooks and curriculums to schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

We lived in Bloomington Minnesota (5 minutes from the old Met, where both the Vikes and the Twins played). Mindy, our oldest, was born in 1965. We moved to an acreage in the Lakeville area in 1968. We were there when Beth was born in 1969.

We had a couple of Arabian horses, and the area was beautiful there, but I missed teaching, especially the daily contact with the students. I stopped in Albert Lea to see Terry Moriarty, the Principal at Southwest when he told me they had a math opening. He lined up an interview and I started teaching there in the fall of 1972 (one of the best moves of my life).

The grass was greener on the side I was leaving, but my work was way more enjoyable teaching. 26 years later I retired, having been back and forth between Central and Southwest.

During those 26 years and more we lived on an acreage near Hollandale. We raised horses, both Arabian and Thoroughbreds, and still have one running at Canterbury Downs this summer!

In 2011 my wife (Barb) died from cancer. In the fall of 2012, I married Marilyn Slegh and went from having 2 daughters and 1 grandchild (Marc Kruger) to 6 (3 daughter and 3 sons, 12 grandkids and now we also have 5 great grandkids.

I keep busy by being on the Hollandale City Council and just got off the church consistory as an elder.

I still miss the days of being in the classroom with 25 or more Algebra ninth graders.