

A Letter from the Publisher

To collect the research for this week's cover story on the troubled lot of America's teachers, TIME correspondents fanned out across the country to interview educators, sit in classrooms and personally observe their subjects at work. New York Correspondent Dorothy Ferenbaugh found one dedicated teacher who inspires her pupils to respect not only learning but also cleanliness; she personally keeps her classroom spotless. Miami Bureau Chief Richard Woodbury suffered through sweltering days in a windowless classroom in Clearwater, Fla., with a high school teacher and his restless, apathetic students. As the teacher told Woodbury, "Now you can see why some days I ask, 'What am I beating my head against the wall for?'"

Many of the correspondents had seen the teaching crisis through the eyes of their own children in public schools. But in addition, a large number of TIME staff members involved in the story had themselves experienced the rewards and perils of teaching. Boston Correspondent Joelle Attinger once tutored at an inner-city grade school in Philadelphia. Linda Stern Rubin of TIME's Detroit bureau teaches a class in magazine writing at Wayne State University. Los Angeles Correspondent Robert Goldstein taught for two years in a South

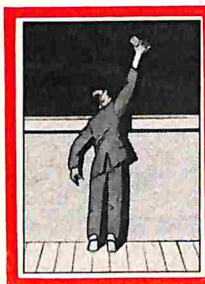


Joelle Attinger at school

Bronx grade school and suffered a literal case of "teacher burn-out." Returning from lunch one day, he found flames leaping from his classroom window.

Senior Editor Timothy Foote, who edited the story, taught a writing course at Yale University and English and French at a St. Louis prep school. Education Reporter-Researcher Jeanne-Marie North taught English in Medellin, Colombia, and Spanish at a small college in Illinois. Education Writer Kenneth Pierce was a lecturer in humanities at the University of Chicago for three years. "In those days I was torn between teaching and journalism," he says. "I would expound on Aristotle's *Poetics* in the morning and interview vice-squad detectives as a LIFE reporter in the afternoon." Civia Tamarkin of TIME's Midwest bureau was a high school English teacher for two years in Benton Harbor, Mich. Indeed, the story itself was first suggested by Tamarkin, who was frustrated at the poor instruction her daughter Elisa, now nine, was receiving in Chicago's public schools. "Her papers came home filled with the teacher's flagrant errors," she says. "How do you tell your child that contrary to what the teacher says, pin and pen are not homonyms?"

Index



54 Cover: The U.S. school system seems to be in peril—teachers can't teach. They are too busy trying to keep order, solve social problems and fill out forms. Also, too many teachers are incompetent. See EDUCATION.



12 Nation: Jimmy Carter sews up the nomination, but Ted Kennedy refuses to quit. ▶ Ronald Reagan makes peace with Gerald Ford. ▶ Black Americans grow increasingly bitter as they slip farther and farther behind whites.



64 Recession: With unemployment leading the way, the U.S. economy is in a free fall, one of the worst downturns since the 1930s. TIME's Board of Economists predicts only a slow recovery. See ECONOMY & BUSINESS.

32 World
A new round of vengeful terror shakes the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Feisty as ever, Israeli Prime Minister Begin talks about his troubles. ▶ Iran again blasts the U.S. ▶ A terrorist suspect's story rocks Italy. ▶ A gentle revolt in a New Hebrides isle. ▶ Mandarin-collar crime in China.

6 American Scene
In Virginia, reporters who covered the Korean War dine on *Hearts of MacArthi-choke* and sing critically of censors.

72 Economy & Business
Cash is flowing as credit-card use declines. ▶ Charter Co. pumps profits. ▶ Men start to invade the skin-care salon.

49 Music
After 20 years, Smokey Robinson is still about as cool as they come, the master of soul, with a gift-wrapped voice.

76 Art
As a smashing show of her "environments" attests, Louise Nevelson at 80 remains the doyenne of U.S. sculpture.

50 Cinema
Clint Eastwood hits the county-fair trail, producing carny art. ▶ Director Walter Hill ambushes the James gang myth.

78 Press
After a long campaign, reporters and editors of *Le Monde*, France's most prestigious newspaper, elect a new chief.

51 Television
PBS's new series *The Search for Solutions*, a fascinating look into the life of the scientist, may be about the best recruiting film ever.

88 Essay
Record-breaking stunts and feats have become commonplace, but the popular appetite for them stays ever high.

52 Science
Decades after it first appeared, the electric car is back on U.S. roads, and some new technology may keep it there.

4 Letters
42 Milestones
44 Sport
74 People
81 Books

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TIME

THE RECESSION
Deep and
Nasty



HELP!

Teacher Can't Teach



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