

Jim Sauter Autobiography

I was born at home in Tuttle, North Dakota, on December 8, 1934, to Lydia and Walter Sauter. My family included my brothers Duane and Vern and sister Pat. I had a wonderful childhood growing up in Tuttle. Perhaps my closest friend when I was young was my cousin, Liz. I can remember many times when we were at Grandpa and Grandma's farm. One time in the hayloft, both of us started coughing from the dust. I also remember going to Grandpa and Grandma's for Sunday dinners with a lot of uncles and aunts and cousins around. As I grew older, summers were filled with a variety of adventures with some of my schoolmates, including many trips to the mulberry ranch area north of Tuttle.

Our aunts remembered me as the "scamp." An example is one summer when Orville Hahn, a friend of mine, and I went skunk hunting. I was about nine years old. Grandpa Sauter was paying money for skunks since the fur was used to make coats, etc. at that time. We got our equipment together which included a shovel, gunnysack, and a pickaxe. We went up about 2 miles north of Tuttle. It didn't take us long to find a skunk. We chased it down its hole and kept it there by putting the shovel over the entrance. We then used the pickaxe to kill the skunk, which took quite a while. Of course, the skunk was defending itself in the usual way. We put the dead skunk in the gunnysack and brought it back to Tuttle with the gunnysack on our shoulders. We took turns carrying it and brought it to Grandpa Sauter's John Deere building. It was a Saturday night and by the time we got there, a number of men were sitting around in a circle listening to Grandpa entertain them. The skunk caused much merriment and Grandpa made a big deal out of it. He gave us \$3.00 for it and we thought we got a good deal and were very happy. That was probably the last time I was happy that night as my mother was very unhappy with me when I got home. She was supposed to work at the drugstore that evening and wasn't able to go because of my adventure. First thing I had to do was get a shovel and dig a hole in the garden to bury my clothes. I dug it about 2 feet deep, which I thought was deep enough. But my mother was very upset with me and made me dig it deeper. She brought a washtub outside and had me fill it with hot water. I took a bath in this, but it didn't do any good. She had me dump the water and fill it up again. She put a bottle of tomato juice in it. This seemed to do the job. She still wasn't too happy!

I enjoyed school. Elementary school was always exciting and lots of fun. Unfortunately for me, the fun part was probably more important than doing much studying. Fortunately for me, I had some very good teachers. One I remember in particular was Helen Riskedah. She was my third, fourth, and fifth grade teacher. Thinking back now, I wonder how she handled three classes in one room. This was during World War II and teachers were hard to find, so she taught three classes for the duration of the war and did a great job.

In high school, sports were always important to me. We played basketball and baseball. We went to a couple of basketball state tournaments and came close to winning one. We played basketball about 12 months a year and as a result we beat some pretty good teams.

I graduated from high school in 1952 and went to Jamestown College for two years. I spent much of my evening time down in the stacks at the college library reading old editions of Time magazine. I started at the beginning and read about one edition a month since it started publication. While this didn't help my grade point average any, it did give me a good historical background of world events. After two years at Jamestown College, I volunteered for the U.S. Army and spent the next two years as a soldier. In some respects, they were the best years of my life. After basic training at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, which I enjoyed a lot, I spent eight weeks in clerk typist school there. I then flew to Seattle, Washington, and was shipped to Japan. About a day or so out of Seattle, we ran into a big storm that

lasted for about five days. It was there that I learned what the word “seasick” meant. Upon arriving in Japan, I was stationed with the Far East Headquarters Company at Camp Fuchinobe, the former Japanese West Point. My job was the payroll clerk for about 600 GIs in the Camp. This is the first time I had any great responsibility and I loved it. At the time I was 20 years old. I had a Japanese male clerk and we became good friends. I remember my time in Japan with great fondness. I got to know some Japanese people and got to tour most of the main island. Tokyo was nearby and my buddies and I spent some weekends there. I think the Army was the best thing that happened to me in terms of maturity.

After I completed my tour of service in the Army, I returned to Jamestown College and finished my Bachelor’s degree in 1958 with majors in history and political science. I was hired at Medina as a high school teacher and coach. A week before school started, the superintendent called me and said that the principal had taken a job at another school and asked me if I wanted to be the high school principal. I immediately said “yes” and afterwards thought, “what does a high school principal do?” I did enjoy my year there, but my uncle Clifford Riskedahl called and offered me a job as the high school principal in Tuttle, along with teaching and coaching duties. I was happy to return to Tuttle and enjoyed this experience a great deal. Another factor in returning to Tuttle was that my Dad had cancer at the time and I was able to help out with his trips to the doctor in Bismarck. It was during this time that I began taking summer graduate courses at the University of North Dakota. After two years, Prof. Peterson retired and I was offered the job as superintendent, which I also held for two years. During these years, my Sauter students included Roberta, Barbara, Alan, Linda, Laura, and Pat, as well as many Leno students. All of them were very good students.

During my time in Tuttle, I met Diane Buchta, who was the first grade teacher. We were married in 1962. We lived in Art and Lynora Scherbenske’s upstairs apartment, which was very nice. I resigned from Tuttle after the 1962-63 school year and we moved to Fargo. I received my Master’s degree in educational administration and worked as an assistant principal in the Fargo school system for one year.

The Department of Education at the University of North Dakota invited me to enroll in their doctoral program, which I did. We moved to Grand Forks. Our daughter, Renae, was born there in 1964. I attended the University full time for one year and then received a scholarship from the National Association of School Principals to be in their national program for school administrators. We moved back to Fargo and I spent the year traveling about once a month to observe excellent school districts all over the United States and also writing my dissertation. We moved back to Grand Forks for a year during which time I completed my coursework and dissertation and received my Doctorate degree in educational administration in 1967.

In the spring of 1967, I applied for, and was offered, the position of assistant superintendent of schools in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. We moved to Grand Rapids during the summer, and our daughter, Suzanne, was born there in the fall. At the time, the school district had about 6000 students and covered over 2000 square miles. Two years later, I was offered the position of superintendent of schools, which I held for 18 years. This was a fine school district, a fine community, and a job that I enjoyed very much.

I could have stayed in Grand Rapids until I retired; however, I was offered the position of Deputy Commissioner of Education for the state of Minnesota in 1987 and accepted it. We moved to Woodbury, Minnesota. I held this position for 8 years. I worked with many school districts and the state legislature much of the time. I retired in 1995.

It was during this time that Diane developed leukemia. For 15 months, she was in treatment at the University of Minnesota, sometimes at their clinic and sometimes full time in the hospital. Unfortunately, there was no cure and she died in 1996. We had been married 34 years.

Rena completed her bachelor's degree and master's degree in the area of social work. She owns her home in the Twin Cities and works for Ramsey County. Suzanne completed a two-year degree in communications and acting. She has schizophrenia and functions quite well. She lives in the Twin Cities, loves acting, and is an actor at the Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts.

I married Judy Wain in 1997. We knew each other from our employment in state government so I reached out to her after Diane died. Judy was a widow. She has three adult children and six grandchildren so our family circle was enlarged after our marriage.

In 2003, we purchased a home in a retirement community in Chandler, Arizona, and have spent every winter there since then and enjoyed all of them. But we feel it is time to quit traveling back and forth each year, so we plan to sell our Arizona home in the fall of 2021.

In December of 2019, we purchased an apartment home in a new cooperative senior development in Roseville, Minnesota. We love this lifestyle and have made many new friends. There are a variety of social activities to participate in right in our building. Also, most everything else that we might need is within a three-mile radius of our home. This is a great place to live.

Life is good!

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