



Finding Mrs. Warnecke: The Difference Teachers Make

Cindi Rigsbee

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Finding Mrs. Warnecke: The Difference Teachers Make Cindi Rigsbee

Finding Mrs. Warnecke tells the inspiring story of Cindi Rigsbee, a three-time Teacher of the Year, and Barbara Warnecke, the first-grade teacher who had a profound and lasting impact on Cindi's life. Cindi, an insecure child who craved positive attention, started her first-grade year with a teacher who was emotionally abusive and played favorites in the classroom. Two months into the school year, her principal came into the classroom and announced that half the students were being moved to another classroom--a dank, windowless basement room, with a young and inexperienced teacher. This change turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to Cindi. Her new teacher, Mrs. Warnecke, made learning come alive for her students. She went overboard caring for each child, made her classroom "magical," and encouraged students to pursue their dreams. Although Cindi was reluctant to explore her creativity as a student, Mrs. Warnecke encouraged her to read and write poetry, which became a lifelong passion. The two kept in touch for several years but lost track of each other when Mrs. Warnecke moved out of state. Cindi spent many years trying to reconnect so she could thank Mrs. Warnecke for making such a difference in her life, but to no avail. Eventually Cindi became a teacher herself, and thirty years later she has taught more than 2,000 children and been named Teacher of the Year for her home state. She later came to realize that all those years she wasn't really trying to track down Barbara Warnecke, but rather, she was trying to "find Mrs. Warnecke" within herself. In Fall 2008 Cindi and Barbara were reunited on *Good Morning America*; the show's producers had tracked Barbara down and brought both women on-set for a tearful reunion. Barbara was floored at this attention--she had no idea she could have made such an impact on a former student's life. As Cindi travels around talking with new and veteran educators, she is always approached by audience members who are moved to tears and want to share the story of the "Mrs. Warnecke" in their own lives. *Finding Mrs. Warnecke* not only tells the story of this teacher who made a lifelong impact on her students, it illustrates the importance of the teacher/student relationship in the classroom, and offers principles for other teachers to follow to make a positive impact in their own classrooms.

Finding Mrs. Warnecke: The Difference Teachers Make Details

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From Reader Review Finding Mrs. Warnecke: The Difference Teachers Make for online ebook

Cathleen says

An uplifting memoir of a NC Teacher of the Year who credits her love of learning and her growth as a teacher to her own first grade teacher, Mrs. Warnecke. A quick read and a good springboard for follow up discussions about choosing to teach.

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Nayif Alsinani says

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The Reading Countess says

Rigsbee is a state finalist for teacher of the year, a nod to the years she spent working with under privileged children in North Carolina. Her selfless dedication was a tribute to her beloved first grade teacher, Mrs. Warnecke. On a fluke, Rigsbee sends an email to "Good Morning America" asking for a reunion of sorts. When she is at last found, Warnecke is thankful to her for "validating her life."

I have to admit, I became a bit teary-eyed at the end because I have often wondered where my beloved fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Wolford, was. The impact that a dedicated teacher has on an impressionable student is sometimes never known, and I was moved by their ability to reconnect.

I was, however, slightly bothered by the periodic reminesces of other teacher of the year designees, as though only those teachers were worthy of being included in the book. As a campus teacher of the year, my comment is not spoken out of anything other than the knowledge that people in ALL walks of life undoubtedly have fond memories of a teacher who left a positive impact on their lives. Teachers of the year are not the only ones.

All in all, Finding Mrs. Warnecke was an inspirational quick read about the important work educators do day in and day out. Sometimes we know that we made a difference right away, but we often never know if we made a difference. Rigsbee's book reminds teachers that each day is an opportunity to continue working to make a difference no matter what.

Qais_alfarsi_ says

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Youusra says

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Patty says

This would be a 3.5 for me, if Goodreads had 1/2 stars. It's true that almost everyone has a Mrs. Warnecke...a teacher that made an impact in your life. While reading this, I enjoyed thinking about mine. Some of the techniques described for how to reach kids seemed a little simplistic. I kept having to ask myself "what age group is she teaching that responds to this?" Overall, an enjoyable read.

Janet says

Amazing story about the influence a first grade teacher had her student's life! Thoroughly enjoyed this book and made me realize I may never know the impact of my words and actions on my students.

Almujtaba Alwaeli says

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Richard Jespers says

Rigsbee returns to her own first-grade experiences to describe the teacher she is first placed with, a rather uncaring, older woman whom she can't seem to please no matter how hard she tries. Because the class is too large, the principal forms another one and Cindi counts herself lucky to prance outside and down the sidewalk to her new classroom . . . in the basement of the gym! But there she encounters Mrs. Warnecke, a very caring young teacher who treats Cindi and all the students as if they're really something special.

Rigsbee continues to keep in touch with Mrs. Warnecke for the next few years until the Warneckes move out of town. Much of the book's structure is built around key moments when Rigsbee asks herself what Mrs. Warnecke would do in such a situation, the departed teacher serving as sort of an absentia mentor. The rest of the book, probably its greatest strength, covers specific lessons or activities that Rigsbee developed for her middle school English classes. These unique activities give a reader insight into what a really strong teacher is like, always thinking on her feet, always planning for better learning. And yet Rigsbee is not afraid to confess her mistakes, those that she makes early on, as well as the ones she makes late in her career, just before winning National Teacher of the Year in 2008.

The latter part of the book explains the machinations of how Rigsbee and Warnecke are united once again on national TV by way of ABC's Good Morning America. Though it is exciting—such reunions can be exhilarating—I found myself reading faster and faster because I realized what was going to happen. There was little surprise. I think it's difficult to write about your own successes; we're taught by society not to do that, particularly people in the helping professions. People in more commercial fields toot their own horn all the time. Still, there are times when it seems that Rigsbee is boasting just a little bit. But why not? It's a very fine award, and she must certainly deserve it.

Another feature of the book that is interesting, although distracting at times, is the statements of teachers who have won various teaching awards. Rigsbee places them in boxes, sometimes in the middle of a chapter, most effectively at the end. I enjoyed reading some of these, but again, they seemed to interrupt the movement of her narrative. Might she have chosen only a few and placed them, according to thematic material, at the end of each chapter? Might she have placed them all at the end of the book?

The book is published by Jossey-Bass, a company that "publishes books, periodicals, and other media to inform and inspire those interested in developing themselves, their organizations and their communities. Jossey-Bass's publications feature the work of some of the world's best-known authors in leadership, business, education, religion and spirituality, parenting, nonprofit, public health and health administration, conflict resolution and relationships."

Andrea says

As a teacher it was inspiring, and reflective. I highly recommend for any pre-service or aspiring teachers!

Heidi Busch says

Having taught for many years, I picked up this book on a whim, drawn in by the subtitle, "The Difference Teachers Make." As the author, a finalist for National Teacher of the Year in 2009, told about how she started as an insecure, and sometimes frustrated teacher, I thought back to my early days in the classroom. I also thought about why I was a teacher and who my most inspiring teacher had been. The author did a good job of telling her story and also had some great ideas for those teachers out there who want to be the teacher that truly matters to his or her students. A must read for teachers or education majors.

Jamil Almatrafi says

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