

ALUMINATI

Laura (Beardsley) Long (BS '61) is the second subject of Aluminati—a Q&A column featuring a randomly selected Andrews University alumnus.



Laura's senior class photo

Laura (Beardsley) Long graduated from Andrews in 1961 with a BS in Elementary Education. She is currently an Administrative Secretary at Mayo Medical Ventures in Rochester, Minnesota.

Focus: Tell us a little about yourself, Laura.

Laura (Beardsley) Long: When I was in college, I struggled with the decision of what to major in because I had interests and talents in so many directions. In addition to the fact that since I was a small child I'd been told I'd be a teacher, I finally settled on elementary education because it was a broad base and I took minors in 5 other fields. Even then, I didn't take any classes in the areas where I feel I have and use my talents most now—writing, art and music. I derive a great deal of personal satisfaction through the expression of art—in painting, design, decorating, flower arranging, cake decorating, singing—all hobbies, but all activities that make life beautiful and pleasant. I've been extremely fortunate to have a husband and son who support

me in all my projects and don't complain about neglect but encourage my self-fulfillment and pick up the slack.

Focus: What other interesting things have you done since leaving Andrews?

Long: I could wax eloquent because I think everything I've done has been interesting. The value to humanity may be dubious!

Since I trained in elementary education, I'll first mention my abbreviated teaching career. Every one of the 5-1/2 years I taught was a very difficult experience—from 14 children in 7 grades, to 33 children in 2 grades in a crowded annex; from creating my own program working with challenged children in short periods away from their classrooms to coping with the realities of court-ordered integration in a southern public school system in the early '70s. I was also trained and experienced as a secretary and thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Florida and Georgia-Cumberland conference offices as well as 2 years in the Far Eastern Division office in Singapore. Traveling around the world was an impossible dream come true and contributed importantly to my life.

Focus: How did you end up in your current occupation?

Long: When I was in 6th grade, I read a book about the Mayo brothers in Minnesota which intrigued me. I was quite excited when we had the opportunity to move to Rochester and I actually landed a job working at Mayo Clinic. I think of this as my third career and have now worked at Mayo

for 24 years. It is rewarding work.

As satisfying as my jobs have been, I feel my most important effort has been my input into the Sabbath school departments in the churches we've attended over the years. I began when I was 14 and have taught or led out in a children's division for an accumulated 35 years or so.

Focus: Sounds like you don't have a great deal of time for backward reflection, but when you do think back on your



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experience at Andrews, what do you miss most?

Long: Even 42 years ago when I graduated and left Andrews, I thought of leaving campus as the natural progression of my life—the exciting next step—forging into the future. So I don't remember ever being homesick for the school or people.

Focus: Is there anything you'd change about your

Andrews experience, given the chance?

Long: I've often wished I'd had better training in my education courses. I believe I was there at the end of an era and things got better soon after I left, but when I got out in the classroom I often depended more on my experiences as a student than on what I'd learned in education classes. But that wasn't anything I could change. If I'd known then what I know now, I would have been more socially involved. Perhaps

I took school and work too seriously!

Focus: A lot of students end up focusing more on finishing with a degree of some sort than on the college experience itself.

Long: It is sad that we can't help the young people facing these questions today realize the most valuable things they will obtain from a college education are the abilities to organize, communicate and know how to find information—in

addition to developing social skills, making lifelong friends and translating the high ideals of youth into a meaningful lifestyle. Skills can be learned on the job or at a technical school, but the value of college is nebulous, and all the more important because of it.