

Jessica Morgan

& College Professor,

Dr. Irene Singletary

JESSICA MORGAN, STUDENT: I have always known that I wanted to be a teacher, but it wasn't until I met Dr. Irene Reed Singletary at Morris College that I realized exactly what kind of teacher I wanted to become. I knew Dr. Singletary for three years, during which she taught me two classes: Methods for Teaching English in a Secondary Classroom and Methods and Materials for Teaching in a Secondary Classroom. Her classes were anything but ordinary. Instead of simply lecturing to the students for an hour, she would review textbooks with us, page by page and then turn and say to us, "Now you do it." She not only wanted us to learn the methods of teaching, but she wanted us to understand the rationale behind each method and exactly how and why they were effective.

Everything about Dr. Singletary inspired me personally and she became a blueprint for the model teacher I hoped one day to become. She was so compassionate and wanted every student in the class to succeed. Dr. Singletary had this magical way of making every person in the room feel special while still giving equal time to each of her students. Her teaching style was so exceptional because she didn't care how much time she had to spend on any one subject, she would stay put until every student understood. Amazingly, she asked that we let her know if there was anything we felt she could do to improve her own teaching.

Even after I graduated college, Dr. Singletary proved to be (and still proves to be) a guiding light in my life. After college, I had to take the Praxis 2 examination (a teacher certification exam), and the first time I took it, I didn't pass. Failing that test made me question my lifelong dream of becoming a teacher. I felt defeated, so I contacted Dr. Singletary and she reminded me that in chasing a dream, there would be pitfalls, but that I should never give up and that I could accomplish anything. She encouraged me to take the test again, even helped me prepare, and has continued to be a mentor throughout my teaching career.

If I had to name the most valuable thing Dr. Singletary has taught me, it would be to always believe in yourself and that you can do anything you set your mind to. Anything is possible when you pursue your dreams and it doesn't hurt to have someone in your corner, like Dr. Singletary.

DR. IRENE SINGLETARY, TEACHER: I was only Jessica Morgan's teacher for one semester, during which I taught her two courses, but I soon came to view her as one of my many children at Morris College. When I first met Jessica, she came across as very intelligent, opinionated, and vocal with a quick temper. After we got to know each other on a more personal level, we began spending more time together and I could see that she was also a responsible, dependable and caring young woman.

At the end of our semester together, Jessica wrote a composition explaining how she benefitted from the class and in it, she said that after taking my classes, she had learned to look at life in a completely different way. That was when I first realized what an impact I had made on her. I am so humbled that she believes that I touched her life in such a special way. I consider her one of my children, as I do all of my students, who, in return fondly refer to me as, "Momma."

My teaching career is the most important part of my life. It satiates a hunger within me to make a difference in the lives of young people. It allows me to be of service to others and to experience success every time they do. Really, to me what I gain from teaching seems selfish, for what I get from my students far exceeds what they believe they may get from me. I am exhilarated each time I hear about their successes, and I share their pain when they experience hardships. Once I have taught students, I am forever connected to them. I still communicate with some of my students from the very first group I taught in 1970. They become a part of my life. Teaching is not just facilitating the content of a subject. It is impacting life and inspiring character.

I believe that I was able to have an impact on young people's lives because I sincerely love and care about them. I do not try to gain their friendship, just their respect, which is really easy for me, because I try to present myself with honesty and integrity. When I learn about them having done something inappropriate, I speak with them about it and listen to them when they need to share. When they do well, I celebrate their successes as well.

If I could give any advice to new teachers, I would tell them to make sure that their desire to teach comes from the heart. Go the extra mile to help and to get to know students personally, because it is through love and respect that positive influence flourishes.

If I were to relive my life, I would choose the very same career—teaching.

Jessica Morgan (student, top) is from Bennettsville, SC. She went to high school at Marlboro High where she later taught 9th grade English. A Morris College graduate, Jessica is currently pursuing her Masters in arts and teaching in secondary English education. She is the proud mother her two-year-old daughter, MaKenzie.

Dr. Irene Reed Singletary, Ed.D. is married to Norman Singletary. She has been an educator for 41 years and was the Associate Professor of Education and the Director of Teacher Education at Morris College. She enjoys traveling, singing, and participating in the music ministry and choir at Savannah Grove Baptist Church, MaKenzie.