

**Susie Hanner
Program Author
Engelmann-Becker Corporation**

I had just turned 20 when I started studying and working with Zig in January of 1968. The Follow Through project was just being put together; the first round of sites was in the process of choosing which educational model they wanted to work with. In the late winter/early spring, Zig asked Charlotte Giovanetti and me to accompany him to Mission, SD, where he would be doing a presentation to a group of parents and educators on the Rosebud Reservation. As some of you recall, we had access to small airplanes that could be chartered from the U of I back in those days. So early one morning, the three of us boarded a 4-seater plane and took off for SD, a long bumpy trip. Part of Zig's presentation there was to work with a group of kids. He was forewarned that the Native American kids would likely not respond, as they were typically very shy. Well, of course, Zig had those kids responding in a very not-shy way within minutes. It was hard to read the audience as we departed, although people seemed impressed with how Zig worked with the kids. On the way home, he told me that if the site chose us, he wanted me to work with them, to be their trainer/consultant--his first vote of confidence in me. As crusty as we all knew he could be, I'll always be grateful to him for believing in me when even I didn't believe in me.

South Dakota **did** choose us, and I **did** become the trainer/consultant for the site. The number of kids involved there grew exponentially very quickly, so I soon had training companions, Carol Morimitsu and Margo Melnicove. Working there on the rez presented many rewards as well as unusual challenges. We had a mantra when faced with some of these challenges: "It's for the kids," we'd say. While we sometimes laughed after saying that, we knew that it was true--that's why we were there. We knew that we could improve the educational possibilities for those kids thanks to Zig's programs.

During those first few Follow Through years, I was also being mentored in program development by Jean Osborn as DISTAR Language 1 was being developed. By the spring of '70, after it had been determined that the project was moving to Oregon, and that Cookie Bruner was staying in Illinois, I was asked to work with Zig on the development of Distar Reading 3. Growing up, I was very quiet and introverted. Needless to say, I wasn't well prepared to survive in a working relationship with someone like Zig. I really wanted to do the

work, though, because I was so inspired by what he was doing with disadvantaged kids, and felt it was a great contribution to the tail end of the civil rights movement. So after we moved to Oregon and started working intensively on Distar Reading 3, I decided to start going to therapy to learn how to work with him. That turned out to be another great gift for me, because I learned not only how to work with Zig, but it gave me a voice in all parts of my life. I was no longer a terrified mouse in the corner--I could stand my ground and speak my truth.

In the role of co-author, I always thought of my time working face-to-face with Zig as being 'in the hot seat.' It was a unique combination of trying to anticipate what Zig would want next, staying on top of what he was writing, and keeping track of other details, like charting or the specifics of what kind of items to include. The hot seat was so worth it, though, in the satisfaction that my life on this planet made a difference, something I've come to appreciate even more as I've gotten older. A few years ago, there was cause to guesstimate how many kids Zig impacted with the 100+ mainline programs that he had written. The conservative estimate at that time was 12 million kids--12 million kids whose lives were likely changed for the better because they had skills that they might not have otherwise acquired.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to speak here today, and so grateful to publicly express my gratitude for the half-century of working with the brilliance of Zig.