

In Tribute to Hazel Loring

by Mr. Lloyd Loring

South Bend, Indiana

(Son of Hazel Loring)

I thank you very much for coming and for helping our family, and her friends, to honor the memory of Hazel Loring. I'm one of three Loring children. Also here this evening is my older sister Jean Mehienbacher and her husband Skip. They are residents of Grand Marais, MI. Jean works at the local school and she's a feature columnist for perhaps the most intriguingly named bi-monthly in Michigan, **The Grand Mara: Pilot and Pictured Rocks Review**. I also want to introduce my younger sister, Pat Lent and her husband, Doug Lent. Pat teaches reading (what else?) to disadvantaged adults in Detroit at the Urban Adult Education Institute. This is a Central City organization. She has created her own phonics instruction system to deal with the very special problems of older non-readers and both Pat and Doug are very active in the nuclear freeze movement. Their daughter, Jody Lent, is also here, and she represents the *next* generation of phonics teachers: She teaches in Brooklyn (special education) and also was inspired by my mother's example and success. As for me. I'm an advertising writer and I live in South Bend, IN.

While for many of you Hazel Loring was this powerful booklet that I'm sure most of you have seen, to the three of us she was, and always will be, a whole lot more. You know, it's quite possible that I, or perhaps my sisters and I, provided the inspiration that led her to this long-standing devotion to phonics.

Let me tell you the (probably apocryphal) story about my reading prowess that Mom was so fond of repeating: It happened back when I was not yet in school. She had asked me to get some butter from the ice box (this was a long time ago) and as I dawdled over to her I asked, in all innocence, "Does butter come from bulls?" She replied, "Of course not, but why do ask?" "Because it says right here, 1 BL., 1 bull," sounding out the abbreviation for pound in reverse, in my best 4-year-old phonics! Well, needless to say. Mom never let up on my phonics training, nor on the directional training she felt was so Important to developing good reading skills ... talk about INTENSIVE phonics, we had it! As a result, all three of us became avid readers ... an ability which has been vitally important all our lives.

I can tell you that my problems with reversals were no "bull." As a matter of fact, they still are — and are very real. At the office they can't understand why I go through more correction tape than typewriter ribbon. Imagine what might have happened with that kind of problem if I had been born in another era — say this one — without a "phonics fanatic" for a mother! I can just hear the sober, seemingly-authoritative pronouncements of dyslexia, non-cognitive learning disability (I think I just invented that one) and all the rest. If I had been relegated to the ranks of a poor reader (rather than considered as a victim of faulty instruction techniques), I might not now be earning my living with words and ideas. Who knows?

Because our family had to move quite often during our formative years, reading became a treat and a solace when we found ourselves as “the — new kids on the block ” time after time, in town after town. But we made friends with books very early in life, and these were friends that never let us down, never failed to expand our horizons and our knowledge of the real world — and the fantasy world of imagination.

Because we DID get our phonics at home in full measure, based on what Hazel had learned in her first years of teaching school back East. You know, she also ran into anti-phonics way back then — and that was 60 years ago! The new methods were all the rage in the ‘20s. It seems that “new” is an even more important word in the lexicon of the educational theorist than it is in the far more primitive art of advertising. Maybe we should take a cue from my field — advertising — and insist that the Federal Trade Commission look over their shoulders when they say “new and improved” ... just to be certain they can document their claims.

Well, Hazel resisted those “new” look-say methods which were based on the novel (at that time) precepts of Gestalt psychology. The Gestalt explanation of why kids don’t need to learn their letters was based on the idea that anyone could recognize a chair. You didn’t have to know that it had rungs, and a seat, and legs. You didn’t have to know those names ... It’s a chair. So why should children need to know the parts of words? As best I can tell from reading the **Informer**, their ideas haven’t really improved in the last six decades, and their success rate in teaching reading hasn’t improved much either

For years Hazel was out of teaching, devoted to bringing up her family and instilling basic values in her children. But once they had grown, and after a series of personal crises, including several bouts with illness, she reevaluated her life, her own self worth, and her role in the world. She wasn’t content to take just any job (although she did take some from time to time, but even so, it wasn’t satisfying) and the vocation of teaching still called her. So she went back to college. But illness forced an end to that. Then she got an opportunity in the early ‘60s to teach in the small town of Oscoda, MI. This led to her re-enrolling at Wayne State University to get her full teaching credentials, although at first they turned her down. (They said she was too old to graduate and still teach.) Little did they know! Of course she was already a crackerjack teacher, according to her peers, her students, and their parents — just about everybody. But the state must be mollified and the bureaucracy must be sated. So, with fellow students easily young enough to be her children, she took the required courses and gained her teaching degree, often with her mouth tightly clamped to keep her from saying what she KNEW was right from classroom experience, especially when it came to reading instruction.

Lest you think that phonics was a monomania with Hazel, she was also a very talented gardener, and later an expert photographer, and not just snapshots, either. She had several 35mm cameras, and a complete darkroom where, as a grandmother, she learned to process her own color film and she made some exquisite color prints. She was not your typical grandmother (or maybe she was). Because my mother's life was just as messy, and non-linear as yours and mine, there were all kinds of other things to distract. These included several serious bouts with cancer that slowed but didn’t stop her time and time again.

Mom spent a number of years teaching the first grade at Oscoda, and while she gave lip service to the official state-mandated curriculum for first graders, you can just bet she found ways to give her kids all the phonics they needed to get their reading skills off to a good start. This was actually the start of the book she was later to create. At first, it was just notes to herself, typed up as a course of personal action to help her in tutoring the many older kids who failed to learn with the “look-say” method.

Which brings up a point that intrigues me. You know, it seems funny that so many students have difficulty, learning to read in the regular classroom, using the approved techniques, yet those same students, offered an alternative teaching technique in remedial classes, are virtually ALL able to learn at a rate far faster than can be taught in class: Yet this obvious demonstration of the worth of phonics used so often in remedial schools, seen over and over, completely escapes the theorists. They seem intent only on finding a new theory for a doctoral thesis, which hopes it can be turned into a book to supplement their income while adding to their prestige. Ah, the boundless mysteries of the academy!

Well, Mom did just fine at Oscoda. She was busy tutoring her special students and nurturing her first-graders into readers far before their time. As you know, she “bootlegged” phonics — right in the face of critical curriculum advisers. It was sort of a game, but a very serious one for Hazel. Eventually retirement ended her formal teaching career, and it was back to her garden and her photography and — of course — always her grandchildren. But that seemed not enough. She still had her notes on how to teach phonics in a hostile world; she still did some tutoring; and she had written a paper on the ocular mechanisms involved in reading, which she hoped to get judged fairly on its merits. And then she heard of the **Reading Reform Foundation**, and she met that remarkable lady, Bettina Rubicam.

Suddenly there was new purpose in her life. She could help LOTS of kids and parents deal with reading from her special vantage point. She became the Michigan Chairperson of RRF, and when people asked for help she gave it. So she sent out her hand-typed teaching guide, revising it as she got more and more feedback. And then, seeing the need, she sat down to recreate her method as a serious book intended to help first-grade teachers include blend phonics in any classroom.

She enrolled the whole family, even her neighbors, in this project. It seemed as if every phone call and every family gathering had to have at least 50 percent phonics content, at least if Mom was around. We all encouraged her in this project, and she got some very special help from my sister Pat, who was involved in a volunteer reading instruction program in the heart of downtown Detroit. So Pat helped Mom, and vice versa, with Pat’s effort finally escalating into a full-time job just as fruitful in its way as was Hazel’s work with the first grade.

As Pat can tell you, (and she’ll be here all this weekend for the various speeches and workshops) the techniques of reading instruction for small children are different from those for adults in many ways. Thus, some of those mother-daughter discussions were more like debates. But the goals were similar, the basis in phonics was identical, and those differing view points helped both of them to clarify their own ideas and needs. And for mom And for Mom to see her work in phonics being carried out by her daughter in behalf of truly disadvantaged adults was a source of great pride and satisfaction for Hazel.

With Pat's help and encouragement, and with Jean (my other sister) offering her assistance and support, the work went on. And, since I was an advertising man, I was the family expert on printing and production and became her editor and publisher. We worked together to refine the text, to double-check the word lists, and triple check the typesetting. God forbid you should make a typo in a book about reading! It was sort of a one-family remote-control cottage-industry publishing empire, but with a major, and significant difference.

When you have a truly better mousetrap, not only does the world generally arrive at your doorstep, they'll usually pay handsomely for the privilege of entering. But Mom simply wouldn't let that happen to HER book. Not in the SLIGHTEST! It was her goal to get her book in the hands of every possible teacher, without the teacher spending a dime — not a penny! She believed that publication of a teaching aid such as this one MUST NOT be profit motivated, and that there was a basic conflict between teaching professionalism and publishing for profit. She carried this idea rather farther than is commonly accepted, because she felt that the push to sell more and newer texts back in the '20s had created the anti-phonics methods in the first place.

While hers may seem an idiosyncratic view to some; she held it firmly and honestly. She had only her retirement money for resources, so she turned to her friends and supporters for help in getting distribution for her book. She created a non-profit organization to receive the funds and urged others to form similar groups to distribute the book in other parts of the world. Meanwhile, she took on the job of getting her book into the hands of every first grade teacher in the state of Michigan ... and darned if she didn't do it!

Using her teacher's pension money as seed money, and with the special encouragement of Dr. Ralph W. Lewis, Professor Emeritus here at Michigan State, the work went forward with a most generous personal grant from Bettina Rubicam to Mom's **Logan Institute for Educational Excellence**. The organization was set up for the sole purpose of getting this book to the teachers. We found a print shop in South Bend, which gave up much of their profit to produce the book at the lowest possible cost, and we bought a mailing list of Michigan first grade teachers. When the booklets finally were printed, friends, neighbors, family all pitched in to attach the labels, seal the envelopes, stuff them, and all the rest. Special recognition should be give to Steve and Alice Mehienbacher (Steve is Mom's grandson.) for their extraordinary efforts helping the **Logan Institute** to operate, and also to Mom's neighbor, Berlyn Hooper, who gave many hours to the project.

At last the books went into the mail, but that wasn't the end of the story. Feedback from classrooms and parents was exceptional, as Bettina has already suggested, with thank you notes and requests for extra copies from all over. With the help of the *Informer*, the word literally spread around the world. That brought requests for copies that far exceeded Mom's available funds for free distribution of the books, so she sent letters to all who asked, telling them how they could duplicate her non-profit organization locally to keep down the cost of distribution.

RRF received a goodly quantity of the books to distribute to those seeking classroom help in teaching phonics. These seemed to disappear like chocolate chip cookies just before dinnertime. Although health problems were escalating for Hazel, she never stopped in her efforts to help teachers learn about intensive blend phonics. At the Toronto Conference of the **Reading Reform Foundation** in July of 1982, Hazel Loring was awarded the *Watson Washburn Memorial Award* for her work. I can't tell you how moved she was by this honor. It was proof — if any was needed — that she HAD made a difference and that there was a very real value to her work.

Mother's final year was filled with pain, and long bouts in the hospital. But there were some highlights. Two were particularly notable. A young writer, Michael Betzold, learned of Mom's story from my sister Pat and wrote a marvelous story, which became the cover article for the February 13 issue of *DETROIT* magazine in the *Detroit Free Press* with distribution around the entire state. The article generated more thousands of requests for the booklet. By this time she was in the hospital for the final time and was resigned to the fact that her active days were over. Still she hung on long enough to hear about this article and the success of the book and the new wave of requests for teachers and parents from Michigan and adjoining states.

The second highlight for Mom was the receipt of a short note from Rudolf Flesch, thanking her for what she had done, and expressing the hope that a copy of her book could be put in the hands of every teacher and parent in the country. Although she was to pass away less than two months later, both the article and the letter put that indomitable twinkle back in her eye.

One other honor should also be mentioned: *The Michigan State Board of Education* passed a resolution on May 4, 1983, honoring Hazel Loring for her life-long dedication to education and for the publication of her book on blend phonics. All of these honors, while much appreciated, weren't the point to Hazel. She knew the importance of blend phonics, and she knew it worked in the classroom. She had a high regard and a respect for classroom teachers and no desire to be divisive. Instead, It was her goal to make it as easy and as positive as possible for good teachers to add the benefits of blend phonics to their curriculum. She was acutely aware of the infighting and the politics of education, and she would have none of it. A quiet end run around the establishment was fine with her if it could accomplish her goal of quality reading instruction. That would make her very happy.

There's one other point I'd like to mention. Forgive me, for I'm no educator, I'm not a reading specialist, not a researcher, not even a college graduate, much less a psychologist or any other kind of expert. However, that may give me an advantage in thinking through some of the problems and their solutions.

You see, my mother taught me to read using intensive blend phonics. While she knew she was teaching me reading in a manner that allowed me to go on successfully reading words I'd never seen before and perhaps even understand them without reaching for the dictionary, she was also teaching me (and my sisters) something else, and perhaps something even more basic.

There seems to be a strong trend amongst educational theorists to keep teachers from actively teaching. Teachers are supposed to be a passive background and a support system so that kids can learn how to learn on their own. No plans. No rules, No direction. And I say: BALDERDASH.

By learning to read with phonics, and its discipline, I was given an essential problem-solving tool that I've used all my life without even knowing it. I learned to start with the small, easily digested elements in order. Learned to recognize them on sight, and how to deal with them. But most important, I learned that these individual details can be assembled to make a meaningful whole. I could build a complete answer from each of these small problems as they came up. It sounds pretty simple, once you've been through the discipline of phonics.

While some reading instruction methods encourage guesswork, with rewards even if the answers aren't TOO wrong, it is a lousy preparation for life, over and above the problems of not knowing how to read. My clients don't pay me to guess. Or to be "sorta" right. Or not mostly wrong. Or even to just do the obvious. They expect me to be a master of language, not its slave. They give me the pieces of a marketing or sales problem, and they want logical, useful, and hopefully creative answers. While it would presume on your credibility to say phonics was the only key to success, I am here to tell you it did work for me. Perhaps far better than my mother ever dreamed. I want to publicly proclaim tonight, "Thanks, Mom!"

Finally, in some ways I suspect that my mother and Clara Peller could be sisters! Neither were fooled by fancy talk and big promises. Faced with the educational fast food menus of so many experts, Mom yelled at the top of her voice, "Where's the phonics?" And she's not alone. Thank you ALL for your help in opening the eyes of the world to the need for blend phonics for everyone. And thank you, Bettina, for all you've done and all you've meant to my mother. My sisters, myself, and our families are very proud to be with you tonight.



Hazel Logan Loring
(1903-1983)

Lloyd Loring, Jodi Lent, Pat Lent, and Jean Mehlenbacher. Lloyd, Pat and Jean are Hazel's children, and Pat is Jodi's mother.

Notes from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

February 14, 2009

I found this wonderful tribute in *The Reading Informer*, Vol. 12, No. 1 – Sept.-Oct., 1984. The 23 Annual Reading Reform Foundation Conference Report, July 20-22, at East Lansing, Michigan. Thanks to Dr. Samuel Blumenfeld for sending me a box of *Reading Informers*, one of which contained this “Tribute.” I have been using Loring’s method since 2007 in my private tutoring and remedial reading work at the Odessa Christian School in Odessa, TX. I republished Loring’s *Blend Phonics* back in 2003. I am happy to report that many parents and teachers have downloaded it and are using it to help the children of American to learn to read the “Blend Phonics Way.” Below I will add material I have gleaned about Mrs. Loring and her method.

Robert W. Sweet, Jr. Co-Founder and Former President of *The National Right to Read Foundation* wrote this stirring recommendation for *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics*, in his 1997 article, “The Century of Miseducation of American Teachers:”

An effective answer to illiteracy ... Let me offer a less costly, and more effective answer. I have here a twenty-five-page booklet called *Blend Phonics* written by Hazel Loring, a master teacher born in 1902, who taught under both the “whole word” and phonics systems. The legacy she has left us is powerful. Within the pages of this little booklet is the cure of illiteracy as we begin the twenty-first century. ... If every pre- service reading teacher, every reading supervisor, every kindergarten, first- and second- grade teacher in America had the information contained in Hazel Loring’s 25-page booklet and taught it this fall, there would be such a dramatic decrease in illiteracy in this country that the national media would be forced to take note.

Further Note from Internet Publisher – Donald L. Potter

November 6, 2005 (Revised 8/30/08)

I first learned of Loring’s pamphlet from the 1997 article mentioned above by Robert W. Sweet. I immediately got a copy of Loring’s *Blend Phonics* from the *Interlibrary Loan*. I was so impressed that I retyped it for Internet publication on May 28, 2003. Later Mr. Charlie Richardson sent me a copy along with his excellent instructional article, “The Alphabet Code & How It Works,” which I republished and provided with an audio instruction file. Mr. Richardson told he had mailed out a zillion copies of Loring’s work. There is also a “Table of Contents” at the end of this document. I am delighted to report that the *Blend Phonics* has received many thousands of hits since I first published it on the Internet. It is my earnest prayer that every pre-service reading teacher, every reading supervisor, and every kindergarten, first- and second-grade teacher in America will receive the information contained in Hazel Loring’s 25-page booklet and apply its message so that there will be such a dramatic decrease in illiteracy in this country that the national media will be forced to take note. I use *Blend Phonics* extensively in my private tutoring practice. I have the students **spell the words orally** in each Unit after I have taught them to sound-out the words with Loring’s blend phonics technique. We also write the words in journal.

Students of all ages can learn to read with Loring's *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*. Her daughter Pat Lent used it to teach adult education students to read. I have used it to teach a 41-year-old man who could not read and numerous other students in elementary and secondary grades. It is very important to realize that beginning readers **at any age** learn best with a good, intensive phonics program like *Blend Phonics*. The title merely indicates the ideal time to teach phonics-first. Numerous valuable supplements are available for free at www.donpotter.net and www.blendphonics.org.

I have republished two articles by Mrs. Loring on the following pages that will be of considerable interest to those interested in the history of good phonics instruction America.

Says a retired campaigner:

Intensive phonics is the only way to go

By Mrs. Hazel Loring

I am a retired teacher, 76 years old, who taught the genuine old-fashioned phonics using New Beacon charts, flash cards, and readers in the early 1920s. I left the profession to raise a family but maintained a lively interest in methods of teaching beginners' reading, particularly when I learned of problems encountered by my neighbor's children who were being exposed to the recognition system in school.

It was in the early 1950s that I began to think seriously of the possible causes of reading failure. Following discussion about eye phenomena with a friend, Dr. J.A.J Hall, an ophthalmologist, I put my ideas in a little manuscript entitled "Monocular Intervals in Binocular Vision and Their Relationship to Reading Disability."

Dr. Hall had the paper read at a regular meeting of the Detroit Ophthalmology Society, and he sent it to a committee on vision whose membership he described as international. My project lost its sponsor when Dr. Hall died of a heart attack. I had had only two years of college training and no prestige or academic standing. You can imagine the opposition my ideas encountered from the powerful anti-phonics people in education. I had enrolled in Wayne State University but as a cliff-hanging encounter with cancer prevented me from completing my work for a degree. Amazingly, I recovered and had an opportunity to teach first grade at Oscoda, Mich., on a Special Certificate.

I taught first grade for 10 years and, with summer, night and correspondence courses – and at age 61 – I received my Bachelor's degree and later my Michigan Permanent Teaching Certificate.

All of my teaching experience has confirmed my belief that directional guidance, inherent in the blend phonics system, is the key to success in teaching reading.

In my first years at Oscoda a sudden influx of personnel at nearby Wurthsmith Air Force Base resulted in over-crowding of the schools and we had more than 40 first-graders in a room. This, together with the fact that I used phonics cautiously in a limited way, resulted in only fair success. As class sizes were reduced to the low 30s and I felt free to give the children intensive phonics training, the results were very gratifying. Only “recognition” textbooks were available (Houghton, Mifflin series), but I spent at least a half hour daily in formal phonics training, which I implemented in all reading classes.

At first I used the chalkboard for phonics instruction, but when I came across an overhead projector that was not being used, I found it to be an ideal phonics-teaching tool.

Three days before my retirement, I went into the school storeroom and took a set of first reader books which my children had never seen before. Each child stood in front of the class and read a full page. Only one little girl needed help, and that with just a couple words. The others read fluently, without error. Of course most of them had been reading supplementary library materials far beyond first grade.

About 10 years ago my daughter, Pat Lent, asked me to teach her how to teach phonics, and she then volunteered as a teacher at an Urban Adult Education Institute in Detroit. For the first eight years she taught as a volunteer, but her work has been so successful that she is now a paid teacher.

It was Pat who told enthusiastically of the **Reading Reform Foundation** and urged me to write to you: “Mom, they are saying the very same things that you have been talking about all these years!”

Well, now I am retired and putter around with my garden and photography, but perhaps you may be interested in the experiences of a phonics believer of more than 50 years.

You quote Janette Moss as saying she cannot understand how it became possible to make money more easily and quickly with an ineffective technique than with an effective technique (see **RRF Conference Report**, October, 1978). It is like an unbelievable nightmare, but I saw it happen. The fanaticism of the Gestaltist cult, bolstered by self-righteousness, left no room for reason or objective evaluation. A science education professor from a large Eastern University, after reading my manuscript, told me, “They won’t get you on this (pointing to my paper); they’ll get you on something else.”

Anyone who opposes the look-say method could expect to be blacklisted. I felt I was a member of an endangered species at Wayne State, but they didn’t “get” me. My first bout with cancer took me 200 miles away where teachers were scarce and results counted more than methodology.

There is no question that Gestaltists played rough, and the conflict of interest of policy-makers in Education was a disgrace. The very people who raked in royalties as authors or editors of textbooks were the very same people who dictated reading methods and selected textbooks. Theirs, of course.

“Publish or perish” may be acceptable if the publication is restricted to non-profit professional journals, but it is an ugly situation when educational concepts are dictated, not by a search for truth in a spirit of academic freedom but by the edicts of publishers and the amount of royalties that will accrue to faculty members who use their university prestige for commercial purposes.

I realize that decent, well-intentioned educators who felt the need to augment their limited salaries were caught in the web – “everybody” was doing it. But it was wrong.

Congratulations to the **Reading Reform Foundation** on your campaign to restore common sense teaching in the schools. Your forthright stance is courageous and admirable. The opposition you encounter is entrenched and formidable, but you are right, **and you will win out.**

I’m a humble person, far from affluent, and I sometimes wonder for what purpose I have survived my on-going fight against cancer, but it feels mighty good to be able to cheer you on in your good work against the legacy of illiteracy that has been bequeathed to our children by the self-anointed, highly organized, cultist Gestaltists whose bullying tactics have dominated the reading scene for more than 50 years.

Another Letter from Hazel Logan Loring in the Same Publication
[Hod’s Podge]

We were delighted to get a letter from Mrs. Hazel Loring of Birmingham, Mich., and to be able to share with you in these pages. Just before we went to press, we received a second letter, one which we believe raises an excellent point for further discussion. Speaking of a **RRF** publication, **The Reading Crisis**, Mrs. Loring says, in part:

“It mentions that Dr. Jean S. Chall in her very fine book, **Learning to Read: The Great Debate**, divides reading methods into two groups: the ‘code-emphasis’ group and the ‘meaning-emphasis’ group. This could lead to the false assumption that intensive phonics fails to emphasize meaning.

“I know that in the past, anti-phonics people like to create the impression that they alone taught comprehension and that the intensive phonics method failed to do so. I question if one can ‘teach comprehension,’ but surely it is possible to create a situation where the exercise of comprehension is encouraged. I suppose that conceivably, a child could be taught to read lists of words without comprehension of their meaning...but that is not the way I taught my first-graders, and I doubt if it is a common practice...”

Mrs. Loring concluded her letter: “Because in years past I have heard so many claims by look-say people in regard to their ability to teach comprehension, when, in fact, in many cases they fail to even teach reading, I simply had to unburden myself.

“With the kindest regards and cheers for the work you are doing...”

“I must dispute Mrs. Loring on that last sentence. With her first letter to the **RRF**, she sent a very nice financial contribution, it’s “we” not “you,” Mrs. Loring.

Note: G. K. Hodenfield was the editor of this issue of *The Reading Informer*. [Hodenfield was “Associated Press National Education Writer before getting angry because he couldn’t write what he wanted to about what he was learning about the reading problem and its cause. He quit and went to work at Indiana University.” He co-authored, with Kathryn Diehl, *Johnny STILL Can’t Read But You Can Teach Him at Home*, AP, 1976. (Per. letter from Kathryn Diehl to Don Potter, 2/15/06.)]

Note from Internet Publisher – Donald L. Potter
Concerning Loring’s articles
January 25, 2006

The above articles by Mrs. Hazel Loring were published in *The Reading Informer*, Volume 6, Number 3 – February 1979. *The Reading Informer* a publication of the **Reading Reform Foundation**. Their motto was: OUR SOLE AIM: TO RESTORE INTENSIVE PHONICS TO THE TEACHING OF READING THROUGHOUT THE NATION. A special word of thanks goes to Mrs. Kathy Diehl, former Research Director for the **Reading Reform Foundation**, for sending me a box of *The Reading Informer* magazines and her book, *Johnny Still Can’t Read But You Can Teach Him at Home*. These articles by Loring were added to this Online edition of Hazel Loring’s *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade* on February 3, 2007.

Article by Kathryn Diehl on Loring’s *Blend Phonics*
The Barbara M. Morris Report
May 1983

The *Detroit Free Press* (2/13/1983) printed a long featured article, “A Sound Road To Reading.” As far as anyone knows, this is the first time the facts about good teaching reading ability have been printed in the Detroit news media. The article was about Hazel Loring, an elderly retired teacher, and her little booklet for teachers, “Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for the First-Grade.” This was sent free to 5000 Michigan first-grade teachers last year. The article quotes admiring teachers who determinedly use this phonics method, saying their basal reading series “doesn’t teach enough phonics” or they are “disgusted” with the failure it produces.

The Loring title alone is revealing to most teachers. Mrs. Loring began teaching before the sight word books were printed, and then watched the old standard phonics method forced out of the schools. “It was like a swarm of locust descending on the schools from coast to coast, and soon phonics was taboo.” She went right on teaching it secretly, of course.

“Blend phonics” is a very helpful term, to try to combat the false theory that the big basal series today teach through phonics. For what they do *not* do is teach the children to *use* the letters sounds by blending them from left to right to figure out the printed words. Some big publishers have even stolen the term “intensive phonics” (coined years ago by Sr. Monica Foltzer to describe her real phonics method), and apply it to their skimpy “phonics.” If we begin to call for “**blend phonics**” **methods**, they’ll have a harder time to invent an Orwellian “redefinition” of that specific term, since blending and sounding out words is the **essential thing** they carefully avoid teaching. It is also necessary to show many teaches that “**first grade**” **is the time to teach children independent reading through phonics**, not spread out over three years and more, as they’ve been trained.

ANYONE CAN ARRANGE TO PRINT MRS. LORING’S BOOKLET AND DISTRIBUTE IT, AS LONG AS IT ISN’T SOLD. She refuses to sell them, considering that the big money that changes hands in the sales of the sight word basal programs is the corrupting reason they remain a virtual monopoly in the schools. She would “die happy,” if every first grade teacher had a free copy of her booklet, to help them make up for the flaws in the programs most must use.

An organization or group of businessmen frightened about the effect of illiteracy on the U.S. economy could contact Mrs. Loring to ask approval to print it – as long as they do not sell, but *give* them to teachers. They would have to bypass the curriculum and reading supervisors, and school superintendents, in many districts, sending the booklets directly to the teachers to ensure they receive them. A couple of million copies of this tiny treasure, in the hands of every K-12 teacher in the schools, would bring about a revival of grassroots literacy within a year. Many teachers at last would understand why their school’s adopted commercial programs produce poor reading, and what to do about it.

I appreciate Mrs. Diehl for sending me the above article. Her idea of printing a “couple million copies of this tiny treasure” may seem a bit ambitious. Nevertheless, with its publication as a free e-book on my website, www.donpotter.net and www.blendphonics.org there is nothing to prevent it from reaching **every classroom in America**, or even the entire English speaking world.

This page last edited: 5/2/19.

by Hazel Logan Loring

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