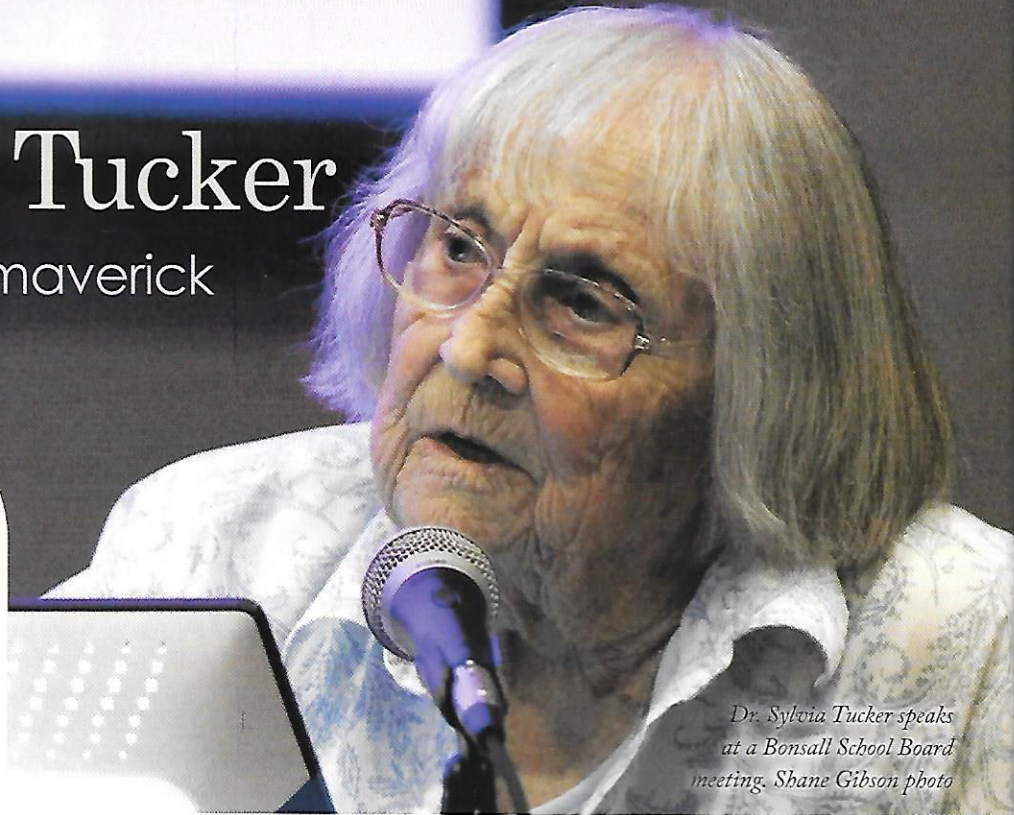


Dr. Sylvia Tucker

An educational maverick
at age 96



Dr. Sylvia Tucker speaks at a Bonsall School Board meeting. Shane Gibson photo

By Nathalie Taylor

For the past 96 years or so, Sylvia Tucker, EdD, has been working hard to create a better world. She knows she doesn't have all the answers but is eager to share the wisdom that she has gained during her many days and nights on earth. Asking hard questions and giving equally hard answers is what she does so well.

This woman, who is a mother and grandmother, shares her ideas and ideals with the world through her website – www.grandmatucker.com.

One important aspect of education is questioning. If people just accept information as is, and don't explore or question that information, then their education stalls. One of the questions that Tucker posed is regarding the "cloud," and what would happen if it was destroyed or rendered useless. Of course, no one had an answer, but she asked some thought-provoking questions in the following quote from her website blog:

"What if someone or something screws up the 'cloud,' ...Wow!!!! I have no idea. No access to medical records. No instructions to the power grids...No personnel records. No digital this, no that. What happens when nothing is available if the 'cloud' that is the magical storehouse of all the magic of our smart phones, etc. becomes dark? Will the human brain find its 'cloud?'"

For the past 21 years, Tucker has also shared her ideas at the Bonsall Unified School District board of trustees meetings. She said that her service on the board is "important because my experience is so broad that it helps me to be a better problem solver. But, the main reason is because I think it is a way I can serve and make a difference. To be left on this earth at 96 – I must certainly be here for something more than just sitting in a rocking chair."

To capture the essence of this multi-faceted woman is difficult, but her Christian faith is of the utmost importance to her. It is the rock from which she garners strength. She wears a cross necklace in her website profile photo-

graph as evidence to the world.

"Faith is more than organized religion – it is who you are. You have to start with faith in yourself," she said. "I get up every morning and think, 'how can I make a difference – this day – to someone, someplace, somehow.'"

Tucker has not only shared her thoughts online, but with the printed word. She has published three books, and each one is unique.

"Creating An Enchanted Place," highlights her philosophical basis for education. She feels that every learning environment should be as interesting and as enchanting as Disneyland.

Her second book, "Pioneer Women of the Northwest," was written during her time as dean of education at Oregon State University. She developed the curriculum, then taught the course. The book was an offspring of not only her research, but the research of students who diligently dug through old trunks. They even found original diaries detailing travel on the Oregon Trail.

"America First, Again," is a book that highlights the fact that to transform the United States, the country needs to return to the divine guidance that was there from its birth.

In 1921, Tucker was born in Iowa. She attended what was then called, "Teacher's College" but is now the University of Northern Iowa. Graduating in 1942, she taught school, joined the Navy as an ensign during WWII, and was promoted to lieutenant (junior grade). She served in Memphis, Tennessee until the war ended.

She got married, resumed her high school teaching career and was promoted to dean of girls. While working full time as a teacher, she earned her doctorate in education at the University of California Los Angeles. As Dr. Sylvia Tucker, she was then hired by the University of California Riverside as dean of women. During that time, she also developed her own curriculum and taught classes that dealt with gender and discriminatory issues. Tucker was driven to develop this curriculum because she had, "incredibly talented young women coming to me saying, 'I can't get the scholarship – or fellowship – because I am a woman.'"

Her own experience solidified her mission. "I was told at UC Riverside that I could not be dean of students because I was a woman," she said. "This was in the sixties. I did a tremendous amount of speaking (on gender/discrimination issues). It was necessary at that point in time."

Tucker ran for California State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1970, which was the year Wilson Riles won.

At her first news conference she was asked, "Are you running as a woman or an educator?"

She replied, "Will you ask Wilson Riles whether he is running as a black or an educator?" The reporter looked at her and said, "I get it."

At 96, she is still going strong.

"We don't know the day or the hour, but I have been extremely blessed in so many ways," Tucker said.