

# Ruth ANN COOPER

*Class of 1957*

Ruth Ann was born in Broken Arrow and attended all twelve grades in Broken Arrow Public Schools, graduating in the class of 1957. Numerous classmates advocated for Ruth Ann's nomination. Many have known and observed her leadership skills for over 70 years and greatly admired her. She continued her education at Northeastern State College and later the University of Tulsa earning her Bachelor of Science degree in education and a master's degree in Modern Letters.

Ruth Ann married Cliff Cooper in 1962. They have two sons and two grandchildren. Both Cliff and Ruth Ann were teachers in Tulsa Public Schools. She taught Communication Skills for 21 years at Carver Middle School, and then was District Curriculum Coordinator for Language Arts, Reading and Speech Arts until her retirement in 1997.

An avid reader, Ruth Ann had a keen interest in books about World War II and the fate of European Jews. She wanted her students to understand the Holocaust and the perils of prejudice, apathy, and indifference to be able to apply these lessons to their personal situations.

In 1989, Ruth Ann had an opportunity to join 44 teachers nationwide in studying the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance through a three-week Summer Fellowship Program, being the

first teacher from Oklahoma. That fellowship was a defining moment in Ruth Ann's teaching. She returned determined to share the atrocities she had learned from scholars, historians and poignant stories from Holocaust survivors.

Students responded well to local Holocaust survivors who visited her classroom, creating lasting impressions. Hands-on projects evolved and were displayed at area libraries and the Tulsa Jewish Federation yearly.

Ruth Ann developed an extensive teaching guide, "From Holocaust to Hope," and made it available to educators interested in teaching about the atrocities the Jewish people experienced. She conducted conferences and conventions ranging from Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, to local workshops in Oklahoma City and Broken Arrow. Her curriculum has been distributed nationwide and adaptable for students from sixth grade to adults.

As a member of the Holocaust Educators Committee, Ruth Ann received a prestigious invitation to the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and returned many times to view new exhibits.

In 2001, the Jewish Federation of Tulsa presented Ruth Ann with the Janusz Korczak Award for Excellence in Holocaust Education



in recognition and appreciation of her dedicated efforts to ensure that future generations remember the lessons of the Holocaust.

According to her nephew, Chuck Perry, "She always put the comfort of others above herself. She was known to prepare meals and food for sick persons or for families who had lost loved ones. Her kindness, care and thoughtfulness embodied her character." A fellow classmate of hers, Dr. Richard Polk, tributes her life with these words, "Ruth Ann has gone above and beyond to educate others about the atrocities of the past to help insure a better world for future generation."