

## Mrs. Wubnig was the best ...

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teacher I ever met. She was brilliant, witty, insightful, honest and entertaining. On the first day of Sophomore English at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, MD she informed us that our purpose in being there was to entertain her. And she meant it. She truly enjoyed her job, sponsoring school-sanctioned and unofficial activities on her own time and often in her own back yard. She taught us to write, edit, criticize, analyze and appreciate the beauty of written words. Many of us went on to enjoy her insights in AP English as Seniors. She was flexible in our tracked education system, teaching the most gifted as well as the most challenged students. She brooked no nonsense from the juvenile delinquents and no second-rate work from the whiz kids. When a paper was still-born, she sent it back. When a student excelled, she offered happy praise. Her husband Arthur died young. Although she suffered with him in his illness, she maintained her professional standards and survived him for almost forty years, passing away in the Fall of 2008 at the age of 100, outliving a daughter and some of her former students. She retired from the county school system at a normal age and then went on to teach in Jewish schools for many more years. She was scrupulous in segregating her Jewish community life from her public school teaching but it became clear years later that she was dedicated to repairing the world through involvement in community projects and charitable giving. I last saw Mrs. Wubnig about ten years before her death, perched on a folding chair outside the main office of the school as its alumni from all classes took their final tours of the school prior to its relocation to a new campus. She still remembered me and my classmates by name, even recalling our adopted personae from Greek mythology. She had assigned us those alter egos more than 30 years earlier based on a few weeks of acquaintance. Many of them were insightful reflections of our true personalities! I was a tech geek in high school, destined to study engineering at MIT, but Sylvia Wubnig instilled in me a passion for writing that never subsided. I am retired now. No one ever hired me to write. But every company for which I worked received an extra measure of attention to expression as I wrote my own papers and presentations and helped others with theirs. An employee once honored me with the compliment "You give good review." That was Mrs. Wubnig working through me. Rest in peace, Sylvia. You inspired generations of students with your passion for teaching and learning. We dedicate ourselves to perpetuating your ideals of clarity, accuracy, charity and good humor.