

Joan K. Lange was born on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, grew up and in time married Fred Lange with whom she bought a house in Westbury about 1970. It was, she told us, located in an area that at the time was affordable. After twenty six years their marriage ended and Fred left. He was an electrical engineer and the owner of his own successful business. Joan remained in the house where she resides to this day continuing in her role as stepmother to three daughters who were 3, 7, and 9 when they first came into her life. She knew early on that she would one day represent her family as the educator. With two powerful influences leading the way; her mother, a brilliant and accomplished woman who'd been teacher and principal in a school where she met Joan's father, and her father who was himself an educator of considerable stature and influence. His career had carried him all the way to the position of 15th Commissioner of Education for the State of Massachusetts following in the footsteps of Horace Mann, the first Commissioner. Joan was raised on Horace Mann quotations including this one that would define her purpose for the greater part of her career: "Be afraid to die, until you've won a victory for mankind". Her considerable abilities and passion for the work fueled her ambition and were earmarks of her distinguished career in Brentwood and other districts on Long Island. Arriving in the Hamlet in 1963 she was initially denied a teaching position by Fred Weaver because he said, she was certified only in Massachusetts. An ironic chain of events followed and she was hired by John Moroka and Charlie Swenson later that same year. Having attended Bridgewater State College and Harvard University she approached Brentwood looking for a job believing it was a place where no one would recognize her family name. Perhaps mistakenly, she now admits to distancing herself from her father's influence in favor of achieving her own success. Her administrative career began in 1971 when she was hired by Ken Stubbelo and Frank Mauro. The difficult decision to leave Brentwood was made a year later when she embarked upon a succession of appointments in Rockville Centre, Jericho, William Floyd, Islip, Hewlett-Woodmere only to return to Brentwood at the request of Donna Jones,. In 1987 and following her fathers lead, she assumed a membership in the National Horatio Alger Scholarship Board and became Northeast Field Director of what remains the largest needs based scholarship in the nation. As Coordinator of Language Arts in Brentwood, she took pride in representing the district to the outside world stressing the wonders of the Brentwood family whose students were amazing individuals who fail to recognize obstacles. Coming from a family of musicians and as a gifted pianist herself, she enjoys playing and recognizes how she's been (in her own words) "blessed". She believes strongly in the importance of academics and identifies the love of children as a vital ingredient for success on the part of people entering the profession. When it's missing she recommends pursuing another profession. "We should never be off", Joan says teaching is a 24/7 profession. Administrators she admits often put in a longer day but not one that is any harder than that of teachers. It may even be easier in some respects but no less stressful unless ones intention is to maintain the status quo. "Never be content", she says. When asked which year was her favorite she replied, "I loved every year".