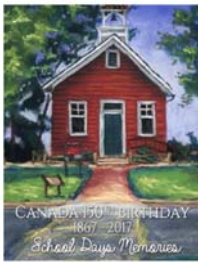




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In recognition  
of Canada's upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday  
members of the Wetaskwin Branch  
of Alberta Genealogical Society  
have recorded memories of our school days.

These events occurred by and large in the 1950s and early 1960s,  
and so provide a glimpse of our experiences some 60+ years ago.  
We hope that this look into our histories  
will be interesting and valuable for future generations.

Thank You to Mika Malloch,  
niece of our members, Neil & Claudia Malloch  
for donating her professional services in designing the front cover.

December, 2015

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## MEMORIES OF MY FIRST SCHOOL

ROBIN (MACKENZIE) SHEEHAN

In 1948, when I was 5 years old, my parents and I lived in a farm house near the tiny town of Kippen, Ontario, which is close to the east coast of Lake Huron, just south of Clinton. My father was in the Air Force and worked at RCAF Base Clinton.



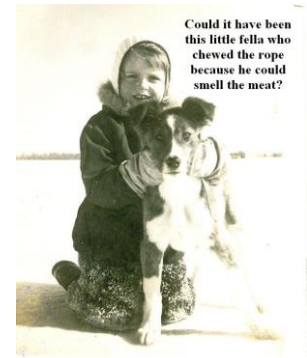
Concocting something  
very muddy on the stove?

We had moved there in the summer of '48 and I remember being outside playing most of the time until school started. In the morning I would listen to a radio program called "Kindergarten on the Air". I seem to remember the female commentator's voice but don't remember much of the programs except the closing song: "Good-bye until tomorrow, Good-bye until tomorrow. Keep smiling and be happy; Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye". I just remember lying on my stomach on the hardwood floor with my elbows on the floor and my head in my hands – I loved that program!

Down the road from us lived a family with a couple of boys, and the eldest used to give me his used "scribblers" and I would trace all his writing in those books. It made me feel like I could read and write – I loved doing that!

We had a puppy that used to chew everything and so I don't think he lasted too long. I also remember that we had a well – and NO refrigerator! Therefore our meat was kept on a rope down the well. One time my Dad went out to get some meat and the rope was broken and all the meat was down the well – you can imagine how the water ended up!

My brother was born in Goderich while we lived in Kippen. I remember standing on a stool talking to my Mom on the wall telephone and telling her that I missed her and I was happy that I had a baby brother, 'cause that was what I wanted.



Could it have been  
this little fella who  
chewed the rope  
because he could  
smell the meat?

One day when I was wandering in the field behind our house I found a baby mole and took it into the house. My Mom just said, "Go see your father", which I did. He tried to persuade me not to keep this little animal with its eyes closed tight. I wasn't having any of that – I wanted this baby. So Daddy got an empty chocolate box and put some cotton on the bottom and then laid the tiny animal on top. I was so proud that I was going to have a pet! Anyway, in the night I noticed something wrong with my baby – it wasn't breathing! So I took it to Dad, who just happened to be stoking up the furnace in the basement and he talked me into "cremating" my dead mole. I was heartbroken about that!

After snooping around one day I found a thermometer in the top drawer of the buffet in our dining room and when I took it out of the case, I dropped it onto the wooden floor! YIKES! The mercury ran in little balls in the cracks of the floor and I kept trying to pick them up. But of course it was impossible!

One time I was in need of some “Castoria” since I hadn’t been to the bathroom for a while. I remember lying on the couch with my Dad on a chair beside me, trying to give me a spoonful of this stuff and I kept refusing. Finally I said, “Daddy, if you take some then I will take some”. So he did. But I still would not take it. Such a brat!

In September I started school in a one-room school house. When I think of it now, it seems like the school house was a long way from my house, but probably it wasn’t. I walked up one road, turned left and the school was halfway down that road. There were two of us in Grade 1 and I remember that our teacher was cross-eyed. Every time she spoke to me I couldn’t tell where she was looking and I would always say, “Who? Me?”. We each had a colouring book – I guess to fill in the time when the teacher was with another grade. I always finished my page quickly and had nothing to do so I would colour the corners of the page I had just coloured. Then, so I wouldn’t get into trouble, I tore the corners off – well, I got into trouble anyway because all the corners were torn off my colouring book!

I remember walking home from school with the other kids and sometimes they would throw my reader, “Dick and Jane” into the ditch. I would try to retrieve it and they wouldn’t let me out of the ditch! Nice kids! I never did get hurt though.

One day on the way to school, just after turning the corner, one of the older boys had some cigarettes and was passing them around. I was 5 years old and had no interest in smoking, but the boy kept trying to get me to smoke his lighted cigarette. Finally, I took a puff, coughed and sputtered and that was it. Well, come time for recess, the teacher said, “By the way, I saw you all smoking at the corner so you won’t be having recess today – that includes you, Robin. I saw you smoking too!”

I do remember another thing about school in Kippen. I was taught to play a song on the piano by the older ones. At home that night at supper I pretended to play the piano on the table and sang the song that I was taught: “Can you swim? Can you float? Can you (expletive) a nanny goat?” My parents, at the end of the table, were silent and just staring at each other. I carried on eating my dinner. Funny that I have never forgotten that song.

In 1948 Nabisco Shredded Wheat came in boxes of 9 (I think) “biscuits”. The layers were separated by a piece of cardboard with printed farm buildings which you had to cut out and put together. My Dad and I cut these out and he taught me how to cut “into” the corner rather than work around it. It made such a neater cut!

My mother decided that I should enter the Music Festival. I guess I used to sing a lot at home! Anyway, the song I sang was “Little Johnny Jump-Up” (Little Johnny JumpUp sat on a stump. Funny little yellow, mellow, fellow.....). There were three of us in this category and I came in third!!! Mom was wrong!

At the end of the school year we moved to Goderich, lived in an apartment for a while, then moved to the air base at Clinton where I was in Grade 2.

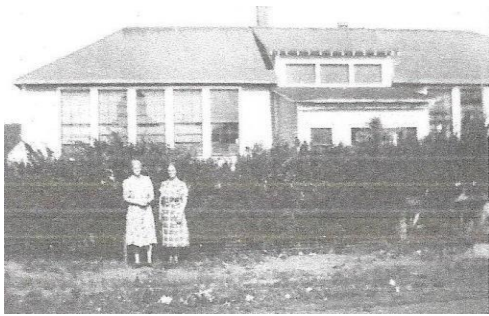
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## SCHOOL MEMORIES

## ROSELLA PLAQUIN

School has pretty much been my whole life. In my preschool years I spent many hours in a little yellow coal shed which became my playhouse. I often played school with neighbour friends and I was always the teacher. At the tender age of 5 I made a commitment with myself that I wanted to be a teacher, and all through my school years that goal never changed. I eventually realized that ambition.

My Mom often read stories to me. She later told me that I disliked school but learned easily. There was no kindergarten in my hometown of Colinton, Alberta at that time. My first grade teacher was Mrs. Day whom I highly admired. I missed many suppers that first year of school because I was so exhausted and bedtime came naturally very early. Many times I would awaken about 11 PM thinking it to be morning, but finding out that I could have another 8 hours of sleep. At this time my family lived on a quarter section of land 2 miles east and ¼ mile south of Colinton. As a result I had to walk that ¼ mile to catch a bus to take me to Colinton School in the middle of town. Fortunately, three different buses passed that corner so I caught the first bus that came by. This was especially handy in the winter.



Grade 2 was a little different. We were housed in a back room behind the stage of the community hall. I remember disliking my grade 2 teacher for two reasons: she tried to make me the teacher's pet and she kept calling me "Rosie". I did tell her in no uncertain terms that Rosie was not my name and thankfully the nickname did not stick. Our neighbour's children had difficulty saying my name so they called me "Rosebedella" which I accepted short term.

For grade 3 and 4 we were back in the main school again. I don't remember much about grade 3 but in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade I had two teachers. When the first one got pregnant a second one came in who happened to be my farm neighbour. I credit her with my neat printing and writing as she taught us well.

Through primary school I attended Sunday School on a regular basis with my Paternal Grandmother being the teacher. Later in my teens, I got my first taste of teaching at Sunday School under my Grandmother's guidance.



Grade 5 was a memorable year in that all the students trooped from the old school in the center of Colinton to the new school about a ¼ mile away. It was so exciting being in this brand new building with so many marvelous facilities. This happened to be a split 5/6 class with a teacher I didn't like for two full years. She was a mean teacher. Thinking back we had a special needs student in our class whom this teacher treated very badly. Of note, I missed out on the county field day having come down with the chicken pox. It was dreadful being in a darkened room in June.

However, even though I disliked this teacher she gave permission for me to miss the last two weeks of School in order for me to go to Portland, Oregon, USA with my parents to visit family as well as attend the Rose Bowl Parade.

My grade 7 & 8 teacher (another split grade) was very good which made Junior High so much fun. I also enjoyed participating in sports – basketball, fastball and curling. I was active in the Student's Union as well as being a cheerleader for the team sports in our school. An American man came to be our principal for grade 8 & 9. He was also my teacher in grade 9. It was a more difficult year in that we had to write provincial exams and our entire mark came from that exam. I remember working extra hard that year as the end result could make or break my chances of being a teacher. After writing these exams, our entire class went to Baptiste Lake where my maternal grandparents owned a cabin. We had a big wiener roast by the lake celebrating the end of a busy year of studying, doing sports and more studying. I remained in Colinton School through grade 9 when we were bussed to Athabasca for High School.

My marks coming out of grade 9 were average so my Mom spoke to the principal of Edwin Parr Composite High School about giving me a chance in the matric program since I needed that in order to go to University to become a teacher. Thank heavens he agreed. Then I had to work my buns off in grade 10 to prove he hadn't made a mistake. I did so well in grade 10 that the next year I was moved into the "A" stream of the matric program. Another hard year!!

That year my Mom got a job in Athabasca which allowed me to join the cheerleading squad. Now I could stay after school for games and practices and still have a way to get home. In grade 12 I continued to cheerlead but also curled on the school team and in a Colinton league. This was a sport I excelled at so became quite competitive. Grade 12 brought more departmental exams so I studied very hard. I'll never forget receiving my marks in the mail, checking my grades and realizing my average would get me into University. My maternal grandparents lived down the street from the post office and I went running down Main Street shouting "I made it, I made it". People came out of shops and stores to see what all the commotion was about.

Graduation 1965 was in September. I was very proud when my Mom was asked to give the toast to the graduates. This was so fitting as she was such an awesome support system. A noteworthy happening at my Graduation was when my diploma was misplaced. I was almost in tears because everyone else had received their diploma and there I sat waiting – waiting – waiting for my name to be called. There were 60 students in my graduation class and my diploma had fallen behind the table. Consequently a BIG DEAL was made of me receiving my diploma once it was found.

Now more schooling!! I attended the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta for four years, receiving my Bachelor of Education Degree. My first teaching job was in Edmonton. The first job was with grade 2, then grade 4, then grade 2 again, special education and finally a grade 2/3 split. Following my husband around the province for his job I had the opportunity to teach in various locations, doing mostly special education. Over the years my favourite grade to teach was grade 2 and my worst was grade 8. I enjoyed teaching remedial reading to students struggling with that subject. After 33 years in the classroom, I retired, ending a life long dream – being a teacher!!

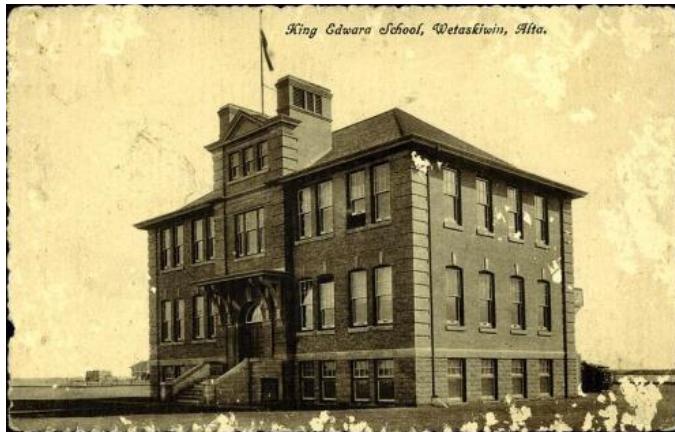
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## SCHOOL DAYS, SCHOOL DAYS, GOOD OLD RULE DAYS

MAVIS NELSON

In 1949, I thought that I would be going to grade one at the King Edward School in Wetaskiwin. This did not happen. There were way too many grade one students for the four room school house. Oh, I could have gone to Queen Elizabeth School which was on the other side of Wetaskiwin. But my parents would not let me go there. It was a long way to walk and Wetaskiwin only had one railroad crossing at that time. I guess I lived on the wrong side of town.



In 1950, I started Grade One and turned seven one month after I started. I do not remember much of my first year at school at King Edward School.

The school was just one block from our home. It was a nice big brick building that stood out as a stately building on 47 Avenue and 47 Street. The school had two rooms on each floor with a big area in the middle. A wide oak stairway led up to the second floor.

There was a big window at the front of each class room and one on the side. Behind the teachers desk was the cloak room, with one big window that opened to the fire escape. The basement had the girl's washroom on the west side and the boys on the east side. The furnace and janitor room were in the basement. I do not remember what else.

Everyone in the school went home for lunch as there was no bus to ride. Some of the children's parents picked them up and some rode their bikes. Everyone else walked ...winter or summer. Back then children could go alone, without the parents walking with them.

There were no computers, iPods, I phones, photocopiers, adding machines or calculators. To make copies of things, the teachers would use a cookie sheet filled with a mixture of gelatin. They would make the master copy of what they wanted by putting an image of what they wanted copied on a paper, then put it on top of the gelatin and pressing hard on the paper to make the image. They then would put blank paper on pressing hard and rubbing it to make each copy. What a time consuming thing to do. I liked to do this when I could.

We had to learn our reading, writing and arithmetic. We also had Social Studies, Language, Spelling, Art and Music. We had no gym so we had to play games outside like ball and only on very cold days could be stay in all day. We had a merry-go-round, swings, teeter-totter, slide, and may poles. All these things are considered to be very unsafe for children to play on now.

In my six years at King Edward I had only 4 teachers; Miss Miller, Miss Betty Szecsy who married then next year she was Mrs. McMillan, Mrs. Tofte for two years and Miss Lorraine Whitecotton.

I did not like to be sick because we lived so close to the school and every time the bell rang you could hear it. So only on the days that I was in bed did I ever stay home.



(Mavis, 3<sup>rd</sup> from the left, 2<sup>nd</sup> row)

Those were good years. I like math, social studies and science, doing projects and colouring maps. I did not like reading and spelling as much. One year we had a robin build its nest on the fire escape. The class got to watch the eggs hatch into little robins. That was fun.

Many years later I was sad to see the wrecking ball come in and knock the school down so a new one storey school could be built. It is now called CB McMurdo School.

After, grade six I had to walk to Queen Elizabeth for junior high which was the only junior high school in Wetaskiwin. By this time the city had put in a new railroad crossing. We had a gym, band room, home ex room, plus many other rooms. We would be with a different teacher for each subject. On very cold winter days we could stay for lunch.

High School was just two blocks from my home so that was nice. It was a new school with two floors and lots of students. There were 101 in my graduating class.

As I look back 53 years, school is so different. What we learned in grade twelve students now learn in junior high. I think I liked the simpler ways of the old days better.

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## SCHOOL DAYS, SCHOOL DAYS, GOOD OLD GOLDEN RULE DAYS!

### LORRAINE (HUBSCHER) MCKAY



Avon Moor School was located in the Leduc County, northwest of Thorsby near the hamlet of Telfordville. Grades one to eight were all taught in one classroom. On the property there was a teacherage in which Mrs. Margaret Sivertson (teacher) and her husband Charlie lived.

I attended Avon Moor School from grades one to six. At that time there was no such thing as kindergarten. My birthday is on December 28<sup>th</sup> and as two older brothers

attended the school, my parents decided to enroll me as well. At the age of five I started in grade one. There were only three of us in grade one so we were taught together with the grade two students. The following school year I was six starting in grade three.

The ringing of the bell brought us running into the school and the cheerful “Good Morning” from Mrs. Sivertson started our days. We would then salute the flag and recite “Pledging Allegiance to the Flag” and sing “God Save the Queen” or “O Canada”.

Memories of school days were many. The narrow cloakroom had individual hook hangers on the walls for our coats. Brown crock water coolers were filled each morning with fresh well water. I think we all used the same dipper or cup to drink out of. Yuck!!! For our lunches we had peanut butter and jam or bologna sandwiches made with homemade bread. We were envious if some brought “store bought bread.” We always had cookies and an apple or orange as well.

I looked forward to the weekly spelling tests. The lessons we were taught provided us with a good basis for further schooling. We looked through National Geographic books that had colored pictures of birds, animals, people, places, etc. It was hard for our minds to fathom this was part of our world. Our library books all fit in one small bookshelf.



I remember six of us girls were all dressed in white and yellow tiered crepe paper dresses. We did a musical “Flag Drill”, but I don’t remember what the occasion was for, only that it was in the spring or summer.

Very little extra equipment was needed to keep our noon hours and recesses busy. We played hide-and-seek, red-light green-light, tag ball, goose-goose-duck, etc. Sticks outlined houses and trails were made in the surrounding bush. Many gun fights (stick guns) were won and lost in the make-believe world.



Older children would play softball and compete with other schools. In the winter a skating rink was built and skates were shared by the students. Snow forts and snowball fights were common.

A coal fired furnace kept the schoolhouse warm in the winter. When the damper on the furnace

wasn't set right, the room would fill with smoke. After playing outside in the snow, I remember the smell of boots and mitts drying around the furnace. They would be dry by the time school dismissed for the day. If it was really cold, both recess and lunch hour could be spent indoors, usually playing at the blackboard, hangman being one. Going to the "outhouse" on cold winter days – brrrr – didn't linger long there!

Halloween parties were an event we all looked forward to. We would come in various homemade costumes; store-bought costumes were unheard of. Some parents would attend this party, mainly the Moms. Many games, contests, as well as some tricks were played, followed by a yummy lunch.

Christmas concerts were another anticipated event. Hours were spent practicing songs and plays and I'm sure we all knew everyone else's lines and songs. A few days before the concert a parent would bring in a very tall freshly cut spruce tree, the spicy spruce smell permeated the classroom. How could anyone concentrate on schoolwork? However, we still had to complete our assignments before the practices because that was the rule.

The stage was made with saw horses covered with planks and wooden boxes were used as steps. Wire was attached to the walls and large safety pins allowed bed sheet curtains to be opened and closed on the stage. The afternoon of the concert, the room was rearranged (didn't have a gymnasium back then), with planks laid across desk seats to allow for more seating with space left at the back for standing room. In the evening, the school was lit by coal-oil lamps, which threw out a minimal amount of light. (Today the lights are dimmed to obtain the same effect.) We all sat in our assigned places, giggling, fidgeting, adjusting our new clothes and wearing new shoes. The boys would be smoothing down their slicked hair and the girls tossed their ringlets.



The most anticipated part of evening for the younger children was the arrival of Santa at the conclusion of the program. Dressed in traditional red suit, greeting us with “Ho Ho Ho” and “Merry Christmas” he moved along through the crowd to the side of the stage next to the Christmas tree. Of course we told Santa that we were “good” and our Christmas wish list. He would hand us a treat bag filled with mixed nuts in their shells, hard candy and the treasured mandarin orange. Of course, we had to sample these goodies before we left for home, much to our mother’s dismay, as we licked the sticky candy. Christmas holidays were the next two weeks and at the end of that time, our parents were probably looking forward to school days again.

Our home was four miles from Avon Moor School. In the winter we traveled in a horse-drawn cutter, pulled by “Jimmy” (our horse). This cutter was box-like in structure with a window on the front and a door in the back with benches on each side. Under the benches was hay to feed the horse. During the day horses were kept in a barn on the school grounds.

One winter day coming home from school, Jimmy was spooked by some hound dogs. He bolted, the cutter hit a snow bank, the shafts broke, and Jimmy was free. He ran back to our grandparents’ place that was over a mile away. We were all a little shook up but alright. It was quite cold so we decided to walk the two miles to home (why we didn’t walk to our grandparents place??). As I was only 5 at the time, it was hard for me to keep up to the older children. Two of the older neighbor boys would take turns carrying me. Thank goodness! Back home, Dad and Mom were concerned about our lateness. Dad came to look for us with the car and rescued us. The cutter was repaired and we travelled to school with Jimmy and the cutter again.

In the spring, summer, and fall, we rode in a two-wheel rubber tired cart, again pulled by “Jimmy”. To and from school we saw and heard many different birds. One of my favorite birds was the meadowlark, with the distinctive black V on their bright yellow breasts, singing their hearts out.

Another family also had similar transportation to school in the summer. Needless to say, there were some races down the roads, after we left the school yard. Did our parents know about this – of course-but do boys always listen!

My brothers and a cousin were sometimes very mischievous. They had heard someone say that if you put a hot potato under the horses’ tail, they would run faster. Somehow they heated a potato and when the neighbor students had their horse harnessed, ready to go home, the boys did the dirty deed. Their horse took off, breaking loose from the buggy and ran all the way home, leaving the children to walk home. Needless to say they were reprimanded, and probably had a visit the woodshed as well!

I will always remember Mrs. Sivertson as she was a marvelous, compassionate teacher, always treating everyone equally. She was my favorite teacher. Memories of Mrs. Sivertson and her husband Charlie, students we attended school with, their families and the friendships we made, will always be treasured.

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## SCHOOL DAYS

BOB MAYNARD

My school days have been varied and spent in Ghana, Nigeria and England and Canada.

My parents did a lot of travelling due to my Dad's work. In Ghana the house where we lived was built by the company and was way up in the hills and had large banana and coconut trees. We would watch the servant boy climb them and get the fruit. Going to bed at night was a task.... making sure that the netting was over the bed in a way the bugs could not get in and bite us. At night we could hear the crickets and watch fire flies in the grass. They looked a lot like fairy light. We could also hear the monkeys. We learned a lot about the country. During the day, we would get the local people coming around to sell blankets and other wares. My mother bought a camel hair blanket which I still have today.



My first school at age 5 was in Sekondi, Ghana. It was run by nuns. School was only 3 hours, 4 days a week. Most of the children belonged to people who worked for the same building company that my Father worked for. When not in school, I would play with other kids. I had a couple of pet lizards and a chicken that my Mother had taken from one of the garden boys. Dad built a pen for it and we had fresh eggs for breakfast nearly every morning. I would also go out with my Father to small towns where his company was building new offices and houses.

My first Christmas in Africa was so strange with the intense heat instead of rain and maybe snow like in England. Mom made our favorite decoration, a big snowman made of cardboard and cotton wool with a hat and scarf. It looked very British. That Christmas, I got a toy jeep. I had plenty of room where I could ride and have lots of fun. There was never a dull moment. The garden boy had caught a snake and I was so thrilled about seeing the wild animal. We got to keep the snake skin. I was only 5 at the time.

When I was 6 and 7 years old I had to stay in England going to boarding school in Sussex. My brother had started before me. My parents had made arrangements for my brother to stay at friends that my Mother had known for years and I would stay with other friends.

Boarding school was very different. The school was run by Catholic Brothers and was an old monastery from the 1500's. The country side around the school was very pretty. The school was home to about 500 boys, all different ages. We slept in dorms of about 30 boys, "lights out" at 9 pm and we were awakened at 7 am. We all had to wear a school uniform; hat, jacket, short pants or long, depending on your age and height. These all had to be paid for by the parents, who paid also a yearly rate (tuition). Time spent at the school was fairly good. Going to see my foster parents was a nice break.

I took my first plane ride at age 6 on my own. A plane ride for a six year old can be a scary thing, especially on your own. My parents had made plans for my foster parent to take me to the

London Airport and meet the airport staff who would look after me on the ten hour flight to Nigeria. I was given a letter with all the information that the airport staff would need, my name, addresses in U.K. and in Nigeria, who was picking me up in Nigeria, my parents name and phone number. The plane was a DC6, 75 seat turbo prop, two engines and very loud. I sat with the air hostess and had tea and cookies and a main meal. I had been given a coloring book to work on and from what I remember I was able to see inside the cockpit. At 6 years of age, everything looks so big.

When I got to Nigeria, a company car was there to pick me up and take me to see Mom and Dad who were very pleased to see me. I did this trip several times after this for summer holidays and Christmas. The company paid the fare.



From ages 8 years to 11 years I lived with my foster parents and went to the local primary school close to where my foster parents were. It was a small school with about 200 boys and girls there. Again I had to wear a uniform. My brother and I saw a lot of each other as he lived close by with his foster parents. He went to different school. When I was at primary school, I made several friends and I was most excited that most holidays I would be flown out to Africa and see Mom and Dad for several weeks. I spent several Christmas away from my parents but I had lots of letters and gifts.

My life in Africa was good as I got older. I travelled with Mom and Dad to many different places where many white people had not been. Small villages where people lived in mud huts and no running water. What an eye opener.

My parents spent about 10 years in West Africa, coming home every 16 months on leave from the company. When they came home, my brother and I would spend as much time as we could with them. Often I would return to Africa for several weeks.

My time in Africa was done when my Father retired from the company he had worked for many years. We were all home in England in 1958 to start a new life. I left my foster parents and was now home with my own family in a house with my own room and a nice big garden.



In this picture I am in the first row, on the left.

Moving schools again was hard, new teacher, new friends but I made the best of it. I was 12 years old now and in grade 8. This school was several miles away from home, at Eastbourne. Sometimes, I would take the bus, but most of the time I would walk with a group of friends that lived up the road. There were about 400 kids attending this school. There again

uniforms were the rule, but now I was able to wear long pants. We had sports days and I

belonged to a film group and took art and woodworking classes, which would help me later in life. I went to this school for 5 years.

My Father and Mother went on a holiday to Canada where Mom's brother and his family were. 12 months later, in the winter of 1961, we immigrated to Canada. We went to Delburne, Alberta.

Here was another school that was very different. A 2 room school house, grades 1 to 8. I was in grade 8, picked up by a big yellow school bus and rode home again on the same. This time, I wore no uniform, but blue jeans and t-shirt and running shoes.

We stayed with my Aunt and Uncle on the farm with no running water or inside toilet that we had been used to. But that was farm life. My Dad found another farm to rent from friends that we had met so we moved just up the road to a 40 acre farm and raised pigs and cows. This was all.

Not being use to cold winters and lots of snow, my Mother and Father made the decision that in the fall we would sell up and move back to a warmer place that we all liked so much-England.

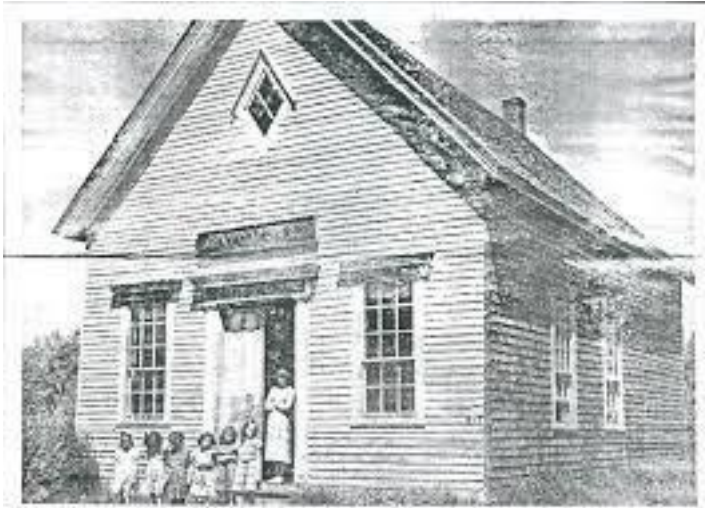
After returning to England in 1962 I was back in Eastbourne and finished my schooling at another local primary school. I worked at the grocery store that my dad had purchased.

In 1964 I went into nursing and graduated in 1967. I came back to Canada to live in Calgary with my aunt and uncle. After having several nursing jobs, I moved to Ponoka to work, moved to Edmonton in 1971 and then to Millet in 1976 and ended my nursing career in Wetaskiwin in 1993.

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## SCHOOL DAYS IN RURAL NOVA SCOTIA

CLAUDIA GAHAN MALLOCH



Education in the late 1940's and early 1950's, when I was in elementary school, was quite different in many ways from education today. For one thing, there were still a large number of one room schoolhouses in rural areas. It was at one of these, in the small Nova Scotia community of South Branch, that I received my elementary education.

The schoolhouse itself consisted of one large classroom with a bare wooden floor and long windows lining one side of the building. Usually there was a separate room for coats and boots. The "bathrooms" were two little buildings out back which were extremely cold in winter and smelly and fly infested in summer.

Heat for the school was provided by a medium-sized cast iron stove located toward the back of the room. This stove had a stovepipe going right up through the roof. In winter, we girls did a lot of huddling around that stove during recesses and lunch hour to keep warm; we had to share the space with wet coats, boots and mittens which were left there to dry. Every once in a while we'd smell the unpleasant odour of burning wool and see someone's mitten on top of the stove where it had fallen from the wire clothes line above. As well as being used for drying, the stove also came in handy for heating water and making soup and hot chocolate. It kept the older boys busy carrying in the huge sticks of wood required to keep the fire burning all day. No one in the room was ever the right temperature; those who sat close to the stove roasted and those farther away shivered.



In spring time the windows were opened and we could smell the flowers and hear all the birds and other outdoor sounds. Beautiful as this was, many of us lived in dread of the bees that flew in and out of the unscreened windows at will.

There were approximately 30 students in our school ranging from Primer (equivalent to Kindergarten today) to grade 10. The teacher was often very little older than her oldest student. I didn't have a male teacher until I went to high school, although this wasn't true of all rural schools. It must have been very difficult for the teacher to keep all those grades busy at the same time and have them concentrate on their own work instead of everyone else's. If you learned easily and did your work quickly, you could listen to the other grades have their lessons. That

was really interesting and kept inquisitive students quieter than they might have been otherwise. Of course, if you didn't learn easily, it was very distracting to hear other people talking.

Many children had long, long walks (one to five miles) to school and during the winter we would stop in at the neighbours' houses on the way to and from school to warm up so that we wouldn't freeze our fingers and toes before reaching our destination. There were no school busses in these rural areas

Because of the distance, almost everyone brought a lunch. In winter, the teacher would make soup or hot chocolate. I can remember that hot chocolate yet...it was ghastly...she made it with just cocoa, sugar and water, no milk. I brought my own cocoa from home in a thermos; there was no way that I was going to drink the mixture they made at the school. Before the hot chocolate or soup could be prepared, water had to be carried from the well by the students, or often melted snow was used as it was easier to obtain.

In warmer weather, we'd all play in the school yard. There were a few large evergreens around the school, a large, grassy field and a swing and teeter totter. That was all we had for playground equipment. Everything else we depended on imagination.

We played quite a few group games which the teacher often led. There was no staff lounge for our teacher; she was the only adult there and had the students all day long. We played tug of war, clap in-clap out and hopscotch among others. Then there was the old favourite, baseball, but you should have seen our equipment! Normally we used rubber or air balls (don't knock it, they really fly) and we used wide sticks we found around the school yard for bats unless we were really lucky and one of the students had a bat of his own. Have you ever seen an air ball hit with a wide stick? They go like the wind unless the stick flattens the ball completely upon contact.

We had no gym and no equipment for learning gymnastics, volleyball, basketball, etc. There were no swimming lessons as our only swimming pool was a wide spot in the river complete with blood suckers and lamprey eels to share it with us. But then, can you imagine one teacher taking 30 students of all ages to the river to swim? She wouldn't see half of them again that day.

One of the high points of spring was arbor day when we cleaned up the school and grounds; not just the yard, the whole school—floors, windows, desks, walls and all. Whenever the school floor was swept we had to use a product called "dust bane". This was a yellow powder which was thrown on the floor before we swept so the dust wouldn't roll up all over the room and choke us when we used a broom. After we finished cleaning, we spent the rest of arbor day having a picnic and playing games.

Each morning we opened the school day with a prayer and then sang "God Save the King" (Yes, "King" at that time, although the Queen had her Coronation when I was in elementary school and we all received special books and silver medallions).

We learned the same basic subjects as students today: reading, writing, arithmetic (but no metric) spelling, social, science and health. However, there were no videos, special equipment, nor field trips to other places. It was when I was in elementary school that the "Tom, Betty and Susan"



group of readers first came into use. Our first readers were much different and we thought the new ones were pretty sissy, and boring. Readers and workbooks were much the same then as now but for writing we had copy books to practise our writing in with special exercises and spacing so that the letters we were practising were right on the same page and we could trace over them if we couldn't quite figure out how to make them.

The only kind of musical training we received in that school was the practice we did for our concert at Christmas and a few songs that we learned at other times. Later, in the early 50's, we had a music teacher come to the school occasionally to get a group of us ready for the music festival at the rural high school 15 miles away. We did songs and choral readings: I can still remember reciting: "There was an Old Woman who Swallowed a Fly". Art training consisted mainly of decorations we made for the school on Hallowe'en, Remembrance Day, Christmas, Easter, Valentine Day and other special occasions.

Our library was a bookmobile which came around once a month to our school. It was a big van and how we loved going through it and choosing enough books to keep us going for the next month. We could only go through in small groups because there wasn't much room, so it took quite a while. Before the bookmobile started coming to our school, there was no library at all except for the very few books kept in the school.

Another thing we didn't have at the school was a telephone. If you were sick during the school day, you either stayed at school or someone walked to the nearest house and phoned someone to get you. Since there weren't very many cars in the community, the other alternative was to walk home by yourself or with a brother or sister; this was usually the solution since there was no sick room nor any place to lie down at the school.

The nurse and doctor came and gave us our immunization shots and the whole school could see get them. A couple of the girls in my class used to faint every time the needle came close. In fact, they'd faint if they stood at the blackboard for any length of time. One minute one of them would be writing on the board and the next minute she'd be in a heap on the floor. We never did find out the cause but it must have been very embarrassing for them. We also had basic eye tests administered by the teachers to determine if we needed to go to an optometrist. That's how we learned I needed glasses when I was six years old.

Punishment was far more physical than it is today with the strap or yardstick as the major weapon. The main problem was that strapping, like needle giving, took place in front of everyone. We were either quite lucky or quite good because the strap was seldom used. The one time that I remember very clearly was when a 19 year old teacher strapped one of the older boys. He was probably around 12 years old and nearly as big as the teacher. They just kept going round and round in circles until most of the students felt sorrier for the teacher than for the student. More than anything else, it was uncomfortable for everyone.

There were special parties for Hallowe'en, Valentine Day, Easter, Christmas and the last day of school when we got our report cards. One year I won a prize for best costume at the Hallowe'en; I was Little Bo Peep. That was very exciting and I was extremely proud of myself until my hat

fell into the wash tub when I was bobbing for apples. One year it wasn't possible for my Mother to get to a store to buy Valentines so my Uncle Nelson, who was very artistic, drew cartoon Valentines for everyone in the school.

We received prizes from the teacher on the last day of school for various achievements and then had games and races with prizes and an extra special lunch which all the students brought from home.

The most important event to any of the school children was the Christmas concert. Everyone had at least one part in it and we practised for many weeks to get everything right, we never managed that but we tried. We had songs, carols, skits, plays monologues, recitations and the all-important Christmas Pageant. I remember being an angel in the pageant and having parts in other acts as well. It was a lot of fun. The last week before the concert, we'd all walk the one and a half miles from our school to the community hall to hold our dress rehearsals where we had access to a stage. That week was just like a holiday.

The night of the concert all our family and friends came to the hall for our performance; it was just like being part of show business and we loved it. After the program Santa came and we all got gifts and treats. How the stovepipe used to rattle when he arrived!

Perhaps this concert was so special to us because we didn't have television. That didn't come to our village until I was in high school. In fact, I can still remember doing homework, in grade one or two, at the kitchen table by the light of an Aladdin (kerosene) lamp because we didn't have electricity. Families were certainly close together, at least physically, because in the evening the main lamp was usually on the kitchen table and everyone congregated around it. There was something really cozy and warm about the pool of light from the lamp, the family gathered and the wood stove with the fire crackling in the background. We were happy to get electricity but one never seems to get anything without having to lose or exchange something for it, in this case physical family closeness.

So it is with education. There are many programs today which we lacked in our schools, there are better buildings, more facilities and more qualified teachers; but many of the things we had have been lost because of the large numbers of children and the drain on the teachers' time. The personal aspects of schools are not so prevalent today.

Education: Better now than then? Who can say? The grooming is for totally different worlds and undoubtedly it requires different sets of tools.

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## MY SCHOOL YEARS 1954-1970

LEROY KOOP

My first schooling, outside of the home, was at a playschool setting at a Mrs. Dyck's on Saturday mornings during the summer. I walked about 4 blocks to get to her place and there I drew, painted and did other crafts. The kitchen where we "played" was dark and had a low ceiling. Mr. Dyck was known as "drayman" Dyck as he and his team of horses would deliver milk and butter to our house and ice blocks during the winter for our drinking water.

The rule in place for starting grade 1 in the 1950's was that one had to be 6 years old as of September 1. Since my birthday was in December, I was unable to start school in 1953, the year in which I turned 6. Thus I had to wait an additional year and only started grade 1 in September 1954. As it turned out, I was one of the oldest in my class with most of my new buddies being only 6. I strongly believe that the fact I started later than most, made it easier for me in school as I had "matured" one year more than the rest. The photo to the right is my grade 1 school photo.



My first four years were spent in the Morris Primary School located at 159 Main Street South in my home town of Morris, Manitoba (see photo on left). The original structure, that part in the foreground, was built in 1935. I attended grades 1 and 2 in this original building from 1954-56. The lower part in the back was built in time for me to attend grades 3 and 4.

The decor in the older portion was a lot of dark stained wood, including the desks which had holes cut in the upper right hand corners of the tops for the ink bottles. We used straight pens and blue ink. The desks had a shelf below the top and a drawer under the seat for books and other supplies. The newer portion (grades 3 and 4) had desks made of steel tubular framework with a wooden top that lifted up to disclose a storage space.

Two things stand out in my first year of school. Since the older portion of the school was having heating issues, the first 6 weeks or so of my first year of school took place in the junior/high school on the other side of town. Every morning, after assembly, I would break down and start crying. I believe I was terrified of so many "big" people all around me. I would run to the classroom where my sister, 9 years my senior, was settling down for her classes. Her teacher would allow her to come out into the hallway, calm me down and walk me back to my classroom. Thanks Sis!

The other memorable event that took place in grade 1 was one that resulted in disciplinary actions. In my family I was known as a "biter". I used my teeth to protect myself from my older sister and brother. One day, after I had finished my assignment during class, and all things were quiet, I looked around the room and my eyes fell upon the relatively large ears of my classmate sitting in the desk in front of me. I quietly reached over my desk top and clamped my teeth on his right ear lobe. Needless to say, there was a scream in the room, the startled teacher dropped her chalk and blackboard brush, spun around and caught me with my teeth still clamped onto my

classmate's ear. As punishment I had to stand in the front corner of the room holding a very heavy book over my head. As my arms weakened and began to lower, my teacher reminded me to raise the book. I was petrified that my dad would strap the daylights out of me because I knew the teacher would be phoning home. My mom and I discussed my behaviour and I promised never to do such a thing again in school. My mom did not tell my dad. Phew!



At the time I was in Grade 1, my dad owned the Valley Service Station, an Imperial Esso franchise. The station was on Main Street, right across from the Primary School. That's my dad in the photo pumping gas. There was a restaurant attached to the service station called the Valley Drive-In Restaurant. On occasion I was allowed to walk from the school to the restaurant for lunch. My dad would buy me a

hot dog and a strawberry milkshake. Yummy!

In grade 4 my teacher asked my parents to have my eyesight checked. Low and behold, I needed eye glasses. This allowed me to move from the front row to the back row, further away from the teacher and allowing for more mischief. I did not like to wear glasses as I liked to play sports and I kept on breaking or bending them and my dad did not appreciate paying repair bills.

There were no school buses for town kids, so I had to walk the 1/2 mile to school and back. I did that twice a day since I had to go home for lunch. My wardrobe was mostly handmade pants and shirts sewn by my mom. Later in life she told me that the invention of blue jeans was the greatest gift to her.

I enjoyed playing softball, soccer and of course marbles during my first 4 years of school. Playing marbles was, I believe, my first experience in the game of gambling. The players would all throw "x" number of marbles into the hole in the ground and the first one to get his "shooter" into the hole, took the pot. We were so engrossed in playing marbles that we invented "drain" marbles for inclement weather. The marbles would be rolled toward a slotted drain in the floor somewhere in the school, often in the washroom. The player who got his marble closest to the centre slot would win the pot.

The photo of the school on the right is where I attended the first 6 weeks of grade 1 as well as grades 5-8. Most classrooms were on the second floor with a full size basketball court in the basement. November 11 Remembrance Day ceremonies for the entire community took place in this auditorium.



A memorable moment in grade 5 was the receiving of a cheque for \$250 for my submission to a national hand writing contest entered by all grade 5 students. I don't know where I placed

nationally but it was a great moment. Sadly, 55 years later, I can't read my own handwriting and most often resort to printing. Grade 5 was also the year when learning a second language was introduced. I chose German.

During these years students were also initiated to Track-and-Field events, often against other schools. I participated in running, long, triple and high jumping, relays and baseball (actually softball).

Not all my education in my early years came from text books. My dad liked to take the family on car trips during the summer. That certainly was an eye opener to a lot of different things. I remember getting dressed in a yellow rain coat and walking down wet steps to stand under Niagara Falls. During a drive through Redwoods National Park in western USA, dad actually drove the car on a one-lane, one-way paved road through a tunnel cut through a huge tree. These trees were huge, more than 300 feet high. Seeing the Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone National Park in Montana erupt every hour to a height of 100 feet was an awesome sight. The four presidents carved out of rock at the Mount Rushmore National Park in the Black Hills of South Dakota was a feat I could not grasp. I marveled at the height and thickness of the Boulder Dam on the Colorado River. A twenty minute walk down into Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico was unbelievable with the big "rooms" and stalagmites and stalactites. At the end of the walk there was a big restaurant, far below the earth's surface. Luckily, from there we were able to resurface in an elevator.

Another memorable trip was one that included Tijuana, Mexico. I recall a big bridge crossing over from the USA into Tijuana. The US border officer asked Dad if he really wanted to take the car across the border as it was deemed unsafe to do so. Most people only went into Tijuana for the day and so parked the cars in a huge parking lot on the US side and walked over the bridge. My dad was adamant that we were going to spend the night in a motel just inside Tijuana, which we did. Sirens from police, ambulances and fire trucks serenaded us in our little motel room all night. My mom pushed a chair up against the outside door and sat there all night, unable and unwilling to sleep. She was so scared and thought someone had to stand guard. In the morning, we walked along the road past our motel and came across a very busy intersection with no stop signs or stop lights, but with the air full of the sound of car horns. My dad asked someone how the traffic was controlled at such an intersection. The man calmly said that the first car in the intersection had the right of way. Go figure! The whole family was glad to leave Tijuana. No one has ever gone back.



I began grade 9 in a brand new school (see photo on left). The only deficiency I recall was the size of the gym. It was too small for a full size basketball court, so we had what they called a floating centre. Lots of solid and dashed lines were painted on the floor resulting in much confusion for the visiting schools for basketball games.



This year in school resulted in many firsts for me. I learned to play chess so I could join the school chess club. Within weeks I was winning over my chess tutor. By years end I had succeeded in winning over the recognized best chess player in our club. One evening, when I beat his dad, even better at chess than his son, 2 games in a row, I retired the chessmen. I thought I should retire from playing chess on a high note.

I continued my inclination to joke around and causing mischief from time to time. I had a classmate who seemed to make trips to the principal's office for the disciplinary strap-on-the-hands on a routine basis. On one occasion, I was prepared with an onion from home. When my classmate came back from a thrashing with his hands all red and sore looking, I took him to my locker, cut open the onion and rubbed the onion over his hands. I told him that it would soothe his hands and at the same time make his hands swell. I suggested that he might be able to use swollen hands against the principal. Needless to say, when he returned to the classroom, there was a strong unpleasant odour and my classmate was sent home for the remainder of the day.

Our German teacher in grade 9 was a very nervous guy. Of course, we all picked up on that. The German class was just before our morning recess break. Our classroom windows faced south. The windows were the aluminum type with screens removable from the inside. One fine and sunny day I got about 15 of the guys together, and as the buzzer went to signify recess, we marched to the 8 or so windows, removed the screens and jumped out. Detention was in store for all of us and the teacher was on the way to a nervous breakdown. The teacher did resign before the year was up.

On a more pleasant note, I met my spouse-to-be in grade 9.

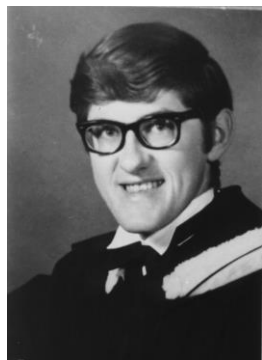
During my high school years I sang in the school choir, played centre for the basketball team, played flag football, softball and enjoyed curling.

This school was more than a mile from home and I still had to walk home on most days for lunch. On days when there were intramural sports during the lunch break, we were allowed to bring a bag lunch. By the time I reached grade 12, my dad allowed me to drive the family car, a black Oldsmobile, to school. One noon as I drove into the school parking lot, a man got out of his car and came to my window and asked if I was the principal, as he wanted to enrol his daughter in high school. I smiled and asked him what made him think that I was the principal. He looked around the parking lot and then said that I had the nicest looking car in the lot. His daughter became my girlfriend for a while.

In the spring of 1966, non-essential citizens of Morris were asked to leave, as the Red River Valley was once again inundated with flood waters. My mom, dad and I evacuated to Steinbach, about 40 miles northeast of Morris. We stayed in a small apartment on the 3rd floor of an older wooden building. There were outside wooden stairs to our private entrance. Although I was expected to go to school in Steinbach, I decided to just study in the apartment. We only had to stay in Steinbach for about 3 weeks and my schooling did not suffer.

Upon graduation from grade 12, the Morris MacDonald School Division awarded 3 scholastic achievement certificates to the top 3 students in the division. All 3 were from my grade 12 class, making our principal as happy as could be. I was one of the 3.

During my 12 years of formal schooling, there were no counsellors of any kind to prepare students for career choices or post-secondary education options. My dad said I had to go to



university. My sole guidance of what I should take in university consisted of a 15 minute meeting with the principal. He asked what my favourite subjects were in school, and when I said mathematics, physics and chemistry, he suggested an honours chemistry program. In the spring of 1970, I graduated from the University of Manitoba with a BSc in Honours Chemistry. During the 3rd and 4th year of university, I realized that I would not be happy looking at test tubes day after day, and that I preferred to talk to people, be it in the class, dormitory or lunch room. I chose to work for Canadian Pacific Airlines as a phone reservation agent and later as an airport passenger agent. I have no regrets!

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## MY SCHOOL DAYS

## CAROLE MARJORIE (JORGENSEN) KOOP

**Prologue:** My Scandinavian grandparents came to Ste. Elizabeth in southern Manitoba in 1918 from their farm near Canora, SK. To the benefit of all of their 12 children, the school built in 1917 in the extreme southwest corner of SW 1/4 Section 31, Township 4, Range 3 East was luckily right across the road from their original house which was moved southward a couple years later to a more pleasing yard site.

Ste. Elizabeth was a hamlet at the centre of a thriving farm community situated nine miles east of Morris beside the Marsh River which snaked its way through the flat prairie. My dad was born in 1912 and was the eldest of 10 boys and 2 girls. Regretfully, he only went to school for four years as he was much needed on the farm. He eventually gained a farm and house immediately south of his father's and that is where I grew up along with my six sisters and one brother. At the time of this writing, my mother still lives in her home on that farm and my brother also a farmer lives very near in his own house.

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I started school in 1954 in the same school as my aunts and uncles. The half mile to the school was an easy distance to travel in fine weather but the roads were difficult due to the very sticky Manitoba gumbo in rainy times. Our lane was long and in the early days when piled with snow



the shovel was Dad's only means to clear it. My sister and I, gleefully sitting on a hay bale, made our way to school with our horse Prince when roads were impassable. He was hitched to the stone boat; Dad stood on it with reins in hand. My grandparents had retired into the town of Morris and an uncle and his family lived in the farm house. I had my cousin Linda, two years older, as a neighbour and friend.

However, my mother recruited one of the older girls from the highest grade to keep watch over me during my first school days. The bachelor teacher was Tony Lussier and he taught at Ste. Elizabeth S.D 1072 for the six years of my grades 1-6. He was held in high esteem and could manage well the increasing numbers of students. At one time there were forty students in one room including some taking

Grade 9 by correspondence.

Some memories of those years are as follows:

On my first day of school the new comb, bought just for me for keeping my tangle of blond naturally curly hair tidy, fell down into the deep shaft of the chemical toilet in the girls washroom. We felt bad as my parents hadn't much luxury money to spare. In later years, we got an allowance on

Fridays...five cents, then ten cents, and eventually twenty-five. After school it was quickly spent on candy at Desaulniers' grocery store before heading home. We also loved the Scholastic book ordering opportunities.



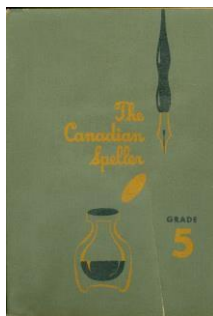
When I was eight years old I had leg surgery to correct the after effects of polio contracted during the epidemic of 1953. Plaster casts and crutches nor braces ever stopped me from enjoying school and enjoying my youth. I was pretty glad to get rid of leg braces. The hinges were torture on my clothes. When I was ten years old I needed back surgery and for twelve months I was in a plaster body cast and confined to bed for the first six months. My parents set up a hospital bed in the living room and I was very much a part of family life that way. We got our first television that year. Tony Lussier came twice a week to give me lessons and my sister took homework and assignments back and forth. We were all grateful that I did not miss a year of schooling.

I learned the feeling of 'puppy love' and was smitten by Marcel all through my elementary school years and he paid no attention! Only once did Dad transport us to school in the manure spreader pulling it through the mud with a tractor. I was mortified that Marcel might be paying attention! Mom wouldn't allow that transportation to be used again so Dad built a wooden box with a bench. It was somewhat like a tiny bus shelter which could be attached to the hitch of his tractor. Two or three of us could sit facing backwards keeping perfectly clean and safe from flying mud.

A student teacher named Charlotte came and she was so talented musically. I remember her writing the words to "Donkey Riding" and "Happy Wanderer" on the blackboard; we sang until I thought I'd burst with happiness.

Mr. Lussier did prepare us for an annual Christmas concert in the local parish hall which was a short walk from the school. It felt strange to leave the school for the practices. One day while walking past the Zilstra's chicken house we heard yelling and banging. Mrs. Zilstra had accidentally locked herself in while gathering eggs. Mr. Lussier did his best to teach us square dancing on the stage. I was so very envious because I could not manage the moves at all. Nor could I enjoy the skating on the Marsh River just down from the parish hall when the whole school paraded there for some winter recreation.

I ate lunch at school most of the time and the classmate who sat behind me ate the most meagre of foods. In the fall she had home grown musk melon for weeks on end and to this day I cannot tolerate the smell of them. I realized years later that her family was 'poor'. Mom said all I ever wanted was jelly sandwiches. Mom made our lunches from her homemade bread and preserves. Later, it was KLIK/SPAM sandwiches then when Cheez Whiz appeared we had that with thinly



sliced dill pickles. I got the word 'cheese' wrong on a spelling test because I spelled it 'cheez'! I often had an apple in my lunch and indigestion followed. The teacher kept "Tums" in his top desk drawer and gave me one when needed.

I was envious of the older students who got to sit in the double desks with the ink wells. The pens had progressed from straight pens to fountain pens which could be pumped full of ink using a little lever on its side. What a mess at times! A bundle of blotters per student was required in those days starting in Grade 4. The patina of those old brown wooden desk tops was proof of the many years of constant use.

When I was strong enough, or to make me stronger, I got a brand new bike and my sister got a second hand one; both had carriers. We biked home at lunch time in fine weather.

The teacher usually was the one who cleaned the classroom at the end of the day. He would scatter the greenish blue "Dustbane" over the floor before sweeping. He would get help with washing the blackboards from the taller children and help with banging the chalk dust out of the blackboard brushes from the younger children. The non-Catholic students had these jobs because the last 20 minutes of the day was always Catechism. The Union Jack came down reverently every day and up every morning. I knew the flag should never touch the ground. In later years, a caretaker was hired. Mr. Aquin was the garageman but he needed to supplement his income. One summer the school was to be washed thoroughly and I asked if he'd hire me. I was excited to earn some money and I thought my best friend should have the same advantage. To my horror she did not get the same wage per hour, she got half of mine!

The school inspector was Thomas Whitley. His visits were always a nice diversion but one could feel the necessity of good behaviour for the teacher's sake. A nurse came to the school occasionally too mostly to do immunizations. This one time each girl in puberty was to have her mother present during an examination. I had just started to wear a bra. I only had one and never wanted to be without it even on laundry day. Consequently, the grunginess of it was an embarrassment to all three of us.

The health care extended to dental care as well. A dental team brought their equipment and set up the examination chairs facing the brightness of the south-facing windows in the school then in subsequent years they used the parish hall. We dreaded these days but the free service must have been a relief for the parents whose children would never have had the dental care otherwise. My cousin who had the finest of clothes from her "Nan" in England wore a white dress on dental day. The dress got splattered with blood. I heard how angry my aunt was about that!

In a classroom of eight grades it is impossible not to learn some of the material ahead of time. During the years that Tony Lussier was teaching, I had often heard the name of the Babylonian king and when in Grade 7 the new teacher Helen Peters asked something about Egypt I shot my hand up and said, "Nebuchadnezzar".

I pronounced it as I had always previously heard it and this sent Mrs. Peters into uncontained laughter which eventually turned into tears. My pronunciation: "na-boooh-ah-nah-zar"! No wonder she laughed 'til she cried!







Professional school photos aroused much interest for my parents. They both loved photography and had our family picture included every year in their Christmas cards. Mom asked on school photo day if she could bring her preschool-aged children to get their portraits done as well and the photographer agreed. Proudly displayed are their seven daughters in one 1962 collage. My only brother was born in 1963.

The owner of the general store also had a transfer business and when the students from Ste. Elizabeth School S.D.1072 needed to go to a sports day at another school we used to be loaded into the truck box. We sat on bales of hay; it was dark for the whole ride. I hated it. The softball games were a highlight of the year. I could not run due to the polio difficulties but I was always allowed to bat. Fortunately, for our field trip to the Ice Capades in Winnipeg we did not use Mr. Desaulniers' transfer truck!



Recess times were fun. However, playing "Hop Scotch" on the new concrete pad at the front of the school required a skill I didn't have and "Double Dutch" skipping with the long rope was impossible. I could manage the "London Bridge" game. I loved building forts in the bush at the east edge of the one-acre school yard. I loved building snowmen and making snow forts. In fine weather playing "Eenie Einie Over" throwing a ball over the small barn was fun; swinging was the most fun of all. Indoor fun at recess included using the meagre library, playing a card game of "Go Fish", playing "Jacks", or "Telephone". When I was one of the older students I

tried teaching the younger girls how to embroider and knit during our lunch hours. I enjoyed the things I had learned in 4-H and wanted to pass them onto others.

The St. Martin and Levi schools closed and our numbers swelled. They set up desks in the basement and Claude Desrosiers from Biggar, SK was hired. It was not an ideal classroom. For my Grade 8 year the teacherage, where Tony Lussier had previously lived on the school property, was also set up as a classroom. Lillian Landry was the teacher. The brightness of this home setting was a great relief to me after the months in the basement. The floor was badly warped as there was no foundation. I stepped wrong and my knee joint came out of alignment and troubled me until surgery fixed it in 1976.

The sister next to me is exactly one year younger. Mom liked to dress us in matching outfits. Before she got too busy with all our younger siblings she sewed our clothes. We wore the same clothes for the whole week at school and changed into play clothes each day when we got home. We had 'school' shoes and 'Sunday' shoes and every Saturday evening they were polished and lined up to dry. Overshoes (aka galoshes) were worn over our shoes when the weather was wet and/or cold. Later on, two much older Winnipeg cousins gave us their hand-me-down clothes and we felt we were lucky to be so well dressed. As a side note: Their father who was by then a school principal had been a teacher in Ste. Elizabeth in the late 1930's and married my dad's sister.



Tony Lussier initiated a bird house contest. Dad was an excellent carpenter and Mom liked to paint. My sister and I had the best birdhouses and hadn't done a bit of the work!

In 1963, the year after I left the Ste. Elizabeth school, the area was consolidated into the Red River School Division. Two years later the school closed and the buildings were sold and moved off the property. Bussing children to bigger centres was what was done. I have only the fondest of memories of my years in our neighbourhood country school in southern Manitoba. Fifty residents was the population of Ste. Elizabeth in the late 1950's as tabulated by me for a Social Studies assignment. At the time of this writing there is only one person living there in a mobile home. The remnants of some of the original homes remain and the place resembles a ghost town!

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### Epilogue:

For my Grade 9 year I went to live with my grandmother. This allowed me to attend the high school in Morris where my United Church Sunday School friends went versus being bussed to the Catholic St. Jean-Baptiste Collegiate where my parents worried that I'd be uncomfortable as a Protestant and English speaking minority.



1963-64

ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE COLLEGIATE  
ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE - MAN.

**STUDENT IDENTIFICATION CARD**

NAME Carole Jorgenson GRADE X  
ADDRESS Ste. Elizabeth AGE 16  
PRINCIPAL James Edmond

The following year my next younger sister started Grade 9 so we went together to the high school in St. Jean.

From that high school, I and all seven of my siblings graduated. In 1966, I went to Manitoba Institute of Technology in Winnipeg and earned my diploma as a Registered Laboratory Technologist. I enjoyed that career for ten years. As a side note: While working as a lab tech at

the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg, I went to the maternity ward to collect a blood specimen. The patient saw my name badge and said she remembered being recruited by my mother to watch over me when I started school.

I married and we moved to Alberta in 1974. Parenthood commenced in 1978 and I happily became an 'at home' mom.

During the ten years before both my children were in school full time, I enjoyed a paying hobby called Car Lee Photography doing mainly weddings. When my sons were in school full time I was able to enroll in the Early Childhood Development program at the Wetaskiwin branch of Red Deer College. In Wetaskiwin, teaching preschool at Building Block Preschool for ten years and at Sacred Heart Preschool for six years until retiring in 2006 were wonderful experiences.



1966



1968



1988

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## ONE ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE

SANDRA KISCH

My schooling began in a one room country school with grades 1-10. It was called Bouchie Lake School. We lived about 3/4 of a mile from the school which was five miles from Quesnel, B.C. We had approximately 20 to 25 students at various times. We had one teacher who in most instances was not married. I attended this school from grade one to six at which at this time they had busing to the Jr. High school in the town of Quesnel.

There was no running water but we took turns walking a fair distance to a stream where we would haul buckets back to the class room. There was a muddy hill to climb down to get it. There was a well with a pump beside the school which seldom worked and the water was terrible. The water was poured into a big crock and from there we dipped water with a dipper which we all shared. Very unsanitary!

In the one room that we were schooled in, we had a big barrel heater and it was the older boys who hauled in wood to heat the stove. Wood was contracted by the community men to keep the school in fire wood. We had a small cloak room at the front entrance of the school. There we piled our coats on hooks and left our winter boots or gumboots on the floor. In the cold winter months our parents made soup which was heated on the stove and shared between us. We also made hot chocolate. Those were real luxuries and some of the kids rarely got a lunch so that was wonderful for them.

Our bathroom was an outhouse about fifty yards from the school set into the trees. There was no basin to wash our hands so again not very sanitary. Even though we did not have the luxuries of water and washrooms we did have to come to school with a clean hankie and clean ears, neck, hands and nails. We had to have our hanky on the desk as well as having our hands spread out to show our nails.

School was begun with the "Lord's Prayer" and we sang "God save the King," until our Queen came into being. Then we sang "God save the Queen". The courses we took were Reading Writing, Arithmetic, History, and Science. We also had art classes and some music which was singing. I loved history lessons as there were huge wall maps which were wound up on coils and pulled down for lessons with the teacher using a large stick or poker to point out places on it. I remember being amazed at the older kids who did science labs. It was fascinating!

The blinds for our many windows also had pull downs which worked on a coil spring which seldom worked. Often the blind would fall and we would go into hysterics laughing which the teachers did not appreciate.

We took turns ringing the school bell for the beginning of class or after recess. We also took turns in putting the flag up the flag pole. That was usually the older boys' job and they also took it down at night and neatly folded it.

All of my teachers in that school but one were wonderful. The one who wasn't should never have been a teacher as she was cruel and would often whack the kids across the head. She eventually had a wooden paddle made and when one day a child made noise, she paddled the whole class,

laying us across her huge lap. When she paddled me, I stood up and fainted. It turned out she broke my lower back. She was not reprimanded as that would never happen back then but I don't believe she ever used the paddle after that.

The good memories are the ones I cherish and they were good memories. I loved the one room school house.

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## SCHOOL MEMORIES

ALICE HOYLE

My journey into the world of learning actually began at home – prior to my entry into Grade 1. I come from a family comprised of daughters, with a 21 year age range between eldest and youngest. One of my older sisters took me under her wing and decided she would teach me the alphabet; all about numbers; how to read, and how to print – all before I started school. As I lived on a farm in a rural environment, there was no such thing as Kindergarten.

So you see, by the time I formally started school I already knew a lot of the things I was going to be taught in school. This tended to give me some free time during classes because I knew what was being taught to my fellow students. Actually, this gave me an advantage, especially since the first school I attended was a one-room school!

I grew up on a farm east of Gwynne, Alberta – ordinarily, I would have attended school in the hamlet of Gwynne, however a new school was being built there (the same one that is currently there – at the top of the east hill in Gwynne) and the school was not ready for occupancy in September when school was set to begin.



John Knox School, 1940

Therefore, we were all bussed to a one-room school called John Knox School. This school was located a few miles north of the Ballhorn farm (Justamere Stock Farm) on Highway #13 and the school was the learning centre for grades 1-9!

(I attended in 1953, but it looked the same then as it does in this picture. There actually were windows in the school: the walls to the right and left of the entrance both had rows of windows in them.)

Anyone who was in a grade above grade 9 was sent to Wetaskiwin to the Camp Centre School. Also attending this school was my next-older sister (my informal ‘teacher’ who had been teaching me at home). She was seven years older than me, and of course, she knew all about school and what the rules were. She also was a conveyer of messages to my parents – as in the time when the teacher asked me to model for the Art Class, and I decided I should pose like Marilyn Monroe (when the teacher left the room, of course!) I’m not sure if my parents were amused or not, when she told them the story of my little acting routine. I know for years after, I heard the story re-told to family members and everyone had a good laugh at my expense.

I recall that I did a lot of “listening in” to the older grades – they seemed to be learning much more interesting things than we were learning in grade one!

Once the new Gwynne school was opened, we started attending there and we marveled at the new, modern structure that we were able to enjoy. Imagine – only one grade per classroom .... what a luxury! Oh yes, and the luxury of having indoor plumbing as well – no need to use the outdoor ‘facility’ in the middle of winter.

When I was 10 years old, my father sold our farm and we moved to Wetaskiwin. What a change to be a part of a school where there were multiple classrooms for each grade! Grade 5 was spent at the Queen Elizabeth School; then in grade 6 (due to lack of space in the school) we were sent to King Edward School on the east side of town. (C.B. McMurdo School is now on the site of the former King Edward School)



This was a bit of a culture shock, as the school was very old; my classroom was on the top floor of the school; the desks were the old-fashioned type of wooden desk with inkwells – there weren’t any lockers, just a big cloakroom at the back of the school room. When the weather turned cold, we spent lunch hour in the classroom – most of us played ‘jacks’ or ‘pick up sticks’ while we waited for the classes to resume.

Although it isn’t specifically a ‘school memory’, one of the best things that happened to me when we first moved to Wetaskiwin, was when my eldest sister (who was married and living in Wetaskiwin) gave me a library card as a gift! I totally fell in love with the library. Imagine.....I could ride my bike there, take out numerous books, read them and then take them back and get some more! It was heaven. At home we had some books, but only a small amount as our family’s financial resources were needed for basics and there wasn’t money to buy books. We did get the Free Press Weekly and one or two other publications and our Dad read articles to us on a regular basis. He loved to read and he passed on the passion for reading and learning to all his children.

Once we moved to Wetaskiwin, we always walked or biked to and from school. If the weather was extremely cold, and if our Dad was available (his work was seasonal, so he was usually home in the winter months) he would drive us to school and sometimes pick us up too. We didn’t think there was anything unusual about walking to school in the cold weather – it’s just what you did! Sometimes your feet and hands were quite frozen by the time you got to school, or by the time you got home at the end of the day. Even Mom’s knit gloves and scarves, plus our warm boots, didn’t keep the cold away.

I was one of those kids who always liked school. There were some subjects that I liked better than others; I do recall that in Junior High we had to study engines and motors in Science Class ..... yuck! I’m sure the boys in the class thought it was a great section of the Science Curriculum, but I found it completely boring.

In Junior High, when the World Series was being played, the Principal of the school would broadcast the game (the games were broadcast on the radio stations) on the P.A. system during recess and lunch hours. We would sit on the lawn outside the school, eat our lunch and listen to the baseball games.

In Grade 9, we had a Home Economics class – this was held at the High School so we had to walk over there (the same location where Wetaskiwin Composite High School is located today). The sewing portion of the class was very disappointing to me: I had learned to sew when I was about 13, and had been sewing all my own clothes since I was 14 so when the instructor insisted I needed a pattern size that was 4 sizes larger than the size I had been sewing for myself, I kind of knew that my dress being made in class was going to be ‘a tent’. I was not wrong! ☺ Thankfully, the cooking part of the Home Ec. Class was more successful than the sewing part.

For me, High School was heavenly. Imagine – I could actually choose the classes that I wanted to take! Of course, there were the core subjects that had to be taken, but those optional classes were awesome. I took all the Secretarial Options: typing, bookkeeping, comptometer (bet the young people have no idea what a comptometer is ☺) and shorthand. The first typewriter I learned to type on was a manual typewriter – you had to have strong fingers to press the keys hard enough to make an inked impression on the typing paper. It used to be a personal challenge for some of us in the class, to see who could get to the end of the line of typing first – you knew who got there first, because you could hear the typewriter carriage being pulled across the machine, ending with a loud “thunk” at the end. We thought we were really privileged when we got a few electric typewriters when we were in grade 12.

At my grade 12 graduation ceremonies, I was honoured to receive the Business Education Award for the student having the highest marks in the Business Education Classes. The things I learned in school have allowed me to work as a Personal Assistant to some amazing Executives, and have given me the knowledge to work as a Bookkeeper, Office Manager and Legal Assistant.

When I see reports about the number of illiterate people in the world, and hear about children (especially girls) being denied an education, my heart hurts. Learning is such an important part of my life – I would be lost without a stack of books at hand. I am thankful for all the wonderful teachers who came into my life.

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## A COUNTRY SCHOOL, A TOWN SCHOOL & A BOARDING SCHOOL

SHARON ANEY

Elmsville School was opened 8 miles north of Lanigan, Saskatchewan in 1924. Twenty seven years later, in 1951, I was an excited grade 1 student in the same school. Having a January birthday, I was not allowed to start school until I was more than six and a half years old. I so wanted to go with my older cousins, Adelle and Diane, but I had to be content to have them stop in on their way home from school so I could read their books. I had already learned to read, and they were only beginning, so we all liked it.

My grades one through six were at Elmsville School. My first teacher was Mr. Peter Kucy, and I had only had one classmate. I loved school! I don't recall anything special about instruction in my particular grades, (probably because I was listening to what was going on in the upper grades) but all of my report cards had very good marks. There were big boxes of books brought out from Central office every week or two and I read every one, whether it was meant for my grade level or not.

I do remember group instruction / participation. At least one teacher could play the piano, so we had Music, which I recall as all grades singing along together. We had a period where the teacher or an older student read a book to the whole student body. I particularly remember "White Fang" by Jack London. The teachers allowed us to eavesdrop on other classes if our work was done. In that way we learned more than what our own curriculum dictated and the older students often assisted younger ones with reading and arithmetic lessons.

There were approximately thirty pupils in grades one to nine; about half of them were my cousins. Most of us cousins traveled together. From the south came three, often with a horse named Doll hitched to a cart, being accompanied by three or four from another family. My brother and I joined them, and we went on to Uncle Mike's for 3 more and 4 more joined us on the corner ½ a mile further along. We sixteen or so students made the last mile together. Mostly we walked, but sometimes someone had a horse to ride, or a bike in summer. When there was no growing crop we could walk through the fields, taking the hypotenuse of the right angled triangle made by the roads. That shortened the way, and in spring provided more interesting things to do...like seeing how far we could wade into the sloughs before filling our rubber boots, or losing them in the mud. In winter the Dads would take turns driving the whole bunch of us by team of horses and sleigh.

Along the way we would pick teams for noon-hour soccer games, decide the batting order for games of "scrub", or choose "It" for a game of tag. I don't know what the students coming from other directions thought of these arrangements, but I don't remember any arguments.

The 3 acre schoolyard contained the one room school, two swings and "teeter-totter" close by, a biffy and a two room teacherage (residence) for the teacher to live in. In my very early days, there was also a small stable for the horses of those students who came to school by buggy in summer, cutter in winter, or on horseback. These buildings were all lined up along the south side of the property, leaving the north half free for ball diamonds, soccer fields, long jump pits etc. The perimeter was lined big trees and bushes, which allowed the girls to sometimes make

secluded little areas for games of imagination, all of us to pick raspberries and saskatoon berries in season, or the older kids to find shady places to study for final exams in June.

We carried our lunch in various containers. For a few years our local fad was to carry a red “Burns” lard pail which we could individualize by punching our initial into the lid. Lunch was a sandwich of home-made bread with such fillings as fried egg, or baloney, or spam, or dill pickles or lettuce with lots of salt and pepper. Sometimes we had an apple, and usually a cookie. We were supposed to have our own cup for drinking water from the 5 gallon water dispenser, but I think we used whichever one was handiest. It was the task of older boys to get the water daily from a neighbor’s well. My brother was one of them and he earned 10 cents a week.

At recess and noon-hour breaks everyone from ages six to fifteen played together. Our ballgames were mostly scrub as we didn’t usually have enough players to make up two softball teams. The older pupils helped the younger ones learn to throw and hit the ball because they needed them as players on their teams. In winter we played tag, fox and goose, red rover red rover, and soccer. In my grades three and four we had Mr. Kueckle as a teacher. He loved playing soccer as there was good competition from the older boys, sometime the noon hour game continued until 2:30! When bad weather kept us inside, we girls seemed to know a lot of blackboard games, while the boys played noisier games in the basement.

During class we inevitably found a need to pass a note to a friend across the way. One of the punishments that I remember, after being caught, was to kneel on the floor at the front of the room and hold the big dictionary above our heads. The books weighed a ton! Another time I was punished for chewing gum in class by having to dispose of it and then stand in the corner. I was upset at this, because it was not gum that I was chewing, but a great wad of Macintosh toffee! My mouth was too full to allow me to correct the teacher’s mistake! And it didn’t seem right to have to spit it out, as I had spent most of my weekly allowance on it.

Of course, November and December saw us preparing for the Christmas concert. Some Dads helped put up the planks and sawhorses for a stage and from the depths of the basement came the stage curtains and decorations to transform the classroom. We performed plays and skits to a packed house, recited verses and sang songs. There was some community carol singing and then Santa came to distribute bags that contained a Japanese orange, hard striped Christmas candy and some nuts.

When the weather warmed in spring we all practiced running, throwing javelin, discus, and balls for the track and field meets. We dug up the sand in the jumping pits and practised our high jump, long jump and hop-skip-and-jump for our inter-school competition.

On the Field Day one of the Dad’s would bring his big grain truck to the school and we would load our balls and bats, javelin and other competition equipment, lunches and ourselves into the box for the ride to Burr, where several one-room schools competed for the district shield. I often wonder what happened to all of the banners and shields that we won for Elmsville.

On the 12 mile trip we horsed around, causing numerous stops to retrieve caps, balls, etc that were tossed out of the truck box, or blown off by the wind. It seems in memory that the day



was always hot, and we came home tired, with severe sunburns, but happy. We were well satisfied with the ribbons pinned to our shirts, indicating our placements from first to fifth. (“Participant” ribbons had not been invented yet). Mom was always proud of us; soothed our burned noses and shoulders with cool cream, and saved our ribbons in a shoebox.



Today as one drives along a rural road in Alberta or Saskatchewan, a square 3 acre plot of land, surrounded by a windbreak of large trees will indicate where a similar school once was a lively part of the community. Nowadays it may be a day use park, may be identified by a historic sign, may be vacant land, may hold a home, or it may still contain a decrepit building haunted by echoes of happy children of another age. But when I think of my school days, Elmsville is the first one that comes to my mind.

For grades seven through ten I rode the bus 8 miles to Lanigan. At the larger schools it was great to have more than 2 or 3 people in my grade. I enjoyed having competition for track and field events, and teams to play softball and basketball. And there were boys! This was the first experience of having several male classmates who were not my cousins. I had a crush on someone different every week! I also was impressed by the fact that our teacher, Mr. Grey, really taught us a lot about how to learn and study our various subjects. I still make lecture notes the way he showed us to.

I left home in the fall of 1961, to take grades eleven and twelve as a boarding student at Sacred Heart Academy (for girls) in Yorkton, run by the Ukrainian order, Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate. I was afraid to leave home at the age of 15, for the totally unknown. I cried and told Mom and Dad that they couldn’t love me if they were so determined to send me away. But they were firm that I should give it a fair try, because it was a Catholic school and many of my aunts and cousins had enjoyed their time there.



So a navy trunk was purchased and filled with the requisite uniform items: navy tunic, white cotton blouses, saddle shoes and cuffed socks for weekdays, a navy skirt, long sleeved blouse, blazer and beanie for Sundays, and a few “civvie” clothes. Each piece, including underwear and socks was labeled with a nametag. The 2 piece gym outfit of heavy cotton bloomers and a knee length over-dress was issued upon registration.

Dormitory life was hard to get used to; two strangers shared my bedroom cubicle. I missed everyone at home terribly. I wrote daily letters that were pages long. What could I possibly have had to say? Probably I recounted ways we broke the rules after “lights out”.

But then the Sisters decided to hire a coach so that the school could have respectable basketball and volleyball teams. I loved to play! Our coach insisted that our gym dresses be shortened for interschool competitions. I was named captain of the basketball team. The rest of my life fell into place. I made some special friends. My studies resulted in good marks and teachers were good, even if they tried to convince me to enter the convent.

I grew to love the daily Mass at 6:30 am, the glee club that prepared marvelous concerts each year for public enjoyment, and even the daily chores and plain food that was served in the refectory. After school snack time of jam sandwiches was livened up with the daily mail call. On nice spring or fall Sunday afternoons we all (about 100 students, chaperoned by Sisters) walked downtown to the Yorkton Dairy Queen....two by two in our navy and white uniforms, earning the label of “Penguins” by the local boys. St. Joseph College, a boarding School for high school boys, was located on the next block, and we enjoyed several socials and/or dances with them during the school year....well chaperoned, of course!

At home for the Christmas break, while attending a hockey game at the Lanigan rink, I was distracted for a moment, and was hit just below my eyebrow with a puck. Several stitches were needed to close the cut. A few days later I appeared at the doors of the Academy with a black eye, and by the way, with my hair dyed red. If it had not been so late in the evening, and the last Greyhound bus of the day long gone, the Sisters might have sent me directly home!



I graduated grade twelve in June of 1963. All of us wore a long white gown sewn of the same fabric from the same pattern.

I will never forget the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, and the home, the example and the friendship they provided for me and for my fellow students during those two years.

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