

FLASH BACK



A Retired Teacher

Margret Bartling

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Margret Bartling

Dedicated to the Early Teachers
of the Elk Point area

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Introduction

Flash Backs

This piece of writing is a tribute to all of my friends in the Teaching Field - mainly those who shared with me the daily teaching routine in the Elk Point Elementary School, but there were many more, those from Junior High and High School and from surrounding rural schools.

Some of these had previously been my personal friends, if they hadn't, then they became personal friends through the exchange of confidences or sharing amusing stories etc. during our careers. I could never have made it without their friendship, their assistance and their understanding. They have my everlasting heartfelt thanks!

Never did I consider writing again after completing "Rambling Memories" - I felt that it had been poorly written, inadequate in content etc. Toward the conclusion of my story it had become a task rather than a pleasure, I was bored with it and it left me with a feeling that it sounded "chopped off" and unfinished - if you have read "Rambling Memories", you'll know what I mean.

Then along came Myrna (Fox). Myrna has always been a dear friend of ours and since our coming to Edmonton, she has formed the habit of paying us a visit at least during the annual Teachers Convention held in the city and whenever else she can. This year, the Convention was held Feb. 21st and 22nd (1980). She came, as usual, to "sit a spell" with us and to up-date us with current events of our dear old Elk Point town. Augie and I look forward to these visits so much. It seems as though, after our visiting period is almost over, Myrna and I invariably wind up reminiscing and hashing over our former teaching days together. Same routine this year. During the course of our conversation, we talked about "Rambling Memories" (I had loaned her my copy) and I expressed my opinion that I was very dissatisfied with it and felt that I should have related the many experiences I had had throughout my teaching years. She suggested that I expand this portion of my story.

Well, her suggestion as indeed food for thought, I mean just a thought, but first thing you know, the idea kept "bugging" me, after debating with myself for some time, I decided to make one last feeble attempt to jot down some of the happenings of those dear old gone-by teaching days!

Maybe my teacher "partners in crime" will "flash back" with me and recall some of these incidents? Goodness knows you've all heard about them often enough, but did any of you ever see them in print? I doubt it. You all must remember how I

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always chattered and chattered during coffee breaks, through the lunch hour and after school, scarcely giving any of you a chance to put a word in edge-wise. All of you know that I have a weakness for rambling on and on, flitting from one subject to another as I relate events of my classrooms. I'll try to be a bit coherent, do the best I can, with the hope that my friends whether in the teaching field as yet or retired, will derive some enjoyment out of reading these lines written by the NOW absent-minded teacher --- ME!

My style of writing will be kept simple, after all my vocabulary has had to be on the level of Gr. 1 for several years besides that who wants to be bothered with intellectual language, and who wants to be bothered with a dictionary? Not I!!!

There will be serious parts within my story but I'm going to make it as humorous as possible. Please read at least part of it, set it aside whenever you become bored, but I'll "betcha" each one of you will see yourself from time to time as you read.

Mrs. B.

Chapter 1

First Canadian Teacher

Before I get into the “nitty, gritty” of my tall tales, I'll go back to the year 1918. This was the year our family (Jacobson) moved from Lansing Iowa to Alberta Canada. We arrived at Elk Point on the 8th of May 1918 and took up residence at the McCloud farm (Sid Holthe lived there years later). Up the hill to the north of us lived the Van Arnam family, just across the road east of us were the Magnusson 5 and to the south of us lived the Markstad family. These three families were our close neighbors and friends.

Most of you know where the old Elk Point school house stood - on the west corner across from the Tom Aarbo homestead. Opposite this, the road took a turn to the east to reach the Arpetts, Kietges etc. farms.

After getting settled in our Albertan home, we resumed our education.

Because of severe winter weather in those early years -temperatures often getting as low as 400 F and even 500 bel. F., we attended school during the summer months. Mrs. Van Arnam was our teacher.

It must have been an amusing sight as we tramped off on our 1 1/2 mi. (school beyond Markstad's) morning trek. There were the three Magnusson boys Ted, Lawrence and Vernon, my three brothers, Wilmer, George, Joe and myself. Since it was my brother George's chore to feed the chickens each morning and evening, these fowl insisted on following him to school every day. Then the Magnusson boyshad to herd the cattle to pasture each morning, bringing them home after school each evening. This pasture was at the south corner of the McCloud farm and was enclosed by a barbed wire fence, wooden posts between and at the opening - hard to stretch tight, and very unmanageable at time.

The gang of us had to see that everything went right, of course, so we'd wait for George to chase his flock back home once or twice. That settled we'd resume our walk until the cows were in pasture, everyone witnessing that while the boys pushed and tugged on that unruly gate. A bunch of happy, carefree kids with nothing much to worry about unless it was to get to school on time - sometimes that took --sometime! You see there were wild flowers to pick along the road side, stopping to argue over some topic and a bit of wrestling between the boys, things like that. I

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never recall being late for school, guess we must have started out early enough to avoid such tardiness.

Among the pupils attending were - the Van Arnam family, Mrs. Van, Edson, Ruth, George (Mr. Van Arnam drove his family to and from school with a one horse buggy.) There was Ila Borowski's sister Hattie Markstad, Harvey Fish, Ruth Lambright, Harold Smith, the two Babcock girls (Jim Babcock's daughters), Roy Maine's daughter, the Chattel's (three I believe) the Milholland "kids"-Cora, Russell, Leeona, Billy, Margaret and Mildred (not sure about Mildred), Gordon Arnott, Frank Keitges, Alfield Aarbo, her two brothers Jens and Martin and I think Rose and Lily Aarbo as well. Also Claire and Harry Ramsbottom, the three Magnusson boys and the four of us. There were others but I can't recollect their names - anyway - full classroom, grades I to VIII.

While living in Lansing, Wilmer, George and I (Joe was too young) had attended a Catholic school, taught by the Franciscan nuns. I think we somewhat feared these teachers, why, I don't know unless it was because of their black robes. They were kind and not too strict, excellent teachers, but they didn't seem to take a personal interest in the pupils. It was simply class routine, getting assignments done on time, and better believe we toed-the-mark!

Laura Van Arnam was an entirely different type of teacher. The minute I stepped into our new school, I liked her, we all did. As time went on, I thought there just couldn't be better teaching methods than the ones used by her to conduct her classes. She was

to become one of my most loved persons, as a woman, neighbor, an advisor and teacher, but above all a very close friend!

However, I'm afraid her older pupils weren't models in any way. As teen-agers, some of us were becoming aware of the opposite sex, giggling and laughing to attract the males attention, getting "moony" over some boy or other - that's young girls for you.

Our teacher had a form of discipline which pleased those of us who were teenagers. If we became unruly, which was often, she made us sit with a boy! It was great fun sitting with these boys in a double desk - not much school work done; the only flaw in this treatment was that the boy behind you stuck the end of your braids or tresses in the sunken ink well - the tips of your hair came out blue-black. The punishment was too enjoyable so it was soon abandoned.

Allow me to side track from the classroom for a few paragraphs while I relate a very special occasion. About six weeks after class enrollment, all pupils and their teacher received an invitation to a party on June 12th 1918. This was the day of Frank Keitges birthday, his mother had decided that his classmates should help him celebrate.

For travelling from Lansing to Alberta, my father had bought me a pair of high top, white canvas shoes and one of my aunts had given me a few yards of pale blue silk for a dress. My mother got Jenny Witworth who was Mary Loftus' aunt, to

make this dress for the party. Mary's aunt was a fine seamstress, the dress fit perfectly and I adored it, the gown was my "dress-up" outfit.

The morning of June 12th was one of those "sunny Alberta" days. We left for school as usual - chickens, cows and kids. The Jacobson kids were especially excited for never had we attended a birthday party. All of us were dressed in our best, me in my blue silk dress, wearing my white laced shoes, which, by the way, were far too big. for me and soon turned up at the toes like ski tips! Excitement ran high and it was hard for any of us to be attentive in class - the day seemed so long. School was dismissed the last recess and away we went for the gala event. Mrs. Keitges arrived at the school in her big Studebaker and packed us in - I think she made two trips. This was fun in itself to be treated to an automobile ride.

Frank's party was a great success, organized games, lighted birthday cake, ice cream (homemade), all sorts of cookies and squares. I'll bet our teacher helped with these goodies. We gorged ourselves, each one trying to outdo the other by eating. When it was time to go home, Mrs. Keitges again transported us back to the school house and from there, all pupils went their separate ways.

Do you know something? It snowed, yes it snowed!! Real wet snow, gallons of it, making the roads muddy in a short while. There we were, our best outfits bedraggled, my silk dress limp and droopy and my white laced up canvas shoes muddy and soaking wet, it was when they dried out that the toes began to turn up. I had to wear them that way, until they were worn out. The weather dampened the excitement of our first birthday party but I still think that everyone of us treasure that event as one of our precious school day memories!

Now - one would suppose that, after eating all we could hold, we would have had enough food for the day, but, no, as soon as we entered the house we said "Mom, we're hungry!" I don't think there has ever been a mother living who could be released from her culinary duties, party or not, 'cause kids are always hungry - that's been my experience!

Back to the school room - we kept our coats and lunch buckets in the entrance until it became cooler weather, which was toward the middle of October or later. School was kept open as long as it didn't become too cold - sometimes until the end of November. When this happened, we piled our clothing on one of the double desks at the rear of the room - our boots and lunches were placed on the floor circling the elongated wood heater. At lunch time, if our sandwiches were frozen, we thawed them out on top of the stove.

We were all fond of Mrs. "Van" as our teacher - she was understanding and kind to all of us. She was interested in our progress, she even played games with us, something quite alien to the "Jake" kids.

I had completed Gr. VI in Lansing, so I was promoted to Gr. VII, but before two months were out, Mrs. "Van" placed me in Gr. VIII. I was pleased about that at the time but was sorry later for it seemed to me that I had missed something basic in

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skipping a grade. I'm opposed to promoting any pupil so early in a grade, more than often this only frustrates a child, for surely, completing a grade must strengthen your knowledge in some subject or other. In grade XII I experienced great frustration trying to "conquer" Trigonometry because of lacking Geometry in both grades VII and VIII - I know darn well that if I live to be one hundred years old, I could never master the former subject!

When school reopened the following spring (1919) I resumed Gr. VIII but now my teacher allowed me to conduct reading classes for the younger pupils and to help her check their workbooks. This gave me a real sense of importance and I'm afraid that at the end of the term, I thought I knew everything about everything in the teaching field - how much I had to learn!

Every Saturday, Mr. and Mrs. "Van" went shopping for groceries etc. to Elk Point, then I was the babysitter for the afternoon, even had supper with them, which was an event 'to be looked' forward to each week - the food was always delicious and the desserts - excellent - Mrs. "Van" was an A No. 1 cook! I was always included in the treat of candy bars which they never failed to bring home, and on a few occasions, I even received a print dress.

As a girl I confided in her, bringing big, little problems for her to solve. After I was married and once again lived on the McCloud farm, I still walked up the hill with my problems, when I became a teacher she helped me as well - always had a listening ear and I was always wisely advised.

During the winter months, the Vans, Augie and I played bridge twice a week, either at their house or ours, from early evening until 2 A.M. or later. You'd think that after two or three winters of this card game, Augie and I would become experts, but, do you know something? We still can't play bridge!

Strange how it goes, Laura Van played so many roles in my life. She taught me, she taught Lucille (the old school house had been moved to town). I "flash back" and see that little girl of mine getting her thumb hurt while playing at recess. Mercurichrome was the "cure all" for minor injuries - Lucille took her injury to Mrs. Van to be treated; instead of her teacher just smearing it on, she painted a little smiley face on it - our little girl wouldn't let that thumb be washed for days! That was Laura's way - she understood children. In later years, she and I taught in the same building, she had Gr. III, I had Gr. I. She was still giving me pointers, we were still playing bridge each Friday night - there were four of us, - Florence "McD.", Mrs. Van Arnam, Minnie Boos and I. "Flash back" with me Florence for a few moments and see the four of us sitting at Laura's bridge table you, who was a "wiz" at the game, me - poor at it, and the other two - average.

We exchanged or took turns having a session at our homes, but I think all of us enjoyed being entertained at her" home the most of all. Mr. Van had died and Laura was living alone. Everything was so peaceful there, nothing interrupted our game, we had no example to set, just do as we liked, I think we could have even put our feet up on the table if we had a mind to - a carefree and fun evening!

The four of us played hundreds of games for a few years. Much to the chagrin of Minnie, the three of us would forget our manners and begin to talk "teacher talk". None of us remembered whose turn it was to deal, we just depended on Minnie to keep us straight on that score.

Came lunch time. Laura would always say, "I don't know what sandwiches were frozen, we thawed them out on top of the stove.

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"I'm going to serve you" as she sauntered into the kitchen. She'd trot back with a few sandwiches, march to the cupboard, again bring out some dainties etc. After several more trips, we'd end up with an almost banquet meal. It was a fun evening indeed. Despite the many games we played, seems odd - I still can't play bridge! (as hard as learning "Trig.")

By way of recall, Florence, do you remember the morning we found Mrs. Van stuck in the snow? You were giving me a ride to school those days. One morning in early winter, we saw her in the snow. Being rather a chunky little person, we both laughed, thinking she had become short winded and had sat down to rest a few minutes - then we became serious and began to think she might have stumbled and broken a leg or something. You speeded the car up, we both jumped out of the car to

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help her only to find that the stocky little lady was simply stuck and couldn't get up under her own power! Those happy days!

Laura passed away in April 1962. All our teacher staff was sad over that. Mr. Beattie allowed Florence and I to attend the funeral services - we were her closest friends. With her passing, something seemed to be missing to me, a link in my Life's chain had been broken, for I had lost a very dear friend, a career partner and my first Canadian teacher!!

N.B. This school was moved into the town of Elk Point in 1920 and was used as the High School. My brother Joe was one of the teachers there later on.

Chapter 2

Spring Park - Supervisor

Those of you who have browsed through "Rambling Memories," already know about my High School grades being taken in Vermilion and St. Paul. School days ended June 1923, with no hope of furthering my education, I stayed at home the rest of the year, helping neighbors out during the threshing season and baby sitting for some. I was pretty well occupied that year.

The following year was spent in the same manner until May 1925. I was offered the chance to act as Supervisor for the Spring Park Schdol during the months of May, June, July and August (I forgot to mention July and August in my story). As Supervisor, I would keep the school open until they hired a regular teacher for the September - June term.

Gracious, I was thrilled over this opportunity, why I would teach these pupils instead of supervising - hadn't I assisted Mrs. Van? And didn't I know the whole bit about classroom routine? Foolish girl - me! The one thing I overlooked was that it is quite different being behind a teacher's desk directing and instructing, than being a pupil. Never once did I think about having discipline problems - I had many, nor did I realize that each individual is different and should receive special help for these differences.

Still following the old school day methods, I tried to be teacher, ho, ho. I did run into all types of problems, but somehow I survived those summer months through "sweat of the brow" and came out of that hazardous experience "unscathed" - being a dreamer, not much wiser, but in my hand I held my first real earnings - my pay cheque! That same year, I married Augie December 12th. The notion of teaching was out of my mind, at least temporarily, for now I had babies to raise.

Chapter 3

Shamrock Valley

Until 1945, I was homemaker and housewife, maybe not the greatest in the world, but I did the best that I was capable of. All of us (including everybody) worked under poor conditions those early days and with no conveniencies, work was harder and took more time than in our present society. Hard though it was, I believe that everyone of us were happy and seemed to find time to participate in good clean fun.

I've always been glad that Augie and I welcomed all of our children's friends into our home during those years - in return, we have never been forgotten and from most of the, we still receive little words of thanks, especially at Christmas, reminding us of the fun they had in the Bartling home.

Despite all of this fun, however, someone needs to be behind the scenes taking time and effort to help with entertaining the younger set and those "someones" were us.

Augie took part by playing the violin so the kids could dance, I tried to have buns and goodies on hand for them to snack. After a few years, housework becomes a tiring task, then comes those changing years of the forties, the years. when one is really bored with housewifely routine, day after day, the same old kind of work. At least, this is what happened to me. I began to feel that if I cooked one more meal, changed one more bed or did one more big washing and ironing, (by wash board and tub and by flat irons) I'd go "off my rocker!"

In 1945 another supervision job presented itself, this time to supervise the Shamrock Valley School. Augie and I talked it over and decided it would be a change for me when I most needed it, indeed, a change for him as well. It may sound odd, but on the day of my fortieth birthday February 5th 1945 away we went by bob-sleigh to take up a new "f ive day a week" residence in the school house.

There were a few hitches to accepting the position. Naturally I would need to take the two youngest children with me - Norma was seven years old and Lucille was five years old; we needed to live in the classroom. Earlier that year, the teacherage had burned down, all furnishings with it, leaving only the basement pit. The School Board partitioned off one corner of the classroom by wire stapled to the wall and attached to a central post; from this wire hung blue drapes, you know the color of blue that makes one feel blue on rainy days or on an unsuccessful day in the classroom. The curtained off part was our kitchen and living room, leading from this, was what had been the library, it now became our bedroom. Rather cramped

living quarters, but we managed.

I had a full classroom, pupils ranging from Gr. I to Gr. VIII. My task was to see that correspondence lessons from each grade were sent into the Correspondence School Branch in Edmonton, every ten days. This, in itself was a responsibility, O.K. for the higher grade pupils, but, tell me, how could grades I and II or even Gr. III struggle over these lessons without being tutored? So -- I tutored and tutored! Using the same "Mrs. Van" teaching methods doing blackboard work, giving individual help etc. trying to simplify the answers to sometimes, "tacky" questions - no grass grew under my feet, believe me. Each Friday evening, after his work was done, Augie would bring the three of us home - transportation - bob sleigh and team or lumber wagon and team, depending on the season; back again to the school on Sunday.

It is not my intent to dwell on supervision routine, rather it is to relate some embarrassing experiences while there. As you "flash back", you will recall that smoking was supposed to be taboo habit, oh, my, yes, especially around the school premises - scandalous! Most of you will recall as well that from time to time, you found little "tattle-tales" within the classroom. These pupils like to "fink" on another kid or even on a friend. I suppose the tattle tale finds himself in the limelight for a short while.

There was a little boy in Gr. 1 who was rather stunted in growth, and a bit of a slow learner. It came to my ears (you know how) that the little fellow was smoking and had a pipe in his desk - horrors! I observed the pupil for a day or so and one day, while all were outside playing, I searched through his desk. Tucked in the back of his desk, was a stubby little black pipe, packed with tobacco, it reeked of tobacco aroma, so I guess my little six year old boy was a young smoker. I never caught him at it, but he grew up to be a small man and that makes me wonder - is it true that smoking when young, stunts growth? Maybe.

The same group of "tattle tales" squealed on four older boys either in Gr. VII or VIII, who were supposed to be smoking in the barn. They were big strong boys much taller than myself and I was a bit wary about approaching them because of their strength. When I finally mustered up the nerve to question them, all four denied it - never would they do such an atrocious thing.

Not satisfied with this denial, I decided to visit the barn. It was a nice day, all pupils playing games out-of-doors during the noon hour. Giving a quick glance around the play ground, these four boys were nowhere to be seen, (or so I thought) - must be in the barn! Squaring my shoulders,. I walked bravely into the building. No boys in sight, no boys hiding behind the horses, nor in the mangers - nowhere. My imagination made me smell smoke - ha - "they're up in the hayloft methinks. Shakily and trembling but determined, I called out, "Come down boys, I know you're up there!" Silence! Again, in a stronger voice (I was getting braver by the minute) I called, "Boys, if you don't come down, I'm going up to get you"! Not a sound.

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Naturally, I had to fulfill my threat - I walked slowly up that ladder, not a boy in sight - what a let down for me. Very embarrassed over my fruitless act, feeling red in the face and prickly all over, "Mrs. B." returned to the school house. Anyway, just to double check, I strolled past the basement pit where the pupils liked to play - there were my four boys innocently joining in the games and mingling with the rest of the group! Had they really been smoking on the school premises? It was never proven.

Mr. Racette, the School Inspector, had visited our school in late spring. During our interview, he mentioned that I should participate in the outdoor games especially during baseball practice periods. Although I didn't go along with that suggestion, not being athletic, I promised him I would give it a try. I kept putting it off, the weeks were sliding by. Finally, because my conscience bothered me, I joined in the sport - me, who usually "struck out," or, occasionally made it to First Base (in girlhood days) became the Umpire! To be honest, I got quite enthused over this "umpiring" business for a few weeks.

One day, the pupils and I became so involved in the noon hour game that we didn't notice a car entering the gate - it was the Inspector! How pleased he was to see his Supervisor out playing ball - he gave me a good report. So many times, that good old "Lucky Star" of mine, helped me out!

During that summer's baseball season, I became better acquainted with Estella Young. She was the teacher at Pleasant Dale School a distance of about 2 1/4 mi. W. from Shamrock Valley. I had known her somewhat, but only through meeting her and Earl at dances or other social functions. Shamrock Valley School challenged Pleasant Dale for a ball game some Friday afternoon. When the day came, one of the older boys brought a team and lumber wagon to school. All pupils, bats and balls were loaded into the wagon and away we all went to spend a pleasant afternoon of sports at Pleasant Dale. I don't even remember who beat who, but we had fun.

The two schools exchanged games with one another for a few Fridays, alternating visitors turn, Estella and I took time off to get in short visits and came to know one another fairly well. Little did I know then, that she was to become my SUPER special friend and co-partner in later years.

Enough for Shamrock Valley supervision. In May of 1945 we celebrated "V DAY" with the day off. My term ended in June, a bit wiser on my part. I also returned home with a tiny "spout" dream that perhaps I could resume my education and become a teacher. If the pupils could be educated by taking correspondence lessons, why couldn't I? With this in mind, I made inquiries as to what subjects I would require for University entrance. Quite a blow! For the 1 1/2 subjects that I had failed to pass, (Trig. and French Translation) I needed to take 5 subjects - a heavy load. Education requirements had changed greatly over the 23 years since I attended High School. Courageously, I sent in for my lessons. It did take courage for each of the five lessons had to be mailed off to the Branch every ten days - I should say four, because I attended the Elk Point High School every day for the 25 mm. period in

Physics. A heavy load caring for my family, my parents, and many interruptions. Somehow, I managed; wrote my tests only to find that I didn't make a passing mark in Social Studies.

That discouraged me for awhile and I decided to set studies aside. All the while though, it kept "bugging" me - only one subject away from University. In 1949, I sent for the Social Studies Course, began to study once again, as an afterthought, from late evening 'til early morn, after housework was finished. I passed it this time and was now ready for University, providing I had the cash. I didn't, so I waited for another year.

Chapter 4

Saddle Lake - Day Teacher

In the meantime, I took it a bit easier at home, getting rid of that Social Studies course lifted a load off of my shoulders, but not for long. Along toward the end of August 1949, Mr. Racette once again, came to see me. This time he was accompanied by Mr. Taylor who was at that time, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. Their purpose was to invite me to teach (not to supervise) at the school on the Saddle Lake Indian Reserve. I would receive a salary of \$160.00 a month if I accepted.

Augie and I "hashed" this proposition over - we had never had such an income per month, that salary sounded to us like a "bunch" so, I suppose that was the key note for our decision. I phoned Mr. Racette saying I would accept the position, he informed me that my term would begin the third week in September since the school building and Government house were under repair.

When the time was up, away I went to the Reserve, my first time to play the role of teacher. They gave me very little information concerning number of enrollment. Augie or someone would bring me to the Reserve every Sunday evening, I'd return home each Friday, all in all, about 125 miles weekly.

To enlighten your minds, although I think all of you know, the Saddle Lake Reserve is situated about 40 miles west of St. Paul. About three miles out of St. Paul, still travelling west is the Blue Quill Residential School.

Almost in the center of the Indian Reserve, stands a Government house, which was to become my teacherage. Across the road, east from this residence was the school house and south of the school in the same yard was the Camire home; Mr. Camire being the Indian Agent at that time. Still farther south was a small Emergency Hospital where the natives were cared for until they could be moved to the St. Paul Hospital.

When I arrived, the school was ready but the Government house was still under repair, so for the first month I lived in the Camire home. The board was cheap, the food was good and I had my own bedroom - a nice place to stay. The Camires and I became good friends and thereafter, the bedroom was always referred to as "your bedroom" and I was assured that anytime I had the urge, I could make use of it. Further on, I'll flash back to the one time I stayed in this room overnight.

The Indian Educational System is controlled by the Federal Government in Ottawa. The Superintendent is responsible for inspection etc. but I was still under

Mr. Racette as Inspector, in fact he was my Inspector throughout my teaching career. Many of you will call to mind that my brother Joe (Jacobson) was in control of Indian Education, acting as Superintendent, for many years. It was his job to place and replace Indian and Eskimo teachers in the far North, 58 teachers in all.

Now I'll describe the school building, later on, the Government house. Formerly, this building had been an office, it was now converted into the first school to be opened on the Saddle Lake Reserve. Four steps, open underneath, led up to the doorway. At the front of the room was the teacher's desk, in the left front corner stood a much worn table; (handy to work on) at the back of the room, to the left, was the supply cupboard which also served as my cloak room and at the right rear was a stairway - about 2 steps down was a small platform, then 3 more steps leading to the furnace room which was also the pupils cloak room. The furnace was a large old type heater, equipped with two wide pipes leading up to the classroom floor, a flat register in front of my desk and one at the back of the room.

Mr. Moses, a true native, was the janitor. He started the fire in the morning, replenished it at noon, (wood heater) and in cold weather, kept it going at night, He was a fine old Indian gentleman and, for some reason he always called me "Mrs. Boss."

Our supply cupboard was generously filled with text books, many series of readers, pencils, crayons, scribblers, enough I should think to last for years. Even cases of Cod Liver Oil which would be administered to the pupils once a day. All supplies were free. The oil was there but no provision had been made as to how to hand it out to the children - it took weeks of going thru red tape before the Government supplied us with such a common thing as a small paper cup!

The Government house, as it was called, was very impressive. It was a large white, old fashioned building and had a white pillared verandah in front. When I first saw it, I felt that I had stepped into the days of "Gone with the Wind" - even today whenever I "flashback," I think of it as the O'Hara plantation.

There were 7 rooms in the house, 4 bedrooms upstairs, 3 rooms downstairs, more rooms than one person could use, hence the repair work. They partitioned the upstairs bedrooms off by placing a trap door over the stairway, leaving the 3 rooms downstairs for my living quarters - a large kitchen, a front room and a bedroom. These rooms were sparcely furnished but I kept bringinq back odds and ends from home and it soon took on the look of a comfortable home.

It too, was furnished with a large wood heater place in the dirt cellar. (I never went down there) In the kitchen stood an old-fashioned range type cook stove - cosy and warm in the winter time.

Leading from the kitchen was a long, dark shed which wag filled with row upon row of cut dried wood, the length of one wall, leaving me a pathway for entrance. I was furnished with a crooked key. (I'm famous for possessing crooked keys) Upon entering this shed, oft times, I made many tries at that key hole before I

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could get into my kitchen.

Surrounding the house was a large beautiful lawn with big spruce trees scattered here and there, shrubs around the sides, truly an impressive setting!

The natives of this Reserve belong to the Plains Cree Indian Tribe. While hunting and fishing may be a means of living, agricultural farming is an added industry. Their land is the best, and residing around Saddle Lake are many ambitious farmers making a successful living - among these are the Steinhauers, the Stones, the Moses and many that I can't recall.

Residents are looked after by the Indian Agent - Mr. Camire during my stay. One day each month, rations of bacon, tea, coffee, tobacco etc. are handed out to the Indians. Farm machinery is loaned out to work the land, but is brought back to the Indian Agent after use to be loaned again to the next farmer. Though one rarely sees an Indian from day to day, there is plenty of activity and visiting on Ration day!

Finally it came the morning of school opening. I stood in the doorway to greet my family. In they came pushing and shoving one another to size me up I suppose. In they tramped., all 33 of them - tall, short, large, small.

You've all heard that expression, as wild as an Indian? Let me tell you, there is more truth than fiction to that statement. As they entered, I told them to put their jackets and lunch buckets down in the basement. Did they walk down? Never! One by one, they jumped down, each landing safely on the little platform! Each time one jumped, each time my heart flew into my mouth lest one should break an arm or a leg - no one ever did. After witnessing this performance several times a week, I ceased to worry.

Well, I assigned them their desks. Six desks to a row, five rows across, with three left over - these I seated at the back, close to the supply cupboard - a full classroom in a small building. When this was done, I tried to introduce myself but discovered that only 11 of my pupils could speak English, the remaining 22 could speak not a word of our language - I couldn't understand nor speak Cree! The English language had been learned at the Blue Quill School where eleven had attended. The non English speaking pupils knew a few choice swear words which they used quite often - I don't suppose they knew the real meaning of these expressions.

After all were seated, I glanced down the rows and thought, "Mrs. B, What have I gotten myself in for this time!" How would I tackle word approach - what techniques would I use? (Remember my knowledge as a teacher was limited.) Only thing to do was to roll up my sleeves and try.

It was a tiring task. Beginning with a single word (eg. walk) It was printed on the blackboard, I acted it out several times, then the pupils imitated this procedure over and over again, trying to say it as well, until the word was mastered. In this manner, I expanded words into sentences etc. Meanwhile the English speaking students helped me a great deal, both in the classroom and on the playgrounds.

I had pupils in Gr. I who were 15 years old, never had attended school - some

were much taller and huskier than myself and I often thought that should these kids ever get the urge to stage a fight, they could have beaten the "pants" off of me!

Though the Crees are considered a stoic race, I found that they could display their emotions, express their likes and dislikes very readily, but they need to be approached tactfully. If they like you they'll do anything for you, if they don't, well forget about it. In my case, certainly the parents and pupils did anything and everything to prove that I was favorably accepted. One little girl, Theresa (very shy) formed the habit of sharing with me, her rather grubby cracker and cheese sandwich for lunch. I didn't dare refuse lest she become sullen but took her offering - you know where it landed. After lunch, I made sure to praise her, saying I would have gone hungry without her sandwich. Ever after, she was my real "buddy" and daily I was treated to a fine cracker and cheese sandwich.

In the classroom, pupils and teacher got along fine. Each day I watched their facial expressions and sized up what kind of mood he/she was in - when one appeared "balky", I refrained from asking him to act out words etc., but also watched my chance for a change of mood; if he/she showed interest, then was the time for that pupil to take his turn. They were quite cooperative, really. Many of them would stay after school to help tidy up. This was great for it gave me the opportunity to become better acquainted with my Indian people and to "spatter" more English among them - fine little people, each eager to do his part, some of them looked forward to walking me home; almost all of them came to meet me in the morning. It wasn't long before I had won them over as real friends, some of them I shall never forget! At the end of the term, each Cree could carry on a simple conversation - that made me feel proud of my year's work!

Speaking of my morning welcome. I'd step off the large verandah steps en route to school to begin my day. Not an Indian in sight - suddenly, up would pop heads from here, there, everywhere about the lawn, just like mushrooms. Each one held his hands out to be given workbooks to carry. I needed to be careful to see that every child was given at least one or two books (these natives are very sensitive and easily offended.) After this was done, one by one they lined up behind me - away we went, I in the lead, through the yard and across the road. Whenever I think back about this odd procession, I think about my brother George and his flock of chickens parading to school. Walking to school, children and I carried on a short conversation; thus - If it were a nice day, says "Mrs. B, Nice day, girls and boys!" Answer, "yuh, nich day." No more, no less. If it were cold, says I, "It's cold today." Answer, "Yuh, colt tудay!" Such a strange lot and so very dear!!

Since it was required to administer cod liver oil to the pupils once a day during the noon hour or at close of morning session, our first task in the morning was to make 33 paper cups, everyone making his own. I appointed two boy monitors. Came time for oil, there we stood around that corner table, the monitors and I, while the pupils lined up. I measured 1 tablespoon of it into the hand made paper cup, the

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monitors passing it along to the kids. Being intent on measuring the oil, I overlooked that. One little girl had been slipping by without getting her quota. One day I happened to overhear monitor No. 1 say, "Damn you, Irene, you re going to take your oil today!" I watched, out of the corner of my eye, the boy had cornered Irene, took her by the nQse, forced her tongue out, poured the oil down her throat! It looked so funny that I had to choke back my laughter - needless to mention that Irene never missed her ration again. Well - one way of taking Cod Liver Oil! The following year, the Federal Government provided capsules, much easier to administer.

Mr. Camire and others, kept referring to me as a "Day Teacher." Remember, I was dumb, dumb, but that expression kept puzzling me until I finally exposed my ignorance by asking the Indian Agent why they gave me that title - he explained it.

Students wanting an elementary education attended the Blue Quill Residential School, this included my eleven (6 girls, 5 boys). The school was self-supporting and was operated by the Oblate Nuns Pupils were divided into two groups. Group A attended school classes in the morning while Group B worked - weaving their own cloth, making their own suits etc. or worked in the fields and gardens. This was reversed in the afternoon, Group B - classes, Group A - work. Since they attended class only 1/2 of the day, it took two years to complete a grade, whereas, by attending the Saddle Lake school for a full day, it was called a Day School.

Ending the term, at Blue Quill, prior to my teaching, each child received a new outfit of clothes, (my six girls had been given bright colored berets). No longer getting room and board, their needs were provided for by Family Allowance. While teaching at Saddle Lake, I attended a Convention at the Residential School - it was both enlightening and educational. The weaving and hand sewing was artistically done, the gardens and flowers - beautiful!

About those brightly colored berets. Do you think these girls would hang their head gear in the cloak room? Never! They kept the tams on their heads throughout the entire day. I didn't mind that so much but I was afraid that if Mr. Racette should suddenly decide to pay us a visit, he would very much disapprove. What scheme could I use to convince my girls that they just didn't wear caps or hats during school hours. I approached them once or twice about removing their berets but was not too successful. The girls would obey momentarily by chucking the head pieces into their desks, but it was not long before the berets were right back on their heads again. I tried again. This time, I flattered them by saying, "You. know girls, if I had such pretty black hair as all of you have, I'd want everyone to see it!" They smiled and giggled, took off their tams and put them away.

The following morning, each girl came to school with her hair nicely shampooed and wore an "Afra" - like hairdo, not too natural looking for Indian females! This tactic worked for a few days, they soon tired of curling their hair; a top of their heads went the berets once more. Beat again! What technique could I invent that would be successful?

When the afternoon sessions began at 1 P.M. I usually read a story to my "family."

Because of the non-speaking English pupils, I chose simple stories with repetitive phrases such as Dr. Suess tales - anything to get our language across. This particular day, while reading to them and fretting too over the array of bright red, yellow, green, and blue patches spattered about the room, a fantastic idea popped right into my head! I stopped reading, looking at the girls, I said, "Do any of you remember seeing Mr. Bartling?" (Augie had visited the classroom once or twice.) Titters and nods from the girls. I continued, "Did you notice how bare the top of his head was?" More nods and laughter throughout the room. Sad look from me as I asked, "Do you know why he is bald?" Shakes of heads and concerned looks from all. "Well," I carried on, "When he was a boy he always wore a cap, he would never take it off and look at him now - no hair. That's what will happen to you if you keep on wearing your berets in school!" Each girl grabbed her headgear and poked it in her desk for the remainder of the day. I had no problem after that ----- more than one way to skin a cat!

Indians are athletic, these were no exception. Many a practice, and many a ball game was held on the play grounds in front of the school, during the fall and spring months. These children put their whole heart into this sport. As I saw it, they kept the game clean and co-operative. Unselfish and cheerful, they gave one another a turn "up to bat" and sportsman like, they accepted defeat when a game was lost.

Of course, they would perspire over their vigorous playing and very often needed a cool drink to quench their thirst. I had observed a twelve year old girl, Veronica, by name, making frequent trips over to the porch steps. From underneath the stairs, she'd take a large whiskey bottle out, tip the bottle up and take a swig from it, put it away and go back to play. Thinks Mrs. "B", "Surely she isn't bringing "spirits" to school!" This whiskey bottle was in evidence for several days - I needed to know what was in it - I decided to investigate. Forcing myself to be calm and collected, (remember I had to be tactful) I went up to her and said nicely, "What are you drinking, Veronica?" It looks so good. With a big grin, Veronica said, "That's tea - better than water!" Still suspicious, I asked, "May I have a taste of it?" She handed the bottle to me, I drank and sure 'enough it was tea. It just goes to show you that one can never tell what's in a bottle.

September and October of 1949 were warm and sunny months. We had a few weeks of "Indian Summer" weather, trees with their leaves of red, gold, yellow and green were resplendently beautiful - one wanted to be out-of-doors every minute.

It seemed to me though that one aspect around my surroundings was out of place amongst these autumn hues, and that was my rainbow colored barbed wire fence! From every other post, hung a brightly colored crepe paper streamer. My, those dangling streamers bothered me! I thought perhaps there had been an Indian wedding - maybe even

from the Government house, before I arrived at Saddle Lake. Anyway, whoever had

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the wedding, had failed to tidy up and take the decorations down! I didn't like the untidy look of that fence, so, one of those Indian summer days, as I strolled home from school, I walked along the fence and pulled every streamer off! That satisfied me and my place looked much neater and tidier now.

Wouldn't you know it? The following day, the Indian Agent knocked on the school house door and called me out. With a broad grin on his face, he said, "You know, school-teacher, you could get into trouble tearing those streamers off the fence?" Dumb-founded, I ask why. He answered back, "They were markers for a new road route!" We had a good laugh over it, but I was somewhat worried too. There was nothing I could do about replacing the streamers - I had no crepe paper. To date I haven't had to appear in Court.

While I'm on this "flashing back" it now seems strange that living alone in that large house, I never once thought of being afraid, nor did I ever think to have fear of the Indian residents giving me trouble. Do you know what? It took a solitary bat to scare the living daylights out of me!

The Camires and I attended Treaty Day which was held in May, on the Reserve. We had a fun afternoon and evening - danced in the circle Pow-Wow, had a puff of the Peace Pipe and entered all of their activities. I was also introduced to Mr. Ralph Steinhauer, who was Indian Councillor at that time.

About 1 AM., the festivities over, I rode with Camiries to their place, it wasn't far from there to my residence, so I walked the rest of the way. I had a creepy feeling as I entered that dark shed and it didn't relieve me any by struggling with that crooked old key, to unlock the door. When I entered the kitchen, I felt my way over to the table to light the kerosene lamp - "Swoosh" something flew at me - it was a bat!! The thing landed on the wall across from me and clung there. Taking the axe, (I kept that tool in the house) I struck at the bat; I must have hit it lightly because I discovered traces of blood on the wall, later. The animal flew away to hide in another part of the house. I was scared and quite uneasy, delayed going to bed. for fear of another bat visit.

An old wives tale?? I had often heard that, should such a mammal land on one's head, it's claws would cling to the hair - a person would need to shave his head to be rid of the bat. Now I never had much hair and wasn't about to lose what I had! I went to bed and mapped out a Great Plan. As a precaution, I tied a tea towel around my head before retiring and laying in bed, I started to scheme my strategy - I came up with this. Should this bat ever dare to light on my top during the night, I'd simply get up and walk down to the Emergency Hospital and have the nurse squirt a small amount of ether on my head. The ether would relax the animals claws, thus enabling me to destroy him and I'd still have my hair - how very dramatic! I didn't need to enforce my plan because the "thing" made no midnight call.

The following day, Mrs. Camire and I searched the house over, no trace of it, we decided it had escaped through the ash pan in the range and on up through the chimney. Needless to say, I accepted Mrs. Camires' offer to sleep in "my bed" that

night and that was the only night. At the end of the school term, I was informed that my house roof and the trees around were literally covered with bats, during the "bat season." Had I known that Saddle Lake would have been without a teacher, I think!

My newly found family of young Crees and I got along famously in the classroom. It was a hard struggle and the hours were long since I taught religion after school was dismissed. I certainly had no qualifications to handle this subject, but maybe this statement isn't entirely true. The pupils who took Catechism were also the pupils who stayed to help me tidy up and to "walk" me home. We'd chat away and find new words to improve their knowledge of English etc. Maybe, through this, we began to have faith and understanding of one another, and as I see it, this is the main principle of Religion. Anyway, they were fine kids!

On Mr. Racette's first visit to my classroom, he informed me that I should introduce the practice of Fire Drill. He explained how to go about it, and thereon after, I frequently held Fire Drill. I told the children that I would ring my desk bell for practice when they least expected it. Thank goodness we had practiced drill until they became accustomed to it and reacted to it in a routine manner.

January 11th, 1950 was Augie's birthday. It was a bitter cold day of 30 below weather and windy too. I took advantage of my noon hour to phone and wish him a Happy Birthday. School opened at 1 P.M. - as usual I stood in front of my desk to read the story. My feet seemed suddenly to feel warm, I glanced down; coming up from the floor register were small flames of fire!

An Indian is an expert at building a camp fire, but making a large heater fire is a different matter to him. Because the day was bitterly cold, Mr. Moses had come at noon to kindle our old heater by filling it with wood to the top - fire broke out! I tapped my bell, all the children filed out, thinking it was fire practice, except for the three pupils seated by the supply cupboard. They were in awkward seating position and were always the last to file in behind the others. As they passed in front of my desk and saw the flames, one little girl panicked, turned back. I assured her and the other two that everything was O.K. but it took several minutes before I had them convinced, and everyone was safely outside.

We huddled together to keep warm. Again there wasn't an Indian in sight! All at once, natives sprang from somewhere, about ten of them, each carrying a bucket of water. Soon there were more of them and in this "bucket brigade" fashion, our fire was extinguished.

While standing outside, one pupil remarked, "Mrs. Bartling; it's cold like H..l out here!" I heartily agreed. Another pupil looked up at me and said, "Oh, Mrs. Bartling, your "pretty pink coat is in the school!" The old janitor overheard this remark and crawled on his hands and knees into the smoke filled building and rescued the pink coat for "Mrs. Boss." That's what I call being loyal. Damage by fire was considerable, so school was closed for a month. I returned in February to resume my

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duties.

Owing to the unwise parent spending of the Child Allowance, most of the native children were soon scantily clad - suits and shoes worn out, even the gayly colored berets were getting old and shabby, so I had a task to do during my month at home. I scrouged old clothes from everyone I knew - some of my good Elk Point teacher friends contributed many useful articles to these boxes of clothing. School re-opened and I doled out underwear, jackets, even old shoes, to my pupils, giving several articles to each. From then on, my family came to school in the A.M., all decked out in their new old apparel, a sight for sore eyes! Instead of wearing one garment at a time, they wore everything at once. Starting with the longest slip or skirt, then graduating up to the top, the shortest gown became the last. They were an odd looking group for a few weeks but style isn't everything ya know, and I guess the extra clothing helped to keep them warm.

February was a cold month, in fact, the whole of winter was severe. Some of these children walked a mile or two and were quite frosted up when they reached the school. It was the smaller ones who felt it the most - rags wrapped around their legs, and any kind of footwear, if they didn't own a pair of moccasins. Often, I have taken a little one's feet and rubbed them between my hands or soaked them in cold water, (hands too) to relieve frostbite.

Though the winter was bitter, I didn't need to worry about a full room of kids during recesses and noon hours, for they played outside in any kind of weather. The boys played hockey out on the highway - a willow branch curved at the end was their hockey stick, horse leavings their puck! They played vigorously at this game and many of them became good hockey players in later years. The girls went sliding down the hill behind the school, on cardboard boxes and broken down wash tubs. How many times I wished that I could give each one of them a brand new sled or a hockey stick and puck. But they were cheerful and contented with what they had - perhaps these kids had more fun sliding down hill on boxes and the wobby, discarded, old unpredictable tubs!

May came, wonderful May, with it's golden headed dandelions, blue violets and purple lilacs. Better believe it, I was their "Queen of May." They made necklaces, bracelets, rings, and bouquets for my hair - I was regally adored! For awhile I felt quite embarrassed over my spring jewellery but for sake of comradship and better pupil relationship, I wore all they made, and that was a whole bunch!

It wasn't long before I became so accustomed to this gay array of color on my hair, around my neck and wrists, that I was almost unaware of seeming ridiculous, even though the Indian Agent accused me of going "cookoo" a few times. And there was always a soup tin filled with violets or lilacs on my desk this offering was easier to take.

Thus the school year ended. I was off for University that September. Sessions completed in April 1951, I was asked to finish out the term at Saddle Lake. In September 1950, they had hired a man teacher. For some reason he left and the

school was minus a teacher for May and June - do you think he objected to wearing dandelion jewellery? Could be.

Anyway, I consented and it was May again! Same pupils with some beginners added, same routine and I loved every minute of it. By now, these pupils were better acquainted with our language and school was not so strenuous for me. Also I discovered that especially among the eleven pupils who attended Blue Quill School, they were artistic and musical as well. Horses were their specialty in art - in such a drawing, one could almost sense the horse running out of the picture, his muscles tense, his mane flying in the breeze! As for singing, they had good voices and taught me and my little natives many simple songs, no doubt this was due to the fine training of the Oblate Nuns.

When I first came to Saddle Lake, I came as a stranger, mingling with a strange race, and tried to understand the ways of their manner and culture. I left the Reserve with a feeling of stimulation and enrichment; I had learned a great deal. It was one of the most challenging experiences I have ever had, one I would have been sorry to miss.

As I saw it, the Plains Cree Tribe natives were a fine race of people. Their standard of living was simple. They were loyal, carefree and happy, and likeable. Today, I am greatly pleased to have had the honor of being the First "Day Teacher" of the Saddle Lake School, way out in, almost the middle of this Indian Reserve.

The Superintendent offered me the teaching position there for the term 1951-52, but I declined, - Mr. Racette had allocated me to Pleasant Dale. Here ends the "flashbacks" of this particular incidence in my life except for the following postscript.

While at Saddle Lake, I simply accepted the title of Government House as my teacherage without ever questioning the history or background of it's name. Then two years ago (1978) Lucille asked me to tape a recording of my experiences there.

It suddenly occurred to me, that if I were to attempt this task, it was up to me to find out something concerning who had lived in this seven room house before I did - how would I go about it? Evelyn suggested that I write to Ralph Steinhauer's secretary, perhaps he/she could supply the information I wanted. (Ralph Steinhauer was at that time the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.) I followed her suggestion and awaited a few days for a reply by mail. Instead of a letter from his secretary, I received a phone call from the Lieutenant Governor himself! He chatted for 1/2 hour or so, saying he had remembered the year I taught, and also recalled meeting me at the Indian Treaty Day festivities.

Ralph Steinhauer was born at Saddle Lake, but at the time of my teaching, he was Councillor of Indian Affairs and lived elsewhere. He went on to explain that the opening of the Saddle Lake School had been more or less of an experiment - whether or not it would be successful for Indian children to attend a day school and be recipients of Child Allowance. Also, the Government House had been used as living

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quarters for Indian officials, such as Councillor for Indians, the Agent of Agriculture, the Agent of Indian Affairs and the constables, (the last named were all white men.) The school building had been the Secretary's office. Mr. Steinhauer urged me to pay a visit to Saddle Lake now and to see the many changes that have been made over the years.

The old Government House has been torn down also the school; modern buildings are now standing in their place. The Blue Quill Residential School has been replaced by a modern Academic College preparing students for University entrance - several Indian pupils, to date have received degrees.

He said just to let him know whenever I could visit the Reserve and he would personally accompany me on this tour if at all possible. Naturally, I was flattered and honored. by his phone call, but as yet I haven't had the opportunity.

Ralph Steinhauer is no longer Lieutenant Governor, a rancher (Frank Lynch Stauton) now holds that position. At the time of the new official taking over, Mr. Steinhauer was present - I saw him on T.V. and his closing speech was, quote, "In recruiting for Lieutenant Governors, they seem to go from Indian to Rancher, but the Indian came first!" Witty, I think - he's truly a fine man.

Chapter 5

Amusing Tales of University Days

For the next few pages, I'm going to "flash back" to University Days before relating stories of first real teaching at Pleasant Dale and Elk Point. Readers of "Rambling Memories" will call to mind how I fumbled and bumbled through my University courses until I received my Standard E certificate in 1963. This was as far as I went to further my education, it was becoming too hard to hack it.

How any one student could have had so many mishaps and come out without a scratch, remains a mystery. Perhaps the reason is the "Lucky Star" that hung over my head, or it could be as simple as this, "I just gotta be me!"

You may enjoy perusing the following tales:

(a) 1950-51

Evelyn and I lived together in a one room basement suite for \$32.00 a month rent. It wasn't worth a penny more for though the winter was very cold, we left the window open a crack because there was always a strong smell of gas escaping from the old gas cook range, our sole heating system in the room -- it was better to be freezing than to be gassed!

My daughter attended Alberta College becoming a Computer, while I went to University trying to become a teacher. Her sessions were from Monday thru Friday, while mine extended to Saturday.

Art was "courting" Evie then and every Saturday afternoon he would visit us. The three of us would leave the house around 2 P.M. and set off to the main part of the city. We'd buy our week's supply of groceries at Woodward's, then Art would treat us to a show and lunch. Both of us looked forward to this weekly event, and I don't think Art missed a Saturday.

This particular day, we started out as usual. We had a few blocks to walk before catching a bus which stopped right in front of the Empress Cafe, right around White Ave.

Art and Evie both had bus tickets, so they got on and took seats at the rear. I needed to buy one, all I had was a \$5.00 bill, which I presented to the driver. He looked at me and said, "I can't change that bill!"

Says me, "Where could I get it changed"

Driver - "Go into the Cafe, they'll change it for you."

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Me - "Will you wait for me?" -

He looked at me with an odd grin and said "Ah sure, I'll wait."

I went into the restaurant but had the poor luck of having to stand in line, about the ninth one from the front. The customers paid for their eats and I got my change.

Do you know what? When I got outside the bus was gone with my two kids on it! Now, I thought, how could that bus driver do such a thing to me? He said he'd wait. Oh, well, down about a block I spied my bus, which wasn't my bus, so I proceeded to catch up to it - about the time I'd almost reach it, away it went again, that elusive vehicle!

The kids didn't miss me for a few blocks, when they did, they got off and waited until I finally caught up, all out of breath from running. They scolded me for being so foolish, but I was mentally admiring them for being so clever - why not me? After all, I was only trusting a bus driver, wasn't I?

(b) The early part of April, Graduation Ceremonies were held at Convocation Hall. I had received a letter from Dolly (Joe's wife) that Joe would be getting a Degree of some kind.

They lived in Vermilion at that time, Joe being Superintendent of Schools there. He would be in the city for the Ceremonies which would take place Saturday afternoon. Dolly couldn't accompany him so she urged me to go in order to share Joe's happy moment. I was delighted, but with my scanty wardrobe what to wear? Lloyd worked at Kline's Jewellers that year and was keeping company with a fine young lady, Alice by name. The two would come Sunday afternoons and visit us. I confided in Evie, Alice and Lloyd that I had nothing decent to wear. They got busy. Between the two girls, they "made over" one of Alice's nice black dresses, Lloyd borrowed a "brilliant" necklace from Kline's to complete my outfit - I thought I looked pretty sharp!

On Saturday afternoon, they drove me over to Convocation Hall. Joe had instructed me to wait in the Lobby until he arrived; the exercises were to begin at 2 P.M.

Well, I waited and waited and waited some more, no Joe in sight - I began to worry and also felt very conspicuous for eventually, I was the only one left in the lobby.

All at once I noticed an usher standing at the foot of the stairs leading to the balcony. I walked over to him and explained that my brother was going to graduate that afternoon but for some reason I had missed meeting him. He (usher) immediately came to attention, called an attendant. He gave me an embossed programme and instructed the attendant to conduct me up to the balcony and to see that I had a good seat in full view of the stage.

Ladies and gents were dressed in their best, some of the women even had lorgnettes which they held up to their eyes now and then. There we all sat, the highbrows and one lowbrow, for the Ceremonies to begin and the scrolls to be handed

out to the students. At least, thinks I, "I'm as well dressed as they are!" I took a sneak glance around and noticed that every lady except myself, was wearing a hat!

Soon the exercises commenced. Across the stage they filed. Four Premiers from four provinces: British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Following these, came the Members of the Faculty. (The only one whose name I remember was Miss Mamie Simpson, the Professor of English.) In the center of this group stood an esteemed gentleman. Introductions were made, and speeches were given, no scrolls were handed out, and the ceremony was soon over.

Do you know what it was all about? I had attended the Inauguration of the newly appointed Dean of the Faculty - Dean Smith of the Faculty of Education!! I just betcha, that I'm the only student, at least, from the Elk Point Elementary, that can claim the honor of attending such a fuction.

But, what happened to Joe? I was very disappointed and when I got home, I thought the thing over and remembered overhearing some students say that there were two events at Convocation Hall, one in the afternoon and one in the evening -- perhaps Dolly had made mistake in the time.

I decided to go back in the evening, I also decided that if the ladies had to wear hats, I guess I could wear my one and only old tattered one, even if it were against my will!

Back to Convocation Hall. I went thru the same old hassle as in the afternoon.

I felt even more uncomfortable so I walked in and out again with the crowd hoping no one would notice.

Once more, I "flagged" down an usher and once more I was given a select seat right up front. There was a big crowd this time, and me the lone lady wearing a hat! "Gosh, women are unpredictable" thought I, as I quickly took mine off.

However, it was the right ceremony this time. Among other, Joe crossed the stage and received his diploma. He looked so downhearted and alone. I tried to attract his attention, to lethem know that I was standing by, but he's way down there and I'm way up here, people were applauding for their loved. ones - I gave up.

Joe explained later that he had arrived late and never got to the lobby, also Dolly had made a mistake in telling me it was in the afternoon. This time as I awaited in the entrance, Joe came and was delighted to see me, he invited me over to his sister-in-law's house for lunch. He also assured me that he would take me home, he would have the use of. his brother-in-law's car.

When the little party was over, Joe and I got into Ted's car. Joe tried and tried to start that car, and since we hadmno flashlight, I burned up a small box of matches so he could see what the trouble was to no avail. He said he had driven this car many times, it had never refused to start, and he was embarrassed to ask for help. Finally he gave up, went into the house and asked for Ted's help.

What do you kn6w? We were in a neighbor's car, not Ted's. No wonder the key didn't fit!

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Driving home, I began to see the funny side of this situation and I started to laugh. I think this annoyed Joe, for the more I laughed the faster he drove, not speaking a word. We arrived at our suite in no time flat, tired, but with the feeling that I'd had had a very adventuresome afternoon and evening!

(a) At the bank.

It was nearing the close of the University term. I had borrowed the money from the Toronto Dominion Bank in Elk Point to put me through the U. of A. courses.

According to mental furs of my own, I thought I had \$100.00 left in the bank to carry. For some reason I needed money for the following weekend. Of course I told Evie that I would stop in after classes and get my money from the Toronto Dominion Bank close to the Tuck Shop and nearby the Education Building. She said, "Mother you'll never succeed in getting it." I answered that I would give it a try.

Classes were over at 3:30 P.M. so I took up my stand by this restaurant, to wait until 4 PM. when the bank would re-open. I filled in a few minutes by walking up the street and down. I noticed business men with briefcases, going into the bank even though the blind was still drawn. Now, if these men can get in the bank before it is open, so can I me thinks, so I slithered in between two men and there I was inside.

Bravely, I walked up to a teller and presented my cheque to withdraw the \$100.00 the only identification I had was my University card. He scanned the cheque and me, walked to the rear of the room and came back with another man. This man said,. "Give Mrs. Bartling the money. I know her for I used to work in the Elk Point bank." Isn't-this big world, small? Happily, and with the much needed money in my purse, I walked home. When I entered our suite, the first thing Evie said was, "Did you get your cheque cashed?"

I showed her the money as proof. All Evie could do was sit on the bed and gasp. "You know, Mother, I'll bet you're the only woman in the city that could be that lucky!"

Final tests over, I returned to our Elk Point town. I finished out May and June term at Saddle Lake. At the end of May, I received my month's cheque, still \$160.00 Away I went to deposit a small amount in our bank. Phyllis Boos was one of the Elk Point bank tellers. As I passed my cheque through the wicket to her she said, "You know Aunt Margaret, you had only \$75 00 in the bank, don't worry, I paid your deficiency amount!" I repeat - A Lucky Star hangs over me.

Thus ends the "misadventures" of my full year at University. Oh, but wait, there are more tales of Summer Session adventures.

Chapter 6

Summer Sessions

July 1953

By the end of 1953 school term, in June, I had taught at Pleasant Dale for one year and at Elk Point, teaching Gr. 1 for one year. It was time to upgrade my University education.

Evie and Art were now married, so I "lived in" with them for the six week session.

Rather an uneventful summer, not many mishaps - there were two good people taking care of me. Besides, I was getting shots in both of my legs in preparation for having varicose veins stripped when Summer School was over. Every Friday I had a shot in one leg, alternating left and right legs. I didn't feel too spry over the week-ends. After my final test this operation was performed. I stayed in the hospital for a few days, then was dismissed. The nurse put me in a wheelchair, shoved me into the elevator, the elevator stuck about 1/2 way down to the main floor. There I sat in my chair for some minutes, which seemed to me some hours, before the darn thing got into motion again and conveyed me to the lobby where Art was waiting to take me home. Not too bad for someone who has a hard time keeping out of trouble!

1954

This Summer Session was one of the most pleasant I have ever attended. It brought a bond of friendship between Mary Loftus (Benett), a friendship that I have cherished for many years. In my book Mary is one of the dearest teacher friends I have ever known!

I knew her as a little girl, but other than being neighbors, our paths didn't really cross until that Summer of '54. (Mary, if I have the year date wrong, put the blame on that rascal "Qld Age.")

Her parents, Martin and Mabel Loftus were the social life of the Elk Point Community in the early days. They provided entertainment for both old and young, by inviting neighbors in, (always welcome) for an evening of fun. While the elders played cards or visited one another, the young people played darts, danced or whatever else they could dream up.

Being quite self-conscious, I didn't join in the games very often but usually

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found a little niche for myself. I found lots of entertainment just by watching the others albeit I envied their bravery in participating.

I "flash back" to one such evening. As was my custom, I found a little corner to hide myself in. Mary, tho' quite young, would chat with all of us. She seated herself beside me and proceeded to tell me about their household tasks and ended up by saying, "Mother swept behind the davenport today, and our family found all sorts of missing things, things we haven't been able to find for 2 years!" I was amused by this revelation - that's why I have remembered it all these years!

Mary had approached me that Spring, saying that she, too, was attending the Summer Session. She had a friend, Peggy Clarke, who had lived with a French Professor and his family all thru' her University days, perhaps even thru' High School days, until she had almost become a member of the family. These people would be away for the summer and they had suggested that Peggy make use of the house by taking five students for the six week session. Peggy would be writing her thesis that year. Mary was going to stay with her and she suggested it would be a nice place for me. I thought Mary's idea was great and I began to look forward to July. When the month came and I, along with three other girls moved in with Peggy.

Peggy was a delightful hostess, we all liked her immediately I've always been glad I stayed there, the six of us had such fun together, even tho' we faithfully "plowed" through our homework.

Some years later, Peggy became married, not much of a tadoo for her, she simply dropped the "e" off of her name and became Mrs. O. Clark, how about that!! Peggy and I corresponded for years. I missed her annual Christmas card and letter about three years ago, one of these "promised" days I'll write to her. The Professor's house was a large one, it made me think of my Government House at Saddle Lake - there was ample room for six persons.

Our room rent was inexpensive and for our board we had a "kitty." Into the can, each one of put in \$100.00 when we first arrived and as I recall, we repeated this amount only once later.

All took turns at getting the meals, evening meal being the main one. Two of us took a week at a time, if you were the cook, the other four did the cleaning up after, washing dishes etc. It was a good arrangement - it was fun to speculate on what the evening meal would be, especially for me who was tired of my own cooking.

Mary introduced me to the other girls - they began to call me "Mrs. B." It may be that since I was the only married woman and the oldest of the group, they hesitated to freely call me Margaret, and Mrs. Bartling sounded too formal, so they settled for "Mrs. B." Whatever the reason, I liked the "ring" of my title and I still like it. Certainly it put me at ease, and these girls made me feel almost as young as they.

Peggy took us on a tour of the lawn, the night we move in. Besides the flowers etc. I noticed a large beautiful tree (good thing I noted that) right in one corner close to the street during the summer, we studied under the shade of that tree.

Next morning we all took off to various buildings for classes, my courses were held in the Administration Building. Mary and I paired off, each in our best dress for the first day, I had a new pair of shoes. It's always hard for me to break in new shoes because of those darn flat feet of mine, so they were pinching me even that early in the morning.

We walked along together until we came to the corner where the "Tuck Shop" stood, then we separated to go our different ways. Mary cautioned me to take a diagonal sidewalk across the street which would lead me directly to the front of the Administration Building. Absentmindedly, I listened to her instructions thinking how easy it would be to get home. Shucks, all I needed to do was to "spot" the Tuck Shop and walk a block or so and I'd be there in no time.

My first day was over. Out I went taking the diagonal walk, engrossed in thought about the summer's work ahead. I came to a corner, no Tuck Shop. I kept on walking, came to the University Hospital! Hopelessly lost, and gosh, those new shoes pinching away! I walked around many corners that afternoon until I decided to ask a policeman, should I see one around the next bend, to straighten out my directions. No sooner this decision made, I turned another corner and there in front of me was that big shade tree in its proper place - I was home.

The girls were waiting for me to join them in the evening meal. As I walked in, one of them said, "You're late, Mrs. B." I answered, "Yes, I had to stop by the Library and pick up some books." We sat down to eat, I gingerly slid my burning aching feet under the table and tried to carry on a cheerful conversation. It was quite hot that evening and before the meal was over, one of the girls came up with this, "Let's all go for a walk." I groaned inwardly - those shoes - I doubted if I could even 'tug them off, by now! I politely refused their invitation, saying I had lots homework to do.

Away they went for their walk, as for me, the girls were scarcely out of sight when up the stairs I went, pulled my shoes off and soaked my feet in the bath tub. I didn't tell this story to anyone until some years later, I told it to Mary. How was I to know that, leading to the Administration Building, there were at least four diagonal walks? I simply had taken the wrong door out!

Such a fine person is Mary! As I see her, she is cool, calm, collected and witty.

Often, after our afternoon courses were over, the two of us met at the Tuck Shop for a cup of coffee and a piece of hot gingerbread, topped with ice cream or whipped cream - delightful! I hope Mary recalls that. I've been in many cafe's since those days, but I have never once seen that delectable dessert on the menu.

Over our coffee, I'd confide in her and blurt out my problems. Mary would listen patiently and try to console me by saying that she, too, had the knack of "putting her foot" in her mouth every time she spoke. You know, I began to believe her because, before long, I noticed that thru' our coffee break either she had spilled

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her coffee over, or I had nicely plopped a portion of that cake in my lap, cream and all! (in fun)

Our friendship grew and Mary was so helpful - it made no difference what my problem was, she helped me over the rough spots, not only that summer but during the Sessions in 1958 and 1963.

For July 1958, also 1963 Mary stayed in residence at Pembina Hall (I think both summers) on the U. of A. Campus! while I stayed at Athabasca Hall, the two residences not being too far apart.

Mary was taking Children's Literature, while I took Geography a newly introduced course. I never could figure this one out. Mary, who was a High School teacher learning all about "Puss in Boots" and here's me a Gr. 1 teacher learning all about the geography of the earth, it's temperatures etc. and those queer symbols to memorize. It seemed to me that the courses should have been reversed, but the Department of Education must have had purpose in mind.

Geography really got me down especially during the "Lab" periods on Tuesday and Thursday. Large maps were placed in front of us to identify whether the country, state or province was mountainous or plain. Also weather maps to discover lines indicating isobars or isotherms etc. If only Larry Branter the weather commentator, had been around, as he is today, he might have made things clear with his explanations of the Mother Low, occlusions etc... Well, he wasn't around so when I became frustrated with assignments, I'd trot across to Pembina Hall to see Mary - no matter what homework that girl was doing, she would set it aside to help me and to give me encouragement.

When the day of the final test came, Mary met me at Athabasca Hall, walked part of the way with me, told me not to worry. I appreciated this and it did give me hope, but darn it all, I failed the course anyway! To compensate for this, I took Zoology 222 in 1963, my last session.

The two of us were still having coffee breaks, sometimes in the new Students Union Building - we still confided our blunders to one another. Along my lane of memory, I still cherish our friendship and I'm hoping that Mary too has tucked away among her souvenirs, a few friendly thoughts of "Mrs. B."

Through the years that followed, I was out of touch with this fine teacher friend, but two years ago, I met her again at the Elk Point Re-Union held in Edmonton.

The book "Reflections" was in the making at the time. I enjoyed her witty speech about the dreamed of great welcome she would receive by the Elk Point Teaching Staff when she decided to be Editor of the new book, and how very different it had turned out to be! It just happened that she and her husband were in the food line up ahead of Augie and I. She was dishing up her plate - I tapped her on the shoulder and said, "How are you Mary?" As she turned around to pleasantly say, Oh, I'm just fine "Mrs. B.", a piece of sliced tomato slid off of her dinner plate, "plop" on the floor! We both laughed -perhaps her's was a laugh of embarrassment, as for me, I "flashed

back" and thought of all the nice moments we had shared together, during Summer Sessions days.

1963

Zoology 222 was an enjoyable Course - field trips to watch Alberta birds and their manner of survival, the microscopic insects and their adaptation to environment. For this Summer Session I'll relate just one incident that is impressed on my mind.

Like other electives, there were "Lab" periods on Tuesday and Thursday. This particular Friday, in preparation for the next week's "Lab" class, we, the zoologists, were sent out to catch mice in a common mouse trap. Most of us caught two or three and these were brought back to the Laboratory to be preserved and kept until the following Tuesday, then the repulsive little things would be dissected, stuffed and mounted. We would receive 10 marks for a good mount.

Also, any one leaving Friday night for a weekend at home, were requested to trap a gopher, if possible. I went home that weekend, and faithful to my assignment, I set out to get his animal. Augie and I took a trap and went out to the East Cemetery where gophers were plentiful, hoping to catch one overnight. On Sunday, we went back to our trap line - we had caught one by the leg, Augie had to finish the job and I had an undamaged rodent. We packed it in a plastic bag, plenty of ice around it, enough to preserve it for a few days. Back I went to Athabaska Hall with my gopher!

The next Tuesday was a day of days - all students sitting at our desks, slitting and stuffing those mice! They had already begun to deteriorate and the stench was putrid. After our mouse was nicely mounted and ready for inspection, we were finished classes for the day. However, as we were about to leave, our professor requested us to stop in the hallway and observe a caged rattlesnake kill and devour a white rat! Most of us felt quite "icky" over the sight, but our Lecturer gave us great praise, saying that we were the first class who had never fainted on him during this assignment, especially the men!

Returning to my residence, thoughts came to mind of that exclusive animal I held in storage in my bedroom - why not take care of him now while mounting processes were still fresh, nothing to it! It was yet early in the afternoon and I could finish the job before supper and have him ready for Thursday's "Lab" class. No sooner thought, I determined to do!

Scissors, sawdust, cotton, mounting board, I placed on my table. He was tough skinned and my task turned out to be not so simple. The supper gong sounded with me only one half through my job! Oh, well, I could always have something to eat later at the Tuck Shop.

About 8 P.M. I had my mount finished, his head held regally in place, I set him on my window sill to dry. By this time, I was ravenously hungry, I walked

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down to the Tuck Shop, guess what I ordered? A Denver sandwich, you know the kind - chopped up ham in scrambled eggs! I ate a few bites when suddenly my imagination began to work overtime, the ham became a mixture of gopher, mice, rattlesnakes and their various types of meat! I left the Cafe, the meal unfinished, and walked back to my room. Some of the women were gathered in the hallway when I entered. One of them said, "Mrs. Bartling, you look sick!" Feeling very green indeed, I answered, "I am sick!" as I dashed to the bathroom.

Despite my nausea, I was very proud of Mr.. Gopher sitting on the window sill to watch over me until Thursday's Lab when I would bring him to class and receive the full marks for my efforts.

Much to my disappointment, I was awarded 9 marks, one mark taken off because his head was up too high, one mark less than some students who received the full 10 marks for mounting a rotten mouse! To top it all off, at the end of the term, Mr. Sampson (our Prof.) asked if I would donate Mr. Gopher to the Lab. since it was the only specimen they had. As I see it, the marking was unfair, but, then I suppose, many a student has experienced this kind of treatment.

Somewhere along the line of my Summer Sessions, Helen Saranchuk and Myrna Fox attended U. of A. as well as myself. I won't attempt the date of year, but both of them being younger than I can recall the term better than I. Anyway, both girls had been long time teacher friends of mine, and once again, I had help with my courses (I'll relate more about them, later). Often the three of us would gather together after classes, or whenever possible, and have a "question and answer" period. This was of great assistance to me, maybe to them too.

And thus I'll conclude my tales of University days by saying that whenever I needed help, there was always a friend around, as the saying goes, - "A friend in need, is a friend indeed!" So.... true.

In the next chapter, I'll relate some of my experiences as a teacher.

Chapter 7

Teaching at Pleasantdale

1951-52

Just as I was the first “day” teacher at Saddle Lake, so I was the last teacher at Pleasant Dale, yet it was my first position as a qualified teacher - Temporary License. Residents in the Elk Point area know that this country school was situated 9 mi. N and W of our home town. Again, I lived in a teacherage from Monday until Friday. When a ride was not available, I travelled by bus, leaving home about 7 A.M., I'd reach the teacherage about 15 minutes later.

As at Saddle Lake, I was once again, the possessor of a crooked key! Why did that always happen to me?? Some winter Monday mornings were very cold - I'd struggle with that key trying to make it fit in the lock until my hands felt numb. The teacherage would be like an icebox, fires out despite the fact that Friday evening, before going home, the stoves would be banked up with chunks of wood or coal. If I were lucky, my bedroom would be fairly warm and comfortable by Wednesday evening. Gosh, I hate to crawl in between those icy sheets!

There were three rooms in my dwelling - a tiny kitchen, heated by a small old wood type stove - this could be kept going by the use of coal for the night. It was furnished with a table, two chairs and a couple of wall cupboards, ample for one person. The bedroom was small too and very cold since the heat couldn't reach it from the living room or the kitchen. Quite comfortable was the main room - the living room. It was heated by a small tin, air-tight heater, operated by a "damper" either red hot or giving out no heat at all. Wood was used since coal was too dangerous because of the heater's thin metal. All rooms were lighted by coal oil (kerosene) lamps, or Coleman mantle type lamps, the same lighting was used for the school room. A typical old school building, made of logs and mudded with holes or chinks in the mud, where the mice were free to enter and leave whenever they chose.

An army blanket was tacked on the floor around my desk, during the winter months to keep my feet from freezing. Augie took me to the teacherage the evening before school opened. We hadn't thought to check re-supply of wood and the next morning I discovered that there wasn't a stick of wood on the place!

My first week was spent by breaking off small dry branches and twigs and whatever splinters I could find scattered around the yard. It was a warm September,

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the school room didn't need heat but, after all, I did have to eat and make tea. The following weeks, Augie brought me cut, dry wood, from our home supply. Eventually, the St. Paul School Division brought some wood - green wood cut in 3 ft. lengths! Anyone having like experience with green wood, know how easy it is to start a fire with it.

One of my Gr. VII pupils was the school janitor. She was young and inexperienced and would arrive at the school about 8:30 A.M. to start the fire, at 9 A.M. the fire was either out or sizzling and frying the green sap! Very unsatisfactory, so in cold weather, I'd set my alarm for 3 A.M., bundle up, cross the yard, fill the elongated barrel type stove with wood, much better results. Later, I was supplied with coal to burn, making my task easier.

Not all was gloomy though, for this term was the beginning of a new friendship for me. Nellie Merrick had been the former teacher and as I think back, if it hadn't been for Nellie and her kindness to me, I would have become discouraged enough to quit. Nellie was well known around Pleasant Dale and popular with people of that district. In contrast, I felt like "a stranger in a strange land," not knowing the parents nor the pupils.

I dreaded the morning of school opening. That morning, there was Nellie at the school door to greet me! She introduced me to my new pupils, helped me to get them seated and sorted out as to grades - I was so thankful. I had known Nellie slightly, but from that morning on, there was a bond of friendship between us that has lasted all through the years. Later, when both of us were teaching in Elk Point, (Nellie taught Jr. High) many an evening Nellie came to see me and to chat over a cup of coffee - I hope Nellie will realize how much I appreciated these visits.

Getting ready for the Christmas Concert, my good friend was there with her guitar to accompany and to assist with the teaching of carols. Plus this, she invited me to her home for a few good cooked evening meals these treats put "spice" in my somewhat quiet existence at the teacherage.

My pupils were a fine group of girls and boys, ranging from Gr. I to Gr. VIII - a wonderful room full of them! They were co-operative and seldom did I have a discipline problem. Especially would I like to mention my three girls all Annie by name - to distinguish between them, they were addressed as, "Annie B.", "Annie E." and Annie S." These were the bigger girls and helped me do so many things. The older boys too, were very helpful. Grades from Gr. VI up, worked like "trouper" building a stage for our Christmas Program, packing lunches in bags to be sold at our dances etc.

These Pleasant Dale kids were among one of the nicest groups of pupils I have ever taught. N.B. - I also taught Religion after classes were dismissed. While events were not too humorous at this school, there were still adventures of a serious nature. One day, Mr. Racette decided to pay us a visit,. It was a blizzardly, blustery day - the school room was cold - how cold? Believe it or not, it was 10 below F. in the room. When he arrived I had Gr. III standing up close to the heater for their

reading lesson. All of you know how Mr. Racette liked pupils huddled around a stove. He commented unfavorably on this, while he peeled off his heavy fur coat and his high felt boots and seated himself down for a full morning's inspection! Bravely he sat, all the while rubbing his hands to keep them warm - how long did he sit? Well long enough for my five Gr. III student's to finish reading! As he prepared to leave, he said he hadn't realized how cold it was - gave me permission to conduct classes around the heater. With a brief good-bye he left the room saying he'd be back later on in the year. We didn't see him again until near the end of the term.

In another paragraph, I mentioned that mice had the freedom of the schoolroom, scurrying in and out around the desks, picking up bits of lunch crumbs etc. While reading a story one afternoon, a cute little mouse ran across my feet. From the pupils came an excited shout, "Mrs. Bartling, there's a mouse by you!"

"Oh, that's nothing," answers Mrs. B. "It's only a little one!" All the while I'm shaking, my book was shaking for I was certain that the "beastie" would crawl up my ski pant leg and as I sat down I'd squash him!! It didn't happen, the animal likely saved his life by crawling out thru one of the chinks.

School closed the end of June. We celebrated by having an outdoor picnic. Promises of potatoe salads and other foods were given, but when the day arrived, one potatoe salad, some cream and a pan of squares showed up, all donated by the same person!

About a month before the picnic, the pupils and I had put on a dance, to raise money for treats of ice cream and chocolate bars. Augie and his orchestra donated their music and if it hadn't been for my good Elk Point friends, Nellie and a couple of neighbors, the dance would have been a complete "flop!"

Enough money was raised for the ice cream, I furnished the rest. Never will I forget that picnic day - one potatoe salad - many people. I had a few potatoes in the teacherage, a bit of vinegar and some milk. With these ingredients, I turned out a pretty drab dish, but you better believe, it was eaten.

It was embarrassing. To top it all off, one of the neighbors came by after the event was over and said to me, "I hear you not have very good picnic!" I was so choked up I didn't reply. Thus ended the Pleasant Dale teaching.

The old building was abandoned. Buses were provided to transport pupils from this area, as well as surrounding areas, into the central school, Elk Point, the following September. I was given the position of teaching one of the Gr. 1 classes.

1951 and 52 was a disappointing term for the great teacher ME (mentally speaking) and my big ideas, but with this experience, I added to my list another good teacher friend, and some fine pupil freinds as well. I shall repeat - "there's nothing like friends to make Life worthwhile!"

Chapter 8

Elk Point Teaching Days

1952 to 1969

A. 1952 - 53

"Old" gave way to "New". To accommodate the Central School System, the School Division purchased a piece of land, perhaps an acre or so in the S.E. corner of Mr. Markstad's property. Dotted about this land were several of the old country schools such as Richland, Paramount, Capital, Shamrock Valley and others. Even the old CO-OP store (at present time, a Bakery) was converted into a classroom. Instead of one teacher for several grades, it was now necessary to provide two teachers for one grade - a vast change from the past!

Earlier, I related that the Elk Point School situated by Aarbo's corner, had been moved into the village and was used as the High School. A few years prior to the 1952-53 term, my brother Joe and Mr. Beattie were the High School teachers and it was here where I attended the "Physics" class for 25 minutes daily periods, taught by Joe.

The old schoolroom had been divided into two rooms, with one wall between, to remain closed or to open, so that classes could assemble into one. Actually there were three rooms, for on North side, at the rear, a small part was partitioned off to serve as a Chemistry or Experiment room to which both teacher's had access.

Now this school became the two Gr. 1 classrooms. Mr. Beattie moved into a newly built High School (yet a newer High School was erected later on) still acting as Principal. My brother Joe worked for the St. Paul School Division, where he held the position of Guidance Counsellor of Education.

N.B. - Mr Beattie remained Principal of Elk Point Schools until his retirement, and Florence Mc D. was Vice-Principal until her retirement. As for Joe, he later moved to Vermilion where he became Assistant Chief Superintendent of Schools - still later, he moved to Ottawa being elected as Chief Superintendent of Education for the North West Territories. He retired at the age of 63 yrs. because of illness and is now living in Ottawa.

Moving along with the old country schools, went a country school teacher "ME" for I had been allocated as one of the Gr. 1 teachers, the other one was Miss Daisy Keck. She had the west room and I had the east.

The door separating our two classrooms served a valuable purpose for many times, either Daisy or I were called upon to "substitute" for another teacher - by standing in the door-way, one of us could teach both rooms - somewhat!

With this advanced assignment to my home town, transportation was no longer necessary. A dash across the road and I could eat lunch at home, unless it was my turn to supervise the playgrounds. All teachers took a turn at this job, a week at a time - although the schools were fairly close to one another, it was a responsible chore, eating sandwiches while we walked from one playground to another, at the end of our week, we felt exhausted and were glad when our turn was over. (I remained as teacher in Elk Point until retirement.)

The Keck family lived close by us, only one house separating our two families. I had know Daisy as a "school kid" but only in a neighborly way. Through teaching with her, she became another Close friend of mine. Of course Daisy was much younger than I but she treated me as her equal in age, there were no formalities between us unless it was that she too, addressed me always as Mrs. "B."

Were my eyes ever opened the first few months of teaching! Out went many of those old teaching methods of mine to be replaced by easier techniques. The only procedure I kept (as did Daisy) was the teaching of Phonics, considered old fashioned! As long as I taught and wherever, I retained the Phonetic Method for word teaching and reading - I was never sorry for that, for as I see it, I developed good readers - no lip reading, and good spellers. Sad that this method isn't used more frequently today!

Daisy was a talented teacher. She could sing, do gymnastics, was excellent in Art and in almost every activity. Although I admired her and could never begin to compete with her, I learned much of the "know how" of teaching from this "gal." We seldom see one another any more, but the rare times we meet, our "get togethers" usually flash back to those good old, gone by teaching days in the old Elk Point High School, teaching Gr. 1.

Among the "old gang", teaching in country schools, which stuck up like mushrooms because of small land area, were Florence McDonell, our Vice Principal, Helen Kovach, Dorothy Siler, Floris Fenton, Laura Van Arnam, Gertrude Engler, Esteila Young, Daisy and I. There were more but I have forgotten their names. Some left and were replaced, some became married and retired, but a few of us held down the "fort" and moved up to the New Elementary School, North of town in 1957:

Mrs. "Mac", Helen Kovach, Dorothy Siler, Mrs. Van Arnam, Estella Young and I. Here we were joined by new members on the Staff.

Close together schools, close together playgrounds! The Gr. V (Florence's, acting as Vice Principal) was west of the Gr. 1 classrooms which was on the east side; school steps separated the two grounds, often the two grades were intermingling st I forget, Daisy and I renovated the old Science room and converted it into a workshop and tea room.

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Augie and I cover the bare 2 x 4's with building paper. Daisy, with her ingenuity and unique ideas, used one of the large, old High School desks as a stand atop of which she placed an electric hot plate - where she scouted for that old relic I don't know, but it was a fine thought for now we could have tea or coffee at recess and noon hour.

We put cheery little curtains on the window in front of which was a long table. On this table we had our paper cutters and mimeograph pans, ideal for our workshop. "Lawsy", what a difference from modern xeroxing!

All of us can "flashback" to duplicating copies of worksheets by this method. A one inch or 1 1/2" depth cookie pan was filled with a special kind of glue. Your pattern was traced on a sheet of paper with a mimeo purple colored pencil - this original copy was laid, face downward on the glue, pressed by hand, and then torn back. If you were lucky, copy number one came out good and clear, additional copies might be torn at the edges or stuck to the glue, it was a long drawn out process, all the while keeping your fingers crossed that you would produce the required number of copies before the original one became faded - this purple outline was difficult to disguise by coloring.

But compensation! Surrounding teachers caught on to the "tea room" idea. They began to come at recess for coffee break and lunch hour, to enjoy relaxation away from the hustle and bustle of their classrooms. It was in this room that we all became close friends and exchanged ideas as well as confidences - if that old tea room could talk, I'm certain it would shatter the building with its revelations!

None of us, as I see it, ever shirked our duties re: supervision or classroom teaching, but one sure thing our friendship became lasting, never to be forgotten memories by me at least and, I hope by the "old gang" as well.

Now, a few "mishaps" or adventures while teaching with Daisy Keck (later Mrs. Leslie Young) as my co-partner. She and I worked as a team together - we also had fun and laughter together, each sharing with the other, many experiences, comical or otherwise. Anything happen, we'd go to the tea room quietly and have our laugh. By the way, this room also became the sick room. A single bed was installed, equipped with blanket and pillow. Any sick child from any room could lay and rest until school was dismissed - a great system except that upon one or two occasions, Daisy or I almost forgot to rouse the patient in time to catch his bus!

(a) Possibly every person throughout his/her teaching career, has had the thought that he is disliked by the pupils - the very title of "Teacher" I suppose is distasteful to them - all the while we, the teachers, are striving for their approval and good fellowship.

This day, I had gone home to eat my quick noon lunch. Before returning to school, I decided to visit the outdoor "privy" - just in case. Broom stick skirts were in vogue at that time, yards and yards wide around the bottom. My chore over, I

hurried to my classroom, crossing the playgrounds on either side. Students greeted me with repeated, "Hi, Mrs. Bartling", all smiley and friendly. Very pleased with this new friendliness, I thought to myself "maybe these pupils like me despite what I think." Beaming with pleasure, I walked into the school to be greeted entirely different by Daisy, who said, "For gosh sake, Mrs. B. pull your skirt down!" Looking behind me, I saw that my broomstick skirt was tucked into my underwear, and my almost bare bum was exposed for all to see. No much wonder that the "kids" were so cheerful! Embarrassed, I went into the tearoom to straighten out my apparel - I can assure you, I was careful not have this happen again.

(b) While reading an animal story to my little people one day, the clever Mrs. "B." made a great decision - I would test out my pupils knowledge by quizzing into the habits of animals. The story related that all the wood animal characters had run away Jimmy Skunk. Faking surprise, I presented this question, "why do you think all these animals ran away from Jimmy Skunk?" All hands went up. Off in a corner seat, sat a small boy named Marshall. He was short for his age and always wore a sober face - I picked him for the answer. He said, "They ran away 'cause Jimmy would p...s all over them!!"

Moral of the story - ask a foolish question, you're bound to get a straight forward answer from a child. Smothering a laugh, I continued reading the story and asked no further questions - I was steadily learning to keep my mouth closed. Marshall made his grades until he advanced to Gr. V. That September, he awaited at Florence's classroom door, to be enrolled. When his turn came, Florence said, rather crossly, "You don't belong here, the Gr. 1 room is over there.!" sWe all shared a laugh over that one. You see Marshall never did grow tall.

Many comic incidences took place among the teachers that term as did always, it seemed as tho' not a day went by, that one or the other of us, had something amusing to relate.

There were serious "misadventures" too - at least for me. I made a terrible mess of my register that June of 1953. For some reason, the register forms were slightly changed re - entry columns. I wanted so much to have a year in Elk Point, therefore I got everything wrong - I put the Average Daily Attendance number of pupils in the Average Yearly Attendance columns and visa versa! Our registers were handed in to Mr. Beattie. Mine came back with the comment, "This has caused me a great deal of trouble!" I'll just bet it did!!!

Anyway, I worried all summer over the mistake and was certain that each mail day a letter would arrive, asking me to "resign" None came, so boldly, I went back in September and continued teaching my favourite people.

Before I write any further, I want to add this - The Beatties had long been personal friends of ours, and other than my blunder, over the register, Mr. Beattie, our Principal, always treated me with kindness and consideration and "came through" when I needed him. I rate him as an excellent good teacher friend. The same goes

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for Augie's feeling for the "Beatties." It was with his consent, that I took leave of my classroom, (for a week) to make a trip to Dallas Texas, where we proudly witnessed the graduation of our son, Lloyd.

During the term 1951-52, Daisy was married in April 1952 - her wedding may have taken place during the Easter break. I'm a bit "hazy" about this event and now wish I had kept a diary of those early teaching years. When one thinks about it, a span of about thirty years is a long period over which to recall events, especially when the thinker is "Mrs. B." the absent-minded one!

However, I started to keep a diary the later part of 1955 and try to enter daily happenings. I recommend this practice for everyone, it's amazing how often the contents within help to settle arguments over many debatable disputes. From April 1952, to the end of the school term, I taught with "Mrs. Leslie Young," but she'll always be Daisy to me!

B. 1953 - 54

As I related, no request for a letter of resignation came by mail, none seemed to object, so back again I went to step into my Gr. 1 classroom to resume teaching along with one of my favorite people - Daisy!

Because the door between us could be left open it was possible for one teacher to conduct (after a fashion) classes in both rooms, Daisy and I acted as substitute teachers for any teacher absent within our village of old school house B We alternated this task and I think it is safe to say that never a week went by that one or the other of us acted as "sub." Tho', we willingly cooperated, there were times when it disrupted our own routine. After a few years this method wasn't necessary for we had regular substitute teachers who were always on call when needed.

These "flash backs" are a great passer of time, for me since I've retired, never do I tire of recalling all those treasured memories I have stored up of my teacher friends. The fine relationship between Daisy and I continued to grow during the term of 1953-54, a pleasant memory now.

We still dashed to the tea room to release our laughter over some comic incident. I am reminded of many of these happenings but will relate only a few outstanding ones.

(1) School always commenced the day after Labor Day. The latter, being a holiday, many Elk Pointers spent the afternoon and evening at Long Lake to fish, relax and have a picnic lunch. Along toward evening, families would gather together to visit and shoot the breeze. Some of the men and young lads had just pulled in their fishing boats, disgusted over the lack of fish they didn't catch. They joined their women and likewise visited. Among one family was a little boy named Douglas - I knew he was on the enrollment list for Beginners - that's all I knew. Suddenly, someone in the crowd said, "Did you catch any fish, Doug?" Now I learned that Doug spoke with a lisp and was a tough talker! I heard him reply in a discouraged voice, "No, I didn't and ath (as) far ath I'm contherned, they can sticth (sticck) thoth (those)

fith (fish) up their ath! (ass)

Goodness me, did that remark ever bring "Mrs. B." to attention I wondered if he'd be one of my pupils the following day as if being the case, how would I ever manage to win him over?

The schoolday began with Douglas on Daisy's list! The only thing wrong with that arrangement was the Doug insisted on taking up a seat in my classroom! This routine was repeated for a few weeks. Doug came each morning, each recess, each noon hour, to occupy the same little desk in my room, and daily we explained that he belonged in Daisy's room. I became fond of this little fellow and, to me, it seemed a shame that he couldn't remain in his own chosen seat. He finally settled down in his own room. In build, he was rather short and sturdy and had plump fingers, it must have been hard for him to grasp such a small item as a pencil.

Daisy always "turned out" good printers in her room and she had confided in me, her worry over this pupil's poor printing. January usually found good results in printing for both of us, Douglas was still struggling with his efforts.

One afternoon, Daisy was called away (I suppose to "sub.") and I was left to look after both rooms. Being concerned over Daisy's problem, Mrs. B. decided to do her Boy Scout deed for the day. I assigned seat work for my pupils, then walked into Daisy's room determined to do my "thing."

Pulling a small chair close up to Doug's desk, I said, "Doug, you and I are going to surprise your teacher with a page of fine printing!" He looked up, shook his head and said with a lisp. "I'll thure (sure) try Mithith (Mrs.) Bartling, but Thethis (Jesus) C....t, thith ith hard for me to do!"

I wished that Daisy was present so we could slip into the tea room and share a laugh. Douglas and I proceeded to print his pencil grasped in stubby fingers, his tongue off to one side of his mouth, it was a hard job for him to do! However, he turned out a fair page of printing at the end of the period. I thought it was a thankless effort on my part, but some days later, I learned that Doug had gone home and said to his father, "You know that "Mithith" Bartling is a H...l of a nith (nice) woman!"

Well better than no compliment at all.

(2) In my room, enrolled in my class was a small boy called Harvey. He had somewhat of an angelic face, blonde hair, curly like Daisy's, (all teachers must remember Daisy's blonde curls) and was rather shy, in other words, he wasn't "pushy." Both of us thought he was a dear.

I related earlier about Daisy's talent in Art. Taking colored chalk, she drew a picture of Harvey, full length, on an 18" x 24" drawing sheet and called it "Buttons" - it really resembled him too! "Buttons" was on exhibit in Daisy's room until she left the Elk Point Teacher's Staff - then she willed the drawing to me. What surprising ideas I invented with "Buttons!" I cut out his outline, mounted him on cardboard,

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added a strip to the back and he became a statue. Buttons was a part of my display for Special Days such as Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's, Christmas - whatever. He stood in the corner of my room with a heart, a shamrock, or a gift held in his hands to mark the occasion. This drawing was used for several years until the chalk faded away and "Buttons" had worn out.

On special days, we did special activities after the last recess. Valentine's Day rolled around so we had a program of verses and songs rendered by our pupils. Door left open between, each child from both rooms, took his/her turn standing in the doorway, to recite or sing for the others.

The program was well under way before I noticed Harvey with his hand up, a signal to take part with the rest of the.. "gang." I said, "You know girls and boys, we must let Harvey have a turn, he's been waiting for so long."

Up he walked to stand in the doorway. Being quite aware of his shyness, I placed my hand on his shoulder, to give him some confidence and said, "Now, Harvey, speak up nice and loud because I know this is going to be good!"

He braced himself and loudly recited -"Gene, Gene, made a machine, Frank, Frank, turned the crank, Art, Art, let a big f....t, And blew the darn thing all apart!"
(How does that strike you for verses?)

Two teachers about choked wanting to laugh and not daring to, but the little people simply applauded. Daisy, with her hands on hips, filled in by saying, "Well, I guess after that, we better all sing a song."

We sang a song but no need to mention that when school was dismissed, both of us dashed to the back room to explode our "pent up" laughter - we also predicted that Harvey would tell his mother about the afternoon's program and his part in it, and how embarrassed Mother would be! Our prophecy turned out exactly that way as we learned later from an interview with his parent.

In the spring, Elk Point held an "Amatuer Night," all school students being invited to participate. Little shy Harvey was entered as one of the contestants, having chosen a song as his entry. Several items had been "ticked off" before Harvey's appearance on stage. The M. of C. finally announced, "next on the program is a song "Bimbo" by Harvey A.

The audience waited.- no Harvey. They waited longer. At last came this cute little "button" of a kid.- he took his stance in the center of the platform. In a clear voice he said, "Bimbo," and ran off stage! Just two words, but he stole the show! I rather suspect tho' that this was the end of "Buttons" on stage childhood career.

(3) Both rooms.

For variation of after recess activities, often we would require the little ones to make a drawing of - whatever.. Came the day when they were asked to sketch their room teacher as they saw her.

What an assortment! We gathered up the pictures, and after the school buses left, we went to our back room to compare results the two of us, just as they saw us. There was Daisy - average tall and slim, blonde curly hair, wearing glasses, a brightly colored dress, high heeled shoes, and if I remember right, hands on hips! And here was I, the direct opposite - a bit on the squatty side, dark hair, no glasses, wearing colored sweater, and what embarrassed me to "flushness" was two flat feet, wearing low shoes, planted firmly on the floor - no mistaking Who was Who..!'

Never under rate a young child's gift of observance - he can put in his drawings many minute details that an adult is apt to overlook. If one is interested enough to study these hand drawn pictures, much can be learned about little individuals and their thinking, more education than what is contained in a book!

Once again proven one afternoon, when they given an assignment in Art. At the time, both classes were taking an Enterprise on Health. To make more meaningful, Dr. Weigerick was invited to our school to give a simple lecture on Hygeine. Her visit over, the two classes made a sketch of the doctor. Anyone could have recognized her likeness.

There stood the lady doctor - tall, mannish hair cut, stocky and bandaged legs, glasses, white uniform, red sweater - even a pair of scissors sticking out of her uniform pocket! Most of the pupils didn't overlook a single detail. One drawing was so nearly real that I have kept it this long time for a souvenir.

And so that term went flitting by, until the month of March rolled around 1953.

Daisy took a leave of absence for this month to have her first baby - her son Campbell. I forget who replaced her, temporarily, but she came back to finish out the term, sharing with me our rich experiences, something to be taught and something to be learned!

If I had that period of my live to live over, I would ever choose teaching to be my profession, and I would ever choose to be a teacher of a Gr. 1, the two of us, just as they saw us. It can't be repeated often enough that there is no grade so enthusiastic and eager to learn, no grade in the whole of the Education System, that need to learn so many basic skills in one term, as do these little beginners.

A word of warning tho' to those who choose to teach this grade. Better be prepared for more than teaching. The day this little person enters the schoolroom, his whole life changes - he walks away from his "play" into a "work" world. Teaching him is only a minor aspect. Be prepared to play the role of parent during that first term - one needs to be nurse, councillor, and a friend. Better not overlook a bandaged finger and give sympathy, be sure to admire a new outfit or a shiny pair of new shoes - you won't be able to overlook the shoes 'cause they'll be placed in the middle of the aisle to stumble over! Better be prepared to skip your coffee break to listen to his little Big problem, better try to fill his individual needs and don't overlook the many "overtime" hours needed to be spent to enrich his program! It's

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all there to be done for your Gr. 1 pupil.

Sounds as if "Mrs. B." was pouring her heart out, doesn't it?

Well...she is!!!

C. 1954-55

Let me first remind you that as well as our "little village of old rural school buildings" (that phrase tickles my imagination) in the south part of town, there were also two country schools on the hill, north of Zarowny's Garage - one served as a Gr. V classroom, the other Gr. VI. The distance between the two buildings was a matter of only a few yards. To the south, of the Gr. VI school was a residence (an old teacherage?) occupied by the new Gr. V teacher who moved into Elk Point that fall. West of these classrooms, and across the road, was the Junior and Senior High School (S. of new High)

That summer of 1954 I was to undergo a toe operation. Believing it to be a minor one, I kept putting it off until the later part of August. I had the tips of four toes removed, two on each foot. What I thought was minor, turned out to be the most painful operation I ever endured!

The last few days of August, with school opening less than a week away, found me feeling very sorry for myself - nursing two sore feet, neglecting housework, but Augie was always there to help me and to console me.

This is how the Principal and Vice Principal found me when they came to call, prior to school opening term of 54-55. Caught unaware, I was lying down so I entertained them in my bedroom. The purpose of their visit was to ask me to co-operate - instead of teaching Gr. 1 as planned, would I take over the Gr. VI classroom for the term, with the promise that I would have my own classroom the following year?

I informed them I thought the distance was almost too far to walk twice daily with my sore feet. Mr. Beattie assured me that one of the teachers would give me a ride.

There was a shortage of teachers that year, some having moved away, others accepting positions elsewhere - new teachers had to be hired. Among the new applicants was a young lady, Miss Gertrude Engler from Mallaig, Alberta. Her preference was to fill the Gr. 1 position, hence, the reason for my co-operation.

The three of us discussed the situation until I finally consented to be upgraded??

I wasn't too satisfied with the "switch" but Mrs. Hatchard, the Gr. VIII teacher, volunteered to give me a ride each day, (she was also going my way) until my feet were healed enough to walk the distance comfortably. She never failed me and I was most grateful for that ride for a couple of months.

School opening morning, I walked in, or rather "waddled" into the Gr. VI classroom, feet wrapped in cotton, wearing Augie's moccasins, none too big, either!

Well, there I stood facing 46 students - big, husky, rowdy boys and girls in a compact room.

When placed in double desks, (relics of rural schools) row after row, there was scarcely room for "Mrs. B." to walk between the aisles! What a contrast to my accustomed little people, both in size and manner of conduction. After the day was over, I came home, feeling exhausted and frustrated, and didn't think I was ever going to be happy with that grade. And I had the feeling that discipline would be a big problem.

No need to think about it - I would be, there for the term, better just roll up my sleeves, and plan some kind of workable system. My first step was to discuss our mutual problems together, with pupils and appealing to them that I would need their help. It didn't take long for me to discover how very helpful these students could be - they were more than willing to do their share.

After a few weeks of school, we had established a good teacher pupil relationship - they understood what I expected of them, and I, in turn, was beginning to learn how to cope with their needs much to my surprise, discipline became a minor problem. Between us, we planned to hold a short meeting the first Friday of each month. Here, we talked out our problems, all having the right to give suggestions as to what we could do to better manage our daily program. Four committees of eight or ten were appointed to do various tasks such as planning our Enterprise, our day of Art, housekeeping within the room, and attractive decorating. These pupils worked like busy beavers and before long that drab old country schoolroom took on a look of cheery and colorful decor.

My preparatory work for the following day was also lessened and I had more time for relaxation. With all this extra help, I began to enjoy teaching this grade - no doubt whatever, I was proud of them!

During May and June, the students entered a contest (Gr. V and VI) for the best essay on a Safety topic - it was entitled, "Stop, Look and Live!" Both grades participated, and we were all very proud when my pupil Audrey Aarbo won the award. She was presented with an engraved plaque and a pin and after our new Elementary School was built, her plaque was hung on the entrance wall for everyone to see!

A few humorous incidents happened but, on the whole, the days went by fairly quiet and sober - we were just too busy to "fool" around. Some important things happened to me throughout the term:

(a) Shortly before the Easter break in March 1955, Mr. Earl from the Department of Education, visited our classroom. He was impressed with our cheerful room and seemed pleased with the progress we had made. When he was about to leave, he turned to me and said, quote, "If I were an Inspector, I'd hire you on the spot to teach Gr. VI" (entry from my Diary) A compliment: how seldom they are given to a teacher! Naturally, it sold me! I would take Gr. VI the following term,

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besides that, I was beginning to like teaching this grade. It didn't turn out that way at all. The middle of May, Mr. Beattie asked me to consider going back to Gr. 1. What should I do?

I was fond of our Principal and was anxious to please, so when Mr. Beattie came back again with the same request, at the end of June, I decided to co-operate once again and gave him "yes" as my answer. Adjoining Gr. VI building, was the Gr. V school with just enough space between the two buildings for a common playground.

Another new teacher was added to the Elementary Staff -Mrs. Kaye Sadlowski to teach Gr. V, and to my "List of Teacher Friendships" was added another fine name, that of Kaye's! She was a friend throughout our weekly teaching days together, as well as outside the classroom. Like all the others on our entire Staff, Kaye gave good advice when I was confronted with any problem, school wise or otherwise.

Kaye and her husband (Paul) lived in the building that I mentioned before, just south of my room. Oft times, I would appoint one of my reliable students and walk down to Sadlowski's at noon hour for a fifteen minute break - a bit of relaxation and "get - away" from the din of school commotion, and a friendly chat.

On the playgrounds, we were once again playing ball (in season). What I mean is, "Mrs. B." was standing around trying to appear as a professional on knowing the rules of the game, while Kaye umpired and conducted the ball game in a fair manner. Being thus intermingled, pupils from both grades became friends and often on Friday afternoons, Gr. V would visit our classroom for a bit of diversion, putting on "skits" or whatever had been planned - Gr. VI in turn, exchanged their visits.

(b) Meanwhile, I hadn't seen too much of Daisy. She and Miss Engler were carrying on with their two Gr. 1 classrooms together. Then along came St. Patrick's Day, a special day for Gr. 1 with special activities. I was invited to have tea with these two teachers after school. Was I ever glad to see Daisy! (as yet, I didn't know Gertrude) Being all involved with my heavy grade, I hadn't realized how much I had missed my friend. It was a real "uplift" to see her again and to chat away as we drank our tea.

Noting the decorated rooms and browsing through the 'little' booklets of Printing and Enterprise, a feeling of nostalgia came over me - beginners are so dear! I tried to chase this feeling away for I was now a Gr. VI teacher and needed to dwell on that grade. But I came back to my own classroom on Monday A.M. with what I thought was an excellent idea.

While chatting with Kaye during the noon hour break, I presented my idea to her. It was this - If I could derive such enjoyment and pleasure in visiting a classroom other than my own why wouldn't some of our Staff enjoy paying a visit to the Grades V and VI rooms? Kaye agreed that the thought was a good one, so we set about planning for a tea.

After choosing a certain Friday, we sent out invitations to the Junior and Senior High

School teachers - they were to come for tea when school was dismissed. First they were to visit Gr. V classroom and then mine, where they would have their luncheon. Some of our students did excellent work on their various booklets especially those on Enterprise. Pupils from both rooms took pride in research for information on subject matter - some of the booklets were highly attractive and suitably illustrated, using pictures from Geographic Magazine, a magazine not too easy to "come by" in the early years.

Coming close to the Big day, both of us were very proud of our rooms and proud of our Pupils and their extra efforts to tastefully arrange the displays. Also, Kaye and I outdid ourselves with our "Culinary Arts". Dainty squares and "home made" buns were made. Each of us brought a bridge table and our best cover from home and even "scrounged"¹ some artificial flowers to decorate our tables! The day came. As soon as the buses were dismissed, we rushed around and had our rooms in readiness by 3:45 P.M.

Our first guest arrived - my ever loyal and faithful friend, Mary Loftus, (Bennett) right on time. We allowed another fifteen minutes to pass, thinking that the teachers might have had some last minute tidying up to do before they dropped in. Guess how many came to our Tea? Mary was our only guest!! And I think she was embarrassed over the others lack of present! Nothing any of us could do but to have our tea.

Two tables for three people and "gobs" of food! We gorged ourselves on dainties - teachers are always hungry after school -the three of us had a nice visit as well. We laughed over the turn of events, but, inside, neither Kaye nor "Mrs. B." felt very laughy.

When Mary left, we gave her a plate of goodies, then the two of us, with "left over" lunch tucked under our arms, and our tails dragging, we walked home, both puzzled. What had gone wrong? Hadn't we taken care of the invitations properly or what? Well, the thought was dismissed and that ended any further "Tea Parties!"

The last teaching day in June, I closed the Gr. VI schoolroom door behind me. I had completed a pleasurable and satisfying term with new experiences. I wasn't all that sure whether I'd be glad or sorry to resume teaching Gr. 1 again the following September!

N.B. - Kaye stayed on with the Elk Point Staff for another term or so, then moved on to another teaching position. We carried on our friendly relationship until she moved away. Also, with the aid of her adding machine, "Mrs. B's" register remained balanced, every average number in it's proper place!

I met Kaye later at a few of our Annual Conventions, where we had short visits, but it's been years since we talked with one another. It seems shameful to me that all of us become so involved and swept up in our own "life style" of living that we tend to neglect our friends!

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D. Term 55-56

This term, my co-partner was Gertrude Engler. Daisy had taken leave of absence for the year to care for her baby but was back again to continue her teaching, in September 1956, at least for part of the term. Gertrude and I each had an enrollment of 23 pupils. Among my group was Kenny Beattie, our Principal's son. After the first few days of observation, I had decided that Kenny was going to be a good student, but I was also worried that I wouldn't come up to Mr. Beattie's expectations as his son's teacher. How very foolish of me!

I found Kenny to be well mannered, respectful and willing to please - we got along fine; not only was he my pupil, he was my little friend as well. For several years he presented me with his school pictures - these I now treasure very highly. Long after he left Gr. 1, Kenny was, still showing me respect.

When we moved to the new school, one or another of the teachers gave me a daily ride, but once in a while I needed to walk home. On these occasional times, I found it quite a distance and, of course, I was always carrying a shopping bag full of homework to be done in the evening. About the time I'd reach Joe Mah's Cafe, my shopping bag was becoming quite heavy. Should it happen that Kenny saw me, he'd come running and say, "Mrs. Bartling, that bag is too heavy for you, let me take it!" Then, he'd, either walk with me or hoist the bag on his bike, to deposit it on our doorstep. Though Kenny is no longer with us, I have never forgotten that consideration.

Now, as I "flash back" in memory, I like to think that this boy represented all the Kenny's, all the Jimmys, all the Marys and who have we, that I have ever taught, for today, many of my former pupils are showing me that same respect and consideration. It has been proven over and over again.

Recently, (May 1980) we attended Florence McDonell's eightieth birthday party. It pleased me so much to meet Eugene, one time pupil, and Florence's grandson, again. He voluntarily came up, shook my hand and chatted for a few minutes. I had a mental picture of this man, sitting in his small boy's desk, trying so hard to master his printing!

In July 1980, we attended the two days of our home, town's Elk Point Re-union. I met several of my "once upon a time" boys and girls. Up they came to greet me, hand extended and at the same time telling me their name, lest I become embarrassed over lack of recognition. (They change so much from six years old to adulthood) Some of them brought their own little six year olders now, to meet the parent's former Gr. 1 teacher.

That same respect was there just as it had been for me during their Gr. 1 years. What better reward could any teacher ask!!

Back to Gertrude and I, and the classroom. Gertrude was a nice person, very pleasant, and I liked her immediately. We became good friends, although I never became quite as intimate with her as I was with Daisy - I knew her only one year.

We worked well together and often stayed after school or met on Saturdays, to plan our Enterprises and other work.

Just as often as we stayed after school, just as often, one of the other teachers would "pop" in for a cup of tea - perhaps Florence or Mrs. Van, perhaps Helen Kovach or Dorothy Siler. Not too much accomplished these times - that didn't matter much we needed a break anyway, and we sure did have fun laughing and relating tales. If that old "make shift" tea room could talk it would amaze you with it's tales - never was there a "tea room" like it!

That was a cold winter. The old school building had almost served it's time - there were cracks under the window sills, drafts coming through the door, and sometimes the pilot light would "kbnk" out on the old converted heater-type furnace imbedded in the cellar - when a blizzard came along, teachers and pupils shivered together!

Nearing the Christmas Season, Gertrude and I planned our Christmas Enterprise. Believe me, it was a "dual" purpose effort. We cut out snowmen from thick cotton to decorate our windows; first, they added a Christmas touch to our rooms; second, they kept the wind from blowing through the cracks. Each snowman had a name such as Frosty, Jackie etc. There they stood, like sentinels, in our windows all through the winter, helping to keep us warm!

The usual school routine was carried out during the term, nothing outstanding on the comic side. From time to time, we each took our turn at "subbing" for another teacher's absence, one being left alone to conduct both Gr. 1 Classrooms. June of 1956 ended and by now, "Mrs. B." had found her real place in the teaching field, a Gr. 1 teacher. I knew I just couldn't break away from those little beginners - from then on, I never taught any other grade. Miss Engler got married and took a teaching position elsewhere - I think Mallaig?

Other than meeting her at Annual Conventions, I have also lost track of her - too bad!

E. Term 1956-57

An eventful year! Daisy was back for the first part of the term. Once again, we were working together, once again one or the other of us, were substitute teaching as well as conducting our own classrooms - and our friendship kept growing. It was so nice to have her back; she was still full of excellent ideas which were cumulated in our daily program. Her stay was all too short, Daisy left the Elk Point Teaching Staff for good during the Christmas break - I think??

Anyway her second baby was born - a little girl (I don't remember the month) Daisy invited me over one evening while she was in town, to see the baby. There was baby Celeste, cute as the "Buttons" Daisy had once drawn, curly haired as her mother

Daisy was out of the teaching field for several years, then moved away from Elk

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Point, and took a teacher position in Tofield, Alberta.

From time to time, over the years, we have met. Two years ago we met at the Re-union of the Elk Point "back-homers" - no time for talking, too much dancing at that event! But last August (1980), Augie and I received an invitation from Daisy to spend the evening at her home, to visit an old friend who had stopped in Edmonton, as one of the highlights of her trip from Washington. Both of us were delighted over Daisy's invitation - we spent a pleasant evening there, chatting and "flashing back" to the good old days, but this time, there was too much visiting with friends and not enough time for Daisy and I to "rehash" our teaching stories. However, Daisy has promised to "pop" in some day to have a right down good chat - this, I hope will happen real soon!

Mrs. Estella Young (aunt of Leslie Young) replaced Daisy to finish up the term. Prior to this, Stella had taught rural schools as we all did. Now, being my partner, we took up being friends where we had left off while teaching our respective schools in 1945, Pleasant Dale and Shamrock Valley.

On my "Friendship List," appeared a super-special name' - Stella Darn it, I knew her title was Estella, but I never could see the sense of that letter "E" at the beginning of her name, so, as in Daisy's case, she was always "Stella" to me. She couldn't have objected too much, for she failed to ever check up on me!

Another cold winter, with wind and snow drifting. Sometimes, because of snow drifts, (once there was 15 feet of snow piled up in farmer's yards, blocking the route to highways) the buses couldn't get in, and if they did get in, their pupil load averaged 8 to 10 students. Naturally, this threw our regular schedule out, but school still stayed open. We had to improvise with all sorts of extra activities until our classes were back.

A new Elementary School was being erected, we were to move into it by Spring. Our old buildings were getting older and older., the classrooms, colder and colder. Plus school routine work, all teachers were busy preparing for the move. Stella and I, along with the others, stayed overtime after school, as well as Saturday afternoons, in preparation for the move. Books beyond repair were thrown out, those that could be salvaged, were mended, taped and labelled. We packed boxes and boxes of books equipment, and workbooks. From time to time, some of us would walk up to the new school after classes, to note the progress of the new building. Each time we went we were encouraged, it seemed to appear bigger and better! How anxious we squatter teachers were to be installed in a new modern school with improved facilities.

Among those who would be moving were - Florence, our Vice-Principal, Helen Kovach, Dorothy Siler, Mrs. Van Arnam, Stella, Velma Andrishak and I. Floris Fenton, our own family friend of long years, as well as teacher-friend, moved to Edmonton to teach several terms. Augie and I were in contact with the Fentons, playing bridge etc. until Neil (her husband) passed away and Floris moved to Arizona - we exchange cards at Christmas, that's about it - not much in touch, but never to be

forgotten!

Well, the big day> arrived - we moved up to the new Elementary School, April 1st 1957. As we walked into this building, it looked so big (at least to me) and I thought, "If this looks big to me, it must appear very huge and "scary" to our small Gr. 1's! There were entrance doors to the south, the west and to the northeast. The interior was on two levels, the higher grades being separated from the Primary grades, by a flight of a few steps. Beyond these steps, was a long hallway, at the far northwest corner of which was the entrance and exit door. Part of this large hallway was used as the library (on east side) and a piano stood on the west wall - the central area of the hall was used for the daily primary game and music periods.

Stella's Gr. 1 room was on the east side, just above the stairway, and one of the Gr. II's classroom was right in line with hers - that of Dorothy Siler's. Helen Kovach's Gr. II classroom was on the far west side directly opposite the exit doorway, leading to the playgrounds; the younger ones having the area close to the school, the older ones, farther out. My room, like Helen's was on the west side.

At the rear of each primary classroom was a sink with real taps and running water! Extending from this sink. was a long bench or table, very handy to do extra work and to take pupils, where one could give individual help in reading etc. without disturbing the other students. Back of the sink was the teacher's clothes closet, also the pupil's lockers accomodating two or three children per locker - here, they kept their coats, lunch buckets, face cloths and towels - what a vast change!

The lower level was much the same, window areas on the east and west sides as well. Beyond the east hallway was a large gymnasium, (double doors) a Science room, and a small room for film showing. Part of the Science area was partitioned off to accomodate the extra Gr. VI room and I think, later on, the Film room was used for classes as pupil enrollment increased.

Around the corner of the separating stairway, to the east, were the toilets - to the west, was the Staff teacher's coffee room, which was equipped with a long table, a few chairs, cupboa.r.ds and an electric tea kettle - a far cry from the old "make shift" tea room! As I saw it, the coffee or tea didn't taste any better there, than it did in the old one, with its friendliness and intimacies!

A small sick room was close to the Staff quarters. It had a bed, but was devoid of a window and was bare of any decorations on the wall. Almost daily, someone was sent to the sick room and I always thought that the little people must feel kind of "spooky" to stay there for any length of time. In contrast to our accustomed crowded rooms, we now had spacious classrooms. All of us were delighted! How many of you remember that first week in the big school?

Let's "flash back." All teachers were anxious to unpack their boxes and get settled in their new surroundings: not to be!! The first day we experienced a short circuit - I know nothing about electricity, but it may have been caused by excitement amongst the students pushing buttons on and off, anyway - a short circuit.

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A hurried Staff meeting was held after school. When it was over, Helen Kovach went back to her room to pick up her belongings -the janitor had already burned her bag, containing a pair of shoes, her uncashed cheques, everything!

Day two was moderately quiet, kids a bit unruly, owing to the newness of the place. Days three and four were "something else" again. The school was out of water! This shortage was probably caused by turning taps on and off unnecessarily and in one room a water tap was left on overnight! On Wednesday morning, the Elementary Staff was greeted by water running, - water everywhere! All teachers took a turn with mop and pail to clean up the watery mess. The older students carried drinking water by the pailsful for the next two days. Because it had to be carted by hand, the kids kept drinking water and water, until Florence had to ration it out - only so many drinks a day. And to top it all off, Mr. Racette took a notion to visit the Primary classrooms - an inopportune time, that "T.G.I.F." morning! What an initiation to our new modern school - when classes were dismissed that first Friday afternoon, all teachers went home feeling exhausted.

By the end of the second week, the novelty of modern gadgets etc. had worn off, teachers and pupils were settling down to the usual school routine. The weather too, co-operated - sunny, spring-like, and even some beautiful summery days. We were enjoying our classrooms with its big windows providing plenty of light, space enough to move around in, good heating system and improved equipment.

Days went by smoothly until the middle of October when an epidemic of "Asiatic" flu struck us. All teachers were given a "flu" shot, but this didn't prevent an outspread of the disease throughout the school. One by one, teachers and pupils were stricken with it, daily pupil attendance became very low. Florence, Mrs. "Van", Stella and others were sent to the hospital, some were ill at home for a week or two. By the middle of October, ten teachers were away and each classroom had only from 5 to 8 pupils present - still school stayed open!

A few of us had a mild form of the illness and managed to carry on - we went from one classroom to another trying to supervise and to provide seatwork for the low number of pupils present in each room - it was exhausting, especially walking to and from the far classrooms but, at least the school didn't need to close. However, by the second week in November, all teachers were back on duty, and daily pupil attendance was almost regular.

As I look backwards it seems to me that our Elementary Staff group in the new building, were like one big family, there was a closeness between us, each helping the other in time of need - many lasting friendships were made.

Our Vice-Principal Florence was a good organizer; order WAS kept, discipline - firm but kind, fire drill practice, bus departures, systematically conducted.

When we, as teachers, brought a problem to her, we were given sensible advice, she stood by us and fought for our rights.

The remainder of the year passed by fairly smoothly, school routine much the same as other years - Stella was recommended to take Gr. 1 again for the term '57 and

'58 - and I was looking forward to that!!

F. Term 1957-58

Stella and I were fast becoming closer friends, but I can't understand how my co-partner ever put up with me. I went to her with all my problems, school-wise or otherwise (there were many personal problems for me that year). She listened with patience and gave me sound and helpful advice - never could I forget a friend like that!

Since we now had the large gymnasium with stage available to us, Christmas Concerts were renewed. This concert was held each year a few days prior to the Christmas break.. All parents were invited to the big event and after the performance was over, the Elementary Staff put on a tea, serving sandwiches, squares etc. This was our annual treat for the parents. It took weeks of preparation and training - no extra time was granted for this, therefore practice took place during game period or culminated with a Christmas Enterprise.

Every teacher in Elk Point knows that "Mrs. B." sings like a "croaky frog," and when it comes to piano playing, I couldn't strike even a sour note - but the school had a piano and I had Stella!

We'd gather our two groups of Cr. 1 around the piano - Stella took care of the music, while I tried to teach words and actions for the songs. It took patience and many practice periods, but, when Concert day arrived, both of us felt rewarded and satisfied over the good performance rendered by our little people.

During the Christmas preparations for the concert December 58-59 term, I had a bit of poor luck - my glasses dropped on that cement floor and were broken! What to do? I couldn't be without them, they would need to be sent to Edmonton for repair! Well, there's always a way out - this was my way out - I simply borrowed Minnie Boos' glasses and carried on almost as usual.

Course her pair didn't fit my nose too well and they kept slipping off my ears, but, with a push back here, and a hanging on there, I managed quite nicely until my own came back from the city.

Oh, by way of reminder, for several years, Helen Kovach, Myrna McFadyen, Stella and I kept the hallway bulletin board decorated for special occasions and holidays - you'd be surprised how all students stopped to gaze on our displays!

G. Terms 58 to 59

The following paragraphs are "flashbacks" of teacher involvement during this period - what I fail to remember, some of you will likely recall events of these school terms when we worked together.

(a) Each one of us had some responsible task to perform:

Supervision - Two teachers were on duty every day to supervise the recess and noon activities, one teacher from the far end and one from our end, Monday thru

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Friday.

If the weather permitted, we were out on the playgrounds, otherwise, we watched from the large North window, or went from classroom to classroom, to see that no accident befell our students.

This supervision day brought the Primary and the Elementary teachers together at least one day a week - if you were like me, that day was something to look forward to, at least one aspect of it, to get better acquainted and have friendly chats - the supervising part was not quite so enjoyable. In the Staff room, we each had some small chore to do. At the beginning of each term, all of us put \$1.00 in a Coffee Fund jar. It was my "job" to see that the tea and coffee supply never got too low; when the money jar was almost empty, another donation was given.

Our table was always well supplied with cookies, a volunteer effort by any one who choose to bring them - occasionally a teacher would bring a delightful plate of dainties or, a freshly baked cake, not a necessity, but certainly tasty with our coffee!

A list of dishwashers was taped on the wall. The day your name appeared on the list, it was your duty to wash the cups and, in general, keep the Staff room tidy. Stella always dashed down a few minutes before coffee break to plug in the tea kettle and someone of us would take the tea towels home Friday night to launder and return.

Then there was supervision of bus dismissal; teachers assigned to all exit doors to see that students were safely on the buses. Some of the older pupils had patrol duty as well. As I see it now, these responsibilities, self imposed, kept us on our "toes" and brought all of us closer together, we operated as a large family - think about it - wherever you taught before or since, what do you remember now? I'm not afraid to bet - the Elk Point Elementary group of close friends!

(b) NAMES AND INCIDENCES

The exit door in the hallway, leading to the gym, was used for the town line-up, two teachers on duty there for dismissal of children who walked home. ANNE UNIAT and I looked after this line-up for several years, (other teachers as well, were with me)

Through this association Anne and I became well acquainted. Mrs. "B." had gained another friend!

Once again, let me repeat - this big world is not so big after all. Almost every Saturday morning, I walk down our alley way to the Beauty Salon which is situated a few blocks away.

Some weeks ago, while having my hair set, Stella, the hairdresser asked where I had lived before moving to the city. When I replied, "Elk Point", she got quite excited and asked, "Did you know Anne Uniat?" Well - I guess!

Lo and Behold! I discovered that Stella (I don't know her last name) is Anne's cousin! Also, I learned that Anne is still teaching in Elk Point, and that Nadya (my former pupil) is staying in the city. Finding updated news of Anne and

Nadya brought back
a flood of memories.

MABEL DUMONT

The months of May and June 1960, I took a leave of absence to have a gall bladder operation. My brother Joe recommended Mabel to act as "substitute" teacher in my classroom. This was the beginning of her teacher assignments in Elk Point. The next term she remained on as permanent Staff where she taught Gr. IV (perhaps other grades) until her retirement.

Mabel was my supervision partner every Wednesday. Another friendship was established! Besides this, we attended Math Seminars etc. together - she represented our Grs. III to VI at these meetings, while I represented the Primary grades.

She was a valuable addition to the Elementary Staff in that she took such an active part in extra activities both within the school and in the community. Even though now retired from the teaching field, she is still active in Community affairs;

ANNA WARREN

When September term of 1960 commenced, I was still on the sick list, so someone would teach in my place for a month. Anna was that person. She had been on our Staff for a number of years, then acted as a "sub" teacher after retiring. Mrs. Warren did an excellent job of starting out my Beginners numbering in all 25 pupils.

I resumed teaching in October. It seemed odd to me to take over as second "cog" and having missed the introductory first month of teaching manners, tours within the building, orderly formation etc. Anna had all this taken care of, basic skills introduced and the classroom well under control. Now the kids had to start all over again, getting used to Mrs. "B." and her ways. It didn't take too long, however, before pupils and teacher alike, got acquainted and school routine settled down. We struck up a friendship that has lasted for years and up to present date.

Augie and I look forward to Anna's annual Christmas letter - how disappointed we would be, if that greeting didn't arrive! In her letter, she relates up-dated news of all the people we know in our home town - people we would probably lose touch with, if it weren't for this good friend, we both appreciate and thank her over and over again.

By way of a laugh - Anna, do you remember my famous grocery list, the one you deciphered for Augie? Just "flash back" for a moment, and think of that particular list! (walnuts)

HELEN KOVACH

Helen as always been a true and loyal friend to all of us on the Elk Point Staff.

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In the old "squatter" days, Helen was our "stand-by", especially mine. She stood by me through everything, giving sensible advice when I needed it, listened quietly to my problems, in general - she was, and still is, my friend!

This relationship between us never changed. Moving into the new building, there, as ever was my good friend standing by all of us, supportive and co-operative. She seemed always to keep her cool, never grumpy, ever pleasant, despite the fact that she must have had problems of her own. (From time to time, I'll refer to her as Helen K. to distinguish her from our other Helen teacher - Helen Saranchuk or Helen S. more about this Helen later.) Helen K. was made of good stuff. She had her babies, took short leaves of absence for these occasions, otherwise, kept on teaching, while being a good mother as well.

She stayed on our Elementary Staff for several years, eventually moving to St. Paul. In, this town, she continued to teach her favorite grade, (Gr. II) until she retired in 1980. Something was missing for all of us when she left, it never seemed quite the same without her. We met her at the Fall Conventions, somehow she always managed to mingle with our group - these visits were all too short.

Florence McDonell - our good old Vice-Principal "threw" a garden party in honor of her 81st birthday. She invited the teacher members of the old Staff. Our daughter Norma and husband were kind enough to see that Augie and I attended. It was a wonderful day for us, meeting many of our personal friends for a short chat and lunch. More than great for me, seeing as well, many of my teacher friends - Myrna, Velma Andrishak, Bea Williams, and Helen K. I had seen the first three various times since retirement but not Helen. I was so glad to see her that I could have hugged her to pieces! However, the afternoon was all too short, but I'm hoping to have the opportunity to see her again in the future. Stella was ill that day and didn't attend the party, *but* my dear friend, Myrna took me over to her house where we had a short chat.

Before I go on to other names, I mustn't forget to relate once again, an incident that happened in my classroom, one that Helen K. never tired of hearing. Along with our modern building and better equipment, came modern ideas, slowly but surely, becoming more advanced as time went by until we could compete with the best. Among the first of these new changes was an Introductory Day, an introduction to school routine for the Beginners who would start the new September term. At first it was for one day only, a day chosen toward the end of June - old Gr. I pupils were dismissed, new pupils came in for the day - a good thing it was held on Friday so Stella and I could rest up over the week-end! This practice advanced as time went on to two days, then a week, until finally the entire month of June was devoted to the next terms pupils.

I recall these "Kindergarten" classes of one month being conducted in the Gymnasium, with two extra teachers taking the two new classes, while Stella and I carried on with our own classes. I'm reminded that Kaye Melnyk (at one time or other) was one of these teachers, I can't remember the others - here is an opportunity

for my teacher friends to "tickle their thinkers" and flash back fo missing names!

Anyway, Kaye had been on our teaching Staff for several terms when she retired, she became one of our most dependable subs always at "beck and call" for any one who needed her. As time went on, I was pleased and happy to become the teacher of her two children, Denise and Donna.

Now back to this "Introduction Day" tale. The day was some-what like a nightmare. Into our two classrooms that morning the new green pupils came storming in, excited, crying, shy. How in the world would we be able to orientate them, or to acquaint them with their new surroundings, the way to the bathrooms etc.? Well, we didn't orientate, we were just too busy with trying to pacify and console! And, I can assure you that Stella and I didn't dawdle the day away.

Out of the North, (beyond Shamrock Valley) into my classroom, came two husky youngsters, two boys who were brothers. Both were much older than the traditional Gr. I age, both had lots of vinegar and, I could add, lots of nerve. I don't suppose that either one of them had ever seen the interior of a classroom before, perhaps they had never visited our town so why not have a "hay day!"

Well, I assisted them each a seat, two aisles apart. As soon as they were seated, Act No. 1 began. This was the game of "flippir spit balls" all around the room, up to the ceiling and down, taking aim at their classmates. They were pretty fair "flippers," I don't think they missed their tarqets too often judging by the confusion, the squeals and the "bawling" heard in the room! How does a teacher master control over. students under such conditions? Well you "doesn't!"

When lunch time came, the kids had calmed down - somewhat. School re-opened and Act. No. II was introduced. My Northlanders had tired of the "spit ball" game - this gaveway to a new and better one, that of crawling under the pupils desks, up one aisle and down the other. It still remains a mystery to me how they ever managed to get under those low desks - lying prone and slithering, would be my guess: anyway a nightmare of a day for timid and scared little people and their teacher!

After last recess, the two brothers had lost most of their energy, they were also bored. The older boy called over to his brother with a loud clear voice, "Let's get to H...l out of here, this is no place for us!!"

The only thing wrong with that statement was, they were forced to wait for the bus. They got out of "there" alright and to the best of my knowledge they never went back "there" again, well at least, the two boys didn't show up the following September to become my pupils. And that Helen K. is your favorite "rehashed" story!

DOROTHY SILER AND VELMA ANDRISHAK

These two teachers had been family friends of ours for many years - the bond of friendship was merely strengthened through our common interest in the teaching

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profession. Dorothy moved up to the new Elementary School along with the rest of us, as one of the Gr. II teachers as you know, Helen K. was the other Gr. II teacher. She continued to teach this grade for a few terms, later was moved up to Gr. V. I think she was replaced in 1964 by Myrna (Fox). She moved away from Elk Point while I was still teaching, and I haven't seen her for years. I missed a golden opportunity to chat with her at the Home Coming Re-union of Elk Pointers in July - it would have been so enjoyable.

Velma, as I remember, was never a Primary teacher; she chose to teach the higher Elementary grades and I think Junior High. While teaching Gr. VI her daughter Ruth was one of my pupils, later on, Susan was one of my Gr. I pupils - still later on I taught Brian, then Murray, (her son) and still later, her grandson - all good students.

How many times we teachers have been invited into a lovely farm home for an evening of bridge! Both were co-operative members of our Staff. Their cars were ever ready to give the rest of us a ride - to and from school, to Conventions or wherever, just as Mary or Kaye did (others too). You could always look forward to a pleasant ride and happy entertainment!

When leaving their teaching positions, these girls came to our rescue, acting as substitute teachers. Along with Kaye Melnyk, these two were ever trusted to perform an excellent job in any of the classrooms.

Our Staff carried on through the terms. Some retired but stayed on as substitutes. Some moved on to new places and climates. New teachers came to fill the vacant positions. Two of these were my wonderful friends of present day as well as in my teaching years, Myrna McFadyen (Fox) and Helen Saranchuk! (I may refer to the later as Helen S. to distinguish her from Helen Kovach.) These two I have coupled together, for, when I think of one, I think of the other! Perhaps the reason for my thinking is that Myrna and Helen have been such close friends for all these years, then (as I see it) they joined forces together and became close and dear friends of mine. Myrna took a teaching position as Primary teacher on May 1, 1958. All I know is she belonged to the Elementary Staff somewhat earlier than Helen S. At first, she taught Gr. II, later Gr. V. Mrs. Van Arnam had become ill toward the end of the 1959-60 term, and Helen replaced her.

Then came the term 1961-62, with a large enrollment of Beginners, too many for two teachers. Helen became our companion teacher. Stella, Helen and I started out that September opening day with 20 pupils each - as the week went by, each of us received extra pupils until we had 22 or 23 students apiece. Helen's classroom was down by the Gymnasium, but the three of us worked together, planning Enterprises and the Christmas Concert etc. What a crowd of little people on the stage that year! Also, together the three classrooms had games and films in the Gymnasium - quite a group to control.

The following year Helen S. became the Gr. III teacher for a few years and

when Florence retired as Vice-Principal, Helen took over that position. She was as fine a Vice-Principal as she was a teacher - always cheerful and supportive and never too busy to listen to the rest of us and our problems..

Helen remained on the Staff for a total of six years before moving elsewhere finally settling in Fort Saskatchewan where she still resides. She has been very successful in her field over the years, giving her best wherever she taught. At present, time Helen holds the position of Assistant Principal for 22 teachers. She lost her husband recently, a sad loss, but with her grit and courage, she still carries on.

Myrna, made of the same metal, always cheerful and better believe co-operative. Do you know, I think I would fairly pass out, should I ever find her "grumpy" or depressed! Both these girls climbed to; the top, expanding their education through Summer Sessions and what a help they were to me during my last Summer Session in 1963. When I retired in 1969, Myrna took over my classroom, later, worked in Bonnyville. She has been Early Childhood Co-ordinator for Bonnyville from 1974-81.

Myrna, so willing to make use of her car! She took me to and from school for at least two years (maybe more), and when rides were needed to attend Conventions, Seminars etc., she was right there to extend her help. We are still in touch with these two friends. As I mentioned in the beginning, Myrna drops in to see us when possible and at a moment's notice will take us out to see Helen S. The three of us also keep in touch with a chat over the phone. These occasions are never-to-be forgotten, and it makes Mrs. "B." all happy inside to claim Myrna and Helen as special friends!

Term 1963-64 was not a 'happy one' at least for me, for Stella, my super friend would be teaching at Lindbergh. I was keeping a Daily Diary by then and as I glance over that year's entries, almost every other page reads, "I miss Stella so much!"

Never-the-less, we kept in touch by 'telephone chats in the evening - she, relating happenings in her Lindbergh classroom, while I kept her updated on what went on in my room, and, naturally I was still asking for her advice and helpful ideas - something I never ceased to do.

Mrs. Vera Romanchuk replaced Stella in the Gr. I classroom. Vera, was a fine hard working teacher, but none of us ever got too well acquainted with her for several terms. It may have, been because of her rural school teaching days, that she kept up the custom of staying in her room during recess, also ate her noon hour lunch with her pupils instead of joining the rest of us in the Staff room. The last year of my teaching, Vera and I finally became acquainted and struck up a real friendship and I discovered that her husband's brother was married to Gus' (my son-in-law) sister, Mary! Too bad that so many years were wasted before friendship began - it was my loss!

Despite Stella not being my co-partner, a few nice things happened in my room. That was the term when Lorne Young (Stella's grandson) became one of my pupils. He was a talented student, full of curiosity, well mannered, and ready to

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learn. His brother David who was also my pupil, a year or so later, was likewise talented. Even tho' David had eye problems, this didn't stop him from "going places" and succeeding! The same goes for Lorne - today I am most proud when I receive news of how well they have made use of their educations.

Sometime during that fall, four Superintendents, called "Field Superintendents" visited our Elementary School. Prior to their visits, rumor had it that three of these men were good-natured and "easy on" the teachers with their report - the fourth man had the reputation of being a "tartar!" All of us were dreading inspection by this Mr. Blocksidge and hoped to escape him. Guess whose room he visited? Mine!

It was a morning 'til noon session and included in the morning work, was the Arithmetic Period - Arithmetic being my less favorite subject. At that time the Arithmetic Texts had been changed over to a new Series called "Making Arithmetic Meaningful" where pupils used objects such as buttons, jacks, jars, colored sticks etc. to put meaning into a lesson. I hated that Series, it seems to me that it was confusing and more difficult for the pupils than any other Textbook introduced.

You'll all recall the signs that were used ($>$ $<$ $=$) symbols of Greater Than, Less Than, Equal to - the Beginners actually sweat over these phrases! By looking at the picture objects or numbers in his workbook, the child had to decide into which of the above three categories, the object should be placed. Great for the observant pupil, not so great for the average, confusing for teacher and pupil alike since there was such a fine line between the three placements.

After the morning recess, Mr. Blocksidge seated himself comfortably in my desk chair, flipping through the page's of my Plan Book and Register. As for me, trembling and unsure of myself, I introduced the Arithmetic lesson, the days lesson being on Volume and Capacity. There was Lorne seated in one of the front desks (to see the blackboard work more clearly) intent on his workbook. The lesson carried on, pictures of various sized jars, cups, tumblers, being depicted in the workbooks. Every student except one decided that two illustrated tumblers held the same amount of liquid, but not Lorne!

He spoke up, "Mrs. Bartling, I don't believe they're equal!"

From my desk chair came a chuckle, one which came from a man who appeared not to be listening nor observing.

Something about that chuckle gave me more confidence to carry on, so I answered the boy, "Well, Lorne, let's go to the back of the room and test it out." Away to the sink went pupils and teacher. I had several containers on hand to match water filled, two almost like tumblers with water to a certain level and - Lorne was right! One was not equal to the other, but was either "greater" or "less" than. Lunch time came, the Arithmetic lesson was over, Mr. Blocksidge called me aside and asked, "Who was that little chap who doubted the answer and wanted it proven?"

I told him - Laughingly he commented, "I'd say that boy has a critical, thinking mind, I was very impressed with him!"

Lo and behold - Mr. Blocksidge gave me one of the best inspector's reports I ever received, and I'm still saying that Lorne "saved the day" for me!!

Then came the month of December and preparations were once again being made for the Christmas Concert. Not only the Primary, teachers, but all teachers were in a bind - you see we didn't have Stella with us - no one to play the piano - what to do? Another good friend came forward and volunteered to accompany with the piano, the carols and songs for my Gr. I class - do you remember that she ended up playing the piano for all of us?

This good friend was Kaye McAleese, a sister of Mary Loftus (Bennett) - I've often suspected that Mary had a hand in convincing Kaye to help us out. Kaye made a trip from her farm home to town, at least twice a week, for concert practice - I don't know what we would have done without her, I should think our Concert would have been a very dull affair!

A few years prior to this, Kaye and I had shared a 4 bed hospital ward together, Kaye's bed being directly opposite mine. She was a good-natured, happy person, in some ways very much like Mary, and really cheered the rest of us up with her witty and amusing stories, the two of us struck up a fine friendship, the otherwise long old hospital day sped by quickly by our laughing and "swapping" stories. I think of her many times, what a friend in need she proved to be that Christmas Season - it is my hope that she still gives me a thought now and then.

1963-64

This term, Stella was back to rejoin our Staff, not as a Gr. I teacher, but as a Gr. II teacher. Myrna, I think, moved up to Gr. V and Vera R. retained the Gr. I classroom until she retired. Even though my friend was never my co-partner again (taught Gr. II until retirement) our two classes still met in the hallway for games and song teaching with Stella at the piano - Thro thick and thin, good times and bad times, Stella was there by my side assisting in all I did right up to my retirement in 1969.

Some names I have forgotten, but from time to time a "flash back" comes and I clearly see other teacher faces and remember a name, so none of you are ever really forgotten. Olga Grykuliak, one of the Gr. V teachers, Louise Maas who replaced Helen "K." in Gr. II, Mrs. Howe, on the Staff for 1 year as Gr. VI teacher, Beverly Bliss who replaced her for that grade, Gladys Salstrom, Louise Dahlstadt, Sylvia Boothman, Mrs. Chase as substitute teacher during some of these terms, and then there was Margaret Modin!

Working conditions under better equipment were steadily improving until about the 1967 or 1968 terms, we were given a Teacher's Aide to lessen our teacher work load; this was Margaret. I've given her the title of "Teacher's Aide," for the want of a better one, actually, she was the "Jack of all Trades" for she helped everyone within the school. Margaret acted as secretary, typing away for hours on her typewriter which was placed in the corner nook just opposite the Staff room. She

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typed out notices, invitations, what have we - in her spare time, she checked work-books, registers, duplicated copies of seat work; always busy, from opening to close of classes, dashing from one room to the other. Helpful indeed! And oh, the homemade "goodies" she put on our coffee table.

Flashing back to the closing of our registers, one June term, I think of myself as sitting at the kitchen table working on my register which was required to be handed in the following morning. I worked on that darn thing until about 3 A.M. because one column was out by one number! I became exhausted and felt defeated, it seemed there was no hope of it ever balancing. The next morning I gave it to Margaret and in less than ten minutes, she found the mistake and corrected it - once again I was spared embarrassment!

Each morning, shortly after 9 A.M. a little "tap-tap" would sound on my classroom door. Upon opening it, there would be Margaret with a cheerful smile on her face, asking if she could be of help in mimeographing copies of seatwork - I always had plenty of that to be done, using the time after school hours and in the evening to prepare it - better believe I never refused her help! Her day was well filled, from door to door she went, offering her assistance. (she once told me that her first stop was at my door) I hope that all the teachers appreciated her help as much as Mrs. "B." did!

Margaret's two daughters, Valerie and Beverly, had been 'former pupils' of mine - two girls with two different personalities. Valerie was a quiet, pleasant studious little girl. Her work assignments were always neat and tidy, handed in on time. Although she had, little to say, it was a pleasure to have her as a pupil, she remained a good student throughout all her grades. Beverly, on the other hand, while also being a fine student, was somewhat of a chatter-box. As I see it, she was quite like her mother, a big smile on her face and happy' acting, as well as being a little "busy bee" - never idle even during recesses and noon hours. She took upon herself the task of watering my plants, (I had many plants in those large West windows) dusting the ledges and even the books, cleaning erasers etc., chatting away all the time. I began to call her my little "housekeeper". Dust within the room, didn't have half a chance while Beverly was my "housekeeper" and I might add, she was the best housekeeper I ever had!

Today, I like to think about all these helpful things that made my teaching days so pleasant and interesting. How I miss that classroom A Beginner Gr I coming through my door each September. I can see them sitting in their seats, five rows of five seats each. Becoming adults, they change, so much 'til I can scarcely recognize them but no matter how many new groups I taught, I still go back in memory and see each pupil as a "six-year older." Each individual in his or her assigned seat. There is an atmosphere of enthusiasm and eagerness with every new class, pupils looking up at me with faith and trust in their eyes, expecting me to teach them everything about EVERYTHING! I hope that none of them ever suspected that little secret of mine, for Mrs. "B." knew nothing at all, but how much I learned from

them!

These now "old Gr. lers" left in June but there was always an exciting new group to look forward to the following September and the cycle repeated itself. It didn't take many such terms for me to realize that I had found my true niche in the Teaching ield - that of being "a-some-kind-of-a" Gr. 1 teacher!!

At this point, I would like to deliver a message to parents, which is this:

To every parent of every child I ever taught, I want you to know that I did my best. Whether you approved or disapproved of my teaching methods and techniques, it was your child's interest I had at heart; I wanted him/her to do things and go places in the future. Naturally, I made mistakes and didn't always succeed, but it's surprising how many times I have been rewarded too.

Whenever I hear of, one of my favorite pupil's success in life, tiny prickles of pride chase up and down my spine - it is times like this that prove to me, my teaching was not all in vain!

Chapter 9

Teachers' conventions

O-Oh yes, we had them ... annually. Something to look forward to, something to be satisfied with, or something to be bored with - a break-away from school routine, a get together for a "fun" time.

The Annual Teachers' Convention were, at first, held in the fall, usually around the first or second week of October, Thursday and Friday being the chosen days. The event took place either in the town of St. Paul or Bonnyville since Elk Point wasn't able to accommodate teachers coming in from surrounding districts. Elk Point teachers usually left early Thursday morning and planned to stay overnight in whichever town the Convention was held. (the two places alternated)

As usual, we had our co-operative Teacher Staff. Those who had a car and could drive, willingly supplied transportation for the rest of us - Florence, Myrna, Dorothy, Velma, and others. The same applied to the Junior High and the Senior High Staff. The going and coming back to these events were very pleasant, laughing and chatting away the miles until it seemed no distance at all. I mean the trip was happy unless one was fretting about some subject matter you were requested to lecture or demonstrate on, before a crowd of strange teachers and noted speakers, and if your turn didn't come until the last period of the second Convention day to present your oration well that was very different, just anxiety.

Our three levels of Staff were indeed similar to a large family, we stuck together like glue. In the meeting room our seating plan remained the same, year after year - High School Staff taking up the seats about midway from the speakers stage, Jr. High a few rows back, and the Elementary Staff still a few rows further back. Seated like this was Florence McD. then Mrs. Van, Helen K., Stella and myself. On down, Myrna, Helen S. Anne Uniat, Anna Warren and the others.

Course, one of us was always sure to bring a bag of peppermints along ... that was because of the on-coming lectures and how we would re-act! If the elected speaker had an interesting topic and was enthusiastic in delivering it, enthusiasm spread throughout the room, we all sat up like good soldiers and tried to absorb his every word. If, however, a dull speaker rendered a dull speech, we reacted quite differently - that's when the peppermints took over. The bag was passed on down the line to the end of our row, each one dipping into the bag and trying to sneak one out without disturbing others. Alas! the goodie bag was made of crisp, crackly cellophane and no matter how adept we became in trying to take out a mint, none of us ever quite

mastered the "crack-crackle" of this bag. I imagine tho that Mr. Beattie, sitting up front a ways, preferred this disturbing noise to a snore from one of his Staff - we managed to keep awake.

Following the first day's session was our banquet, a meal we all looked forward to seating plan at table almost identical to lecture arrangement, except groups opposite to one another on either side. Quite often, a dance followed this meal which most of us attended and got acquainted with teachers from other districts. If no dance, we went to a late movie or did as we pleased; this was our "let-hair-down" and fun evening.

Let's flash back to the fall Convention of term 1958-59, which was held in Bonnyville. By this time, I was beginning to feel that I could buy a few extras, what with my teacher's salary and all, so I went all out in shopping, I would try to turn up at our Convention as a well groomed sophisticated lady. Never will I forget my purchases, - a Forest Green flannel dress with a loose high neck line, a gown that wouldn't do justice on that flat chest of mine. Well, I decided to buy a modern "uplift" bra to actenuate lines, paying no heed to size or whatever. Away we went, and along went "Mrs. B." attired in Forest Green gown and "uplift" bra.

As the day wore on, I began to feel more and more uncomfortable around my chest - could I have eaten an extra large luncheon? Banquet hour arrived, we took our places at the long table -Florence, Mrs. Van. opposite to Helen K., Stella and myself. The Bonnyville Ladies served a delightful meal except for the meat dish - chicken. Honestly, that chicken had to be the oldest and toughest bird any of us ever tackled with knife and fork to say nothing of getting it to our mouths. We struggled with the thigh or breast, only to have it slip and slide across our plate, trying to keep it from toppling off to the table. During this ordeal, suddenly something went "Snap!" Oh, I thought I knew what it was, but I was afraid to glance down. From across the table came a hearty laugh - (you, who knew Mrs. Van, will remember her laughter) - she had witnessed what I was too embarrassed to discover, that "uplift" bra of mine had slowly worked its, way up and was now embracing me under my chin!

Laughing is contagious, so we all laughed. I'm certain mine was from embarrassment and as soon as I could gracefull exit, I, went to the "Ladies" room, discarded the article. The next day: I went to the Convention sessions, comfortable and flat-chested. As for the brassiere, it was donated for a box to the needy, and "Mrs. B." never again tried to be sophisticated!

Time went by. The Annual Teacher's Conventions were now being held in larger centres, and for some reason, they took place, in the Spring instead of the Fall, usually around the third week in February or the first part of March. The first Spring Convention that we attended in Edmonton was during the term 1967-1968 and took place in the McDonald Hotel, February 29th and March 1st (1968).

Also the following year (my last term) it was again held at the McDonald

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Hotel, but, the two Convention days were Monday and Tuesday instead of the Thursday and Friday we had been accustomed to. This was great, for we had the week-end to visit relatives and relax a bit. After classes on Friday were dismissed, most of the teachers left for the city, transportation being supplied, as usual, by our co-operative car drivers.

Augie was working at the Salt Plant so we couldn't leave until his days work was finished. We left Elk Point around 6 P.M. with Marvin and Beverly Bliss, and arrived at our daughter, Norma's, home at 9:30 P.M. All of us were looking forward to a fine "get together" and something by way of super entertainment for Saturday evening. The families decided to go bowling. Augie had bowled a few times before, but I had never been in a bowling alley in my life and certainly didn't understand the skills for knocking down pins with that heavy ball. Both of us would have preferred a good movie or some other form of entertainment, but we went bowling.

Augie did well at the game and I had a streak of "Beginners Luck", I managed to keep within the "alley" and managed to knock all ten "pins" down! That was thrilling and our evening together with the families was a great success. Oh... but the next day! Augie was limping around, stiff and sore like you wouldn't believe - I was chuckling to myself and felt no ill-effects anywhere - in great shape for the first day of the Convention!

The first lecture on Monday morning was fairly interesting; no need to pass along the peppermints. Afternoon was a surprise, (for me) as the day progressed, I began to feel a bit stiff and uncomfortable and by the close of the sessions, my legs were very "achy" and stiff - me, who had chuckled! The banquet was to be held that evening in the basement room of the Mc Donald Hall. To fill in the few hours before our meal, we chose different pastimes. Stella went back to her son's home in city and didn't attend the banquet. Some of the girls went on a short shopping spree. Mrs. Van and I chose to remain in the hotel and fill in the time as best as we could. We had a cup of tea, then took a tour around the several business rooms; walking was becoming more, and more painful to me and it ended up by the two of us sitting down to have a nice chat.

Banquet time arrived - we began to descend the two flights of stairs, Mrs. Van hanging on to my arm, while I with supreme effort, was gingerly planting one foot at a time on the steps. We got to the bottom of the first landing and whom should we meet coming up the stairs, but our School inspector, Mr. Racette!

He greeted us, but kept looking at me queerly, while we held a short conversation. When he left, Mrs. Van burst into that hearty laugh of hers and remarked, "You know, Margaret, I'll bet Mr. Racette thought you were "sloshed!" Had I been going to teach another term I would have been worried, believing he would ask for my resignation, but that was my last year.

Chapter 10

Retirement

I retired from the Education Field, the end of June 1969. During my last term, I was beginning to feel tired, it became an effort for me to run, hop, skip, jump etc. as a Gr. 1 teacher needs to do. It seemed great to be looking forward to Retirement; all the extra time it would provide, no homework to do, no commitments to make! A day or two before school closed, our Teacher's Staff meeting was held in the High School. All the teachers were present. After the business part was over, a delicious lunch was served, and to my surprise, the party was for me!

At the close of the meeting, the entire Staff presented me with a painting, the artist being Bob Quinn, an old time family friend of ours. The picture portrays the scene of an old rural school, a path leading up to it through the trees, there is even a small outdoor "privy" in the background. At the bottom of the painting is a gold colored plate which reads "Best Wishes for Retirement - Elk Point Teaching Staff." On the back of the picture is inscribed, "Closed for the Summer", but for "Mrs. B.", as it turned out, maybe it should have read "Closed for All Times". This was a touching moment for me, and my teacher friend couldn't have chosen a greater gift. Later, I was given a plaque which reads, "20 years Service to Education, to the Association, and To the Community". You will recall that, I had no qualifications in my early teaching years. Both picture and plaque are proudly displayed on the walls of my home, where I can see them each day as I pass through the rooms. They act as happy reminders to me, the plaque is a reminder of a dream come true, that of becoming a teacher. The painting a reminder of a man, Bob Quinn, school chum of our son's, and of a man, who for many years, came to our home each Christmas morning, to watch the Bartling family open their gifts!!

The first few years of Retirement were wonderful. I delighted in preparing planned meals instead of rushed through, "thrown-together" ones. Now, I had time to do a thorough job of house cleaning and chasing the dust out of the corners. There was plenty of leisure time left over to read books, to work on crafts, or to travel. Those years fairly flew until about three years ago when suddenly I discovered, like a "bolt out of the blue", that I was right "smack bang" into that Garden of Old Age. It was a sad discovery and I didn't like it one little bit!

It's that period in life when your mind says, "DO IT!" and your body says,

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"YOU CAN'T" because your physical strength has left you. Leisure time - too much of it, hard to fill in the hours with suitable tasks. I rebelled at this "Old Age" - I wanted to kick it - I couldn't accept it "graciously" as they say one should. No matter how you re-act to it, it's there, and the sooner you stop struggling with it, the better for you. Gradually I'm accepting things as they are, and when I begin to feel sorry for myself, I stop and think - you are a fortunate woman, being surrounded by a family who cares and who will make you feel secure - how about the people who have no one? It must be a lonely world.

Augie and I work together preparing meals etc. and by the dust under the rug, (our girls and their men do the heavier work) the house appears clean anyway. And you better believe that old "Welcome" mat is still by the front door, to welcome guests, who come our way!

Why don't you try it sometime? We'd love to visit you and reminisce about the "good old times!"

Chapter 11

Conclusion

What I have written in this tribute to all of you are but simple "flash backs " of the pleasurable hours spent with special friends with a common interest - teaching. There are times I get a yearning to toll back the years, to be once again back in the classroom, my feet planted firmly on the floor; on Wednesday to be walking down the hallway, or out on the playgrounds to snoopervise, but the yearning is strongest when I think of that coffee room with all of us spending a happy few minutes together - I guess it wouldn't be the same anymore, would it?

Nearing my conclusion, comes a peculiar feeling in these now old bones of mine, a feeling that this material isn't worth reading - you'll likely rate me a "D" on this assignment, but, then, my mother used to say, (quote) "Old Age can get away with anything!" - maybe I'll "get away" with this!

Along with this emotion, one of those big, fat, "Mrs. "B." ideas just popped into my head - how about some of you writing something for me? Most of you have taught longer, than I, therefore you will have richer experiences to relate.

Give it a try. It would provide interesting reading for your friends and what a "treasure record" to be handed down to your children!

Tell you what I'll do. Should any of you attempt such a task, and hand me a copy, I promise to gi've you an "H" for effort, I might even give you EXCELLENT - if you don't try, well I guess you'll rate a "D" and all of you "gals" know what that rating means!!

Along the lane of memory
The blossoms never fade,
For near and far, still cherished are
The friendships we have made.

Edgar A. Guest

And I hope you feel the same way about me!!!

Mrs. B .

Margret Bartling

January 30th, 1981