

Cecilia (McIntosh) Dixon

1924-



Here I am
at
Shaftesbury
School

Berwyn School days



Beatrice
Dobson and I
at Normal
School

Sep/42



I was born in Peace River, Alberta and attended the Berwyn and Shaftesbury Schools. (As my mother was not used to living without servants)I learned early on to be somewhat independent and to develop a skill set so useful for my later endeavours. I could cook a cake by the age of six and my mother thought I would become a good Home Economics teacher. In August, 1942 I moved to Edmonton to attend Normal School. Shortly into the program nine of us were sent north of Grimshaw to one room schools. "Give it your best shot" was our instructors' advice to us. I therefore started my teaching career at North Star School north of Grimshaw. Luckily I only had grades 1-4. I boarded with a German family where although the mother spoke no English luckily the children did. One teacher spent an afternoon showing me how to organize my teaching materials. These skills were put to use for my entire teaching career. Halfway through the school year another set of student teachers were sent out so we student teachers returned to Normal School in Edmonton where the staff stated that they felt we had learned well while out in the classroom.

Back at Normal School we were not impressed to discover that the funds we had left in the Student Union Fund had been mostly spent leaving only enough funds for us to try roller skating. Introduced to the joys of roller skating I spent that summer working at Safeway and I roller skated a lot.

Then, at 19 years of age, I applied for a mountain based school job but ended up in the Bald Headed Prairie at Vulcan School. Again this was a one room school with Grades 1-9. The air base nearby provided entertainment with dances which we enjoyed attending. Since teachers could not afford a car I acquired a bike for transportation even though tires were rationed. While boarding again I went into Vulcan with my landlady to take some music lessons as music was a big part of the curriculum. One of my students was more advanced in her studies and she played for the class which was a great help. I taught Grade 1-8 all subjects and the Grade 9 student was on correspondence lessons.

My friend Val who was slightly older encouraged me to apply for different jobs, to do the bike tour, and to attend the dances at the Air Force bases. She also encouraged me to apply for a job with Imperial Oil in Trinidad but you had to be 21 and I was still too young. So instead of summer school that year we did a bike tour from Calgary to Waterton.



Cecile and Val,
1944
“ Waterton or
bust”



I am in the
back row left
Kleskun Hill
School

The cost of going home for Christmas was too high that year so in 1944 I took a post at the Kleskun Hill School. The teacherage was so cold I stored my apples and oranges under my pillow to keep them from freezing. I had to light the fires but the students cleaned the

classroom. The big bonus at this school was a shared phone. Therefore I did not receive an isolation bonus while working there but I sure loved that phone.

Early in the fall, after the class settled into routine, we would bring out the unique Christmas concert books with recitations, skits, and ideas to fit ages 6-13 and grades 1-12. These books were well used and traded between one-room school teachers. The next step was to organize a money raiser for treats. We held a box social which the parents and community really supported. Some money was used for treat bags done up by a parent group and the rest was sent to the Eaton catalogue company with names and ages of the students. The company sent back gift wrapped parcels for each student, usually with additional items included.

We had a piano in the school so a student's mom would come and play a few times for practice and then for the concert. I had a great class of hard working students who put their hearts into the production. Fathers came and built a raised stage and seats out of boards laid across supports and my bed sheets became stage curtains. The kerosene lamps with mantles had to be taken to the school for the evening event as there was no electricity in the school.

Well the evening started out with laughs when the students started singing as soon as the curtains opened, even though the pianist had not given them their notes. Everyone had a good time. One of the fathers came in dressed as Santa and teased the teacher to everyone's delight. Each student received their gift and treat bag. "All's well that ends well", said I.

Next I moved to Barrhead (Vega #1 School) and boarded there for a year before heading to Fairview for a year teaching Grades 1-3.

Vega #1 School



Fairview School



When my Dad asked me to relocate closer to home I moved to Grande Prairie for two years teaching a large Grade 5 class. Montrose Elementary school was overcrowded so Grades 5 and 7 were sent to the Army Barracks. Home Economics and Shop were also at the Barracks as was a kitchen run for the kids. Friday afternoon recitations were very entertaining for the Home Economics teacher as there were only thin dividers between the groups there. While teaching that year I met my future husband who was teaching Grade 6.



Grade 5 class at the Barracks, Grande Prairie

At my school desk



Walking in Grande Prairie

Staff at Montrose Elementary 1947-1949.

Peggy Hodges
Pauline McPherson
Betty Caldwell
Bishop
Vera L. Rankin
Sharon Wickhart ART CRAFT STUDIO
Grande Prairie, Alta.
Ruth Robertson
Doris (the old hat) White
Marie M. Good

I am the one on the left in the back row.



My next move was to Hoping (near the US Border) for a two year stint teaching Grades 3-5. Students were bused to this school. There were four teachers at the school. While farming here I pulled out my pension and stopped teaching. When the crop was hailed out and we needed money I went back teaching for another two years.

Then we sold out the farm and moved to Rio Grande. I taught at Elmworth School until 1975. When I was widowed I decided to retire. I did not sub as I felt I could not see the progress made by the students and I could not get to know them in the same way as when I was teaching. The best part of teaching for me was getting to know the students. The students were so interesting. So when a colleague was setting up on the Hutterite Colony I gladly showed him how to organize Grade 1-3 there using the skills shared with me so long ago.

My motto for retirement is “Do what you like. Refuse to do money raisers.” Since my retirement I like to keep busy with reading, word and card games, and visiting with family and friends. Lifelong connections continue to make my days enjoyable. I also am known for my golf skills, having bested my own children when playing a round on my 90th birthday. Sadly I feel I can no longer travel which I did extensively making good use of Senior Hostels. Scotland was on my list but the walking tour is no longer feasible. Other than that I feel my bucket list has been filled. Now I feel that I do not have to do anything unless I wish to do so. I continue to enjoy my friends and leisure activities and hope to do so for some time to come.

[Interview by Sue Mills](#)