

ORIGINAL RETURNED TO

Feb. 14/84

the EXPANDED COMMENTS STARTING on PAGE (4)

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MRS. KAY BLAKE

CECILIA JEFFREY INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

1950-58

Cecilia Jeffrey School was in the Mission Band study when I was a child. We packed a Christmas bale for the indian children each year.

Years later I attended Young People's camp at the old school site on Shoal Lake - where the fish were three feet long.

The school started in 1902. It was moved to the beautiful new building on Round Lake, Kenora, after the disastrous post World War I flu.

I relieved Miss Carruthers, the nurse, in 1950.

The children went home for summer holidays leaving some orphans and skeleton staff to prepare for next term.

New students spent a full day in class until they could understand English, then it was half days in class and half days learning to work. Very few reached high school.

The 1950's were years of transition into integration. We added two class rooms by dividing a dormitory and using double-decker beds for one and utilizing a workroom for grade two. This left one classroom for the seniors and one for grade one, and pre primer class zero. A fourteen year old boy went from zero to grade seven in one year. All children were in school full time and the work was done too.

While relieving a grade II teacher in late spring, I found that the children knew the answers before the questions were asked. There were not enough desks for the forty children. Orange crates were used for extras.

2. A four year old boy slept under the sand table. (A loose horse shoe over a shed door fell on his head and a piece of bone was driven in and had to be lifted.)

3. When the inspector came the children were splendid, until they were dismissed. Then they all wanted to be monitors and swarmed about us showing sincere affection and shy respect.

A real teacher was sent to replace me.

I taught the health subjects and enjoyed spares on Fridays with the art class. Some of the children went on to be artists.

The children who came to us after a time in sanitorium were segregated in a preventorium program. There was a partial partition around two tables in the dining room. A cupboard with dishpan and dishes were used, and these children had extra rations. They were developing a "chronic invalid" complex. We removed the wall and cupboard and gave extra food to all the children.

The local clinic was co-operative and the Indian Health Nurse visited and was a friend. Otherwise I was on my own.

5. Hairs were tied across scalp wounds, casts kept dressing on, and first aid as needed. Antibiotics were new. Veterans Affairs supplied our drugs. The cook said that "D.D.T." meant drop dead twice.

There were several five gallon cans of cod liver oil in stock. The children got a spoonful each at breakfast time. Some of them poured it into their pockets, so everyone was glad when we got vitamin pills and the oil was added to the pig swill.

6. There were X-ray and dental clinics, no fillings were don, only extractions. Only those with less than 20/30 in one eye received glasses for the first few years.

7. Some of our accidents were unforgettable. The boy who ate a basketful of wild crab apples almost died before getting to the hospital, then to Winnipeg. A run-away fell between freight cars. A man in the caboose saw a leg on the track and did first aid. When the boy returned to us with a full length artificial leg he could play football better than the other boys. One night a new supervisor saw the leg fully dressed under the bed and pounced on it.

8. One evening, -40°, the boys were playing hockey. It became obvious that the barn was on fire. A senior boy went into the mow, smoke belched out and he blundered about lost in the hay until a supervisor pulled him out.

Each cow was assigned to a boy who took care of it. All the cows were led outside, but some died later because of frost bitten lungs. The dead cows were skinned. The carcasses were piled across the road. In the spring the bus company asked us to please move the carcasses because when they stopped at our gate they did not like the wind from that direction.

The henhouse was iced and emptied for the cows. Three hundred laying hens were killed and put in the laundry. There was a rumour that the school would be closed.

9. During the few weeks between principals the nurse was in charge. The second year requisition and the third year estimate had not been done. The Indian Agent kindly helped with this. The principal from Birtle gave good advice. A new school block with three classrooms, a home economics and industrial arts rooms, a gymnasium, offices and utility rooms and cupboards were needed.

10. My first trip to a reservation by bush plane was on a warm winter day. The plane could not lift off because the skis broke through the crust. Fish crates were put off and after packing down a runway we flew. The motor caught on fire and the fire extinguisher worked.

11. The agent asked us to check a chief's death and we chartered a plane. A supervisor came along and remained to help the family. On the way home the sea-bee was so rough I lost my glasses through the open window when I was sick.

12. After six months of upgrading at "The Sick Children's Hospital," a five year programme of investigation and experimentation was started on ear disease. Dr. Ling taught well. The government and local laboratory co-operated in testing and anti-biotics. Treatments included: posturising drilling with a fine stream of water under pressure and the use of lungs for suction. When debris was cleared and drums healed, hearing was restored and we got the worst cases they could find. Results were dramatic.

The police were friendly and often visited. Once the boys found a case of percussion caps. Sometimes they found abandoned explosives. Once a garage was called to take a staff car, and someone ran out of gas at our gate at the same time. While the man was getting gas the garage towed his car away by mistake.

13

Church services and Sunday school were the high point of the week. The children were naturally dramatic so pageants were special.

Stories for class zero were illustrated on the blackboard as told. Across the lake on a grassy hillside near an old barn foundation called "Bethlehem" was a favorite picnic spot. There were CGIT groups meeting with groups from town. A camp fire party with boughs of evergreen, with lighting from celophane and bulb in a jar was effective.

We had visitors from far away. Among them were Seifoulah Lofti from Iran, Rev. In Ha Lee from China, and Dr. and Mrs. Ibiam from Nigeria. A Cessna was chartered to take Sir Francis and Lady Ibiam to see day schools on reservations. I went along to take pictures.

On the way home the door under the plane flew open. We clung to the racks lest we be sucked out. Our principal lying flat on the floor managed to close the door.

At bed time the Ibiams sat on the beds visiting with the children. It was truly a love story.

The new school block was finished by 1967. The ears were healed and I was engaged to be married. On the way home from a European tour the ship was stopped at Quebec to be cleared for Asian flu. During the next few weeks the flu went through the whole student body. When I arrived there were only a few cases. On a large chart on the wall names were added daily. Red marks told at a glance how the flu was progressing. We took all temperatures twice daily using thirty six thermometers. Out "Disaster routine" averted work. Staff men carried trays piled with bread, jugs of milk and fruit to the dormitories. Sulfa drugs worked and everyone recovered fully.

14.

During the winter of 1958, the girls made wood fiber apple blossoms. Willows were put in warm sugar water until the leaves came out. These and real flowers from WMS decorated the newly painted chapel for the wedding. Five high school boys were ushers. The choir sang "Fairest Lord Jesus." A bus was chartered to take Indian guests to the supper at the church. It was a formal wedding. Rev. Marnoch came from Winnipeg. Rev. Inglis and Mrs. Inglis represented my parents. I bought a dress in London England from the "New Yorker."

Residential schools have been phased out. Educated Indians are finding their rightful place in our society.

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Our work will have a lasting influence. It was a difficult task, well done for the Lord.

15.

A beautiful carved oak chair, hand made in the original school will be in Kenora's new museum.

## CECILIA JEFFREY SCHOOL

1. Janet Carruthers had been laundry matron in the school while it was at Shoal Lake. When the 1919 flu took the principal and caused so much serious illness, she decided to have a nurse's training. She came as a nurse to the school when it moved to Kenora and remained until 1949-50.

She wrote a book "The Forest Is My Kingdom." Soon after she left the school she died with lung cancer.

The church in Kenora in memoraim set up a scholarship for the best speaking choir at the festival of arts.

Mrs. Douglas, the senior teacher, told me that "long ago when there was a famine the Indians tied their most beautiful girl to a tree and left her there to appease the spirit. Someone rescued her and C.J. School was founded. (Heresay, oral tradition). The girl was Orpha Mandamin's grandmother." Orpha was one of our grade IX students. She married Sam Copenace who was in grade XII. Their first son was Charles who has a daughter who is doing so well in swimming she is training for a future championship try. (Sam and Orpha are divorced.)

2. Richard Mandamin did not recover as quickly as expected. On closer checking he was found to have tuberculosis. With modern treatment he was able to go home to the reservation in the summer holidays. He fell in the lake and was drowned.

3. The children were familiar with me not only as their nurse (etc.), but some of them knew me from a visit on their reservation, (Shoal Lake), when I was with the principal's sister, Ellen Ross, who was studying Ojibway language, and I went to give the parents a chance to have me at their "mercy," as we had their children. A dog used fo get into our tent early in the morning and sniff us and jump on us. The children would roll under the flap and get the dog out without disturbing us.

It was early November. The chief would come into our tent and sit there for a few minutes until he was satisfied that we were comfortable. (More about chief Roy Redsky and his wife Alice, later.) We visited all the homes but the one we were told not to visit. We were to go to the chief first then to the first councillor and so on down the order of authority. Only the right person could give us permission if we wanted to do something, so we always inquired who was in charge. (They were very pleased when I gave a bag of humbugs to a cheif for his people.) It was really important to understand this custom.

We had a coleman stove in the tent and were given fresh fillets of pickerel. We were expected to lead in a service of worship in each home. Gerald Redsky was building his new house. When we arrived he stopped for worship. Later on that autumn on the way home in a storm he was drowned.

4. I came from Birtle, (which was squeaky clean), in January. There was an offensive smell that plagued the whole building, clung to our street clothes and hung around outside the doors. Saturdays saw everything scrubbed and everybody bathed and with clean clothes. This stench was called "Indian smell" but it came from chronic ear disease which had resisted all known treatment.

There was a dark brown fuzzy looking thing in the dish pan in the preventorium. Dozens of cockroaches fled in every direction. The roaches came with the groceries when the school was being built.

Short cuts left open walls behind cupboards and stoves etc.

The children enjoyed their chores and tried to do a good job. I asked one about cleaning methods. She told me that they wiped the painted wood with a 'dam clot.' I realized later that they were not hearing word endings.

With Helen Ross to help lessen the roaches, we went to the dining room with magazines in both hands to swat them on the walls when we put the lights on before they could escape. We estimated that in the beginning we got about five hundred each time we did this. In a desperate effort to beat them I used the blower end of the big vacuum cleaner to blow cyanide powder into the attic and walls. The staff put a quick stop to that because it got into their (and our) clothes closets and there was a dry cleaning bill.

5. When we began getting all our prescription drugs from Veterans Affairs our local druggist thought he had done something to cause ME to boycott him.

6. The Indian Health Services dentist came about twice a year. Dr. Ben Claman, a well liked dentist, died about a year after we both had an attack of Lupus after which life expectancy was not usually more than two years.

Dr. Chin Whan Ling came from mainland China. Because of the Communist connection he could come only if he worked for the government. He had fourteen degrees in eye, ear, nose and throat and could do corneal transplants. His job was to test vision in the Indian schools. In due time he passed the required test for his proper place in our medical world. His wife is a nurse. They are Baptists retired in Winnipeg. It is to Dr. Ling that we owe our success with ear disease, and the complete eradication of the offensive smell.

7. Danny Wapioke became a taxidermist. He was murdered.

8. The cause of the barn fire was "worn electric wires." The beam was badly scorched around a switch box. Farming was discontinued at this time.

9. There were very few staff members left at the school during the summer. It so happened that the burdocks grew about six feet tall in the old pig yard. The Jaffrey Melick council said they would send a man to cut the weeds and send us the bill. Our petty cash did not allow for extras like that. I got great satisfaction out of cutting them down with an axe, especially when watched by the men who were digging up the septic tank.

Years ago the engineer was also a cobbler. When he was on night duty (Gene Seranchuk) he cut pieces of old boots to mend not quite so old boots. In a store room there were two boxes about three feet square. One box contained scraps for patching. The other contained a variety of boots, some high legged with buttons and many not suitable for school children but in good condition. The boys' supervisor was asked to take this box to the Salvation Army. He did not realize that he took the wrong box until after he had forced the big box through the doorway and the bottom opened up and the trash went down the stairs and piled up against the Salvation Army door. He grabbed the carton with our name on it and fled.

Another job was to take care of the band instruments which were spread on the floor of the residence attic. They were cleaned and put in a cupboard for safe keeping. Later they were sold to the Salvation Army. (S. Robinson)

Many adjustments were made and left over work finished.

10.

The Indian Agent was helpful especially since the work should have been done before school closed. The requisition for the first year bounced four times before it was accepted. We did not have the required information and had to guess at it.

The first afternoon when the agent came to do the second year requisition he crowded me into the corner behind the desk. I realized that this was the man who took cases of Copenhagen snuff to the reserve to give out with the treaty money. I thought of the inflamed gums and stupidity of the students until we broke the snuff habit so that they could learn something in the classroom. I got mad and he got two jabs and an uppercut. He murmured "You shouldn't have done that," and we got on with the second year requisition. That evening some advice for women in business seemed useful. The desk was moved out from the wall and nailed to the floor. In the morning the farm manager was alerted. Before we started working the agent tried the desk and closed the door. Sonn, "Hill" knocked to see if we had found his requisition. He was told that there would be time the next day. He left the door open. It was soon closed, and soon "McCourt" came to add an item for the engineers department. He also was told that there would be time tomorrow and was accompanied to the door which was closed. Soon "Barrington" arrived to ask permission to make a phone call.

I wondered why a respected Anglican gentleman with such a fine record would be so off track. A few years later he was admitted to the old folks home in an advanced stage of senility. In about two weeks his wife had him transferred to Winnipeg where he soon died.

11.

Chief Roy Redsky and his wife Alice were camping when the chief died of a heart attack.

It was the agent's job but we were interested and happy to be invited to go to see if there had been any foul play.

The agent had chartered the plane but he billed us for it. I refused to pay this bill but a new principal did.

In the summer of 1983 there was news of the death of Alice Redsky. On January 29, 1984 the church in town held a pot luck supper before the annual meeting. I saw Alice Redsky there with her son Jimmy. She told me that her name had been reported when someone else died and that she did not get her old age pension for four months because of it. ((This Alice Redsky that Mrs. Blake is talking about, is the one who was the wife of Chief Roy Redsky, and whose number as a registered Indian is 008701. The Alice Redsky who died in 1983 was the wife of chief Walter Redsky and her number as a registered Indian was 008802, and she died of cancer after being in hospital (because of the disease) often; and she had been frequently visited by W.K. Palmer, Presbyterian Missionary right up to the end. Mr. Palmer had prayer with the family and friends and gave a short sermon the day before the funeral in the home. The next day Mr. Palmer attended the funeral conducted by Bert Green and one or two other "shamans." Mr. Walter Redsky subsequently told Mr. Palmer that he had left the Church. He said this in his office in the Band 40 office. Walter later had his name entered as Presbyterian in the hospital and was visited by both Rev. Mrs. Palmer and Rev. Mr. Palmer.))

12. Page 58 "The Ostrich Syndrome" by Ivan Bernard Robson March 1982

13. Our choral speaking group were winners at the festival trained by Doris Skene who also trained a choir that sang "Fairest Lord Jesus" at my wedding. Stephen (not Steven) Robinson, (former principal at C.J., address in 1984, 1420 Ontario Street, Keewatin, Ontario), recently made a tape of these choirs.

For a while we had a boy's supervisor who was the organist and choir leader at the United Church in town. It was a delight to work with him in our services. He had a disease in which his skin did not stretch and he was constantly uncomfortable because of the cracks all over him. He went to Mexico and shot himself.

A boy in Sunday school declared that Jesus Christ was the son of Joseph, ((as Matt. 1:16, indicates)). He got the cold shoulder from the boys. He came back in a few hours declaring that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ((which is not incompatible with Matt.1:16))

There were six groups of CGIT in the school. At a camp fire party we played "Robin Hood" games using paper weapons. Our principal told us about his experience in India and showed souvenirs. The senior group was invited to Winnipeg. We arrived early -- after a scout meeting or something. The janitor had not been told that we were coming. Our group pounced on the mess and it was gone before anyone else arrived.

14. Our wedding was during the spring break-up. This prevented a number of friends from some reservations from coming because the rivers were their roads, either by dor or canoe. We brought out a table where it could be seen to sign the register because it was not understood what went on in the vestry after a wedding. The little girls did a sun dance outside to keep the sun shining. It was a beautiful day and a happy one.

There are books of stories not mentioned here. I would like to add two more:

During the holidays we hired a transient to paint the dining room tables and benches. He would not sleep anywhere else but in the furnace room. A mattress etc., was supplied and all went well until it was time for him to leave. The principal found a lot of "seam squirrels" on the mattress. The man was promptly DDTed. The engineer put the mattress in the furnace. It filled the house with disgusting smoke then put out the fire. (We got and incinerator.)

When we got the new tubular fire escape the staff had to use it first. The engineer was first to go into the dark pipe three stories up. He said "this proves I'm no coward," then he was gone. At the first bend he was stuck and it took quite a while before he reached the bottom. I was next and I found out at the first bend the pipe was not polished. After considerable wriggling and kicking I shot out of the spout at the bottom, and was caught by four boys on duty for that. The firescape proved to be a way for some naughty boys from another school to enter the girls dormitory. Our principal brought out his "303" and waited. There was a triangle of cedar shrubbery near the fire escape where the boys hid. A few shots whistling over their heads caused them to leave promptly. The principal was not allowed to do this again but we had no more similar visitations.

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There were two oak chairs, a matching set, made in the workshop in the school at Shoal Lake. They had carved flowers on the back and curved arms with leaves. When they were moved the scow with a load of records etc. was upset. It took four days to fish the stuff out of the lake. It took that long for me to open pages of the reister with a razor blade. The chairs were used in the dormitories until little was left except the frames and one was lost. I asked for the other just in time in 1958. I took it home and moved it from place to place waiting for the museum to find room for it. At last the curator came for it. He wrapped it in a comforter so that it would not be damaged and sent it to be restored. This year (1984), we hope the new museum building will be realized.