

Memories of teaching school at Manson's Landing.....1968 to 1975. Written by George Gardner.

Prologue:

Hello....and welcome to my account of the schooling and activities at Manson's Landing Elementary-Secondary School during the years 1968 to 1975. Should you not know or remember me, I became the teacher/principal after the year Ian Hay departed the school and his principalship. My name is William George Gardner.....and I direct you to a few happenings in and out of school.

Content:

Our school was small, with grades 1 to 10 and a student population of seventy-five. Mrs May Freeman was the primary teacher of grades 1 to 3, but left the school due to a serious illness after my first year. Replacing her was Mrs. Joan Guthrie, a dedicated, hard-working elementary teacher. It was these two astute teachers that provided the small number of their students with direction, scholastic abilities, and courtesies!

Grades 4, 5 and 6 were under the absolute direction and guidance of Mrs. Bev Mathews. Her daughter, Sheril, and my daughter, Diana, were two of the students who went on to secondary school in Campbell River then on to college/university.

Mrs. Mathews convinced me, and the Superintendent of Schools, to be allowed to visit other communities, and her proposals were accepted by the Board of Trustees. The students, with most of the expenses borne by the school and district, were able to see the "outside" world! Riding the train from Courtenay to Victoria; watching the Legislature in action; traveling to Calgary; and an extended visit to a glass factory, were two of the trips taken by her class. Quite a learning experience for many students who had never been far away from Cortes Island!

With the dedication and arrival of the ferry in 1969, all of our students were participants at Campbell River Junior Secondary School in the annual School District 372 "Sports Day". Prior to this, we had teachers and students from Read Island, Redonda Bay and Whaletown bus or boat to Smelt Bay for "Sports Day".

During the coldest months, and with rain or slight snow, our physical education activities were held in Manson's Hall. Relay races, learning the fundamentals of Square Dancing and volleyball were some of the activities undertaken. Too, the District sent over 6 to 8 educational films each month, and, sometimes, the classes in the school trooped over to the Hall to see appropriate films for their grade level.

A dedicated teacher from Rhodesia (Africa) arrived, was interviewed by me, and was immediately hired to specifically teach Mathematics and Science by grade level. Penny (Johnson) Hansen was a skillful teacher, and would brook no nonsense from her middle-grade to upper-grade students. Her arrival and dedication allowed me to have a few hours a week to supervise and direct the other teachers at the school, plus to do my paperwork as an administrator.

As the school grew, not only students but also in rooms during the 1970's, another teacher was hired. Alan Rye came from England, fully conversant with the grades he was assigned to and taught.

The school population was growing. Now to 125 pupils. A teacher-assistant was needed, especially for the library. Advertising for the position on the island brought no response. I then hired my wife, Irene Gardner, to become the teacher-aide and to be librarian for a few hours each week, doing this because she had previous experience in Culver City, California. Doreen Thompson took over that position during our last term on Cortes.

Lakeside visits were held in June, during the warmer weather. Sometimes it was only one class that went to swim in Hague Lake; then again, it was noon dismissal for an afternoon of picknicking and swimming for all. Only once did we go to the lake for ice-skating, but the cracks and noises made by the nearly 4-inch thick ice became a danger! So, we returned to school to finish our physical education there.

At Christmas-time, Manson's Hall was decorated by the students with all artistic forms pertaining to the season. Steady practices and full dedication to the season evident, and the final plays and songs were performed for parents and friends. This was all done on the next-to-last-day before Christmas vacation. I should mention that the final song, "Silent Night", being sung by all in attendance concluded a successful, entertaining program. The students then served coffee or punch and cookies.

In conclusion, I cannot forget the two custodians, Peral Graham and Ernie Guthrie. These two kept the school clean and tidy. Mr Guthrie, too, drove the school bus around the island each morning and afternoon to pick up or return children who lived quite a distance from school. There was only one afternoon, a Friday, that Mr. Guthrie had the 'flu, and really wasn't anxious to drive. I, with a Class 5 license, became a bus driver and delivered each child to their proper stop.

Epilogue:

I moved off the island in 1975; Mr Ed Piggott became the new principal. Eventually, being in Campbell River, and being elected to one office or another, I found myself running for the Presidency of the Campbell River District Teacher Association. My efforts during the 4 years I was in office found favour with most of the teachers and each year that I was up for re-election. After the 4th year, I decided to retire.