

Violet Herrewig in conversation with Susan Ellingsen and Doreen Thompson. At her home in Campbell River. January 2005.

I went to Cortes Island as a school teacher. My name then was Violet Jamieson, I was eighteen and single. Married women were not allowed to teach in those days. The local trustees were having a difficulties getting a teacher, as small places often did. There was an old chap there who was just putting in time until his retirement, Mr. Pollock was his name. The children weren't progressing the way they should. He used to lean against the blackboard and sleep, when I started teaching, in January of 1934, there was a greasy spot on the board where his head rested as he nodded off in front of the class. The trustees heard about me through Mike's father, Henry (Hank) Herrewig who was working at my father's logging camp on Redonda Island.

Hank Herrewig was actually an American but in those days borders didn't matter. One day he and a friend of his decided they were going to Canada so they just walked over, made their way to BC. He worked awhile for Legerwood, a donkey manufacturer, and was sent up to Mary (Marina) Island to install a donkey engine. He met Mike's mother there and decided he wanted to stay. His friend returned to Wisconsin.

I arrived at Manson's Landing in time to begin the after-Christmas school term. I boarded at the "Big House" which was the old Manson house near the wharf. (It later became the "Lodge"). There was another large house down on the spit, it was lost in a storm off of Cape Mudge when they were moving it to Stag Bay on Hernando Island.

The community had built a little log schoolhouse at the dogwood tree (across from intersection of Beasley and Sutil Point Roads) in 1909. There were 10 or 12 students in grades one through eight. In 1937 Lillian Jeffery (who later became Mrs. Jack Parry), Thelma, Minerva, Lorne and Cal Campbell, George and Bill Hawkins, Rod Griffin, Frank Hayes, Fred Jeffery and Masuhara Matsimura were enrolled.

Masuhara was the nephew of Mr. and Mrs Nakasui who lived at what became known as "The Jap Ranch". Mrs. Nakasui did not speak English and didn't really become a part of the community, they had no children of their own so Nakasui (as he was called) imported his nephew from Japan to keep her company. They had an orchard and also grew strawberries to sell locally. When St. James church was built at Manson's the Ladies Guild proudly planted an oak tree to commemorate the occasion. Mr. Nakasui brought along, and planted, a maple tree. A symbol of the new country in which he lived. When WW2 started they were among the Japanese sent to internment camps in the interior and did not return to Manson's.

There was no central School Board, each school had its own Board consisting of three local trustees. During the years I taught there John Manson, Henry Herrewig, Ervine McKay, Fred Hawkins, Mr. Jeffery and Mr. Beasley served as the local Board.

I taught in the little log school for three and a half years, until I married Mike Herrewig in 1937.

Mike was a logger, we had a floathouse and moved wherever the work was. Our first child, Sharon, was born in 1938, Gail arrived in 1943 and Terry in 19---. We were in Whaletown Bay for a short while, Mike was working in VonDonop with Scotty McKenzie. Getting back and forth was difficult, there were no roads into VonDonop in those days so we moved the house up there. There were enough children in the logging camp to have a school so I returned to teaching, at first in an old blacksmith shop then in a building provided by the school district. It was brought in on a float and pulled ashore across the head of the inlet from the camp. I taught there for a couple of years then Bev Mathews took over.

We had to leave Von Donop when the children outgrew the school, so it was back to Manson's Landing where I had started out in 1934. It was now the early fifties. I taught at the "new" three-room school that had been built in my absence. It was on the same property as the log schoolhouse in which I had previously taught. The dogwood tree, planted by a Miss Lettice who had taught at the log school throughout the First World War years, was still there. Mr. Levey was the principal. Ray Miller was teaching in the intermediate room.

Gail joined Brownies and later was a Girl Guide. Joan Heaver, who was working with the Columbia Coast Mission, and Olga Hynek from Blind Creek (Cortes Bay) were the Guide leaders. Meetings were held at the little church/hall at Blind Creek. I joined both the Ladies Guild to St. James Church and the Women's Institute. I was more active with the Institute and was on its executive.

Christmas concerts were a big part of the school year. I remember Terry and Darlene Sharkey from Squirrel Cove learning to square dance for a concert.

Times had changed. The intervening years had seen a growth in population. The three-room school had an enrollment of close to fifty students in grades one through ten. Cars travelled on roads once used by John Manson's horse and buggy and the occasional vehicle. A school bus, driven by Ernie Guthrie, collected the children and took them to school. There were still schools at Whaletown and Squirrel Cove but they only went to grade eight, the older children were bussed to Manson's. Movies were shown at the community hall on Friday night. Television had arrived on the Island...Mike put an antenna up in a tree and we got Channel 12 from Bellingham. It was often pretty snowy but watchable. Lowes and Summers were operating the store and Lodge down at the landing and had opened a Coffee Shop where Mrs. Lowes served sandwiches and pie.

I taught in the three-room school until -----

Work took us away from Cortes in 19----. We moved to Campbell River for several years. When Mike retired it seemed to me that there was no longer any need to be in town. We moved, for the third time, back to Cortes. We bought a place near Hague Lake. Bought it from an old fellow who lived in a hollow stump. He had built the house we moved into, it had a cement bathtub. Believe me, it was not comfortable.

There had been many changes on the island. When we returned in 19-----there was a ferry, hydro, telephones. The biggest change, though, was in the people. There were a lot more of them, many were young people who had not grown up on the island, there were a lot of people that we didn't know. The Ellingsens were still there, the Hansen families and Peggy Newsham.

We had to leave the island in 19----, Mike had been diagnosed with angina and we felt we needed to be closer to medical services. We returned to Campbell River. Mike passed away in -----.