



RETIRED WOMEN TEACHERS OF ONTARIO ORGANISATION DES ENSEIGNANTES RETRAITEES DE L'ONTARIO

RENDEZVOUS BRANCH **Newsletter**
Issue 86 **September** **2020**

Provincial President **September 23, 2020**

Nancy Papiez

Good morning Branch Presidents,
The Covid-19 Pandemic has resulted in our living in a very unsettled time. We have recently heard on the news that surges of this illness are recurring now. Within the last few days, the Provincial government has increased restrictions on social gatherings in some areas. The future is uncertain and the safety of our members in RWTO/OERO is paramount! At the Board of Directors Meeting this past week, a Motion was Carried to cancel the 2021 Convention in Sault Ste. Marie. In its place, the Board of Directors will be creating a Virtual 2021 Convention. This year, we will have the time to expand the Virtual Convention to include a) an interactive Annual General Meeting whereby Resolutions can be discussed on Zoom and b) other elements outside of the AGM that will resemble our traditional Convention.

I would like to thank Convention Convenor Joyce Ratz and the Convention Committee for all of the planning and work that was completed in preparation for the 2021 Convention in Sault Ste. Marie. It is much appreciated!

In Caring and Sharing

Nancy Papiez
Provincial President 2020-21
Retired Women Teachers of Ontario Organisation des

enseignantes retraitées de l'Ontario
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Dear Branch Presidents,

There is a history of remuneration from Provincial, of varying amounts, being given to the Branches each year (e.g. for the 60th Anniversary of RWTO/OERO, towards charitable work).

For the past few years, it has been a grant for the 3-R's which stands for Recognition, Recruitment, and Retention. This grant was given to assist you with maintaining and increasing membership in your Branches.

I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors has once again passed a motion at our Board of Directors meeting last week to support the Branches with the sum of \$400.00 for the 3-R's. Linda Huffman, Executive Secretary -Treasurer will soon be sending the cheques for this grant to the Branch Treasurers.

Covid-19 has put a halt on the regular way of doing things and has undoubtedly put a strain on the Branches including a financial strain. A second motion was passed at the Board of Directors meeting last week that an additional one-time Special Grant of \$400.00 for Covid-19 related expenses be disbursed to each Branch effective immediately. Linda Huffman will be sending out these cheques to the Branch Treasurers separately from the 3-R cheques.

The Board of Directors is requesting that you use the grants this year to help out with expenses related to maintaining membership, staying connected and embracing technology during this Pandemic. I wish all of you the best during this challenging year!

Nancy 

PROVINCIAL UPDATE

Area 5 News

Judy Anderson Area 5 Director

RWTO PROVINCIAL Convention 2021

Delta Waterfront in Sault Ste. Marie

June 1, 2 & 3 2021

Cancelled

A Virtual Convention is being planned by the Provincial Board
Please contact Judy Anderson for details.

INSURANCE

I am planning a Zoom Lunch & Learn on Filling In Your Claim Form. This session will get you started on the path to sending in your expense information and then receiving a cheque. There will be opportunities to ask questions and get answers from our RWTO/OERO insurance experts.

If you are interested in participating in this session please email me and start gathering your receipts.

Recently members have cashed in on claims following broken bones and cataract surgery.

Judy Anderson
905-985-4257

Insurance Convenor
ukeladyjudy@gmail.com

RENDEZVOUS BRANCH

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was postponed. Issues have been dealt with as they arise. The Financial Report was approved and submitted to the Provincial Office.

We won a cash prize, the Barbara Bain Award, for increasing our membership more than any other small branch.

Milk Bag Mattress Makers

Come and learn to weave a milk bag mattress at Jean's home: 15 Jill Cres. Rsvp jeansauro@hotmail.com. Bring lunch & scissors and keep your distance around her long dining room table. The date will be determined soon. Email Jean if you are interested in trying this craft.

Squares to Blankets.

We will collect the squares you have been knitting and crocheting for this project at a later date. Doris Brownlie has extra yarn if you need it. You may email Doris if you have squares to drop off. jtbrownlie@idirect.com

Membership fees for RWTO/OERO will be sent to the Provincial office this week. Please pay DeHavilland. The Rendezvous Branch will meet for, "The Coffee is on Us", when it is safe to do so. Then we can enjoy a free coffee and plan some adventures.



This is the 86th issue of our Rendezvous RWTO newsletter. Find out what is happening here at Rendezvous and throughout the province. Judy

Jean's Jokes

Have you ever wondered why the sun lightens our hair but darkens our skin?

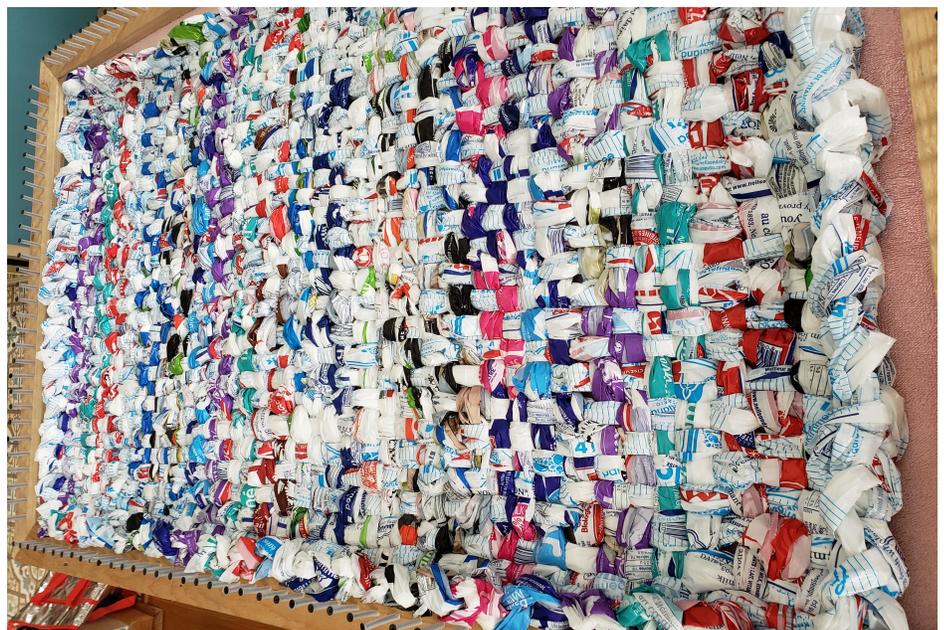
Why is abbreviated such a long word?

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

Thank you Patricia. Your contributions to Rendezvous Branch, your big smile and endless energy will be missed.

Here is a finished mat and the frame it was woven on.

The latest news about the milkbag mats. This week Doris delivered 6 mats and 4 cushions to the Salvation Army. We have made a total of 33 mats and have filled 27 cushions. Each mat takes 374 milk bags and a cushion takes at least 500 milk bags.



Rendezvous Branch
RWTO/OERO
Newsletter

September 2020

Hello Rendezvous Branch members,

I hope you have been enjoying the beautiful summer weather we have experienced this month. I walk every day through my neighbourhood and have made new friends as so many people are outside walking too. The little kids say 'Hi' and the dogs bark 'Hello'.

I put two letters from our Provincial President, Nancy Papiez, in this edition so you could read her messages as the Provincial Board continues working on committees and at Zoom meetings. We are very pleased to receive Provincial grants to help us connect with you during COVID-19 and to plan activities for now and the future when we can meet socially again.

Doris and Jean S. continue making milk bags mattresses and cushions and could use some help.

DeHavilland is trying to reach everyone as she collects your fees.

Jean FH wrote her story for this newsletter.

I have attended several Zoom meetings and do what I can from a distance.

Our theme for this newsletter is 'My First Day of School'. Please enjoy the stories and if you have your own story to tell please send it to me.

Caring and sharing,
Judy Anderson
ukeladyjudy@gmail.com

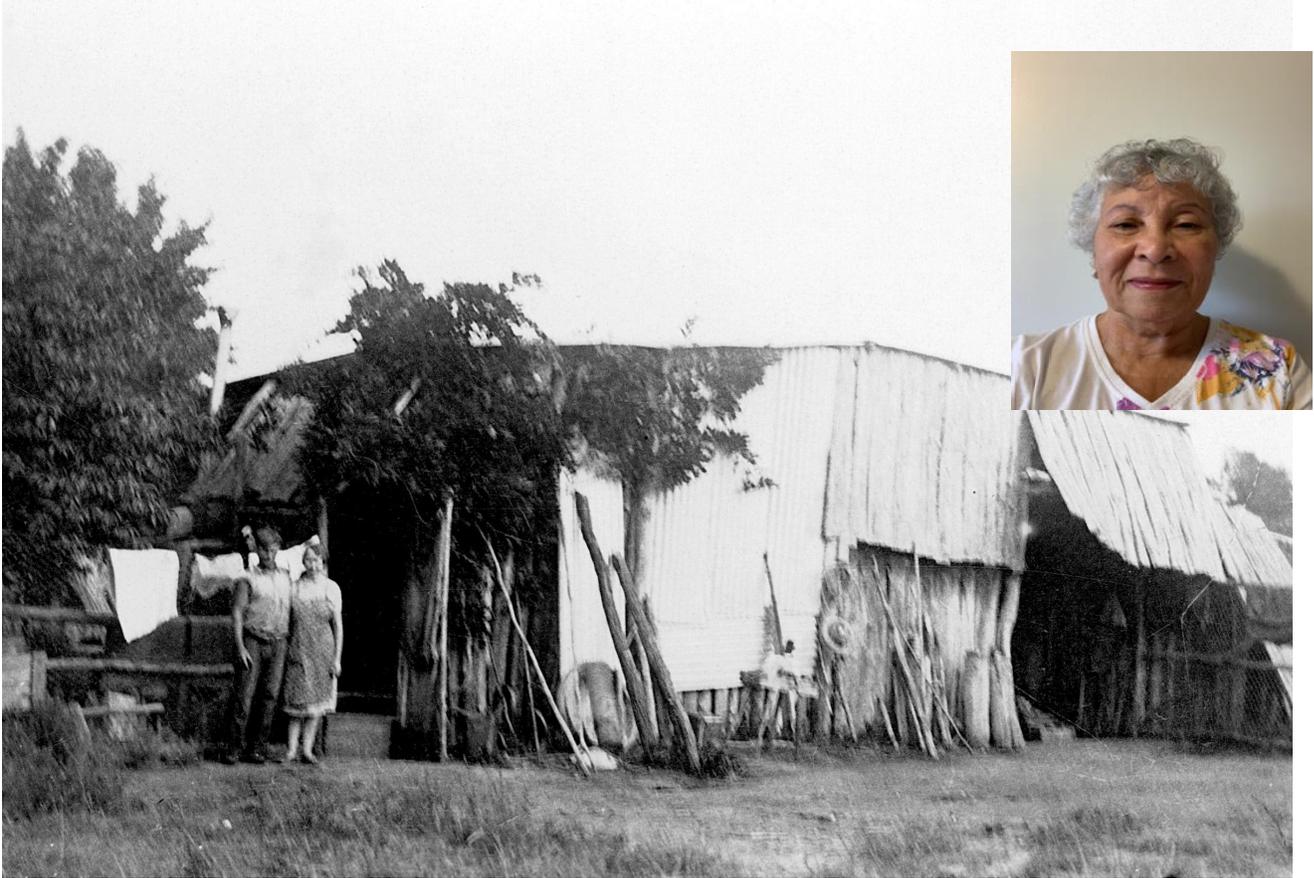
President
Rendezvous Branch RWTO/OERO
905-985-4257

RWTO/OERO Rendezvous Branch Report

September 28, 2020

The last RWTO/OERO Rendezvous Branch Report was published May 26, 2020. Since that time, the Coronavirus continues to rage around the globe and Ontario's Public Health experts are advising us to maintain physical-distancing and wear masks. These measures have impacted our organization's activities causing us to rethink how we model the task of Caring and Sharing.

Our Branch added two new members who transferred from the York North Branch which was dissolved on August 31st. We welcome Judith P and Norma B. Last week, member Patricia L. moved to be near her family in Northern Ontario and has transferred her membership to the Area 11 Branch in Sault Ste. Marie. We will miss her generous spirit and bubbly personality. These changes bring our membership count to 62, including four Life Members. Of the 58 members who are required to pay the annual fee by August 31st, all have paid except seven and five of these have been contacted. The total amount collected to date is \$2040. This amount and any other membership dues received will be mailed to the Provincial Treasurer early next month. In June, our Branch was one of those privileged to receive The Barbara Bain Membership Award of \$400 for adding eight new members to the Rendezvous Branch. The financial balance as of today is \$4586.31. This amount includes the Guaranteed Investment Certificate of \$1102.50. It will mature on November 2, 2020. Finally, we learned this week that the 65th Annual Convention scheduled to be held in Sault Ste. Marie in June 2021 will be a virtual convention due to COVID-19.



DeHavilland Brown Treasurer of Rendezvous Branch

Doris' mum and dad in front of the camp.

My Early School Days

Doris Brownlie

I am the daughter of a pioneer who spent my childhood with no electricity, no house, no car and no telephone. Six weeks before I was born my mother travelled by train for more than 200 miles to the nearest city of Toowoomba. On her return, my father had to meet us in the middle of the night to drive us by horse and cart the last 12 miles.

We lived in a camp which had tree trunks and hessian walls, a wooden floor, a wood fire burning stove, a big table and chairs, a couch made from hay bales covered by a blanket and a pantry cupboard. Our water supply was caught by the rain falling on the roof and running into a big tank. Drinking water came from a hessian water bag hanging in the doorway and food was kept in a cooler made from double wooden walls with holes bored in them. Between the walls was charcoal which was kept wet.

At night we would wash our feet, all in the same dish, then our father would piggy back us to the bedroom which was a separate building with iron walls and a door and small louver window. On Saturday it was bath day. My mother would warm up the water in a copper and we all took our turn in the big tub on the floor of the camp.

On Sunday we would all climb into the cart and our wonderful horse, Laddie, would take us to church which was 3 miles away, in the middle of the valley called Downfall Creek. Our one teacher school was beside the church. I started school, riding on the back of my brother's bike until I got a bike of my own. Other children came on horses or horse and buggy. When my sister started it was my turn to carry her on my bike. In later years she rode a horse. She sometimes persuaded me to ride a horse also. One morning a neighbour's son came up behind us and frightened the horses who bolted out from under us. My horse was quite tall so I dislocated a shoulder and hurt my back. A neighbour had to take me 30 miles to the doctor in his old Ford car. In 2013, I returned to the district for the centennial of the development that same person came up and apologized to me for frightening the horses. I was stunned! Of course I forgave him. He was now in his seventies.

On some days it was quite an adventure to ride to school. One day we killed a small snake and put it on an ant hill. In the afternoon the snake was nothing but a skeleton. On Spring days the magpies would swoop and hit us on the hat while protecting their young. The number of children enrolled ranged from 21 to 27. Enrolment was every second year so I had to start Grade 1 before my 5th birthday. I was sure the teacher did not like me because we had to share books and she never gave me the book. I was left handed and she made me write with the right hand. I started in a class of 6 but, by the time I reached Grade 7 there were only 2 of us. The others had all quit to work on the farm.

When I was 7 my brother and I arrived at home to be met by a note from our mother which said, "Grab a bag and wet it in a bucket and come and help us fight the fire." We could see the fire in the woods near our camp. Thankfully, with the help from the whole family, we got it under control.

Another childhood memory was a locust plague. We could see and hear them as they progressed across the field buzzing fearfully, leaving no blades of grass and trees stripped of leaves behind them.

When I was 7 my mother took my brother and me back to the city where I was born to take us to the dentist. It was a 200 mile journey on a dirty coal burning train. I lost my hat when I put my head out the window. The city was noisy and frightening and my first visit to the dentist was painful.

On the whole, being at a one teacher school was a pleasant experience. The teacher introduced us to the Easter bunny by organizing an Easter egg hunt in the school grounds. She read to us Winnie the Pooh. One day we would not go into school until she told us her second name. It was a real standoff until my dear friend, Viola, persuaded us to go inside. Just before we left in the afternoon the teacher said, "By the way, my second name is Elfrieda!" My dear friend, Viola, died at the age of 18 from leukemia .

In Grade 7 I stayed behind to be tutored by my teacher for a government exam. If I passed the government would pay for me to attend boarding school because the nearest high school was 30 miles away. One day I came home telling my father that I got 40% for my math test. He said that I probably would have to stay on the farm. That gave me the incentive to really study. I passed the exam so, at the tender age of 11 my mother took

me to be enrolled in a boarding school 360 miles from home. I was so homesick! Since then, I have been home only for holidays , at most, 3 times a year.

My First Day of Teaching – September 8, 1959

Jean Franklin Hancher

My first day of teaching is somewhat blurred in my memory by the journey I took to reach my first school. It began with a road trip. A very long one! Four days long! Driving to my first school was a big part of my transformation from London Teachers' College graduate to brand new, first year teacher. What a transformation in both geographic distance and emotional maturity!

The road trip saw me leaving my parents' home in St. Thomas, heading out to Dryden in remote north-western Ontario, driving a very new, blue Volkswagen "bug". The car purchase was my father's idea, partly I think because my parents wanted to discourage me from wasting my hard-earned summer job money on flying lessons. But from my vantage point this many years later, I believe they wanted me to have the freedom to explore the north around Dryden once I arrived, which if I had taken a train, I would not have been able to do. As it turned out, my VW made it possible for me within a couple of years to make the territory between Winnipeg and Port Arthur/ Fort William (as Thunder Bay was then) my own. I had my mother's genes: I was an explorer!

The route for my drive to Dryden had been much discussed and planned between my father and me, with my Mom just occasionally injecting, "You pay attention to what your Dad is saying, Jean" when she caught me rolling my eyes at some of his suggestions. What he made a case for was that my route be almost entirely through the United States. He convinced me that it was the safest way for a young woman to go, given the lengthy distance between St. Thomas and Dryden, over a thousand miles no matter what route I took. In my mind, the Trans Canada Highway was the more logical route and would take me through many towns whose names were familiar only because I heard them recited on CBC Radio in weather reports. Unofficially starting at North Bay, Highway 11 would go north and west through New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Longlac, Geraldton, Nipigon before finally reaching Port Arthur/Fort William, - which still left me five hours east of Dryden in the next time zone. A rather ominous fact, clearly marked on road maps of the time, noted that there was no fuel for sale for the approximately 300 mile stretch between Hearst and Longlac. My father pointed out that my VW did not have a fuel gauge per se, and this was not territory where a twenty-year old, inexperienced female driver wanted to find herself out of fuel. My bravado was subdued by that scenario. His other reason for me to choose the American route was that clearly there were large towns/ small cities along the potential route which would surely mean there would be "hotels" where I could safely lodge at the end of the day, as opposed to "motels" which would probably be less secure. My parents' preference for hotels rather than motels was predicated on their limited experience of staying in city hotels having a high degree of security features, whereas motels, often on the outskirts of towns usually had no internal security and a single door facing outward to the street or parking lot. Even I had to admit that motels did not seem very safe for a woman traveling alone. I was fairly easily convinced by the safety issues to choose the route through the United States on all the points my Dad raised. This meant that the first leg of my journey would take me west to cross the Canada/USA border at Sarnia.

As it happened that year, the first day of school, traditionally the day after Labour Day, was on Tuesday, September 8, just as it would have been this year had it not been for the COVID-19 impact. So it was settled that I would leave St. Thomas a week before school started to give me about 4 days of driving to reach Dryden, thus leaving about three days to find a boarding place and prepare my classroom. I knew no one in Dryden, and only had the written letters from the Supervising Principal who had hired me on "hiring day" at my teachers' college earlier in the Spring, and a copy of the signed contract forwarded to me by the Secretary of the Dryden Board of Education. Additionally, one female member of the Dryden Board had also reached out to me via a friendly welcoming letter, offering to help me look for accommodation once I arrived. I was grateful for her promised intervention. Thus I chose Tuesday, September 1st as the auspicious day to back my blue VW out the driveway of my parents' home on Wellington Street, and wave goodbye to my mother.

My father had already left the house to begin his day's work at his B.A. service station on Talbot Street. He had indicated I should come by, ostensibly so he could give my gas tank its last free fill-up. I was a bit resistant when he asked me to wait a few extra minutes because I knew leaving him was going to be emotional and I didn't want to prolong this stop lest my brave face betray my quailing heart. However I waited several minutes until a fellow showed up with a parcel for my Dad, who then came over to where I had moved my car to be out of the way of the gas pumps. To my great surprise, my father presented me with a small case from a local jeweler (a regular customer at my Dad's station) which contained a dainty gold wristwatch. My father had never given me such an expensive, grown-up present before! As my Dad fastened it around my wrist and kissed me on the cheek, wishing me a safe trip as he said goodbye, there was no further reason to linger. Although, at that moment, my strongest desire was to stay where I knew I was loved and appreciated.

I'm sure the tears started rolling down my cheeks before I was a block away from my father's garage. And they grew into convulsive sobs that I couldn't control. I remember that I kept asking myself: why did I ever think it was a good idea to go so far away from home to teach school? The crying persisted in waves of intensity, subsiding at times when I had to make directional decisions as I drove, but roiling up again as I noticed how lonely I was as I got further and further away from home. I distinctly remember feeling very sodden and bedraggled about two hours later when I pulled up to the Customs kiosk as I crossed the bridge from Sarnia to Port Huron, Michigan. I was aware that the officer scrutinized my tear-stained face as he asked me where I was going, and how long I would be in the United States. I'm sure he could see that I was sniffing and holding back tears as I gave him my truthful answers. I'm sure I did not look like the confident teacher I hoped to become by the next Tuesday. I think I even momentarily hoped he would detain me and send me back to Canada. But no such luck. He waved me across the border, and inevitably, at that point there was no turning back. I was committed to reach Dryden and begin my first day of teaching.

Somehow, the tears stopped. This was the first time I had driven in a foreign country. I had to watch for new highway numbers, and place names on overhead signs. Unfamiliar names of towns forced me to scrutinize my map and my journey plan. My Dad and I had carefully chosen towns/cities for my overnight stops for the remainder of the trip that would allow me to fairly evenly divide the overall length of the trip into manageable daily segments. My father realized, even if I didn't, that I needed to pace myself and not get too tired. This first leg was a relatively easy one because of my late start in the morning, and not having built up a driving stamina yet. Until this trip, the furthest distance I had driven was from St. Thomas to Toronto, about 120 miles. The destination town for that first night was St. Ignace, on the other side of the Mackinac Bridge, the relatively new, huge suspension bridge that spanned the Mackinac Straits which linked Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, and divided the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of Michigan. My father's eyes glowed as he reminded me that I would be the first one in our family to actually see and cross the bridge only finished five years earlier. It did turn out to be a touristy highlight of my trip, notwithstanding crossing it was a fear I had to conquer. My stomach always did flip-flops when my parents drove us to Grandma Soper's place and we crossed the big iron bridge which spanned a large creek. For me, driving my own car over that lengthy bridge high over the

Mackinac Straits, was almost traumatic. But later that evening, settled in the only hotel I could find in the town, I looked out at the shimmering outline of the bridge across the lake water, and smiled to myself. I did it! The next two whole days of driving became tedious. Scenery consisting of bush and lakes flashed by me, as did the towns and villages, but certainly no big cities. My lodging the second night was again in a small town hotel, the only one I could find. I almost went against my parents' dictum to stay in a hotel because it would be safer. I sensed the moment I approached the dingy hotel desk that this was not the kind of hotel that my parents had in mind. I could smell it: this was the town's most popular beer parlour. Loud male voices assailed me from the beverage room as I checked in. As it became later and darker, the voice noises got louder. Later that evening, the sound of heavy boots tramping up and down the hallway made me uneasy. At one point, someone stopped and twisted the doorknob, and then a fist pounded on the door itself. A male voice hollered "Let me in – it's Jim". Thoroughly frightened, I actually moved a dresser in front of my door for protection. I don't remember there being a telephone in my room. Certainly, 1959 was years before the invention of cell phones. Somehow I fell asleep. By morning when I awoke, the hotel was ghostly quiet. In later years when I reminisced this trip with my parents, I teased them mercilessly about what a dangerous situation they put me in by insisting on hotels. At the time I didn't even think about the likely fire trap it would have been with a dresser blocking my door. It could have been even worse than I thought at the time!

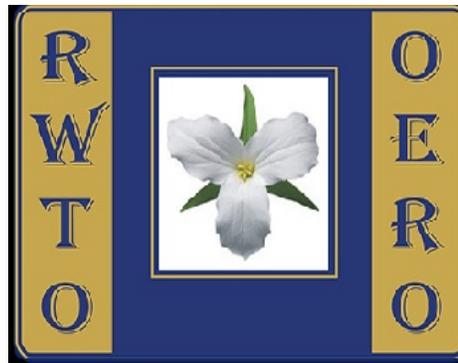
By the third day, my route through Michigan on the south side of Lake Superior took me through Wisconsin to the state of Minnesota. I set my sights on reaching International Falls where I would cross back into Canada at Fort Frances. A nephew of my mother's (her only brother's son) lived there, and it was my mother's wish that I stay overnight with his family. I'm sure she wrote to them ahead of time to confirm that I would be welcome, and I was. But their family members were almost strangers to me. My cousin was considerably older than me, and a doctor, so if anything, the feeling of homesickness was setting in. I knew my Mom would enjoy visiting them much more than I did. I was really shy. I do remember my cousin's wife's younger brother took me to a movie that evening. As I recall, he was new in town and going to be teaching in the high school there. We didn't have much in common. I was relieved to be moving on early the next morning.

Fort Frances is south-west of Dryden. The next day, now on the final leg of my trip, I was flustered when after only a couple of hours of driving, I reached the "junction" of Highway 71 (the one I was driving north on) to where it intersected with Highway 17, the Trans Canada Highway. All of a sudden I knew I was only a few hours away from Dryden, but I wasn't ready yet to arrive there and start making decisions. On a whim, I turned left at the "junction" and drove about twenty miles west into Kenora. I had heard of the town and I just wanted to see it before I turned my sights on the final leg to Dryden. The highway that year was heavily under construction (as it would be for years to come), so driving conditions were challenging. But I had to concede the scenery was startlingly rugged and beautiful: huge rock cuts, sparkling lakes and green forests that stretched as far as the eye could see. This was the northland that geography books told me I would find. For about ninety miles, I admired the chiseled beauty of the rock formations through which the highway wound, and then the terrain slowly turned into agricultural farm land. And then, I could see plumes of smoke on the horizon and I knew I had arrived at Dryden. I could also smell the notorious sulfur smell of a kraft paper mill. Events happened quickly. The first downtown hotel I tried to get a room in had no vacancy, and the desk clerk jabbed his finger in the air to indicate direction, and he sent me to the Riverview Lodge. Nestled on the bank of the Wabigoon River, and overlooking the paper mill, it was the premier, gracious residential hotel and banquet hall in town. To this day, I sometimes wonder whose formally dressed wedding party was coming down the main steps to the parking lot, as I – thoroughly rumped after four days of driving, - carried my overnight case up the steps, causing the wedding party to flow around me. I stayed there comfortably for the next three nights until the trustee, Evelyn McKen, helped me locate a shared apartment in the upstairs of a house with a young female high school teacher also new to Dryden. The whole house had been rented by yet another new to Dryden teacher: Shirley Thompson, a single mother with two young boys. An experienced teacher, she would be teaching grade one at Albert Street School, a Kindergarten to grade 6 school where I was assigned a grade 3 class. I spent much of Saturday, Sunday and Labour Day Monday meeting my teacher colleagues and

preparing for my class. All the teachers were women, including the Principal, and they were exceedingly friendly and helpful. “Streaming” was the operative method for delivering appropriate programs to children at that time. Two other senior teachers had the As, Bs, and Cs: the bulk of the grade 3 students. I, as the new, young, inexperienced teacher was assigned the Ds and Es. Their somewhat apologetic explanation to me about why I was given this motley group was that Mrs Ferguson, an experienced teacher was supposed to get them, but she became pregnant. There was no maternity leave in those days, so she resigned.

After three days of preparation and settling in with my new house-mates, my first day of teaching had arrived. All I remember about that first day is the sound of the hand-bell ringing at 9 o'clock, and the sound of many children's feet climbing up two flights of beautiful wide wooden steps to reach the second floor where my classroom was. Inside the classroom, I was so conscious of 28 pairs of eyes trained on me attentively. I never felt so impotent in all my life! Fortunately the feeling didn't last long. I was prepared. I know we did the formalities of Opening Exercises which would have consisted of singing God Save the Queen, reciting The Lord's Prayer, and I read a bible story. After that, in what order I don't remember, but I'm sure there was reading, writing and arithmetic. I suddenly realized I was in my element. After all those years when we played school and I was the teacher: now I was playing school in real time! I was the real teacher and it felt good.

My biggest concern that first day was how to fill in the afternoon. In all my earlier school years in public school, the first day had only been half a day long. School always finished on the first day at noon. I think it was so the parents could take us to buy school supplies. But in Dryden, everything was supplied so we put in a full day until 4 pm. I honestly don't remember what I filled the afternoon program with, but I was already aware that I had inherited several children who were barely reading. I could see that I had work to do!



But already, they were “my children”. And I think the affection was mostly mutual. One of the boys brought me my first (of many over the years) partridge tail – a beautiful fan of soft mottled grey and brown feathers. And one of the girls, whose attention span I had already noted was about three seconds, told me she really liked my “potato heels”. (“Squash heels” on women's dress shoes were fashionable that year.) The other 26 children were probably more retiring, but many smiled as they went out the door and told me they would see me tomorrow.

My first day of teaching wasn't brilliant, and I wasn't particularly creative, but I could tell that it was the beginning of an interesting new life. How I wished my Mom and Dad could see me standing at the front of my

class. They would have been so proud of me. But, I confess that I was totally exhausted, and all I could think about was that there were still three more days before the first weekend! How would I ever find enough work to keep these children busy and learning!