



Mildred Seibel



Mildred was born on October 26, 1923, an only child and raised in Preston attending the original Preston Public School and then Preston High School at the end of Moore Street.

She says that she had always wanted to be a teacher because she had looked after little kids all the time. So, after graduating from high school, she attended Hamilton Normal School.

For the next three years, from 1942 to 1945, she taught at her first school, SS#2 Eramosa, a one room rural school with students ranging from Grades 1 to 8. She earned \$850 for her first year and paid \$5 per week for board.

The school was heated by two stoves. Fortunately, a grade 7 student became her "fireman". He passed her boarding house at 8:00 a.m. and had the school heated by 9:00 a.m. As you entered the lobby of her school you saw the woodbox in the middle flanked by a one-holer for the girls on the right hand side and on the left, the one-holer for the boys. There were no flush toilets in rural areas in the early 1940's. Also, there was no telephone at the school. If ever there was an accident she would have to send a student runner down the road to the nearest farm. Outdoors, there was no equipment for the students to use.

There were no teachers' meetings and she had no contact with other teachers in the area. In addition, she was not involved in the community. The only time she saw the parents was at her Christmas concert. She was lonely because she was all on her own and really couldn't go anywhere. That's why she always went home on the weekends.

During the winter, Senior girls made soup or hot chocolate to augment the students' lunches. The cost was funded by the board. Drinking water had to be hand pumped and stored in the school in a pail. The Grade 8 students had to write Ontario departmental exams at a Guelph school. The inspector came once a year, usually in May. But, you were considered to be a good teacher if you put on a good Christmas concert and if the Grade 8's passed their exams!

In the following years, Mildred taught at Baden Public School, Elizabeth Ziegler School and Alexandra School, all in Waterloo.

In 1973 she moved to Three Bridges School, a mile west of St. Jacobs. This was an all Mennonite school under the county board. Markham, Old Order, Old colony, David Martins, Mexican Mennonites and several other groups made up the student body. They all got along at school but had no contact outside of school. The parents thought their children would receive a better education at Three Bridges with qualified teachers rather than what they would receive at their one room parochial schools. In her first year, she had three grades - Grades 3, 4, and 5. This was perhaps the only school in the county with three grades in a classroom at that time. After that she always had a double intermediate grade.

In 1988 she retired. In an effort to get over the trauma of retirement, she arranged with the principal to volunteer for three mornings a week. Later she cut back to two mornings. Mildred chose to work with special needs students one on one as much as possible. In 1990 Mildred was presented with a wooden plaque to recognize her contribution as a community volunteer.

At present, Mildred is a widow with one son, Glen. She is an active member of Knox Church. Ironically she sends birthday, Christmas and Easter cards to the 80+ members. In addition, she has also worked with Estelle Fritz and Audrey Hertzberger on the Goodwill Committee of the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario

Mildred's is a life of service at home, at school and in the community and she continues in this role, well into her 90's.

