

I was born in Victoria and went to the following schools: Springridge, Girls' Central, Victoria High and Victoria College. At that time Victoria College was affiliated with U.B.C. I took my teachers training at the Normal School in Vancouver, there being no Normal School in Victoria at that time.

My father was born in Italy and my mother in Switzerland, and my father came to Canada in 1889 (through the United States to Victoria). He operated a grocery store. His uncles, the Counts Disuari, came to Canada in the 1850's and they left their home in Lombardi in northern Italy because they would not swear allegiance to the Austrian Government. That part of Italy was given to Austria at the time Napoleon Bonaparte wished to marry Maria Louisa (neice of Marie Antoinette), who was the Emperor's daughter. At the time they arrived, the BNA building on Douglas Street was under construction. Karlos, one of the uncles, came to Canada from San Francisco as there was no railroad in Canada. He landed in Esquimalt and had to walk to Victoria. On arrival in Victoria he heard hammering and went to see what was happening. This was the building on the BNA bank, located on what is now Johnson Street between Store Street and Government. He looked at the building and saw they were not doing it correctly. He was a stone mason and felt the stones should be cut properly. The boss of the project came over and Karlos explained what was wrong. The boss showed him the plans and Karlos said "Why don't you make a nice looking bank because Victoria is going to grow". He suggested they put columns in front and the boss asked him if he could do this. He said "yes" and was hired and put in charge of the making of these columns. He was paid a large sum for doing this work. He did building in Victoria but brought property in several different places. He bought property at the corner of Saanich Road and Douglas Street. He also had a store at Johnson and Store Street, and this is where my father came to work. Karlos told father he would take him to the wholesalers and he would sponsor father if he could not pay, but father did not need this.

There was just three of us in the family, my brother Alfred Louis, my sister Anita and myself. We really had a very happy childhood. We were always encouraged to bring our friends home and mother went to

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to a lot of trouble for the children. We wanted wagons to go down to the field to play with, so mother took two wheels off an old baby buggy, and made the wagon box with an old Sunlight soap box which was unpainted. Father got two smaller wheels and made a wagon. He was so particular, his wagon even had a small piece down the back so the wagon would not flip over. He painted the wagon a bright red but, would you believe it, mother's wagon was the favourite. They took us to Beacon Hill Park and later on to the Japanese Tea Gardens at the Gorge. There was a bear pit at Beacon Hill Park and this fascinated us.

We shopped at Ward's Store at the corner of North Park and Quadra Street. Three of the Ward ladies ran the store. There were toys, dry good, and general stores. We loved the dolls. 7 inch Bisque dolls were 10¢ each. We would spend a lot of time over the cases selecting a doll, and the store ladies never hurried us. We still have some of the little dolls.

When my teaching career started, my first post was at Satlum, five miles out of Duncan on the Cowichan Lake Road. This was a one-room school and I was paid directly by the government. One of my students from there still keeps in touch with me. She lives at Maple Bay. From there I went to the Bonaparte Valley School for just one year as it was quite isolated. In those days, schools were hard to get, there were more teachers than classes. I took Bonaparte because I thought it was in the Cariboo, and a friend of mine at Normal School told me how wonderful the Cariboo was. From there I went to Okanagan Landing. This was at the north end of Okanagan Lake near Vernon, and finally I got to the Cariboo. It was lonely country. I stayed there two years.

I went to Alexandria where the mountains to the east are so high they prevent the cold winds from coming down, so we did not get much wind. Even at 35°F below zero, it did not seem so cold. In the daytime if the sun was shining you just wore a thick woollen sweater. If the temperature went below -35°F, the school was closed. I had a cabin there, no telephone of course, so I would go to a neighbours to see how cold it was. I remember one morning going over to see if the temperature was going below -35°F that day, only to find out it was already -55°F.

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The school had no janitor, so I did the maintenance as well. In the evening I would lay the wood for the next day, and in the morning I would go over, light the fire, and scurry back to my cabin until the school warmed up. It was a scattered settlement, students coming for miles. We always had a Christmas concert and tree. In the holidays prior to Christmas I would come home to Victoria and purchase gifts for each child and mother at the 15¢ store. I gave each mother a fruit dish made of Carnival glass. You could buy nice things for very little in those days and I was making \$108 per month because the settlement was so isolated. The next year it was increased to \$114 per month. I used to buy meat from a neighbour for 3¢ per pound, whatever they were cutting up. Sacks of 100 lbs. of mixed vegetables were \$10 and they lasted me a long time. We bought our groceries at Soda Creek at the Chinese store or at Fraser's Store at Quenelle. This was before the PGE was built.

When the railway was being built, I took my class up to the railway. We met Mr. Percival who was the Engineer. He explained how the ties were laid and the running of the train and afterwards took us all over to the "camp on wheels". There they served us tea and apple pie. This was our only contact with the outside world.

There were mysteries up there. I remeber one day seeing a rig with a man, woman and boy going up the Cariboo Road. The man came back but no trace was ever found of the woman and boy. We pondered that for ever so long! Then there was a joke up there about Cariboo Bill's billy can. When a tree was little someone would place a billy can on its uppermost tip and when the tree grew up someone would point it out to a stranger and say that it was Cariboo Billy's billy can.

I did not look very strong and one day the government doctor came to examine the children. He asked me afterwards to send all the children out and then said to me "I want you to promise me you will take Blaud's pills to build you up". This same doctor made a call at Harper's Camp out of Williams Lake, when someone up there was ill. When he left Williams Lake he was perfectly sober, but when he arrived he was absolutely drunk. The person who drove him up in the rig could not understand how

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it happened, but found out after the doctor was put to bed that the doctor had a bottle with a long tube and a nipple attached to it and had been sucking at that when they thought his head was only nodding with the motion of the carriage.

Another story was about a telephone. They put the line up the Cariboo Road and my neighbour got a phone. Hers was three rings. Every one listened each time the phone rang; they all knew each others rings. One day when the PEG was going through the Superintendent wanted to get in touch with one of his colleagues at Williams Lake. He phoned from Quesnel to Williams Lake and said to his man "I would tell you more about this but so-and-so is listening in". A little voice came over the wire "Shut Up, I ain't".

When I left there I came to Gordon Head School for one year. There were mainly farms in the area at that time. The school was on Tyndall Avenue not far from Vantreights' farm and I taught Geoff Vantreights sister, Margaret. This school had two rooms, my first school with more than one room. On arrival at the school the Principal told me the former teacher had always supplied the Principal's lunch. I didn't know until 19 years afterwards when I met the former teacher, that this was not true. However, I never did take the Principal's lunch, and the Principal made my life miserable.

By November I was fed up so I went out to Royal Oak and told Mr. Cowper all my woes, and asked him for a transfer. I also told Mr. Hobbs who was Chairman of the School Board. He told me to sit tight and not say a word regardless of what happened. Somehow the Principal who taught the older children got wind of this and had the older children call me names. It was a most unhappy time of my life. At Christmas the Principal was transferred to Tolmie School to teach Grade 2.

I left Gordon Head School after one year and went to North Dairy and then to Prospect Lake. I taught at Prospect Lake School for fifteen happy years. One wonderful Grade 3 class at Prospect Lake contained Brian Oldfield, Neil DuVal, Kenneth Reid, Ewart Fraser, David Pillar, and Jim Oldfield. They took Grades 3 and 4 in one year. I also had

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poor Clarence Spotts, nephew of Bossy Spotts. He was not very bright. I taught all the Whiteheads and Pat Hoole also. Elizabeth Gaskell was there also, but she came later.

Things are much the same at Prospect Lake as they were then. A bit more built up perhaps.

We had Christmas concerts and a tree, of course, and some of the men in the area used to sneak in comical gifts for me, disguising their writing. I used to have the children make things for their mothers. One gift I recall was an apron made up from a white flour sack. I put transfers on them and each student, including the boys, embroidered them. Every year there was a different project. Those were happy days at Prospect Lake.

I used to have a little cottage at Prospect Lake and then I had our present home at 3308 Quadra Street built. It was built on part of the Tolmie Estate.

My sister taught school at both Quadra Primary and Cloverdale Schools, about 25 years in all.

We both live here on Quadra Stree.

Interviewed by Jo-Anne Morrison

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