

Memories of Connaught School

We all have memories of the 1940's but they are also about the neighbourhood, vacations, the war years and the recovery in the late 40's when the troops came back and rationing ended. It is hard to separate out school events from the whole part of growing up in urban Saskatchewan. So, for the last 60 odd years my days at Connaught were not front and centre in my thoughts. When I do think back on the 40's, there are a few significant happenings that come to mind.

- **Recess** was a big deal. It was a chance to get outside and play. During the winter it was ball hockey. Each grade made their own rink and there was lots of fun with a frozen tennis ball. I don't remember what the girls did, segregation was very evident. In the summer, it was baseball. Most of the boys had gloves and there was usually at least one ball and one bat. I was usually picked last for the team because of my skill in dropping the ball! I don't remember any grass on the school ground, only snow in the winter, mud in between seasons and clay and weeds in the summer.
- **Jam Pail Curling** was introduced to make sure that Saskatchewan would always have a Brier contender. The large jam pails were filled with concrete and a handle of sorts stuck in the top. Someone flooded and marked sheets of ice and we kids were taught the rudiments of the roaring game. I don't recall much roaring but I also don't recall us having brooms to sweep. Any success at curling would come much later in life because my jam cans normally ended up rolling on their sides.
- **Spring** seemed to take forever to arrive but when the snow started to melt, the boys got out their marbles while the girls got involved with the skipping season. It was my first experience gambling and learned that I was very risk averse when I lost my favourite marbles playing "keepsies".
- **Phys Ed** was so specialized that I remember there was a visiting teacher that would travel from school to school getting all the students in a sort of formation in the hallways and to the tunes emanating from the Victrola, would lead us in exercise.
- **Bullies** were in attendance but we managed to survive and I guess that it was just part of growing up.
- **Corporal** punishment was alive and well at Connaught. I must have upset Miss Parker in grade 6 and was hauled to the front of the class and administered a couple of strokes of the strap. This was terrible, I was more terrified of crying than the actual act itself. Either she was not very strong or I was because I don't recall any tears. The really bad kids went to the Principal's office for their strapping.

- **Ink** seemed to end up everywhere except on paper. There were no ball point pens and so we progressed from the large pencils to smaller pencils and then to pen and ink. We had ink wells on our desks that were filled with care and then we learned how to carefully dip our pens in the ink and then to carefully form letters on paper. Somehow ink ended up on clothes, desks, fingers and even on the tips of braids. I don't think that my penmanship was never very legible but it is equal to or better than my children's.
- **Blackboard Erasers** naturally accumulated a lot of chalk and some of us were detailed to gather them up and go into the depths of the school and hold them up to a vacuum. It was a big deal to get the responsibility of this task and get into places in the basement where students seldom went.
- **Movies** were few and far between but there were 16mm films. Of course the films often broke and needed splicing. A couple of us were taught the way to repair the film and wind it back onto the reels. This was another task that took place in the basement and on more than one occasion in our efforts to repair the films we ended up with having to make more splices than when we started. Obviously film repair is a lost art in this century.
- **Finger nail biting** seemed to be prevalent in our grade 6 class and Miss Parker did her best to rid us all of this habit. I think there was nail inspection each day and those that passed inspection got some kind of a star and those that failed were chastised and humiliated in front of all the class. Her method was probably not "politically correct" but it worked and I never took up nail biting again.
- **Miss Parker** features in a number of my memories of Connaught. On a somber note, on one occasion some of us had been given detention to write "I will not talk in class" 500 times. Sadly, our Principal, Mr. MacDiarmid (sp?) collapsed on the front steps of the school just below our class window. I think that he was a WWI veteran and had lost a leg. It was a very traumatic event for a 10 year old to see and unfortunately the memory is still with me.
- **Graduation** was held in the hallways of the school. I don't remember much of the ceremony but everyone was dressed in their best and either proud to be there or glad to be leaving Connaught. I played a euphonium solo and feared making a mistake in front of the huge audience. Anyway we dined on cold meat (Spam?) and potato salad, were entertained by classmates, and toasted the school. In 1950, there were 58 graduates and over the years I have met 13 of them in my travels. We spread out to different locations and have contributed in some way to the progress of our nation.

That ended my time at Connaught. I went on to Central Collegiate, Regina College and then I left Regina to join the RCAF and attended the Royal Military College in Kingston Ontario. I did return to visit my parents from time to time and even spent a tour in Dana, Saskatchewan while in the service. In the 1970's I was project manager of planning

study for the future of Regina Airport during my time with Transport Canada. Overall I kept in touch with the City and although I drove past the School many times I really did not think much about my time there. Most of my contacts with classmates have been from Central. Many of them looked for warmer climates and are here in British Columbia.

There were many that went before us and many that came after us at Connaught in its 100 year history and I believe that we all benefited from the experience. At our Graduation in 1950 we toasted the School, and in 2012 I would like to propose another toast "To Connaught".


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