

One Room School House

Contributor: Agnes Pike

Collector: Marie Marshall

Marie Marshall:

I'm here at Agnes Pike's, it's January 29th she's going to tell me a story about growing up in L'Anse au Diable and what else?

Agnes Pike:

And about my life ah...from the time I started school until I finished school at the age of sixteen.

Marie Marshall:

Okay, Agnes. Go ahead now.

Agnes Pike:

Well in those days, when I started school back in L'Anse au Diable there was about eight families. Seven or eight families in L'Anse au Diable and ...but we were a big family, we ah ... a family of twelve children. Right next door to us less than one hundred feet away, ah...Mr. and Mrs. Marshall had twelve.

So there was twenty four kids, right there or , you know. Now saying all that, some of them was young men and women because I was the seventh child in my family so I got brothers that's almost twelve years like...twelve years, thirteen years older than me and eleven years, because there was five boys and a girl older than myself.

I started school when I... at the age of six going to what we call Primer, and we had a one room school. And my teacher was...my first teacher, I ever went to was Ron O'Brien. And ah...you didn't have to have a teaching degree to teach school then but the thing was getting you in the school into some kind of learning.

I in 19 and 5119 and 50, I was ...I had a slate and ah...I remember spittin' on my slate to clean 'em lots of times. (laughs)

Marie Marshall:

Germes.

Agnes Pike:

And the teachers never ever said...the teacher never said 'well that's dirt, you should

have your water bottle', you know and ah...we think back now...we look back now at the things we done then and we wonder why we weren't more infected with flus and sickness but I think we had so much bacteria in our body, it would fight everything down.

Marie Marshall:

Yeah.

Agnes Pike:

And ah...and that's the way it was and nobody had a whole lot, it was a round pot bellied stove and ah...while we when we were in that little school, it wasn't very big it was probably, I'd say, no bigger then ...I have pictures of it here now, in some old slides. It was probably about fourteen or eighteen by twenty or twenty four, something another like that. And a round barrel stove into it. And every family took their turn in terms of heating the stove, heatin' the school ... their week...a week at a time of every family. And there was a couple of families especially in the winter time when we knew it was their turn we were going to be out of school because they had no wood. It was all green wood and it'd be so cold in the school when you'd go to it.

You'd be on one side and you'd be sittin' in your seat holding out your hand warming your hand on that side by the stove, and then you'd move over on the other side and hold...hold your other hand out. So you know, education then, I think the answer was having kids in the classroom of some kind. But the way we had to learn was so different from today's ah...ah... ways of education.

From there we moved to...when ... back in the late '50's or mid '50's we had a nice little school built and that was a fair size and it was kind of a little chapel as well into it, like where the priest use to come and have mass. So it ...the building then served two purposes, although it was still only a one room school but that was still up further on the embankment and it was, you know, it was, you know in those days, it was a popular building. It was a real modified building to what we were in then and ah...there was twelve and fourteen of us, fifteen and sixteen of us some times. I had different teachers, I had my brother for a while when I was in grade two, he ah...George and ah...he didn't stay very long. He only stayed one year, thank God, because he use to be really hard on me. I was...I think I was a little bit of case in school.

I remember him one evening chasing me home from school and I ah...I crawled right up under the head of the couch and he come and caught me by the leg and pulled me out and mom said to him 'what are you doing with her? What are you doing with her?' And he says, "she told me to kiss her ass and I..." anyway, he give me a trimmin' right there. And there was no such thing as getting away with it.

Marie Marshall:

No.

Agnes Pike:

And nobody couldn't interfere, that was the teacher. And that's the way it was you

know, and lots of times you held out your hands ...the day they call it abuse, but we held out our hands for the old strap 'til the old hands was blood red. And ah...but we respected those people and ah...I guess, like kids today we weren't always that easy either.

But I went from that to the school...the new school and coming all the way up through school, up until I was in ...finished my grade eight in L'Anse au Diable. I was taking grade nine and that's when the school the parish priest came in and closed down the school because he wanted to try to get a much larger school with classrooms in it here in West St. Modeste, but he didn't...he didn't do it right. We had no way of transportation even though in 19 and 58 the road come through to somewhat, but there wasn't hardly any ah...no roads, you know. There was no branch roads out to the little communities and all that kind of stuff that wasn't done until '59 and '60.

But in '59 then, I had... I was out of school for a full year and in '59 the summer of '59 I said to my mother, I said, 'I'm going to I think I'm going to school and go to West St. Modeste'. It was five miles, it was a one hours walk. I use to get up in the morning, ever morning, and I'd walk down to West. St. Modeste to go to school and I'd walk home in the evenings. And I did that for two months 'til then I stayed with a neighbor and I ah...helped out and I was here in school until the month of March. Ah...the middle of March, my mother came down and I wasn't feeling very well and she took me back home and ah...we walked back and ah...and I ended up in the hospital with Phenomena or something another because I had the flu and I wasn't looking after myself, I guess.

But Ithat year he came back to me and he said, 'you know, you'll go back to school again' and I said 'no, no I can't. I can't go back to school.' And he said something or other about a good teacher. And I said 'you know what, Father.....he was the parish priest...I said, 'Father you know what, education is no good without common sense'. And he called me crazy. But I learnt that all down through the years, they both go hand in hand. And that' how I found the school system.

Now I came out of school in 19 and 61...60 and ah...I learnt even though I wasn't in the classroom but I've always been a big reader and I read a lot of books, I read a lot of books and I was always really good at math.

And ... and from there I guess that's why being here in West St. Modeste, I met up with my partner who was Pat Pike and ah...Pat was older than I but one thing that myself and Pat had in common was, like I mean...we were two work-a-holics. We were hard workers. And ah...so I ended up marrying Pat in November of 19 and 61 and ah we had five children and we had 43 years together. And they haven't been too bad. It could've been a lot worst. We had our ups and downs but we had a lot of good times, we enjoyed life and ah...we got five children that's out there doing fairly well and ah right now I got nine grandchildren. So I think I done pretty good.

Marie Marshall:

(Laughs) That's my story and I'm sticking too it is it?

Thank you very much Agnes.