

School Days in Capstan Island

Collector: Gertie Fowler

Contributor: Alma Goudie

Gertie Fowler:

Today is March 25, 2009, and I'm here in L'Anse au Clair today with Alma Goudie and Alma is gonna talk with me today about her school days in Capstan Island. So would you like to share your memories with me Alma?

Alma Goudie:

Ah....Gertie, I don't mind talking about my school days.....

Gertie Fowler:

No.

Alma Goudie:

Because they were happy days, although it can't be compared to school.... the school that I went too can't be compared to the schools today.

Gertie Fowler:

No.

Alma Goudie:

But they were happy days perhaps because I didn't know any better then but ah.... and I looks back on 'em with fond memories.

It was only a one room school and it was ... but it was always well kept ah.... I guess it was ... it was built by free labor, the men of the community, and it was always kept clean and maintenance, you know, good...kep up really well and kep impeccably clean, the women of the of the community, they cleaned the school, like they cleaned their house.

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Alma Goudie:

You know, every week they had it cleaned and the desk and everything scrubbed down and it was impeccably clean..... and that was one.... that was one thing that I remember about it and, of course, the school was always, well heated although it was only the potbelly stove, the old fashioned potbelly stove, but ah... there... and again the men use

to take... every man in the community who had children going to school, he took a turn, supplying the wood for for a week.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

So.... and saw that the fire was lite in the morning and all... and plenty of wood around, plenty of wood there. So the school was always warm and comfortable, and ...and... and...ah... that part of it we... I enjoyed, cause the wood. And we were, I don't know, I enjoyed going to school, I enjoyed learning and I always tried to do my best... always.

And then at home, mommy was encouraged us, perhaps more then some people, but... because mommy had always had books around for us....

Gertie Fowler:

Sure

Alma Goudie:

.....you know, talked to us about how important it was to... to.... to get an education and things like that. Ah.... so I enjoyed school, immensely. (laughs) I was always eager to go to school.

Gertie Fowler:

Hmmm.

Alma Goudie :

Ah it seemed like, we always had a teacher, ah... and the ones that I remember are, Myrtle Barney, Mabel Davis, ah.... Sam Jones, Millie Bugden. Did I say Millie Bugden? Millie Bugden.

Gertie Fowler:

Nope.

Alma Goudie:

It seemed like Myrtle.... Myrtle... Myrtle Barney, you remember...

Gertie Fowler:

Yes.

Alma Goudie:

You know Myrtle Barney... it seemed like she had been there a couple of years and it was the same thing with Mable Davis. Seems like they were there, because that's the ones I remember most, in my ah.... early years like grade 3, 4, 5, and 6 like that.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

Yeah, 'cause that's the ones, I remember, those three. And ah... it was it was happy times, you knows perhaps we had our arguments and and...things around there, but it was always like a big happy family and I was like it seemed like we were always glad to go to school, especially in my... in those years, like grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Ah... then when we got to grade 9 the teacher that year, was Sam Jones, so... I don't know it was three or four of us that wrote exams that year. And I... I'm not going to mention him because I might not mention..... get it right.

But anyway, Winnie, and Henry and those Henry Fowler... Winnie Fowler.....

Gertie Fowler:

Yes.

Alma Goudie:

Winnie Fowler and Henry Fowler ...

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Alma Goudie:

Those in my age group and Mina, I think all of us were in grade 9 that year.

And then the next year, the year, I took grade 10; Grade 9 was 1950-51, and in 1951 – 52, the teacher was from over in White Bay.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh.....

Alma Goudie:

A Ropson, now because this little school was a all grade school, he di....he wouldn't do or he wasn't qualified to do the grade 9's, 10's, and 11's. So we had to go somewhere else or not go to school.

And I remember, I was really ...really put out about that...really disappointed about ... that I couldn't go to school, so I decided or I kept thinking about it... down in West St. Modeste because they had Olive O'Brien, for teaching down there then. And I knew Olive and Olive was interested in ... in ... especially in someone who wanted to learn... seemed like she was interested in.

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Alma Goudie:

So..... (laughs) we decided or I decided that I was going to go to West St. Modeste, now my mother and them...they didn't.....wasn't all together, you know, fond of that idea because for one thing, I had to go to see Father Tessiard, 'cause he had all to do with the schools and everything that happened in that school, well it had to go through Father Tessiard. There would be no good for me to go to....to...to...to ah..... the teacher.

Gertie Fowler:

No

Alma Goudie:

No good for me to go to Olive and tell Olive that I was going, but so anyway Mommy said you can go to West St. Modeste to school but she said "there's one thing" she said (laughs)...."you're gonna have to do, you're gonna have to go and talk to Father Tessiard yourself".

At first, I didn't know how I was going to do it, and I can't remember how it all turned out, but anyway, I guess, I went to Olive and told Olive that our.....'cause Olive knew that I

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Alma Goudie:

.....I wanted to go to school and anyway, she must have set up a meeting or for me to meet with Father Tessiard. But anyway, it turned out that poor old FatherFather Tessiard was right pleased that we... that I had come, hey.

Gertie Fowler:

He was eager to have ye?

Alma Goudie:

He was eager to have us.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Alma Goudie:

(laughs) So anyway, I started school and shortly after that then, three more of the people from Capstan Island like Henry and Mina and Winnie they they went down there to school so we we spent that year down to West St. Modeste, and it was fun.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah, I bet.

Alma Goudie:

We use to have to walk to school, like in the Fall and in the Springwe'd walk to school. We'd go down in the morning, walk down in the morning and walk back in the evening. And I'm not right..... quite sure of the...the...distance but I ...I would say it was two and half miles to three miles, and it wasn't a very good. It wasn't a very good path or road, we had to wear rubber boots 'cause.....

Gertie Fowler:

Oh so, did you ever get to go on the dogs then?

Alma Goudie:

Well sometimes, in the winter, ah because during the winter if the weather was bad, we'd stay down. We all had somewhere to stay, I stayed to Effie's and Will's place.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Alma Goudie:

But we all had a house, like where we use to go to eat our dinner in the Spring and the Fall. So when the winter weather got bad, or ah.... some nights, we would stay down, but if it was a nice day like today or if you know... we would walk...go home. And sometimes, we would catch a ride just on the dog team, there'd be somebody...

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. That'd be nice.

Alma Goudie:

.....down there you know, to get a ride up on the dog team. Well if not will we'd walk. (laughs). And so, it was great fun. (laughs)

Gertie Fowler:

So.... what about the books...your books and things, now, where?

Alma Goudie:

The books. I...I don't know... I think they came from Department of Education....

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

.....like they ordered them from Department of Education. And then there was exchange you know, youfrom someone who....who had books the year before....

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

.... and that wasn't very many, but I remember Mommy...for us... for me...she would have them come over from...from Savage Cove, from her brother and sisters...

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Alma Goudie:

...from her brothers and sisters over there, hey? And ah... the books was the same in the Roman Catholic school when you got up to grade 9, 10, and 11 when you were taking...writing public exams, their books was the same. I don't think there was much difference in their books anyway.....

Gertie Fowler:

No

Alma Goudie:

...you know, And ah...we ...we...we had a grand time. 'Cause they use to have have their prayers and that and we'd....we'd....we'd you know...we'd take part in their prayers...

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Alma Goudie:

...and their catechism and all that, so it was great. I enjoyed it.

And then inthat was that year, the next year '52 and '53, I hope I get my dates right, '52, '53, I took grade eleven in Capstan Island. Steward ...Steward Fowler was there then, so ah... we did...I did grade eleven there and after grade eleven, that spring I went to ah.....they use to have what they call summer school and ah it was a six week course for anyone who was going into the....teaching.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh, right.

Alma Goudie:

This was a six week course, so I ah... went to summer school that year, that summer and ah...I enjoyed that.

Gertie Fowler:

So how did you get to summer school, Alma, from here?

Alma Goudie:

Ah...well see, the coastal boats, there was the Springdale, and the Northern Ranger, I think. And so you'd go from West St. Modeste...we had to go to West St. Modeste to get

the boat and you go I went from West St. Modeste to Corner Brook and then, I had an aunt in Corner Brook, so I stayed there for a night or two and then you'd get on the train and go to St. John's.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

And... but ah...ah... I don't know if I had... I think, I didn't know much about the city and about you knows, but I think there was a Violet... Violet Fowler was in St. John's that year or she use to work in there. So I think that it was Violet that helped me around.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Alma Goudie:

Okay. Helped me get around because I stayed, I didn't stay with Violet but I stayed up on Craig Miller Avenue and ...with...a ...woman, Mrs. Peddle. But I think it was Violet that helped me through, like going to church and where the school was

Gertie Fowler:

Okay. Yes.... showing you around.

Alma Goudie:

...yes, and then there was other girls, there was another girl boarding there that was going to summer school, too. She was from ah...I don't know where she was Ah... Ca...Cow Head? ... anyway, her name was Liza, Liza House. Ah... not sure where she was from, but somewhere over there on the Northern Peninsula.

So she stayed in the house with me, so you know, we got along. And then at the same summer Faye Brophy, Faye or Faith they calls her now....

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

....she was in there.

Gertie Fowler:

Was she?

Alma Goudie:

Yeah.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Alma Goudie:

Yeah, same summer and so we got....you know, we got... well, same as it is today, you got along.

Gertie Fowler:

Made Friends.

Alma Goudie :

Made friends.

Gertie Fowler:

So what did you think of leaving here now on the coast, now and then goin' to St. John's? What kind of changes?

Alma Goudie:

Yeah, there was a lot a lot of different changes, because I.... I had never seen a motor car. I had never seen a car or a truck....

Gertie Fowler:

No.

Alma Goudie:

...up to that time, no. And I remember when steaming in the Harbor in Corner Brook and seeing the cars and they...they...they (laughs) were just like little, miniature cars, hey. Toy cars moving up.

Gertie Fowler:

Sure. So do you remember now, gettin' aboard the first one? The first car or anything?

Alma Goudie:

Ah...yes, but those...yes but ... see you think it would be a big...you know, shock or....surprise or what.....but it didn't, see, things like that comes to you right.....

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah, naturally.

Alma Goudie:

..... natural. Yeah. Comes natural. Yeah. Yeah. Well I remember...well, like I said, my aunt, I stayed at with my aunt ...well they came down to the boat and they had their car so their...their car was the first car, that I had.

Gertie Fowler:

So what about different foods, then, ah...ah... Alma?

Alma Goudie:

Yeah

Gertie Fowler:

....to the restaurants or anything like that?

Alma Goudie:

Hmmmm..hmmm.

Gertie Fowler:

'Cause I mean there was no restaurants around here

Alma Goudie:

No.

Gertie Fowler:

....or anything.

Alma Goudie:

...no restaurants around here. We didn't go to the restaurant very much.

Gertie Fowler:

No

Alma Goudie:

No, we didn't go. I might have went... me and Violet might have call in and had an ice cream or something, like that in a ...

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah...

Alma Goudie:

....it wasn't that much....

Gertie Fowler:

That was a big treat, then.

Alma Goudie:

That was a big treat. But ah... we didn't go to restaurants in St. John's.

Gertie Fowler:

No?

Alma Goudie:

No, not a lot. Ah.....?

Gertie Fowler:

Couldn't afford the...???

Alma Goudie:

No, you couldn't afford, nope. But I did find the foods different, because even there to Mrs. Peddle's, ah... it was different foods that they ate, was different from 'cause we eat a lot of fish, of course.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah, that's true.

Alma Goudie:

Ah... well she use to have fish too sometimes, but ah...I think the most thing in the food that I ... was the bakers.... the sliced baker's bread.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah, why?

Alma Goudie:

To get up in the morning and she'd do up a whole plate full of this. (laughs)

Gertie Fowler:

Baker's bread....did you like it?

Alma Goudie:

Oh, I loved it. Now that's the most thing I I remembers, that I was this baker's bread in morning, it seemed like I use to long for breakfast to come. (laughs)

Gertie Fowler:

(laughs) Is that right?

Alma Goudie:

Yeah, but that was one thing that sticks in me mind was this was this ...

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Alma Goudie:

.. this slicedsliced bakers bread.

Gertie Fowler:

So was it anything else now, you want to add to your ah.....

Alma Goudie:

No, not really but ah... anyway, I went to summer school that summer and I came back to Green Island Brook, that's where I taught that winter and then in ah....ah...I....I knew

that I wanted to go to University...I ..I... so the years following that, I tried to upgrade myself because although, I had passed exams, I had passed...I didn't have ...my marks were not all that high.

Gertie Fowler:

Hmmm.

Alma Goudie:

And so you had to have a certain average to get in University, so I did a lot of upgrading.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Alma Goudie:

To get in andsomething else you needed that I didn't have, ah...was a foreign language, like Latin or French, that's what they required, well I suppose you could have Spanish or anything but anyway the most one that Newfoundlanders did was this Latin or French. So I did French, down with ah...Olive, 'cause Olive could teach French, but then see when I went to St. John's, I had to ...that wasn't enough, I only had grade 10 French. So, I had to... in order to get in University, I had to upgrade, in a foreign language so. I was a couple of summers at that.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Alma Goudie:

But then in 1958, I went in and I was in there all that summer, doing French and upgrading my history. I had to...I had to have another extra subject and I went to... all that summer in summer school, then in September I went in University and all there... all that winter and then the next winter, I ah....the next September I came down to L'Anse au Loup.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh, Okay.

Alma Goudie:

That's the first place I taught at, after I had university, was L'Anse au Loup.

Gertie Fowler:

So how long did you stay down there?

Alma Goudie:

I was only down to L'Anse au Loup, one year. Ah... Mr. Comdon, you remember Mr. Comdon, he worked with Ed Cumberford?

Gertie Fowler:

No

Alma Goudie:

You can't remember? Well he was principle there.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Alma Goudie:

In L'Anse au Loup. It was only a two room school, the old school, and he was principle, I was only down there one year. I enjoyed that.

Gertie Fowler:

So where did you go from that?

Alma Goudie:

Ah...up to L'Anse au Clair. Yeah, L'Anse au Clair. Then I thought most of the years in L'Anse au Clair.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay, then the rest ah... until you.....

Alma Goudie:

I was sorry, that I didn't go back to University, I regrets that. But I did do....I did do some off campus courses, but I didn't really get my second grade. 'Cause that's how that use to go you know...

Gertie Fowler:

...then...

Alma Goudie:

...went away to university fer first year and that was your first grade and then the second year was your second grade, so ah....I did some off campus courses but I didn't get my second grade but I regrets that.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. Not to late yet, you know.

Alma Goudie:

No.

Gertie Fowler:

You can still do it.

Alma Goudie:

I don't think Gertie, my head is too thick.

Gertie and Alma:

(laughs)

Gertie Fowler:

Well I'd like to thank you for your memories, then Alma, they were beautiful.