

Underwood didn't need a strap to keep students in line

Student said teacher maintained law and order

by Tracey Doerr
Shoreline News

If you natter away at the children all the time they won't listen to you, blow your top once in a while and they'll take you seriously.

That's what School Inspector Mr. Game told a young, teenage teacher one day back in the late 1940's and it turned out to be good advice.

Audrey Underwood, an 18-year-old teacher at School Section #5 Saugeen from 1947 to 1950, said she didn't like using the strap and can recall only one time when she did. It wasn't something she approved of, nor

was proud of.

If ever there came a day when she could no longer control the children without using the strap, that would be the day she would leave the teaching profession.

Former student, Bruce Township Reeve Ron Andrews, said he's always respected and admired Underwood for her ability to teach eight grades and keep them in control.

"She could really maintain law and order and she didn't need to give the strap," said Andrew.

Underwood said the students weren't afraid of her but they knew what they could and

couldn't get away with.

"We had fun but they knew their limits and they knew my limits," said Underwood.

Teaching at S.S. #5 Saugeen was Underwood's first teaching position.

Just after the war was over teachers were very scarce. Underwood was just out of high school at the time and proceeded to take summer courses to obtain her teacher's certificate.

After the first session of summer courses Underwood immediately began teaching. The next summer she went back to summer school and again in September, came back to the classroom.

Underwood said summer school "was a breeze."

Underwood was known for her love of music. Andrews recalls playing the guitar for Christmas concerts.

He said he wasn't very good at it but since Underwood was so "musically inclined" she helped him wing it.

"People from far and wide would come and watch," said Andrews. They even charged admission.

The school music teacher loved to visit S.S. #5 because he knew the students practiced with Underwood when he wasn't around. During one visit the students impressed him when they sang a song in three parts.

Underwood also taught the children to square dance.

Usually twice a year the school inspector came to call. He sat in the classroom and observed and evaluated the teacher's work.

Underwood admits to being slightly nervous during inspec-

tions but because Mr. Game was such "a really nice man," it made her feel more at ease.

Mr. Game was more than an inspector to S.S. #5. Underwood said the tales of his extensive travels were often told to the students during his visits.

Andrews said the teachers were critiqued "pretty seriously" on their work. He said a bad evaluation could cost a teacher their career.

Andrews said at one time he contemplated the idea of being a teacher himself. He doesn't recall what changed his mind but he does remember that teachers weren't paid very well in those days.

Underwood said she was paid approximately \$900 a year which she thinks was in par with other salaries at that time. Since she didn't have a car she had to move to Saugeen Township where she boarded and walked a mile to school.

Underwood had experienced the operation of a one-room school house herself while she was a student.

When her role changed from student to teacher she said her time table was always full.

Andrews was a new experience for Underwood as he was her first and only grade eight student at that time. Because of this he received a lot of personalized attention.

"It was like having your own private tutor," said Andrews.

Andrews said he looks back on the country school house with a lot of fond memories.

Andrews was the school caretaker. His job included keeping the fire burning, bringing in and piling wood, sweeping and dusting. He was paid \$100 a year for his job which he was paid for three times a year. Andrews said it was a long time between pay cheques.

There were 13 to 15 students at S.S. #5 at that time. Because the school section was so small Andrews said if one decided not to participate in an event it often meant the event didn't take place.

"If you played ball you had to have all the school playing or you couldn't play ball.

"It was all good fun. We did-

n't get into a lot of hellyry back then."

The school house, which is now owned by Janet and Stephen Miller, was a red brick building with two entrances at the front, one for the boys and one for the girls.

Andrews said the school basement was also divided in two. He doesn't recall why the two groups were always divided but said...

"There certainly wasn't any hanky panky going on."

The school house had one big, pot-bellied stove, a cloak room and, as Underwood calls them, "pail-a-day toilets," which has to be flushed out with pails of water once a day.

"It was a pretty elegant school at that time," said Underwood.

Andrews said he doesn't feel he missed anything being educated at a one-room school house but he did take a course of study that he never had much use for.

"We had to memorize a hell of a lot of Shakespeare. I didn't see the sense in it."

Well, Andrews went on to graduate from Port Elgin District high school and later moved to Bruce Township where he is presently Reeve.

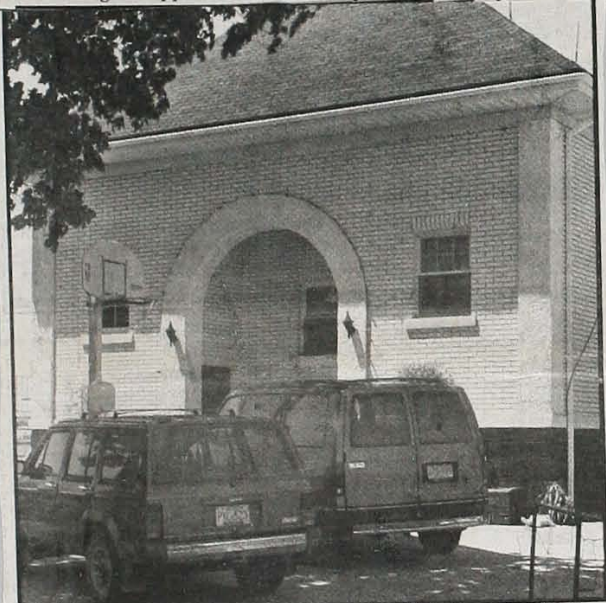
Underwood was married to Basil Underwood in 1950 and left the one-room school house to start a family. Sixteen years later, after raising her children, she returned to teaching at G.C. Huston in Southampton as a supply and remedial teacher where she remained for three years until her position was phased out.

Underwood said if she could go back in time she would do it all again.

"It was marvelous. They were a great bunch of kids."

As for the school house, Janet and Stephen Miller purchased it in 1976. It is now a four bedroom home located on Concession #4 in Saugeen Township.

The Miller's have rebricked the building in grey, removed the black boards from the walls, closed off the boy's entrance and transformed the library into a bathroom.



S.S. #5 Saugeen is located on Concession #4 in Saugeen Township. It is presently owned by Janet and Stephen Miller who reside



S.S. #5 Saugeen 1949

Back from left is Dorothy Andrews, Ruth Schwass, Freda Andrews, Audrey Underwood (Webster), Janet McEwing, Betty and Ruth Turnbull, Jane McDougall, Clare Turnbull. Front from left, Orland Nelson, Eric and Ron Andrews, Jack and Russell Schildroth.