



Early Oyama School Days

Allan Claridge

June 24<sup>th</sup> 1996

Dear Pat,

As promised earlier, herewith a few memories of  
early Oyama school days.

I have not put these thoughts down in any  
particular order, but rather in random fashion, so  
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Hope the project goes well.

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The thoughts expressed here cover the period 1931-1938 which it should be borne in mind cover most of the years of the great depression and in some instances reflect that difficult time.

The school had twelve grades in three rooms during that time, with four grades in each of three rooms. Subjects were more basic than to-day but the fact that there were several grades in each room, didn't seem to distract greatly and in fact appeared to help when one got into the next grade.

Some teachers were strict and did not allow much leeway, while others did not have the control that was necessary.

The books *Treasure Island* and *Lady of the Lake* were required literature items and a good teacher almost made the characters live and the learning worthwhile.

The school was heated by wood furnace, using four foot long wood, and while the custodian was responsible for getting the heat going in the morning, one of the high school students kept it going during the day. I believe that a sum of two dollars a month was paid for this extra task.

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The room housing the high school, also had a heater in that room, using coal in small quantities.

There were no indoor toilets, but rather a shed like building containing those facilities, with no running water.

There was however a drinking fountain in the general area of the school where the hallways converged.

When King Edward abdicated, a local electrician (Elmer Crawford) loaned a radio to the school to hear the speech, because it was of historic significance.

The railroad tracks passed the school and the dozens of unemployed men who used to ride the tops of the boxcars from place to place became etched in your memory.

Aldred's store, located next to the school sold many things, but of greatest interest was the amount of one cent candy available and if one was fortunate enough to have five cents (which wasn't often) that would buy a full sized chocolate bar or two bars of slightly smaller size.

The hobnailing of boots to make them last was accepted even though they weren't kind to the floors.

The clothes worn reflected the difficult financial times, but it didn't really matter.

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Christmas concerts in the Community hall, followed much rehearsing and were always well attended.

Sports equipment was at an absolute minimum and a new bat or ball or football was to be looked after, because they were hard to acquire.

The enjoyment of sports was still there and soccer particularly brought a much prized trophy to the school.

There were no school busses and the method of getting to school was by walking, with the odd ride from a kind neighbour.

The strap was part of the school rules and for the most part was fairly applied.

A suspension of the rules severe enough to warrant strapping, could result in two strokes on each hand and a more severe problem might warrant five hits on each hand.

Kids generally were well behaved and did not live in dread of punishment.

Considering the economic problems of the times I think it was remarkable that the school in Oyama offered the opportunity it did and attracted teachers of the quality necessary. Teaching was not a well paid profession and the support staff and learning tools of to-day were not available.

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