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Tonight I would like to share with you memories of experiences and ^{of} the people who contributed to my educational growth.

Over seventy years ago, I started on the "learning path" at the East Oxford School out around the mountain.

From that day forward I learned daily in a multi-aged atmosphere via John Dewey's philosophy "Learn by doing" and guess what? We not only didn't know we were doing it but today it is the "INTing" with improvements and variations.

For example: I learned the "sight reading method" which today is called "Wholistic Reading". We had math, reading and language. Still in our curriculum today but Enumeration and Literacy.

But --- the goals are the same "Develop the growth of one's mind." And that's what happened in our little school!

For awhile we were blessed with "practice teachers" from Plymouth Normal School, a new one every 18 weeks! This was a way that the town could save money as they were not paid while they were learning how to teach.

② Because of these people - I knew from very early on that I'd be a teacher, they brought the outside ^{world} to us and the entire community. They were young, eager and full of new ideas.

We did arithmetic, reading etc. with the ones at the same level of learning or ~~you~~ ^{we} progressed on our own even though ~~you~~ ^{we} were in fifth grade.

Often with geography and history, all grades, first thru eighth we studied the same unit. For example: When we learned about Eskimos we built an igloo where we ate our lunches. When we studied the Indians (Native Americans) we pretended to hunt for wild animals by chasing Coony rabbits out back in the swamp with hand made bows using twigs for arrows. We learned to track rabbits not cats! In the spring the boys fished for trout in the brook by the school and ran down to my mother's with them. She cooked them for their lunch.

We had a wood stove. The children's in the rows nearest were sweating and others by the windows were freezing. Children brought potatoes, carrots, onions and some times pieces of venison or meat to make a luncheon soup.

⑤ Later, as a teacher, I used these methods of learning that were ^{then} called "learning activities". We loved school! It was our social life plus the neighborhood's too.

There was a Halloween party at night. Our parents and every one else came. Games were played, "Bob for apples", "Wink'em", "Spin the bottle" and Oh, what food! All after a program of songs, poems etc.

At Christmas it was the same plus exchanging of gifts by every one. Homemade ones usually, mittens, jellies, pot holders etc.

In the summer, we were lucky if a preacher was visiting, because then we had Sunday School. Now and then my mother thought we had one or two who were having their first church experiences.

Then the school attendance was dropping - down to 9 students when I left the eighth grade. It was inevitable that the school would be closed and it was - the next year.

This was a very sad time because never again was there a place for the community to socialize. Some parents expressed their loss openly but in the end they appeared to feel that it would be ^{the} best for their children's education.

⑦ That next fall Ralph Mack and I were off to High School, scared but excited. How would we ever get there? But once again our parents came through. Juliet Brown from Wentworth and Harriet Bean from Mt. Cobe School joined us.

Julie's father had a Model T Ford. He would pick us up and off we went - Sort of!

Gas was an expense so we made two gallons last as long as possible. And there was a way: Ralph would remove a piece of flooring in the back seat area, unscrew the gas tank cap, insert the hose of a tire pump, ^{I held it there} and when we approached a hill (not before) he started pumping the gas up to the motor. When we reached the top, Mr. Brown would put the car in neutral and down the hill we'd fly because the more speed we got up, the farther we'd go without using gas.

There was a night when we used Mr. Bean's car and forgot to drain the radiator. Consequently it froze and you can visualize the result. We were never negligent again, in fact once we drained it only to hear from Mr. Bean that he had put in alcohol for the first time. No happy campers that night!

⑤ There were many other experiences, some funny, some scary during those "special transportation" excursions. But we were never late. We always got to school and home again somehow even though we sometimes walked part^{of} the ten mile trip.

The only thing that we felt was our loss was that we couldn't play sports. There was no way to get home at night, even after we started riding the bus. (We tried a few times but that's another group of stories!)

However the fact we got to school was far more rewarding.

When I received my Teachers College diploma, I was bursting with happiness. My first thought was, "Now I can help bring the world ^{through learning} to children as my teachers did for me. As the years flew by, I realized that my world was being enhanced and enriched by the children.

And that is what education is all about. People and children bonding in communities for the purpose of learning and contributing to each other and — the future.

As you can understand from the talks and input tonight our educational heritage has always been a community happening made possible by respect, hard work and the love for learning.

Changes can be difficult as my dad once simply but clearly stated:

Quote - "there's no common sense when it comes to schools. The town hires a man and a bus to tote kids to school, then borrows money to build a gym so they can have some exercise."

But he ~~said~~ ^{did say} to me later, ^{when I was teaching in Hanover} "Why don't you teach right here in Oxford. We've got a dang good school. Instead of teaching down in the southern part of the state?"

And so communities make and accept changes thus promoting growth and success but always keep^{ing} the memories of the past.

She grew up in the shadow of Mount Cube, and loved it

By **PAT HAMMOND**
Special to the Union Leader

Ruth Brown grew up in East Orford in the shadow of Mount Cube. Her father, Charlie Ladd, worked hard as a farmer all his life. Ruth taught second grade in the Hanover school district until her retirement. I asked, how did your upbringing in East Orford shape the way you taught school? This is what she said.

"Going to school opened up a whole world to all of us. There were nine of us in the first eight grades in the one-room schoolhouse, and the school was also the center for East Orford. (The area was then called "around the mountain," and "the mountain," of course, was Mount Cube.)

There were 16 school districts in Orford at one time. When I was in school, grammar schools

were established to serve the families in that particular part of town.

There was the Beantown School on Baker Road. That took all of the Beantown children, including the Curriers. Ours was the Macks, the Chases, the Ladds and the children of the loggers who moved in for the winter.

We had "practice teachers" from the Plymouth Normal School, who came for nine weeks each. We had the whole world brought in to us, though some of the teachers were only a few years older than we were.

We did not have a bus to high school, which was at least 10 miles away. Albertson Brown picked up some of us. He would buy five gallons of gas for a dollar. To make the gas last we coasted down the hills, and Ralph Mack (future police

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RUTH BROWN
on growing up in Orford

chief) manned the pump (while sitting in the back seat), which pumped the gas up the line to the motor when the gas level was low.

Sometimes Ralph and I walked home from the high school, if there was a late activity there. Miss Twitchell, the principal of Orford Academy, announced one time that even though we came from the farthest away, we were never late

to school.

One of the best things is we learned about community. We all worked together. Glenn Pease was the only one who had work horses, so when it came time to fill up the ice houses, from ice blocks in the pond, everybody used Glenn's ice cutter to cut and set blocks in the sheds between layers of sawdust.

The Macks had a harrow, to toss the hay, and they shared.

Everybody helped everybody.

The social life was in the school building. We had a minister and his family and they held Sunday school for us, and my mother and other women rolled bandages for the Red Cross for the boys in World War II there. Of course the Mack boys were in it (the war).

When I was teaching, I did a lot of stuff the way I learned from those teachers. I taught in Hanover the way I was taught, a lot of group projects. In East Orford when we studied Eskimos we built an igloo, and when we studied Indians, we would go out in the woods and find different kinds of plants — and that's the way I taught about Eskimos and Indians in Hanover.

In Orford we would fish in the pond before school and during morning recess. We would run

the fish up to my mother and she would cook them.

We had the best education and at our own speed.

People say to me now, "Why are you so healthy at 87?" I tell them it was the way I was brought up — we lived on venison and rabbits, then fish in the summer. I had the best of foods and Dad would take two mill pails and go up the mountain and come home with them full of wild raspberries, blueberries blackberries.

There was no crime out there. Not so much because they were trained not to steal, but also because there was nothing to be stolen, and nobody had time to steal anyway. It was rough sometimes. In winter we put chains on the Ford's tires, and there was no heater in the car. We had some hard times, but I just loved my life.