

Peel Board of Education
Finlayson, Jessie
June 5/74

No more pupils, no more books

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By SANDY STOUTH

Time is running out for Jessie Finlayson. Within the next few weeks, school bells will ring for the last time, announcing the end of a school year. It will also mean the end of a life-style Jessie Finlayson has become accustomed to.

For 44 years, Miss Finlayson has dedicated her time and efforts to teaching children in primary grades, 23 of which have been at Lorne Park Public School, Indian Road. This year, she's retiring.

"I've made a lot of friendships here," says the petite teacher. "A lot of children come back from high school or university and reminisce about the past. I'm glad they come back." On Saturday, she attended a wedding for a bride and groom who were once two of her students.

Last week, over 300 people, former pupils and parents, attended a garden party in her honour. A 15 foot high maple tree was planted in front of Lorne Park Public School by the pupils and teachers in recognition of her service to the school.

Born in Tuckersmith Township, County of Huron, Miss Finlayson started teaching at the age of 23 in 1930, in a rural school near Belgrave.

When she came to Lorne Park Public School in 1949, there were only four classrooms, with about 120 children. Today, the original part of the school is being used by the Peel Board of Education for offices.

A hallway joins the new extension to four of the old rooms in the old part of the building. Next year, they will be about 300 children in the school.

Only at one time in her life did Miss Finlayson consider changing occupations. "I tried to get into Bell Telephone but couldn't. Since then, I've been teaching. I've never been sorry."

Miss Finlayson fondly remembers humorous events during her teaching days. "We used to have show and tell. One boy brought a bat in a bag which was from British Columbia, and it got out of the bag. Another boy had a snake in a cornflakes box, which also got out. At another time, a child brought in his grandfather's false teeth. I wish I'd have kept a diary."

Although she was well-known as being strict and disciplined, she also had a soft spot. If children were injured, sick or hospitalized, she would make housecalls and bring them small gifts.

"If a child knows you care and are helping them, and see they are progressing, they don't mind you being a bit cross at times. It means a whole lot if a teacher shows a little concern."

It's difficult not to become attached to children, she says, but you try not to play favorites. "I didn't have a child in my classes I didn't like."

When school starts again in September, the old wooden spoon that was used occasionally for punishment won't be seen anymore. But Jessie Finlayson might be back — just for a visit.

"I'm afraid to go back after teaching 44 years. I just don't want to be around the first few weeks of September."

Instead, Miss Finlayson plans to devote her time at her Lewisham Drive home, doing craft work, rug hooking, crocheting, visiting friends and travelling.

"I hope to go to Hawaii either this year or next," she says, with the \$800 given to her out of a trust fund. "I also hope to do some volunteer work, perhaps for the Red Oaks school."

After teaching for 44 years, Miss Finlayson feels "it's been rewarding in many ways."



A school picture of the first class Miss Finlayson taught in 1949-50 at Lorne Park Public School.



Jessie Finlay's teacher for 44 years, points to the first classroom she taught in at Lorne Park Public School.