

Recollections of the Presbyterian Mission School

This email was sent by Daniel Sanchez to Charlotte Valdez on August 15, 2012.
Daniel Sanchez grew up in Dixon and later became a Santa Fe District Judge.

Good Morning Charlotte,

I sure enjoyed reading your history of the Embudo Presbyterian Church and the mission. I also have some very fond memories of my school days at the Mission School.

There was a popular teacher there, I think she was the head teacher or principal – Miss Cook. I think Ben would have a better memory of her because she wasn't there when I went to school at the Mission School. When I went to school there, I went a year after Annabelle and Everett had gone, so I learned some English from them because we didn't speak English at home. I went to pre-primer and my teacher was Miss Kildren. She was a pretty and young teacher and I don't remember her staying very long. We were in the room where the stage is at. She put me in the closet one time for talking too much. I cried because I was scared! I remember when I went on to the next grade, 1st, my teacher was Ms. Beryl Crawford. We had the 1st through 3rd grade in that room. We were in the southern room. I only recall staying there for two years though. My mom says something about being promoted 2 grades. I don't remember. The pre-primer teacher then was Miss Van Hine. She was the head teacher and she was not very friendly. We were afraid of her. The upper grade teacher was Miss Eunice Lieb. She taught 4th through 6th grades and we used the eastern part of the big room. It was separated by the big moving doors. When I passed to the 4th grade, Ms. Lieb was my teacher. We used to go on field trips and I remember going to the Kit Carson museum in Taos. They used to bring in a music teacher about once or twice a week and her name was Miss Lee. There was also a 4-H instructor who would also come in periodically and his name was Mr. Baca, I think he was with the extension agency or something like that, probably the Department of Agriculture and he was probably an extension agent. As part of a 4-H project they gave Everett a little pig so he could raise. It was a Poland China pig and it grew to be quite big - bigger than the ones we used to raise. We butchered it at a matanza at our house. All our families got together for that matanza.

I also remember that the tuition must not have been very much because my mom would give me coins to pay for it. The lunch room charged a nickel for lunch, because when they would have peanut butter honey balls for dessert, I would run home for noon for my nickel so I could eat at the lunch room and get the peanut butter honey balls. Unfortunately they would also give green string beans and I hated them. We had to eat all our food before we got the peanut butter honey balls, so I would put the string beans in my pocket so I could throw them away when I got outside. I would show our teacher that I had cleaned all my plate so she would give me my peanut butter honey ball dessert (with my pants getting wet from the string beans in my pocket).

In 1958, the school closed down. Allison James in Santa Fe also closed around that time. In 4th grade, they would assign you a bible and when you finished the 6th grade, they would give that bible to you. I got mine after 4th grade because there would no longer be a 5th or 6th grade there for me. My bible stayed in pretty good shape until Daniel used it when he went to school at Temple Baptist here in Santa Fe. I still have the bible though.

After the school closed down in 1958, they would have like caretakers come and live at the school. I remember two of them. The first was a gentleman (and his family) by the name of Mike Masoyan (spelling?). He owned a 1956 two tone green Chevy station wagon. Pretty neat car! He would open up the community center (today's kitchen) and we would do crafts, play games and play ping pong there. I got pretty good at ping pong there.

The next gentleman that I remember being there was Rudolph (Rudy) Guerrero and his family (she was very pretty and they had a daughter that was younger than us). He was from San Antonio, Texas, and he was quite popular with all the kids. He started us playing softball and we really enjoyed that. He was the umpire for the Sunday ballgames at La Canada. He would yell "Teerike" for a strike and we would get a real kick at his antics being an umpire behind the catcher (Tony Rendon or Gene Rendon).

I also remember going to watch movies at the mission when these gentlemen were there. I think they charged either a nickel or a dime. The first movie I saw there was a movie called "To Hell and Back" starring Audie Murphy and it was about World War II.

Some of the kids I remember going to school there were Annabelle, Everett and I; Rosabelle and Larry; the Frosts, Michael and Sharon; the Bells, Ralph, Marilyn and Jerry and a younger girl; Macarita Montoya and her sister; the Berghofers, Carl, Elaine and Gordie; the Pinedas, Sarah, Lydia and Sammy; the Romeros, Melvin, Arnold, Lester and Gary; the Benavidez, Martha and Danny; the Martinez girls, Susy and Mildred; the Esquibel's, Joseph and Becky, and maybe Betsy; Bobby and Joey Ortega; Tita Lujan; Ruth and Danny Maes; Johnny Brown and some of his sisters (Becky?); a kid named Rex; I think Rudy Brown and Roger Brown may have gone there at some point; Fred and Florence Atencio; Patsy and Rita Sanchez; Billy Joe Wood; Judy and Tine Mascarenas; Stevie and Cap Rogers; Johnny Archuleta. I don't remember any kids from Canoncito or Apodaca coming to school there though. I saw the 1957 picture in the Town Crier, but I couldn't make out any others.

Those were fun days!

Daniel