

Mighty-Mini-Minnie

by Melanie Grillo

"It was a very delightful experience getting fired. At first, I thought it was incredible, but the more I thought about, it, the tireder I got."

Minnie Hertzog began teaching in 1912 and taught in Steamboat Springs for twenty-four years. After teaching for 50 years she then sat with children and elderly folks.

I first undertook this interview for the sole purpose of making soap (like so many of the other Foxfire projects have done...) Little did I realize that this wondrous and spritely woman of 82 had so much more to offer.

Minnie tells why getting fired was so delightful, "Mr. Sauer came to my room that year, about the usual time when they sign contracts, and he asked me if I was tired. And I snapped out, 'Of course I'm tired, everyone's tired this time of year!' (spring) He said, 'What I meant was, are you tired of teaching?' But I still didn't savey what he was getting at. 'At the board meeting they issued contracts,' and he said, 'Here are two contracts, if you're sure you aren't too tired sign at least one of them and get it back to the office, and if you are too tired just don't sign any of them. Now don't make up your mind in a hurry, you can see that there are a number of days before they have to be back in.' I thought it was such a graceful act, and I did feel tired!"



Minnie has so many delightful teaching stories to relate, "Another time the word spread that the superintendent was coming

to check up on the class. The children scurried about trying to pick up the room before she got there (the superintendent), except the two that went to raise the flag. When the superintendent came in she asked what was wrong. I answered, 'Why, nothing, why?' And she replied, 'You have your flag flying upside down!'"

During Minnie's first teaching job at the age of eighteen in Kansas she lived and boarded with a family. She recalls making \$50 a month and paying \$15 for room and board. Every morning she and the two children walked to the school house together. "I would have the children open up to any page in this one book and on whatever it landed we would discuss that day. I always hoped it would open to the chapter on animals."



Although Minnie began her teaching career in Kansas, she moved to Maybell, Colorado, in 1919 where she married her husband, and pursued her teaching career. She remembers, "Maybelle had a flour mill, bank, two stores and one telephone in the whole town."

I asked her about memorable stories from the time she lived in Maybell, and she related the cricket story, "The Mormon crickets became a tremendous pest there one summer (1924). Some of the neighbors told me that I mustn't give up on the crickets. They put wash tubs over the hills of pie plants, and kept them there 'til the crickets had gone. They then opened the tubs, but the crickets had been under there, and had eaten all the pie plants away."

Like locusts. I don't think they should be called Mormon crickets, just because they come from the West. The men would meet at the school house and mix up a stoge of bran and poison and spread it around to try to get the crickets. But most unfortunate a sack or two that were supposed to be empty were thrown among the brush and a few cattle got too much of this poison and didn't survive."

Minnie's last year of teaching in Maybell was in 1944-45. At that time she moved to Steamboat Springs and taught at the grade school for 24 years. "I was closer to 76 than to 75 when I drew my last month's wages. Oh, yes, I taught many generations."



Minnie Hertzog receives a plaque in commemoration for her many years of service to the Steamboat school.

After Minnie Hertzog retired she just wasn't ready to quit being active, "I retired from the classroom in 1969, then I just began doing odd things. It began in a gradual way. Sometime I sat with older people that were more or less invalids - especially if the folks they lived with took a trip and hated to leave these people all alone. But I spent most of my time working with kids. I like to do that a lot, I also like the remuneration that goes with it. That helps a lot too."

Minnie kept many children overnight too. "They were used to me sometimes, even more than the grandparents. I did it about the way I did my own children when they were little. We just tried to keep busy and happy. They kept happy and I kept busy."

Another time Minnie took a short break from sitting with kids because of an accident, "I went downstairs at 4:30 in the morning and thought it was time to get up. When I saw it wasn't I thought 'Hurrah!' I'll just jump back in bed for a couple more hours. I jumped clear across the bed and landed on my head." Her last day sitting with children was the 16th of August.

Minnie's last day sitting with children was the 16th of August. "I do miss them, but there's so many unfinished projects around here. Some of them have been around for 20 or 30 years, so I thought it just might be a good idea just not to go back to little folks, but to finish up some of those unfinished things."

Homemade Soap

Minnie Hertzog's humanitarian nature stood out once again as she took time out from her many unfinished projects to show me how to make soap.



INGREDIENTS

- 6 pints of grease
- 3 pints of soft water
- 1 can of lye

STEPS

- 1) Pour water over lye in enamelled or stoneware container while stirring slowly. (water will boil)
- 2) When cooled to room temperature pour slowly into melted grease which should also be at room temperature.
- 3) Continue stirring until the mixture is the consistency and color of honey.
- 4) Pour into mold.
- 5) When firm (maybe a day or two later) cut into bars. If it's for your washing machine grind up finely.
- 6) Keep in warm place for a week or two before using.



Cooled lye being poured into melted grease.



Bubbling mixture of lye and water.

To sum up the person of Minnie Hertzog would be hard, but I think I'll let Minnie end the article since she started it, and once again using her own words to tell the story, "I would love to help everybody, but I couldn't."