



EXCERPTS FROM THE
DIARY OF
IRENE MCKENZIE SPURGEON

When the smelter (copper) was shut down in Greenwood, we moved to Orient, Washington which was ten miles or so south of the British Columbia border. Mr. Smith (Papa) worked in a lumber mill and

David worked in a mine south of Orient. It was called the Napoleon Mine.

Most of the mines had just closed down in Orient. They were gold, copper, and iron mines. There was a new four-room brick school just finished which I went to in the fall of 1910.

There were two hotels: Terry's and Temple's. MacDonalds was a general store and Montgomery's was a drug store where we bought ice cream. There was a post office, a bank, and a livery stable. The town was between the Great Northern tracks and the Kettle River. There were two sporting houses, one near the railroad tracks and one down by the river. There were four "girls" in all. They each had a man who did their shopping for them. The "girls" never came in to any store, but we kids had seen them all and we knew all the men in town who went to them too. We kids would hide out beside the house in the dark and when the door was opened, we could tell who the man was when he stood in the light. The "girls" spoke to us when we watched them hang their clothes out in their back yards.

There were two passenger trains which went through Orient each day. One went north into B.C. and then on north to Oroville, Washington. The other came from Oroville going to Spokane. Of course everyone went up to the depot to see who got on or off. Then they went to the post office to wait for their mail.

The one sidewalk (board) we had was about four blocks long, one side of the street only. The one street and all the paths leading to people's houses were full of loose dirt.

There was no electricity and no indoor toilets. Most houses had to carry water from an outdoor tap and each kitchen had a workbench with a pail of water and dipper, a wash basin (tin), and soap dish. A towel hung from a big nail above the bench. Later we nailed an empty spool to the wall to hang the towel on.

For years, everyone washed clothes on Monday, ironed on Tuesday, mended on Wednesday, and went calling on Thursday. Friday we shopped and cleaned, and Saturday we cleaned, cooked and baked.

In summer we had picnics, fished, and swam in the Kettle River. I remember we danced once a month in Temple's Hall (over the store).

The summer of 1910 I learned to dance the waltz, two-step, and polka. Later on, the three-step, tango, and the rag. We very seldom had a quadrille. People came to the dances on horseback or in wagons. They would come from as far away as twelve miles—Laurier, Rock Cut, Dulwich, Boyds, Barstow, Kelly Hill, Hungry Hill, and Pierre Lake.

There were many Indians around but they went to the mission schools and churches. They used to pick huckleberries and bring them into town for trade. I remember people trading with old clothes. There were many Italian families around and I went to school with the children.

After the First World War started many of the German children and families were ostracized. One was the Roescheiser family who lived on a farm at the edge of town. Everyone in town bought milk, apples, and potatoes from them. Many of the people in town wouldn't buy produce any more and wanted them to take their children out of school. The older children changed their name to Rogers and left town.

One summer a little girl came to Orient to visit her uncle. Her name was Jeraldine Jones. She was ten and small and she could "tap." She had a "Duluth Bob" and she wore long white stockings and "Mary Janes" (slippers). I was entranced with her. I think I asked her to "tap" every time I saw her and to tell me about Indianapolis, Indiana where she was from. She did recitations too.

There was a old abandoned sawmill on the Kettle River near our house and I decided to put on a "show" there. There were boards and blocks of wood for seats and I put up two cotton sheet blankets over a cable for a



curtain. I had an Edison Phonograph with cylinder records for music. My mother made lemonade and hot muffins served with butter and choke-cherry jelly. The only acts I remember was Jeraldine Jones reciting and tap dancing, and my friend Mabel Lucille Fryett and I singing School Days.

Venita “Nix” Temple was my very best friend. We started school in Orient in the new school in 1910. I was 11 and she was 12. She had started school at the Colville Mission and I had started in Duluth and on to Greenwood, B.C. and then to Orient. She had straight blonde hair, blue eyes, small boned but plump and round. She helped me with my arithmetic and sewing and I helped her with reading, English, and geography. She always said “sentness” for “sentence” and I never forgot it. Later on I went to North Central High School in Spokane and she went to Holy Names Academy. I saw her a few times after I had married. Mrs. Temple was the “Pathe News” of Orient. She was the keeper of all records. She attended every marriage, every birth, every death, and every party. I have a receipt signed by her for Mr. Smith’s burial plot. Mr. Temple built and ran Temple’s Store. He was the first man to take a vacation that I knew. He had the first car in that part of the country. I got to go to Christina Lake in B.C. and to Little Pend Oreille Lake near Colville, Washington. When we went to Christina Lake we used to walk to the big dance pavilion on the lake shore. Venita played the piano. She had all the new sheet music and she taught me all the new songs. She played all afternoon and I sang. The pavilion was unlocked and anyone could go in anytime. Earlier Mr. Temple had driven four-horse wagons from Ft. Colville to Grand Forks, B.C. with supplies. They had a stopover near Pierre Lake at Pete Pierre’s place. They changed horses there. The barn and the two story frame house was still standing in the 1920’s.

One summer Maggie Rae came to town (Orient). She was a niece of the Terry’s. She came from New York City and she was an accompanist for the soloists at the Metropolitan Opera. She married an Orient boy by the name of Delepine and they lived there a short time. She had everyone talking when she made her new husband bury their garbage each day. Everyone used to throw everything out the back door—bottles, cans, and gunnysacks and maybe sometime they’d haul it down to the river and throw it over the bank. In the winter when the ice was clear, we skated and counted bottles, cans, and old wagon wheels.

Mr. Cronawert was a farmer who lived on Hungry Hill—about six miles from Orient. He had a team of horses and a few cows. On nice Saturdays he walked to Orient carrying two large pails of butter made into pounds. My mother used to buy all our butter from him.

I believe we moved up on Hungry Hill in 1912. Mr. Sackett with his large family lived up there. He had a small lumber mill and he promised us

enough lumber for our house right away. But we never got it and we lived all winter in two tents. One a large one. It had room for a kitchen stove, tables and chairs and a bed and some chests. There were no side walls or a floor. We were still waiting for lumber. We had the proverbial wash bench with a pail of water, wash basin and soap dish. Must have put our towels on the bench too. Doris and I slept in a small tent in a double bed. Had clothes chests and straight chairs but no side walls or a floor. The snow was very deep that winter and my mother always had a rock heating in the oven for each of us which to take to bed with us. We slept in our long underwear and nightgowns and stockings. We undressed in the big tent by the stove. Then we put on our coats and caps and shoes—grabbed our wrapped-up rocks, a lantern and cat and made a dash for out tent.

Most of the time I broke trail to school. We walked a mile or so. When the snow was deep, Papa made a path for us. On very cold days, my mother brought us a hot lunch. I remember hot muffins with current jelly, but that is all I remember.

Mr. Sackett sold us enough lumber for two rooms and promised us more right away. Then papa and mama and Doris and I slept in two double beds in the same room. Our other room had a stove, table and chairs, three chests of drawers and a big trunk. We hung our clothes from nails in the walls at the foot of the beds. We only had two windows. One the bedroom and one in the kitchen-living room. We still had a wash bench and we carried our water about a block from a well down by the lake. We heated water for washing clothes on a grill by the well. We washed on a washboard and boiled all the white clothes.

We had a team of horses, a cow and I had a horse of my own, Fanny. I rode her to school in Orient until the weather was too cold and the snow too deep.

When I rode off Hungry Hill I had two gates to go through. One gate was made of poles and barbed wire and the other of boards, a wooden bolt and leather hinges. I taught Fanny to maneuver around so that the barbed wire never cut us or that I lost control of the gate or that I had to get down to open or close the gate. One night it was snowing hard when I got out of school in Orient and the man in the livery stable said I had better stay all night as I’d have to break trail all the way. All the farmers had left town early because of the snow. I know my mother would worry so I started out the six miles or so. We broke trail all the way and I got through two gates without having to get off. I was about a half mile from home when the saddle cinch broke and I and the saddle rolled under Fanny. I had the reins in my hand and I thought she might jump on me. But she stood perfectly still. I knew about where I was as I had gone through the last gate not too long before.

I knew I couldn't get back on Fanny with my books. I always wore a heavy black all-wool riding skirt. Must have had five yards of material in each leg. My school skirt was wool and to my ankles and pulled up around my hips. It had been dark all the way home but now it was black and still snowing. I knew Fanny could find her way, but I'd have to lead her now and carry my books. I was still sitting in the snow when I saw a light. It was Papa coming down the draw carrying a lantern and looking for us. Topsy, our red setter, got there first and Papa pretty near stepped on me before he saw me in the lantern light. That was my last ride to school in Orient in winter. From then on I had "batching rooms" in a private home or in the Orient Hotel.

One afternoon I walked two miles to play with the Sackett kids. Our house was on a knoll and in the open—theirs was in a gulch. The road ran at the gulch bottom with a creek beside it. One wall was fenced farmland and the other was heavy underbrush and dense forest. We kids played in the sawmill and then went in to sing songs at the piano. The only real furniture the Sacketts had was an old, old Baby Grand. They may have had a rocker and some kitchen chairs, but I can't remember any. Everything was made out of rough board. I hadn't noticed it had gotten dark. They wanted me to stay, but I knew I had to go home. They gave me a lantern and I started out. I wasn't out of the gulch when I heard a cougar crying. Papa had told me that they sound just like a woman crying and that was what this sound was like. I knew the coyote bark and howl, but this wasn't anything like that. I tried to run and couldn't—my clothes and boots were too heavy—and then the lantern went out. I knew in which direction to walk to reach the barbed wire fence. I ran into the fence and followed it in the dark. I had been walking in snow in the road but the snow was deeper along the fence. I had no way of knowing how close the cougar was. I don't know if I was more terrified when it cried as when it kept still. I followed the fence out of the gulch and into open spaces to our gate. Papa was getting ready to come for me again.

Another time all the kids who could skate went to Pierre Lake in a big sleigh. When we got back up on Hungry Hill, I had a mile or more to walk alone. The snow was as high as the fences and it had frozen and you could walk on it. It was one of the brightest moonlights I ever remember. It was one of the eeriest walks I ever had. Every step crunched on the snow. I heard a cougar crying again and I thought it might be a half-mile away. I had to walk by three ponds. The branches of the trees around the ponds made stark pictures on the sparkling snow. I was afraid to look up in the trees as I thought I might see a cougar crouching up there. The setting would have been perfect for an Alfred Hitchcock movie. What terror when I could see clearly all around me.

We had a ten acre field of wheat and two patches of oats. A big garden

with potatoes, corn, onions, turnips, rutabagas, radishes. I planted morning glories against the front wall of the house.

I helped Papa fence the forty acres. He dug the postholes and I stretched the barbed wire. I held the posts up while he tamped the dirt around them. He held the wire with heavy leather gloves and I nailed the staples. Mama stayed and did housework and cooked. Doris carried water to us and our lunches too.

We saw bear and deer, squirrels, coyotes, pheasants, prairie chicken and grouse and moles but we never saw a cougar.

My cousin from Duluth sent me big boxes of clothes. My mother could remake them for Doris and me. Mama sent to Sears & Roebuck for red serge and black velvet. She made a suit for me with black velvet collar and cuffs, and a black Billie Burke hat. Doris and I were a novelty to the other kids on Hungry Hill as we never went barefooted. But we couldn't play hop scotch any better than they.

Every day was fun at home or at school. There were lots of kids. I learned new songs at school from my young teachers. Think it was 1912 when we first sang, Silent Night. We had dances, box socials, and picnics at the one-room school and always homemade ice cream. We went to Pierre Lake in the summertime. There was a picnic ground and an octagonal dance pavilion. We never swam in the lake because there was supposed to be quicksand in it. People had rowboats and fished from them. I never saw a person in swimming.

I played the lead in a play in Temple's Hall. I was given my first bouquet of red paper roses. I was 15, I think. From then on everyone called me "Cheerie" until a new family came to Orient and then one of the boys called me, "Irish." That name I had until I married and moved away from Orient.

One of my friends was Carl Douglass. His sister was Mrs. Chet Finch of the Spokane Finches who had made their money in the Coeur d'Alenes. The Finches were a very prominent family. A school and other buildings were named for them. The Chet Finches had a butler and maids and a nurse for a new baby.

Chet Finch came to Orient to be a gentleman farmer. He brought seventeen carpenters with him and hired more help around Orient and he built a big house and a big barn and other smaller buildings. He fenced acres of land at the south end of Pierre Lake. He brought in cattle and horses too. But he didn't stay too long. He was a playboy and not a farmer. When Carl was at the ranch I was invited for dinner. He [Chet Finch] had hundreds of books—many of them leather-bound. He loaned me books by Hall, Caine, Maupassant, and others I never heard of. He played his Baby Grand piano beautifully. The last time I heard anything about him he had gone to Hollywood. As

I remember him, he looked like Errol Flynn.

One time when there was a dance in Temple's Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Finch came to the dance in evening clothes. He was in white tie and tails and she had a pink satin gown and long white kid gloves. They danced a few dances with each other and left. They never mentioned it to anyone afterwards, but everyone had something to talk about for weeks afterwards. Bill Eisenhauer and Veral Kidwell were two boys who always came to the dances in Orient.

When I lived on Hungry Hill, the Hawkins, Buhrgs, Mears, Gourlies, Cronawerts, Sacketts, LeMars, and us, the Smiths, were there.

The Hawkins lived in a draw on the side hill ranch. They had a barbed-wire gate across the road. The other farmers had to get out of their wagons or off their horses to go on. I trained Fanny to move around so I didn't have to get off. When we all went to town, Doris, mama, and papa, I always rode Fanny and opened and closed the gates. Two of the Hawkins boys, Web and Clyde, came to picnics and dances on Hungry Hill, Pierre Lake, and Orient. They were older.

The Buhrig boys went to school on Hungry Hill—Henry and—. Henry is the one who was reading a story about a lady bug floating downstream on a leaf. Punctuation didn't mean anything to him. "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall drown! In a tree nearby sat a bird, etc., etc." Henry read, "Oh dear oh dear I shall drown in the tree nearby..."

The Cronawerts had two boys and two girls. They came to everything which they could walk to. He was always "saving the horses." He was the only one who rode in the wagon up hill. Everyone else got out and walked. Evangeline Cronawert. was my best friend on Hungry Hill. She and I read constantly, but she lived only in books. Evangeline Cronawert married Web Hawkins. They had three children. Her husband, Web, was killed in a logging accident when her children were small. I last heard from her in the 1960's. She worked in a nursing home—Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Tom Callan was a boy I knew who lived on Kelly Hill. He was the handsomest boy I ever saw. He was part Indian. His father was Irish and had married a Colville Indian. He was a "Squaw Man." Many of my parents' friends said they shouldn't let me talk, ride, and dance with Tom. I liked him the best of all the boys until I met Jim Spurgeon.

The Gourlies had a big family. Les married Venita Temple and Viola married Clyde Hawkins. Mrs. Gourlie was deaf. They all yelled at her, especially Mr. Gourlie. "Ma, bring in another stick of wood." I never saw her without a smile on her face. Les, Viola, and Leon were some of the Gourlie children who lived on Hungry Hill. The Mears ranch was next to ours. They never had any children but they always had nieces and nephews who came in the summer. Mrs. Mears was a Toulou Indian and she taught school at Tonasket at

the mission. She was small and quick and he was very big and very slow. He was always weeks behind seeding or harvesting. The neighbors always had to help him. Mrs. Mears was the only one who gave parties on Hungry Hill. She was an excellent cook and housekeeper. There were only three rooms in her house. A very large kitchen, small living room and bedroom.

The Sacketts had a large family and lived a mile or so away. They boarded the teacher who lived in a one-room shack with a bed, table and chair. The Sacketts lived in three rooms all in a row. The one door came into the kitchen (stove, table, benches and cupboard). The living room had Mr. Sackett's chair, kitchen chairs and a Baby Grand piano. The teacher could play it. Mr. Sackett sat in his chair and planned and dreamed about all the things to be done on Hungry Hill. Believe he was the only one around who had gone beyond Grade School. He was on the School Board and our preacher when anyone would listen. Can't remember where all the kids slept but I do know they all grew up and went on to school.

The LeMars lived up past the Sacketts. They had two or three children. Their oldest was Marguerite. The LeMars had a log house by the lake. They had a lot of books and they there were so many water snakes in the grass. Mr. LeMars made a zither and he played for the dances in the schoolhouse. Tom Callan played the violin when he came over from Kelly Hill.

One night during a dance someone went outside and said, "LeMars' house must be on fire, as we could see the red glow in the dark sky." Mr. LeMars wouldn't leave or let anyone else. Said it would be too late by the time they hitched up the wagons and drove up there. We danced till daylight and then the neighbors drove home with the LeMars. The house and everything in it was gone, but the barn, horses and cows were saved. I wished I had borrowed more books from them.

The Winegardens lived a short time on Hungry Hill. They had two or three small children. He was a Great Northern brakeman. He had been hurt at work and got a settlement. He bought land on Hungry Hill. He wore a heavy brace, walked with a limp and all bent over when he was in Orient. On the ranch he walked straight without a brace or cane. The neighbors were sure he beat his wife and his children and we knew he beat his horses unmercifully. We had all seen that including me. He was no rancher and he didn't stay long.

The last time Jim and I were on Hungry Hill there were only two people living there. They were living in the Mears house. They were a young couple from San Francisco. They had no family and they both were nightclub performers. They were tired of people and the city. They had a herd of Guernseys and loved their life there.

When we drove to our place part of the old house was still standing. A

loose board hung and creaked in the breeze. My dad's old chopping block was still there. The bunchgrass had grown over everything again and the bushes and trees were all so tall swaying in the breeze and bright sunshine around the four little ponds on the forty acres.

There is a place on Hungry Hill I'd like to go back to. It is a walk we kids took one day. Up the gulch, past the Sackett's old sawmill and beside a brook (not a creek) that moves slow over moss-covered rocks. The water is ice cold. The shrubs are thick and hang over the water and the cedars, firs, and tamaracks are so tall that the sun can't filter down to color the flowers which were all white. There were no felled trees or sawed stumps. Only trees which had fallen from age or heavy snow. I often wonder if someone else has found "The Forest Primeval."

MY DAYS IN ORIENT BY GLENDA PITTMAN

My grandparents Sam and Josephine Veltrie came to Orient in 1906. Pictured are 8 of their children--a wonderful family. My mother Elda was born in Orient in 1910 and lived all her life here. I was in Orient and went 8 years to grade school before going to Kettle Falls High School. My first grade was the last year there as a high school in Orient. School was very important to me. I was especially fond of reading making 100 book reports in the 8th grade. I enjoyed school, playing all sports, swimming in the Kettle River, coasting down Arneson Hill and attending Vacation Bible School.

I will confess I was in on some of those Halloween pranks like dumping over toilets, but I had no part in taking Bob Norton's boat and putting it in Mr. Shoemaker's garage (honestly!). When I was in the 7th grade during recess, the 7th and 8th graders were playing basketball. Someone tore the sleeve of my blouse, so a classmate and I ran to my locker to get a safety pin. The steel lockers were in the room next to the kitchen. When I stepped inside the bottom of the locker and reached for the pin in the top compartment the lockers fell on me. I was grateful for the cot that protected me from seriously being injured. My classmate was so afraid that she ran upstairs and didn't tell anyone about it. I started screaming. My mother Elda had just started cooking at the school and another classmate (Karen Wang Shute) came to my rescue. Thankfully I only had a broken nose. Mom Elda continued as cook at the Orient School for 26 years. Many young people enjoyed her wonderful cooking. Home-made rolls everyday for 26 years. The picture enclosed is of Elda as Grand Marshall First Thought Days Parade in 1986.

After Glen Pittman and I were married, we returned from Alaska where he had been serving in the armed services. We bought the Service Station in 1954 from Gene and Helen West of Colville and Frank and Jenny Taylor of Spokane. We put in a lunch counter, a mini convenient store, trailer parking and the store was the area's telephone message center at Orient #6. We took great pride in keeping our business neat and attractive and accommodating our customers. When our customers paid their bills, we

gave them a sack of candy for appreciation of their business.

Since we delivered phone messages, one Sunday during hunting season Glen took a phone call from a man asking him to tell Dick Hurst that they had found his father (Murph) dead upon Deadman Creek. Glen relayed the message to Dick and gave his condolences. He returned to the station, an hour later another call came in a voice said, "Hey kid, this is Murph, I AM NOT DEAD!" They mistook me for another fellow. We were sorry for the other man's family but happy that Murph was still with us. Incidentally the Murphy steak at Barney's was named after him.

Glen and I would organize workdays to clean the town. Many townspeople would get involved especially the younger ones. Glen's brother Morris had a TD-6 Cat and "Mac" McDonald had a Low Boy, the rest of us kept them busy hauling trash away, old cars and trucks as well. When we'd get through each time, the town had experienced a much neater appearance.

Glen and I had 3 children, Teria born in 1954, Connie born in 1956 and Knox born in 1960. The girls went to the Orient School until Teria's 7th grade, Knox started the 1st grade in Colville.

We had many Canadian customers until the Trans-Canada Highway was completed. The Doukhobors from Grand Forks shopped frequently in Colville, on their way back and they would stop to buy gas at our station and use the rest rooms. The women would go into the rest rooms, they would go in slim and come out thicker, which may have accounted for all the empty shopping bags they left behind.

One summer day Glen had gone out on a service call and I was the only one at the station. A man came in and told me there was a car with a flat tire, just out of town about 1 1/2 miles. Just at the same time my mother Elda and sister Joanna had come over to visit. I pulled up behind the car and expected someone to get out and ask if they could assist me. I saw there were 4 people in the car, three Catholic nuns and one young man in his twenties, the driver. Then he handed me the key out the window and quickly rolled it shut so he wouldn't get wet. We jacked the car up, removed the tire, put the spare on and headed back to the station. Luckily Glen drove in just as we arrived with our dry customers following behind us. Glen changed the flat. I have never forgotten that experience.

We bought a new old school bus that all the children in the neigh-

borhood played in and had a great time. We would get 18 or 20 friends and travel to Spokane to see our favorite country music singer. Lots of fun. A few years later we supposedly sold the bus, the man signed the papers, filled the gas tank and faded into the sunset. Never to see the bills again nor payment, although the sheriff tried.

Thanksgiving 1963 we were headed for Odessa to spend the day with my sister and her family. We got as far as Lakin Fields and saw a family in a car with a flat tire, really in distress. We stopped to help, came back to the station and he changed the tire. The family went on their way, thankful for the assistance.

We helped with dances sponsored by the PTO (PTA then) at the School gymnasium. The New Year's dance at Orient was a tradition for many, many people. Sometimes 700 people attended. It was New Year's 1964 and we had just gotten into bed at 2 a.m. when we heard the banging on the door. Glen got up, a man said "there is a car way out in to the snow bank above Shriners and you will need a Cat to pull him back on the to the road. Glen donned a bunch of heavy cloths because it was minus zero degrees and headed up the hill on the cat. When he got there he found a young man, quite inebriated sitting in his car. Glen pulled the car out of the snow bank. The young man asked, "what do I owe you?" Glen said "Fifteen dollars". He said "I don't have fifteen dollars". Glen said "Oh, just give me ten dollars and that will do". He didn't have that. I believe it ended and the young man said he would pay him later, much, much, much later.

We moved to Colville in 1966 starting in another ARCO service station at Third and Main Streets. We left my father Orval Lyle in charge of running the station in Orient. I started my home-based business in 1968 and am still continuing. We sold the service station in Orient in 1972 to Gordon and Myrtle Christopher of California. Glen passed away 2 1/2 years ago, we had been married for 46 years. This really wonderful man is missed by his wife, his family and everyone who knew him. We lawyers have many fond memories of our years in business in Orient and we are thankful for our many, many, friends we've kept through the years.