

A Lasting Learning Legacy

Ethel and Eric Brown



This collection of photos and stories commemorates Ethel and Eric Brown's passion for family and education.

Arranged by: Mavis Jacobs and Shirley A'Hearn

November 2025

Front cover drawing: South Athabasca School No. 2768

By Denise Loiselle 1953

CONTENTS

Ethel Margaret Brown (nee Hopps)	1
Eric Philip Brown	2
Parents	3
Ethel and Eric Brown - Through the Years	4
Ethel and Eric Brown - Next Generations	5
Remembering Other Teachers in Our Family	6
Ethel's Memories	7
Edmonton Normal School - Ethel Brown	14
Tribute - Ethel Brown	15
Retirement Tribute - Eric Brown	16
There is No Place Like Home - Meanook	19

Ethel Margaret Brown (nee Hopps)

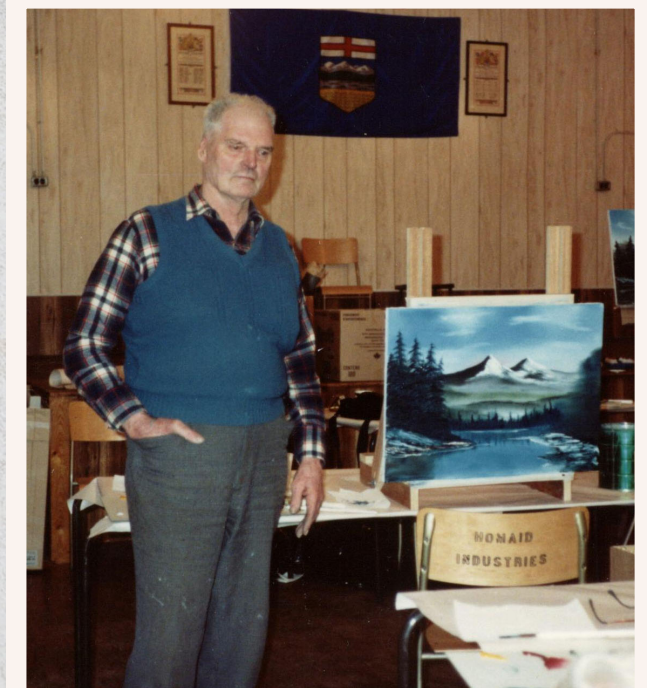
March 22, 1917 - October 1, 1990

Born Meanook, Alberta

Taught school 1941 - 44, 1961 - 81



Eric Philip Brown
November 22, 1915 - June 3, 1999
Born Vermilion, Alberta
Drove school bus 1956 - 1981



Parents



Eva and John Hopps
Married June 7, 1905
Lacombe



Jared and Phoebe Brown
Married September 10, 1913
Vermilion



Ethel and Eric Brown
Married April 26, 1943
Meanook

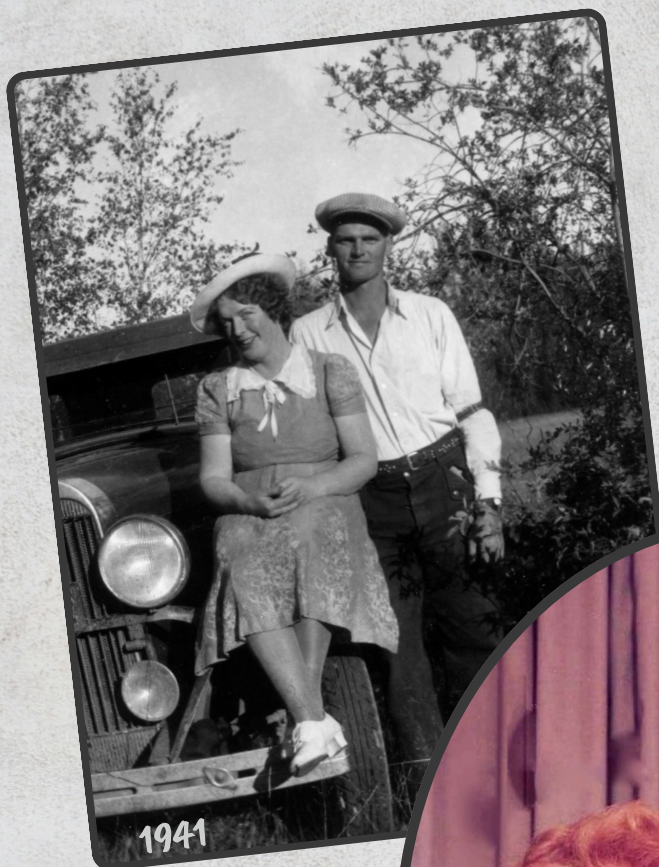


Gwen Hopps, Laura and Harold Ray, John Hopps
Eva Hopps (sitting), July 1938 after L&H Ray wedding ₃



Jared and Phoebe Brown
Meanook, August 1941

Ethel and Eric Brown - Through the Years



Ethel and Eric Brown - Next Generations



Eric and Ethel's 25th Anniversary 1968
Mavis, Philip, Shirley, Edwin and Jean



Jean, Shirley, Philip, Ethel,
Eric, Mavis and Edwin 1988



Ethel and Eric Brown family - Meanook Reunion 1990

Remembering Other Teachers in Our Family



**Hopps sisters: Gwen,
Florence, Ethel, Laura 1932**



**Hopps sisters: Florence,
Gwen, Ethel, Laura 1968**



Hazel Hopps 1962



Norman Ray 1964



Jean Barry 1975



Hazel Hopps 1988



Norman Ray 1968



Jean Barry 1978

I (Ethel) was brought into the world by a wonderful Cree mid-wife, ~~who spoke~~ Mrs. Plante Sr. ^{of George Lake} who spoke no English. My parents said she is known to have gathered roots and plants to treat people ~~with~~ ^{for} various ailments. It made me feel very proud (but oh, so ancient!) when I had the opportunity to teach the great-great granddaughters Duneice and Michelle Plante ^(Mrs. Plante's children) a few years ago.

Mrs. Billy Smith, also, a wonderfully kind neighbor, again came to help look after the other children while my mother was in bed. Laura told me she remembers wondering why Mrs. Smith

hustled the children out to play as it was a rather cool March afternoon. Before long, however, they were ~~soon~~ called indoors to view a little bundle, their new sister. Then, because I was a ~~somewhat~~ bluish color, I was put in the oven to warm up.

Since I was the youngest of the family I was still attending school at Meenook when my mother was first afflicted with arthritis. When I completed Gr. IX under the able tutoring of Mr. Fertig, I, like my sisters Laura and Gwen, carried on with my high school by studying at home.

After completing Gr. XII I continued to stay at home as my mother was becoming quite helpless. In the fall of 1940 my parents rented a small house in the Bonnie Doone area in Edmonton for \$8 a month (no electricity or water) and we moved into the city for the duration of ^{the} one-year teaching training term. My father was already receiving his old-age pension of \$20 a month and with help from the other members of the family we were able to manage.

All my teaching experience has been in the local area. My first school was South Athabasca a wonderful neighborly district

which has left me with many happy memories of children and parents. I taught there from 1941-44. While at South Athabasca Eric and I were married and thus emerged a new generation of Meanookers - the Eric Browns.
(Eric Browns) Eric Brown and I were ^{son of David Phoebe Brown of Meanook} ^{Ethel Hopps, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Hopps (nee Cuckey)}

married in the Meanook church by the Rev. C. R. Lang on Easter Monday, April 26, 1943. Rev. Lang's car was not working at the time so Eric took his 1929 Plymouth to Colinton to get him. Roads were in typical spring break-up condition and there was the ^{great} possibility of getting stuck but "where there's a will

there's a way" and minister and groom appeared in time for the ceremony.

We have spent all our married life in Meadbrook where our children were able to grow up in the company of numerous cousins, an enjoyable experience.

~~We~~ Eric and I are very fortunate in having three of our married children and their families now living in this area.

On May 31, 1969 we had the misfortune of losing our home in a fire caused by a propane explosion. Eric was seriously burned and spent over four ^{months} in hospital but eventually

made an amazing recovery. We will never be able to repay the wonderful kindness ~~given~~ shown by our relatives, friends and neighbors. It still is overwhelming to us.

Although Eric's main occupation has been farming, in 195¹⁹⁵⁶~~6~~ he bought a school bus (a small panel) from Alec Nimco and has continued to drive the Meanook route ever since. He even has some second-generation passengers who are already teenagers!

I thought my teaching career had ended in 1944 when our first arrival was expected but 17 years and five children later I was called to "fill-in" and have been

24

on staff since 1961, first as part-time in Colinton and Perryvale, then full-time at Colinton until the school closed in 1968 when I transferred to the Athabasca Elementary. As retirement nears for Eric and ~~I~~ we realize we will have a host of happy memories of our association with school children.

These memories are included in the Eric and Ethel Brown and Family story in the "Colinton & Districts - Yesterday & Today" history book.



JEAN HLADIK, Wetaskiwin

A twinkling laugh, a pleasant smile,
With lots of zipp and lots of style;
Constant, true and ever bright,
Makes Jean to us seem just all right.

LUCILLE HOCHHAUSEN, Provost, R.R.4.

Ambition: To find a true Democracy.
Hates: Porridge, bow legs and boys.
Likes: Week-ends.
Favorite Song: "In the Mood."

GRACE HODGSON, Dewberry

Likes: Teasing, late hours, volleyball,
headstands.
Dislikes: Science, 30 below weather, shocks
from door knobs.
Favorite Expression: "Oh, sure!!"

JOYCE HOLLAND, Edgerton

We don't know much of Edgerton, but we
think it must be fun,
'Cause Joyce Holland comes from Edgerton,
you see.
You can hear her laughter tinkle, in her eyes
a merry twinkle,
And she loves to dance until the clock strikes
three.

KATHERINE HOLMES, R.R. 3,

Edgerton
Characteristics: One of the many
blondes. Will try anything at
least once—even me.
Hobbies: Walking with long skirts and riding
horseback. Hold the Fort, Kay!

ETHEL HOPPS, Meanook

Ethel shines in everything she does, especially
Practice Teaching.
Favorite Expression: "Oh, I see."
Favorite Pastime: Talking.

JEAN HORRICKS, Mannville

She loves sleeping, but is always wide awake.
Ambition: To do a headstand.
Pet Aversion: Getting up in the morning.
Good luck to you, Jean!

CECILE HOUDE, Donnelly

Sports: Skating, dancing, swimming.
Ambition: To get to bed before 12 o'clock.
Hobby: Scrapbooks.
Favorite Song: "Till the Lights of London
Shine Again."

A LEGACY OF LOVE



Ethel Brown

The following article is a tribute to one of many of Athabasca's dedicated teachers, Mrs. Ethel Brown.

After attending school in Meanook from Grades one to nine, Ethel continued her education at home. All her high school courses were taken by correspondence while attending to an invalid mother - a woman who also valued education very much.

Ethel attended normal school during the '40 - '41 term. After normal school she returned to the Athabasca area to teach in South Athabasca until 1944. She boarded with the Soper family, walking the two miles to school in all kinds of weather. It

was indeed a pleasure to get a ride with Carl and Alfred Olson with their team of horses.

Ethel left teaching in 1944 to raise a family. Five children and seventeen years later, she found herself sitting at the kitchen table writing an acceptance to an offer of teaching 1/2 days in Colinton. She then drove to Perryvale for the other 1/2 day. So began the second stage of her teaching career.

Ethel taught in Colinton until the school closed down in 1968. Some of her colleagues teaching at Colinton were: Josephine Breckenridge, Mrs. Day, Mrs. Trollope, John Richel and her own daughter, Jean Barry.

The following tribute by one of Ethel's former students, Heather Hay, speaks for her insight into self-learning, self-esteem, and child development:

I was so saddened to hear of Ethel's illness and death. This must have been very difficult for all of you. There's very little one can say to ease the loss. It's difficult for me to refer to Ethel as "Ethel" - she will always be "Mrs. Brown" - my 3rd and 4th grade teacher. This was my "astronaut / rocket scientist" period. If I finished my work early, Mrs. Brown would let me go to the library and read encyclopedias and books on outer space, rockets, etc. She often "forgot" to call me back to the room when the class was switched to another subject - I felt I was really getting away with something!

I still have the binder of carefully copied notes from encyclopedias and books (about 100 pages!) and calculations of how much fuel it

would take to get to Mars and how old I would be when I got there. I read, I wrote and I did arithmetic and enjoyed every minute! She was a wise teacher.

The other particularly fond memory I have was that after we came in from noon-hour, Mrs. Brown would read aloud from a book. Charlotte's Webb was my absolute favorite! Of course, at the time, I didn't realize how important this was. Most kids in the class never had adults read to them for that exposure to literature. She touched the lives of many and left a piece of herself with all of us. I will remember her with great fondness.

In 1968, Mrs. Brown became a member of the Athabasca Elementary School staff. She spent many years as a grade one teacher. While on staff here, she and many other teachers furthered their education by taking evening and summer school courses. She especially enjoyed taking these courses with her colleagues. She particularly enjoyed the Grade one students' openness and honesty. She noticed a significant change in Grade One students with the implementation of a regular kindergarten program. The children came to school not afraid of the teacher, the bus or the school and not missing their mothers as they often had before. They were more prepared to be students.

After retirement, Mrs. Brown could be seen at many student functions such as the Music Festival, Drama Productions, Christmas concerts and Band concerts, following the progress of former students.

**Eric Brown Retirement Tribute
By Aggie Thomson
June 1981**

It has been said that everyone has a story to tell. Eric is too shy to tell his story, so I decided to do it for him. One could start out by saying once upon a time in the year 1956 or thereabouts, there was this farmer who decided he would become a school bus driver. His wife, Ethel, and the people in his village of Meanook spoke to him, "Eric are you sure? Have you thought about it seriously? Do you have the intestinal fortitude to take on such a nerve-racking occupation?" Eric smiled sweetly and replied, "No problem, if I can farm I can handle a busload of kids." Imagine, a grown man making such rash statements like that when Anacin hadn't even been invented yet.

Well, there was no way anyone could talk Eric out of this seemingly dangerous occupation. Actually, his love of driving went back many, many years to his marriage to Ethel. It seems the minister couldn't make it to the marriage because of bad roads and a broken-down car. Eric went and picked him up because he wasn't going to let his redhead get away.

Eric invested in a yellow van that held 18 children. This van was quite the vehicle - nice wooden benches, no upholstery. Oh, such comfort! In those days the roads left something to be desired. Gravel had not been invented yet. Therefore, when Jean (all beautifully dressed in pink) took her first trip in Daddy's bus, he promptly hit the ditch. So much for the beautiful clothes, as the children had to crawl over the driver's seat, out the door and they sank into the mud nearly up to their waists. Regardless of these minor setbacks, Eric carried on.

Through the years, he watched romance bud, bloom and die. Occasionally romances bloomed and continued to bloom, for example Wendy Wildfong and Paul Lisowec, Bev Harband and Nick Lisowec, and of course, Jean Brown and Leonard Barry.

Eric loved his charges. Christmas and end of June treats were his way of showing how much he enjoyed them. He let the children amuse themselves by supplying boards for the kids on which to play cards. He also supplied them with numerous homemade nail and wood puzzles. There was a method to his madness, if the kids were playing cards or working these mind-boggling puzzles, they would be busy and wouldn't be screaming, fighting and throwing food around.

Eric's driving expertise was not limited to the five-day school week. His talents were often used on weekends by various groups such as 4-H, Scouts, Guides, as well as adult groups. These trips could be to a variety of places and oh – what an education he received. Let me list some for you.

- 1) He learned to roller skate
- 2) He became a professional figure skater just from watching ice capades
- 3) He was sure he would soon become a rodeo rider

- 4) Eric knew every nook, cranny and animal at the Storyland Valley Zoo (the animals recognized him too)
- 5) Then, of course, there was the Provincial Museum and Edmonton Art Gallery for the more serious type education

The naming of these excursions could go on and on. If you want to know something about a particular place ask Eric, he's probably been there – not once – but many times.

Eric never mentions the number of sick kids he's had on his bus, but we can imagine that he's had to swab the inside of his bus many times.

Being a school bus driver has its advantages and disadvantages and Eric made the most of the advantages. Actually, he was Meanook's PR man. You see Eric enjoyed the afternoon bus trip very much. When he unloaded his last passenger he would then decide where he would stop for coffee. He didn't practice favoritism. He gave everyone a turn. One day Hannah's, then Whieldon's, then Wolfer's, Helms', Thomson's, Dube's and so on. You see Ethel had put him on a diet and this was one way he could relieve his sweet tooth without Ethel knowing. Now she knows why he didn't lose weight.

There were other advantages too. Eric now has a magnificent supply of Playboy magazines and Harlequin romances. These were left behind on the bus – at least that's what he says. You will have to ask him what he's done with them. You never know he might just share them with you.

Eric will never take an extra curricular trip on Senior Citizens' night. He just couldn't miss a game of crib with May Walli. At least that's what he tells Ethel.

I must let you in on a scandalous secret, once in his 25 years of driving, Eric slept in. Oh my, what a to do around Meanook. Arthur Hopps went one way, Eric went another and Edwin, with his newly acquired license went another way. Believe it or not, the students were in school on time. Eric was happy, the students were not happy and the county office never knew – until now.

To tell you the whole truth, there is no way that Eric could have survived for 25 years without help. There was one person who never stopped giving him aid. You are wondering who? Well, it's Ethel. She would call all the families on the route when Eric's bus got sick, she'd phone if the children would be late. She had the fastest finger in Meanook. When Eric would come home from a particularly harrowing bus trip, she would be there to give him tea, many aspirins and rebuild his shattered nerves.

I'd like to tell you more about Eric's bus driving career but we'll let him write his own memoirs.

Eric, thank you so much for your kindness and patience, continue dropping in for coffee – (you can bring Ethel now) and thoroughly enjoy your retirement.

There Is No Place Like Home - Meanook



