

and horse stalls, and in the process, his footgear would get saturated with what Sears, Roebuck catalogue used to delicately refer to as barnyard acid. "Well sir, I'll never forget one cold Winter's day, up at Wilder School, when Betsey Holsbery was teacher . . . so dern cold in the room that she asked us all to come down front and set near the pot-bellied stove to keep warm. I was first in line— propped my shoes up against the stove, I did— but just about the time I got real warm, my foot gear began to emit the strong odor of barn— so Mis' Holsberry tactfully asked me to move to the back of the room . . . and then she relented a bit and asked me to just leave my shoes up back.

Now you know, in those days lots of the older fellers . . . from sixteen to twenty . . . used to come to class in the Winter, when fishin' was slow . . . and they sat in the back of the room and chewed tobacco all day long. So when it came three-thirty in the afternoon and Mis' Holsbery rang the bell for end of school, I padded back to my place, dragged out my size thirteen shoes, and slipped my stocking feet into 'em and each one had a puddle of tobacco juice about big enough to float a dory. . . . Maybe that's why I never've had trouble with my feet, even though I'm crowdin' eighty."

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The late Arthur Cobb often used to reminisce about his schoolin' in the old one-room building— district five, if memory serves— that once stood by the railroad tracks in South Truro, about where Marie Stephens' place is now located. Eight grades in one room, he used to tell, presided over by a single teacher who was expected to lead his heterogeneous group of pupils from the age of six to the late teens through such diverse subjects as arithmetic (including plane geometry, algebra, and double-entry bookkeeping) literature and grammar in the mother tongue, a smattering of Latin, geography and history (we call 'em social studies nowadays) penmanship, music, public speaking, and sundry other subjects. The older boys usually shipped out, come warm weather, in the local fishing boats, but the Winter session saw the school crowded with near-grown men, bearded, unruly, at their desks only because of parental pressure. If they managed to pick up some knowledge that would be useful in a career at sea-navigation or accounting as applied to ship lading, so much the better.

But discipline, obviously, was a real problem in every school in Pamet. "Never forget the time the big boys at South Truro decided they wanted to get rid of the city slicker teacher the committee had hired," is the way Art used to tell the yarn. "They plugged up the chimney so's the schoolroom filled with smoke— had to send the scholars home for the day. Then they nailed his ulster to the cloak-room wall and put a live frog in his dinner pail. He got through that all right, but when they spiked the door of the privy shut while he was in there, and then tipped the cussed thing over, why that poor feller up and left town. Too late to hire another teacher that season, so Mr. Caleb Sullivan, a member of the school committee, he offered to take over. Follerin' Monday morning, bright and early, Mr. Sullivan drove up in his buggy. First thing he did, after we'd saluted the flag and said the mornin' prayer was to take off his coat

and roll up his sleeves . . . that man had forearms big's a stove-pipe. But it wasn't until he grabbed two of the biggest boys— Jug Rich and Nehemiah Mayo— and knocked their heads together when they got to fighting— that we knew he meant business.

Turned out Cale was an expert navigator; he put the boys to work plottin' a make-believe course from Pamet Harbor to St. Miquelon and back, on a fishin' trip. Every day he'd give 'em the weather conditions— direction and speed of the wind, tide, currents— and they'd have to plot the position of the vessel on a big wall chart,

using parallel rules and compass. He even fetched a sextant to school and had the boys shoot the sun. Meantime, the younger boys and girls were keeping the ship's log and checking inventory of the cargo and food for the galley— he even had someone to act as doctor when an attack of dysentary broke out aboard. Got to be kind of fun, especially when the ship was navigating through bad shoals or rough water in the Bay of Fundy.

Well sir, we made St. Miquelon on time, unloaded our cargo of salt, and headed back for the fishin' grounds. Rode out a bad gale, we did, lost one man overboard and had to splint another for a broken leg— filled the holds with codfish, and headed for home. Ben Loveland, I remember, had the last watch, bringin' the craft across Massachusetts Bay into Pamet Harbor. Soon's school opened next morning, Mr. Sullivan says to Ben, "Mr. Loveland, read me the log. . ." And Ben did. Told his course, elapsed time and logged speed of the vessel, and when he stopped, he looked to Mr. Sullivan to see how he'd done. "Good Lord, boy don't you remember there was a shift of wind last night? You've missed Race Point by two miles— another hour and we'll go aground on Nantucket Island."



MY PAMET

BY

TOWN FATHER