

DR. E.W. COFFIN SCHOOL
Stories of Community

Edited by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many, many people have contributed to this book. I will attempt to name most of them here. Please forgive me if I have omitted any of you.

In the fall of 1999, as we were planning the celebration to honour the 25th anniversary of the reconstruction of Dr. E.W. Coffin School, it was Anne Turner who first uttered the words, “We could create a Memory Book!” Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett and I nodded in enthusiastic agreement, not fully realizing what we were getting ourselves into. Thanks anyway, Anne! It has been a time-consuming, yet fulfilling, project.

“We should put the whole document on disc for ease of moving into publishing,” enthused school principal, Joy Chadwick, who has been a great supporter of this project from its outset. “Great idea. But,” we wondered, “do we know all the ins and outs of the school’s computer system?” That’s when our kind school librarian, Sheri Coutts, came to our rescue, with instructions for scanning, logging us on when somebody changed the setup, helping us out of dead ends, etc. We had some sound advice from library assistant, Laura Adams, and many good chats with her, too.

Veteran Dr. Coffin staff member, Marion Makarchuk, answered school history questions for us and coordinated the efforts of some of our student artists. Ken Gummo, Heather Gummo, and Kelly Tracy all helped with word-processing of various submissions. Rosalind Jeffery also helped with some of the editing.

Adelle Palmer is the friendly voice who answered many of our query calls, helped immensely with the Silver Anniversary Celebrations, making that beautiful guest book etc., and was always available to help sort out mysteries.

Thanks to Arielle McCuaig who gave us her Grade 4 drawing of Mickey the Bird that appears throughout the book in close-up on chapter headings, and in full body on our cover!

Carol Lysak's student memory book committee worked hard to interview former staff members and friends of Dr. Coffin School. Sometimes the visitors came to the school; sometimes the children were driven by Joy Chadwick or Cheryl Tanner to do their interviews. Cheryl also gave the students guidance and extra help with typing and editing. You will find their interviews throughout the book.

Special thanks go to Dr. Benjamin Zeng at Mount Royal College, and the students of his Electronic Publishing course who did the final page design for our book. In particular, Aileen Gautron and Amy Elverum are two students who deserve special mention. They worked for many hours after the completion of their course to finish up the final copy. Thanks also go to Nancy Elias and Blitzprint for facilitating this connection with Mount Royal College.

Without the encouragement and support of Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett I might have given up. The project seemed overwhelming at times. Thank you to Polly for doing all that scanning, for editing chapters 6 and 8, for journeying with me to Blitzprint and then to Mount Royal College to do final edits and yet more word-processing, and for submitting a successful Neighbourhood Grant application to The Calgary Foundation to help pay the printing costs and make this fine book affordable to all. She also came up with the title, *Stories of Community*.

The process of creating this book has been one of building community between our Dr. Coffin children, parents, and staff. May you find your own sense of community in these pages. Thank you so much to all who have contributed their stories, artwork, photographs, and memories.

*Karen Gummo
May 2002*

In chronicling the now 35 year history of Dr. E.W. Coffin Elementary School and Brentwood Heights in Calgary's northwest, this book has become much more than just a recording of school events. It showcases ideas and projects at Dr. Coffin which have had a significant and ongoing impact on a far ranging community.

Our Memory Book Committee, chaired by Karen Gummo, consists of other parents of children at Dr. Coffin School, as well as several staff members. Karen, a resident of Charleswood, spearheaded this project, in all its many forms, from its inception. It all started as a casual conversation in the fall of 1999 between Karen and another parent as they cheered their children's soccer game... "Did you know it's been 25 years since Dr. Coffin School burned to the ground on a frozen January night in 1974? I remember that like it was yesterday..."

And so, under Karen's inspired guidance, our committee began the planning for an April 2000 25th anniversary celebration of the reopening of Dr. Coffin school in 1975. Capitalizing upon the school's overarching theme of storytelling, we began to collect stories about Dr. Coffin's history... and more stories, and still more stories. They came flooding in from all directions. It seemed everyone had something to say about what a very special place is tucked away in Brentwood Heights.

We contacted as many former families and staff as we could locate. Karen even made contact with a relative of Dr. Ernest W. Coffin! We invited all to our great celebration, where the school's current students displayed their own research into Dr. Coffin's history, constructed a timeline, led tours for visitors, and interviewed former teachers. Former students, staff, and community members wrote, emailed, faxed, and called. They rummaged through attics and basements, and uncovered artifacts from Dr. Coffin's early days. They came to our celebration. And they shared more stories.

Karen Gummo researched the school's namesake, Dr. Ernest W. Coffin. We sought out archives about the tumultuous fire. We found a neighbour who still had a film of the night of the fire. We rediscovered the story of people that had pulled together to rebuild what they had lost, and what was so precious to them. What was never lost, however, was a powerful sense of community and purpose.

This project has involved a myriad of people of all ages and abilities, in numerous small and large capacities. What started as a casual conversation between two people, has sent out ever widening ripples of involvement, encompassing a far greater populace than we had ever imagined at the outset. At last we are able to share this documentation of an extraordinary pocket of Calgary history. Thus, this book is your book, and we thank you all for the opportunity to compile it.

I personally wish to thank Karen Gummo, who, with her ideas and affirmations, has welcomed so many into the full circle of community. As new Canadians, Karen made my family feel immediately welcome by handing us tools accompanied by an infectious smile, and finding tasks for us in the creation of the Sun Circle gardens. What better way to become neighbors than by working side by side in common purpose. This book is dedicated to the very spirit of community, and the stories that weave all our lives together with meaning.

Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett
May 2002



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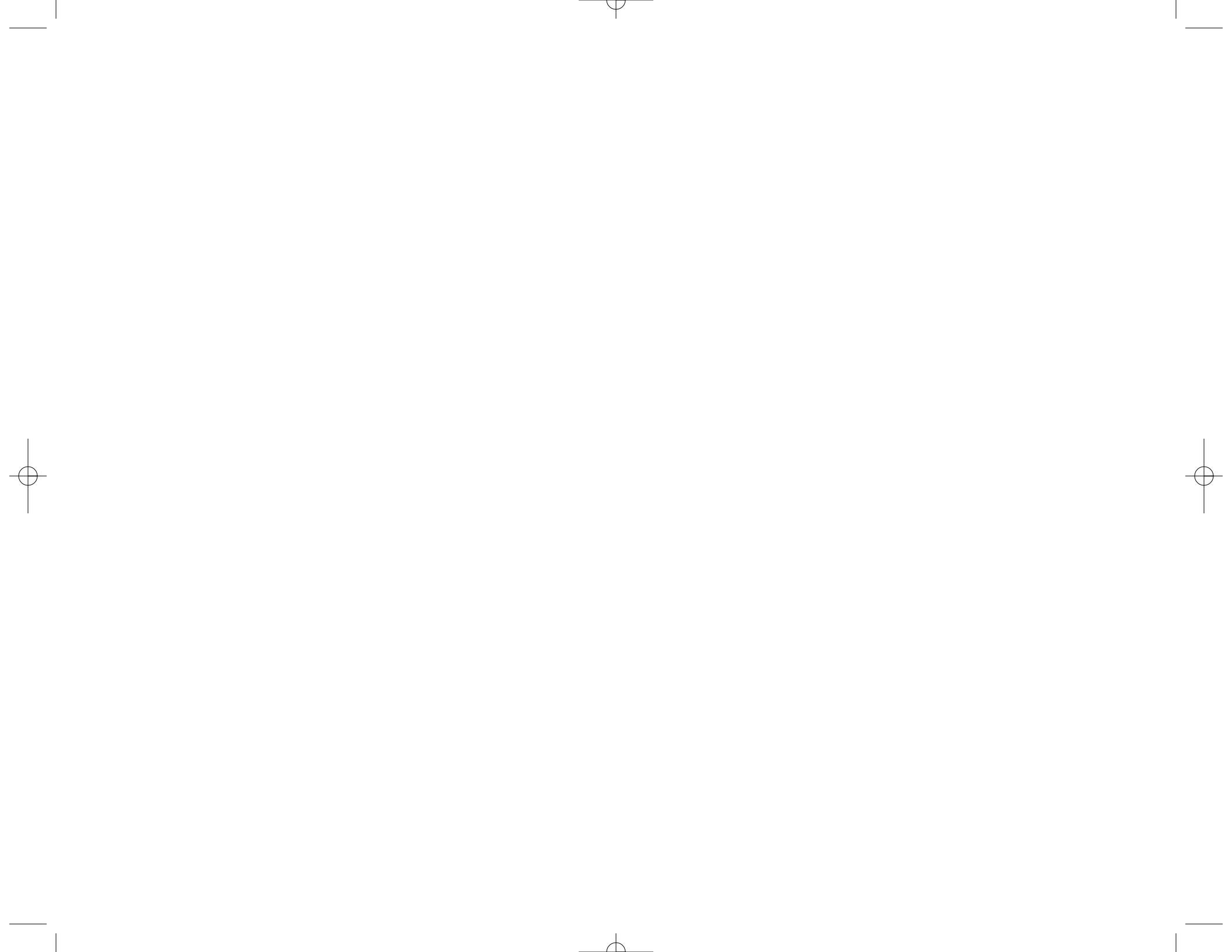


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