

Lapenskie

Lapenskie, Peter & Marcella

Children: Bennet, Ruth, Olivine, Dolores, Lorenzo

Hearst Relations: Begin

To School by Horse, Dog, Sometimes Train by Olivine (Lapenskie) Raftis

My father, Peter Lapenskie (originally Lipinski), was born in Rockingham, Ontario. His parents, John Lipinski and Anne Recoski, were Kashubs, born in Prussian-occupied Poland. They immigrated to the Wilno area in Ontario, Canada's first Polish settlement, where they were married in 1886.

My mother, Marcella (Marcianna) Lapenskie, was born to Anthony and Mary Anne (Lorbetski) Burchat around the Wilno area, probably a home birth. The original Burchat farmhouse has been moved to Wilno and is now part of the Polish Kashub Heritage Museum.

Our dad, Peter, served overseas in World War I. He received some Crown land in Hearst after his discharge, where he and Marcella settled after their wedding. By all accounts she was lonely there, as she had been very close to her sisters and the farm was in the middle of nowhere. In newspaper accounts of their anniversaries, she said she hated the farm. Pete and Marcella were married in Wilno in 1921. They enjoyed more than seventy-four years of marriage living in the Ottawa Valley, Hearst, Geraldton and Sault Ste. Marie, and were blessed with five children: Bennett, Ruth, Olivine, Delores and Lorenzo.

Marcella passed away in 1995 and Pete in 1998, and were both buried in Sault Ste. Marie. In addition to farming, Pete and Marcella operated a restaurant for a time in the CNR station in Hearst, as well as a ladies' wear and confectionary store in Geraldton.

I seem to remember going to the Orange Hall in Hearst for schooling in the primary grades. I recall more of how we got to school since we lived three-and-a-half miles from Hearst; we went through a bush road to get to the railway, then followed the tracks to town. In the spring, this road would be covered with water. Mom either carried us through the water, or we took extra socks to change into. We preferred being carried, as our boots would be wet and, really, the dry socks were not much help. What Mom went through to get us to school! Other times, we had a horse hooked up to a scraper (used to dig cellars, etc.) to take us through the bush road. When we got out of the bush, we would turn the horse around for him to go home. Sometimes he would just stop and not move. On these occasions, Dad would have to come and get him. My brother Ben remembers Dad taking us by horse and scraper and having to stand up so that we all would fit in. It must have been an uncomfortable journey. The passenger train would come from Hearst to turn around at the "Y" (Hazel). If we got up early and caught the train, we were allowed to get a ride to town. It was always warm inside. If we missed it, we walked. I can remember coming to school, crying because of the cold, and since it was early, the school would be locked. We would bang on the door, and Bernice Martin, the custodian, would let us in. Another way we got to school included taking the horse and sleigh to Hearst and stabling the horse in the barn behind

Lemaire's Union Hotel on George Street. Lorenzo was in charge of the horses, sometimes Ben. When Ben was in charge, he preferred to stable the horse at the Experimental Farm at the corner of what is now Front Street and Twelfth.



Lorenzo -1938



Olivine & Dolores -1940

Sometimes we'd get to town by dogsled, and it was important to be on the sled when it went down the bush road or you got left behind. Occasionally, the dogs would be more interested in the rabbits in the bush than getting us to our destination. Once, when we had gone to Sunday school and were coming home with the dogs and sled, they took off before I was completely on and dragged me behind. I remember being embarrassed by people having a laugh. I guess it was quite a spectacle.

When the old school was still open, Bertha Reihe, plus another girl (I don't remember who) and my brother Lorenzo got together to make hot lunches in a room. I found the room fascinating. It was like a science room with bottles filled with different things and articles on the walls. I recall a seashell, which I would hold up to my ear to hear the ocean. These cooked lunches did not last too long, as Bertha and Lorenzo got into a disagreement about something, so

Lorenzo made us leave. I sure did not want to go. It was the end of hot lunches.

Fall fairs were a big thing every year. I can remember Ruth entering asters and I zinnias to be judged. I don't know what the others entered, probably vegetables. Potatoes were a big thing on the farm; we had two weeks in the spring and two weeks in the fall that we missed school to plant and dig potatoes. I remember I trained a calf for the fair by walking it from the new farm to the old farm. (We had moved to the new farm on Johnson's Lake when I was in Grade 5.) She walked without any problems, and I think she won a prize, but when taking her home, she didn't want to leave the other animals. It took a lot of pushing and pulling to get her moving. The crowd got a laugh out of it.

In one of my parents' anniversary writeups, Mom mentions the cow that would follow her everywhere. Sometimes she would forget about locking up this animal until she was dressed for town. But the cow, sensing the clothes signalled departure, would refuse to go into the barn until Mom changed back into working clothes. What an animal. It must have looked funny to see a cow walking into town behind you like a dog.

I remember Nick Shoppoff as the joker of the class and getting a lot of laughs. On one occasion, some kid was acting up and I laughed at him (don't know if any others laughed, also). The teacher, Mr. Bradley, grabbed my arm and I got heck; I couldn't see why, but guess by laughing at him he was egged on.

Since we lived out of town, we missed the after-school activities, which took away from some of the fun. But Mother was determined that we would get an education, because when she was young, church was more important than school.

In 1941, the school offered continuation school to cover Grades 9 and 10. There was no high school at that time. Fortunately, the nuns at the Roman Catholic convent were offering part-time business training and, in 1942–43, a full-time secretarial course, which a few of us took. Sister Rose Marie was the teacher. This was a great help for job training.

In 1941, teacher Ford Rupert was brave enough to organize a school orchestra. Wouldn't it be interesting to hear the music we performed?

I recall an incident due to classroom antics. Murray Sprickerhoff (I believe that's who it was, but it could have been Howard McMeekin) sat behind my brother, Lorenzo, and kept pulling on his braces and letting them go. As punishment, the teacher had Lorenzo drive Murray (using his braces as reins) around the room several times. Knowing the boys, I believe it was more pleasure than punishment.



Ben Lapenskie, Luba Giecko, Florence Mulligan,
Mary Poberezec, Ruth Lapenskie at the rink

