

by the time you made a friend, you were just leaving. Few of the kids I went to school with lived on the base, so I didn't see friends outside of school. I read a lot.

When I was twelve we moved back to Winnipeg. I was going back to the class I had left two years earlier. By that time they were a cohesive group. They had taken French, whereas I had never

done so. I felt behind them in certain respects and never did feel a part of the class.

Whitehorse was a different society because you had to depend on yourself for entertainment. It was small and without all the modern conveniences, but I enjoyed my time there as much as any other time in my life.

## An Irish Town in Quebec



*Paula Irby grew up in Chelsea, Quebec, a village near Ottawa, with houses on the highway and farms behind them. When she was small,*

*Chelsea was an English-speaking enclave in the French-speaking province, without a movie house and with a single, small general store. Today it is nearly sixty per cent French speaking and has almost merged with Hull, the French-speaking city which lies across the river from Ottawa. Many things have changed in a decade and a half. The differences between Catholic and Protestant people of Irish descent have faded. Here Mrs. Irby, now a secretary living in Springfield, Virginia, remembers her early adolescence.*

We're all pretty much Irish — some Scots but mostly Irish. In Old Chelsea everything was built around the Catholic church and in New Chelsea we had a really small Protestant church. Old Chelsea was larger and older.

We were never allowed to go out with Catholics, but I was very animal oriented so I didn't care much about going out with boys anyway. I kept my horse at a farm in New Chelsea, although I did buy him from somebody from Old Chelsea. But the disassociation was very real. When I was eleven, I would sneak up across the field to Old Chelsea and play with my Catholic friends. If my parents ever caught me coming back across the field, they would be upset. But I remember my parents would go to the bingo games in Old Chelsea at the Catholic church.

As I said, I was more interested in animals. I started off with a snake when I was six. I went from there to a rabbit, and I always had dogs. I got my horse when I was about thirteen. I had to work to get it. I paid something like \$25 a month to pay off the horse. He cost about \$200. That was very cheap. I didn't know how to ride that well, but he was a good horse. When I got up in the morning, I would go down and clean out the stable and brush him off and take him for his exercise.

When I was five, in grade one, I went to a one-room school house with a pot-bellied stove. Then when I was in grade two, they built a school in the field behind our house, and it held one hundred students for seven grades. I did alright in school. French was a compulsory language. If you failed French you failed your year.

The summer and fall were lovely. The winter was cold. I was about ten; we didn't have plumbing, but we had a backhouse. In the wintertime you wouldn't spend any time out there. You had to go tramping through the snow.

I used to ski to school in the wintertime. It was only across a field, but it was nice to ski to school. We always used to wear a scarf around our mouths because it would get down to forty below, and if you breathed in through your mouth you would get this terrible pain in your chest.

When you were in Chelsea during the winter months, unless you had a boyfriend, you didn't really get out because there wasn't anywhere to go. Church dances were the biggest thing. People would come from Wakefield. Dances were held at the Protestant church, which was a three-minute walk from my house. The English community would come around, and the Catholics too. And they would go to our little white church. Saturday night was the big night out. I think I only had one dress and I'd wear that all the time. My cousin would come and she would curl my hair and it was really exciting. And that's where we would meet the other young people.

We didn't get to Ottawa very often when I was young, because we didn't have very much money. It was always a big thing to go in to the Exhibition every fall. I used to look forward to that. They have a fair with the pigs and the cows and the horses, and they have the amusements. We would get to go one day in the week. The candy floss, that's what I liked to eat. When I was fourteen, the boys would ask us to go out somewhere in the summertime, and I would say, "Let's go to the Ottawa Exhibition," because that was the most exciting thing I could think of at the time.