

## **JENNINGS SCHOOL SNAKES**

**KAYOED BY MRS. PEAVY**

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This article was written by Lillie B Rooney.

The Western country teacher is a paradox; a combination of mother, doctor, philosopher and of necessity a student of zoography.

These attributes caused Mrs. Iva Peavy to return several times as teacher of the Jennings School, a one-room building north of Wetmore, Colorado. Generations of Jennings successively served on the school board, and by the usual rural pattern, the school automatically took the name.

Mrs. Peavy could readily shift from acting the part of Goldilocks with the primary class, to giving a learned exposition on science to the tenth-grade pupils and expertly handle all subjects of intervening grades.

She was wiry and fitted into the family life of the prairie country, which had taught her the necessity of constantly wearing high boots.

Jennings School never boasted more than a dozen pupils each term, but these were of such varied ages that each grade was represented by at least one student.

The ancient stucco building stood on a treeless prairie. It had an unfinished half-basement which contained a coal furnace and a storage bin. These were reached by descending through a trap door in the school room. The room was heated by a large floor register. Time had caused numerous holes to appear in the school's foundation.

Through these holes snakes crawled to hibernate. As furnace penetrated their bodies, their lethargic condition disappeared. They boldly announced their presence by angry rattles when children to fire the furnace. Girls became terrorized at the unexpected sharp noise directly beneath them, under the basement steps. Even larger boys hesitated to take their turn at firing. Consequently, the high boots of Mrs. Peavy stood her in good stead when

entering the basement which had literally become a snake den. She was armed with a flashlight, a large club, and fearless determination.

Obviously, such conditions could not be allowed to continue. This intrepid teacher conceived a plan of extermination. All basement holes were calked by pupils who remained outdoors carrying defensive weapons of rock and huge clubs.

In the meantime, Mrs. Peavy had attached a length of hose to the exhaust pipe of her 1935 model Ford, pushed the car against the house and extended the hose through a basement window. The engine was started.

As the poisonous fumes entered, snakes became restless. When this was noted by peering eyes, some of the plugged holes were opened. Out rushed the snakes—big, little and in between, eager for a get-away. They were pounced upon by the alert pupils who destroyed ten rattlesnakes and two red racers in the slaughter.

Resourcefulness of a lone, courageous woman restored serenity to the prairie school.

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