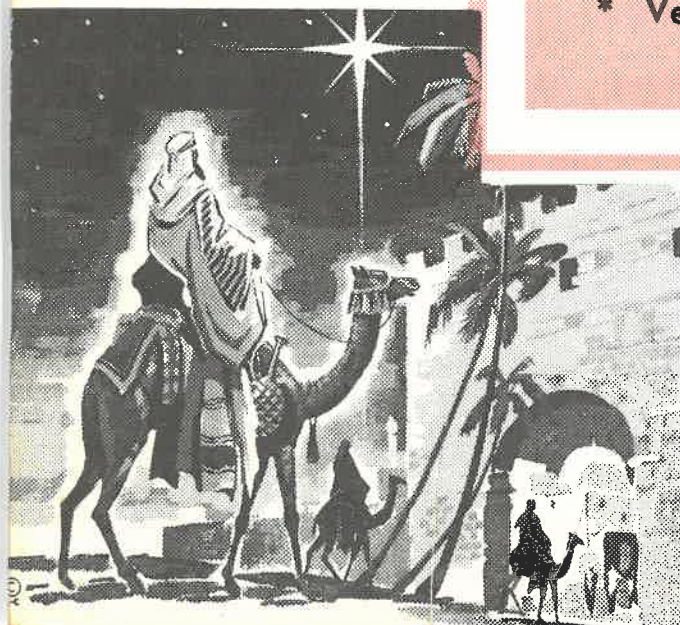


DECEMBER 1974

The Second Mile



- * A Yuletide Jumble Jar
- * New Testament Art Gallery
- * At The Crossroads
with R. L. Jeffery
- * Vestigia



At this Holy Season, let us remember Him Whom we seek, and may His spirit be with you in all the days of the year to come.

At the Cross Roads

with R. L. Jeffery

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?



Ralph Lent Jeffery was born in 1889. He is an internationally-known mathematician, probably the greatest scholar in his field Canada has produced. Among his many publications *Theory of Functions of a Real Variable* is a standard work. Dr. Jeffery is still on the staff of Acadia University and lives in Wolfville.

The more I look at myself today a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, with seven Honorary Degrees — and then look back at the worry I brought on my parents, first

to keep me in school, and then when this failed, to get me settled in some constructive way of looking at life, the more I am amazed that I am what I am.

My father was a fisherman-farm-

er whose living was made mainly from the lobster season and the produce of a 70-acre holding. But my first interests were in duck shooting and fishing. For these I often played hookey, especially if my father was away from home, as he often was. One day, as I was walking out of the yard with the gun, a neighbour happened to be driving past on his way to the fishing station. He stopped and said: "Go put that gun up and get in here with me. My man has left me." This I did. The day went well; I seemed equal to the job, and said I would be back for the next day, if my father would let me. I went home, shaking in my shoes for what my father would say to me. He said not a word! My guess was that he had given up trying to keep me in school. I finished the lobster season with the neighbour — barely fourteen years old, doing a man's job and earning a man's pay.

As the end of summer vacation drew near, my father spoke out in no uncertain terms: "If you are going in a boat you are going in my boat!"

That was it, and so it went. I was put to work preparing for the lobster season coming up, and went as third man in the boat after the season opened. I had noticed that more traps had been built and gear prepared than had been used. I wondered why? The answer came early the next April. My father bought a second boat, put me in it, hired a young man and put him in with me. The extra traps went into use. I was very happy to take on the added responsibility. I was not hap-

py that my father made me save most of the money he paid me.

My parents were pleased that I seemed to be "growing up". They were pleased with the way I did the work relative to the lobster fishing, and bought more land for extending the farming operations. This went on for more than five years.

Early in September 1910, word came out that an Evening School would start in Yarmouth. Out of curiosity I went over to the opening session. Many of those entering were as old as I was, or older. One of them asked me what I was interested in. My reply was: "Nothing in particular." He suggested that I go into the arithmetic class with him. This I did, and continued going. The big surprise came when I found I could do arithmetic as well as, or better than, any of them.

This set me thinking. What about other subjects? Should I not go somewhere to some school for a year? But what school? Where? It set my father thinking, too. Our mother had trained me and the other children of the family to have an interest in Sunday School and the Church. My father feared that if I started school again I would be led into the Ministry. He talked with Mr. W. J. Rockwood, Principal of Everett, Mass. High School who had a summer home near where we lived. He thought that if I wanted to go back to school I should be helped to do so. Never will I forget the next morning at breakfast. My father and I were eating alone together. He said: "If you are going to leave, get to hell out, and don't be making a fuss about it."



The R. L. Jeffery Hall, Queen's University, recently opened mathematics building named in honor of the author of this article.

My interest in the Church included a special interest in the organist of the Church, (Nellie Churchill), the most attractive girl on the West side of the Harbour. Part of her training had been at Acadia Seminary. She told me about Horton Academy in Wolfville, an institution for boys, which offered courses preparatory to Acadia University. At the Academy men as well as boys were admitted to start or restart their education. She assured me that there would be men of my own age or even older.

In early September 1911 I entered Horton Academy, with no back-

ground beyond the middle of Grade eight. Three weeks later, on the third day of October I was twenty-two years old.

It was as the organist said. There were men of my own age and some older. Some were restarting their education, some were getting their first taste. They let me start in the middle year. Geometry held me up for awhile, but I finally came out on top in it. I was accepted for the final year.

The year had made a deep cut in the money my parents had guided me into saving. They again paid

me for helping with the farm work during the vacation. Near the end of the vacation I went over to Yarmouth and rang the door-bell of Mr. W. F. Kempton, principal of Yarmouth Academy, seeking admission to Grade XI. He stood, partly behind the door, holding the door-knob, looking me over, from my number twelve boots to the top of my six foot high head. After thinking a bit he said: "You can try."

It must have been a shock to the teenagers to see such a guy coming into their class, but in not more than a couple of weeks we were all one. I even got penalized for some misbehaviour. Some of my best life-long friends I made there and then. So it went through to the Grade eleven provincials which I made with high standing. It went the same, or better in Grade twelve.

It was the influence and help of Biney Horner who gave the course in Arithmetic, and W. F. Kempton, Harry Wyman, and George Blackadar of the Academy that brought about my success in high school work, and what is more important settled for me what I wanted to be — a high school teacher. It is hard to envisage more capable, accomplished, and effective teachers. My gratitude to them is deep and lasting.

To be a high school teacher meant a year at the Truro Normal School. This would take money. My parents had been keeping me through the two years of high school. My father had been under a strain to keep things together due to my walking out on him. He helped me again by signing notes for

me to borrow money for Normal, which I entered in the fall of 1914.

Dr. Soloan, the Principal of the Normal College, recommended me to my first position as Principal of Port Maitland school, Grades one through eleven. It is unusual for a teacher's first position to be Principal of such a school. I did not get fired but stayed only one year, resigning to accept the Principalship of the MacDonald Consolidated School in Middleton, Grades one to eleven. I went there in 1916 taking with me as my wife the attractive organist mentioned earlier. I did not get fired from this, but resigned to become House-Master of Horton Academy.

At Horton I could teach in the Academy and study at Acadia University. This I did for four years; for three of them I taught full-time and for one part-time. At the end of the four years I graduated with a B.A. degree with a major in Economics. This was May 1921.

At this time R. G. D. Richardson, Dean of Graduate Studies at Brown University, recommended me to the graduate school at Cornell for work at the Master's level and some teaching responsibilities in Mathematics.

Had they seen my formal academic record they would never have admitted me, much less allowed me to teach — my transcript showed only one course in calculus and one in analytical geometry.

So began my academic career. The neighbour, the organist and the Academic Dean all helped to make me what I am, because each recommended a new direction at one of my life's many crossroads.