

SCHOOL DAY

“Boys, time to get up”, it was mom yelling up the stairs at us to get out of bed and start getting ready for another school day. It was winter time and school Christmas break was over. I didn’t want to get out of bed that I shared w/my brother Todd as I was nice and warm under the quilts. We shared a large upstairs room, that had no heat except for an open grill in the floor with brothers Tom and Tim and I could hear them start getting up also. Now, we had 3 bedrooms upstairs but it was winter and folks closed one bedroom off so there was less to heat and when summer came around we went back to the 3 bedroom arrangement.



Farmhouse 1965

Once I was fully dressed for school I started my brisk walk down the cold hallway past my oldest brother Terry’s bedroom down the creaky wooden stairs to the overly large farm kitchen where my mother Ardith, stood tending to the big pot of malt-o- meal she was stirring over the corn cob stove we used to heat the kitchen. I envied my brother Terry (who hates Malt-O-Meal) that morning as he was having my favorite cereal, Cap’n Crunch.

I was thankful it wasn’t my turn to take the grey feed bucket and go out to the corn cob shed that was located right outside the back door and get another pail of corn cobs for the stove. I was always amazed at how much heat those burning corn cobs could throw off. But it was up to us 5 boys to always have a full bucket of corn cobs

ready for mom when she needed it since dad had already left for work at Dar’s Texaco station in town.

Once breakfast was done, we were allowed to go out in the living room where there was a big old oil burning stove doing its best to take the chill out of the air. Dad had taken bales of hay and put around the outside foundation of the house before winter to help keep the drafts out as well as putting plastic sheets over all the windows, and yet it seemed to have no effect on the arctic air spilling in that I could tell.

I walked into the living room and spread out on the floor in all its glory was our boys Christmas present from the folks. It was an Aurora electric race car set and we each had our own car. Now, we could only race two cars at a time and Tim and Tom were already duking it out on the track. We were very fortunate when the time came to put it away for a while as our Uncle, Richard Buchholz, who worked as a carpet layer at the downtown Jones Furniture Barn (now called Pipestone Interiors) had already built us a storage box to put it all in. As usual, the folks had planned ahead.



Our Aurora Racetrack

Since I couldn't race cars, I took a spot alongside my brother Todd on the couch and started watching Captain Kangaroo & Mr. Green Jeans on the B&W set. We were lucky during the winter we could pull in ABC out of Sioux City and watch "Felix the Cat" when we got home.

Mom was now reminding us boys to make sure we had all gone to the bathroom before we had to run out to meet the bus. This aspect of a morning routine might seem trivial now but back then things were different. When we first moved to the farm, we had a two-hole outhouse next to the garden as we had no running water. My very ingenious dad, Ed, modified an old lawn mower frame to haul cream cans down to the barn where the water hydrant was to get our water, no easy feat in the winter.

Dad had numerous discussions with the landlords to provide running water to the house and an arrangement was made with Billy Winter of Winter Construction to run a water line up to the house and put in a septic system for us. We now had running water and an inside bathroom, but no hot water. When it was bath time, mom would plug in a silver metal heater that was put in the water and heated it up.

None of us can remember how Billy Winter was paid for his hard work on the water line but later Billy brought out a horse named Lady & soon had a colt named Dynamite and put them out to pasture and they also had use of the barn.

Yes, we were slowly getting out of the Stone Age and now back to my story.

It was my brother Terry's turn to watch for the bus this morning. He was on one end of the couch peering out the back window straining his eyes looking thru the grove of trees to see the familiar blinking red & green lights of a school bus stopping at the Sundermeyer's farm across the road to pick up their 2 boys, Lee & Gary.

When the blinking lights were identified. Terry cried out "School Bus!" and like a well-trained commando unit we all knew instantly what to do. Hats, gloves, coats & book bags flew on each one of us and out the front door we went. We were running the 100-yard dash, down the driveway and up to the

highway to wait for bus #16 to pick us up next. Our 2 dogs, Chico & Ringo usually accompanied us. No snow drifts today to run through as when weather got bad the buses would not leave the highway to get you. Your parents brought you to the highway or you just had to stay home from school or walk in. Also, luckily it wasn't warm out so there were also no cattle to avoid in the yard as they were in the barn and no fresh cow pies to step on.



BUS DRIVERS: STANDING: Mr. Ludolph, Mrs. Ludolph, Mrs. Merrill, Mrs. Priester, Mr. Carstens, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Priester, Mr. Nelson. KNEELING: Mr. Raschke, Mr. S. Frick, Mr. D. Frick, Mr. D. Johnson, Mr. Hoogland.

My brother Terry told me, when it was warm we would wait for

the bus up on the road (Hwy 75) and stand there “like cattle in the stockyards“ until it was our turn to load.

Within minutes the bus was at our stop and the doors swung open allowing us to board, A familiar warm face smiled at us that morning. Our driver was Stella Ludolph and Stella greeted each one of us with a perky “Good Morning”. I have heard that there were some mornings that Stella, fresh off the hospital night shift would jump into a bus and start her morning route still dressed in her nurse uniform. Now the difficult task lay ahead, where to sit as you only had seconds to decide before someone yelled “sit down!”.

Since we were one of the last families to board, finding a spot to sit was slim pickings and you had to be careful who you sat in front of so you would not get picked on all the way to Central school. We all got seated quickly and next stop was O’Neil’s and then on to Wakefield’s. Normally after Wakefield’s the next stop was Central School, but today we had to go over and pick up a new family who had taken residence in the government housing at the Pipestone National Monument grounds.

The hill down to the government housing was very steep and we coasted down there to a stop to retrieve them. Unfortunately, getting the momentum to get back up the hill with a full load of students was quite the work out for the old orange bus, especially in the wintertime w/reduced traction, which provided some exciting driving exhibitions by the bus driver and entertainment for the students. Within a couple of days of this routine the kids had made up a chant to recite to help the bus get up the hill.

The rest of the ride to Central was very noisy with multiple conversations going on at once and some kids actually still trying to finish their homework before the arrival time. My brother Tim told me Stan Atkins & himself would discuss politics. The older rowdy kids usually had the back of the bus to apply their mischief.

Other families who rode the bus included, the Petersens, Paulsens, Einck, Greenhoff, Werner ,Moeller, Hulzebos, Lopau & Dubbelde to name of few.

One particular incident that I will never forget was one morning on the way to Central we were going under the underpass and there was a police car behind us that suddenly turned his lights on, and our bus driver pulled over. Bob Ludolph was our driver that day and he opened the front bus doors to let the police officer on board. Turns out some of the boys in back were giving the officer the finger thru the back window and the officer was not amused.

The officer started lecturing everyone on board about proper behavior and after a few minutes he exited the bus and the boys in back started laughing. Now Bob (a big man) stood up and started walking



Unloading at Central

to the back of the bus and it became so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Bob started his lecturing and when he was finished there was no giggling or laughing and not a peep out of anyone all the way to Central.

Our arrival at Central was well planned out in advance. Our parking spot was located, and teachers were standing there to help direct the unloading of passengers to their correct locations. This memory reminds me of the "sorting hat" in the Harry Potter movies. I merely got off one bus and on to another that would bring me over to Dr. Brown Elementary School that was next to the Juba's Super Valu store. I believe this was bus #2. My brother Todd and myself went to Brown, while my other 3

brothers stayed at Central. Once we were all loaded it was off to Dr. Brown with no worries about finding a seat on this trip.

After the end of the school day, we were loaded back on another bus to take us from Dr. Brown back over to Central again. I can't recall what this bus # was again but it again had a different number. Back at Central depending on what day it was we would get on another different bus to take us home. One route was with bus #33 that went a more westward route around the town, and we were one of the last to get off and the other route maybe #9 nicknamed "stubnose" because of its flat front end design would be dropping us off first on his route.

So, depending on the day I would ride 4 different buses a day. A book could be written about all the stories of the kids when riding the bus and about their bus drivers who played such an important role in bringing the students safely to and home from school every day.

We lived on the farmstead, ¼ mile north of town on HWY #75 from 1964- 1968 and although the farm buildings have been gone for many years, the memories still live on. Like the unforgettable sound of the clicking of bus windows, I also will never forget the adventures and stories of growing up with my 4 brothers.



Texley Boys:
Front L to R: Tony, Terry, Todd.
Back: Tim, Tom.