

1969 in South Dakota

By Cindy Peters

Yes, I was one of millions of people huddled with our families watching our American astronauts walk on the moon for the first time on our black and white Motorola TV set. We thought it was the most exciting part of our lives.

The television also brought us horrible news of the Manson family and the brutal murders and yearlong court trials. It was said that those murders brought an end to the hippie movement. Television news reports showed us violence in the streets and race wars. 1969 brought our nation the music festival Woodstock. The cult film *Easy Rider* was made in 1969. The theater brought us the Western movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Burt Bacharach wrote the song, "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head."

Another exciting time in our household was when we lost our party line phone system. It was so wonderful to be able to have lengthy phone conversations without interruptions or eaves droppers.

1969 was also my last year of Elementary School. I remember experiencing the worst winter of my life in eastern South Dakota. We had record amount of blizzards with weeks of school cancellation as the snow plows could not keep up with the amount of snowfall. When there was school in session I walked six blocks to school in 20 below temperatures wearing my miniskirts. It was the last year there was a school-enforced dress code in which girls were required to wear skirts or dresses to school. Most of us girls did not wear pants under dresses to face the humiliation of having to take off our pants in the coat room in front of everyone.

I remember a blizzard that covered our white ranch-style home from basement to roof. Our home looked like a giant igloo. We had to boil water to thaw out the ice and snow in order to be able to dig ourselves out of our home. We broke a door and a window in the process. It was the most claustrophobic feeling with our home covered in a blanket of darkness and not being able to see out into the world.

The exciting part of that winter was when we would bring out sleds to the local sandpit and pretend we were Evil Kenevil performing death defying stunts. We would also shovel snow off the river and ice skate across. We girls pretended to be ice skating champion Peggy Fleming and the boys pretended to be hockey stars.

I looked forward to going to school when the walk was bearable. My favorite class was gym. However, girls' sports was only in its infancy in our school. For example, in gym when we played girls basketball we could only play half court, as running the whole court was considered too taxing for a female. South Dakota patterned it after Iowa girls' basketball. If you played offense you were on the half court that made all the shots in which the defensive court side was unable to do.

As 1969 was coming to a close my classmates and I were looking forward to 1970 with great anticipation. We would be entering Junior High School which is now called Middle School. We were so happy knowing we would have different classes with a variety of teachers. We would

have sport events and dances. Yes, good-bye 1969 as it was good while it lasted. However, we were leaving behind recess and childish things. We were becoming teenagers and oh boy we couldn't wait!