

Early School Days Memories

By Hap Hansen

On September first, 1940, I entered grade school. There was no Kindergarten there, so I started in first grade at age five. There were only six other students in that country school, all boys, and all older than I.

I recall having lots of help from the older students during tests and as a five-year-old, I also got lots of attention from my teacher, Miss Lois Studley. How many of you remember the name of your first grade teacher?

The one-room school had a wood and coal fired pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room and I recall that it turned cherry-red when it got hot.

In those days, most boys quit school after the 8th grade in order to work on their parent's farm or ranch. Many girls only went to school for the first few grades. All three of my oldest siblings only went through the 8th grade. My next oldest brother finished high school and went to college. My younger brother and I completed high school and college.

Many of us consider those with only an 8th grade education as being uneducated. That may be true today, but it wasn't in the 30's and 40's. Today, an 8th grade and even a high school education wouldn't get many very far in our computerized, technological world. Back in those days, one had to correctly answer some various and difficult questions to be able to go on to high school. A few examples:

- What are the parts of speech and define those that have no modifications.
- Define verse, stanza and paragraph.
- Write a 150 word composition using the rules of grammar.
- Relate the causes and results of the Revolutionary War.
- Who were the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn and Howe?
- What is climate?
- Upon what does climate depend?
- Name all the Republics of Europe and give the Capital of each.

A tough exam for 8th graders. I wonder how many of us educated folks could pass that exam today?

The next time you meet an old-timer with just an 8th grade education, give them some respect.

My early school memories also show that even as a young man, when I met a lady on the sidewalk, I stood up straighter, pushed out my chest, sucked in my stomach and smiled. This continued well into my 60's and 70's. Last Wednesday was my 81st birthday. Today, when I meet a lady on the sidewalk, I'm already standing as tall as I possibly can, my chest refuses to expand and my stomach will no longer recede! All that remains today is a tip of the cap and a smile!