

Ed Memmott – June 2008 – Alumni Dinner Speech for Class of 1958

We thank the Alumni Association for this fine and free dinner and the opportunity to speak for the Little Valley Central School Class of 1958.

The class of 1958 started kindergarten in September of 1945. WWII was over. We were born before the US entered the war but after it had started in Asia and Europe.

All of our parents had been through the Great Depression. My father was born before the First World War, in a house on 8th Street in Little Valley. My father came back to Little Valley to teach in 1933. He probably taught many of our parents. My mother taught in Little Valley from 1936 to 1939, so she too could have taught some of our parents.

During the war my father became the Principal, taught English and Latin, and was the basketball coach. He had a very decent two-handed set-shot.

During WWII my Dad had a large Victory garden and raised chickens. I remember my Mom adding coloring into oleomargarine. Vitamins came from the cod liver oil that she fed us; if you knew her you knew you had to take it. Flintstones are much more palatable.

Some of our fathers worked in the war effort: Dick Williams' father worked at the Curtiss-Wright airplane plant in Buffalo. Ann Young's father worked at Kinfolks in Little Valley, where they made bayonets.

In the 1945 yearbook my Father wrote to the Class of 1945

“You are the fourth class to graduate from L. V. C.S. during the war; it is my fervent hope that you will be the last, and that you will never have to suffer the agony of battle that so many of your fellow alumni have suffered.”

63 years later, and many wars in-between, last night's graduates from CLVCS still face the prospect of battle.

Kindergarten, 1945-6: The wonderful Mrs. Harder was our teacher. Our class was the first kindergarten class. I am sure that my Mom told my Dad that Ed had to get out of the house. My brother Jim was 3 and my sister Elizabeth had been born in March that year. There were a lot of happy Moms.

I remember chucking a milk carton across the room at somebody.

The 1958 Yearbook was dedicated to Mrs. Harder. It said "Her understanding and guidance and patience will long be remembered and appreciated by those who were fortunate to have her for a teacher."

First grade, 1946-7: Miss Skoczylas was our teacher. There were 30 in the class. I chipped a tooth playing eraser tag. Mrs. Bartow, the music teacher, made me stand in the hall for singing. I had tried to sing loudly and she thought I was acting up, she just did not know how bad a singer I was.

Second grade, 1947-48: Mrs. Eighme was our teacher. She was really nice.

Third grade, 1948-49: Mrs. Backus was our teacher. She was nice too.

Fourth grade, 1949-50: Miss Hoggan was our teacher. I tripped Burma Dunkleman Skinner as she came back to her desk. Out in the hall I went, in great fear that my Dad would see me, he did like to roam the halls.

Fifth grade, 1950-51: Mrs. Currie was our teacher. There were 32 of us in the grade. She encouraged everyone to bring pickles. Somebody put caps under chair legs and the caps went off when the people sat down.

Sixth grade, 1951-52: I was with Mrs. Smith in the combined 5th 6th grade. The other sixth graders had Mrs. Miller, whom stood outside the boy's rest room with her hand on the door making sure that the boys behaved.

We went on a field trip to Carl Fuss's farm. One of our class, I will blame Dick Leccardone, suggested that we have a cattle drive. Carl did not appreciate the ensuing stampede of his milking cows. We had to write a letter of apology to him, the school board Treasurer. That was our last field trip.

We had things that my grandchildren are never allowed to have, cap guns, BB guns, and bows and arrows. I even assembled my own knives from the Kinfolks scrap heap.

Radio was our first entertainment medium. My brother Jim and I would listen to the Lone Ranger at 7 and then we had to go to sleep.

The first TV program I saw was the Milton Berle show, with the Adams family at their 8th Street home.

At the Memmott household we did not get a TV until the Presidential election of 1952. My Dad was a Democrat, he voted for Stevenson and not Eisenhower.

He had a TV installed in the auditorium of the school for the World Series and would bring in shows for the school. I remember a marionette show. I am pretty sure it would not wow the TV and Internet generations.

Allen Velie's parents Ken and Olive led our Cub Scout den.

There were school bus trips to Red House Lake in the summer. What a great thing for a school to do. Coach Newhouse and Ruth Harvey gave us swimming lessons.

The only funny thing we ever smoked was corn silk, it tasted pretty awful.

Seventh grade, 1952-53: The beloved Mrs. Milks was our homeroom teacher. Her garage was in home run territory of our baseball games in the skating rink. She covered the back windows with chicken wire. Ron Adams' brother Don could hit a ball a mile, all the way to 7th Street.

Mrs. Hale, who taught art, retired after having to deal with the boys in our class. I don't know how the girls in our class put up with the boys.

Eighth grade, 1953-54: Mrs. Sharpe was our homeroom teacher. There were 44 students in our 8th grade class. We had a real eighth grade graduation; the girls dressed in fine style.

There were roller skating nights in the new gym. I can't believe that any school lawyer would allow them now.

Halloween at the Principal's house at 413 Fair Oaks was an adventure. One Halloween I heard some squeaking on my second floor window and I looked out and somebody was soaping the window with a bar of soap on a pole. All kinds of garbage would turn up on the lawn, even a dead hawk!

High school years, 1954-58:

Mr. Keenan taught us history and Spanish. In his first year of teaching, our freshmen year, he told a couple of jokes to set us at ease. Dick Leccardone chimed in with a joke. Mr. Keenan assured us that he was going to be the only joker in that room and disciplined him.

Mr. Keenan was our JV basketball coach. One half time he called us a bunch of ham and egggers and said if we were basketball players then he was the president of the United States. The same joker replied thank you Mr. President and got it again.

Miss Critchlow taught Plane Geometry and this introduced proofs. She had us go the board to work them out.

Mrs. Willard taught science. She wanted to create a white marigold. I think she tried a poison called colchicine, to see if it would cause a mutation to the seeds. It did not work.

Mr. Krug taught science and math and at basketball practice showed us how the game should be played. Mrs. Krug taught typing. I can still touch-type on the computer keyboard.

My Dad taught Latin and was the school truant officer. One time he got in the school station wagon and rounded up Dick Milks, who was heading for the hills New Albion way.

Ed Jedrzejek was in charge of the Future Farmers and taught us Drivers Ed. The big test was to start the standard shift car from a dead stop halfway up Mill St. in the middle of the winter.

Mrs. Rogan, now Mrs. Wood, taught Home Ec.

Pete Newhouse was the varsity coach. He had great football and basketball teams before us. Our senior year there were only 3 seniors each on those teams from the yearbook photos. It was a rebuilding year and the yearbook did not print the records, I think they were pretty bad.

The years with great basketball players like the Gerwitz brothers, George Tennies, Don Krug, Tom Fuss, Wayne Ellis, the Kuhaneck brothers, and from the class before us, Ken Marsh, had come and gone.

We had record hops in the cafeteria. The stroll was a popular dance.

For our Senior Trip we went to New York City by train from Buffalo. My Father and Mrs. Milks were the chaperones. We visited the UN, saw a musical “Little Abner”, and a movie “Bridge on the River Kwai.”

I roomed with Ron Adams and Jim Ruper. We called some classmates room and pretended to be the hotel detectives and said we were coming right up. Then we ran to see the mass evacuation. I assume something suspicious had been going on.

We went on from high school, before hand-held calculators and home and lap top computers. Some of us have adapted to the computer age.

I am at the end of my stories, it has been pretty much a boy’s view, but school was not all mischief and colorful tales.

After graduation we found that this little school in this beloved Little Valley had prepared us for the life to come.

We remember those in our class whom have passed away, Judy Parkhurst Pauley, John Leyda, Terry Perkins, Dick Leccardone, Ron “Bud” West, and Wilber “Bud” Gallup. We miss them.

We are glad that the Alumni Association hosts this event, where we can renew the friendships we made at Little Valley Central School.