

hands of two children on the opposing team. If she broke through, she got to take a child back to her team; if she failed, she had to become part of that team. The team with the most children at the end of the playing time won. I almost never was able to break through, but almost always was broken through by the other team. My wrists hurt just to think about it.

I remember one humiliating moment when I was the ringleader of a bunch of kids rolling down the small hill in back of the school. I saw Mrs. Landon looking at us out the window, but didn't realize that anything was wrong. When we came in, Mrs. Landon scolded me because I had encouraged the smaller children to get their clothes dirty. It had not crossed my mind that this could be a problem because my mother didn't seem to mind if we got dirty. Now I realize that mothers were overburdened with work and that there was probably a pretty severe clothing shortage in many of the homes.

There were times when getting dirty definitely was an issue with my mother. In the spring when the snow melted, the road down to the school would be more or less a river of mud. We loved to play in it, diverting water into streams by digging channels with sticks. Mother insisted that I wear my boots. I have always hated to have my feet confined, so I would take off my boots part way to school and hide them in the ditch to put back on, on the way home. I remember wondering how my mother always knew that I'd taken them off. One spring, my grandfather broke his shoulder blade and our family had to move to his farm for a while to help with the chores. That meant I could walk to school with my best friend, Harold Clark. The Cowslips were in full bloom in the swamp on our route home from school. Every day, Harold's mother Elise and my mother and grandmother would tell us not to go into the swamp to pick Cowslips. Every day Harold would see some Cowslips near the road that he was convinced were on solid ground. Every day we arrived home muddy to our knees with droopy bunches of Cowslips for our mothers and grandmother.

As in our parents' day, children were called up by class to the recitation bench for lessons. The other children were expected to work quietly in their seats. This didn't work equally well for all children and occasionally there would be what felt like an explosion as some child would be pulled from his seat and hauled to the front of the room. David Tacia recalls that the back of his hand got it with a ruler sometimes when he and his friend Johnny would get too "busy." Mrs. Landon did try, however, to find activities for us. She had a box full of little match-like colored sticks and sometimes would put a handful on each smaller child's desk for the child to make designs. At other times she would put a gob of white paste on a slip of paper for each of us and give us colored paper scraps or seed catalogs to make pictures. On nice days, she sometimes let the smaller children go out to play by themselves. There were 44 children in grades K-7 the last year that McDonald was a separate school. Having taught school myself, I can't imagine what it must have been like trying to keep some kind of order and still meet all of those children's needs.

I was mostly a pretty good student and liked schoolwork, but Penmanship and Spelling were my nemeses. Try as I might, I could not master those loops and slanting lines with my arm not touching the paper. My hand always got smeared with lead or ink and my writing was terrible. It still is. My brother John had an even harder time because he is left-handed and his teachers didn't understand that he should tilt his paper in the opposite direction. I also dreaded spelling bees because I had a hard time with spelling. I usually managed to get through the first two or three rounds so wasn't too humiliated when I had to sit down. Francis claims that he usually "went down" on round one. Kathryn remembers the humility of her first spelling test. Since she could read, she thought she would automatically be able to spell all the words. She "missed" almost all of them. After that, she studied. She also remembers that Patsy Pierce was an excellent speller and usually took and got all the words right on the spelling tests for all of the grades above hers as well as her own grade. I'm still "spelling disabled" and am grateful that I can write on a computer and use spell-check.

Teaching aids were in short supply at the McDonald School. A few years after I started school we got something called "Hectographs" (I'm not sure of the spelling). These were framed flat boxes filled with a kind of gel onto which a sheet of paper could be pressed. The teacher would write something with a special indelible pen on a paper and then would press the paper onto the gel. She also had some pre-made pictures that she could use. Then blank paper was pressed on the gel and the lesson or picture copied onto it. Someone working quickly could get about twenty copies made before the ink began to sink into the gel. The Hectograph couldn't be used again until the ink had completely settled. I think the school had two Hectographs. Making copies was a task that children could do and it was a treat to be called on to be a copier.

When I was in the second grade, we got our first workbooks. My Dad was on the school board when the decision to purchase workbooks was made. Some board members felt that it was a waste of money to buy supplies that could be used only once. However, Daddy and others argued that Mrs. Landon was overworked and that it would help her if she didn't have to make up all of the lessons by herself. I can't remember for sure what the first workbooks were for, but I think it may have been Geography. I do remember how excited I was anticipating them, as Daddy had told me they were coming.

Holidays remained big events. Usually some parents helped with the Halloween Party, which was probably the hardest to control. All of the children had homemade costumes and paraded around the room in them. Then they played parlor games organized by the teacher. One year the party had already started when a Drunk (Elise Clark) came running into the schoolroom pursued by a Policeman brandishing a block of wood for a Billy Club (my Mother). They had a great time running all around the desks and doing a lot of hollering. The older children loved it, but they scared the daylights out of some of the smaller children, so they didn't repeat that act.

Preparing for the Christmas Program consumed most of the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Again, parents helped with costumes for dialogs and pageants. One year Kathryn, who by then was in high school, suggested to Mrs. Landon that we could have a drill of fairies in crepe paper dresses instead of the usual angels. Mrs. Landon agreed. Kathryn and Mother set out to make all of the dresses, which turned out to be a bigger project than they anticipated, but they got it done. Mine was lime green and I later wore it to play Tighrope Walker on the end of my bed until it fell apart. (My Tighrope Walker name was Miss Malatova.)

Every child had to have one speaking part either by saying a poem or participating in a dialog. I was painfully shy and can still hear Mrs. Landon telling me that I had to speak louder. On the big night, we lined up from the smallest to the largest and marched onto the stage in an elaborate zigzag pattern to sing our first song. I was a slow grower and had to be the smallest two years in a row, and was embarrassed that as a first-grader I had to lead the march ahead of Kindergarten children who were bigger than me. Mrs. Landon played the same bouncy march every year and most children who went to school with her can still hum the tune, though they don't know that the name of the march is General Grant's Grand March.¹² With the children all dressed in their best clothes and the lights out except for the stage and the Christmas tree, which now had electric lights, the whole event felt like magic. If parents wanted them to, smaller brothers and sisters not yet in school were also allowed to participate. Kathryn said a poem when she was four. She was half-asleep by the time she was called on, but someone lifted her onto the stage and she recited her poem. Later she insisted she had not been given a chance to perform.

If families could manage, their children had new "outfits" for the Christmas program. During WWII, patriotism ran high, so Mother made Kathryn and me matching sailor dresses to honor our two uncles in the Navy. We were ten and five at the time. The dresses were quite elaborate with braid

¹² Mrs. Landon revealed the name of the march in an interview after she retired.

and stars on the sailor collars and military trim on the sleeves. Mother ran right up to the last minute getting them finished and was still pressing them while our Dad paced up and down in his suit, waiting to take us to the program. The real fashion coup was that we had red long stockings. Typically, little girls wore brown stockings for every day and white stockings for dress up. Kathryn thinks our red stocking were the first colored stockings in the neighborhood. They certainly were the first we had.

The children would have drawn names and, at the end of the program, gifts were distributed. We each also received a gift from our teacher, usually something we could use in school like pencils embossed with our names, a box of colored pencils or a small coloring book. Each family also usually gave a gift to the teacher. I've often wondered how many lovely handkerchiefs Mrs. Landon ultimately owned. Then Santa Claus arrived. Usually he was dressed in someone's old fur coat and had a mask with a beard. He wasn't at all believable, but we chose to believe anyway. In fact, when he was about four, brother John reported that he saw Santa's reindeer parked behind the Norwegian School waiting to take Santa back to the North Pole. Santa brought boxes or small bags of candy for all of the children in the school and the audience. Each box contained exactly the same number of peanuts, hard candy and chocolate drops. The number of chocolate drops varied according to how much money the school board had to spend, but usually was two or three. I remember one year seeing my father and Everett Alstrom at our kitchen table carefully counting out the treats and filling the boxes. Children in our time did not get much candy so it was important that everyone was treated equally. Most families went to both the McDonald and Norwegian School programs and also to the Presbyterian and Lutheran Church Christmas programs. That meant four boxes of candy to horde and eat sparingly.

A somewhat scary day at school was the dreaded visit by the county doctor and nurse. The teacher kept a record of all children's vaccinations and sent a permission slip home a few days before this visit for the parents to request whatever shots the child needed. I always tried to convince my mother not to sign the slip, but of course I was no more successful in this effort than any of the other children in the school. Several parents usually were recruited to help on this day. Elise Clark always came because Ruthie, who was rather frail, nearly always fainted. (Ruthie died at the young age of 34 of a brain aneurism.) Our mother was usually there. The doctor and nurse would give all of the children a mini-exam, checking their heart and lungs, looking at their teeth, and giving eye and hearing exams. I remember the envy I felt when the doctor called the nurse over to look at Shirley Bushey's "perfect" teeth, since my mouth was full of fillings. Then we would all be lined up to get the dreaded shots. We were also given Tuberculosis tests. Francis recalls a time when parents as well as children were lined up for Smallpox vaccinations. He says there was a lot of crying. He also remembers that one of his boy friends unexpectedly fainted. At the visit's end, a note would be sent home to all parents reporting any findings that needed attention. By the time brother John was in school, shots were no longer dispensed, but the eye and hearing exams were still given. That is how my parents learned that John, then in the third grade, was profoundly near-sighted.

The winter of 1947 was the hardest we had in a number of years. It seemed to storm every weekend and Kathryn and Francis missed high school a lot of Mondays because the school bus was not able to get through. My Dad finally began leaving our car out on US 23 and walking the two miles out and back morning and evening so that he would not miss work. People who lived farther away from US 23 were simply snowed in because the county plows could not keep up and finally resorted to just keeping the main roads open.¹³ Every spring, the day the "thaw broke" was

¹³ Francis says that on March 4 our Dad, who was very "tuned in" to weather conditions, sniffed the air and said that a big storm was coming. We already had a larger amount of snow than usual on the ground. Dad took our car to a spot on the top of the hill that usually stayed bare. The next morning, he jerked Francis out of bed at about 6:00 a.m. to help him free the car. The snow was coming down so fast, they barely got it free. It snowed 36 inches in 48 hours, with a driving

always exciting because the rapidly melting snow would create small rivers everywhere. One day that spring, Mrs. Landon dismissed the younger children early as usual. About 20 minutes later, the children heading south toward Swede road returned wide-eyed, frightened and wet. A larger-than-usual fast-running stream was pouring across the road. The children had attempted to get across by walking near the edge of the road. The fast-running water knocked Jackie Pierce into the ditch where he was unable to fight the current. Mary Pierce, Jackie's sister, says she remembers that two of them were holding Jackie's hands and he swept away from them. Mel Bushey, who was also young but a sturdier child, jumped in and somehow managed to pull Jackie out. I asked David Tacia if he remembered the event. He said, "Yes. I was in first grade and I was scared." Mrs. Landon dismissed the older children and had the larger boys carry the smaller children across the "river," watching them all until they were safely on the other side. At the time, I was in the fourth grade, so these older boys seemed big to me. Now I realize that they were only eleven or twelve years old themselves. This incident became the talk at supper tables around the community and shortly after a big drainage pipe was put under the road to prevent further occurrences.

Besides attending the Christmas program at the Norwegian School, families in our district went to other events there. There were occasional dances held there, with a record player providing music. Kathryn says that was where Daddy taught her to dance. Sometimes a movie would be shown in the evening with a small admission fee and there were "socials" serving strawberry shortcake or some other seasonal treat to raise money for "extras." My Dad usually knew and was interested in everything going on in the community, so when he heard that the Wills brothers, Fred and Harold, were putting a new tile floor in the Norwegian School, he went over to take a look. Getting a tile floor was in itself a big deal, as both schools had wide plank wooden floors that I don't believe were finished. This tile floor was really special because the brothers had cut out silhouettes of deer and other local wild animals and inlaid them in the floor just in front of the recitation bench.

In July of 1947, I came home from a two-week visit to Aunt Helen Vicary to learn that the McDonald School was being moved over to the Norwegian School in order to make a three-room school. I've since learned that the two districts, Caledonia #1 and Caledonia #2 had consolidated in 1939 in order to buy a school bus to transport grade 8-12 students to Alpena. The community had also been discussing a consolidated grade school for some time and had even considered building a new school in Spruce. However, moving the McDonald School was the least expensive way of getting a three-room school, since there were two rooms that could be used as classrooms at the Norwegian School.¹⁴ At the time, however, I didn't know any of this and I was devastated. Moreover, I was furious with my parents because they had not only agreed to the plan, they had promoted it! I couldn't imagine riding on a school bus, being in school with children I didn't know, or having any other teacher than Mrs. Landon. My parents assured me that there were other good teachers and that I would be fine. Of course, they were right, but at the time I wasn't so sure. The McDonald School was put on rollers and began its long trip down Swede Road. When my Dad would come home from work and we would all hop in the car and go to see where the school was. I don't know how long it took to move the building, but had to go about five miles. Unfortunately, we didn't have a camera and so far no one has been able to find a picture of the move. The McDonald School was attached to the north and slightly back of the main Norwegian School building. A kind

wind that left huge banks. The bank across our front yard was so high we couldn't see the road and there was another between the house and the barn. The power was out for seven days. The high school bus was caught in a drift that ran across Spruce Village from the hardware to Gillard's store. Small planes on skis brought in food for people who were completely isolated. Our road, which was the main road to Spruce, was too clogged for the plows to break through. (Plows were also not as powerful in those days.) Finally, a group of men came walking by with shovels, gathering up volunteers as they came. Francis went, and Dad joined the crew when he came back from work planning to again leave his car on US 23. They used round-nosed shovels to break through the packed snow. When they got the drifts partly dug down, a snow plow would ram the pile. It took them all day to get the two miles from US 23 to our house. The high school students missed school for most of March.

¹⁴ Per research done by David Tacia.

of hallway ran across the back of the Norwegian School connecting to the back of small older Norwegian School and the McDonald School that held bathrooms for the McDonald and smaller Norwegian classrooms. The newer Norwegian classroom retained its original boys and girls cloakrooms with flush toilets and running water sinks. The furnace room was behind the hallway. The hallway also held a wonderful new piece of technology: a vacuum machine to clean chalkboard erasers. There must have been water fountains, but I don't remember them.

Caledonia District #1 opened in the fall of 1947. Geneva McCoy (Curly) taught K-2 in the original Norwegian School building; Violet Gunderson Rasmussen taught grades 3-5 in what had been the McDonald School and Christina Landon taught 6-8 in what had been the main Norwegian School. As I recall, the desks in the 3-5 room were still the variety that bolted to the floor, but the desks in the other two rooms were self-contained units with metal frames, swivel seats and a top that opened upward. They seemed very "modern" to me.

At that time, school buses in Michigan were painted in broad horizontal red, white and blue stripes. Other states were already using yellow buses and we smugly felt more patriotic. Everett Alstrom was our first bus driver. He was a comforting presence and once in awhile had a bucket of chocolate drops, one for each of us as we boarded the bus. On Thursdays, he let the fifth-grade girls off at Gunda Ghiata's house for our 4-H sewing lessons. Then our parents would come for us. Later both Alan (Kewpie) and Gordon Dahl were bus drivers on the elementary route.

Violet Rasmussen proved to be a very good teacher and the year went well. The only crisis for me was the day someone¹⁵ put a live worm in my puff sleeve. I don't know why I was afraid of worms, but I was, and I got absolutely hysterical. I remember Mrs. Rasmussen getting the worm out and trying to calm me down. I also remember that Mrs. Rasmussen once had to scold her son Jerry for something and he put his head down and cried. I felt sorry for both of them. For some reason, we didn't have any warning that year that the school photographer was coming. Usually, I insisted that my mother curl my hair for these special events. My fifth-grade picture has me in pigtails, which is how I wore my hair to school most of the time. It's the only pigtail picture I have and it's my favorite. Mrs. Landon was still teaching grades 6-8 when I moved into the sixth grade. By then we had begun getting *Weekly Readers*, small newspapers with current events. Usually about an hour on Friday afternoon was devoted to the *Weekly Reader*. I think I must have listened in on other classes a lot, because I remember learning many pieces of history and government from Mrs. Landon, such as how the Electoral College works and about the Immigration Bill of 1921 (which I thought wasn't fair). I also learned to diagram sentences.

That is also the first year that I remember having A-Bomb drills. At a signal from our teacher, all children were to get under their desks and tuck their heads down and cover them with our arms. This was supposed to protect us in the case of an atomic bomb attack. Being easily frightened, I asked my parents about the likelihood of an attack on Spruce. They wisely told me that we lived a long way from a big city, carefully leaving out the fact that we lived only thirty miles from the Strategic Air Command base, Wurtsmith Field, in Oscoda.¹⁶

These drills were still occurring when David Tacia was in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. A. J. Anderson was his teacher. David liked to listen to Edward R. Murrow on the radio. Using what

¹⁵ My two best friends at the time, Beverly Wilcox and Kathleen Hammermeister, both deny responsibility. Bev says she would remember anything bad she did. Kathleen says she would never have had the courage to do anything like that.

¹⁶ During these years, jets and other planes, were in the sky over the community most of the time. There were few restrictions on Air Force pilots during that time, so we frequently saw "air shows" of loop-the-loops over our house. Pilots were also known to buzz fishermen on the lakes and once some pilots on a dare flew their planes under the Singing Bridge in Oscoda with only inches to spare on each wing. I think I recall that they were disciplined for that stunt, but for most part, pilots were golden and did what they pleased while practicing maneuvers.

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he learned from that radio show, he questioned the validity of the A-bomb drills, among other pieces of information imparted by Mr. Anderson. This did not sit well and that marking period David earned all A's in his academic work but a zero in "respecting authority." David says it's the only report card he has kept. Mr. Anderson also told David, "your mother was the smartest student I ever had, and you're the dumbest."

The next year, my seventh grade, Mrs. Landon moved to the 3-5 room and Don Rasmussen, fresh out of County Normal was hired to teach 6-8. Don was related to many of the students in the class (he was our Dad's step-nephew) so we called him Donnie. He was also the first "modern" teacher we had. He found it sad that these country kids knew so little about nature, so there were hikes in the woods behind the school and down to the creek at the corner of School and Swede Roads. For English, he had us reading short stories and writing stories of our own. He wanted us to develop our imaginations. We thought he was wonderful. Part way through the year, he asked me if I would like to draw up an alphabetical list, by title, of all of the "library" books in the room. That was the first time I realized that books could/should be organized to make finding them easier. I had a wonderful time doing the list. The only problem was that I didn't realize that the titles starting with "A" and "The" didn't go under "A" and "T." Donnie quite kindly said that the list was fine but the next time I had such an assignment, I should remember that the first word for alphabetizing purposes would be the word after the "A" or "The." He assured me that I didn't need to redo the list, but of course I did.

There were two emergencies at the school that year. During the winter we iced a long patch on the driveway next to the school and used it to slide down on trays, cardboard boxes, or whatever we could find to slide on. One day Harold Clark collided with another slider and broke his two front teeth off at the gum line. Then later in the spring, there was a "boom" outside the classroom shortly after we came in from recess. An eighth-grader had hung back and lit a firecracker. He didn't throw it fast enough and the firecracker exploded in his hand. He didn't lose any fingers, but his hand was badly shredded. In both cases, I remember how upset the teachers were and know that the students were taken for medical help, but I don't know how. We still didn't have phones at that time.

In my eighth-grade year, Donnie moved to the 3-5 classroom, Mrs. Landon moved to K-2, and Alfred Anderson was hired to teach 6-8. That was the most boring year of my entire school career. Part of the problem was that Mr. Anderson was near the end of his teaching career and probably had grown tired of teaching. English class reverted to students taking turns reading aloud from a fairly antiquated text while Mr. Anderson fought off drowsiness. The nature trips were gone. I don't think we did any writing except for grammar sentences. The hardest for me was that Mr. Anderson was vocal about his disdain for a college education. He didn't think it was necessary. This attitude was not unusual for those times, but I badly wanted to go to college, so found this upsetting. When I told my parents about it, they said it would be best to ignore the remarks and not say anything. I think I also missed listening in on classes of older students. I did learn from Mr. Anderson how to add columns of numbers very quickly in my head by estimating. That is a skill I still use. I can't resist adding that Mr. Anderson had two identical pairs of slacks that he wore on alternate days. We knew there were two pairs because one of the pairs had a weak zipper that had to be adjusted periodically throughout the day.

David Tacia remembers the arithmetic contests that Mr. Anderson used to hold, with students in teams racing to put answers to complicated problems on the board. David also remembers that Mr. Anderson read beautifully and could often be persuaded to read poetry to the class. Even the most restless children were quiet and enjoyed listening to him read *Evangeline*, *Hiawatha* and other favorite narrative poems. Sometimes the reading would last most of the afternoon with the children quietly listening.

Near the end the eighth grade year, the class went on an eighth-grade graduation trip, planned and led by Mr. Anderson, to the Sault Saint Marie locks in Canada. There must have been another adult along because there were ten of us and we went by car, but I don't know who that was. Beverly Wilcox and I were the only girls. We stayed over night in a motel. All of this was a very big event as none of us had traveled beyond going to visit relatives. At some other time, we went by bus on a day trip to the Au Sable River and the Lumberman's Monument.

Brother John started Kindergarten at Caledonia District #1 in 1948. There are twelve years between Francis and John, so perhaps Mother forgot Francis' first day at school. In any event, against his wishes, "the women in his life" (Mother, Kathryn and me) sent John off on his first day in a cute little navy blue sun suit and yellow shirt that Kathryn made in 4-H. He arrived home a bundle of red-headed rage. "I was the only kid in short pants! Even Art Olson had overalls on!" He went to school the next day in his beat-up Grandpa Piper-style bib overalls, while Mother made a quick trip to Alpena to buy him blue jeans.

John's first teacher was Miss McCoy, who was young and who John thought was quite wonderful. He remembers reading *Dick and Jane* with Miss McCoy tracing under the words with very long red fingernails. John always reported the events of the day from his 5-year-old point of view. I remember that he frequently talked about Miss McCoy's fingernails and how glamorous they were. One early spring day, he reported that Clarice Hawkins had gotten stuck in the mud on the playground and had to be lifted out by her armpits.

While John was still in the K-2 classroom, Clarice developed Type 1 Diabetes. Diabetes was hard to control in those days and John remembers emergencies when Clarice would have spells because her insulin levels would get out of control. For school picnics, Clarice and her mother would work out her diet so that she could have one dessert. Clarice would spend a long time looking at the heavily laden dessert table trying to decide which would be hers. John also remembers late in their elementary schools days a field trip when Clarice excitedly showed everyone her can of pop. Diet pop had just been developed and she could bring along a can of pop like all of the other children.

Another child in John's classroom was the only American Indian child in the school. One day she had a seizure. John had grown up seeing our Aunt Helen have seizures because of the epilepsy she developed during the Flu Pandemic of 1919. Nonetheless, he and his classmates concluded among themselves that this little girl's seizure was because she was an Indian.

The Parent-Teacher Organization was very active trying to improve conditions for children in Caledonia Township. People belonged to the PTA whether or not they had children in school. I recall that retired Hubbard Lake folks Ray and Lou Chamberlain, among others, belonged. The meetings always had some kind of program before they got down to the business of the day. I can still see my Mother and Elise Clark practicing a play when it was their turn to do the program. The play was about someone attempting to propose to his sweetheart while reading the proposal from a book. Elise played the girl and Mother, the man. The girl kept referring to "my fiancée" and the man kept trying to get on his knees and read, "Dear Matilda, or whatever the name may be." They both collapsed into fits of giggles.

A major PTA project was to put a kitchen in the Caledonia School. Mother had always been concerned about the nutrition of the children in the area, since most of us were really poor. She spent hours at our kitchen table drawing diagrams of the entryway to the McDonald School part of the building, trying to figure out how to fit a school kitchen into it. I suspect that the district was able to get a grant for the kitchen, but I don't know that for sure. John remembers that our Dad and Uncle Arthur Piper did much of the work installing it. With a kitchen, the school could get surplus food and could serve nutritious hot lunches. Mother was the cook for a while. There was always a lot of surplus flour that Mother couldn't stand to waste, so the bread and baked goods were all

homemade. Years later, Mother cooked at the new Caledonia School. Parents kept asking her how she got their children to eat things they refused at home. She said she tried to serve lunches that were colorful and she didn't overload the children's plates. They could come back for seconds if they brought her their empty plates. She put platters of carrot and celery sticks on the tables for them to munch as much as they pleased. I suspect she also did a lot of praising.

With three rooms instead of one, the school traditions changed somewhat. John remembers that they sang several times a week rather than every day, and that sometimes all three rooms were brought together to sing. Our cousin Peggy Piper Williams remembers going to Mr. Anderson's room to sing and that they always started with "Just a Closer Walk with Thee."¹⁷ There had originally been a move to stop the Christmas programs, but people in the community protested, so the program was moved to the Township Hall in Spruce and remained until the school closed. General Grant's Grand March, played by Mrs. Landon, still accompanied the long march onto the stage.

Recesses were probably a bit more supervised, but the children still had a lot of freedom. John remembers playing a lot of softball and soccer. Soccer wasn't well known at the time and he thinks they must have been taught to play it by Don Rasmussen.

The school acreage was surrounded by a woven wire fence. A wooden rail had been put around the top to keep children from breaking down the fence by climbing over it. John points out that no one thought about the fact that the children would use the rail as a balance beam, which they all did.

When John was in the sixth-grade, a new boy, Jerry Marenkewicz, moved to Caledonia from Detroit. Jerry had been at school only three or four days and was not fitting well into the pecking order when something happened and Jerry took off. The last they saw of him he was going over the back fence rail and heading home through the woods. He returned a year later and finished his school career at Caledonia and then Alcona High School. His classmates later learned that his parents had let him return to Detroit to live with his grandparents for a year.

John's teachers after Miss McCoy were Christian Landon, Don Rasmussen and Floyd (Beng) Benghauser. History and geography were always taught together and a lot of Michigan and local history and geography were taught along with US history. They did a lot with maps and John remembers learning about how the area was surveyed. In those classes he first learned the differences between national, state and local roads and that east/west national highways are given even numbers (I-96 or Route 66) and north/south highways are given odd numbers (I-95).

One of John's memories is not necessarily connected to the school, but was definitely reflective of the community's desire to teach its youth. The local VFW was able to obtain army surplus, bolt-action 22 Army Springfield rifles with peep sights. The rifles arrived packed in Cosmoline that had to be cleaned off before they could be used. They set up an indoor, fifty-foot shooting range in the Spruce Hall and taught gun safety and shooting to the children of the community. John learned to shoot at this range when he was ten or eleven.

By the time John was in the seventh grade, the Caledonia District #1 had become too crowded. The twenty-six seventh and eighth graders were bused to Pine Grove School, a vacated one-room building on Hubbard Lake Road. Floyd Benghauser was the teacher and the students put in two wonderful years there. They were outdoors exploring under Mr. Benghauser's tutelage as much as they were in. They had bird feeders outside the classroom window and learned to identify native

¹⁷ Even for that era, this seems like a strange song for children to sing. Now, it would be out of the question in a public school.

species. They also got to watch the antics of squirrels trying to get into the feeders. On Fridays, they cooked their own lunch and learned table manners and proper etiquette in the process. They learned to dance. I remember the day John came home from school and announced, "I'm exhausted. I've been dancing with Walker Craibe all afternoon." They learned the facts of life and how to respect one another.

John remarked recently about how little was known about learning disorders. He remembers ruefully that they had called one of his classmates a disparaging name for years after the child had been unable to spell his own name correctly. Mr. Benghauser created a lot of special projects for that child trying, John believes, to restore a modicum of self-worth in him. Nonetheless, that child, as well as others before him, dropped out of school as soon as he was allowed.

By then, most of Alcona County had consolidated into one district for the purpose of building a high school and new elementary schools. In January 1958, the new four-room Caledonia School on Hubbard Lake Road was finished and students K-8, along with their teachers, moved in. The Caledonia District #1 property and buildings were sold. The buildings were used by the new owner for storage. At some point, they burned and sat in a ruined state for several years until the owner was ordered to dismantle them. When I drove down School Road this spring (2007), they were gone.

(2007)