

Riggs High Class of '63

High School Memories

For our 50 year reunion in June 2013, we asked classmates to jot down some memories they have of their high school days and send them to us. The stories were then read during our dinner program. In addition to the following written stories, several classmates verbally presented their memories of their days at Riggs High.

Noel Erikson Memories (June 2013)

RIGGS HIGH MEMORIES: I only lived a couple of blocks from Riggs High, so remember when it was being built and then the deterioration of the South Wing foundation. I remember the pep rallies in the gym and also basketball games there. Theatrically, I'll not forget my role as the butler in Anastasia. I truly liked geography class, Miss Hamilton's Spanish class and biology. On a football trip to Bismarck, ND, Mr. Sampson sat in the seat ahead of me and I had to apologize to him for repeatedly (accidentally) hitting his bald head when jumping up to move around the bus. I learned a lot more than my grades showed and a few years ago was diagnosed with ADD. This probably explained a lot about my school experience and my ability to multitask.

GREETINGS: My best to my classmates. I do hope that all of you have had productive, happy lives and are in (relatively) good health. I can't make this reunion, sorry, but GOD bless!

Synopsis of Memorable High School Days in Pierre: by Jeanne Feurt Lombaer (June 2013)

I was a "dam kid," that is, my father worked on building the Oahe Dam, so my family moved to Pierre from St. Paul, MN, the summer before ninth grade. My brother, Ward, was going into seventh. When the job was finished, we moved on to the next job, which was in Chicago, so I only lived in Pierre for two years. In my memory they were wonderful golden years.

In Pierre kids created their own fun. No one waited around for some adult to provide entertainment. We went to each other's homes, made pizza or popcorn, sometimes watched the one television station available, played ping-pong or danced, or played marbles on the floor. We walked to the Grand or State Theater for movies. In the summer we walked to the Dairy Way or the swimming pool. There were dances at school or the Isaac Walton Club, or in the basement of the bank. On hot windy nights sometimes we would go to the little lake beside the State House, and if the wind was coming from the right direction, we could drop a match to watch the natural gas that flowed above the water to ignite the lake in a whoosh of flame. We had slumber parties at each other's homes. Sometimes in the middle of the night a whole bunch of us girls would wander around the neighborhood - in our pajamas!

The whole town turned out for Governors' basketball and football and Cowboy's baseball games. If a person missed attending a game, friends would call the next day to inquire about his/her health. The Homecoming parade through town featured floats made by student organizations and consisted largely of chicken wire and colored paper napkins. One year my Spanish Club made a huge paper mache gourd and displayed the motto, "We'll Squash 'Em." The king and queen, attired as Indians, rode in black convertible Ford Thunderbirds, one belonging to a doctor in town, and the other one to my father. I have the pictures in my 1961 Gumbo.

At Riggs I got to be in plays, such as *First Impressions*, cheer as a pep club member, sing in the chorus and participate in Declam. I was a Job's Daughter and sang with the Episcopal choir.

I have fond memories of listening to clear channel radio station KOMA from Oklahoma City, and enjoying the "kissing tone." Pierre was on the Chautauqua circuit, which brought "cultural" events to town. I remember especially Jerry Lee Lewis, who did sing "Great Balls of Fire," but sadly he didn't burn up the piano he played on.

I am happy to think that I will be back to re-connect with friends from so long ago.

Bonnie Forney Mattick Memories (June 2013)

A high school memory I'd like to share is the experience I had working with Mrs. Fran Ruzick, our debate and declaim coach. I asked Mrs. Ruzick if I could try out for debate and she knew she had many strong debate team members and didn't need a "first-timer." Rather than discourage me, she diplomatically suggested I try declaim instead – and said "you tend towards the dramatic, and I think you would enjoy speaking or doing plays." I learned a speech from the book "Eloise at the Plaza Hotel" and that fueled my desire to speak professionally. Mrs. Ruzick gave me the training (tools) and encouragement and was always quick to compliment, knowing I had worked hard and was having fun with it. She was a teacher I will always remember.

I've often regretted that I did not look her up to tell her what I was doing with the basic speaking skills that she taught me – I think she is looking down at our reunion and saying "Job Well Done, Kids!"

Joe Hanson Memories (June 2013)

I moved to Pierre in June of 1959 after finishing grade school in Gregory, S.D. The first guy to introduce himself and welcome me to Pierre was Mike Pellerzi. Mary Tyler was also very nice to the shy, country kid and I have always appreciated her for that.

The other goods memories really started in my Sophomore year when I was able to drive - - CRUISING the streets!! I remember when they changed South Pierre Street starting by Corner Drug to a one way. About a year later they changed all of Pierre Street to a one way. What a crisis in our routine! And of course there was East Capitol Avenue to the intersection by Capitol Lake so we could do a "U" turn and head back to and then up Euclid Avenue to check out the CORAL and A & W drive ins. We did not need cell phones or texting to stay in touch. A nod or a wave was all we had and needed.

The classroom teachers, the support staff, and the coaches were exceptional. They all had to like us young immature folks to try and lead and show some of us the way of the future.

It was a good time to be alive and live where we did. When we look around and realize how many good relationships and friendships that were developed and maintained through the years, it has been an absolute blessing. Thanks to all.

Things I Remember About High School by Dick Lamster (June 2013)

I had a great time in high school. I thought we had great teachers, nice facilities and the students generally had a good attitude. I learned enough to get three college degrees, earn a good living in good jobs and continually enjoy education. I thought Pierre in the 1950's and 60's was a good place to grow up. I believe about the worst thing that would happen during school was chewing gum in class. I bet teachers today would love to have that be the worst thing they had to deal with! I also thought we benefited from other kids parents. I remember many parents that treated us to fun times, talked to us like adults and treated us with respect and honesty. Here are some specific things I remember. I am sure as soon as I finish this I will remember some more.

All the sport teams I was on provided some really good times. The other athletes on the teams were good friends and it was really important to learn to work as a team and for the team. Those experiences became valuable later in the real world. We could have been better athletes if we would have trained more, but it was more a social thing for most of us.

However, our football team our senior year was really good. We outscored our opponents 208 to 62. We won six games and lost two by a total of four points. We had eight players chosen to the All-State Teams including Dave Baade to the first team. We ended up ranked 5th in the state.

I cut off the tip of my little finger on my right hand, in a car door, when I was a sophomore. I had a huge bandage on it and it was difficult to write and do much of anything with that hand. One of our teachers,

Mrs. Heer, was giving a timed test in her class and I thought I should get more time because of my disability. She basically told me that I should quit whining and get on with the test because I was not going to get more time and generally in real life that was how it was going to be. I was really mad, but I completed the test. I do not remember the grade I got on that one test, but I did get an "A" in the class.

I was also taking typing the year I cut off the tip of my finger. I had to stop and resume the class the next year. There were not many boys in the class (which was not all bad!) but years later when computers and "keyboarding" entered all of our lives, I was really glad I knew now to type.

Joey Hanson's Mother made the best homemade bread that smelled heavenly. As if by some miracle, she always seemed to have some coming out of the oven just as a few of us were going to Joe's to play pool, and of course we got it with some homemade jam on top.

Mrs. Wise (Marvin's Mother), Mrs. Palmer (Brent's Mother), Jeanne Bauman's parents, Paula Volk's parents and many others always made us feel at home in their home and treated us wonderfully. They were just basically good, nice people. I guess today they would be called "good role models".

I worked at the Cottage Grocery on Euclid Avenue just a half block down the street from our house starting in 1957. It was a great place to work as the owner allowed me to do all the extra-curricular activities and work hours as I could. It was also a good place to socialize with other kids when they came in, especially Janice Wright, Vicky Hansen, Bonnie Forney, Rose Longland, Gary Porter, Lois Pinckney, Carol Pyncheon, Mark Simmons, Bill Thomas and others. Barb Stoeher worked there for a couple of years and that was really fun. I earned and saved enough money working at that little store for 6+ years to pay for my first two years of college at SDSU. We, mostly boys, started drinking beer in high school since you only had to be 18 to legally buy beer back then. Of course we were drinking before we turned 18 because it was easy to acquire. Some of those times were fun, some were scary (drunken driving), and sometimes we got sick, but we kept doing it. Looking back, I think beer was better for us and less dangerous than the illegal drugs of today.

Once, our teacher Mr. Robinson, who was considered very straight laced and a strict disciplinarian, was standing in the hallway chuckling. We were about the only ones in the hallway and I was a senior and had taken his classes. He was taking down a sign that some group had put on the wall advertising that they would be having a bake sale and would be selling tarts. Someone had changed the first "t" in tarts to an "f" to become farts. He confided to me that he would probably have had a hard time stopping himself from doing that!

Today the standing joke is how everyone's parents walked ten miles in the deep snow to get to school. Well, I did walk to school for most of 12 years and it was frequently through deep snow and below zero during the winter. I know many of my classmates also walked to school. I guess it was character building and made us tough!

I have been looking through the 1963 "Gumbo" and was quite amazed at the number of activities, organizations and special interest clubs that were offered when we were in High School. I counted 32 different activities that we could and did participate in. That is a lot for a small school like Riggs Senior High. I know today's school struggle to offer half that many.

Dan Neiles Memories (June 2013)

Things I Remember From High School

1. Our Sophomore Year: New Years party at the principal's house.
2. Last period study hall our senior year ... something about chewing gum

They called him Baddie
by Sam Ruzick (June 2013)

It was a beautiful afternoon in Lincoln Nebraska and the Cornhuskers were slated to take on the University of South Dakota. The students liked these games even if the Cornhuskers were to win by 70 or 80 points. The outcome of the game was already known and it was going to present a great chance to feature some of the talented freshmen without jeopardizing the Cornhusker's national ranking. This was not David VS Goliath (well maybe in a way), but more like a high school team VS a semi pro team.

The first offensive play for the Huskers said it all as the huge offensive line pushed the Dakotans back five yards and the play went for far more. I think they scored on the first possession and it did not look like there would be any stopping the Huskers. What occurred next can only be described by the feeling one gets in a haunted house when you go down a hall and there is the usual scary stuff and then something pops up out of the floor and scares the bejeebees out of you. Early in the first period that is what happened.

The Cornhuskers were on offense again and the ball was hiked, the play was developing and "SPRONG"!!!!, from nowhere, right in the middle of the backfield, up pops a South Dakota player crouched waiting for the halfback to make his move. It was an oops moment for the Cornhuskers. But then it happened several times again in the period, this guy would pop up in the backfield the moment the football was hiked and if not tackling the ball carrier he would disrupt the play. The Huskers even found themselves punting of all things. In the second period the same pattern continues and soon the Nebraska students were yelling at the offensive line "Would someone block that guy." I swear the ball would be hiked, the play would just start and there he would be in the backfield chasing whoever had the ball. It was in this period that the announcer who had been saying "Baddie on the tackle" changed the name. I did not have a program but quickly borrowed one to check the lineups. My suspicions were confirmed that the seemingly unblocked defensive end that was creating all the havoc was none other than Dave Baade.

Halfway through the third period the adjustments made by the Huskers were having little impact, the jeers from the crowd were turning ugly ("OK don't block him just see if you can touch him as he goes by"), the score was low, like 14-0 with no freshmen in sight. A sweep play that ended near the out of bounds would end in a heap of players, I thought the play was away from Dave's position but he was in the middle of it and was carted off the field with a broken arm. The fans stood and applauded in respect. The final score was 56-0 and we got to see the freshman and "Lighthouse" Harry Wilson put on a good show. But the best show of the day left the field in the third period.

At the last reunion I mentioned the game to Dave and he commented that he didn't think anyone had seen the game (and I doubt he has told any of you this story). He went on to say that the game had meant a lot to him as it was this game that confirmed he could play with the big boys. To us in the stands it looked like the high school kids had a pro player on the team. In the dozen or more games that I saw in Lincoln, the jeering by the Husker's own fans occurred only one other time. On this occasion the jeers were directed at the defense during a Kansas game. The fans were yelling at the Husker defense to tackle ("OK, just try to slow him down") Gale Sayers. Pretty nice company since Gale is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

Mike, Our Senior Class President
by Sam Ruzick (June 2013)

This is a story that I have shared as a mentor and as part of a sermon, the latter given while subbing for vacationing pastors. It is a story about not being judgmental and it is time to share with those that were involved.

It was the summer between our sophomore and junior years in Pierre when I got the word from my classmates that a new student would join us in the fall school year. His name was Mike Harris and "he is really a cool guy". Working 12 to 14 hours a day and six days a week at Coca Cola, it was not unusual that I was last in the loop during the summer months. Soon the guys I was in contact with were raving about Mike Harris and their conversation would always end with "you have to meet him and you will like him". As the summer continued it became obvious that the girls liked him a lot and they made comments that he was funny, good looking, tall and he even plays the piano!!!

I had just about enough of Mike Harris and decided that I did not like this guy and would make a point of not meeting him until it was necessary when the school year started. This was not very difficult with my work hours. My disdain for Mike grew, he seemed to attract people like flies to *#*. With school not in session how could this guy meet so many people? Even the new girl in town, Susan Johnson, had less of a following and how strange was that? Did this guy ride into town on a white horse?

One day at Coca Cola after doing local runs, I am told someone is in the office to see me. Usually this meant that Nancy Kindt and her mother were there to pick up some cases of pop, something I always looked forward to. I come up front to the office,(dirty, sweaty, etc.) and there is Mike Harris with this huge grin, holding his hand out saying he was Mike Harris and how great it was to finally meet me and that he had heard so many good things about me. My stunned reaction was to reply "likewise".

Some gull, interrupting me at work just to introduce himself. He must have read my body language as he quickly departed to let me get back to work but not before a few more compliments and saying he hoped to see me again soon. His sucking up had not worked and I avoided him until school started. With school in session, there was no avoiding him as he was in almost all my classes.

A month later, having met his wonderful family, found that he played basketball and ping pong, enjoyed cards and had made friends with my friends; I decided to give him a little slack. A short month after that, Mike had become one of my best friends along with Mark Simmons and Don Madison (good friends for years).