

## **Chapter 5. – Grade School in Pelly, Saskatchewan**

My entry into grade two in Pelly in mid-November was not a happy occasion and very quickly, I experienced name-calling and bullying as the norm. Firstly, I was a "Dirty Douk" as well as a "Drunk's son". At my seven years of age, both were not well understood by me and did contribute to my low esteem and total lack of confidence in my schoolwork as well as sports activity. This became a challenge going forth.

I was picked for many fights, but I did not resist as the pacifism of my religion contributed to my resistance not to "fight back". What disappointed my "attackers" most was that I never cried. There was a "code" in Pelly that was well understood by even the youngest, "never tell". Being a "sissy" may result in a real beating off the school yard.

This all came to a head one cold winter day as a limited amount of the grade 6 boys played a game we called "football" which was played with a Soccer Ball. We had special rules.

Well Richard, one of the self-proclaimed bullies, brushed his leather glove past my nose. No one knew that my nose was actually a "trigger" for Elmer. An uncontrolled "haymaker" swung up from my rear end and just pasted poor "Dick" and he found himself flat on his back, totally surprised as this action was not expected from "sissy" Elmer.

He lay there for a few minutes and just stared at me. He got up slowly and we continued with the game. "Dick" became my friend after that incident, right through grade twelve. I am not sure if this would be good advice for someone who is being bullied but no one tried bullying me after that.

Our grade four Teacher was high on memory work, and she urged us all to memorize every poem in the Reader and recite same in front of the class. This was resisted by most of the class but about a third of us did achieve most of them. I used to walk herding cattle on unfenced lands around our farm, because our pasture was too small, and I would memorize these poems as I had nothing better to do. This meant that from grades four through six, all poems in the Readers were memorized. The positive benefit, obviously contributed to me being able to absorb lectures readily by memory. The brain can be compared to a "muscle" that needs exercise and that I did.

In later years I could go to business meetings and not make notes. Then when back in my office I would write a synopsis of the meeting and send it to all that had attended with "this is to confirm our discussions." No one ever came back to me challenging my reports. This proved to be a great advantage in my business career.

It was in Grade seven, that a letter was received from the Ministry of Education by my father. Of course, being illiterate, he gave it to me to read as he could see the government logo and knew it had to be important.

"What does it say?" he asked.

I scanned the letter and realized the Ministry was inquiring as to why his son, Elmer Verigin, was missing so much school (i.e., my attendance averaged 120 days out of the mandatory 200 days a

school year). I realized that there was nothing that my father could do as this was survival on our farm.



This is my father standing beside a John Deere Tractor that was propelling the Threshing Machine in this photo.

This steel wheeled machine had two alternating pistons and was gas propelled.

I spent a great deal of time cultivating the fields. No ear protection and no covered cab to keep the dust and noise out. A flywheel on the other side was used to start the engine.

"They are asking how many cattle, horses, chickens and fowl we have here on the farm", I lied to him in response. I was suggesting that Statistics Canada were the authors of the letter.

"Can you answer them?" he asked.

"Of course!"

To this day, I have no idea what I wrote them, but we never heard from the Ministry again.



Pelly School that later became a museum and now destroyed by fire.

The lower left was where I took grades 4 through 6 incl. The lower right was for grades 7 and 8. The upper right was for grades 9 and 10. The upper left was for grades 11 and 12. I took grade 11 there and one month of grade 12.

Grades 9 through 12 had three (3) teachers that would specialize in certain subjects. This photo is of the teachers that taught me from years 1956 through 1958.



Mr. (Edward) Shanks (changed his name from Shankowski) was the principal and taught mathematical subjects and the Sciences. Mrs. (Daisy) Nelson taught literature and French. Mr. (Peter) Negraeff taught English and Composition. All of them really cared about their students. Photo was taken in the top left-hand classroom as viewed from the above school photo.

I consider all of them to be my Mentors that encouraged me to continue going to school firstly, and then to university.

*End of Chapter 5 (Edited by EWV October 24, 2021)*