

## **Chapter 6 - High School in Pelly, Saskatchewan**

It felt great to move up to a room with only two grades after six years with one Teacher attending at three grades. This change began with grades 7 and 8 and then moving up to grade 9 and 10 seemed like, I had really moved up a large notch. It mattered little that there was a total of 136 students in the grades 1 through 12 at the Pelly School. I had no idea what class sizes meant since there were no comparison models as most local communities were similarly structured.

My thirst for literature led me to read all the library books in each of the two rooms housing grades 9 through 12. The result was that I was able to absorb the required customary eight supplementary books for each of those grades by the time I completed grade 9. So, writing book reports (essays) on those Supplementary books as part of my course requirement for Literature and English, was straight forward. I had already read all the books in those limited libraries.

My thirst for reading and knowledge had to be further satisfied by parcel post from the Provincial Library in Regina. Almost every week a book was returned, and another came in. Sometimes in the winter, this was several books a week. When I was short of reading material, I took on Ben Hur and the Lev Tolstoy collection.

The Western and Romance pocket books my brothers and sister left me, became surplus and I lost my interest in that reading to this day.

Despite my school attendance, I was still able to score a "B" grade average with little additional work.

I really did not know that I was going to complete grade twelve as I had no positive comparisons nor mentors as most of my friends had already become farmers and / or worked summers away from Pelly and returned with an Unemployment Insurance cheque for the winter. This actually sounded good, and I even considered it as an option.

I was fortunate to have three adult Mentors that independently, became associated with influencing my destiny:

- My brother-in-law John Khadekin, Principal at Benito School was armed with an MA, B.Ed., and a major in Psychology
  - positive encouragement to rise to the horizon and lift myself out of the uncertain farming destiny
  - advantages of higher education in achieving better paying jobs
  - he observed that I liked to eat and recommended something more substantial than Philosophy which was on my lips and aspirations
- A. Pushkarenko. B.A., B.Ed., my principal in grade twelve (12)
  - encouraged better attendance

- provided teaching course outlines to assist concentrated study at home which I was accustomed to practice
- Essentially directed me into Engineering
- Recommended that my poems be used in the Yearbook and Graduation Ceremonies
- Always encouraged me to carry on (I had to walk over 3 miles through blizzards and extreme cold.) He would always greet me when he entered the classroom.
- Peter Negraeff, my High School Teacher
  - Was actually a member of the Negraeff Family that lived next door to our Canora farm and so he knew my family before my time
  - He was my English Instructor and provided direction in my writing skills
  - Was very encouraging when marking my essays and stories with progressive and encouraging comments
  - He was seriously interested in my progress

My good fortune was that they all took a special interest in me and contributed in different ways but combined in collective encouragement. They all saw a quality in me that perhaps, was not evident to me, personally, at that time. I was still suffering from a lack of self esteem.

I was supported in so many positive ways!

My social role at school changed dramatically from the bullying in grade two when in grade twelve I became President of the Pelly High School Civic League (our high school student designation), and I also was captain of our infamous Touch Football Team. We were undefeated in two games against the neighboring Arran High School (no NFL scouts that we were aware).

In a manner of speech, I became a "school socialite" which helped with my interest in the other sex in getting dates.

I did not have a car and so, facilitating a date required my ability to arrange a "double date" with a friend who had a car. Nick Strukoff and Fred Konkin were such friends, and we never drank alcohol during my time in Pelly.



This school was ready for occupancy in late September 1957.

The gym was on the right. I attended grade 12 just left of the front doors. Grade 11 was on the left and grades 9 and 10 were across the hall.

The school is now used as a community centre.

A story here may be about grade 12 graduation night. I got a call from my cousin, Nora Trofimenkoff in Veregin, asking me if she could join me in my graduation ceremonies in

Pelly because the Veregin Grade 12 class was not large enough to warrant a graduation ceremony. I did not have anybody of interest at that time and besides, she was very pretty, I agreed.

She was going to take a bus from Veregin to Pelly and I asked Nick Strukoff if would be able to drive her back after the ceremonies.

Everything went well and after the ceremonies, Fred and his sister Sonia Konkin came along with us on the trip back to Veregin with Nora.

Most graduates have a wild time and get drunk on grad night, but I bought two (2) pounds of wieners and we had an impromptu Wiener Roast and 12 midnight on the banks of the Assiniboine River near the historic Fort Pelly. It was all complete with dry maple wood, willow sticks to roast the wieners and we splurged to have two (2) dozen buns but no butter, but we remembered a tube of mustard.

I loved wieners and I overate. Later that night I vomited wieners.

At least I remembered my grad night thanks to my friends.

Updated October 24, 2021, EWV