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## ***Consulting Petrophysicist The World is My District***

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## **OHS Class of '59 Memories**

I composed the original version of this for the 55<sup>th</sup> Reunion and have cleaned up most of my initial spelling errors (Mrs. Grinnel, may have commented about my creative spelling skills, for my OHS "Student Record"), and added a few additional memories, for the 60<sup>th</sup> Reunion. I have also added a few more, since.

Since I am one of the very few, of or class, that went K – 12, I have often thought about starting a "Class of 59" memory discussion, ever since the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. Now that there has been a 60<sup>th</sup> reunion, I thought I should actually do it, while I can still remember, at least, some things.

Almost everything is from memory and not all of the "facts" may be accurate. However, my commentary may stimulate others to correct and/or add to my commentary. I have organized my memories by year, through 8<sup>th</sup> grade together. Interestingly enough, my memories of High school are not that easily separated by year, so they will be combined. I understand that short-term memory is "The second thing to go". These are all saved as a MS WORD document so that anyone else can easily add their own memories and/or correct my memories.

In September of 1946, about 40 +/- scholars began their Okemos Public School careers, by joining Mildred McKinley's Kindergarten. As Bob Stetler found out before the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion, the Okemos Public School District no longer has records that go back that far, and no one seemed to have a class photo (including my mother, who never threw anything away). I am guessing about the number, based on my mother wistfully talking about the days when Early Elementary School classes were only 20 students. When we started at Okemos, K & 1<sup>st</sup> grade had morning and afternoon sessions, with the same teacher; so 40 +/- is a fairly good estimate.

Our class generally had multiple sections (3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades may have been exceptions, when we were in the large room in the original Okemos School house (replaced by the Meridian Township fire station, which I understand has been razed, for future apartments and/or commercial establishments). Over the next 13 years families would move out of the district, while others would move in. One classmate was killed in a boating accident and two left for

various institutions. Some left to join the military, at least one dropped out because of a pregnancy, and others just "dropped out", when they reached 16.

#### **1946 – 47: Kindergarten – Mildred McKinley**

The classroom was in the basement of the three-story building at the corner of Okemos Rd. and Mt Hope Rd. This was the same room that held the HS office, when we were in HS. There were two sections: Morning and Afternoon. I attended the Morning session, so I do not know anything about the Afternoon session. I only have two vivid memories from that year:

1. Danny Hickey giving Bob Stetler a bloody nose. I do not know what started it, because they were at a different table. I only remember that there was a big commotion and everyone at Bob's table started yelling: "Danny did it". Bob does not remember it, but it obviously made an impression on me.
2. Me running my hand through a windowpane on the room door. The details are rather long and involved, but it apparently was memorable to my classmates, because at least one wrote about it in my senior yearbook. Besides, I still have the scar to remind me. In Retrospect, this may have happened, during 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, as both of my classes were held in that same room. Whenever it did happen, I altered my trips to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Boys Bathroom, afterward

#### **1947 – 48: First Grade – Florence Hill**

The classroom was in the Annex of the Original Okemos School (in central "Old Okemos"). Again, there were Morning and Afternoon sessions. This time I was in the Afternoon Session. Again I know anything about the morning session and do not have very many memories about that year:

1. That was the year I met Ron Witmore and Bill Delind. I think that both their mothers were Cub Scout Den Mothers. I spent time at one or both houses casting and painting plaster of Paris "Bobcat", "Wolf" and "Bear" head wall hangings. This was the closest to Scouting; I came until my own sons Joined and completed the *Trail to Eagle*.
2. We boys spent much of our time, during recesses, running around the grounds in our "gangs" and/or climbing up in the fire escape slide that came from the second floor room.
3. That was the year that I started to use my given name, instead of my family nickname. I also decided that my teacher would be "Mrs. Hill", even though, outside of school, she was my mother. Apparently we were quite successful with this, as I had at least one classmate tell me that they never knew she was my mother, until junior high school.

#### **1948 – 49: Second Grade – Mrs. Esdale and Viera Hammond/Rosdale**

This was the first year our class had two different teachers. I was in Mrs. Esdale's class, which met in the same basement room, where our Kindergarten class had met. I think that Mrs. Rosdale's (I knew her by both names, but do not remember when she changed them) class met in the upper story room of the original Okemos School (i.e., where the fire escape started and had housed the original OHS). I have two memories from that year.

1. Second graders would ride a bus to Williamston and then take the Pere Marquette/C&O train to the Michigan Avenue Station, in Lansing. I vividly remember Mrs. Esdale telling the class, how smoothly Streamliner trains rode ("It is almost like we are standing still"), as we met an oncoming train near the Okemos Elevator. Later that afternoon, Charlie Sowers, who was in third grade, stopped by our classroom to report that the passenger train from Williamston to Lansing had been shuttled to the sidetrack, at the Okemos Rd. crossing, to allow an oncoming freight train to pass. Everyone in the class (including the

teacher) were so intent on looking at the passing train that we did not notice that we were indeed "standing still", while the other train passed.

2. The two second grade rooms also staged a joint show for their parents, where the students dressed up in "bird" costumes and moved across the high school stage keeping time to the music. Ron Witmore and I were supposed to be woodpeckers and attempted to bob our heads in time with the *Woody Woodpecker Song*. I think that Ron was the "Red Headed" one.

#### **1949 – 50: Third Grade – Mrs. Volker**

This may have been one of two years where there was a single class, which met in the large first floor room of the original Okemos School House.

1. The teacher, Mrs. Volker, entertained the class, by reading the entire series of Robert Tyson Terhune *Ladd of Sunnybrook Farms* books.
2. The classroom was large (the classroom had been the 1 – 8 grade class room for the original Okemos School) and foul weather recesses were spent in the room doing art and games.
3. Peggy Greer introduced the class to country music, via her family's collection of Hank Williams records.
4. Sarah Buehler humiliated me by announcing to the class that I had a crush on one of the other girls, in class.

#### **1950 – 51: Fourth Grade – Fern Bogue and Miss Hansel**

The class was once again spit into two sections. I was in Fern Bogue's class, which (I think) met, once again, in the basement classroom of the three-story Main School. The other section, taught by Miss Hansel was a split (either 3-4 or 4-5), and was apparently in the Old Okemos School large room. Both Bob Stetler and Vicky (Victoria still sounds strange, to me) Shick were apparently in her class. I do not think that she was still on the faculty, the following year.

1. My biggest memory from 4<sup>th</sup> grade is that I broke my left arm twice and was able to diagnose the problem, the second time. I did not notice any lasting problems, from this injury, until high school typing class. I still do not have full mobility of that forearm and a small scar, where the bone fragment pierced the skin.

#### **1951 – 52: Fifth Grade – Mrs. Aldridge**

This may have been the second time that we were in a single room, at the old Okemos School, in central Okemos.

1. Our class moved from the Old School building, in central Okemos, to the newly built double wing attached to the Central 3-story building, at the end of the first semester. Our new room was intended to be the Library, which it became, the next year.
2. I think that 5<sup>th</sup> grade was when we were introduced to instrumental music. I had inherited a trumpet, so that was "my instrument". I do not remember much about the Band instructor, but he apparently spent a lot of time giving *private lessons* to one of the HS band Alto Horn students in the bus barn. He was gone, the following year.
3. I celebrated my birthday by inviting all of the boys in class to our farm for a softball game.
4. The highlight of the year was a trip to Greenfield village and the Henry Ford Museum, in Dearborn.

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**1952 – 53: Sixth Grade – Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Wiggins**

This year, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms were moved to the new 4-classroom building out behind Band/Shop/Ag classroom building. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade rooms were large, which was good, because each section had ~45 students.

1. I was in Mrs. Jones' class. Her husband was teaching school, at an Okinawa Army base. At Christmas time, we exchanged presents with the Okinawa class. I do not remember what we sent to them, but they sent straw sandals and vases made out of empty beer cans, courtesy of the soldiers, wrapped in bamboo. The sandals are long gone, but I may still have the vase.
2. In the spring Bill Johnson and I toured the new Meridian Twp Fire Station (at the location of the original Okemos School) and were supposed to visit the lower elementary grades teaching Fire Safety, as part of Fire Prevention Week. Ron Whitmore filled in for Bill, who came down with a childhood disease (Measles, I think). I thought that Ron's adlib descriptions of the new Meridian Twp. Fire Station (which I do not think he had ever visited) were much better than any of my recollections. He always could tell a good story.
3. We staged plays in our classroom. Mary Dreps was one of the tallest in our class. Because of this, she played "Little John", in our version of the Robin Hood tales. I do not remember much else, about that play, except my mother sewed my leather and 'Lincoln Green Merry Man' costume. Carol Bernard has a picture of Bob Crafton dressed as an African Explorer for another play.
4. During Spring Vacation, Mrs. Jones's husband secured married housing in Okinawa, so she resigned and moved to Okinawa, to be with him. The school brought in Mrs. Barrett, an experienced retired teacher to fill out the year. Unfortunately, the large class never recovered from the abrupt departure of Mrs. Jones and took out their frustration on Mrs. Barrett.
5. In Six Grade Okemos got a new band director, who turned out to be Okemos' answer to Liberace. He too, lasted only one year.
6. This is that year that I joined other six graders in law enforcement, and became a *Safety Patrol Officer*. I think that Tom McNitt was the Captain. In the spring, Ingham County Sheriff Department sponsored a day at the Lake Lansing Amusement Park. I invited a friend who attended Bath Schools (Clinton County) and shared my ride and meal tickets, with him.
7. Playing football catch with Leroy Eicher and Bob Stetler, at the Cider Mill, while our apples were being crushed.
8. Spending weekends at our family's cabin in Northern Michigan with Bob Stetler and Leroy Eicher.

**1953 – 54: Seventh Grade – Addie Prentice and one other Homeroom Teacher**

This was the year that we moved up in the world – to the second floor of the three-story Central School Building. This was also the first year that we changed classes. However, since our homerooms were adjacent, and most of our classes were in them, the class changes really did not amount to much.

1. Mrs. Prentice taught math and English.
2. Science was taught by the other homeroom teacher.

3. Bob Baker taught history, in another room. We all thought this was great, because we could often get him off subject, by asking about his experiences as a Radio Operator in a WW-II Bomber Squadron.
4. Ed Kiley taught P. E. and Health Education (which seemed to consist of watching WW-II era GI Training films). This was the first time I had ever heard the term, "B-Girls". I never learned its meaning until several years later, when I was working in Bangkok.
5. We also had 4 one-quarter rotations of Art, vocal music, home economics and wood shop. This was when I discovered that "art" was in the eye of the beholder. After watching the 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea movie, I attempted to do a watercolor of a submarine under water that was so bad, that I dumped my wash water on the product and turned it in as a joke. A week later I saw my painting proudly displayed in the art department display case, for everyone to see. I cannot remember if I was more proud or embarrassed.
6. A visiting vocal music teacher (whose name escapes me) taught vocal music. Fred Hoffecker and Bob Zuver tried to drown each out, in the music class, by singing their version of the Marines Hymn and Anchors Away, respectively.
7. Seventh grade was when Don Mueller became OHS Band Director and began to build a respectable instrumental music program at the school. Seeing no future as a "Third Desk" trumpet player, I switched to Tuba, which had much less competition.
8. This was also when I discovered that I was not much of a wood worker. However, I still have and use the "Sanding Block", from that class and use the safety protocols that Ed. Kapalla instilled in us.
9. The class challenged the Eighth Grade Class to a baseball game, in the spring, and won. To celebrate, we ordered special OJHS baseball caps. Unfortunately, when they came, the monogram was OJS.
10. I attended my first Dance, after lessons at home, by my mother, and also in Gym Class, taught by the girls Phys-Ed Teacher. However my experience at the dance was so embarrassing that I did not attend another dance until my Junior year.

#### **1954 – 55: Eighth Grade – Mrs. Davis and two other Home Room Teachers**

This year, the class had three Home Rooms, and even more diverse classes and teachers. My homeroom teacher was Helen Davis, who also was the art teacher. I do not remember the names of the other homeroom teachers.

1. We got our second dose of Bob Baker, who continued to make history come alive with his tales of bombing missions over Germany, including a personal message from "Axis Sally", who named every member his their crew and described "all the fun their wives and girlfriends were having", while they were off bombing Germany
2. Two boys, surprised by Mr. Baker's Student Teacher's "Quick Quiz", attempted to turn the pages of their History Texts, with their feet. They were discovered, with the appropriate results.
3. I do not remember who taught math or science, that year.
4. Molly Rudersdorf taught English. The classroom was on the second floor, of the three-story building, at the head of the stairs. Sometime during the year, Bill Johnson and Ron Whitmore discovered a crack in the floor. In an attempt to determine just how big the resulting hole was, the class began to fill it with pencils

gratefully *donated* by the girls in the class. I do not remember just how many disappeared in that hole, but I think that Bill kept the official tally.

5. Ed Killey taught P.E. and Civics, as well as coaching the HS Football Team. Athletics was obviously his first love.
6. I had to choose between Band and PE. While I probably made the wrong choice, I do not think it made any lasting impact on my life.

### 1955 – 59: High school

Now we were in the big time, with three "Home Rooms", every one taking different subjects, and having both upper and lower classmen in some of our classes. This was a significant time in all of our lives. My random memories are:

1. Joe Arasim was Principal. During the junior year, he accused Ron Whitmore, Bill Johnson and Casey Wagnnvoord, of *trying to run the school*.
2. Bob Baker taught World History and coached basketball, track, and baseball. Again, he made history real with his WW-II war stories.
3. Joy Clemow taught typing and business classes. I consider myself lucky to have escaped her typing class with a single successful 40-wpm test and a C letter grade. However, touch-typing that I learned from that class may have been one of the most important skills I picked up, in high school. I was able to use it to type HS and collage class reports, as well as all of the initial drafts of my dissertation. However, because this was before the age of word processors with "Spell Checkers", it did not help my proof reading.
4. Roland Cook taught Agriculture. I think that much later he and Carolyn Paty's husband ran a dairy farm near Rudland, in the UP.
5. Karl Ekstrom taught Speech. The class utilized Mr. Ekstrom's "Booming Voice" To narrate our Senior Homecoming float: "I Dreamed I Beat Fowlerville in my Made in Formosa Tee Shirt" (*name changed from the original title*). As with most male HS teachers, he moonlighted with a second job: Selling shoes at the Shaffer Shoe Store, in Lansing. Linn Prather and I teamed up to conduct a very spirited Debate team on the question of "the Death Penalty". I do not recall who was on the other team or which side we took (it may have Con), but our arguments were *LOUD*.
6. Rachel Grinnel taught English. In our senior year, she conspired with the class to stage a "Senior Assembly", even though the school had banned "Senior Class Night". The highlight of this was, Harold Spross as the body of "Charlie Senior" juggling as he was paraded around the assembly, on a slab, while the Senior Class Dixieland Band played "Didn't he Ramble".
7. Jeanette Halliday (who was an excellent teacher) taught biology. She came in and rescued the class after it had driven a first year teacher out of the profession.
8. Ed Kapalla taught Math, Shop and Driver's Ed. I still use many of the shop skills and safety techniques I learned from him. Most of the class only took one year of shop, but Gary Taber, took two years and used the second year to build a molded Plywood speedboat. Because the Shop had wide double delivery doors, Gary did not have to knock a hole in the wall as most basement boat builders do.

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9. Ruth Kelly taught mathematics. See was a truly devoted teacher.
  10. Thelma Lamb (Auntie Thelma) was our guidance councilor. Even though she could be over bearing, at times, she really did have our best interests at heart.
  11. Don Mueller taught Band and Orchestra. He elevated a rather pathetic instrumental music program into one, which everyone could be proud to claim. In the process, nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the high school ended up participating.
  12. Ester Reed taught English and was a truly devoted teacher.
  13. Christina Shram taught speech, Latin and coached the junior play. Our Junior Play was the last Class play at OHS.
  14. Joe Walbridge Taught Chemistry, Physics, and Vocal Music. He made science truly fun and interesting, and started a "Men's Glee Club".
  15. Rachel Grinnell and Ester Reed became known as "The Sweater Girls", for their winter apparel choices.
  16. Randy Webster taught American History, American English, and introduced interscholastic wrestling to OHS. That was where I learned what athletic training really involved, and decided that I would rather concentrate on academic classes.
    - Our particular Section of Mr. Webster's classes was so rowdy that he would not allow us to discuss "The Luck of Roaring Camp".
    - After he forgot to wear a belt, Ron Whitmore and Casey Wagonvoord got Gary Tabor to make a "No Belt" Award plaque, which was duly presented.
  17. I learned that there were many better basketball players then me and was too slight for football, but that I could run.
  18. I discovered spectator sports and bus rides to away games. Couples usually sat in the back, of the bus, and were very quiet.
  19. It took me over a month to get up the courage to ask a real neat girl, in the class, out on a first date, during my junior year, and was startled when she said yes.
  20. As part of our "Senior Assembly", the Senior Boys "Bequeathed the Sophomore Girls back to the Sophomore Boys".
  21. Casey Wagonvoord showed up for a hayride with a date and a sleeping bag. He then spent the evening chasing her around the trailer.
  22. Case Wagonvoord prancing around the stage for the junior play wearing Long underwear, which was found at the closing curtain, behind a couch, on the set. When the cast came our fore a curtain call, Casey cane out wrapped in a large blanket, much to Miss Schram's horror.
  23. One Saturday morning after wrestling practice A class screw-up decided that it would be amusing to remove the mouthpiece from the pay phone by the High School and toss it into a snow bank. Only after doing so, did he realize that he needed to call his older sister to come pick him up for his ride home. I think that he may have ended up walking to the Gretenberger drug store to call his sister.
  24. When Mr. Walbridge was out ill. We were told to conduct a study hall and tom Kat and Larry Beaman claimed to b making Nitroglycerine in the storeroom. We had a substitute teacher, the next day. I never really knew if they were serious about it or

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- putting on a show. Fortunately nothing happened when they dropped the 5cc vials of clear liquid off the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor fire escape.
25. The excitement of working with Dick Bennett to discover that our unknown chemical was barium sulfate. We made that determination when nothing, including Aqua Regia, would dissolve it.
  26. Dave Davidson ambushing one of the girls in our senior physics class with an elaborate plumbing scam.
  27. Walter Schreiner electrifying the Physics/Chemistry Lab door knob, with a "Tesla Coil" and the class forming a human chain across the study hall.
  28. The time one of the physics class teams dumped their Benzene specific density liquid into the sink followed by a chemistry class team tossing a lighted match into the same sink, making for an exciting experience. One of those present claimed that there was a *White Streak*, at the head of the class, heading for the storage room and the fire extinguisher. The next day all physics and chemistry classes received a "Stern Safety" lecture.
  29. Ron Whitmore and Case Wagonvord attempting to deny the Class of '58 the SRA Presidency, and other political moves, during our junior year.
  30. Driving around downtown Okemos with 4 passengers in my open MG-TD, until I learned that the local Sheriff deputy was looking for me.
  31. The support from my classmates, after my Father died, when I was in the ninth grade. Fred Hoffecker and his father essentially adopted me, for the remainder of the year. While I didn't realize it at the time, this was a role, I would later duplicate when one of my son's playmates lost his young father.
  32. Playing in a dance band, with Gilman Smith, grads Roger Shull and Tom Wagoner, and, junior, Tom Gunn, at college parties, during my senior year.
  33. Sharron Stoneham, who was so shy and quiet landing a significant speaking part in the Junior Play, with the prophetic line: "I suppose that geologists may get to see some pretty rocks". Significant because I ended up going to MSU and studying Geology.
  34. Joining my classmates, discovering sophomore girls, during my senior year.
  35. Carol Price, Lynn Prather and Margie Sheldon performing the opening scene of Macbeth, for our Senior English Class.
  36. Teacher, Randy Webster leading the student cheering section at basketball games, during our junior year. I later learned that he did the same thing when he was at Livorna High School, where he became an Assistant Dean, after leaving Okemos.
  37. My cousin, Bob Benson, doing his Student Teaching with Mrs. Kelly. He made mathematics fun and interesting.
  38. Ron Gates always finding something useful to do around the school.
  39. Showing Sheep with Jim Flanders, at the county fair.
  40. Gale Stevens getting a Tigers Class-C Spring Training Camp invitation, during our senior year.
  41. Square dancing with Margie Sheldon, Tom Katalenich, Diane Grota, Art Reece, and Judy Hulkenen, as well as another couple, whose names I cannot remember.



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42. The New Year's Eve party hosted by Vickie Shick, Mary Madzia, and Lynn Prather.
  43. The senior party Terry Marzen arranged at Walnut Hills Country Club paid in large part by the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade magazine sales of Bill DeLind and Howard Hatch (who had moved to Dimondale, the previous year, but was also invited to attend).
  44. Band trips: One trip to the Holland Tulip Festival, several boys in the band, discovered that the ranks of the Dowagiac marching band Drum Major, Twirlers, and Flag Girls seemed to be designated by their relative lack of clothing. It was a sunny, but cold and windy day, by Lake Michigan, so there was no shortage of volunteers from the OHS band offering to keep them warm.
  45. Playing in the Pep Band at Pep Rallies.
  46. Mrs. Reed's husband, Dr. H. O. Reed, of the MSU Music Department, composing an original Fight Song and Alma Mater, for the school, which attempted to imbue the "Spirit of Chief Okemos" (a real person, who was a village chief and a member of Pontiac's Tribal Council, and was the inspiration for the Okemos Village name). However, I am not certain if it was ever used, after Mr. Walbridge introduced it, at a school assembly.

I do not think that any of us really appreciated what we had, at the time:

The Okemos Board of Education provided us with outstanding quality teachers, K – 12, that would be competitive with much larger districts, without the problems inherent with the larger schools. It may have been the proximity to the MSU College of Education, but the school board responded proactively to the "Baby Boom", that followed our class, in setting the standards high. We were the lucky recipients of that action. I came to this realization after witnessing the trials of our own sons in much larger and impersonal schools.

I hope that this narrative may inspire other Class of 59 grads to correct my misstatements and add their own memories. As a neuropsychiatric professional once told me, "A memory is like a rolodex file. As we get older it takes longer to sort through it, but we usually do find what we were looking for".

What is in your Rolodex?

Don Hill