

GROWING UP IN ZACHOW: 1936-1955

(Seventeen pages of great childhood memories from a kid from Zachow)

Foraging:

One of the more or less daily activities of the kids in Zachow was foraging. This was not a planned thing but something that developed out of circumstances. For example, we could be busy planning on whether we were going to play Army, or Cowboys and Indians for the day and suddenly we would pick up this aroma wafting through the air. This was a sign that Martha Kroening was making donuts the old fashioned way. This aroma would be over the entire village similar to the aroma cast by the Ambrosia Chocolate Company in Milwaukee but with fresh donuts rather than chocolate. We would then amble over to Martha's house and just hang around the door. Inevitably the door would open and some fresh donuts would appear.

At the appropriate time in the summer currants and gooseberries would be ripe at Emma Kallies's house. We never asked for permission but we would sit below these bushes and eat our fill of the delicious fruit. Another foraging exercise was at the Albert Radtke garage and filling station area. They had a variety of apple trees between the house and the garage, and then some plum trees around the filling station. This was a long term source of foraging since the ripening part of the season seemed to be longer than that for currants and gooseberries. Of course we never asked for permission to do this either. I do not recall ever being run off during these "raids".

The Pauly Cheese house offered another opportunity for us. They graded cheese at this facility and one of the parts of the process was to take a plug out of a wheel of cheese to test it. This "plugger" would be a piece of great cheese about 5-6" long. If we hung around long enough one of the workers, Earl Krueger, "Acey" Boerger, Herb Kallies, or Albert Kallies, would break off the "plugger" and give it to us. Occasionally, the boss, Harry Hoefs, would do this. They really did not like us to be hanging around the Cheese house so we used a certain amount of discretion when we did this. The dairy pursuits did not end here however. We knew what the cheese processing time was at the Graf Creamery and knew when the curds would be available. This facility was a full blown processing plant and not a place kids should hang around in. But if we stayed out of the way and just hung around we invariably would be offered some curds. Butter was another thing we gathered here but the butter was not nearly as tasty as curds.

To balance out our foraging diet a little we would head for the "Pickle House" to eat some of the pickles that the local folks were bringing in for sale to the canning company in Pulaski. The "Pickle House" was a grading facility that sorted out the pickles and put them into wooden crates. Herman Radtke, from Radtke's Hardware Store, ran this and

he also gathered string beans for the vegetable farmers. Raw beans never tasted very good to us so we never bothered the supply of them. Pickles and cucumbers were another matter. Other activities would generally result from our pickle foraging trips. The empty crates made dandy fort building material so we would hollow out an area in the middle of the empty crates to build our "fort". Forts, of course, imply some sort of warfare. These would be the pickle fights where we would gather up some of the more soupy cucumbers and then throw them at each other. This activity did get us run off since the broken up cucumbers would be spread all over the loading area, the street, and inside the Pickle House. Herman would only be at the facility when pickles were coming in or being graded or shipped out. The rest of the time it was not protected by an adult and wide open for kid stuff.

Sometimes, we would head for the Creek. The Pensaukee Creek ran through Zachow and we would dig some worms and try to catch the chubs that were in the creek. The trout of years before were long gone. Sometimes we would build a small fire and fry them on the creek bank and other times drag them home to fry. In my case I did this generally when my Dad came back from a trout fishing trip. I would eat the trout and he would eat the chubs. This was always a good trade!

Other gustatory delights cost us a little something. An ice cream cone was available at Merts tavern for 5 cents. Pepsi and Red Rock Cola were both available at Merts tavern, Schmidts tavern and Radtkes's garage for 5 cents also. Peanuts and Burnt peanuts were available in peanut machines for 1 cent in the office at Dirks Feed Mill and Lumber yard. The trick here was to beg nickels and pennies from our parents for these trips.

I do not recall if we went on raspberry foraging escapades but if anybody had raspberries we would find them.

Another activity that comes under the heading of foraging was the aftermath of the "Free Shows" in town. These were movies sponsored by the Zachow Businessmens Association and occurred weekly throughout the summer. These movies were mostly serials so you would come back next week. The "Wolfman" was a favorite as were some of old black and white westerns. Folks would come in from all over the area to see these movies. Cars would start parking in front of the screen well before dark so people could watch from the cars. The "square" was kept free for the people that came that sat on blankets to watch the movies. The grocery stores and bars in town flourished during these weekly movie showings and I guess it was judged to be well worth the effort. The kids definitely thought it was because of the appearance in the morning of a lot

of stuff that would be laying about and in particular coins that dropped out in the grass on the square. Who ever got up the earliest would be well rewarded for searching through the grass for money. Our main competition for this was Fritz Lemke. Fritz was one of the Icons of Zachow and resided with the Herman Radtke family above the hardware store. Fritz was always good to the kids and I am not sure if it was not he who tipped us off about the morning after coins.

Zachow really had no boundaries for the kids. The entire village was meant to be explored (and exploited?) Everybody knew everybody and the adults generally kept an eye on us and if we messed up too badly our parents would be alerted. Appropriate redirection would then follow.

Army-Cowboy-Roy Rogers Club:

It seemed that there was a period of years that just about every day we did some sort of combat. With World War Two going on, or just over, we played at soldiering. Some of us had military replicas such as the 03' Springfield and we also made wooden guns. "Rubber guns" were a standard for a short time. We would cut up inner-tubes crossways to make large rubber bands and then stretch them over the "gun" that maybe had a cloths-pin or nail release mechanism. When hit with one of these you generally got a welt. The more clever of the builders of these figured out how to rig multiple rubber bands so you had a repeater.

The military warfare was done in olive drab as much as possible and was enhanced with a couple of Nazi helmets that Harvey Radtke brought home with him. I vaguely recall that we also had some US helmet liners but not the helmets themselves. This "warfare" was escalated when a couple of us got the brilliant idea to use BB guns. This was a difficult weapon to use in the open so we decided one day to move the battle ground to "Paul's Barn". (Paul Dobratz) His barns hay mows clearly marked out two sides. We chose sides and then donned leather jackets and other heavy clothing and helmets to begin our battle. We really knew this was not a good idea but did it anyway since we were soldiers. All was proceeding well when a distress signal went up. Leon Westerfeld had been hit in the forehead and had a pretty good welt the size of a BB. This was too close to his eyes and we declared an armistice and never engaged in this sort of battle again. The big challenge for Leon was how to pass on the logic of having this sort of welt to his parents when he got home. (Mr. Dobratz never knew we considered his barn just another place for kids to explore and use as we saw fit. He kept a bull that we used to check in on from time to time and we also inspected his other animals.)

Cowboy was another activity involving a sort of combat with the good guys and the bad guys. This was the era of Tom Mix, Lash Larue, Hopalong Cassidy, Red Ryder, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, The Lone Ranger, etc. etc. This was also the era of cap guns. Most of us had some sort of six shooter and cowboy gear. Eventually, the Roy Rogers Club was established and most of the boys in town participated in this. Generally the “meetings” were held on Saturday morning and the days cowboy activities planned. Not everyone agreed that Roy Rogers should be the cowboy honored with our club since Gene Autry was also very popular. This debate never was resolved to the satisfaction of everyone.

The clubhouse was in back of the bank in a wooden woodshed type structure that housed the banks furnace and was used for storage of bulky items. A sign was dutifully painted on the door announcing to the world the existence of the Roy Rogers Club.

Winters:

The winters were just as busy as the summers. Sleigh riding was a favored activity when the small hills around town were right. One of the places this occurred was the hill between Zernickes farm and Leon Westerfeld’s house. We built a ski-jump on this hill one winter. It was a pretty sorry affair. It was not long enough or high enough so all we did was end up with a “plop” at the end of the run. To get more use out of this structure one of us got the great idea of trying it with a toboggan since we could get up more speed with the it. Down the hill three or four of us went with the toboggan and “kerwump” we hit-with a tremendous jarring to our spinal columns. Luckily none of us were hurt very badly and we then abandoned the toboggan idea.

Other spots for sledding were the part of road from County Truck F to the bridge in town when the roads were iced up. We also used the stretch of road by the barn/garage east of the Kammerman building near Paul Dobratz’s driveway. This was a longer run that would carry us as far as Frank Stiede’s house. The king of sleigh runs was out in the country by the hill that ran to Krakow. This was near the Lester Radtke farm that Bud Eckert worked at on top of the hill on County Trunk C. It was a hike of a couple of miles north and east of town to County Truck C and then north up the hill to the road going east to Krakow. It was a long walk for us but well worth it if the ice was right. The sled run here was at least half mile long. If the ice was right for sledding it was not right for cars so this worked out well.

Ice skating was also a major activity since we had two ponds to choose from. Dirks’ pond by the Dirks Feed Mill and Lumber Yard was the most used since it was in town

and easily accessible. All the kids in town would gather here for afternoon skating and night skating. When it snowed someone always found the time to shovel off a decent skating area. The other pond was Zernickes' pond. This required a hike across a field by Grafs' Creamery or a longer walk down County Truck F to get to the pond. This was a larger pond that in the earlier days was the source of large ice blocks for the ice boxes in the area homes and businesses.

Zernickes' pond permitted some serious skating because of its size. Games of ice tag, hockey, and fox and goose were organized. This was the pond where you learned to skate fast, go backwards and do figure eights. This pond was also used day and night during the winter and being larger required a quite a bit more shoveling when it snowed. As with the other facilities and assets of the town the kids considered these two ponds as part of their realm. Manton Zernicke, the son of owner Elmer Zernicke, sometimes took exception to this "open for all" philosophy surrounding the pond. On one occasion a small pushing incident occurred when I was on skates and I inadvertently cut off the toe of a new pair of winter boots Manton had on when I lost my balance on the skates. Peace was ultimately made and the kids kept on skating, but I always felt bad about the boots.

One of the odd things about the skating activity was that the boys had to frequently help the girls lace up their skates. The girls usually had the high top figure skates that were hard to lace. I guess they needed the help!!!!

It was also in one of the winters that a following developed in delivering the Green Bay Press Gazette. I had a paper route that had around twenty-seven customers. They were scattered over the entire village and when out as far as the Schultz, and Zernicke farms on County Trunk F. This paper was usually delivered after supper and for some reason some of the kids decided to walk along. Some of names of the kids that did this were Gladys Westphal, Matt Erickson, Pete Erickson, and others. The paper route had become a social event for a time. This was during the years when snow would be piled up along the roads ten feet high and higher. The FWD built county plows made great walkways on the road side snow with the wing blade of their plows.

Another winter dimension of the paper route was Christmas. The paper boy was always remembered at Christmas time. One Christmas chocolate covered maraschino cherries were in vogue. I received seven one pound boxes of these and feasted at least into March on them. I think that this was also the year I received some "Cream Oil Charlie" from the Dirks family. This of course was Wildroot Cream Oil, "keeps your hair in trim". I guess I must have needed it.

Another winter benefit of the paper route occurred in November or early December when the Green Bay Press Gazette would host a Packers game for its carriers. I went to these games at least twice in old City Stadium and saw the likes of Tony Canadeo, Ted Fritsch, Don Hutson, Jug Gerard, and some of other old time greats of the 1940's Packers.

Christmas time was especially great for the Railroad buffs since Lionel trains were at their peak during these years. Most of the train equipment would appear at Christmas time and on Christmas day we would be checking with each other to see who got what. Some of kids had pretty elaborate layouts. I think John Dobratz had the largest layout with O27 gauge Lionel that his father Leonard preferred. Brian Baker had an excellent layout that was set up in Merts' Tavern. Roy Dirks also had a good collection. American Flyer was represented since Mike Buss got a set one year. Mike's father Wally Buss was the C&NW depot agent in Zachow for a time. My set was on a 5x10 foot piece of plywood in our basement and included a Santa Fe Diesel in O gauge and an 2-4-2 steam engine passenger train in O27 gauge.

Christmas caroling was another great winter social activity. The kids would all get together and wander all over town caroling. I do not recall any of the boys having good voices for this but some of the girls did a great job and had good voices. This was much appreciated by the town folks and maybe offset some of the annoyance we caused at other times of the year.

Camping:

Another activity that some of the boys in town pursued in summer was camping. This was a natural expansion of activity from the Pickle House fort building and hideouts we built in Mollys' woods. (Clarence & Molly Kroening lived next to the woods.) We were a little older at this time and could ride our bikes out of town. Wagons were tied to the bikes as trailers and then loaded with our pup tents, food and beverages, axes, knives, flashlight, and other assorted gear.

Our favorite area was south of town on County Trunk F just before you hit Highway 29. At the lowest part of the wooded area you pass through just before 29 there was a logging road on the right. If you followed this into the woods for a quarter mile there was a great little spot for pitching tents. (and swatting mosquitos) I think Roy Dirks was the one that named this place after seeing a skunk lurking about. The site was named "Stinky Lane".

Another area for camping was closer to 29 on the left. There was a small knoll across a field that was more or less wooded. We pitched our tents here several times. On one of

these ventures we woke up in the morning and found a small snake nestled among the bedding in the tent. We then dubbed this site as “Snake Hill”.

We were pretty self sufficient on these trips and the folks at the YMCA or the Boy Scouts would have approved of our camping techniques. However, this apparently was not shared by everyone. On one of our trips we were scouting new ground and got run off from one spot we had selected by the sons of the owner. Their stated concern was that we could start a fire in the woods. We moved from their piece of land and got permission from another land owner near by to set up camp on his property. We were not to be dissuaded during this trip but it cost us. During the night our bikes were taken and pushed down the road and into the ditch where they could not be easily seen. After searching around and grumbling about how we were going to deal with our camping equipment without bikes we finally found them. My bike just happened to be a brand new 1949 Schwinn Red Phantom without a mark on it. After being pushed into the ditch the chromed front fender was permanently scratched and some of the paint was scraped. We know who did this and just considered the source and went on with our camping pursuits. This camp site was never dignified with a name.

Camping developed some skills for us that would serve well in later years for hunting and fishing in the Wisconsin’s “wilderness”.

(The 1949 Schwinn Red Phantom was completely restored a number of years back and now resides in the Bicycle Museum of America in New Bremen, Ohio. This is the museum that Schwinn had in Chicago and was sold at auction during their bankruptcy and moved to Ohio. “Dean’s Bike” is one of featured displays.)

Football, baseball, softball, basketball, & track:

None of these sports were “organized” in Zachow. But, we did all of them in one way or another. From my perspective it was better this way since we did them when we wanted to and we were not subject to a schedule or “adult interference”.

We generally followed the normal seasons for these sports. Touch football was a big activity which we played mostly on the “town square” (really a triangle) This was the same place the free shows took place. The high schools in Bonduel and Pulaski supplied us with local heroes that were a little older and in my age group these heroes from Zachow included Dennis Radtke, Roger Klevesahl, Roger Erickson, Bill Brunner, and Jim Dobratz to name a few that played for the Bears in Bonduel. Sundays when the

Packer games were on the radio were usually the times to concentrate on football and most often a game was organized after the Packers were done.

The “square” also took care of the softball needs. The outfield was the open area between the depot and the downtown retail strip. The bases were a little close together but it worked for us. Many people used this square to sharpen up their softball skills.

Bob Dobratz used to practice his windmill fast pitch here. No one could hit it if he got it across the plate. His father Ewald Dobratz slow pitched to the kids just about every night after work if the weather was good.

We also just did fielding practice by hitting pop-ups etc. from the retail strip, hitting the ball towards the RR crossing area. The game of “500” was used as an incentive to catch the fly balls as well as the grounders. One day I miss-judged a high fly ball, and got hit in the mouth with the baseball we were using. This cracked four front teeth that gave me trouble for years and finally in later years had to be replaced with a bridge. Also, to sharpen up our hitting and coordination skills we simply batted stones we threw up in the air and hit out of sight.

The most formal we ever got for a team was in the A to Z 4H Club that covered Advance to Zachow. Many of the kids from Zachow belonged to this club and we played against other 4H clubs in the area. These were generally night games and well attended. Our team was pretty good. We even had Blue and White jerseys to show how organized we were.

Baseballs were used here and there but mostly it was softball. In the earlier days Zachow had a competitive baseball team made up of a lot of Radtke’s and the field they used had home plate by the Harry Hoefs house with the outfield sort of northwest from there. After I left the area a more formal ball field was established across from the Pauly Cheese house that was used for both.

Basketball was a little harder to develop in Zachow. The first effort at this that I recall is a “basket” the Dobratz boys, (Jim, Bob, Gary) and I set up in the store front of the old Kammerman building department store before it was made into an apartment. We used this for a number of years. Later, my father built a two car garage next to the Bank which had a nice concrete pad in front. About the second year we had this I had Carl Hafeman from the blacksmith shop weld up a framework that I could bolt to the top edge of the garage roof. This was attached with lag screws and then flat 1”x8” boards bolted to it for a backstop. We also had Carl weld up a hoop for us to bolt to the backstop and then we

actually bought a regulation net to tie to the hoop. It was an ungainly affair but many of the kids in town wandered over to shoot baskets. I never really asked my father if it was okay to mount this contraption but I guess our ingenuity won him over since he never told us to take it down.

Track activities were just a natural for kids. There was always some way to see who could run the fastest, jump the highest, and throw the farthest. We constructed some low-hurdles and tried to develop the technique. This caused more than a couple of skinned up knee's and legs. We had some local heroes for this activity also and some of them were the ones named in the football discussion. Bill Brunner was a State Champion in the low hurdles and he was like watching poetry in action when he ran the hurdles. In earlier years one of the legends talked about by some of real old-timers was Lester Radtke. He was probably the fastest man ever to run in the County and set track records but he had terrible eye sight. In football he had to be told where to run since he could not see.

In another track activity Gary Dobratz and I got together to make a high jump pit in the sawdust pile of Zernicke's sawmill by the creek. We did not know any better but both of us worked on a jumping style I later found out was called "Sweenies Roll"). It was basically a scissors kick. Gary developed a type of "Western Roll" and eventually took the school record at Bonduel High School with it. Of course this beat a record I had set a few years earlier.

We were not totally isolated from the outside world in these sporting activities since we had to go to grade School in either Bonduel or Pulaski, and it was the same for high school. This gave us a window as to what was happening with the other kids and to expose us to organized sports at the high school level. As we got older we got to know just about all the kids in the vicinity of Bonduel, Cecil, Pulaski, Advance, Green Valley, Krakow, and many from Shawano and Gillet. All three school districts, (Bonduel, Pulaski, and Shawano) were consolidated districts so the farm kids were brought in along with the "townies" and fierce rivalries sometimes developed between the respective areas.

I was active in most of the sports in Bonduel High School and turned out to be about a B+ type athlete with football my favorite sport. One of the ego inflating things that I cherish to this day is that I was given the nickname of "Zock", acknowledging the fact that I came from Zachow. For me this was the ultimate recognition and this name stuck to me for many years after I left the Shawano County area and some folks still call me "Zock".

Chicago & Northwestern Railroad:

The C&NW and its trains were the reason Zachow existed. The stockyard that was torn down in the early 40's was the original reason for Zachow being. Farmers were having cattle shipped in and the C&NW depot built in 1906 was the destination for farm equipment the farmers purchased.

My early recollections were of playing in that stockyard that was no longer in use. The first trains I became aware of were steam freights and passenger trains, with the exception of the Diesel/Electric Doodlebug. The latter was an olive drab thing with red and white wide horizontal stripes on the front. It generally was just one unit but later added a second passenger car. This train came through twice a day and brought mail in the morning and returned the shoppers from their trips to Shawano in the afternoon. Two other railroad wonders were the Flambeau 400, and the Ashland Limited. They came through around 4:30 PM and again around 1:00AM. We had a long siding in Zachow and often they would pass one another in our little village. These trains did not have a regular stop in Zachow but came through at 70 to 90 MPH when they were not passing one another. The cars were the heavy dark olive drab passenger cars with an observation car at the rear with the railing around the rear platform. The engines were the high wheeled Pacifics.

The freights that came through and sometimes stopped had a long uphill grade coming into Zachow from Green Bay. You could hear these freights from a long way off as they struggled up that grade. When their wheels would slip one could hear the steam engine racing away until they dropped sand under the wheels to regain traction. Then the slow chuf, chuf, chuf, would resume.

These freights would stop from time to time to drop off cars at the Pauly Cheese Company, the Pickle House, Dirks Feed Mill & Lumber yard, and the Westerfeld Oil Company. Since the highway system was not yet developed well enough for freight there were always some freight cars on the sidings. The Pauly Cheese Company would load up the refrigerator cars with graded cheese, the Pickle House would load up pickles and cucumbers (later trucks hauled these away), the feed mill received its feed and grains this way, and the Westerfeld Oil Company received fuel oil and gasoline.

The kids took advantage of all of this in many ways. The freight cars on the sidings were made for climbing on and walking on the catwalk on top. The refrigerator cars had doors on top to open to permit inspection of the cooling ice the car contained. (No one ever fell into one of these.) We frequently just watched the loading and unloading of these cars.

In the case of the Pauly Cheese Company they frequently had several cars to deal with and when one was full they would get everybody out to help push the car away from the loading door so there would be room for the empty car.. They used a long lever to fit under the wheel of the car to get it rolling and then they just pushed it to the new location.

One the things that happened from time to time was the appearance of “strange characters” that would arrive by train. These were generally the last of the hobo’s and tramps that used the old trains to get around. However, one night an individual showed up that was different. He was a soldier returning home on leave and had been partying on the train and got stuck between the cars of the old time steam passenger train and could not get into the next car. He hung on from Pulaski to Zachow outside the car and finally had to drop off since his hands were freezing. It was below zero weather. This occurred on the 1:00 AM train. He started knocking on doors for help and finally someone gave him some paper and matches to start up the old pot belly stove in the waiting room of the depot. It was impossible to get the coal started in this stove with paper and matches and he could not handle the matches very well since his hands were frozen

He then wandered over to Schmidt’s tavern and Rueben greeted him at the door with a twelve gauge shotgun. (The soldier looked pretty disheveled and had a sailor hat on,) The soldier dropped to his knees but to Rueben’s credit he invited him in and had him sleep on the floor. However, Rueben stood watch over him all night with the shotgun. The next day I guess the soldier finally got on his way to Shawano but his hands were horribly swollen from freezing. We never heard the outcome of this episode.

A section crew worked out of Zachow to maintain a certain distance of track and they had a small gasoline car with a trailer to carry them about. Bill Westphal ran this in my early years later to be replaced by Louis Sperberg. We never got a ride on the car they used but wished that we had. The crew maintained spare track sections and ties in the space between the sidings. The ties were soaked in creosote and our mothers always knew when we were climbing around on the tie pile since we would smell and our clothes would be stained with creosote.

The C&NW had a roundhouse in Green Bay and they would run their engines as far as Zachow for testing when they were being repaired. Most of the time just the engine came to Zachow but sometimes it came with a caboose. The crews got to know most of the kids and dogs in town and quite often sought refreshments at Merts’ Tavern. (Brian Baker is perhaps the most knowledgeable about the C&NW) When my dog would challenge the engine the crew quite often retaliated with a burst of steam.

A great treat was being permitted to climb into the engine cab with all the heat and dials. An even greater treat was when the crew would give us a ride in the engine to the first crossing east of town. This gave us a ride of one mile where they permitted us to shovel coal in the firebox and to blow the whistle. Of course we would have to hike that one mile back to town. When there was a caboose available, either on a test run, or just in town to switch freight cars around we would ask to go in the caboose. The treat here was sitting in the little house on top of the caboose where the crew watched the train from the rear to spot "hot boxes". Most of the cars did not have bearings in the wheels and relied on oil soaked rags to lubricate the axels. These would get hot and start to burn. If it got serious enough the train would have to stop to put out the fire.

One of the great sports with the trains was to see how flat and large we could make a penny. A penny would be placed on the track and we would wait for the train to come by. The freights worked the best since they were slower. We would put the same coin down multiple times to see how big we could make it. Eventually it would thin out and stick to the wheel of the train and we would lose it. The passenger trains ran too fast for this activity and they would take the coin too far down the track or it would stick right away.

Walking the rails was another type of competition for the kids. Here we would walk down one rail to see who could walk the furthest before falling off. Another was running down the center of the tracks on the ties and pacing our run to the distance of the ties.

The railroad trestle that ran over Pensaukee Creek west of town was another thing to mess with. We would climb around on this and frequently sat under it to view the trains from the bottom.

We did not know it at the time but it would be a sad day when the steam engines were retired. The first diesel engine through town was on one of the passenger trains that came through at night. I think everyone in town was up to view the yellow and green streamliner. At first they used the "heavy" passenger cars but quickly changed the familiar yellow and green streamliner cars. The transition from steam to diesel took about five years from the late 40's to the early 50's. (My mother welcomed this change since now she would not have to redo her laundry after a smoke belching steam engine went through town.)

All the kids in town spent some time hanging around the Depot. This was just across the little field from our house and I went over there all the time. We messed with the telegraph, listened to the agents keeping track of the trains coming through, and generally absorbed the activities of the railroad.

Some of the dogs of Zachow:

The village had numerous dogs that the kids had contact with. Our first dog was “Buttons”. Buttons was an English Retriever of some type and he was my pal. I was constantly playing in Buttons’ doghouse. He was black and white and a very friendly old dog. One bad habit however was heading across the field in back of our house to a farm and raiding Herb Ruschs’ chicken house. Herb did not know where this dog came from but one day unloaded on Buttons with his shotgun. I think that Buttons survived but I do not remember the ultimate disposition of Buttons.

Jim Westphal had a Boston Terrier named “Zipper” that became a sort of town dog. Zipper was a little thing that just wanted to retrieve balls that would be thrown.

The Bakers, in Merts Tavern , had a dog called “Fuzzer”. I think it was some sort of chow. Old Fuzzer had a bad habit of biting at your heels when you walked by the tavern. He was a terror for the smaller kids of which I was one. Later Brian Baker got a new dog. A real beautiful collie they named “Lassie”.

We later had some liver and white springers. One was called “Patches” and the other was “Brownie”. Brownie was a champion quality dog and was ultimately sold to somebody in Green Bay. Patches stayed with us and was as great hunter and retriever and generally stayed home. She was a great companion for an eight year old.

The Erickson’s had a hound of some type called “Bert”. Bert was a town dog that every kid in town knew and Bert was always where the action was. I recall him frequently being at Dirks’ pond in the winter when the kids would skate there.

Paul Dobratz had a collie type dog called “Pal”. I think that Pal was more Dollys dog than Pauls. Pal was a town bum and like Bert went to where the kid action was. Old Pal had a bad habit of chasing cars and one day he caught one which was his demise. This was a sad day as we carried Pal back to the Dobratz’s.

Neil and Lucille Moesch had a black and white springer spaniel named “Skippy”. Skippy came after Zipper and also like to chase balls and sticks for the kids. Skippy pretty much roamed around with us kids and was more a town dog than a family pet for Neil and Lucille. I do not know what precipitated it but Skipper was eventually reined in and lived tied to his dog house in his later years. He turned ugly during this time and the kids could not get near him. I think the loss of his freedom and the continuing presence of the kids caused this.

My last dog before I left town was another “Brownie”. He was an American Water Spaniel that Dad acquired from Dewey Krueger. This was the result of a “love affair” between the dog and I during a pheasant hunting trip. I think we paid \$15.00 for him. Brownie was grown when we acquired him and was pretty set in his ways. He became a town dog and meandered everywhere on his own and was a town pest. One of his favorite pastimes was burying things. I made some dog-food “balls” once and old Brownie did not want to insult me so he would carry these around for awhile and finally take off and bury them someplace. To my knowledge he never dug one up and ate it.

I got Brownie to hunt for me but he would not hunt for Dad. He had a thing for old men and one day leaped at someone that came onto our yard and this became a problem. His town roaming was eventually his undoing. After I was in the Navy in 1955 Brownie crossed the road in front of a truck driven by Roy Dirks and was killed. It was not Roy’s fault but he felt terrible about hitting Brownie and could hardly talk to me about it when I came home on leave.

I am sure there are a number dogs I have not mentioned that I have forgotten about and maybe someone can add them to the list. The dogs were as much a part of our growing up years as anything else we were exposed to.

Other miscellaneous activities:

Swimming was a harder activity to get involved with in Zachow. We would flounder around in Dirks’ pond but its water quality was terrible and it was not deep enough. Zernickes’ pond was too dangerous, and the Creek was too shallow. The adults helped make up for this by driving groups of us to either the beach at Cecil, or to the Shawano County Park on the north shore of Shawano Lake. I had an advantage here in that my

parents had a cottage on Washington Lake and swimming became part of the activities here. Some of the kids from Zachow would visit with us. Roger Hansen is the only one that I can claim that I taught to swim.

For bowling we would get someone to drive us to the lanes in Pulaski or Bonduel. This often would include around a half dozen kids or more.

Quite often for a number of years we played “Kick the Can”, or “Tin Can Alley”. Most of the kids in town joined in on this and it was generally played after supper until dark. When we would hide this would give the boys a chance to hide with the girls. “Alley-Alley-Over was another game that the group engaged in which involved throwing a ball

over a building to a “team” on the other side. I do not remember exactly how this game went but it involved a lot of running around the building.

Some of the kids worked on farms here and there, sometimes for compensation. I helped with “shocking” oats one year which involved picking up the cut oats and stacking them in an upright stack for drying and gathering later. One needed a long sleeve shirt for this because the oat grass would cut your arms. These stacks were later threshed by pitching them into a wagon and taking them to the threshing machine. This gave us a chance to drive the tractor which was big stuff at the time. However, the most memorable part of farm work was the noon meal for the workers. This would be a feast that the women would prepare that had three or four different types of meat and vegetables, and potatoes and bread. For the type manual labor involved these feasts provided the fuel to keep the men going.

Showing up at the farms during milking time was another great activity. It was always a challenge to hand milk a cow and I never really mastered it totally. However, I was good enough to give the cats a “squirt” of milk from time to time. The farm cats hung around looking for this special treat.

Trying out smoking was something most of the kids took a try at. I recall when Leon Westerfeld and I tried our first “drags”. We selected Chesterfields as the cigarette of choice since they were advertised as mild. I am not sure where we got the cigarettes but we probably borrowed them from one of our parents. The site of the trial was one of the outhouses behind the hardware store. We lit up and took a couple of puffs and wondered why anyone would want to do that.

My second adventure with cigarettes was with Manton Zernicke in his Dads sawmill by the creek. We went up to the second story of the sawmill where they used to cut shingles and lit up. This was a very poor idea since the sawmill was constructed of old dry lumber and had piles of sawdust everywhere. A fire would have been a bad thing. In the course of our adventure I backed up over the open stairwell and fell backwards on the steps below. I landed on the steps and slid down to floor and could not breathe. Manton rushed down and kept asking “are you dead, are you dead”. I could not answer since the breath had been knocked out of me but eventually I came around. With Manton’s help I limped over the Gertie Hansen’s house by the blacksmith shop to help get me home. I left a substantial amount of skin behind from my back hitting the steps and had some good bruises but nothing was broken. I did not mess with cigarettes for many years to come.

Halloween provided the kids a chance to gather a lot of treats, but it also gave us a chance for some tricks. The usual soaping of windows occurred along with other minor tricks. One of the noisiest and startling tricks I did was to first notch the edges of an empty thread spool. Then a spike would be inserted into the hole and a string wrapped around the spool. The spike served as a handle and the contraption would be pressed against the outside of a window and then the string would be pulled causing the spool to rotate. This notched edge rattled the window glass in a pretty frightening way.

Tipping over outhouses was another activity that some of the kids outside of Zachow did but to my knowledge only one was tipped over in Zachow. Rueben Schmidt used to wait for the kids to come around by waiting in one of the two outhouses he had behind the Schmidts Tavern. We finally figured this out and one year we pushed the outhouse over when we thought Rueben was in it waiting for us. We all ran and never could verify that he was actually in it at the time.

Mostly Halloween was another social activity with all the kids getting together and walking around the village gathering up treats.

There is more I could ramble on about but enough is enough! All the kids have their own recollections of "Growing Up in Zachow".

Dean D. Proper (resident from 1936 to 1955)