

MY MEMORIES OF ZACHOW
by Marilyn (Hoefs) Hanson

My name is Marilyn (Hoefs) Hanson and my parents were Bernice and Maynard Hoefs. Before I was born, they lived upstairs in my grandparents, Harry and Irene Hoefs' house in Zachow. My sister Judy was born when they lived upstairs there. Then before I was born in 1947, my parents bought a house from Lester Radtke that was located just across a small field from my grandparents.

My first memories were at about the age of 5 when I would follow the well-worn path from our house across the empty field to my Grandma and Grandpa Hoefs' house. My grandpa would be at work at Pauly Cheese but my grandmother would always stop whatever she was doing and spend time with me. I remember playing hide the thimble a lot. She was so good to me and I remember her hearty laugh. She passed away in 1954 of cancer.

I attended LaFollette Grove School from first grade through seventh. It was a one-room school with eight grades and was located one and a half miles east of Zachow on what is now Church Drive. I had three teachers during the seven years - Edith Winkler, Dawn Polley, and Leona Wegner. After my seventh-grade year, the school was closed and some students went to Pulaski schools and the rest of us went to Bonduel.

From first grade on, we would have to either walk to school or ride our bikes. When it rained or during the winter, we would often be able to get rides to school. I remember in the later years, Dick Mayefske who operated the hardware store would drive his children to school and would be kind enough to take us along.

I have many fond memories of LaFollette Grove School. The teacher would bring one class or group up to the front of the classroom at a time and work with them. During that time, the rest of us would study, read, do homework or extra work. The older students would also work with the younger ones, helping them to read, do math, etc.

The students took turns with housekeeping duties depending on their ages and capabilities. The teacher would assign jobs each week such as putting up the flag in the morning and taking it down in the afternoon, sweeping, washing blackboards, burning papers, handing out bottles of milk. We took our lunches in lunch boxes and I remember how I'd look forward to lunch time when I knew my mom had put soup or a hot dog in a thermos bottle instead of packing just a cold sandwich! White milk was provided for all of us by the school, and once in a while we would get a special treat of chocolate milk.

Christmas was a very special time at the school. Weeks before, a stage would be built by the older boys at the front of the classroom. Curtains would be put up on wires for the stage. We'd all memorize parts to recite, learn songs, learn parts for plays, and prepare for the Christmas program when all the parents would be invited to come and see us perform.

The older boys would go out in the woods and cut down a Christmas tree and bring it back to the school and we'd all decorate it.

During the winter when we couldn't go outside for recess, some of us would bring records to play on a record player and everyone would dance, including the boys!

When I was in seventh grade, I won the spelling bee at our school and went on to participate in the county spelling bee at the Shawano Court House. I was so nervous to come from a little school to compete with kids from bigger schools from all over the county. Needless to say, I did not advance any further, but it was a good experience for me.

When I was very young, I vaguely remember someone showing outdoor movies on Saturday nights on a big screen in the grassy square uptown in Zachow. We'd all sit on blankets or in cars and watch the movie.

We never had ice cream at our house back then, so once in a while our parents would give us a dime so we could go up to Minnie and Rueben Schmidt's tavern and buy an ice cream treat. And when word spread around town that they had gotten in "rainbow ice cream", it didn't take us long to get up there to get a rainbow ice cream cone. What a treat it was!

One of my favorite places in Zachow was The Pond. It was owned by the Henry Dirks family, and it was located between their elevator and the oil tanks owned by Westerfeld Oil. In summer there was a dock and a small row boat that we were allowed to use. We also caught a lot of pollywogs in the spring and sometimes took them home to proudly show our parents! When it was really hot out and we were desperate to cool off, some of us would actually go swimming there although it was very weedy and not good for swimming. In the winter, the pond would freeze over and we would spend many hours ice skating there. Kids of all ages would come from all over to skate there. Mr. Dirks allowed us to use their scrapers from the elevator to clear off the ice, they had a yard light so we could skate at night and even allowed us to use their outhouse next to the elevator!

I remember going to Pauly Cheese to visit our dad. I was fascinated by the hot paraffin tanks where they would dip the blocks of cheese into the tanks to seal them with the wax. I'd also like to walk back with my dad into the coolers where the cheese was stored and feel the coolers get colder the further you walked back into the warehouse.

I remember a couple of tragedies that occurred in Zachow. In December of 1961 a car was hit by a train one afternoon at the crossing in the middle of town. One man was killed. Also, there was a fire in the old hardware store. The building burned down and there were people living in the upstairs apartment. I think someone died in that fire also.

I remember Radtke's Garage would have a special event every year to show the new cars coming out for the new year. They'd have food, balloons, etc. I remember going there with my parents.

We went to Zion Lutheran Church and I remember enjoying Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. I remember Pastor Lederer, Pastor Boelter and I was confirmed by Pastor Strassen who was a vacancy pastor.

We would always look forward to the Shawano County Bookmobile coming to town. During the summer, we would get a lot of books to pass the time. It was a nice service made available by the county and appreciated and used by a lot of people in town.

We also planted and picked pickles during the summer and took them up to the pickle house that was located between the elevator and Pauly Cheese House. I don't know who owned the building or managed it. And I'm not sure where the pickles were taken - probably some canning factory in Bonduel or Pulaski. But we were paid so much a pound - the best ones that paid the most were the medium size. We were so happy to get some spending money but didn't enjoy the work of picking them!

We also spent a lot of time in the woods at the end of our road. I don't know who owned it at that time but we called it "Molly's woods" because Molly and Clarence Kroening lived in the last house on our road right by the woods. We played a lot in the woods making houses and forts and picked lots of wildflowers there in the spring.

These are some of the memories that I have of Zachow long ago. I hope that they will bring back some good memories for others as well. It was a nice quiet little town with good people and was a good place to grow up in.