

# Bisonalities, Again



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to the Alumni of Waterford and Fort Le Boeuf High Schools

July 2001

Summer Issue

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**T**he Bisonalities, Again Newsletter is available to any and all alumni, teachers, and administrators of Waterford or FLBSHS on the Web site, free. If you know an alumni, teacher, or administrator who would be interested, please ask them to contact me.

None of the material in this newsletter has a copyright. If you wish to make copies of this newsletter and distribute it to other Alumni or friends, please feel free to do so.

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**W**elcome to the Summer 2001 edition of the Newsletter dedicated to the alumni (students, teachers, and administrators) of Waterford and Fort Le Boeuf Senior High Schools. This newsletter will be issued quarterly. New issues will be posted for viewing on the Web site on, or about, October 5, January 5, April 5, and July 5.

**T**he Web site may be viewed by going to:

<http://www.geocities.com/candoer1>

**T**he success of this newsletter will depend on you. I need contributors. Do you have an interesting article, a nostalgia item, a real life story, or a picture you would like to share with other alumni? Do you have a snail-mail or an e-mail address of one of your classmates? Send it to the me at the following e-mail address:

**bisonalities@candoer.org**

or at my snail-mail address.

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## Cat's Corner

**B**uck Davis furnished an e-mail address for Dave (Ox) and Peggy (Osborn) Pifer, class of 1959: [oxmister41@aol.com](mailto:oxmister41@aol.com).

**D**ave and Peggy furnished the class officers for the class of 1959.

**I** have added to the Memorial Page a young man who died last summer, in the eight grade, at the age of 13, Cory Rinfuss. Cory, a very special young man, died suddenly of a seizure.

To Andrea, who made this request, I extend, from all of the Bison's, our condolences and support to Cory's family and friends..

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## Get the janitor, quick

by Pat Weaver

**W**elllll....Herb did get me to thinking about a lot of things from our Waterford days. And I mean a

LOT of things. But let me tell you about the most embarrassing thing that I can remember about the good ol' days.

I was the "new girl" in school in 1954. We went to school in the old Waterford Academy with it's warren of classrooms connected by stairs that were worn down from the 132 years of feet running, plodding, and walking up and down their wooden surfaces. Remember how narrow some of the hallways were? And poorly lit? But it had that unique smell...old chalk and dust....and the special smell rarely encountered in this day and age of cement block, plaster, glass, and steel. It was shortly after the school year started that the most embarrassing day of my entire life occurred.

It started in a study hall on the second floor. The room was small and only about six or seven of us were in there, with no teacher. I was cutting up a bit (who me? Nawwwwww, maybe it was someone else) and standing at the blackboard writing on it. As I wrote, the board sloooooowly started to tip forward. The others in the classroom ran up and leaned against it, holding it in place so it wouldn't crash to the floor. They told me to go and get the janitor, QUICK.

Well, I ran out the door, down a very narrow pair of stairs and through another area and ended up in the area just inside the front door. I stopped. Where would I even find the janitor? Who WAS the janitor? I was new and didn't even know all the rooms in the school yet and certainly not all the personnel. But ... I did know a certain senior boy who lived near me and who I thought was just a wonderful person ... mysterious and ... well, you get the picture. I knew this boy was in a classroom right over ... there! The door to that classroom stood open. It was a nice warm September day, in a school that didn't have fans much less air conditioning in those days. Across from the open classroom door was another door that I had seen people going in and out of but didn't know where it went. It could lead to the basement, I thought, and where else would I be more likely to find the janitor. Besides, if I went through that door, I could look into the open classroom door and maybe catch a glimpse of my neighbor. So over I went, pausing as I turned the handle of the door and smiling at the Senior class as I opened the door and went in.

I was at the top of a stairway...the steps leading down to what appeared to be the basement. This must be the place I thought as I descended. WRONG! As I walked down about six steps, the rest of the room came into sight. Not a basement at all. It was the boys bathroom and it was occupied. I remember stopping shock still and recognizing the principal's son

enthroned before me. What do you say to a young man with his pants around his ankles looking up at you with a shocked face? I remember to this day what I said. I said "Excuse me, but do you know where the janitor is?" and JD replied "No I don't." We spoke in a very conversational tone, as if this were a perfectly normal situation for us. I thanked him and ran back up the stairs and threw open the door. The entire Senior class and the teacher were waiting expectantly for my reappearance. As I came through the door, they broke into laughter that I could hear all the way back up to the classroom I had left. I was soooooo humiliated ... I wanted that blackboard to fall on me and cover me up, but instead I stayed and held it up while someone else, who knew the school layout much better than I, ran and got the janitor. No one ever mentioned the incident to me.....they were too kind. If you believe that, you didn't know the class of 1954!!

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### **Humor**

**H**umor taken from the February 29, 1956 issue of the Bisonalities.

What is worse than raining cats and dogs?

Hailing street cars and busses.

Mr. Miller: "Class, it is the law of gravity that keeps us on this earth."

Carol McMahon: "But Mr. Miller, how did we stick before the law was passed?"

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### **Class Personality**

**T**his girl is very active. She is President of the FHA, Vice President of the Senior class, Treasurer of FNC, and belongs to many other activities. She is 5' 5', has blond hair, and green eyes. You can find her working at the Sugar Bowl. She is always ready for a laugh. But, yet is the biggest tease of all. Give up? Check later is this issue for her name.

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### **Always the sticks**

by Herb Walden

**I** started school in 1943, smack-dab in the middle of World War II. Ar as I can tell, the two events were unrelated.

My school was the old Waterford Boro School, which is gone now. It stood on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street just behind the old Methodist Church, which is gone now, and across from the Old Waterford Academy, which is gone now.

The grade school was a 2-story, 4-room, white-clapboard building with a big front porch. Room contained two grades and one teacher. (One of the upstairs rooms was not used when i was there), I wish I had some pictures of the old building; it's hard to remember all the details.

Downstairs on the east side was the room for first and second grades taught by Miss Elayne Bradley, (who was to become Mrs. Ronald Brooks during my stay). On the west side, Mrs. Luba Lewis taught third and fourth grades. Upstairs were fifth and sixth grades, taught by Mr. William Carroll, who was also the principal.

The building was heated with a big, old coal furnace. The large, round hot-air registers were great gathering places on cold winter days. Sometimes we got some unexpected time off when the furnace would break down. I'm not sure what there was about a hand-fired furnace to break down, but that one did.

The hardwood floors were neither painted nor varnished; they were oiled. In the pre-floor tile era, many floors in schools, stores, and other public buildings were saturated with a thin, black oil. They were slippery as ice for a day or two after the annual oiling, but eventually the oil soaked in and/or evaporated, and it was fairly safe. But the floor was always dirty. Kid couldn't sit or crawl around on it without coming up very black and slightly greasy.

The teachers didn't have much equipment, as I recall. Remember the Hectograph? That was our copier. It was essentially a gelatin coated pad. The "original" was made on plain paper with an indelible pencil. That was placed on the moistened gelatin, pressed down, and when removed, its image had been transferred to the gelatin. Copies were made by smoothing plain paper onto the gelatin and peeling it off. You could probably run 20 copies in 10 or 15 minutes with practice. The Hectograph was slow, but at least it didn't break down!

The start of the new school year meant a new pencil box. Basically, a pencil box was a cardboard case, (sometimes with a drawer!), containing pencils, a pencil sharpener, eraser, a short ruler, a compass, and a protractor. No one knew had any idea what protractors were for, so we just traced around them from time to time.

At the beginning of every 6-week grading period, the teacher gave each of us a new pencil and tablet. The cover of the tablet had a map of Pennsylvania showing all the counties. I always tried

to save some of my tablets and pencils to take home. I still have one of the tablets. But I've ran out of pencils.

Our school day started at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 3:30 p.m. The day started with morning exercises which consisted of the teacher's reading of five verses from the Bible followed by our recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. My, my --- things have hanged, haven't they?

Do you remember the poems we had to memorize in grade school? I do. Every one of the thousand or so. I suppose it was somewhat less than that, but it seemed like it at the time. Each poem was an agonizing experience --- in two ways: (1) having to stand up in front of the class and recite it, and (2) having to sit and listen to all the other class members recite it. Fortunately, we were a small class!

I didn't care much for all that memorization at the time, but now that I'm an old guy, I appreciate knowing those old poems.

"Blessings on the, little man,  
Barefoot boy with cheek of tan."

Now that I think about it, I', almost sure there was more to it than that. Oh well, that's not too bad after all these years, is it?

A lot of thing went on at our school in addition to the 3 R's. For instance, music classes happened every week or two, I think. Sometimes the music teacher would play the piano while we sang such favorites as "Camptown Racetrack" and "The Erie Canal", (Complete with choreography at the "low bridge" part).

We sang "The Farmer in the Dell" quite frequently, and yet no one ever told us (nor did we every ask), what a "dell" is. Well, I looked it up, and it's just as i suspected. A "dell" is a "vale"!

At other times, the teacher would break out the rhythm instruments with which we would accompany her piano playing. There was a triangle, a couple f tambourines, a few clappers, and just slightly over 12,000 pairs of sticks. Now for those of you not familiar with musical sticks, they are very similar to non-musical sticks. To play them, you whack them together in tempo with the tune being played on the piano, taking care, of course, not to raise a welt on the person next to you!

I speak here with great authority because when

the instruments were passed out, I always go the sticks. I always wanted the triangle. But I always got the sticks. I wasn't interested in the clappers which were smacked into your hand to make a sort of clacking sound and were orange. The tambourines looked too complicated to me. The triangle was the most musical sounding thing in the room, including the piano. But I never got to play it. I always got the sticks.

And another ting: All of the 12,000 pairs of sticks were blue, except for two wich were red. I never got the red ones. I got blue ones. I really wish I could have had the triangle.

It is said, however, that everything happens for the best, and I'm pleased to say that I can still hit a couple of sticks together in time with almost any slow tune. Still, I wish I could have had the triangle.

There were two recesses each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Our playground equipment consisted of four swings, four teeter-totters, and the fire escape.

You had to be fast to get a swing, because they were in great demand. And if you did get one, you never gave it up no matter how sick you got. There were always stories about someone going 'over the bar'. No one ever saw this happen; you just heard about it. Some of us would try only to chicken out before we even reached the horizontal. (Actually, it can't be done without a jet engine assist).

The old iron fire escape on the back of the building was our "Jungle Gym". The fact that it was off-limits made it all the more attractive. When the teachers weren't looking, some of the more-daring kids would climb on, around, under, and all over it, which resulted in sprains, scrapes, and broken arms from time to time.

One game we used to play was called "ante-over" or "Anti-over" or maybe "Annie-over" --- I never knew for sure. Anyway, it consisted of two teams, (one in front of the school and one behind it), and a rubber ball. The idea was that someone from one team would throw the ball over the room. If someone on the other team caught it, they would run around the building and ----- well, I don't really know. We never got that far. Inasmuch as the building was very tall and we were very short, the entire recess period was spent just trying to throw the ball over the roof.

You know, at the time I didn't carte much for school. I was a very busy little kid, and I had a lot of important things to do at home. There were toys to

play with, a dog to play with, a cat to play with, adults to bother, etc.

But now I wish I had a time machine so I could go back for awhile. I'd like to wander through the old building. I'd like to see my teachers. I'd like to play on the playground with Bud and Ted and Nancy and Billy and all the others.

But mostly, I'd like to get my hands on that triangle!

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### **Baghdad School**

by Bernard Cowley

Waterford High Class of 1950

**T**he year was 1944, it was September and the school term was about to begin. We had just moved to our new home in the country, and last week Dad drove us to look at our new school. About two miles from home, it sat in the corner of a hay field at the intersection of Bagdad Road and Swailes Road, about three miles west of Waterford, Pa. Two large maple trees were growing in what was the front yard of the school. About the size of a small cabin, painted white many years before, and complete with belfry and bell, our new schoolhouse sat waiting for us. On either side, replete with well-worn paths, were two outhouses. One for the boys and one for the girls, I assumed!

Little did I know what impact that little building would have on my life.(Not the toilet, the school. However the toilet did have quite an impact when there was snow on the seat, as I recall)

To a family that had just moved from the city, it was hard to imagine this place as a school. There were to be sixteen kids enrolled this year covering eight grades, and one teacher.

During the summer we had become acquainted with the kids at the neighboring farm and since they were returning students we were to go with them back and forth to school, Besides, they knew a shortcut through the woods that made the trip only about a mile and a half.

It was scarcely 7:00 A.M. when we arrived at the neighbors farm to join the others for what was to be the first of many trips through the pastures, woods, and fields on our way to and from "Bagdad School."

The shortcut to school took us across the neighbors pasture on a path well worn by the cows on their way to the barn. Reaching the woods the path

soon became a faint trail made by human feet, angling down over a steep incline that led toward a creek.

Surrounded now by large Maple and Beech trees, we could smell the distinctive odor of musty leaves and the sounds of rippling water in the creek could be heard. We paused as a chipmunk scolded angrily and scurried off into a hole in the side of a cradle knoll.

Reaching the stream, we crossed at a narrow spot and proceeded up the steep hill on the other side.

Passing now through a large stand of Hemlock trees, the musty odor changed to fresh piney smell.

Suddenly! A flock of grouse exploded into flight, as we invaded their territory. As it turned out, this was to be an almost daily event.

Soon the trail emerged from the woods into the open pasture again. Leading through a maze of small bushes and scrub apple trees, the grass grazed short around them, like a well-kept lawn, the trail once again joined a cow path along a barbed wire fence. Crossing the fence at an old wooden gate, we started up a hill, across the stubbled grass of what was a hay field during the summer.

Looking down from the hill top, about a quarter mile away, we could now see Bagdad School. The teacher apparently had just started a fire in the stove, as white smoke was coming from the chimney.

Some pictures remain in your memory all of your life, this was one of them. From this vantage point one could look over the countryside for miles. The rolling hills, the farm houses, the barns and the faint smell of wood smoke. The fall colors of the leaves, as the brilliant morning sun peeked over the horizon, created an indelible portrait in my memory.

Through the open foyer, with its dangling bell rope, we entered the front and only door of Bagdad School. Inside, divided into two sections numbering ten on each side, were the bolted down desk seats complete with inkwell and pencil slots in the desk top. Located in the middle of the room, in the center of the aisle, was the only source of heat, a potbellied stove. On the floor, on the left side of it, were a coal bucket and a little coal shovel.

Rough cut planks, worn smooth from years of children's feet, with gaps ranging from almost nothing to almost half an inch between them, made up the floor.

Located in the front of the room in the center of the aisle was a large open front desk. This is where our teacher, Miss Eleanor Lane, would command her charges.

A little closet like alcove, with a wooden rod installed across the opening for coat hangers, was on the left of the foyer part of the entrance. On the right were, cupboard like, book storage places with doors and padlocks.

On a sturdy little wooden table in front of the book cupboards, sat a fourteen quart milk bucket, filled with water. Hanging on the bucket was a drinking ladle that we all would share.

Two rather large, curtainless, windows were on each side of the room.

Three months of summer heat, together with closed windows and doors, left a musty odor in the room.

More than just a one room building, with a pot bellied stove and desks, Bagdad School was a place with a personality. Sixteen kids ranging in age from six to sixteen attended there. We were steered, shaped, and molded by a pretty, twenty-one year old school teacher. No more than a child herself, she soon won the hearts of almost all sixteen of her students. Playing games, reading stories and singing, she made the three "R's" almost fun.

Notice I said "almost" all!

There was Tommy! Tommy was in the sixth grade. Tommy didn't like school, Especially arithmetic. Tommy always had to go to the bathroom during arithmetic class, coming back just when class was finishing.

One day Miss Lane had enough of this and went outside and dragged Tommy off the toilet and back into school by his shirt collar. Screeching and yelling and trying to pull his pants up, this was quite a sight! He was the first and only kid that I ever saw that got his mouth washed out with soap, for swearing. I still remember seeing his teeth all caked with soap.

Tommy whittled a hole in the floor under his desk for a funnel, so he could spit tobacco juice in it.

"I wonder what ever happened to Tommy?" I hope he turned out to be a rocket engineer or something just as impressive.

Once during recess the entire population of the

school climbed one of the trees in the front yard. At recess end Miss Lane rang the bell and no one showed up in school. A snicker from one of the little kids gave away our hiding place.

Trying to mask a smile she sternly ordered us down from the tree and back into school.

Since I was the only boy in the seventh and eighth grade, I think it's safe to say I was the smartest boy in the seventh and eighth grade, very possibly the whole school, however that might be stretching it.

Glowing cherry red, the pot bellied stove made a feeble effort to heat the room in the winter. Hot on one side and cold on the other, we were either too hot or too cold.

With a fine spray the snow would blow through the cracks in the floor and around the windows. Huddling closer to the stove as it got colder, we became as one, sixteen kids, one teacher, eight grades, together!

This was Bagdad School.



**BAGDAD SCHOOL  
1945-46**

1st row Norman Spiegel--Geraldine DeWolf--  
Faye Marsh--Jacqueline DeWolf--Charles Cowley--  
Bill Cowley

2nd row Tom Marvel--Bernard Cowley--Tom  
Callahan--Louis Malinowski--Robert Stafford

3rd row Rita Sipple--Mable Marthers--Mary  
Sipple--Phyllis Cowley--Miss Eleanor Lane--Ann  
Marvel

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**Our 1956 class personality is: Joan Markham**  
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