

# *School Days*

Looking back to the time that I attended elementary school leaves me with smiles and a frown or two. My six years of elementary school were spent at the old Washington School located on California Street, now housing the Senior Center. Distance was not a factor for me with only five blocks to walk although you could get mighty wet in a rainstorm. After a rainy walk, I had the pleasure of standing, with my other soaked companions, close to the boiler that heated the school at the invitation of Mr. Hansen, our school janitor. School discipline was varied and sometimes a bit harsh. I was disciplined twice and clearly remember each event. On my first day in school we assembled in a room containing a children's sandbox. I had never seen one before and was quite fascinated with it. As I gazed at the sandbox, over my shoulder, the teacher reached out, grabbed me by the hair and proceeded to turn my head to the front with a deft twist. That did get my attention. The second event took place on the school grounds. The whistle blew signaling that recess was over. A kickball was rolling away from the assembly point. I retrieved it and headed for the group gathered around the school principal. I guess that I was not fast enough. As I came within range, she slapped me with her open hand. I did see a few stars. Mom paid a visit to the principal the next day. On a lighter note, one of the teachers was concerned about the children being flatulent in public. While class was in session, she would stop, nose twitching, and with searching eyes, ask "who made that smell?" The lessons would not proceed until someone raised their hand. One of the pupils happened to be her son and he raised his hand more than once. There was no punishment involved except that of the student having to own up to the dastardly deed. One form of punishment for the boys was not designed as such. That was the weekly dance of the "Minuet". Popular games for the boys were "Mumblety-peg", "Marbles" and "Milk Caps". One version of Mumblety-peg was played by two boys, standing with feet apart, each attempting to stick a pocket knife in the ground as close as possible to the others foot. The one sticking the knife closest to the foot was the winner. The game of "Marbles" is familiar to most so no explanation is needed. Back then, milk came in glass bottles, sealed with heavy duty paper caps. In the game of "Milk Caps", you would stand behind a line and toss the caps towards a wall. The milk cap landing closest to the wall won all the caps involved. What with a pocket knife, a supply of marbles and milk caps, each boy had his pockets pretty well full.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment