

Robert H. Lamb
BH\$ 1942
Boone, Iowa

THE B-Y-ETTES
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The "high school" in Boone, Iowa was more than just a High School. It consisted of the Junior High (7-9), the Senior High (10-12) and the Junior College. There were four levels, including the basement, to accommodate about 1200 students, teachers and all the other necessary personnel.

It was the destination for students from seven public elementary schools as well as those leaving the two parochial schools.

To provide a more congenial social setting for the girls, as they were "funneled" into this new environment, the YWCA offered an after school activity once a week. They called the organization the B-Y-Ettes.

Across the street from the school was City Park, which covered the whole city block. It had a bandstand and an old Civil War cannon as well as dozens of mature trees. On the other side of the park was an old Victorian style residence, which had been converted into the YWCA, making it most convenient for the girls.

(Incidentally, the cannon became a victim of the need for "scrap iron" during World War II and was shipped to a junkyard.)

During the end of the first semester of our seventh grade, it was customary for the members of the B-Y-Ettes to have a party and invite boys. This was before the era of Sadie Hawkins Day, but it could have been a precursor to it.

Since we were only twelve, the fathers of the girls chauffeured us. Doris, the girl who invited me, Chuck and I all started Kindergarten together. In fact, our birthdays were all within the same week. The father of Betty, the other girl, picked up Doris, then Chuck, and finally me, en route to the Y.

→ Ferguson '42 ↓ Wiernsberger → Station '42

The party consisted of parlor games with the climax being refreshments.

The only game I remember was "Wink 'em" where the girls sat in chairs in the form of a circle with boys standing behind the chairs. One of the chairs was empty, and the boy behind it had to wink to a girl he wanted to sit in it. If the boy behind that girl could detect the wink quickly enough and grasp her shoulders to prevent her escape, the original boy would have to try winking at another girl. If the girl got to the open chair, then another boy became "it"; and so it went.

A reversal of this would place the girls behind the chairs and the boys would try to escape. This usually resulted in a much more roughhouse game.

As I recall, the party began at 7:00 pm and was over about 8:30. About that time, cars began to gather along the curb on Carroll or Sixth Streets. This time it was the father of Doris who provided the wheels to take us home. Since it was springtime, it was light when we headed for the party, and light when we returned.

HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMING TEAMS

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During the last dozen years or so, I've witnessed dozens of swimming meets in person. They include Club meets, YMCA meets, Masters meets and even those at Senior Olympics (where I'm a competitor). However, just the other day I attended a High School swimming meet. It was the first one I had seen in 65 years -- when I last participated in one.

And what a difference!! Let me tell you about it. In the first place, it was strictly a boys' sport. One of my female friends was an outstanding swimmer, but the only outlet she had for her athleticism was swimming in summer AAU meets.

My hometown of Boone, Iowa had one of the smallest schools in the state to have an indoor pool. But its pool was the same size as all others - twenty yards long and four lanes wide. Even the college pools in Iowa were exactly the same size.

The meets took less time, not only because there were no girls' events, but because there were fewer events, with our longest being a 220-yard freestyle. Today, the longest event I saw was the 500-yard freestyle. Eleven events comprise a meet today while only seven were required then. Three relays are on the dockets today instead of two. There were no individual medley races; but if there were, they would consist of only three strokes.

In the late thirties, the butterfly stroke was being introduced; and it was considered interchangeable with the breaststroke until several years later when it assumed a category of its own. As I recall, whenever a breast stroker used the "fly", he invariably won.

My meets consisted of: 160-yard freestyle relay, 180-yard medley relay, freestyle races of 40, 100 and 220 yards and 100-yard races for back and breast strokes.

In contrast, today there are 200 and 400-yard freestyle relays and a 200-yard medley relay. A 200-yard individual medley (four strokes) is a real challenge. Freestyle races of 50, 100, 200 and 500 yards are standard with 100-yard races of back, breast and butterfly strokes.

One factor that stretched out the time of our meets was that we had no separate diving pool. As a result, there was a break between the individual and the relay races to conduct the diving competition. This also gave the swimmers a chance to "catch their breaths". Our whole squad consisted of 12 to 15 swimmers and we were limited to two events per swimmer. Actually, we only needed ten swimmers to fill all starting positions.

As far as uniforms were concerned, we furnished our own swimsuits. Publicized swimmers often wore full body suits; so we resorted to our parents for help. Like other mothers, my mother fashioned a rayon crotch for one of my father's sleeveless rayon undershirts and dyed the finished product dark blue. In short order, we looked like pros even if our swimming times didn't show it.

It occurred to me recently that there are very few at my age who still compete in a sport in which they lettered in high school. Another realization is the fact that the longest individual event in

"the good old days" is commonplace among my events. I usually compete in the 200 yard freestyle, breast stroke and back stroke as well as the 500 yard freestyle.

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MEMORIAL DAY(S) AND THE AMERICAN LEGION

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There was a time when May 30th was called Decoration Day. As a young boy I recall the custom of visiting cemeteries to remember one's deceased relatives and close friends by leaving bouquets of spring flowers on their graves. It was also customary for veterans' organizations (American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars) to decorate the graves of deceased veterans with a small American flag a few days before the holiday.

I oftentimes tagged along with my father as he placed a spiked holder and a flag near the grave stone of veterans from the Civil, Spanish American and World War I. Respect for the graves was stressed as we were cautioned to step around them during our efforts to help.

Dad was a veteran of World War I and was a charter member of Arthur D. Lantz Post No. 56 of the American Legion in Boone, Iowa. There was a national trend in the early thirties to initiate a "Junior Legion" by creating chapters of the "Sons of the American Legion". This idea caught on and soon my brother and I were members.

In addition to teaching us the principles of Americanism, respect for the flag and a sense of obligation to our community, state and nation, they wanted a special activity in which we boys could participate. Thus, a drum and bugle corps was born. I chose to be a bugler while Brother Bill picked the drum. One can imagine the noise level in the Lamb household (and in the neighborhood, especially in the summer when the windows were open) when it came time to practice.

Decoration Day always had another activity --- a parade. It was not as elaborate as the "County Fair" (aka Achievement Day) in late summer, but it did give the drum and bugle corps a chance to perform. A marching and musical group such as ours must have been contagious since it created an appetite for a girls drum and bugle corps (sponsored by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter.) Eventually another girls' drum and bugle corps was organized so that the three groups could be the parade without any open convertibles or flat-bed trucks as floats.

The last surviving soldier from the Civil War (Mr. Ritter) was always honored as he rode in one of the vehicles. He was in his nineties when he passed away.

Drum and bugle corps were naturals for parades, even with the basic bugle issued by the Army. Several marches were composed to provide melodic tunes which were catchy and easily recognizable. When the bugle was designed with a piston (two pistons short of a trumpet), it allowed a composer to increase the number of selections which could be played, thereby adding to the repertoire of the corps.

Eventually, as we matured and perfected our routines, we were invited to be in parades in many cities outside of Boone, especially if our invitee was an American Legion Post. In fact, we marched in four or five State Legion parades as well as a National Legion parade in Chicago.

Due to the heritage of our corps and the fact that all the dads were in World War I, we buglers were required to memorize and play regulation bugle calls common to the military. Years later when I was in the Army Air Corps, an opportunity arose when my organization needed a bugler in a hurry. This talent enabled me to escape the mundane chores of participating in close order drill exercises with the rest of our contingent. Instead, it was during that time that I was to practice my horn for the many required calls I had to play.

An extra special assignment which always gave me a thrill was the opportunity to play "Taps" at a military funeral. On the rare occasion that two buglers were available, one would be located some distance away and play an "echo" to the original notes. It could be very emotional.

Prior to Decoration (Memorial) Day the American Legion Auxiliary (and the VFW Auxiliary) engaged in a fund raising effort referred to as Poppy Day. This was national in nature and involved a number of projects to emphasize its presence in the community. Naturally poppies, made by the auxiliaries, were sold to be worn on each person until Decoration Day.

There was a friendly rivalry between the auxiliaries of both the Legion and VFW. The poppies were constructed with different designs so that it was easy to discern which organization made the poppy.

Children were encouraged to make posters for display in merchants' windows to publicize the occasion, with prizes awarded to the most creative efforts. Essays describing the significance of the holiday were also written by students. One of the favorite themes for posters, year after year, was the reference to the poem, "In Flanders Fields" ("In Flanders Fields the poppies blow between the crosses row on row".)

Although awards were given for the best posters, I don't remember receiving any in spite of the fact that I participated regularly.

My last memory of a Decoration Day parade was in 1946 shortly after returning from World War II. For the want of anything better to do, I had wandered to the staging area for the parade before it was scheduled to begin. It was there I met a former classmate and neighbor who had been an Army Air Corps pilot.

↓
Chuck Statton '42

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One of the parade organizers spotted us and asked if we would like to carry the flags at the head of the parade. Since his dad had not been a Legionnaire, I carried the Legion flag and he carried the American flag.

Another memory I have is the Log Cabin. Shortly after the Post was formed, plans were made to build a facility in which to hold their meetings. This resulted in a structure with the outward appearance of a log cabin. Not only did it serve their immediate needs, but it accommodated the Auxiliary and later the SAL. Pot luck dinners and other social affairs were held there. It also became a popular site for dances

The legacy of those early days has influenced my attitude toward the importance of a strong national defense, the support of service men (especially those wounded in the line of duty) and a deep respect for our flag. Finally, I'm proud of the fact that I carry my PUFL (Paid Up For Life) membership card in the American Legion. It signifies over 75 years of being a "Legionnaire".

BRYANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Increasing the size of an extended family by 14% doesn't seem extreme. But when one more mouth to feed is added to a four generation household, it became time for a change. My maternal grandparent's home already housed my grandfather's mother, my aunt, my parents and me. Now, my newborn brother, Bill, was coming home from the hospital to a four bedroom one bath homestead.

My parents had been "shopping" for a house and found a suitable three bedroom home only 2 ½ blocks away just across the street from Bryant Elementary School. So, in 1926 we moved into 1327 6th Street, where my parents lived for over 52 years.

Bryant School was a vital part of our family's lives, both during and after Bill and I attended there. It stood there until 1939 when it was replaced with a "modern" structure, including a gymnasium and other special rooms. But time marches on and about ten or twelve years ago (2005?), it was demolished to make room for new residences.

But let me tell you about Bryant. It was a two story, brick building with 4 classrooms on each floor. The principal, who was also the sixth grade teacher, had her office overlooking the stair well which led to the first floor and basement. All the classrooms had a long hall leading to the rear of the classroom. The hall was lined with rows of hooks to hold coats and other wraps.

Kindergarten through third grade class rooms were on the first floor, while fourth, fifth and sixth grades were on the second floor. The fourth room was empty and used for PTA meetings and other events.

The school property occupied half a city block with an alley separating it from residences which consisted of five homes and a vacant lot. Along the alley, for half the block, was a row of mulberry trees. A certain time of the year the trees would bear fruit. If a person was alert enough he could pick a couple of small pails of mulberries before the birds beat him to it.

In my case, I often persuaded my mother to bake a pie or cobbler from my harvest. She usually had an extra job of getting mulberry stains out my brother's and my jeans – which were acquired by climbing the trees.

The rest of the property was a playground with a basketball "court" on one side and a larger area on the other side for softball or football, with somewhat reduced areas.

Positioned elsewhere were swing sets, teeter-totters, sand boxes and a modified manual "merry-go-round".

It was 1929 when I crossed the street for the first time to go to school. Miss Herron was to be the teacher to about 30 boys and girls. We were all destined to spend just the first semester together because the school system then consisted of "mid-year" students. Based on age about 40% of the class would be promoted into first grade in January. In my group of 12 or 14 was my cousin, Don, who was six weeks older. We were classmates throughout our public school days.

An incident which occurred before the semester ended, and before Christmas, was an abbreviated version of "A Christmas Carol" performed by the current sixth graders. They needed a small boy to play the role of Tiny Tim, and I was chosen. My only speaking part was the very last line of the story when I said "God bless us everyone."

As a member of grade 1B, my teacher was Mrs. Cora Holmes, but only for that semester. When I returned from summer break, she had retired and Mrs. Eva Peterson had replaced her. Having two groups in a class room, each with a different set of goals, presented a different learning environment. This took some adjustment, but was a part my future elementary school standard operating procedure. (Compared with a one room school house, it was "duck soup").

After that fall semester I moved to second grade to be taught by Mrs. Kendall. However, she retired after that school year, and I was destined to have my fifth teacher in 2 ½ years.

Before Miss Graham and I could get acquainted, a major health issue occurred. I contracted typhoid fever during the summer months and was bedridden for quite some time. In fact, I missed the first six weeks of school (the first grading period of the school year). Apparently my class mates were glad to see me because two or three of my buddies came across the street and tried to carry me on their shoulders.

Miss Graham had a unique teaching "tool" to train us not to say "ain't". She gave everyone in the class room five kernels of corn (what else would she use in Iowa?). If any student would hear another say "ain't", the guilty student would have to surrender a kernel to the one with the sharp ear. I don't know how successful this scheme was, but it certainly made me aware of "no more ain'ts" in my vocabulary.

An amusing sidebar to Miss Graham occurred when she borrowed a hot plate from my mother to heat some soup for her lunch one day. Everyone went home over the noon hour except most of the teachers who brought their lunches. Miss Graham burnt her soup and the odor permeated the school building – thereby restricting any future uses of a hot plate.

Third grade, for the first time, gave me a full year of class with the same teacher. Her name was Miss Ireka Joan Kreiger. It was an election year (1932) and she became politically neutral by carving two jack-o-lanterns and setting them in front of the class. One was round faced (Herbert Hoover) and the other had an extra long face (Franklin Roosevelt).

While I was in fourth grade (Miss Dora Pence was the teacher) both my brother and I got tonsillitis. Our parents arranged to have twin tonsillectomies in the doctor's office. The doctor gave my father his "two for the price of one" sale price (as I remember) and charged \$40.00, each of us boys giving the doctor a \$20.00 bill a few days later.

Mrs. Bertha Johnson, my fifth grade teacher, was kind and well liked. She had a duty twice a day, just before recess. The boys and girls rest rooms were in the basement on opposite sides of the building. All children were expected to use the facilities (or put in an appearance there – en route to recess). I don't

know who was the counterpart to Mrs. Johnson for the girls, but Mrs. J. stood at the top of the stairs so the boys would have to go past her.

This strategy provided an opportunity for each boy to excuse himself as he passed. Presumably this forced him to practice common courtesy, for she would always respond with "Certainly".

I know that George Washington was born in 1732 and died in 1799 because I stood beside a framed picture of him just outside our classroom dozens of times as we lined up for recess or dismissal.

It was my sixth grade class's turn to participate in a play in the empty 4th room on the 2nd floor. Most of us had speaking parts, no matter how big or small. I remember playing the part of a Latino whose complexion was far more tanned and ruddy than mine. Consequently they used a make-up to achieve this. It was made of face cream mixed with ground cinnamon.

School crossing patrols, comprised of students, appeared in Boone for the first time when I was in sixth grade. The Lincoln Highway (U.S. 30) ran through our home town only 1 ½ blocks from Bryant school. As a result I was among the first students to be selected for this important job. In those days only boys were considered candidates for the positions. To identify a student patrolman, he wore a white Sam Brown belt.

Junior High had a peculiar way of grouping incoming seventh graders. A written test was given to all incoming students from the eight elementary schools. Boys and girls testing in the upper 2/3 of the total would comprise an all-boy and an all-girl "class within a class" and the bottom third would make a separate "class". Theoretically this would signal to the teachers that their teaching methods should be adjusted accordingly. (Incidentally this lasted only a few years before it was considered unworkable as well as unfair.)

I'm sticking my chest out now by relating that while I was home recuperating from the mumps, Miss O'Donnell called my mother to tell her that I had achieved the highest score of all incoming 7th grade students in the city.

A major factor occurred in the motion picture world this year. A Shirley Temple movie, I think it was "The Littlest Rebel", but not sure. Nevertheless, the viewer had to wait until 4 or 5 minutes was left in the show before it was introduced. The scene was the entrance hall of a large ante-bellum home in the deep South. With a spiral staircase in the background, there was a large round table with the most magnificent arrangement of flowers in the center of it. The camera focused squarely on the flowers when it literally burst forth in color. The gasps and ohs and ahs indicated the audience had just witnessed the birth of Technicolor. The final few minutes continued in color adding to the pleasure of the moment.

The only sport that had any city wide coordination among the 8 public and 1 parochial elementary schools was softball. It so happened that we had some pretty good players with 7 sixth graders, 4 fifth graders and a fourth grader on our squad. Cousin Don was an excellent pitcher and I played first base.

We went undefeated at 8-0; and qualified to play an All-Star team consisting of two players from each of the other eight teams.

After beating them, we were treated with snacks and candy by many of our parents. The biggest treat of all was a trip to Miller Drug Store after school for an ice cream soda, thanks to Miss O'Donnell. It was a typical drug store of that era with a floor made of hexagonal tile, a soda fountain with eight or ten stools, and glass topped tables with sturdy woven wire legs to match the chairs. (Were those the Good Old Days?)

Miss O'Donnell had many attributes as a principal including her excellent penmanship. The Palmer Method School for teaching good writing could learn from her. She was often called on by her teachers to demonstrate her talent to their classes.

I would be remiss if I neglected to write about Clyde Reynolds. "Rennie" as a few of the students called him, was the school janitor. He worked hard at keeping our school looking its best, and could be seen most every Saturday morning outside beating blackboard erasers together to rid them of the chalk dust. He had a big heart, too. It was during the "depression"; and, again, on every Saturday he would be seen with a boy whose dad was out of work helping him with the erasers or other chores, after which he would thank the lad with a hard earned quarter.