

A Brief Overview of My Schooling Years

typed by Dean Bones finally in 2021

(Reuben wrote this information in about 2002 in response to questions given him by students at Nestucca Valley Middle School as they worked on the Heritage Project. Sometimes the next paragraph might seem unrelated to the paragraph before it. That is because Reuben was providing an answer to a different question.)

I was born on September 30, 1927, one mile east and 2 1/2 miles north of Partridge, Kansas. I was born in a farmhouse.

I was the 4th child. I had 2 older brothers, 1 older sister and 2 sisters younger than me. Our names were Enos, Manass, Barbara, Reuben, Rebecca and Clara.

In my younger days I definitely did not play with my older brothers. I only played with my older sister in my younger days. Back in Kansas I had a friend, Bud White, who I taught German.

We lived at Partridge, and I went to school 2 1/2 years to East Eureka School. We moved to Yoder, Kansas, and I went to Excelsior for 1 1/2 years and lived with my Grandmother Schrock. I had to take 2nd grade over because I was slow in school. We moved to Oregon in the spring of 1937. I attended Chicken Coop School and had to take 3rd grade over at Bellevue and Gopher Valley School. I missed a lot of school because of moving so much. This affected my grades.

Miss Day at Bellevue was my best teacher. I learned more about geography than I had ever learned.

The language barrier had a definite influence on my schooling especially in my younger years as we spoke German at home. In my first couple of years of school we had a German Summer School, and I learned my German A,B Cs. This was to teach us to read and write German.

In Kansas in the schools we had a Bible verse each day. We also had a current event time, and current events papers were passed out. This was our contact with the "outside" world with "outside" representing outside of the Amish day to day.

In Kansas there were about 32 children in each school. In Oregon the school buildings were small with some having 2 rooms, but there were never very many kids in them. In the lead-up to WWII teachers were hard to get so we had 3 or 4 different teachers in a year.

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We had desks with ink wells, and we used straight pens. But you had to be a 3rd or 4th grader before you could use ink.

We didn't have science taught until the last few years of school. But the teachers were strict on working on penmanship. We used penny pencils that were useless. The lead wrote very pale. Tablet paper was the going writing paper. And we never threw paper away that had room for more writing. It was used for scratch paper.

The schools were furnished with small libraries with old books in them. My sisters and I rode to school with the teacher, and I did janitor work for the ride to school at Bellevue. I got paid about 50 cents a week.

For lunch we had jelly on bread, and sometimes we had a sandwich spread. We never had lunch meat. Sometimes we had boiled eggs, apples and cocoa to drink. My first lunch pail was a gallon syrup can.

I wore clean clothes on Monday and then wore the same clothes all week. In the last years I had an extra change of clothes. I took 1 bath a week. Our Amish clothes were a drawback in Oregon because the kids made fun of us. I will never forget my first store-bought clothes with pockets. I was so proud.

I was the meanest little guy. I was at the top of the class in being ornery.

We did have running cold water, and we each had our cups to drink out of but no bathroom. We had to run through the rain and snow clear down to the end of the school yard to the out houses.

In 2nd grade we had indoor toilets, and I held up my hand to let the teacher know I had to go. She wouldn't let me go so I crawled on my hands and knees to the bathroom. I never got caught.

Once the teacher washed out my mouth with soap because I said a bad word. I jumped out of the toilet window and ran for home. The teacher caught me.

I almost flunked my 5th grade because I couldn't get arithmetic when it came to multiplication. I guess I was just an average student.

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We had old-time singing class where everybody pulled out a little old songbook, and how we sang. It was a fun time.

Our heat came from a fairly small wood stove setting up front with a small rail around the bottom where we would hang wet socks and mittens. And when we got cold we could sit up front by the stove. The boys would go get the wood out of a woodshed attached to the back of the school.

The teacher always had her desk up front with a blackboard in front and on one side. Windows were on one side, and we had 2 anterooms in the back where we kept our lunch pails, coats and boots.

Our floor was wood, they always oiled it so it wouldn't get dusty. Whenever we dropped our coats or paper it would get oil on it.

I got along okay with boys and girls, but girls and boys were more segregated in some ways.

Note that as Amish children we were never allowed to take part in evening programs. My parents never visited school or went to any programs. Father refused to be on the school board.

We didn't play any war games, but we did play cops and robbers. We made our own games and did play Hide and Seek, Dare Base, Hound and Geese in the snow. We also played Beckon Beckon and Ante Over. We played ball games and even had a track meet one year. There wasn't much emphasis on sports. Everyone just played. One year we had a boys team.

World War II affected all of our lives. When President Roosevelt made the announcement of war with Japan we lived in fear of an invasion on our Pacific Coast. We had black-out at night for awhile.