



## Dennis McCullough Class of 1957

Dear MCC Education Foundation Board

Thanks so much for the invitation to share some autobiographical memories of early life and, more specifically, while a “Nordic” at NHS. I feel honored and filled with humility to accommodate such.

On a small rocky farm about 5 miles east of Newfolden in the Holt township stood a small log house where I and 5 of my siblings were born with the assistance of medical Dr. Lynde of Thief River Falls. An additional 3 siblings were delivered in the hospital in Thief River Falls as we became more “modern”. Years later, I asked my father what it cost him for my delivery at home and he replied, “twenty five dollars”. My sister maintains that I was awfully expensive as her delivery fee was for two bartered chickens! Life on the farm in the 1930’s and 1940’s was happy, but difficult. We had no electricity, no indoor plumbing, no telephone, a radio hooked up to a battery, and spent the majority of our time during the summer months preparing for winter. Hay and grain were planted, tended, (weeds were hand-picked-not sprayed) and harvested for feed for our small dairy herd which was the primary source of income for the family. They were milked, fed and cleaned after, all by hand!

Many loads of aspen trees were cut and split each year with a double-bitted ax to provide fuel for the cook stove and heating stove, and, of course, the ashes were carried out by hand.

A large garden provided fresh vegetables and for winter canning. Wild June berries, blueberries, chokecherries, raspberries, strawberries, high-bush cranberries, plums, and rhubarb were also a part of the cache. Late one fall I recall counting the canned goods put up by mother for the family and found 900 quarts! This, plus the farm raised beef, pork, mutton, chickens, geese, turkeys, eggs, milk, cream, butter, cheese, home-made ice cream and flour milled at the local gristmill from our wheat, provided an abundance of nutritious food for our large family.

On September 1st, 1939, WWII began and the world became very uneasy as the nations polarized and the fighting escalated. To support the war effort, the United States citizenry and those from other allied countries were called upon to make sacrifices by “cutting back” so the military could be provided for as much as possible. Books of ration stamps were issued each

month for each man, woman and child which allowed them to purchase a limited amount of the items represented. Many food items, clothing, fuel, tires etc. were included in the rationing. After the conclusion of the war most remained in effect until 1954.

After the war ended, I began my formal education in School District #35, Holt MN. Prior to my enrollment, Holt, MN had a high school from 1901 through 1933 but was reduced to only grades 1-8 thereafter.

My memories of grades 1-8 at Holt School are pleasant and interesting. My appetite for reading was stimulated, groomed, and still flourishes to this day! Each teacher had two grade levels in the same classroom so we could listen to material for the next grade level if so inclined. Each fall we had a school/community carnival complete with games, cake walks and fishing pond. The annual Christmas program was always exciting and well attended as every child got to participate. Valentine's Day was always special as we opened our decorated box which we had constructed in art class. Physical education activities included soccer, softball, basketball in a small room with a low ceiling and an ice skating rink with a warming house and electric lights!

In 1948 a monumental development occurred on our farm which changed farm life dramatically. The Rural Electrification Act (REA) passed in 1936 during the Roosevelt Administration was finally bringing electricity to our farm! The right-of-way was cleared, poles were set, cables were strung and buildings were wired. The date and time of "powering up" were announced. Neighbor ladies gathered for coffee and to witness this miracle. When the power did not come on until 30 minutes late of the announced time, one lady mused, "I wonder why it was late in arriving?". Another lady indignantly responded, "well, it had to come all the way from Grand Forks!"

After passing required State Board tests and graduating from the Holt School in the spring of 1953, there was a curious mystery in the air; what was it going to be like to go to "the big school" in Newfolden to complete high school? Also, the group was going to become larger as the 8th grade graduates from Viking would also join us. In the fall of we began our journey as freshman at NHS. The class of approximately 40 students from the three communities melded well. The evidence of this has been demonstrated by the attendance at our class reunions which have been held with regularity: the 65th last summer. Although our memories are fading and our numbers dwindling, we still enjoy the comradery of one another.

There were some outstanding teachers and administrators that I remember well during my years at NHS. Miss Star (later Mrs. Ray Tunheim), Mr. Lowell Anderson, Miss Torgerson, Mrs. Westerson, Mrs. Carlson, Mrs. Fisher, Mr. Ulferts, Mr. Wergeland, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Fisher and Supt. Halverson all were a part of that group I believe that their efforts enabled me to compete well in my collegiate undergraduate and graduate education and perhaps were an influence in my decision to choose education as my profession.

In the fall of 1957, I enrolled in Normal Training in Thief River Falls; an intensive 9 month program which prepared you to be a certified teacher in that time. Upon graduation I signed my first teaching and basketball coaching contract with the Grygla Public Schools for \$2403.00 a year. After completing my second year of teaching the school board offered me the position of Principal/Superintendent which I accepted and held until I was drafted into the military service during the Vietnam Era. After serving overseas as a communication specialist for the bulk of my

military duty, I was honorably discharged and returned to Bemidji State College to complete a Master's degree in educational administration.

In the fall of 1965 I was employed as an administrator in the Warren MN Public Schools and served there until the fall of 1967 when I enrolled in the doctoral program in educational administration at the University of North Dakota. After completing the doctorate degree, I was employed in Bloomington, Minnesota at Normandale State College as the Associate Dean of Instruction until I retired from education.

Currently, my dear wife of 30 years, Sharon, and I live on our farm southeast of TRF where we still farm, garden, and enjoy family, friends and life and thank God for our blessings every day.

In closing, thank you MCC Education Foundation Board for what you do, and thank you NHS for what you did for me.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis McCullough Class of 1957