

In another version Dean Proper did an excellent job of describing "Growing up in Zachow". I agree wholeheartedly with his descriptions in most, if not all his described episodes and activities, as we were only one year apart in age, Dean being the elder. This is just a supplement to his experiences. As kids, we were allowed much more freedom than kids today, with their structured activities. We had to invent, innovate, adjust, and learn, by ourselves, as well as to satisfy our peers and parents, allowing us to grow into adults, and now, as "elder" retirees, to reminisce and record, for posterity, our youth.

A Newcomer to Zachow

I, myself, was a relative newcomer to the immediate community of Zachow. We lived in the Zion Parsonage $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of town, on County Truck F since 1938, moving into our newly constructed home in Zachow in 1949. For years I had to make the long, tedious $\frac{3}{4}$ mile trek to Zachow by bicycle, to play with the "Zachow kids". Now I was living in the midst of them,.

Zachow's Woodworking Shop

As Henry and Hilda Dirks owned and ran the Zachow Elevator & Lumber Company, it was inevitable that their basement woodworking shop held the most wood scraps. I, together with Roy Dirks, spent a considerable amount of time in his dad's basement shop, building everything from bird houses to bicycle trailers. Besides, Roy's dad had electric shop tools.

I remember building bird houses for a 4-H handicraft project to take to the Shawano County Fair. Roy and I "invented" stucco for bird houses, nothing more than cement applied to the side of a wood birdhouse, giving it a Spanish flavor. Trying to make it stick was the problem, since we were doing it on the way to Shawano where the deadline was approaching to enter our 4-H handicraft project. Luckily, the cement dried prior to the judge giving both of us a "red" ribbon. Second only in the eyes of the judge, we thought our ingenious nature deserved a "First".

The Pensaukee Creek

In the spring of the year, the creek running thru Zachow, the mighty Pensaukee, would overflow and the ice would break up in large chunks. Dean, Roy, Gary Dobratz and I would climb on these large chunks and float down from the railroad bridge to the bridge over Main Street where these ice chunks would jamb up, which caused the overflow. Little did we realize the danger of such a stunt, but where there was more than one kid, we would find excitement in whatever activity was available, and the opportunity was so short lived. Our parents perhaps only saw our wet feet as we arrived home after mastering the formidable task only we could admit to.

Christmas Caroling

This was generally initiated by the Zion Lutheran Church Young Peoples group, of which most, if not all, the young people in Zachow were members of. We even had older "young people" those of high school age, who could carry a tune. We would stop and sing at the "older homes" in Zachow; the Albert Kallies's, Mrs. Bohm, Margies's mother, the Albert Radtke's, the Carl Hafeman's, the William Westerfeld's, the Asoph Boergers, the Harry Hoefs', the Herman Dobratz's Clarence and Hildegard Deering, the Mancies on Main Street, but ultimately end up at the Martha Kroening's where we would get donuts and a small glass of homemade wine. Ervin, the son, would stay out of sight in the front room.

Chevrolet's New Model Introduction

Once a year, Chevrolet would deliver their new model, under strict secrecy and under a canvas cover, to Radtke's Chevrolet Garage in Zachow. It would then be hid until "Introduction Day" with a festive party and goodies at the garage. Albert and Jessie, Harvey, Ruth, and Harry Radtke would all be there to show off the latest model Chevrolet. The garage was always a stopping off point for the kids, as the peanuts and soda were a bargain, and any kid loved to talk cars with the mechanics, Roger Kirchenwitz, Harvey and Harry.

Mielke's Blacksmith Shop

Old John Mielke was the typical "Village Smithy" made memorable by the poem. Later came Harley Hanson, and then Carl Hafemen. No matter who was there, the hum of the open forge was an interesting place to visit, as kids were allowed to mingle with customers and watch as the plow points were sharpened and welding taking place, watching the sparks fly. The numerous machines and lumber piles in the back sheds were interesting places to explore. If a bicycle or wagon needed welding, 25 cents would get the job done. Farmers would come from miles around to get their plow points sharpened, as that seemed to be the main business in spring and fall. Sharpening those big circular saw blades, for sawing logs was also done. We kids watched in amazement at what a blacksmith could do with metal.

Bible School at Zion

Each summer, generally right after school let out, Zion Lutheran Church would hold its two week, mornings only, Bible School. It was really a sight and ritual, about 20 kids on bikes, making the trek of County Truck F, from Zachow, the ¾ mile, to church. Only the teachers would ride in cars, bringing the youngest kids, and perhaps the cookies and koolaid for our recess or break. The lawn between the church and parsonage was our ball field, and we were warned explicitly, NOT to hit a foul ball into the stained glass windows. Minnie Dobratz, Lorraine Westerfeld, Lucille Moesch, and Hilda Dirks, some of the longtime teachers, endured energetic kids year after year.

TV Store in Zachow

Dennis Radtke operated a TV store at the east end of Wall Street in Zachow, when TV's first came out. It certainly was an exciting day when we bought our first black and white television set. I remember watching the test pattern in anticipation of a real program coming on. The cabinet was a real piece of furniture, with doors, hiding what was perhaps an oval 12" or 14" black and white screen. Dennis and Darlene lived in an apartment in the back of the store. Neil and Lucille Moesch lived in the upstairs apartment

Lafollette Grove School

This was the one room elementary school about one and one-half miles east of Zachow that most Zachow kids attended prior to consolidation. The railroad tracks were the most direct route to school so this was the walking path that was taken most often. Dean attended this school when he was five and six. His mother had him go to first grade twice with one year counting as kindergarten. Roy Dirks, Marge Graf, Jeanette and myself attended St. Paul's in Bonduel, so our folks had to change off driving to take us and get us from school. After consolidation, the Bonduel Public School bus picked up all kids and dropped those off at St. Paul's, then on to the Public School.

East End of Town

Most of the kids in Zachow seemed to live around Graf's Apartment Building (Kammerman Building) so it was natural to congregate in that direction. There were the Dobratz kids, Jim, Bob,

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Gary, Rojean and Karen; Maribeth and Bernie Eckleberry; Nancy Sperberg; Jim and Sandy Klevesahl, Alley and Ronnie Bohm, Rose Marie Moesch; Judy, Marilyn, and Sally Hoefs, so a fair amount of time was spent at that end of town. Invariably, when we would get done playing, whether outside or inside, the mothers would have some home-made cookies or treats of some sort, prior to us heading home. The Sperberg house was no exception, as the walk back to Nancy's house was well worth the walk. Frank Stiede lived one-quarter mile east, just down the gradual grade. This was the last house in Zachow in that direction.

Winter time Tobogganing

Zernicke's hill between Ernest Westerfeld's house and Elmer and Ella Zernicke's farm was used for tobogganing, sledding and skiing. Elmer even opened the fence so we would not have to climb it. Manton very seldom joined us as he was busy farming. Tobogganing was the most popular, as it went down hill over soft snow, and it held the most kids at one time. In sledding you needed a hard runway and most kids did not have ski's. In this scenario, the up-town kids would start walking-Gary and Rojean Dobratz, pick up Roy Dirks, Brian Baker, and perhaps some of the Erickson kids, come around the corner, to pick up Leon, toboggan till we were tired and then have hot cocoa in Westerfeld's basement Recreation Room before returning home.

Pat and Lila Eckleberry and Others

Eckleberry's were relative newcomers to Zachow having moved there in the mid 50's, a number of years after we (Jeanette, Leon and Carol) moved to Zachow. It did not take long for Marybeth (Betsy) and Bernie to join in the many Zachow activities; free shows, hide and seek, soft ball, football, kick the can, etc. etc. Nancy Sperberg was also a relative newcomer, when her dad, Louis Sperberg, took over the job of Section Boss for the Chicago & Northwester Railroad. A few other folks to mention are Mr. & Mrs. Lyle Brunner with boys Bill and Dick who lived in the apartment in the upstairs of the Mencie house. Mert and Dora Baker ran Mert's Tavern, between the Farmers State Bank and the Keenway Grocery Store. When Mert was cutting hair in the back (a favorite spectator sport) Dora had to tend bar.

Bonduel School Bus Stop in Zachow

The Zachow school kids would congregate at the Pauly & Pauly Cheese Company to board the Bonduel School Bus, eliminating stops at each house. It's what kids did in those days, and surprisingly, without any supervision, the smallest kid would be allowed first in line, followed by their peers, with the High School kids last. All kids rode the same bus, perhaps 10-15 kids getting on at this stop, and be left off the same way.

Weekend Movie Matinee

One of the parents, who took turns, carted a carload of Zachow kids to the Pulaski Theater for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon matinee. The cost was about 25 cents and you could get popcorn for 10 cents and possibly a soda for a nickel. It is surprising how many kids would fit in a carload. We sat on one another's lap in the back seat, plus getting four in the front seat, perhaps 10-12 kids in all. Try that today and see how far you get! That was something like the outdoor movies at the Shawano Drive-In when we got older and could take our folks car. On "carload nite", a carload could get in for the same price as a couple, so we would pack the car with as many as we could get in, sitting on the hood, the top of the car, anywhere you could find a seat, the speaker on as loud as it would go so everyone could hear, not just those inside the car.

High School Football Practice

The two weeks prior to school starting, Rush Niles would have football practice for the Bonduel Bears. The farm boys had their driving license at fourteen, so most of them brought their dad's

pickup to practice. Us out-of-town kids in Zachow' Bob Dobratz, Dean Proper, Leon, Gary Dobratz would have to ride our bikes the five miles to Bonduel for practice as that is what was expected. Sometimes we walked. Besides, no late bus or any bus transportation would be available until school started.

Zachow's Post Office

The post office was located right in Henry Westphals, then Kriels, then Ted & Marcella Wilke's "Keenway Grocery Store". It was a small area, perhaps five feet by six feet, where the proprietor of the grocery store doubled as the Postmaster. Small assigned and numbered boxes, perhaps 30 or 40, is where your mail was placed by the postmaster, and don't bother with a grocery order when the mail came in. The mail was the priority. The mail itself came by rail, with it being dropped off and picked up by the "moving" train, as it sped past the Zachow C&NW Depot.

Elmer Zernicke's Sawmill

The sawmill on Pensaukee Creek was a beehive of activity in the spring when farmers brought in logs cut during the winter. The ground was generally soft, especially close to the creek, and horse teams were used to pull the logs up to the carriage when tractors got stuck in the mud. But, the sawmill wasn't only used for sawing logs. In the off season, being summer, when the kids were free, and the sawmill was idle, it was a congregating place for kids to explore and it had numerous places to hide things, like cigarettes, matches, perhaps even a cigarette lighter, where certain Zachow boys occasionally met to smoke a cigarette. Being perhaps 10-12-or-14, we thought we were getting away with something. However, our breath gave us away when we got home-so the experience was short lived.

Radtke's Minnow House

Riding a bicycle across the railroad trestle as a shortcut to County Trunk F, or hiking upstream on the Pensaukee, just north of town, was Albert Radtke's minnow house. This small shed had a spring piped into a large specially constructed cement tank, where Albert kept, or raised minnows, for fishing or perhaps even sold some occasionally. If it wasn't locked we could step inside and explore, watching all the minnows, sometimes even throwing some pellets in the tank, watching the minnows swarm to the feed. It was also an opportunity to explore the abandoned barn foundation on the same site. Harvey Radtke later turned this piece of property into quite a fine Nursery, spending many hours planting, cultivating, trimming, and giving tender loving care to all his shrubs.

Marquart's Lot

This was an empty lot between Radtke's Garage and Dirks' house. Roy Dirks and I would frequent this lot many times, as it was convenient to his house and because it had some good climbing trees to the rear of the lot. On one particular occasion, Roy had climbed the tree, I was on the ground, and BOOM!!!. Roy fell out of the tree! He didn't make a sound, so I asked him if he was still alive. What seemed like an eternity, but perhaps only a minute, he started talking, and within a few minutes we both resumed climbing.

Washington Lake Cottage

On several occasions I was invited to the cottage of Dean Propers' parents on Washington Lake, but one particular occasion stands out. Dean and I took the row boat across the lake, thru the channel to Loon Lake. I don't remember if the water was low, but we had a devil of a time getting thru the creek, especially the culvert under the road just before Loon Lake. Time meant nothing to us, as we had nothing better to do, HOWEVER, we failed to tell Dean's mother where we were

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going, how long we would be gone, in fact, she didn't know where we were. We were perhaps gone all day, on a lake the size and depth of Washington Lake, had Dean's mother somewhat worried. We knew exactly where we were, never giving a thought to the dangers we may have or did encounter. When we did arrive back at the cottage, Deans' mother fixed us a meal, but if I remember the facts correctly, Dean was relegated to do dishes after every meal for the rest of his life.

Winter Indoor Activity

The old Kammerman Building, purchased by Graf Creamery, had apartments upstairs, a vacant store front, and a huge full basement. When Ewald and Lila Dobratz lived upstairs, the Zachow Kids; Gary, Bob, Dean, Rojean, Nancy, Betsy, and myself, and I'm sure, others, would congregate to play hide and seek in the basement. Simple entertainment, but our folks allowed us to leave home, ride our bikes or walk, in the dark, knowing someone, somewhere, perhaps our parents or a neighbor, was watching us, arriving home safely at a prescribed hour.

The Zachow Stockyards

One of the reasons for Zachow's existence was the railroad and its ability to ship livestock to market by rail and to receive livestock for the farmers. The Stockyards, with their board fencing was a neat place for us kids to climb, and although I cannot ever remember it being used to actively ship cattle, we climbed the pen rails and of course could visualize in our minds what actually happened in the years gone by. It was a sad day when it was dismantled in 1944, but that is what they call progress.

In its place Henry Dirks added a lumber shed where the catwalks as well as the entire feed mill, with its storage sections for everything from cement, to windows, to bagged feed, to building hardware, was fun to explore. Bud Eckert and Adolph Bohm worked there for years.

Herman Radtke's Hardware Store

This store on Wall Street was a General Store that sold everything from horse harnesses, to appliances, to nuts and bolts, to pots and pans, to water systems and had a tin smith shop in the rear. Adolph and Mabel lived upstairs after Herman built his new house. Herman was also the Pickle sorter at the Pickle House located next to Pauly & Pauly Cheese Company. He also had a bean patch behind the hardware store where I picked beans one summer to earn money to buy the "Roadmaster" two wheeled bike in his store. After a season of picking beans, my Dad made up the difference. (the bike was \$25.00) I never found out, but I surmise he paid more than I earned, allowing me to believe I "earned" the bike with my many hours of "real hard labor".

Out of Town Kids

Arnie Manthie lived on a farm in back of Paul and Emma Dobratz's fields. It was shorter to walk across the back field to his house, rather than take the road all the way around and then hike up his long driveway. Phyllis, Inez, Janice, and David Deering lived just west of town. Manton Zernicke lived just south on County Trunk F, butr seldom had time to play, farm chores keeping him busy.

The older & younger kids in town

Marge Graf, Dolly Dobratz, Phyllis and Inez Deering, Bernadine Deering, Bill and Richard Brunner, Jeanette, Margie Bohm, Jim Dobratz, Roger Klevesahl, and perhaps more that I can't remember, being the older crowd, never really participated in our chenanigans, as they were already older teenagers, and perhaps already had boy/girl friends.

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The younger crowd, Dale, Glen and Neil Dirks, John Dobratz, Carol and Dennis Westerfeld, Terry Radtke, Judy, Marilyn, and Sally Hoefs., Janice and David Deering, Bernie Eckleberry, Karen Dobratz, Brian Baker, Carol and Bill Wilke, Rose Marie Moesch, Jim and Sandy Klevesahl, Roger Hanson, the Mayefske kids, the Erickson kids, the Arnoldi's and certainly more that slip my mind, will remember and be remembered as "Growing up in Zachow" in the 40's and 50's.

Newest House in Town

When Harvey and Joyce Radtke build their new house, you would have thought a building boom had hit Zachow. It was the newest, and the first, built after World War II. The kids congregated to watch the basement digging as that was a big deal, especially in Zachow.

Halloween Trick or Treating

The kids in town were allowed to go unescorted, and we knew which houses NOT to go to, At Leonard and Minnie Dobratz's house we always had to recite something before we would get a treat. At Ernest and Lorraine Westerfeld's house we always got a pencil. Different places for different things, but we always ended up with a bag of candy, which our folks made us stretch out for at least a month. Albert and Emma Graf always had a good treat, but you did not stop at Albert Kallies's house or Rueben and Minnie Schmidt's house, nor did you go out of town to the Zernicke's or Schultz's-too far to walk.

Dirks' Pond

Located between the Zachow Elevator and the Wadhams Bulk Plant, next to the tracks, it was used summer and winter. Henry Dirks built a small dock and moored a rowboat there for all the kids in town to use, row and ride at our leisure. The boat was named "Nutch" for Rojean Dobratz, as that was her nickname. The pond was also used for "soaking up" the fishing boats of others so they would not leak when used for fishing elsewhere. Water fights would abound, as would other water sports.

Winter would be for skating, whether a game of hockey, (using a shoe heel as the puck) or simply jumping barrels, or tag, or whatever came to our minds. The kids generally shoveled the pond ourselves, that's where the older kids came in handy. Occasionally Henry Dirks would plow it if the snow was too deep. No warming house was available, the dock is where we put our skates on, and went home when we got cold.

Unloading Railroad Petroleum Tank cars

As the agent for Wadhams Oil Co. my Dad, Ernest Westerfeld had the responsibility for the Zachow Bulk Plant. Petroleum would come in by railcar, all the way from the Green Bay Terminal, which received product by ship, prior to the Great Lakes freezing in the winter. He would take me along to load his delivery truck and deliver to farmers. The highlight would be when these railcars would be slid onto the siding by the bulk plant, and my Dad would have to unload them into his storage tanks. I would get to climb up on the railcar while Dad has hooking up the unloading arms. Little did I realize that someday this would develop into the Westerfeld Oil Company, Inc. a \$20 million a year Jobbership with a fleet of twenty vehicles, covering northeastern Wisconsin, headquartered in Zachow.

Green Bay Press Gazette Newspaper

I was never fortunate to trudge along with Dean Proper on his Zachow paper route, but my recollection of his paper route days was the fact that the Press Gazette hosted all their paper boys, with a guest, once a year, to see the Green Bay Packers play a game, at that time, in the old City

Stadium, by Green Bay East High School. Dean invited me as his guest. What a thrill at that age, and how things have “matured” since then.

Camping

We took our bikes, with trailers built out of scrap limber and discarded wagon tires, the one and one-half miles down County Trunk F, where the tree branches hung over both sides of the road, creating an umbrella effect, unique at the time. Then deep into the thick woods, on either “Stinky Lane”, or up to “Snake Hill”. Then Dean Proper, Roy Dirks, Gary Dobratz, and myself would pick a campsite, where man had never trod, or so we thought. Our folks knew where we were going and allowed us the freedom to stay overnight in the woods, camping with our tents, bed rolls, utensils, and compasses. We built fires and knew enough to surround the fire-pit with rocks. Cooking was crude, but we could even fry eggs on a pan over an open fire. We may come home tired the next day, as the noise and/or silence overnight was deafening, but with every trip we would become more confident of our abilities, learning from our mistakes, and eventually becoming as efficient as 12 or 14 year old boys can become.

Molly’s Woods

This was perhaps a 5 or 10 acre wood plot at the end of one of Zachow’s streets, where Maynard and Bernice Hoefs lived, and where Vernon and Gertie Hein later moved a house to. It was easily accessible by bicycle, so through the years, most Zachow boys were involved in building, remodeling, or relocating tree houses, to a bigger, taller, and better tree. Lumber was scrounged from wherever it could be found, skids or pickle house crates worked just fine. Nails and fasteners from whomever’s dad did not keep close track of their nails and fasteners. It was Molly’s Woods because Molly Kroening, the wife of Clarence Kroening, lived at the end of the road, just prior to entering the woods. Molly sort of looked out for us. In the early spring, Quandt’s would cook maple syrup, tapping our good tree houses maple trees. They owned the woods, but as kids, we were oblivious to the fact that they may not have appreciated us trespassing on their property.

Our Softball Field

The Times Square area where free movies were shown eventually was outgrown, as it would not hold a “regulation” softball field. The area across from Pauly & Pauly Cheese Company was a farm field cropped by Elmer Zernicke, but it belonged to the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. The Zachow Businessmen’s Association, an informal group of Zachow business owners (perhaps 10 or 12) who met once a year, negotiated a \$1.00 a year lease with the railroad on an area large enough to put in a “somewhat smaller than regulation size” softball field. It was complete with bases (old cement bags filled with sand), a backstop (four cedar poles with chicken wire attached, 6 feet high) and seating (2 blocks of wood with one plank as a bench). Mowing this converted hay field was done by individuals in town taking turns, mowing at least the infield. The “A to Z” 4-H Club actually used it to play softball games against other area 4-H clubs Saturday or Sunday day games only, as we had no lights, and early evening games were not scheduled, as 4-H member generally came from farms, and that was chore time.

Conclusion

All the kids in Zachow have stories to tell and these are some of mine.

Leon Westerfeld
2010