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# *Tales*

Spring/Summer 1993



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BY RAY ELLIOTT

A VISIT TO OMAHA BEACH

- publishes *Tales* magazine

- provides hands-on experience in writing for publication

- encourages the learning, exploration and understanding of other cultures

- preserves the history and culture of the Midwest

- promotes student participation in the national Washington Journalism Conference

# WHAT DOES Tales DO?

- helps families host foreign exchange students in their homes

- co-sponsors trips to other countries to experience cultures firsthand

- promotes student participation in writing contests for scholarships, such as the VFW Voice of Democracy program

- offers a country cottage getaway for short-term stays

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By Ray Elliott

## Road-side accident shows change in society

I was reminded recently just how much our society has changed since I was growing up in southeastern Illinois. Back then, I can remember seeing my father and scores of other people stop to help stranded motorists, male or female, young or old.

Following those examples, I've often stopped over the years and offered a helping hand. And I've been helped in similar situations. After a car wreck late one night, I regained consciousness as I felt a hand on my wrist searching for my pulse.

The woman, a nurse at a local hospital, had heard the car crash and went out into the night to see if anyone needed her help. Had I been injured seriously, her prompt action and concern for another human being undoubtedly would have saved my life.

But times have changed since those days. Some people still seem to care about the welfare of others. And they may still want to help people having problems along the highway but now consider it too dangerous.

No question that it is dangerous, either. Tales of good samaritans getting robbed, mugged and killed are everyday stories in this country. Novelist and short story writer Andre Dubus lost one leg above the knee a few years ago when he was struck by another car after he'd stopped to help a stranded motorist.

My parents recently found out just how difficult it is to get a helping hand and how dangerous life is along the highway. First, though, a little background is in order.

My mother, who is in her early 70s, has had two complete knee replacement surgeries in the last six months. The year before, she had an ankle operation. So she hasn't been able to get around too well for some time.

My father, who is in his late 70s, is a retired farmer hobbled by arthritis in his knees and one hip and years of wrestling livestock, tractors and trucks around. Except for the three weeks or so my mother was in the hospital for the operations and therapy, he has provided the necessary care.

You get the picture. They're not exactly Bonnie and Clyde, and yet my parents are not helpless. They've farmed, raised cattle and hogs and worked around machinery all their lives; they've worked together and survived the knocks of that kind of life pretty much intact.

So on the way to Bloomington, Ill., the other day for a regular doctor's appointment for my mother's latest knee replacement, they had a blowout on Interstate 74. Nothing to do but change the tire.

With the westbound traffic whipping by, my father jacked up the car, making sure, he said, that the jack was straight and the car level. Before completely removing the lug nuts and the flat, he jacked the car up another notch or two to make room for the new tire. He held his left hand on the jack to help steady the car because the semi-trailer trucks roaring by caused it to shake.

Then a sudden blast from a passing truck blew the back end of the car a bit too far away from the road, and the jack toppled over. As it did, the top of the jack caught the little finger of my father's left hand and a piece of his ring finger.

I'm confident there was an oath or two that passed through his lips when he looked down and saw that his little finger was gone at least to the first joint. His shock of white hair blowing in the wind, the scowl of his ancestors (a mixture of Scotch-English immigrants and Native American) on his face and the bloody hand waving in the air may have kept would-be samaritans from stopping.

Whatever, nobody stopped. After a few minutes of trying to wave down the passing trucks, cars and vans, he said he knew he was going to have to change the tire himself and he "might as well get at it."

My mother got out of the car before he started raising it back up. She leaned against the car to help keep it from falling off the jack again. Then she handed him the lug nuts as he held the spare and screwed them in.

With no further mishap, they drove off to the doctor's office where my mother made her appointment and my father was treated for the severed finger and other cuts. The doctor evened up the end of the little finger and stitched the wounds.

Fortunately, my father's injury wasn't too severe. He said the finger never hurt him except when he accidentally bumped it later. And if the fact that no one stopped to help bothers him at all, he hasn't mentioned it. The only complaint he has is that he no longer can use that little finger to scratch his left ear.

"I sure am gonna miss that," he said, lifting the shortened finger to look at it closer.



## Host A Foreign Student And Treat Your Family To The Experience Of A Lifetime

How would you like to engage in a 10-month cultural experience without ever leaving your own home?

Right now Ray Elliott and Vanessa Faurie, local coordinators for the American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) Foundation's Academic Year in America (AYA) high school exchange program, are searching for families in the east-central Illinois area to host high school students arriving this August from countries across the globe.

Students ages 15-18 from Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, China, Russia and many other countries will arrive in the United States to spend between five and ten months attending local high schools and living with an American family. All have studied English, have their own spending money and full medical insurance provided by AYA. It is the goal of the AIFS Foundation's Academic Year in America program that these inquisitive young ambassadors will grow to understand American culture and depart the United States with an appreciation for American interests, values and traditions.

Families who host AYA students have the unique opportunity to share their traditions and values with a foreign

student and, in exchange, learn the language and customs of another country. Host families are awarded up to \$800 in scholarship funds to be used on AIFS travel/study abroad programs. Whether you have young children, teen-age children or no children, you may qualify as a host family if you can provide a bed, a place to study, two meals a day and an open heart. Interested families are invited to choose the boy or girl who would best fit with their lifestyles and interests. Hosting can be August through December, January through June or August through June.

Since 1967, the AIFS Foundation, a not-for-profit organization founded with the assistance of the late Senator Robert Kennedy, has been promoting worldwide understanding through cross-cultural exchange in the United States. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a host family, please contact Elliott or Faurie, who are hosting a student from Rostock, Germany, for the '93-'94 academic year, at the Tales office (217 384-5820) or Regional Director Anita James at the AYA national office (800 322-4678).

## Experience It!

# Mail's Here

### Walker School story brings back memories

I have read *Tales* for several years—always interesting, especially poetry by former students in Casey and/or stories by my neighbors (e.g. Helen Ryan, Jennifer Pringle).

The Winter 1992-93 issue really stirred fond memories. It was my pleasure to supervise student teachers from Illinois State University (ISU) from 1936-39; 1940-43. In 1936, Walker (School) was one of five schools used by ISU for teachers in rural education. Norma Ashbrook was one of my students at Walker. She is a descendent of the Orendorfs.

We devoted a lot of time to the history of Blooming Grove and Funk's Grove. George Herbert Walker Bush is a descendent of William Walker, who is buried near Walker School.

In 1913, Mabel Carney, a pioneer in rural education, headed the Department of Rural Education at ISU. Eula Atkinson was the supervisor at Walker School. University students traveled on the trolley car to observe and practice teaching in this model rural school.

Keep the good stories coming.

— WANETA SEDGWICK CATEY  
Greenup, IL

### Oral history lover wants more stories

Enjoyed your last issue. Hope you have more oral histories from area students.

— FREDERIC L. CAMPBELL  
Robinson, IL

### A family of fans enjoy *Tales*

My husband and I have been on your mailing list for a long time. We enjoy your stories.

My mother, Laura Partlow Junka, grew up south of Casey. Frank and Alice Partlow were her parents. She enjoyed your paper, too. My dad died nine years ago, and Mother is confined to a nursing home. I share our copy (of *Tales*) with her.

— JAN JONES  
Marshall, IL

### Family history shared at Christmas time

The following was sent to us last Christmas by my cousin

Eileen Snyder. Her sister is Evelyn Adams of Palestine, Ill. They are my Uncle Everitt Adams' daughters. Uncle Everitt was my father's brother. My father was Lester Adams.

I can also remember my grandfather, but I can remember back farther than that. I can remember my Great-Grandfather William Adams, who home-stayed several hundred acres of land southeast of Palestine. He told me when they took possession, there was nothing but big trees everywhere. He was past 94 when he died.

— FORREST L. ADAMS  
Palestine, IL

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Would you like to cook Christmas dinner in (an old-fashioned) kitchen? Grandpa Reinbold (1867-1952) told how a neighbor drove horses and a wagon 200 miles to Chicago to get the first cook stove in Crawford County, Ill. What convenience compared to cooking in a fireplace! In spite of much guess-work, a lot of good food was served in those old kitchens.

Back at my sister's in October, we found an old ledger given to my Grandpa Adams by his grandfather in 1877. Some entries showed farmhands paid \$15-\$19 a month, wheat 80 cents a bushel, corn 25 cents a bushel, potatoes 15 cents a bushel, six pounds of salt for 6 cents, 25 pounds of flour for 65 cents and 17 pounds of meat for \$1.20. Years bring changes! "Change and decay in all around I see, Thou who changeth not abide with me." (II Cor. 4:18)

— KAYLE & EILEEN SNYDER  
Hemet, CA

### We need more friends like you

I enjoy your work and will do all I can to keep it coming. I was born and raised near Robinson, Ill.

— MADONNA STAHL  
Albany, NY

I read *Tales* with gusto and use it in classes, too.

— REET LIGI  
English teacher  
Tartu, Estonia



Courtesy of Jan Jeske

This postcard from Casey, Ill., was sent to Mr. Geo. L. Easton in Toledo, Ill., on May 15, 1945. It was found in an old book store in Champaign, Ill., in 1993.

## Did You Know...

### Meetinghouse marks 175 years

"Most people enjoyed it quite a lot, I think" was how Sarah Guyer of West York summed up a weekend of activities June 19-20 commemorating the 175th anniversary of Pleasant Grove Friends (Quaker) Meetinghouse.

Located in Hutsonville on the Annapolis Road near Route 1, Pleasant Grove has been a gathering place for Quaker worship since 1818 when Thomas Lindley donated some land for a meetinghouse and cemetery. He had moved to Crawford County two years before, and his grist mill had housed the first Friends Meeting in the area.

Guyer, a main organizer of the event, said people from as far away as Alberta, Canada, were in attendance, as well as pastors from North Carolina, Kansas, Florida and Ohio. The weekend included a genealogy meeting, reminiscences led by the president of the Crawford County Historical Society Kay Young, a gospel sing, Sunday school, worship services, various speakers and a portrayal of an Early Friends wedding.

Next year, Guyer hopes

Pleasant Grove Friends can sponsor a Thomas Lindley Day to honor the man who helped establish the meetinghouse. In 1873, Samuel and Ruth Green donated an acre of land where a frame structure was built. In 1910, the existing meetinghouse was built, with additions constructed in 1952 and 1976.

"I think we've got too much here to be quiet about it," Guyer said.

### Author collects old country sayings

*Country Talk: A Collection of American Country Colloquialisms*, by Diane Suchetka, was recently published by Country Roads Press in Castine, Maine. The 144-page book with line illustrations includes more than 900 expressions from American oral tradition. It takes readers back to a simpler time when words lived and talk was fun—when folks were "three pickles shy of a quart" and others were "too darned lazy to commit a sin." From the front porch to the woodshed, there is a saying that suits every occasion, and then some.

### Man crafts old-time walking staffs

One hundred fifty years ago, with the advent of the railroad and steamship, people fled the cities each summer exactly as they do today, says history buff Al Fromberger, but for different reasons.

"They believed that in the heat of the summer germs flourished," he says. "So you had thousands of people leaving the cities like New York for the country for reasons of health."

Fromberger, of Poestenkill, N.Y., first became interested in 19th century summer life when he stumbled across several strange, long, hand-carved staffs in a Catskills antique store 25 years ago. "I hadn't the slightest idea what they were," he says.

They were Alpine walking staffs from the late 1800s. A little investigation led to the discovery that the rare walking staffs were all the rage in the summertime resorts of the Edwardian and Victorian days. In the Adirondack region, particularly, the popular great lodges had special hiking trails, and the staffs were sold as useful souvenirs for hikers.

He became so fascinated with

the era, Fromberger now makes his living meticulously reproducing exact replicas of the 5-foot-long Alpine staffs. More than 7,000 people have bought his staffs—from a hiker in Norway to a rancher out West.

### Emergency work saves ghost town

Emergency repairs have saved four of the most threatened structures in the world's largest ghost town, the historic mining community of Kennicott, Alaska.

Fifty years of exposure to the elements have seriously deteriorated many of the red, wood-frame buildings, including a 14-story concentration mill that cascades in tiers towards the Kennicott Glacier. Kennicott is located approximately 180 miles east of Anchorage, in the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (the largest park in the nation).

"We were concerned that some of the buildings could not survive another Alaska winter," said Rich Kirkwood, president of Friends of Kennicott, a non-profit group which received a \$200,000 state grant to stabilize some of the

collapsing buildings. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has listed Kennicott as one of the nation's 11 most endangered historic places.

Kennicott traces its roots to 1900 when prospectors spotted a patch of green hillside that looked like good grazing ground for their pack animals. The grass turned out to be the world's richest known concentration of copper ore, and over the following 11 years a boom town was carved from a wilderness of mighty glaciers and soaring peaks. A 196-mile railroad linked the town to the marine port of Cordova in Prince William Sound. Although the trains are long gone, the rail bed and suspension bridges form the 60-mile road that links Kennicott to Alaska's highway system.

In 1938, the Kennicott Copper Corp. moved out, leaving behind 70 buildings filled with equipment, papers and furnishings. Kennicott turned into a ghost town overnight. In recent years, however, it has become a major tourist destination in Alaska. The secretary of the interior designated Kennicott a National Historic Landmark in 1986.



Photo by Vanessa Faurie

# THE WONDERS OF STONEHENGE

Recently I visited Stonehenge in England and came away with the same feelings of awe that most people have. Seeing the huge stones built into arches that form a set of concentric circles with still other stones is indeed inspiring. The stones are huge, each weighing several tons. Since most of the land surrounding Stonehenge is nothing but chalk, the stones had to be carried a great distance to be assembled on this spot.

At some point, the stones had to be cut to a specific shape, positioned properly and assembled into arches. The entire process took thousands of years. Many generations of humans worked on the various phases of Stonehenge. It's amazing that such a project continued over the course of so much time. Each phase built on earlier work. Each phase added something to the device. And that's what it was, a device. It served as a calendar and celestial forecaster for the local population.

Several other stone circles are known to exist, but only at the location of Stonehenge do things line up just right to allow the device to predict everything from the solstices and equinoxes to solar and lunar eclipses. Even the location of Stonehenge is something of a marvel and poses more questions about its construction and use.

How could early humans, with few tools, build Stonehenge? How could they move the giant slabs of stone so many miles? How could they cut the stone with no metal tools? How could they lift the stones to the heights needed to fashion the arches? How did they

know this particular spot would allow for the prediction of many celestial events? The list goes on. The answers are a testament to human ingenuity and will.

The location to build Stonehenge would seem the simplest task, at least it's the one with the least heavy lifting. However, choosing the location was probably one of the most difficult tasks faced by the builders. As in most cultures, people noted the movement of objects in the day and night sky. A few people in each culture took particular interest in these movements and began cataloging them. These few were the forefathers of modern astronomy.

While these ancient astronomers didn't have the powerful telescopes and satellites that modern astronomers do, they had a few advantages that we don't. Pollution was negligible then. The skies at night were dark and clear. (Try counting the number of stars visible in the night sky near a city.) People depended on the sky for more information than we do today. Even now, the sky can tell us the time of the day and the time of the year. It can tell us which way we're headed and even where we are on earth (if we're clever enough).

Today we get most of this information from other sources. A calendar tells us what time of year it is, and anything from a VCR to a microwave oven has a clock that can tell us the time. A compass and a map show us where we are and how to get to where we want to go. The sky's importance has faded from our everyday lives just as the stars have faded because of chemical and light pollution.

BY JIM ELLIOTT

Without calendars, clocks and compasses, what did people do? They did just what people have done throughout the history of man: They built their own. That's what happened at Stonehenge. The first stage consisted of a circular bank and ditch with a few relatively small rocks arranged in compass-like fashion. This allowed for some simple time-keeping and year-marking. The position of the rising and setting sun could tell the time of year and the shadows could tell the time of day. While people probably didn't need Stonehenge so much for the latter, they did need it for the former.

Telling the time of year was vital for agriculture. Knowing when to plant and when to harvest insured that people had enough to eat during the course of the year. This might explain the abundance of stone circles in northern Europe. Many people figured out this simple way of marking the passage of the year since this worked very simply with the sun.

Stonehenge could also predict the location and movements of the moon. On the face of things, this might not seem like that big of a deal. Isn't the moon the same as the sun? The answer is no. The moon moves in a seven-year cycle with respect to the earth. To be able to predict the location and movements of the moon, you have to sit through a cycle at least twice, once to note it and learn it, and a second time to test and confirm it—and make any corrections.

Later phases of Stonehenge were built with this lunar capability. Each addition to it added something new. To this day, the complete uses of Stonehenge are being debated by historians and scientists. But the list of possibilities is impressive.

So the gist is that people paid attention to the sky and put rocks in various places to be able to predict what was going on. But more than that, they must have noticed that the location of Stonehenge had unique advantages over other locations, since Stonehenge was the only stone circle to be visited on a regular basis for upgrading.

The later upgrades added the huge stone arches which are so well-known. These huge stones had to be transported great distances, cut into shape and lifted into position. How did they do that? Huge stones from hundreds of miles away were mined. They were cut into rough shapes and rolled on short roads of logs. The idea was to put the logs down side by side and then roll the huge stone slab on top of them. Then when the stone slab had advanced enough, the logs from the rear were removed and placed in front of the stone's path. This went on mile after mile. It might sound tedious and difficult, but when you have enough people and the alternative is to carry a piece of rock weighing several tons, the idea looks appealing.

Once the stones were transported, they were cut into shape. The builders rubbed animal fat along the place where the stone was to be cut. Then they burned the fat. This made the stone a little weaker along the line and easier to break. This

technique wasn't foolproof, but it worked well enough. The builders were able to fashion enough stones in the proper form to construct the massive arches that still stand today.

The whole thing seems an incredible marvel of humans' scientific and engineering abilities, and it is. But many people are too awed by the age of Stonehenge and overlook comparable feats throughout time. The constructing of the Pyramids, men sailing across oceans in wooden ships, lone people flying across these same oceans in airplanes, men landing on the moon and returning to Earth, machines that "see" and move individual atoms are also marvels. Who can say what accomplishment is more impressive?

Humans have quested and conquered incredible feats throughout history. Indeed, we have the ability to study nature, learn its secrets and duplicate them. Now we're at a point in history at which we need to study our behavior within nature and learn about ourselves and our actions. Since Stonehenge, we've learned many of nature's tricks (Some people might say we've learned too many.), and we're in danger of destroying the fragile balance that allows us to exist. But as much as we think we know, there's more to learn of nature. Many have "conquered" the Earth before us, and many have become extinct. By continuing to study nature and man's place within it, perhaps we can learn enough to avoid the same fate.

*Jim Elliott is working on his Ph.D. in physics at Purdue University.*

*A first view  
of these*

# Embattled Shores

by **Gretchen Hansen**

When I first heard we were going to a war cemetery in France, I didn't know what to think. I wondered why we'd spend time in a cemetery on our way to Paris. Our courier said it was well worth the drive, so I took his word for it.

We were going to Omaha Beach where the Normandy Invasion took place during World War II. We pulled into a driveway that led to a tree-lined sidewalk. Perfectly cut grass surrounded us on all sides, and a small building stood in the background.

As my eyes took in everything, they paused on a small sign that read "Quiet please." I thought it strange that such a sign would be at a cemetery.

An elderly man with a cane was coming out of the cemetery as we were walking in. He looked at us sharply. He sobered my mood. The seriousness of the cemetery was beginning to sink in.

Our group of 13 students and 11 adults walked quietly down the sidewalk toward the cemetery. A monument lined with columns was one of the first things that came into view. Inscribed across the top of this monument were the words, "This embattled shore, portal of freedom is forever hallowed by the ideals, the valor and the sacrifices of our fellow countrymen." On one side was drawn a map of the invasion. In the center of the monument stood a large statue of a man with one arm extended to the sky. The monument faced the cemetery.

As I turned to see the rest of the grounds, the view took my breath away. Behind a small pond of water stood more than 9,000 white crosses and Stars of David in perfect diagonal rows. There were two flagpoles. One was being repaired; an American flag flew on the other. In the distance at the end of a path which led

through the graves was another small monument.

Walking closer, I noticed that each cross or Star of David had a name inscribed on it. It was an overwhelming sight. I'd never seen so many graves before. It was easy to be quiet; I couldn't imagine speaking out loud. I felt as if I were standing on sacred ground.

I walked to the beach to see where the men got off the ships. It was an incredibly peaceful beach, green and hilly with bushes everywhere. A path led down to the water.

I stood and looked out and tried to imagine what it was like nearly 50 years ago when the men stormed the beach and began to fight and die.

A flood of emotions came over me as I thought of these men. It is hard to describe to someone how I felt. I felt both awe and respect for the sacrifices they made there so long ago.

Our group was subdued as we got on the bus. No one said much. We were all lost in our thoughts. I know I'll never forget Omaha Beach.

During the rest of the trip in Europe, I had feelings that I have never experienced in the United States. The feelings are comparable to looking over the Grand Canyon or seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time.

In England, before crossing the English Channel on a luxury cruise ship, I was amazed by Stonehenge—one of the mysteries of humankind, built thousands of years ago before Christ was born.

When I saw the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London, I knew I'd never see another collection of jewels as beautiful as those worn by England's royal family.

And I experienced a sense of history while visiting Windsor Castle and Hampton Court. It is a powerful feeling to stand where a famous king or queen stood,

walked and lived hundreds of years ago.

Watching the Changing of the Guard was something we had all learned about in grade school but had never seen. It was a thrilling sight to watch the Guards in their heavy bearskin hats and long grey coats marching toward Buckingham Palace.

France also had so many wonderful and exciting things to see. I've never seen so much stained glass before. I imagined the many hours of work put into those incredibly beautiful cathedrals of Chartres and Notre Dame.

At the Palace of Versailles and Marie Antoinette's nearby villa, I couldn't believe I stood where some of France's most famous kings and queens had once stood.

Just walking down the streets in Paris and listening to the French language was also a new experience. Going to the top of the Eiffel Tower and seeing all the lights of Paris was unforgettable. And seeing how another culture lives and acts was fascinating.

From Windsor Castle in London to Omaha Beach in France, the trip to Europe was filled with wonder. Yet it was at Omaha Beach that I learned respect for the sacrifices of so many young men. Until I stood with the beach at my feet, I had no concept of the battle at Omaha Beach and the cost of war.

When I visited the ancient castles and cathedrals, walked where kings, queens and commoners walked, I was drawn to the past. And when I stood at a beach where others took a stand and died, I knew my connection to events of long ago tied me forever to them. I see differently now in the present. I hope to return one day.

---

*Gretchen Hansen, a 1993 Urbana High School graduate, will attend the University of Illinois this fall and plans to major in education.*



# A visit to Omaha Beach

By Ray Elliott

Hundreds of images and past conversations flashed through my mind on the bus ride out from Caen. The Normandy countryside looked just as I had imagined it would look long before I ever saw any pictures. It had the rolling pastures and fields and hedgerow fences I'd first heard of as a young boy riding in my father's trucks with a cousin who had landed on Omaha Beach that morning of June 6, 1944.

On this particular morning nearly 50 years later, farmers were doing early morning chores—plowing, fixing fence, cutting wood and a hundred other jobs farmers do in the spring regardless of where they live; the same kinds of jobs American farmers like John Wesley Dart, Oblong, Ill., who landed on Omaha Beach with my cousin Bruce and the 741st Tank Battalion, had done on his farm 10,000 miles away for years before he retired.

The narrow streets of the small towns and villages seemed virtually deserted at mid-morning. A sign pointed toward

St. Laurent, Colleville and Vierville, towns just inland from the landing zone. Another sign pointed off to *Circuit du Debarquement* (Area of the Landing) with another just below it pointing the way to Omaha Beach.

Ever since we had left London for Portsmouth, England, and the luxury liner ride across the English Channel to Caen, France, I had been trying to imagine what it had been like for the nearly 200,000 allied troops (two American divisions, two British divisions and one Canadian division) who had made basically the same trip to the invasion that I was now making with a group of students, teachers and other travellers.

I couldn't quite imagine it from the ship or the bus window. Although I'd first heard the stories long ago and had known about the Normandy Invasion as the largest amphibious landing in military history for about as long as I can remember, the peaceful, picturesque countryside hid visible, physical evidence of the scars of the German occupation and the Allied invasion.

It was almost inconceivable to me that so much dying had taken place in one area in such a short time. More than 23,000 Americans were originally buried in hastily dug graves nearby. Some 9,386 of those men are now buried at the Normandy American Cemetery at Omaha Beach with 307 of those soldiers and sailors in graves marked unknown.

Perhaps it's as John Dart used to tell me when I'd ask a question that he couldn't explain to his satisfaction. "I guess it's just one of them things where you gotta be there," he'd say and spit a stream of tobacco juice to the ground. "Not that you'd want to be there. 'Cause I sure as hell didn't."

My cousin probably would have agreed. He tolerated my endless, undoubtedly naive questions about what he'd seen and done in the war while I rode with him to the Indianapolis Stockyards or on shorter trips around east-central and western Indiana.

"I wouldn't go through it again for a million dollars," he'd tell me, then add, "but I wouldn't take a million dollars for it,

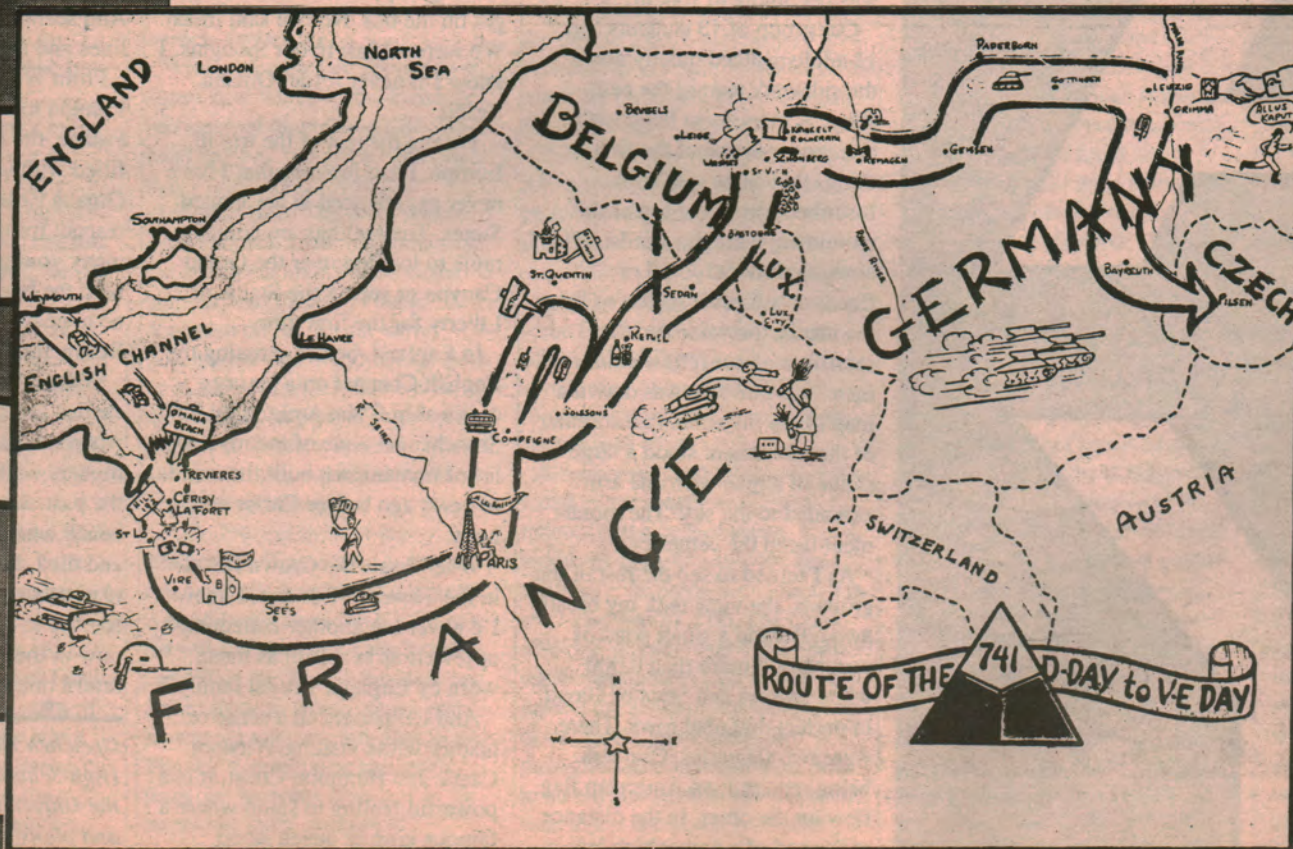
either."

But it was a long time after I first remember seeing him sitting in our living room in late 1945 or early '46 with a tanker's tight-fitting cap cocked jauntily on his head before he would ever tell me anything like that or anything about the war at all. In those first years after the war, I was too young to understand what he'd seen and done, and he didn't tell me much.

Then unloading a load of livestock in Indianapolis during a thunderstorm, he dived off the loading dock under the truck after a loud clap of thunder. And another time, he dived under the truck during the same circumstances while we were loading a couple of veal calves at Thornton Stephens', near Annapolis, Ill.

"He was in the war," Thornton said quietly to me before Bruce crawled out the other side and continued loading the calves.

It was about that time that I really began asking Bruce to tell me things about the war that formed those earliest memories I was thinking about now. Early on, I remember asking him if he'd "ever been in any fights in the army."





h



"Had one with a guy in my outfit named Frank Elliot," he said, smiling at my innocence and noting that the guy had spelled our family name with only one "T." He went on to tell about the fight, how Frank was a big, barrel-chested man from New Jersey who wore thick glasses and jerked them off as he telegraphed his haymaker right hand that knocked most people out and ended the fight with the one punch.

I don't remember exactly how the fight turned out, other than that Bruce told Frank that the one punch wouldn't get the job done. But I do remember Bruce telling me that Frank was killed in action after the invasion.

Looking through a 741st Tank Battalion history that John Dart later showed me, I saw Cpl. Frank M. Elliot listed among "A" Company's (one of the first ashore on D-Day) killed in action. I'd almost forgotten the name and the incident until that day years later—just as I'd almost forgotten the 741st triangular red, blue and yellow patch with a streak of lightning running through tank tracks and a cannon that Bruce had given me, cut from his

uniform along with a set of staff sergeant stripes, until I saw the patch in James Jones' book, *WWII*.

If my memory could better serve me or if I could ask Bruce now, I'm sure I could recognize many more names on those lists from stories he told me while they were still fresh in his mind. But my memory mingles fact with fiction because of all the conversations, interviews and stories I've read and movies I've seen. Now I can't remember or simply never knew.

And, sadly, Bruce isn't here to question any more. He took his own life on June 6, 1982, 38 years after the invasion and after years of ill health. It was an ironic end after what he had survived on the French coast and on to the end of the war.

Writing about the magnitude and the terror of the Normandy Invasion in *WWII*, Jones, the most noted novelist to come out of the war, gave some thought to being there. After hiking around the beaches while he was working as a screenwriter on *The Longest Day*, the Darryl Zanuck film about D-Day, Jones sat on a bluff above Omaha Beach "and

looked down into the cup-shaped area with the sea at its back."

"It too," he wrote in his 1975 non-fiction book about the war, "had been built back up, and the six or eight tall spindly French summer homes have been rebuilt.

"It was easy to see what a murderous converging fire could be brought to bear on the beaches from the curving bluff. Especially to an old infantryman."

To him, a wounded Guadalcanal veteran, the horror of the death and destruction and the price everyone paid on the landing was clear.

"And it was easy to half-close your eyes and imagine what it must have been like. The terror and total confusion, men screaming or sinking silently under the water, tanks sinking as their crews drowned inside, landing craft going up as a direct hit took them, or getting ashore to discharge their live cargo into the already scrambled mess, officers trying to get their men together, medics trying to find shelter for the wounded, until finally out of the welter a 'certain desperate order began to emerge,' and men began to move toward the two bottleneck exits.

"I sat there until my friends began to yell at me from down below, and I fervently thanked God or Whomever that I had not been there."

Now, the closer the bus drew to Omaha Beach, the faster the stories and pictures flashed through my mind. From the parking lot, more than 20 of us left the bus and fanned out through the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial for the short time we had there.

I headed for the Memorial, a simple "semi-circular colonnade with a loggia at each end," as it was described in a flyer from the American Battle Monuments Commission. Within the circle is a 22-foot bronze statue, the Spirit of American Youth, to serve as "a tribute to those who gave their lives in these operations" and three battle maps "engraved in the stone and embellished with colored enamels" of arrows showing the troop movement after hitting the beach.

Just east of the memorial stands a semi-circular Garden of the Missing. The names, ranks, organizations and home states of the 1,557 missing Americans are inscribed on the walls. The remains of these men haven't been identified, or they were buried at sea.

Nearby is a circular chapel with a mosaic ceiling that "symbolizes America who gives her farewell blessing to their sons as they depart by sea and air to fight for her principles of freedom." France presented a laurel wreath that hangs over the altar for "the dead who gave their lives to liberate Europe's oppressed peoples. The return of Peace is recalled by the angel, the dove and the homeward-bound ship."

I could hardly speak. But as I walked toward the beach, I could see what Jones had said about the fire power that could be pounded on the beach from the bluff that curved gently around it. It's amazing that anybody got off the beach. And General Eisenhower wasn't sure they would. Before the invasion, he wrote a statement announcing "a withdrawal from

the French shore due to invincible enemy resistance."

A winding path meandered toward the water through a virtually unchanged beach since that early June morning in 1944. The brown vegetation covering the area from the edge of the sand and up the slopes contrasted starkly with the well-manicured, velvet green grounds of the blufftop.

I stood looking out to sea and remembered Navy veteran Wayne Foran, Bement, Ill., telling me that as his LST (landing ship tank) was heading in, he looked both ways and could see ships on either side of him for as far as he could see. The whole scene that was now clearly formed in my mind made me shudder.

Looking out from that spot on the bluff and the passage of time gave me a vantage point that the troops who made the landing never had. John Dart used to tell me that he knew very little about the big picture until long after the war was over.

"Hell," he'd say, "you didn't know what was going on except in the area right around you. You didn't have time to look, or even think, about the big picture."

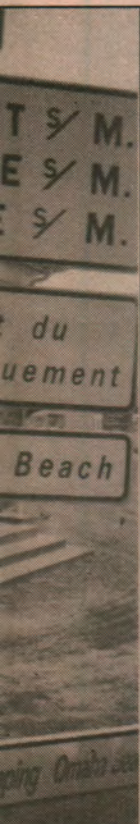
Thinking about both pictures, I walked to the edge of the cemetery where the 9,386 markers stood in checkrows so that nearly any way you could see straight, single-file rows. I shuddered again as I moved closer to them and saw the ages 19, 20, 21, 22 ... on the simple crosses and Stars of David with the names and states of those buried there.

On the way back to the bus, I stopped in the visitor's center to sign the guest book. Most of the group was already waiting at the bus. I didn't know why it was so important to sign the book. It was, though.

Beside my name, I wrote, "For Bruce Elliott." And, of course, it was for him. But that small, insignificant gesture was for them all, too. It'd be nice, I thought, if they could see this sight today and what they helped preserve.



Graphic courtesy of John Dart and photos by Vanessa Faurie



# A chance to see the PRESIDENT

By  
John  
Amberg

When I told the bearded, middle-aged reporter I was on my way to the White House for a presidential news conference, his eyes widened. "Really?" he asked. "Really," I answered. "And how did you manage that?" "I have connections," I said jokingly.

Actually, I was with a group of high school students from the Washington Journalism Conference in the nation's capital for a five-day stay to cover Washington and to see what it is like to be a reporter there.

"I hope you realize how lucky you are," the man said. He then explained how he had been a reporter for about 20 years and yet had never covered a press conference in the White House.

Two hours later, while I was walking to the East Room of the White House, the man's message became clearer. Looking at the signs on the reserved seats that lined the front row, I began to count my luck: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, The Associated Press, United Press International, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC and National Public Radio.

This is it, I remember thinking. I'll probably never get to do this again.

I sat down in the second row. The president's mother and stepfather were escorted into the room and seated directly in front of me. I was in awe. The light from the huge chandelier above me and the television camera lights were practically blinding. I squinted to see faces of the journalists I had grown up admiring.



The author, third from the right in the back row, poses with fellow conference attendees and White House communications aide, George Stephanopoulos.

The press conference, the second of President Bill Clinton's administration, was being broadcast live on all major networks. The loud chattering of the White House correspondents was silenced by a voice over the sound system: "Ladies and gentlemen ... the President of the United States."

My heart raced when I heard those words. I had never seen a president in person before, and

this is the most powerful person in the world, I told myself as he entered the room.

For about 30 seconds, I was in a trance. But shortly after my initial starry-eyed reaction, I came to a realization. All my life I had been watching presidents on television. I had admired them and sometimes despised them from afar. But as the press conference continued, I began to see the president—perhaps the presi-

dency itself—in a new light. No longer was the president merely a character in an endless news drama that unfolded on the television screen every day. He was real. He was human.

Granted, I wasn't exactly going out on a limb in concluding that the president was human. Though having watched presidents chastised and cursed by the media and the general public, it seemed to me that we sometimes regard the president as only an object on which to vent our frustrations.

Seeing the president in real life made me see him as a person for the first time. Although his face was plastered with make-up for the television audience, his presence was real.

After the press conference, the other high school students and I met many of the correspondents: Wolf Blitzer from CNN, Andrea Mitchell from NBC and Helen

Thomas from UPI to name a few. We were also introduced to then-Communications Director George Stephanopoulos. They all reiterated the message I had gotten from the reporter earlier that day: Relish this moment; it might not come again.

Five minutes later, I was turning in my press identification tags to White House Security at the gate. A crowd of tourists lined the gates surrounding the White House. As I walked out, a boy asked me, "Did you see the president?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Man, you're lucky," the boy said.

"Yep," I said with a smile and without hesitation.

**They all reiterated the message I had gotten from the reporter earlier that day: Relish this moment; it might not come again.**

*John Amberg, a 1993 graduate of Urbana High School, will attend the University of Illinois in the fall and plans to major in journalism.*

Arlington National Cemetery; JFK's gravesite; and a portion of The Wall  
Photos by Beth Brotherton and Vanessa Faurie

# Lessons of a trip still linger

By Beth Brotherton

It was 4 a.m. when my alarm went off. I eased out of bed only to stumble over the suitcases I'd finished packing just four hours earlier. I couldn't sleep anyway. I was up for a flight with the early birds on my way to Washington, D.C., a trip I'd been anticipating for months.

I had plenty of preconceived notions, but nothing prepared me for what I'd bring home just five days later. I never would've imagined that the Washington Journalism Conference could show me so much about myself and my country. And as I sit here on a rainy day in Urbana-Champaign thinking back to that week two months ago, all the excitement of making new friends, being in historic places and meeting famous people has worn off, but the lessons I learned haven't.

It wasn't until the last day of the conference that we were taken to see the sights of Washington. Our first stop was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. My dad was never in the military and missed being drafted. Because there were no family ties to the war, I never thought I'd become emotional. But I did.

Standing in line with others from the conference, I walked down the winding path that traversed the wall. A girl several feet away from me stopped and asked for paper and some rubbing chalk without moving her finger from a name she had found. It was the name of her dad. I wondered how it was for her never to have seen her father.

The answer came to me in a letter laminated and placed in the center of a wreath of red, white and blue flowers. It was a note from son to father telling of the hardships and pain suffered as a result of his father's death, but at the same time expressing the pride that his father had brought to his family and his country.

As I wiped the tears from my eyes, I thought of my own father and how glad I was that he was in my life. I looked up at the girl ahead who moved grudgingly from The Wall, clutching the small scrap of paper in her hands, carrying away that small piece of her father. Though in tears, I could see that she, too, was proud of what he had done.

When I came to the end and looked back along the wall full of names, I realized how harsh life could be and that while some people are dealt better hands, we all need to be thankful for what we have.

My train of thought was interrupted by a tap on my shoulder and a voice that said, "Hey, guys, I've been to Washington before, and I'm not much into museums, so I'm planning on taking the subway to Arlington Cemetery. You guys wanna go?"

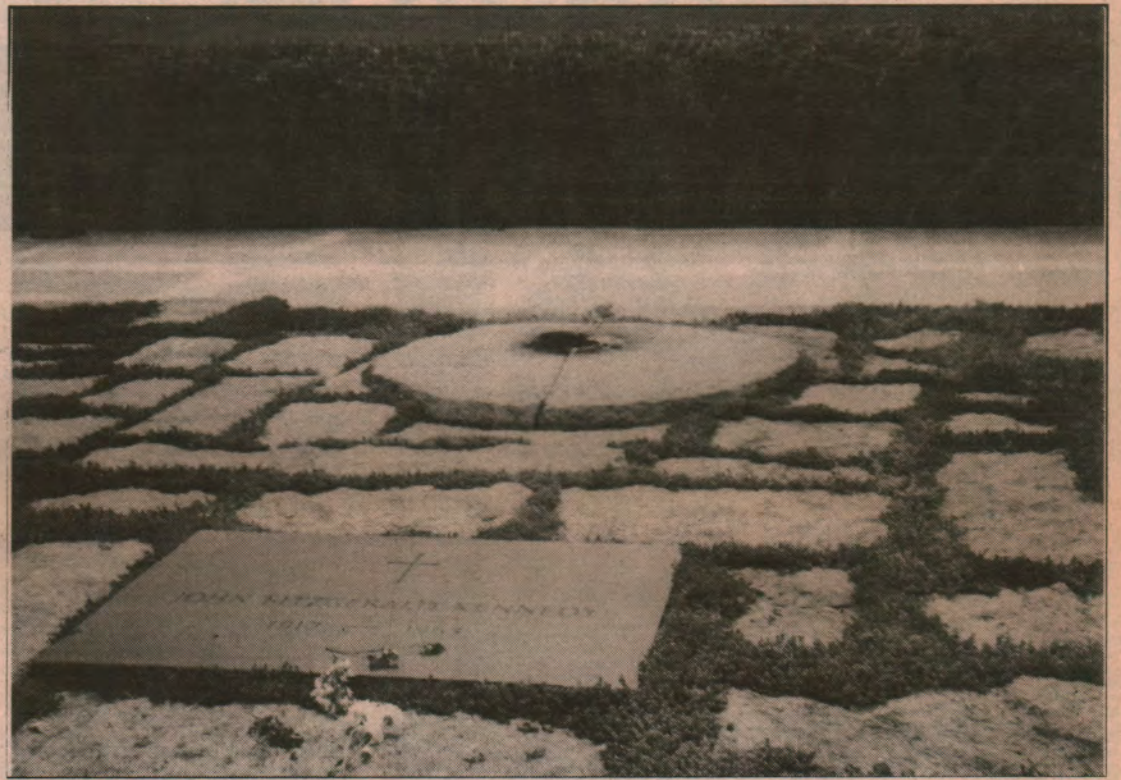


I agreed to go, and so did two others. I walked down the aisle of the bus and sat down in the last vacant seat as the driver pulled out into traffic, and my thoughts shifted away from Vietnam. Arlington was the one place I'd always wanted to see in Washington, though it wasn't on our conference agenda.

After several stops, we got off. Unlike most other stops, we didn't end up underground. We were on the path to the cemetery. The cherry trees were in bloom, and everything seemed full of life. The grass was green, the sun was shining and bunches of gawking tourists were passing by in trolley cars.

The walk up to John Kennedy's grave was a long one, but truthfully, that was all I had come to see. On the way, though, I was grabbed by something more powerful. I looked at the tombstones all in a row. They seemed so majestic, as if only heroes could be buried there.

Then I noticed an amazing



thing: There were no names on the stones, only numbers. The first thing I thought was, "These people died for their country, and all they're remembered by is a number." I thought about all I planned to be in my life and how I wanted to be recognized, and it really hit me hard to think that one can do so much and be no more than just a number.

Still, I finished the walk up the hill and looked out over the city. It was a beautiful view. As I looked through the crowd, I could see the eternal flame on President Kennedy's grave. I thought back to my parents telling me about the day he was shot. Here 30 years later, the fire for him still burned. In the end, it was these two places—Arlington and The Wall—I'll remember most.

Yet it wasn't just the places I went that opened my eyes; it was the people I saw.

I saw gay and lesbian couples holding hands, hugging and kissing; men wearing dresses; and women without shirts. This was

no private party; it was on the streets, in the park and on the Metro. I was shocked. It was a world I had never seen. Granted, it was during the Gay and Lesbian March on Washington, so it was probably not an accurate representation. But it did happen, and I was there to see it.

Many homosexuals compare their struggle to the civil rights movement of African-Americans in the 1960s. Yet to me, the civil rights movement was a racial struggle that involved discrimination based solely on skin color. They believe homosexuality is a moral issue, and gays must fight for acceptance. By marching on Washington, they wanted to demonstrate that "gays are a part of the mainstream."

There was no plea for the right to vote or to desegregate schools, restaurants or transportation. So it was difficult for me to understand and, therefore, probably difficult for me to accept their demands. But I did understand that everyone hates being discriminated

against, especially for being different. So living that lifestyle must be difficult. While I still don't agree with it, I realize it wasn't right for me to be so judgmental.

I see that Washington is both a city of the past and of the future, with monuments and statues commemorating our country's history. At the same time, it hosts the center of our government where decisions about our future are made every day.

During my time in Washington, I learned the significance of the past—like why the flame on President Kennedy's grave needs to be kept burning—and I learned to be thankful for all I have in my life. Finally, I came to understand that people are going to be people, living their lives with as much integrity as they can.

*Beth Brotherton, a 1993 graduate of Urbana High School, will attend the University of Illinois in the fall and plans to major in journalism.*

# Dealing with prejudice face to face

by Cari Anderson

In the middle of the capital city of the United States, I hardly expected to feel like a minority. But that's exactly how I felt in April at the March on Washington for Gay Rights.

I had attended the Washington Journalism Conference the week prior to the march. The conference concluded on Sunday, the day of the march, but our plane didn't leave until Sunday evening. So we had the whole day for sight-seeing.

Another young woman and I both avoided going to the event for as long as we could, but after we had shopped the entire Pentagon City Mall, we headed to the center of the march. We weren't avoiding it because we didn't want to be there. We were afraid of what we would find once we got there and how we would react to what we saw.

I have never felt that I was a prejudiced person and have always tried to keep an open mind. But as we deboarded the Metro and walked above ground, my stomach flipped at the sight of thousands of same-sex couples.

My friend and I looked at each other. We both made a funny face and crossed our arms over our stomachs and made sure to walk about three feet apart. It was the most eye-opening experience of my life. Of course, I have lived in Urbana, Ill., for all 18 years of it, so that's not saying much.

Still, I felt like I was in a completely different world. It was a world that I never fathomed existed. I knew there were gay people, but I never really gave much thought to it. It's pretty

easy to avoid thinking of things when you're not faced with them.

But here we were, in the middle of hundreds of thousands of gays, and I couldn't avoid the reality anymore. I was actually upset with the way I felt about the situation. It made me feel sick to see same-sex couples kissing, and the fact that it made me feel that way made me feel even sicker.

I was angry at myself for feeling prejudice toward anyone. The drag queens didn't really get to me. I had always assumed people who dressed like that were gay. It was the men holding hands who looked like fathers and the older women who looked like grandmothers that made my stomach twist.

I don't think I ever really thought any differently about gay people, and I guess I still don't. But being out in the middle of the march was definitely culture shock. Seeing two middle-aged men in suits holding hands is not something I'm used to seeing.

As we walked further into the center of the crowd and toward the AIDS quilt, we encountered more open displays of affection from the crowd members. A group of eight or 10 women stood by the edge of the march with no shirts on. Some of the women were wearing only underwear. They were jumping and screaming with signs in their hands.

But we just kept walking, clutching our arms around ourselves even tighter. The signs people carried and the T-shirts people were wearing had the most entertaining sayings I'd ever seen. It appeared to me that by

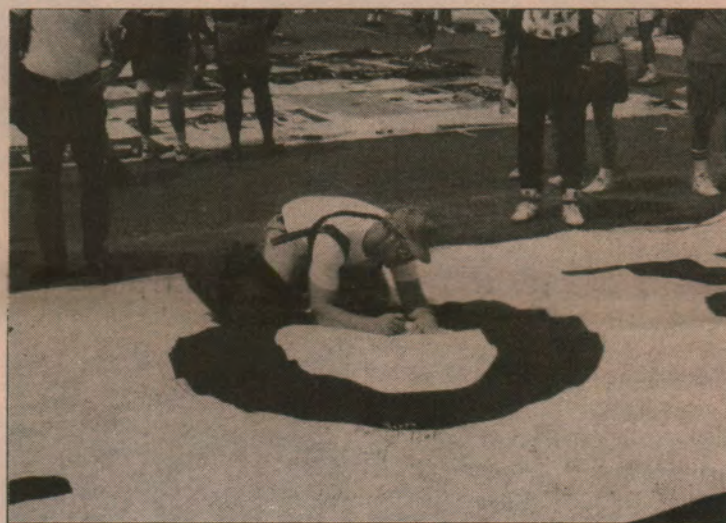
wearing these shirts the gays were making fun of themselves, basically saying they really didn't care what anyone thought. Yet in spite of their ability to laugh at themselves, there was a deep sadness.

We made our way to the AIDS quilt and were really saddened by it. The quilt bears the names of people who have died of the disease. The people gathering around the quilt were very emotional. They were hugging and kissing and comforting each other—another sight that seemed unusual to me. I guess it shouldn't strike me as weird that people in emotional turmoil would bond and support each other.

My friend and I wandered through the crowd feeling more awkward the farther we went. I felt as though people were looking at us funny because they knew we were straight. At the same time, I was hoping they didn't think we were gay.

We made our way back to the street away from the main crowd. Neither of us had said much at all since we first left the Metro. Now, my friend looked at me and said she'd heard a good joke at the conference and it happened to be about gay people. I looked around. We were surrounded by gays, but she proceeded to tell the joke in a low tone.

While the joke was in poor taste, I couldn't stop laughing at the punch line. It broke the tension of our afternoon. In a way, I felt bad for laughing, but in a way it put everything in perspective. It made the whole



issue seem a little bit lighter. I realized that the entire problem is what we make it. It is so much easier if we take it all in stride and don't separate or segregate the issue.

As we headed back to the airport, we began to see what the march was all about, even if we didn't understand it fully. Neither of us said much on the way because we were both digesting what we had seen.

During our ride to the airport, there was a female couple sitting in front of us. I listened to them talk for the whole ride. They weren't talking about anything unusual; they weren't acting differently; they didn't even look out of the norm. But I thought seeing them was a good way to end the day. It supported the fact that we're just all people with different likes and habits.

The March on Washington for Gay Rights wouldn't have been something I'd travel 800 miles to see, but having been there, I'm



glad I got to go. It forced me to deal with something I had ignored. I know I still may be prejudiced in my thinking to some extent, but there is no way to attack those prejudices unless I begin to face them.

*Cari Anderson, a 1993 graduate of Urbana High School, will attend the University of Illinois in the fall and plans to major in journalism.*

# Raising llamas for love and money

By Vanessa Faurie

Not far from Chicago, the alert observer can spot a variety of creatures not usually seen so far away from their native habitats. In one glance, a hilly landscape can reveal camels (one hump and two), zebras, Indian-spotted deer, wallabies, miniature horses, Sicilian donkeys, four-horned sheep, colorful macaws and last, but in no way least, about 150 of those lovable, humming llamas.

Local farmers around this somewhat unusual 80-acre ranch near Marengo, Ill., had called it the Crazy Farm for years. But that never ruffled the feathers of owner Charlie Hume. He laughed right along with them ... all the way to the bank.

Hume officially retired nine years ago from his animal feed business in Arlington Heights and now eagerly devotes his full attention to breeding leopard appaloosa llamas and other tame exotics to sell as pets. The key was to find something that virtually took care of itself and wouldn't require a lot of labor.

Raising llamas not only met those criteria but has exceeded them by leaps and bounds. Llamas are some of the easiest animals to care for, but they also currently sell for anywhere from \$1,000 (for a male) to \$10,000 (for a female). And llamas with the colorful appaloosa genes Hume has bred into them often go for even more than that.

"I had 80 births last year, and I'll probably have 90 or more this year," Hume said as he traveled the grounds in a handy golf cart painted with zebra stripes. "I never get tired of looking for another baby llama. You never know what they're going to look like. A plain ol' brown llama will have the most beautiful spotted baby you ever saw."

But Hume's enthusiasm is not just because of the money the animals bring in. That was merely an unexpected (but certainly welcome) dividend. Hume has always been an animal lover and, since graduating from the University of Illinois in 1949, a self-proclaimed "crazy zoologist."

"As a kid, I never had any kind of rabbit or guinea pig or decent pet," he said. "I caught wild

animals: field mice, shrews, moles—even moles! None of 'em were ever meant to be pets, but I had to try. That's what I liked to do.

"My folks figured I'd end up in a zoo," he confessed and then laughed. "Thing was, they just weren't sure which side of the bars I'd end up on. So I guess I was lucky I got into the University of Illinois and ended up with my own zoo. It could have gone in the other direction."

Hume's "zoo" is not open to the public. However, the occasional passer-by will make a sudden stop along the road at the sight of a camel or zebra and not resist the urge to walk up to the fence for a closer look.

"The object of this farm was not to display it to the public," he said. "We've got public zoos around. That's their purpose. The object was to give the animals a good breeding environment and to see what I could produce with them and to save the ones that are endangered and to give everybody a healthy life."

The sweeping view from the exposed side of Hume's innovative earthen house provides him with a spectacular view of all the critters that contentedly dot the rolling landscape. With a pair of binoculars, he can even see when another llama is about to increase the herd size.

"By the time you get there (to the new mother), the baby's standing up looking at you," Hume said. "They just pop right out."

There seems to be no end to the wonderful attributes of these curious animals. Conveniently, llamas almost always give birth in the daytime. The only sound they emit is a humming to their young. Babies are born standing up, then gently relax to the ground.

Llamas don't shed, they don't need their hooves trimmed and they don't eat a lot. What they do eat is processed so thoroughly in their three stomachs that their waste is minimal, and (what could be their most admirable trait) they even stack it in a neat pile.

Contrary to what many people think, llamas don't usually spit either. In fact, if a first-time

visitor isn't paying attention, one of Hume's more outgoing and inquisitive charges will quietly approach undetected until the visitor feels a warm, tickling nuzzle at his ear.

Hume also keeps photo albums filled with pictures of all his registered llamas—more for keeping tabs on the breeding results rather than as a sentimental keepsake.

"Mayabe if I die, someone can tell the difference," he added. "I know 'em all, but nobody else does. I'm not much good at remembering people's names. I'll have two people come out, and a half-hour later I have to ask my wife what their names are. But I can go out and tell you the name of any one of those 100 female llamas."

Hume has always said he's never met anyone with whom he'd rather trade places. The life he is living is one that he carefully planned and prepared for and is now reaping its rewards.

"People look forward to retiring all their lives, and they don't make any provisions for it," he said. "Suddenly it's on them, and it's a great disappointment. They're bored. You've got to have something that makes you want to get up in the morning."

Llamas and all the other animals at Hume's Exotic Wildlife Ranch are this crazy zoologist's wake-up call. And there is no place in the world he

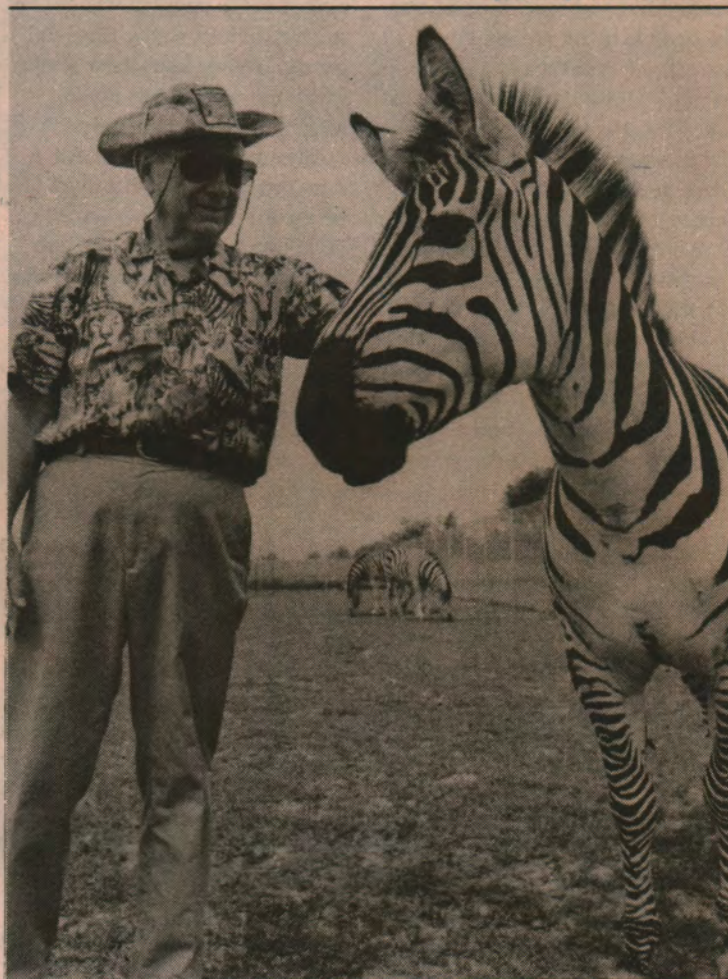
would rather be.

"I'm gonna die right here," he insisted, "looking at the llamas."

*Reprinted with permission from the Illinois Alumni News.*

**Bottom: Charlie Hume visits his charges all over his ranch via the "Zeb-Mobile"; top: Hume and friend.**

*Illinois Alumni News photos by John Konstantaras*



# One river, One dream

By Randall S. Trainor

When I was growing up in Prairie Village, I had a friend named Bret Tarey. Bret was my spiritual leader at the time. We were both 15. A lot of things were important to us at 15. Girls ranked first, for sure. Second was being able to get around on something besides a bike. We weren't allowed to drive a car on our own, even though our folks let us when they were along for the ride. But that wasn't good enough for us most of the time.

We wanted to get to places on our own power, and life was full of adventure, even if that meant just showing up at the shopping center. We wanted mobility. We did not want to arrive at our destination like the younger kids, pulling up to a Dairy Queen and throwing their bikes to the ground. Frustrated by all the days, weeks and months until our 16th birthdays and with a full summer of adventurous destinations still ahead, Bret announced that we would raft down the Little Blue River.

This newly discovered sense of the Huck Finn lifestyle totally

ruled Bret from that day on, it seemed. I was with him in spirit, naturally, but I had to remind him that I didn't know how to swim. As a kid, maybe 6 or 7 years old, I had gone to summer swimming classes at the pool but was always so scared of drowning that I did poorly. No one knew how scared I was, but when I was in the water, my teeth chattered.

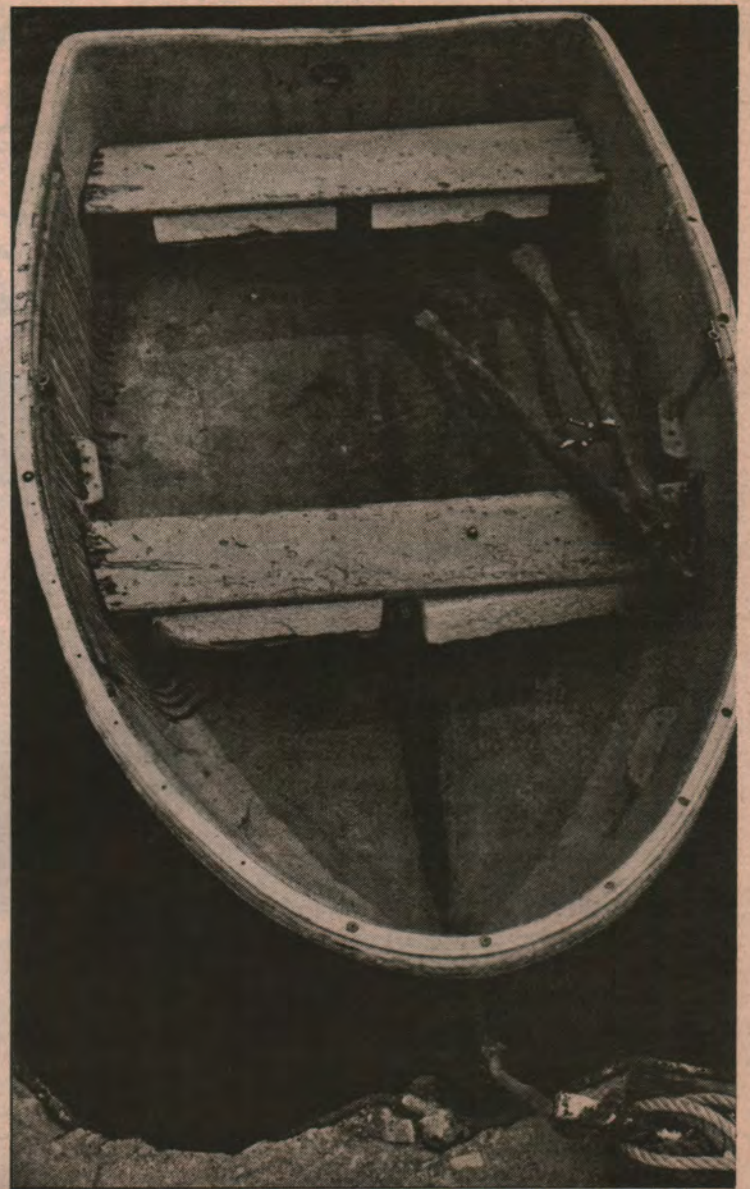
Anyway, Bret was sure that a ride down the Little Blue would be a great tonic for what ailed us in this summer before our 16th birthdays. We could run the river, relying on our own ability to survive and without parental supervision the whole trip, start to finish. Maybe that's why our parents said no. The survival part was, at the very least, a serious concern. Neither one of us had been brought up near the river and I particularly was getting really anxious about being in a rubber raft with a whole lot of fast moving water.

Immediately upon hearing from our parents that running the river was a bad idea, Bret became even more determined to do it. He

decided we would sneak out one night and start rafting under a full moon. We could smell the danger. I just kept seeing myself in about three life preservers, wondering how I would even be able to row.

Finally, something even more powerful than "No, you can't go down the river in a raft," suddenly woke us from our pleasant dream. The raft we wanted cost more than \$100. It was so much money that we had to give up the notion entirely and settle for the nickels, dimes and quarters that make up a summer before we could get a job and drive a car.

I wonder, of course, what might have happened to us had we run the river. We might have been braver, bolder people had we done what we had dreamed about. And I dreamed about it, too, teeth chattering and all. Maybe we could have realized our dream by simply working for it—cutting lawns and doing odd jobs—but it never happened. So many events in a future, now passed, might have been experienced had we worked for them, believed in



them completely. The cost of a raft was out of reach, but not if we had believed in our dream enough to want the raft.

Many years later, I've discovered that there is always a river, always a raft and always a way to

make the dream come true, but only if the voice tells you, "Yes, you can."

*Randall S. Trainor is a free-lance writer and lives in Dallas, Texas.*

## More oral history from Paris, Illinois

by Holly Henson

My Great-Great Aunt Emma Lou Garwood was born March 26, 1911, near Paris, Ill. When she was 6 years old, she began attending Hodgin School.

The school was not like our schools of today. It consisted of only two rooms. Children from first through fifth grade had lessons in one room with a teacher, and the other room had the sixth through eighth graders with another teacher.

The school had no running water and was heated by a stove. A well and outhouses were located behind the school. Children were in school 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Students had an hour-long lunch period. The children who lived nearby usually went home for lunch, even in bad weather.

My aunt could remember traveling back and forth to her

house from the school even when the snow was so high that she'd have to walk on fences in order to see over the snow. Other children would bring their lunches in dinner pails and eat at school.

Every morning and afternoon, the students had a 15-minute recess. They had to make up their own style of recreation because the school didn't have playground equipment. Some of their games were baseball, pitch and catch, or running.

At the time my aunt went to school, reading, writing and arithmetic was about all that was offered. She said that before she started school, her older sister taught her how to write. And since she was left handed, my aunt was taught to write with her left hand, too.

But when my aunt started school, the teacher gave her an experience she would never forget. Her teacher thought it was

a handicap to write with the left hand. So every day until my aunt learned to write with her right hand, she received a crack on the knuckles with a ruler.

Though this was a painful memory, there were better memories. And when I asked my aunt what she remembered most about her past, she mentioned the Chautauquas that were held at the fairgrounds. This outdoor assembly of education and entertainment took place in the early 1920s.

The Chautauqua was somewhat like the concerts we have today. It consisted of talented people who could entertain with their musical ability or speaking talent.

During the fall of 1923, the sesquicentennial was also held at the fairgrounds. It included a historical pageant with 12 children. Parents would send their children's names in with the hope of being selected as one of the 12.

My aunt was chosen to perform, but she became ill and was unable to participate.

The sesquicentennial also included skits and dances from other countries. The children performed in these, too, wearing representative costumes.

My aunt's family lived 10 miles outside of town. Some families from the country could not afford to have a car, but my aunt's family was fortunate enough to have one—a Model T Ford.

But the family had no radio or electricity. She remembered her father buying Delco batteries for the family's power needs.

In addition, they had an old potbellied stove for heat in the winter. Much of their lighting was from coal oil. She thought it wasn't until the 1930s that Edgar Electric came through with electricity.

They had an old washtub that sat in their kitchen. They usually

took a bath once a week and would usually make only one change of clothes per week.

When my aunt got older, she remembered going to box suppers on Friday night in the schoolhouse. Each box was raffled off, and the person who bought your box was the person you ate the meal with. The money from these raffles went toward school supplies. The suppers also provided a way for younger people to meet and socialize with each other.

My aunt was married when she was 18 years old and then moved to Indianapolis, Ind.

"We are very fortunate to have the many things we have," Aunt Emma said, "because it makes life much more easy."

*Holly Henson is a student of Paris High School history teacher Anne Pool.*

# The Last Word

## What interests are served by not consolidating schools?

**F** BY RAY ELLIOTT

For the first six years of my schooling, I attended a one-room school in Bellair, a small village in southeastern Illinois near the Wabash River. One teacher taught some 20 students in all eight grades and did a pretty reasonable job of teaching us the three Rs.

More importantly, for me anyway, the teacher and the people in the surrounding village and community instilled a sense of pride, a work ethic and a desire to learn in all of us. Schools in communities with a lot of support from everyone seem to do a pretty good job of educating their students.

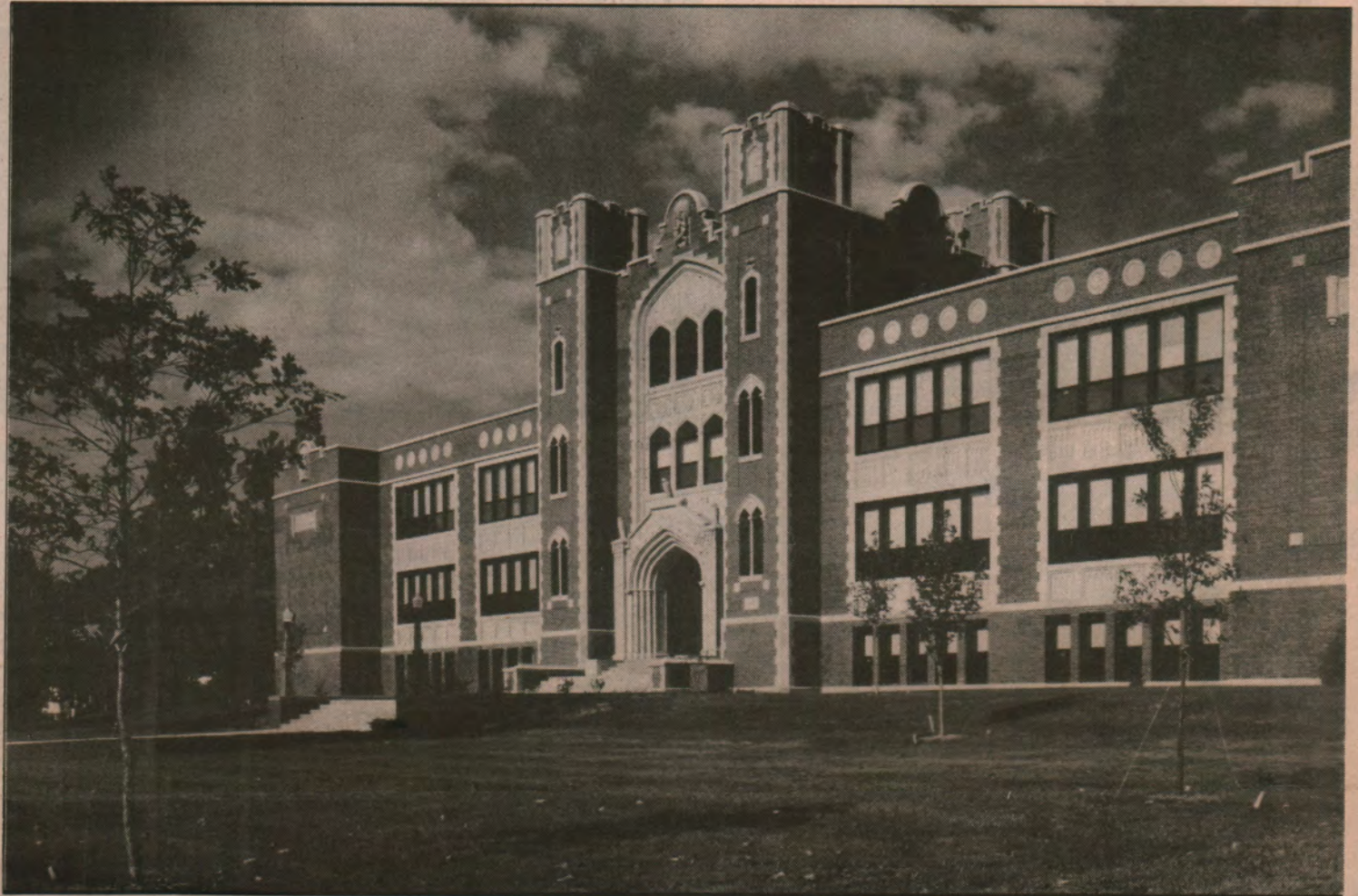
But after my sixth-grade year, students from the next two grades were sent in to the town school in Oblong 12 miles away. It was the beginning of phasing out country schools and consolidating them with other districts. Part of the reason was undoubtedly the dwindling rural population and financial considerations.

By the time my youngest sister went to school, only the first four grades were available in Bellair. Not long after, the school closed down completely and everybody, including later kindergarten students, were bussed to town.

I had no problem with the idea when I got on the bus. I thought I was ready to move on. But people all over the country, just as they are now, were adamantly opposed to school consolidation for all kinds of reasons, some good and some bad.

Regardless of the reasons, however, the fact of the matter is that for financial reasons, if no other, schools are going to continue to close and consolidate with other districts. It's a different world with different needs and different situations than the days when it was possible to have schools in each local community.

That's why I was pleased to learn last spring that one school superintendent in Crawford County, Ill., where I was born and raised, had publicly suggested the possibility of consolidating with the three other high schools in the county. The issue came up because the Robinson High School, like many older school buildings, is badly in need of repair.



Urbana High School's front facade after renovation

Photo courtesy of Urbana High School

I was disappointed to hear that only one of the three other high schools even discussed and considered the idea before rejecting it out of hand. Robinson is faced with the decision of restoring an old building or constructing a new one. Either way, it's going to cost big bucks.

Schools just about everywhere already face other similar problems: shifting populations, increasing violence and discipline problems, bad economic conditions, rising costs and little raise in revenue. All of which add up to less than ideal schools, not even considering major building needs.

Without consideration for personal bias and community prejudice, decisions in all areas should be made with the educational best interests of students in mind. In the Urbana district where I teach, residents were faced with the same decision the Robinson people are now considering (about their high school).

After much debate about the relative merits of a new building versus the community tradition and heritage the 1914 building

**W**ithout consideration for personal bias and community prejudice, decisions in all areas should be made with the educational best interests of students in mind.

represented, a referendum was passed for the \$14.3 million dollar renovation of the old buildings and addition of a new gym and physical education facilities. Unfortunately, the swimming pool was lost. It couldn't be figured in the budget.

The high school is now a bright spot in a community struggling to meet rising educational costs brought about in part by the tax-exempt status of the University of Illinois and Carle Clinic, two of Urbana's largest property owners and employers. Only the lack of funds for adequate library materials, computer systems, books and new technological teaching aids have kept Urbana

from having a school ready to move to the front in meeting the challenges of education today. With proper funding in the schools, Urbana can become a place where people will want to buy homes and where businesses will want to locate.

Part of the needed funds could undoubtedly be secured by consolidating the Urbana and Champaign (also facing tough financial times) school districts. Surely one central office could administrate the combined districts for a million or two less than it now costs and do at least as good a job as the separate staffs do now.

Of course, that consolidation

isn't going to happen in my lifetime anymore than the four high school districts in Crawford County are going to consolidate. Too many people have too many memories and too many traditions they don't want to let go. No matter that it would be financially beneficial in the long run and maybe even in the short run; no matter that it would offer a better educational system that would attract business and taxpayers almost at once.

Athletic rivalries, childhood haunts and money are often more important considerations than quality educational conditions. That shouldn't be the case.

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