

## **PART II High School and College: 1959 - 1945**

### **CHAPTER I Blythedale, Missouri**

Don and I started to high school in the fall of 1939. The school was in Blythedale, a small town four miles south of where we lived. There were approximately 200 people living in Blythedale. There was a band stand in the intersection of the four main roads in town; the road to the north where we lived led to Anclover and the Iowa line; to the south was Ridgeway; to the east was Cainsville and to the west was Eagleville. The Citizens' Bank was, and still is, on the northwest corner of this intersection. The Standard Gas Station was diagonally across the intersection on the southeast corner.

On the main street of town were: The J. O. Reed Drug Store, the C. O. Fowler Grocery Store, Helen Wilson's Cafe, Roy Foster's Produce and Skelly Gas Station, and the Post Office. There were other businesses but I'm not sure what or where.

The Blythedale school building was located about four blocks south of the band stand. The school building was two-story and made of stucco. All of the high school classrooms were upstairs. The first floor was used for the grade school and the cafeteria. The gym, the locker and shower rooms and the janitor/boiler room were in the basement.

In the fall of 1939 the school district started bus service for the high school students for the first time. Errol Gusewelle was our bus driver for the first two years. He lived just south of Harvey and Cora Richardson. He drove north towards the Mt. Pleasant School and picked up Marjorie, Millard and Marvelle Pierce; and then Betty Hougas. At the Mt. Pleasant School he turned west and picked up Billie Baker. Roscoe Lane had to walk out to the main road to be picked up next. Then Don and I were picked up. Jack Bowles had to walk down the hill to catch the bus as it turned west there to across the creek and then south to pick up the Jerry Craig and Leonard Moore kids. The younger Craig and Moore kids rode our bus to grade school. From there we went east, back to the main road and picked up Bessie Arvin who had to walk to catch the bus. There we turned back south and picked up the McDaniel and Babe Cook kids. We had a bus load now of all the kids living to the north going to school in Blythedale.

The bus was a big old square bus. We had to push it on rainy and snowy days. The roads were all dirt and only dirt, no rock base, so the bus would sink nearly to the hub caps in the mud. I'm not sure how any bus was able to make that run daily for the four years we went to high school. They never cancelled because of bad weather but we were late many days getting to school and back home.

## **CHAPTER II                      Freshman Year: 1939-48**

Blythedale High School had the enrollment of approximately fifty students. The School colors were orange and blue. There were fourteen enrolled in the Freshman Class: Bessie Arvin, Cecil Craig, Don Fowler, Mildred Fowler, Betty Gillispie, Kenneth Gray, Dorothy Harvey, Doris Hazen, Betty Hougas, Parnell Lacy, Roscoe Lane, Lawrence McDanel, Marvelle Pierce, and Louise Smith.

The teachers were: Superintendent Mr. Orville Kelim. He taught Social Science; Principal and Coach Mr. Ralph Carmichael. He taught Math and Science; Mrs. Marguerite Umstead taught English and Music; Mrs. Mae Shelor taught Commercial Subjects; and Mrs. Blanche Kramer, a retired teacher, taught part of the year. She took me under her wing, so to speak, as I was having trouble adjusting the first few weeks. She would talk to me and advise me about making friends there in school. Dorothy Harvey was her special student and friend. Mrs. Kramer was a wise teacher and friend to me. Mrs. Shelor wrote in my yearbook, "Mildred, I believe you have the ability to become Valedictorian. Why not try for it? Mr. Bill Rhinehart was the janitor.

I enrolled in all the school activities: Glee Club, I didn't know until later years that I could not carry a tune; Orchestra, Errol Gusewelle loaned me his violin to play; Pep Squad, the girls cheered while the boys played ball and then the boys cheered while the girls played; and Sports, in the fall and spring we played softball.

During the winter the boys played basketball and the girls played volleyball. We had a game nearly every Friday evening either at our school or at a neighboring school. Blythedale High School was noted for its strong volleyball team. I had never seen a volleyball until going to high school but found it challenging and exciting. After Christmas, Norena Owens, one of the members on the volleyball team, had her appendix removed. I was added to the team for the rest of the school year, in her place. On rainy or snowy nights after the ball games the coach, Mr. Carmichael, would take us country kids home in his car if possible. On occasions I walked two miles south to Mom's Uncle Riley and Aunt Jean Hill Hurst's house and someone would pick me up there to go to the ball games or bring me home. Aunt Jean always kept her clocks half an hour fast.

If the roads were real bad I would spend the night with someone in town. I usually stayed with Dorothy Harvey or Louise Smith.

If we had the money we could flag the train down and ride to Blythedale for twenty-five cents. We could ride the train home in the evening too, but we seldom have the twenty-five cents. We only did this in emergencies or later when we were older and working away from home.

Each class would have parties two or three times each year. Our Freshman Class combined with the Sophomore Class for one party. Arthur Dean Pontius sat by me during the party and then later gave me my first kiss! We had about three dates and that was that.

A date consisted of sitting next to each other at some function, holding hands, and maybe sneaking a quick kiss. Big deal! Well it was to me then.

Later in the year Cecil Craig and I started being together at most of our class activities and at the ball games. Marvelle Pierce and Parnell Lacy really had a thing going, as did Louise Smith and Ben Savely, a Junior.

I took turns, with some of the other girls, working in the school cafeteria. We received free lunches. Mrs. Faye Gray, Kenneth's mother, worked in the cafeteria and she took a liking to me and so did Kenneth. More about them later.

One morning during assembly it was announced Mrs. Opal Seats would like some girl to spend the nights with her. Tommy Seats, her husband, was away at winter training. Tommy was a pitcher for the Detroit Tigers Baseball Team. I walked down to see her at lunch time and she hired me. I don't remember if I was paid or not.

That summer, 1940, Mrs. Seats wanted me to go to Detroit with her and her daughters, but Mom decided Virginia should go instead as she was older.

One day in the spring of 1940 Bessie Arvin and I were walking home from school. We noticed some people had moved into the house about half a mile south of where Bessie lived. A man and girl were in the barn lot with a horse. We stopped to talk. They introduced themselves as Henry Casady and his daughter Alberta. We discovered Alberta was our age and in the same grade at school. Little did we know that Alberta would one day be my sister-in-law. Alberta enrolled at school the next day. Alberta's favorite outfit was a red corduroy skirt and white majorette boots.

Bessie lived in a large yellow house which had three stories and a basement. She lived with a distant relative, Doss Elmore. He had a housekeeper named Katie. The house had running water and a bath room which was very unusual in that area. Bessie had to work hard helping keep that house shining. Alberta, Bessie and I had fun playing up on the top floor with the antique clothing and jewelry, etc., packed away in chests. My mother told me when she was young, the family living there had dances on the top floor of the house.

The Quaker Oats Company offered free, with each coupon from a box of oatmeal, a silver teaspoon which was engraved with a picture and the name Betty Lou, whoever she is. I walked to all the farm houses north of Blythedale asking for coupons. I still have the five free teaspoons I managed to get.

During the summers of 1940 and '41 I visited with Aunt Lonle and Uncle Tom in Lamoni, Iowa. Aunt Lonle helped me start my first quilt.. It was made on bleached white sugar sacks with appliqued butterflies made from printed feed sacks. I packed the blocks away but finally finished it in 1979-80.

The fall of 1940 Randall enlisted in the U. S. Army. We had a picture taken of us nine Fowlers before he left. I remember the day he left. Mom was standing in the door of our house with tears in her eyes as he left walking down the road to the railroad tracks and on to Blythedale and beyond.

## **Chapter 3 Sophomore Year: 1948-41**

There were sixteen enrolled in our class this year. Bessie Arvin, Alberta Casady, Cecil Craig, Beryl Elmore, Don Fowler, Mildred Fowler, Kenneth Gray, Dorothy Harvey, Doris Hazen, Betty Hougas, Imogene Lacy, Pamell Lacy, Roscoe Lane, Lawrence McDaniel, Marvelle Pierce, and Louise Smith Savely. Alberta Casady had enrolled during our Freshman year. Betty Gulesple got married and dropped out of school. Louise Smith married Ben Savely but finished out the year. New to our school and class were Beryl Elmore and Imogene Lacy. Beryl's grandfather, Jess Elmore, was a brother of Doss Elmore. They came to live with Doss, Katie and Bessie in the big yellow house.

Our Sophomore Class had several parties that year. We had an Initiation Party for the Freshmen in September. We went roller skating at one party, my first time to roller skate. On Halloween there was an all school party. After the party some of the boys pulled some tricks on the community. Some one turned an outside toilet over with a teacher's daughter inside. Others pulled junk out of a ditch onto the road so our bus could not get by the next morning. Our bus driver had to stop and some of us got off and pulled the junk back into the ditch.

It was a tradition for the high school students to walk out of school one day each year, usually on April first. We didn't do anything real exciting but the next day the Principal would have us all stay in for a month during lunch time. One year we had to copy the dictionary, another year we had to answer all the questions in a history book.

Jack Bowles was forever getting into trouble by pulling pranks. Several times he turned the clock up a half hour and the lunch bell would ring early.

The students could walk down town during the lunch break. The restaurant had a pool table and room in the back with a Nickelodeon where we could dance. That was a good place for the couples to smooch. I didn't, but Ruth Sturdevant and Dick Offield did and others. For five cents we could buy a candy bar but I didn't usually have the five cents.

Our Volleyball Team won three trophies in 1939-40. In 1940-41 we won first place at the Harrison County Tournament, and second at both the Eagleville and Ridgeway Tournaments. Marian "Bab" Schlefelbusch was the captain and a spiker. Rosezella Stanley was her tipper. Dorothy Harvey and I were paired together. Dorothy was the tipper and I was the spiker. Dorothy was an excellent server. I just couldn't get the hang of serving but I made up for it by my spiking.

Cecil Craig and I were together at the class parties and ball games. Cecil lived to the west of town so we were only dating at school functions. None of the high school students had cars in those days. On Saturday nights there was a movie in Blythedale. The movie cost ten cents and had a continuing serial. One serial starred Tom Mix. We would go to the movie with our own families, then Cecil and I would sit together during the movie.

The cutest little girl in town was Elaine Stanley, daughter of Mom's cousin Cecil and "Coon" Stanley. Elaine had long curls, a great disposition and was spoiled by everyone in town. Elaine was another Shirley Temple. Elaine's sister, Rosezella, was two years ahead of me in high school. Marvin stayed with the Stanleys when their son, Wayne, was sick.

The summer of 1941 I stayed with an elderly couple up in Iowa. Aunt Lonle's daughter, Violet, was staying with them, but she wanted to go to Idaho. I stayed there one month. They paid me sixteen dollars. I bought some wine colored material and Aunt Lonle made me a jumper to wear to school that fall. It was my first purchase with my own money.

## **Chapter 4 Junior Year: 1941-42**

There were now fourteen in our class: Bessie Arvin, Alberta Casady, Cecil Cragg, Beryl Elmore, Don Fowler, Mildred Fowler, Kenneth Gray, Dorothy Harvey, Doris Hazen, Imogene Lacy, Roscoe Lane, Lawrence McDaniel, Marvelle Pierce and Ruth Sturdevant. Ruth enrolled as a new student. Betty Hougas and Parnell Lacy moved to Eagleville. Louise Smith Savely dropped out as her husband, Ben, graduated in the Blythedale Community Building.

We had all new teachers. This is just before World War II and it was hard to get teachers. Mr. Kelim did not return. Mr. Carmicheal started the year but left mid-term. Mr. George Bailey became Superintendent and Coach. The other two teachers were Miss Faye and Miss McDermott. I loved Miss McDermott. She was very young and pretty. She taught us Dancing during P.E. Kenneth Gray's father was janitor. His mother was still working in the cafeteria.

Mr. Bailey tried to teach us a different way to play volleyball but it just did not work. He finally came around to our old way of playing and we started winning games again. I was made Captain of the team and Dorothy Harvey was still my tipper. There were several Freshman girls on the team as most of the players had graduated. Some of the Freshman players were Marlyn VanHoozer, Imogene Craig and Bonnie Andrew. I don't remember how many tournaments we won but we were tops in the county. I received a medal for being on the County All Star Volleyball Team. The trophies that were won by the Blythedale High School are on display in the Blythedale Community Building.

I was one of the leaders of the Pep Squad for my Junior year. I still remember several of our favorite yells. When we went to a neighboring town on the school bus to play ball we would just have the ball players to cheer the other team on. They did not take the Pep Squad on the bus. Everyone in the community turned out for the ballgames.

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese mounted a surprise attack against the U.S. at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Don wanted to join the service immediately but Mom and Dad talked him into finishing high school first.

Our Junior Class went on a trip to St. Joseph, Missouri. We visited, of all places, the Missouri State Hospital. We had lunch there and participated in their weekly dance. One of the patients thought Ruth Sturdevant was someone she knew and would not leave her alone.

I was President of our Junior Class. I was voted by the students and teachers to represent Blythedale High School at the contest for Queen of all the high schools in Harrison County. Miss Faye loaned me a dress to wear and Dorothy Harvey curled my hair. I did not win but it was a good experience for me.

Emotionally I was having a hard time. I did not realize it then but looking back now I can see I just wasn't ready for all those problems of the teenage years. I was the youngest one in the class, several were two years older than me. Cecil had been my first and only boyfriend. He was wanting to go steady but I was becoming interested in other boys. The Everett Sturdevant family moved to Blythedale. Their daughter, Ruth, had enrolled in our class at school.

I thought their oldest son, Daryl, was good looking. One night after a ballgame a group of us kids went for a ride in a car. I sat in the back of the car with Daryl.

Dad saw me and pulled me out of the car. Don had Delbert Shain drive us home one night after a ballgame and Delbert asked me for a date and there was always Kenneth Gray Interested In me. I Just could not make up my mind who to date or what to do. Dad did not want me to date Daryl. Several other girls were Interested In Daryl anyway. Mom did not approve of Delbert because of the reputation of his brother. Cecil wanted more than I was ready to commlt to. I dated all four boys a few times but by the beginning of our Senlor year I had lost them all but Kenneth, and I only wanted to befrlends with him. Poor, Mildred!

In 1942 Dad agreed to take over the farming for Mr. Henry Inman. He owned the farm where Edna and Audrey Grant lived and was married to their sister, Ethel. Mr. Inman was a Professor at Simpson College In Indianola, Iowa. Audrey went to California and worked for the war effort. Edna went to live with a sister. We moved to the Inman farm In May. The house was two story. It bad a screened-in back porch, kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom downstairs. Mom had an oil stove to cook on Instead of a wood cookstove and there was a sink with a pitcher pump in the kitchen. Upstairs there were three bedroms. For the first time I had my own room and we had a telephone. It was on a party line and the phone would ring a certain number of rings for each family. Dad loved to eavesdrop. I could hear the phone ring even when I was out In the barn.

There were twenty cows to be milked each morning and evening. Don and I had to milk cows every day before and after school. Dad and Mom milked and then separated the cream from the milk. We sold the cream to the Creamery In Lamon, Iowa. The milk was fed to the pigs. That summer Don joined the C.C.C. and was sent to Camp Crowder near Trenton. I helped Dad wlth the farming.

Mr. Inman paid me \$1.00 a day to help put up hay. Dad was still using a team of horses to farm. I used the horses and a bull rake to haul hay to Dad while be stacked It In big bay stacks. That was hot dirty job but I got paid for it!

By now Randall was In the Army and Marvin was In the Martne Corp. Virginia attended Chlllcothe Business College from September 1941 to August 1942. On August 12, 1942, she went to Washington, D.C. to work for the Federal Government.