OLNEY MEMORIES # 124

July 6, 2016

Hello again and wishing everyone a good summer. More memories to read and share with everyone. Some ideas are below to send in for more things we remember of days gone by….maybe more May Day memories, and how about the Arcadia Theatre, thoughts that we all surely have! How sad to see a mainstay that has been open I guess our entire lives…is now closed. That building holds lots of memories for all of us I’ll bet! ☺

Ann King

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Jerry Scherer

[jerrycars@aol.com](mailto:jerrycars@aol.com)

Class of 1950

66th REUNION of ERHS CLASS of 1950

This is just a reminder that we are planning the 66th reunion of the graduating class of 1950 from OTHS (ERHS) on Friday, September 23, 2016 (the Friday before the Fall Festival at the Olney Park). Almost all of us have retired from our lifetime jobs and have had many years to enjoy our retirement. This is a great opportunity for us to visit, share stories and get reacquainted.

This year, we thought it would be nice to invite some of our friends that we were in school with from other classes, including the classes of 1949, 1951, and 1952. Spread the word and invite anyone you would like from those classes. Please pass along the information below so they can reserve their spot for dinner and don’t forget to reserve your spot as well! ☺

**What: 66th Reunion of ERHS Class of 1950**

**Date: Friday, September 23, 2016**

**Time: Social Hour at 4:30, Dinner around 6:00**

**Where: Olde Tyme Steakhaus, Olney, IL**

**For reservations: Call 618-392-3663 or email them at:**

[**oldetymesteakhaus@gmail.com**](mailto:oldetymesteakhaus@gmail.com)

Make reservations for the “Class of 1950” room. We will order from the menu. Please be certain to reserve your spot 2 weeks prior to the event. This invitation will be shared via e-mail, TAC, OLNEY MEMORIES and word of mouth so help us get the word out to everyone! We look forward to seeing you in September!

Peggy Carson, Don Watson, Wayne Bateman, Jerry Scherer and Bill May

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Ron Scherer

[rscherer@htc.net](mailto:rscherer@htc.net)

Hi Ann,

You mentioned in the latest OM that you would welcome additional items on Olney’s May Day tradition.  I thought while May Day was a fresh topic, I would submit some of the items we found and included in the new book, “Before the Big Yellow Bus.”

Obviously, they are not my memories, but they do present a good look at the time in history when the May Day tradition was in its early stages.  I do have some May Day memories of my own, including the year I looked out the classroom window at ERHS and saw snow coming down…on May Day!  So disappointing, but I believe we still celebrated the occasion, although it wasn’t a very nice day to be outside.

Hope the attached is something you find of interest.

(The attached is printed out below)

**THE BEGINNING OF THE OLNEY MAY DAY TRADITION**

*Excerpts from the book, “Before the Big Yellow Bus: remembering the one-room schools of Richland County, Illinois.”*

*(To discuss the beginning of the May Day celebration, it is necessary to set the stage with a brief mention of some of the traditions at the time. The following paragraphs were written by William Bower, who was the second child born in the City of Olney, of this experience at one of the early schools, apparently before the Civil War…)*

“It was the custom in those days for the pupils to come early on the last day (of school) and take possession of the schoolhouse, and refuse admission to the teacher until he had provided refreshments. On this occasion, Prof. Smalley, the teacher at this term, promised that he would furnish the refreshments the next day, provided the pupils were on their good behavior.

“Accordingly, the next day, Prof. Smalley made his appearance with a couple of baskets filled with apples, ginger bread, maple sugar, brown sugar and a jug of whiskey. The water bucket was filled with a mixture of water, brown sugar and whiskey, and all – big and little – were invited to take the gourd used as a drinking cup, and help themselves. My recollection is that none took enough to show unfavorable effect. It seems impossible,” Smalley wrote in 1896, “that so short a time back, such a thing could be possible.” *(Source: 125th Anniversary Edition of the Olney Daily Mail)*

May Day Begins

        Teachers of the era were also known to award their students in other ways. One of the oldest traditions of the county – which pleased thousands of students up through much of the 20th century – originated in 1872, when a thoughtful teacher took her pupils on a picnic. From this event bloomed the annual May Day parade for school children in Richland County.

        “On Friday afternoon last, the children of the public school had their May Day, marching in procession some 700 strong through the streets to the Driving Park grounds, where they enjoyed themselves in various ways. The sight was a beautiful one, and elicited the admiration of all who witnessed it.” *(Source: Olney Times, May 18, 1881)*

        “The pupils of the Olney Public School, about 1,000 strong, under the direction of their teachers, marched out to the Olney Driving Park Monday afternoon to enjoy their usual May Day picnic. The colorful procession was formed at the school yard and, headed by the band, marched east to Fair Street, then north to Main and west on Main to the street leading past the grounds. On reaching the grounds, the school board presented each pupil with a ticket entitling them to a treat at a stand prepared on the grounds, after which the pupils amused themselves with sports of different kinds.” *(Source: Olney Times, May 5, 1886)*

        “The first day of May was called ‘May Day.’ The country school children and teachers would go to Olney. We would be dressed in crepe paper and we carried banners made of flowers (crepe paper). We would march down Main Street, then to the fairground. There we all got a sack of candy, gum and an orange.” *Source: letter by Ruth Bailey Smith, pupil at Prairieton School, date unknown)*

        “…However, the best part of my school days was summer vacation. The last thing we would do before vacation was March in the May Day Parade. I can remember how hot the pavement was on my bare feet. I also remember how good the Cracker Jack was. I probably had a new pair of bib overalls so I’d look my best for the parade. Bib overalls were the norm. With new tennis shoes and new straw hats, we were ready for summer.” *(Source: 2011 letter from Bill Combs, former student at Oak Ridge School*

Ron Scherer

Class of 1962

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John Helm

[mlehjerhs@gmail.com](mailto:mlehjerhs@gmail.com)

Ann - reading OM #123 reminded me that a farm field near Dundas was the center of population of the United States in 1950.  There's still a marker out there somewhere.  It was a big deal, a celebration. There were herd dog competitions in the field; prizes were awarded to the dogs who did best at keeping herds of sheep together.  Also large exhibits; I remember the Caterpillar Tractor Company had a large exhibit there, among others.  It was similar to a carnival.  My dad, Dr. Helm, volunteered to work in the medical tent on the grounds, and I rode around with him in an ambulance.  You can probably access old editions of the Olney Daily Mail which will give you the particulars of all the activities there.

John Helm

Class of ‘58

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John Helm

[mlehjerhs@gmail.com](mailto:mlehjerhs@gmail.com)

Hey, Ann!  I was talking via email with Joe Smith; I'm not sure if he was in your class or not.  I was telling him that in 1952, when I was 12 years old, Richard Nixon came through Olney on the B & O railroad, and they switched his special car off on the Illinois Central and brought him right up Kitchell Avenue, next to the courthouse to make a speech in behalf of his running mate, Dwight D. Eisenhower.  All the Olney schools were let out for the day so we could all see a real piece of history.  Do you remember that?

John Helm

Class of ’58

Mary Jane Hughes

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Ann, I remember those May Day parades and celebrations. Not only that, I remember your sweet friend Annie your lamb.

Mary Jane Hughes

Class of ‘60

Ron and Janet Leist

[Jrleist17@gmail.com](mailto:Jrleist17@gmail.com)

HI Ann,

Thanks for another interesting read of OM’s.

Ron is wondering if anyone can remember Rogers Hornsby hosting a baseball camp at the city park?

Ron & Janet Leist

Class of ’56

Charles Fregeau

[N5hsr@sprynet.com](mailto:N5hsr@sprynet.com)

Since my mom’s name was Mary, and she had my sister in Olney, Dad often used to say “Mary had a little lamb, and she named it Nancy.”

This lead to the odd coincidence of all the men in our family being born in Chicago but all the women being born in Olney.  Nancy was the first female born in the family in over 100 years.  Since her birth, no males have been born in the family, oddly enough.  My brother, the only member of the brood to marry, has two daughters.

Thanks again.  I remember all of the things before electricity.  Mom’s house didn’t have electricity until she went to high school in town in 1947.   Although she went to the same high school, it had at least a couple different names while she was going there.  By the time she graduated, the old building on Main had been become part of East Richland district, and the new building was not yet complete, so for a while, the old building was East Richland High School, although the cheerleaders and athletes got letters O (for Olney) for the team, at least up to the time I was attending.  (Did they ever get E for East Richland?  Do they now get R for Richland, or are they still getting O for Olney?)

It’s also odd that I kept working my way down the alphabet.  Had we gone to high school where I was born, I would have gone to Fenger.  (Dad had been class president his graduating semester.)   By the time I actually started high school I was attending East Richland, and graduated from Danville.

I sometimes watch the old episodes of the Beverly Hillbillies and have to laugh.  Root cellars.   Cutting a hickory switch.   Coal-oil lamps.  Homemade cures.  Family Bibles.   My mom’s family did these things and had these things, as did, I’m sure, many of the other families in the county.

 Charles Fregeau

Class of ‘75

Mary Jane Hughes

[hughes.micki@gmail.com](mailto:hughes.micki@gmail.com)

Someone needs to tell Walt Ryan the air mail stamp became obsolete when all mail became air mail.

Micki Hughes

Class of ‘60

Charles Fregeau

[N5hsr@sprynet.com](mailto:N5hsr@sprynet.com)

Dear Ann,

Wonderful memories of Olney.  Too bad May Day had to be the last day the Arcadia was opened this year.  
  
I wonder if any of those orphans stayed and got married into the families in Olney?  
Seeing some of them were from the orphan home in Cincinnati,  I often wonder if the Leaf brothers (George and Henry)  knew any of their family names, since they were born in Cincinnati, also.

Since the Arcadia is now not showing movies anymore, maybe we ought to get up an OM issue about the Arcadia?

Charles Fregeau

Class of ‘75

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Sue Rice

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Hi Ann,

I truly enjoyed this OM.  A lot of history in this one, not commonly known by most people.

Also, remember participating in the May Day parades at a child.  All of the schools and classes would line up, and we would all walk down Street, single file, and I also remember holding hands as we walked in a long train of children.

Do they still hold the May Day Parade in Olney?  I thought about that on May 1st this year....OMG, that was 50 years ago...my how time flies...LOL

L. Sue Rice

Class of ‘74

Bud Dodson

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DEAR ANN,   JUST READING  # 123 AND A COUPLE OF THOUGHTS CAME UP FIRST MAJOR FRANK SCHILT USMC ..WAS AWARDED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR FOR ACTION IN 1929, IT SURE KEPT ME ON MY TOES WHEN I DATED HIS DAUGHTER AS A PVT IN 1946.

YEARS LATER I WAS MAYOR OF WESTINSTER, CO FOR FOUR HECTIC YEARS.   I ALSO BELIEVED OLNEY WAS NAMED AFTER OLNEY, ENGLAND?

BUD DODSON

 CLASS Of ‘ 47

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Pat Nickel

[patnbrown@hotmail.com](mailto:patnbrown@hotmail.com)

Dear Ann:  I am responding from my mother's email address.  Her name was Patricia Nickel, nee King. (Any relation?).  She was born in Olney in 1920 to Dr. Ralph and Nana King.  Her mother was a Wharf.  My sister and I have been working in her house since she passed away last August.  We've found a lot of Olney memorabilia.  I'm wondering if anyone there might be interested in any of it.  I just opened a mailing tube and there was a picture of the high school class of 1938 at their reunion in 1953.  Currently I'm just packing up everything to bring back to my house in Colorado.  You can contact me at [patnbrown@hotmail.com](mailto:patnbrown@hotmail.com) although I am keeping her email address active for now.  BTW - I was also born in Olney (accidentally) in 1949 at the Olney Sanitarium.  My doctor was one of the Weber's.  Anyway, if there is any interest in these things - mainly pictures and some newspaper clippings, etc. please let me know.  As I said, I'm moving them back to Colorado for now.

Sincerely,

Patricia Nickel Brown

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