



Buda Elementary, early 1970s

Two Sisters Remember Buda Elementary

by

Carla Adolph Meyer and Susan Adolph Iwert

Edited by Susan Brinkman

Buda Elementary was School District #28 in Ness County. Located eleven miles south of Beeler between Dighton and Ness City, the little one-room served approximately ten families in a ten square mile area. The Adolph sisters were one of those ten families who attended Buda between 1952 – 1962. *Heritage* editors asked the sisters to share some thoughts and memories from their days at Buda Elementary.

Susan Adolph Iwert: The ground, a corner of donated land from a farmer's pasture, was approximately 1 acre. On the land was the red brick school building, two wooden outhouses (men's and women's both with two holes), a red wooden barn that housed horses ridden to school, a teachers residence, and an activity areas for basketball, high jumping, horseshoe pitching for men, and a large field for softball.

We kept with the tradition of a farming community needing children to work on the farm. School started after Labor Day and got out in April. It was an eight month school year. During my years at the school we had 12 students in various grades between first and eight. There was no Kindergarten we all just started in first grade. There were five of us in my first grade but we lost a student every year until I was the only one in my class by the seventh grade.

Carla Adolph Meyer: Most grades had two students. Sometimes there'd be no one in a particular grade. For me, there were two of us

Carla Meyer graduated from Emporia State University with Bachelors and Masters degrees in education. She taught English at Salina High Central for five years and is currently a guidance counselor at Beatrice High School in Nebraska. She likes to tell her students she's been in school forever and is hoping to graduate in another year or two.

Susan Iwert attended Buda Elementary for all 8 years, going on to graduate from Ness City High School and earning Bachelors and Masters degrees in business and education from Emporia State University. She has worked in business and manufacturing, and has been a high school teacher and a college instructor. She lives in Emporia, Kansas.

until 4th grade and then my classmate moved so I was the only one in my grade during fifth through eighth grades. Ness City (thirty miles away) was gracious enough to invite all of us in the rural schools to attend eighth grade graduation ceremonies with them. That was a really big deal. I had a new dress and my first high heel shoes. We had no stairs to practice walking on at home; I definitely worried about climbing them successfully at the town ceremony. My mom sewed all of our clothes; she did a very fine job on the dress she designed herself (that is what you call it when you alter the pattern a bit). The town school year was nine months versus the county eight month. The one month wait until graduation seemed to drag on forever.

Susan Adolph Iwert: In the fall, after harvest we had a box supper fund raiser to buy candy to put in the treat bags that were given out at the Christmas school program. Each woman would cook a picnic supper, pack it in a decorated box, and wrap the box to hide it from family members. Men bid on the boxes. The person purchasing the box shared the supper with the woman who cooked the meal. This often caused emotional “oh’s” when a married woman ate with someone other than her husband. These boxes sold for 25 to 50 cents. The auctioneer would read the contents of the box before the bidding started.

Carla Adolph Meyer: There were many, many memorable experiences. One stand-out was a very cold winter day in my fourth or fifth grade year. The teacher gathered us around the floor furnace that heated the school and handed out pieces of dolls and stuffing for us to begin making our own rag dolls. We stuffed arms and legs and torsos and the head. She showed us how to embroider the eyes, mouth, and face. We used yarn for hair. I think my mom made the clothes for the doll. My sister and I had only one dress each for our dolls. It was such a totally unexpected activity and we felt like a family gathered around the fire on that cold, cold day. That is what made it so much fun...and no studying, of course!

Another very memorable experience was the only fight the school ever had. We were such docile children who never questioned and always followed the rules regardless of what we thought of them. A new family had moved to the school district. They had three children who attended Buda for just a short time. One day the oldest boy got

ticked off about something and he thought the sweet and frail teacher was against him. I remember being absolutely shocked when he raised his voice toward the teacher. His sister joined in the fracas and told us little kids she'd get involved if we tried to help, and she would have. He confronted the teacher physically, hitting her and then pushing her up and down the rows of seats while we sat there in horror. At one point she asked a student to take off her nice watch as they struggled in the aisle. At some point a couple of us (I was in the third grade) realized we had to have help. One of the older kids managed to get to the cloak room, close the door, and use the party-line phone to call for help. It didn't take long for three of our dad's to appear, break up the mess, and expel the student for the day. The three-member school board (our dad was one of the members), asked the boy not to return to school for a week.

Susan Adolph Iwert: Spring always meant field trips to interesting places. The trips were within a 100 mile radius of our school. One year we went to Hutchinson and toured the salt mine and another year we went to the Great Bend police station and learned about marked cards and loaded dice. We saw things that farm kids weren't generally exposed to during that era.

Carla Adolph Meyer: We had very limited resources and teachers sometimes used the new innovation called "School of Air" to provide new opportunities. The "School of Air" was the use of the radio and phonograph for teaching. I loved turning on the radio at 1 p.m. on the scheduled day for art assignments. We would follow along and at the end of the lesson the airway teacher would tell us what we'd need for the next week (paper, water colors, brushes, pencils, etc.). I don't remember anything elaborate but without that radio we would never have had an art class.

We used the phonograph to play the talking books bought by our district. I think we had four or five books of about a dozen pages each. Each book had pictures telling a story and a 45 rpm record that we'd play to synchronize with the pages. A big deal was to be chosen to sit on a chair in front of the classroom to hold the book and turn the pages. The books were very small, maybe 9 inches square, so we would look at them before and after the record played. With such a limited number to choose from, we soon had the pictures and words memorized. Woodie

Woodpecker was one of our favorites. We loved to hear the ee eh eh ah ah ooo sound of Woodie and the “That’s All Folks” at the end.

Susan Adolph Iwert: Our daily routine consisted of the flag salute, group singing from the Golden Song Book with an older student playing the piano, and then our lessons. We had a morning recess, noon recess after lunch (always brought from home and shared and traded), and an afternoon recess. We played tag, pom-pom pull-away, and red rover during nice weather and lots of mother-may-I or Simon Says during the winter months. We had a few records for the phonograph. I remember dancing a lot to the Hokey Pokey. Our library consisted of a four shelf bookcase with a set of encyclopedias on the bottom shelf. By the time you graduated you had read all of those books cover to cover including the encyclopedias!

Carla Adolph Meyer: I’m not a fan of one room schools. We took tests when we were ready, not when they were scheduled and that was really hard for me to adjust to in high school. There were no discussions about any assignments. It would have been fun to have exchanged some thoughts on a topic. The goal was always to get through the book. We memorized the presidents in order, all the states and their capitals, and all the counties and county seats in Kansas. I remember spending a great deal of time just copying maps. We had no carbon paper so I held a map to the window with a sheet of paper to copy for practice.

Susan Adolph Iwert: The one room school taught us a lot about sharing, caring for one another, taking turns, rites of passage, and being part of a community. Everyone watched out for everyone else. It was like we were a family of brothers and sisters. You can’t really compare it to today. It was simply a different place and time. We dealt with the circumstances and made the most of it; we didn’t know any different.