

First and Last graduation classes honored—

May 27, 1977

BY SUE ELLISON

(Editor's note: with the investigative assistance of Mrs. Hazel Kees and Mrs. Hazel Yokom, both of Mapleton, the following information was gathered.)

After 55 years, May 27, 1977 marked the date of the last high school graduation from Mapleton High School.

By the vote of the people, the Mapleton High School was discontinued after the last school term (1976-77). Grades kindergarten through sixth will still be continued, and other students plan to attend Casselton and West Fargo School districts.

Some of the residents of Mapleton had a feeling that the high school would be discontinued after this year, says Mrs. Yokom, but it wasn't until the April Award Banquet that the residents talked about including the members of the first graduating class at the May commencement ceremony.

After more interest was shown, the investigation started and members of the 1922 graduating class were contacted asking them to attend the last commencement with the 1977 graduates. After some digging, she was able to contact 1922 graduate, Violet Taufman, in California, "she was excited about coming," said Mrs. Yokom, "and we knew that if she'd come, the rest would come".

Five of the six 1922 graduates did attend the May commencement: Mark Derrig of Mapleton; Janet McKinnon Roden, Casselton; Alice Otos Eggert, Mapleton; Violet Spark Taufman, California; and Mary Twichel Bishop, Fargo. Francis Fick Cass, formerly of Montana, is deceased.

The following address was given by Alice Eggert at the May 27 commencement ceremony:

"When the program for this evening was in the planning stage, Supt. (Ardell) Zimmerman called me and asked if I would say 'just a word' on behalf of the graduation class of 1922. After some hesitation, I asked which word he would prefer - 'hello' or 'goodbye'."

"Now we all know of, and are acquainted with, the built-in persuasive powers of a school superintendent. So, here I am tonight, and here is just a word -- hello."

"On Tuesday evening, June 6, 1922, six young hopefuls sat on the stage of the old town hall. We were just as nervous, just as important, and just as proud, as each member of the Class of '77 is tonight. We were the first class to graduate from Mapleton High School. Our class colors were green and white. Our class flower was a red rose. Our class motto was 'Step by Step,' which, even today we believe is an excellent one."

"We attended the OLD school, a large ornate frame building which burned in 1923."

"We had no gym, no hot lunch program, no school buses, no cars. The country kids drove to school in their horse and buggy, stabled their horses, fed them at noon and returned home at night. Should there be a basketball practice or game, or other activities, they came back again in the evening. In the winter, they substituted a sleigh or sled for the buggy. The country schools were closing, so you see 'consolidation' is not a new term". "We had no running water, no showers, no indoor rest rooms. We remember the two buildings 'out back.' The one on the east was for the boys, the one on the west was for the girls. Each was built to accommodate six at a time with plenty of 'standing' and 'learning' space for the waiting line. Needless to say, they became the 'social centers,' especially at recess. Cold winter weather would severely curtail these gatherings." "I do not recall all of our class achievements, or all the records we may have set, but there is one-record of which we are mighty proud. Of our class of six graduates in 1922, five of us are here on this stage tonight."

"At graduation we wore no cap and gown. Each girl proudly displayed her new white dress and Mark wore his new suit. We had no class banquet or dance. We had a class history and a class prophecy. I wish I had a copy of that prophecy tonight. I know Mark was voted the boy most likely to succeed: We had a class will. We willed all of our old books and desks to the juniors. All of our bad habits and mistakes we willed to the under classmen."

"We honored our Valedictorian (Alice Eggert) and Salutatorian (Janet McKinnon) by allowing them to give a speech. We had no lectern to hold on to for support, or to hide our shaking knees, and which in turn hid our notes or speeches. We memorized each and every word and hoped our memory would serve us well that evening."

"Graduation is sometimes called Commencement. It truly is the beginning for young people. You filter out from your protective nests of families, friends and communities. We did! Three of us entered the educational field and became teachers, Muggins Twichell (her family called her Muggins), 'Bun' Sparke, whose mother affectionately called her 'Bunny,' and myself. Janet went to business college and became a stenographer. Mark entered the business world with his father. If you needed anything in or out of the hardware line - 'ask Mark.' He'd either have it, get it, or make it for you. When Dewey and I were newlyweds, Mark made our first bathtub! It was made of galvanized tin and shaped like a mummy case."

"To all Mapleton graduates - be proud you attended a small school. A good school which meets all the state educational requirements will adequately prepare you for Commencement. In high schools of 500, 1,000 1,500 or more students, you may be a number - not an individual. A larger selection of subjects, bigger classes, more students with names but no faces, winning basketball or football teams - these are compensated for in a smaller school. You receive a good education. You know your teachers personally and they know you. 'Your friends are truly friends not just acquaintances.. All extra-curricular activities are open to all students not just a few. And remember our own state champion basketball team?'"

"Mapleton High has successful graduates in many fields. Agriculture claimed its share, as we were primarily an agricultural community. Some of our farmers have won state awards for their contributions. We embrace lawyers, architects, businessmen and women, teachers, secretaries, nurses and politicians. I believe each of you could name a person you know in each profession and perhaps in many others."

"I truly hope that in the near future, the class positions tonight will be reversed and the last Class of '77 will be welcoming a new first class from Mapleton High. And as Supt. Zimmerman requested, just one word, goodbye!"

Speeches were also given by honor students, Howard Gohdes, Larry Yokom Sheri Sorenson and Susan Madsen.

As opposed to the Class of '22, the Class of '77 chose red, white and grey as its class colors, the red tipped white carnation as flower, and the motto "We may never pass this way again."

The Class of '77 chose the following road: Ken Asleson, State School Science, Wahpeton; Barb Camp secretarial studies; Gary Camp, employed as a baker; Howard Gohdes, SSS of Wahpeton; Dawn Harland, SSS of Wahpeton Gail Kirchoffner, hair design; Sus Madsen, business; Becky Odegaard, work and possibly attend school later; Ilias Saavedra, architecture; Shari Saari married; Randy Schmidt, working; Sheeley, auto mechanic; Sheri Sorenson interior decoration; Larry Yokom business (accounting).

Following the May 27 Commencement reception was held at the Henry Yokom's home for the 1922 graduates and their families. Other families held individual receptions for their graduating seniors.