

This story (with quite a few alterations) was printed in 1976 in a commemorative book about Wessels School which is located two miles north of German Valley, IL.



### WESSELS SCHOOL MEMORIES

I attended Wessels School for 6th grade during the 1954-55 term. Edith Nesemeier of Rock Grove was the teacher.



The kids were collected from all over the countryside and brought to the two little schools between German Valley and its suburb of Prairie Hill. From there two grades were sent to each of the small one-room schools in the newly-formed district until the new building could be completed. From September 1954 until April 1955, fifth and sixth grades went to Wessels.

We were the last “gang” to occupy the school. The first week of April the new grade school in German Valley was finished and we were moved lock, stock and ink well.

# Plan To Move To New School

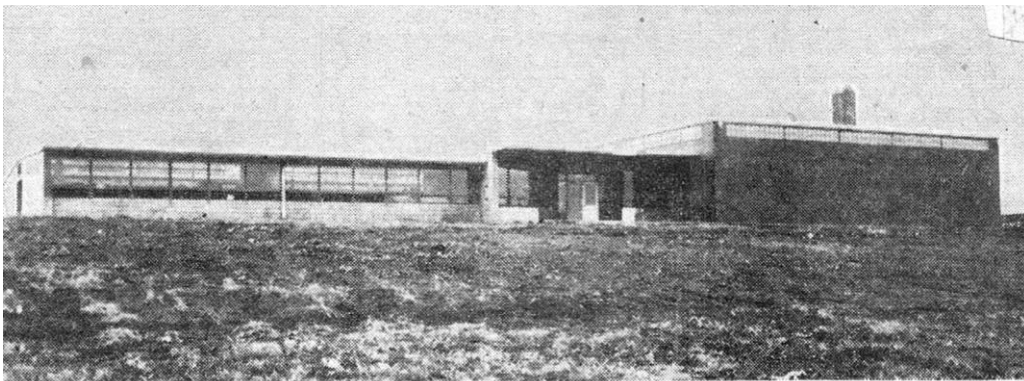
Temporary plans are underway to move the German Valley grade school furnishings to the new school building Saturday, March 26.

Your trucks and help would be greatly appreciated.

Mom wrote about it in her 1955 diary:

**MONDAY - APRIL 4**

Linda went to school in the new school building she is so happy that it finally got done



GERMAN VALLEY'S NEW GRADE SCHOOL has been in operation for two weeks. Some minor work remains to be done. Construction of the \$170,000 building was begun in March 1954 and the school was put into use April 4, 1955. The new building will accommodate 150 students, there are 97 enrolled. This central grade school has eliminated the use of one-room rural schools.—Journal-Standard photos by Reinhart Wessing.

Thinking back, we were really a bunch of renegades. During the winter snows we had dandy snowball fights along the old dirt road which extended a mile west from the school to Bunker Hill Road - except we had them at the west end of the mile so we couldn't possibly hear the teacher call us in from recess. Someone had long ago disconnected the large bell and all she had was a six-inch brass bell that really didn't do a respectable job at that distance. When we were cold, wet and tired, or the fighting among us got too much for even kids to take, we trudged back to an angry, frustrated teacher.

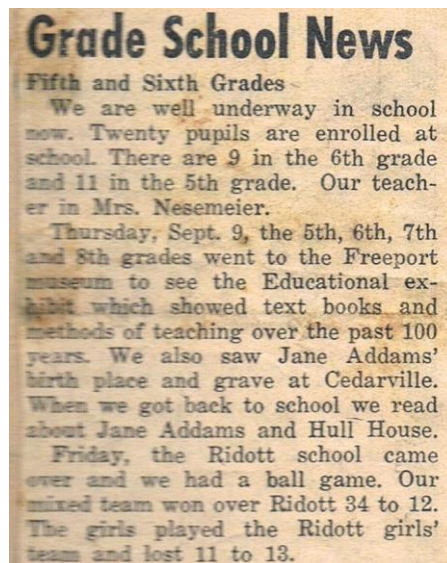
Terry Mathiot could "wang" the snowballs the hardest so everybody wanted him on their team. The only problem was that when the other team started to get the worst of the war, Terry switched sides and helped them out. He should have gone into politics instead of insurance sales! Terry had most of the girls fighting over him.



Randall Bolen was the shortest guy in the school but he threw some mean iceballs until somebody discovered him soaking the snowballs and hiding them to freeze until the next recess. His fire power diminished after that. What Randall lacked in stature, he more than made up for in spunk and good looks.



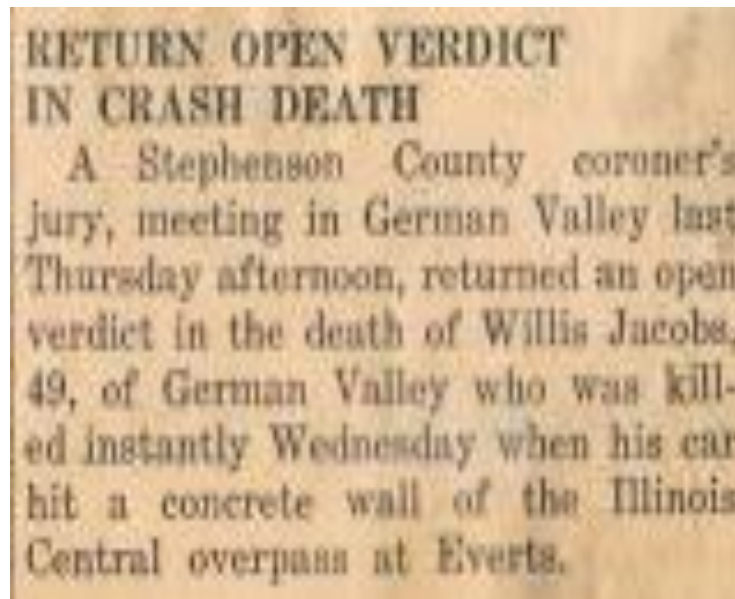
We were involved in the usual grade school activities:



There was an old rusty basketball hoop hanging by a thread on a wobbly post south of the building. Our crew invented a new game called "Hog Pile". It was a mixture of basketball and football with some poor soul getting buried under a herd of kids at the cry of "Hog Pile!" Kind of like tackle football only no one was very gentle and there really weren't any rules other than "Don't ever get caught holding that dum' ball or you will get smeared." It's a wonder no bones were broken.

One weekend Willis Jacobs, the local Case tractor dealer, lost his life at the Evarts underpass. Early Monday morning we all trooped down there to see whatever remained to be seen. One boy

dragged part of the bumper back to school as a souvenir.



Down by the fence at the west edge of the yard stood an old abandoned road grader. Its steering wheel turned and, if you really strained, you could make the blade wiggle just a tiny bit. We spent many a noon hour climbing over the thing or sitting under it, discussing world-shaking topics that are important only to a fifth or sixth grader. I remember sitting on it with sweet Bonita Greve:



Just before the big move to the new school, we were given orders to clean a treasure of paint cans from a closet. Naturally, we had to open each can to make sure it actually contained the stated

color of paint. One lid resisted even the strongest of us, so we slung the can against the north side of the school until the lid surrendered and flew off. Yellowish-lavender paint splattered over everybody and drooled down the red brick wall. For years it stayed there, reminding all who passed that kids CAN overcome any obstacle! When the Girl Scouts cleaned off all the names, unfortunately the lavender paint job went too.

None of the kids were discipline problems but we were all normal so it was a case of “us against the teacher!” The wisdom of time and experience shows me Nimbo wasn’t a bad teacher at all. She just had her hands full with a bunch of normal, healthy kids who gave Wessels School a final class to shudder its bricks out of place.

David Greenfield was shy but always friendly.




Quiet Larry Hinders was a “brain” already then.



Darlene Ross was a spark plug of fun and was always bubbling.



Charlene Ackerman was everybody's best friend.



CHARLENE  
ACKERMAN

Charlene Ackerman  
Wins Spelling Bee <sup>my school</sup>  
For Districts 52-151 <sup>mate</sup>

Charlene Ackerman, Pecatonica Route 1, was declared the winner of the spelling contest held in Freeport Junior High School Thursday evening by the 26 winners of competition in the individual schools of districts 52-151 in Stephenson County, exclusive of Freeport.

Glennen Kaiser Jr., Freeport Route 2, was runnerup. He is a fifth grade pupil at Florence Station School.

The winner is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Ackerman and is a sixth grade student at German Valley Community Consolidated School.

1955 3/10/55

The prettiest girl in class was Judy Ross.



Rose Marie Buttell could make the piano come alive with music.



Yup, I was there too:





Jerry Guth had so much happy mischief stored within him that it often spilled out and got the rest of us in trouble too; he was a big ball of fun!



Gale Schneiderman and Donna Wilken were very quiet but they were always ready to join in the fun.



Larry Stein and Steve Borchers could do a right honorable job of batting a baseball.



Jerrene "Rinky" Borchers was a pretty, giggly blond.



Sweet Lois Dee Ingram always had a smile.



Jo Ann Miller loved nail polish even then.



George Baal was a tall fellow who liked to have fun.



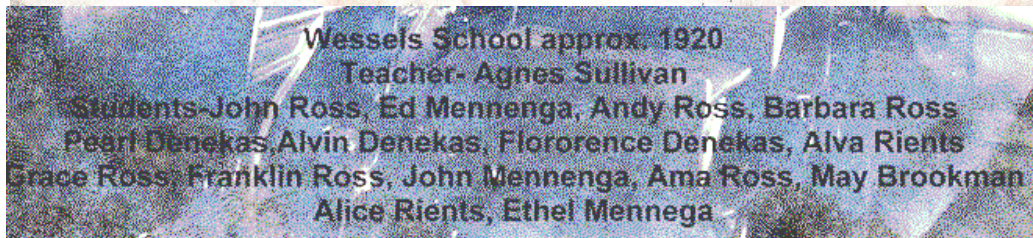
Perhaps I've left out some of the kids who were there those eight months, but time fades memory. That time at Wessels was one of my happiest years in school.

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Today, in February 2015, I need to add a few more pictures of the old school. Let's start with a picture from the 1920s:



Wessels School approx. 1920  
Teacher- Agnes Sullivan  
Students- John Ross, Ed Mennenga, Andy Ross, Barbara Ross  
Pearl Denekas, Alvin Denekas, Florence Denekas, Alva Rients  
Grace Ross, Franklin Ross, John Mennenga, Ama Ross, May Brookman  
Alice Rients, Ethel Mennega



Wessels School approx. 1920  
Teacher- Agnes Sullivan  
Students- John Ross, Ed Mennenga, Andy Ross, Barbara Ross  
Pearl Denekas, Alvin Denekas, Florence Denekas, Alva Rients  
Grace Ross, Franklin Ross, John Mennenga, Ama Ross, May Brookman  
Alice Rients, Ethel Mennega

In 2013 Cindy and her children, Abby and Ben, stopped by the now-abandoned school and took some pictures:



All that is left is a shell of memories:



Those memories still live on in the hearts of the "kids" who learned their A,B,Cs there. Someday those students will be gone, too, and the little red school house will depend upon history books and stories like this to keep its place in the German Valley lore.