



CANCER SURVIVORS take the first lap around the park on Friday night to kick off the Relay for Life.

Herald staff photo by Doug Sloper

St. Francis graduate tells of high school remembrances

By Jim Cram

From 1931 to 1935, I, Jim Cram, was a student at St. Francis Community High School. Janet Carman and Bonnie Cram suggested a short report of my memories as a student at St. Francis High School from some 80 years ago.

That was during extraordinary times in our nation's history: the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and Prohibition. Sure enough, no one had any money (or cars), the dust storms were terrible, and the only liquor was "rotgut" sold by bootleggers. But life was pretty good anyway.

We were fortunate to have Garnette Green as principal, he arrived in 1930. He was not only a superior educator but also a college wrestler and talented violinist. He had physical strength and intelligence and no one ever thought of getting around his authority. Tough kids never gave him any static.

He hired outstanding teachers such as Lawrence Laird (math), started student plays, and established a strong music program including an orchestra (including strings) and choirs. They performed several times a year. The junior class and senior class each put on a play annually. Coach Green began a wrestling program that achieved state-wide excellence. Dale Duncan won the state wrestling championship in 1934.

We also competed in football, basketball and track, against

teams in Atwood, Oberlin, Norton, Colby and Goodland. On the away games to Norton, we stayed overnight. There was no bus to transport the team, so coaches, parents and students with cars all transported the team to the away games by caravan. One of my teachers, Joe Timkin, coached football, basketball and track.

One of the best and most interesting athletes of this era was Woodrow Reinhold. He went on to play football at Fort Hays College and during a game when they were playing against the Kansas Aggies (now K-State) he was heard to exclaim "Come on guys, we can beat this 4-H Club," and they did.

A custom of that time that made life difficult was "initiating" freshmen. For example, I was kidnapped at midnight and taken out of town blindfolded, dumped off a bridge, and then left to walk back into town. Such hazing was outlawed in later years.

When I started high school, the building was square, made of red brick. During my sophomore year (1932-33), a state-of-the-art gymnasium was added to the school (now the cafeteria) with new locker rooms and shower facilities. Before that, we played basketball games in the school basement, which then became the industrial arts classroom after the new gymnasium was added.

The light-colored face brick that you see today on the front of the high school was added to

the exterior, much improving the appearance.

We had plenty of social activities available. High school students enjoyed meeting up at Bill's place downtown (the building on north side of the alley across from the CC4C Gallery) for a fountain drink, where we could play records and dance. We also had fun parties at each others' homes. Movies at J.B. Roshong's theater (then just east of Bankwest building, before Cheyenne Theater was built) were always showing. Roller skating was very popular at what is now the St. Francis Community Church building. It had (and still does have) an excellent wooden floor. The swimming pool was unheated and did not have a filtration system, so it had to be drained once a week and filled with fresh water. If you liked clean and clear, but very cold, water, you swam early in the week. If you preferred warmer, but dirtier and murkier water, you went toward the end of the week.

I remember the dust storms, but do not recall that school got cancelled because of them. In town, the wind would blow very hard for a short time, and would generally subside by the time school was out.

Graduation ceremonies included a banquet (it was called a prom but there was NO dancing) and a baccalaureate service. Most kids then went into farming or business. Not all kids even went to high school. There were 37 in



TELLING HIS STORY — Jim Cram tells Bonnie Cram of his memories of high school.

my graduating class.

Not more than a few days after high school graduation, the Flood of '35 hit in late May. I and my two younger brothers, Bob and Dick, were staying at my Uncle Jake Ringo's farm about 4 and one-half miles north of town when the rains came.

My parents Robert and Elizabeth were away on a trip. We could hear the flood waters roaring south of us all night long. In the daytime, Uncle Jake took us to see the raging Republican River.

We could see a house floating down the river, which must have been a mile across in some places. All the bridges north and west of town were swept away in the flood. Telephone lines were down, so we listened to the radio. Later, we got back to town in a boat. Somehow, the St. Francis light plant stayed operational through the flood.

The flood level stayed high only a day or so, but it did plenty of damage. A woman north of town lost her life, and two pilots, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Bush, flew her body in a biplane to the mortuary.

Following high school, I attended Kansas State in Manhattan to become a civil engineer. About a semester shy of completing my degree, I received my draft notice, along with 15 other young men from Cheyenne County, and on Feb. 4, 1940, we took the train to Omaha, Neb., where we were inducted into the Army.

We were the first group of

draftees from Cheyenne County to be inducted in World War II. I remember Kenny Felzien and Ruben Zimelman were in my group.

From Omaha, we were assigned to the 35th Infantry Division of the National Guard and took a troop train to Camp Robinson, Little Rock, Ark. The 35th Infantry Division consisted primarily of Kansas boys, along with some from Missouri and Nebraska.

I became a soldier in an artillery unit with World War I-era 155mm Howitzers. We trained at Camp Robinson until after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

There was great fear of a Japanese invasion of California then, so we were transported to Fort Ord, Calif. Many of us were assigned to different units at that point, so we lost track of each other.

I applied for and was accepted into officer candidate school, and was sent to Ft. Sill, Okla., in April 1942, to complete that and obtain a commission as an artillery officer. Following World War II, I returned to Manhattan to complete my civil engineering degree and embark on civilian life.

Although I've experienced many things, traveled to, lived at and worked in several places since leaving St. Francis, for me, all roads will always lead back there. The dedication of the wonderful high school teachers

I was fortunate to have, Mr. Laird, Coach Timkin—all of them, and the great example Mr. Green provided for his students, stood me well in dealing with the challenges that came my way.

The strong high school academic standards and programs, the camaraderie, sportsmanship and discipline I learned from participating in high school athletics and activities, prepared me for the rigors of college and the military, and helped instill in me the desire to succeed in my career, build a strong community wherever I might be, and raise a good family.

Mr. Cram currently lives in Denver, where he is now retired, having spent most of his career as a civil engineer with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. One of his early projects was the planning and construction of Bonny Dam. He was born and raised in St. Francis and is the oldest of three, having survived his two younger brothers, Bob, a 1936 graduate of St. Francis high school, and Dick, a 1942 graduate.

He married Josephine Firkins (class of 1937), and they raised three children, Jo Ann Joselyn, a retired physicist in Boulder, Colo., Jon, a practicing physician in Littleton, Colo., and Jeri Howe, a harpist in Seattle, Wash. Josephine died in 2011. He also has a large following of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Seven area businesses sponsor the harvest countdown contest

By Karen Krien

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Last year, the first load of wheat in Cheyenne County came in on June 9. This year, after a very cool spring, is a different story. This is what makes the Harvest Countdown contest interesting.

The countdown contest has begun. The question is "what is the date and time of the first cutting in Cheyenne County?"

There are seven businesses sponsoring the contest this year. They have entry tickets for anyone wanting to register their guess of the minute, hour and day of the first load of wheat brought into one of the county elevators.

There will be three people winning a total of \$100 in scrip money (\$50 first prize, \$35 second prize, and \$15 third prize).

Cheyenne County Wheat Field Tour has been set for 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 19, at the Sunny Crest Farm test plot site south of Wheeler. Supper follows at Goodland Greenline, Wheeler. Speakers are Jim Shroyer, K-State wheat

specialist, and Jeanne Falk, K-State agronomist.

Rules of the contest

Rules are:

- Guess the day, hour and minute of the arrival of the first load that has a moisture content of 14 percent or less.

The contest allows anyone over 18 years who is not employed at the newspaper or related to someone who is to try to guess when the first load of wheat will be brought in to one of the elevators in Cheyenne County.

- The winners of last year's contest are not eligible to win this year.

- The scrip money won will need to be spent in participating businesses.

The Herald is sponsoring the contest but it would not be possible if it were not for the participating businesses: Pizza Hut, Majestic Service and Truck Stop, St. Francis Equity, The Bank, Captain Hook's, and Western State Bank. Boxes and entry blanks along with the


contest rules are located in these businesses.

Look for the sign in the window and register your guess at the counters. Be sure to check their merchandise and services while in the business and check their ads in this week's issues of The Herald and Times. The contest tentatively ends on June 28.

Last year's winners

Last year, Jon Waters brought in the first load at 1:49 p.m. on June 9. It was brought in to the Wheeler Equity and had a test weight of 60.2 pounds and the moisture was 13.9 percent.

Winners of the contest were Shelley Culwell, first; Dave Fry, second, and Shawna Blanka, third.



July 4th
Hot Dog Eating Contest
High Noon July 4th
In Front of Uptown Market
St. Francis

Two Divisions - Youth & Adult
8th Grade & under and 9th Grade & up
Sign up now — Call 785-332-2774
or stop by Uptown Market
First Place Trophies Awarded
Limited to 10 people per category
413 E. Washington, St., St. Francis

Young People
You Are Invited
to a Vacation Bible School Block Party
hosted by Solid Rock Baptist Church
June 21 & 22
3-11 year-old • 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.
12 years-old & up • 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.
300 S. Benton—Across from Scott and Carol Northrup

St. Francis Equity

Thanks to all who helped
make our 100th Anniversary
celebration a great success!

Gift certificate winners
\$100 Dan Stephens
\$50 Bud McCall
\$25 Royce Gienger
\$25 Roger McQuigg

St. Francis
Mercantile
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