

## **Personal and Academic Growth**

### **From Zaleski High School**

**Chuck Pinney**

Any graduate of Zaleski High School is deserving of a Baccalaureate Degree in Production Management, because of the four years he has lived in, and learned how to survive in, a society of scarce resources, low capital, and unskilled and unwilling labor. There are few other places in the developed world where such survival training is still available. To the young Zaleskian, both the school and the town itself offered exercises in privation. The school merely prepared one for the daily downer of living in Zaleski for the rest of one's life. I do not mean to imply that the people in the town were unhappy. For the most part, they enjoyed the life and the challenges, and knew enough never to expect good fortune. Therefore, they celebrated doubly when good luck came, and they lived their modest lives in accordance with the training they received from Zaleski High School. Let me tell you about some of the features of the Zaleski school system. As I speak, you will no doubt recall your school experiences, and be aware of some of the learning opportunities that were not available to you.

First, there was the size of the school. About 250 students in 12 grades, age from six to eighteen. Many would say this is too small. Anthropologists tell us that early man existed for eons in groups of tribal sizes, 10– 15 families. We are told in courses in sociology and in management courses, That the most comfortable working units for people to associate and share responsibility is family size for working groups, 6 to 10 persons; and tribal size, 100 to 250

persons, for the entire working organizations. So, our school was the right size. It conformed to the anthropological standards of family and tribal size. All could comfortably share the same goals and objectives, and work together to achieve them. We are all familiar with the results of organizational size that is too big. The tendency is to divide into groups of smaller sizes. This size invariably turns into family-sized units. Each family unit then tends to establish goals which are not necessarily in conformance with the already established organizational goals. Thus, the progress toward the organizational goals is slowed, and the effort toward them is diluted:

Then, the course offerings must be considered. A school should meet societal standards in the variety of courses taught. Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, twenty-five miles away set the standards for courses taught in area schools. An Ohio high school graduate who applied to OU who had not taken Algebra, Geometry, English and American literature, a foreign language, US history, World History, US Government and a few others, must take the missed courses at OU. Half the courses I took in my first year at Ohio University were subjects I had either missed or were never available in Zaleski. However, the population of Vinton County had no trouble finding employment there in the 1950's utilizing the education available from Zaleski HS and the other schools in the county. Of these other schools, there were six total. All were about 15 miles apart, in small villages across the county. All were about the same size, about 80-100 students in 4 grades, except for McArthur, the county seat, which was about twice that size, and offered more courses. Yet, any graduate from any school in Vinton County could find work there, and would be academically qualified to labor at shoveling any of the substances found in Vinton County, which were dirt, coal, gravel, dynamite, and barnyard shit. Suffice it to say that the education offered in the county was appropriate for the least populated and most illiterate county in Ohio.

It has been said that while study develops the young mind, sports builds character. Except for McArthur, which had football, baseball and basketball teams, the other schools in Vinton County could only field a basketball team. At Zaleski, I was a forward on my squad, at 5' 8" and 160 pounds. Our coach's favorite saying, "The team that can score 40 points per game is a winning team." That wasn't even true in 1950. We could score 40 per game, but most of our opponents could score 50. Basketball built character, alright. It taught us defeat!

In addition to the academic and sports programs, ZHS had a music department, featuring chorus and band, and a Dramatics Department, which competed with other schools in the County on a one act play contest. I volunteered in all of these activities. Perhaps I can provide you with some of the flavor and aroma of those days by letting you read a letter that I recently sent the alumni secretary of our school.

“Dear Willa,

I won't be able to attend the ZHS Alumni Banquet on June 9, despite the fact that it is my 55th anniversary of graduation. I look forward every year to your newsletter, and all the news about old friends. I have some vivid and long lasting memories of my days at Zaleski High, and your excellent newsletter brings back many of them. Attached is a contribution in gratitude for all the memories.

You mention that ZHS is being torn down this coming year. I remember my dad taking me to the dedication ceremony, sometime in the summer of 1940. My Mom asked Dad why he was taking a little boy to such a long ceremony, and he said that I would be starting to school that

fall, and would be grateful to know I was entering a building that had been dedicated. There were several speakers, it was warm, and the Auditorium doors were open. My eyes started to go out of focus. A baby started crying, in the row behind me, to my right. I looked around, and saw the mother trying to hush the child. Finally, exasperated, she reached into her blouse, lifted out a large breast, and swung it against the baby's head. I thought she had knocked the kid out, and started to giggle, until Dad pinched me. I don't remember who spoke or what they said, but this is what I do remember about the dedication. I was 5 at the time.

Since it took so much effort to get Zaleski School dedicated, and considering all the efforts exerted during its life, it seems a shame to let it die without so much as a whimper. I would propose a ceremony where Toasts are made to the memory of ZHS.. I would like to attend, but probably won't be able to. However, if you really have such a ceremony, I would like to contribute to the cost. Consider it as going to the wake of an old friend.

You mention a drama trophy from 1950. If it is a plaque, or a framed certificate, I think it might have my name on it. If so, and there are no other claimants, please give it to my brother Bob, who will probably attend the banquet.”