

# OPINION

## Remembering the good old days of country school

The other day, the radio played a song that caught my attention. It was a John Sousa march, up tempo, as marches are wont to be. Bingo! A memory triggered by that song popped into my mind! It took me back over 60 years.



**The Prairie Spy**  
Alan "Lindy" Linda

Suddenly, it was around 1960, and I'm in the one-room schoolhouse I attended eight grades in, in rural Iowa. It had room for four rows of desks, although the row on the left was shorter due to the large coal-burning, shiny enamel heater.

And the memory that came with the march on the radio? It was our teacher, Miss Martin, whom I can best describe as grey-haired, a bit stout, never married, reliable, a bit stern, pretty humorless, and quite rigid in her regard for us students and our future—the heavy responsibility for which she shouldered gladly.

She was indeed stout, and for all the many years she taught Douglas # 8, she lived in town and walked the four miles to the school. I can still remember her anger when her school board—which consisted of our parents, all farmers—insisted that she ride the school bus out to at least within a mile of the school. After all, she was older, don't you see? From her viewpoint, such a reminder was unwelcome, as it would be for all of us as age socks it to us. It was a change, simple as that. What if that bus got in an accident? What if it was late? What if? What if? As I remember, she finally gave in, but she didn't give in quietly.

The school house itself was like many of them. One large room; a small entryway where people could hang their coats and stash their boots. There was a large water cooler, from which we could dip a drink, and which the oldest students were responsible for filling, from the farmer across the road.

And cold in the winter? No insulation. Single pane windows. Floor up off the ground so it could be as cold under our feet as it was outside. Without a doubt, in colder weather, one of my best memories was getting my turn to go up to the large heater to warm my feet. In the winter, when that stove was really cooking, the favorite goal of us boys was to smuggle some cap gun caps into school, scissor off one or two, and flick them onto the top of the stove as we were leaving.

PSSSSHHHSSTTTTT!!!!

They would ignite and hiss and smoke wonderfully! And the blame would be on whomever was sitting there. Well, I say blame. But for Miss Martin, one frown in your direction was sufficient. Extreme behavior drew a note home, and since our parents were the school board, and since country school teachers were impossible to find, that note was nigh on to a death sentence.

But the caps? Sigh. Made our whole day worthwhile, kind of.

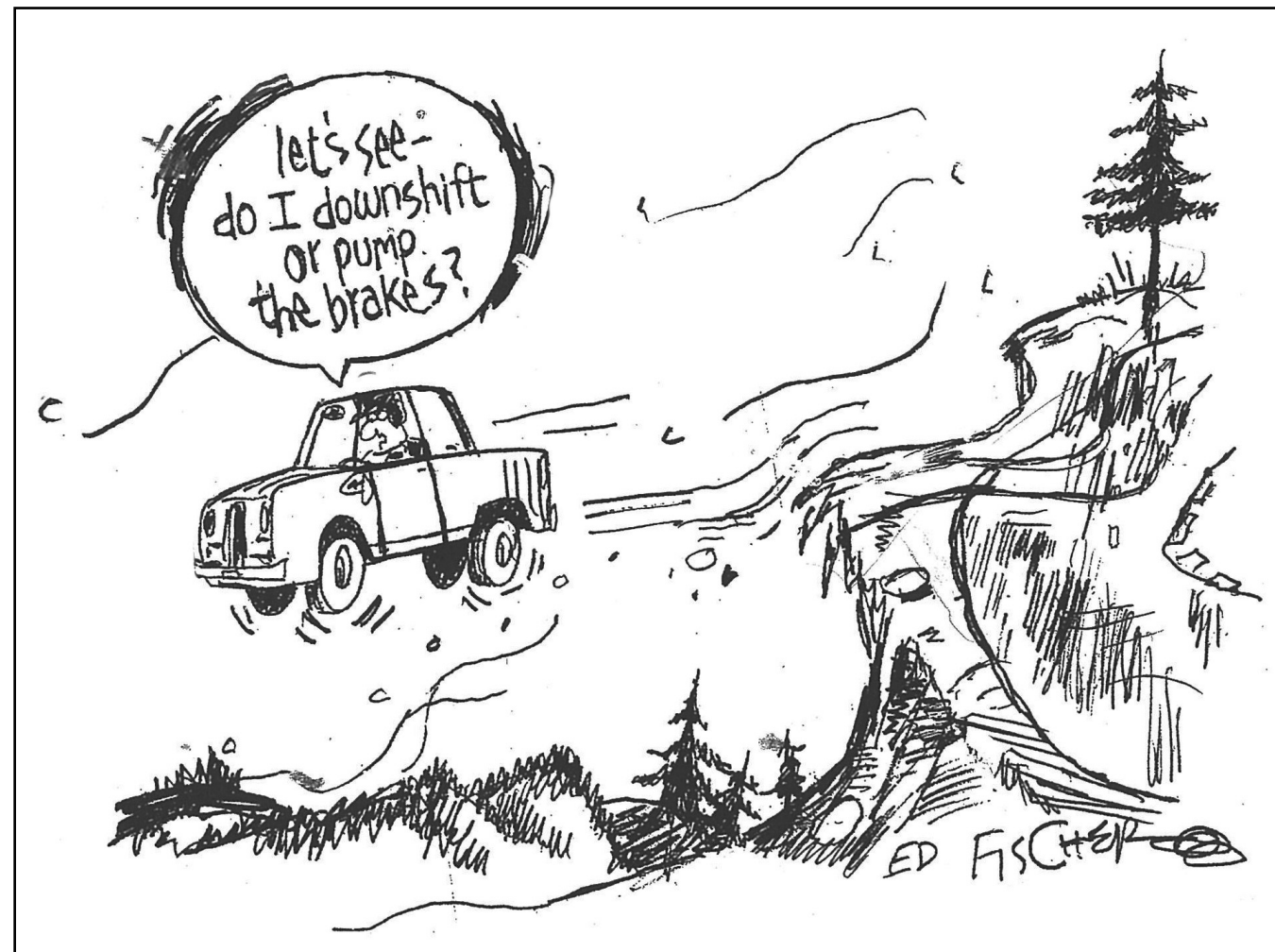
In the right front corner of the school room sat a large crank-up Victrola, which scratchily played the old 78 rpm records. That Victrola was the focus of our musical education, as we were supposed to memorize songs and sing them, accompanied by the Victrola, while standing up there. It was best to get it right the first time, because you were at that point the center of entertainment for the rest of the students, who all knew they would be subjected to this ordeal. Or had been already.

You blew the words? Sit back down. Have to do it again.

When the John Sousa march played on the radio the other day, the memory that came back was focussed on that Victrola record player, because in the winter when outside weather became too cold, our PE—physical education—involved Miss Martin playing that same John Sousa march that I heard on the radio. We all marched around and around inside the school room. Weaving among the aisles of desks until the song was over. Around and around.

I suppose this was Miss Martin's way of taking the edge off our natural fidgeting. And I guess it worked.

I was the last student to graduate from the Iowa Rural School Systems. In some ways, as I find myself struggling with computer software, cell phones, and automobiles that talk back to me, it was the best time of my life.



## Options for rest areas along Minnesota highways

**Question:** I do a lot of over-the-road traveling for work. Can I stop and stretch my legs along the freeway?

**Answer:** Do not stop on the interstate or along the roadway. The only time you can stop on the freeway is for emergencies. Use the freeway exits/off-ramps and pull off onto the shoulder and park. If you are in need, Minnesota offers several rest areas throughout our great state.

According to the Minnesota Department of Transportation Minnesota has:

- 36 Class I safety rest areas
- 8 Class II rest areas
- 2 Class III rest areas
- 112 Class IV rest areas
- 9 Travel information centers
- 3 Regional welcome center partnerships
- 3 Visitor centers

For more information about Minnesota rest areas, check out [www.dot.state.mn.us/restareas/](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/restareas/)



**Ask a Trooper**  
Sgt. Jesse Grabow

There are always other options, just make sure what you are doing is safe.

**Question:** I hear that DWI's can become more of an issue around the winter holidays. Can you talk about that? Thank you for all you do.

**Answer:** Minnesota Law Enforcement is participating in a statewide campaign that includes extra DWI enforcement that started the day before Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve. Over the past five years (2018-2022), more than 120,000 people have been arrested for

DWI. Each DWI risks the loss of a license for up to a year, thousands of dollars in fines and possible jail time. Repeat offenders, as well as first-time offenders arrested at 0.16 and above blood alcohol concentration, must use an ignition interlock device to regain their driving privileges.

Even with all those costs, it's still better than what could happen in a crash. Getting behind the wheel while impaired, whether it's by alcohol or other substances, is incredibly dangerous. From 2017-2021, 49 people died in drunk driving-related crashes between the day before Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve in Minnesota.

Alcohol-related crashes not only take lives, they also change them forever. Those crashes leave people with chronic pain, medical bills and other problems that follow them for years.

There is some good news: These crashes are 100 percent preventable. The best way to save those lives is to have a sober driver. Either designate one from your group or plan for an alternative transportation option. If you see an impaired person about to get behind the wheel, speak up and get them a safe ride home.

Also, don't forget to buckle up. It's the best defense against impaired drivers.

A portion of state statutes were used with permission from the Office of the Revisor of Statutes. If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Trp. Jesse Grabow - Minnesota State Patrol at 1000 Highway 10 West, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-2205. (You can follow him on Twitter @MSPPIO\_NW or reach him at [jesse.grabow@state.mn.us](mailto:jesse.grabow@state.mn.us)).

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Liberalism are to thank for getting farmers through the Depression

To the Editor,

Thanks, DEMS

Now in my 90th year and still have good memory, I look back to the 30s when I was born and the wonderful changes that have occurred for the middle and under classes...men and women of color, women's rights, voter's rights, worker's fair compensation with benefits...just a few liberal, progressive policies that have brought us to the age of wonderment.

Who would have believed we could be in immediate touch with family and friends with pictures/videos, current news around the world, sports of all kinds played by people of all origins, skin color and gender, the best music from times past to the current performers, social pro-

grams that provide health care and basic retirement incomes for most, education/training opportunities to match interests and talent ...many good things to list.

Since I have plenty of time to watch TV and use my smart phone to look up any information that comes to mind, it is not hard to fact check political utterances for credibility ... at least other opinions. Most striking changes have been in news anchors on major networks and local TV outlets, where a growing majority seem to be women of color, not because of race or gender but because given the opportunity, they are very good. Then we look at major sports and see the same intrusion. No

wonder the white male supremacists are so nervous about losing their vaunted status and power.

What is unfortunate and dangerous is these incredible tools can now be employed by those who seek political power to turn us back to authoritarian governments, tearing up the constitutions with all the protections it provides for the masses and governing rules effective democratic governing. We are now in an election cycle that is testing our democracy as never before. It is not even hidden as before. Candidates from President on down have openly stated their intent to destroy Democracy if elected. What is scary is that they are doing very well in early polling.

For all the great positive achievements in this period, we have to thank liberal, progressive policies of Democrat leadership... President Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, LBJ, Carter, Clinton, Obama, and Biden but equally important are the governors, senators and congressmen/women who actually do the detailed planning. Good examples are Senator Hubert Humphrey and our own governor, Tim Walz. Aren't we lucky to have had them. Republican conservatives fought every progressive initiative.

Thanks, Dems for my good life and many other farm kids of the depression era.

Lee Purrier,  
Park Rapids, Minn.

## Have your opinion heard

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Deadlines for all Letter's to the Editor is Friday at 12 p.m. Letter's can be emailed to [news@henningadvocate.com](mailto:news@henningadvocate.com) or dropped off at the Citizen's Advocate office at 412 Douglas Ave.

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**Staff Members:**  
Chad and Dani Koenen, Publishers

**Office Hours:**  
9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday  
Closed Saturday, Sunday

**Address:** 412 Douglas Ave., PO Box 175, Henning MN, 56551-0175.  
**Phone:** 218-548-5585  
**Fax:** 218-548-5582  
**Email:** [news@henningadvocate.com](mailto:news@henningadvocate.com)  
[www.henningadvocate.com](http://www.henningadvocate.com)

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