

The Joe Klimschot Story

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Sadly [Joe Klimschot](#) died on January 14, 2013

Many students remember their teachers. But few teachers remember their students; there are simply too many of them. Yet when I told my Lake View 5th and 6th grade teacher, Joe Klimschot, that he probably didn't remember me, he shot back, "Sure I do. You're John's brother."

We hadn't talked in over 50 years. I had spent only a year-and-a-half in his class in the 1950s. Three other "Green(e)" families went to the school. My brother John was three years ahead of me. How could Mr. Klimschot so easily have recalled who I was? "That's because of Lake View School," he explained. "I knew every student there, all 100 of them. I knew their brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers." When it came to keeping order in the classroom that was mighty strong medicine. "I'd always threaten the troublemakers that I'd call their parents if they continued to act up," he said. But he never did.

Word of Lake View's happy circumstances reached all the way to Albany. Joe remembers a visiting state official who was mightily impressed how students, upon hearing the bell ending recess, quickly lined up and filed back into the building without being told. "We had a real sense of camaraderie, the staff and students," Joe said proudly.



Photo at right shows LV School teachers in 1954: Back row: Peg Malican-3 & 4 grades; Joe Klimschot-5 & 6 grades; Doris Hopp-art; William Crocoll-7 & 8 grades; Sitting: Pat Graser-1 & 2 grades; Leona Eckert-kindergarten



Photo above: Joe Klimschot and Stephen Greene in 2006.

We were talking in his Webster, New York residence outside of Rochester. Joe, now 79, and his wife, the former Peg Ryan from Burke Road in Lake View, have lived here since the 1950s when they left Western New York for a higher paying job. Like everyone else, he had been forced to leave Lake View School in February, 1955 to relocate to Pinehurst Elementary. This marked the beginning of the Frontier Central School District and the end of Lake View as an independent entity. Several years earlier, voters had bought the argument that centralization would "save money." It would also increase the average school size from 100 to 600 students, making it impossible for a teacher to get to know the whole school.

"I remembered Lake View students better because they lived close to the school, many had siblings from previous years and they spent two years at a time with me." In the years after leaving Lake View, Joe pursued his Master's and Ph.D. in School Administration. He found himself relating more to other administrators and less to students. "I missed the classroom, but I liked the extra pay that administrative work provided."

The 23-year-old Klimschot was hired at Lake View in 1950 when he approached Principal Bill Crocoll for a job. He had met him earlier while both were undergrads at the University of Buffalo and then renewed their acquaintance on Sunday afternoons while playing on opposing teams in the Suburban Baseball League (Joe played for Woodlawn, Bill for Lake View). Soon thereafter, 5th-6th grade teacher Mr. Rozinski, was drafted into the Korean War and Joe replaced him. The same conflict soon snared his friend Crocoll and Donald Dix, who was soon to meet an untimely end to his life, entered the picture.

"That's how we operated before centralization. Lake View was its own district and could do whatever it wanted," Joe explained. That same independence extended into the classroom. The state assigned the textbooks, but the teachers could decide how and what to teach. "I used the text, but skipped around a lot," Joe said. The key to simultaneously teaching two grades in one classroom was to keep one grade working on their own while the other was dealing with the teacher.

"I used what I call 'bell work.' Every day in the morning or after each class period I'd write an assignment on the blackboard for at least one of the grades," Joe said. One of his favorite exercises was to ask students to draw a picture of someone they wanted to be. This was a task his teacher had asked of him while growing up in South Buffalo. "I always drew an airplane pilot," he said. Sadly, while he did serve in the US Navy he never made it to flying school because all the slots were filled.

Lake View teachers had to be flexible, Joe said. They had a “full scholastic gamut of students” to teach. Some were better than others, he said. One moment, teachers might be explaining American history, the next they might be supervising tumbling on mats rolled out on the classroom floor. The faculty’s greatest challenge, he said, was taking on the students in baseball or basketball. “We always won,” Joe said, “even though there were usually only four of us. I was a physical education major in college and we had Peg Malican. She was quite an athlete.” How did the quartet of teachers manage to cover all the bases and the outfield? “We just did,” the still fit Joe said with a smile.



Lake View School in 1953

Once in a while, Joe would join in a dodgeball game in the front yard. “I was usually the prime target, I guess because I was so big.” While he usually would moderate his throws against younger students he once got so annoyed with the neighbor’s dog that he tried to teach it a lesson. “He was barking all the time, so I winged a ball at him that just missed his head.” The neighbor, Mrs. Ortiz, witnessed the incident and came over to complain, “Boy, did she chew me out,” he said. Unlike Peg Malican who was known to fling a few erasers in her career, that was the only time Joe remembers purposefully throwing at anyone or anything, other than one errant toss that hit an innocent student on the shoulder. To this day, he remembers that student was Ann Gomez.

How did he get along with the rest of the faculty members? “Just fine,” he said, “we were a community.” Each day the teachers would gather for coffee in the cafeteria during recess. Only one of them had to patrol the students outside. He remembers Peg Malican as being both “a pillar” of the group and an extremely “authoritarian figure.” “To be honest,” Joe said, “she scared me a little.” He has seen her only once since the mid-1950s. He remembers that 1st and 2nd grade teacher Pat Graser married Malican’s brother. Read article about [Peg Malican](#).

Not much else springs to his mind about Lake View. Living behind Wanakah Country Club near the Wanakah Grill by the railroad tracks isolated them. Peg Ryan and he had been married at the “saloon across from Spittlers grocery” and brought four children into the world, but he was off to Central New York before he or his family could get more involved in Lake View.

Peg Ryan attended Lake View during World War II when there were only three grades, Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced. Her most vivid memory was of a huge scrap metal pile for the war effort eight feet high by 25 feet long in the school’s front yard. “The last time we went by, the school had burned down,” she laments. “That must have been a real blow to the community.”

Both regret that Lake View represented such a short time in their lives. They wish they had kept more memorabilia. Not having a computer nowadays has prevented them from seeing the pictures and stories Susan Ward Merk has compiled on the internet. Shown copies of some of these photos, they fondly fingered their way through the names: “Johnny Poppenberg, I remember his brother Tommy. Boy, he was a handful. Almendinger, DiOrio, who was that pretty girl? Beverly ... Beverly Dobbs.”

He can only remember one amusing incident involving a faculty member. Itinerant music/art teacher, Lois Hoppe, during one of her weekly visits was asked by a student why she always wore the same dress to school. The embarrassed Hoppe never wore the same dress again.

While Joe remained very busy as a principal in Central New York he managed to build another career as a football referee. He rose up the ranks from Division III to Division I college football. He worked Army-Navy games, Penn State-Alabama, even the All-America Bowl at Birmingham, Alabama in the 1980s.

That’s all over now. He retired from education in 1984, from football refereeing four years later. Does he miss the workplace? “Not at all” he said, “I had my shot at it.” “Besides, I’m now at an age when I forget a lot. I even forget what I forget.”

Whether that’s true or not, rest assured if you happen to drop by, Joe Klimschot will remember you.

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