

Seeley-Swan High School – A History

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In 2001, the Seeley-Swan High School underwent a transformation. The school received a new principal, several new teachers, new natural lighting in the halls, new interior and exterior paint, a new grand piano, a new gym ceiling, a new Multimedia Center/Library, and paved parking lots. A new gym floor was scheduled for completion in 2002. As the school stepped into the new millennium of education in the Valley it seemed a perfect time to look back and see how the school had grown.

The Fight for a New School

Grade schools in the area had their start in the early 1900's. If students attended high school they boarded with families in Missoula, Kalispell, or other places.

A spruce bark beetle infestation in the forest of the Northwest caused a population explosion in the Valley in the late 1940's. Infected trees had to be removed or the timber would be lost. Two lumber mills in Seeley Lake were built. Grade school enrollment in Seeley Lake grew from 33 students in 1949 to 94 students by 1954. A new grade school was built in 1956. These students soon became high school students and with the paving of Highway 83 in 1952, teenagers were expected to attend the county high school (now Hellgate High) in Missoula.

Thus, 1955 brought the start of the arduous 65-mile plus, over one-hour long bus ride twice a day to Missoula, which was documented "the longest bus ride in the United States." In one year's time a student from the Seeley-Swan Valley would ride the bus the distance equal to "two and a half times around the equator", which equaled in time to a whole month out of the child's life, day and night sitting on the bus. To make matters worse, in the winter the bus was out on the road before the snowplows and by spring there wasn't "much left of the road."

The driver, Mac McCormick, who lived on Riverside ("Dog Town") started by picking up teens above Gray's Mill north of Seeley Lake. By the time he reached the Blackfoot Tavern in the Blackfoot Canyon on Highway 200, east of Bonner, sixty children were on board, three to a seat.

Mary Anna Rich, who lived with her family at the Rich Ranch (now the Double Arrow) in Seeley Lake, started riding the bus in the fall of 1959. She remembers McCormick as a "whale of a bus driver" who often got the kids to town only to find the schools closed because the in-town bus drivers declared conditions too bad to go out. In four years of riding Rich only recalls two times they didn't make it to school. Once the bus slid off the road near Clearwater Junction and once an avalanche in the Blackfoot Canyon made the road impassable. To catch the bus the kids had to be up early. Rich caught the bus between 6:00 and 6:30 in the morning and returned home between 5:30 and 6:00 in the evening. The riders had to be prompt, too. McCormick didn't wait for anyone.

It was also a cold ride. Rich spent winter on the bus wrapped in blankets because girls weren't allowed to wear pants to school. She wasn't one of the first ones on so she didn't get a seat with the heaters. It was such a grueling trip the high school drop out rate in the

Valley was as high as 90% and some years even higher. In 1960 eleven seniors from Seeley Lake should have graduated, but none did.*

To help ease the situation, the Missoula County High School Board of Trustees looked into using a more comfortable bus similar to a “Greyhound.” They decided against it because then two expensive busses would be needed to carry all the students and they couldn’t afford that.

On behalf of their children, community residents pushed for a local high school. To tackle the problem the grade school PTA formed a Seeley Lake High School Committee and went to Missoula to ask for a school. They learned they could not have one because only one high school district per county was allowed and even if they could have one, they didn’t have enough deeded land to provide a tax base. Seeley Lake was surrounded by Forest Service land. The only option was for the school to be a branch school of Missoula County High. To do that they needed the support of Missoula County voters. To ask for help the committee wrote an impassioned letter to the President of the Missoula PTA Council in February of 1961. The letter, signed by Myrtle (Chaffin) Eldridge, stated that the Seeley Lake students missed out on extra curricular activities, such as basketball, football, and music, and that all the students had to look forward to was “a long tiring bus ride and home work afterwards.”

The letter ended with the apology: “We are sorry to have to press this on everyone..., but if you watched your children leave home when it is dark, and wonder whether they will come back again, day after day, you perhaps might know a little of how we feel...” An almost fatal bus accident involving the Blackfoot Canyon, freezing rain and a log truck in 1963 confirmed the parent’s worst fears and helped speed the process along.

“Why Not a High School at Seeley Lake?”

The Committee worked hard to get the word out about a branch high school. In an incredibly detailed, four page newsprint flier titled, “Why Not a High School at Seeley Lake?” they put forth their findings to Missoula County residents. The flier identified 100 students in Condon, Seeley Lake, Woodworth, Ovando, Placid Lake and Greenough that would benefit from a high school. The committee proposed a one time ten-mill levy to build the school. (The amount was based on how much it took to build the new Frenchtown High School.)

They pointed out that Missoula County spent about \$600 per child from the Valley to be educated in Missoula each year, of which \$200 went to the cost of the bus. A child living in Missoula cost only \$400. They also pointed out that the Forest Service 25% Fund (25 cents out of each dollar made) went to Missoula County. (This fund offsets the fact that government land often surrounds or engulfs counties, limiting private industry, which limits taxes that can be obtained from the land and is still in effect today.) Seeley Lake and Condon were in Missoula County, but they didn’t see much of those funds and asked that some of that go for their own school.

C.B. Rich, Helen Rich, Anne and Marshal Gray, Bernard Wold, Sally Wold, Tex Baker, Margaret Anders, Myrtle Eldridge, Jack Lee, Bill Gordon, Mr. and Mrs. Rueben Kauffman (from Condon) and others from Ovando worked hard on the flier.

In 1961, a Missoulian Newspaper article stated, “Any Organization wishing information on the proposed Seeley Lake High School please write the Seeley Lake High

School Committee, giving a date, place of meeting and a representative of the Group will attend.” In response, one sympathetic reader quoted a state law, which said, “It is unlawful for students to be transported more than an hour under normal road conditions.” A Polson reader proposed a junior high for Seeley Lake that would serve 9th and 10th grade so that only the 11th and 12th grades would have to travel to Missoula.

Overall, Missoula County residents (with the bulk of the voters in Missoula) were for the new school, but the Valley had one more hurdle to cross. Ovando was in a different county and county high school districts didn’t cross county lines. Before they could combine to make what became the State’s first “High School Attendance Center,” special state legislation had to be passed. Bob Watts, the House Representative from Missoula County formulated the bill. It took many trips to the state capitol in Helena by the Committee, but it was worth it. House Bill 182 passed the House and Senate unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Tim Babcock on March 7, 1963.

Now county money could cross county lines for education. With that completed, Missoula County voted for the one time 10-mill levy to raise \$278,000 for the new school. It passed 1430 to 797 on July 20, 1963.

“The Site with the Beautiful Trees”

Back in Seeley Lake, the hunt for land began. It was no small matter and several sites were proposed. The first site was county land already owned out of town, but no one remembers exactly where this land was located. The second site considered was next to the grade school. The schools would share the lot and several folks around the school offered to donate land bringing the total acreage to 20 acres. Another site was 10 acres called “The Double Arrow” behind the “Baptist Church.” This land was flat, close to town and close to the new water system being put in. Some folks in Ovando wanted the new school built at Clearwater Junction so teens from Lincoln could attend. The Junction would be about half way for both communities. The final proposed site was east of town beside the “new bridge” across Morrell Creek on the way to the new airport. It was also flat and had “several large, beautiful trees.”

The Missoula County High School Board took a tour of the sites. The county land out of town was too far away and needed drainage. The grade school site posed too many possible conflicts with the high school. The Double Arrow looked good, but was maybe too close to the community with no room for growth. Nobody liked the Clearwater Junction idea so that left the site by the creek with the lovely trees.

When the bids for the new school came in they were over projections so the communities had to foot the bill for the land themselves. Each family pledged \$5 towards the purchase. When coupled with some larger donations a down payment of \$1000 was put on the land. Soon after, with other large donations, the communities purchased the 18.5 acres of land for \$200 an acre from Anaconda Copper Mining Company’s Forest Products Division, which is now Plum Creek.

The communities were ecstatic and put their energies enthusiastically into the project. They would soon have a high school of their own.

Construction Begins

The plans for the new school included 6 classrooms designed to hold 150 students. The school boasted “29 subjects” with “as good an education as offered in Missoula.”* The bids for the building were let in early 1964. When they came in they were too high so one of three things could be done. The ceiling on the “Multipurpose Room” (old gym) could be lowered to a normal height, the school could be shortened by 12 feet, or the kitchen could be eliminated. They decided the kitchen could go. The students could bring lunches and save the school even more in operating costs. (The area designed to be the kitchen is now the teacher’s lounge.)

The general contract for the school was awarded to Gleason Construction of Missoula, the mechanical contract to Kalispell Plumbing and Heating, and the electrical contract to G & R Electric in Hamilton. Glenn Camp Drilling of Missoula dug the well for \$1,450 per 100 feet. Prep site work commenced in April of 1964. Lawrence Copenhaver and Sons cleared the land of trees, careful to leave the pretty big ones in front, but the year was a flood year with the “worst flood since 1908.” Rain set construction back by weeks. Mr. Gleason said that they were “going to have to work like heck” to complete the classrooms “by the time school starts.”

This Little Light of Mine...

While construction continued as best as it could that rainy summer the state of Montana celebrated its Centennial Year. Folks were encouraged to “do things that would make the state more beautiful.” Seeley Lake declared their motto for the Celebration “One small candle may light a thousand,” a line penned by William Bradford. It proved to be true. The community’s light shone brightly in all it did. That summer, along with the school, they were working on the new airstrip, a fire station, a much needed ambulance service and a new post office. Condon and Ovando were experiencing growth too and took an active role in helping the high school along.

By the end of July the beams on the school classrooms were up and the bricklayers were busy. The well came in at 538 feet. As summer ended, a principal and four teachers were hired. The staff included Principal Roy Scott and four teachers, Shirley Bandy, Marvin Anderson, Patrick Dolan and Kim Haines. Mr. Scott was from Southern California. Along with his duties of principal he also taught General Shop and Drafting. Miss Bandy of Ovando taught Home Economics and Business classes. Mr. Anderson, a graduating senior from Western Montana College in Dillon taught English, some Social Studies and was the Librarian. Mr. Dolan taught Math and Science and Mr. Haines coached and taught Social Studies and some math.

As the first day of school drew near, hopes for the building being ready in time for classes were gone. The new completion date was set for October 1 and even with that Gleason Construction said no one should “get too excited about anything yet” so a plan was devised. The high school and grade school would “join hands” for a short time. Until their building was finished high school would be held at the grade school.

High school began on August 31 and was in session one full week prior to the grade school’s start. Grade school began one week later on September 8. For the next three months the schools shared the building. The grade school used the classrooms from

morning until 1:00 in the afternoon. The high school used them from 1:00 until 6:30 in the evening with only a short 15-minute lunch break at 4:00 to fulfill the state law that required schools to have a minimum 5 hours of instruction per day.

91 high school students were enrolled, but only 86 attended the first day. Most of the students were from Seeley Lake, but some were from Condon, Ovando, Woodworth, Placid Lake, Greenough and Lincoln. (Lincoln parents drove their children to the bus and picked them up in Ovando each day.) It was still a long bus ride for some, but now at least they had the chance to go to school without boarding in town or moving.

When October 1 rolled around the school still wasn't ready, but it was getting closer. In mid-October the community hosted a workday to clean up the grounds. The clean up was held early so it wouldn't interfere with opening day of hunting season. Volunteers with shovels, axes, wheelbarrows, chain saws, and pickup trucks were "urgently" welcomed.

On November 20 the student desks and library shelving moved into the school. Now all that remained were the missing parts for the well pump. Finally, on November 23 after "many rumors, several starts and many disappointments" the students moved into their new school, "at last."

But the first day didn't last long. Water problems forced the school to close early. The problems were solved by the next day and school began in earnest.

They named the new school the Seeley-Swan High School. The students voted on the school colors and school mascot. They picked black and gold for their colors and named themselves the Blackhawks, after the graceful, soaring Southwestern birds of prey with hooked beaks and strong claws that feed on rats and lizards.

The First Year

High School events for the first year included a PTA Carnival, a piano recital, a sock-hop held by the Junior class to earn money for the Senior Prom, a talent show, and a style show given by the Home Economics class to show off their creations. The newly formed Drill Team, the "Loggerettes" gave a baton twirling demonstration. The name didn't stick. Shortly after they formed they changed their name to the "Rusticettes." Their motto was "Practice equals perfection, perfection comes with patience, patience leads to a poised personality." FHA (Future Homemakers of America) and a Saddle Club, sponsored by folks in Swan Valley, also started. The Home Economics class entered the "Montana Fleishman's Yeast Menu Planning Contest" and won a set of Melamine dishes for the school.

The first honor roll included Junior Thea Wold and Freshmen James Styler, Cheryl Wilhelm, Peggy Rich and Becky Wise. No seniors or sophomores made the grade. When winter set in a Movie Night was held each week in the gym. Movies were rented and played on the school projector. It was a big hit. Folks could watch a movie for 50 cents. The money was used for the sports program.

The Junior Prom, "In the Misty Moonlight" was held to honor 18 seniors. The prom colors were white, silver and blue. The first Prom King and Queen were Brian Jameson and Roberta Wiscarson. A band from Missoula played. popular songs of the year including Leader of the Pack by the Shangrilas, Pretty Woman by Roy Orbison, and Do Wah Diddy, Diddy by Manfred Man.

First Year Sports

The school started sports as a Class C school. The first sporting event to be held in the new gym (what is now the “old gym”) was a wrestling match that took place on December 1. Carl Mecham, the grade school principal, coached the wrestlers. They had a good year, winning seven of their nine matches and sent one boy to state.

The Basketball Team actually played the first sporting event for the school on November 27. It was a home game, but it had to be played in Missoula at Hellgate High School since the Seeley-Swan gym wasn’t yet completed. It was the first “competitive prep basketball” game played by the Seeley-Swan school. They lost to Arlee, 17-71. An article in the By-Line, the Seeley-Ovando-Swan bi-weekly newspaper, explained the loss by saying that the team had been “practicing outside on the blacktop at the grade school with temporary baskets and many times by the lights of their cars at night” until their gym was completed. They rallied in their second game against Columbia Falls, February 19, winning 49-39.

The final sports event for the year was track, which was held in spring. Both boys and girls participated, but their meets were held separately. Track was one of Seeley Lake’s strong suites. Training rules included “Eat right, don’t drink, don’t smoke and get plenty of rest.” At the end of the year 13 players lettered in basketball, 9 in wrestling and 12 in track. Ground breaking for a football field began on April 19, 1965. The donation of a dozen bulldozers and money from all over helped build a “do-it-yourself” football field. Football would begin the next fall.

The Black Hawks Take Flight

A ceremony to dedicate the new high school took place on Saturday, March 6, 1965. At the ceremony the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] Ladies Auxiliary presented the school with desk flags for the teachers and pictures of the U.S. Presidents for the office. Congressman Arnold Olsen donated a large flag that had flown over the nation’s Capitol in Washington, D.C. to the new school.

On June 2, 1965, ten boys and seven girls graduated in the first high school graduation ceremony in the High School gym. The Address to the Class was titled, “Invitation to the 20th Century.” The class song was “Climb the Highest Mountain” by Rodger and Hammerstien. The first Class Valedictorian was Ralph Cahoon and the Salutatorian was Brain Jameson. In their Class History, graduating senior Jim Howard referred to the three years that the class had ridden the bus to Missoula as “rough flying year’s” for the Black Hawks, but then “a great thing happened...A great nest was built for all the hawks...Finally, after all these years the Hawks found a place they could call their own, a valley they could reign over.” Howard continued, “When the Hawks flew into this wonderful place to nest they thought they might be near the end of their long strenuous flight...” but they found that their “greatest flight” was still to come. The Class History ended with the class motto, “We have conquered the foothills, the mountains lie ahead.”

The first year of the Seeley-Swan High School was considered a success. The parents were relieved and the students were soaring.

The Second Year

After the excitement of the first year, things settled down nicely, but some changes occurred. The first was the resignation of Principal Roy Scott. Mrs. Scott's asthma forced them to return to a dryer climate. Kim Haines, head coach of most sports and teacher became principal. David Marshal was hired to teach Math and Science. Another new teacher, Douglas Vagg, also taught some Math along with Industrial Arts and Band. Teacher Marvin Anderson also moved. In his place, Philip Dwight taught Social Studies and Jon Salmonson taught English and served as the Librarian. With the hiring of Mr. Salmonson drama activities were strong with both a fall and spring play.

Another new addition during the second year was a Journalism class taught by Shirley Bandy. The class produced the first annual named the "Lone Pine" by the students. The name changed to Snow Country in 1977. The first annual was dedicated to Marshall Gray, who served on the Missoula County High School Board of Trustees from 1959 to 1966 "in all positions except Chair." The dedication thanked Gray for all he did to "help establish" the school. The Journalism class also published the first newspaper, "The Biz & Buz." Today the school paper is called "The Blackhawk Communicator."

To support the student's scholastic efforts the Businessman's Association sponsored a program that paid a Seeley-Swan High School student in college \$1 for an A, 80 cents for a B, 60 cents for a C and 50 cents for a D each semester. The program is still in effect, but in a different form. Today the money is paid from the proceeds from the vending machines in the lunchroom. A student can receive \$4 for an A, \$3 for a B, \$2 for a C and \$1 for a D each semester. The amount may vary based on how many students apply.

SPORTS*

The second year also brought some changes in sports with the addition of cross-country track and football. Football was practiced at the grade school and games were played on the "do-it-yourself" field in a flat meadow on the Double Arrow Ranch beside the Homestead Cabin.

In 1968, boys in a summer vocational training program in heavy equipment operation built a new football field behind the school. Homemade goal posts made from lodge pole pines completed the field. The goal posts served the school well until the early 1980's when they started to sag. Then they were just an embarrassment. Someone removed them one night with a chain saw. Who cut them down is one of the community's best kept secrets.

In the 1970's equality in sports was expected. Wrestling and cross-county track was dropped. Girls' basketball and volleyball were added. It helped that the Anaconda Copper Mining Company had donated 20 more acres of land to the school. It allowed room for expansion and the long requested "real" gym, along with a band room and lunchroom that were added in 1978. In addition, a library and shop were also added. Sports remained the same until golf, for both boys and girls, was added as an official sport in 2000.

Seeley Lake always did well in sports, but in the early year of 1967 the Boy's Basketball team surpassed everyone's imagination when they won the "State Class C Basketball Tournament" claiming the title from many well-established eastern Montana teams. One newspaper called them the "Rags to Riches Team" because four short years

before the school hadn't even existed. The team took the title with a starting line-up of five seniors each well over six feet tall. One particular family from Condon provided several tall players for the next few years.

Enrollment

The population of the school remained steady at around 100 students until the fall of 1967, the year after the "big win" when enrollment soared to 170 students, the highest the school has ever experienced. The following year (fall of '68) enrollment dropped back to 131 students and hovered there through the 1970's. The school was moved up to Class B making it more difficult to compete in sports, especially football.

By 1978 enrollment dropped to 128 students and the school was dropped back into Class C. In 1979 the grade school in Lincoln burned down. When Lincoln rebuilt in 1983 they added a high school of their own, which took a handful more students away from Seeley-Swan High.

By 1989, enrollment stood at 106 students, the lowest it had been since its third year in 1967 with 115 students. Since then enrollment has risen an average of five students a year. This increase is, in part, attributed to the "Echo Boom," the children of "Baby Boomers. It still effects the high school, though grade school enrollments are decreasing. In 1998 the school was moved back to Class B. Today enrollment stands at 166 students.

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

While school population was changing, the teens dress and styles were changing, too.* In the 1960's girls wore knee-length dresses to school. Boys had to wear collared shirts and slacks. By the late 60's guys were wearing "Beetle" haircuts. Suits were no longer required for pictures.

By the early 70's students followed the trend of the "Hippies" and "Flower Children." Girls' hemlines crept up and that resulted in a dress code change to allow slacks. The 80's brought the "shag" haircut for girls and boys. Long layered hair swooped back from faces in "Partridge Family" style. Sweaters were in. Girls were allowed to wear jeans.

In the late 80's the shag gave way to the "long perm." Hair became "big" and "very curly" surrounding the head in big halos. In the 90's the "grunge" look was in and hair could be whatever the student liked. Most boys returned to short hair and many of the girls did, too. Although it may be too soon to tell it appears that a more natural look is in, with girls once again wanting to look feminine (skirts) and boys reflecting a new interest in looking well kept.

Changes in Missoula

While changes were happening in Seeley some things were changing in Missoula that effected the school. Big Sky, a third high school in Missoula was built in 1980. In 1981 a teacher's strike shut down school in May so the seniors had to organize their own graduation. The strike was settled over the summer and school resumed as usual the next fall.

In 1994 all the public schools in Missoula were combined under one administration. The new unified Missoula County School District 1 includes 10 grade schools, 4 middle schools and 4 high schools. It was a hard transition, but it turned out to be a good thing for students in Missoula. The advantages include continuity of curriculum, less duplication of services and better communication between lower and upper grades. It was also good for the teachers. Under the same union the pay became more equitable.

The effects on the Seeley-Swan High School are mixed. On the down side, a 13 member school board makes it more difficult to meet the school's needs. Many of the lower grade schools aren't used to thinking about a high school in Seeley. It also means that one administrator handles all the problems of a staff of 1500, (700 of which are teachers,) 18 buildings plus two administration buildings and a 45-million dollar budget. With three high schools over 1000 students each, the problems of Seeley Lake with less than 200 students don't seem as pressing.

Nevertheless, the Seeley-Swan School has benefited from being a part of Missoula's district. It has a bigger budget than other schools in Montana of the same size with a staff paid the same wages as Missoula, which can attract quality teachers. In fact, with better roads and transportation, the school has become a training ground for new teachers. However, it also means that many of the teachers no longer live in the Valley, and teacher turnover is high. The balance between those who drive from Missoula and those who live in the community is delicate, but important. New, young teachers are energetic and enthusiastic, but those who live here know the parents and the issues in the communities.

High School Profile

Through the years, trends such as dropout rates and college rates weren't kept in detail, but it was thought that Seeley-Swan had a lower dropout rate and a higher college rate than other high schools in Missoula County. When tracking started in the 1990's, the school board was shocked to find that the dropout rate in Missoula County stood at nearly 10%. The county began working hard on lowering it 1% a year for the past five years. They did this by offering special programs to students at risk and by opening an alternative high school that could individualize education for the non-traditional student. It's worked. The dropout-rate now stands at lower than 5% in all four high schools.

In addition, three years ago Montana began to profile their schools. The profile follows student performance in several areas including, CTBS (Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills) scores of 9th –11th graders, ACT/SAT scores of seniors, GPA (and honor roll) rate, failure rate, dropout rate, graduation rate, and scholarship rate. For instance, during 1998-99, 55% of the SSHS students were on the Honor Roll, less than 1% received an F and 35% of the seniors received scholarships. Proponents of the Profile warn that all it shows is where the district is and where it needs to improve. It is not meant to compare one school to another. They also warn that the Profile must be understood in relationship to such things as changes in community demographics, student-teacher ratios, class size and female/male ratios, among others. Nevertheless, the Profiles help the school see overall weaknesses and strengths and will be useful in the future.

The Only Constant is Change

As the Valley entered the 21st Century several new changes effected the school. Principal Kim Haines, retired in 2001 at age 67 after serving the school for 37 years. Anthony “Tony” Gallegos, from Missoula picked up the reins. In addition \$800,000 was budgeted for needed updates on the school. So far the school has received new natural lighting in the hall, new interior paint, and a new gym ceiling. In summer the gym floor and sports complex will be remodeled and soon the new Multi-media Center/Library will be completed - just in time to educate the teens of the 21st Century.

School Review by Peg Wiscarson, 1964

T'was in the fall of sixty-four
The Seeley-Swan High School opened the door.
First day's attendance was eighty-six
Who wondered if NEW teachers knew the OLD tricks.

“Now children, our building has not gone to pot.
It just isn't finished,” announced Mr. Scott.
While builders are building our building brand new;
Education (at the grade school) we shall pursue.

This split-shift fills us all with appall,
But with pen and ink we'll weather the squall.
Anyone having more muscle than brains,
Contact our coach, Mr. Kim Haines.

Contemporary Problems have their niche,
Anderson teaches their correct pitch.
Teaching Health and Physical Education,
Mr. Patrick Dolan is a sensation.

Social Studies and General Science—
Dolan's deft teaching defies defiance.
General Shop and Drafting lore we need,
Mr. Roy E. Scott with these shall proceed.

Mr. Kim Haines is teaching Math.
The subject of Science he also hath.
Mr. Marvin Anderson, English leads;
As Librarian for silence he pleads.

In Business we have no typing machines.
For Home Ec. we'll open canned pork and beans.
Teaching these subjects with knowledge and ease,
Is Miss Shirley Bandy – applaud her please.

Five fine teachers, a superlative lot!
Oh, yes, the principal is Mr. Scott.
Water-lacking adds to our confusion,
Me thinks we need a coffee transfusion.

Get up early! Do not miss the bus!
The schedule is crazy, but do not cuss.
Be thankful, patient, realize there MAY
Be even a school with feet of clay.

CLASS HISTORY OF '65

By Jim Howard, Class of '65

A new life began for 17 students as they come into the environment of education. It was like a newly hatched Hawk breaking its way out of an egg. As the pieces of the shell fell from the egg the lives of the first graders became more interesting at the dawn of each day. Now life was not centered so much around the home, it was the beginning of the six-year-old's social life.

As time progressed on, the young Hawks became stronger in mind and body, developing traits that would be with them the rest of their lives, determining a great part of their future. Many Hawks began taking flight now. Some of them were a little slower and some a little faster, but the flock seemed to survive the hardships of their elementary education. A great number of the mighty Hawks wanted this to be a resting place, but they knew that this was only the beginning of their long flight.

The young determined flock now entered one of the main periods of their life. Though many of them took to different nesting places at the beginning of their high school career they all had one thing in common. They were all slowly developing into stanch and promising "Black Hawks."

At the time they seemed to lose faith in life and some were knocked down in flight, but came back strong, showing the determination and fight in a "Black Hawk." Great hardships faced the mighty flock as it flew on. Many of them were forced down to nest in places away from home in order to complete their education, which complicated the financial problems of numerous parents.

Then again a greater portion of the flock was compelled to a bus morning and night, 180 days a year. This was miserable for the Hawks during the cold spells that Mother Nature created in the winter. The thoughts of the long ride morning and night made a few falter in their course. Some of them wondered if they should pull in their wings to complete their long flight early, but they didn't. They fought on.

After three years of rough flying a great thing happened. A great nest was built for all the Hawks. Things began happening quickly and life began to look a little easier. A tremendous school was constructed for all of one kind. Finally, after all these years, the Hawks found a place they could call their own. A valley they could reign over for many years to come. In defense of this valley and name, the first team of S.S.H.S. came into being. The young Hawks now very strong in mind and body, fought hard to be known everywhere. There was many a time when this flock was knocked down during the year, but now they had something to fight for.

A cheerleading squad was formed for added strength to the Black Hawk team. Organizations were formed and constitutions constructed, to make the basis of S.S. H. S., strong and impenetrable to outside forces and forces within itself.

The first year, 1964-1965, proved to be very interesting and rewarding to the 17 Black Hawks. Just having a nesting place they could call their own was rewarding enough but the underclassmen helped a lot. The Junior Class honored the Seniors with the Junior Prom. The Freshmen and Sophomores honored us just by being underclassmen.

When the Black Hawks flew into this wonderful place to nest, they thought they might be near the end of their long strenuous flight.

After 180 days of residing here all of us realized that our greatest flight lies ahead. We have finally built our bodies and minds up to the point where we should be able to keep flying without restraint. “We have conquered the foothills, the mountains lie ahead.”

***Writers Note:** Last year when I wrote the history of the Seeley Lake Grade School I used the wonderful scrapbook of the Seeley Lake PTA, which began in the 1940’s and ended in 1962...or so I thought.

While researching this article another scrapbook surfaced, which had been in the safe keeping of past High School Principal Kim Haines, who gave the scrapbook to the high school library archives last year when he retired. The book begins with the year 1963 and continues until 1968. It explains that the PTA incorporated the High School into its organization, hence the change in the name to the Seeley-Swan PTA. The PTA continued to save pertinent items concerning the grade school, but understandably focused their attention on the new high school so in effect it became a high school scrapbook and therefore best belongs at the high school. Nevertheless, for those interested in grade school history, it should be noted that important grade school information lies in its pages.

*Information for this article taken from the By-Line, the Valley’s bi-weekly newspaper, with Editor Myrtle (Chaffin) Eldridge and Assistant Editor Mildred Chaffin. This mimeographed paper was in production for two years before it changed to “The Recorder,” operated by the Seeley Lake Businessman’s Association. Information was also obtained from the By-Line, the Valley’s bi-weekly newspaper, Editor Myrtle (Chaffin) Eldridge and Assistant Editor Mildred Chaffin, which was in production for two years before it changed to “The Recorder” and was operated by the Seeley Lake Businessman’s Association and from the Seeley-Swan PTA Scrapbook. Some information was compiled from the Seeley-Swan High School Annuals, two personal sport scrapbooks compiled by Mr. Haines, which were donated to the school Library Archives when he retired and from the “By-Line.”