



Edgar G. Mueller photo

▲ Firefighters Charles Hagen, Marvin Crist and Marvin Quandt, left to right, gather recently in front of the old Cole School in Woodland, Wis., which they attended in 1945, to reminisce about their school days. All three are Woodland area farmers.



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▲ Firemen from Iron Ridge, Hustisford, Woodland and Neosho in southeastern Dodge County burn down the old Cole School in Woodland recently to test new equipment. Some of the firemen attended the school more than 50 years ago.

# Firemen reminisce before old school is burned down

By Edgar G. Mueller  
Reporter Correspondent

WOODLAND, Wis. — Although the thought of burning down the old school might have occurred to us when we were kids, especially if the teacher made us write "rhinoceros" 100 times on the blackboard after school as punishment for some wrong-doing, it never really happened.

But volunteer firemen from the southeastern Dodge County communities of Iron Ridge, Hustisford, Neosho and Woodland gathered here recently to do just that — burn down the old school.

With today's geographic changes in school districts, along with consolidation, area children are bused to enlarged districts nearby.

Burning down the old Cole School, as it was known, served as a practice for the firemen, some of whom attended the school when they were youngsters.

One of them was Marvin Quandt, who said the Cole school had been moved in 1958 from its original location near Hustisford to

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—Marvin Quandt, former Cole School student

Woodland, where it sat next to the Woodland School.

The two buildings accommodated all eight grades from that time on until both ceased operating some years ago.

"Just getting there, especially in winter, was a real problem at times," Quandt recalled. "With snowstorms like the one in 1936, our schools were closed for weeks at a time.

"A Caterpillar plow broke down in a deep drift near our farmhouse for two weeks, and had to be repaired on the spot.

"Finally, when it stopped snowing, a below-zero period of a month froze the tops of snow-

on top at heights we could touch the telephone wires above."

"I hate to see the old school go now," Quandt lamented. "It had such beautifully embossed-in-metal artistic patterns on the ceiling.

"There were so many nice things about this one-room school, where the young learned much from the older," he said. "And the helpful teacher knew not only the students, but their families, too, including our weaknesses, as well as our strengths.

"Many of us attending Cole School lived on farms," noted Charles Hagen, another student of the 1940s.

began very early, having to walk a mile or two or more to school," he said. "Who can forget those cold, wintry days, when our lunch (boxed at home) was frozen solid.

"How about those outdoor toilets? We wasted no time going and coming from the outhouse," he chuckled.

"Our school chores included carrying in coal and wood for the fire started first thing after Teacher arrived," Hagen recalled.

"Recess time was great fun," he continued. "Even though we had no elaborate playground equipment, we made do with a bat and

ball in season or found other games to play. Teacher always played with us.

"There was no janitor service in our school," Hagen pointed out. "The kids swept the floor daily and pounded the chalk dust out of the erasers before washing the blackboards. It was all a part of our education."

Marvin Crist, another former student, chimed in with, "Christmastime was special. We spent weeks before the big event learning our songs and recitation parts. Then there was vacation."

In recent years, the old Cole

School no longer enjoyed the patter of little feet, but before its demise, there was still a mission for it.

"The coming together for area firemen, beginning with a breakfast lunch in the firehouse, we had a good practice session," said Woodland Fire Chief Bill Lackas.

"We learned to operate our newest gear and equipment with this 'real fire' situation, providing us with a learning experience on its very last day."