

Mike Lynch, meteorologist for WCCO radio always gives us a countdown of days to the possible snow season. I'm not sure of the day count right now but I know it's too darned close. In a follow up to last month's mention of one of the phone operators that West Concord had many years ago, Melva Starman, I had a nice note from Donna Lyon. Some of you might remember Donna. Donna's dad was Robert Leigh Campbell and her mother was Olive Shelton Campbell. Her paternal grandparents were F.M. and Claire Campbell. Her maternal grandparents were Earl and Rose (Zeller) Shelton. Her siblings were Barbara Jean Campbell Taylor and Robert Gary Campbell.

Donna mentioned that Melva Starman Rew was with her mother at the Frank Shelton farm in 1940 when she was born. Melva worked for F.M. and Claire Campbell when they owned a restaurant in West Concord near where Farmer's State Bank is now located. Her grandparents bought the farm in 1917 and on August 5th of this year, the Shelton family is hosting a Centennial Celebration at the farm, which is just a few miles east of the Berne church south of the old Milton townhall. Donna's cousin, Mike Shelton has been making many of the arrangements for the celebration. Donna is retired from Timberland Regional Library and now lives in Chehalis, Washington.



Emery rounding 3rd while Owatonna's third baseman Dave Rice times his speed with a calendar.

This is my second year of playing softball in the Southern Minny 'Over 60' softball league. The teams, which consist of players over 60 years of age, consist of the Cannon Falls Boomers, Northfield, Owatonna and Faribault. We keep plenty of ice on hand for aches and pains and every summer, we increase sales for Tylenol. Not only is it slow pitch but it's slow everything. The games are like watching slow motion replay only at actual speed. It's not that we're slow, it's just that we run in the same spot for too long at a time.

Softball has been a part of West Concord history in the past 40 to 50 years. I remember a fast pitch church league starting in 1968. That lasted a couple of years and then slow pitch softball took over. One of the classic games I took part in was in 1976. West Concord would host a couple of weekend tournaments each year. Three games would be played Friday night and then play continued Saturday and Sunday. There were two local teams playing each other in the tournament on this particular Friday night, the Sudsers and the Longhairs. Yes it was the epic battle of the rednecks and the hippies. The Sudsers were a beer drinking team that had a softball problem. The Longhairs problem is that they had a fear of barbers. On this night, both teams were intense in their pregame preparations, coolers-check, ice-check, beer-check, more beer-check and oh yes a softball glove might come in handy. It was a hard fought battle. Neither team wanted to lose to the other. The Longhairs pitcher that night was Joe 'Spanky' DeFlieger. Spank was on his game this night. In fact at times, he would hold the ball high above his head and implore the other team to and I quote "hit this SOB". Well it went back and forth and in the end, the beer drinking team won. Well that could have been either of them but this time it was the Sudser's winning the game 9-8.

Spanky's dad, Dick DeFlieger was quite a pitcher in fast pitch softball in his younger days. I heard stories of him and Vic Durst pitching softballs like they were Bob Gibson, only underhanded. Before that, baseball was king across southern Minnesota including West Concord. I'm still researching some of the stories for a future column but you may recall the baseball diamond was on the opposite corner of today's softball diamond. Home plate was next to the highway on the northeast corner of what was once the high school football field. They would have grandstands behind home plate and down each line just beyond the old wooden and wired dugouts. The third base line bleachers butted up against the highway. I'll have more on this as I said but one tidbit I learned is that one pitcher for West Concord in this Southern Minny league (same name as my current softball league) was a former Brooklyn Dodger, who had ties to Faribault Shattuck. But that will have to wait for another time. And if anyone has recollections about those baseball days in West Concord, I would love to hear the stories from you.

As I close, I know people are anticipating a fun Survival Days again this year. I will miss it this year as I will be in Omaha visiting kids and grandson and playing in a golf tournament.



Emery and Twig at Twigfest in 2017 at the Muni

I was at Twigfest this year back in late June. I asked Twig who gave her that nickname. She said it was the late Pete Wilson that dubbed her Twiggy. Next year will be her 40th year at the muni. Congrats to Twig. Also I was in town for the 90th birthday of Bernice Crouch. A good crowd was on hand at Trinity Lutheran Church for this event. Congratulations and Happy Birthday to Bernice.

Also, I send my condolences again to the family of Harold Vangness, who passed away on July 4th at the age of 95. I pitched horseshoes against Harold many times and could never beat him. I'm glad I didn't bowl against him. I know many did and would come up short there too. He was a member of the Rochester Area Bowling Association Hall of Fame. Harold was a true gentleman and he will be missed.