

As I took a bus load of young kids from the Cannon Falls Elementary school the other day to the city swimming pool for lessons, I thought back to the one summer in the early 1960's when I took swimming lessons in Kenyon getting there via a school bus. Some of you may remember when we boarded a bus in West Concord and went to the pool in Kenyon. The pool is still in the same location but many things have changed in Kenyon. I seem to recall there was a drive-in right next to the pool. And just a couple blocks away was a bakery right next to Bergh's Drug store on the corner. I can still remember that smell and the taste of glazed donuts and bismarks. Today a thrift store that I visit from time to time occupies both of these store fronts.

I was about 8 years old at the time. That would put it in the summer of 1962 just before the 4th of July. My dad had packs of Black Cat firecrackers which he 'hid' in the bathroom cupboard in a big glass bowl. I can't remember yesterday but I recall this like it was yesterday. I don't know who he was hiding them from but it certainly was not me. I would take some of these packs of firecrackers with me to the swimming lessons. After the lessons, I, along with some classmates would go into the woods behind the Kenyon pool and I would sell the firecrackers for whatever I could get. Usually it was a dime but sometimes I would get a quarter. Did I mention my overhead was pretty low on these so I had no set price. But I had a limited supply as I couldn't just empty the bowl in the bathroom. I had to leave enough so they weren't missed. My dad never said anything to me but I suspect he thought my brother Harv was the culprit or maybe my sister Sylvia. She could be sneaky too. I don't think any of the Cannon Falls kids I bussed to the pool were doing anything like this. Of course Tom Vanderwall, who I'm pretty sure was the driver in those days, probably didn't suspect there was black market activity going on or that he was hauling explosives.



On several of the July 4th celebrations as a kid, many of the neighbors, and by neighbors, I mean anyone north of town would gather at Gale Callister's for a bonfire, wiener roast and fireworks being shot off of two of Gale's hayracks. They would put the two hayracks down by the road at the end of the driveway and the audience would be back by the bonfire eating hotdogs and hoping not to get hit by fiery explosives. My dad must have hid the roman candles in a different spot than the firecrackers. I probably could have got a dollar each for the roman candles. It was always a grand celebration with many good memories and very few injuries.

Growing up on the farm, I never had to 'go out' and find a summer job. I just had to go out the door and the work was there. I was third grade when I got to drive a tractor solo. It was the narrow front 660 Oliver. I think of the 10,000 or 11,000 hours we put on that tractor, I must have been on it for about half of those. The 660 was a 40 horsepower utility tractor that we used for about everything. It's interesting to see how things have changed. Today a small utility tractor is 140 horsepower.

The picture of the old 660 here was taken in 1982. That was Lisbeth's cousin Raymond from California who got to help out for a few days on the farm. Oliver Green is still one of my favorite colors. It's also the name of TV star Red Green's uncle.



Below would be 1984 when my two daughters were very young. And I was much younger too!

