



*Some pupils getting ready to play ball; from left: Johnny Freeborn, Jennings Van Meter, Jr., Nancy Cooper, Ernest Van Meter, Robert Werling; (Robert and Nancy were in first grade.); 1937*

“Play Day was a highlight of my time at Simmler School. The schools at Pozo, Choice Valley, Annette and Simmler sponsored Play Days. There were lots of events in which we competed, including sack races, 3-legged races, obstacle races, tug-o’-wars and footraces. I especially enjoyed all the footraces as I could run really fast. At our school when I was in the first grade, only an eighth grader could beat me. (In fact, some Olympic people contacted my father to recruit me to train for the Olympics, but he declined.) There was a big picnic lunch and then traditional baseball games between the schools. My, oh my! What a lot of fun those times were!

“A big community and school event was the Easter picnic in the big oak tree grove on the La Panza Ranch. We all looked forward to the day, which included races and a baseball game. Our school graduation was held in the La Panza oak grove. The tables and benches from school were brought out for the gala affair.

“I enjoyed the special programs we had at school. We drew names for Christmas and exchanged presents. There was a Christmas play that was put on at the special Farm Bureau meeting with a big dinner and then our school play and recitations by the students. We made special Valentine boxes and we exchanged Valentines at our Valentine Party. Halloween was celebrated as well as May Day.” Carol summed up, “Going to school at Simmler has left me with lots of fond memories.”

Robert “Bob” Werling enrolled at Simmler in September 1937, but missed most of his first year due to several bouts of flu and the severe winter storms when the creeks were up and the roads were impassable. He graduated from the eighth grade in June 1946.

Bob recalled, “My parents took me to school for a

few years—9 miles up and 9 miles back. Then, when I was 13 years old, I drove to school myself in a 1940 Dodge four-door sedan!

“During the winter months when it rained hard and the creeks came up, I stayed with different neighbors and they would make my lunch for the next day because the roads were impassable for getting home.

“One time we gave the teacher, Iva Wolf, four mallard ducklings. One day she couldn’t find them, but we (the children) found a gopher snake that had four humps in it. Our teacher just couldn’t believe that was where the ducklings went. The gopher snake ate every one of them!

“During rainy days we played tic-tac-toe, drew pictures and we’d play a game where we blindfolded a person and they had to touch or catch someone. Then that person would be the next one to have the blindfold. We also played marbles.

“The seventh- and eighth-grade boys raised and lowered the American flag. The flag was respected by everyone. The older boys started the oil heater in the mornings. It was cranky to start. The school had a Kohler Light Plant and the boys would go out and start it when it was needed.

“We had school plays and programs at Christmas, and singing hymns and Christmas songs.”

Robert related, “There was no phone at the school. My family had the *only* phone on Carrisa Plains proper, at Soda Lake, from 1927 to 1952.”

Carrisa Plains became part of the Atascadero High School district and for their high school years, students boarded in dorms provided by the school.

In 1955 a new Simmler schoolhouse and teacherage were built about 5 miles to the west of the old school. The old schoolhouse is still used as the Carrisa Community Center. ☺



*Front, from left: Nancy Cooper, unknown, unknown, Robert Werling, Johnny Freeborn, Shirley King, Patricia King; back: Alberta Stone, Iva Wolf (teacher), Jennings Van Meter, Jr., Ernest Van Meter, Alan Beck, Leonard Cavanagh; 1937*