**“Glory Days”**

**Ernie Spisak Valley Mirror April 6, 2013**

**Do you remember what time the first school bell rang? Was it 8 a.m., 8:30 a.m., or 9:00 a.m.? Back in the day, I am thinking 8:30 a.m. After all, all of the kids walked to school. Young children attended the Bell Avenue Elementary School at the corner of Bell Avenue and Anderson Street. Older students attended the North Braddock High School in 1890. It sat on the corner of Verona Street and Bell Avenue. The school’s first graduating class - 6 STUDENTS - received their diplomas in 1894. The Borough of North Braddock incorporated in 1897.**

**Borough officials added more schools to accommodate growth of this small mill town. In 1901, a four room framed elementary school, Shady Park, sprang up on Lobinger Avenue in the third ward of the town. Years later, a three story red-brick structure replaced the little school house. In 1910, the high school was refurbished. The eight room wood frame, Brinton Avenue Elementary School, in 1914, accommodated families living in the first ward of North Braddock.**

**With World War looming in Europe, Americans sang, “Over There”, and promised they would not be back until it was over, over there. Meanwhile, America preparing to enter the fight, workers at the Westinghouse Electric plant and mill workers at the Edgar Thompson Steel mill went on strike in 1916. Two years later, the North Braddock School District constructed the town’s first Junior High School. The two story red-brick school sat on Jones Avenue, near Spring Street.**

**With peace at hand, the Mon Valley prospered. Its’ mills and factories punched out any number of products the world needed. During the day, smoke blocked out the sun over North Braddock, and flames from the mills’ smokestacks lit the night skies. The Borough’s population grew, and the school district, in 1927, constructed another school, Hartman Junior High on Wolfe Avenue, First Ward.**

**Two years later, on Bell Avenue, contractors demolished the stately home of the Alexander M. Scott family. In its place, the school district constructed the town’s new high school, Scott High. For 67 years, the home of the Scott High Raiders sat in the middle of the historic battlefield of Braddock’s Defeat. Directly behind the two story yellow brick school, cheers rang out from the town’s historic football stadium. Historic? Just ask an old timer to tell the stories of the Scott and Braddock football games. Have another beer, it will take a while.**

**Don Cramer, a high school student, anticipated the construction of a new high school. Mr. Cramer, in 1927, penned the lyrics to a new alma mater. Nor-Bra-Hi was sung to the tune of Aloha. It is quite possible that when the doors of the new high school opened in 1928, the band played and the chorus sang “*Nor-Bra-Hi, to thee we all are loyal* *and may thy colors ever wave, over all the bravest and the truest thy dear name from dishonor we shall save.”***

**The years passed. The Mon Valley and the families of North Braddock shook off the Great Depression. Franklin Delano Roosevelt walked into the Oval Office, the mills and factories put out three shifts, Labor Unions flourished, and generations of teens passed through Scott High. Most graduates remained in their hometown, found employment, and raised families. “*When no more within thy walls we linger, still scenes shall dwell in memory dear,”***

**Hitler’s tanks, in 1939, invaded Poland, thus began the Second World War. Unsure of their future, teens continued attending their classes at Scott High. In anticipation, the Mon Valley’s industries moved into high gear. The 1940 Census documents the population of North Braddock at 15, 679. Between 1941 and 45 many Scott High graduates, both male and female, marched off to war. “*When the cares of life have come to save us thoughts of thee, then shall fill our hearts with cheer.”***

**The World War Veterans came home and created the Baby Boom Generation, one of the last generations to enter the doors of Scott High. Unlike their parents, when they graduated they did not remain in North Braddock. The Boomers, heading for their futures, ventured down many roads. Most witnessed the election of President Kennedy, the assassination of his brother, Robert, and Dr. King. Some witnessed Vietnam first hand, while others watched from a far. The North Braddock School District closed its doors in 1971 when it merged with Braddock and Rankin, forming the General Braddock District. In 1981, the Woodland Hills School district was formed.**

**North Braddock incorporated in 1897 and celebrated its centennial in 1997. Contractors, in 1995 demolished Nor-Bra-Hi.**

***Nor-Bra-Hi, to thee we are all loyal***

***And may thy colors ever wave,***

***Over all the bravest and the truest***

***Thy dear name from dishonor we shall save.***

***When no more within thy walls we linger,***

***Still scenes shall dwell in memory dear,***

***When the cares of life have come to save us***

***Thoughts of thee, then shall fill our hearts with cheer.***

**The 2010 Census claims the total population of North Braddock at 4,857, with 1,104 children birth through age 17. The March 14th issue of the Valley Mirror told of the Woodland Hills School District closing three elementary schools: Shaffer in Wilkins Township, Dixon in Swissvale, and Ben Fairless in North Braddock. So, say goodbye to another landmark, Ben Fearless Elementary, as it departs North Braddock in a dump truck.**

**Nor-Bra-Hi, to thee we all are loyal. Many have walked in and out of our school. A few “have left a footprint on the heart” of a once vibrant school district.**

**Comments to delon11@verizon.net**