

# Forward Progress

Randolph 1961-1985



Diamond Days Parade celebration

The community dove head-long into the last quarter of its first century with a celebration. And what a party it was! The Diamond Days Celebration began in May of 1961 with a kick-off dance followed by other events: a stag party, tea, home talent play, square dance, and youth talent night. The final events began with the Diamond Days Ball at the West Randolph Ballroom on Sunday, July 2. The Paul Moorhead Band played to the delight of about 1,100 people; Elmer Munter was crowned King and Angie Dowling was crowned Queen of the festivities. July Fourth saw the conclusion of the celebration with a parade drawing 10,000 people and an evening show and fireworks display drawing 6,000 to 7,000 people. The headline was "It Was a Wonderful Celebration!" and the Times editor noted "The 75th anniversary of Randolph was undoubtedly a filling time that the people of the community should display such a fine community spirit and willingness to work together for a common cause. If, as a result of the celebration, we have all learned a lesson in good fellowship, then for this reason alone the many thousands of hours of work put forth by all, in behalf of the anniversary observance, will have been well worthwhile."

The life of the community returned to normal. In 1962 "Sabin Saturday" brought to an end the ever-present threat of polio. Drs. H.J. Billerbeck and G.E. Peters were in charge of the committee set up to administer the Sabin

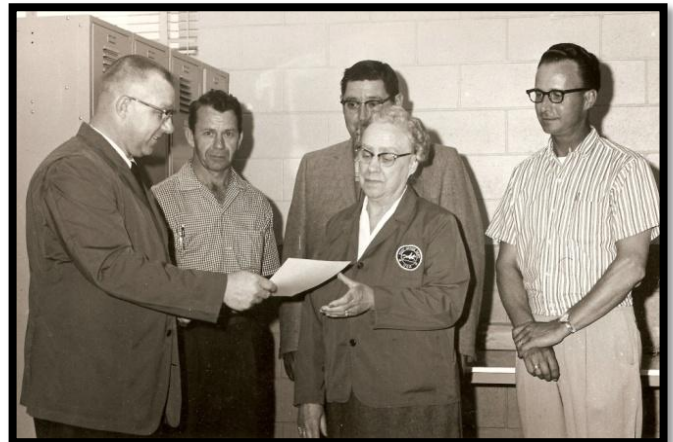
oral vaccine to the community on three different Sundays. It was given to everyone age three months and older. Many people took advantage of the clinics.

Another medical milestone was noted with the death of Dr. B.F. Gleason who died in August of 1962. He had served the Randolph community as a physician for 38 years before his retirement.



Diamond Days King and Queen- Elmer Munter and Angie Dowling

The new Randolph Post Office on Main Street was dedicated in June 1962 with Marvin Weber its first Postmaster. He held that post until 1984. The new building made way for the eventual construction of the new First State Bank on the corner of Broadway and Main in 1967, part of the site being the former location of the Post Office.



Marvin Weber, Dale Boughn, Kenny Rosenbach, Bessie Boughn, Dean McGrew

In 1962 Randolph residents could attend a show at the Roxy Theatre, \$1.00 for adults and 35 cents for children; or they could buy a dozen donuts at the Dairy Dream for 50 cents. Interest on a time certificate at the First State

Bank was drawing 4%; farmers were getting \$17.00 for hogs, \$25.00 for cattle, and 20 cents a dozen for eggs. At the end of the year postage rates for letters went from .04 cents to .05 cents and postcards from .03 cents to .04 cents.

It was in 1962 that the community was excited by the announcement of a ten million dollar project northwest of Crofton to be called "Devils Nest". The project failed several years later.

Heralded as one of the greatest improvements to the community, a project to widen the downtown streets and install new street lights was begun and completed in 1963. It was undertaken with the combined efforts of the City and local businessmen.

The two Randolph school systems saw their greatest expansion programs since the early years of this century. In 1964, Randolph Public School built an addition south of the old school which included a lunch room, gym and stage, and classrooms for the grades K through 6. Plans were announced that same year for the construction of a new St. Frances grade and high school with the old building to be demolished. The St. Frances building was completed in the fall of 1966 at a cost of \$322,269.00.

Plans for major construction continued in the community in December 1965 with the announcement to build a 60 bed nursing home at a cost of about \$350,000.00, in a joint effort of local investors and Colonial Manor Corp, Inc. The facility held its open house in March of 1968 with 3,000 visitors who heard the singing of Joe Feeney of the Lawrence Welk Band. The first resident that month was Marie Lienemann; Roger Johnson was named its first administrator. By December the facility had thirty residents.



Clyde Cook Hay Mover Fire- Herb Sauser on left and Pat Kaiser far right

Consolidation of school districts was active now and the Belden District voted to join Randolph in March of 1966. One year later the Randolph District had a combined valuation of over six million dollars. Combined enrollment in the Randolph schools stood at 879 in 1967.

Consolidation of school districts could create emotional discussions, and the community of Randolph tackled one

just as emotional, liquor by the drink. The vote held in April 1966 found 221 for and 115 against.

The tragic reality of the Vietnam War was brought home with the news of the death of Pfc. Robert Nelson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Nelson, in August 1967. Before the war was over, the community had also lost Stanley Gubbels, James Moser, and Larry Robinson in the conflict.



The new Randolph Swimming Pool

The new Osmond General Hospital was dedicated on January 15, 1967, and a week later an open house was held to pay tribute to Dr. G.E. Peters of Randolph. He had been a physician for 56 years, 48 of which were in Randolph. He also had been active in community affairs. Due to his efforts highway U.S. 20 was routed through Randolph. He also served as mayor for several years.

The continued decline of the importance of the railroads to the community was evident. The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha north-south tracks had been abandoned for several years and the depot was torn down in September of 1967. The abandonment of the Burlington station was begun in 1968.

Another long-standing institution in Randolph came to a close in 1968. The final service was held on Sunday, March 28, at the Presbyterian Church. This was only one of the signs of the continuing consolidation of the farm community into larger units meaning fewer people. This consolidation continues today.

But the community continued to look ahead. A new John Deere Implement store was built that year by Rokahr Implement and a new sanitary sewer system was planned by the City. In early 1969, three new paving districts were created and the voters of Randolph approved a \$39,000.00 bond issue for park improvement to include a new swimming pool.

This progress was quickly forgotten by January 1970 with the announcement by St. Frances Parish of its intent to close both its grade and high school in the spring. The parish had voted 321 to 92 to close the facility of more than 300 students because of a decrease in the number of nuns as well as a lack of finances. The community responded by passing a \$695,000.00 bond issue in March to authorize the Randolph School District to buy the St.

Frances facility and add a lunch room and physical education area to it. The vote was 666 in favor and 178 opposed. That fall a consolidated school was opened with West and East campuses serving a record 850 students. It was agreed that the area community had successfully faced this crisis with a spirit of cooperation by all involved.



Great Plains Lumber Yard

The St. Frances basketball team was determined to close its final season with a bang. It did so by winning the Class D District championship and losing the regional game in the last seconds of that contest.

There was added excitement in town that summer with the Randolph Community Club's biggest promotion to date its "Win-A-Car" promotion. A 1970 Ford Maverick along with other merchandise totaling \$4,500.00 was given away in drawings from July through October.

The year 1970 brought the death of three long-time members of the health care professions in Randolph. Dr. L.T. Peebles died in January; he had been a dentist in Randolph from 1925 up to his retirement in about 1967 and had served on the City Council. Dr. A.E. Peters died December 4th. Dr. G.E. Hartman also passed away that year and had engaged in the practice of dentistry from 1897 until his retirement in 1947. During Dr. Hartman's years in Randolph he was mayor, city treasurer, member of the school board, and a member of the library board.

"Number please" was gone replaced by the dial tone. In October 1971, the Randolph phone system was switched over to dial. This meant the transfer of the local phone operators to the Norfolk office, including Arlene Schutt who had been an operator here for about twenty-four years.

The Randolph Cards basketball team ended its regular season with a 15-0 record in 1972. They went on to capture the district tournament and played at State losing to Waverly. Not until 1978 did the Cards return to State losing to Lyons at the Duvaney Sports Center. Their record that year was 22-1. The girls became involved in basketball as well forming the Cardettes. In 1981 they

won the Class C State Girls Basketball Championship with Dan List as their coach. They returned to State in 1983 losing the first game, thus ending their season with a 21-1 record.

Changes continued with some long familiar aspects of the community disappearing. In 1973 the Randolph House Hotel was demolished having been built before the turn of the century. Sunday mail was terminated in 1974 and during these years the Randolph business houses closed on Saturday nights for the first time since 1886. The familiar Saturday night trip to town had come to an end. 1974 also saw the end of Roger Buchanan's tenure on the Randolph School Board after thirty-eight years of service.

However, new things were added with a waste water treatment plant, addition to St. John's Lutheran Church, VFW home east of the First State Bank, enclosed entrance to St. Frances Church, and completion of the Fire Station in late 1975, a joint venture of the city and rural people.



Edwin Olberding trying on a pair of boots at O'Neill Clothing while his children look on

The community began plans to celebrate our country's Bicentennial in 1976. A committee was formed for the purpose. Many events were conducted during the year: a beard growing contest was sponsored by the Randolph Jaycees; June 18 and 19 were set as the dates for the community's celebration; a play was staged by the Community Theater Players; a kiddie parade was held; and an early-day style show was conducted.

The City noted the Bicentennial with the completion of a new City Office and undertook the largest paving project to date. Twenty-four and one half blocks of paving were laid in the summer of 1976. The City continued its progress and in 1977 assigned house numbers to all the businesses and houses in town. In June the numbering method to be used was finally agreed upon after much heated debate as to the correct procedure to follow. The City continued to change and in 1979, after several years of study and consideration, entered into agreements with the Nebraska Public Power District purchasing wholesale electricity from them and leasing the City's power plant back to NPPD. The local power plant was now idle except

for several hours each month when it was operated for maintenance purposes.

During these years much attention was given to finding ways to broaden the economic base of the community realizing the continuous decline of the farm population. This decline was dramatically seen in the number of Randolph School students when only 450 enrolled in the fall of 1985. This represents a drop of 400 students in fifteen years. The Randolph Community Club kept as one of its highest priorities the development of additional industry and businesses.



**BACK: John Kelsh, Henry Pate, Henry Strathman  
FRONT: John Pock and Leonard Leise**

Individuals and groups continued to strive to improve the community. Since 1979 many things have been added. In that year the Randolph Haven Apartments held an open house for the low rent facility, a beautiful addition to the town. Patent Electric also built a new store on Broadway in 1979. In the following years, Farm and Home expanded, Marvin's Time Center was completely renovated, a new dentist office opened, the Dairy Barn came into business, the Mini Market on U.S. #20 opened, Nordhues Feed Store began its operation, the Flower Basket opened; Kiddie Korner Pre-School began classes; Schwan's Ice Cream expanded; Day-Light Doughnut began operations; and New Horizons & Family Counseling Center was dedicated. This is not a complete list but simply an indication of the activity and commitment that is still part of the Randolph community.

Some milestones in our history were touched in these final years. 1979 saw the sale of Louie Broer's Blacksmith Shop after more than fifty years in business here. Dr. James O. Black, a veterinarian here for nearly fifty years, died in 1979. The same year saw the death of long-time Randolph resident Anna Hosch at the age of 103. She had moved to a farm about a mile west of Randolph in 1899.

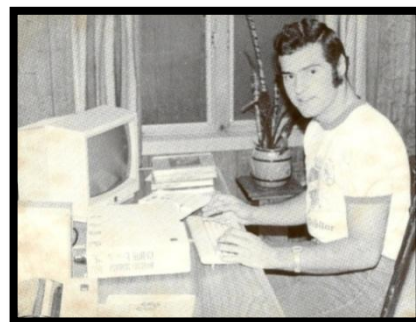
The late Seventies saw the dawn of the popularity of slow pitch softball. Leagues were created for men, women, and combined men and women leagues. Games were played on almost every evening during the summer

and in 1980 the City established a second ball field in the City park so that two games could be accommodated at the same time. Golf and bowling have also remained popular with each having men and women's leagues.

The City perceived that the community was ready for additional changes. It instigated a survey in 1981 to determine if the citizens would object to discontinuing the blowing of the whistle three times a day. The response was overwhelming in favor of keeping the whistle, and so it still blows three times a day. The City could not hold back the advent of the computer age and installed one in 1984. The City fathers also found that some things never change. As in the first days of the city's history, the mayor and council have been continually faced with the "dog problem" and financial considerations. In 1981 the City did see a change with the retirement of J.F. Atwood as City Clerk after serving in that position for forty- four years.

The Community has continued to work together and one of the signs of that has been the establishment of the community choir, which held its first Easter Cantata in 1981. This choir is a combination of area singers as well as singers from all three churches; it has continued with its popular productions, which have been performed in front of over eight hundred people for each Cantata. The Community in 1984 also saw the concrete results of working together. The Randolph Senior Citizens Center was organized that spring and by September held its ribbon cutting ceremony of the new facility on Broadway Street serving over 300 members. This was accomplished by the efforts of hundreds of individuals in the community giving of their time and resources led by Mr. and Mrs. Gus Marreel. Mr. Marreel was the group's first president. Today the Center serves daily meals and provides various activities for its members as well as taking part in community activities. At the end of its first year it received three major awards for the Northeast Nebraska area, namely: Outstanding Senior Citizens Center; Community Service Award; and Intergenerational Award.

The town knew that it was in step with the times when it was announced that, Joe Huwaldt, a great-grandson of August Huwaldt, had won the championship in the Ak-Sar-Ben Micro-Computer National Exposition in Omaha in September of 1985.



**Joe Huwaldt with computer he won at Ak-Sar-Ben  
in 1985**