

Hello readers of the *Enterprise*:

A few years back, I started writing the ‘Pavučina Corner’ (pronounced ‘PAH-voo-chee-nah’), a column which sought to revive interest in the local history of the Czech community of McLeod County, primarily centered in the town of Silver Lake. The *Glencoe Enterprise* newspaper took note of the interest that was generated by the column in the greater Silver Lake community and approached me to inquire if I wouldn’t mind having the column printed in the *Enterprise*.

I took some time to reflect on this before I gave my positive response, as I wasn’t too familiar with the paper--the last issue of the *Enterprise* that I had most recently read was from August 1902, which included the obituary of my great-great grandfather Josef Kadlec! I wondered if *Enterprise* readers, especially those residents of Glencoe and beyond, would find the ‘Pavučina Corner’ interesting and worth reading.

When I reflect on my memories of Glencoe, I imagine myself driving there from Silver Lake on County Road #2, which folks from Silver Lake call ‘The Glencoe Road’ (I wonder if Glencoe people call it the ‘Silver Lake Road’?). It was this road that led the Green Giant factory that once consumed my precious adolescent summers, one twelve-hour shift at a time. I suppose many of you can relate to that character-building experience. My younger brother Andy proved to be much smarter than me and got his summer job at the Dairy Queen in Hutchinson, where he got to meet girls and eat ice cream leftovers at the same time.

Another vivid Glencoe memory involves the Glencoe Eagle, Mr. Cullen Ober soaring over me to dunk the basketball in my face, in a basketball scrimmage between G and SL in the ‘olden days’ before there was a GSL. Despite the embarrassment, I remember thinking it was pretty cool and it didn’t hurt my self-esteem too much, as we had just won our first 9-man state championship in football the month before.

And thinking of Glencoe recalls fond memories of family reunions at Oak Leaf Park for my Grandma Rose (Bednar) Kadlec’s side of the family. Incidentally, my grandma Rose, class of 1928, played basketball for Stevens Seminary on a team that featured Winifred Boylan, Janet Holmes, Clara Kuhnau, Susan Schmidt, Hattie Southworth, Betty Tifft, Silvia Tucholke, and was coached by Mary Gray. Those were the days when young girls played ‘six on six’ basketball, where there were two games of ‘three on three’ played on either end of the court and you either played offense or defense.

Back in the 80’s, I remember shooting hoops with grandma Rose when she was nearly seventy years old—she had a sweet ‘set-shot’ and I would have given a week’s worth of Green Giant wages to travel back in time to watch her play.

I came to the conclusion that although small towns typically have a strong identity and their citizens like to keep to themselves, their histories are not separate, nor are they mutually exclusive. There is quite a bit of shared history among small towns that lurks in our memories. And yes, it might be possible for a column like the Pavučina Corner to draw interest across a larger collection of communities.

What I like to imagine, think, and write about are the days in the mid 1800's when my family first arrived in McLeod County—in the days before these small towns, schools, and local institutions even existed. In the course of my research I was surprised to learn about members of my family who played a meaningful part in establishing some of these McLeod County institutions. Institutions created by people who needed a place to educate their children and a hall to celebrate the culture of their homeland; a church to honor their God and a non-religious cemetery to bury their dead; a closer mill to grind their grain and better roads to sell their crops, electricity to power their rural homes, and the list goes on and on.

It is certainly a 21st century convenience to romanticize certain aspects of our family's early history without having to experience the same level of hard work and hardship that they faced. But I think that reflecting on this history and passing on the memory to the next generation is an important exercise and skill set that we need to hone as we face our own struggles and make our decisions as to which institutions we choose to keep alive and which ones we decide we are going to abandon and let perish. And there are many interesting stories to be told and remembered along the way. All of the above are reasons why I write the Pavučina Corner column and I look forward to our future journey together.

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