



Across the Fence

By Howard Sherpe

Across the Fence - Introduction

You may be wondering why this column is called "Across the Fence." For many years I was Editor of the Wisconsin Federation of Stamp Clubs Newsletter. I became Editor by default while serving as President of the federation. When the Editor quit due to health problems, and no one would volunteer to pick up the reins, I inherited it by default. As long as I was also going to be the Editor, I decided to give the publication a name... "WFSC News" just didn't have a creative ring to it!

I decided to call it "Across the Fence," and the reasons for choosing that name are just as good or even clearer to me today.

When I was growing up on the farm, I remember how my father stopped and visited with neighbors across the line fence when they would meet while working in the fields.

I especially remember "Pete" Erickson who owned the farm just south of ours and adjoined our back forty. Many times over the years while we were working in the forty, and Pete was working in his field, we would stop to visit.

Dad and Pete would meet at the line fence, shut off their tractors, and sit and talk for a while. Sometimes they got off and stood at the fence together, arms resting on the top wire.

There was always something special about neighbors taking time out of their busy day to visit, even for a short time. It seems to me, that many people today are too busy to stop and say hello to their neighbors.

While visiting across the fence, they discussed the weather, the state of

the crops, which neighbor had the best looking corn or tobacco, and quite often the rising cost of supplies and how it was hard to make ends meet. Politics and the state of affairs of the country and world were also discussed.

Visiting across the fence provided a great chance to catch up on what was going on in the neighborhood and even what the latest local gossip was, but you didn't hear that from me!

I always enjoyed when we stopped and visited for a while with the neighbors. It gave us a short break from work and made me feel like we were part of a larger world beyond the boundaries of our farm, especially when I got to listen in on adult conversations.

I doubt if Dad, Pete, or any of the other neighbors solved many of the world's problems during their talks, any more than my friends and I have solved any of the current problems in our many conversations today. We all think there would be less problems in the world if someone would only listen to our solutions, but.... that's about as likely to happen as me pitching a no-hitter and winning an Olympic Gold Medal in cross-country skiing, all in the same year! But that's another story, and I'm straying from the subject at hand.

The point is, stopping during a busy day for a few minutes and having a conversation across the fence, exchanging news, thoughts, and ideas, is good for the soul. We need to keep that connection between people, especially between neighbors. In this global world we live in today, our neighbors are not just the people next door,

they include people all over this country and around the world. We need to stay connected with people, share friendships, and exchange thoughts and ideas.

I hope the thoughts expressed in these writings can be like that. My hope is that you'll remember times gone by and how life used to be, and that those memories will be good ones; we'll keep an eye on what's happening in the world today and how it affects us and all those around us; and we'll also look to the future and try to imagine what the world will be like in years to come.

There's a thought by Albert Einstein that comes to mind: "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow." I know Dad and Pete covered all three of those areas in their talks across the fence back on the farm.

As I explore thoughts and ideas, I hope it will make people think. I am not one who likes to play follow the leader and do, say, and believe exactly as people tell me I should. I like to ask "Why?" and explore the many possibilities instead of blindly accepting what someone says or tells me I should think or believe. I'm often accused of taking the "road less traveled," as Robert Frost wrote. We'll explore some of those lesser-traveled roads together in this column. I'm sure not everyone will agree with all my views and thoughts, but that's all right. It would be a mighty dull world if we all thought the same thing and agreed all the time.

So stop what you're doing, settle back, join me for a few minutes each week, and let's talk....across the fence!