

Lowell's Memory Books

Full Given Name

Lowell Elson Bjella

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE:

Sport Skiing and football

Book The Greatest Generation

Dessert Custard pudding

Author Tom Brokaw

Vacation Spot Alaska

Type of food lobster or seafood

Sports team MN Vikings

What did you enjoy doing most as a child? Did you prefer doing it alone or with someone else?

Going with my dad doing the necessary duties involved with the work on the farm during the "dirty thirties". Dad started the local Co-op sortie in Bemidji, while a hired man and I did the farm work. When I was twelve, it was my responsibility to care for the livestock like pumping water by hand for 34 head of cattle, while going to country school two mile's distant. After work was done, the neighbor boys and I would ride horses to ball games of which included skiing behind with a long rope.

Who gave you your name and why? Did you have a nickname? How did you get it?

Mother named me Lowell after the famous writer James Russell Lowell. My younger brothers and sisters called me LoLo.

Describe your childhood home. What was your favorite room?

We lived on a farm with a quarter section of land which included 160 acres of fields pasture and timberland with a spring fed water hole. Our house was seven room with a full basement. The upper NE room where two hired men and I stayed.

Were you baptized or dedicated as an infant? If so, where and by whom?

March 1926. Baptized and attended church and confirmed by Rev. Harold Buiedi until 1951. Some of the other pastors were Rev. Jergenson, and Rev. Iverson.

Did you attend Church as a young child? What are your earliest memories of church?

1930's Every summer we had two weeks of bible school. Our favorite teacher was a Mr. Sand. This was also two mile walk each way. Memorizing the catechism was first began here. That is when girls started to look pretty good.

Where did your father go to work every day and what did he do? Did his work interest you?

Dad worked in the logging business away from home in the late 20's. Farmed in the early 30's in the Bemidji acreage and also had a farm 100 miles north up at Grygla, MN and later started the 1st Co-op store about 1934 – the opening his own farm machinery business until 1958 which I bought after working there for twelve years and sold in 1990.

Did your mother have a job or did she work at home?

Mother worked in the home caring for her five children full time.

What was your favorite sport or outdoor activity? Why was this your favorite?

During the early 30's we would ski to school. The township road was covered with snow from December thru March. Skiing was our winter sport along with ice skating and fishing during the summer. Football in HS I played 296 minutes in five games at the center position.

Did you pray as a young child? If so, can you remember a specific prayer? Who taught you to pray?

We learned to pray soon as we could talk by mother. Now I lay me down to sleep and the Lord's prayer.

Where was your childhood home located? Did you enjoy living there?

Home was six plus mile's from Bemidji High School or 3 ½ miles from the city limits. We would always rather live in town, rather than Frohn Township.

Describe your grandparents. What did you enjoy most about them?

Grandpa Lars lived with us until 1933. Grandpa and Grandma Aakre lived near Thief River Falls, MN where we sometimes do to stay during the summer months. We enjoyed the stories we were told.

Can you remember being afraid as a child? What was your greatest fear? How did you deal with it?

In the first grade we were reading about the trolls that lived in the woods and under a bridge. Walking home alone during the winter it would be dark by 4:30 and seldom was home by 5 o'clock.

Recall five of the most important lessons you have learned in life.

- 1 – never tell a lie
- 2- do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- 3- what goes around comes around
- 4- the 10 commandments
- 5-

Did the pastor or a visiting missionary ever eat dinner at your house? Did they have an impact on your life?

During the 1930's evangelist preachers would come by with reading materials. Our pastor was invited to come with his family to the farm home for dinner and we ate in the dining room always on special occasions.

How far did you have to travel to attend elementary, junior high, and high school and how did you get there?

Two miles each way to Sunnyside School, District 8. Six miles to Bemidji HS. In the AM, we rode in with dad, PM the bus to Nymore and we walked 3 miles part of the year. Phoenix Union walked seven blocks. The last two years lived on campus at Northwest school of Agriculture at Crookston, MN.

Who gave you your first Bible and how old were you when you received it? How did it influence your life?

Ottena Stay, the seventh grade teacher. Thirteen. I belonged to the Gideon Organization that gave Bibles to 170 countries around the world.

When did you become a Christian? How did your life change?

At Camp Hood Texas, 1944, one Sunday afternoon.

Did you go to ball games as a child? What kind of food did you eat?

We had a rural Field Day every spring in Bemidji. One of the events was softball. Hot dogs.

When you were growing up, did you have any animals? What were their names? Was it important to you to have a pet?

We always had a dog on the farm and used it to get in the cattle every day. They were in the pasture. Two of the milk cow were called "Brindle" and "Buttercup". The dogs were Sport, Trixie and Shep.

Tell about your mother's cooking. Can you recall your favorite meal? What made it your favorite?

We always had homemade bread. She made the best custard pudding and pie.

Did you ever get into fights with other kids? Did you ever start a fight? Or stop one?

In elementary school all the boys from the north and west township roads would team up against the east and south township roads. Each side would antagonize one another into a wrestling match.

What chores did you have to do when you were growing up? Did you get an allowance? How much was it?

Like all the neighbor boys, I had farm chores to do everything from feeding to barn cleaning pumping water. When in HS I received two dollars a week which I bought a slide trombone.

Who gave you your first job? What kind of job was it? How much money did you make?

When going to school in Phoenix, AZ as a sophomore I set pins at the bowling alley, 2 blocks from the house we lived in and earned from 1 to 4 dollars a night after school and Saturdays and some Sundays.

Share your idea of what makes a good friend.

One that I would lend money to. One that would go hunting and fishing with. One that would go with on motorcycling trips.

Do you remember your first Communion? What influence did it have on you and your family?

(he confused confirmation with communion) Confirmation in the spring of 1940. The same year graduating from 8th grade. My dad gave me a new Bulova watch. The minister was leaving the area so we read only 8 months instead of 2 years also combining us with the early class. It was an important event.

Describe your favorite pastime or hobby as a child.

There was so much farm work to do that what little time we had was Sunday afternoon we would ride our bikes into town as many as 25 in a group. Horse back. One summer we had over 40 head in the pasture.

What mischievous prank did you pull on someone? How did it affect you?

Halloween was the last day of October – we went to a farmer and tipped their toilet. He shot so close with a rifle that we could hear the bullet go by.

Did you have a television when you were growing up? What was your favorite program? Why?

Television was not available until I was 23 years of age.

Who was your favorite teacher? How did that teacher influence your life?

Miss Stay taught us we could accomplish almost anything we put our mind to.

In high school, what extracurricular activities did you enjoy most? Why did you choose those activities?

Wrestling and football.

What is the nicest thing you ever did for your mother and father?

Visit them often when they were in their senior years. Take them driving.

When did you have your first date? Tell about it.

When a freshman in HS, it was very uncomfortable. She was in my confirmation class. She knew I was uneasy and made fun of the situation.

What do you remember about your first kiss?

I was introduced to what she called a French kiss while getting a Christmas tree for the elementary school.

Share some of your insights for working well with others.

I always tried to do more than my share of work as well as in sports. My first promotion while in the service was a result leaving dinner to carry out an order while my friend wanted to finish eating. Who was 22 when I was 20 years of age and Hal had been in the service over a year longer than I.

What were your family finances like when you were growing up? How did that affect you?

Our family finances were always more than average. While in Phoenix, I held an after school job and had saved near \$30. Dad asked me to lend it until he received a check from the business in Bemidji.

When did you first learn about sex?

Growing up on the farm, I noticed when the farm animals would breed.

As a teenager, did you rebel or do things your parents wouldn't have approved of? How do you feel about that now?

When in elementary school, the teacher would report to my parents that I was always ready to wrestle with the boys in my grade. I skipped school one afternoon, only one time.

List three things you wish you had done during your junior high and high school years but didn't.

- 1- Transferred directly from grade school to Northwest school of Agriculture.
- 2- concentrated more on class work.
- 3 -

What did your family like to do on weekends? Describe one particularly memorable one.

Go to the little country church. Go swimming at Grace Lake.

During childhood, who was your best friend? Share some of your fondest memories of fun times together.

Kendel K and Oscar S. We rode horseback, went hunting, ball games, belonged to the local 4-H Club.

What image of your father is the most striking in your memory? Why that image?

Dad was always a leader in the neighborhood. Dad had a more modern farm. We had tractors while neighbors used horses to farm with.

List one special memory about each of your brothers and sisters.

We were always competing for the best grades in school.

Share your father's attitude toward life and how that affected you.

Dad was always optimistic and enthusiastic about his work by running two farms and a business.

If you were to find an old toy box in your attic, what toys would you remember most fondly? Why?

A steam "minitore" engine that had a whistle. And a wind up train and locomotive.

How old were you when you understood that God loves you? How did that affect your life?

When attending two weeks of summer school each year between age of 10 – 12 years. Never realized how important until in later years.

Describe a time in your life when you feel God led you in an unusual way.

The time in my life when I met my future wife and her devotion to God.

What kind of car did your family drive? Were you proud of it or embarrassed by it? Why?

A 1929 Overland Whippet with a two tone color of tan and grey. It was one of the nicer looking cars in the area. I was impressed with it.

Did you ever go to a dance?

The later years in high school. It seemed difficult to get comfortable with.

How often did your family go to church? What pastor or Sunday school teacher do you remember most? How did that person influence you?

Just about every Sunday. Pastor Jergenson – at the age of 12, I had collected funds for a neighbor boy who had broken his arm and during a party for him in the church basement. We were upstairs when he asked me if I was saved, surprised, I said I think so.

Did your family attend family reunions? What activities did everyone enjoy? Tell about your favorite cousins, aunts, or uncles.

At the age of 14, in 1940, at Grandma Aakre's in Thief River Falls. In 1946 mom and dad's 25th anniversary. In 1986 at Aardahl church. Mostly eating cafeteria style. Favorite cousins from Tower, MN. Jim Ersbo who was near my age. Uncle Richard who would drive from Duluth to T.R. Falls and pick me up on the way.

When you were young, did you ever go to a funeral? How did that affect you?

At the age of 8 when Mr. Evans' was killed on a farm tractor, next door to our farm. It was a preventable accident due to not practicing safety.

If you had brothers and sisters, did you feel your parents treated you all the same? Why or why not? If you were an only child, did you wish for brothers and sisters? Why?

My two younger sisters seemed to get more favors which now I realize was not true.

Did your high school have college or career days? What field interested you most? What did you want to become when you grew up?

The agriculture class and future farmers of America was the most popular of America in the early 1940's. I was interested in farm tractors and machinery.

If you went to college or to a career training school, where did you go and why?

When home from the army, the local teachers college was available which I attended for one year. Also attended French's Business College for part of two years. In 1948 I began working full time in the tractor and farm equipment business as that was my interest.

Where did you live when you were going to college or developing a career? Describe an unforgettable experience from that time in your life.

When in college I arranged my classes and had Friday – Saturday free from class to work at the business to earn my room and board at home.

Share some principles from scripture on which you have chosen to build your life.

The first Commandment.

If you learned to play a musical instrument, tell about your memories of lessons, practice, and your music teacher. If not, what instrument did you want to play and why?

The slide trombone. I took lessons after school two nights a week as I entered the class late. The Mr. Kerns was excellent as a teacher- changing HS, three times in 4 years, I did not catch up, so as a trombone player, I never would become famous.

What were your youthful goals and ambitions for life? Which ones have you been able to fulfill?

To follow in my dad's footsteps. I purchased the business in 1958. I was elected to public office like dad was. Was respected in the business community and successful in business for over 40 years with the help of my wife with our sons and daughters.

How old were you when you met your spouse? What attracted you to her?

Twenty three. She was cool. She was smart. She was beautiful. She came from a great family. She disliked anything to do with liquor.

When did you know that your spouse was the "one and only one" for you? How did you know?

When she met me at the bus station with her mother and sister in MPLS. I stayed at their house and met the rest of her family. That morning, Manilla dropped me off at the general motors office on the way to her classes at Deaconess Hospital.

Share a memory about the way the proposal occurred in your marriage.

It was Sept. 7th, 1950. We agreed to get her folks permission with seeing time and place. Her father wanted to buy a new 12 gage shotgun "wholesale" from me. We had been discussing for some weeks. Sometime later we met her folks on a Sunday afternoon, they were in the kitchen waiting for us. When I told them we wanted to get married, Ernie replied your make your bed you will have to sleep in it. With the following "remark" "now about this shotgun"...

Tell about your wedding day. What happened? How did you feel? Were you nervous, scared, happy?

My two younger brothers drove to MPLS, the day before in a snow storm. We were there on time. My parents came the following day barely on time.

Where did you go on your honeymoon? Describe at least one humorous thing that happened to you and your spouse.

The Smokey Mountains in Tennessee. We visited a Catholic Monastery where a monk wanted to kiss Manilla.

Do you remember the first meals that you cooked/ were cooked for you in your marriage? Do you dare comment on them?

She always said she did not know how to cook but she was only teasing.

Describe where you lived after you got married. What was the view like from the kitchen window?

In an apartment one block away from where I was employed. View was facing south across from 3rd Street and Minnesota Ave.

When did you start talking about having children? Why did you want children – or did you?

We never talked about it. It just happened.