



I have been a member of St. John's for 68 years and my grandparents (Lena and William Artus & Anna and Leo Niewolny) and parents (Eleanor and Lawrence "Bucky" Niewolny) were St. John's School parish members before me. My father was an alumni of St John's School Class of 1937 and my mother Class of 1940. Later my mother was a member of the Parish Council of Catholic Women. I remember her holding meetings at our house. My parents were married at St. John's in 1956.

Grandma Lena lived across the road from the rectory in the white two story house on the corner of Maple and 5th. She enjoyed gardening and grew flowers in her garden to put on the altar each Sunday. I remember being young and picking the gladiolus for the flower arrangements in church.

When we visited Grandma Lena's house, we spent many hours playing on the playground and hill behind church with cousins in summer and sledding and ice skating in winter. My husband Dennis also remembers ice skating behind St. John's in his younger years. We would warm up in the warming shack and keep playing.

The house is still in the family and now owned by the grandchildren of Grandma and Grandpa Artus. Many who live there have helped in various ways at St. John's. Our son and daughter-in-law, Dennis and Jessica Halvorsen, lived there after they were married. Jessica is now the principal of St. John's School. Also, my cousin Diane has put in many hours at St. John's helping as the school cook and custodian for several years.

My Grandma and Grandpa Niewolny had Father Oscar Cramer bless their 50th anniversary in St. Johns. At age 12, I remember Grandma had a pretty dress and Grandpa had a suit on and we all went to church for their Anniversary Mass.

During first through fourth grade, I remember going right into church as we got off the bus for daily Latin Masses. When we got to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade we sang for the funerals that were held in the church. For communion, we had to kneel at the communion railing and wait for either Father Oscar Cramer or Father Arthur Cramer to give us communion. We had church every day and went to school after Mass. At the end of the school day, Father Oscar and Father Arthur Cramer would come and say goodbye to us. I had 25 children in my class.

For school, we had nuns as teachers in first through fourth grade. We had lay teachers 5th, 6th, and 7th. The nun who was our 8th grade teacher was also our principal. I remember when I started school, the nuns had long habits and by the time I got to 8th grade, in 1970, their dress had changed. But the students still had a similar dress in that the girls were to wear dresses and the boys dress shirts and nice pants. For Mass, all the girls were to add scarves or hats.

Our biggest class trip was an 8th grade trip to Rib Mountain for the day. We were very excited to do that. I remember having to pack a picnic lunch for the trip.

We were married by Father Oscar Cramer at St. John's in 1974, and celebrated our 50th Anniversary Mass with a blessing from Father Alan Wierzba in 2024 with our family present to help us celebrate.

When we had our children: Jim, Brian, Chad, Todd, and Dennis we wanted them to have the same experiences I enjoyed. All of our boys were baptised at St. Johns and attended school at St. John's. Now our grandchildren, Connor and Max are going to St John's too.

We continue to enjoy hearing about the boys' school days as they get off the bus at our house. Many of their memories are similar to the experiences I enjoyed at St. John's throughout my life.

The Connie (Dennis) Halvorsen Family



Pictured (left to right): Todd Halvorsen (class of 1997), Connor Halvorsen (class of 2030), Connie Halvorsen (class of 1970), Dennis Halvorsen (class of 1999), Max Halvorsen (class of 2032). The photo is my mother's (class of 1940) and father's (Class of 1937) wedding portrait.