

## Our City

Forty-five years seems like a long a time ago; but then I am only 56. I would have been in seventh grade at Hawthorne Junior High in Pocatello. I used to ride my horse out to see her on the Reservation. I used to try and hold her hand between classes. After she fell on the ice going out to Mrs. Johnson's reading class in the trailer and broke her arm, I got to be a gentleman and help her out across the ice every day to class.

It's funny what you remember about growing up; bits and pieces here and there form memories. I remember a few things about seventh grade. I remember Felicia Burke, Mrs. Johnson, learning to love to read and that trailer. That trailer was cold and noisy in the winter and hot and noisy in the early fall and late spring; I hated everything about it except Felicia, Mrs. Johnson and reading. Today, looking back I don't know how Mrs. Johnson did it, how she taught so effectively in such a terrible environment. I couldn't have done it. I came close to having to try though back in the '90's as we struggled to pass a bond to build the new high school. Of course we called them "modulars" back then; it sounded so much better than trailer. But, they were trailers nonetheless, a poor environment to teach and learn in. It's interesting how history repeats itself; how so often we are content with short term solutions to long term needs. Yet, here we are again trying to educate our future in spaces that are far from conducive to that very task.

Here we are again renting a trailer, in this case two at Hillcrest Elementary, rather than building and buying a house. The sad thing is that the house is less expensive and solves long term needs. The house metaphorically would be a new Intermediate School for our third, fourth and fifth graders; my grandkids. The Intermediate School if built will cost less than half of what we are currently paying on the high school; which will be paid off ahead of schedule in 2018. Like the high school bond back in the late '90's next week's bond election will be the third attempt by the School Board and many of our District's patrons to pass a bond to build the much needed classrooms for our kids and grandkids. I guess it takes a while sometimes for the needed 66% of the electorate to come to a consensus on the actual needed space and what we are all willing to pay for it; but eventually we end up doing what is best for our kids and community.

I add our community into the mix as mayor and not a grandparent because without well-functioning schools we will cease to be a community. As a community we are all connected in some fashion and form. When one part struggles to keep up it drags us all behind; it is the nature of how things are, it's no mystery. Kindergarten through high school we have some of the most dedicated and professional teachers I have ever known and because of them and their continued efforts they help make American Falls the best place to live. They helped to grow a young girl who came here when she was three not speaking a word of English into becoming this year's valedictorian. They help grow and educate our future as they produce productive members of our work force and society; conversely they often do it in spaces less than favorable to the task; especially here and now in our younger grades. Just like Mrs. Johnson did 45 years ago in her trailer.

Too often it is hard not to get caught in the "me" of the now because of life's circumstances. It's hard to see past today and immediate needs as many households struggle to make ends

meet. But, should you join me in voting yes on Tuesday, March 14 to build a new Intermediate School rather than continuing to rent trailers you will in fact end up paying less in 2019 than you do today and our kids and grandkids will have classrooms and learning spaces that are safer and actually help the learning and teaching processes.

As mayor, I want to thank the American Falls School Board for their persistence in trying to do the right things for our community. Their efforts and decisions are not easy and are often thankless. In that same breath I thank the teachers at Hillcrest and the Intermediate School for doing their very best in difficult circumstances by my grandkids. You are all certainly part of what makes American Falls the best place to live.

Until next week....