

1989 - 1991

FAA - Pierre

- See Appendix II for stories and anecdotes from Pierre FSS -

In 1988, Jack Mitchell, the manager at Pierre, SD FSS retired. I bid on and, in January 1989, was selected for the position. The actual date for the transfer was somewhat open because we had to wait until a replacement was brought into Watertown so we didn't even make a trip to Pierre to find a house until spring. The weather for the drive down was great, but the next morning there was about 18 inches of snow and



Home 1989-1991: 221 S Harrison Ave. Pierre. SD

driving around with the realtor looking at houses was horrible. We found a house we liked pretty quickly and were set to move as soon as school got out. Sue found a job at the hospital almost immediately and so she and all of the kids, except David, moved to Pierre at the beginning of June. I had to stay in Watertown until my replacement arrived in early July so David and I camped out with a TV, refrigerator, one bed and cardboard boxes for furniture.



Pierre Flight Service Station Operations area

Being a manager in Pierre was a great experience. Things got off to kind of a rocky start because most of the specialists, after years of working for Jack, had absolutely no trust in management. It took the better part of a year before I felt they believed I had their best interest at heart.

There was only one serious aircraft accident a Pierre while I was in charge and I was gone when it happened. Sue and I had gone to Rapid City for the retirement of the facility manager

there. It was extremely windy that day and I remember as we drove west having to dodge the tumbleweeds blowing across the highway. Some of those suckers were so big they'd move the car

when they hit and at the time I was driving a Mercury Grand Marquis. The wind caused a small plane to flip over after landing at Pierre

Joe Gray, who I'd worked with in Huron, had transferred to Rapid City and was selected to become manager after the retirement. Joe had retired from the Air Force so had some great experience and we talked a lot about what and how to do our jobs.



There was a fire station about 2 blocks from our house and Tom used to jump on his bike and try to follow the fire trucks whenever they went on a call. Once the driver actually stopped the truck and talked to Tom about the danger of following him. One day Sue was shopping for carpet remnants and called asking me to come to the store to look at something. I loaded the kids in the car and was just backing out of the driveway as the fire whistle sounded. I was so used to it that I didn't even think about it until I got to the middle of the next block and saw a fire truck approaching from behind me. I pulled over and just about that time saw another truck turning onto my street coming from the other direction. I guess it was about that time I looked across the street from where I was stopped to see a garage on fire. Who expects that as they pull over for an emergency vehicle that they will be at the exact point everyone is heading to?

The City of Pierre had a volunteer fire department which was limited to 100 members. One of the Flight Service specialists, Blaine Olson, was a member of the Airport Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) Company. He talked to me about joining but I was somewhat reluctant because in the event of an aircraft accident I knew my responsibilities would be in the Flight Service station. After much discussion I decided that so long as it was understood what my limitations might be I would join.

I was accepted by the department and after completing all required training became a full-fledged member of the department. Fire fighters carried pagers and whenever a fire was reported we would receive a coded alert and all members who could would converge on the location. In addition to this at least one

member of the ARFF company had to be at the airport fire station during arrival and departure of scheduled airline flights. We received a small stipend for this, but otherwise no one received any pay. We never had any aircraft incidents during my time with the company but I did respond to about half a dozen fires during the 16 months I was involved.



A couple of the most memorable fires involved the airport. The Pierre airport had been built by the Army Air Force during World War II and there were a few structures that dated back to that era. One of the buildings had been the base dispensary and a portion had been remodeled to be the home for the assistant airport manager. One summer evening that building caught fire and we were called to the airport. As I headed up the hill I imagined all sorts of possibilities and was greatly relieved to learn it was only structure fire. The fire was extinguished very quickly, but the building was too badly damaged to be rehabilitated. A few weeks later we got another call to the airport, which amazed me, but it turned out that it was a "training" event and they were going to burn the rest of building. However upon arrival there was no fire. When I entered the building I found that fire department officers had tried to start a fire, but it kept going out. Upon investigation it turned out that the room where they were trying to start the fire was the old shower room and the floor was made of cement! Once they moved to another location they were able to get the fire going and the building was destroyed.

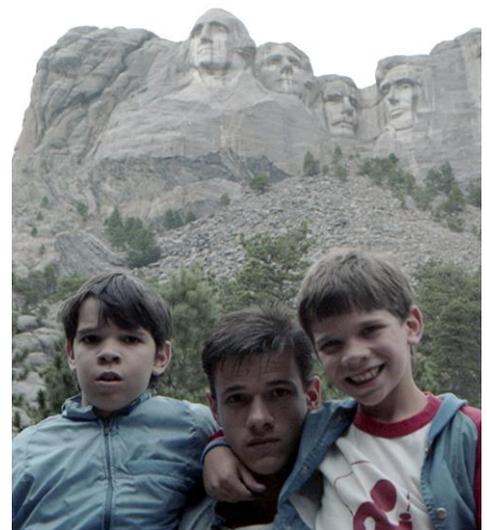


RN Graduation - December 1990
Jim, Kevin, Joni & Guy Willson
Dave, Sue Kasi & Tom

During the summer of 1991 we went to Havre an "All School" reunion that coincided with my 25 year class reunion in June and the beginning of August we rented a cabin in the Black Hills for a week.

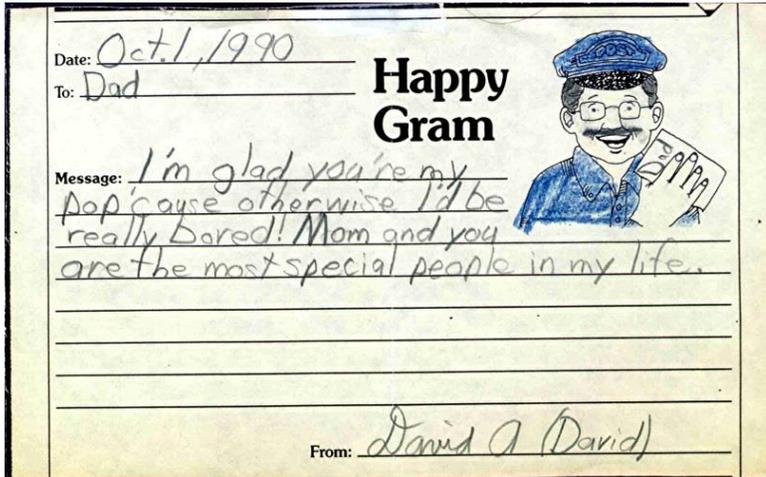
I think the kids liked Pierre OK. Kevin started High School there and was a wrestler. One day we got a call from the school advising us that Kevin had gotten hurt. He'd been chasing another kid in the locker room and smashed his hand into a door. I guess he broke his finger - oddly enough I don't remember. What I do remember was that while Sue and Kevin were in the emergency room

While in Watertown Sue had started attending college in Willmar, MN to get a degree as a Registered Nurse but she was forced to quit when I got the job in Pierre. The University of South Dakota had a satellite campus in Pierre and in 1990 Sue finished her course work and got her RN degree. She couldn't find a decent position as an RN in Pierre so she went to Sioux Falls, knowing that we'd soon be moving to Huron.



Dave, Kevin and Tom at Mt. Rushmore

the first Gulf War started. I was standing in the waiting area at the emergency room trying to watch TV while Sue kept trying to get me to come into the treatment room to watch them fix Kevin's finger.



One of the interesting experiences in Pierre - and one I wouldn't want again - was when I was the head coach for an "Odyssey of the Mind" team. Dave was in 6th grade and was selected to be on the team for his school so, because I'd never heard of Odyssey of the Mind, I was asked to coach a team. And because I'd never heard of Odyssey of the Mind I agreed! OM is kind of a cross between a science fair and speech meet and I had absolutely no

idea what I was getting into.

Each team was made up of 5 to 7 kids (we had 7) and there was a national rule book that listed that year's challenges (or long term projects). The teams could choose what project they wanted as their primary task. Our team chose a project, called "Give and Go" that required that they develop four separate devices to relay tennis balls from various locations in a 20 foot square area to an elevated basket or something like that. This had to be accomplished in 8 minutes and there was a \$75 limit on materials. So picture 7 really smart 6th grade kids (5 girls and 2 boys) reaching an agreement and then working together to figure this out. I was supposed to help and coach but couldn't do any of the planning or work. It was like herding cats. Now throw in another parent, the mother of one of the girls, who was the assistant coach and "couldn't help much" but had lots of ideas about how I should handle things. You can't imagine the amount of patience it took but the kids came up with a pretty good idea and were able to fabricate it.

I can't really remember if there was a local competition but we ended up going to Aberdeen on March 9th for the regional competition. In addition to the "long term" project which generated two scores, one rating how well the goal was achieved and another for style. Additionally through the day the kids had various sessions where they were given random challenges and they had an hour or so to come up with a solution. These were called "spontaneous" problems and could be written or hands-on. Then at the end of the day they competed with their "long term" problem. There was only one other team (from Huron) in our division (grades 6 to 8) and we came in second, but because the top two teams went on to state competition it was essentially a learning experience.

The state competition was in Pierre on April 6th where we were competing with 5 other teams. We placed first in the "long term" problem success and 3rd in "style" points but fell down in the



"spontaneous" category and ended up in 2nd place. I felt pretty good about that because the 1st place team had to continue to compete at the next level! My kids, being 6th graders were at the young end of the age spectrum for the division, they had made a respectable showing (the team from Huron that had beat us at the regionals only placed 5th) and *we didn't have to continue*. I don't know if my nervous system could have handled another month of that.