



Gary DeNeal photo

Guy A. DeNeal's red barn stands on DeNeal Road across from the DeNeal Building Supply he founded in 1966.

Memories of Rudement

Billy Paul Ewell

If you travel south from Harrisburg on Route 145, you will go through Mitchellsville. Turning southeast on Route 34, traveling east you will come to a small village named Rudement.

From my boyhood home near Rudement, it is ten miles to the City of Harrisburg. Just before reaching Rudement, you will cross a small creek called Rudement Creek. That creek has a special place in my heart because it was in this creek that I was Baptised — along with three other candidates for baptism. The Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church at Mitchellsville used the creek frequently for baptisms.

After crossing over the bridge, you will see the sign that says “Rudement” and the “45 miles per hour” sign. This Rudement sign immediately takes me back to the

years of growing up near the small village. The memories I have of that community and its people are awesome to me. I was born near there, at home. My parents are Virgle and Lola (Gibbs) Ewell.

My grandfather, John Henry Ewell, along with his wife, India Katherine (Partain) and 14 children moved there from a farm near Herod, Illinois. Upon moving to the 80-acre farm, my grandfather became very ill and passed away when my father was 14 years of age. I was told that my grandfather died from inhaling dust from seed they were cleaning.

The other brothers did not want to stay on the farm and went elsewhere to find their fortune. The grass looked greener on the other side. The girls married and left my father to tend the farm. He was only able to at-

tend school in the winter until it became necessary to leave school to tend the farm. He graduated from Rudement school at the age of 18 since he only attended about four months each year.

I remember his telling me about two teachers who played an important part of his life. A lady whose name was Nell Pate and a man named Guy A. DeNeal. He often spoke of the respect he had for each of the teachers and how they encouraged him.

Now, this brings me back to my formative years. I attended first grade at Rudement school when I was very, very young since there was no kindergarten. You must be reminded that this was a one-room schoolhouse which contained all eight grades. Two teachers at the school made a great impression on my life with memories I will never forget. My first teacher was Guy A. DeNeal who had also taught my father when he was young. "Mr. Guy" — as we were taught to call him — taught me for four years. During the time he was there, each morning we stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. I learned to respect him and others, and never to take what was not yours, and always to be honest. He did not accept anything less. I learned the multiplication tables by moving a picture of a car I cut from a magazine, across the chalk board to the finish line. All the students raced their cars to the finish line hoping to be first.

Mr. Guy played soft ball with us. Once, as we were playing, he fell to the ground. I ran over to him to see what was wrong and he said, "I'm just having a breathing problem. I can't get enough air. I will be alright. Don't get upset."

On Fridays, if we had been good students and had not caused any problems and had all our lessons done on time, in the afternoon he would bring his own screen and movie projector and would show *Rin Tin Tin* movies. Different mothers would bring popcorn and Kool Aid for us. I need to say that this man took the same amount of time with each student. He always made you feel that you were special. You could discuss your problems with him and know he would keep your secrets.

After he moved on to another position, my father became a member of the school board. The school board met and interviewed a younger man whose name was Kestner Wallace. My father liked him very much and recommended that the school board hire him. They hired

him. He was my teacher the last four years of my journey through Rudement School. Each morning we opened the school day by standing and repeating the pledge to the flag and singing "God Bless America." He asked Dolores Wilson (Stuby) if there was a student who played the piano. She told him that I did and he asked me to play piano for the opening exercise. I soon learned respect for this new teacher. He was very honest and very supportive of each of us and encouraged each of us to do our very best to accomplish what we wanted to be. At the first of each week, he would lead in a prayer. I often spoke with him about all the problems of growing up. And again, he would pray with me. While he was teaching at Rudement School he was dating his future wife. He would walk across the road to the Hosea Parks' grocery store to pick up his mail. If he got a letter from her, he would jump the fence back to the school yard and would be smiling.

I need to mention that during the early years of my schooling, there was a grocery store just across the highway to the south of the school. Hosea Parks was the owner. I was very awed by all the tools, saws, groceries and especially the ice cream. There was an ice house that sat on the outside where we were able to obtain blocks of ice for our ice box. Dad would purchase a square block of ice and we wrapped it in burlap sacks and old rugs to keep it from melting before we got it home. The ice was placed on a top compartment of metal which

would drain into a pan at the bottom of the ice box. This kept the milk and other foods cool. The ice box itself was made of wood with shelves to hold the food.

So now, when I approach the "Rudement" sign and the "45 mile per hour" I slow up, remembering these two great examples of what I needed to become what I am today. Sometimes I stop and pull off on the south side of the road and reflect on the past which was such an important part of my life.

I regret that I do not have a picture of the old school building that is no longer there. The grocery store is also long gone with its gravity flow gas pumps.

Now when I visit the Block House Cemetery where my grandparents on the Ewell side of my family are buried, I always touch the headstone of Mr. Guy and say, "Thank you for believing in me."

Rudement was a great place in which to grow up. It still holds a warm place in my heart.



Photo provided by Gary DeNeal
Hosea Parks' store stood across Illinois Route 34 from the Rudement School just west of the Rudement Church.