

(Editor's Note: Minneota teacher Aaron Cheadle had students write about their life living in Minneota, in honor of the poet, writer who brought Minneota notoriety — Bill Holm. The Mascot will print three of these essays beginning this week).

By Carley Novotny

Time is an unforgiving creature with wings.

It slows for no one. It flaps its wings and soars, weaving through lives and people and places — changing them.

And among these is Minneota, Minnesota.

When I was nine years old, my family moved to Minneota, the native land of my parents, where they went to school and grew up.

At the time, I was so happy to be coming to live in Minneota.

I was sad to leave Mankato, but excited at the prospect of this small town where my favorite cousins lived and where there seemed to be an endless supply of happiness.

That feeling, however, would change over the years, along with most other things.

We moved into a house that stood on one of the most perfect places in all Minneota. Built in 1912, it was an old house, on an old farm site, with an old barn and two small sheds. To the east, there was a field growing with beans, and to the south, another growing with alfalfa.

A gravel road ran past our house and between these two fields, eventually turning into a dead end.

There were many mornings when my sister and I would wake early, dress quickly and head out across that gravel road into the alfalfa toward our cousins' house, which stood on the other side of the field.

Our jeans would be soaked through all the way up to the knees with dew when we finally emerged on the other side, but children never mind that sort of thing much.

In the years to come, the city would demand that gravel road be paved and the alfalfa field turned into several lots on which new houses could be built — a new addition to the town of Minneota.

Before I knew it, the gravel had turned to black top.

One day, the foundation of a new house was sitting where the field used to be. The house was promptly finished and another new foundation was there.

Then, another and another.

And within a couple years' span, the Ousman Addition was complete and filled with houses.

There is a river in Minneota. It's called the Yellow Medicine.

At one point it passes the football field and a bridge lies over it.

On one side of the bridge, the river was once enclosed by trees — endless trees it seemed, when you were young.

I used to go down to that river with Audrey on summer afternoons.

When the water was high, we would sit amid those endless trees and let our feet dangle in the water. Or, when the water was low enough, we would walk across the protruding rocks at the

bottom of the river, humming and singing whatever song it was we couldn't get out of our heads that day.

It was the place I always wanted to go to on my birthday, just to sit there with the trees and the water and the flowers, just to throw sticks into the river and watch them float helplessly away — the place where I'd nearly lost so many flip-flops.

And the trees are gone now, replaced by rocks, hundreds of rocks. It's no longer the adventurous place it was for me as a child. It's rather stoic.

I once had a dream that I fell into that river. I floated for days.

At first, it was floating between the banks of rock, but as the days passed, I began to see trees around me.

When the river finally let me off, I was at the house.

I was at my house the way it used to be: gravel road, alfalfa field, no houses ... cosmically, nostalgically, dreamily, poetically, incandescently, sweetly beautiful.

The only thing that was different was myself. I was no longer the child I had been.

So now, as I get older, the vision of my home, the way it once was, remains in my memory as a portrait of loveliness, but more importantly, as a longing — a longing for the things time flew away with.

That picture remains in my mind, never changing, never changing.