

My High School Encounter with Daylight Saving Time

By James R. Bainter

It was back in my teen years, 1952, when I was in the 10th grade living in a small Midwest town. The town had a population of three thousand or so inhabitants. This town was a one-factory town where my parents worked and the inhabitants of one-factory towns usually did as the factory management dictated. Many farmers surrounded the town and farmers were very independent people. The factory/farmer student mix in my class was about 50/50.

Daylight Saving Time was a city option during this time. It was a very confusing time. Many people, including my relatives, shopped in the various adjacent towns in a twenty-mile radius. In April, of each year, each town would make a decision to either go on Eastern Daylight Saving Time (EDST) or stay on Eastern Standard Time (EST). So when my relatives went shopping the first thing I would hear them ask is “I wonder what time such and such town is on. Do you know?” This was very important item to know back then because the stores did not stay open late into the evening and the stores may be closed by the time you arrived if you thought they were on EST.

The factory for many years had always told their employee’s, in the spring, to start work an hour earlier in the morning so that the people could enjoy the extra hour of daylight in the evening.

In 1952 this marked a year of change, as this year the factory told their employee’s to set their clocks ahead one hour Sunday evening before going to bed, EDST had arrived for the factory employee’s and their families.

Well it didn’t quite work out so well for the community. Many of the businesses in town had farmers for customers and the farmers, being independent as they are, decided they were going to stay on EST along with their cows, pigs, and chickens. Why even one farmer told me, “Even the corn stays on EST.” It was his way of telling me that corn has no idea about time zones and hands on a clock, only when the sun rises and sets.

I worked at one of the local supermarkets after school and their big customers were farmers, so guess what time their clocks were on, your right, EST. In fact all stores that had lots of farmer customers stayed on EST and stores that catered to factory people set their clocks on EDST.

As for my High School they just didn’t know what to do at first, since they had a 50/50 mix of farmer/student enrollment. After much debate and sole searching, so as not to favor anyone or hurt anyone’s feelings, they set all the school clocks midway between EST and EDST.

I awakened in the morning on DST and on my way to school set my watch back a half-hour upon arriving at school, so as to be on time. After school, on my way to the supermarket, I set my watch back another half-hour so that no farmer would see my watch and think I was “One of those idiots.” After work on my way home, I set my watch ahead a full hour so that I would be on our home/factory DST and not be an idiot at home.

It became quite a battle between the farmer/factory store owners. Each store window was posted as to the clock setting inside the business. The factory employee’s would not do business with a “slow time businesses” and conversely farmers would not do business with “fast time businesses.” The “TIME” was the first topic of conversation when people met on Saturday night in town. Saturday nights were always, in the past, happy times but now the topic of “TIME” made people uneasy and ready to fight and speak badly of the “wrong timers.”

Everyone in my hometown was relieved when fall arrived so that the whole town could get back on EST. and everyone was ready to take a “blood oath” to never, ever set their clocks on Daylight Saving Time again.

Well, I moved to Arizona where we keep our clocks on Mountain Standard Time all year and the people there have the good sense to know that they can’t and don’t want to save time. In fact in Arizona, I would not be surprised to hear someone suggest that we should go on “Daylight Wasting Time.” I say leave the clocks alone!