

Annandale Days

I had a paper route in Annandale for four-and-a-half years. I had to fib about my age because you were supposed to be ten years old and I was only nine. I took the route over with 54 customers but managed to grow it to 84 customers. I did this by going one mile out of town to the north and one mile out of town to the west.

I knew the majority of people in town, so some days I could do the route in less than an hour and sometimes it would take me three hours because of talking to the customers. I remember customers giving me homemade bread, cookies, etc. I remember that the paper cost 35 cents per week, not including Sundays, when I started and it went to 42 cents shortly after I started. That gave me a lot of eight-cent tips, although many tipped me more than that. I also remember Christmas tips over \$100, which was nice.

I made a deal with my father that I would buy an above-ground pool with my paper route savings if he would maintain it. He agreed but I think he got the short end of the deal! Overall, delivering papers was a great experience and I always had some money in my pocket, although I saved much of it.

Jim Bird lived on West Street in Annandale from 1948 until 1972, when he and his wife, Sue, bought a house in Washington Township. They stayed there until Jim retired in 2006 after 41 years with the Jersey Central Power and Light Company. After trying Florida for three years, Jim and Sue moved to Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, about 20 miles south of Myrtle Beach. They are a couple miles from the ocean and like it there very much.

The clambakes in Farrington's Lumber Yard were at the end of the summer for the employees and their families. We were very close to the Emery's—4 kids in that family, too—so there was someone for everyone!

The only drink served was birch beer, which I detest, but the food and games were fun! We played kick-the-can. It was pretty unstructured and without rules, but all seemed to enjoy it.

I remember the smell of freshly-cut lumber was so overwhelmingly beautiful. In retrospect, the lumber yard was probably not the best place for kids to play around, but hey, we never even had seatbelts back then or infant car seats! The baby would ride in a “car bed” on the floor of the back seat!

Ruth (Alice Manning) Clark lived on Maple Avenue from 1949 until 1972, when she graduated from Rutgers College of Nursing. After living in Boston for 12 years, she returned to New Jersey, where she lives outside Hackettstown (the home of M&Ms!) with her husband, and continues her career as a school nurse.

All the kids in third through eighth grades rode the bus to school up on Belvidere Avenue. To get the bus, we had to walk to the brick school on the south end of town. We walked down West Street, then turned right before old red-framed schoolhouse and past the playground to the brick school, which housed kindergarten through second grade. We lined up on the covered portico and waited for the buses to pick us up.

The brick school had an awesome gymnasium, complete with built-in seating that looked over the basketball court. I played basketball on the 7th and 8th grade teams. Girls’ basketball was quite different then. Each team had six players: three forwards and three guards. The forwards stayed on one end of the court and the guards on the other end. Neither group was allowed to cross the center line. A player had three choices when she got the ball: pass, shoot, or dribble it no more than three times during which time you could move.

Mrs. Jane Pederson was our coach and we had lots of practices in the gym after school. Sometimes, when practice was over, I’d put a small stone in the doorway so the door wouldn’t completely latch and lock when closed. Obviously, no one ever checked the door because my friends and I would return later and practice more until it was too dark to see in the gym. We never turned on any lights, in case the neighbors might take notice. And, we never got caught!

That gymnasium was also the place I frequented for other activities. My mom was the local Girl Scout leader and our troop met there for our weekly

evening meeting. I remember working on badges as well as learning the Girl Scout pledge and laws under Mom's tutelage.

Sherry (Young) Szymanski lived on West Street across from the church from 1958 to 1963. After a long career teaching elementary school in south Jersey, she moved to Sparks, Nevada. She splits her time between there and Elberton, Georgia.

In my kindergarten year, Clinton Township School used the basement of the Church for my class. (This would never be allowed in today's times!) I guess there were so many kids and they didn't have room in the little red school house and brick school.

I remember the school Halloween parade, putting our costumes on and walking through the town, all the parents lining the street and whoopin' it up. There was a school trip where we walked up to the railroad station on Main Street, when it was actually open and functional. Another one was to the florist on East Street.

First and second grades were in the brick school. I never got to have a year in the little two room schoolhouse, but my brother did. Back in those days, we had to walk a mile to school in the snow and rain; both coming and going were uphill. Good Times!

Scott Olsen grew up in Annandale from ages 5 to 18 (1965 to 1978) at 5 West Street, across from the post office and fire station. He loves those houses that were built in the late 1800s that had basements, two living floors, and attics. The houses in Florida, where he now lives, aren't like that!

My grandmother, Grace Patterson, who lived next to us in the smaller brick house on West Street, was the Avon Lady for the town. She used to keep items that her customers purchased in stock so that when someone needed something, they would come see her. Back then, you had to travel quite a distance to shop for anything other than what a pharmacy, grocery store, or 5 & 10 had. She enjoyed the company.

You would usually see her and her customers sitting on her front porch talking when the weather was nice. She would sit on her front porch a lot and always watched for Gary Deckhut, who was going to school to be a mortician. She wanted to know all the details of what he was learning!

When my grandmother passed away in 1961, my mother, Margaret Bird, took over as Annandale's Avon Lady. She worked as a nurse and wasn't home that much, so people had to give her orders for what they wanted and she would place the orders about once a month. Now that my Mom is gone, I am the third generation Avon Lady for the community. (I only live 10 minutes from Annandale.) Of course, now people can order it themselves online and there are so many more companies selling this type of product, but it's fun to see how Avon has changed over the years.

Peggy (Bird) Weightman

We were probably ten years old at the time. We were the big hunters. Three of us decided we were going foxhunting up High Bridge Road. I built my own bow and arrow out of a stick and some string, arrows out of a dowel, and cut out arrowheads from tin cans. As soon as the arrow flew about 20 feet and hit something, the arrow point bent over, but we were big hunters.

We also made a couple of torches to smoke out the foxes from their holes. We hunted for a while and tried to smoke out a fox, but no luck. Soon we gave up and decided to go home. As we looked back at the field where we had hunted, all we saw was smoke from the field fire we had accidentally set. We ran all the way back to the firehouse that was on West Street, pulled the alarm, and the firemen went and put out the fire. We were great hunters.

David Frace was born on Gobel's farm, which used to be across from the high school. He was the last baby to be delivered at home by Dr. Boyer. David lived on Center Street from 1942 until 1954, when his family moved to the tenant house on Austin farm on Beaver Avenue. After high school and a stint in the Army, David began a long career working with computers. He now lives in Bel

Air, Maryland, about fifteen miles north of Baltimore, where he works at his second career: umpiring softball and baseball games.

Bong-bong, bong-bong, bong-bong. The sound of the church bell from the Dutch Reformed Church filled my bedroom every Sunday morning. Bong-bong, bong-bong, bong-bong. Why couldn't we have found a house on the other side of town? The quieter side. Why'd we have to live RIGHT ACROSS from the church?

Maybe it was God's way of bringing us to his doors. You know, keep them close and don't let them forget what day it is and what they're supposed to be doing. That bell—that damn bell—wasn't going to let us sleep, and it wasn't going to let us forget, either.

It would have been fine had I enjoyed the whole church experience, but I didn't. Sitting still and being quiet was hard enough, but wearing paper-thin pants and a noose around your neck was just too much. About the only thing going for it was seeing my friends: Dennis, David, Craig, Rudy P., Jimmy V. We were an active group to put it mildly and a handful for any Sunday School teacher. But, when the church service came and we were dispersed to our parents to sit for another hour in the musty air of the sanctuary punctuated by old-lady perfume, we became subdued.

I considering feigning sickness on many Sunday mornings, but thought better of it as I would have the whole afternoon to play if I just went along with the program. My only respite came when my grandparents visited and my grandfather would concoct a "mission" for the two of us to go on. Off we'd go in his Plymouth, him with his Old Spice aroma, me with my dungarees and sneakers. We'd always get back in time for the hot meal Mom served at noon.

In my grandfather's aversion to church, it seems we had a common bond. It would be a bond that we'd share for the rest of his life.

Robert (Bob) Young lived on West Street from 1958 to 1963. He is an author of children's books, a writing consultant to schools, and a retired teacher. Robert

lives in Lowell, Oregon, a small town near Eugene at the southern end of the Willamette Valley. The town is the same size of Annandale.

We lived on Maple Avenue, a quiet shaded street with lots of old trees and sidewalks. There were mostly young families with many young children living there then. We would gather in front of our houses after dinner and play together, biking, roller skating, flying kites and generally relaxing before darkness set in.

On one of these summer evenings, we were startled to hear several loud gunshots coming from the end of our street, and we all hurried down to the corner to see what was going on. There was old Mr. Kostenbader, rifle in hand, shooting at a bunch of starlings that had decided to roost in his big old trees surrounding his property. Mr. Kostenbader, who seemed to us to be a grumpy old man, had had it with these starlings, which were making a mess of the sidewalks and he wasn't going to take it lying down any more. He was muttering with each shot, something about damned birds pooping on his sidewalks. There must have been many hundreds of birds taking their places there each evening, and the sidewalks really were disgusting, so we were on his side. BAM!! would go the gun, we all cheered as the birds rose as one and left the trees. Of course, one minute later, they were all back again. BAM! would go the gun again, cheers on all sides, and the birds left again only to return forthwith. This went on until dark descended and we all had to take our broods off to bed.

This continued for what seemed like weeks, until we all got tired of it, including the starlings, and the summer's entertainment on Maple Avenue was over for the season. I recall this happened only one summer. The birds must have passed the word to stay away from Maple Avenue, as it was crowded with an angry old man and many nutty gun-happy residents.

Margaret (Peg Dyer) Haake lived on East (Back) St. from 1959 to 1961. From 1961 to 1976 she lived on Maple Avenue. Although she now lives south of Clinton, her postal address is still Annandale, which suits her. Other than the addition of an area code, her telephone number has remained unchanged since the 1961 move to Maple Avenue.