

# Annandale Days

August, 2015

Playing baseball at the Creamery filled many summer days for boys in Annandale. It was fun and exciting, but the action wasn't always on the field.

One day while we played, we noticed a kid—a teenager—walking along High Bridge Road toward town. Although no one seemed to recognize him, we didn't think much of it. After all, he could have been a new kid living out on High Bridge Road, or maybe he was from High Bridge and walking to town to visit someone. If we needed more players, we probably would have asked him to join us.

There was something about that kid, though, and it didn't take us long to figure out what it was. It was his clothes: he wore long pants and a shirt, both faded blue in color. The kind of clothes the prisoners wore in the Reformatory nearby.

The game stopped and we all huddled. That's when someone recalled hearing the Reformatory whistle blow earlier in the day. The kid walking along the road must have escaped!

Bobby Lindstrom was smart and practical. He suggested we call the cops, so we ran to my house and did just that. Too excited to play ball, we decided to follow the kid to see what happened.

Keeping a safe distance, we followed him up West Street then down Eick's Hill and along Maple Avenue. As we walked, we imagined the scene that would soon take place: cars with sirens roaring in and surrounding the kid, cops with pistols drawn, a man with a megaphone demanding surrender or else.

What we saw when we got to the end of Maple Avenue was something else. We saw a single cop car in front of Humphrey's Store, the cop opening the back door, the kid getting in, and the car driving away. That was it.

Ready for real action, we headed back up to the Creamery to finish our game.

David Voorhees stuck around Annandale for a year after high school, then set out for California in 1970 to experience the West Coast. He returned after three years and has lived in Hunterdon County since, the last thirty-two years in a house he built in Pittstown. David is married (Bonnie Little) with two grown children (Amy and Brett). He works as a self-employed building contractor in the Clinton Township area.

At the Annandale Reformed Church, June 7<sup>th</sup> is Children's Day, which brings back a lot of memories for me. Starting at about 3 to 5 years of age, everyone in our Sunday school classes had to learn what they called "pieces" (little sayings that were part of an overall Bible story). As we got older, we would have bigger parts or maybe sing, either as a group or solo.

On the Saturday before Children's Day, some of us (Mary Frace, Dodie Ader, Midge Sosnowski and myself, to name a few) would take wagons around town and gather flowers from the townspeople to decorate the church for our Special Day. Most of the flowers were peonies in pink, red and white and they made the front of the church look and smell beautiful.

Most of the Sunday School children would dress up in their finest clothes with their hair combed nice, and usually bows in the girl's hair. It was so cute to see the youngest ones play with their dresses, their hair, or their neckties. Because they were so nervous, some were so scared that they would just stand there and cry.

The church would be packed with parents and relatives and people from town on that very special day, which was usually the last day of Sunday School for the year. The tradition of Children's Day continues to this day.

Peggy (Bird) Weightman was a Sunday School teacher for many years and still goes to Annandale Reformed Church.

I recently read an article about "free range parenting" where parents would allow their children at early ages to walk and play independently without any

specific adult supervision. While the article touched numerous nerves, it was certainly reminiscent of how most, if not all of us, were reared in Annandale.

There are countless examples in my and my siblings memories of being allowed to leave the house early on summer days and not return home sometimes until dinner time. We somehow were able to find enough change in our collective pockets to lunch on a Devil Dog and bottle of soda from either Harvey's or Humphrey's. Most of the time it required us to have our bikes in operable condition to get from home to point A to point B and then back home again the same day.

The "playground" of Annandale was the entire town. Be it the sand pits and lumberyard at Farrington's or the creek at Beaver Brook, there was always a quorum of guys willing to play ball, build and race "buggies" down any and every street with a slope, or dig for worms in order to go fishing.

As we got older and probably bolder, we would even venture to the movies at Clinton Point for a thirty-five cent matinee, assuming of course, you could maneuver your bike across route 31. The ride home after the movies always seemed far longer and certainly more uphill than the trek to the theater. Norman Kiefer was the perennial movie manager who kept law and order while the "hooligans" enjoyed the cool, dark theater on hot summer Saturdays since it was probably one of few places within bicycle-commuting distance with an air-conditioned environment.

I can't remember any time when any of these adventures included parental supervision. Of course, there was the "Grey Y" somewhat organized basketball games in the evening at the old brick Annandale Elementary School, and countless attempts to organize Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Explorers groups that certainly had adult supervision. But, these organized groups never quite matched the impromptu, vicarious activities that occupied hours, days and weeks of unsupervised fun.

Thinking back at the lessons we all learned and how those lessons translated into habits and priorities in my adult life, I believe I owe a lot of how I operate on a daily basis, how I have parented our own offspring, and what I value in my current neighborhood, to my upbringing in Annandale. The times were certainly different, but my wife and I pretty much adopted the "free range

parenting" approach to preparing our children for the complex world in which they live. Annandale was a "lab school" for child-rearing, not so much for the programs it provided but rather the safe and creative environment it afforded all of us, if not by design, certainly by default.

Rudy Papenfuhs lived on Roosevelt Ave from 1950 until 1965, when he moved to Pittstown after his parents divorced. He resided with siblings through high school, then went to Kansas State University and graduated with a degree in Biochemistry. He went on to graduate school, earned a Masters and two doctorate degrees before teaching and becoming a high school principal. Married for 38 years, he has two married daughters and is living the good life!

I experienced growing up in Annandale from not one but three different locations. My life began in the tenant house on Beaver Brook Farm. My father worked on the farm at the time. I have many memories from living there: playing with the animals, the team of horses that plowed the fields, the first tractor, home deliveries by the ice man, fish man, milk man, and Jave's Bakery. The telephone was a "party line" meaning there were several families using the one line. Sometimes you had to wait your turn to use the phone and sometimes people would listen in on your conversation. The Great Depression took place while we were living on the farm, but we always had plenty of food. I remember when World War II was over and the sirens sounded when the Germans surrendered.

When I was around seven, we moved to the Goble Farm across from where North Hunterdon High School is now. There was no bus service so I had to walk to the Annandale School everyday. We walked along a little country road—Allerton Road—that still leads to the school today.

Later, we moved into town in a house alongside Beaver Brook and next to what was Lindy's Tavern, now Cryans. I fished a lot in Beaver Brook, which ran along what is now Route 78. I also used to shoot snakes, ground hogs, and crows in the fields. I went to school in the Annandale Brick Schoolhouse, then what is now the Little Red Schoolhouse next to the current post office. The last two years we had school in the church Sunday School room. Growing up, I did what most of the other kids in down did: kick-the-can at the lumberyard, baseball at the Creamery, sleigh-riding down Center Street.

I left Annandale to go into the Army right after graduating from North Hunterdon.

Byron (By) Weightman moved back to Annandale after two years in the Army, got a job at New Jersey Power & Light Co., and eventually married Peggy Bird from town. They built a house in Lebanon Township, ten minutes away from Annandale, and still live there. By and Peggy continue to attend the Annandale Reformed Church, and they enjoy discussing the “old times” in Annandale.

In post-WW II America, our country’s role in the war was a source of pride and nationalism. You could see this play out in movies and on TV, in the toys sold, and the games kids played.

If there was anything that could compete with the joy of playing sports for me, it was the excitement of playing Army. Fortunately, Wayne Sheets lived next door. He was the perfect leader: three years older, bigger, stronger, and he carried an incredible knowledge of all things Army. Billy Cramer was second in command. Besides his knowledge, Billy had a great knack for staying in character and carrying out Wayne’s orders.

With descriptive narrative and the authentic sounds of bullets and bombs, the two of them transported recruited neighborhood kids to another time and place, where evil and danger lurked around every barn and behind every bush. We were all on the same side—Americans, of course—with the enemies, the Germans and Japanese, well-hidden and always close.

Wayne let us borrow his extra Army equipment—belts, canteens, helmet liners—until we got our own at Army/Navy stores or the gun shows Rev. Runge took us to. My most prized possessions were a real WWII bayonet (which I still have) and my M-1, an authentic-looking toy rifle with bolt action. I must have snapped that bolt open and closed thousands of times.

Wayne and Billy put us through training and led us on missions that took us out of our lower West Street neighborhood. We fought battles in the woods below Eick’s Hill and the gravel piles across the street from the lumberyard. Yes, there were casualties (as designated by Wayne and Billy) but we prevailed in every conflict.

In time, we all moved on: to schoolwork, organized sports, girls. In our play, we had learned some discipline and the value of cooperation. What we didn't learn was the horrors of war or the continual nature of world conflict. Those, we would learn later.

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.