

Annandale Days

December, 2014

Mischief Night is the night before Halloween, and when you were around ten years old you were allowed out for maybe an hour or so to soap windows (as long as it wasn't the next door neighbors). You could throw toilet paper around, but you couldn't be destructive. And, you always had to watch out for "Brownie" the Cop.

"Brownie" was actually Mr. Brown, who was the only township police officer we had. So, while you were in the process of soaping a car and you saw lights coming down the street, you had to duck real quick just in case it was "Brownie." That was really most of the fun: avoiding "Brownie."

"Brownie" had a new spotlight that he could shine all over from his car so you had to be really careful. We'd duck behind a car as he slowly went by with his big spotlight and hold our breath, wondering what he would do to us if we got caught and how mad our parents would be. There really was no question that if "Brownie" took us home we had been bad and we were gonna get it. So, instead of going all over town soaping windows and hanging toilet paper for an hour of sheer terror, we were usually home in 30 minutes terrified that "Brownie" was gonna get us!

Sue (Long) Engle lived in Annandale from 1957 until 1969, in a green house at the top of Center Street. It had a big porch that was great for playing on when it rained. She met Bob Engle in high school (class of '67) and they have been married for 45 years. They have four fabulous grown children and eight wonderful grandchildren. Sue was a stay-at-home mom for 18 years then went back to work in the newspaper advertising field. Sue and Bob are both retired and enjoy puttering around in their vegetable garden and flowerbeds. Their golden retriever puppy keeps them very busy!

One of my favorite memories of growing up in Annandale was sleigh riding down East Street, which is where I lived. A number of kids in town used to sleigh

ride on Center Street because that street would be blocked off to vehicles. Our street was not, but we had lookouts to watch for traffic.

While we were under a certain age (I'm guessing around 10 or 11), we could only go as far as what was referred to as the "lower hill". That was the point where East Street curved slightly, then continued up to Main Street. It was a true rite of passage when you were old enough to go all the way to the "upper hill", or top of the street. There was always one person stationed at the lower hill to watch for traffic, one person at the top of the hill to stop cars from going down after all the sleigh riders had started down and one person at the bottom of the street to stop cars from going up. None of the drivers ever had a problem with stopping to let us through. The lookouts were quite often parents or some of the older kids. Of course, people took turns so everyone had a chance to have some fun.

We sometimes went down individually, but quite often made a train where each person would put their feet into the front of the sled behind them. The person in the front had control of whether we went straight or zig-zagged like a snake. The person at the tail end would always get the worst of it when we went "snaking" down the street as they got whipped back and forth quite a bit! When we got down to the bottom, we normally turned into Khron's parking lot so we wouldn't wind up going out onto Beaver Avenue and take a chance of getting hit by a car.

The worst part was getting to the bottom and having to walk back up! Occasionally we would get lucky and a neighbor would be driving up the street and offered to give us a "ride". One person (usually one of the older kids) would hook the rope of their sled onto the bumper of the car and we would all hook our feet into the sled behind us as we did going down. I'm sure this wasn't the safest of things to do, but no one ever got hurt and the driver of the car always took care of the "passengers." Depending on who was driving the car, it didn't always get us all the way to the top, but it saved us a few steps!

Mary (Whitely) McGraw lived at 34 East Street from the early '50s until 1971 when she married and moved to Hampton and then Phillipsburg. She had two children before divorcing in 1985 and beginning a career in office management, during which she worked for the Journal of Commerce/Transax Division, Catholic Charities, and Lehigh County Assistance. In 2001, Mary

married Don McGraw, and they moved to Pennsylvania. Happily retired now, she and Don have time to enjoy their six children and 18 grandchildren.

When I moved to Annandale it was the summer I turned 10 years old. My brother was three years younger. So when my parents went out for the evening Peggy Bird was hired to be our babysitter. She was the best! She was in high school and I thought she was so grown up. I loved listening to her talk to her boyfriend, By, on the phone after she thought I had gone to bed. When I giggled and teased her about him, she knew I wasn't where I was supposed to be. Peggy was my inspiration to be a babysitter when I got older. I couldn't wait!

My first experiences were watching the Fillingham boys during the day when their mom had to go into town to shop. My first night job was for the Vandermarks who lived just behind us. Leann was only a baby and I loved playing with her and taking care of her. Unfortunately, one night after she was sound asleep in her bed, I began watching a scary movie on TV. It was called The House of Wax. It really spooked me and I was even afraid to go upstairs to check on the baby. Believe me: I never watched scary movies while babysitting again.

My babysitting jobs increased steadily including the Farbers and the VanArsdales. My best friend, Sharon Emery, had her regular customers, too, and often we would sit together to keep each other company at the Greens or the Dyers. I was paid 50 cents an hour for my services and thought that was spectacular!

Once, a new family moved in on Maple Avenue and the first time I sat for them I told them my rates included time and a half after midnight. I was tickled to death when they stayed out until one a.m. and I got an extra 25 cents. That particular family had a new fancy stereo and I certainly enjoyed playing the Theme from Peter Gunn quite loudly. I wonder what the neighbors thought of that?!!

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.

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THUNK.....

THUNK.....

If you think reading this is tedious, pity my poor parents. They had to listen to it. Endless hours of it. For years.

This is the sound of a hardball hitting a brick chimney. More accurately—it's the sound from behind the chimney, inside the house. Outside the house and 50 feet away, it's not nearly as loud.

But who cares? When you're 10-12 years old and pitching entire make-believe 9 inning games from a strip of dirt scratched into the grass to a strike zone chalked onto the chimney, you're not thinking about the sound. You're too busy trying to strike out [insert 1960-65 Major League star on team of your choice here—say, Al Kaline, the Detroit Tigers' slugging right fielder].

If nobody was around to pitch against you—no problem. You just pitched both sides. My side was usually the Yankees. If, say, Tom Scheier was available, and wanted to be the Yankees, that was okay. Tom lived a block away, over on Center Street. He was a year older, bigger and faster, a fine athlete, and lots of fun.

We lived on the corner of Maple Ave and Washington Street, across from the Coxes. Big Bob Manning lived three or four doors down on Maple Avenue. Although he was a few years older, one summer he spent some serious time with me in front of the chimney. Bob had a mission—to teach Pete Dyer how to throw a curve.

And he did it! I learned to throw a decent breaking ball, breaking down and to the left. What a thrill! This really upped my game, so to speak, and the hours of chimney thunk increased by an order of magnitude.

One day Bob and I were pitching batting practice to each other. Throwing a curve was one thing...hitting it was another thing altogether. At any rate, Bob could do both. He demonstrated this convincingly one afternoon when he

knocked one of my curve balls across Washington Street, shattering one of the Cox's windows! Home run!

I was frozen—near panic. What to do? The default option—running home—obviously was not available. The good news was, the Coxes were away.

Bob then taught me another lesson. He calmly walked to his house, came back with a tape measure, a piece of paper and a pencil and measured the window. As soon as his Dad came home from Farrington's, Bob told him about it and the window was fixed the next day. No problem. No harm done. Such a sensible response, devoid of drama, had simply not occurred to me.

I went away to school the next year. If, for my parents, it meant blessed silence, their relief was short-lived. My younger brother Jonathan was soon at it.

THUNK!

Peter Dyer was a wannabe major leaguer, living on East (Back) Street from 1959 to 1961, and on Maple Avenue from 1961 to 1970. (1967-1970 summers only). He is now a freelance writer, living in Wellington, New Zealand with his wife, Cathy.

I can't remember the years exactly, but I do remember the fun growing up on Center Street, with each summer day a new adventure. The one memory that stands out is the lumberyard: the endless alley ways, ladders climbing skyward, and the pure excitement each new imaginary caper brought.

I was the Army guy fighting the German Empire, the super hero saving my friends from the enemies' evil hands. It would be me and Carl Shutz, running and jumping for hours escaping from our foes. Then we would hop on our bikes, super duper high-performance Western Auto Specials, and jump the hill by the post office on Main Street.

We loved climbing the ladders up the sides of the lumberyard buildings, reaching the top, running along the roof enjoying the view of Annandale, and lying prone with our BB guns like snipers ready for the kill. We could see the Whitley's house, and Tom and Cy would become our targets.

Tom Scheier, Eric Hegstrom, the Ludwig brothers, and others all found their way to the lumberyard, but I'm not sure how many kids experienced the joy I found during the hours of exploring that place. The smell of the freshly cut lumber

was heaven to me, and the warehouse doors left ajar called me to enter and explore their contents, which I did until the light of day would begin to fade and the need for food would call me home.

Britt Long Lived on Center street from 1957 to 1967, near the top of the street by the old post office. He graduated from North in 1970, and went looking for the meaning of life. He tried college, but his inability to comprehend the written word shortened that attempt. Britt became a truck driver, then an owner-operator, hauling bulk chemicals. In 1993, he left the trucking business and started selling pre-owned cars at Flemington Car and Truck Country, where he still works today. Married for 38 years, he and his wife have two wonderful sons and two grandsons. Their oldest son is an English teacher at Central, as is his wife. Their youngest works in NYC, lives in Hoboken, and is living the dream.

My father, Clem Emery, worked at B.W. Farrington's, the lumberyard in town. We always looked forward to the annual clam bake for employees and their families. Early in the morning we'd go and set up tables and benches using lumber and cinder blocks. We would scrub clams and put them in cheesecloth bags holding a dozen clams each. The chicken, potatoes, and corn on the cob would also go into the steamers. Nothing like the flavor of those foods!

When my dad made deliveries for the lumberyard, sometimes he would pull up in front of our house on East Street and beep the horn. Either my brother, Randy, or I would run out and jump up in the truck and ride along with him (this was before insurance companies got strict about their regulations).

Larry Apgar, who lived on West Street, told me one day he missed his bus to school. As he was walking over to the high school my dad picked him up in the concrete mixer he was driving and drove Larry straight up to the front door of North Hunterdon Regional High School! Can you imagine that scene?

Sharon (Emery) Riddle

Each Christmas season the kids in my Sunday school class would be invited to trim the Christmas tree in the church. The tree was always large and it took many of us to do it, but we really enjoyed the process and made a fun time

of it. Still, at some point during the evening some of us would get bored and start fooling around.

One year, someone brought in a rubber ball and we decided to play catch. Some of us were upstairs in the balcony and some were down in the pews. As luck would have it, one of the throws to the balcony was thrown high. It sailed over our heads, out the door to the hallway, and right through the stained glass window in the front of the church, spreading glass all over the sidewalk. Boy, were we scared. Lucky for us, the church paid for the new window, but you can be sure we never played catch again in the church.

In addition to the trimming the tree, I enjoyed our Christmas pageants. We were each given a passage to memorize and recite in front of our parents attending the services. Once that was completed, Santa would arrive and give us each a small bible and a little box of assorted Lifesavers. Even today, as I shop in stores at Christmas, I always look in the candy section to see if I can find those same types Lifesaver boxes.

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 Army enlistment, 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