

Annandale Days

June, 2014

Time growing up in Annandale was marked by the long summers away from Clinton Township Schools and the responsibilities yet to come. Summer days started out with a quick phone call to friends and setting a time to meet at the Creamery baseball field, which was nothing more than an open field along High Bridge Road at the base of the old, abandoned creamery where milk used to be processed. Bob Lindstrom, David and Dennis Voorhees, Joey Apgar, many of the "Smith clan" of twelve-plus kids, Bob Young, Jim Van Arsdale, and many other a sundry guy who had nothing better to do for much of every day. Sure, many played Little League in High Bridge in the evening, but those games were far more formal with uniforms, real bases, bats, and a scoreboard.

But the Creamery games were far different. Teams were chosen and the basic rules were reinforced—if you hit a foul ball and it went into the swamp behind home plate, you had to wade in the muck and retrieve it! The field was seldom mowed unless some dads came by and ran a mower over it. Otherwise, it was usually ankle-high weeds. No one ever questioned our use of the field or declared it "off limits" because it was unsupervised. Disagreements were resolved between the players.

The games would end about the time people had to leave for supper, or when the street lights came on, whatever happened first. A lot of life was learned on that old Creamery field. It was a simpler, kinder world where no one ever heard of a microchip!.

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, which is what he is doing presently outside Kansas City, Missouri. Married for 38 years, he has two married daughters and is living the good life!

We had a huge maple tree in our side yard, between our house and the Sheets'. Because the tree was old and dangerous in windy weather, we decided to have it removed. Les Ader, our neighbor across the street, worked for the phone company and had lots of experience climbing and cutting trees. He agreed to take it down.

Les brought over his power saw got to work early one morning. As he sawed, people stopped by to watch. I started getting nervous about Les' safety, the roof of our porch, and the people watching so I decided to take a walk up town to the train station.

All the way up West Street I could hear the whine of the saw, and I pictured all the bad things that could happen: Les falling from the tree, the tree crashing down on our roof, branches falling on watchers. I kept walking until I could not hear the saw anymore.

When I returned to the house, the tree laid on the ground, exactly where Les said it would land. Our roof was still in tact, and nobody was injured. He did a great job!

Margaret (Peggy) Young lived on West Street from 1957 to 1963, then returned from 1969 to 1985. After retiring from the telephone company, she moved to Springfield, Oregon, where she enjoys volunteering, watching birds, and doing crossword puzzles.

During winter, when I was in grade school, the Braddee girls, some of the Da'Agastino boys, and I would walk the tracks toward Lebanon. Off to the left were a couple of open fields, and a hill that led to a small pond. It was a perfect place to ice-skate: surrounded by hills, the place was secret and safe. (Had we known the boys' reformatory was nearby, though, we wouldn't have thought that!)

By the time we got to the pond, we'd often be freezing so we'd gather some wood and make a fire. One afternoon, while standing too close to the fire, the wind shifted, and both of my pant legs caught fire. My first instinct was to run, but luckily my friends knocked me to the ground and threw snow on my pants to put out the fire.

I wasn't hurt, just worried what my mom would say. So, before I went home I stopped by a friend's house and cut the burnt parts off my pants so my mother wouldn't find out. And she didn't. When I got home, I told her I ripped them on a fence, and she bought it.

As an adult, I did come clean to her. It's funny now, but I was not laughing then.

Sue (Susie) Schermerhorn lived in Annandale from 1960 to 1983. Her family still owns the house at 59 West Street, across from the Creamery field. Sue now lives in Flemington and works for the YMCA as the assistant site director for the Before and Aftercare programs. She also puts on birthday parties at Thee Ice Cream Parlor and serves as advisor for her church youth group.

The one time of year I remember vividly is Halloween. Halloween in Annandale, since most everyone knew each other, was a really fun time. Kids and some adults would dress up in crazy costumes and go to people's homes, where they would try to guess who you were. We all knew who gave out the best treats, so those homes were really crowded. It was great fun to try to hide your identity from your neighbors.

It was also fun to be on the guessing side. When I was real young, I would be back home early enough to help try identify some of the people who were dressed up. I remember one person none of us could identify since he was disguised very well. Finally, I looked down and was able to recognize him by his shoes. Great fun!

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.

Around sixth or seventh grade I realized that girls didn't actually have cooties. Until then I lived, breathed and dreamed baseball.

Any form of the game would do. If nobody was around I might pick up a piece of lath and a handful of gravel from the Farrington's lot next door and play 9 inning games. Tossing a piece of gravel in the air with my left hand, I'd swing the lath. A miss was a strike. If I hit it, the distance determined the tally—into the trees at the edge of the lot was a home run.

I'd narrate, imitating Mel Allen, the New York Yankees sportscaster: "That ball is going, going, it is gone!"

If someone else was around, we'd have a catch. If there were three, that was enough for "pickle." A couple more and "flies and grounders" was an option. A few more and we could head over to the Creamery on upper West Street for a real game.

A real hardball was a precious item. When the stitching wore out and the horsehide flapped, we'd tape it up with black electrical tape.

On my tenth birthday, my friends came over for a party. Among the presents were four baseballs! I was rich!

Like other kids from town, I played in the North Hunterdon Little League. My years were 1962-65. The field was "over to High Bridge." Behind the field was the dirt road running parallel to the South Branch. Once in a while a foul ball would clear the backstop and bounce across the road into the water.

Opening Day of each season was a big deal—such a big deal they would play the old, scratchy record Perry Como had made especially for the North Hunterdon Little League. It wasn't a song—rather it was Perry Como reciting the Little League Pledge.

We thought it was pretty special that a big star had done this for our Little League. The story was he had a summer house somewhere in the area,

although I never met anyone who had the slightest idea where it was. I thought it might be one of those cabins up the Gorge.

The summer of 1964, Bob Manning taught me to throw a curve ball. One evening the next year our coach was pitching batting practice. At third base I picked up a grounder and threw a curve ball back to the coach. He immediately turned me into a pitcher. Because nobody in our league had ever faced a curve ball, I struck out a lot of kids as long as I was able to get the ball over the plate.

The father of one of my teammates, Joey Costello, was our barber. Mr. Costello would make a fuss when I came in for a hair cut, calling me Whitey, after Whitey Ford, the great New York Yankees pitcher, because I had blond hair. I loved it. He made me feel almost as important as Perry Como.

Peter Dyer was a wannabe major leaguer, living on East (Back) St 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.

One of our favorite things to do was to help the Boy's Reformatory guards. When a boy escaped from the reformatory, the guards would set off the siren, and everyone in town would hear it. My friends and I would wait a while and then venture down High Bridge Road to the railroad overpass. A guard would be standing there to make sure that the escapee was not hitching a ride on the train.

It seemed like the guards who got stationed at the overpass were always hungry. They'd ask us to go over to Bowman's store on Main Street to get them something, and they'd let us buy something for ourselves, too. It was a real treat to get to buy some candy with somebody else's money!

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.

One early December evening I arrived at the Fillingham household to babysit for Michael and Freddie while their parents went Christmas shopping. I had a quick chat with Janet who gave me directions on bedtime and such. She disappeared and I went looking for the boys.

I found Michael in one of the rooms downstairs busy crafting a snow scene on a piece of cardboard. He was gluing cotton to it and right beside him was a lit candle. Just like that, the cotton burst into flames.

I can't really remember what happened next but I know I ran into the kitchen and grabbed a pan of water and rushed back to douse the fire. Janet (luckily) was still there and saw me running with the water and no doubt yelling something. She took over and made sure the fire was completely out and reminded Michael he wasn't to be lighting candles.

Then, just like that, she was off to her shopping trip. Believe me, the rest of the night I kept smelling smoke and imagining flames licking up the walls. I was traumatized but it never phased the boys. They continued what they were doing, however not by candlelight!

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.