

# Annandale Days

October, 2014

There's so much I remember about Annandale: what a wonderful place it was to live (although I did not appreciate it at the time), and so many memories. As a kid, I thought I knew everyone in town but probably did not. I had a paper route, the Plainfield Courier News, from 4th grade until I went into high school.

Delivering the paper was a hate/love relationship. I made a small amount of money, but every afternoon it was the same old grind. I think I delivered to about 50 customers, and I divided them into two routes. I'd load 25 newspapers into the canvas bag at a time, put it on the front of my bike, and off I would go.

I used to time myself to see how fast I could complete the route. On Saturdays I'd try to collect. I still remember my frustration of people not paying, some weeks on end. Even when I didn't get paid by my customers, I still had to pay for the papers, so some weeks I lost money. That was my first lesson in economics.

David Frace delivered the Easton Express in town and we had a friendly competition for customers (I believe he had more). Still, we knew each other's routes and would help each other when needed.

Bill Sherman grew up on Center Street and lived in Annandale from 1945 until 1962, when he left to attend the University of Montana to become a "forest ranger." After graduation and a stint in the Army, during which time he was married (and still is), Bill worked in insurance and higher ed. before settling into a career as a high school guidance counselor. Bill retired early at age 57 and has been enjoying his "life after employment" from his home in East Windsor, N.J.

Before every Mother 's Day and Easter, I went to Krohn's Nursery over on Back Street. They had one greenhouse that ran alongside their house. When you walked in the front door of the greenhouse you had the check-out area, and once you passed that, colors and smells opened up and it was like walking into a another world: rows and rows of beautiful green plants.

It was often hard to determine which plant I wanted to buy Mom. As I would look around, Mrs. Krohn would help me select the plant and I was thankful for her help even though Mom would be happy no matter which plant I gave her. Mrs. Krohn would always reduce the price for us neighborhood kids.

I remember little about Mr. Krohn as he was always working with the plants and outside the greenhouse. The Krohn's had a daughter, Ruthie, who was a couple years older than myself, and they may have had a son, too.

Mr. Krohn got into trouble one time over a dog. The dog was mean and would come around the nursery. Mr. Krohn told the owner to keep the dog leashed. When the dog kept coming around unleashed, Mr. Krohn finally took out his gun and shot it. The dog didn't die, but Mr. Krohn had to pay the medical bills.

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

It was our family habit on Christmas Eve to attend Midnight Mass. We had recently moved to Maple Avenue and would be attending church in Washington New Jersey. We had 3 young children in tow, all of whom were getting toys that needed some assembling after we got home from the service about 12:30 A.M.. After the children were finally asleep, we started putting the toys together and we did not get to bed ourselves until well after 2:00.

About 5:30 we were abruptly awakened by a large and jolly group of carolers, who sang 5 or 6 carols until we were all wide awake, including the 3

children. Turns out this was a tradition for the young people in Annandale. Naturally there would be no going back to sleep after this noisome interlude.

There was a kindly and elderly couple who lived across Maple Avenue from us who had a lovely tradition of a Christmas morning neighborhood get-together, where they handed out silver dollars to the children and coffee and Danish to the parents. Of course, we went with the children.

As sleep-depressed and soggy with fatigue as I was, I started bemoaning our lack of sleep, excoriating those thoughtless and annoying carolers in no uncertain terms. Suddenly I was aware the room had gone quiet. I finally realized that most of those gathered there were those very carolers! After apologizing, at the first opportunity I slunk out the side door, sheepishly crossed Maple Avenue, and quietly slipped into our house. You may be sure I never criticized anyone again on a Christmas morning from then on.

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.

The note was simple and straightforward. “If you need money,” it read, “hang a bright-colored towel over the front porch railing.” That was all. The note was unsigned.

Imagine that, someone actually giving you money, just for the asking. No need to pay it back, no strings attached. My eleven-year-old brain struggled to make sense of it all after my mother had shown my sister and me that note left on our porch in a sealed envelope. It seemed too good to be true.

Maybe it was just what we needed that fall of 1962. My father—the breadwinner of our family—had left town at the end of the summer. He just packed up his car and drove away one sunny Sunday as my mother, sister, and I spent the day at the shore. He didn’t leave a note.

We were left with a void in our house and in our hearts. My father had been a prominent member of the community—high school vice-principal, church elder—which only added to our public humiliation. The sympathies that surrounded us were awkward and uncomfortable.

In the days that followed receiving the note, I spent more time on the front porch of our West Street home, watching people pass in cars and on the sidewalk. I looked for a sign—a smile, a wave, a longer look—that might reveal the identity of the person who sent the note. But I learned nothing.

Who was it that was willing to help us? A neighbor? A friend? Did we even know the person? And, why all the mystery?

As time went on, it became clearer that we could use that generous person's help. My mother had gotten a clerk's job at the telephone company so we had some money coming in, but it wasn't enough to cover the mortgage.

By spring, it was evident that we were going to lose the house if something big didn't happen. My mother may have thought about the note again, but she never mentioned it. Nor did she ask friends or family to help. She just put the house up for sale and took the first offer.

In the summer of 1963, we moved out of Annandale to a small apartment down the highway past the high school where my father had worked. We never found out who had sent us the note.

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.

My dad, Joseph Bird, was Postmaster in Annandale from 1954 until he retired in 1977. When he first became Postmaster, the post office was in a little white building at the corner of Main and Center Streets in Annandale (basically one room). This was the original post office in Annandale, built in 1892, and everyone had their own mailboxes made of brass with a little dial you had to turn to open them.

When I was about 12 years old, Dad gave me the job of decorating the windows of the post office for the holidays. I loved doing this, especially at Christmas when I could use the spray “snow” on the windows. I also liked to drape crepe paper along the windows for other holidays and draw pictures on the windows with paint or use decals that would cling.

The post office moved to a new location at the corner of West and Washington St., the old Seals Furniture Store, in 1962. The Clinton Township Municipal offices were on the other side of the building and the firehouse was behind the post office in the same building. That was great for Dad because being a fireman was his life. He was usually one of the first to arrive when the fire whistle blew and would get the fire truck out and ready to go. There was a chalkboard in the firehouse, and someone would write the location of the fire on it for firemen arriving after the truck left. This was before the time of pagers, cell phones, and e-mail.

Peggy (Bird) Weightman lived at 32 West Street from 1942 until she was married at Annandale Reformed Church in 1961 to Byron Weightman, who also grew up in Annandale. The couple lived in built a house on Mount Grove Road in Lebanon Twp. (10 minutes from Annandale), and still live there. They have 3 children, 9 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren so family keeps them busy. Before retiring, Peggy worked in physicians’ offices as a receptionist, medical transcriptionist, and HMO coordinator. She and By enjoy camping, bluegrass festivals, and the beach.

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