

## Charlie Johnson in Malvern Hills

By Charlie Johnson

I entered Malvern Hills' history in May 1955 when Phil Johnson married my mother, Edith Klutz. My father, Charlie Klutz had passed away in 1948. In 1951, Phil Johnson and four other firemen finished building our house at 135 Arthur Road. His first wife, Frieda passed away shortly after the house was completed.

Sometime in the late 1950's, the Ziegler house at 139 Arthur Road caught on fire. The house partially burned. My dad was the Captain of the West Asheville Fire Department, Station 6, and he worked on that fire.

Behind our house there were woods with a steep hill down going to an enormous field that stretched out to a motor court and several cabins on Patton Avenue (Goodwill and the DMV are located there today). In the woods, we had a big swing that went way out over the hill about 50 or 60 feet. One day a bunch of kids, including myself, John and Tim Seay, Bill Bryson, Dale and Bill Groce, Donny Holbrook, Tommy and Riley Palmer and some others decided that the field looked like a great place for a ball field. Several of us sneaked our dads' lawnmowers out of our houses, and we spent a week to ten days clearing it off. The grass and weeds were at least knee high and near the creek it was waist high. When my dad found out what we were doing, he drove me to my grandmother's house in Enka to borrow a hayfield scythe. I used that most of the time because I was the only kid who had ever used a scythe. When we finally got the field cleared, we spent many afternoons and evenings playing there. Our parents had to drive to the motor court to call us in for supper.

That hill and the great big field served as a sled run during the winters. We had a good old time there until '58 or '59 when Becky Mewbourne (she lived on School Road) was sledding fast and hit one of the logs that stuck out from under one of the cabins. She was seriously hurt and had to drop out of school for the rest of the year. Becky finally recovered, and was back in school the next year.

I spent most summer days in Malvern Hills pool. I wouldn't come home until my lips turned blue from that cold water. It was city water, and the kids that swam there said it was pumped directly from the reservoir at Bee Tree. It was "**mountain cold**"!

I went to Vance in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, but in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I went to Aycock Elementary School for one year. Vance was overcrowded, so the Malvern Hills kids were transferred to Aycock. I went to Hall Fletcher and then to Lee H. Edwards. After high school, I went to A-B Technical College and then joined the US Air Force.

I was lucky to grow up here. Today, I am living where I grew up, in the very same house in Malvern Hills. I still love Malvern Hills!