

Growing Up in Malvern Hills

A time it was....the 1950's. Malvern Hills was young and so were we. We were the '40's baby boomers, about fifty kids romping through the neighborhood, climbing trees, riding bikes, playing ball, badminton, croquet, tag and "red rover, red rover...we dare ya' to come over!" A summer rainstorm could keep us on the porch for hours banking our Monopoly money. Warm, sunny summer days made Malvern Hills Swimming Pool a destination. In the pool, crossing under the rope into the deep end meant you passed the big test... swimming across the pool and back for the lifeguard. Ten cents bought a Towne House Fried Apple Pie and five cents bought a Coke at the concession stand. In the pavilion, we rocked and rolled to early Elvis spinning on the jukebox.

When fall arrived, we had the "back-to-school-blues". Some kids went to private school, but most of us went to Vance, Hall Fletcher and Lee Edwards. There were several teachers in the neighborhood ...so... trouble at school meant *lots* more trouble at home. There were no yellow school buses, only Asheville City buses. A brown bus ticket was good for a one way ride to school, another would get you home. Sometimes we'd jump off the bus at Mr. Sisk's Malvern Hills' Drugstore for a cherry Pepsi. After school, some of the guys played football at the School Road triangle.

On Halloween night, almost every house turned the porch light on for the Caspers, the Supermen, the Cinderellas, the witches, the cowboys and cowgirls. Even if it was a school night, we roamed the neighborhood collecting bags, full of "loot". Our parents carried the flashlights and trekked around the blocks with us. Many treats were homemade...popcorn balls with caramel, cookies, fudge, brownies.

For several years, everyone in Malvern Hills decorated outside in holiday style for Christmas. There was a live Nativity in the Presbyterian Churchyard complete with a little barn, wooden manger, hay and real farm animals. Our families portrayed the Biblical characters. We were the kids' angel choir, shivering in the cold, standing on risers with our aluminum foil halos and white sheet robes. We sang as loud as we could, belting out our off-key Christmas hymns for all of the people visiting the neighborhood. Many times the traffic was bumper to bumper.

On snow days, we went sledding on School Road hill or at the "golf course" ...the hill, now chopped off and cemented behind Goodwill. Sometimes we'd make a run or two down Clarendon's big hill. Clarendon Road and School Road were also great hills to ride part-way down with no-hands on our bikes. After our adventures, there was always a cup of hot chocolate or homemade grape juice and cookies.

In the spring, the flowers bloomed and so did we. As we reached the magic age of 16, our summers were spent with first jobs. Several of us went to work at Malvern Hills Pool, We manned the front desk and the locker rooms, drained and scrubbed the pool every Thursday night. A couple of us were the lifeguards who required the young kids to swim across the pool and back before crossing the rope into the deep end.

Malvern Hills was a great place to be a growing "Boomer" kid. We worked hard at school and played hard at home. Like all kids, we had our squabbles, but we were good friends. We grew up along with Malvern Hills in what was a simpler time....but.... a time it was!

.....Written by Ann Clayton whose grandfather built their home at 8 Bear Creek Road in 1947