

A Boy,
His Life,
And Growing Up In
Glen Rock, New Jersey
From 1945 to 1963

by

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A compilation of breezy, not literary, e-mails written to the
Class of 1963 over a twenty-one year period ending in 2018.

Introduction –

My childhood hometown is Glen Rock, New Jersey, and is situated 22 miles northwest of New York City's Time Square. It covers 2.7 square miles and lies in the foothills of the Goffle Mountains. Glen Rock is home to a community of about 10,000 people (or at least it was when I resided there).

The Borough of Glen Rock consists of a wonderful, two-block long downtown area with two other smaller shopping venues located at its outer borders, three elementary schools, a Catholic school, and a junior-senior high school. There were no school buses back then and everyone walked to school and no one seemed to mind. There are also parks, playgrounds, a wonderful brook, and even a community pool in which we all fully occupied ourselves.

Although I have not lived there for the last 45 years, I have been writing my classmates and relating to them what I remember about my childhood experiences. In no discernable order, I have tried to recall the various youthful activities I was engaged in from my pre-school years through high school, and though most of the experiences I write about pertain only to me, they could just as well have happened to anyone my age who lived in Glen Rock during that same time period of 1945 to 1963.

While there are a few personal photos in one section of this tome, the rest of this collection of e-mails is in narrative form because I was not able to print out the crystal clear mental pictures I have of my adventurous youth.

All in all, through the eyes of someone who was raised there, Glen Rock was a very ideal place to live - as I hope you will soon see.

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Glen Rock Pool -

What were you doing in 1951 when you were six years old?

Learning to go to school on your own - probably.

Learning to keep up with others on your two-wheeler - more than likely.

Learning to swim - I sure hope so!

The year the community pool opened, 1951, and all the ensuing fun years after its dedication, has to go down as the longest running and most pleasant of my summertime memories. Sure - there were vacations, camp, and other summer activities (like playing sandlot baseball at a neighbor's house), but the pool was the best because it was a constant in my life.

After the pool opened, and for the next ten or eleven years from June to September, the pool was truly my focal point. When I was a kid I used to take care of a few of my neighbors' gardens and lawns, but as soon as my work for the day was finished, I was off to the pool! It wasn't until I got a car did my horizons change when it came to going to the pool every single day.

Before I list some of the true joys of being at the community pool, there were these three little annoyances that I hope all of you will recognize. The first nuisance to enjoying the pool, at least for me, was that little footbath one had to endure before entering the pool area. If I could get away with it, I would try to jump over it - and, no, I don't know why I tried to avoid it other than the fact I was a kid, the footbath was there, and I didn't want to walk through it - but usually I was called back by the attendants and had to wade through it like everyone else.

The second annoyance was the scarcity of benches located on the concrete apron surrounding the pool and having nowhere off the ground to put your towel. Hanging it through the fence loops and having it stay there wasn't always successful; more often than not, your towel would wind up on the concrete perimeter where the overflow splashes from the pool area would invariably get it wet.

And, thirdly, there were those times when the pool was sooo overcrowded you couldn't swim laps, dive off the side of the pool without landing on

someone, or submerge yourself in the deep end without fear of getting hit by a swimmer on your return trip to the surface. Luckily, those times were few and far between.

And lastly, one little oddity, rather than an annoyance, always intrigued me. I'm left-handed so it seemed very natural to me, but since right-handers are in the majority I don't have an answer to this question. Why did most of us wind up on the left side of the pool? Only on rare occasions did any of us put our towels down on the right side of the pool, and only barely more than that did we ever venture over and put our towels in the larger area behind the diving boards.

Anyhow, let's move on to the good stuff. At the very beginning of my pool experiences were the swimming lessons. Before the pool's dedication, the closest I ever got to having my head under water - other than having the Atlantic Ocean waft over it during vacations to Asbury Park or Virginia Beach - was the bathtub, and remembering my mother's comments that I would have potatoes growing out of my ears if I weren't more judicious when bathing. But, I am not certain the bathtub incidents count as a total underwater experience.

Standing in the shallow end of the pool, turning your head side-to-side and blowing bubbles like the swimming instructor told you to do, and pretending you were enjoying the whole thing was not my idea of fun; but as I gained confidence, I gained the ability to swim, and that was just the beginning of my Glen Rock pool challenges.

It may be a guy thing - non-sexist that I am - but I believe the next 'fun' thing to do at the pool was mostly a male tradition. The first challenge that I recall having was attempting to swim - without diving in - across the pool, all underwater (and all on one breath of air), and once that was accomplished, the real fun started. The next challenge was to swim submerged across the pool and back while still on one breath (the underwater turns were always the neatest part). Swimming all that way underwater might not have made you a Navy Seal, but it was still quite an accomplishment for a young swimmer.

Now doing that double lap underwater was more easily said than done, but the real and final challenge was to swim the entire length of the pool on one breath, and, yes, all underwater. The unwritten rule was you couldn't use the

diving board as your starting point, and, because the shallow end's depth was only three feet, trying to stay completely underwater in that end of the pool was a bit tricky.

Do you remember doing any of that? Of course you know I do, and I remember doing it more than once. I can recall when I was about 12 years old I challenged my father to that last swimming test, and I beat him - well, sort of. My dad did not think I was serious about doing it so he asked me to show him that I could swim the entire length of the pool underwater. I did it, and I think he was astounded, for, as I emerged out of the shallow end, he called out, "You win!" My dad never did partake in the challenge, but I could tell he was impressed - and that as I know so well was never easy.

In my younger years, I can remember playing tag at the pool. The rules were simple: you needed to tag someone in or out of the water, but you couldn't run around a corner - you had to cut the corner by jumping or diving in and then escape by either climbing out the other side or by swimming away. With those simple rules, it was as much playing pool tag as it was playing 'cat and mouse' with the lifeguards, and they were good at setting limits with tag players with their whistle. The less crowded the pool, the more leeway you had.

A little sideline to playing tag was the splash fights. The one-handed splashers could never match the slash power of the double-hand cuppers, even when they were splashing water with alternating hands. Here, I have to give the nod to Alan Furler, for he was the best. Whenever I was foolish enough to challenge him, I always came away with the thought that I had more water in my mouth than there was in the pool!

Another thing to do at the pool was diving, and the boards were always a great source of entertainment - both as a participant and as a spectator. The girls seemed to go for form and style while the boys wanted to make the biggest splash possible.

I wrote awhile ago in my Doug Pardee remembrance how I owed him my ability to do back flips, and in that account was a line about how fantastic it was to be at the pool when the power 'fill' spray under the main diving board was on. Doing any dive to perfection was always a trial and error event (okay, some of us guys were concerned about form, too), but the spray made

your mistakes bearable by breaking the surface water and allowing you some leeway when landing incorrectly.

As I got older, life outside the pool was just as memorable. The girls - after deciding whether they should wear a two-piece bathing suit or not (remember, I had a sister) - were stretched out on their towels by the pool fence trying to soak up as much sun as possible; the guys were always playing basketball or touch football (girls, do you remember how often the pass plays were run on your side of the field and how often a loose ball always seemed to wind up near you? Don't believe that was a coincidence); kids exploring the woody area behind the pool and attempting to dam up Diamond Brook (I'll protect their names since many of them might consider themselves environmentalists today!); and who could forget the families having barbecues on the weekends and that great smell of hamburgers and 'what-not' cooking over the charcoal grills. By the way, who uses charcoal anymore?

And because of where I lived, I was lucky to have an extended season at the pool. Not to slight anyone I will not use names, but many of my Byrd School buddies can attest to using the left side pool area and the larger field area on the right during the off-season, too. Kite flying from our Cub Scout den was done there, our sixth grade end-of-the-year baseball game was held there (replete with cheerleaders - at a baseball game? Yep, with just one classroom of 22 boys and 8 girls, our Byrd School girls were special!), jumping the fence to use the pool during off-hours, numerous pick-up games (no, not cruising for girl, but for sports), making doughnuts in the snow-covered parking lot with our cars, and, okay, a meeting place for quiet, innocent romantic times. (I used the word 'innocent' to protect the guilty).

Those images about my summertime at the pool are just as strong as my other memories about school - and just as wonderful.

Everyone's childhood has some pain (it's the nature of the beast, I suppose), but when put into perspective I was luckier than most, and to have had all you as my classmates sharing my summertime fun, how much luckier could I have been.

David Lamken
Reunion -

As the New Year is upon us, it is now almost 30 years since we graduated from high school. What you will be reading may seem hokey to some (okay, to most), but - and this was written mainly for those of you who are undecided about coming back to Glen Rock next fall to visit - a reunion gives all a chance to see the journey of our lives in an unique perspective, in the shared experience of people who saw what we have seen, did what we have done.

We, the Class of 1963, are very special, and we are all linked. We have all lost someone - classmates, dear friends, family members, and, yet, for some inexplicable reason we are still here. Call it life, call it our destiny, but definitely call it (or us) lucky. And this is especially true when considering the experiences of our childhood when seen from the perspective of our now 'middle-age' years - we are all very lucky to be here.

We know we hail from a great generation, but we are the first wave of the oft-maligned baby boomers, and we came before seat belts, bike helmets, and all things plastic. We were the last to grow up without a childhood safety net. We experienced the kind of freedom generations who came after us have not experienced - and maybe because of the pitfalls should not experience.

I, like a few of you, was born in February of 1945 and was whisked from a hospital in Jersey City to our home in Glen Rock during a snowstorm, not in a car baby seat but in my mother's arms. Since cars did not have seat belts, we drove slowly but still commando style on slippery seats down icy roads - no traction control, no four-wheel drive, no road-hugging SUV.

I was tucked into my crib every night without a padded bumper guard or a machine that replicated the sounds of a womb. Baby pictures - in glorious black and white - show me smiling while I stuck my big head through the wooden bars, not a baby monitor in sight. My mother swaddled me in warm flannel pajamas, the non-flame-retardant kind.

When my mother needed peace and quiet, I wasn't put in front of a television set to watch a 'Baby Einstein' video; she plopped me in a highchair so I could watch her do housework or bake (loved that cookie dough!).

Our big family car had a rear window ledge large enough to provide a comfortable sleeping area during long drives, my older sister asleep on the

seat below. I was a projectile object waiting to happen! Riding in the front didn't improve my odds by much; whenever the car came to an abrupt stop, my mother or father would fling their arm across my chest to keep me from going airborne. Think of how silly that seems knowing what we now understand about car crashes, air bags, and three-point safety belts.

Seems frightening with what is happening in today's world with abducted children and 'Amber Alerts' to remember during my wee-little years, my mother would often leave my sister and me in the car, keys in the ignition and doors unlocked, while she went into the Glen Rock Sweet Shoppe for a pack of cigarettes. Thank goodness, too, for the changes in smoking habits.

When we got home, I would run outside with the only admonishment being to come home before dark. My parents weren't afraid if I was out of their sight - I lived in peaceful, serene Glen Rock! I imagine they looked forward to the silence. And, yes, I stuttered at home, too.

Our schools - like Richard E. Byrd Elementary School for me - were a high-risk adventure for anyone who went there to play on a summer's day. The jungle gym and slide were a heavy gray apparatus with metal bars, with protruding nuts and bolts, anchored in the ground by cement pods for all to see, and for some to land on. On a hot, sunny day, the metallic surface would burn your hands. No plastic-coated, rubber-matted jungle gym set for our generation - no sirree. We lived dangerously and didn't know it.

I rode my red Schwinn Stingray playing bike tag around Byrd School with Alan Furler (truth be told, the first X-treme bicyclist), along with Rob Hoogs, Chip Krieder, Mark Schlageter, Harrie Richardson, Ken Hrasdzira, Wayne Bonhag, and Craig Lampe, among others, without wearing a bike helmet. My Davy Crockett cap protecting me from serious injury, I suppose. I am sure the snapping sound made by the baseball cards stuck in my spokes (the one I could not trade away to Bruce Emra) alerted the oncoming traffic to my presence.

A great summer day at play was any day you came home without either a blister on your hands, a bump or two on the noggin, or the obligatory skinned knee. Were we reckless? Nah, we were just having plain, ordinary, everyday fun.

For lunch we ate tuna-fish sandwiches, which we later found out contained high levels of mercury and a dolphin or two, drank whole milk, and, for dessert, ate Hostess Twinkies or Ring-Dings. It's a miracle I am still here to remind you of all this stuff.

When we were little, we played baseball the old-fashioned way - we did not wear plastic batting helmets or cups, and we hit pitched balls instead of hitting off a tee. Worst of all, we received trophies only if our team won the championship. Now, in today's world, try to find a kid who doesn't receive a trophy just for showing up.

We baby boomers may not have weathered the Depression or stormed the beaches of Normandy like our parents did, but we were the last generation to live on the edge, and, may I say, to have fun the harmless, innocent, great memories way!

If you are in any doubt about attending your 30th reunion next fall, come say 'Hi' to your friends and add to our joint collection of memories. What do you remember that I do not?

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Life's a Beach -

As previously mentioned in an earlier e-mail, when I was young, my family went to the beach in the summer quite often. We stepped on sand in fabulous Virginia Beach, on the Outer Banks in the Carolinas, and in various spots in Florida, but we vacationed at the Jersey Shore the most. We would go there a few times each summer.

On occasion, we would journey as far south as Cape May (near where I live now) and venture over to the Wildwoods for a night's entertainment on its boardwalk, but we usually preferred staying closer to home in Pt. Pleasant, Seaside Heights, or, my favorite, Asbury Park.

I haven't been to Asbury Park in almost 50 years, yet I can recall the beach, the boardwalk, and the buildings as though I was there just yesterday. They were among the most beautiful on the entire Jersey Shore. Because my sister and I liked going on amusement rides so much (what child didn't!), the boardwalk is an especially vivid memory of mine.

One of the most magnificent rides wasn't situated on the Boardwalk, but in its own copper and glass housing along Lake Avenue. The Carousel had the most absolutely beautiful, realistic, hand-painted wooden ponies, and they pranced around and around behind windows emblazoned with the screaming visages of Medusa-like faces. It was the largest and most magnificent merry-go-round I have ever seen.

To give you an idea of how large the carousel was it had four rows of life-like horses (not the usual two) and various assorted chariots. Over the years, I have been on many carousels, but none as awesome as the one I remember riding on in Asbury Park. Do any of you remember riding it?

Not far from the carousel house, and taking up one whole city block, was the aqua-green facade of the Palace Amusements building. The building housed the Twister, the Scooters, the Fun House, and the Tunnel of Love, with colorful illustrations on its exterior walls. There was the ubiquitous Ferris wheel, of course, but it never held much interest for me - riding it seemed so long and boring.

What makes me remember Asbury Park so much is not the ride on the merry-go-round itself (which was wonderful), but rather the large, toothy,

smiling characters drawn on the side of the Palace building. Oversized ears, hair middle-parted like a member of an old barbershop quartet, lips painted an uncharacteristic rosy red, and eyes so blue and strong they seemingly popped out of its head and stared down at you.

I suppose it was meant to be a happy face, but it was nothing short of terrifying to this little kid - worthy of a Stephen King novel I suspect now that I think back on it.

At the north end of the boardwalk was the majestic architecture of Convention Hall, a massive brick building, with pastel terra-cotta accents. The cavernous hall, theater, and arcade were decorated with patina-green copper sculptures of mythical winged sea horses and huge lanterns. General Motors had its perennial exhibit inside showing off its newest cars. That was something easy for a car nut like me to remember.

At the southern end of the boardwalk was the Casino, which jutted out over the breaking surf atop a forest of spindly pilings. Walking on the beach and going under the pier was always a bit scary, too. You never knew what you would find. Do you recall how the Casino's facade was adorned with fantastic reliefs of seashells and sailing ships? Very impressive.

Between Convention Hall and the Casino, the boardwalk boasted the usual assortment of fudge shops, the miniature golf landscapes and, of course, Skee-ball arcades. My Uncle George and Aunt Edith were especially good at garnering tickets at Skee-ball and it was always a treat to visit them for a day when they had been down at the shore for a week and to be showered with tickets they had won. The prizes selected from all those tickets were insignificant; the real prize was that the two of thought enough to share them with my sister and me.

My sister's favorite ride was 'The Whip' and mine was the bumper cars (what else!). As you were driving around (if you can call it that) trying to unnerve everyone by bumping into them head on, do you remember the smell of the crackling and sparking electrical apparatus overhead?

By the end of a long day, my parents would tire us exhausted kids out even further by putting us in paddle boats while they rode arm-in-arm in the Swan boats on Welsey Lake at the end of the Boardwalk.

Do you any of you recall that across from Welsey Lake there was the little town of Ocean Grove, a unique little Methodist community? If I remember it correctly, I don't believe you were permitted to drive a car on its streets. Another odd thing about Ocean Grove was that in some respect it was a 'tent town'.

Surrounding the largest auditorium that I had ever seen outside New York City (it held more than 5,000 people - the same as Radio City Music Hall!) there were these smaller tents that were available for families to rent. I was fascinated by thinking that's not much of a vacation, but then I eventually went to a Boy Scout camp and slept in a lean-to so what did I know.

Maybe there weren't as many tents as at the Boy Scout Jamboree some of us attended in Valley Forge one year, but there sure were a lot of them. Of course, there were houses and cottages in the Ocean Groove, too, but I was struck with the magnitude of the tent population. I always wondered where the people ate. Oh, well, that was a long time ago.

This next memory doesn't have anything to do with tents or the Jersey Shore, but did any of you ever go to Jones Beach out on Long Island? It was in the middle of nowhere as I recall. And if you did go there, did you ever see Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians perform 'A Thousand and One Arabian Nights' on the beach? Quite a memorable experience!

What I never understood was in the heat of the summer (even though the performances were given at night) was that the band always wore tuxedos. Funny what you remember.

May you all get to wiggle your toes in the warm sand by the cool ocean water really soon. And thank you for letting me enter your e-mail box once again.

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A Boy and His Bike -

It's curious sometimes when I get to thinking about where I lived in Glen Rock. I must have lived on the wrong side of the tracks because we seemed so isolated living on Greenway Road. There were no stores, gas stations, or offices of any kind on my side of the tracks. There was an architect who worked out of his home and put up a beautiful Christmas display every year, but that was it.

Although I was allowed to roam wherever I wanted, the boundaries early on seemed to be Lincoln Avenue, Rock Road, the woods behind my house, and Diamond Brook. It's not like permission was ever requested or granted; it was just understood that I'd return home by dinnertime. Those initial lines of demarcation were self-imposed, but once a two-wheeler was mastered, they were all but forgotten.

Don't get the wrong impression - my parents cared about what I did. My mother would ask me where I was going, and I would say, "Out." That was not meant to be a smart-alecky answer, but one I believe we all used in one form or another. Some of you may have inserted a friend's name where I used the word 'out' (knowing full well you were going out exploring once you got to your friend's house). The world was ours, we felt safe, and our parents gave us the freedom to be who we wanted to be.

Just a short divergence, if I may. If the world back was any way my oyster, then my bike was my pearl. I cannot express the utter joy I experienced hopping on my bike and going wherever I wanted, doing whatever I wanted, seeing whatever I wanted. I saw that bike as my lifeline to the world, and I used it - maybe even abused the privilege a little by being miles away from home at times. I can picture in my mind's eye right now how joyously happy I was just to be pedaling along (usually with no hands on the handlebar) and being content to be headed somewhere.

I went places with friends that I can't even begin to list, but distance was never a problem. There was always something to see or something to experience. Alan Furler and I had heard that there was an old submarine on display in Paterson so we biked there. Were 'we' crazy or what? Don't answer that - Alan's not crazy.

I will try to send out a remembrance of mine I shared with Art Smith and Alan Furler last winter. It's an adventure we had on our bikes when we were about 12 years old. It may not be of interest to most of you, but then again it may parallel something that happened in your life back in 'old' Glen Rock and trigger a memory or two of your own.

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Mechanical Drawing -

I will leave it to others to recall their favorite teachers and their respective nicknames, but this recollection of mine is worth mentioning not because this teacher was a favorite, but because the circumstances that led to this teacher getting his nickname could not be so easily repeated in today's schools, or, at least, I hope not.

In high school, I was fortunate to have a couple of my Byrd School friends - Alan Furler and Art Smith - with me in Mr. Joshua Hewitt's Mechanical Drawing class, and I often relied on their assistance in making sure the perspectives and lettering for each of my drafting assignments were correctly drawn and would pass Mr. Hewitt's muster.

We shared the class with some upper classmen, and I remember one day in particular when Chip Parisi (sp.) had great difficulty correctly forming his letters for the identification plate on his drawing. Mr. Hewitt, whose ego and teaching style were as big as a house, called him to task on it. Chip was not one to be easily flustered, but Mr. Hewitt definitely had him going.

Chip had to go to the board and Mr. Hewitt made him practice his lettering in front of everyone, and each time Chip made a mistake, Mr. Hewitt gave him a whack him with a wooden pointer. After a few missed cues on his lettering, and after a few more whacks, Chip finally got it right. In recognition of Chip's accomplishment, Mr. Hewitt said to everyone, "I just knew it." And, voila, a nickname was born - since forever after, Mr. Hewitt became affectionately known to all in his classes as 'I Josh Knew-it'.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Hewitt taught an interesting subject, but he needlessly used less than professional techniques. I will only guess that served him well with some of his students, but in any of the years following my departure from Glen Rock High if Mr. Hewitt was ever reprimanded for using that pointer on another student the way he did on Chip Parisi, I could easily, and knowingly, have said, "I Josh Knew-it".

Thank you for your emails concerning my rather long remembrance about summertime at the Glen Rock pool. We did have a good time, didn't we?

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Secret Agent Man –

Up to 1950, our household had to depend on its media entertainment from radio until TV first appeared in our living room. We all had our radio heroes such as the Green Hornet, the Lone Ranger, The Shadow, and others. For me, Captain Midnight was another hero, but more so once he made the trip to TV than when he was on the radio.

My Captain Midnight story takes place around 1951, 1952. On Saturday mornings, I would sit in front of our 12-inch Philco TV and wait for his show on the DuMont station, which was Channel 5.

By the way, can you picture your first TV like I can? It was a wooden floor model with curved cove corners and had a rabbit ear(s) antenna on top. The screen was on the top half with four large knobs just beneath it. The volume knob was on the far left, then in the middle were the vertical and horizontal knobs (remember those - the ones forever needing adjustments), and on the far right was the channel selector. A cloth mesh cover about twice the size of the picture tube hid behind thin wooden slats and housed the large speaker on the bottom half.

What was so unique and memorable about Captain Midnight was that he had a special message at the end of each episode for all those in his 'secret squadron'. To see the special message, one had to hold up a decoder ring to the TV screen and decode the message. Oh how I wanted to be able to see that secret message.

The Captain Midnight decoder ring (which was an "encoder" ring as well) was very simple and allowed you to do simple substitution ciphers. It had two concentric wheels of letters, A through Z. You rotated the outside ring and substituted the letters in your message found on the outside ring with the letters directly below on the inside ring.

The sponsor of the program was Ovaltine, a chocolate milk mix. To get the decoder ring, you had to send in four foil tops from the Ovaltine jar along with a quarter, and it would be sent by return mail. I sent the coupon off for my secret decoder ring expecting to be in on the big secret and be the envy of everyone in Bergen County.

Being six, seven years old and not understanding the U.S. Postal Service, I expected my decoder ring to arrive the next day. Sam was our mailman (he delivered the post twice a day back then), and I started on day one sitting on the front steps waiting for him to bring me my prize.

The first day – there was nothing. And so it went, day after day, week after week. During the start of my second week of waiting, Sam asked me what I was looking for in the mail. I didn't want to tell him (secret squadron stuff, you know) but thought if he knew, it might speed things up. It didn't.

By the end of the third week, I began to suspect Sam of being a spy and having intercepted my decoder ring for himself. I never told him, but I surely suspected him.

Week four came and went. By now I was sure Sam was a spy. I thought of writing Captain Midnight and letting him know but could find no address other than the one on the original coupon. Besides, I thought if I tried to let him know by mail, Sam would find out, and I would be in deep trouble. I began losing sleep worrying about it but could tell no one but my sister. She knew how to keep a secret.

Finally, during week five, Sam showed up on time one day and handed me the little brown envelope I had been waiting for. My decoder ring was inside, and I was truly happy. Now the waiting until the following Saturday began - I could only use the decoder ring at the end of the TV show because I didn't know who else had a decoder ring.

Saturday morning, I was up at the crack of dawn polishing my secret decoder ring and getting ready for the TV show that did not begin until 11:00. My sister knew my secret and threatened to tell if I wouldn't share the secret message with her. I thought about it but made no immediate decision. Then, at last, the show began. Captain Midnight was his usual spectacular self, defeating enemies with the help of Secret Squadron members. He never failed to give us our due.

Now, the end of the program was near. Just before the closing Ovaltine commercial, Captain Midnight told all us Secret Squadron members to get our decoder rings ready for the secret message. I stationed myself as close to the old Philco TV set as possible and the scrambled message was shown at the bottom of the screen.

Using my secret decoder ring, I finally saw the secret message. It read, "Drink more Ovaltine". I could not believe it. That was it? Drink more Ovaltine? I screamed at the TV, at Captain Midnight, and finally at my sister. I told her the secret message and I was mad as I had ever been and disappointed beyond belief. Captain Midnight was a traitor - a traitor at the highest level. I wanted my quarter back!

I ran from the house, went way back into the woods behind our house, and threw the secret decoder ring as far into the lake as I could. I gained some gratification imagining some ugly old fish swallowing up the shiny ring for it to never be seen again.

I no longer wanted to be a member of the Secret Squadron. I no longer wanted to hear or see Captain Midnight, and I surely never wanted to drink Ovaltine again. At seven years of age, I had been introduced to fleecing for the first time.

After all these years, I wonder whatever happened to that old ring. Was it eaten by a fish? Did someone find it during one of the many times the lake was drained? Or, does it still lie down there covered by silt and mud never to be seen again? I hope it is.

I wonder about it and then think to myself why this memory is still with me. Is it because it really meant that much to me or because it hurt so much to have been deceived? No matter... that ring is gone from my life and I still think 'good riddance'.

But I still remember that secret decoder ring, Captain Midnight and Ovaltine, the old Philco TV, the woods, and the lake. And most of all... I remember growing up in Glen Rock.

I hope you do, too.

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Reunion Buddy -

I wasn't sure what type of message I wanted to leave this time. I have decided to share with you a reminiscence of mine that I've had on more than one occasion about someone I haven't seen in years and years. It bears repeating for no other reason than I wish to tell it. There's no moral behind it, no words of wisdom offered, no profound observation to be gleaned – it's just a remembrance.

Many, many years ago, on a cold, wet Friday night, a classmate and I trekked our way down Maple Avenue to the Ridgewood Bowling lanes. Our parents thought we were crazy for going out on a miserable evening like that. We knew better. We were going out in the hope of finding some girls.

Some luck we had! Men's leagues were scheduled for the night and there were no girls to be found. We stayed awhile, shot some pool, and then once again headed out into the dreary night to find our way home. The night is memorable to me only because it was the last time this classmate and I were out together.

He went off to his college and I went to mine. He had a great time at college. Of course, everyone loved him - even the college president. In fact, the college president wished him well after he expelled him for using some construction equipment to pile a mountain of dirt on the president's front lawn.

I wish he could have been at our reunion so I could have told him how much I cherish that time I spent with him on that cold Friday night talking and laughing and making plans for the future.

I realize I wish for many things in my life, but I truly wish that David Brooks had never heard of Vietnam.

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Carols -

With the mention of carols in the title, I may have had some of you thinking about Gossart, Fisch, or Van Dien, but this e-mail entitled 'Carols' has nothing to do with them.

I may also have some of you now saying to yourself, 'Gotcha, Dave, you made another memory error. We all know Van Dien's first name was Lynne.'

And Lynne is how I first got to know her, too; but, while we were dating, I learned that whenever Lynne's mother was mad at her, she used Lynne's true first name, Carol. In fact, her mother would call out "Carol Lynne!" Initially, I thought she was yelling Carolyn - and that's how I learned Lynne's real first name was Carol. Anyway, you're right; she'll always be Lynne to you and me.

As you may also know by my past e-mails to the class, I don't have a yearbook so if I left out any other Carols from our group I am sorry, but even though my memory's recall is diminishing with age (oh, yes, it is!), I am pretty certain there were just two Carols in our class - or three, if you trust my insider knowledge about Lynne.

Well, if this e-mail isn't about the three beautiful Carols in our class, then what is it about, you ask?

I'm sorry to inform you that it's about six guys. Yeah, I know - it's pretty sad when Dave Lamken has to resort to writing about guys, isn't it? But this is really a good bunch of guys.

I truly can't date this remembrance other than to say I believe it occurred during the winter season of our seventh grade year, but I'll leave it to others in the group to pinpoint the timeline more accurately.

Chris Johnston, Robbie Hoogs (sorry, Rob, but I will always remember you as a 'Robbie') Art Smith, Bruce Emra, Doc Savage (again, where in the world are you, Doc?), and I all lived within a stone's throw of each other, and on one winter's night we decided to try our hand at Christmas caroling.

Miss Doremus would be horrified that because of the short vowel in the last syllable I did not add another 'L' in the word caroling before using 'ing', but I

believe the rules of phonics have relaxed a bit for some words since I was in third grade - dare I say it - over 53 years ago!

I listed Chris and Rob's names first because of their angelic voices. Art and Bruce could carry a tune with the best of them, and Doc was our front person. He was so adorable, wasn't he? Doc had the rosiest of cheeks that night and with the red and white scarf and snow cap and he had on, Doc was picture perfect for a Norman Rockwell postcard depicting caroling. In fact, I guess we all were.

If you haven't figured it out by now, I either hummed or mouthed the words. No, not because of my stutter (no one stutters when they sing - anyone remember the C&W singer Mel Tillis?), but because I didn't have a singing voice back then - still don't. I'm sure the group would have preferred Doug Pardee or John Sheldon, but they were stuck with me.

If I recall correctly, I was probably invited to join the group to make it an even half dozen (are there ever any odd half dozens?) or maybe it was because I could ring the doorbell and get back to my place within the group better than anyone, but that is just Monday morning quarterbacking on my part, I suppose.

Our neighborhood had quite a few childless homes - either by choice or by empty nest syndrome, but to every house we went, our reception was the same. Even as the homeowners' faces became blurred by the slow frosting of the glass, the two-person applause could be heard through their storm door. We quickly learned to shorten our repertoire to just two or three songs (mostly two) and then move on to the next house.

Initially, I was struck by how many times we were offered hot chocolate, but then after awhile I became more dumbfounded by the question. Not because offering us something hot wasn't a nice thing to do (it was a nice gesture since it was freezing, absolutely freezing, the night we embarked on our Christmas spirit escapade), but, rather, I was surprised by the thought - did anyone really think we were going to wait around for them to make it!

On a side note pertaining to the cold night, Art Smith brought along a silver pocket-warmer. I'm not sure how it worked exactly, but he was generous enough to pass it around, and we were all thankful. I've never encountered

another one since, but I assume they still make them. I lead a very sheltered life, I suppose.

At a couple of residences, we were asked if we were collecting for charity and offered us money. Money! We weren't quick enough to say yes. Only kidding, only kidding!

What I remember most about that evening was not the 15 or 20 neighborhood homes we visited, although the McKeon's, Spencer's, Everson's, and Schaffer's were most kind, but that I enjoyed ringing the doorbell at our homes the best.

Granted, our folks knew why we were out and about that night, but when they opened the door to see who was there and saw all of us, the smile on their faces was worth the last minute decision we made to visit our own homes.

I would like to think our songs sounded a little bit sweeter when singing to those who loved us the most, but in all honesty, looking back, I doubt we sounded any better, but I like the world as I remember it.

We were heaven sent that night and it's etched in my mind along with all the other great memories of childhood. Thanks, guys, for thinking to include me that night.

As December rolls in, I wish you all the best of holidays with family and loved ones - and sing (or hum) a holiday tune for me.

Thanks for letting me evade your time and space once again.

Merry Christmas to all - And to all a good night!

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Krause - Math -

John - The recent e-mails about our upcoming 40th high school reunion had me thinking about one of our more memorable teachers, Mr. Carl Krause, who may be remembered as having this idiosyncratic gesture.

Anyone who experienced Mr. Krause's classroom demeanor was at one time or another struck by his proclivity to use his middle finger as a pointing device. A personal maneuver that in today's school environment would not be as lightly overlooked as it was back in the early sixties.

I would like to say that he was a favorite teacher of mine, math or otherwise, but after I relay an incident that portrays the highlight of our relationship (scratch that, we did not have a relationship) after I relay an experience which upon reflection makes me feel we had a close one-way relationship, you may understand why he was one of my favorite people.

Some of you may recall my commenting that because I was exempted from taking a foreign language class I had a class schedule that was rather eclectic, and in my junior year Mr. Krause was my teacher for two subjects, Geometry and Math 12. Mr. Krause was his usual self with the upper-classmen in the Math 12 class as he was with the sophomores in his Algebra II class, but I am getting ahead of my story.

For four weeks during my sophomore summer, I helped some high school teachers paint classrooms. Mr. Krause and another teacher were paired as a team, and I worked as their gofer. I mixed paint, cleaned paint brushes and rollers, moved drop cloths and furniture, etc., and, generally, I thought I was doing a good job. Therefore, I could never fathom why I was always encountering Mr. Krause's middle finger prompt. I hadn't as of yet had him for a teacher, so I barely knew him, and, therefore, I thought it was directed at me - personally.

During a lunch break in one of my most practiced of speeches (I just presumed Mr. Krause did not know I stuttered since I usually just nodded when in his company), I asked him why he didn't like me. Mr. Krause turned toward me with this puzzled look and asked why I would ever think that. I continued by saying I assumed he was aggravated at the work I was doing because he was forever pointing his middle finger at me and at the things he wanted me to do.

Mr. Krause paused mid-sandwich, pushed his painter's cap up just a bit, smiled his little half-smile, and said that if he didn't like me he would have pointed at me with his index finger. Seeing how I was now totally confused, he said using his middle finger was an unconscious habit borne out of reflex and not to take it to heart (well, after all these years, the conversation went something like that, anyway), and he thanked me for asking. I remember that part as clearly as though it was yesterday - he thanked me!

We talked a lot after that, and I imparted to him some of the difficulties in my life. Mr. Krause listened as though he had known me my entire life. I saw him in a completely different light after that summer session; and, no, sorry to say, this math star wannabe never did become a math whiz the following year in his class, nor was I ever treated any differently than anyone else in the room (darn it all!!!).

I know that last part for a fact, for whenever I was in his class, he pointed at me in his customary manner with his middle finger like he did with everyone else, but I felt we shared a special time that summer, and for that I will always consider Mr. Krause to be someone more than just my math teacher.

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Square dancing –

Before I proffer my little remembrance, I would like to thank those of you who took time to offer words of support concerning what I wrote in my bio regarding 'gym class line rearranging'. It wasn't necessary, but was much appreciated and heartfelt.

During this lull between Christmas and New Year's (well, it's quiet time for me), I would like to transport you back for just a minute or two to our junior high years. I want you to imagine yourself to be 13 years old again and conjure up what you might have been thinking and feeling at the time.

Are you there yet? Are you remembering how you could sometimes feel bold and simultaneously totally unsure of yourself at the same time? Were you ever both smooth and awkward at the same moment? In certain situations, and on a certain forbidden level, did you ever think what a great opportunity has just been presented to you and, yet, wish fervently it would somehow magically go away? You will think of all those things, and more, in just a second.

In junior high school, one of the more unique tribal initiation passages into adolescent maturity ever invented by man was presented to us, or should I say forced upon us, by Mr. Monro and Miss Houstoun.

Now, do I have you at the right place? Are memories flooding back? You know I am not talking about our regular school dances, where we decided if we would attend, wherein the music played was our music, and, if we did attend, then asking someone to dance was by our own choosing. And if we did all that, we shuffled across that vast, empty gym floor with all the grace of a moose on ice skates (of that I am sure), but it was still our decision to go, to ask, to dance.

What I am referring to here is square dancing, which was a provincially sanctioned part of the curriculum in Phys. Ed. classes. Yes, that's correct - what I am talking about is the combining of gym classes, the loss of free will, and the mandated and enforced physically contact among teenagers of the opposite sex!

And this was perpetrated on the timid, the unsure, and the socially unengaged - on those of us who, at the time, may never have given the

opposite sex more than a fleeting thought. Not me, of course, oh no, nor you, naturally! But think of your other self - the not-yet-who-you-wanted-to-be-self.

Contact with the opposite sex takes confidence and a strong sense of who you are, and it is the rare, early teenager who is swimming in self-confidence. It felt like forcing us to square dance seemed, in a way, like punishment for being who we were.

Square dancing - the name itself seemed the antithesis of what we wanted to be. Imagine anyone at the age of 13 ever choosing to spend time doing it. Come on, think back on it. You remember - the girls all standing on one side, the boys on the other, listening to darn awful music and waiting for the 'caller' to order us into groups to do the strangest of things all the while standing out on the gym floor wondering who's going to be paired with whom.

The dancing would begin with us bowing and curtsying, dosadoing, and then leading to the part of being sashayed between rows of smirking classmates giving you that all-knowing aren't-you-the-lucky (or unlucky) to be with that one.

Now after this little diatribe, you may think that I did not like the Virginia Reel or any other square dance, but the truth be told, actually, I did. Looking back, I rather enjoyed it, but I was probably spectacularly awful at it.

Like many of you, I would not have done it if the ritual wasn't mandated, but there was one thing about it that showed promise. I learned I liked dancing with girls. (That sounded as though I may have liked dancing with boys, but you get my meaning - I hope.)

I came to like the technique of sashaying - and I liked being sashayed, too. And so to all those whose feet I may have stepped on and whose arms I may have crossed and tangled the wrong way, I thank you for being so understanding of a boy with two 'Allemande' left feet and a dream or two in his heart.

Growing up was both easy and hard, and you all made it easy for me. You even made it feel good remembering part of my youth 45 years later.

And thank you Micky Monro and Barbara Houstoun, wherever you are!

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P.S. – A classmate passed this memory along to Mr. Munro and he like what he read.

Dances - school and elsewhere

Since I have already exhausted my square dance memory, I would like to take things a little out of sequence regarding my other exposure to dancing and write about my most 'idyllic' dance memory first.

I cannot think of another word that more aptly describes the summer dances held at the asphalt parking lot diagonally across from city hall. Okay, the occasional passing train might have momentarily snapped me out of whatever fantasy I was having while holding my dance partner in my arms, but other than that those dances were special.

I don't know how long the town held those dances before I became aware of them, and I truly don't recall participating in any of them once I started to drive, but what I do remember about them fits my memory just fine - summer nights, cool breezes, our music. What else could be more perfect than that! Even the timing of a sudden downpour which ended one of the dances early and found many of us crowded under the eaves of the train shelter can't dampen my thoughts.

If there is one summer memory in its totality that is stronger than that one - and family vacations don't count - I cannot think of one, can you? I can surmise that for me all the dances artfully meld together so beautifully I can't pick one out of the many (except for the rainy one), but, boy, weren't they idyllic!

Those summer dances were different from the dances with which I had grown accustomed - they were held outside, they were set in a 'come and go as you as you please' environment, and they occurred at exactly the right time in my life. I believe that as I walked home through the center of town on those starlit nights I was in all likelihood whistling a happy tune.

Some of you may think about the community pool, or the films shown after dusk at the ball field such as 'The Pursuit of the Graf Spee' (that British navy vs. the Germany battleship movie), or the 4th of July parades and fair, or a myriad of other great summer memories as being your best summer experience - and you'd be right, but I'm centering my remembrance on what was available just for us, just for our age group. And that makes me feel fortunate to have grown up in Glen Rock.

I've been told that my remembrances could form the basis of a book - and thank you for writing to me about that, but I don't think so; however, I wish someone would capture the emotions I was feeling back then and make them into a 'feel good' movie.

Okay, summertime is now over - let's go back in time a few more years to those formal dance lessons held Tuesday nights in the school gymnasium. Although my sister would gyrate in front of the TV to American Bandstand, I never gave dancing much thought when I entered junior high. It was my mother who signed me up to take those lessons, and, as we know, moms are always right, or, at least, that's what she told me.

I'm the first to admit that I was a reluctant participant in any activity associated with having to move my uncoordinated feet in any fashion on any dance floor, wooden or otherwise, but I came to like the smell of freshness in my arms, the wisps of hair against my face from a head on my shoulder better looking than my own, and the awkward ease to which I now accepted my fate – if I wanted a girl close to me, then I'd have to learn how to dance!

During those lessons I learned the Lindy, Cha-Cha, Fox-trot, and Waltz. Well, in my case I was taught those dances; I am not too sure my two left feet learned those steps to the best of their ability, but, more importantly, I learned how to behave when in close proximity to the opposite sex. Actually, it wasn't so much a behavior issue as it was an attraction issue.

I ascertained early on what it would take to attract and 'to be attractive to' the opposite sex. It was a lesson that I have still not completely mastered, although I knew right from the start I was attracted to the opposite sex; it was the 'being captivating to' that has in some respects has not been fully integrated into my being.

Somewhere along the way, we also learned the 'Y' dance, and I'm not talking about EMOC at Ridgewood's YMCA. Somehow we learned how to sway in time to music ever so slightly, learned how to move our feet ever so imperceptibly, and learned how to embrace our dance partner ever so fittingly that the same thought occurred to both dance partners at the same time - we were both doing the 'why dance' dance, and liking it.

Here again I thought I'd have time to write about all our school dances, proms, and the various church-dance nights, but, again, I don't want my e-mails getting too long, and I do have the one last thought to share.

At our last reunion, I had a chance meeting with a group of three attractive and accomplished women who told me in passing that they did not have a date for our senior prom. Although I was ignorant of that fact back then, when I heard them say it, I somehow felt as though I had let them down.

Other than at that moment probably saying something inane to them, I came away thinking to myself that I could have added to someone's memories. I think that even now after 40 years I must have been a quite a dunce for not even thinking to ask whether someone in my own class needed a date.

You see - recently I blanked on the name of the beautiful girl I escorted to the prom. If I had bothered to ask someone in my own class, then that would not have been a problem.

I am sorry I do not have a collective dance floor memory to share with one of those girls. I am worse off for it.

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Winter -

In a recent correspondence with a classmate, I mentioned that my wife worships snow. It's not that Nancy skis or likes to snowmobile - she just wants it to snow long and hard enough to get a day off work.

Forget the fact that Nancy works in a school and any snow days must be made up, and, therefore, technically, it is truly never a day off work for her; she just laments the fact that Cape May County is surrounded by saltwater, and we don't get many snow days.

That got me to thinking about snow when I was growing up in Glen Rock. My first memory is of being about five years old and going out into one of the biggest snowfalls I had ever seen. It snowed so much that the snow was more than waist high. Forget the fact that I was only five years old at the time - it really was a very big snowstorm.

That year, my sister and my dad made an igloo. I don't remember being much help one way or the other, but my dad's idea for an igloo was great. He took an old folding card table from the garage that he occasionally used as an outside workbench and tossed a tarp over it. The two of them then piled the snow on with every shovelful they tossed from clearing out areas.

At the bottom of our front steps, there was a small slate patio and when that area was shoveled clear, along with the snow from the near end of the driveway, the igloo was complete. When the two shovelers were done and I had crawled inside, I felt like an Eskimo.

Well, an Eskimo dressed with a hat, mittens, scarf, earmuffs, a winter coat, galoshes (is the word galoshes still used?), and the ever present leggings. My mother always bundled me up like 'Nanuk of the North'. But, now, I had an igloo!

Many years later in another big snow storm during the mid-fifties, an attempt was made to make another igloo. This time my dad wasn't involved; my sister and I did all the work, but it wasn't the same - and it was much easier to make a snowman.

Remember the fun of rolling a blob of snow strategically around your yard until you couldn't get it to roll anymore - and that became your base. For the

second ball, you had to be shrewd enough to end its rolling near enough to your snowman's base and then make it light enough to lift.

Early on in our snowmen building careers, my dad taught us to slice the second ball in half with a snow shovel and then lift its two halves into place. Dads are always so smart.

The third ball, of course, was the smallest, and the easiest to handle, but sometimes the hardest part to get just right. To be pleasing to the eye, the misshapen head always needed some cranial touchups - additions here and there or the lopping off of snow in other strategic places usually sufficed.

When school resumed, I enjoyed walking the snow covered pathways and forever admired the snowmen that majestically dotted the neighborhood. The expression 'same, but different' certainly applies to the variety of snowmen I saw, and ingenious is the word I'd use to express the creativity displayed by the builders who individualized their snowmen. The snowmen seemed liked sentries placed to pay homage to the snow gods.

Building snowmen - and the occasional igloo - was fun, but what gave me the greatest of pleasures after a good snowfall was sledding. I lived on a hill, but its slope was not really good for sledding - it was long and gradual. It was okay for long, slow rides, and probably entertained me enough when I was four or five years old, but it wasn't a very challenging ride.

The need for speed was what Cedar Street was all about. It was located at the northwest end of Rock Road and was short, steep, and perfectly made for good sledding. The ride down was fast, the walk up was quick, and, because of its incline, traffic tended not to want to traverse it and chose to exit the area by other roads. It was the neighborhood's 'go to spot' for great winter fun.

Cedar Street sledding had its options, too. If the snow was compacted and the road icy, especially early in the morning, it was possible to turn right onto Oak Knoll Road at the bottom of Cedar and make it to a small hill leading down onto Glen Boulevard. (Why was a street only a block and a half long labeled a boulevard? I haven't a clue.)

Anyway, that route was the subject of contests - mainly, who could make it the farthest. If the conditions were perfect, you could have yourself a nice

ride, but, generally, the long walk back to where you started didn't justify the extra length. The ride down just Cedar Street was enough.

How many of you remember -

Waxing the runners of your sled with an old candle for more speed - and do you think it worked?

Getting a running start and not always landing perfectly straight on your sled - and then attempting to maneuver into a better position?

Sledding down two on a sled - I seem to remember always being the one on the bottom. Tandem riding seemed reserved for parents and their children. Someone in our neighborhood had a toboggan and occasionally brought it out - that was neat.

Forming a train and snaking down the hill?

Giving someone a head start and then trying to catch up with them, grabbing their rear runner, and then spinning them around?

Building snow barriers at the bottom of the hill and crashing into them?

And after hours and hours of sledding, walking home with one of the biggest smiles you ever had? I envy those of you who still have a sled, or should I say I envy those of you who still go sledding?

Like all my class e-mails, this one's getting too long, but I would like to mention one other place that I went sledding - the hill in Craig Lampe's backyard.

Once the town's plow and the warming weather diminished the pleasure of sledding on Cedar Street, Craig's backyard was the spot to be. Craig's house, the one on Rock Road (not the one on Hamilton), was crested atop the same ridge line that made Cedar Street so great, except Craig's backyard was awash with trees. That hill was great for a quick sled run down and through the obstacle course of trees leading all the way to Diamond Brook - if you were lucky!

Thanks again for your time and patience and for allowing me to do this.

Bits and Pieces – 20 questions

First day of junior high - school supplies:

Notebooks - the loose-leaf, metal binder type of notebooks.

Did the manufacturers have to make the opening or closing click of notebooks so darn loud? That universally recognizable 'CLICK' was capable of being heard all the way down the hallway. What was the purpose of that? Was it so everyone would suddenly look over at you and wonder what was so important that you had to open or close your notebook at that particular moment!

And what if you tried to close the notebook quietly without snapping it shut; how many times did you get your finger pinched? And how about those rings - did anyone's set of notebook rings stay aligned? Mine always seemed to be crooked by the end of the first week of school. One always seemed a little higher than the other two, or one closed completely while the other two looked like a bridge not yet completely built.

And who used the 'push down tabs' to open their notebooks. Wasn't it a test of strength to pull the rings open? And more times than not all three rings fully opened, right? As I recall, one of the three rings always seemed to open only halfway and then magically close just as you were taking out a piece of paper, thus mangling the paper enough to make it appear somewhat unsightly as you prepared to hand it in.

Continuing with the 'push down tabs' for just a second - does anyone know how they worked? Think about the mechanics that were involved for a just second. Pushing down on the tab opened the rings - seems simple - but think about it. Pulling up on the tabs didn't close the rings. It was rather ingenious how it worked. I won't spoil it for you.

Do you now recall why you pulled on the rings to open the binder rings rather than pushing on the tab? Think about it.

Whose idea in the manufacturing world was it to give people a choice between two-ring or three-ring binders? Do they even sell two ring binders anymore? Five holed paper - what an accommodation! Does anyone else think that was silly? And who will admit to carrying a useless hole puncher

in their notebooks? If you used one, did the paper's new holes ever truly line up with your binder's rings? I bet the paper rarely laid perfectly flat.

And those manila notebook organizer sheets - what was with those little colored plastic tabs? And, if you labeled each subject using a pencil rather than a ball-point pen, when you folded the label on the dotted line and slid it into the tab, could you really read what was behind the little 'red' tab. I think you had to look twice at what you had written. Yes, I do - especially during the first week or two of school before you got familiar with your schedule.

Who remembers the little white gummed circles used to repair a torn or split-opened paper hole? How often did you perfectly apply the circle in the right spot? Yeah, I believe you only think you did.

And what about those plastic see-through pencil holders for your notebook, After about three months of using your handy-dandy little pencil sharpener, didn't the shavings get all over the inside of the zippered envelope and make the inside appear to have a light gray coating?

By the way, was I a doodler on notebook covers in school, or do you think I could have used my pristine notebook for more than one year? I'll let you ponder that one.

I tried for 20 questions, but ran out of time this morning.

However, I am starting a list of names of who wore pocket protectors!

David Lamken
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Carrying Books -

Since I have spent the past several e-mails delineating what Dave Lamken recalls about his specific upbringing, I thought I would offer up a more generic observation that you might all relate to having.

I need you for just a moment to remember back to when you were in school -specifically junior or senior high. I want you to picture being in the hallways at the change of class - the regular change of classes, not the ringing of the bell for lunch. I need the guys to be walking to class, not running through the courtyard or bumping into people in the hallways in their mad dash to the cafeteria.

Are you there, really there? Do you have a really good mental picture? Good.

As you walk to class, look around and see the students as they pass you in the hallway. Look at all the students - upperclassmen, underclassmen, classmates; it doesn't matter. Now zone in on any boy and on any girl.

Picture the two of them as they are walking. What do you see? Sure, familiar faces - but what else? What is different about them other than their gender?

I can't read your minds; I am not trying to; however, I think there will be a constant to everyone reading this e-mail.

Get that picture back in your mind and look at how the boy and girl are carrying their books. The girl is holding her books across her chest, and the boy is holding his books down at his side with one arm - right?

I won't speculate as to why the girls are protecting their chests - although it might be fun to do so; and with the boys, I haven't a clue as to why they held their books that way either (other than the 'how else were we supposed to hold them?' question).

With the B.M.O.C's, I remember the elbow was crooked a little higher, the swagger a little more pronounced. In fact, some guys crooked their arms so much you might have thought they were getting ready to be a pro football lineman - and it made no difference whether they were carrying one book or five!

With backpacks slung over their shoulders, the current generation has lost another opportunity to sometime in the future reflect back and see what was so special about their generation. What's so special about bookbags the kids use today other than if it had wheels or not?

Anyway, I hope this brought you back in time for just a moment or two. It was just a quick thought.

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New York -

I would like to relate an innocent little story about three young kids (Rob Hoogs, Doc Savage, and me) who went to Times Square to celebrate New Year's Eve in December of 1959. Since it was two years before I could legally drive, we walked along the train tracks to the bus depot in Ridgewood and rode into the city.

Fortunately, the early evening air was cool, not the bitter cold that would soon envelop us - and being young and adventurous our spirits were high. I marveled at the fact that our parents gave us permission to go into the city that night for New Year's, but then maybe we didn't inform them of our plans - maybe we used that old familiar phrase we were just 'going out'.

In any case, as we walked from the Port Authority to Times Square we encountered quite a few fellow celebratory party-goers who were drinking on the streets - 'brown bagging it' as it were, a term I could have used hundreds if not thousands of times for people that evening.

As we passed more than one liquor store on our short journey to 'ring in 1960', a suggestion was made that maybe we, too, should get something to drink. The wind had picked up and it was now turning bitterly cold (insert any excuse here for wanting liquor - and forget about who needed to be 18; it was New Year's and the store's owner wanted money!).

Quite a discussion took place regarding who would enter the liquor store (I guess I looked older) and an even longer discussion ensued regarding what type of liquor we should buy. Somehow the fateful decision was reached, and a bottle of Southern Comfort was purchased. Whew - what sweet, sweet, nasty stuff! I can't speak for the others, and while it positively warmed the cockles of our hearts - I'm no mollusk so I'm not sure what cockles has to do with our hearts, but, in any event, that particular drink has never touched my lips again. It was nasty stuff. I know I already said that, but it was brutal.

Doc drank a little too much and got sick; Rob and I managed to stay upright, and we helped Doc stay clean and recover the best we could - and that night of cheering, yelling, camaraderie, and of getting back home is a memory I wish all of you had.

There's another episode I'd like to relate to you concerning my long-time friend Tom Janicke. We were across the state-line and wanted to enter this neat little bar called 'White Birches'. It was a predominately black bar with terrific music (mostly jazz), but one night a week it was a strip club. It was tame by today's standards, but to two young kids, it was a place where we wanted to be.

Tom and I had difficulty entering the place because you needed a sport coat and we were unaware of that fact the first time we went there. I was glad Tom was my partner that night for he came up with the most outrageous - yet so simple - of ideas. Tom said why don't we knock on someone's door and ask just to borrow two sport coats - and that's what we did, sort of.

We looked for a house with a porch light on and rang the bell. Since you all know me, you know that I didn't do the talking, but together Tom and I devised a plan whereby he said to this nice old lady who answered the door that we been invited to a CYO dance and needed to wear a sport coat, but didn't have any. Tom's ingenious plan worked and we embarked on an evening of adventure by wearing two of her husband's sport coats. And, yes, we returned them along with a beautifully written and very sincere thank you note written on a table napkin.

There are more details to each of the above-mentioned stories that I could bore you with, but those episodes in my life are not the real reason for this email. (That's always the case with my class emails, now isn't it?)

When we were in high school, going to New York State to drink was seen as a rite of passage, and many of us went. I know I did, and, yet, I truly don't know why. I would like to think that the reason was more serious and complex than I went there because I could - because it was something to do - because I wanted to hang out with friends - because crossing the state line to drink was only because it was there, but I really don't know.

Of all the things I look back on in high school and question, it has to be the drinking in New York. And by New York, I mean the state, not the city. Going to the city - the village, especially - was fun, interesting, exciting. It offered a different perspective, a different experience than what I was used to having. Please someone tell me that aspect of the city hasn't changed.

Although I frequented more than just the following places, I know many of you will recognize the names - the 'Hub' (the bar – who bowled?), Gaffey's in Nanuet, the 'Old Tavern' in Suffern, and the Orangeburg Inn (oh, and how many of you remember getting beer and going to the Orangeburg drive-in on Rt. 303) - and that's not counting all the bar cruising up to the Greenwood Lake bars in the summertime.

Those of you who know me really well know that I am not a social person. I used to be a social drinker (the more I drank, the more social I became - that was my bad attempt at humor); and I would like to believe that back in high school whenever I crossed the state line to drink, I drank responsibly.

As we age, however, our memories somehow purge all the really stupid things we did in high school (thank God), and I tend to see things now through those ubiquitous rose-colored glasses from the 60s. And it's unlikely that many of you will admit to going to New York and having more than one or two drinks - and I truly don't want any of you to incriminate yourselves, but, for me, I believe that might not have always been the case.

I was a car fanatic back then (still am - my daily driver has been a Corvette for the last few years), and since I had a car early in high school, I was usually the one behind the wheel (albeit not as a 'designated driver'), and so sometimes I drove home when maybe, just maybe, I shouldn't have. And maybe I should not be so truthful.

The summer after we graduated, an underclassman drove up to New York with friends and didn't make it home. Some in the car on that drive up refused to get back in the car with him for the ride home. A fateful decision on their part since he crashed his dad's Cadillac into a tree and was killed.

All in all, life has turned out pretty well for me despite my early feeble attempts to thwart it. I learned early in life from other people's mistakes not to drink and drive and I did come to realize that my wanting to cross the state line was not for any other reason than that's where the girls were. And although my success rate for meeting girls was about the same no matter which side of the state line I was on (not bad, but not all that good either), I did meet a few.

Oh, by the way, girls crossed the state line to meet people, too. Someone I was fond of in school related to me in a follow-up email on my discourse

about our summers in Glen Rock that she met her husband of nearly forty years at the 'Hub'. Considering I had to wait until after grad school to meet the mother of my children, maybe my luck at meeting girls was pretty bad after all!

I do know that my numerous emails (from square dancing, to the Glen Rock pool, to EMOC, and back through my Mr. Krause memory, etc.) have all had a central theme - but since this one's getting too long, I'll save that thought for another time.

Happy New Year to you and yours – and thanks for letting me ramble once again.

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United Nations -

It's springtime - albeit a little overcast here in South Jersey, but it's Good Friday, and I don't have to at work this morning, so I thought I would take the time to pen you another recollection of mine. I hope it takes you down memory lane once again.

As you may be aware, one of the buzz words when talking about children is 'exposure'. No, not the Michael Jackson type of exposure, but, rather, exposing children to new things - life changing things, educational things, rewarding experience type of things. And that's the topic of this e-mail.

I remember writing you that when I was about eight years old I started accompanying my dad to Yankee Stadium two to three times a year (those box seats were a company perk), and I would join him on his trip into the city in the morning. He worked in lower Manhattan at a naval design firm, and to get there we would take a train to Jersey City, board the PATH (the tube train that took you into Manhattan), and then finally hail a taxi to his office building on Broadway, which located not too far from the New York Stock Exchange. That and joining him on occasion to board battleships, aircraft carriers, etc. at the Brooklyn Naval Yard were truly highlights in my young life, anyway . . .

In the spring, when it was announced in junior high that our class was going to New York City on a field trip, I was ecstatic. I thought 'Wow' - my classmates would get to experience what I had done so many times before: ride the train, use PATH, hail a cab - this was going to be great.

Now you know why Special Education is the perfect place for me. Our class did venture into the city, but not by train; we went by bus - not a terrible mode of transportation by any means, for we got to see the Weehawken Park baseball field at the entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel and wonder aloud that wouldn't it be neat to play ball there, but it wasn't the kind of adventure I eagerly hoped to share with all of you.

As we were told of the school's plan, we were informed our first stop of the day was going to be a tour of the United Nations. And what a great place the plaza turned out to be - built on the east side of Manhattan on a parcel of land donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., with buildings that were futuristically designed, and holding the hope of all people for a more

civilized and orderly world. Well, two out of three things withstood the test of time.

The itinerary was to tour the General Assembly Hall, visit the Security Council Chamber, walk around a little bit, and maybe see an ambassador or dignitary or two (so dress appropriately, we were instructed!). I, of course, was expecting we would also be meeting with Dag Hammarskjöld (sp), but then that's why I never got into politics. There is logic there somewhere.

On our arrival, I was definitely impressed with the flags of so many nations stretching from 48th Street to 42nd St. The United Nations is in the United States, of course, but it's not part of New York City or even part of the United States. It's in an 'international zone'. (I'm curious, though - if a crime was committed on this parcel of land, who would investigate it?)

By the way, I was ultimately struck with the awesomeness of the translators sitting in those booths doing their job. (I thought more than once what would have happened if they misspoke. Would war break out? I was just learning to live without those school air raid drills.) After our morning tour of the United Nations was completed, we had lunch and then went to our second and last stop of the day.

Before I spoil it for you, does anyone recall where we went and what we did after lunch? If you do, then your answer may or may not match mine. Did a thought just zip across your mind, as in why wouldn't there be a match with our answers?

Well, it's because our class was split into two separate - but not equal - groups. One group went to Carnegie Hall up around 54th and Seventh Avenue; the other group went to 39th and Broadway. Boy, do I wish I had been in the Carnegie Hall group. I don't care what you guys and gals did when you were there, but it had to be better than what I was 'exposed' to that afternoon - another one of my lessons in 'life isn't fair' saga.

Exposure in education is a good thing, and in the hearts and minds of the Glen Rock school system they were trying to expose us to new experiences - a truly noble idea, but what were they thinking! If you do not remember what was at 39th and Broadway, then you have a way of blocking out unpleasant memories. A gift I truly wish I had.

Okay, for those of you who cannot recall that particular day as clearly as I can, and if you were in the same group as I was in, I will tell you - we went to the New York Metropolitan Opera House. What were they thinking! I just had to say it again. Imagine sending junior high kids to the opera.

Granted, we weren't treated to a full-blown opera, and the behind the scenes experience was somewhat nifty (does anyone use that word anymore?), and, later, when the performers came on stage and went through their abbreviated performance using the music, costumes, and voices that I had only heard and seen on TV, all I could ask myself was - what were they thinking!

The United Nations still gives tours, Carnegie Hall is open and functioning, and people definitely still go to the opera - but now it's to Lincoln Center (built a few years after we were out of high school). Does anyone know if the Met building is still there?

Okay, judging by how I have written some of my other e-mails, you may have guessed what's coming, but, in any event, it's with great pleasure to tell you how this e-mail ends: yes, I have been back to the opera; yes, I have exposed my own children to it; and, yes, I am glad for my Glen Rock Junior High exposure.

And what I'm also glad about is how they now have these individual devices to interpret the various songs into English (and the devices do not interfere with the theater-going experience of the people around you). You can use them or not. It's your choice. Guess what? I choose not to. I'm such a baby. I guess I just want the exposure!

Thank you again for letting me share another time and place with you.

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7th Grade –

One of the more interesting teachers in 7th grade was someone who taught a subject I didn't need and, truthfully, although I believe we all had a course just like it; however, I couldn't quite understand why it was on my schedule.

This teacher taught (if you can call it that) something entitled 'Study Skills' or a title close to it. This was supposed to make us better at studying. I know we did outlining (yeah, like we had never done that before!), had practice pages on organizing resources, etc. I recall we had this class for only one marking period, and I doubt we received a grade for it, but, of that, I am not certain. I am going to assume it was to get us ready for higher learning, but the whole concept was lost on me.

What did fascinate me at the time, and annoys me to this day, is the fact that this teacher didn't do anything. She rarely got out from behind her desk, and when she did it was only to pass out papers. She never wrote on the board, never walked around the room, and hardly ever interacted with us.

I hesitate to say she had a personality, but if she did, I never saw it, for she was hardly animated in any way. Granted, I never had this teacher again (thank goodness), don't even know what department she was associated with, and although she could turn out to be someone's favorite teacher, she was an enigma to me.

This teacher's standout feature was she owned only two dresses and they seemed identical. Now you are thinking how does David know that? Well, of course, I don't; I'm only guessing here, but she rarely, if ever, wore anything that could have given me a clue that her wardrobe closet was extensive, even moderately so. Others in our class made the same observation about her clothes, or lack of them.

And the two dresses I do remember her wearing were as plain as she was. Oh that was too kind. Those dresses were ugly. I can do better than that - those dresses were plain ugly! Solid in color - and, as I recall, they were light gray in color. If she wore a different color or a different style dress, it had to be during a marking period when I didn't have her.

Now if this teacher wore those dresses because of her religious beliefs, then I'm sorry for this characterization. But as a kid just entering 7th grade, I was

an observer of all things, and this teacher fascinated me for as much as what she was as for what she wasn't.

If anyone has anything else to say about this teacher, this Madam X, I'd be happy to hear from you. An opposing point of view would be greatly appreciated for I would hate to think I was right about her.

Oh, her name? Well, I'm going to use a twist on what we hear on every crime television show: her name was changed to protect the guilty. If you had this teacher and know who she is, or if you didn't have her and don't know who she is, then my using her name doesn't matter.

On to a different topic - some of you have been highly complimentary about how my memories have stirred recollections within you, and it's not that I expect people to e-mail me about any of my remembrances, but some of you wrote that we never had a field trip to the UN.

Now that is fascinating! Did I go there alone?

That field trip was unlike those Saturday morning science excursions to Fairleigh Dickinson for Chemistry, for that did comprise a small, select group. However, I am positive our entire class participated in the UN experience. Hey, I know I did not go there alone!

No need to write. I am just curious as to why no one recalls our UN trip, that's all. If I had an out-of-body experience way back then, I guess it's just catching up with me.

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Cattle Call -

I know this e-mail doesn't have the best of titles, but then I have never been too creative when it came to writing.

I would like to venture back to the time when you were in elementary school. You might not have lived in Glen Rock, but that's okay, for that shouldn't diminish this remembrance. It should only change the surroundings, for what I'm going to write about most likely affected us all.

I'm not sure if I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks since Glen Rock had two different sets of tracks, but as I've stated before, I attended Richard E. Byrd School. The school was small and somewhat private. It was tucked away on the short end of Doremus Avenue, as if they were trying somehow to hide it behind the 'Rock'.

Byrd School was a very comfy place. There was only one homeroom for each grade. The kindergarten, first, second, and third grades were on the first floor, with the second floor housing fourth through sixth. The bathrooms were in a scary place, though. Well, it was scary for a five-year old kindergartner going there for the first time. The bathrooms were in the basement, and it was dark, dank, and very industrial looking.

I grew to love the place once Sam DeVries, the custodian, took a liking to me. Though Sam was dark haired, a little on the burly side, he was a gentle giant - at least to a five-year old. I was lucky Sam took a liking to me.

Although school is school, have I set the stage well enough for you to get a picture that I liked Byrd School and all was right with the world when I was there? I hope so for now I want to turn the tables and talk about the flip side of being young in the early 1950s.

That time in my life was pretty scary. No, not because of big, burly Sam, but because of the world we lived in. It was a scary time. As children running, jumping, playing, we were oblivious to most of the world events unfolding around us, but we were participants, nevertheless.

Two circumstances readily come to mind. First, there was the air raid drills. Our leaders knew about the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We all saw the pictures of atomic bombs exploding and their ensuing mushroom

clouds. Did they really think that the 'duck and cover' drills would really save lives?

After the devastating Catholic school fire wherein over 90 students died, I can understand implementing a law mandating fire drills in schools. I think that was a common sense approach to a very serious concern - but duck and cover! Did anybody really believe that if hydrogen bombs were going off all around us 'duck and cover' would save anyone? Yeah, maybe it would if we lived in the middle of Kansas - and then only maybe.

Initially, it was crawling under our desks in first grade, but then the procedure quickly changed from being near the classroom windows to sitting in the hallway with our arms over our heads. Even today, I can still feel the coolness of the wall against my back. Can you?

If you think about it – really think about it - duck and cover wouldn't have helped the Japanese survive even the atomic bombs, and let alone have helped us survive a hydrogen bomb.

The teachers, our beloved teachers, were standing next to the windows in the hallway and chitchatting away. No wonder they wanted us to cover our heads. It was so we wouldn't see them talking! Did our teachers know something that our nation's leaders didn't? Maybe they were just fatalists; who knows?

I am reminded of that 1964 anti-Goldwater ad wherein there's a picture of a little girl out in a field picking daises with a mushroom cloud billowing up behind her. All I know is that if a hydrogen bomb were going to be dropped, I'd rather have been outside picking flowers instead of in a building waiting for the windows to be blown out and concrete raining down upon me.

And to continue that theme for just a bit, what about those gleaming white NIKE missiles positioned up in the hills just north of Glen Rock. You would drive by and see them pointed skyward and think, 'Great, that will thwart any attack.' – except, they weren't there to protect us. Well, remotely they were; they were placed there to protect New York City.

Back to the reason I designated this e-mail as 'Cattle call'. When I was in fourth grade, my mother drove my sister and me over to Coleman School. Talk about a change in perspective regarding schools. It was like night and

day. Coleman School was long and flat with huge play areas. It was so unlike the school I attended. We didn't have any playing fields - well, not so you'd notice.

Back to the 'cattle call' theme. I named this e-mail that because I couldn't think of a better way to explain the next scary thing I had to endure. When we were at Coleman School, my sister and I had to line up with hundreds of other kids to get vaccinated for something I knew very little about, but something which definitely terrified my mother when it came to her children - Polio.

Now don't get me wrong - the polio vaccination idea was a good thing. However, lining up and making us wait in long lines might not have been.

I'm not afraid of blood; I'm not afraid of shots (believe it or not, I'm tough); I'm not even afraid of long lines. But, as an observer of all things, I was acutely aware of my sister and some of the people around us. Having seen the anguish Carol went through during her regular doctor visits, plus watching the reaction of those near us, the lining up and having to anticipate the wait to get inoculated was more than some could handle. Now my sister didn't throw a fit (trooper that she was), but there were children in those lines that definitely didn't want to get their shot.

Like I said, I didn't mind standing in line, albeit I wasn't entirely sure of why I was doing it. I had heard of polio, and had known it was something I didn't want, but at the age of ten the world at large was more than ten years away. I was now just one of a few hundred kids lining up that day and following orders. I just wish I had been able to soothe the trepidation of some of those around me.

A Byrd School alumnus of mine had a sister who contracted polio, and most of us have friends or family members that were afflicted with polio, or at least we remotely knew someone who was, and in this year of the 50th anniversary of the Jonas Salk vaccine we have a lot to be thankful for.

I'm curious, though, why we didn't get our shots at our individual schools. Don't get me wrong, I liked Coleman School, but it might have been a little better if the shots were given on familiar turf; but then, if a kid doesn't like shots, I guess it doesn't matter where he receives them, I suppose.

We did get a 'Tootsie Pop' at the end of the ordeal - do you remember that? By the way, does it still take 250 licks to get to the chocolate center? And what's with that hard ridge that encircles the pop?

Oh, and we had to do the lineup thing all over again for our booster shot, didn't we? Later on, the Sabin oral vaccine became available for some lucky kids.

Those were the days, weren't they?

I'll stop with the questions, and I'm sorry this couldn't have been a really happy, good-time memory. I'll try better next time.

And thank you to those who wrote me stating they remembered being on the trip to the UN. I'm glad I wasn't hallucinating.

Dave Lamken
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Fairleigh –

This recollection isn't about a class field trip per se, but it did involve a few of us going somewhere.

Knowing how teenagers tend to want to sleep late in the mornings, especially on weekends (not me, though, I've always been an early riser), I am struck with the thought that asking kids to be at school early on Saturday mornings was a bit too much, but, yet, some of us did just that.

There was a big push for science after the Russians launched Sputnik, and our generation benefited from that infusion of money, renewed attention, and changes in the science curriculum. And one of those changes allowed for us to expand our horizons and 'to go where no one else had gone before'. And so on various Saturday mornings, some of us met in the high school parking lot to board a bus for a short ride to Fairleigh Dickinson.

We went there to play in their science labs. Now, I know 'play' isn't the right word, and Mr. O'Hara, my group leader and CBA (chemical bond approach) groupie, wouldn't like my saying it, but it's probably what I did. I did have an interest, but not my heart, in the sciences. I went along because it was an adventure. Did I glean much from the experience? Well, I remember it, so it must mean something to me, and I still get Popular Science magazine - does that count?

Now I am on to a totally different topic - one that definitely doesn't fit in with the above. Those of you who liked school - really, really liked school - you can stop reading now, for what follows probably has very little to do with you.

I am curious to know how many of my fellow classmates didn't like school and might have felt you were learning disabled.

Even at this late stage in our lives, I am not asking this to embarrass anyone, and, as some of you have done in the past when responding to my e-mails, you may contact me directly and I will not reveal what you write me.

I will tell you that I was learning disabled as a child, and I recognized it early on in my formative years, but never had a label for it until I got to college.

I am not talking about my stuttering - God, forbid, you would have thought that was enough of a burden to have as a child. No, I'm talking about those little things that got in the way of learning so easily what others grasped so effortlessly.

I could give you a whole litany of examples of how my disability affected my schooling (some of them are so sad that they are actually funny), but for each of us who had (has) this problem, the symptoms of our learning disabilities are different, and I don't want to trivialize someone else's difficulties by making fun of my own.

Suffice it to say that even after all these years I still cannot spontaneously tell my left from my right without first making a conscious effort at confirming which is which (my comment about having two left feet at our school dance lessons was really not a joke).

Although I never had the problem of reversing my letters, I am an extremely poor speller and even have difficulty looking up words in the dictionary. As a child I had very little phonetic ability. For example, early on, I always drew on 'vanilla' paper while the rest of you colored on manila paper. Even after I was corrected repeatedly (vanilla connected with my sensibilities more than manila because of paper's color), I know I continued to confuse the two through high school.

I am not an auditory learner by any means (can't even define a musical beat by tapping my foot in time with the music without feeling like a fool), but I am blessed with an exceptional visual memory - maybe not photographic, but it's in that arena. Years later when I figured this all out, I would have thought that the latter would have helped me with my spelling dilemma, but for some reason I can't visualize words to spell them correctly.

I could easily continue down the list of things I cannot do well, but I have been fortunate to sidestep many of the accompanying pitfalls of being learning disabled by compensating for my shortcomings (something I can do well). For example, I married an excellent speller. Nancy finds it funny that someone she considers to be bright can't spell, but she always helps me when I ask. Funny would be her term, not mine.

I am interested in hearing from any of you who might have thought that learning in school was more of a chore than you might have thought it

should have been, and how it affected you; and, as always, what you write to me will stay with me.

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Bike Hike –

This e-mail was written to Alan Furler a few weeks ago (with a copy to Art Smith) about an excursion we took years ago, and what are memories for if not to share them with the class, so here goes.

In the Boy Scouts, merit badges are mostly singular events, like the cooking or the boating merit badge, and so it should have been for the bicycling merit badge, but somehow a group of us decided to get our merit badge together. Were we blessed or were we cursed?

>>

Alan, thanks for asking. My memory has Ken Hradzira, Craig Lampe, the two of you, and me setting off on a bike hike up into the hills toward Greenwood Lake.

* * * Now don't get me wrong, I like hills - but for a bike hike, come on. What were we thinking! Who decided we shouldn't head south and do our required distance along some flat roads?

Okay, the first directive in the handbook was to get our bikes checked by a professional, and we did that at the bicycle shop in Ridgewood. Ken had an English type bike with thin tires called a Raleigh, Alan and I each had a Schwinn 'Corvette' (my bike was red with chrome fenders), your bike, Art, is lost to memory (sorry), and Craig was riding an older, nondescript American bike.

We parked our bikes outside the shop, and the owner came out and signed off that our bikes were trip worthy. Big mistake - he must have been busy that summer day for he just gave our bikes a cursory once-over, signed our cards, and seemed happy when we rode off. I don't think he truly checked out everyone's bike as thoroughly as he should have because we all remember how our trip turned out - or at least you will by the time I'm finished with this e-mail.

Okay, we were Boy Scouts - being prepared was what it was all about. We had a map, carried a little notebook to log in our trip, had the necessary bike tools and first aid kit, canteens were filled, sandwiches were packed along with a Ding-Dong or a Twinkie (or two or three), and, of course, we had a

trusty little air pump, and, yes, the required tire patch kit - consisting of abrasion paper, rubber cement, and exactly three patches – ‘Be Prepared’ was the Scout’s motto, right?

* * * Okay, now is the time to 'fess up. Whose idea was it to ride north into those hills? Who planned that trip, anyway?

The morning of our journey was beautiful, and we were on a mission. We set off with ebullience, camaraderie, and high expectations. The temperature was perfect; we knew our departure time, where we were headed, how long it should take, where our rest stops would be, and our contemplated arrival time back home. Well, five out of six wasn't bad.

After setting out and riding for quite some time, the first flat occurred just before lunch. No problem - it was the front tire of Ken's bike, and it was an easy fix. We repaired the wheel quickly and were soon on our way. Just after lunch, the second flat of the trip happened, but this time it was Craig's rear tire. Not as easy a fix as Ken's because the chain had to come off, but we were 'pros' at fixing tires so even though it took a little longer, the job was accomplished without too much hassle and we were soon again headed off.

However, when we were patching the tire, we did notice that the tube had been patched before - twice, I believe, but I will surrender that memory to someone whose recollection is better than mine. Our journey continued rather uneventful until late afternoon, but at least we were now turned around and headed in the direction of home. That's when the third flat really derails us.

Craig's rear tire blew again, and he fell off his bike. Craig's cuts were minor and easily attended to, but even with the third patch being available in our kit, the inner tube was beyond repair.

* * * Anyone ready to step up to the plate now and state that going up and over North Jersey’s hill and dale was their idea?

After it was determined that the tire couldn't be fixed, we knew at this juncture that it was getting pretty late. The sun wasn't quite setting, but it was approaching the early dinner hour. We recalled passing a service station, but it was back in the opposite direction; and no one knew for sure if it even sold bicycle tubes, and, if it did, would they even have the correct size. The

question of forging ahead or turning back was analyzed, debated, and resolved; it made the most sense to continue heading home, and so that's what we did.

Except for little individual scouting sojourns to find out what was just beyond the next hill or curve, we all stayed together. I presume it was out of sympathy for Craig's injuries since we all took turns pushing his bike while he rode ours. We all enjoyed the long coasts down the various hills, and - I'm just guessing this time - we didn't want him to be left out of all the fun.

As dinnertime came, a phone booth was found, calls were made, and all pertinent information with home and families was exchanged. Our fathers were home from work by now, and they coordinated a master rescue plan.

Soon three cars arrived to pick us up - and, boy, were we delighted to see them. As the bikes were being put into the trunks of cars and into the back of a station wagon, I'm thinking - I'm really tired - my dad's here - I get to ride home - no more pedaling up those hills - wow, I'm in heaven. Wrong, wrong, wrong!

The car caravan took us to a service station, Craig's bike got a new inner tube, and then all our bikes are unloaded. I just about fainted, but fathers always make sons do the right thing, and since we had come so far, we still had to complete our road trip if we were going to be entitled to that merit badge. So off we went pedaling into the night.

Darkness had settled in by this time, and we rode our bikes along the country roads between the headlights of the lead and trailing vehicles. I'm sure the cars that were lined up behind us weren't so happy about moving along at a snail's pace, but it was comforting to know we had our parents' protection.

As we were nearing the end of our trip, the lead car pulled into an Oakland ice cream place called 'The Old Barn' - a family favorite of ours (and my dad wasn't in the lead so some parental discussion had to have taken place before we left). At first, I wasn't sure why, but when our dads got out I knew it was to treat us - or maybe it was to treat themselves, but, in any event, it was terrific. We were treated to double-dips - the best one I ever had.

From then on, the rest of the ride home was a breeze, and when we hit Lincoln Avenue we went our separate ways. Going to bed that night never felt so good, and sleep never came so quickly.

Thanks for being there, guys. It's one of my fondest memories, and I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

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Footloose Activities -

Growing up I had numerous opportunities by which I could stand around and admire girls or in which I could dance with them and try to hide the fact that I had two left feet. The slow 'Y' dance was the easiest movement for me to fudge my non-existent dancing prowess. For those of you too old to remember, the 'Y' dance embodied the 'Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye' idea, but without the swing; you just stood together, swayed, and thought 'Why?' dance.

I have highlighted EMOC and our summer dances (those down by city hall in the railroad parking lot) in previous e-mails, but there were two other casual dance activities in which I partook.

One may have been touched on before - our Saturday Canteen nights. This was a curious mix of various activities. There were games (like Ping Pong and ring toss) that were set up in one gymnasium while the other gym was organized for dancing. I'm not sure whether the 'divide and conquer' arrangement was supposed to accommodate those 'not yet ready to mingle with the opposite sex' or if it was there to provide for the varied interests of those who didn't want to be home on a Saturday night and but didn't want to dance.

What I thought to be curious, however, was something you, too, may have found to be a little funny or odd. I recall that if you were in the game room area, the chaperones would chidingly kid you as to why you weren't in the other gym dancing. Mr. Yost and Mr. Thomas, the Phys. Ed. teacher, were famous for this. (What are the chances of a small, non-regional school having three Mr. Thomas's, by the way? But we did.)

Of course, if you were in the other gym and just standing around, the chaperones would query you as to why weren't you dancing. Saying I just came to look at the moving scenery did not impress anyone (I wonder why?). Never did like Ping-Pong, though.

Because my parents would on occasion make a passing comment or two about my less than stellar behavior, they offered up the idea that maybe I should attend St. Catherine's, and so out of memory to that situation the following comments might at first seem biased and not too respectful, but, nevertheless, I offer them up as true.

So it's now fairly obvious, my other mingling with the opposite sex opportunity was at CYO dances. These were on Friday nights and were held in the original church building to the right of St. Catherine's School.

When you are at that awkward stage of just getting to understand the opposite sex (I'm not there yet), the right mood helps a lot. Sure your own mood is important, but the ambience of where the interaction takes place is important, too.

EMOC had it right with subdued lighting; the summer dances had the benefit of a dusk to nightfall setting, and even the Canteen organizers saw fit to turn off some of the gym's lighting - but, no, not the CYO dance sponsors. You would have thought that the nuns were hoping to see how fast they could spin the dial on the electric meter. They had on more lights lit than the White House does at Christmas!

I believe the nuns' main objective at the CYO dances was to keep us apart rather than to foster any chemical bond among teenagers. They walked around and separated anyone who they thought was dancing too close. And by close I mean within two or three inches of each other.

Dancing at a CYO function was more of a 'cat and mouse' game. You tried to dance as close as you could get to your partner just so you could see how many times they separated you. If the nuns wanted a non-contact, recreational, co-ed social-time activity, they should have put up Ping-Pong tables!

And don't get me started on the music. If we did not bring our own records, I think we would have been dancing to Guy Lombardo. (Hey, does anyone remember watching him perform 'Arabian Nights' at Jones Beach. My parents were enamored of his music - and what would New Year's Eve have been without him! The younger generation will soon be saying that about Dick Clark, I suppose.)

The CYO dances were from 7:30 to 9:30. I am not sure why, but the girls were always on the left side of the room, and, of course, the boys were on the right. I don't know why I remember that, but I do, just like I remember during our Tuesday night 'dance lesson' times in junior high that the girls were always lined up on the 'home' bleachers side and the guys walked the longest mile across that gym floor to pick a partner.

For all my seeming negativity about the CYO dances, I went didn't I? Sure I did - and I had fun. The only problem was that I could clearly see my two left feet in that well-lit room.

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EMOC -

Weekends - who doesn't look forward to weekends! Back in our school days, or was it as it is referred to now - our 'school daze', whatever it was, weekends were the time to socialize.

The first constant that comes to mind was EMOC. The how and why of its origin are lost to memory, but 'come' we did to EMOC like ants to sugar. The Ridgewood YMCA did us a big favor by opening its doors and allowing us sanctuary if albeit for only a few hours.

Whether you were with a date or went solo, it was the place to be. It's the closest I ever got to an 'American Bandstand' type event. The upstairs dance hall was a warm and inviting place (sometimes too warm), and you felt up close and personal with everyone in the room, whether they were next to you or across the room. The lights were on, but in a subdued manner, and the atmosphere was electric.

In my junior high 'square dancing' remembrance, I confessed to having two left feet, but that didn't stop me then from enjoying myself, and the same was true years later at EMOC. Whether I started out dancing slowly to 'Runaround Sue' or I began doing steps to the Lindy right away, my arms and legs always wind up going in directions that I was sure they shouldn't have been going, but what did it matter - fun was in the air. The music was just right and there was a feeling that all was right with the world.

Afterwards, there was the ubiquitous FirePlace on Rt. 17 for hamburgers and fries, or, for a change of pace, there was Mario's just down the road for pizza. Those of us who had cars - and didn't mind breaking a curfew or two - went across the state line to have fun in Nanuet, NY, or other such good places. I'll save our class adventures to New York State for a whole other email.

Now this may come across as a put-down and since I'm not much of a writer, I'll just lay it out there. Glen Rock tried its best to entertain us with what I will call 'school dance-happenings', but it just didn't have the same panache that EMOC did. In one gymnasium there were games set up and in the other gym there was an attempt to get us to dance. Teachers chaperoned and encouraged us to participate, but the games were lame and the gym where the music played was too well lit and seemed like a cavern. Those nights

were a flop. I only remember going to two of those events. Anyone out there who remembers being at more than two of those dance-happenings, please e-mail me. I would love to know what I missed.

I'll touch on CYO and other church socials at a later time, but if it wasn't EMOC or other organized activities that occupied our weekends, then it might have been the parties. I have memories about each and every one of them and I would like to share them all with you. Only kidding - your time and patience with me would run out long before I could finish writing about them.

However, there is one party that stands out and this was at Chris d'Elia's house. It's an unbridled fact that I had a crush on Chris (what normal guy didn't?), but this is not about her (although I could definitely write a tender remembrance about how kind she was to me), but, rather, this is about something that happened at her party.

When I arrived, I found the party underway in the backyard. The record player was on, people were dancing, talking, eating - everyone was having a great time, but what stood out the most was the presence of a drum set nestled up against the house. I thought to myself what a great idea - Chris was going to have a band! Now that was something different, but throughout the evening no band appeared.

Being the shy, retiring type, I didn't inquire about the drum set, and I don't recall anyone else commenting about it either. Toward the end of the party, one of the party-goers proceeded to sit on the stool and start playing. And, boy, could he play the drums.

I don't believe I'd embarrass him one bit if I told you he sounded as good as Buddy Rich - okay, now maybe that is a bit of a stretch - but he was good - really, really good. When the party was over, I helped him load the drums into his father's car, but since the two of us were not close friends, I never heard him play any musical instrument before or after that night.

All I ever thought about him was that he was someone I played basketball and football with at the Glen Rock pool, as well as being someone with whom I shared some classes. The most memorable class was English class our senior year wherein he liked Mrs. Punchard as much as I did. If the truth is told, I might have liked her new Ford Thunderbird just a little bit more,

but the real question is - Tom Aitken, do you still play the drums?

Thanks again for letting me ramble about our school days - I tried to keep this one short.

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Childhood Games –

Okay, I admit it; like others, I have inundated the class website with too much e-mail lately (don't you love hyperbole), but I know it's true, so I'm going to beg off for a while - just for a little while. However, I do have one last nostalgic thought - sorry!

To pass the time as I journeyed home from junior high, I would on occasion find a perfect stone, engage it, see how it rolled, and then kick it along with me on my long walk home.

Although I hardly ever do it anymore, I found myself kicking a stone as I walked in my neighborhood yesterday enjoying a beautiful day. Considering the passage of time, I was somewhat astounded at how deft I still was at maneuvering the stone. The stone, incidentally, followed me all the way home, albeit, ironically, always just ahead of me, and landed on the edge of my driveway where it still sits today - awaiting another challenge from a passer-by, I suppose.

That leisure time frolic had me thinking about other childhood games that occupied my youth. Let's get three manly games out of the way first. King of the Hill was a definite favorite, as was Indian wrestling, followed by thumb wrestling. Thumb wrestling - manly? Well, I don't watch WWF.

I wasn't terrific at it, but I loved tetherball. There's a point in the game where you just know the game's outcome, and once you get the smell of victory you see it coming, and if you're on the losing end, you definitely see the win slipping away. As with all games there must be a strategy involved, but, luckily for me, I just enjoyed playing. I liked the coming and the going of victory!

Early elementary, primary grade recess games such as Red light - Green light, Giant Steps, Mother May I, and Red Rover, played outdoors at Byrd School, were playground classics. Dodgeball (with and without a bounce) was always exciting, especially the times when it was played without a required bounce. A special mention goes to Punchball, for it was a favorite, but I was always fourth best behind the power hitting of Alan Furler, Art Smith, and Michael Boynton (one of the fastest runners I ever encountered). If the truth was told, Ken Hradzira, Craig Lampe and I were really tied for fourth (but, heck, it's my e-mail), with Bruce Emra's play strategy evident in

every game. Jungle Gym Tag always seemed to be played before school began, and especially before the bell rang ending our one hour and fifteen minute lunch break (boy, have schools changed!), and I never remember playing jungle gym tag after school, does anyone?

Classroom favorites played to pass the time away on rainy or wintry days were Seven-Up, Twenty Questions, Simon Says, and Hot Potato. Seven-Up always seemed to be more of a popularity game to me. I never could keep a straight face on those occasions when I got to be one of the 'lucky' seven, so I was an easy 'up and down' player. Musical chairs was an infrequent game - maybe because we were always too loud and pushy.

Silly outdoor games played at home deserve mention - ones like Freeze Tag (never liked that one much - too silly), Crack the Whip, and marbles. I never truly understood the attraction of playing marbles. Sure I knew the how and why of it, but it never did capture my spirit.

Speaking of capturing, how about Capture the Flag, Prison (some around town called it Jail), and Steal the Bacon. Hide and Seek was a good one. Did Ollie ever get his oxen free? And where did 'Ollie, Ollie, Oxen Free' come from?

Horse was played on the basketball court - and getting to the letter 'S', and not making that last, simple lay-up, and having to start all over again was the absolute worst. And why was it called Horse? I know - I ask too many dumb questions.

My older sister liked playing hopscotch, and now that I'm older I can 'fess up' and tell you I enjoyed it, too. Not as much as playing baseball in a neighbor's yard on those cool summer evenings with good friends, but it was always a challenge finding just the right, flat, hopscotch stone that would do the trick and land exactly where you tossed it.

What did I miss, and what games did you play and enjoy?

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Two Teachers -

Over the years that I've been e-mailing our class, I have mentioned a few teachers in my remembrances – Mrs. Blair, Mr. Krause, Mr. Hollinger, Mrs. Punchard, Mr. Watterson, Mrs. Palmer, Mr. Chenoweth, Miss Houston, Mr. Hewitt, Mr. Thomas (the industrial arts one), Mr. House, Mr. Monro, and probably some others that I've forgotten just now - as well as my Byrd school teachers that I don't need to rename since not everyone in our graduating class would be familiar with them.

I would like to give you a snapshot of two more people from school, one from junior high and one from high school - both quite different from each other, and each from different departments. Since we had our own schedules, and our teachers were not all the same, I don't want this to be a guessing game, but since you are familiar with my writing style, I will tease you for just a bit, but the names will follow. The first one is easy, or is it the second one?

Upon entering a classroom for the first time, this individual, who worked in the high school, would try to impress a class with an opening act of facial recognition/name memorization. This person would rapidly go up and down each row and quickly ask everyone their names, turn around, and then when not facing the students permit them to exchange seats. While not totally impressive, it wasn't a bad gimmick, and we all wondered how he could do that upon meeting us for the first time.

Do you need another clue? This person was medium tall, but not slight of build, had short light brown hair in the traditional Princeton hairstyle (right, Pete?), and was rarely in the classroom.

Guess now for the answer follows -

As I have referenced to you before, I had neither foreign language classes past the seventh grade nor study halls in high school; my class schedule each year was rather eclectic. One omission was by choice, the other by parental edict. Therefore, I had a very good working relationship with the guidance office, for it was their job to do the substitutions and arrange my schedule somewhat to my liking.

It was in that capacity of being in the guidance office that I got to know Mr.

LaRue fairly well and deduced that his memory trick was aided by our class pictures. As with any demonstration of semi-magic, it's always a little disheartening to know how a trick might be accomplished.

By simple elimination, the second teacher in question is from junior high. His father was a policeman in Paterson (why do I remember this stuff?), and although he was very approachable, he ran a pretty tight classroom. I have used this reference before when delineating a former Byrd School classmate, but it's also suitable here. This teacher, if he had been a child actor, could easily have been type-cast to play in the 'Our Gang' series.

This teacher taught me to love English - and poetry in particular, and among a slew of things we had to memorize for his class, I still recall some lines from the Merchant of Venice. I won't bore you with everything but a little bit of Portia's part - The quality of mercy is not strained, it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed. It blesses him that gives and him that takes.

Over the years as a teacher, I have had to use that sentiment more times than I care to remember. Incidentally, the 'olde English' version is probably a little different from what I recited, but after 45 years, it's probably pretty close.

And now for the easiest clue for naming this teacher - although pronounced slightly differently here in America, his last name was the first name of a very famous music composer. Any ideas? Guess now for the answer follows shortly.

Please feel free to get any old famous quotes that have remained with you all these years off your chest. I'd be happy to entertain them when you e-mail me. As you can tell, I'm fascinated by what people remember!

And, if you like music and are into Beethoven, then you know I was talking about Mr. Ludwig, another one of my more memorable teachers.

Thanks for letting me ramble.

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Another 1st Grade Field Trip -

In my own way, I try not to presume too much when remembering things about Glen Rock and our school years, but knowing some of you wrote back about the first grade field trip to the fire station, I will assume that those of you who attended other elementary schools in Glen Rock had similar experiences to what I had at Richard E. Byrd School; and if we all did the same types of things, I hope you will remember another first grade field trip, but this one was to a dairy farm.

What is notable about the trip is not that we saw cows, or even the fact that we had an opportunity to milk one - yes, by hand, but that we were exposed to things I had only peripherally known about. Granted, we went into the barn and saw the cows hooked up to a milking machine, and we learned about cows and the entire milk making process (and that was really neat), and the fact that we were given a chance to milk a cow the old fashioned way - that was really cool. Does anyone use the words 'neat' or 'cool' anymore? I am showing my age, aren't I?

As I remember it, the cow was pretty co-operative, the milk turned out to be warmer than I expected, and a few classmates were quite good at getting the milk into the bucket. I was not one of them. Any guess on my part why I wasn't particularly successful will have to be left up to my therapist whenever I get one. I know, I know - some of you think the sooner the better, Dave, the sooner the better!

So what was so notable about that trip that makes me remember it so well - it was seeing this solitary cow tied up to a stake. This poor cow was left all alone in this large fenced in area to the left of the barn. The area around the cow was just dirt; there was no nice green pasture for this cow to play in as there was on the right side of the barn for the rest of the cows. I felt so sorry for this poor animal.

I remember inquiring why this cow was tied up, and the dairy farmer said it wasn't a cow. (Well, I didn't know.) He said that the 'bull' doesn't get along well with the cows right now and needs to be separated from them. I still felt sorry for the 'cow'.

Except for the following few things, I don't remember much else about that trip - black and white cows are called Holsteins (I still call them black and

white cows), a cow's tongue is as rough as sandpaper, and a bull weighs about a ton. Oh, and after that day, I knew I was not meant to be a farmer - dairy or otherwise.

This next part of this e-mail is not about a field trip, but it's still a great memory - one I will have forever.

Our high school put on some wonderful plays, but one play in particular stands out above all the others, and it's because of the awesomeness of one of the actresses.

Sitting in the audience I was bowled over toward the end of the play when Molly Morck's character emerges from stage right (our left) transformed into this thing of beauty. Molly was dressed in this stunning white dress (gown?). Don't get me wrong. Molly's as cute as they come, but this entrance had the punch of Cinderella and Henry Higgins' makeover of Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* rolled into one.

The play had something to do with a family of scoundrels, and I recall that Paul Brown had a part written into the play just for him. Sorry I don't remember much more, but it was a few years ago and I was just an observer, not a participant.

Now for one small tidbit of something that for some of you may have long forgotten - do any of you remember sitting in a diner or some other kind of eatery where they had a jukebox selector at the end of the table and you would flip through the pages to view the song titles? Of course you do. But do you remember reading a song title and then adding the phrase 'under the sheets' to it - and then laughing or giggling at the silliness of it all?

So as not to be accused of slanting this little tidbit remembrance one way or the other, I went to the following website and copied the first ten songs that appeared (that's why they all start with the letter 'A'). The website is www.americanmusicclassics.com/thefifthies.htm and the misspelling of 50s is their mistake, not mine.

A BIG HUNK OF LOVE - ELVIS PRESLEY
A BLOSSOM FELL - NAT KING COLE
A BUSHEL AND A PECK - PERRY COMO
A CASUAL KISS - BLUE JAYS

A COUPLE OF SWELLS - JUDY GARLAND
A DREAMER'S HOLIDAY - BUDDY CLARK
A FOOL IN LOVE - TERESA BREWER
A GIRL WITH A FLAME - NANETTE FABRAY
A GUY IS A GUY - DORIS DAY
A KISS TO BUILD A DREAM ON - LOUIE ARMSTRONG
A LOVER'S ISLAND - THE BLUEJAYS

Of course some titles work better than others when adding 'under the sheets' (and that was half the fun), but for those of you who did not do this as a kid I wanted you to have an idea of how nifty this was to do.

What makes this memory so special to me is that my sister (who is three years older), and my mom and dad, and I were all having breakfast out one morning and my sister and I were reading the song titles and smirking at each other. My mother asked us what was so funny, and I told her what we were doing.

My father quickly interjected and said that in his day the phrase was 'under the covers', and my mother - ever so shocked that he would reveal this to us - said in her not so normal tone of voice, "Jerry!" and looked at him as though he had given away a deep family secret.

My dad followed it up with something like "He's almost 16 years old, Mildred. He gets it!"

I felt like I had arrived.

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Star Wars -

How did George Lucas come up with some of those characters in his movie? I think I know the answer for that. George was probably inspired by his recollection of a field trip his first grade class took to the fire department, if, in fact, they went to a place like the one we did.

Those of you who lived near town may have known where the fire trucks were housed, but before I entered school my only exposure to them was when the trucks came out to extinguish an occasional brush fire in the old golf links area near my home.

In any case, one of the most vivid memories I have is that after completing a unit on community helpers, our first grade teacher, Miss McGuirk, lined the class up in the entrance way/lobby of Byrd School and proceeded to take us along Doremus Avenue and through town to the Glen Rock Municipal Hall. To onlookers, it must have been akin to seeing a proud mother duck escorting her ducklings on a leisurely, but purposeful stroll.

I recall being allowed to climb all over a ladder truck, and when I spied a fireman's hat I thought 'WOW' - what little kid wouldn't want to try on a real fireman's hat, and that's what I did.

Got the picture - really little boy, really big fireman's hat. I think the hat came down over my entire head and rested on my shoulders - it was that big! If I didn't look like R2D2, then I must have sounded like him when I said, "Look at me!"

From the fire truck (aka - really neat jungle gym for a six year old), we went inside to visit the police station. I'm not sure, but I believe the holding cell was actually used for storage. I recall they moved some boxes out of the way so we could get inside the cell. Does anyone have a better recollection of the jail cell?

And speaking of good recollections, I could also use your help in jogging my memory on where we went after various proms. I recall three places, but know there were more (I went to five proms, not counting our graduation dance). I should have bought a tuxedo rather than rent one each time!

Two of the places were on Passaic Street in Rochelle Park (on the way into Hackensack) - one was the Blue Swan Inn and the other was the Swiss Chalet. They were about two blocks apart from one another on opposite sides of the street.

The third was the 'restaurant on the mountain' just over the border in New York State - and whose precise name I don't recall. The road (it seemed more like a path up the mountain than a real road) was treacherous, especially driving up there and being on the outside lane. Not a road I'd like to have been on in the ice and snow.

Thank you to those of you who offered me their hole punchers. I truly appreciate the kindness, but will decline. However, those of you who still have a two-ring binder should see what a collector on eBay would offer for it.

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Gym Floors and More –

Byrd School didn't have a gymnasium and so on our first day in junior high when we were told we shouldn't walk across the gym floor, it seemed a bit strange. However, being the dutiful teachers that they were, it was explained that our shoes would leave scuff marks on the newly varnished floors, so only sneakers were allowed on the playing area.

That did make sense - for who would want scuffed floors - and being the disciplined children we were, whenever we had on our street shoes and wanted to go from one side of the gym to the other, we obediently walked around the perimeter.

That ideal lasted about a month, but in that time we did learn the rule quite well and followed it under threat of dire consequences and dashed diagonally across when we thought no one was looking. Also, during that time, I observed teachers, administrators, and maintenance personnel adhering to that rule as well, but as I said, the spotless floor only lasted about a month.

By the way, since I brought up the topic of administrators, did anyone besides me find it peculiar that our athletic director (who was in charge of the guys' sport's programs) was named Mr. Fellows? And that his first name was Ernst. Yeah, I thought so. Imagine getting stuck with a name like Ernst Fellows. Also, do any of you recall Mr. Fellows getting his arm hurt during a track meet by an errant javelin throw. Man, when that happened, it must have hurt like hell!

Okay, back to the gym floor. After our weeknight dance lessons got under way, there were so many scuff marks on the floor you would have thought Salvador Dali was gearing up to do a mural! And, do you think the gym floor rule may have explained why the boys obediently lined up on one side and the girls on the other and were so reluctant to come out into the middle of the dance floor during lessons? Nah - me either.

However, I think if one was to stretch the reason of plausibility, it might be concluded that scuff marks were the reason that 'sock hops' were invented. What a better way to remove the marks than to have the perpetrators have a frantic, but innocent way of erasing them. Makes sense to me, but then, as you know, I'm in Special Education, so everything in this world makes

sense. Also, how many of you recall custodians using an old tennis ball stuck on the end of a pole as an eraser for the scuff marks? Thought you might.

Others can chime in here and correct me, but I can recall only two times when our school had a sox hop after a basketball game. Midland Park, on the other hand, had a sox hop after almost every Friday night game. How do I know, you ask? Well, because I liked moving scenery and I knew when they had home games. On occasion, Tom Janicke, or Doc Savage, and I would drive to Midland Park after our game was over. I recall taking off my Glen Rock jacket and leaving it in the car so it would appear I was from the opposing team's town, going inside just as the adults were heading home, and seeing what there was to be seen. I believe my two left feet didn't seem as prevalent when I didn't know the person with whom I was dancing!

Okay, now on to a slightly different topic. I'll be the first to admit that girls are smarter than boys. Maybe not always in academic situations (I'll let others argue that point to its natural conclusion), but in social situations girls have all the right answers, especially on prom night.

After all the instructions I received at home on how to properly pin on a corsage so as to not embarrass myself by drawing another person's blood, you can only imagine my relief at finding out that I did not have to do it. As soon as I presented the flowers, my date's mother proceeded to pin the corsage on - and she did it perfectly!

As I recall, I only had to go through that anticipatory trauma once - hooray for the invention of wrist corsages! However, I do recall some girls bringing their boxed corsages with them to school and pinning them on in the ladies room. You girls helped each other out far more than boys did back then.

Now I am sure when it came time for your first prom you women struggled with what to wear - that's part of who you are, but you knew right from the start that you'd get it right. Over the years, I never saw a dress style that wasn't becoming, a hair out of place, or a mismatched anything on any girl in the six high school proms I attended.

We boys are the other hand, after anxiously being measured for our tuxedos, once we picked them up, got them home, and started to dress, struggled with which end of the studs went in the button holes (just so you

know, ladies, there were no buttons on the shirt, only seven button holes on each placket of the shirt), and the silver stud always looked more inviting to have showing than the black tip end (but the cufflinks were the clue); we also wondered whether the pleats on the cummerbund faced up or down (it wasn't meant to be a food catcher); and, believe it or not, we questioned (more than we needed to) if the bowtie was in the right position. For me, that didn't matter, though - my mother always straightened it before I left (whether it needed it or not), along with a good luck kiss on the cheek (that was always appreciated!).

And, let's not forget the shoes - how can we forget those glossy, black shoes! I felt as though I was slipping into my sister's patent leather shiners. To me, it was the only part of the outfit that seemed unnatural. Nothing on my feet should have been that shiny and polished, but it was dress up time, and I knew I needed to do my part in order to pull off a perfect evening - so patent leather shoes it was!

It was only after the third prom that I started to feel secure in knowing how to properly put on a tux. I guess that's why I like cruises so much now - I get to wear a tuxedo twice in one week!

To state all my e-mails are about me would obviously be true, but then it's hard to write about what other people experienced, so please excuse my boastfulness in this next part, but as I left the house to pick up my date, I thought I looked pretty good - maybe not Cary Grant good, but darn good, nevertheless.

That feeling lasted, of course, until I saw the radiant beauty who was to accompany me to the prom, for then I knew I was outclassed. On seeing her for the first time, I probably looked like a deer in headlights - to say I was overwhelmed would be a complete understatement. And then, after I got to the prom - oh, my gosh - I felt like a kid in a candy store, but, trust me, I knew that the piece of 'eye-candy' I came with was going to be the Godiva I went home with. I hope that last part came across as the compliment I meant it to be!

Thank you everyone for letting me go down memory lane once again. Over the years in the dozens of e-mails I have penned, you have been so patient letting me inundate you with my little missives, and I have enjoyed the hundreds that have been sent to me.

Speaking of e-mailing, a classmate and close childhood friend recently brought up an interesting point about my e-mail address. I always try to remember to include my home e-mail address at the bottom of whatever I've written. That's because some of you have mentioned you cut and paste some of my musing and send them on to others not in our class. And I appreciate you thinking my writing is worth sharing. What I also love is being contacted from people I don't even know and hearing how what I have expounded on relates to their childhood – the old same, but different adage.

On a side note, I have bargained for my work e-mail address to be held in perpetuity after I retire, and in that way my former students will always be able to contact me. It's something you may want to consider doing at your place of employment, too.

Thanks again for allowing me to invade your time and space.

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Tar Bubbles -

What - you're thinking as a kid, did David spend time at the LaBrea Tar Pits in Los Angeles? No, but I have been there. This summertime childhood pastime involved street maintenance.

After repeated warnings once the trucks had left our area, I didn't dare get tar on me from the newly sprayed street in front of my house for fear of parental wrath, or even consider throwing any of the newly sprayed, loose stones around, but I did 'pop' tar bubbles for days afterward. Does anyone else remember doing that?

Right after the truck passed, especially if it was an extremely hot day, tar bubbles would start to appear along the roadside edge of the curb; and if you were lucky - very, very lucky - some bubbles would be as large as a computer mouse, and popping them would be fun. But popping those bubbles had a learning curve - a learning curve you quickly mastered.

In the beginning, as you stretched out in a prone position studying the bubble (with your nose within a foot of it), you tried to pop the bubble with your finger. You did that so you could see what you were doing, but after reaching over the edge of the curb and making the bubble pop and have it ooze its special by-product up at you, you soon realized that that was not the best of techniques. Trust me on this.

For one thing, sometimes the bubble was thick, even pliable, and so the bubble wouldn't always 'pop' easily, and secondly, popping it or not, you risked getting tar residue on your hands, fingers, or clothes. But that wasn't the worst of it. It was the steam you had to watch out for. Well, the steam and the smell of the hot asphalt. You soon learned that using a stick to pop the bubble was a much better way of achieving your goal. Goal? What goal?

I am not sure there is an answer for that (other than just popping bubbles), but I know it was a pastime that I enjoyed whenever the town decided to redo our street. And you know what - the town where I presently live doesn't do street maintenance. For some reason it doesn't have to (the road where I live is as pristine today as it was when I moved here over 20 years ago), but I believe the neighborhood kids are missing out on something.

The ten years olds living around here are missing out on writing their classmates 50 years from today something that no one would care to read about except those people who have made it this far down the e-mail.

This is probably the silliest remembrance I have ever written, but it has been stuck in my nostrils for a very long time.

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Glen Rock Sports -

With the Olympics being beamed into our homes, we have all had those moments of sheer edge of your seat excitement whether it is participating in a sporting event or just watching it from the sidelines.

I previously touched on two of those times in high school when I highlighted Glen Rock's hard fought seven to six victory over Woodridge in what turned out to be a tug of war championship football game, and I wrote about the way Ross Burhouse would leave me in the dust during the last leg of the 880 in track events. By the way, since he passed me so darn often, and did it so well with great style and grace, I could easily have been his biggest cheerleader, for I waved him on more times than I care to remember. (I get out of breath thinking about it.)

I would like to share my recollection of what I refer to as the greatest underdog story of all our high school years and it has to do with our basketball team. Some of you are already nodding your heads for you know what I'm about to say - our little school up against big, overbearing Ridgewood. Since Ridgewood was probably a Group IV member, the particulars of why that game was even scheduled is lost to me, but the exhilarating feeling I felt on our school's heroic night has never left my memory bank.

Whether you were on the team or in the bleachers (as I was that evening), you couldn't help but think that there was something very special about to happen that night in the Ridgewood gym. Despite the disparity in our schools' sizes, our team rose to the occasion and put forth that 'little extra effort' (which was the cornerstone of our ninth grade graduation motto - trust me on this; it was), and we stayed neck and neck with Ridgewood the whole game.

Okay, maybe, just maybe, on that particular evening the sports' Gods may have intervened a little on our behalf, but I would like to think that our team knew that the bar had been raised and found it within them to make us more proud of our team than we already were.

As I sat about three-quarters of the way up the stands, I felt the electricity in the air as the game ebbed and flowed, and I slowly became aware that more and more people were coming to the same realization that I was - something

spectacular was about to happen. It wasn't that a basketball game was about to be won or lost, but rather it was about a night we were going to remember for the rest of our lives. It was going to be our own true to life David and Goliath story.

During the '80's or early 90's, I heard athletes relate about being in a 'zone' when they felt they were playing well. I can only imagine what it must have been to be a player, a cheerleader, or anyone closely associated with what was happening down on the court that night, for it was thrilling just to be in the stands watching the game. The end of the game brought the house down.

The magical 'zone' had reached out and touched all of us, at least on the Glen Rock side. The air of invincibility and bravado that permeates all youth had expanded a bit more that night making us feel even more special that evening. I left the gym feeling just a bit taller, my car ran better, the hamburgers at 'The Fireplace' tasted just a little bit juicier, the kiss at the end of the evening was a little sweeter (I don't think I've reversed those last two), and the whole experience made for a pocketful of memories.

This game, and my other recollections about growing up when and where I did, highlights what I have always known about Glen Rock and my fellow classmates, friends, and close buddies – in our crazy young lives we didn't always have everything together, but together we had everything.

On a little side note, growing up on Greenway Road I often thought to myself that if my parents had bought a home in 1941 half a block up the hill from where they settled, I would have been living in upper Ridgewood and wouldn't have attended Byrd School or Glen Rock High. What a mistake that would have been!

Thanks Mom and Dad for waiting until I was out of high school to move - and thanks to all of you for allowing me to share another remembrance.

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Thank you for writing, Hugh.

I have a theory about my memory regarding Glen Rock and the various school activities and childhood experiences that I do offer up in my e-mails - and it's that my memory is just like everyone else's; except that I choose to write about it.

Not that I have a photographic memory nor do I consider myself very intelligent, even with a Ph.D. – I'm in Special Education, not nuclear physics, but I do know I recall things visually. With the passage of time, I have likened my memory to one of those old carousel slide projectors. The cartridge may have to make more than just one revolution before it stops at the correct or desired slot, but eventually it will fall into place, be in focus, and I will remember whatever it was I wanted to recall.

Of course, as I get older, it may take days or weeks before the carousel makes that all important stop, but it will happen - and, of course, when I least expect it.

My memory is selective, for I know I don't recall some things that others classmates do. Some have written back regarding something or other in one of my e-mails and offer up things that I don't recall, and it's to such an extent that I'm thinking did we even go to the same schools.

Some have thought I should put all these together in a book. I'm not going to for these were written as e-mail not literary prose, but I will let you in on a little secret - I am writing so my grandchildren will know what it was like when their grandfather was growing up. I thought it would be a nice gift for them when that time comes and I'm no longer here to tell the grandkids stories.

By the way, what I miss the most are my yearbooks. When my parents moved from their Wyckoff home to a gated community in Lakewood, a box of my important 'stuff' was discarded by mistake (and here I thought I was keeping it safe with them!). I am sure that if I had a chance to peruse them for longer than I do at our periodic reunions, then more of my memory gates would open.

A few classmates have offered to lend me theirs, but I have declined. I wouldn't want anyone else to be without their books like I am, and you never

know what will happen to borrowed items. I don't mind lending my stuff; I'm just not a borrower. The responsibility is too great.

Well, I've prattled on far too long as usual - thanks again for the encouraging words about my memory.

Hope all is well with you and yours. - Dave

A Treat -

During a 6,500-mile road trip this summer surveying whether the Southwest held any retirement interest for Nancy and me, at one gated community in Arizona there was mention made of the kitchen sink this particular home offered and a memory connection was made. For those of you who are too curious for your own good, it was a beautiful triple basin sink.

Now back to the real subject of this e-mail. Some of you will make the connection that I did and know where I am headed with this Glen Rock memory - Jahn's Restaurant and Ice Cream Parlor on Route 4.

Do any of you remember being on a double date and ordering the 'Kitchen Sink'? It was the most glorious of all sundaes and Jahn's signature dessert. It would arrive at your table in a large, silver chalice serving dish (along with long-handled spoons), containing mounds of different kinds of ice cream, bananas, hot fudge and caramel sauces, wet nuts, whipped cream, sprinkles, and, of course, cherries. And all for the unheard of price of five dollars and fifty cents!

What we learned as proper eating etiquette in our early childhood days went out the window as the sundae was devoured. No, not that anyone ate as pigs, but what first started out as eating dessert soon wound up as having soup as the last course. The sundae was meant to serve four, but no matter how quickly you ate it, there was this soupy mess at the end - consisting of soft bananas, melted ice cream, and combined sauces all languishing at the bottom of the bowl. It was not a pretty sight.

Once you learned your lesson, it was an experience that was never repeated; however, it always a treat on subsequent visits just to sit and watch others order it for the first time - for you knew that they weren't going to finish it, and you knew what would be left behind.

And for you aficionados, did you ever visit Jahn's other place in Union, New Jersey? Same, but different (love that expression).

I always entered the next place in Fairlawn through Radburn's back streets, but it was located farther west down the highway from Jahn's (on what most would think of as a continuation of Route 4, but was commonly known as Broadway), and it was the home of the fifteen-cent hamburger -

McDonald's. It just seemed like the perfect place to be after a high school basketball game.

After you arrived and backed into a parking spot under the trees (the side streets were numbered somewhere in the 30's, but I cannot remember exactly which one it was - old age is setting in, but McDonalds sat on the Northwest corner - that I do recall), you got out of your car, stood in line (outside, for there was no inside service and drive-thru windows had not caught on back then), and placed your order. The milkshakes (20 cents) were rather thick, the French fries (10 cents) were a tad too greasy, and the hamburgers (well, what can you say about them) were less than ordinary (19 cents with cheese), but it was 'the' place to be on a Tuesday or Friday night after a game. Oh, and the menu was that clear-cut. Other than two or three different sodas, that was it - about eight items total.

Speaking of hamburgers (and having touched on the Fireplace in previous e-mails), there was another less frequented spot on Route 17, about three miles south of Route 4, in Lodi (I'm guessing here). It was a little shoebox-sized place that served five-cent hamburgers. You may remember it as White Castle. The building was white, but it sure was no castle. The counter sat eight and the two tables along the front window sat two more people each. The hamburgers were two and a half inches square, thin, steamed cooked, and, depending on your chompers, were more than likely gone in two or three bites. You almost thought you were eating air - they were so light and substance free.

I am curious to know if those places are still there. Does anyone know for sure? If so, please let me know, for I feel a nostalgic, food field trip coming on.

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Cruising -

When was riding 'shotgun' in a car not the best place to be? You either know the answer for this one already or at least you will.

If you weren't the driver, but you were out and about with a bunch of friends, a certain protocol was followed. Invariably, someone called 'Shotgun!' and, I hope, it was you who yelled it first.

And do you remember that calling 'shotgun' had to be done every time you approached the car? Having ridden 'shotgun' out to somewhere, it didn't entitle you any return trip privileges.

Riding shotgun meant you secured the second best seat in the car - and for that you could look important, control the airflow from the little vent window (remember those?), and, maybe, just maybe, get to choose the radio station.

But above all else, riding shotgun meant you didn't wind up looking dorky being relegated to the back seat. When you were 17 and knew how to drive, there was nothing worse than looking as if you were being chauffeured around.

Okay, so you remember calling out 'shotgun' - sometimes even shooting 'paper, rock, scissors' for the privilege, and this ritual held true for almost every occasion when you were 'out and about' with friends.

So when was it that you didn't want that seat? Yep, you've got it - every time you were cruising for girls.

Sorry, ladies, I don't know what it was like to be out cruising with you so I will limit my observations to the male perspective, but I think you'll see that the same agenda applies.

When cruising, the best place to be seen was downtown Ridgewood. And to be seen required you being positioned on the left side of the car. Why? - so you could be as close to the white line as possible. You wanted to be where the action was.

No one called for that seat; in fact, I don't believe there was even a name for

it; but I do know that when you were out cruising, you didn't mind giving up being in the front. And when there were six of you in the car, even the middle front seat was preferable to riding shotgun.

My memory for cruising in Ridgewood seems confined to just Sunday nights in the summer. I am sure I must have been cruising there at other times as well; it's just that I don't remember cruising Ridgewood other than in the summer. And I can narrow that down a bit further to the summer of '62. The summer after graduation is a whole other story.

Sunday nights in the summer were always a 'do nothing' part of the weekend, but after I got my license and the obligatory date nights were gone, it was a super time to be out and about. The daylight hours were longer thus making twilight the perfect time for cruising; car windows were cranked all the way down to catch the night's breeze (remember when all four windows in a car actually rolled all the way down); the radio was turned a little too loud to your favorite station.

Speaking of radio stations, you've got to remember 'The super hit sound of - 77 WABC - with the hotline of hits', and the DJ that did it all, Cousin Brucie, and the music that was perfect for 'watching the submarine races'.

Do you recall cruising up East Ridgewood Avenue, crossing Broad Street to the half-circle parking area by the railroad station, making a 'Uie', and moving on back down toward Maple Street. What was better than that on a 'do nothing' kind of summer night? It was sweet.

I remember crossing Maple, turning right on to Hope Street (now how ironic is that!), and going around the block to start the entire ritual all over again.

There was this whole set of unwritten guidelines for cruising. Do you recall that when you passed a car that held promise, you made sure you passed it again? But this time you made sure to acknowledge the passengers' presence, and then probably you even passed it again, and maybe more than likely passed it even once more, giving everyone in the other car the once over, the twice over, the thrice ... well, you get the idea.

After the occupants in both cars had eyeballed one another enough, a determination was made within each vehicle whether or not a stop was warranted. Some type of connection had to have been made with the people in the other car. It had to be more than hormones, more than curiosity, more

than just wishful thinking. This was because any stop while cruising was never taken lightly by either party. Why??? Because you were afraid if you did stop, you might miss something better.

Not every car was worthy of a thrice over glance, not every car was worthy of a discussion about whether a meeting should take place, and, of course, not every request for a meeting was accepted by the opposing car.

This ultimate step - an actual face to face meeting - depended on a few things. First, cruising etiquette had to be followed. For one thing, the number of occupants in each vehicle had to be close in number. No car with two girls in it was going to stop and chat with a carload of six boys - no way.

We, guys, on the other hand, had no problem being just two among the many - but rarely did that happen. In fact, I can't recall a carload of six girls ever stopping for just two guys, but then, as you must know by now, I like to dream a little - so it's possible that it did.

On the other hand - I think we will leave it to the fact that I'm too old to remember it one way or the other, okay?

Next, the physical characteristics of each car's occupants had to be somewhat on a par with one another. How this was determined was the subject of much debate within both vehicles. If a meeting were to occur, then the singling out of 'who wants to talk to whom' usually ensued - and for some that could have lasted well past the actual meeting.

Remember, the discussion (er, argument) would have resembled statements something like the following: I want the blonde; she's too tall; you said I could have the brunette; why did I have to get the _____? (you fill in the blank) - and so on and so on and ...

In my car, usually the driver won the argument of whether a meeting would take place and the first choice of the other car's occupants.

Who am I kidding! If a car full of girls motioned to us that they wanted to meet, then we were going to meet. Period! No thought given; no discussion; no arguments. We thought we were 'in like Flint' whenever that happened.

But it was the girls who ultimately decided who would be given the time of

day. You had more power over us than you realized. All guys are a sucker for one-on-one time with a pretty face.

What was funny, though, was when we saw a girl's car from Glen Rock cruising Ridgewood. Sometimes we were struck with the following two thoughts - what's she doing out here, and isn't she going out with so and so?

Did you notice, too, that there was a major unwritten rule that nobody cruised alone? All vehicles had to have two or more people in it - had to, or, otherwise, that vehicle's driver was labeled a 'weirdo'.

Three in a car seemed like the perfect number. It allowed for some flexibility in pickups. You had a slight chance of connecting with a vehicle that had just two girls, certainly there was a chance of hooking up with a car that held three, and maybe even connecting with one that had four girls in it.

Now, once the initial contact was made, the 'where one would meet the other car' was always discussed - and how that final destination was communicated was always interesting.

Wasn't the meeting spot usually conveyed by using hand gestures and a quick yell of a word or two? And more times than not two passes were needed before the meeting place was correctly communicated; and, in the intervening time, you always hoped the car in question wasn't waylaid by some other guys.

However, hand gestures and a few quick words weren't the only method employed. Often, a brief stop in the middle of the street took place. Not a welcomed procedure by those drivers behind both you and the other car, but, still, mid-traffic stops did occur.

Some people preferred to meet at Sealfon's parking lot. A side note - did any of you know that Sealfon's had a sister store in Summit? When my sister couldn't find the right color or size in something she liked, sometimes she trekked over there.

Some cruisers also liked to meet at the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company's parking lot on Broad. I always liked the diagonal parking area up from the Warner Theater by Van Neste Square Park.

By the way, are any of those places still there?

I think cruising for girls in Ridgewood was the most innocent of things I ever did at that age when it came to girls. Cruising was so pure and simple. However, truth be told, I cannot remember anything that ever came of it.

I can't remember ever arriving home late when out cruising in Ridgewood (it was an early evening event unlike going to New York State). I can't remember ever meeting a significant other while doing it. I can't remember any of the guys who I thought were better looking than I was getting lucky, either. And, I truly can't remember ever, ever being disappointed that nothing came of those random stops and meetings.

But, one thing I can remember is the camaraderie I shared with the guys I had the experience with - and that will always be with me.

Thanks for the memories, guys.

And thank you to all the girls who might have seen me cruising in Ridgewood and wondered what is he doing out here; I thought he was dating so and so.

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One Boy's Point of View -

By the time I was old enough to walk, I was headed down the street to my first girlfriend's house. Before 1949, there were no other children my age in my little, one street neighborhood, so visiting her was always a treat.

Sweet, kind, and forever the apple of my eye, she and I would tend to our teddy bears like the proud parents we someday hoped to be. For the two or three years before school invaded our lives, she was my constant companion, and I was hers. And if you haven't guessed it, Christina (Stina to her Byrd School classmates) Schmitt was my first friend.

Along came morning and afternoon Kindergarten and we were split up, the 'teddy bear' thing was no longer workable, and, wouldn't you know it, along came a new girlfriend. The prettiest little thing you ever saw. She lived near the 'Rock' and was to be in Byrd School for only one year. St. Catherine's was to be her home for reading, writing and 'rithmetic for the next eight years. We would see each other on occasion at church, the pool, or wherever, but the romance was unsustainable. At the age of six (and now entering first grade), what was a little boy to do. I hope you know it was you, Gail Waterman.

As mentioned before, Byrd School had only one homeroom for each grade, and so the pickings were slim when it came to finding just the 'right' somebody. I know I tried, but there was something else I was up against - for you see, our class had 22 boys and just eight girls. The odds were not in my favor, and the competition was tough. You can imagine the overflow in the girls' favor each year in the Valentine card box.

I tried my best and was able to capture for a fleeting moment the attention of some of the eight girls - luckily for me, not all at once. Each one was a beauty in their own right, and each one was worth the chase - the dark-haired girl with the wonderful clothes and the strawberry blond with the cutest freckles were always my two favorites. Thank you Valerie Plumb and Jean Anderson.

I enjoyed Byrd School and the teachings I learned there. Oh, not the regular academic regimen (which was a good foundation for what was to come later), but the interpersonal relationships between the sexes. It is strange how those years could have been that life altering - the parties, the hayrides, and

the dances, but they were. It defined who I was and how I felt about the opposite sex. I seek to claim no wisdom on that subject here; I am only acknowledging what I remember.

Granted, I had an older sister, but, come on, Carol was just that - a sister. Good for advice - maybe even great, but I couldn't (or wouldn't) try to hold her hand, give her a peck, or tell her I thought she was special. No, that was left to the young beautiful women of Glen Rock.

Entrance to seventh grade brought new wonders - within the first year I was dating one of our class's most beautiful blondes. Heavenly, with a style and a personality all her own, she was a delight to be around. In eighth grade, I was walking home a delightful, light-brown haired girl, who wore the prettiest 'Poodle' skirts imaginable.

By ninth grade, I was privileged to escort an intelligent, tall, statuesque, dark haired beauty to our graduation dance. She had a smile that warms my heart to this day. She frequently attends our reunions, but, unfortunately, I have been too shy to remind her of our connection - my loss.

In tenth grade, I was infatuated with a girl whose father rode the train with mine. I had to be on my best behavior (that was possible!). She, too, was tall, very, very, smart, and had a habit that drove me crazy. While holding hands in the movies, she had this unique way of continuously encircling my palm with her finger. It was marvelous - never happened before, or since, but so memorable I still get chills thinking about it.

I need to add here that throughout grade school and junior-senior high I was fortunate not to alienate the charming ladies with whom I had shared a bit of growing up (at least I don't think I did). Even though they were no longer with me on a day-to-day basis, they forever held a place in my heart.

As all of us entered high school, they had moved on. Because the gap in maturity level between the sexes reared its ubiquitous head, dating upper classmen made sense to some of the women. I found solace in going out with an underclassman who found dating an upperclassman charming (can you believe that!), and we went out off and on for two years.

High school dances, make-out parties, drive-ins, and the over-socialization of our generation had both its good and bad points (right now I can't think of

any bad points, but there must have been some otherwise my mother wouldn't have warned me so often about the perils of make-out pits); but, I survived and currently love my wife Nancy more now than on the day we married. I thank the women of Glen Rock for setting me on the right course, for without you I would just be another ordinary male.

As with all my e-mails, I give thought to whether or not it would be okay to highlight certain people, and I would have loved to have named names in this one, but feel everyone has a right to their privacy and so other than my first loves I tried to be a little oblique. If any of you (and you know who you are - I hope) would like to write me, I'd be happy to hear what you have to say (you can even chastise me) or you can have me elaborate on what I remember - with discretion, of course.

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A Clean Sweep -

Do you remember the Glen Rock ritual of spring-cleaning at your house the way I remember it happening at mine?

Can you recall that the first thing to come down was the wood storm windows? While high on the ladder, my dad somehow managed to get those windows off their slotted hooks and down from the second story all by himself. He then, of course, had to climb back up the ladder and install the screens. They were somewhat lighter, but still not easily handled.

My dad built a special rack on the ceiling in the back of the garage and stored either the windows or screens there when not in use. We eventually got permanent aluminum storm windows (I believe Dad thought he had gone to heaven after they were installed!).

The windows were washed inside and out with Glass Wax. When done, they glistened. Do any of you remember using Glass Wax? It was a pink window washing liquid that when allowed to dry to a light haze made wiping off its powdery dust very easy (I wonder if that product is still around).

I don't know if this happened to you, but there was always some tiny little area that went on a little too thick and would never completely dry before you started to rub it off; it would then smear on the glass as you worked to clean off the haze, thus making your job a little bit harder.

Seeing smudges on the windowpanes and specks of dust dancing in the sunbeams you would think that that in itself would remind you it was time for spring cleaning, but, no, it was something much more basic than that. Do you recall what it was?

Of course - the soon anticipated arrival of summer's heat. With the storm windows in place and not having access to screens, air didn't circulate through the house very well. A buttoned-down house may have been perfect for the wintertime, but not a great place to be on hot summer days. Opening the windows and letting in fresh spring air cleared out Old Man Winter's gloom and is a vivid childhood memory.

The Venetian blinds were taken down and cleaned, too (over the years, I've been to Venice four times and saw mostly shutters - not blinds - on their windows).

The blinds were put in the bathtub and washed by my mother. Dad stretched a rope from the corner post on the back porch to the far corner of the garage; he had long ago put hooks there just for that purpose. After the windows were washed, and as my sister searched out any lost 'dust bunnies' in all the rooms, he and I would hang the blinds up so they could dry in the backyard sun.

Thinking of the summer heat, I remember a window fan was put in a window on the 'hot' side of the house to draw air in from the 'cool' side. Yeah, like that really worked! It was probably 96 degrees on the hot side of the house and 94 on the cool side, but the fans did cause some air to flow throughout the house, which was better than nothing, I suppose.

It is strange, but I recall in the 50s that our car was air-conditioned before our house was. Can you imagine living in your present house without air conditioning? I can't.

It's easy for me now to understand why we vacationed so much in New England. We went to the Jersey shore a lot for the cool ocean breezes and the water's wonderful waves, but Vermont and New Hampshire were always on our travel path.

I envy Bruce Emra for going away to Mr. Suntherland's (sp) camp in the mountains every summer. The best my parents could do for me was Boy Scout camp - not a bad way to spend two weeks in the summer, mind you, but not paradise, either. I will definitely reprise this topic in another e-mail someday.

Spring-cleaning also involved changing just about everything in the house to bring in a fresh, lighter look. Fresh air and fresh flowers did wonders for our home, however, the semi-annual changing of the draperies and slipcovers did the most. My mother would make the changeover from winter to summertime with different slipcovers and draperies during spring cleanup. The look was always lighter, brighter, and more cheerful - a pretty old fashioned way of doing things.

My parents capitalized on the eager energy of my sister and me to help, and it paved the way for a great parent/child relationship with all of us working together. We did a lot as a family back then (you all did, I'm sure), and when we worked together, it was quality time; and, in this case, you got to share in the accomplishment and its ultimate reward - a fresh, clean house.

Times sure have changed though, have they not? Windows are now double (even triple) paned - and are opened far less frequently. I probably couldn't find Glass Wax anywhere even if I wanted to try my hand at washing windows again (thank goodness for our housekeeper). The draperies get changed only when its redecoration time; and now stores sell a 'fresh air' scent in aerosol cans, although I doubt it evokes the same essence as the real thing.

Sometimes the good, old-fashioned way of doing things are best left in the past; however, holding on to memories will never go out of style. Thanks again for allowing me to ramble.

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A Boy and a Brook -

First, just a few facts to get us going, okay? My parents were born in Jersey City a few blocks from each other in 1910. They led separate lives until a chance meeting through mutual friends in the fall of 1931.

They lived through the 1920's and told some great stories of being teenagers in that era, but each of them was reluctant to relay much about life in the 30's. Because times were tough, I know my parents dated for five years before they got married; my dad had difficulty finding permanent work in his field until 1935. I've related in previous e-mails that he worked for a ship building firm.

Now for the good part - my parents married in May of 1937; my sister was born in 1942; and I came along in February of 1945. No, that was just okay part - the good part was the fact that my parents bought a house on Greenway Road in Glen Rock in September of 1941. How fortuitous of them to do that and to have had such an inquisitive son as myself.

They bought a home in an isolated part of Glen Rock, or at least in 1941 it was. There were only ten houses along this lonely two block stretch of Greenway Road. There were three houses across the street, then an empty lot and then another house. On my side of the street there were five houses, then two empty lots and then Christy Schmitt's house. Other than houses along Lincoln Avenue near where Rob Hoogs lived, there was nothing in Glen Rock around us for blocks and blocks.

In fact, there were no blocks. Behind our house there were just woods (untouched until the mid to late fifties and destroyed by Roughgarden Construction Company for homes), and to the east of us was an old abandoned area referred to by the old-timers as the 'golf links'. The empty lot across the street was then made into a road connecting Greenway Road with Oak Knoll Road. Bruce Emra and Art Smith moved in two doors away on this new street called Pembroke Place. Chris Johnston moved two doors up from me on Greenway Road. It was beginning to be a happening place.

What lay down the hill and beyond the short block and a half of Greenway Road through the abandoned open area of the golf-links was Diamond Brook, a treasure trove of a place for a young kid to play - and play there I did throughout the fifties. My fascination with the brook and its flowing

water was endless.

In the early 50s, new homes were built in the golf links area and my street was extended for two more blocks and dead ended at Diamond Brook. Tommy Marino moved into the last house on Greenway Road, and his house abutted Diamond Brook. I liked Tommy and he liked the brook, so we made a perfect pair.

Over the years, we played in, around, and through that brook. Our greatest adventure was when we were about nine years old and decided to follow the brook upstream to find its source. We thought the brook probably started out at a lake or a spring and we wanted to find it. As it turned out, it was both a fun and a foolish thing to do.

From Greenway Road, Diamond Brook ran north behind the community pool complex into Ridgewood. The brook, as we later discovered, begins in the vicinity of BellAir Road and Ackerman Avenue in Ridgewood. There were three tennis courts nearby. I'm not sure what building was there, but I used to play tennis on those courts in my later years with Doc Savage. Well, he played and I swung and missed more often than not. For being on the short side, Doc was a pretty good player. Not much of a serve, but he covered the court well and could put the ball where he wanted - usually where I wasn't! Where is he, anyway?

Okay, back to the brook. Tommy and I followed the brook north until it ran underground. We looked inside these huge concrete pipes and literally didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. You know what's coming.

Yep, we ran home, got flashlights, and went in. Every so often we saw some light coming from above. After we passed a couple of these grates, we decided to mark them. How - you are thinking? We pushed sticks up from below. There was a lot of debris in those pipes so finding sticks was not a problem. The problem was that after being in the tunnel for about half an hour we were getting scared.

For fourth graders, we were pretty cautious (okay, dumb for going into the tunnel, but cautious). The concrete culvert had some offshoots, but we stayed in the main pipe. What made us turn back was my flashlight was getting dim (why weren't alkaline batteries available back then!). We never did get to the absolute end of the tunnel.

What made the episode so memorable was not that we were scared (and we were), but when we got out of the tunnel we looked at each other and laughed (and cried); we looked like coal miners. Having tripped, stumbled, and fallen, we were pretty dirty; in fact, we were so filthy we were afraid to go home. So what did we do?

Yep, you're right again. We striped down to our undies and washed our clothes and ourselves in the brook the best we could. When we got home we caught heck for 'falling into the brook', but that was a far better thing than having our parents come to realize how foolish we were.

Oh, and using those sticks the next day helped us determine where we believe the brook started. Hansel and Gretel couldn't have had a better time.

Zippering ahead a couple of years, at around the age of 11, when Alan Furler and I were in the sixth grade, the two of us tracked Diamond Brook south to its end. Being older and wiser, and my being with Alan, made this job a lot easier. We rode our trusty bikes for much of it (no, not riding our bikes in the brook itself, but on the roads that paralleled it). Because the stream often went behind peoples' private property, we couldn't always discern where it was headed. That meant at times we had to walk in the brook with our black, high-top sneakers tied around our necks (does anyone wear black, high-top sneakers anymore?) and then get on our bikes and ride some more.

Our journey was a long one because we discovered Diamond Brook wound its way under Route 208, through Fair Lawn into Paterson, and emptied into the Passaic River - on a curve in the river as I recall. It was also near the outfall of the Henderson Brook in Fair Lawn, a much shorter stream that starts near Radburn Road behind our high school. Some of you who lived on that side of town may have explored it.

I have a few more stories to tell about my adventures in and around Diamond Brook, but they'll have to wait because this e-mail is getting too long. Thanks again for letting me ramble once more.

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Diamond Brook revisited -

It's curious that I can remember so much about one little brook, but I do. I suppose it has to do with my boyhood fascination with the endless, shimmering, flowing water that traversed through my neighborhood. I recall on more than one occasion that I wanted to put an end to that - literally.

As I mentioned, Diamond Brook flowed north to south from Ridgewood to the Passaic River. It ran behind our community pool on Doremus Avenue. In that area, it was located about half way through the woods between the pool and Dunham Place to the west. You got to Dunham from Doremus by going up Rutland Road (where Wayne Bonhag lived) to Lowell Road and then turning right.

That woodsy area is where Roughgarden homes were being built and where my greatest adventure with the brook took place. With the dedicated help of three great childhood friends, Bruce and Doug Woltman, and Mark Schlageter, it was during the summer of 1958 (between my seventh and eighth grades) that the four of us embarked on a courageous adventure to dam up Diamond Brook.

One day while at the pool we got bored with doing the same old thing and decided to go into the woods and explore. We had no idea what we were going to do, but as we kicked over skunk cabbage and ran, we found our way to the brook. When we got there, someone had the idea of damming up the brook - hopefully, since it was a childhood dream of mine to do just that, it was my idea, but since I truly can't recall who it was, I won't lay claim to that and will just say it was a wild idea from a group of guys looking for something constructive to do.

We must have seen a film on the building of Hoover dam because to build the best dam we could we knew we had to divert the flow of water just like those engineers did with the Colorado River. We dug a trench to change the course of the 'mighty river' and began our quest to build the greatest dam we could. It took us three days to complete our mission.

Where did we get the tools and materials to complete our task, you ask? From the Roughgarden home construction sites, of course. We went on periodic, furtive, scavenger hunts to find what we needed and were careful to only take discarded wood and damaged materials, but I am sure there

were times in our zealous pursuit of perfection that we were desperate and might have broken that rule once or twice, but I'll never tell.

Once the directional flow of the brook was changed and there remained but a trickle of moving water in the original riverbed, we began using concrete blocks to build our dam. We built it higher than the riverbank. I am not sure why we did that; it may have been because our enthusiasm got the better of us, but when our task was completed, it was truly a thing of beauty.

It's truly amazing how driven we were. We had to have been driven because we didn't think of the consequences of our actions. We let the concrete cure overnight before we re-diverted the water back into the original stream the next day. The flow of water was not very strong on the day we did that, but when we came back the following day, the water had backed up behind the dam - and backed up, and up, and up.

Being innocent little engineers we gave no mind as to what would happen to the area once the water was dammed, but it was like we had dammed the mighty Mississippi. There was water everywhere – everywhere! We had created a mess.

Once we saw what we did, we quickly got to work. We diverted the water once again and began to dismantle the dam. We did that until someone got the bright idea of building a bridge instead of a dam (who that person was is something else lost to memory), but that's what we did. We turned the concrete blocks on their side so the water could flow through the blocks. We thought we were geniuses (I think if we had thought to do that originally, we might have been, but whatever - we were again driven to do a good job and were proud of our handiwork). When we came back the next day, the water was flowing through and over the new bridge-dam. It was a beautiful sight.

We checked on our bridge over the course of a week, but were disappointed to see that someone had ruined our masterpiece. At first we thought it was older kids who were envious of what we had accomplished, but upon inspection we saw that much of the dam's materials had been removed, so we settled on the idea that the construction workers were just doing their cleanup job.

Thank you Bruce, Doug, and Mark, for giving me one of my greatest memories and for making me feel as though I could change the course of a

mighty river.

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Diamond Brook – one last time

The back of Byrd School's playground, which was two tiered, was not very big and the lower end beyond the basketball court sloped down to Diamond Brook. It's curious to note that teachers - at least the ones I had - paid very little attention to the brook as a teaching tool. I guess it wasn't until the '60s that we gave ecology much attention.

That's not to say my fellow students didn't find it interesting. I have related in another e-mail how many of us would gather at the school on various summer afternoons or evenings to play bike tag. The same bunch of classmates that I delineated in that remembrance would also partake in occasional 'splash fights' down by the brook. It was the basic 'boys will be boys' kind of thing.

Three or four of us would be on one side of the stream tossing rocks of various sizes into the brook trying to get those on the other side as wet as we could with the biggest splash possible. There was a learning curve involved in trying to locate the best spots in the stream and figuring out which rocks worked best. What was a little strange was when someone ran out of stones to throw we would wait until the person got back up from the riverbank with a new supply of ammo before we started throwing rocks again. If on the other hand the person took too long in determining which rocks were just right for tossing, he would get bombarded with splashes. It was our version of fair play and made absolute sense to us.

I don't have any memory of anyone at anytime getting hit and/or hurt with an errant stone. That seems hard to believe given the barrage of rocks that were thrown, but that's my memory - luck had to be on our side.

The school yard took up most of the block that ran from Doremus Avenue on the south - or front - side to the Boulevard in the north side in the rear. On the right side toward the 'Rock' was Marinus Place, and on the left was Oxford Place. There were houses on both sides of Oxford Place and Mike Boynton's home butted up to the school's lower playground on the east corner of Oxford Place and the Boulevard. Wendy Emes lived in the corner house across the street from him.

Why mention Wendy's house when writing about the brook? Well, Diamond Brook ran along her property line and someone professionally designed and

dammed up the brook (I swear it wasn't the four aforementioned dam-bridge builders from my last e-mail!), thus making that area into a swimming pool of sorts. Many of us from Byrd School went swimming there. It was a unique experience, especially those cool, early evening dips.

Knowing what I did about the source of Diamond Brook, it's curious that I spent as much time as I did in and around that water. Although some of the water was spring fed, for the most part, the stream consisted of run-off surface water - probably not the cleanest water in the world.

There are two other pools that I'd like to mention. One was the pool at Peter Holzer's house. Pete and I were not friends in the sense that we hung out together, but we did meet others at the 'Rock' in the morning, and as a group we walked to school together. I'm not sure how or why I was invited to his pool, but I did swim there once or twice, mostly notably was for an afternoon swim just near or soon after our school graduation. There were seven or eight of us there, and it was picture perfect.

The second pool was that of Mark Schlageter's aunt. As I said I lived on Greenway Road, and Mark's aunt lived in the last house on the corner of Greenway Road and Knollwood Road, but across Lincoln Avenue in Upper Ridgewood. She had one fantastic house and one fantastic pool. I was only there once, but that, too, was memorable. I know I've said how lucky I was to have grown up in Glen Rock, but it might have been nice to have lived elsewhere and experience how the other half lived. Oh, I guess by going to that pool I did do that for a little bit, didn't I? Nice! Thanks, Mark for the memory.

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Landfills -

Landfills? You really opened this e-mail and thought I was going to write about landfills. Well, you're right; I am - landfills and our school cafeteria.

Upon entering our school cafeteria I sat over on the left with basically the same contingent of guys over the years. Whenever I moved quickly enough through the halls to enable me to be one of the first students through the lunch line to grab a good seat, I usually sat with my back to the windows. Oh, no, you're thinking, there David goes again remembering where he sat while in school.

I don't know whether this idiosyncrasy of recalling a little detail like that is a curse or a blessing, but I do know I rarely sat on the right side of the lunchroom. I did sit over there a few times, but it was for dances, I do remember that, and when I took the SAT (that event was stressful enough for all of you to probably recall where you sat), but other than those rare occasions, I always sat on the left.

Back to landfills and lunch - I'm sure the origins of landfills didn't happen this way, but they could have. I'm talking about all those discarded origami folded pieces of triangular paper the guys used to play modified football games across the lunchroom tables.

Not just the ones I used, but over the six-year period of playing football in the lunchroom all those amassed 'footballs' would have made quite a pile. Think about it - when totaled there had to have been thousands of them. Where did they all go? Landfills? Who knows!

I don't know who invented the game nor can I recall exactly when I started playing it, but I know I flicked the 'football' across lunch tables more times than I can remember. I wasn't very good, but I do know why I tried to sit with my back to the windows. You see, if you got the football to hang over the edge just enough, you scored a touchdown, thus entitling you to kick an extra point through your opponent's upright, finger-positioned, goal posts.

I didn't care about scoring any extra points. I wanted to flick the football as hard as I could and 'wing' it toward the girls' tables and then go over 'innocently' to retrieve it. Back then, I had no shame!

The window seating arrangement was important, since facing the windows would not have allowed me the wonderful view of the walking scenery nor would it have allowed me my chance encounters. Come to think of it, if I had been a better player, my whole dating scenario in school might have been different!

If GROG (Glen Rock Only Guys meeting) becomes a reality, I'll remember to bring a piece of paper. Oh, that's right; there'll be no walking scenery if just the guys get together - darn!

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First Year in School -

The State of New Jersey passed a law a few years ago mandating full-time kindergarten. Generally, a good thing since full-time kindergarten can be a worthy educational experience.

However, for today's children, a chance to experience one of life's most revealing realities like the one we had has been whisked away by the stroke of a pen. My participating in a two-part kindergarten program was one of the most memorable moments of reality I can ever remember having as a young child.

Now, for those of you who went to Richard E. Byrd Elementary School, our kindergarten teacher, Miss Singer, was outstanding; but then at five years old, I am not sure I knew what a teacher was supposed to do, nor, with the limited life experience I had, would I have been qualified to decide whether she was an excellent teacher or not, but, nevertheless, given what was just stated, she was very special to me.

Miss Singer treated us as if we were her own children. She was kind, gentle, and attentive to our needs. And she had this one trick up her sleeve for making me feel extremely good about myself, which, upon looking back on it all, she probably didn't even know it.

Like the rest of you who from the very beginning attended all your schooling in Glen Rock, our Byrd School kindergarten was divided into two groups, one class attending the morning session and the other in the afternoon - a common practice back then. What gave me the first reality check of my life was when the two groups met for the first time.

Although the children I'm am thinking about missed out on graduating and being with us and part of our great reunion group, I still won't mention any names since it is not my intention to criticize anyone beyond labeling them as strange, but I hope that those of you who attended Byrd School with me will recall from your own experience what I remember about that day and those of you who attended elsewhere for your kindergarten class will remember your own joint meeting day.

I'm not sure I was aware that any other children were going to be invading my kindergarten space, but, anyhow, the meeting of the two groups was a

little bizarre. We sat in a circle and, for the first few minutes, no one said anything to each other. We just sat staring at each other. I sat with my back toward the open door, and there were parents in the room, too, I remember that, thus making the whole scene just a little surreal.

I know as I scanned the whole group I saw what can only be described as the strangest group of new kids I had ever seen. These kids were foreign to me, but they were in 'my' kindergarten room; they were sitting on 'my' floor; they were talking to 'my' Miss Singer. It was all a little unsettling.

Then Miss Singer said something that stunned me. She informed the group that these other children were going to be our future classmates. I can see it and feel it as though it were yesterday. It was 'the' defining moment of my first year in school. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I looked around that circle and saw what was to be my future. I was shocked, totally shocked. I was about to become part of a class of freaks. I was overwhelmed by it all.

As the two groups sat in the circle looking at each other, I thought to myself that next year I could be forced to sit next to a boy in first grade with the weirdest pair of eyes I have ever seen, or near to someone who has a nose like a pig, or told to sit close to a boy who looks as though he has just come from a Little Rascals movie set. It was the biggest reality check of my young life. I couldn't believe it.

I can recall that day perfectly - truly, I can - and I remember thinking to myself that this was a great, great day. It might surprise you to hear me say that after reading what I just wrote, but, honestly, I was really overjoyed at hearing Miss Singer's announcement.

In fact, I thought I was in heaven. Why - because, now, no one would ever think of my protruding ears as anything special. I was saved. Those new boys put me in a higher pecking order in life. I was elevated beyond belief. I went through the rest of the day thinking I was one lucky kid. Thank you, Miss Singer! My future happiness was assured.

That is unless, of course, you were in that other group looking over at the kid with the Dumbo ears and thinking to yourself he is one of the strangest looking kids you have ever seen - and are hoping against hope that next year you don't have to sit next to him. Oh, well.

As you can tell that day is still a very vivid memory for me, for it was a very special day, and I hope you can remember your joint meeting of your kindergarten classes as well as I can remember mine.

The mandating of full-day kindergarten may not seem like much, but it is just one more thing that separates our generation from future ones. Sure, they will have their memories, but they won't be the same as mine (or yours). What a pity!

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Reunion -

Forty years have passed since our public school education ended – as if any of you needed to be reminded, but in some ways doesn't it seem like it was yesterday? Well, okay, maybe the day before yesterday, but you get the idea. Time has flown by and the memories of those good old days are still there, and it's that connection with the past we have to thank for who are today.

I can remember things that were both good and bittersweet about my educational experience. Some of you may think it is vainglorious of me to state that I can remember where I sat in almost every one of my classes, but it is true.

Over the years in school, my survival skills taught me that my chances of being called upon by a teacher were greatly reduced if I used my 'one up, one over rule'. I never sat along a wall, never sat in the front or back row, and tried to keep as quiet as the proverbial church mouse. It worked reasonably well.

Sure, along with the rest of you, I had to memorize multiplication facts, states and capitals, the Gettysburg address, sonnets, the element symbols, and other things that, for the most part, today's students aren't required to do. However, I was fortunate for I could, in the teacher's presence, pen mine to paper and hand it in. Not any of you out there will ever remember me raising my hand, asking a question (let alone answering one), or giving an oral presentation. Just the opposite of our beloved Jennifer Smaldone, who was heard from but rarely seen, I was ever present but never heard from.

Even in Phys. Ed class, wherein everyone but the totally physically uncoordinated saw Gym as a haven from pressure, I was on alert. Gym class! Are you thinking there was no speaking in gym class? But you see, terror comes in many forms, however small. When the gym teacher would say line up and count off, I would always try to make sure that I was a 'one', because for some reason, the word 'one' rolled off my lips very easily, unlike t-t-t- two, or th-th-th-th- three, or, the most dreaded of all, f-f-f-f-f-f-f-f-f- four. And see, guys, some of you were thinking I was maneuvering around just to be placed on a 'better' team.

Of course, I survived, went on to college, and found myself working in the unlikeliest of places for someone with a speech defect - other than theater, of

course - a school. Formal training aside, my years in the Glen Rock school system served me well, and, for over thirty-six years, I have been a Special Education teacher and can never imagine doing anything else, ever.

Retirement will come soon, I know, and I will spend more time with my wife, Nancy, my son and daughter, and grandchildren (present and future), but I will miss giving back to the educational community something that I learned along the way. That all children no matter what their rank in the pecking order of life have something good to offer, and a teacher's job is to lead students to where they don't want to go, and to do so in a manner that brings them to discover what that something is.

I wish you all the best, and hope your life has been an adventure – for mine has been truly blessed.

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Sixth to Seventh -

June of 1957 couldn't have come at a worse time. We were at an awkward stage in our lives and just as we were wrestling with roller-coaster emotions and trying to understand the changes in our bodies - all of which made us self-conscious, argumentative about most things, and anxious - everything about our school day was about to change, too.

A couple of days after our one and only dance at our school, Mr. Hawkins, our beloved sixth grade teacher, said so long to us. Having come to us from Hawthorne, this was his first class at Byrd School. Mr. Hawkins had everything going for him as a teacher. He was intelligent, highly verbal, very compassionate, and, above all, he made you feel as though you were the only one in his class - a good trick in a class of 22 boys and eight girls. Of course, now as well as then, I knew in my heart it wasn't true, but it was the way he made you feel.

For those of you who didn't know him, characterizing Mr. Hawkins is easy. He looked like Howard Hughes, albeit, a tad smaller in stature and minus the money aspect, of course. However, he did splurge when he could like when he built his son an outdoor train set (one he could ride on!) and he did purchase a '57 Studebaker. I know, I know, a Studebaker, but this one was the Golden Hawk model (one of the most futuristic cars ever made - tail fins and all). He drove it over to Jean Anderson's house while we were there for an end-of-the-year party. The car was beautiful.

During his final pep talk to what he called his best class, Mr. Hawkins said on our last day with him, "They're not going to baby you. If you don't do your homework, you'll get a zero; no second chances!" As if we didn't know that already.

After our personal orientation day in junior high in the Spring, we were all acutely aware that we would be having a different teacher for every subject instead of just the one we answered to every year during each of the past seven years. In our junior high visitation (short as it was), we saw that the classes would be harder, the homework would be tougher, and there would be more work.

Because the girls wanted to make a good first impression, they probably knew for weeks what they were going to wear on their first day, while all I

was concerned about was that my cowlick on the crown of my head didn't assert itself too much. In reality, I guess we all wanted to make a good impression and have new classmates and teachers alike think well of us.

On that first day of junior high I recall riding my bike to school, parking it in the bike racks on the left side of the building, entering the side door, and never looking back, except when it came to Mr. Hawkins. I did encounter him a few times after I graduated and he always remembered my name. That confirmed what I always suspected - I was his favorite.

Yeah, me and 29 others.

I hope you all remember something about your transition from sixth to seventh grade, and I truly hope somewhere along your school travels you made a connection with someone like Mr. Hawkins.

Truth be told – I met quite a few of them during my years in Glen Rock schools, both male and female.

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The Eyes Have It -

The jury is out on whether or not I have done enough in my life to be considered a winner (and I hope it stays out for a long, long time), but in all my years growing up I never hit a home run - never during my time with Little League, never when participating in gym class, never while playing sandlot ball in the neighborhood.

Granted, my athletic prowess wasn't sufficient enough for me to be made a team captain, but then I had just enough athletic ability never to have been picked last for a team, either. I was a true 'middle-of-the-roader' when it came to sports. Of course, I enjoyed it when my side won (who wouldn't), but I never truly played because I liked winning; I played any sport because it was fun - because it was something to do - because I liked being out and about.

By nature, I am not a competitive person. That's why I believe I am better at teaching than I am at being a supervisor. I know my way is not the only way. However, I don't like it when the odds are stacked against me like they were when I had to read the Snellen Eye Chart every year in school. You recall that one, right? It was the ubiquitous eye chart with the big 'E' on top.

Every year at Byrd School, we were measured by the visiting nurse for height and weight and given an eye test - first one eye and then the other, remember? It didn't take a genius to know that if I stood at the end of the line I could hear the letters being called out and know what order to present them when it became my turn.

I had long since learned that if given enough prep time I could put anything to rhythm (my rhythm, not a dance rhythm), and if my speech flowed out of my mouth like singing (out of tune and all, of course), then I wouldn't stutter (I call it my Mel Tillis effect).

The same held true for pronouncing those dreaded letters on the eye chart. Once I memorized the letters and put them together in a little beat, I was good to go - and my problem was solved. My presentation may have been a bit slow and monotone, but it was as fluid as a person in the gentle practice of Tai Chi.

Of course, while I didn't stutter chanting those letters on the eye chart, I wasn't receiving a true and proper eye test, either - and therein lies the problem. My eyes probably could have used a little more honesty from me.

It wasn't until after elementary school that I had the collision in 1957 that I wrote about in a previous e-mail involving a teenage driver, his car, my bike, and me. I was thrown head over heels 22 feet in the air and landed on my head (I know - the perfect spot for me) in the middle of Hamilton Avenue. Because of the seriousness of the accident (my bike was totaled, me a little less so), Patrolman Neil Finn (who later became Police Chief) escorted the ambulance to Valley Hospital and stayed with me until my parents arrived.

Because I was in and out of consciousness (not much has changed), it was the doctor's opinion that I should spend the night in the hospital for observation since he had prescribed a battery of tests for me the next day, including an eye examination. As luck would have it, Valley Hospital's ophthalmology department didn't use the Snellen Eye Chart, and I was on my own with their chart. I believe it was the only test in my life I ever failed for - lo and behold - it was determined I needed glasses. It turned out I was nearsighted, which invariably explains why I never ducked and got walked so often by being hit by errant pitches in Little League.

After receiving my new glasses, I recall being in Ridgewood's Warner Theater and being dumbstruck by how sharp and clear the movie was. I don't recall the name of the film, but I do remember I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I thought to myself is that what I have been missing out on all this time - WOW!

I learned a valuable personal lesson from all I went through. No matter how careful or circumspect I am in trying to cover up one defect, sooner or later events that are out of my control will happen to set things right. I am glad they do.

By the way, for those of you who are nearsighted and wear glasses, have you ever had difficulty finding them when you weren't wearing them? I have, and if it's just momentarily, it makes you appreciate even more a monk's 600 hundred-year old invention.

I don't need reading glasses, but for those of you who discovered in your forties that you did, I can sympathize with your plight to have normal vision, too.

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Shopping -

My 'New York drinking' remembrance elicited a lot of reply e-mails and I thank those of you who took the time to write me about your own experiences.

Although many of you did cross the state line to drink, I was struck by the various accounts some of you had concerning making the trek to Times Square for New Year's Eve. Granted, none of you were 14 when you first journeyed there alone (sans parents), but, still, I was surprised by how many of you have experienced the NY ritual of the collected human spirit on the eve of a New Year, regardless of how old you were when you ventured there.

Also, over the years, you have been kind in stating how my memories of either this or that stirred your own recollections about growing up in Glen Rock, and I thank you for that.

To those of you who have written me directly, I want you to know that I cherish those comments and have found those e-mails to be even more enlightening than my own writing. Your e-mails have either been funny, poignant, or sentimental - or a combination of the three. I've also been truly touched by those who have stated that they wished they had known me better in high school (by the way - me, too!).

My fondest wish now is that some of you would consider using the 'reply-to-all' tab when you write me so that others in our class could read what you have to say about growing up in Glen Rock - but, in any case, keep the emails coming; I like hearing from all of you. And to those of you who haven't ever written me, I like to hear from you, too.

As all my memories have illustrated, we have only the most tenuous idea of what our history really is. The who and the what of what's significant in our past is endlessly debatable. One thing always does lead to another, and if we are figuratively holding hands through this journey, the ride is a lot more interesting, don't you think?

Well, enough of that. I knew when I entitled this e-mail 'shopping' I'd get some people's attention, but this remembrance hasn't anything to do with shopping, but I did want to share my recollections about three businesses in

our hometown.

Glen Rock was (is) a neat little place and for those of you who still live there, or at least live nearby and get to walk around the places I miss so dearly, I will state emphatically that I envy you, and since I like food, that's what this e-mail is all about.

Back when I was in Byrd School in grades 4-6 whenever the need arose (as in there was going to be no one home to watch over me from 11:30 to 12:45 and, more importantly, serve me lunch), I had an occasional dining experience at Irv's - at his first restaurant, the smaller, more intimate one before it moved to its larger quarters in the old Grand Union building. Ken Hasdzira was more of a regular than I was, but we'd often share our time with Virginia, our favorite waitress. She attentively looked after two hungry school children with a smile and, if I recall correctly, always an extra little something to eat.

Irv's beef barley soup was my favorite, as was his corn beef Reuben - served with the best coleslaw I ever, ever tasted. I needed two ever's in that phrase because it was that memorable. Dare I say it was even better than my mother's - and her coleslaw was good. Dessert was always chocolate layer cake - always in season, but a tough decision over the Boston Creme. All of it washed down with - and for those of you who frequented Irv's know what's coming - a 'Graveyard'.

For the uninitiated, a Graveyard was a soda spritzed with each of the syrups that were lined up along the counter and then topped off with Coke. Strange isn't it that Coke is now experimenting with various flavors of its Coke products. To tell you I truly miss that time and place will give you an idea of what my heaven will be like when I get there - presuming I'm even allowed through the pearly gates.

When Irv's moved a few doors away, it lost its charm, but I was out of Byrd School by then and eating lunch at Irv's was no longer an option. Granted, the walk home from jr.-sr. high allowed for the occasional, obligatory after school drop-in, but it just wasn't the same. In my own little world, I ascertained early on what 'an end to an era' meant, but let's move on to store #2, a place that I don't remember ever changing.

My father worked in New York City and came home on the 5:30 train. That

necessitated him being picked up by my mom, and if I happened to be home around that time, it meant having to tag along. Not that I minded, for you see, the train station was located just five doors away from the Glen Rock Sweet Shoppe.

I lived out my fantasies in that store since that's where I bought my comics (I should have kept those comics - I could have retired by now!). That narrow, little store was an absolute treasure trove of good reading, penny candy, and delicious, hot fudge sundaes. As I got older, the fact that Doug Pardee worked there was an added bonus.

For this remembrance, the third place of interest to me was the Glen Rock Inn. No, not the fancy extended place it is today (okay, it's still not that fancy!), but the little dining room in the back is what fills my memory bank the most. We almost always entered from the side door, but whenever we didn't, my mother always seemed to usher me quickly past the front bar as though there was something she didn't want me to see. Funny, what we recall.

In all the times we ate at the Glen Rock Inn, with or without guests, it always felt small, personal, and not unlike our own family dining room during the holidays - crowded, but always with room for one more.

The house specialty was an open-face steak sandwich. It was made from slices of flank steak broiled first to perfection and then laid over toast points with melted butter drizzled lavishly on top. I don't ever remember ordering anything else in all the years our family ate there. I'm surprised my cholesterol laden heart still functions. I wonder if the open-face steak sandwich is still on the menu. It will be in my heaven.

I'm glad there's not a law about long e-mails for I'd be in trouble. Thank you for letting me invade your time and space with another memory or two of mine.

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Two of My Favorite Glen Rock Activities -

Since the flurry of e-mails about the downtown area of Glen Rock has subsided, I thought I would let you know that I stand by my picture perfect memory of Irv's luncheonette. It was originally next to Dom's Shoe Repair if that helps anyone's memory.

For those of you who had different recollections concerning its location, I will state again that after the lumber yard fire the Grand Union moved to its new location (the lumber yard was still part of the property, but way in the back) and Irv's moved into the old Grand Union building. The pharmacy relocated from farther up the street (on the same side) and shared the renovated building with Irv's.

What astounds me is where any of you believe the Grand Union was before it moved - and downtown Glen Rock did have a supermarket other than Kilroy's (although using the term 'super' market, however, does seem a bit silly when considering the size of today's supermarkets). I'd be happy to hear of where any of you believe the Grand Union was before it relocated. Is there not anyone out there who remembers it the way I do?

Okay, back to the e-mail topic listed - my favorite wintertime activity was ice-skating at the Ridgewood duck pond. It has to be my all-time favorite winter activity (besides the early childhood pleasures of riding a sled down Cedar Avenue with half the neighborhood or the building of snowmen in my front yard with my sister).

Ice-skating at the duck pond was more of a 'grown-up' activity (even though we were still kids) and persisted for many more years than riding down hills on a sled - darn it.

Going into the shed at the end of the parking lot, putting on our skates, and walking somewhat wobbly out to the frozen pond is still ingrained in my memory bank(s). I think I may have more than one memory bank, but I believe the withdrawals about now are far outnumbering the deposits.

Whether skating alone or skating together in 'whip' formation (swinging a whole line in ever greater momentum and then letting go) was always a treat, but the greatest thrill was holding a girl's hand as you skated together oblivious to any of the other skaters around you.

Strange, but whenever I was at the duck pond, I never remember it being too cold to go ice-skating. Does anyone else remember it that way, too? The winters haven't gotten colder, have they?

I do have a one-time memory of ice-skating with five or six classmates at the then recently opened pond in Glen Rock (the one by the community pool) and skating with Marilyn Smith - holding her hand was both a treat and a thrill.

My second (second) favorite activity came in the summer (I already e-mailed that the pool was my first) - the Fourth of July parades and the ensuing celebrations. The excitement of watching the parade, or being in the parade, was just the greatest experience a little kid could have.

For those of you who lived in Glen Rock your entire lives like I did will, I hope, remember the 'fair' when it was held behind Central School (it then moved over to the municipal park by city hall). I liked the Central School location better, perhaps because I was so young when I had my first exposure to a fair. Nevertheless, it truly was a community event. Families all coming together to have a good time - now what is better than that!

Oh, and I'm not sure what happened to any of the goldfish I won in those little glass bowls, but I know they seemed to last longer than those balsa wood airplanes. You remember them - the ones with the metal clip on the front end and those wings that would easily crack and which never seemed to stay perpendicular in flight.

Okay, you Fourth of July devotees, you know what's coming. After watching the parade, and eating your fill of what we never considered to be 'junk' food, who could forget the nighttime fireworks display across from the Ridgewood swimming hole.

Do you recall trying to find a parking place, having a blanket in hand, crossing the street, hearing the 'teaser' rockets, and listening to the band play - all of it culminating in the anticipation of waiting for dusk to turn to nightfall. Wow - I remember those firework displays as if it were yesterday.

As I got older and started to drive, I did abandon Ridgewood's fireworks for the Macy's display on the Hudson River. But, hey, I was older, dating, and could park the car and still see the fireworks. Some might say the Macy's

fireworks were better, but not to that little boy who used to stretch out on a blanket, look up, and see the sky explode with color. No, not him - or to me either.

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A Question of Buttons -

Whenever something about my past comes to the forefront of my thought processes, I am more than willing to pass these little gems along to the class (as you know only too well by now); however, I've tended to write about my childhood rather than what's happening at my present age, and I will continue to do so, but I've recently had an epiphany – I'm getting older!

For as long as I can remember, while putting on my socks, I've always stood on one leg, raised the other leg, and put on a sock. It's a tradition that started when I was about six; I saw my father doing it, and wanting to be like him, I began doing it. That era seems to be over.

I noticed the other week that I was sitting on the edge of the bed to accomplish that task. It only happened once more since then, but when it becomes a daily routine, I guess I'll know then that I really am old!

Speaking of Dad, growing up, I remember seeing him in only white shirts under his suits. I recall seeing him in short sleeve white shirts in warm seasons, long sleeve white shirts in the cold weather, and with rolled up shirtsleeves in the odd seasons with his suit jacket thrown over his shoulder as he disembarked from the evening train. If he were getting dressed up - really dressed up - it might have been a 'white on white' shirt under the pinstriped suits, but that was only for special occasions.

During my junior high years, I recall my sister and I bought Dad a light blue shirt for his birthday. When he unwrapped the box, he stared blankly at the shirt for a second or two and then said flatly, "Well, it has white buttons." And although he tried it on that night and modeled it for us (at my mother's insistence, I suppose), it took him nearly a year before he actually wore the shirt. And I never, ever, saw him in a pink shirt!

I haven't outgrown wearing wear button down collar shirts (even pink ones), but prefer shirts with no pockets, and when I unwrap a new shirt, the brand I wear includes a little plastic packet containing extra buttons pinned, rather than having the buttons individually sewed, to one of the shirttails. Maybe someday I will use the skills learned from earning a sewing merit badge to fix a broken button, but since my shirts are laundered, and the laundry replaces broken or missing buttons for free, I keep only one plastic packet of

buttons in my dresser drawer in case of emergencies; the rest gets tossed away. Boy, have things changed since I was a little.

My lack of needing buttons got me to thinking why in my house growing up there were cookie tins filled with buttons. Not just one tin, or two tins, but tins and tins of buttons. My mother was not an excessive-compulsive person, but for some reason she saved buttons.

Playing on the living room floor when I was little with a tin of buttons is a vivid childhood memory of mine. Trying to wiggle my little fingers down to the bottom of a button-filled tin was fun (but no easy feat by the way), as was seeing how good you were at stacking buttons, separating buttons into sizes or colors, arranging them into designs, and, my favorite, outlining my mother with buttons while she was stretched out on the floor.

But with all that, I cannot come up with any good reason why my mother kept so many tins of buttons. There were enough buttons in just one tin to keep a youngster happy for a great long while.

Mom's collection consisted of every kind of button imaginable - round, oval, square, rectangular, diamond, and irregular shaped ones, cloth-covered, wood, metal, and brightly colored, pastel, and black and brown ones. Granted, like most moms, my mother did clothing repair and sewed (hard to forget the yards of material and dress, skirt, or jacket patterns strewn about on the floor waiting to be pinned together by either my sister or her), but that doesn't explain the huge collection of buttons - some still attached to the cardboard placards.

By the way, does anyone use paper patterns to make dresses, etc., anymore? Home economics was dropped from our school curriculum about 25 years ago to make way for a computer lab. Except for a sweater, I don't remember seeing anyone in a handmade anything recently - not that this non-fashion guru would notice.

Anyhow, I am curious why our house was a sanctuary for so many buttons - especially since just a few dress-white ones for my dad's shirts and a few button placards for dress making would have sufficed.

And, I wonder where all those buttons went. I'd love to see whether I could get my fingers down to the bottom of a button-filled tin now.

Thank you for allowing me to unleash this button-up memory.

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A Rite of Passage -

Bruce Emra's recent e-mail outlining the newspaper account of what was going on in the shack in the woods behind Glen Rock's Community Pool was some revelation, wasn't it? Times have changed, haven't they?

It got me to thinking (I know - a rare and unstable occurrence anymore) about the rite of passage I went through. Well, I believe we all went through it at one time or another; however, if someone out there hasn't gone through it, then you are definitely missing something.

For me, it happened before my junior year; for some of you it may have occurred during your senior year, or, perhaps, later, when you were more mature.

For each of us, this rite of passage changed our lives forever, and that time in your life has to be something you'll never forget - at least I hope you don't. I never have, and in this e-mail you will read about some of the things I remember doing during that time.

On a sentimental note, I hope you still recall the name of the person with whom you first did it. I know I have and, contrary to my normal writing style, this was an important enough milestone in my life that I would like to share a person's name or two. I haven't asked their permission, but since so much time has passed (over 45 years), I don't think they will mind.

Although we can draw some similarities between the rite of passage alluded to in Bruce's e-mail and to the one some of you had hoped this e-mail was going to be about, I will confine my ramblings to the rite of passage I had always intended to write about - learning how to drive!

Sorry - some of you may be disappointed (or should I have said all of you), but, don't worry, this rite of passage is important enough to me to still name names.

Uh-oh, right about now I think some of you may be going back to reread the first few paragraphs in this e-mail to see if you got all of this right. Go ahead - I have the time.

Anyway, for me, getting a driver's license and receiving the keys to a car marked a significant rite of passage in my life - and threefold. It meant freedom independence, and the road to adulthood. My dad sensing my love for cars early on took me out driving quite a few times. St. Catherine's parking lot was once place where we went. I sensed he knew that if given the opportunity to 'borrow' his car when he wasn't home, I would, and, therefore, he wanted me to be a good driver.

Anyway, my birthday is this month, and other than Art Smith, who is probably the granddaddy to us all when it comes to having a birthday before any of us, I was fortunate to experience Driver's Ed. early in my junior year.

There were only two Driver's Ed. teachers that I can recall, Mr. Bing and Mr. Zaisser (how many of you called him Ziggy?). If the girls had a female behind-the-wheel instructor of their own, I am not aware of it. These were the only two teachers who taught this course, right? Boy, I wish I had a yearbook.

During my behind-the-wheel experience, I wasn't sure how I would play out the scenario of pretending I was a first-time driver, but I needn't have worried. As you may recall, there were usually two students in the car at a time, and on my first outing, I was second to drive. Not to embarrass anyone I will not tell you who went first that day, but to clue you in on how scared I was, this uncoordinated person's lesson lasted less than 20 blocks.

When it quickly became my turn, I now knew I wanted to show off. I decided to be the confident, experienced, but cautious driver I knew I was. Hey, it's my e-mail, and I'll write it any way I like - besides, I was a very good driver - still am. Jinx - double jinx.

Mr. Bing, after having experienced a few not so successful right hand turns with the first driver and wanting to spare the tires any more grief from bouncing over any more corner curbs, directed me to take one left turn after another.

Turn after left turn, I received more positive responses in that 30 minute stint than I had ever gotten from any teacher over the course of a year, and, yes, eventually, I was permitted to make some right hand turns.

I was lucky to have Mr. Bing as my driving instructor for I came to learn Mr. Zaisser's method of teaching students was old school and still incorporated teaching hand signals. Remember, this was winter and it was cold outside. Besides, some students had a little difficulty simultaneously using the window crank and driving a car. Oh, yes they did!

Do you remember those archaic times when we actually rolled car windows up and down by hand? Have we come a long way, or what?

The Route 208 experience came on my third and final outing. I was surprised to hear students complaining that their palms sweated when the teacher told them to go faster. If I recall correctly, Rt. 208 had a 50 - not a 30 - mile per hour speed limit! Most students were reluctant to go past 30!

I must have been taught well because I've never caused an accident and haven't had a speeding ticket in over 40 years (and for those of you who know what I drive, I know you believe that's next to impossible, but it's true). When I did get my one ticket, it was during spring vacation. I was on my way to Ft. Lauderdale and was driving through a small town in Georgia and never saw it coming - neither the small town nor the police officer waiting to nab a carload of joyous college kids on their way to another rite of passage – Spring Break! And, yes, I bore my college buddies with old memories, too.

But I did have a one, very scary incident when I was in high school. After a recent snowfall on a Saturday afternoon about a month after I received my license, I was traveling north on a straight stretch of Paramus Road near Saddle River County Park (some of you may remember it as your 'occasional make out place') when I hit a patch of ice.

My car, a light brown, 1952 Ford, with a flathead V-8 and a three speed manual transmission with overdrive, spun out of control. Bruce Woltman was with me; I wonder if he remembers being in the car on that near fatal day. I hope for his sake he's blocked it out of his memory because I truly thought Bruce and I were headed for heaven's gate.

Luckily for us - and for anyone else, there were no cars immediately approaching in the opposite lane. I recall turning the wheel in the direction of the spin (a very unnatural reaction, but thank you, Mr. Bing!), and, after having over-compensated for the spin (my fault), we spun a perfect 360. I

came out of this near-death experience completely in the northbound lane, albeit a few yards farther up the road.

The entire procedure, however, was accomplished in agonizingly slow motion. Really, it was very slow – remember now, I'm not much of a speeder. As we came out of the spin and continued heading north, the first car to pass us going south was a Bergen County Sheriff's car. He just stared at us as we drove by. I remember thinking to myself that I've used all my lucky stars for the day, if not for the entire year.

I recall my mother telling me that one of the most traumatic moments in any parent's life is when his or her teenager earns the right to sit in the driver's seat. As the parent watches the car disappear around the corner, two emotions take over: the visceral one, "Please, God, bring him/her back." and a philosophical one, "My baby has grown up." Having gone through it with both my children, I would have to agree with her observation.

Now, after getting your license and the keys to the car, do you remember whose house you went to first and beeped the horn in a childlike 'Can you come and play?' tone? I remember picking Doc up for a legal run to Van Dykes. I think he treated.

Or did you just drive around thinking to yourself, 'Look at me, everybody; I'm all grownup!'

Thanks again for allowing me to reminisce, even if it wasn't the rite of passage you had in mind. That's a subject I'll let others pursue.

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Skiing -

A few years ago, you may remember I wrote about my New Year's Eve adventure in Times Square with Rob Hoogs and Doc Savage when we were 14. Boy, did we have a good time. In a recent e-mail, I mentioned I have another Doc Savage story (actually I have hundreds, but this one was promised) so here goes.

Doc and I were friends from the time he moved in across the street from me until I lost touch with him after helping Doc find an apartment in 1968. At the time, I was a graduate student at Temple University and Doc had graduated from Texas A&M and landed a job in pharmaceutical sales in the Philadelphia area.

Doc always had the upbeat, pleasant personality I wish I had had, and, as you might recall, it was always great fun to be around him. It's been said height makes a difference, but not in Doc's case. His attitude was 'As big as you are, and as small as I am, I'm as big as you are, as small as I am.'

Amen to that, Doc, wherever you are. By the way, over the years and despite numerous Internet searches I have been unsuccessful in finding him so if any of you have any suggestions as to where I might look for him, your help in locating an old friend would be greatly appreciated.

In any case, Doc was a great buddy to have for he was up for trying anything. One of the things he and I wanted to do was to try our hand at skiing, and so soon after I received my driver's license in February of our junior year, we decided have a go at it.

All during the ride to Sterling State Forest (it's near Tuxedo, N.Y., for those who don't remember), we assured each other skiing would be fun and we could do it like the best of them. As the two of us ventured up Rt. 17, we increasingly talked about black diamond runs, moguls, and carving powdered arcs like we had been skiing our entire lives.

Of course, I'm kidding you; Doc and I didn't call them that; we didn't have a clue as to what we were about to do except for the old adage 'what goes up must come down'. We barely remembered seeing the 1960 Winter Olympics from Squaw Valley, California, but we just bragged every which way about

how great the two of us were going to be on the slopes - and, of course, the girls we were going to impress while doing it!

I believe it was even before we got to the rental area that it hit us that we didn't know what we were getting ourselves into on that cold wintry day. We had heard things like "Keep your tips together but don't cross them or you'll eat snow. Change your weight from your downhill ski to your uphill ski when you want to turn. If you can't stop, just fall down." All appropriate advice for the novice skier, and that's exactly where we heard it being given - on the bunny slope by a young instructor to a bunch of kids.

Maybe we should have stayed there longer and listened to the instructor's whole spiel, maybe we should have joined the beginner's group, maybe we should have asked for help, but, no, we knew best and were determined to go it alone. No baby 'bunny' slopes for us.

Doc and I thought we knew what we were doing, but when we got on the first lift, I wasn't so sure we had done the right thing. Nervous, cold, and feeling a little unstable while traversing up the mountainside, I have to admit to clinging tightly to the cross bar. We rode high above the frosty alpine runs (they were more like little hills, but, hey, it's my e-mail). In a few minutes, Doc and I would begin our first run at the art of skiing. Tension was high.

As we disembarked from the lift, I tottered toward the slope and fell down more times than I care to remember. I didn't have to cross my skis; they did that all by themselves. The first fall, of course, occurred when I tried to get off and away from the lift. I barely got down that first run.

As best as I can recall of that first run on the slope was that it was a very cold, wet, swoosh and plop - followed by another swoosh and plop about every fifty feet down the hill (I'm being generous about my skiing ability when I say I fell only every fifty feet). People whizzed by me on every side while I was having trouble just staying up. I realized then and there I should have stayed in the bunny slope area a lot longer and learned the basics rather than just mouth them.

My second ride up the hill was about the same. This time I didn't fall down as soon as I got off the lift (practice does make perfect) - just soon after. But progress is progress no matter how small. My second trip down was as eventful as the first - more swooshing and plopping, but this time I could

snowplow a little better and go a little slower. Doc was waiting for me at the bottom with that big smile of his - and with cheeks as rosy as ever. By the way, Doc in a snowcap and covered in snow is a sight to behold.

I was truly freezing by the time I got back down the mountain and upset that this wasn't going quite as I had planned. I thought longingly of being warm again; however, Doc wanted a third go at it, and not wanting to 'chicken out' on him I went for another run.

It may be my bad memory or just my wanting to pay a friend a compliment, but I believe Doc skied better than I did on that day - and it had nothing to do with him being closer to the ground. Doc took to skiing as he took to tennis and to everything else he did - Doc was just good at what he wanted to do.

I cherish the time I spent with Doc over the years and wish him well wherever he is, but I would like to know if he would rank his first time at skiing the same way I did. Knowing him as I did, I would bet he'd chalk it up as tie.

That's the Doc that I knew.

Oh, and as for the two of us encountering any girls, that's a whole other story!

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Different –

Something happened the other day that brought my perceptual impairment to the forefront. No, not my two left feet this time (although that condition has improved to the point where I am no longer wasting money buying two left shoes), but, rather, my lifelong, innate inability to not always know my left from my right. Granted, when I am wrong, I'm wrong only 50 percent of the time, which is, at least, something to be thankful for, but it is still a nuisance.

We all have our own peculiarities, but rarely do they impact on others like mine does on occasion. Right from the get-go, you would think that someone with my past history and with my experience with helping others with their learning disabilities, I would have learned to stop giving directions to people who are lost - but, oh no, not me. I forge right ahead as though I was Christopher Columbus. Wait a minute, come to think of it, Columbus didn't know where he was going, either.

A young couple was lost and trying to find Stone Harbor (a nearby town), and after I pointed out to the driver and his wife the correct way to take, I watched them go (as any proud civilian would who just helped someone in distress) down the road and make a wrong turn. I knew immediately that I had made the mistake and not them.

As I was talking to them, I saw the intersection, said turn left when you get there, all the while knowing it was truly a right turn, but said left because in my mind's eye it was left, etc. - and if you're confused right now, you can imagine how that couple must have felt. I wasn't embarrassed, but chagrined that here I am at 60 years of age making the same foolish mistakes I did as a child.

Okay, now you are thinking what does all have to do with David growing up in Glen Rock. Well, it doesn't really, and this isn't a discourse on learning disabilities, either.

The incident, however, brought to mind a recent e-mail from a classmate who wrote that, at times, he felt during his school years like he didn't belong. He proffered he hasn't been able to relate to many of my remembrances about going out after basketball games or the sojourns to New York, or much of anything else I wrote about concerning a social life, or a dating life, because he was shy. Now, in reading this classmate's e-mail and thinking

back to our time in school, I wasn't aware of any of this, so it came as a slight shock. I had always thought of this classmate as a talented and gifted guy, and shyness never entered my perception of him; however, he saw himself differently than I did.

That really got me to thinking how much we all wanted to fit in and how everyone in their own way didn't really fit in with everyone else. By that, I mean we tried, but except for a small cadre of friends, we rarely mingled on an intimate level with all that many people.

Sure, there were cliques, but in reality the cliques were just groups of friends who were perceived by others as having a better time of it than we were. The cliques stayed small because otherwise they would become too unmanageable. Think about it - how could you have a clique with half the school in it?

As I recall, being popular usually involved different traits for boys and girls. The number one requirement for boys was their athletic ability. If you were good in sports, then you were 'in like Flint' (but all the gifted brawn with no brains to go with it didn't get a guy too far, either). And, of course, there were the traits of coolness, toughness, and that certain indefinable something that some guys had. I didn't have it – still don't, but I knew it when I saw it.

For girls, it seemed to be first looks, and then clothes, with some socioeconomic status thrown into the mix somewhere. Hey, someone had to pay for the 'Poodle' skirts, the plaid skirts, and then the 'whatever' fad in clothes that came next. This is only my opinion, ladies. I truly have no idea what qualified you to be in your particular clique.

For both sexes, however, if you had beauty, brains, and some athletic ability, you were sure to be in a top tier clique.

Some cliques may have been - for the want of a better expression - on the fringe of society and our sensibilities wouldn't allow most of us to go there. Yet, in some odd way, we might have perceived those cliques to be having more 'fun' than we were; when in reality, they were just like everyone else - wanting to be accepted and to fit in somewhere.

There is an old trivia question about naming the Seven Dwarfs and that if you cannot name all seven right off the bat, it's always the same dwarf that's missed. Supposedly, it's because we don't want to be seen as this dwarf.

Now stop and don't go beyond this paragraph if you want to guess which dwarf it is, but if you remember the Disney cartoon of Snow White, he was very, very memorable, and once you see the name in the next paragraph you'll think to yourself, "Of course, _____!" If you've made your guess, read on.

More times than not, I can easily be seen as Grumpy, Sleepy, Sneezzy, Dopey (no comments, please), Doc, and Happy – can't we all, but what most people miss, if they don't name all seven dwarfs, is the cute, red-faced one called Bashful. Is it because we all see ourselves as bashful? Who knows? I surely don't, but I've asked this question enough times over the years to know that Bashful is the dwarf who is missed the most.

I recall mentioning in another e-mail that I walked to school most mornings with a great collection of guys that met at the 'Rock'. I never viewed this group as a clique, but I do know that it was a steady group and rarely did anyone new join us. For almost five years, I walked with them from seventh grade until February of our junior year when I got a car.

My parents knew it wasn't permissible to drive to school (hey, I know what you are thinking, but I lived way across town and I thought five years of walking two miles to school was enough; the only person who lived farther from school than I did was Chris Johnston and that was by two houses). They wouldn't allow me to drive others because they didn't want to be responsible for getting someone else into trouble.

If memory serves, however, the Woltmans, who lived near school, knew I was stealthily parking on their block. On a side note, my parents didn't say anything about not driving anyone home so . . .

Anyway, I'm not sure where I was going with this e-mail, but like all my e-mails this one's getting too long.

I just wanted to let you know that if you were in a clique in high school, then I wanted to be in the same clique as you - and so did others, I suppose; and

guess what - for this brief moment - I am in the same clique as you, and it feels pretty good.

Oh, and if I was in a clique in school other than that morning walking group, I didn't know it – then or now. I just had friends. I call them my Class of 1963.

Thanks for letting be ramble once again. I'll try to be more coherent and stay on topic next time.

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A Special Room -

Thank you all for your poignant comments concerning my rambling e-mail on cliques. I guess I really hit a bull's eye with that one, and I really enjoyed reading your observations on the subject. I am always amazed at how well we remember the same things, but in different ways. As promised though, this e-mail, and all future ones, will be short and stay on topic.

So, during our time in junior-senior high, do you remember the one room or place in school (other than the gym or cafeteria) which provided us with varied experiences?

For me, it would have to be the auditorium. What - you thought I was going to name 'under the bleachers at lunchtime' as my place for varied experiences. Sorry, I can't do that; I was never there and was never invited to go there. That 'clique' mystique from my last e-mail must have been going on, I suppose. The under the bleachers area didn't seem like a place where I would have felt comfortable, anyway.

In other e-mails, I've touched on being in the auditorium for school plays, men's club performances, various band and choir concerts, award assemblies, and, of course, our 'little extra effort' ninth grade graduation ceremony.

The auditorium attacked my senses of sight and sound and, at other times, enveloped me with disappointment and numbness. The following paragraphs highlight a few more experiences I remember about that space. The first recollection is just for the guys, but maybe some of you ladies will revive a thought or two about this particular reminiscence even though it had nothing to do with you; it was the talk of the school for a while.

I recall being one of many males escorted into the auditorium in eighth grade and being lectured by Mr. Schneider on the destruction of school property - and, in particular, a boys' restroom. Mr. Ax was in attendance, too; however, I don't remember him addressing us. This only made sense to me later when I realized all the boys in both the junior and senior high were being given the same lecture and I can only assume Mr. Ax addressed the senior high boys.

At first, I was a little bothered and bewildered for I didn't quite grasp the significance of what was being said. That all changed when we were herded

by groups into the first floor boys' lavatory near Mrs. Blair's homeroom and I saw the devastation of twisted metal and bent doors on two of the stalls. For those of you who don't remember, and for the ladies who never saw it, the rectangular metal bars that acted as support beams across the top of these stalls were twisted and contorted out of shape. The doors were bent to the point where they were off their hinges and were so misshapen and maligned they were incapable of being used again.

I came away from viewing the damage in that restroom thinking what in the world would have caused the metal to have given way like that, and I was brought back to reality by hearing that if any of us knew the person who was responsible for the destruction we had an obligation to report them. Did I hear them correctly? A person did this! I was dumbstruck, for there I was in my naive childhood stupor thinking only King Kong or Superman had the strength to twist and contort steel out of shape like that.

I, along with everyone else, came to learn an upperclassman was responsible for the damage, and he did so with only his bare hands. I will only tell you he lived on Doremus Avenue and that I steered clear of him. I barely knew him, but from what I learned on that day that was enough. If you know who he is, as Harrie Richardson should, I will confirm it in a private e-mail to me, but I'd rather not post his name in this communiqué, okay?

By the way, does having a principal named Ax seem odd to anyone besides me. Although I was never in his office, I do know he knew me by name. I will attribute that to having a stellar student for a sister and I was probably known to him by association rather than accomplishment (good or bad).

It was in my junior year when the boredom and numbness part of being in the auditorium occurred. I was scheduled there for a study hall, and because of the poor lighting, uncomfortable seats, and lack of writing space, it was not an ideal situation. Luckily for me, I was only in there for about three weeks before opting out of study hall and taking another class instead. That place would have driven me crazy.

The disappointment part of being in the auditorium came when I showed up for a 'Rock 'n Roll' show on a Friday night in either ninth or tenth grade and was informed the lead female singer was not going to perform. Her name, and the band she was with, eludes me at the moment, but she was a big enough draw for me to have purchased a ticket ahead of time. The other

bands were okay, but I know I was disappointed. Anyone else recall being there?

Incredible as it may seem, I remember where I sat for the lecture, the study hall, and the Rock 'n Roll show. In fact, I recall where I sat during most of the school plays, too. I also remember where I sat when Bruce Emra was honored at an awards assembly for having one of his writings published. Pretty cool for being recognized in high school for having writing talent, isn't it?

I might be off by either a seat or a row in all those instances, but I'm positive enough about each location that it brings a smile to my face remembering all those events and situations so clearly.

Okay, you can stop smirking. As I wrote that out, I'm not entirely sure whether that memory trait should be considered funny or sad. I should have scribed some telltale mark into all my seating places to have the verification of how good my memory can be at times, but then the guys would have had to sit through another lecture about defacing school property, and I do not think anyone would have wanted that.

In any case, this memory is out of the 'bank' and into another e-mail.

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Bill Daley -

I knew Bill Daley. I also knew a side to Bill that some of you may never have seen, but I hope you did. The Bill Daley I knew was quite special.

I don't remember Bill being in any of my classes, except for maybe a Phys. Ed. class or two, but one after-school activity he engaged in definitely comes to mind when I think of Bill.

Bill liked to run track. Given his stature, he was an unlikely candidate to be a miler for he had the physicality that lent itself more toward being a shot-putter than a long distance runner. But run he did.

Bill's philosophy was the only way to be a runner was to run. That seems obvious, but he truly took it to heart. Bill knew the rhetoric and practiced what he preached. He ran. And he ran.

One spring day in ninth grade when track practice was called off because of the weather, I crisscrossed with Bill in the school courtyard. I was dashing across to get to the other side, and he was in a t-shirt and shorts heading out from the gym to the track with a stopwatch in hand. I don't recall exactly what I said, but he conveyed that he was working on a running system and wanted to get a handle on his various quarter-mile lap times.

In another e-mail, I related that being continually over-taken in the half-mile by Ross Burhouse made me realize I wasn't cut out to be a track and field man for more than my fleeting ninth grade experience, but there was something about Bill and his dedication to the sport that gave me hope about him.

Although I didn't know Bill really well, I made my way to my locker, got my poncho (remember those?), and joined him on the track. He explained he needed a good first-quarter time, but didn't want to be in the lead, and he realized he had to have something left for a good kick at the end, so it was the two middle laps he needed to work on.

Bill knew his over-all time would improve as the season progressed, but he wanted to do it proportionally to each of his lap times. He figured if he could get a handle on those middle laps, then he'd have a chance at winning a race or two.

We were out in the rain for most of the afternoon with Bill running his heart out and with me holding the stopwatch (I told you I wasn't going to make it as a long distance runner). Watching Bill run you noticed that his running style was reminiscent of the 'Little Engine That Could' for as he ran you could see those arms of his pumping out 'I know I can - I know I can' all the way around the track.

I am sure Bill's dedication to running the mile carried over to his personal life, and I know he will be missed by everyone who knew him. I do.

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A Few Little Things -

When it came time to visit a hardware store, those of you who lived west along the Boulevard and Lincoln Avenue might have had your favorite place in Hawthorne, and for those of you in the southeast corner of Glen Rock along Prospect Street, you might have ventured into Fair Lawn, but when it came time for those who lived near Ridgewood to purchase home maintenance necessities, there was only one good place around - the Ridgewood hardware store; and for those who frequented the place, what I'm about to say should come as no surprise - I loved the store.

I am not sure what got me hooked at first - the pneumatic air tubes, which went this way and that or the Lionel train setup that appeared in their Christmas window display every year.

And, were you as mesmerized by those pneumatic tubes as I was? At a wee young age, I would often wrestle my little hand free from my father's reassuring grasp, toddle over to one of the cash registers, plop myself down, and just stare at those tubes doing their thing.

Probably what attracted me was the 'whooshing' sound the canisters made as they went about their business through those tubes, but as I got older, and was no longer hinged to my father's hip, I would wander from register to cash register waiting for the next cylinder to make its move.

I would look up into the glass enclosed business office, and, as a cylinder was being placed into a tube, I would try to guess which register in the L-shaped store the canister was going to visit next. I was sooo easy to entertain as a child.

Of course, when it came to trains, I knew the masters of model railroading were Alan Furler and his dad. Alan's basement held a magnificent display of what model railroading was all about, but the Ridgewood hardware store's display was good, too. Do you remember how the trains traveled from the window area into the store and back out again?

On the subject of trains, I had a 5x8 tabletop setup in my basement (a figure eight within an interconnecting oval track incorporating four switches and two side tracks - one inside the figure eight and one outside the oval). It was pretty neat, but other than the requisite street lamps, miniature houses and

gas station, some shrubbery, and painted streets and landscaping, the set-up wasn't super special, except for this corny looking, two foot long, curved mountain tunnel nestled in the back corner by the wall.

My mother and I made the tunnel (more mom than I) from a mold using balloons. We covered them with papier-mâché and painted the jagged ridgeline white to make the mountains look snow capped. My mom meant well, but I think real model railroaders would have avoided putting out a tunnel like that; however, ours served its purpose, I suppose.

What I did love doing was stalling the train in the tunnel and puffing smoke from the engine smokestack until it waffled out from within the tunnel. Very cool. I told you I was easy to please as a child.

Speaking of being easy to please, I did have this odd little engine that looked the same coming and going. It had bumpers on both ends and was a stand-alone engine - you couldn't couple any railroad cars to it. The design of the engine was such that when it hit a barrier, it reversed itself, traveled back in the direction it came from, hit another barrier, reversed its direction again, and kept hitting barriers and reversing itself until you stopped it. Silly, really - and it served no useful purpose other than for entertainment.

And, of course, entertain me it did. I had more fun with that useless little engine than anything else in my entire train setup - even my own version of the Smokey Mountains. That bumper engine was every little boy's dream. I rammed it into every conceivable thing imaginable, and it kept going and going - just like the modern day Energizer Bunny. I wish I had invented it.

I know this is weird, but I was also fascinated by the fact that the Ridgewood hardware store had two separate entrances. I know - how dumb is that, but I thought it was pretty neat. I remember one entrance being on North Broad (where invariably we found parking across the street from a savings and loan) and the other was on East Ridgewood Avenue - I think it was called East Ridgewood Avenue, but I'm not sure. My memory has been in slip mode recently.

After shopping on East Ridgewood Avenue, my dad would often cut through the store just so I could be entertained. I was one lucky kid; but then again, maybe he liked the swooshing sound of those canisters, too.

While I'm on the subject of dumb things to do, I would like to touch on something else. I suppose it's more of a guy thing, but there was a small window of time between when I felt too grownup to be seen pedaling a bicycle (but I've got one in my garage now) and when I got my driver's license - so I took to hitch-hiking.

During World War II, many people hitch-hiked because of gas rationing and the scarcity of cars - and while hitch-hiking was dying off somewhat in the 50s, it was still considered a viable means of getting around.

In light of today's standards, not too many people hitch-hike anymore, but it seemed commonplace back then. I know I didn't concern myself with any dire consequences about doing it, but then I didn't inform my parents I engaged in hitch-hiking either.

With a smile on my face and my thumb out, I could go just about anywhere - and did. With me, it was probably more thumb than smile that got me rides, but one Saturday afternoon when I was about 13, I hitched to the FairLawn Lanes on Maple Avenue. I met a girl in the lane next to mine who had been invited to someone's birthday-bowling party.

The girl lived in Smoke Rise, and the following Saturday I hitch-hiked to her house just to go for a walk with her. I told you I was dumb, but now you know I was also a sucker for a pretty face.

Because of the numerous rides I had to take to get to Smoke Rise, my travel path was pretty convoluted. In total, the hitch-hiking part probably lasted longer than the walk she and I took. Since I still remember the difficulty I had getting to Smoke Rise, the walk must have been worthwhile. The girl's name is lost to memory, but I can still picture her secluded house on the side of a hill - and the girl, too. Pretty as they come.

Another little thing - as we get closer to that time of the change in weather from our winter wonderland, does anyone remember worm day? Oh, of course you do! You know that first almost-warm-after-the-rainy-night-spring-morning when you innocently go outside and find yourself in a sea of worms. You'd see the first worm and then look around and find worms everywhere they didn't belong - on sidewalks, patios, driveways, even in the streets. And then after the hot afternoon sun did its thing ... oh, well, you know what happened to those hapless, moisture-laden creatures.

Just one more thing before I close out this e-mail. Do you think the girl in Smoke Rise ever looked back into her childhood memories and remembered me as this weirdo guy who had hitched-hiked 25 miles through hill and dale just to take a walk with her?

Nah, me either – and keep the weirdo comments to yourself, please!

But I like having the memory of a few little things, and thank you for letting me share them with you.

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A Penny For Your Thoughts –

Thank you to those who reminded me it was Stephen Paillet's dad who owned the Ridgewood hardware store I loved so much and that the main entrance was on East Ridgewood Avenue.

I'm glad to also hear some of you found the www.missingmoney.com website to be beneficial. Okay, with all that said, let's move on.

We can't remember everything that happened to us as children, but in reading what I have written to our class over these past several years, you may have noticed what I have - that as you grow older your life is full of these little bookmarks that can remind you of events that have danced across the early years of your life.

Smells can do it. They can bring back childhood moments and emotions as if you had just experienced them. Songs can certainly bring an ache to your heart or a smile to your face, a subtle souvenir from a day long gone or a reminder of a missed love. Special events and traveling to distant places can often trigger a memory or two, also.

These little bookmarks have been wonderful for me, like a scrapbook I carry in my head and heart to ensure that memories are not just some distant dusting waiting to be swept away. But there are moments, the sad and often scary-wish-I-could-let-this-one-go moments, which often creep up when they are least welcome or expected.

I just got back from an awesome road trip with Nancy to Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse, and the Badlands in South Dakota, and while there, I noticed the ubiquitous souvenir machine that for fifty-one cents (two quarters plus the penny) you can change a coin into a small oval-shaped medallion with a picture of something on it. You've all seen them; you turn a crank that works a press to flatten and imprint the penny.

Seeing kids with their elongated pennies got me to thinking about my childhood and the old 'squash the penny on the railroad tracks' routine. That sighting brought back the terrifying memory of possibly being the one person in Glen Rock to have stupidly caused a train to derail. Seriously, that's what crossed my mind.

I know now that it seems foolish to think that my putting a penny on the railroad tracks could have possibly derailed a train, but moments before the train came flying by I really thought that. I thought, "Oh, my God. What did I just do!" The angst was real. I truly thought for a split second I was going to be the person from Glen Rock who was forever known as being the one responsible for a train wreck within the city limits.

I remember being terrified. Deep down to the marrow of my bone scared. As the train approached, I was frozen in fear. I couldn't run to get my penny back for the train was too close, and I was petrified by fear to move my legs and run away. I felt so helpless.

Was the possibility of a train wreck a rational thought? Of course not - a train engine weighs ten tons, but as a seven-year-old kid at the time, what did I know. I knew from experience that any little thing would upset my Lionel train and throw it off the track, so why wouldn't a penny be capable of derailing a real train. It made sense while not making sense - like I am doing right now.

It seemed like an eternity as I wondered if I had done the right thing. I could hear the sound of the roaring engine in the closing distance, the train booming along the railroad tracks, gears clinking and clanging, shifting up and down, coming my way.

With increasing speed, the black train approached the place where I had knelt down moments before and placed the shiny new penny from my pocket along the silver track; the great monster thundered with anger in its speed, and wailed with a mighty blow at the small boy who seemed to ignore its desperate warning. I shot my eyes back and forth as the gap between the train and the penny lessened.

What the heck was I going to do!

I tumbled away from the track just as the train bellowed past, coughing with inhalation of dust, smoke, and exhilaration, and when its last car had gone, I felt the greatest of relief. The train was safe. The passengers were safe. I was safe. We had all survived!

I approached the tracks again and looked for my penny. It took awhile - much longer than I would have thought for I figured my penny would still be

on the track. I gathered the coin in the palm of my hand, feeling its heat and admiring its new form - flattened and smooth like untouched water; no longer was it merely a penny, but a perfect, copper beauty. Silly, but I would like to think Lincoln smiled at my creation.

After this harrowing experience of living in momentary fear, you would have thought that I would never, ever have put a penny on the railroad tracks again. You're right. I never did.

Well - I never put a penny on the tracks; now I was much more daring and put two or three pennies on the track. Had to. I had too much trouble finding the first penny and I thought it would be easier finding a bunch of them.

I waited for what seemed like an eternity, but the next train, when it came, seemed to be flying forward as though it knew there was a new prize awaiting its passing. Its chug-chug-rattle was shaking the ground beneath my feet with a fervor that seemed personal and imminent. I now knew its secret. It was never going to derail because of what I had done - because of my pennies. It was bigger and badder than I was.

As it swept past my hiding spot, the roar of the engine and wheels almost drowned out the sharp shriek of mine as it found the pennies I had laid on the track. I grinned and laughed aloud, the thrill of the moment sweeping me upwards so that it felt like my spirit was flying after the massive monster. It is one memory I'll never forget. I can't - I repeated it at least a dozen times in my life.

For those who have never experienced that particular angst and would like to try it in your second childhood, I'll offer some pointers for squashing a penny or two. It is a good idea to place the pennies on the track so they are lined up with a noticeable object like a tree or a unique little pile of bedrock. In my first attempt, I was easily disorientated and had trouble remembering exactly where I had placed the penny. Those railroad ties all looked alike.

I advise you to move away from the track, too; you don't want to be hit by an errant flying penny. Also, try this in a less public place, not at a railway station. You will feel guilty doing it (you may even feel that the train will derail!), and it's best that other people are not around to compound your guilt. And if you do feel guilty and decide not to do it, there's always those store machines ready and willing for 50 cents to squash your penny!

Dad –

On an April day in 1911, my father came into this life in a simple, two story wooden house in Hoboken, New Jersey. He died, without warning, in a hospital of congestive heart failure, on a cold February night, while living in a lovely planned retirement compound in Lakewood, New Jersey. A little more than 77 years separated his birth and death, a little more than 77 miles separated the two residences.

An ordinary man in many respects, born to a German immigrant father who came to this country through the Port of Baltimore at the age of eight, and to a mother who died at an early age while giving birth to my dad's baby brother (who would not live to see a completed day), my dad knew extraordinary sorrow at an early age, and, later, extraordinary triumph in finding a woman to marry and to love like no other.

My father belonged to a generation of intelligent, ambitious, working-class Americans who had the misfortune to finish high school and to attempt to find work during the Depression years. Although he graduated high school at the age of seventeen, which was not uncommon back then, it took him years before he found work as a naval architect.

There was little money for college tuition without working for it, no easy path for this first-generation lad to travel. Dad could only find odd jobs like washing windows and helping out in a corner pharmacy before he would begin his lifetime career.

My father would only marry after he found full-time employment and that was only during the mid-to-latter part of the Depression. My mother, the love of his life, whom he dated for over five years, was, however, the main bread winner during the first year or two of their marriage. She had held a good paying job as a personal secretary (on of all places during the Depression - Wall Street) at E.A. Pearce, a well-known stock brokerage firm.

The two of them grew up only five blocks apart in Jersey City, yet they didn't meet until they were twenty-five years old. Bay View Avenue, where my father lived, and Myrtle Avenue, where my mother lived were, at least to an outsider, in the same neighborhood, but were, in fact, worlds apart. My father, raised strict Catholic by his Boston bred step-mother, went to Sacred

Heart, an elementary parochial school - where he served as an altar boy, and then on to Dickerson High School, a public high school. My mother, raised predominately by her Swedish grandmother, was Protestant, went to public grammar schools #29 and School 14, and then on to Lincoln and Henry Snyder High Schools for training in business courses.

It would be almost five years of protracted courtship before they would marry, not only because of the dismal financial times, but because they knew it would take place without the blessing of my father's strong-willed stepmother, Kate. She thought my mother (who was Lutheran) wasn't good enough for Dad, and who, later, would have the good sense to admit how very wrong she was.

Dad had found his soul mate in Mildred Lane - a woman who was highly verbal, strongly committed, and immensely compassionate. Kate would prove to be no match for the love my father had for my mother.

In 1933, he found a job that would last thirty-five years as a ship designer for Gibbs and Cox, one of the finest naval engineering firms of its kind (as the beauty and grace of one of their ships, the SS United States, will attest). Mr. Gibbs personally hired my dad, and my father's admiration for Mr. Gibbs' genius was returned in kind, for my father was continually selected to direct special projects that went beyond the scope of shipbuilding.

Dad's favorite project was overseeing the design and construction of what would eventually be called the SuperPumper (one word). Mr. Gibbs wanted Dad to design a fire truck for the New York City Fire Department that would have the power of a fireboat, a pumper so powerful that it could by the force of its stream of water keep a brick wall from collapsing outward and injuring the men sent to extinguish the fire.

This was no small task since every bridge and tunnel had to be inspected and measured to insure that this specially built truck would be compact enough to navigate its way through the streets of New York. Because of the huge amount of water required of the SuperPumper to do its job, and because it would be much smaller than a fireboat, specially designed fittings, hookups, hoses, and pumps needed to be designed and manufactured.

The final manufacturer of the SuperPumper, and its accompanying tender, was entrusted to Mack Truck in Pennsylvania, and in 1961 the Gibbs and

Cox Company presented the SuperPumper to the New York City Fire Department, a modern miracle of engineering that to this day is still in use.

When America was drawn into the War II, forced to watch as the world convulsed and bled, as the men of his generation went off to their appointed sufferings, and as the company he worked for designed ships of destruction rather than for leisure, Dad grew increasingly cynical about the world in general, and about politics in particular.

Around this time, my parents bought a home and moved to a somewhat rural area - at least back in 1941 Glen Rock was considered small town rural. They were expecting a child - my sister, Carol Ann, who will always be (God Bless her) my older sister, by two years and nine months (lest she ever forgets). And it was in this home that could be found on any given night what I will always remember my Dad for - the thought provoking conversations about life, love, and, most of all, the state of the world.

When the war was over and he was no longer working long hours, Dad went into local politics and ran for councilman. My father was a natural campaigner, and he did a good job of getting out the vote. The problem was he was a Democrat - a charter member of the local Democratic Party - in a staunchly Republican town. He was a stubborn man, proud to a fault, utterly determined in his beliefs of working for the good of the common man, but he was sorely outnumbered. He could argue any point, query any thought, but he wouldn't change parties just to be elected. My father thought of himself as a man of the people, not of politics.

For a city-raised boy, Dad accounted for himself quite well as a homeowner in the country. With self-taught carpentry skills honed by common sense, and with the patience of a saint, Dad divided our basement into a recreation room with tongue and groove knotty-pine paneling on one side and storage and work areas on the other. He did all the woodworking, wiring, and plumbing work himself.

Outside, with the help of my beloved mother's uncle, Henry, he built a beautiful stone barbecue, and from then on he never looked back. He built two stonewalls, a couple of dry wells, and a beautiful rock garden. He tried his hand at growing vegetables - mostly, I suppose, as a learning experience for Carol and me - but his pride and joy was his roses. When Dad convinced

my mother it was time to move from Glen Rock, he took some cuttings with him to their Wyckoff home and continued to nurture them there.

After Dad retired from Gibbs and Cox, he worked briefly as the business community representative for the Paramus Chamber of Commerce. He had the personality for the job, but not the passion. Dad always saw himself as a teacher, as an imparter of information and ideas by way of asking questions, and so he embarked at the age of 61 on a new career and became a teacher. He taught for more than five years at the Bergen County Vocational-Technical Career Center under a jobs-work bill funded by legislation passed by President Johnson before his move to Lakewood. My sister and I know from experience how very well my father could lecture, and although he taught adults drafting skills, what my dad did best was to teach people how to think and how to question.

Dad died in his sleep at a hospital near Lakewood with no sign of the struggle with cancer that had marked so much of his last year of life, and in the ensuing years after his death, I continue to have private conversations with him that do not require the assistance of an analyst to interpret.

The closer I creep upward in age the clearer understanding and greater respect I have of the strength of his will, the fire that fueled him, the effort and self-belief and self-sacrifice that can only be read between the lines of his life's resume.

I have, as it turns out, inherited his stubbornness, a portion of his discipline, and a minute sampling of his intellect, but those are secondary things, mere traits; what matters much more to me is his gift of a sense of perspective, his innate questioning of things, his penchant to wonder and to dream. For these things, I say, "Thank you, Dad. Talk to you soon. I love you."

The Little Things -

We all know it - it's the little things that enrich our lives and make us who and what we are, but do we ever account for how we learned those certain little things, as in tying our shoes.

Nowadays, I almost always wear loafers, either casual Docksidors (which have laces, I know, but are rarely in need of re-tying) or dress penny-loafers. However, this morning, I was putting on sneakers and tying the much needed bows and got to thinking how did I come to learn this skill. (By the way, other than slipping them on, is there a way to wear laced shoes without tying a bow?)

I can remember the time before being able to tie my own laces at the age of four (and contrary to today's kiddie shoes, all my shoes had laces, even the moccasins I got in Vermont); I can remember being in the kitchen and recall my mother showing me how to tie them, as I have this visual memory of where I sat (in my dad's chair) as she repeatedly helped me through the process; and although I don't have any distinct memories of bending down and tying my shoes for the first time by myself for any specific reason or event, I know by the above paragraph that I learned how to do it. It's like riding a bike, I suppose - some things . . . well, you get the idea.

What is strange is that when I first learned how to do tie my shoelaces I always tied them double, meaning I put an extra knot in them so the bow wouldn't come undone. From my Boy Scout days, I later learned this single knot was called an Overhand - so was tying it twice called a Double Overhand? I don't know, but it worked.

Undoubtedly, that trick came from my parents showing me how (and then insisting that I do it every time I tied my laces so they wouldn't have to re-tie them), and I'm sure I double-knotted them every time I tied my laces when I was four, five and six, but then I moved on after that and have stayed with just tying a good, tight, single Overhand knot - thank you very much!

Oh, and do you remember, as I do, having at least three pairs of shoes - one for dress, one for school, and one for play (and God forbid if I took a misstep while wearing the first pair before it was time to make them school shoes!). And does anyone polish their shoes as often as we did back then?

Today's shine seems to last a heck of a lot longer. In my case, maybe not being around Diamond Brook anymore has something to do with it.

As I stated, although I was past the age of six, I don't remember the exact occasion when I stopped tying doubles, but I did do a double overhand recently.

This past year, my college buddies and I recreated a white-water rafting trip we took 40 years ago down the New River in West Virginia. For those who have been thrill rafting, this was a Class IV-V run, and for those of you who have never been white-water rafting on a Class V trip, it's not something I'm likely to do again at my age.

Anyhow, before we set out, the guide went through the why and wherefores of his life-jacket, helmet, and wetsuit spiel, along with the standard precautions of what to do while out on the river (and, more importantly, what not to do), and then with a twinkle in his eye and a mischievous smile said, 'Oh, and make sure your footwear is tied tight; we don't want anyone barefoot in the river swimming after their shoes!'.

You got it - there I was on bended knee not only re-tying my footwear up tight, but double-knotting them. I felt like I was six years old again, and to tell the truth it felt pretty good. Darn good, in fact!

And, as you might have guessed, after the trip was over, I had one a heck of a time getting those double Overhands undone. Some things never change.

I hope you fondly recall when you learned how to tie your shoes, too, for it's the little things that let us enjoy the big things in life, right?

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To Speak Or Not To Speak -

A classmate who had a stutterer in his high school class once asked me to write to his English students about how I viewed my disability as I was growing up.

I did and thought I'd share part of the story with you. It is long and some of you may find it boring so please don't feel you have to read it all the way to its conclusion – for, as you will see if you get that far, there isn't any.

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David Lamken, Ph.D., is so easy to read, so easy to write, and so very hard to say. No, no - not for you, but for me. You see - I am different from you. I am labeled. I have been marked for life. I can't say even my first name without sometimes feeling like an idiot.

I am a stutterer. I am not like other people. You might not think so, but I know so. I must think differently, act differently, and live differently – and all because I stutter. Oh, come on, you are thinking, how hard can it be to live your life as a stutterer. So you stumble on a few words; it can't be that hard. I hope to change anyone's mind concerning that thought by giving you a glimpse of what my life has been like.

Like other stutterers, like other exiles, I have known all my life a great sorrow and a great hope together, and, for better or worse, they have made of me the kind of person that I am.

An awkward tongue, so to speak, has molded my life – and, as the saying goes, I have only one life to live. I share with you, I hope, the grand assumption that life comes first, life is significant, life is precious.

Language is used by man for the purpose of translating muscle and nerve into oral business agreements and theatrical elegance, into last wills and sonnets, and into laws which man has tried to use to bring peace to this world of ours. It is the greatest man-made power under the heavens, and without a mastery of it, a complete mastery of it, one proceeds at the risk of all good things, at the risk of the grand assumption that life is precious.

At the age of six to seven I began to stutter, for no apparent reason, and have persisted in that defect up to the present time. I do stutter less than I formerly did, I will admit to that, and, now that I'm past 60, the malady has all but lost its terror for me, but the hurt from experiencing it has never gone away.

Although not totally relevant, an investigation into my family history reveals a record of rather ordinary persons and events. No significant cases of mental or nervous disease are evident; so far as general physical health is concerned, both the paternal and maternal lines have been characteristically sound. There appears to be nothing exceptional to a general well-being and mediocre achievement in my family tree. Among my forebears there were apparently no stutterers, and neither was there in my only sibling, my older sister, Carol.

When I began to stutter an explanation was offered that I was "thinking ahead of my speech." The supposition amounted to this, that my ability to think words had developed faster than my ability to say words. Concurrent to that, I also heard people remark, "Slow down and think of what you want to say." I never made sense of either opposing thought. Stuttering back then was also often thought of as something stutterers might "grow out of." In my case, however, such an explanation proved to be wrong. I never did grow out of it, and in my childhood years, it only got worse.

Because of who and what my parents were, I developed a considerable vocabulary at quite an early age; I had the verbal material with which to express myself; it was just that I couldn't. Moreover, they are not big or long words that cause me the most difficulty, for I stutter on all words, any word, simple, compound, or complex.

Some explained away my stuttering by saying that it was a "kind of nervousness." That, of course, means very little and offered very little in the way of an explanation. The one theory proffered that I liked best was the reasoning that I stuttered because I was afraid I would stutter. An interesting thought, isn't it?

I enjoyed going to school. I studied (a little) and played eagerly (a lot). There is no record or recollection on anyone's part that I stuttered at a very early age in my formative years. For about a year after I entered school, I had begun to stutter slightly, but in school, as at home, nobody apparently paid much attention to my speech defect, and, apparently, neither did I.

I have a report card from second grade (they were narratives back then) and it indicates quite clearly I didn't stutter in first grade. My first grade teacher moved with my class to second grade and wondered what brought this defect to the forefront. No explanations by parents or school were forthcoming.

While I was still in second grade my stuttering got worse, and my father intended, I was told, to advance me to the third grade, and for reasons that were apparently unrelated to my stuttering but were never disclosed; he later decided not to do that because of my stuttering. This occasioned my first significant realization of stuttering as a part of myself. I was given to understand that it was a handicap, an understanding, by the way, which circumstances were never to repudiate. A label now stood in my way. Stuttering was now becoming a wall, and a wall, I later found out, so high I might not ever be able to scale it.

I can recall moments when I was childishly and bewilderingly sad because I could not talk like everyone else. I went to my mother on more than one occasion and cried about it, and she did far more for me than she ever suspected, simply by being who she was - kind.

I was fortunate my playmates never ridiculed me unmercifully when I stuttered, and frequently, when I blocked on a word, one of them would say it for me, and so I chatted with them almost on equal terms. My teachers, save one, treated me with uncanny understanding and, although I have no way to prove it, were more than likely chiefly responsible for the attitude of my classmates toward my defect. I shall always be grateful to them.

During the early years of my school life, while stuttering itself was painful, life on the whole was pleasant. My grades, while never stellar, were more than presentable and always reflected the effort I put forth in my studies. I always did well in English class although I rarely spoke. A little ironic, I believe.

Through perfectly tolerant of my stuttering, classmates are connected with my earliest memories of embarrassment from my faulty speech. I felt inferior to them and for no other apparent reason than that I stuttered. This general attitude on my part became involved in the run of my associations with all children, with all adults, with all people. As a result of experience, I gradually came to regard my stuttering as something to be concealed. And

try to conceal it I did, for I resented it considerably. And although sometimes bold in action, I was a rather shy child.

Concurrent with this feeling of resentment regarding my speech, I was becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that I could easily have turned into a bully. In fact, if the truth was told, I am quite sure that because of my inadequacies I was one on more than one occasion, but I found that the line of least resistance is that of good-natured behavior. Life did not teach me to believe that it was desirable to make enemies, especially if you talked the way I did.

Every ambition I have ever entertained has sprung to a large degree from my stuttering. The imperative fact is that I have considered my abilities in any area as compensations for my inability to express myself adequately in speech. Not only, then, as a human being, but also as a student, a teacher, a social creature, I have received the impress of stuttering; and believe I am justified in saying that largely because I have stuttered I am a particular kind of person.

It could be said that I work with disabled children in part because I see myself as disabled. That's for others to judge. All I know is that my life is better for the path I have chosen and in knowing that in some part it was chosen for me.

We all have stories to tell and if you've gotten this far you may well have the sense of how cathartic it was for me to write what I have and to give you a glimpse into part of my life's story.

Thank you, Bruce, for letting me write to your class.

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I Scream -

Since Van Dykes was one of my favorite ice cream places, I'm glad to hear so many of you enjoyed it, too. I never did have cantaloupe-flavored ice cream, but it sure hit a sweet spot with quite a few of you. I preferred the walnut flavor and truly marveled whenever I licked off some ice cream and found a full half-size piece of walnut hiding somewhere deep inside the cone next to all the little walnut pieces.

As the time approached for us to get in the car and go for a family drive (something that's not done much anymore), I was always on my best behavior for the thought of going to Van Dykes and being allowed to order a double-dip cone, especially one with two different flavors of ice cream, was beyond joy for this little boy and as close to heaven as I believe I'll ever get.

Rob Hoogs was spot-on about the milk bottle deliveries in the winter. Unlike today's plastic bottles and caps, the glass bottle ones back then were cardboard and whenever the non-homogenized milk's cream would freeze, it would pry open the top. I'm glad I was usually first to get to the milk chest.

And to think the milkman parked in front of every house he delivered to and had to go all the way around to the rear to deposit the milk in the chest. He earned his money!

In a previous e-mail I touched on Jahns Restaurant on Route 4 and the experience many people had when ordering the phenomenal 'Kitchen Sink'. It was a sight to behold, and if memory serves, it cost \$6.50, which was a lot of money back then being that the hourly wage was only a buck an hour in 1960.

Another beloved ice cream venue frequented by my family was 'The Dairy Barn' off the western end of Route 208. I touched upon that place in a class e-mail about a priceless memory concerning a fifty-mile bicycle trip Alan Furler, Art Smith, Craig Lampe, Ken Hradzira and I took while earning a merit badge for Boy Scouts. I'll be happy to send it to anyone who didn't get a chance to read it.

My main purpose in writing this e-mail is not to recount all the glorious places my father took us in order to sample various ice cream vendors (and we traveled near and far), but to recount the times when ice cream came parading into our neighborhoods. Well, it seemed like a parade, anyway.

You know what I'm talking about - those Good Humor trucks with the alerting ring of melodious bells that introduced us kids to Pavlov's theory long before we had ever heard of a guy named Ivan Pavlov and classical conditioning. I bet his dogs would have loved ice cream, too.

We were as happily hooked on hearing the sound of those approaching bells as our parents were at being dismayed when realizing an ice cream truck was invading their quiet neighborhood - and what those bells meant to their deep pockets.

Those seven bells stretched in a line across the top of the truck's windshield and were activated by a cord manually tugged on by the driver. And each driver enjoyed their own little jingle and style when pulling on that string and ringing those bells, too.

And do you remember, as I do, the Good Humor man being dressed all in white, wearing a white hat with a black brim, and having the ubiquitous coin changer attached to his Sam Browne belt? Which was black, of course - not brown!

While the vanilla ice cream stick covered with toasted almonds was my usual favorite, the Good Humor man carried a variety of items. He sold Popsicles in a variety of flavors. You remember Popsicles - the two sticks per bar that when pressured was applied would break in half so you could share one half (as was the case every once in a while whenever my sister and I needed to pool our pennies) or, as was the case more often than not, in order to sample more than one flavor with a friend.

Consisting of only flavored ice, Popsicles were the cheapest item you could buy - and at a nickel apiece they weren't cheap. Not when you consider all the penny candy you could get in 1950 for five cents - but, hey, these iced treats were being delivered right to your front door.

Ice cream trucks don't traverse the neighborhood in which I live, but a co-worker who is an EMT on the North Wildwood beach informed me that vendors who walk the beach sell Fudgie bars and ice cream sandwiches for \$2.00 and the rest of the varieties sold are \$3.00. And they don't sell twin ice pops anymore because no one was buying them. Isn't that amazing!

At seven cents, Fudgesicles were next in my hierarchy of what to buy. As you unwrapped and slowly licked at the bar, do you remember how the fudgie outer layer would lightly frost over? I hope so!

And the licking of these iced treats was the best part, wasn't it? Everyone had his or her own method of how to do it and how to avoid the inevitable. You know what I mean - whenever the wrapping paper used as a guard was no longer able to contain the flow of popsicle juice, it would trickle down and into the palm of your little hand.

Dreamsicles and Creamsicles were next on the rung of the ladder of goodness. The Creamsicle was made of raspberry sherbet with vanilla ice cream on the inside, and the Dreamsicle was made with orange sherbet and vanilla ice cream. Outside of the having them during the summer months, Dreamsicles were a rarity as I don't recall them being sold in sweet shop freezers the rest of the year as were the more popular Creamsicles.

Good Humor also sold rockets (remember those - the push-up popsicles with several colors and flavors in one) and, of course, ice cream sandwiches. Back then if ice cream sandwiches came in a flavor other than vanilla, I'm not aware of it.

And last, but not least, there were the ice cream sundaes served in a paper wrapped cone with a little paper flap that was attached to the wrapping and served as its cap (today's caps are separate and peel off).

I was rarely given enough money to purchase the best of the best - the vanilla ice cream cone sundae with nuts and chocolate on the top. Hence, the treasured art of a long lost pastime... the collecting of soda bottles in the summertime. At two cents for small ones and a nickel for the large ones, it was a search worth pursuing. But then, that's a whole other story.

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Custard's Last Stand

In replying to your e-mails concerning my remembrance on ice cream places, it got me to thinking about experiencing frozen custard. Of course, as you know, it wasn't custard nor was it truly frozen, but that's what I remember people calling soft ice cream back in 1950.

I wrote to you about going to Coney Island and Jones Beach with my parents in other e-mails so I won't bore you with that again, but my first true memory of having frozen custard was being at Coney Island when I was about five years old.

It was a Kohr Bros. Custard Stand and I don't remember much about it other than I liked licking soft ice cream more than licking hard ice cream (which I usually just took bites of) and the frozen custard cones were softer and sweeter, too. Kohr Bros. soon populated many New Jersey shore boardwalks as I distinctly remember one being in Asbury Park not far from the carousel house and another one in Atlantic City near the Mr. Peanut store by Steel Pier.

By the way, do any of you recall how the Mr. Peanut store would blow the roasted peanut smell from their machines out of the store and up from under the boardwalk in three exhaust tubes. Quite a sales technique.

In remembering my experiences with frozen custard what stands out most in my mind is going to Carvel ice cream stands. There seemed to be a quite a few of them. While my parents were more inclined to favor hard ice cream spots during our early summer evening outings on Sunday and Wednesday nights, we would occasionally try various Carvels.

There are four main things I remember about Carvel: it only had chocolate sprinkles - no multi-colored ones; their ice cream sandwiches were round and were called Flying Saucers; they sold an ice cream cake that was rolled and looked like a log - and might even have been called 'The Log'; and, finally (and maybe the main reason for our Wednesday's evening stops), was their slogan 'Wednesday was Sundae'.

I wish I could remember the reason but because of some connection between my father and its owner, I do recall going to a soft ice cream stand off Route 9 in Haverstraw, NY, on Broadway. It wasn't a Kohr Bros. or a Carvel, but

was called 'Blizzard' or maybe 'Blizzard's Place' - can't remember, but there was no connection to Dairy Queen and its new Blizzard concoctions. I wonder if it's still in business. Do any of you recall ever going there?

Like all good things, soft ice cream doesn't taste the same anymore - too many additives, I suppose.

Thanks again for allowing me to enter your time and space.

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LB -

I know, I know - for those of you who are politically inclined, you thought I left out a letter and the title should have read LBJ, but this remembrance goes along with all my other ones to the Class of '63 and concerns itself with growing up in Glen Rock - and it doesn't have anything to do with my 60s political experiences, however interesting they might have been.

I recently had the dubious pleasure of not being able to see for a while, and so my entertainment came not from books or television, but from listening to the radio. For some reason, I found myself blindly tuning in stations and trying to find classical music channels - and that got me to thinking about my childhood.

When I was around the tender age of 12 to 13, CBS offered to broadcast live educational concerts with Leonard Bernstein, and they ran periodically for a number of years. Does anyone else remember the program?

In the beginning, whenever they aired, his Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic were the main topic of conversation around our family's dinner table. To say the least, I was not enthralled at being made to watch these shows for as I recall the first programs were shown on Saturday mornings and what emerging, robust teenager didn't have better things to do on a Saturday morning (other than chores) than to watch a TV show about classical music.

(By the way, I think I may still be emerging - I'm just not too sure robust is a correct descriptive adjective for me anymore.)

Anyway, while I may have been coerced by my family into watching Bernstein's first few concerts, I slowly became hooked. Many of you who have read my other e-mail ramblings might recall that I have commented about having two left feet and not being able to carry a tune except in an attaché case, but I do like music, and the Young People's Concerts cemented that love deep into my heart.

As I recall, there were times when Bernstein was dressed in a cardigan sweater and addressed the camera directly and at other times when he was decked out in a tuxedo leading the New York Philharmonic, but no matter how he was attired, his shows were simple and to the point.

Bernstein discussed such common topics as 'what does music mean' to the more complex notion of what really made up 'music theory', but no matter what topic was being addressed, I found myself interested in what Bernstein had to say. And what he was saying was only the half of it, because, if you remember it the way I do, he showed us it was the music that was truly speaking. And it all came through loud and clear - even if we didn't have TVs with surround sound back in the day.

By the way, do any of you recollect the child prodigy André Watts? His piano playing for a 14 or 15 year old was superb and he was featured on Bernstein's show a few times. I wonder whatever became of him.

All of Bernstein's shows were broadcast live, as almost all televisions programs were back then, but I believe the Young People's Concerts were finally moved from their morning timeslot and shown during prime-time hours since I faintly recall watching some of them at night.

And to think that a mere six years later, the Beatles would make their first appearance on another CBS program, the Ed Sullivan Show, which aired on Sunday nights.

I think Bernstein would have approved - and (as their song goes) would have held their hand!

And although Bernstein's shows may not have been a total constant in my family's routine, there was something that kept our family busy over the years. How many of you remember the ubiquitous jigsaw puzzle pieces scattered about on a card table somewhere in your home?

Our card table was kept by the front window and it was hard not to stop and put at least one or two puzzle pieces together every time you passed by. As we got older, the box cover with the puzzle's picture disappeared until the puzzle was completed. If a child abuse hotline had been available to me back then, I think I might have called it and reported my parents for tormenting my sister and me like that.

Thanks again for allowing me to enter your time and space.

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Be Home By Dinner!

I can't imagine anyone out there who doesn't remember hearing that phrase when you were a child, especially if you spent all your young years growing up in Glen Rock. And by anyone, I mean the guys in our class more than the girls. I don't have a handle on what girls experienced while growing up.

In my upbringing, those words conveyed more than just a time and a place. The first thing that comes to mind - other than imagining that my parents were thinking quietly to themselves, 'Please, yes, go - get out of the house' - is trust. When my parents uttered the words, 'Be home by dinner', it meant they knew I could find my way back home and that I would be there at the appointed time.

To me, this is all very interesting, of course, since I don't recall wearing a watch back then - especially when I was out and about at the tender ages of 6, 7, and 8. I had to use my body clock, the position of the sun, or some stranger who was asked to offer up the time of day - politely, of course. A slight growl coming from an empty stomach of this young boy might have helped a bit, too.

I do recall Art Smith wearing a wristwatch. And this is not to pick on Art, but what makes me remember it so well is that he wore his watch on inside of his wrist. Made sense to Art then - makes sense to me now.

Bizarre - isn't it - what little inconsequential things we can still recall after more than half a century.

I rewrote those last words twice because 'more than half a century' sends more of a shiver of old age through me than does '50 plus years'; does it for you, too, or don't you want to be reminded of which part of any century milestones we have passed?

My memory is still pretty intact about how some people knew when it was time to go home, and so I won't embarrass anyone by listing names of parents who rang a cow bell to alert the neighborhood that it was time for their little ones to find their way home. Everything considered, though, I thought it was a pretty neat idea. Ivan Pavlov was on the right track, wasn't he?

'Be home by dinner' also meant I'd be out of my parents sight and that they were bestowing upon me the respect of knowing I'd stay out of trouble. Other than acknowledging the fact that I didn't bring the trouble home with me, we'll just leave it at that. Boys will be boys whether you built your own dam on Diamond Brook, started up a bulldozer and couldn't get it to stop, or did whatever.

Well, anyway, growing up as we did back in the '50s, our world was pretty small. No, I don't mean that we didn't go into the city with our parents to see what wonders it had to offer (anyone remember skating at Rockefeller Center - or, as it was in my case more often than not, falling down). I recall skating there with my sister, Carol, before I even owned ice skates! My dad skated with us as my mother watched from above beaming as though we in the Ice Capades.

By saying our world was small, I mean we played within our neighborhoods with neighborhood friends and attended a neighborhood elementary school.

And with that last fact comes the reminder that I never had to ride a bus to school. Living across town as I did, a bus for the daily trek to junior-senior high would certainly have been a pleasant accommodation those cold winter days.

As the crow flies, I was living within the legally mandated limit of less than two miles to school and, therefore, wasn't eligible to have bus transportation. But, if that crow had to walk as I had to do, and it followed my actual footsteps in the zigzag travel path the roads provided to me to get to jr.-sr. high, then maybe the both of us might have had something to crow about.

Someday I'd like to strap on a pedometer and walk-the-walk I enjoyed taking to school and find out whether I'm correct in thinking I might have had a legitimate case for needing a school-sponsored bus.

Times have really changed since our 'be home by dinner' era. This change is readily apparent for me whenever I compare it to what my grandchildren are now experiencing. They have regularly scheduled 'playdates', but are always driven to the other child's home.

Back in the day, a bike was my daily mode of transportation and it took me wherever I needed to be with no parental involvement. I don't remember my

parents ever dropping me off at anyone else's house, but then we all lived so close to our classmates, didn't we? Nowadays, children are driven everywhere, even to Little League practice, and parents often wait around to drive their children home. It's a world far, far removed from the one I experienced growing up.

Looking back as I often do, everyone and everything seemed so close. Doc Savage was across the street from me, one property away was Chris Johnston, and a stone's throw away lived Bruce Emra, Art Smith, and Rob Hoogs. A couple of good heave-hoes of that stone would have brought me to Tommy Marino's, Wayne Bonhag's, Craig Lampe's, and Mark Schlagater's. And once my two-wheeling skills were sufficiently mastered, Ken Hradzira, Harrie Richardson, Jack McGill, Alan Furler, Mike Boynton, and Larry Gzell's homes were doable without breaking a sweat or having my parents concerned that I was not within easy reach.

You might have noticed that I didn't list any girls. The fact is I didn't play with any girls. Stina Schmitt (sorry, Christy, that's how I remember you) lived three doors away and was a dear, close friend growing up, but for any significant play, it was just guys back then. And nothing has changed in that regard. I still don't play with any girls - much to my wife's relief, I imagine.

Other than encountering some different boys in the summer at Little League time, my elementary years were never spent playing with anyone who didn't go to Richard E. Byrd School.

Things surely changed when I got to junior-senior high, and I was glad for the new additions to my circle of playmates. Whoa, whoa - wait a minute, wait a minute - only Hugh Hefner had playmates back then. I meant to say friends. Although, come to think of it, at that age I was just getting interested in what Hef's Playmates had to offer, but we'll leave that for a whole other story.

Now with new friends or not, with bicycling being passé by the time seventh-eighth grade rolled around, and until I got my driver's license, I didn't like the distances I had to walk to visit anyone who resided beyond the center of town.

I lived about two-three blocks from Rock Road and three houses off Lincoln Avenue on Greenway Road. It was an unwritten rule when I was very young

that I was not permitted to cross Lincoln Avenue - and I knew the reason for the dictum. Lincoln Avenue was a county road (meaning a major thoroughfare that connects at least three towns) and, therefore, it was too busy of a roadway for a little child like me to navigate on his own.

I'm not sure when the Lincoln Avenue rule got pushed aside, but it did because by the time I was nine or ten, I was crossing it quite often - and for good reason.

Let me digress for just a second and say for those of you who don't remember Rock Road very well, it had a fork at its northern end (with each street having about five houses on it) - to the left it continued on as Rock Road and went into Hawthorne, and as it forked to the right toward Ridgewood, it became Isabella Place. Rob Hoogs lived near the corner of Isabella and Lincoln Avenue.

What was so magical about crossing Lincoln Avenue where Rob lived was walking to an undeveloped area off what I recall as Highland Drive in a section known to most of us as Upper Ridgewood. Off this street you would wind your way up to the top of a very large, very rugged, very undevelopable hill - and, if memory serves, from its ridgeline you could command a magnificent view of the top of the Empire State Building. It also was a phenomenal site for flying kites as there always seemed to be a breeze at the ready to take your homemade creations skyward.

The hill was too isolated and rough for winter sled riding, but down at the bottom of the other side of the hill, on a part that boarded the town of Hawthorne (before getting to what I remember as the railroad tracks of the New York, Susquehanna & Western trains) there was this wide, deep stream. It ran somewhat parallel to the railroad tracks and Goffle Road and had these great old trees with branches that hung out over the water.

Attached to at least one of these large trees was a rope hanging from a branch that stretched way out over the stream. In the summer, swinging on that rope, yelling 'Geronimo' (for some unfathomable boyhood reason that's lost to me right now), letting go, and then waiting to make a SPLASH! made for a perfect summer afternoon adventure.

If you've never done anything like that, it's still not too late. It's something so free and beautiful that you'll laugh and cry while doing it. And the higher you are before you let go - the better.

Sorry, but I see this is getting a bit long. Maybe I should learn shorthand.

And thanks once again for letting me ramble on about growing up in Glen Rock.

And remember - Be home by dinner!

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Getting To Look A Lot Like Christmas -

I can easily recall when Carl Kemm Loven beautiful staging of his annual Christmas displays on the grounds of his home, complete with lights, music, and well over 100 Disney figures that he had carved from wood.

His architect's training was put to good use with appropriate lighting and placement of lawn ornaments. He had an eye for not over doing it - unlike many of today's homeowners with their over-the-top designs and egotistical need to outdo their neighbor's displays.

Loven's house was situated on the corner of Concord and Rock Road - one block northwest of our beloved 'Rock'. Grace Winterberg lived across the street on the Boulevard side of Rock Road and Peter Holzer lived diagonally across from the Loven's on Rock Road. Peter, I believe, moved to town well after the sensational display was resized.

In the 50s, Mr. Loven minimized his display after the town intervened because of traffic congestion. Parking, foot traffic, and slow drive-bys added to the problem.

My favorite display was a life-size Santa, sleigh, and complement of reindeer situated as though they were departing the area. When I was very little, my dad said they were headed toward our house - if I was good. Yeah - like that was going to happen. :)

I don't recalled what happened to the various pieces once Mr. Loven was no longer allowed to display his entire collection. I do know that many pieces were displayed atop some buildings in town, but what became of the majority of his collection is a mystery to me now.

I do know that 'my' Diamond Brook flowed through the back of his property and I often saw him as I waded up or down stream. He liked puttering around in his yard and he had a neat backyard patio that extended down to the water. His goldfish pond was a favorite of mine, too.

And, how many of you remember the mermaid he had in his pool – a topless mermaid? What little boy could forget that!

Dave Lamken

Perceptually Impaired Heaven –

Luckily, I'm not physically handicapped, and as far as being emotionally handicapped - other than for my sense of humor - I'll let others decide that one, but as noted in my other class e-mails, I am perceptually impaired in that there are times I confuse my left from my right (about 50% of the time!) - and have done so my entire life.

So what's heaven got to do with my impairment? Not much, but when one is impaired in any way, finding some sort of relief at anytime in one's life is a Godsend. And as a child, what I thought of as a bit of heaven I found in a very unlikely source - the Paramus Roller Skating Rink.

My parents moved to a new house in Glen Rock in the early 40's and the Paramus Roller Rink was built somewhere around that time by the Greeters (or at least I think that was their name). The rink was on Route 17 on the northbound side close to Midland Avenue. By today's standards, it was probably not a very large building, but, as I remember it, it was huge inside - a young child's perspective, I suppose.

If you were ever there and can picture it, you may recall the building ran north-south along the highway and you entered from the northern end. The snack bar and the skate rental area were also on the northern end. Benches surrounded the outside of the rink which was enclosed by a railing.

Skating in the rink was a fun activity and while I don't remember being there very often when I was young, I do recall my father taking my sister and me there on occasion. I believe he may have liked it more than we did.

However, I did roller skate a lot when I was little - must have had something to do with having an older sister and wanting to emulate what she was doing - but on those occasions I skated outside using clamp-on roller-skates.

Remember those skates? Those metal devices you carried outside to put on and that felt like oddly-shaped dumbbells in your hands. And do you recall being permitted to use them only on an old pair of shoes because of your mother's warnings about how they might ruin your good shoes? I have first-hand knowledge of that!

And the skates really only worked on a pair of shoes. Sneakers just didn't cut it when using clamp-ons. The tightening mechanism needed a lip on the sole of the shoe to grab on to - and sneakers didn't have one.

Do you recall how the roller-skate's length could be adjusted by a screw on the bottom plate? This permitted a single pair of roller-skates to fit multiple shoe sizes. Granted, the skates came in different sizes, but they were still able to go through a few growing cycles of changing shoe sizes before you needed bigger ones.

Once adjusted for length, the skates were tightened against the shoe by another screw on the side of the skate. This would enclose and 'clamp' the skate snugly around the shoe.

And remember the key? All skates came with a key. This key was an invaluable tool and it never left your side; in fact, it usually hung around your neck on a string when skating.

You needed to keep the key with you at all times because the design of the skates was far from perfect and the skates were always coming loose. It might have been close to a 50-50 split between the time actually time spent skating and the time spent sitting on the curb adjusting your skates. Well, maybe an 80-20 split.

One pair of skates we owned had a strap that went around the ankle and helped to keep the skate on, but the other pair was designed to stay on your shoe without a strap. I'm not sure which one worked better, but the strap one was older.

Skating up and down our driveway was fun, but for those who are familiar with Greenway Road, you may recall that it was on a hill. And that made skating in the street a dream come true - except, of course, when you had to skate back up the hill.

And do I dare say it - but we skated without knee, wrist, or elbow pads. And no helmets, too! Come to think of it - maybe I should have worn a helmet; oh, well!

But the best memory I have for clamp-on skating is that of skating in the house. I know what you're thinking, but since the basement's part of the house, technically, my sister and I skated 'in' the house.

Like most of the homes of that era, our cellar stairs bisected the downstairs area and Carol and I skated 'round and 'round the basement floor on smooth concrete; that is, until my mother couldn't stand the noise anymore. And it wasn't just the noise from the skates rolling on the concrete - it was the noise coming from the two of us hoopin' and hollin' and cheering each other on as we went round and round. We used one of the support poles behind the stairs to whip ourselves around the corner even faster. Great times; great times!

By 1954 my father was designing and building a tongue and groove, knotty-pine rec room on one side of our basement and that negated having a circular area in which to skate. That, along with our advancing ages, made skating in the Lamken cellar just a passing memory.

But going to the Paramus Roller Rink was another great memory, for you see, I rediscovered it as I got older and went there quite often without my family. I'm not sure how my resurgence of going back to the rink initially came about, but in my 'tween' years (between the ages of 11 to 15), I skated a lot at the rink.

On Saturdays or Sundays afternoons with beautiful weather, I foolishly or courageously (I'm not sure which) pedaled my way to the Paramus rink on my bike. Living on the far side of town, I rode the length of Rock Road to Prospect Street, got onto Grove Street, and from there it was a straight shot to Midland Avenue and Rt. 17. Maybe it wasn't all that straight, and, after all, it was a good five mile ride with lots of hills thrown in, but I did it because I knew heaven awaited me there.

On very rare occasions when the weather wasn't conducive to bike riding, one of my parents would take me - at least one way. While I never went to the rink alone, I'm hesitant in listing the names of anyone I went with, not out of any embarrassment for them if they now think of roller skating as a sissy activity, but because I wouldn't want to slight anyone by leaving them off the list. And that's way my parents only took me one way - someone else's parents picked us up.

Now for those of you who did go there, you may be thinking that the heavenly aspect of this e-mail has to do with the free-style skating part set to music or, even better yet, the 'couple's skating', which as an emerging teenager I must admit I found to my liking. Or with the 'ladies choice'

segment (which I loved supremely whenever some pretty girl chose me), but, no, the true heaven part - at least for me - was slightly different.

For you see, when they cleared the floor and announced it was time to skate in the opposite direction, I knew I'd soon be in heaven. With me being perceptually impaired, skating in the opposite direction felt somewhat natural, and for that sheer moment in time I seemed to be at peace with myself. I was no longer trying to fit my sensibilities into the world at large, but the world was struggling to adapt to mine.

Even though quite a few people took this opportunity for a short time-out at the snack bar or to rest on a bench, for those who did skate in the reverse I can recall overhearing comments about how weird it felt for them to be going counter-clock-wise.

Well, for that two or three minute change of pace that had everyone who was out on the floor skating and wondering why things felt so different, I remember thinking, 'Welcome to my world!'

I realize this e-mail means very little to most of you (as do almost all of my e-mails since they're autobiographical), but you may have your own reasons for loving the Paramus Skating rink and that's why I'm sharing it. And I hope you do recall being there and liking it as much as I did.

And since I remember it so well, I may drive up to our next reunion a bit early and try my hand at roller skating again.

Anyone care to join me?

Dave Lamken

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Hey, Batta, Batta, Batta -

A classmate just wrote me this morning referencing my roller rink e-mail and saying how amazed he was at my ability to remember things in detail. I thanked him for that, but replied saying how it was because of friends like him that made my life so memorable and, therefore, so easy to recall the little things about growing up in Glen Rock. And it's true - I had a good time when I was little and it's always easy to remember the good things.

And now since I've used batta, batta, batta, and the word 'little' twice in my opening comments, I'm sure you've figured out by now that this remembrance pertains to Little League, baseball in general, and another aspect of what it was like for me (us) to grow up in Glen Rock.

I signed up for Little League in the summer of '54 between third and fourth grade when I was nine years old. There wasn't a T-ball organization back in the early 50s or I might have started even earlier wearing a baseball uniform - or at least a hat and a team jersey.

Since I've already related my experiences about going to Yankee games with my dad and sitting in his company's box seats (and playing hooky when I was older to do it), you may have already figured out he was a big Yankee fan. I believe he would have really liked for me to be a ballplayer, and so well before I joined Little League, I started practicing with him in a clearing in the woods behind our house - both of us in our Yankee caps. This is the same clearing some of my neighborhood friends might remember as a place where we sometimes went to play baseball.

I would stand in front of this huge tree while my dad pitched underhand to me (I was six or seven at the time), and I would try to hit the ball. We took three balls with us (one of which was from a Yankee Stadium game where he retrieved a foul ball - I wasn't at that game, but he said it bounced his way!), and although I truly tried my best, I was only a mediocre hitter. I swung and missed at more pitches that bounced off the trunk of the tree and went every which way than ones he had to chase after because I had hit them.

Of all the times I went out there to practice, what stands out in my memory bank so clearly is when my dad alerted me to the fact that he was going to try an overhand pitch. I know the moment of truth had arrived for me and I eagerly took my well-honed stance. From the time the ball left my dad's

hand, I saw it comin' the whole time it was in the air, and when the ball flew across our make-shift home plate, I connected. The only problem with my near-perfect swing was that the ball hit the shank of the bat, came up so fast it hit me on the nose, and, before I knew it, had a nosebleed that just wouldn't quit.

As we walked-ran back to the house for an ice-pack, my father kept saying how sorry he was. I said something to the effect of, "Don't be; I hit the ball, didn't I!"

To me, hitting that ball was a standout memory. It was one of the very few overhand pitches I hit. I have never hit a home run - never, ever. I believe I never hit a triple, and, more than likely, probably never hit a double, either - except, maybe, because of an outfielder's error. That includes sandlot games, school phys. ed. games, and organized Little League games. But you know what, I tried to hustle when on the field and because of that I don't ever recall being picked last for a team. Maybe the guys knew I had fun just playing.

Since our neighborhood group played together almost every day in good weather, I played in a lot of sandlot games when I was little. My across the street neighbor, Paul Rockefeller, had a large backyard which accommodated a small, but nicely sized infield, a moderately sized outfield and, because he lived on a corner, the playing field was made even bigger by the fact that his backyard outfield sloped gently toward the street.

Besides my fellow classmates, Chris Johnson, Bruce Emra, Art Smith, Rob Hoogs, there were an assortment of other neighborhood kids, including girls (Stina Schmitt for one) that joined in our summertime fun. We were all protective of the surrounding neighbors' properties, but sometimes a little trespassing couldn't be helped when we needed to retrieve our ball. Some neighbors were not as nice about it as others, especially one with a manicured lawn. Names withheld to protect the guilty - right, Mr. McKeon!

When Paul's backyard ball field wasn't available to us, besides the clearing in the woods, we played on Pembroke Place - a street perpendicular to the front of my house, which while on an incline was still not as hilly as Greenway Road. It's a short street with just four or five houses on either side, and it's where Art Smith and Bruce Emra lived next door to each other.

There were other neighborhood kids who lived there and so we picked the street area in front of Art's house as the best place strategic place to play.

When there weren't enough kids to play baseball (you wanted at least four since a catcher was always needed to keep a missed ball from rolling away), we engaged in a game called 'steal the bases'. Like in 'catch', two kids tossed the ball back and forth as a third tried to steal a base. Unless someone missed catching a throw, usually you were tagged 'out' and, therefore, not too many bases were successfully stolen - but it was fun trying.

After I signed up for Little League and got my uniform, my proud parents took pictures - one of me holding a bat just about to swing, one imitating the famous Babe Ruth pose of him leaning forward with two hands on his bat, one with my glove extended out, and another one of me jumping up and catching a ball (a little hint here - the ball was already in my mitt!).

For the sake of authenticity, these pictures were all taken at the community pool ball field in the batter's cage. While I never played at that field while in uniform, I do remember being there for an organized sixth grade game played at the end of the school year and pitched by our teacher, Mr. Hawkins - a game replete with cheerleaders.

Yes, cheerleaders at a baseball game. You might recall me mentioning in previous e-mails there were 8 girls and 22 boys in my elementary school class, and Mr. Hawkins wanted to include everyone in the event. Don't ask me why the girls didn't play. I haven't a clue. They participated in punch-ball and kick-ball games during our regular recess time, so why not in the baseball game. Maybe they can answer that. But a fun time was had by all.

I did play in quite a few pick-up games at the Doremus Avenue park and those games included more than just the classmates from my close-nit neighborhood group. Paul Babbit (before he moved diagonally across the street from Chris D'Elia and Molly Morck on Abbington Terrace) lived across from the field and would join us, as did Ken Hrasdzira and Harrie Richardson (both of whom also resided on Doremus Avenue), as well as those who lived in easy biking distance like Wayne Bonhag, Tommy Marino, Jack McGuill, Craig Lampe, Mark Schlagater, Larry Gsell and Alan Furler.

Getting back to Little League, during my first practice session, I gravitated to my wished for infield position - short-stop. I was okay at catching ground

balls and had an accurate enough throwing arm for getting the ball to first base, so I thought I was a shoe-in for that spot. But it wasn't meant to be. You might recall - I'm a lefty.

The coach was very diplomatic about it. He came over part way through practice and showed me how it took an extra step for lefties to plant their feet before they could throw the ball to first, and explained how that extra time could allow for a batter to get on base. Therefore, after telling me I had a strong arm, I was relegated to picking daisies in the outfield where nary a ball came my way. It was Little League after all.

It's interesting to note that while I throw lefty, and kick a ball with my left foot, I bat righty. That might explain my previously written emails about my left-right difficulties!

All my Little League practices and games took place in the municipal park across from the police station. Home plate was situated in the southwest corner and if you outstretched your arm and pointed northeast while holding a bat (ala Babe Ruth), you could imagine yourself hitting a ball over the weather vane cupola atop the town hall across the street. (Well, I can dream, can't I?)

The field was nice - much better kept than the one on Doremus Ave. and smaller, too - with a 60-foot diamond rather than the usual 90 foot one and the pitcher's mound set at 46 feet (both measurements are two-thirds the size of a regulation baseball field). Little League rules call for only six innings of play instead of nine (must be that two-thirds rule again) so my chances of getting to bat at least twice (accounting for substitutions) were always pretty good.

If Little League games were played on bigger fields or anywhere else in Glen Rock other than at the municipal park, I'm not aware of them. But then, I only played for two or three seasons. It's not like I didn't enjoy playing, I just knew I wasn't cut out to play baseball other than for fun, and the Babe Ruth and Senior Leagues were meant for more serious, competitive players than I was meant to be.

I don't know how many of you played in Little League or in any of the more grown-up leagues, but does anyone know if a Glen Rock team ever went to the World Series competition in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, or even come close to getting there? It would be nice if they did.

It would have been nicer if I did.

And if you have gotten this far down in the e-mail, then you know that over the years I have thanked you for allowing me to intrude on your time and space. I have yet to learn how to condense my ramblings detailing what I remember about growing up in Glen Rock - and it doesn't look like I ever will.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Simply Dating -

I dated quite a bit when I was in school. I realize how that may come across to some of you reading this e-mail (and it should), but it's not bragging - really, it's not; it's more of an acknowledgment to my being lucky. And I was lucky.

Needless to say, I was lucky in the first place that anyone said 'Yes' to my asking (that goes without saying), but more than that I was lucky to be in a time and place where dating was possible. By that, I mean as I guy I thought I was mature. Of course, I wasn't. Silly for me to even have thought so (even at 63 years of age, I'm still not there quite yet, as you can tell from my writing), but as a boy of thirteen I thought I was and that's all that mattered, I suppose.

Since I reached my present height of six feet pretty early, I had the presence that some might have taken as maturity - physically, anyway. Second, I always liked girls. I liked their presence, the hand-holding, the kissing... in fact, why list it all - I liked everything about them. I think they sensed that in me. I'm such an easy read.

By nature, I'm not a competitive person, but I do feel good about myself (even with all my foibles), and I believe that came across to the opposite sex as well. But if the truth be told, I think my luck with dating had to do because I put myself out there more than for anything I may have said or done. In other words, I was available.

Think about it - fifty years ago, how many guys wanted to date and how many of those wanted to date as early as the seventh grade? Not many. At least not many that I knew.

To me, it was an easy equation: lots of maturing girls (far, far outnumbering the contingent of mature boys) and this one willing and able guy who thought he was mature. Okay, I know I wasn't the only guy out there who thought he was mature, but you get the picture. I was one of relative small number of the 'ready, willing, and able' - and maybe I should change 'willing' to 'eager' on that short list, for I was eager. Now, if only I had been as good-looking as Warren Beatty - oh, well!

I did like dating, however. I liked going to the movies more than to dances because at the movies I didn't have to move those two left feet of mine, but I

never missed a dance. And with movies you could go every week if you were so inclined. The most convenient movie theater was, of course, the Warner Theater in Ridgewood on East Ridgewood Ave. You remember it, right? You purchased your tickets outside, walked up the ramp, the concession stand was L-shaped and situated on your right - with the ice cream display on the short part of the 'L', the double doors just beyond that, and located before the screening room doors were the restrooms on the far left.

And as a side note, how many of you recall that East Ridgewood Avenue became 'West' Ridgewood Avenue when it crossed Paramus Road. And then for some inexplicable reason, after third of a mile or so as it crossed over Rt. 17, it became East Ridgewood Avenue again. I have no idea how that came to be - especially since it was now nowhere near the town of Ridgewood anymore.

Well, the Warner Theater was certainly convenient and while I frequented there the most, it wasn't my favorite date theater. And my favorite wasn't the theater in Hawthorne on Lafayette Avenue either - which by the way, didn't have a name other than the Hawthorne Theater that I can recall. If any of you can remember its name, I'd love to have my memory jogged.

No, my favorite theater when being on a date was the Fox Theater. Now I know you were all probably thinking the 'Drive-in!', but this e-mail is not going there. This recollection is mostly about my early days of dating - way before I had a car. Thank heavens!

The Fox Theater theater, on Main Street in Hackensack, was huge and styled in the popular Art Deco style of the 30's, but it wasn't the size or the interior décor of the Fox that I liked the most, but, rather (now picture the theater in your mind's eye for just a second or two if you've ever been there - see, you guessed it), it was the large balcony.

Nothing nefarious ever went on up there, but just knowing I was on a date and the two of us were sitting in a balcony in an out-of-the-way theater, it was perfect. I'm such a romantic!

There was a movie theater across the street, the Oritani, but it wasn't as nice or as big. I don't remember being at that theater more than once or twice, but I do remember when a movie ended at the Fox, and when the weather would

warrant it, walking my date down the street a block or two to Baumgart's Ice Cream Parlor. Does anyone remember going there for ice cream?

I can't for the life of me understand why I didn't include Baumgart's in my list of favorite summertime ice cream places in one of my recent e-mails. I suppose it was because my family only stopped there on odd occasions - usually after shopping at Packard-Bamberger's, a first of its kind department store/supermarket. Anyone recall ever going there?

Anyway, Baumgart's sold great homemade ice cream. I suppose back in those days almost all ice cream parlors could boast that their ice cream was homemade, but theirs was good. The store had the old fashioned, soda-jerk counter, plus booths and tables - and how could I forget, a jukebox.

Anyhow - I liked dating. In fact, I liked the whole ritual of dating. And it was a ritual, wasn't it? The first thing I learned was not to ask for a date too early (unless, of course, it was for a big dance, and then a good lead time was expected), and, of course, not to wait until Friday night to ask for a date on Saturday. I sometimes asked on a Tuesday, mostly on Wednesday, and rarely on Thursday.

The conversation on my part usually went like this: Hi, this is Dave Lamken. Would you be interested in going to the movies with me Saturday night? You would. Great! I'd like to see _____ if that's okay with you? (I already knew what was playing at the Fox verses the Warner theater so I kept my fingers crossed that my future date hadn't already seen the film). Good, then I'll pick you up at 7:00. Bye.

If all went well, I was off the phone in 20, maybe 25 seconds. I'm still not much of a conversationalist - most guys on the phone aren't. But having an older sister, I can only project what was going on once I hung up. If things remained true to form, and if this was our first date, then I'm guessing the phone line was tied up for quite a while on the other end.

Once the girl explained to her BFF's who this David guy was she was going out with on Saturday night (remember now, we had all come from three separate elementary schools and hardly knew each other in junior high), I'm sure it all went quickly downhill from there. Just kidding - but the 'what to wear' and other scenarios related to dating were discussed, and endlessly, don't you think? Remember, girls, I'm just projecting here.

And the dating ritual went beyond just my date and myself. My dad understood his part in all this. As the chauffeur when he dropped the two of us off at the end of the evening, he would quietly announce as we were exiting the car that he was going to go turn around. I knew, of course, what he was doing. My dad was driving around the block to 'turn around', thus allowing me the privacy of walking my date up to the brightly lit front door un-chaperoned, as it were.

And although my dad may have figured out his role early in this dating process of mine, this ritual was far from simple. But the part that came even before the first phone call was initiated was magical.

You know what I mean when I say magical - no matter how many times you may have been around a person, when you truly see someone for the first time and in that special way, that certain something catches you off-guard, you find yourself thinking, 'Hey, she's _____.'

And, girls, as you continue to read this, feel free to change a pronoun or two, okay?

Fill in the blank yourself because I don't know what it was for you. For me, it was never one thing. Never. Of course, of course, the 'She's cute!' characterization is totally at the top of my and every other guy's list - and every girl I dated was beautiful. I always saw something in them that made her beautiful to me. Or else why go out with her, right? And I happen to remember every beautiful girl I dated, escorted, went steady with ... well, you get the idea.

What attracted me at first to someone could have been her eyes, or her hair, or how she looked in a poodle skirt, or - how could I forget - her smile; however, for me, it was more than that. Don't get me wrong - I'm just as shallow as the next guy when it comes to liking pretty women, but I was always looking for something else.

We've all been there. We all know that dating is a process - and we're all looking for something. If you've ever been happy with someone, really and truly happy, then you know what it is. And since I can't answer that for you, I can only tell you what it is for me - Acceptance. That's right, with a capital 'A'.

I can't thank the girls of Glen Rock enough for accepting me. From the initial answering of 'yes' to my date question, through the good times we shared at the movies or at a dance or whatever, to the final (and eagerly awaited for) goodnight kiss, I was in heaven.

And it was an all-around better (and all together totally different) kind of heaven than what I found at the Paramus Skating Rink!

And I do thank you girls for that.

And I am thankful for growing up in simpler times - and simply dating.

Dave Lamken

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An Affair to Remember -

I realize the title is a bit much, but it's more of an accurate statement of what I'm going to reveal than my usual titles. I changed so much during the course of this affair. I'm not sure how it started so bear with me as I try the best I can to lay it all out for you.

When you're in high school, you think you have the world by its tail - and with that you believe you're invincible. Well, of course, at the time, we never did really think about being invincible, but in hindsight, it was a feeling that permeated every good or stupid thing that we did and how easily it justified whatever we did. Of course, please keep in mind, I never, ever did anything stupid!

Well, it's my remembrance so I can remember it any way I want.

And since it's my story, I believe the girls in our class thought more about this topic than the guys did. Something tells me a few of them may have experienced it well before I ever did, even working everything out well in advance, but I really don't know for sure. The only thing I know is for guys, when it occurs, it just happens. We like to think we're the ones leading, but in situations like this we're more like back-seat drivers. No double meaning intended here.

Anyway, it's really hard to put this remembrance into words for as I have stated I'm not sure how it all began. And although there is an end point, I'm not exactly certain when I knew it was over - but it did indeed end, albeit with a flourish no matter which endpoint I choose to accept.

I was young and thought I was in love. Of that I am certain. The girl in my life was beautiful, but as I've stated in past e-mails, they all were from my perspective at least. At the time, I was riding a high and enjoying every minute of my life. But it wasn't meant to last; it just wasn't meant to be, I suppose. But there are consequences for what one does and I found that out.

I don't know why, but I never needed a key. That's the way things were back then. The door was always left open for me, but the first hint that everything was coming to an end was when I found myself locked out. I know I was locked out because I tried the door and it wouldn't budge (and, as I said, it was always open - sometimes even left ajar), and just to be sure it was locked - I tried it again. The door rattled a little bit, but it didn't open. I tried

to look inside, but to no avail. I tried to listen, too, but it was difficult to hear anything. I even knocked, but something deep inside told me my time was over and I had lost out. And because everything was locked up tight, then - and only then - did I know it was the end of a beautiful relationship.

The first thought I had was 'Why now?' I knew I had been given less than a week for that's what I had been told. And even though I had accepted that fact, I still wanted to do it at least a couple more times. What guy wouldn't!

I didn't want to give up what I come to enjoy so much and what had become so much a part of me. I was a little annoyed - maybe even more than just a little. Okay, truth be told - I was devastated.

When I got home, my parents sensed I was not myself but wouldn't acknowledge anything about the affair. I was driving a '56 Chevrolet at the time (having gone through two other cars in less than a year - no accidents mind you, just personal preference of wanting different cars) and offered me their beautiful, white Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight for the evening. I was a bit overwhelmed, but, of course, with a growing smile across my face, I said 'yes' immediately. I needed something new and different for the night and I believe they knew it.

'What is he talking about this time?' you're wondering, and after you finish reading to the end of this e-mail and go back and re-read the beginning, it will make sense - at least I hope so.

It was the gymnasium. I was locked out of the gymnasium and didn't like it one bit. I had spent some good times in gym and wanted it to continue all the way to the end of my senior year, to the very last day in fact - but it wasn't meant to be. For if you recall, our parents had taken over the gym - and what was going on in that gymnasium was the best kept secret since the development of the atomic bomb.

Ahh! You've got it - our graduation night's extravaganza. For days (mostly nights for my dad) our parents worked diligently to transform the gymnasium into a whole other world. George Wolfe, Glen Rock's resident cartoonist, and Kathy Cappiello's dad, a set designer for the Met, may be entitled to some artistic credit here, but every parent that participated in that make-over deserves a hug and a kiss for a job well done.

If you've ever been up on a ladder and hung streamers out for a dance or placed table settings around a dance floor as I have done (more times than I care to remember), then you can truly appreciate how hectic things become decorating for just a simple dance.

Imagine if you will then, the magnitude of the work that went into making over our gymnasium into the show place that it became - the canopies, the murals, the walkways, etc. Now I know why my dad carried his tool kit out of the house every night - and it wasn't to help one of his pinocle playing buddies from the evening train as he had implied.

I have a thousand and one reasons for not telling you what the theme was, but if you were there, then there's no need to do it, is there? But it was an affair to remember!

And if by chance you don't recall what the theme was, then ask any Glen Rock resident who lived in town at the time - for after our graduation ceremony there was a whole parade of citizenry going up the back stairs and into to our gym to ooh and ahh at the transformation. Of course, we didn't have time for that since we had to skedaddle home to get ready for our big event.

Our evening's activities in the gym started at 10:00pm, with dinner around midnight, and the dance was over at 3:00am - with caveat that once we left we couldn't get back in. We were allowed to go into the courtyard, (which was set up as a garden), but that was mainly for smokers - one habit I never acquired. I do recall there was a grand prize drawing at the end of dance (only seniors were allowed to participate in the drawing - not sure why that was, but it seemed fair), but I forget what the prize was or who won.

How many of you remember dancing to Si Zentner's band. It's been said that he got a late start in striking up the band because he was a little inebriated and stayed in the kitchen. Does anyone have a memory of that? I do, of course.

Do you also recall how the entire night's events were laid out for us so that we weren't tempted to meander off and get into trouble?

From the dinner-dance, we were expected to drive our dates home, go get changed, pick them up again, and be at selected houses for breakfast at 4:00. Bruce Bovenizer's mother was gracious to open her home for the after-the-

dance party I attended. That started at about 4:30 for our group since most people were late. (By the way, Bruce, your mom made a super breakfast.) For party favors, the girls got a pendant necklace and the boys got a pair of gold cufflinks. I'm glad it was a pair. I guess I should have just said cufflinks, right? I'll have to look, but I believe I still have mine.

From the breakfast, we were expected to be at the community pool by 6:00am. Some of you sleepyheads didn't make it and I can't blame you; for if you remember, it was a bit chilly that morning, but a fun time was had by all who attended. A few of you parked curbside and watched from outside the fence on the right side of the pool as the rest of us silly geese frolicked in the water.

After the pool party, a small contingent of us went down to the shore. Whose idea that was I don't know, but we had a great time. I don't remember much else because this sleepyhead (along with a few others) took a nice morning nap on the beach. We went to a restaurant next to Empress Hotel in Asbury Park for lunch and it was as good as any meal could get. Imagine - three good meals in 12 hours. What teenage boy could ask for more! After a quick dip in the Atlantic with some romping in the surf, and a little arcade playing, we were headed home by late afternoon.

To me, it was an affair to remember, and I hope you, too, have fond memories of that good time in our lives - whether it ended for you after the dance, after the dinner party, after the dip in the pool, or after whatever you did later.

To clear one thing up, I would like to outline what I meant in the beginning of this e-mail concerning the changes I went through during this affair. Over the course of roughly 24 hours, I -

1. Came home from school and changed into a suit and tie for graduation pictures
2. Changed again by donning the prerequisite cap and gown - more pictures
3. Came back home and changed into a tuxedo - more pictures
4. After the dance, changed out of the tux and into clothes to go to the pool

5. At the pool, I changed into swimming trunks
6. Changed again into street clothes before heading to the shore
7. At the beach changed into swimming trunks again
8. Changed back into regular clothes for the last time before heading home

I've never had an affair, but if I did, I wouldn't want it to change me eight times!

Oh, and my alluding to the girls being more likely to have experienced an affair was simply an acknowledgement that some of them may have previously attended graduation dances with upper classmen. No slight was ever intended.

Does anyone know if the tradition of an 'affair to remember' still occurs on graduation night? I hope so!

The idea for this e-mail came from viewing an old picture. I have attached it, but assure you I no longer look like that. In fact, I think the photographer air-brushed my rendering back then because he was too embarrassed to let something like that out to the public not retouched. My date, of course, needed no airbrushing!

Thanks for allowing me to ramble once again about what I remember about growing up in Glen Rock.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

>> Follow-up e-mail -

Hi - I was pleased with the response that I received from my last e-mail and was glad to hear it brought back so many good memories for all of you.

A lot of you recalled the 'Sophisticated Circus' theme - mostly the girls, but I'm still impressed.

A classmate wrote and informed me that Kathy Cappielo's father, who was head scenic artist at the Metropolitan Opera at the time, did a lot of the design work. I think he did a wonderful job, don't you?

What struck me as neat (does anyone use that word anymore?) was how many of you had parents that performed as wait staff. Granted, they might not have served your particular table, but for you to carry that memory along with all the good times we shared that evening is something special.

Also, I learned some of you were so taken with our own graduation dance that even though you had moved away from Glen Rock when the time came you helped out with your children's special night in your hometown. What a beautiful thing to do!

By the way, more than one classmate told me Glen Rock's graduation festivities still continue on in the tradition we all remember so well. That's nice to know!

Another classmate was more to the point and sent me a picture of last year's dance. The theme was Little Italy and China Town in New York City. I used to love going to Canal Street and all the good restaurants in that area!

I'm just guessing here, but since more than one of you indicated you went down to the shore after our organized activities were done, I'm thinking why didn't we bump into each other - or better yet, all planned to meet at a particular beach. Now that would have been a great memory!

I try my best to keep what you write to me private (must be my professional training), and you all know that your names will never be used, so I hope I was right to obliquely share these things with the class.

On a side note - along the way, inquiries have been made as to how come I can remember so much. I tried to delineate that in a previous e-mail quite a while ago, but this 'An Affair to Remember' e-mail came from viewing an old picture. I have attached it, but assure you I no longer look like that. In fact, I think the photographer air-brushed my rendering back then because he was too embarrassed to let something like that out to the public without being retouched. My date, of course, needed no airbrushing!

Thank you to all who have written me, and know how much I appreciate hearing from you and reading what you remember from whatever I've written at any time. Your memories are always better than mine. Oh, yes, they are!

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See picture on next page.



Smoking Weed –

I believe you know what this e-mail is about, and you're right because this posting is about what it says it is - smoking weed. Well, kind of.

For those who may not be familiar with my other class e-mails, I went to Richard E. Byrd School, built in 1925, then dedicated in 1931 to honor the famous aviator and explorer. It's situated a block or so from the 'rock' on Doremus Avenue and a block from the railroad tracks. On the town side of the tracks (meaning the east side), there is Main Street (which runs about ten long blocks or so from Rock Road all the way down to Argyle Road near Route 208), and on the west side of the tracks, a block or so from Byrd School, there is West Main Street, a short road consisting of about five houses.

I'm just guessing there were five homes populating the street; it could have been six or seven, but as memory serves, I can recall only five - two north of Oxford Place and three to the south. Whatever the number, there surely weren't enough houses for the street to warrant being called a 'Main' street, whether it be a north, south, east, or, as it was in this case, a west.

To help some of you remember what street I am talking about, it's where Alan Furler lived. Some of you are wondering - why didn't he just say so in the first place. Sorry - it didn't occur to me until just now.

Anyway, at the end of West Main there was a large empty lot that bordered a huge wooded area with a lake (probably overrun with beautiful homes now and making West Main Street a suitably named avenue), and it was there that at the age of eight or nine I first experienced smoking weed. I'm calling the substance a weed since it grew wild, but it was truly more like a piece of vine. And the above outlined cartography lesson was just in case you might want some for yourself, you'd know where to go during our reunion weekend to find it.

The vine had a hollow center and you'd break off a dried out, cigarette-sized piece, light it, puff on it, and, of course, cough heartily all the while you were attempted to smoke it, but at that young age anything was an adventure.

The vine was definitely hard to keep lit - you were lucky to get three strained puffs in a row before it would die out. The smoke was bitter tasting, but

the reward of leaning back against a shade tree and pretending you were Tom Sawyer while doing it was powerful.

Hey, at eight or nine years of age when you're not out and about exploring the world around you, your inner-self takes over using its gift of imagination. Just think of all those cumulus cloud formations you interpreted while happily lying on your back and gazing up at the sky - and all this occurred well before you had ever heard of a Rorschach test.

Until I was about ten and all grown up (I matured fast), I would on occasion try other fields, other vines, but none seemed as satisfactory as the ones I smoked that first time. I was, of course, at those fields with others, but this doesn't seem like a topic where naming anyone else serves any purpose. However, I'd appreciate hearing from any of my 'old' smoking buddies from whatever open field or woody place you can remember us being - I can think of two or three other places right off the bat.

As far as smoking goes, when I was about twelve, I did try cigarettes, but never liked those little bits of tobacco invariably sticking to my tongue (this was way before filtered cigarettes became popular), and, truthfully, I really didn't like the taste - and this coming from a kid whose parents were one or two pack-a-day smokers for most of their lives. I remember I didn't even make it to half a pack - probably had just four or five. It's one thing I'm glad I didn't succeed at doing.

Buying cigarettes was easy because of vending machines. Hard to forget those multi-dispensers of various brands of tobacco with the hard to pull knobs, but I haven't seen any in years. My pack of Lucky Strike cost less than a quarter; back then the machines couldn't give change like the soda machines of today do, so the tobacco companies put pennies in the bottom of the pack behind the cellophane wrapper. Ingenious, in a way, don't you think? And the pennies were new and shiny - perfect for putting on railroad tracks.

On a side note - I did try a pipe later on in life (going for that 'professorial' look at 19, long hair notwithstanding), and I even liked the taste for it was a bit sweeter, however following a tradition established from ten years earlier, I had difficulty keeping the thing lit. There's a trick to packing and smoking a pipe properly that I never quite mastered (much like writing short emails!). Within a year, my dad inherited my Meerschaum pipe and would

occasionally smoke it outside on a cool summer's night in his white Adirondack chair. That memory alone is worth my giving up smoking a pipe.

Thanks again for letting me wander down memory lane. And, thank you, Bruce Woltman, who called last night and who got me to thinking about this topic.

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What Made Me – Me?

In the realm of studying human development one always comes across the age-old argument of what matters most - nature or nurture.

My mother's maiden name was Lane and I know her father was English; her mother's maiden name was Carlson and I know she was Swedish - a nice pairing of the two. My dad's father was German and his mother's maiden name was Scanlan, which is Irish. The coupling of those two people bode very well for my father.

What is interesting (at least to me) is that both my parents were only children. For those of you from large families, or even small ones, let me tell you how strange it is to grow up without having any aunts, uncles, or cousins, especially when all those around you did. And since my grandparents – except for my dad's father – passed away before I was born, in our household, family reunions were totally non-existent. No wonder I consider myself a shy person.

The swirl of DNA floating around at the time of my conception was destined to produce the person I was to become. That's the nature part of the argument – you are born to be the person you are because of genetics. I can accept that, and I can also believe I was led to have good genes. I've never had a broken bone and, therefore, I trust I'm right in assuming my DNA is pretty robust.

The nurture aspect of what determines who we are and what we are to become is the more interesting part of the equation. There are more variables for one to consider in answering that question. You see, once the sperm and the egg come together you're sort of stuck with nature's result (plastic surgery notwithstanding). With nurture, everything of any significance that impacts your life is thought to be life changing – or so the proponents of that side of the argument will have you believe.

In 1941, my mother and father bought the house at 148 Greenway Road that I would come to know as home. My sister, Carol, was born in 1942, and I came into this world on February 23, 1945. My world stayed pretty small for the first few years.

This is mainly because Greenway Road was a dead-end street off of Lincoln Avenue. There were six houses on my side of the street, four on the other side, and woods and fields all around us. I grew up assuming if you didn't live there, you didn't belong there. It was a very safe place to be. There was very little vehicular traffic.

And while it was it was comforting for my mother to know that I could play outside with little likelihood of being hit by a car, there were very few children to play with. Stina Schmitt was my first and only friend for years. By the time I could walk until the time just before kindergarten, she was my only friend. Sure I had to suffer through Teddy Bear tea parties with her, but she had to learn to climb trees with me - and so I think we were pretty even.

By the time the school bell started to ring for me, Greenway Road was rapidly expanding into the old golf links and new streets and housing were being added at a very fast clip. And with that meant more playmates were being added to the neighborhood mix just as quickly. With the advent of learning to ride a bike and with the post-war building boom taking place, I had within a very short distance the following kids to play with, idolize, and learn from during my elementary school years.

Ever so quickly - from Chris Johnston I learned badminton, Rob Hoogs - kite flying, Bruce Emra and Art Smith - baseball in front of their houses (they were neighbors), Tommy Marino - ice skating, Wayne Bonhag - catching lightning bugs on summer nights, Craig Lampe - sled riding in his backyard, Mark Schlagater - chemistry making in his basement alcove, Larry Gsell - Wiffle ball in his backyard, Jack McGuill - exploring Diamond Brook, Harrie Richardson - model airplanes, Ken Hradzira - basketball at the pool, and Alan Furler - exploring the train tracks.

While accurate in their individual depictions, there was much over-lapping with the guys mentioned above. We all did so much together – it was like having a band of brothers. You can't get any better than being with those guys when you're growing up. Neither nature nor nurture had a part in me being so lucky to have been with them in my early childhood - it was cosmic to have been in Glen Rock at that time in my life and to have been fortunate enough to have known them.

And I only mentioned the boys from Byrd School that I knew so well because girls did not become a significant part of my life until after I entered junior high - more on that at a later time.

Regarding early schooling, my kindergarten teacher, Miss Singer, was the absolute best. I realize you may all think fondly of your Kindergarten teacher the same way, but, truly, Miss Singer was the greatest. The reason I may be a bit more partial to her than some of my other teachers is that she lived next door to Dr. Shumacher's office on Prospect Street in Ridgewood. He was our family dentist. I know what you're thinking – what does one thing have to do with the other, but it does.

You see, my sister had a lot of dental work done – so much in fact that Dr. Shumacher was invited to her wedding. I think that was because he had spent so much time with my sister he became a natural extension of our family - not having any uncles and all!

Anyway, on Carol's many visits to Dr. Shumacher's office I was a tag-a-long, and rather than sit in the car or in the waiting room with my mother (good comic books notwithstanding), I got to go next door and visit with Miss Singer. She made the best raisin-oatmeal cookies ever! I continued to go there well into jr. high. Don't recall why I stopped going - shouldn't have now that I think about it.

In an often quoted book, Robert Fulhgram wrote that all the important things we use in life we learned in kindergarten - and it's true. Kindergarten was a wonderful place - it was all about playing, and sharing, and exploring. It was nurture at its best.

Upon entering First Grade, beauty was brought into my life. Not only was my teacher, Miss McGuirk, the prettiest thing I ever saw, but she taught me how to read. I was in the Bluebird group - 'Look, Jane, Look! David is reading.' Granted, my mother gave me a headstart on the art of loving to read, but I will be forever grateful to Miss McGuirk for her patience and dedication when it came to reading the 'Dick and Jane' books. I also remember how proud she was of her brood as she escorted us through town to the children's library at the municipal hall. I felt like a drake in a sord of mallards.

And did I mention how beautiful she was. She was a looker!

What makes my memory of her so vivid is that not only was Miss McGuirk the quintessential teacher, but she followed us to Second Grade – or did we follow her? Not sure - but in any case, I was so enamored with her I believe I would have followed her back a year to Kindergarten if that's where she was headed - she was that gorgeous. And sweet, and nice, and everything else you'd want your first teacher to be. Sure, Miss Singer was technically my first teacher, but she was older, very doting, and didn't push the academics like Miss McGuirk.

Did I mention that in First Grade Miss McGuirk got married and invited our entire class to her wedding in April? She then became Mrs. Knapp. Back then when I was six, I wasn't cognizant of what the entire marriage thing was all about, but I did know that it meant I wasn't going to grow up to have her be mine. The nurture part of learning about life's great disappointments reared its ugly head that time, that's for sure.

Mrs. Knapp only stayed in second grade with us for a short time because of what my mother would refer to as 'being with child'. On occasion my mom would say, 'in a family way', but she never used the word pregnant, not even when her own grandchildren were in the womb. God bless her.

Mrs. Knapp left! She was replaced by Miss Hanky who became Mrs. Ewert. I needed a hanky when Mrs. Knapp left. On a side note, it amazes me how in today's world a little baby bump is no longer a reason for a woman to be excused from work wherein back in the day it was considered obligatory.

Third grade brought an exposure to a task master, Miss Doremus. Crippled and having to use a cane to get around, my time with Miss Doremus brought a slice of life to my education that is undeniable. You wanted to do well in her class; she demanded that you do well in her class; but most of all, you wanted to be the one who escorted her outside at recess time.

Miss Doremus needed help in getting around and her grip on your arm was her lifeline; she needed you in order for her to fulfill her duties as a teacher and you felt that. And you responded. It made you proud that you could help her, and, at the same time, sad to know that she was in need of your help.

It's strange what you remember, but in the cooler weather Miss Doremus, who was from a prominent Glen Rock family, wore a mink coat and it felt sooo nice to touch. I hope others in my class remember her the way I do.

When Miss Doremus was on your arm, you walked taller, stood straighter, and, more importantly, acted more respectful than during any other time in your young life. A lesson in nurture's book of learning compassion, I suppose.

And in third grade it was the first time I had a student teacher, Miss Ruth Hoffman, for part of the year. She lived just down the block from the school and was the first person to give me speech lessons.

At our most recent reunion I learned that others don't share my negative opinion of our fourth grade teacher, but in my mind for how she treated me, she's not deserving of having her name in this e-mail, and so I'm moving right along to fifth grade. Except for her being quasi-attractive, there was nothing nurturing or positive about that woman that I could discern. What I found so interesting in Miss Innes' fifth grade class was that the desks were grouped in fours. I had not been exposed to that before, but I liked the idea. It made for a little more chatter, but with Miss Innes in control, it was never a problem – especially for me since I rarely talked in school. Fifth grade is where I learned to memorize in alphabetical order the twenty-one counties in New Jersey. Jeopardy – here I come!

Sixth grade gave me my first exposure to a male teacher, Mr. Hawkins. Ask anyone who was in Byrd School with me and they'll all tell you that he made each one of them feel special. He looked a little bit like Howard Hughes and acted a bit like 'a man about town'. His classroom is where I learned to locate the 48 states and memorize their capitals (Hawaii and Alaska came two years later in '59). By the way, it's also where I learned a good mnemonic for the difference between capital and capitol. The one with the 'o' is the building and you can remember it because it has a dome – which also has an 'o'.

Each of my teachers deserves more space than what I've given them here, but as the bumper sticker says, 'If you can read this, then thank a teacher.' And I do. The nurture part of my upbringing taught me to be thankful and grateful for what I have learned from others – and I am. And I also thank my parents for giving me the good genes with which to do it.

And, like always, this e-mail is getting way too long.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Be Prepared –

It's hard to imagine how exciting it was for this sheltered little boy who had never been away from home to join scouting and to spend a couple of weeks in the summer at Camp Yaw Paw.

My parents let me go for a night here or there on overnight hiking trips out in the woods with my troop, but for my city-bred mother having her 'little boy' go away to camp and live in what she called 'the wilderness' for two whole weeks was a bit much. She was beside herself thinking that something would happen to me. Knowing that my scout master, Mr. Young, who lived three doors away and would be present at the camp along with his own son, Doug, did little to comfort her. But away I went.

The journey to camp seemed like forever for my mother, but it was just up Route 208 to Ramapo Valley Road (some of you might remember it as Route 202). From there it was a mile or two before making a quick left onto Bear Swamp Road, which led on up a hill to Cannonball Lake, the site of Camp Yaw Paw. I'm not sure how my mother thought a 10-15 mile trip lasting all of 20 to 25 minutes was at the end of the world, but I know she did.

Maybe it was the winding road up a very narrow unpaved path to the top of the hill or the crossing over of a one-car rickety bridge that did it, but, nevertheless, no matter how stoic my mother thought she was being, it was a traumatic time for her. As my dad was extricating my duffle, sleeping, and goodie bags from the trunk, my mother's everlasting hug was all one needed to see in order to gauge how trying a time this was for her. I can't imagine how she would have been if I were going off to war. For me, on the other hand, I was embarking on an adventure.

Yaw Paw had a few camping areas, but the site I remember best was as you faced the lodge, it was up the hill and behind towards the left. Not too far away was the rifle range and behind the camp site and to the right were the restroom facilities. This site was set up with both wood-hewn lean-to shelters and just a little farther away were large stand-up-inside tent areas platforms.

In the times I went to camp, I came to utilize both accommodations, and to be honest I found sleeping in the three-sided cabins more to my liking. The

built-into-the-wall bunk beds were bigger than the cots in the tents and my air-mattress made it perfect and cozy. And the open air feeling one got from not having a fourth wall closing you in was much more to my liking. Even when it rained it was more exciting.

Two new experiences for me were using an outdoor shower area for bathing (it was walled off for privacy) and using a latrine for other necessities. Granted, on over-night hikes primitive easements to alleviate the call of nature were readily available behind almost any tree. Since you were there for only one night, their employment could be utilized sparingly if one chose to do so, but being away at camp for two weeks was another matter. I'll leave it at that.

The mess hall was an interesting place. We were served breakfast, lunch, and dinner family-style (we did the serving), and heaven help the sixth person in line at the table to receive the bowl of food. If we were having hamburgers, there were no problems, but if it was a casserole, the last person to be served was lucky to get a whiff of food. Sometimes we were all asked to put some food back into the bowl.

The drink of choice (not by us, but the chef – if you can call him that) was a concoction that was served in a metal pitcher and looked and tasted a lot like Kool-Aid. Now I know I tasted Kool-Aid sometime in my youth, but it wasn't ordinarily found at our house. However, at camp, no matter what flavor was being offered, the drink had its own special name – does anyone remember it? I do.

If the meals weren't satisfying your taste buds, then next to the mess hall on the left was a concession store of sorts (more like a closet), where you could buy candy, soda (the bottles barely cold enough on a hot summer's day and which weren't allowed to leave the platform area), ice cream, and some camping necessities - insect repellent was an often sought after item!

The pride and joy of Camp Yaw Paw was Cannonball Lake; it was the perfect size. You could row across it in minutes – big enough to have fun in, not large enough for anyone to get into trouble. My guess would be about a hundred by two hundred yards, so maybe it was more the size of a good-sized pond. Sorry, but I don't know what constitutes the difference between a lake and a pond or vice-versa.

If you stood on the mess hall lodge's balcony and looked down at the lake, you could see a three-sided dock. On your first full day of camp you were called down to take your swimming test and asked if you could swim. If you answered in the affirmative, you were told by the counselor (who would judge your swimming competency) to jump into the water on the lake side of the dock and swim out to an anchored wooden platform which was about thirty yards away.

If you answered that you couldn't swim or if you knew you couldn't make it out to the raft, you were asked to stay in the shallow end of the lake within the sides of the dock. It was there that you would be given lessons. Those of you who read my Glen Rock pool memory know I was a 'to the raft' kind of swimmer (as most of the kids at camp were), but there was still a sizable contingent who needed swimming lessons. Nothing wrong with that – that's what camp was for.

On the far side of the lake was the bonfire site where we would gather on some nights, sing songs, have ghost stories told to us, and in one glorious ceremony each year have some scouts inducted into the Order of the Arrow. Those were special times.

There were a lot of memorable songs sung at camp on those nights. One which I found to my liking was the old stand-by 'On Top of Old Smokey', and it went as follows:

On top of Old Smokey
All covered with snow,
I lost my true lover
For courting too slow.

There are many, many verses to the original song and I won't bore you with them here, but there were other renditions that were ad-libbed that I will list.

On top of Old Smokey,
All covered with sand,
I shot my school teacher,
With an old rubber band.

I shot her with pleasure,
I shot her with pride,

For I couldn't miss her,
She was forty feet wide.

She run out and caught me,
Threwed me 'cross her knee,
But in the seat of my britches,
I had my old Geography.

She reached for her ruler,
And took a swipe at me,
She missed old Kentucky,
But she hit Tennessee.

And not to bore you to death with too many more of Old Smokey-type lyrics, but here's the one (I believe) most Scouts liked and truly will remember –

On top of spaghetti,
All covered with cheese,
I lost my poor meatball,
When somebody sneezed.

It rolled off the table,
And on to the floor,
And then my poor meatball,
Rolled out of the door.

It rolled in the garden,
And under a bush,
And then my poor meatball,
Was nothing but mush.

The mush was as tasty
As tasty could be,
And then the next summer,
It grew into a tree.

The tree was all covered,
All covered with moss,
And on it grew meatballs,

And tomato sauce.

So if you eat spaghetti,
All covered with cheese,
Hold on to your meatball,
Whenever you sneeze.

Hope this brings back some memories to all you scouts, and lest you forget -
Be prepared!

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Nowhere, But Somewhere –

Not yet high, but no longer elementary, entering junior high school was a place of discovery.

I didn't know quite what to expect from junior high school even though I was escorted through an orientation day the previous spring by former Byrd School graduate Jimmy Olmsberg. That whole day was more of a whirlwind than a fact-finding tour.

Having been previously coddled by an educational institution in elementary school that presented me with just one teacher in the same classroom all day long (visiting music teacher Miss Whitehouse and Phys. Ed. teacher Mr. Sunderland notwithstanding), junior high exploded upon my senses for the first few days I was there. While not large by today's standards, the size of the school was a bit daunting.

My old school was comfortable with just seven classrooms, one per grade for K-6 – four on the first floor and three on the second, plus a teachers' room. Everyone knew everybody. In junior high, I was confronted with kids other than the ones I had come to know on a daily basis for over seven years at Byrd School.

Through gatherings at church, Little League, Boys Scouts, and the community pool, I wasn't naïve enough to think my class was the only group of twelve year-old students in Glen Rock entering junior high on that fourth day of September in 1957, but on that first day of school I was surprised when only a few of my old classmates were in Mrs. Blair's homeroom with me.

For those who don't recall whether or not they were 'my' homeroom, Jennifer Smaldone had her speakerphone in that room. It's the same room where I attempted to learn Spanish.

Mrs. Blair was a history teacher and her class that year was to undertake the study of the Middle East. I was lucky to get Egypt for my report. Because of the Suez Canal raucous in 1956, it was getting a lot of play in the newsreels. Besides, I liked mechanical drawing and for an attractive cover the pyramids were easy for me to pen in the right perspective. The Great Sphinx was also

reasonably drawn I thought. I made it resemble my face as closely as I dared. I don't think anyone could tell - a Rembrandt I am not.

In homeroom on that first day, I was presented with my first traveling regimen. The schedule was dictated by the ringing of bells and indicated when I should move about to different classrooms and to different venues of instruction – so opposite from my first seven years of elementary school.

Back then we never left the room and the periods were fluid and allowed for flexibility regarding allotting time for various projects – not so in junior high with its Pavlov's dog routine. And I did this changing of classes all the while carrying more books than I thought I'd ever get a chance to read (I wonder when bookbags came along; I could have used one).

I get the whole idea of education for the masses. Heck – it worked pretty well, at least for most of us. I know we all survived it; most of us with some recollection of that first day of junior high, but WOW!

Maybe it was the simple things I noticed right away that I didn't like - for one, I thought lunchtime was too short. I know, I know - don't come between a guy and his food, but it was more than that.

In elementary school we got out at eleven-thirty and didn't have to the back until a quarter to one. I could walk home, kick a stone along with me as I traveled, eat a pampered lunch, be sent back out into the world with a hug and a kiss, and basically have ample time to myself - with a little left over to be on the playground when I returned to school; it was wonderful. Or maybe it had to do with having to learn how to get into sync with so many teachers as opposed to sizing up just one. Or maybe I just didn't like that my new school was so far away. Who knows?

In the beginning, I rode my bike (a past-time that wouldn't last through seventh grade) along with a small contingent of guys from Byrd School and parked it in the bike racks on the left side of the building near the shop classes (never seeing a need to lock it – just like at the pool). What I did notice very early on was that everyone arrived at school around the same time, mostly in groups, but didn't leave the same way. Some students couldn't who take it any more left immediately at dismissal, some stayed on with teachers well past the last bell, others signed up for activities, and some just hung around.

What I sized up right away was that if I wanted to walk a girl home, my having brought a bike to school in the morning turned out to be an obstacle. Sometimes I would leave it at school and come back for it later, but I soon learned that depending on which way I walked, it was better not to have one there at all. And, besides, as mentioned in another e-mail, the group of guys that met at the ‘Rock’ was starting to form and the camaraderie of walking to school with them far outweighed the benefits of ‘biking it’.

The lunch duration issue faded, too, because we did eat and still have time to go outside. I bought my lunch and always found that the cafeteria workers gave me an ample supply – well, sometimes I needed those delicious cookies or a brownie to round things out, but, overall, I found the food to be to my liking. It was there that I sampled a ‘Sloppy Joe’ for the first time; we never had them at home. I still love them. Ah, and, yes, two milks, always two milks. They were always so cold.

Concerning the teachers, the fact that I stuttered made me easy to be labeled and, therefore, easy for them to remember. Some of you were quiet by nature in school (or was it nurture?); I was quiet by necessity. And other than that rare oral presentation in which I volunteered to participate in, as I’ve stated before, I went unnoticed and unheard of in the classroom.

From other class emails, many of you have recounted the poems we had to memorize for English classes. How many of you recall being in history class one year and being offered an extra credit ‘A’ to memorize and recite the Gettysburg Address. That’d be me. And I got the ‘A’. Silly, isn’t it, what we remember?

Regarding early afterschool activities, I learned from the raucously delightful minstrel-type play my elementary class performed in sixth grade that maybe I’d like to be on stage again. I tried out for a play in junior high and to my disappointment I found myself being relegated to being a stagehand – nothing wrong with that, but I didn’t see it through. One of the few mistakes I regret making in my short life.

At least my life seems short anyway – unlike this e-mail. I’ll reprise these miscellaneous ramblings about junior high topics at another time with the hope that some of you will remember what happened at our first school dance, the Halloween dance.

But if you don't that's okay, for all will remember what happened that first weekend in October. It had us looking skyward and thinking the Russians had the world by its tail. Sputnik was launched on Friday, October 4th, and we spent the weekend nights looking to see if we could spot the satellite – and we could. How could any of us forget those times - the doom, gloom, and boom of the space race was upon us! We did live in exciting times, didn't we?

Dave Lamken dlamken @comcast.net

End of an Era -

School played a major role in my life. I stayed in school long enough to put a few letters after my name - BA, M.Ed., Ph.D. When you combine all the years in elementary, junior high, high school, college, graduate school, and my time spent teaching, it totals 58 years in one type of classroom or another.

But for the first time in my life on the Wednesday after Labor Day, I did not go back to school. It was a bit of a shock. After working in the field of Special Education for 41 years, most of it in a self-contained environment, I retired. Heck, retirement allows me the freedom to be writing this e-mail so early in the morning.

Teaching, however, was fun for me and I enjoyed every minute of it. I accumulated well over 460 sick days and never liked being absent. And although I found myself doing some office work in my later years, I loved being in the classroom. I thought of it as my stage. Every day was different and I got a chance to show my lighter side 180 days out of a year. I believe I was an okay teacher. At least I tried my best.

What I am proud of most during my career was that I never yelled at a student - not once. I didn't see any purpose in yelling. I should add that with my unusual (read it as obtuse) sense of humor whenever a student exhibited aberrant behavior (after all, they were 'special' children), I always looked for the bright side. I think my reaction was 'off-putting' enough that they came to understand me very well - and I them.

That's a far cry from what I experienced growing up. Sure New Jersey had corporal punishment laws and teachers were not supposed to manhandle students, but, without naming names, I can think of numerous occasions wherein teachers not only yelled at kids, but accosted them. Sometimes it happened in the classroom, but more often than not it occurred after the student was escorted out into the hallway.

While I can say I easily remember ten various times, it was probably more like twenty. Not twenty different teachers, mind you, just twenty different instances whereby a student was pushed, shoved, jammed, jostled, hoisted, or was otherwise physically put into contact with a desk, a wall, or a locker.

While I find the practice abhorrent (then and now), it was common enough back then that no one made much to do about it. I'm not sure why that was. And what strikes me the most is that it wasn't only the non-mainstream teachers like shop and phys. ed. that engaged in doing it, but English, math, and science teachers as well.

If we had Special Education classrooms back when we in school, I'm not aware of it (there weren't any at Byrd School, that's for sure), but in 1911 New Jersey was the first state to mandate special education classes for the deaf and blind in the public schools. A true milestone in education history.

The legislature again stepped forward and passed the Beadleston Act in 1954, which extended special education provisions for the physically handicapped, mentally retarded, and emotionally and socially maladjusted children, and provided state aid for those services.

I'm sure the forward thinking Glen Rock educational system would have applied for it, otherwise how did Jennifer Smaldone come to utilize the voicebox contact within our junior-senior high school? Since I didn't attend Coleman School, those who knew her in the lower grades can offer up what accommodations were made for Jennifer back then.

While being physically handicapped, Jennifer was our academic equal; however, we all knew students who were less fortunate than we were educationally. Granted, some were retained along the way (four from my Byrd School class come readily to mind) and progressed at their own pace in a lower grade, and other than being at lunch or in my gym class every now and then, I never saw the learning disabled students that were within our grade during the day.

Does anyone recall where they were? Was there a special class in our school, and, if so, who was the teacher? As you know by now, I don't have my yearbooks so I haven't a clue, but if you know, I'd love to hear from you.

And thank you to the two who remembered I crashed into the punch bowl table at the Halloween dance, although one of you had me overturning decorations. As the world's worst dancer, I attempted to do my interpretation of the Lindy, got carried away, spun around more than once, got dizzy, and tumbled into a folding table holding glasses and pitchers of punch. The table got overturned, along with everything on it, into Miss Lane's (Laine's) lap. It

was quite the sight to behold. To say I suffered the highest state of ignominy is to be polite, let alone how she must have felt. I can laugh about it now; I only wish I could have done it back then.

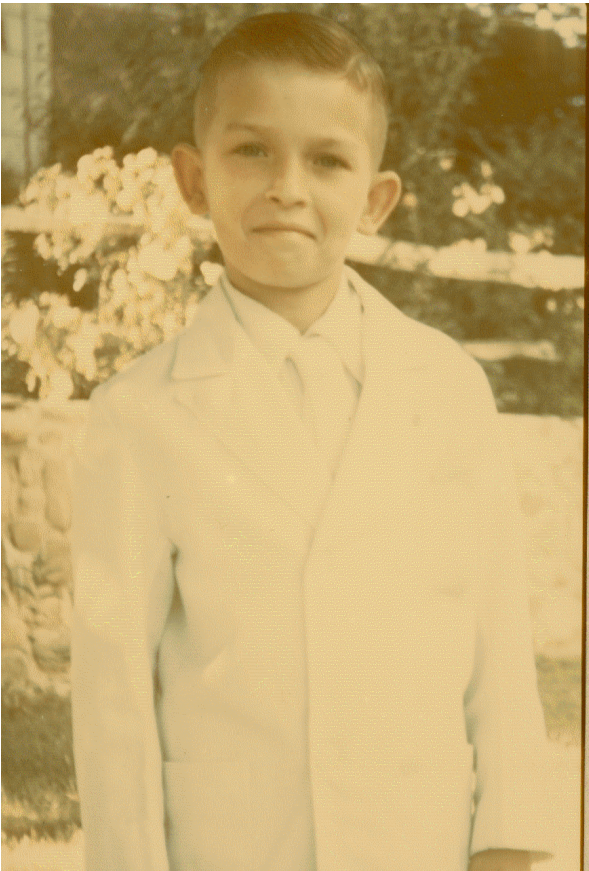
Dave Lamken

The Mane Attraction –

I know, I know – I might have mixed up my homonyms, but I don't think so. While I'm always the main subject of my class e-mails in one way or another, this one has to do with hair – mostly mine, but nevertheless hair.

And before I start in on this topic, and to be totally fair, I want to congratulate all the girls out there who put more time in getting just the right look for themselves with their hair than anything I could ever endure. With that said, here goes.

Recently, Rob Hoogs was kind enough to 'Forward' some early Byrd School class portraits, and in looking at them I was taken with how my hair always appeared to be the same. No doubt on school picture day it was combed and Brylcreemed by my mother, but in the lower grades my hair was always styled in the little slicked back, comb-over, pompadour manner in every picture. And I have the feeling my mother never truly grasped the



company's motto of 'A little dab will do ya!'

And as this picture of me taken at age eight with a smirky smile and dressed in my killer First Communion suit clearly shows, I knew even then that I might need longer hair to hide the fact that my ears were waiting until my head got bigger. Dumbo was probably thinking I was a close relative of his. Maybe that's why I always had an affinity for the elephants at the circus. Who knows?

Needless to say, the photo is not one of my favorites, but it does illustrate the need for my ears, head, and hair to get into sync with one another. It took more than a

few years for that to happen.

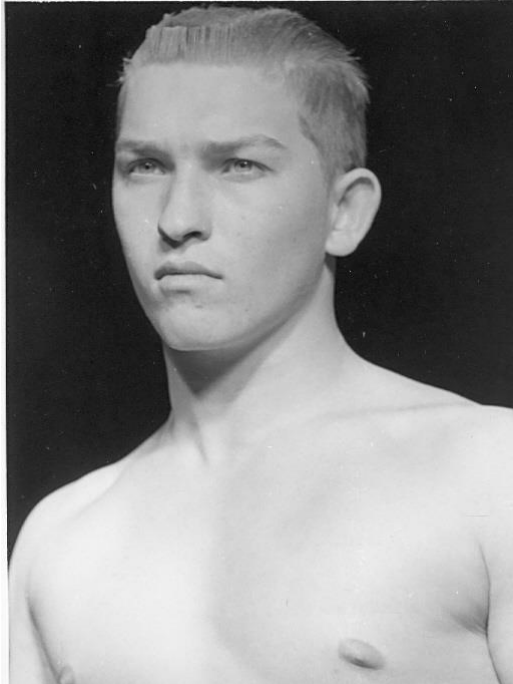
No matter what style I tried nothing really looked good on me. I came to believe Dumbo may have been right.

Over my formative years, I tried many of the styles that were popular (many of us guys did), and although my hair was pretty straight, a wave came naturally to the front of any of my long hair styles.

It wasn't until my hair got longer and I was combing it high atop my head with an occasional DA in the back (I wonder why American Bandstand never called) that I came to realize all that grooming was a bit time consuming, and so at the age of 13 or 14, I said the heck with it and had it cut it off.



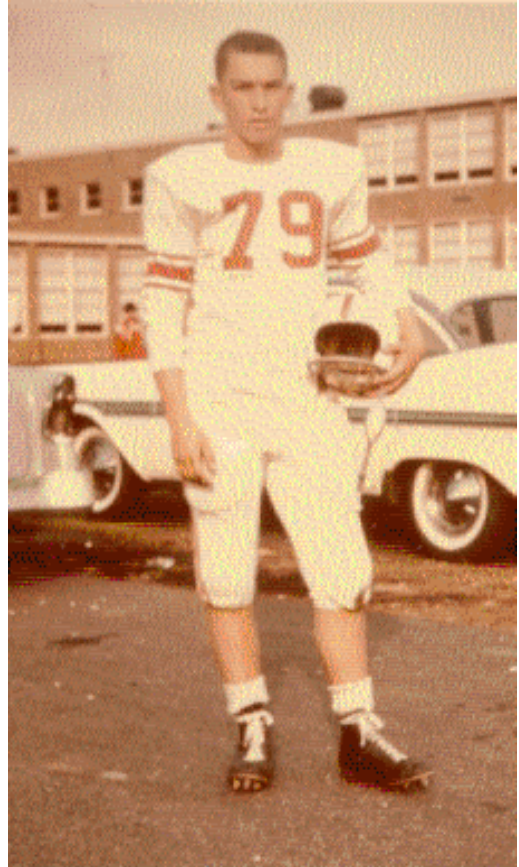
As soon as I walked out of the barber shop near the corner of Rock Road and West Main Street, I knew before I even made it home that I had made one of the biggest mistakes in my life. That short crew cut of a hairstyle just wasn't me.



The crew cut turned flattop picture on the left was taken months later by my father during my body-building days at age 14. I use the term 'days' here because, although my dad bought me the weight lifting set in preparation for me going out for football in tenth grade, I was not into exercising – and from those who saw me at the reunion, they will tell you I'm still not.

I know when I had a flattop I went through quite a few push tubes of hair wax, also called butch wax, as I remember. I don't recall any of the brands I used back then, probably because I tried them all and none gave me the hair transformation I was looking for at the time.

My foray into having crew cuts, flattops, etc., lasted a little more than a year. I'm not exactly sure when the transition back to longer hair happened (I know, can you believe how faulty my memory's become?), but it was probably during the summer before we went into high school. I can say that with some certainty because the picture to the right is of me dressed out for the Thanksgiving game in 1960 and my hair was growing back in (or out, however the case may be).

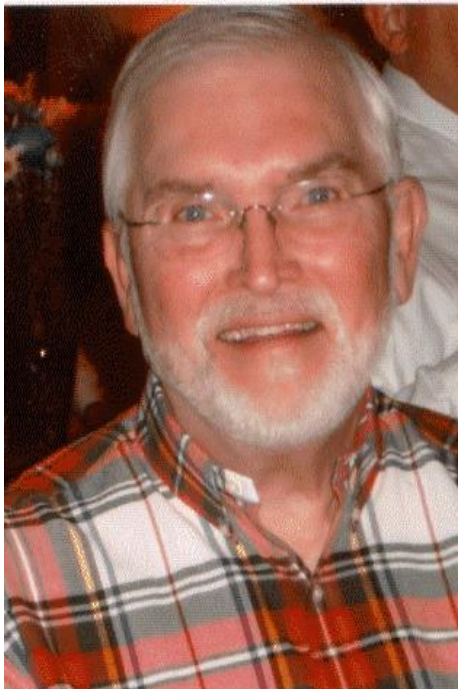
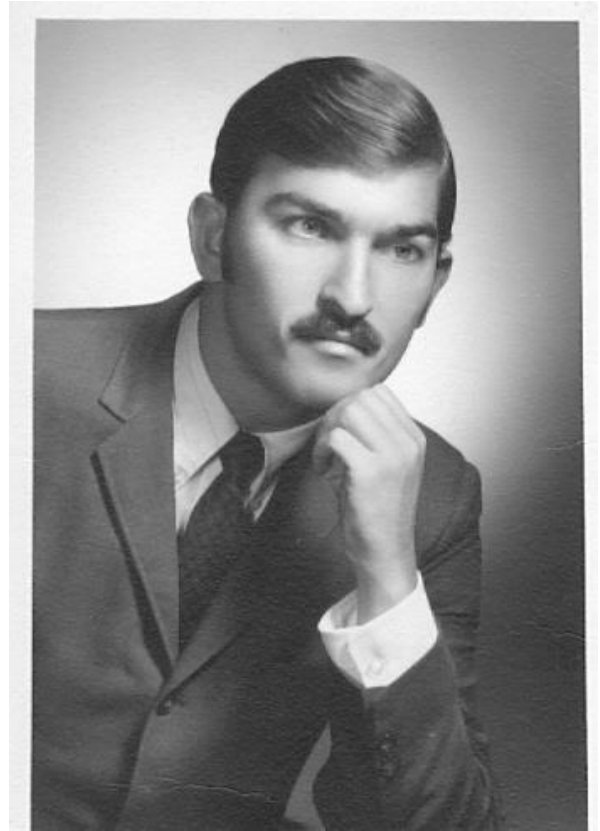


All the J.V. players saw some game time as we were going to be varsity players the next year. I was a mediocre player at best, but a knee injury sidelined me for my senior year, much to my father's dismay. He thought I was good and thought I'd be letting the team down if I didn't play.



And as my high school graduation picture shows (courtesy of Karen Nielsen's super idea of wearing picture name tags for our 2000 reunion - which I saved because of a lack of a yearbook; in fact, I just wore the name tag to our last reunion), I was back to having a decent Dave Lamken haircut, although I was parting my hair differently from my pre-crew cut style. I went back to parting it on the left like I had worn it as a child. And I might add, one I was combing and maintaining myself on picture day - although I think my mother would give me the once over as I paraded out the door. She always liked adjusting my tie.

A photo taken around the time of my graduation from college (it's not a yearbook picture) shows a more conservative haircut befitting someone applying for federal fellowship money. The thinking man's pose and the moustache must have helped because I was awarded the fellowship for graduate school. I'm thankful of that since it paid for almost all my graduate work in those early years, plus some of my living expenses – a much needed boost to my financial situation because my beginning teacher's salary wasn't much. I know, I know – that's what all teachers lament, but we did get rewarded in other, and better, ways.



The last picture is one of an older gentleman. You would easily pass him on the street if you didn't know who he was. He's changed quite a bit since Glen Rock (the head has grown to accommodate his ears), but who, nonetheless, has aged rather gracefully, I believe - although it's been said, some Kindergarteners believe he's Santa Claus; I think it's the cheeks - the beard's too short - don't you?

While he's kept his slight pompadour comb-over hair style intact these many, many years, what he finds to be a bit curious is that while his facial hair continues to grow unabated, there's some hair on the top of his head that seems to have retired and left no

forwarding address.

And speaking of curious things, and definitely off the subject of hair or the lack of it, how many of you remember the mystery box experiment which we did in Physics class. As I recall, the black box was a rather large, palm-size cube with a number on it, and, at least in Mr. Hollinger's class, we were asked to make a guess about what the contents of the box even before we were allowed to touch it (one of those 'smaller than a breadbox' propositions). And every time we did some evaluative testing to determine what was in the box, we were directed to write down what we thought the object might be. I believe the box was plastic because, as I recall, we did do a specific gravity test in water. I thought it was a great lab experiment.

Oh, and if you should ever come across any of the hair that retired and moved elsewhere, would you please inform it that the older gentleman is still keeping the place open and they're welcome to come back.

And, thank you, too, for allowing me to be the main attraction in another of my class e-mail sagas.

Dave Lamken

Off-Topic -

Whenever I write to you, I find myself easily bombarded with odd little tidbits about school, childhood, or the events in my life pertaining to growing up in Glen Rock (which have nothing to do with the topic about which I'm writing, of course), and I often include them for no apparent reason that I can think of at the present.

For instance, in my last e-mail (Mane Attraction), although it had nothing to do with the changes to my hairstyles, I included a reference to a 'black box' experiment in Mr. Hollinger's physics class. What I find awe-inspiring is that two of you recalled what earthly elements you had in your little black box. Here I am thinking I was pretty good for even recollecting the experiment in the first place and then there are those of you who remembered what you had in the box! Boy, I sure did graduate with some amazing people.

With that said, and for those of you who have taken time to read my other class e-mails, it is understandable that you may think this e-mail entitled 'Off-topic' is about me and my writings, but, no, it isn't; it's about our teachers, or at least a few of them.

Maneuvering teachers off-topic was an art, and I believe we were all glad for the break in our book learning routine whenever it occurred. We all strived to do it at one time or another - or we liked it when our classmates tried and succeeded. It worked more easily with some teachers than with others, and while I'm sure it happened in the lower primary grades, the first teacher I can recall who was easily led off a topic was Miss Innes, my fifth grade teacher at Byrd School.

Miss Innes was the first person I personally knew who had journeyed to the Grand Canyon. Before the Interstate highway system, can you imagine what the roads and travel accommodations must have been like in the early 50s, especially out west? Now to be fair, Miss Innes traveled across part of the country by train, but, still, it couldn't have been easy. Just consider Interstate 95. Those of you who live near the over-populated East coast are quite familiar with the Maine to Florida route and know that it won't be fully contiguous until it finally aligns itself in New Jersey (where else!) in 2014, which is almost 60 years after Eisenhower signed the bill authorizing the Interstate highway system in 1956.

I have been to the Grand Canyon twice and have loved it each time. If you ever get the chance to go, do it - you won't regret it. I recommend getting a room on the second floor of the lodge - one overlooking the canyon, of course - and when the sun comes up early in the morning, open the curtains to your picture window, jump back into the cozy comfort of your bed, and watch how the rising morning sun majestically changes the color of the canyon right before your very eyes. It's breathtaking! And while there don't forget to journey a little farther south and visit Sedona. Go on one the 'Pink' Jeep tours and see the countryside. You'll be enthralled.

My dad, who had a love of maps and a wish to drive his family to places near and far, deserves the foremost recognition for my love of wanderlust, however it may fall to Miss Innes who traveled a lot and who loved to regale us with stories about where she had been, and what she had seen, that may have influenced my love of travel. Her photo albums (which she kept in the classroom) were magnificent and the personalized images of faraway places were fantastic. I believe they set the stage for a boy like me to go see those places (and others) once he was old enough to travel on his own. Were the last couple of paragraphs off-topic? I'm thinking they were. Sorry.

My sixth grade teacher, Mr. Hawkins, could easily be taken off-topic on two subjects. One, his naval experiences - which he loved talking about it, and, two, his son and the backyard train set he built for him - you know, the kind that was big enough to sit in and ride. Mr. Hawkins had pictures of it on his desk, and they made me want to go and ride it!

Mr. Meyer, one of the Industrial Arts teachers, could always be made to talk about cars. Not that you wanted him to do it if you were desperately trying to finish a project, but he loved to talk about whatever car he was working on at the time. On occasion, Mr. Meyer would have it in the auto shop section of the IA area whenever another car wasn't available to work on.

Mr. Ludwig was also fairly easy to get off-topic. He'd talk about being raised in Patterson and the fact that his father was a policeman. He kept an eye on the clock, but you could often get him to loosen his tie, so to speak, and have him ramble on quite a bit. Strange what you remember.

As mentioned in one of my earlier e-mails, one of the nicest - and most unique - teachers I ever had was Mr. House. He was not a 'front of the classroom' kind of teacher. He would move around the room, stand on a

desk or a chair whenever he wanted to make a point, and never neglected anyone. What I remember most was that he engaged the class with great stories about history (what else), but he was the kind of teacher you wanted to listen to all the time. Mr. House brought the subject of history to life and was my most memorable teacher. Can't you tell?

Because I was never assigned a foreign language class past the seventh grade, I was placed in Mr. House's room as a sophomore with those from the class of '62. It was a second history class for me that year, and I didn't need it, so I was eventually transferred to an Industrial Arts class - metal working as I recall. In all the years since then, I may have soldered a few wires but have never welded anything or had a need to hammer out a copper ashtray or bowl - however, I have missed Mr. House's stories. Now that was off-topic a little.

Mr. Cheska could easily be gotten off-topic if you timed it right and asked him a question about his Amherst football days (he coached there, too) or his Master's thesis about German submarines being off the coast of New Jersey during WWII. I recall him telling us about one German submariner who came ashore and loved the area so much he came back after the war and built a motel in the Strathmere section of Sea Isle City, which is just south of Ocean City. It turned out later not to be true, but it made for a good story.

Another teacher who comes easily to mind when you wanted a break from the classroom routine was Okey Chenoweth. How could anyone forget a name like Okey? I recall having Mr. Chenoweth as a junior and strongly suspect it was his first year teaching at Glen Rock High. If any of you remember it differently and recall having him as a sophomore, I'd really like to know - okey dokey? Sorry, couldn't resist doing that; however, I would still like to know.

To be honest, I believe Mr. Chenoweth missed his true calling. I think he really wanted to be on stage. I believe he should have been. He had quite a good memory and could recite lines from the many plays he had been involved with over the years. And whether for my public speaking or English classes, I only wish he didn't have us recite so many.

And thanks for letting me go off-topic - at least just a little bit.

Dave Lamken

To Pet Or Not To Pet -

I believe I grew up at the right time and in the right place - I think we know we all did. And as you know, I didn't grow up on a farm, but was still fortunate to be exposed to an array of life's beautiful creatures.

You may recall a first grade field trip I reminisced about describing an excursion to a dairy farm. It was a great outing for me, and since the offer to try our hand at milking a cow is such a vivid memory, I can only hope that other Glen Rock elementary schools besides Byrd School engaged in this wonderful, eye-opening trip, too.

In junior high, I did ride a horse a few times during the winter at an indoor arena in Fairlawn. I didn't develop a passion for horses that some of you held, but I still cherish the memory.

When I was little and growing up on Greenway Road, there was a family, whose name I can no longer recall, who lived a few doors away on Lincoln Avenue and kept a goat as a pet. The goat was extremely friendly (well, friendly as long as it was fed type friendly), and because of its friendliness I can only surmise it is one of the reasons I grew up not being afraid of animals - which, back then for an inquisitive little kid like me, was a good thing.

In other past e-mails, I also mentioned that during my early childhood years our house overlooked some woods. The woods stretched for six blocks or so and bordered Lincoln Avenue on the left, Ridgewood at the far end of it, and Diamond Brook on the right - and between those boundaries was a wealth of great things to explore.

Far back in those woods, at the end of what would eventually become Lowell Road, there was a nice sized pond just over the border with Ridgewood. Frogs were plentiful there, and they loved to bask in the sun along the shoreline. Of course, frogs would rather jump back into the water than be captured, but with some practice at stealth and stalking, it wasn't hard to get them to jump up and away from the water, thus making the joy of apprehending them easier. By the way, although you're not likely to do this at our age, I don't recommend you following them into the water to catch them - that was nearly impossible, as I recall. Although they stayed reasonably close to the shoreline, they were pretty quick swimmers underwater.

What was so cute about the frogs was that once you caught one of them you could get them to stay on your outstretched palm for an extended period of time, especially if you stroked the top of their little head very gently with your index finger. And as you did that, it was fascinating to watch their various eyelids open and close. Bullfrogs, with their huge bulging throats, were especially interesting to hold; however, I don't remember getting one to croak while I was holding it - but I always hoped.

At our house, I was never permitted to bring a frog home and keep it as an inside pet, but I was allowed tadpoles (must have been the education thing). Observing the tail shrink, the legs sprout, and the eyes and head change size and shape was really awesome. I was always asked by my mother to return the newly formed tadpoles/frogs back to the pond once they had reached their last stage of development. I wonder whether that pond is still there; I wonder if frogs still inhabit it!

To find a garden variety toad was a pretty simple matter since you usually didn't even have to leave your yard to do so - and because they were dry land animals, they were easier to catch than frogs. After stalking the toads and making a few trial and error attempts, you'd inevitably wind up with one in your cupped hands - even catching some in mid-jump. Some toads tried to lay low and play possum, thus making your job so much easier. Trying to keep a toad in the palm of your hand was not easy. They didn't like being held or petted the way frogs did - nor were they as animated.

Like frogs, I wasn't allowed to keep toads inside, either, but turtles were okay. Well, baby ones anyway - and they were really cute.

We had a small aquarium atop a bookshelf in the front corner of our living room, and when it wasn't full of tadpoles or goldfish (garnered, as I recall from winning ping-pong-ball-toss-games at the Fourth of July fair!), it sometimes housed turtles. It was a delight watching baby turtles swim around and then attempt to climb up (and then slide off of) rocks. They were incredibly persistent, but the true secret to their success was keeping the water level at the right height. And if that didn't work, I'd sometimes help out and reach in the tank and put them on a rock - I'm such a softie!

Remember, this was around the time we got our first TV so there wasn't much in the way of household entertainment going on in the Lamken household in 1950!

Aah, hah! Maybe what prevented me from being allowed to keep my frog/toad acquisitions in the house was the fact that our little aquarium didn't have a lid. I'm not sure, but it seems plausible now that I think about it. If the toads or frogs had ever jumped out when I wasn't home, I don't believe my mother would have enjoyed chasing after them.

We did have deer in those woods before Roughgarten began to build homes back there. I never saw a buck roaming around (at least one with antlers - and not being deeply into deer anatomy at that tender age, I had no other way of telling who was what), but does were present.

One morning there were two deer in our backyard. They were beautiful creatures and wanting to insure their up close and personal return, I took a bag of my mother's cooking salt and placed it on a low stone wall behind our house. Somewhere I had heard that a saltlick would attract deer and thought all I needed to accomplish that feat was to display an open bag of salt.

Eventually, my dad saw the salt and queried me as to what it was doing on the wall. After I told him, he said I wasn't using the right type of salt, but maybe, just maybe, the deer might come; however, he suggested I put the bag a little farther out in the woods near a clump of trees and cover it ever so slightly with some dirt - but Bambi never came.

I'm not sure how many deer populated the Glen Rock area, but I would think that my vicinity of town wasn't the only one so lucky to have them. However, there were other animals to play with - if you can call it play.

On the left side of our property, my dad built a rock garden to support a sloping terrain, and within this rock garden, there was a cornucopia of great little things to occupy a boy's time. The first animal that comes readily to mind was the garter snake. The ones in our yard were mostly black with some yellow striping, but I can remember seeing dark brown ones, too.

What makes this recollection of garter snakes so memorable was that I was present when one of them gave birth to her babies. There must have been 25 to 30 of these cute little snakes wiggling around their disinterested mother. I, on the other hand, was totally amazed because before this happened I had thought all snakes laid eggs.

I wanted my own mother to be amazed, too, so I brought one inside the house to show her. Mom went into her petrified look so it was a little hard to

tell whether or not she was amazed as I was. I'm thinking not as I write this out - I don't think the city girl in her ever got totally comfortable with living in what she considered 'the country'.

Also present in that rock garden were wasps - yellow jackets to be precise. Their nest was underground, but the busy colony entrance readily gave their presence away. Yellow jackets are somewhat aggressive and do sting, but since the stingers don't have thorns, yellow jackets rarely lose their stingers - and, therefore, yellow jackets can sting you more than once. But what did it matter - it still was an adventure to toy with them.

I recall playing chicken with the yellow jackets. While the wasps were entering and leaving the nest, I'd run up to its entrance, pour some water from a watering can down the hole, and then run away. It just wasn't fun getting stung - but that didn't stop me. And, no, I don't have any firsthand knowledge of whether the same wasp stung me more than once or not; I can recall, however, getting a few bite marks over the years - just not garnering any stingers.

The wasps that decided to take refuge in our garage were a totally different matter - they did leave stingers in you. These hornets took up their residence in the far corners of our garage, especially lodging above the shelf where the storm windows were horizontally kept - and they were pesky. They didn't like people coming and going and bothering their area of influence very much.

To get rid of the hornets, my dad used a small, pump fumigator with a jar attached. I don't recall what was in it, but I know he used it only after sunset when the hornets had come back to the hive to sleep. By the way, do bees sleep? Lest there were any hornets still alive, the nest often stayed in place for awhile (looking a little bit like a wall trophy) until it came time to knock it down - and the bigger the nest, the bigger the flaky mess.

I don't remember encountering a bumble bee hive, but those bees were ever so present around flowerbeds, weren't they? Their yellow and black striped-fuzzy-little-rotund-bodies were so distinctive. It was fun to watch them flutter from pistil to pistil, stem to stem, flower to flower, gathering nectar. Bumble bees seemed to buzz louder than other bees - and now that I write that out, I believe it sounded more like a hum.

Going back to snakes for just a minute, there was an incident one summer day involving what we neighborhood boys thought was an electric eel navigating its way downstream in Diamond Brook. This was at the very end of Greenway Road where Tommy Marino lived.

To this day I don't know what it was; however, it was totally black, a foot or so long, rather skinny, and very elusive. It was elusive because no one wanted to touch what they thought was an electric eel - not even fearless me!

We tried to confine the eel to one area of the brook by blocking off some water flow; we attempted to encapsulate it in a large glass jar; and we even tried to lasso it. I know that seems a bit silly now as I think about it, but, heck, I was probably nine years old at the time and wanted to capture an electric eel! However, after an hour or so of tentatively doing what we could, it eluded us and escaped downstream.

Later that night as I recounted my day's adventures around the dinner table, I found out that it couldn't have been an electric eel. My dad didn't know what it was, but he knew an electric eel wasn't indigenous to North America. Darn!

And darn on two counts. One, I didn't know what indigenous meant at first, and, two, when I found out what it meant, I had to give up any hope of ever catching an electric eel and keeping it as a pet. By the way, if any of you adventurers out there have an idea (even a remote one) of what that black thing might have been, I'd like to hear from you. Guessing is good.

It's also hard not to remember the fun we had with lightning bugs - fireflies to some of you. In the early evening just after sunset, it was always entertaining to try to entrap them in old Skippy peanut butter jar. When you couldn't find any more, how many recall shaking the jar and making the bugs light up? Seems a wee bit cruel now, but those were great times - our summer times!

And finally bringing this e-mail to its much needed conclusion, is the most intriguing animal of them all - the butterfly. I can easily remember observing them as caterpillars. I'd put them on my arms and watch as they crawled all around like a slinky; they'd continually stop, often lifting their heads up in order to get a sense of what was going on, and then move on. I'd also watch the caterpillars spin their cocoons in the trees, and then later when the time had come, witness their emergence as butterflies. It was all so spectacular.

It is also hard not to remember the migration of the distinctive orange and black Monarch butterfly every August. I can recall being down the hill in my backyard and standing perfectly still with outstretched arms. It was fantastic having butterflies land on me. It's quite the mental picture I have remembering my parents calling out to me from the porch saying that a butterfly had just landed on my head - and then another, and then another. It's the only time I can recall when it was advantageous to have a big head.

We were fortunate to have the childhood we had and to remember the things that we do. And as you read this, I hope you were able to reconnect with some of your own summertime experiences with nature's little neighborhood pets.

And thanks for sticking with me to the end of another long e-mail!

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Who Would Believe It -

When I was growing up, I don't remember ever having pizza - and because pizza had very little to do with my childhood, you may wonder why I'm writing about it, because (as you all know too well by now) I tend to focus on the things I do remember rather than on the things that I don't. However, that's what I find so incredible.

No, not any lapses in my memory (although there are many), but the fact that I never had any pizza as a kid.

Right now, pizza is pretty much a staple in my life - I have it at least twice a month, and the fact that I had nothing to do with it in my early years, absolutely amazes me.

When the mood strikes - as it is doing now - and I search my memory for things to write about, I find that non-occurrence so incredible that I'll state it again - I don't remember having pizza when I was a kid. Who would believe it!

I don't know about you, but I can't recall pizza ever being delivered to our house nor any take-out pizza being brought into our home. And although my mother liked to bake, and was good at it, I'm positive she never made any.

I also don't remember my family ever going to a pizza parlor, nor do I recollect Glen Rock or Ridgewood even having one. I can't picture any of the other surrounding towns close to me like Hawthorne or Midland Park having one either. If any of you have a different perspective on this, I'd appreciate hearing from you.

From what I do recall, Route 4 didn't have any pizza places either, but Route 17 had two on the southbound side – however, I don't remember going to either one until I was old enough to drive.

Alright, now that I really think about it - not counting holiday times or get-togethers when family or friends arrived with hors d'oeuvres, casseroles, etc. - I can think of only a few prepared foods being brought into our house.

Besides soup and some other assorted canned goods, the only ready-made foods I can remember having in our home were the sporadic inclusion of

bakery and delicatessen items. There was the occasional attempt in the mid-50s to sample a new culinary delight just coming on the market - Swanson's TV dinners, but those frozen inedibles never found favor in our home. Even frozen vegetables took their time replacing the tried and true canned variety in the winter time.

It's no wonder our mothers didn't work back then - they were too busy cooking!

And to return to bakeries for just a second, the best one was near the Glen Rock Inn - better than the one that was across the street from the Glen Rock Sweet Shoppe on the corner of Valley Road.

I loved going to bakeries and watching the vibrating slicer cut up fresh loaves of bread – that was so cool. Sometimes when ordering bread, I'd be lucky enough to get a fresh, warm loaf right from the oven. Usually when that happened, by the time I had made it to the door, I would have reached into the bag already, taken a big slice from the middle of the loaf, and eaten most of it before I had gotten back to my mother waiting in the car. Umm, good!

Thanks to those who responded to my 'pet or not to pet' e-mail – I do appreciate hearing from you and reading your stories, and it's nice to know my area wasn't the only site in town that had deer presenting themselves for review.

Dave Lamken
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The Silliest Of Things -

Thank you to all who responded to the vast collection of 'Pizza' and 'On Behalf of' emails. It's nice to know that so many in our class are motivated by food!

A classmate who wrote me stated it better than I ever could - quote - I really do think some of these stories/recollections should be collected in a volume. Again, the ethnic references about food and relatives and cooking, etc., were fascinating. Some of those writers may not have thought of themselves as writers, but once they started to reflect on tangible memories from youth, they went wild and were very, very eloquent. - unquote. I certainly agree.

And since I hadn't a clue as to where the 'The Oven' was located, I have to offer a special thank you to Barbara Ulrich for letting me in on the secret. For a moment there, I thought the entire class was having a 'senior moment' and everyone had forgotten where it was situated. I wonder, did 'The Oven' take over the store where J. Fred Muggs called home? I remember a jewelry store being on one end and the Art Tone camera store, and the pet store, of course, but what business was there before 'The Oven'?

Now, moving on - positioned somewhere in my head, there is a memory bank holding a deposit slip listing the silly things I recall doing as a child - silly things, mind you, not dangerous, or hazardous, or stupid (well, maybe stupid). And knowing how I tend to ramble, I'll not bore you with outlining all of them. In this e-mail, I'll just quickly cover a ten year period by limiting the discussion to just three.

Freeze Tag is an early childhood game that's high up on my 'silly list'. I'll admit I played it - have to because I have a memory of doing it, but (and I hope you'll all agree) the game made no sense - no sense at all. Freeze tag has to be the silliest of all the games we were ever involved in as kids. And as kids, I mean when we were 6, 7, or 8 years old. It consumed some of our idle playtime, that's for sure, but at what cost is what I'm thinking.

For those of you who were lucky enough to escape the humility of playing 'freeze tag', players who were tagged were 'frozen' in place and required to stand perfectly still until they were unfrozen by another player. That part seems reasonable. However, as the game progressed, it morphed itself into a highly improbable activity. Players found themselves increasingly wanting

to be posers and willing to assume more and more unlikely and improbable positions, and so, when tagged, they undertook 'frozen' poses that were highly acrobatic in nature. And most players found themselves wanting to be 'tagged', which is just the opposite of what playing tag is all about.

What made 'freeze tag' so silly is to envision a yard full of children frozen like statues on a hot summer day. Oh, and that's how some of you may remember a closely related, but non-running game called 'Statues'. You were taken by the hand and rapidly whipped round and round only to be quickly released to go assume a position unnatural in normal posture. Silly. Silly. Silly.

The next silly thing I remember doing that's high on my list (this time around the age of 11 or 12) was 'Hula hoops'. Now grant you, Hula hoops caught on big and might not exactly fall into everyone's category as actually being silly, except to those of you who were like me and couldn't gyrate your body with enough rhythm to properly achieve the desired effect with the hoop - even if your life depended on it. I'm just glad mine didn't!

Watching me trying to perform using a Hula Hoop had to be silly, and I'm just glad there's no 8mm film out there catching the slow, spinning decline of the Hula hoop as it reached its final resting place around my ankles. I haven't a clue as to why I was sooo spastic and unable to conquer that minor feat, but I was. Ignominy comes easily to mind.

Do you think my Hula hoop failure had anything to do with me having two left feet? I doubt it, but in any case, and to satisfy my long ago bruised ego, I have to put Hula hoops high up in the 'silly list' category - have to!

The last item on my list is, by far, the silliest. It is the silliest because it was performed at an age when I was certainly old enough to know better. And so were you, but it didn't matter because many of us did this silly thing at least once. And although I remember those of you who engaged in this activity with me, I won't embarrass any of you by revealing names. You are, of course, free to do so.

To fully appreciate this activity, I want you to remember back to when you were in a car with your friends and to picture that car stopped at a red light. Now while that situation in and by itself was not silly, the Chinese fire drill that occasionally accompanied the stop at the red light was.

Do you recall those times when everyone threw open the doors, got out, ran around the car (at least twice, mind you), and got back in - not always winding up in their original seat? Now that was silly.

But the silliest - and absolutely the best part of the whole charade - was when one of the people running around the car was slow to get back inside and we'd drive off without him. It still makes me smile a little when I think about that!

We were silly back then, but good times demanded we be silly. What would our childhood have been like without it!

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

That 'First' Uncertain Moment in Time -

While the rite of passage through adolescence held many interesting roadblocks for me, not all were rough - some obstacles were full of sweetness and innocence. This e-mail remembrance concerns itself with my first-kiss-at-the-front-door experience.

When using the word 'first', I do understand that it denotes just one time - the 'first' occurrence - but, in actuality, I think we can all agree that as our date/partners changed over time we can categorize more than one front-door-kiss opportunity as being a 'first'.

For me, this rite of passage time is generally locked in at the junior high years (my 'age of discovery phase' regarding how dating a girl should proceed) - but depending upon your maturity and who you were with at the time, there's a subtle difference to each and every encounter in the first front-door-kiss department, so as you read this please let your mind wander back to whatever date or era strikes your fancy.

And although I may appear to be doing otherwise, right from the start I would like to state I am not bragging, and while at first blush that may seem to be the case, that's not the purpose of this e-mail - and as those funny photos of my hairstyles in the recent 'The Mane Attraction' e-mail so dutifully illustrated, I was an average guy in school and can truthfully state there was nothing outstanding about me.

My voice changed around the time I was in sixth grade and I can remember my mother saying I was maturing early; I wasn't sure that I understood all of what that meant in its entirety; however, I was glad those intermittent squeaks in the pitch of my voice were going away. Because of an early growth spurt and an inclination on my part to do so, I may have started dating earlier than some, but I was nowhere near the top of our class when it came to being sought after by anyone in our school willing to call me their own.

Each and every time I went through the process of getting up the nerve to ask someone out, I was always completely astonished when the answer came back a 'Yes'. I realize it took a whole lot for me to ask someone out for a myriad of reasons I don't need to go into here, but I was truly humbled by it all.

I haven't quite gotten a grip as to why I was so utterly astounded when the invitation was accepted, but suffice it to say I was - and it happened every single time I went through the routine. It's easy to reflect back now and state I may have been looking for some sort of validation, some sort of affirmation as to whom or what I was becoming and that the asking someone out on a date was a way of confirming it all - but let's face it, I haven't a clue as to what the girl was thinking. Why did she say 'Yes'?

As best I can recall, it mattered not what the two of us did on our 'date', and since my junior high dating repertoire never went much beyond the ordinary and was pretty well limited to movies, ice/roller skating, dances, bowling, etc., there was nothing very special about any of it - except for the fact that I was going on a date!

I don't want you to think I'm going hyper right now, but - WOW!

I was going on a date - I was going on a date with a girl who had caught my eye - I was going on a date with a girl who had caught my eye and for some unfathomable reason was saying 'Yes!' to me asking her out. WOW! Who would have believed I could have been so lucky - I certainly didn't. Still don't.

My father acted as chauffeur and he had his routine down pat - the rearview mirror was always turned up and away, talk from the front seat was kept at a minimum after the initial introductions were made, and when at the end of the evening my date and I exited the car after being driven back to the girl's house, my dad always indicated he was going down the block to turn the car around.

It took me awhile to catch on as to what he was doing, but I came to appreciate my dad's act of kindness for leaving us alone for what I came to know as that lonely, awkward, and seemingly ten mile hike up to my date's front door.

I never understood the mystery of why the front porch lights were sometimes on at one girl's house and off at another's. (By the way, I often turned off the front porch light at our house when my sister was out on a date - don't think Carol ever realized it was me doing it, but she will once she reads this e-mail, I suppose).

Whether it was a true first date or a subsequent follow-up date, as the two of us walked to the front door, but before the door handle was touched and the door opened, there was always that uncertain moment of truth time encircling the two of us - what was going to happen; how were we going to handle the situation; were anyone's feelings going to be hurt as I departed back down to the curb, etc. The anticipation I felt concerning how the next few seconds were going to play out are so beyond words please fill in your own if you don't understand where I'm headed with mine.

It's easy to recall walking my date to her front door, all the while wondering how things would officially end. Being more than a bit nervous, I'd shift slightly, and thank her for a great time. I can recall she'd smile back sweetly and I'd be looking subtly at her lips. I'd lean in, sometimes brushing a stray lock of hair from a cheek, and then - if it was destined to happen - in an instant, our lips would meet. How - I'm not too sure, but they would.

As I look back upon those times, the kiss seemed so spontaneous, but maybe it was planned. Perceptive as I am about myself, and knowing me as I do, I was probably thinking how this date would end from the very moment we exited the movie theater. But since I was just half of the participants in this tender equation, I can't assume too much of the credit - and after all, I was just the guy in this venture.

And while I'd like to think of myself as a decision-maker and would like to believe the outcome had something to do with me, I'm also a believer in miracles, too - all the while knowing the fate of the matter rested with my better half.

Not having had much practice, I can recall the kiss was gentle, and slow, and our lips stayed lightly together; we breathed as one, and stood together for what seemed like an eternity but what was in reality merely a second or two, I am sure.

It was a delicate, gentle, front-door-kiss, one of the most memorable kinds to have, I believe. I remember being terrified of breathing in case I broke the simple bond that had just developed between us. I hope I remember all this correctly, because I think I got pretty good at it. (Okay, that was bragging just a little, right?)

Truth be told - I liked the innocent, front-door-kiss routine. It was not making out; there was nothing inherently unseemly about it; and both parties knew it was going to be over quickly and without any totally embarrassing moments.

If there was any real shocker to any part of this front door dilemma, it was when that initial kiss was occasionally seconded by another - a follow-up kiss if you will, a chance to do it again and maybe to do it better, a slight, benign verification that perhaps things went better on the date than we both thought - a justification for just that one brief moment in time when two human beings who had so little in common could reach out to each other and acknowledge that all was right with their world.

I don't know how you will react to this email, or what you remember of your first front door kiss, but I know I will always cherish those precious times of new discovery in junior high. That period of time in my life is prized - and, hopefully, it was worth writing to you about and triggered some long forgotten good memories of your own.

Oh, and maybe one day I'll get to know how my dad knew when to miraculously reappeared at the curb at just the right moment and whisk me away in his chariot. I'm assuming he did that because he didn't want me floating a foot off the ground all the way home.

Thanks for letting me into your mailbox once again (I know this wasn't typical of my usual class e-mails).

And a special thank you to the girls who thought me worthy enough to be with them.

Not one of you is forgotten - front porch light on or not!

Dave Lamken

Front Door Kiss Follow-up -

I seemed to have hit a familiar note with my last email and it was nice getting validation that I wasn't the only one going through that dilemma. Thank you to all who replied - your attention to detail is always better (and funnier) than mine.

Although I always suspected the awkwardness at the front door to be generally universal, it made my day reading how some of the 'other half' dealt with their end of the date ritual. So take it to heart, guys - we were only one-half of the contingent of junior high students confronting the quandary of how to proceed in our early dating routine.

And because it popped up more than once regarding how some evenings ended, I will share with you the phrase 'dreaded handshake'. Ring a bell with anyone? I hope not with too many.

I have to be honest - I laughed when reading those postings. Well, smiled, anyway. Sorry, but I did. I must confess I would have been mortified had that happened to me, but, in retrospect, I believe the handshake had more to do with inexperience than a desire for the outcome not to have been different. I hope for all concerned it was a scattered and infrequent event.

And after hearing from both sides on this issue (and although I am partial to one side), I must state I never truly got a handle on who put out their hand first. To be fair to all, let's call it a draw.

Moving along (and not to confuse some of you any longer), I may not have been entirely clear when I used the phrase 'first kiss' in my last e-mail. My first kiss happened when I was in elementary school - and it wasn't even at a front door!

It was neither by accident (I hope) nor did I deliberately set out with any preconceived notion of doing it. I was on a nighttime hayride with classmates from Byrd School; it was a party; and I was just lucky enough to be the recipient of a totally unexpected kiss with a girl so pretty and sweet she will forever hold a place in my heart.

I should also mention it was a kiss on the lips because along the line there may have been a peck or two given and/or received on the cheek sometime

earlier in my childhood, but this was definitely a true 'Hollywood' kiss. It was not fleeting or one that could have been timed with a stopwatch, but it was definitely memorable.

After it happened, I felt so good I believe my chest expanded two or three sizes and I felt an inch or two taller. Of course, that may have been entirely due to having gotten some straw into my jacket (after all I was sitting on platform of hay), but I had crossed over that great divide and my life as a boy had changed forever.

If I may, I would like to take up a little bit more of your time and mention another unforgettable place to kiss - the sanctuary of a movie theater.

Smooching at the movies didn't take much more than a willing partner - at least once you got up enough nerve to put your arm around the girl. Usually the arm started out on the back of her chair, which subsequently allowed you to gradually let it slip onto her shoulder, which led to drawing her closer, which then - at the appropriate moment in time - allowed for the turning in for a kiss.

Personally, I don't believe I ever knew when that appropriate time was. Looking back, I think I took the 'anytime' approach - and hoped for the best.

Boy, oh, boy - as I sit here, that 'arm around the girl' scenario was so incredibly easy for me to type out, but thinking back to the earliest stages of dating, it wasn't effortless at all. Once the movie started, you can't believe the deliberations that went on in my head before getting up enough nerve to actually stretch out my arm (more like a fake yawn one-arm-stretch routine), then move it up and around and over my date's head. And now that I think back on it, it all seemed to happen in such slow motion. I sure hope it wasn't that way .

Incidentally, deliberating whether or not to take this action is definitely a no-no in a situation like this. The movie could be half over by the time you've made up your mind to go for it.

I think the rule of thumb in cases like this was that if you didn't get your arm around your date's shoulder, there wasn't going to be much kissing at the

theater; or, worse yet, you weren't going to be able to experience that personal-movie-theater-comfort-zone wherein your date's head was nestled so beautifully next to yours.

The solution was eventually made easy, of course. Even before the cartoons, the newsreels (remember those?), and the movie began, you quickly learned that, at a minimum, you should initially start out with your arm on the back of your date's chair; it was significantly better than coming up with any maneuvers to later address the problem of getting your arm in position once the lights went down and the curtain went up. Remember the curtain?

By the way, with the growing number of new multiplexes offering stadium seating and high-back reclining chairs, another old tradition is sadly biting the dust for the younger generation to experience.

I still like going to the movies with my wife, Nancy - sometimes even sitting in those 'couples' seats. A kiss now and then has been known to happen, too.

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The Rock In The Glen And Its Stores – 1940's-50s

Although the title has changed, this is not an original e-mail - and while I may have penned the initial list of downtown stores a year or two ago under a different title, without the help of classmates and non-classmates who searched their memories, both back when the original e-mail was posted as well as within the last few weeks, to contribute store names, locations, owners, etc., I never would have been able to accurately update this list.

And if it's not perfect, then it's only a reflection of me; however, to all who helped me in this endeavor, I offer my sincerest appreciation.

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Byrd School, which was a little more than a stone's throw or two from the 'Rock', was the elementary school I attended, and our teachers were always fielding questions about how the 'Rock' got to be where it was.

Under their tutelage, I learned that Glen Rock was named for the 570-ton boulder (other than that number being an unverifiable good guess, how that came to be its accepted tonnage I'll never know), and this rock was commonly referred to by our teachers as a glacier erratic. It was carried along on a bed of ice that moved through our area during an Ice Age that occurred about 18-20,000 years ago. It was deposited in its present location as the temperature warmed and the ice bed receded.

The Lenni-Lenapi Indians, I was told, named the rock, Pamackapuka, which meant 'Stone from Heaven'. We were taught the rock served these Delaware Indians as a base for signal fires and as a meeting place for their various tribes. The rock was later used as a trail marker for colonists. It was also the sight of various attempts by some of your fellow classmates to reach its apex, but I'll save that story (and whether we ever succeeded) for another time.

The Native Americans would have been proud of the fact that Byrd School had a tradition of including their sacred place in our Halloween parade. There was a ritual at our school to march from our school on down Doremus Avenue to Rock Road, encircle the 'Rock', and triumphantly parade back. I can only imagine had the Indians ever been in attendance what they would

have thought of our vain attempt at being decked out in various Indian warrior and princess costumes, as well as the assorted soldier and cowboy garb - all the while wearing masks and carrying colorful orange pumpkin treat baskets.

I doubt the Native Americans who inhabited the area ever envisioned a town developing between two future railroad tracks. The town was a nice collection of stores and offices contained within a two block area, and after being appreciatively aided, corrected, and advised by many who have written me (and to whom I am completely indebted), here's the final listing of stores that existed in our beloved town of Glen Rock in the late 1940's and '50s.

Starting from the north side of the street from the 'Rock' and going in a U-turn pattern, here's the best listing of stores I could devise -

Leone's Lumber (before the fire in June of 1956) - later a Grand Union opened as part of a new, two store complex with the lumber part in the far back parking lot area and the hardware section in the front, but attached to a new Grand Union.

- railroad tracks – Main Line

Dr. Janowitz's dental office - faced the tracks

Smith and Sons Insurance and then Glen Rock Savings & Loan - moved from across the street on the corner of Main Street and opened in this location in the 50s

Irv's Food Bar - see below for Irv's new location

Dom's Shoe Repair

doorway to upstairs apartments (Mr. Hawkins, my sixth grade teacher, lived there for a time)

Lou's Beauty Parlor

Varsity Cleaners

Grand Union - later divided into two stores (maybe 1956 or '57), Rock Ridge Pharmacy on the left and a new Irv's eatery on the right

- parking and driveway -

Longson's Citi-Service Station - Boy Scouts had our Christmas tree sale there

Newcombe's Gulf Service Station

Stately's Barber Shop around the corner from the gas station on Glen Avenue

- Glen Avenue -

Glen Rock Sea Food

B&M Shoes (then a jewelry store)

Glen Rock Pet Store - owned by Carmine Mennella and Leroy Waldron and home to our beloved chimpanzee, J. Fred Muggs

Glen Town Apparel (Valerie Plumb's mother's exquisite dress shop before it relocated to South Maple near Harristown Road – 2nd floor)

Myra's gift store

Center Deli

Rock Ridge Pharmacy (moved to old Grand Union building (1956 or '57) - maybe the location of 'The Oven')

Glen Rock Book and Toy Shop (2nd floor)

Artmore Paint and Wallpaper

Glen Rock Shoe Store

Ridgewood Employment Agency (2nd floor)

Oriental Rug & Trading Company

- driveway to parking (also accessible from Valley Road) -

Art Tone Camera Shop (store location has been offered up by numerous people to have been on either side of the driveway – take your pick; painted on the wall on the left side of the building was the word 'coiffure', finally it became the law office for Andrew Meara after moving from across the street. He serviced many of our parents in wills and real estate proceedings.)

Hoitsma's Bakery

- Valley Road -

Flying 'A' service station, later renamed Getty

- railroad tracks – Bergen Line

The stores on the south side of Rock Road heading west were:

Peoples' Trust - it was pink - pink!!! Remember that? How could anyone forget!

Phyllis's Beauty Parlor, later Beekmans - a liquor store

Francis's Deli

Russell's Market (butcher)

Glen Rock Sweet Shoppe - owned by the Sher's

Don Fell Laundry

Excel Cleaners - owned by the Betterbed's

Rock Hardware

Castle Amoco gas station

- Glen Avenue - AMICA Mutual Insurance Company behind the Glen Rock Inn and across from the new Post Office site after it relocated from Main Street.

Glen Rock Inn

Glen Rock Bakery - owned by the Lehman's

Glen Rock Appliance - owned by Frank Viscardis

A&P Liquors – formerly an ‘A&P’ store

Town Deli

Jeanne Mackenzie Clothes

Glen Rock Pharmacy

Mandee

AJ Grand Five & Dime

Kavner's - old bowling alley downstairs; pin boys were employed

Betty Laine dress shop

Laura Alice Beauty Salon

Glen Rock Hardware

Dad and Lad Shop

Grasskamp's Butcher Shop - a big butcher block counter was located in the middle of the store, sawdust on the floor, remember that? ‘Grasekamp’ and ‘Grazenkamp’ have been offered as alternative spellings.

Glen Rock Wine and Liquor

Raynor Door Company

Cases Electric and Gift Shop

Schuring Insurance and Realty Company - after the GR S&L relocated across the street

John Kinney's Barber Shop - around the corner on Main Street

U.S. Post Office next to barber shop (remember the man without a nose) - PO eventually moved to the corner of West Plaza and Glen Avenue

- railroad tracks –

Erie train station (later Erie Lackawanna), parking lot, three houses, and then our beloved 'Rock' - which, by the way, is actually on Doremus Avenue, not Rock Road.

I also must make note that within our little downtown area we had six gas stations (six!) - four in town as mentioned and two on Maple Avenue behind city hall, a Humble (then Esso, then Exxon) on the corner of Rock and Maple and White's Gulf on South Maple, which was attached to a pass-through parking lot with Kilroy's Wonder Market on Rock Road.

Kilroy's was originally in a store to the left of White's Gulf Station on Maple Avenue. After its new store was built facing Rock Road, the old store housed an Italian-pizza type of place, and then was home to the PBA for awhile, and a policeman lived upstairs in an apartment. I have no recollection of those things, but the information came from reliable sources.

I realize you may be wondering why I did all this, but I thought it would be nice to have an index of where we bought our comic books, purchased our sweets, ordered our birthday cakes, and otherwise tagged along with our parents who shopped for trade goods and other essential services that established a life of memories for us.

I hope you agree.

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The Gravity of the Situation -

Sometimes as I sit at the computer writing out these e-mails about what I remember concerning my childhood in Glen Rock, it's hard for me to reflect back and imagine that once upon a time I was little. I mean little, little. Let me explain.

I had a sandbox in my backyard. I can only assume my father built it for my sister, Carol, who is three years older than I am, but I don't remember her every using it. I think she may have tired of me tossing sand all around as little boys (especially me) are wont to do. Nevertheless, as far as I was concerned, it was my sandbox, unlike the swing my dad had hung from a tree branch. Now that was a shared toy - shared in the sense that Carol was gracious enough to put me on the swing when I was too short to climb on by myself and, sometimes, since my feet barely touched the ground, she'd push the swing for me to get it going.

I can recall yelling 'higher, higher', as every kid does, but I'd like to digress for just a minute. In later years, I came to respect that the true king of high flying on a swing was Alan Furler. No one, and I sincerely mean this, no one was more of a daredevil on a swing than Alan. The swings at the Goffle Brook Park in Hawthorne (the ones near the Boys Club and close to where we sometimes went sledding) were massive, and he used every inch of those chain links to soar as high as the birds - sometimes swinging past being horizontal with the attachment bar. He was fearless. I just hope he doesn't scare his grandchildren with how high he likes to swing!

In any case, back to the sandbox. I liked to dig. By the way, the sandbox wasn't actually a box with a bottom, but more of a foot-high, wooden-bordered container that enclosed the sand, and if I dug down a bit too much, I'd hit dirt. Like I said, I liked to dig and one day when I was really going at it and digging a bit too deep to get more sand to add to the sandcastle I was building, my dad questioned whether I was digging a hole to China, and if I was, would I please do it on the other side of the stone wall that separated our property from the open woods. What a revelation! I never thought anyone could actually dig their way to China.

Of course, I can no longer remember my verbal response to him, but I know I ran and got a shovel that was bigger than I was - a real shovel, not a sandbox shovel -and climbed over the low retaining wall, and started to dig -

really dig. And for a little boy, I dug a pretty large hole - well, it seemed really big, at least to me. It was probably no more than four feet deep (three is probably more like it, maybe just two - who knows), but I was well on my way to getting some wonton soup! At least that's what I thought.

It saddens me to tell you what you already know - I never made it to China. It's not that I didn't try, but at the dinner table later that night I was told it wasn't going to happen - that if I continued to dig, it was impossible to dig straight down and wind up in China. I was shown on a globe that if I had dug down far enough, I wouldn't have found my way to China, but rather I'd wind up in the middle of an ocean. Okay, the proverbial light bulb went off in my head - an ocean, even better!

I'm glad I don't remember much of being really little because I was pretty stupid, but I was smart enough to know my mother wouldn't have wanted an ocean bubbling up through a hole in her backyard, even if I did - seriously, she wouldn't have.

What confounded me the most about examining the globe, however, was that I couldn't understand why people on the other side of the world weren't falling off the Earth. I mean really - I couldn't understand it. If I could balance a toy soldier on the top of the globe, but I couldn't get one to stay on the bottom, why wouldn't people fall off, too? I was beginning to be glad that I lived on top of the world, literally.

Ideas were expressed, theories offered, and explanations given, but to this little four-five year old boy, all he wanted to do was to get to China to find out for himself - and from a hole he had begun to dig. But the dream was never realized.

Later, the hole was enlarged, but not for a route to China, but widened for a fire pit of sorts. My dad burned leaves in it. Remember when burning autumn leaves was permitted? Now we mulch or recycle them - or do both.

Aided by a little lighter fluid (whatever happened to all those Zippo lighters?), our front yard leaves were burned in a pile on the street and the backyard leaves were put ablaze in a pit - my 'hole to China' pit. And for the most part, we followed the old Boy Scout canon of waiting until four o'clock in the afternoon to start the burning. Supposedly, that's the time of day when it's less likely to be windy. As I got older, I came to realize that four o'clock

was about the time we finished raking, but, hey, there was that Boy Scout rule.

I believe it was in the early to mid-fifties when an ordinance was passed outlawing the burning of leaves, but I'll leave the exact timeline for others to decide. Besides, the no burning ordinance left more time to romp and play and to cover your body in a beautiful pile of colorful leaves. What was more fun than that? I always liked the unkempt look of leaves in people's hair.

As for gravity, I've come to accept something I truly don't understand. I'll just leave it to knowing that when my neighbors on the other side of the world were very little they were looking at a globe and also wondering why they weren't falling off the Earth. They probably wished that they, too, could have lived in Glen Rock - maybe even next door to a neighbor who if he had kept digging might have had an ocean in his backyard!

Times have changed just like my understanding of gravity. Whatever bewilderment I may have had as a child concerning my attempt to understand gravity certainly pales in comparison to experiencing the personal reality of gravity as I go through the aging process in my 60s.

I prefer bewilderment to reality!

Thanks again for allowing me to enter your e-mail time and space.

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Just A Second -

After my 'Gravity of the Situation' e-mail, a classmate wrote and told me she thought that what was even better than playing in a pile of dry leaves was climbing the big oak tree in her front yard and sitting there while looking out on the world below. That got me to thinking.

My first thought (other than how peaceful and serene that must have been) was that boys and girls in a tree were certainly different. While a boy would certainly climb a tree and even sit for a moment (more to catch his breath and to survey how high up he was than to look out on the world for any length of time), he'd be climbing all around and going as high as he could, even swaying the top of the tree as though a hurricane was pounding on it. He'd be trying to shake the branches enough to break loose every last stubborn leaf that remained on the tree.

For me, at least, climbing trees and building tree houses (more like forts) was a great pastime, as was, sadly, sometimes falling out of one. I have no hard statistics to back me up, but I believe the ratio between a boy verses a girl falling out of a tree must be close to ten million to one.

And when falling, if some boy didn't make it all the way to the ground when he fell, then at least as he bounced from branch to branch before grabbing on to one to save his dear life, he experienced what it felt like to be a steel ball in a pinball machine.

Falling out of trees led me to a second memory on gravity. Remember in Mr. Hollinger's physics class, when he did this little experiment wherein he's holding a golf ball and a hardball and asked if he dropped them out the window, which would hit the ground first - the heavier one or the lighter one.

Now we had been exposed to this question earlier in our schooling, but we still all ran to the windows to watch Mr. Hollinger conduct his little experiment and, of course, the two differently sized balls hit the ground at the same time. He then asked if anyone knew how fast they were going before they hit.

As I recollect, no one did, but you may recall Mr. Hollinger continued on and stated that if you drop an object on earth, gravity will increase its speed

by 32 feet per second every second. Thus after one second it will fall at a speed of 32 feet per second, and after two seconds its speed will be 64 feet per second, and so forth and so on (confused yet?). He said that gravity is accelerating the object at 32 feet per second per second, or, more concisely, 32 feet per second squared. Mr. Hollinger related that particular number of 32 is due to the mass of the earth and its radius and is just an approximation.

Naturally, it wasn't as simple as that. If you remember, the objects weren't moving when Mr. Hollinger started, so in the first second the balls went from zero to 32, or on average 16 feet in the first second. You know how you can understand something, but not truly understand it. That's me and gravity. I understood what Mr. Hollinger was saying, but I never truly got it. And don't even get me started on terminal velocity!

Gravity is as close to reality as I'll ever get, and that's a lot to grasp for a little boy who wanted to dig his way to China.

Not surprisingly, my degrees are in Special Education. It's a perfect fit for me! And for those of you with backgrounds in advanced science and engineering, you have my utmost respect - and for more than just a second.

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Beaten to a Pulp -

It's strange what you remember. You know what it's like - bits and pieces from your past flow in and out of your consciousness like the flicker from a dying light bulb. You want the images to last, stay lit, and be bright in your memory bank, but you know that's not going to happen.

One of those fading memories popped into my mind just now and it has to do with my elementary classmates Larry Gsell and Jack McGill. Although there was no WWF to model ourselves after, there were times after school during our free time when we wrestled - more like horseplay, but we thought of it as wrestling.

The strongest memory of wrestling was being on Jack's front lawn, probably because we wrestled there more than once. It would always be two against one - their two against my one. It was always friendly, always mindful not to hurt or be hurt, but our antics were still very competitive and combative.

For some strange reason - and for those of you who have been on the short end once or twice will know this to be true - sometimes it's far easier being the one than part of the two. You get to play one opponent off the other. Of course, with those odds, you rarely win (although it did happen on occasion), yet you're always amazed at how long you lasted before calling 'Uncle' - and you always went for a rematch.

I'm not sure why I was picked to be the one - maybe it was an early growth spurt on my part that pitted my brawn against theirs; however, for whatever reason of why it occurred, when you're a boy trying to prove yourself against all odds, having that kind of reputation was undeniably the best thing to have.

With that said, and to totally change the subject of this e-mail, yesterday, I found myself standing in front of the refrigerator section of the supermarket staring at all the varieties of orange juice. Luckily, I wasn't in anyone's way, because like my e-mail writing, I do my grocery shopping very early in the morning. Being a morning person, and retired, does have its advantages.

Anyway, as I stood there looking at the various containers of orange juice - organic or not, I didn't see any ready-to-drink cartons that just said orange

juice - plain, simple, ordinary, orange juice. I only saw containers that were labeled with an array of words trying to convey that the juice in some manner or another contained a little pulp, a large amount of pulp, or was pulp free. When they come out with one stamped all pulp, I'm there.

While stationed there looking at my many choices, I found myself reflecting back to when I was little and remembering how my mother squeezed oranges to make juice for me in the morning. Now, I didn't have freshly squeezed orange juice every day - mainly because it was time consuming and took quite a few oranges, especially if everybody in the family was having juice, even when drinking it from those little juice glasses. If it had been served in a regular sized glass, I can just imagine how many oranges it would have taken if everyone was getting a dose of vitamin C.

Back in our time, oranges were kept at room temperature to keep them soft. And just before juicing, they were often softened even more (usually my job) by rolling them around on the counter with a palm pushed down on them or by squeezing and compacting them like a snowball, thus breaking the bond between the skin and the orange.

What I recall most about this simple juicing process (other than its great taste) was that once the orange juice was strained into a glass, my mother would allow me to run my finger around the edge of the strainer and scoop out whatever pulp was left.

When I was in my mother's company, there were only two times I can think of when I was permitted to lick my fingers - salvaging the orange pulp from the strainer was obviously one, and sampling leftover cake frosting from a mixing bowl was the other. When she wasn't around, I'm pretty sure I licked my fingers a lot. Oops, there were three times - when ice cream ran down the cone and onto my fingers, but who's counting.

There were hardly any seeds to contend with since my mother would pick them out after cutting the orange in half. Sometimes she would scrape the inside of the orange after she was done straining it and would put the leftover pulp in my glass or spoon it out for me. It goes without saying that moms are the best, especially mine.

What I found interesting in previous e-mail postings is that some of you remembered having frozen pizza at home. Of course, as mentioned, I never

did, but the fact that it was frozen was of some interest to me. Our old refrigerator's freezer (pre-1953 - before our new, 1941 house's kitchen was remodeled) would have been too small to accommodate a full-size pizza, let alone its box.

And thinking back to our old refrigerator, other than ice cubes and ice cream, I don't remember too many things in our freezer that were frozen, but there was that newcomer seeking an honored place in our Frigidaire - frozen, concentrated orange juice. It was so easy to make (after running hot water on the part cardboard/part can container, anyway) and so plentiful that once the switch was made from squeezing fresh oranges to utilizing frozen concentrate, I can recall sneaking a full-sized glass of it now and again - but only when the pitcher was full.

I haven't sampled the frozen variety in years and years, and I haven't had freshly squeezed orange juice in such a long time I fear I might not like it now since I prefer my orange juice chilled rather than at room temperature. And would I still be allowed to scoop out the leftover pulp from the strainer - I'm afraid not.

As for my favorite store bought type, don't get me started on the pulp-free kind. I'm hoping the rest of you like it that way, for that gives the orange growers more pulp to deposit into my mostly pulp container. And I see the word 'reconstituted' on some of the juice cartons, too, but I don't like the sound of it so I don't buy that type, even though it's made from frozen concentrate but in a ready-to-drink container.

Oranges were once used as a preventative for getting scurvy, but that's not a concern nowadays. As for additives and I'm not sure why it is, but some orange producers proclaim having added calcium and/or vitamins to their juice or it being low in acid. Boy, times have changed from when an orange was just an orange.

Oh, and if you really want to see how much times have changed, go stand in front of the toothpaste aisle and survey what's there. For Crest toothpaste alone, I easily counted over 20 different varieties - over 20! One, I believe, was labeled 'Nighttime'. Then, of course, that begs the question, "What would you use come morning?" I didn't see any toothpaste entitled 'Morning'. And there were more flavors than you could shake a stick at - three cinnamon flavored ones alone and too many mint varieties to count!

And while I don't know what difference it makes, but for me growing up, everyone in our house shared toothpaste tubes (my parents shared one, and my sister and I shared another) - nowadays doesn't everyone have their own? I know I do.

And now that I think about it, I wonder if they make an orange juice flavored kind. I'll have to look the next time I go to the store.

Oh, and do you remember learning in school that orange is one of the three names for a color that has no rhyming words? Can you recall the other two color words?

And if you can't, then I hope you don't threaten to beat me to a pulp.

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My Building Blocks of Life -

When I was little - let's say up to and including my elementary school years - I had fun building things. My train set was on a table in the corner of our basement and I spent hours configuring and reconfiguring that, and when I was upstairs in the living room, I could be found sprawled out on the floor with various construction sets.

I truly wish my memory was better than it is at this moment, because although my plastic blocks functioned a lot like Legos, I can no longer remember the name of the building block set, or should I say sets. And the only reason I doubt the blocks were Legos is because I sense they weren't - you know what I mean, when you have that certain feeling when you believe you're right, but not in that positive, know-it-all kind of way.

Anyhow, I spent hours upon hours with those plastic blocks - building, changing, demolishing, and then rebuilding things to my satisfaction. Whenever I was called away from my masterpieces for dinner, bedtime, etc., I was allowed to keep them intact as long as I cleared the area and put away any leftover pieces.

My mother liked an uncluttered look in the living room, but knew how important my projects were to me. She also knew that as soon as I was completely done with whatever I was building, I would put the blocks back in their containers. I wasn't a neat-freak; I just knew what was expected of me.

And I used the word container because not all the blocks came in boxes. Some came in cardboard cylinders with large, tin, screw-on caps. These cylinders were great because they could be easily tucked under my arm and made traveling with them wherever we went a breeze.

My favorite project, not shown on any of the instruction booklets, was building tall, marble-chute towers, some with as many as four possible exits. I loved doing that - and loved hearing the clickity-clack sound the marble made as it wound its way down through the tower. I entitled my favorite one-exit tower the 'magic chute' because if you dropped in a white marble, a red marble would come out. Naturally, when you dropped the red marble in, the white marble came out, but I thought it was a pretty cool trick. If I had

more blocks, I could have built it as high as the ceiling with even more staging areas, but it was still pretty neat for an eight year old to do. At least, my parents thought so - building the chute, not wanting it to go to the ceiling!

Going way back, even before starting school, my first building set was, of course, Lincoln logs. They were fun, and a good time-occupier, but the logs didn't offer the same building flexibility as the plastic blocks. Looking back, I also believe that gluing some of logs together to make bridges was not the greatest of ideas, but I was little and wanted what I wanted with no thought given to the consequences. Unfortunately, a few pieces wound up damaged (regrettably they were the longer, more desirable logs) because of my momentary flashes of unconventional creativity.

Erector sets were great fun, too, especially the ones that came with motors. My most ambitious project was building a huge Ferris wheel with six swinging chairs and it is a particularly strong memory of mine. I even remember my dad coming home from work and getting down on the floor to help me. It was very, very labor intensive and days, if not weeks, were spent on that one. Well, maybe not weeks, but, in any event, I think my toy soldiers loved going round and round on that ride.

And while I relished every tedious moment I spent bolting the pieces of the Ferris wheel together, I found taking the contraption apart so boring I believe it dampened my enthusiasm for playing with my erector set very often.

All in all, the plastic blocks were what I used the most - easy up and even easier coming down. And even though I outgrew playing with the Lincoln logs fairly quickly, I believe all those building sets served me pretty well. They gave me a great appreciation of time and space, of what could and couldn't be accomplished, and a good understanding of the difference between work and play. And some of my projects took a lot of work!

And now - thank you to those who recalled the non-rhyming color words of silver and purple to go along with my aforementioned orange. And thanks to those who also offered up obscure rhyming words that would have been unknown to this one-time, little elementary school boy who paid attention to his teachers.

Thanks, too, for the reminder about using a pot or a pan filled with hot, boiling water to defrost those old, little refrigerator freezers. Do you remember that sometimes, if you waited too long before defrosting them, the ice buildup would be so great you couldn't get the ice trays out!

And I don't know where all of you grew up or what sights you may have seen when you were little, but I can recall visiting relatives in the Jersey City and seeing horse-drawn ice carts (seriously, horse-drawn carts) on some of the streets. I remember the iceman getting out and grabbing an ice block (which was about the size of two shoeboxes) with a large two-prong device and slinging it over his shoulder. As I recall, his shoulder was protected by a fitted, padded piece of what looked like leather or rubber.

My parents told me the blocks were for an 'ice box' some people still had, and after it was explained to me what an ice box was, it made me glad we had a refrigerator, even one with a very small freezer. It also clarified why my parents sometimes referred to our refrigerator as an ice box - and here I thought it was because it contained the ice cube trays.

Thanks, too, for again letting me invade your time and space with thoughts of what seems, at times, like just yesterday.

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A Kodak Moment -

You may think with a title like that I'm interested in finding a picture or two from my past - just the contrary. Not being very photogenic (I try my best to stay out of reunion photos), some pictures are best left tucked away, but I am curious to know what became of all those 'photo-booth' pictures. You know the ones I'm talking about - those strips of four conjoined photos with the odd, tortured, or funny-faced poses we were inclined to make whenever we were in those booths.

Now, to be honest, guys, you and I both know we were never allowed to keep the pictures, not that we ever wanted them. And if memory serves, whenever we were out with a girl and had our picture taken (by the way, I believe that was only time I was ever in one of those booths), I don't think we were ever allowed to touch the photos once they streamed out of the processing unit. The girls seemed to think of those pictures as our unspoken gift to them.

We could laugh at the photos, wish they were never taken, make comments to ourselves like "OMG, I hope no one ever sees these!" - but be allowed to keep them, heck, no.

In the beginning, when sitting in the booth, there was a slight learning curve involved. Initially, not knowing the seat was adjustable, the first set of pictures came out making my date and me looking like we were midgets as the seat was too low, but eventually we got it right - not that it mattered, though.

Whether you kept the background white or pulled the curtain around the back to make it dark, the photo quality of those pictures was always minimal at best. I don't know whether they came with a sepia finish or not, but the photos always had an odd look about them - and I'm not talking about the 'deer in headlights' phenomenon coming the participants either.

By the way, those four monochromatic photographs cost a lot more than the stated twenty-five cents price - oh, yes, they did. What was your humility worth?

Nowadays, with the powerful nature of Facebook and MySpace enabling your image to be splattered around the world, imagine if at the time when we

were teenagers those inch and half by eight inch strips of black and white photographic paper were posted on the Internet for all to see. Yeah, now you're thinking what I'm thinking. Does ignominy come to mind? Does embarrassment beyond belief ring true?

Of course, at this moment you're probably wondering what in the world did David do in those booths. Nothing really - and, if given a chance to now revisit those insane photo-strip poses again, I would most assuredly be the one laughing the loudest. But ask yourself - did anyone ever go into those booths with the intention of taking a normal picture? And if you did, then what happened?

Put your thinking-memory cap on for a just moment and reflect back to your being in one of those booths. What I'm not referring to are those simple, goofy, posturing pictures wherein you were sticking your tongue out, or putting two fingers behind someone's head in a devil's pose, or pretending to French kiss someone's ear, but to the crazier and wilder ones. Use your imagination 'cause I'm not going there.

And while those moments in the booth were sometimes a bit outlandish (some maybe even regrettable), they were never as memorable as the three or four minutes of sweet, cuddling time you had with your date while awaiting the processing of the photos. That made the taking of those pictures worthwhile, didn't it? Now that was a Kodak moment if ever there was one, that's for sure.

With regards to my 'Building Blocks of Life' e-mail, I wish to thank those who replied and told me the building blocks I had were 'American Bricks'. Although I knew it to be true the moment I read the name, I never would have come up with that on my own. Old age is setting in pretty quickly, I'm afraid.

I also had 'Tinker Toys' as did many of you, but your experiences with them far outweigh mine. Maybe you had more sets than I had, but while I played with them, I never really got behind the whole idea of Tinker Toys. The larger structures were big and clunky while the smaller ones were not very impressive - just my opinion.

As for the various chemistry set comments, the closest I ever got to one was in an alcove in Mark Schlageter's basement. I may be totally off base with

this recollection, but I believe Mark's dad was a chemist. In any case, Mark's set provided quite a few hours of great entertainment.

John's Sheldon's critique of his experience with a pharmacist thinking he wanted ingredients to make gunpowder may be the reason why my parents never bought me a chemistry set. And they would have been right.

In passing, John, what did you want those ingredients for, anyway?

I wish I had experienced an 'ice box' like some of you had. And I appreciated the comments about how you recalled the 'junk man' coming around in the city in his wagon, and the fruits and vegetable man, and the coal man, too. Thanks for sharing those memories.

My sister passed along one to me that no one else mentioned and that was the 'scissors and knife sharpener man'. She said we had one in Glen Rock, too, but I don't recall ever seeing him. I must have been intently playing with my 'American Bricks' whenever he rang the bell.

Oh, and I found out from your replies I wasn't the only one who was building marble chutes. And here I am thinking I was the only creative, inventive little boy in Glen Rock - silly me!

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Social Security -

While I may be reluctant to admit to reaching a milestone that was once reserved for my parents and grandparents, it's not the benefits of the government's social security plan I had in mind when I thought of starting this e-mail.

Over the years I have made mention of having two left feet, and, yet, as many of you now know, I have sent out more than my fair share of postings related to our dance activities. From the most recent one recalling our graduation dance in the 'An Affair to Remember' (bought back to life by a current picture of last year's dance by Jean Anderson - sorry, Willie, Jean Walker), to recounting in private e-mails to some of you the junior and senior proms with some old photos, through reminiscing about the Y's EMOC and our own school canteens, as well as highlighting the town's summer dances at the parking lot by the city hall railroad tracks, and, of course, the discussions that took place concerning our evening junior high dance lessons for the Lindy, Foxtrot, Cha-cha, and box step.

Oh, and who could forget those square dancing experiences we had during gym class - not me! The first and only time I have made an 'Allemande Left' - although there might be some drivers out there who may disagree with that statement!

What makes all those times so memorable is not the dancing itself, but the fact that we were all together. I loved going to those events even if I didn't actively participate on the dance floor very much.

When you think about school, of course you think about the academics we endured, but don't you also reflect back on the social impact the institution had on you.

I have made mention of how quiet I was in school and I know from the replies that were posted to me it gave some of you the wrong impression. I should have stated that with their acquiescence I was more or less mute whenever the teachers' question and answer sessions were going on, but not so much during our social interaction time. I used the phrase 'more or less' because a lot of people do, but I don't really know what that means in this context or in any other. Let's just say I was a non-verbal communicator in class - more or less.

Now granted, we weren't permitted to talk socially very much during class, yet some still did - and while I don't think anyone abused that privilege, it still put a damper on holding a prolonged conversation. However, there were always bits and pieces of class time wherein communal interaction rather than academics was at the forefront.

Certainly those fleeting minutes before and after class are easy to recall, as were the times our yearbooks were passed out - I don't believe much instructional time took place on that day or even the next in many classrooms, and then, of course, there were the times when some teachers wrapped up their teaching periods early and gave us permission to talk until the bell rang.

Generally, however, my recollection is that classrooms were the place where we saw but rarely spoke to each other. Okay, wait a minute - scratch that. There were gym times, art classes, labs periods, Industrial Arts sessions, etc., where talking didn't seem to be restricted so much as long as the task at hand was being completed, but other than that we were a pretty quiet group when in class.

So when did our real social interaction time occur? Walking to and from school, out in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and outside on the tarmac during lunchtime for sure, but for our main group social interaction activity, it had to be our dances. When you think about it, wasn't it a bold move on the adults' part to put all of us teenagers in one room at the same time.

This morning when I got started thinking about school dances, snippets of recollections not already addressed in other class e-mails came flowing back to me. The most prominent one is our ninth grade graduation dance and I'm surprised I didn't make more of this earlier when writing about our graduation ceremony and its theme of 'a little extra effort'.

The reason I can readily - and I'm reminded of Mr. Hollinger whenever I use that word - remember that dance is because I was so very lucky to go with one of our prettiest classmates - a tall, slender, intellectual beauty if ever there was one. She was so sweet and outclassed me in every way - if she doesn't recall being my date, that's okay for I have enough memories for the both of us.

Another memory of a different junior high dance concerns two of our most popular students who didn't coordinate what they were going to wear (at

least I'm assuming they didn't) and came to the dance both dressed in red. The red of his jacket clashed with the red of her dress, but each of them was having such a good time, I don't believe it mattered.

There was also a little bit of controversy preceding one of our junior high dances when one of our cheerleaders asked a high school sports star to be her date. And other than not being the one chosen to accompany her to the dance, I saw nothing wrong with her doing that. Anyone should be able to invite whomever they'd like; however, if memory serves, I believe Mr. Schneider may have intervened and vetoed that idea. The young man was so tall I think I would have remembered him actually being at the dance, but I'll let others come to my rescue on that one.

Another dance I can recall attending was held in the school cafeteria. It was not school sponsored, however, but rather a Boy Scout event. The reason it stands out in my memory is not because of any fabulous dance moves on my part (naturally), but because I won the door prize. Hard to forget something like that, especially when it was an actual door - an old, white screen door in desperate need of painting. Seems funny now, but back then I wasn't amused. My date, however, received a bottle of Chanel No. 5 and thought she had gone to heaven. My aromatic memory of her lasted through to the next morning!

And who could forget an impromptu rendition of 'Lollipop, Lollipop' performed by a couple of our girls at one of the dances. That was lolli, lolli, lollipop-priceless.

Now that I've had time to think about it, I may actually have been on the receiving end of getting social security benefits for most of my young life, too.

Thanks again for allowing me to share my recollections once more. I realize many of them are trivial and my writings a bit silly, as well as being ungrammatical at times, but I like sharing them with you anyway. Sometime I'll try writing later in the day when I'm more awake and had more caffeine.

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Social Security - follow-up

When discussing junior high dances in my last e-mail, I forgot to mention the experience I had in picking out a corsage for the ninth grade graduation dance. Of course I had purchased corsages before, but since my date was really special, and I wanted to get her something nice, I went to the florist by the southwest corner of East Ridgewood and Maple Avenues in Ridgewood rather than to the one on Goffle Road in Hawthorne.

In chatting with the florist about my choices of flowers, the option of having either a pin-on corsage or one of the new wristband ones came up. I went - WHEW, no choice there! I never liked being the bumbling idiot attempting to correctly attach a pin-on corsage nor did I like relinquishing my self-imposed duty to my date's mother, although that was highly preferable to making a fool out of myself.

I doubt Chris d'Elia realized why my smile was so big when she opened the box and looked at the wrist corsage, but I knew.

By the way, Chris wrote and gave me permission to use her name. Some of you had it right and some of you guessed incorrectly. I believe I used tall, as well as smart and beautiful, in describing the girl I escorted to our ninth grade graduation dance.

Since Janice Morton is not in our class, I'll tell you it was she who got the real door prize at the Boy Scout dance. The bottle of Chanel No. 5 was so big I wonder if she still has any of it left.

I haven't heard from the classmate who invited Ron Duncan to one of our junior high dances, so I won't reveal who that was, although some of you guessed correctly. Now that I think about it, since you remembered who it was, it wasn't a guess, now was it?

At one of our dances, Sue Fleming was the girl in the red dress, and if Chris de Burgh was in our class back then, Sue could have been the inspiration for his song 'Lady in Red', for, as I picture it in my mind's eye, she fit those lyrics to a 'T'.

The suave Tom Aitken (by the way, he'd never admit to being suave, but I know better) was the handsome guy in the red sport coat. He wrote and said there was a long story pertaining to that red coat and I'm eager to hear it at

our next reunion. I'll remind you, Tom. Remember, people tell me I have a good memory.

Oh, both Sue and Tom gave me permission to use their names.

The beautiful blond classmate who sang her rendition of 'Lollipop, Lollipop' at one of our dances is on our 'Lost Souls' list so I don't want to mention who it was until she's 'Found', but for those of you with good memories, it's the same gorgeous girl who, in eighth grade for St. Patrick's Day, dyed her hair half orange, half green. I hope that helps bring back a memory or two.

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Uniformity –

When growing up, didn't you just love the uniformity we all had? I mean really – wasn't it the greatest thing? We did so many things together.

I know I couldn't get enough of it. In fact, if you want to know the truth, I relished it - I really did. Whenever I reflect back on my youthful time in Glen Rock, there isn't an instance when I think about all those good times I spent with many of you when it doesn't bring a smile to my face.

Granted, some of you were so much more engrossed with the aspect of uniformity (really, you were) than I was and took every opportunity to experience it fully – way beyond what I did to fit in anywhere, especially a few of the girls who had an opportunity I didn't have, but I'll do my best to quickly cover what I remember about my own experiences.

My first exposure to uniformity came in the third grade with the Cub Scouts. My mother thought I looked sooo cute in my navy blue uniform (you knew the titles for my e-mails were always half a bubble off of plumb, right?). Anyway, I liked the fact that the scout pants didn't have cuffs. I'm guessing the no-cuff thing was a staple of the uniform because then leaves and other debris from our gallivanting through the woods couldn't get lodged as unwanted souvenirs in our pant legs, but other than that I haven't a clue as to why that was.

And thanks to my mom, the orange triangular neckerchief with its blue border was always crisp and perfect, thus enabling it to be tucked so neatly under my collar. With all the activities we participated in, I am surprised the metal gold-tone slide never unintentionally slipped off – at least mine never did. And who could forget the navy blue web belt with its shiny buckle. Besides your shoes, just one more thing you needed to keep polished.

Adding patches as you progressed from Tiger Cub to Wolf Cub to Bear Cub and finally to Webelos definitely made our uniform pop. I'm assuming the term 'Cub' Scout came from those designations and was in name only, for the insignia we wore above our right shirt pocket said 'Boy Scouts of America' - don't know why that was, either.

I am totally indebted to Rob Hoogs' mom for being a great den mother and for teaching me the skills that not only made me a good Cub Scout, but for

my later use of those learned skills. As a Boy Scout, I became a Den Chief for Mrs. Hennessey's den – and loved every minute of it.

Following closely to this Cub Scout time period was the acquisition of my first Little League uniform. My father (a huge Yankee fan) must have thought I was a future MLB player in the making for I remember we went shopping for a new glove. I think we could have waited a bit since it turned out I was not a stellar ball player. My catching was pretty good, but I believe my batting average could have used a number higher than zero immediately after the decimal point.

My full-fledged Boy Scout uniform came next and other than a change in color nothing in the design or function differed much from the Cub attire. The only addition was a merit badge sash. If memory serves with regard to badges, I think Art Smith's accomplishments could have warranted him having two! Oh, yeah, and hiking boots. Mr. Young, our scout master, took us on took some great hikes, didn't he, guys?

The hike I remember best is one to Bear Fort (?). Not quite sure of the name (besides what would a bear need a fort for in the first place), but the trail was in the vicinity of a lake, I remember that - and what was most memorable about that hike was that we got to climb a fire tower - and the views, needless to say, were spectacular.

I know in another class e-mail I touched on Camp Yaw Paw and the fun our Troop had there, but at camp we got to wear shorts, along with knee-high socks. And that now reminds me of an incident I'm going to bore you with. No, not about Boy Scout Camp, but about a trip my family took to Florida in 1953.

We were staying in Ft. Lauderdale right by the Bahia Mar Harbor where all the beautiful boats, or should I say yachts, were docked. I think some of them were bigger than my house. Anyway, picture this – as I'm sitting along the waterway in a lounge chair by my sister, out into the Florida sun comes my dad wearing a beautiful, light-colored, pastel flowered shirt, white Bermuda shorts, and a white Captain's hat!

Now don't get me wrong here, my dad looked pretty dapper – remember, this was 1953 - but what made the incident so incredibly memorable was he

also had on his over-the-calf socks with accompanying garter straps and tie-on dress shoes. Oh, and should I mention a black belt.

And although my mother did talk him into getting sandals, I don't think my dad ever wore the flowered shirt outside the state of Florida, but the Captain's hat was a staple of his for quite a few years after that. He wore it to death while working in the summer sun in the yard or painting the house. Maybe his being a naval architect had something to do with it, but I sincerely don't know. I just know my mother wouldn't let him wear it in public – at least outside the state of Florida.

Next up in my uniformity saga was a soccer outfit, a track uniform, and, for those who read my 'Mane Attraction' e-mail and saw the pictures, a football uniform.

I'm sure I missed other examples of uniformity somewhere along the way, but, on a somewhat more serious side, having totally mastered doing a cartwheel on my front lawn (thanks to my sister), and being able to do back flips off the diving board, I do think, if I had wanted to do so, I should have been allowed the opportunity to try my hand at cheerleading.

I'm not sure how that uniform would have looked on me, although it was certainly very becoming on those who did wear them.

And as far as being thankful for certain things when I was growing up, I am glad, in a way, there weren't computers and air conditioning in our homes in the 50s because I never would have been outside as much as I was.

And so that leads me to my favorite uniform – and that was whatever I was wearing when I was having fun playing with the kids who lived in my neighborhood.

You have all left me with so many good memories – and I truly cherish the uniformity in all of that.

Thanks for letting me ramble once again.

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Uniformity reply –

Boy, I'm glad I went to school with people whose memories are better than mine!

In regards to the Boy Scout hike, 'Bear Fort', I have been told, is one word (Bearfort), not two, and the lake I think I remember seeing off in the distance has been suggested to be Greenwood Lake, but Wawayanda Lake has also been mentioned. Since I don't recall ever hearing of the latter one, I'm torn between guessing which lake it was.

Greenwood Lake has a connection to my past since it was there that I learned to water ski - or should I say, where I learned to fall off water skis with abandon, but since the lake I'm picturing in my mind was very far away (as in over there way, way, yonder), the second lake, Wawayander is a good choice, too, don't you think?

So to be fair to everyone, maybe I saw two lakes on that hiking day and only remember seeing one. Heck, it was over 50 years ago!

As for wearing uniforms, I am pleased it triggered so many good memories for some of you. And for those of you who thought I should have experienced the navy blue style worn at our Catholic school, you can't believe how many times my parents threatened me with 'If you don't shape up, David, you're going to St. Catherine's!' Well, then again, maybe you can.

And as mentioned in one of my replies to a classmate, I guess my navy blue Cub Scouts pants would have seen more activity if I had been sent there.

Also, while I'd like to thank all who replied, I'm at a loss to make something out of those of you who thought I would have looked good in a cheerleader's uniform. Back when we were in school I definitely would have thought that comment was meant as a cut, but now that I've aged a bit, I truly think it was meant as a compliment. Age does have its privileges, right?

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Was that a Drag, or What!

I love it when one of your replies to a class e-mail of mine triggers another memory I have about growing up in Glen Rock.

In a recent class e-mail, I questioned what lake I must have seen on a Boy Scout hiking trip our troop took one Saturday morning. That brought a few responses and a few answers.

What it also brought was an unrelated e-mail from a classmate about our early years in junior high and a hitch-hiking trip the two of us took one hot, summer day to Budd Lake. The reason it was eventful was not because we went there, but because on the way back to Glen Rock I needed to phone home to let my parents know I would be late for dinner.

Hitch-hiking our way out to Budd Lake early in the morning was relatively easy - or at least that's how I remember it, but darn if we could get picked up headed east on Route 46 late in the afternoon, and this was on the rural part of 46, not the congested, shopping center part.

Maybe it was because we looked neat and tidy on our way out, but a bit tired and disheveled on the way home. I don't know, but it was disconcerting - and, no, not just for having wet bathing suits on under our clothes, but for having to endure an interrogation later that night as to why I went. To paraphrase a line from a popular TV show from that era - "You've got a lot of 'splaining to do, David."

At this point in my life, I can no longer think of the reason why we ventured out to Budd Lake that day (other than it was there - or maybe it was because of a girl or two, who knows), but suffice it to say, it was a terrific adventure and I'd do it all over again - that is, if I ever find myself being 13 again!

Speaking of which, while I didn't go there again at 13, I do remember hitch-hiking way past Budd Lake one time. While I did not know Lloyd Rock all that well, he and I did share a love of cars (like many of us did), and so when we were 15-16 years old, one fall Saturday with the autumn leaves in all their carrot color, we hitch-hiked out to Island Raceway, a dragway in Hackettstown.

I recall the raceway wasn't actually located in Hackettstown, but I don't remember the name of the town. This dragstrip was situated about five miles

down Island Road (hence, it's how the raceway got its name, I suppose), however, I can't call to mind ever seeing an island on that road - but then who thinks of Manhattan as being an island when you're in Times Square, right?

What made going on this trip so much easier than the earlier one to Budd Lake was that I was older and knew that as long as I told my parents beforehand I'd be eating at so-and-so's, I would be in the clear as far as reporting home by dinnertime. Of course, I wasn't invited to Lloyd's for dinner, but it made for a good excuse for arriving home later than usual. Besides, with my sister away at college, it gave my parents an opportunity to go to dinner by themselves, maybe even to the Glen Rock Inn for one of those great open-face steak sandwiches I remember so well!

Hitch-hiking isn't as popular as it once was and while I can understand that, if ever you find yourself in a position of needing a ride and having to stick your thumb out to flag someone down, I'm going to pass along two strategies that worked reasonably well for me way back when.

The first strategy I recall using is when encountering a Volkswagen bug or a Renault Dauphine I'd crouch down a bit to appear smaller. I know this seems silly, but it worked, at least it did back in the '50s. It would often put a smile on the driver's face and made them think you were serious about needing a ride and being able to fit in their car. Remember, this is when having a little car was an anathema to most Americans who were used to driving a big American boat. By the way, I, for one, miss having a car that comfortably fits six people (with luggage) and isn't a van or a huge SUV.

The second suggestion I'd like to make is if the driver isn't headed all the way to where you want to go but is still willing to give you a lift, then ask the driver to let you off at a red light (preferably before they make their turn). This allows the other drivers at the light to see that you are an 'okay person' and often results in you being picked up by someone else stopped in line at the light.

Also, while the doing the following isn't necessary if you are just hitch-hiking down Maple Avenue to Ridgewood or across town on Rock Road, but if you find yourself headed out of town and going to a faraway place like Budd Lake, it helps to have a sign indicating where you want to go, and using the word 'PLEASE!' is always a plus, too.

Once I got my driver's license, I did go back to the dragstrip at Hackettstown a few times. You could race your street-legal car and while I only did it once (a 1952 Ford Coupe with a flathead V-8), I know a few Glen Rockers besides Lloyd who worked on 'souping up' their cars and went there often. While I wonder if the dragstrip is still there, I do know, however, that my love of cars is still with me.

Okay, and this recollection has nothing to do with anything either, but how many of you recall when you were first learning how to drive using hand signals for either coming to a stop or making a turn. Do any of you still use hand signals? I know I don't.

I currently drive a German car and when I pull on the handle to open a door, it automatically lowers the window about a quarter of an inch, and when I'm settled inside and close the door, the window automatically moves back up that quarter of an inch and reseats itself. It gives you the odd sensation of being hermetically encapsulated within the vehicle. I'm not sure, but I get the strong impression it was the manufacturer's intention that I should never open a window. And with EZ Pass, I don't!

And not that it matters to anyone, but I thought I'd pass along another inconsequential remembrance. When I was little, I can recall my parents telling people that when I was younger I was a towhead.

Now don't get ready to hit the reply button and inform me it is spelled 'towhead' - I know that; well, at least I know that now. But when you're little, and have big ears (as evidenced by some of the photos I sent out awhile ago discussing the various hairstyles I had growing up), I mean, come on - it was a bit unsettling to hear your loved ones refer to your head as a toe, thus making you run to a mirror and compare your head to the shape of your toe, even a little toe.

Stop smiling! It wasn't all that funny way back then, especially if you didn't believe your parents when they tried to inform you that being a towhead meant your hair was once lighter in color and trying to tell you it didn't truly mean your head really looked like a toe. Thank God for my parents' Webster's, that's all I can say!

Besides, who wanted hair that once looked like flax, anyway!

Oh, and while I don't know how many of you were towheads back in your early days, I am very certain when I was in school with all of you there was nary a towhead to be found. We were a good looking group, weren't we? Still are from what I can gather from the postings of reunion get-together pictures.

Thanks again for putting up with my ramblings. I hope it wasn't a drag.

Where, oh where, have all the cooties gone?

I know, I know, with a title like that you're all thinking David's really gone off the deep end and is finally withdrawing the last of the deposits from his memory bank.

And you could be right - but, in actuality, I don't even know what cooties are.

I believe someone may have said I had them when I was seven or eight years old - and not to pin the blame on anyone, but I do believe it was a girl who offered it. I don't feel any of the attributions for having cooties was ever a guy-to-guy or girl-to-girl thing. Maybe it was, but I'll let you weigh in on that. I just don't remember.

And I'm not sure what I was doing at the time to warrant being told I had the cooties; however, knowing me as I do, being who I am may have been enough to elicit such a comment. I don't believe my sense of humor has changed much over the years. From my class e-mail postings you may sense it has gotten worse over time, but for anything that has deteriorated when it has to do with me, I tend to have blinders on.

Anyway, at the time this cooties thing was being bantered about, there was also a thing called a 'cooties catcher'. It was a multi-folded piece of paper that you opened and closed with your two thumbs and index fingers.

I'm not sure what you would catch with it, but some converted them into fortune telling devices. You picked a color - let's say 'red' and opened and closed it as you spelled out r-e-d. Then you picked a number - let's say four and then you opened and closed it four times. I'm not certain of the next step, but eventually a flap was picked, lifted, and then your fortune was revealed.

I know - that was one useless memory, wasn't it? Sorry.

What I do know and appreciate are those of you who responded to my Hackettstown dragstrip memory. To find out that Island Raceway is still there and open was great - as is the town it is located in, Great Meadows. I never would have recalled that. Hackettstown was the best I could do.

For the sake of my memory's reliability, I am glad no one else remembered seeing an island, either; however, as mentioned by someone who responded, it could have been situated in an area that we didn't approach from. That bit of logic eluded me at the time of my posting.

Nevertheless, I still don't know if there was an island anywhere around for which the dragway and the road were named. By the way, the road, I have been told, is seven miles long, not five as I had cited. Hey, don't I get credit for remembering the name of the road! (I sure wish my computer came with a sarcasm font right about now.) Anyway, I think I wrote it was 'about' five miles. Close enough for me. Just kidding - I love the corrections to my details. In any case, when hitch-hiking, Island Road felt like 100 miles!

Another reply stated there was a 'Shades of Death Road' nearby. I wonder if it had any connection to the raceway. Nevertheless, I can't imagine having it as my street address, can you? Just answering the question of 'Where do you live?' would be interesting.

Speaking of details, I am astounded that some of you who raced still remember your speed and your drag times. That's amazing after the passing of almost 50 years.

I also had one classmate who wrote and said he raced his father's Pontiac. I never thought to use my parent's new Oldsmobile 98 with its 330 horsepower engine. If I had, then maybe my stats would have left a lasting impression on me, too.

Of course, I'm thinking the lasting impression I would have received once I had gotten home that night might have been one I wouldn't have wanted to remember!

Besides being thankful for those who let me know I wasn't the only towhead in town, I was also taken with the stories some of you sent me regarding your hitch-hiking experiences. One in particular pertains to a classmate (who

I have known since before I ever entered school) who wrote that she was picked up by the band Big Brother and the Holding Company. I could never come close to having a hitch-hiking incident as cool and as memorable as that.

By the way, my best memory has nothing to do with the cooties, either, but, rather, with all the cuties we had in our class. As an avid girl-watcher, I consider myself pretty lucky to have grown up in Glen Rock and to have had the opportunity that I did as a kid to observe all the beautiful walking scenery.

I think that might explain why I sometimes had trouble concentrating in school!

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Sweet Dreams -

As I've come to embrace all the good things about my retirement, the one thing I covet more than anything else is the freedom to take a nap (if I so choose to do so) whenever I want - morning, noon, or night (well, early evening, anyway).

Growing up, my mother lamented the fact that I had given up taking scheduled naps by the age of two-and-a-half. Of course, as a child, I still napped, usually at the most inopportune of times. The funniest ones occurring at meals, of course, with my face sometimes falling in slow motion onto my plate (unless rescued in time), but gone were the sleep times by which you could set your watch - that is, until I entered Kindergarten.

I'm not sure why it was necessary to formally set aside a time in class for everyone to lie down and rest, but there it was - a new, etched-in-stone, nap time for Dave Lamken. And it mattered not which session of Kindergarten I attended, morning or afternoon, for students switched time slots for some reason at mid-year. I do not know why that was, but I do know nap time was part of my new, regimented, school day.

What I found interesting is how easily some of my Kindergarten classmates adapted to the idea. Maybe it was the soothing instrumental music coming from my beloved teacher's record player; in any case, the napping strategy worked quite well - so well, in fact, that Miss Singer had to routinely roll one student over because his snoring was so loud. Thinking back on it, he must have had an adenoid problem, but, nonetheless, for a five year old to snore as loudly as he did, it was a bit disconcerting.

Having given up on taking programmed naps, I wasn't about to acquiesce and go back to being robot-like, so I would always try my best to situate myself in the alcove of the classroom's bow window, thus enabling me to stare up at the sky until it was time to be on the move again. It was a huge bow window on the side of the building, and, as I recall, the only window in the room, with at least five or six large glass encasements and lots of floor space - and I know I wasn't the only one besides the huge stuffed animals who enjoyed being in that area.

Over the years at Byrd School, I came to realize some classmates still needed a nap no matter what grade they were in. What made me become aware of this was that on days of inclement weather when going outside for

recess was made impossible, I noticed during the playing of 'Seven-Up' some students would fall asleep whenever they nestled their head in their arms for too long on top of their desk.

You could always tell which students were no longer fully participating in the game because their previously upwardly thrust thumb was suddenly hidden neatly beneath their arms. When the appropriate time came, the student had to be awakened and informed of the fact that the game was over. The ensuing startled, puzzling look of 'Where am I?' was often quickly replaced by an expression of personal embarrassment amid the whispers of 'Hey, look, so-and-so was sound asleep!'

For so many reasons, we can all be thankful that 'YouTube' was not part of our growing-up experiences, don't you think?

I'm going to keep this remembrance short because a soothing rain has started to fall once again and - you guessed it - I feel a nap coming on.

Besides, I don't want you to assume my intermittent yawning has anything to do with the writing of this inconsequential e-mail. It's just that feeling like a kid again has its advantages. Sweet dreams.

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A Little Bit Country, A Little Bit Rock and Roll -

This e-mail, I believe, will ramble for just a bit as I'd like to cover three short subjects that popped into my head.

As we all know, being a bedroom community that serviced New York, Glen Rock cannot be considered exactly out in the country, but it sure felt that way. And as evidenced by so many of my other e-mails, I loved being outside and took full advantage of the landscape the town and its surrounding area provided me.

From living just blocks from the hills of Upper Ridgewood that provided me with a view of the Empire State Building (sadly, no sightings of King Kong to report), to the goat and chickens being raised a block or so away from my home, to the woods behind my house that granted me outstanding places to play and explore, and then, of course, to the babbling waters of Diamond Brook and beyond, I was one very fortunate little boy to have had parents who settled where they did in 1942, that's for sure - and so it's no wonder I thought I was living in the country.

The house I grew up in was situated in the middle of what was originally a short, one block, street. At the dead end of Greenway Road lay the remnants of an old golf course. Is it any wonder how my street got its name!

The area was laid out for the old Ridgewood golf course before the country club moved to its present location, which is now in Paramus. You may be wondering how the Ridgewood Country Club got its name if it was never actually in Ridgewood, but remember Glen Rock was part of Ridgewood until around 1900.

Since the golf course relocation happened in the 1920's, the 'old golf links' (as the area was referred to by my golf playing neighbors) was a mere shadow of its former self. When I started to play there at around the age of five, it hadn't been tended to for over twenty-five years. Tall farm grass and an array of bushes had settled in and overtaken the uneven terrain, along with a lot of mole holes. I only know they were mole holes because when I was down there one time flying kites with my dad, I asked why there were so many old holes for a golf course and he told me what they were. By the way, no matter how much kite flying string we brought with us, it never seemed long enough.

The post war building boom would eventually devour much of the woods and open space I cherished so much (as I recall from the early 50s to the early 60s, our town's population almost doubled), but by then my interest was focusing more and more on cars and girls (with a little schooling thrown in, of course) than exploring my environment. And so it didn't matter much anymore that Glen Rock was outgrowing whatever country feeling I thought it had - and, anyway, by then it providing others with a great opportunity to enjoy a wonderful way of life, too.

It is interesting to note that on my side of the tracks, so to speak, there were no religious places of worship, no stores, not one office building or gas station, not even a place to buy a soda or an ice cream cone - and, yet, I didn't feel deprived. The only thing we did have was the community pool, and it was lucky we did or, otherwise, most of you would never have known my side of town existed.

Which reminds me when it comes to the pool - in response to one of my e-mails awhile ago, I was in communication with a couple of my Byrd School classmates pertaining to a rutty old dirt road that cut through part of the woods behind my house. Because it was the only direct connection to get from where we all lived to the pool, we navigated it the best we could in order to get there and home again in the quickest time possible - besides, riding our bikes on Rock Road was a no-no for many of us at the age of six. The dirt road was a jaw rattler, that's for sure, and, once Rutland Road was paved, we all came to ponder whether or not the street got its name because of its topography.

As for the other side of town, I'll let the Colemanites tell me what was going on with the property in their neighborhood before Coleman School was built, but with the produce stands that dotted Prospect Street in the 50s, my speculation is that the area was probably farmland at one time. However, since I don't recall being in that area much when I was very little, it's only a guess.

If you haven't figured it out already, the reference to 'rock' in my title can be none other than that little 600 ton pebble that came to rest during the ice age on part of what was eventually to be named Doremus Avenue. The stone had to be of some significance because they named the road in front of it after the rock - probably by the same ingenious person who gave Rutland Road its

name is what I'm thinking, however, that is not what I really wanted to comment on.

As for my next topic, as previously mentioned in earlier postings, I usually got a pass when it came to speaking in class. My teachers must have spread the word that while I scored reasonably well on tests, I wasn't going to willingly participate verbally very much in class. That was both a blessing and a curse for, as you can tell by my numerous class postings, I have a lot to say.

I'm not sure how my teachers graded me when it came time for them to calculate a class participation grade. Now don't get me wrong - I know others were very quiet in class, too, but my quietness was borne not out of nature but out of necessity.

In any event, that's brings me to the 'roll' part in today's email's title. How many of you remember entering the lobby of the high school and going over to the bulletin board and seeing the Honor Roll posted.

What intrigued me back then was that the list was put up before we got our report cards at the end of the day. That means, for anyone who went over to look at it and found their name on the list, you knew you had gotten good grades - it's just that you didn't know what they were!

Also, a few days later, do any of you then recall having seen a revised list being posted? That list always seemed a bit longer, but I can't attest to that being true every time it appeared. What is interesting is that I never saw a 'revised' report card. Those must have existed, too, right? Common sense tells me that if the honor roll list was revised, then a revised report card had to have been made, too. What do you think - were the previous grades blotted out and new ones superimposed over the old ones? Inquisitive minds want to know.

The only thing I know for certain is that I doubt I would have brought home a revised report card for my parents' approval. I know what you're thinking, but, no, no matter how good the changes might have been, I don't believe I would have. I wouldn't have liked my new report card's credibility questioned, even if the new results made me look smarter than I was. I'm just glad I never had to go that route.

Anyway, I always liked my report card just the way it was - after all, I'm a little bit country, a little bit rock and roll.

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A Cut Above -

Okay, I'll admit it - I felt pampered and loved as a child, but compared to how much today's children are indulged, I'm beginning to wonder.

Case in point: I don't recall being chauffeured from place to place. Like our telephone, our family car was not used very much.

Although early on we had to hand crank the windows up and down and lived without our car being air conditioned until the early 60s, the family automobile took us on great summer vacations, was used for shopping (even to the original Two Guys from Harrison store) and we ran necessary errands with it, but as far as 'Old Betsy' being used as a daily driver (other than to pick my dad up at the train station at 5:30), I don't think it saw much of a work out, unlike today's cars.

By the way, for some reason, all our cars were named 'Betsy'. The name was usually uttered especially in extremely cold weather when the car didn't start right on the first cranking. I'm not sure why that was - not the errant starting, but the name.

Anyway, it's not as though I couldn't have been driven somewhere; it's just that it never occurred to me to ask. I knew in my heart of hearts my stay-at-home mom loved me to death and would have driven me in a heartbeat, but being a taxi driver was not how she saw herself - or I her. And I also knew my two feet and/or the riding of my bike would take me to wherever I wanted to go.

Sure, on days of really inclement weather, I was driven to school, but, heck, other than for Chris Johnston, who lived two houses farther away from school than I did, my walk to junior-senior high was a long one and I deserved being driven. Since I'm guessing my trek to school from 148 Greenway Road was at least a mile-and-a-half, I think I was entitled to rides to and from school, don't you? If it had been two miles, I believe I would have been legally entitled to bus service.

Truth be told, though, on days other than when it snowed, I didn't mind the walk. And it wasn't even the snow that troubled me - what bothered me was how hard it was to make and throw a snowball while carrying books and a notebook under one arm.

Of course, I only have my perspective on this, but, as a guy, if I ventured out somewhere, I never expected to be driven to where I was headed nor picked-up. Were any of you girls treated differently?

In any case, from where I lived, the area beyond where the high school was located was more than I was willing to undertake on a regular basis, and so I'm thinking that's why my sojourns to the other side of town to visit some of my 'new' classmates from junior high were rather limited. But when I did go there, I learned to make it back into town by 5:30 and get to the train station so as to shorten by hike home.

And speaking of the other side of town, I'm still bewildered with what was going on with all those 'G' named streets behind the high school. There must have been over a dozen streets all clustered together beginning with the letter 'G'. Anyone find that to be a bit peculiar and have an answer for that?

I think changing one of the streets to 'Lamken Road' would be a nice thing to do and certainly less confusing for those not familiar with the area and looking for an address, don't you?

I may have pointed out before that I live in a house not unlike the one I grew up in. It's even gray - or is it grey (I never know which spelling to use), but my present home has red shutters unlike the white ones that highlighted my Greenway Road house.

In any case, from 1942, when my parents purchased my childhood home, until 1950, my father mowed our lawn with a push mower. Every time I take out my zero-turn power mower to cut my grass or scoop up the autumn leaves I find that so hard to believe. Like all fathers of that era, he was a saint to have done that. I doubt I ever would have.

In 1950, my father purchased a Toro power mower, a red one. It looked just like his old reel mower, except for a Briggs and Stratton engine sitting atop of the mower. I was fascinated with it - the sound, the power, the ugly beauty of it. I don't know how many of you recollect what those old power mowers looked like, but they were weird looking.

The old push reel mowers had a grace about them. Straightforward in design and function - they were a thing of simple beauty, but adding that motor above gave them a tortured look, I believe. That's just one person's opinion.

Anyhow, I can recall being five years old when this infusion of loud noise invaded my quiet space inside the house and caused me to run to the front storm door. I looked out to see my father on the patio having the new mower's operating system explained to him by a man from a store in Midland Park.

Now don't get your keyboards all in a twitter and start e-mailing me. I don't remember that last fact from being five years old; it's just that over the years we took the mower back for service and to buy parts from the Midland Park store and that's how I'm able to place where 'Mr. Mower Man' came from.

I can also remember wishing my mother would have unlocked the door so I could have gone outside to have been there with them, but I think she was frightened by dad's new toy. It was loud.

In any case, loud or not, I started to mow our lawn when I was in the fifth grade and got 25 cents a week for doing it. For the first few times, I would have done it for free (and considering how things turned out for the first few times I used it, maybe the job should have been for free), but then along the way my mowing got better and it turned out to be just another chore I was expected to do. Somewhere down the line I stopped being paid the 25 cents, but then I was given movie money for dates and so forth and so I believe I came out ahead on that one.

Oh, and did I mention that the motor was a pull-start, not an electric start like the ones I have always had. What great fun that was!

I never got the motor to start on the first pull, nor rarely on second as I recall. And the pull rope was not a re-coil starter either. You had to wrap the starter rope around the pulley each time you used it. Once the motor started, I used to toss the pull rope around my neck so I wouldn't lose it. I might have even swung it around too hard once or twice and hit myself in the head with the wooden handle - a little bit of a learning curve there.

Somewhere around 1958, my father got another Toro, another red one in fact. This one had a re-coil, pull-starter, but I still couldn't get it to turn over on the first pull. And, yes, I adjusted the choke!

And how about all the fun we had sharpening those undulating, spiral mower blades. Wasn't that an exercise in frustration using a file and whetstone to bring those blades back from the dead!

I wonder if they still make reel-type mowers. Nowadays, the only ones I see being used are rotary mowers, lawn tractors, or zero-turns - and all have straight blades.

Well, you're all a cut-above for staying with me on this one and for putting up with another of my recollections.

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Look! Up on the Screen! It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's another Story!

I don't recall I was reading much before the age of five or six. In the past, I have been told that at quite an early age, I could be found sprawled out on the floor next to my sister (who was three years older) with a book in front of me pretending I was reading by mimicking Carol's turning of the pages in her book, but I don't think that counts as actually reading.

And other than having memories of sitting next to either of my parents and being read to as a child, what I remember most about my own reading experiences has to do with comic books. And while it is probably not true, I tend to think that if it weren't for the existence of comics, I probably would have remained a non-reader until I was an adult.

Okay, that was a bit of hyperbole, wasn't it, but I loved comic books. I loved shopping for comic books. And as soon as I was done with reading comic books (usually three times over), I loved trading them and reading someone else's.

Just to side track for a second before I lose this thought - how many of you remember going on vacation very early in your life and staying in those 'cabin' motels. What I absolutely loved about them was that the motel owner's cabin usually contained a stack of old comic books that you were allowed to borrow. Well, not the entire stack, but a couple of comic books at a time. Wasn't that a slice of heaven here on Earth!

Anyway, in the very early beginning of my comic book life, there were the Bugs Bunny, Marge's Little Lulu, and the Archie comics that entertained me (all passed down to me from my sister), but once I found out about the super hero comic books, I was hooked. And 'hooked' is definitely what I was.

While I was reading them, I was on such a high, and when finished, I found it to be such a downer. I couldn't wait for my next fix - I mean book. What the comic book publishers realized early on was that to keep you spending your dimes on their products they sometimes continued their stories from one edition to another. I guess that's how soap operas got to keep their audiences, but for me as a child back then, I think it was shameful what they did.

I can vividly remember standing with a dime in my hand in front of those chrome spinner racks at the Glen Rock Sweet Shoppe or in Kavners and literally debating with myself whether to get either the new Superman or Batman comic. Sometimes if I was careful and given enough time by a non-observant shop owner, I could shyly but quickly read one comic and then take the other one I was holding up to the counter for purchase.

I'm not sure when they began to appear, but along the way there were those 25-cent comics that contained some really good stories. They weren't always complete, as the ending to the last story was usually carried over to the next edition, but the stories seemed meatier in content than the dime comics.

And how many of you recall the dumb ads that were in those comics, because as promised, that's another story!

I always wanted to look like the muscular Charles Atlas or Joe Weider and was informed by those comic book ads that all I had to do to be like them was to purchase their material. The muscle building secrets they were touting was something called 'Dynamic Power'. I'm thinking now it would be akin to 'resistance' training, but I'll never know because I never sent away for it.

The one ad I always loved was the picture of a string wrapped surprise package with all those black question marks in varying sizes highlighting and surrounding the contents of the box. You'd send in your money and supposedly get this fantastic surprise! To this day, I wonder what was in those packages for 50-cents.

But if the truth were told, I would have loved to have owned one of those pairs of x-ray glasses. I'm sure the black and white colored spiral lenses with the little pinholes would easily have given me away that I was wearing something unique, but how cool would it have been to have had x-ray vision. But for a dollar - no way, I'd rather have had ten comics for that price.

The last ad I can remember is for a book to learn how to hypnotize someone or to put them to sleep simply and easily without their knowledge. Wow - that would have been great to try on our teachers, right?

And I trust you're not thinking the book that put you to sleep was entitled 'Another One of Dave Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock' or something close to that.

Anyway, I'm glad you stayed awake to read this far.

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Times Have Changed -

I was recalling something last night from my earlier childhood (and as if you haven't figured it out with all the trivial things I bore you with, I'm on my second one right now) and got to thinking early this morning about the children of today's generation and what they will relate to their future children and grandchildren about their own youthful experiences.

Can't you foretell a scenario of how they will recall to others something as simple as a childhood accident - "Well, kids, one day I was pedaling down this very steep hill. I was going really fast and to avoid hitting a hubcap in the road I turned far too quickly, bumped into a curb, and fell off my bike. It was truly terrible. Luckily, what saved me from any broken bones, bruises, or scrapes were my knee pads, elbow pads, and helmet!"

Okay - I do get it; you don't tend to see too many hubcaps in the streets anymore, but you get the idea. Sure - we want our grandkids to be safe, but if you think back to your childhood, was there ever a day that went by when you didn't see some kid in school with a band-aid on their arm, leg, or head. Hardly ever is what I'm thinking - and we survived.

Some accidents, of course, are stupid ones. When I was in the third or fourth grade, there was an older boy who lived in my neighborhood on the corner of Cedar Street and Oak Knoll Road and thought his homemade Superman cape gave him special powers. He jumped off the roof of his garage to prove to himself and to those around him that he could fly. Not surprisingly, the cape didn't bestow any special powers on Rodger, and when he landed, he broke his arm.

What's stupid about that is not that he jumped off a roof, or even that he broke his arm, but, as indicated in my last e-mail, having been a reader of the Superman comics, my initial thought was that if Rodger had truly thought the cape made him special, then he should have stayed on the ground and first tried to see if he was faster than a speeding bullet. I know I would have, but then that's just me. Besides, nowhere in any of the comics did I ever read a story wherein Superman jumped off a garage roof!

Also, nowadays, in the protective nature of things, before kids go outside to play in the summer (which with central air conditioning and video games being so prevalent that rarely ever happens anymore), parents anoint their

children from head to toe with bug spray. Is it a good idea? Of course it is, but they won't have a story to tell like I do of their father using a freshly snuffed-out match to carefully burn an embedded tick off his son's arm. Good thing my dad was a smoker and had a pack of matches handy, that's all I can say!

And as may be evidenced in my 'Mane Attraction' e-mail pictures, this former wannabe Adonis rarely used suntan lotion, compared to today's children who get swathed in so much SPF that when their summer vacation is over it makes them appear as though they were never outside, at a beach, or in a pool, for even a minute.

Back in our day, suntan oil (coconut oil, if memory serves) was used to enhance the getting of a tan, not shield you from getting one. But I could be wrong.

What I do remember fondly are the girls in our class utilizing the little knoll embankment on the left side of the community pool as their own personal outside sun tanning area and stretching out on their towels as though the Sun God had summoned them to come bask in his glory.

I don't remember that area as being much of a guy place, but I recall as I played touch football on the playing field near them, I would occasionally look over at our goddesses and wished it was. And, okay, so maybe I took a gander over in their direction more than just occasionally. You truly can't blame me for not concentrating on the game as the horizontal line-up of bathing beauties was quite impressive - trust me.

And does anyone remember the Coppertone ad wherein a dog exposed more than just the little girl's tan line. In the morally uptight era we grew up in, it seems oddly out of place for that advertisement to have been so prevalent on billboards and in magazines. In today's climate, I believe those ads would be considered politically incorrect on so many levels that the company would be forced to withdraw them. In fact, I think even the animal rights advocates would be protesting, don't you?

Times have changed - and so will the stories, I suppose; however, the ones we tell will always be better.

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It's About Time -

While we all know Al Gore never said he 'invented' the Internet, I wish to congratulate whoever made that discovery because without the Internet it would have made it so much more difficult for The Class of 1963 to remain close and in touch with one another.

Thanks, too, to the computer gurus John, Bruce, Art, and to all the others who are instrumental in making our class website's operation appear so seamless. The invaluable time you spend bringing it altogether is well beyond the words of this writer to express his appreciation.

Like many others, I enjoy reading the holiday greetings that are sent out through our e-mail list - as well as all the add-on stuff that is contributed. What is more endearing than reading about a classmate who brought three sandwiches to the cafeteria and ate with the guys! As I recall, I always bought my lunch, but considering what the lunch menu might have been on any particular day, if she had sat at my table, I'm sure there would have been many a day when a trade would have been possible.

I would also like to thank my class pen pals for all your positive comments over the years to my youth driven recollections of Glen Rock - and, especially, for your invaluable added insights into whatever I was writing about. Your observations have truly enriched my own home town experience.

And as you could probably tell from all those writings, whether it was a pro or a con observation about childhood, I thoroughly enjoyed writing about my formative years in Glen Rock. Oddly, I can hardly remember any of my middle-age years because they went by so quickly. And although the following has nothing to do with any of my Glen Rock years (other than I survived them), depending on one's point of view - reluctantly or happily, early in this New Year, I officially become a Senior Citizen.

I hope you noticed the capital letters - no, not for New Year, but for Senior Citizen. I realize some of you may have gotten to this special place in time before I did (one November birthday boy comes readily to mind), however, I believe this new stage of my life does warrant some recognition and I thought I'd pass along one or two reflections that I have had.

Following in the tradition of my parents who made the transition to being a Senior Citizen appear so seamless, I can only say that this is the oldest I have ever been and it doesn't seem much different than at any other time in my life, except now I have an official Medicare card which informs me I have arrived. And so much literature is being sent to me from the Social Security Administration and the New Jersey Division of Pensions I believe I could spend the rest of my life reading it.

I'm not sure why I didn't receive a special certificate when I hit my teens or even when I rolled over into middle age. And besides, while I didn't mind being a teenager and couldn't wait until I got there, I never liked being thought of as middle aged. So much so - and with looks aside - I believe I always thought of myself as being 39 until this momentous birthday.

I have grown, aged, and matured. Hold on - I have grown and aged, but I don't believe the whole maturity thing has ever settled in with me at any stage in my life cycle, at least the way people expected it should have. I think my sense of humor is continually getting in the way and blocking that last identifier of me. Maybe someday that will change.

One thing I have noticed, however, and something to which my wife can attest, is that my vocabulary has become much more standardized and I can get away with using far fewer words than I used to employ.

For example, on our way out the door, I will often mention to her not to forget the whatchamacallit over on the doomahickey - you know the one next to the thingamajig, and Nancy, who is about ten years younger than I am, will miraculously know about what I speak.

As my vocabulary dwindles, I believe that trait will bode well for me as I enter the age of genarians. I know I would have liked it to have been the Age of Aquarius (whatever that is or was), or even the age of geraniums, but I was thinking more of septuagenarians for when I'm in my 70's, or octogenarians for my 80's, and, hopefully, then nonagenarians for when my 90's arrive. Time will tell.

And other than always wanting to be a Centurion (well, at seven or eight years old my heroes and Halloween costume choices were rather limited), I guess I will have to settle for being a centenarian, if and when I reach the age of 100 and beyond. And to those who get there before me, please let me know whether or not the wait was worth it.

In any case, after attending many reunions and seeing how ageless the rest of you are, I can only hope that some of that magic will rub off on me someday. And remember, it is not too early to get your mind wrapped around the idea of attending our 50th reunion - for it will be here before we know it.

But something tells me I'm getting way ahead of myself and, as usual, this e-mail is getting too long, so it's about time I got to the real purpose of writing this message - and that is...

To wish you all the best for a happy and healthy 2010!

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If Only, If Only –

I have mentioned on numerous occasions how accidental it is that I remember certain things from childhood. I got to wondering this morning what my life would have been like if certain things had turned out differently.

For instance, if I had studied more in school and instead of getting a 94 on a test, I had gotten a 95, would that have changed my life? Probably not. How about if I had gotten a 96, a 97, a 98, a 99? No. No. No. And no.

So that got me to thinking a little bit more - as in, what would it have taken for something to have changed my life in a measurable way when it came to school? Like failing an entire grade for example - maybe, then again, maybe not.

Positioned somewhere in one of my other e-mails, I recall mentioning I received report cards that were respectable and never found myself in a position wherein I wouldn't have wanted my parents to see and/or sign them.

My parents, thank goodness, were pretty accepting of my accomplishments and so considering my academic standing in school, the failing of an entire grade wasn't exactly within the realm of possibility; and, yet, considering the parenting skills I was accustomed to seeing, it wasn't something I would have feared either.

Although, if the truth be told, reflecting on the fact that I wasn't so enamored of what the school system did to me, I wouldn't have given it much thought had it happened.

How about moving? Now that seems more of a certainty for life changing possibilities, doesn't it? Many of you moved, though, and you turned out alright - at least from my perspective you did. And some of you moved out of Glen Rock and then came back. Was it because you missed me? No comment necessary. :)

I've also made mention of the fact my parents waited until I graduated before they moved, and when questioned about it, they said it was because they wanted my sister and me to have one unified childhood experience - the same hometown for all our childhood years. There's something

commendable to be said for that, and while I'm so very glad they held that perspective, I'm not totally convinced I might not have blossomed even more if I was transplanted somewhere else. So who knows - again, it's probably a mark for the 'maybe' column.

Friends - now there's a certainty. I have on most occasions in my e-mails not mentioned too many people by name when I was out and about doing certain things; and that was because I didn't feel as though I had the right to do so - but remember each and every one, I sure do, and so that's a certainty.

And don't you find there was an ebb and flow to your childhood friends. You started out sharing your core elementary days with classmates with whom you got to know very well during your formative years, then added to that good mixture new friends you met while passing through early adolescence in junior high, and finally you closed out your senior year by saying good-bye in an adult manner to people who may have known you well for only a short time period of time.

And that brings me to a sad conclusion - there are those of you who for one reason or another I didn't get to know all that well other than by name, reputation, or in the most casual of ways. Why? I don't know. Was it time, resources, distance, class schedules, personal choice - pick one, pick all. I just know my memories of Glen Rock would have been enhanced if I had gotten around to have known all of you better.

So if I may, from the countless remembrances I have had, I'd like to share an 'if only' that popped into my head on this cold early morning (19 degrees when I started writing this piece, if you are wondering just how cold).

If only I had taken the time to know this person better (it's a girl), I believe my life may have been immeasurably changed. Why her you ask. Good question, especially since I never said more than ten words to her in school.

Okay, maybe I said more than ten words, but it was never at once. We were never in the same class together that I can recall (not counting our 7th-8th grade co-ed square dancing classes, of course), and so our meetings were either by chance encounters in the hallway, at social functions, or by the community pool.

I don't ever remember talking with her one-on-one. Our chat-ups were always group related, but she left an everlasting impression on me. And that was from the very first time I saw her. It was across the crowded school cafeteria in junior high and she was wearing a dark colored pinafore - navy blue, I believe, and she was standing in line.

Because everything and almost everyone was new to me at 600 Harristown Road, every time I would sit at my lunch table and take a bite out of whatever I was having, I would stare out looking every which way to see what there was to see - and for some inexplicable reason, among all the beautiful moving scenery, she just caught my eye.

Why that happened remains a mystery to me. But I like the romantic notion of it and the power of it - of being the one that was noticing someone else first. Also intriguing to me is being clueless as to whether I was ever noticed by her.

With eyes as bright and warm as sunshine, with cheeks as rosy as the promise of tomorrow's wish coming true, and with a smile that said all is right with the world, she's one of the persons for whom I should have had the courage to overcome my innate shyness and have asked out on a date. Of that I am certain. No maybes about it.

I know she has read my collection of memories, and, therefore, she has gotten to know this grown up lad from Glen Rock fairly well. I can only hope Norma Falk liked what she read and that she, too, at one time or another, has said to herself... if only, if only.

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The Big Picture –

With my memory being what it is, I have always enjoyed seeing the big picture. I like what I can remember and sharing it with you. Right now, as I gaze out the window on an overcast morning, I am remembering an old TV show.

When I was little (I'm thinking six or seven years of age - which is a good age for being little), I was fascinated with a TV documentary show put together by edited World War II newsreel footage. Why – I don't know, maybe it was the action of it all.

Anyway, 'Victory at Sea' came on Sunday afternoons and there I'd be sitting on the living room floor in front of the TV playing with my toy army men, battleships, aircraft carriers, and other such stuff, trying to interact with what was happening on the screen. I say 'trying to interact' because our 1950 TV, a Philco, was only a 12 incher. And while I wouldn't want to characterize the screen as being round, it was so curved on the left and right sides that's how I remember the screen looking, even though I know it wasn't.

Around 1954, we soon progressed to a 17 inch screen, a Zenith tabletop model that was placed on something that resembled a coffee table. The funny looking, rabbit ears antenna from the Philco was replaced by a much larger one positioned on the end of the roof's apex but which eventually found its home in the attic. That antenna looked like it could receive signals from outer space; of course, it didn't - that is, not counting those highlighting Flash Gordon's exploits!

Remember Flash taking off with Dr. Zarkov and Dale Arden to fight Ming the Merciless on planet Mong. I loved how the spaceship would circle around and around before it landed with what looked like cigarette smoke emanating from its tail. The show was so corny it was good. Loved Buster Crabbe with his hair dyed blonde, too. Or was it dyed white? Too long ago to remember – and the show was in black and white, so who could tell.

Once my dad had completed our basement's new knotty pine rec room, the old 12 incher, which was encased in its own tall, narrow cabinet, was moved from its storage spot in the basement and relegated to its new corner. Then somewhere around 1959 or so our living room TV was upgraded once again and we settled in on having a glorious 21 inch set. This was another Zenith, which like our first TV was built into its own cabinet, but different than the

old Philco in that its new stylish, horizontally rectangular cabinet was raised off the floor on four inch legs (or something close to that). What made this TV really different, though, was this set received broadcasts in 'color'!

Have any of you noticed that with today's generation, upon hearing the phrase 'color TV' in your dialog with them, they would often ask, 'Well, what color was it?' I know - I am getting old!

And while I'm not absolutely sure about this, but I don't believe this new Zenith television had vacuum tubes, for I don't have any memories of replacing them like I do with the tubes from the other two televisions. When our other TVs got all funky, I used to tag along with my father and watch him test the tubes and, eventually, then fell into the position of being called upon to it myself. The term 'plug and play' wasn't used back then, but if it had, it would have been changed to 'plug and test', that's for sure. Anyone else remember going to the store and testing vacuum tubes?

Getting back to watching 'Victory at Sea' - the show held my attention, not only for the fact that my dad helped in the design of many of those ships, but for all the battles that were taking place on the screen. Plus, I had the TV to myself. I didn't have to compete with anyone on Sunday afternoons wanting to watch something that I didn't. The Leonard Bernstein concerts, which I wrote about in a previous e-mail, came later and after my attraction for things military had long faded.

I can still remember, though, during my 'Victory at Sea' time being sprawled out on the carpet, with my military toy box emptied in front of me, and in a world all my own. That is until the smell of whatever was cooking in the kitchen came wafting my way and I had to make the decision to keep watching my show or turn off the TV and go into the kitchen to eat. What choice do you think I made?

Boy, you're good!

I find it interesting that the rule in my house at that time was the TV had to be turned off while we were eating; and now, in today's world, our kitchen overlooks the family room and we watch the news while we eat - and on a screen so big, and with so much definition, the newscasters appear as though they are actually part of our household.

In the 50s, the spell of this new visual invention, along with its unique mystery of exactly how these pictures were invading our homes, enveloped

our nation and overtook the sensibilities of having family time wherein everyone ate together and discussed things. And that's because someone invented the TV serving table – you know, that little folding contraption that enabled people to move out of their confined eating areas and into their comfortable living rooms accompanied by food. Now, I don't know about you, but we were never allowed to have food in the living room.

Well, I say never, but by that I mean we were never allowed to do it unless there was something extra special being shown on TV. And I was never the arbitrator of what that was going to be - never. But being a growing boy and having to turn off the TV because I was being called to dinner was never an issue; however, once we upgraded to larger TVs, I believe the rule about not having food in the living room was relaxed a bit – to maybe once a month or so.

Oh, and I don't know about you, but it was my job to set up the TV tables. Early on, I seemed to get it right about 50% of the time. By that I mean opening the table and placing it correctly so one could swing their legs underneath and pull the table up close to them. Embarrassed by the fact that my parents would sometimes have to stand up and turn the table around and rearrange the silverware placement, I soon caught on that I needed to look for the crossbar on one side of the table before setting it down in its rightful place. I liked being a quick learner. :)

With that said, once the food rule was relaxed a smidgeon, I can recall eventually being permitted to eat a bowl of ice cream while sitting on the floor as our family watched The Ed Sullivan Show or, as some of you may recall from its earliest days on TV, 'The Toast of the Town'.

It's pretty hard to forget sitting on the floor and watching Elvis Presley on The Ed Sullivan Show, too. That was memorable and aired somewhere in the mid 50s. And, of course, the Beatles broadcast in 1964, but that's a little out of my time period for writing about my Glen Rock days.

In any case, I believe the ice cream scenario was probably being periodically indulged in during the viewing of 'I Love Lucy', 'The Jackie Gleason Show', 'Dragnet', 'You Bet Your Life', or any of the other great shows of that era.

Once in a blue moon (that's when two full moons occur in one month – the second being characterized as 'blue' – why that is, I don't know), someone sends me a clip from an 'I Love Lucy' show, and I still find humor in it even after all these years. The 'Veta-vita-vinamins' or whatever the routine was

called, is a classic; as is the conveyor belt episode wherein Lucy, who can't keep up with chocolate candy being sent down the line, starts hiding items in her uniform and mouth. Too funny!

By the way, I still have ice cream on occasion in front of the TV. I guess I'm turning into a classic, too.

Since you made it this far, just one more little memory - in the sixth grade, I had an appendix operation. On my second day home from the hospital, my mother, who was probably tired of going up and down the stairs to check on me, brought my pillow and blanket downstairs and permitted me to be on the couch. That was a rarity. No, hold on, I worded that wrong – it wasn't that I wasn't allowed on the couch (I could always sit there), but being able to stretch out on the couch was. That was normally a no-no. Does anyone use the term 'no-no' anymore?

In any case, what I loved during this time was watching 'Queen for a Day' with my mother. I don't recall exactly how a winner was determined, but someone got a crown and a cape, I remember that, and won either a dishwasher, stove, or refrigerator. All a bit boring for a kid, but the best part was that I got to share that time with my mom.

And during this little week long hiatus from being out and about, I was also treated to having the 'Million Dollar Movie' (which, if you recall, showed the same movie for five days in a row) broadcasting 'King Kong'. The movie may have been about 25 years old at the time, but it got me to wishing I had more appendixes that needed future attention, that's for sure. I loved that movie, and could have watched it every day for weeks, especially viewing it from my newly allowed, elongated position on the couch!

Thanks for hanging in there with me, and I hope you are enjoying the big picture in your home.

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A Dinner and a Movie -

My parents had their 24th wedding anniversary dinner at Barbetta's on 46th Street in New York City. How can I remember that? Because I was there. Isn't that romantic!

The restaurant sure was, however. Even as a young teenager struggling to understand the world of love, I could see why my father picked the place. Little did I know, Barbetta's was one of their favorite New York dining establishments. At least it was when it was just the two of them.

When my sister and I were little, my parents would often take us into the city to see the Christmas show at Radio City Music Hall - and if you've never been to that theater, it can seat well over 5,000 people. We would sometimes eat at the Carnegie Deli five blocks away rather than go to their favorite 49th St. restaurant only a block away. I guess we were either too young or they wanted it to be just their place, or a combination of both reasons.

Whenever we were in the city doing other things, like seeing the circus at the old Madison Square Garden on 50th Street, I do recall a favorite spot of mine for lunch was Horn & Hardart's. It was around 46th Street in Times Square.

Before putting my nickels into the chrome slots and turning the knob, I would peek through the glass doors to see if I could spot anyone behind the sandwiches or pies. I'm thinking everyone must I've done that, but I don't know. I hope you have a memory of being at Horn and Hardart's at least once and doing what I did. It was neat.

I thought Hardart's food was pretty good, too, and I especially liked their apple pie. I'm not sure what they served for dinner out of those little portals, but their lunches sure hit the spot. The whole atmosphere there was just different - a place I remember like no other. I don't suppose there are anymore 'automats' anywhere; do any of you know?

In any case, on this particular anniversary (and the only one I can ever recall sharing with them), my mom and I met up with my dad at what they considered to be their restaurant. Afterward, they had tickets to see Camelot, which was just down the street at the Majestic Theater. With my sister away at college, I was invited to see the play with them, but declined. Instead, knowing it had opened to rave reviews, I wanted to see Otto Preminger's production of 'Exodus' starring Paul Newman.

In my last e-mail, I made mention of big TV picture screens; well, this movie was filmed in Cinemascope and, while I can't recall the theater it was in, the screen was huge. Again, there I was, sitting in front of a screen, in a world all unto myself. I don't recall having popcorn (I was probably too stuffed from dinner, I suppose), but, since the movie was three and a half hours long, I was glad the film had an intermission. Because the picture was so long, my parents were there waiting for me to be let out of the theater - and here I was thinking I'd be the good guy and meet up back up with them at the Majestic.

The only other films of era that made such an impression on me for their magnitude of storytelling was David Lean's 'Bridge on the River Kwai' from a few years before, and, of course, my absolute favorite movie of all time, Lean's masterful production of 'Dr. Zhivago'. They just don't make movies on that scale anymore - and, yes, I've seen Avatar and in 3D, and, boy, has 3-D changed!

For motion pictures on the home front, I don't know why my parents had an old Revere 16mm movie projector nor do I know what happened to it, but on special occasions, when I was very young (this could have been in my home's pre-TV era, I'm not sure), my father would hang a sheet on the main living room wall and we watched black and white cartoons (Steamboat Willie was a classic) and well as some color ones.

There was a store in Ridgewood that had a couple of racks containing metal tins of films. They were organized by coded numbers. I'm assuming the cartoons and films were in a catalog, and that's how one determined its corresponding tin number, but I'm not sure, so that's just a guess. I recall these tins weren't always easy to pry open, at least not with the little hands I had at the time, that I do remember - both the tins and the small hands.

What I loved about watching those old shows was eagerly awaiting my dad to load the film onto the projector, hearing the click, click, click of the machine as he loaded the take-up reel, and then switching the projector on and joining everyone in the room calling out the countdown as it displayed 10, 9, 8...3, 2, 1. Magical times in our living room as a little kid, that's for sure.

My father once hung a stretched-out sheet in the backyard trying the best he could to duplicate the feeling of being at a drive-in movie, but the sheet swayed ever so slightly in the night air, thus making the cartoons appear even funnier. Sitting in the comfort of the white Adirondack chairs we had

back there and eating freshly made popcorn made for a great event – not counting the bugs, of course.

I still get out to the movies and have dinner on a pretty regular basis with my wife. In the past month, we've seen ten (Nancy had a week off and is more the movie buff than I am), but, anymore, I'm starting to enjoy the dinners more than the movies, although the handholding is still pretty good.

If you still happen to be movie goers at this point in your life, please save the aisle seat for me, okay?

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With Room to Spare -

A classmate and dear friend recently mailed me a fantastic article from the New York Times about an entire collection of Corvettes. Can you imagine having an original Corvette from 1953 and one for every year up to the present? Wow!

And, of course, that got me to thinking.

Some of you know I am a car guy, maybe not as much as a few of you, but I still venture out to automobile shows, buy the cars that I want, and wish that I could have a garage large enough to hold a different vehicle for every day of the week - and, of course, to have the money to pay for them.

Cars from our era were remodeled every year (versus the four or five year cycle of today's vehicles) and had style, panache, and that certain something we all wanted. Okay, I'll agree, it was advertising that told us what we would like or needed, but we still wanted one - even if it had tail fins. Some of us still do!

Who could forget how the car designers from the mid to late fifties tried to conceal where to refuel the car? Back then, sometimes you had to push a button to flip up a hatch on a tail light lens (like on a Cadillac) or turn a knob to release and pull down a small hatch (as on a '56 Chevy) to reveal the gas cap. Even the dipstick for checking the engine oil was hidden on some cars as it was attached to the oil refill cap. Good, fun times for car design, that's for sure.

Oh, except for those huge steering wheels. They had so many turns from lock-to-lock you would think you were driving an electric boardwalk bumper car. Some drivers installed what would eventually be called a 'suicide knob' on the steering wheel to make turning the wheel a bit easier - that is, until you let go of the wheel and the steering wheel quickly returned back to its neutral position after you made a turn. The knob rapping your knuckles is one memory that's hard to forget!

My dad graduated from buying Chevrolets to Oldsmobiles and enjoyed the whole car buying experience. I'm not sure whether my mother really knew what make or model of car she was driving, but she liked picking the color or, in the case of two-tone cars, colors. Because I'd like to keep this e-mail

short, I'll save what I recall from being in dealers' showrooms with my father and perusing every known option for a car in a later e-mail, but, boy, that was fun.

What I'd like to discuss is how our old cars compare with today's vehicles - you know - the ones from the 50s and 60s that would comfortably seat six, float down the road while replicating the undulations of the Queen Mary, and have more room for luggage than what a family would typically take on a two week vacation - even discounting the fact of not having a Continental kit to hold the spare tire!

When it came to car size, my sister and I would find ourselves cocooned in the rear seat of the family car on the drive back home from visiting relatives; we often stretched out and fell asleep on the massive back seat as the car gently rocked its slumbering charges for miles on end. Only when the wheels finally crunched over the familiar bump leading from the street to our driveway did we stir, knowing that the 'sweet dreams' pleasantly wished for by our grandparents would soon be coming to an end.

We tend not to think about how big those cars were, but automobiles from our era often stretched to more than 18, 19 feet long, with huge overhangs in the front and the rear. No need for today's modern crumple zones with so much extra protruding metal, I suppose.

I remember how the large doors on each side would swing wide, swallow us up, and shut again with a solid thud. That 'solid thud' sound was the end result of many hours of pre-production engineering and testing, that's for sure.

Whenever I could, I would assume placement in the right front seat (the shotgun position), giddy with the power it brought me. I marveled at the switches, toggles, and pulls, all of them shiny and polished chrome, and pushing or turning any of which would produce some magical, mechanical response. 'Power everything' is the way my dad described it; and because we had GM cars, it was always 'Body by Fisher'. I wasn't sure who Fisher was until my interest in cars had grown.

Whenever I was in the second-in-command position, I'd adjust the vents, dial in radio stations and depress the plastic buttons to program them in, repeatedly lock and unlock the doors and watch the windows rise and fall with a twitch of a finger until my parents had had enough. Lucky for me, I'd

be left to watch the car whenever they needed to run into a store for a minute and I'd get to play some more!

Do you recall when older cars had those little triangular vent windows on the front door and when you didn't have air conditioning (or if you did and it wasn't on), you'd point the window so the blast of air was coming straight at you. So cool!

No wonder women back then often wore babushkas when riding in cars. It's a shame those vent windows were designed away, but who drives with their windows open anymore, right?

Come to think of it, I believe it would be difficult in today's world to find a new car on a dealer's lot that didn't come with air conditioning.

Over a year ago, I gave up my Corvette and now drive an Audi A5 sports coupe. I can only imagine what my dad would think of its all-wheel drive, massive S-line disk brakes, three point seat belts, seven airbag protected interior, skid controlled ride, satellite radio, and more creature comforts than one could ever want. The outside mirrors even rotate down and in when the car is put in reverse for a better rear view and then go back to their original position when the car is put into drive and you move forward.

I would venture to guess, however, that if my dad were around today he would certainly nod his approval to my purchase, but might lament that it couldn't accommodate six. :)

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A Pressing Matter -

In a long ago e-mail entitled 'A Clean Sweep', I wrote about what it was like growing up and having to participate in a 'spring cleaning'. You know - when windows were washed inside and out, Venetian blinds taken down and scrubbed in the tub, winter drapes replaced with summer ones, etc, etc. Not exactly fun times, but something you remember, that's for sure.

Anyway, in my adult life, I have never washed a window (other than on my car) and since we don't have blinds (Venetian or otherwise), I haven't had to wash any of those, either. It's sort of amazing what a difference a generation makes.

I sometimes look back at my parents' life and think of it as being more laid-back than mine. But it couldn't have been, could it? They were too engrossed in doing those day-to-day things that we no longer have to be concerned about - for instance, like ironing.

My mother ironed everything - and I mean everything. I don't know about your mother, but mine even ironed my socks. I know - it seems silly to say so now, but she did. I wouldn't be surprised if she ironed the shoelaces on my newly washed sneakers. Just kidding, but Mom was always ironing- or, at least, it seemed that way.

On a side note, I used to buy Lee dungarees in a store on the north side of Franklin Avenue in Ridgewood, about a block or so from the railroad underpass - remember, the one that connects Wilsey Square on the west side of Ridgewood with the main downtown shopping area. Some of you guys may remember the store as the place where you purchased your Scout uniforms.

At any rate, this was back in the day when you rolled up the bottom of your dungarees, usually more than one turn's worth - remember doing that? What's special about this dungaree memory is that my mother once ironed them and put a crease in the pant legs. A crease!

Removing that crease was my first recollection of ever stepping up and using an iron. I must have been around ten at the time, but I had to because a couple of the neighborhood kids made mention of the crease and I needed to do something about it - so I ran home and ironed it out.

By the way, unless there's a difference to them to which I'm not aware, when did the transition from referring to them as dungarees end and we started calling them 'jeans' occur?

Well, getting back to my mother and chores, ironing became such a task master for her that my dad bought her a 'rotary ironing board press machine'. If the machine had another name, I'd like to know about it.

This machine was a household version of what they used in dry cleaners, although the roller on this unit was only about three feet wide. To operate it, you sat down in front of the machine and used a foot pedal. The laundry was inserted through the top and the machine folded it neatly as it was rolled out the bottom. It was fun to watch my mother slide something in and to see it come out perfectly ironed.

Of all the memories I have of my mother - and there are plenty, it is so easy to remember her standing at an ironing board. She was there so much of her time. And why was that, you ask, when she had a rotary ironing board press machine? Because she liked ironing by the TV - and the rotary machine, after spending a short inauguration time in the dining room, was eventually relegated to the basement. Can't blame her for that, though - she was raised in the 'radio only' era and having a TV must have seemed wonderful to her, even though it received less than eight channels.

Just curious, other than a bagpipe brigade, does anyone wear pleated skirts anymore? I'm thinking who would want to iron those pleats, especially one at a time. Not anyone in my family, that's for sure.

I escaped from being chained to an ironing board because in all of my adult life shirts have been laundered, curtains dry-cleaned, and bed linens taken care of by a housekeeper. All in all, when it comes to the subject of ironing, I count myself pretty lucky.

Speaking of shirts, my dad always had his shirts laundered, too. His came home folded and encased in a cardboard box of four; mine come home on wire hangers and encased in plastic. His were starched; mine are starched. His shirts needed to be touched-up to erase a fold crease across the chest; mine don't. His dress shirts were always all white and had a pocket; mine are almost all non-white and are designed without a pocket.

Fortunately, just when I begin to think I'm permanently hard pressed to come up with another topic to write about, a classmate gives me the nugget of an idea for a memory. I hope he remembers our recent e-mail dialog and appreciates how I ironed out some of the things we discussed so fleetingly.

And I figured you have to attend to other pressing matters so I kept this e-mail short.

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Permanently Impressed –

I knew I could count on my former classmates to have good memories.

Many of the personal replies I received concerning my last e-mail alerted me to what I had termed a 'rotary ironing board press machine' was, in fact, a 'mangle iron'.

If I had ever known that term, it was lost to memory, at least up 'til now - so thank you for enlightening me and answering my question.

And because mangled was not how laundry turned out to be with this iron, some hypothesized the name may have been the inventor's or how your arm turned out if used improperly. Sounds reasonable, but, for a fancy iron, I'm surprised Madison Avenue didn't step in and change the name. It would be like purchasing a new automobile called a 'Wreck' and then having people ask what kind of car did you buy. Not too impressive.

What some of you had pointed out, and I was remiss in mentioning, was how hot the mangle iron got and how easy it was to burn yourself on the bottom plate - well not us, but our mothers.

I'll pass along a few more laundry techniques that came with your replies besides a sprinkle bottle, laundry placed in the refrigerator, and the sizzle noise that sometimes occurred when the steam iron met the newly chilled and damp laundry.

How many of you remember the adjustable metal pant leg holders your mother inserted down each pant leg before putting the item up to dry? And if the placement of those stretchers wasn't exact, you'd wind up having a crease that was off-center. And I said 'put up to dry' because my mother didn't have a dryer until the mid-fifties - not that a pant leg stretcher would have been of much use in a dryer.

When the pants were dry, my mom (whom you will recall ironed everything - as I am told did many of your mothers), proceeded to iron the pockets so I could get my hands in. Not sure if that was necessary, but, if my mom saw a wrinkle anywhere when doing the wash, it was ironed. I just made sure not to show her my fingertips after taking a bath. :)

Okay, how about curtain stretchers for the see-thru curtains. When the curtains were wet, they were stretched from end to end on adjustable wooden frames. The stretchers enabled the delicate curtains to keep their shape and size as they dried.

I'm starting to believe my mother must have thought she was pretty lucky to have all those amazing time-saving devices. :)

Thanks again for your neat replies.

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No Left Turn –

Before I start on my latest recollection, I thought we'd sing a song - of course, you can't hear me, but sing along with me anyway.

“Born on a mountain top in Tennessee

Greenest state in the land of the free.

Davy, Davy Crockett, King of the wild frontier.”

Okay, now that you know what it is, let's go back and sing it again.

I realize I'm being way too corny right about now, but that song from the mid-fifties brings back a lot of good memories, doesn't it?

Fess Parker, the icon we most associate with depicting Davy Crockett, passed away recently, and it got me to thinking is how someone like Davy Crockett thought killing a raccoon, taking its skin, and making it into a hat was somehow a good idea. What was he thinking!

Where I reside, we have an occasional raccoon wander into the neighborhood and I can't imagine killing it and relinquishing my favorite baseball hat for a coonskin cap. And while I have no idea how popular coonskin caps were back in Crockett's era, imagine how we'd all look if it were fashionable in today's world to wear one. Wow!

And, boy, am I glad no one called me Davy!

Okay, enough of my idiotic random thoughts and on to my latest recollection.

Because buildings and furnishings from Coleman and St. Catherine's schools were newer than what I experienced in elementary school, I'm going to assume the students from those schools are probably out of the loop on the following, but students from Central and Hamilton, along with my Byrd School classmates, might recall having the type of archaic desk I remember using.

If you went to one of those three older schools (which were probably built in the 20's since their architecture is similar), you may recall sitting at an old desk with a slightly sloped, hinged desktop which lifted up, except for a wide ledge area at the far top. This area held two long notches in the wood that nestled pencils, pens, and erasers, along with a round two-inch hole.

The round cut-out allowed for easy access to an ink bottle (a bottle, which by the way, I was often reminded not to remove without permission from its resting place. I wonder why. :)

In a long ago e-mail, I made mention of this before, but early on in elementary school I was taught to write cursive with a fountain pen. It's not that ballpoint pens weren't invented by the early fifties (they were), it's because there was an expectation that a fountain pen was the writing instrument of choice.

And what a treat it was to use a fountain pen! There was an art to not getting ink all over the place when you were re-filling your pen. And I'm sure if you searched your memory bank and recall using a fountain pen when you were little, then you may have your own story to tell about reloading it.

And if you don't remember being a bit untidy when refilling your pen, you may recall having a blackened tissue in your desk which got that way by wiping the pen's fountain tip clean – as well as an occasional fingertip or two.

Way back - way, way back it seems now - when I was learning how to write cursive in school, I didn't have an easy time of it. To say I was unsuccessful at first in mastering penmanship is a mild understatement - and the problem was most likely equally divided between nature and nurture.

The nature part of the problem came about because I am left handed – and even in stating that I know I am sending mixed signals. I throw a baseball with my left hand and kick a football with my left foot, but I bat righty and I'm right eye dominant. A bit of a contradictory mess, isn't it?

Regarding learning to write with one of those fountain pens, imagine for a minute you are left-handed, have a piece of lined paper in front of you, and pretend for a second you are writing.

As you can see, what made things very difficult, at least for left-handers like me, is that your hand trails behind the pen, sliding directly across the recently inked words you've written and smearing what was just penned. Right-handers didn't have this problem since they moved away from the wet ink when writing. Makes it easier to understand why there was a push in some school environments to change left-handers to being a righty, doesn't it?

I could have crooked my hand a bit and avoided making some of the mess, but then my wrist would have engaged in the smearing process where my hand just missed. Instead, having a nurturing mother who wanted to see her son succeed, I was shown how to turn my paper slightly to the left and to write up the paper to avoid smudging what I had just written.

Over time, I ultimately turned the paper so much the lines were eventually perpendicular to my body (I know, a bit weird), but it worked out very well, at least for me. I learned to write totally up the paper, with no smearing occurring because by the time I got back down to start on the next line, the ink had dried.

The difficulty was in getting my teachers to see that it this was a good idea. They kept telling me not to turn my paper because it wasn't a proper writing technique. I'm glad I was in a class of thirty and the teachers had little time to focus on this left-handed genius.

Okay, maybe I wasn't very close to being a genius, but in addition to turning my paper, I found another solution to my problem by following the lead of many of you right-handers. In order to give your handwriting some personality, many of you slanted your handwriting – some to the left and some of you to the right. I also recall some of the girls incorporating a stylish circle for the dot above the 'i'. Funny what you remember.

As I became more skilled at writing vertically on paper, it became easier to learn to slant my cursive writing in a positive way to correct for my odd, new paper position. I found this writing technique made my penmanship appear somewhat normal.

Oh, and I wonder if John Hancock was a lefty. I'm guessing not since I don't recall his famous signature being the least bit smudged!

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No Left Turn – Revisited

I am pleased to know I'm in such good company when it comes to being left-handed.

Sorry to hear, though, how many of my fellow lefties had the same difficulty learning to write with a fountain pen as I did, although none of you reported keeping your paper turned to the left to the extent I did.

And even though we all recognized I was being a bit silly by asking you to sing the Davy Crockett song along with me, I was surprised by the number of you who wrote and said you had a coonskin cap as a kid - and doubly surprised that a girl wore one. I couldn't tell if that was in any way related to her being a tomboy or if it was a very early expression of affirmative action on her part. She would have been as cute as a button in it, that I am sure.

I wish to express a special 'thank you' to those of you who offered to send me your coonskin cap if it ever resurfaces. Whether said in jest or not, if you find it, keep it, and just have a picture taken of you wearing your cap, okay? I'd love to see you in it all grown up; and when you e-mail it to me, I'll make sure the picture never sees the light of day on the class website. :)

Another thought regarding being schooled in an old building – do any of you recall the 12 foot classroom ceilings we had, along with the high windows that needed a pole with a hook attached to open and close them.

It was always a bit of an honor to be asked to open or close those windows and somewhat of a challenge to maneuver the pole just right and to do so quickly enough with the eyes of the entire class on you to get the hook into the window's slot without looking like a completely uncoordinated dork, especially when the top window was in the closed position.

And opening or shutting the windows sometimes required a bit of an effort, too - remember that? Do you recall having to climb up and over the radiator cover and stand on the window sill to pull down or push back up a stuck window? And, of course, not having screens on them was always made the open windows such a treat, especially when the Monarch butterflies were in migration in early September.

Can you also recall our classroom doors with the transom windows above them? This was a really neat feature because the window was usually left ajar - and so whenever you were out in the hallway, you could always hear what was going on inside a room even when the door was closed.

When it was my turn to take the absentee card down to the office, it was fun to dawdle along the way a little bit and stop and covertly overhear what was being said in the other classrooms. It made me feel like I was part of the TV spy show, 'I Led Three Lives', with Herbert Philbrick - funny how I can remember his name and not the actor who played him. Lucky for me a classmate wrote and said it was Richard Carlson.

Thank you for letting me ramble on once again.

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Were We All Quizzical Kids?

I remember learning to solve problems in school. No, not personal ones – we were always left pretty much on our own to resolve those, but we were taught how to use the five-step approach concerning other matters.

First, we were taught to make an observation and then in step two to create a question derived from what we had observed. Step three was to formulate a hypothesis based upon that question and then in step four to develop a means by which to test our hypothesis. And finally, step five was to construct a theory or explanation upon which stated whether or not the hypothesis we had made was correct.

Of course, we all know this to be the ‘scientific method’, and while I remember encountering it a great deal in junior-senior high school, I’m guessing my first exposure to it was in Sixth Grade, for I can recall having science projects with my teacher, Mr. Hawkins.

Going further back, in Fifth Grade, other than studying the solar system and posting a scaled display all the way down the hall of the vast distances between the nine planets (now just eight – poor Pluto!), I don’t recall doing much hands-on science in Miss Innes’s class, just textbook learning.

Fourth grade’s recollection is limited to learning about different types of rocks and, as mentioned before, I don’t use this teacher’s name in any of my recollections, but there was mostly textbook exposure in her class, too.

From Third Grade on, the one commonality I remember in all my elementary school science classes was magnets. I’m not sure why that was, but I can recall playing with magnets in almost every class – with the emphasis on playing. I never got tired of the mystery associated with them, either. I loved their neat little push and pull – still do. I’m such a simple little guy.

I was, however, confounded at one point to learn that the end of the magnet marked ‘N’ was actually a south end – and it had to be since the north end wouldn’t be attracted to the direction of the North Pole if it were a north end.

Oh, and of course the end of the magnet pointing to the North Pole was marked ‘N’ because magnetized metal used in compasses pointed the way

north for explorers. And isn't it curious explorers took comfort in knowing the needle was pointing to the North Pole when no one had ever been there – well, not until Richard E. Byrd went there in 1926, the man for whom my school was named. The accuracy of his flyover, by the way, has been in dispute for quite some time, but I love the fact that a man named Byrd flew over the North Pole.

As mentioned, I love magnets and maybe that's because my father had an industrial strength horseshoe magnet the size of an iron. I'm not sure what he used it for, but it was really powerful – and I loved playing with that one, too. My dad kept it in the garage and away from his tools in the basement. I'm sure he's glad it never came in contact with our car because it would have been a monster to wedge loose – or did it? I'll never tell, but I do wonder whatever happened to it, however.

As far as problem solving at home, my parents were a treasure trove of good answers, except for the final and most important one. For that, they always had the same answer – 'Well, try it and see what happens'. Never knowing the extremes to which their curious little boy would take things it's easy to see why I sometimes came home a bit scraped, bruised, or dirtied. But firsthand knowledge is always best, right?

For example, one night around the dinner table a discussion about kites was undertaken. I wanted to know whether a traditional kite or a box kite had more pulling power. As I remember it, the dialogue centered on surface area and while no definitive answer was given by either parent, their response was 'Well, build both types of kites and see what happens.' That rejoinder ended the discussion.

Not surprisingly, little did they know their ten year old son was asking because he was curious as to how many kites it would take to lift him off the ground and he wanted to know which kite was the best one to get the job done. I figured out that box kites provided the most surface area and so I built four kites and headed to the ridge near my house that I talked about in another e-mail - the spot where on a clear day you could see the top of the Empire State Building. It was perfect for flying kites because there was always a nice breeze.

As I unfolded and boxed out each kite and put them in the air, I found it difficult to keep them separated from each other - hadn't really thought that

part completely through. By keeping the kites staked about ten yards apart, I eventually got three of them to stay up in the air. But even at having them fly at different altitudes, once I untied them from their groundings and had them tightly in hand I was never able to bring them close enough together without them getting tangled. And, of course, other than jumping, I never got to the point of having any ‘lift off’ – but then I never thought about the consequences had there been some.

Only later did I realize that if I had flown the kites in tandem I might have had some success in keeping them all afloat, but it was still a great memory for me even if I didn’t succeed, although I can’t quite figure out why this topic of problem solving came to me this morning. However, I do know that as I move on up the age scale, I lean more and more toward making snap judgments (although I’ll deny that anywhere but here), and I’m curious as to where all that long lost training from my school-age years might have gone.

To give you a quick example – how many of you have ever gone to an auto show, liked how a car looked, and bought one without ever driving it - besides me, of course. Some snap decisions turn out to be a good thing – I love my new car.

Also getting back to the age thing for just a second, maybe at this stage of my life if I took the time going through the five problem solving steps, I’d probably forget what the original question was.

As for my schooling, other than the hands-on shop and auto mechanics classes I took, and maybe a mechanical drawing class or two, science was always the most fun. It seemed real, didn’t it?

And if Mr. Hollinger is on anyone’s e-mail list, would someone please let him know his physics class was always my favorite.

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Making Sense of Nonsense –

Responding to a mixture of previous e-mails, some of you wondered how I could have fit auto shop into my high school schedule, along with extra science classes, extra history classes, etc.

I believe I may have mentioned in another of my other recollections from years ago that because of my speech impediment I was afforded the opportunity after seventh grade to participate in taking additional classes in various subjects in lieu of being required to take a foreign language.

These classes were in addition to the further electives I was offered because my father didn't like the idea of his son wasting time in a study hall (his perspective, not mine).

In that regard, I should have been clearer in both my private and class e-mails to you and hope you now understand how those two extra periods, plus my regular elective choices, afforded me the opportunity to participate in so many diverse classes over the years in both junior and senior high school.

And although I don't regret taking the path I was offered, but considering how much our country's dynamic has changed over the years, I believe Spanish may have been more of a help to me in today's world than my learning how to properly adjust a carburetor (especially since cars no longer come with them) or from an Industrial Arts viewpoint of my learning how to recognize the difference between a Ball Pein hammer and a Cross Pein one.

What's more, if I had taken a creative writing course, maybe most of my paragraphs would consist of shorter and more concise sentences rather than long meandering ones.

Anyway, while I am still thinking about study halls, did anyone ever consider we should have been sitting out in a hall studying? Me neither – just asking.

Okay, but then how about the term bleachers – does anyone have any perspective as to how those seats got its name? I'm bit flummoxed as to why anyone would want to bleach wood in the first place, and then follow on doing that and call what you have just built with that wood - 'bleachers'.

If I could continue along with that train of thought for just a moment, then how about the word ‘stands’? You went into the gymnasium to watch a basketball game or a wrestling match and sat in ‘stands’. Sure, at some crucial moment or two along the way you might have stood to cheer your team on or yelled at a referee for an egregious call, but for the most part you just sat during a game. So being a bit contrary here, why weren’t they called ‘seats’ or, better yet, instead of the word ‘stands’, how about ‘sits’?

Okay, as I typed that one out, I get it – that sounds too much like zits. Oh, well, stands, it is then.

And while I’m being a little obtuse with some of this, don’t you think schools got the whole numbering system wrong for what grade you were in. We should have started out going to school in Twelfth Grade and worked our way up to First Grade.

We all know the best things in life are first grade, not twelfth. The military got it right, as did law enforcement along with many other entities – so why not schools.

Consider this - if you had dropped out of school in the 11th grade or even the 10th, you should have been thought of as being second or third grade. What were schools thinking!

If you withstood the test of time and graduated, you were truly first grade, not twelfth.

Or better, yet, what was I originally thinking about when I thought of writing this e-mail! Oh, yeah, cheerleaders.

For every girl who wanted to be a cheerleader, and every girl who was one, Glen Rock had the best looking girls. I know what you are thinking – David just wants a hug from every girl at the next reunion for saying what he just did, but it’s true. And I can prove it - well, sort of.

Ask any of our guy classmates who sat in the stands during one of our basketball games and see if he remembers the following the same way I do. I bet if he searches his memory bank he will.

At the very beginning of a game, the opposing cheerleaders formed a line, put their hands on their hips, pranced on over to our side, and did a little welcoming cheer. That's easy to remember.

But I bet the guys watching them as they came over were as hopeful as I was when we looked down the line of rival cheerleaders. One by one, we studied each of the visiting cheerleaders and looked for that certain something. We were guys and that's what guys do – look at girls. And without a doubt, I expect every guy on our side was thinking the same unthinkable thought I was – ‘Wow, who picked those girls to be cheerleaders!’

Okay, to give someone on their side their due, there might have been one or possibly two who could have passed muster on looks alone, but what about the rest of them - and where was the talent? I think they left that on the bus.

I'm not sure who sang the song with the lyrics ‘I'm a girl watcher’, but I do know I was privileged to have grown up where I did because I got a wonderful head start on the rest of the world by being able to look at the very best at such an early age.

And after being surrounded by beauty in my childhood, I am still very fortunate to be able to relive my youth by attending our class reunions and confirm with certainty that my early observations as a girl watcher were correct.

Give me a ‘G’; give me an ‘I’; give me an ‘R’; give me an ‘L’; give me an ‘S’ for the girls of Glen Rock!

Sadly, as you can tell, I had neither the looks nor the talent to be a cheerleader.

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The Game of the Ages –

When we were in school and it came to participating in or watching sports, we had our rivals and our rivalries. It is what made our school years interesting.

Somewhere in my postings to you, I once highlighted a football game wherein we narrowly beat Woodridge in a 7 to 6 victory. It was basically a ground game on their home turf that went down to the wire and it defined our season.

I also recall drawing your attention back in time to when we defeated Ridgewood in an unusual Friday night basketball game on their home court – unusual in that we were a small Group I school and they were a Group IV. I haven't a clue as to why that game was ever played.

While I am sure there are those who participated in other sports or attended other sporting events and can bring to the forefront further examples of our competitive spirit being fully tested, there is only one more activity that truly stands out for me. And it is so monumental it is why I entitled this e-mail, The Game of the Ages.

And I must make my apologies now, for without a yearbook I know I will probably be misspelling or leaving out names of crucial players and for that I am sorry, since no one should be forgotten in an epic basketball saga this special.

And while I am also at a loss as to give this game its proper title, I do know that each player on the opposing team was older, wiser (or that least they thought they were), and had more experience on the court than our team did. And if you haven't guessed it already, I'm talking about the basketball games wherein our faculty challenged the students or vice versa.

There are no other sporting events that caused as much hoots and hollers as those matchups did. And other than insanity, there's no word to describe how I felt when I first saw our male teachers come out onto the court in shorts and black high-top sneakers. I know I was laughing, but it sure looked like I was crying because of the stream of tears coming down my face.

Okay, maybe a bit too much hyperbole in characterizing my enjoyment, but I can't remember having more fun as a spectator than I did at those sporting events.

If you remember things the way I do, the faculty never practiced as a true team so a few mishaps were inevitable. They had some good players, and if some were not so accomplished, then the faculty made up in technique what they lacked in talent. I think they thought of themselves as Glen Rock's hometown version of the Harlem Globetrotters.

Remember, this action also came at a time when basketball was seeing a change from older players shooting two-handed chest shots and underhanded foul shots to younger players beginning to master the one-handed technique. And with the faculty team having mixed ages on their side, they didn't disappoint. Many of the senior players on their team used the two-handed approach and to great effect.

In the spirit of good sportsmanship, I will only say I thoroughly enjoyed seeing Mr. Krause, Mr. Smith, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Zaisser, and Mr. Monro on the court. A special mention has to go out to Mr. House and his ball playing efforts for he was always a favorite teacher of mine.

I suspect because of height and body style, as well as age, Mr. Cheska, Mr. Bing, Mr. LaRue, and Mr. Yost probably scored the most points, but I doubt anyone kept a scorecard. And as I said I can't recall all the players (and now you know why I am so hesitant to name names in my e-mails), and I truly regret that, for I would hate to think I missed recalling any of the courageous players who stepped out on that court and played their hearts out for us.

In an era long before jogging became popular, I can deeply appreciate how a group of mature men could put forth the mighty effort they did at the end of a long school day to compete against players who had in all likelihood not yet reached their 18th birthday.

This may have been just some form of dramatic exercise for them, but it turned out to be a lifetime of good memories for me. Oh, and, now, for the most important part, the winner of those games is ... anyone's guess.

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Who Wrote the Book of Love -

Using a song title from our youth is a bit cheesy, I'll admit that, but as you will soon see, I thought it was an appropriate title for this e-mail.

Somewhere along the line late in junior high, I reached the somewhat perfect height to weight ratio of six feet and 170 lbs. - at least it was for my bone structure. I thought that was ideal and pretty much stayed that way until around the age of 50, wherein my height soon became a bit too short for my weight, if you get my drift.

What I remember most about my physicality back then was not how comfortable I was in those dimensions, but how wonderful I felt when I believed I wasn't. Let me explain.

I can't recall the first time it happened, but I can mentally picture one of the circumstances. Whenever I walked along with a girl and reached over to hold her hand, if the gesture was accepted, I felt as though I was ten feet tall. In my dating scenarios back then, I know I reached the realm of being ten feet tall a few times and, of course, nothing about me changed physically (thank goodness), but I loved the sensation it bestowed upon me.

The art of feeling ten feet tall may be a guy thing (girls, as I seem to recollect, would through a flight of fancy be positioned up on a place called Cloud Nine – whatever happened to Clouds One thru Eight is anyone's guess), but feeling that tall sure was spectacular. It definitely beat out being shot down – and I'm glad my memory is a bit weak in that particular area although I'm certain it happened to me.

And it wasn't just holding a girl's hand that made me feel ten feet tall either – and while I'm reluctant to repeat myself from other e-mails, I do have a collection of wonderful circumstances that come easily to mind.

Even with the apprehension that accompanies the moments before a front door opens, walking up the steps and ringing the bell while holding a box with a corsage in it was definitely a ten foot moment that's hard to forget. Oh, and then seeing the expression on the girl's face when she sees the corsage; I truly can't express to you how very special I felt to be there when that happened.

And having been in that situation of presenting a corsage seven or eight times, I sometimes wonder if you girls were all taught to give forth that certain fabulous look of delight, but it sure locked in a ten foot moment for me. And what a great frozen moment in time that was; I only wish there were many more junior-senior high school dances in my lifetime so I could have experienced that look many times over.

Another ten foot experience occurred out on the dance floor - any dance floor whether it was inside on a school's gym floor or outside on a church's or a municipal's parking lot. This special moment would happen whenever I released my right hand from the properly taught, formal dance position we were all trained to use and slid it around a girl's waist.

I have to say, in the beginning of my dancing career, it took a bit of courage to make that move, but it soon became the accepted position for couples who were past their first or second encounter on the dance floor and who had come out to perform that ever so slow, rocking in place, barely moving at all dance I once referred to in a previous e-mail as the 'Y dance'.

Having both arms around your partner seemed to become the generally well accepted dance position for couples that cared about each other (or wanted to) at all dances except the ones held at CYO!

Although it may have been concurrent with the above dancing move, but independent of anything I did, the blissfulness of having a girl turn her head, rest it on my shoulder, and draw me closer to her made me feel ten feet tall - easily ten feet tall.

And speaking of turning heads, how about when in your dating experiences a small innocent kiss was about to be undertaken - how sweet was it, guys, when the girl turned her head your way in anticipation of you kissing her. How did you girls know just when to do that? Amazing!

But the real ten foot moment came when the girl turned your head toward her and kissed you. Wow – probably a twenty foot moment!

And, of course, this e-mail has nothing to do with 'The Book of Love', but the title 'Who Wrote the Book of Being Ten Feet Tall' didn't seem to resonant all that well with me.

Oh, and before I close out this message completely, I would like to go back to a previous e-mail about basketball games and focus in on sock-hops for just a moment. I can recall being at four of them – two in our gym and twice after games at Midland Park High School.

If any of you have recollections of being at sock-hops that would stir my memories further, please e-mail me – even with your faintest of memories. I would love to read what you remember.

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Sock Hop –

In regards to my last e-mail, thank you to all who wrote and said I misspelled 'Sock Hop'. I know getting old is not much of an excuse, but I should learn to proofread my e-mails before hitting 'Send'.

Concerning my question about 'sock hops', though, I like that one classmate wrote and stated his memory of being at a sock hop was fuzzy – in fact, 'very fuzzy' was his direct quote. I can identify with that. He alluded to the fact that he also believed his own sock hop experiences at Glen Rock (at least two) were limited to junior high.

Did we ever have advertised sock hops with announcements, posters in the hallways, decorations, etc., in junior high? Don't know, but we must have had a few, right? In any case, few phrases trip the tumblers of time in my memory bank more vividly than the term "sock hop."

The really elaborate ones must have happened - or am I just remembering things from Hollywood movies and such that glorified our era of teenage life in the 50s and early 60s and just melding everything together in this little old brain of mine?

Another classmate indicated that at a sock hop it was the first time she was introduced to a 'ladies choice' option and didn't partake. She thought it was weird going over to a guy and asking him to dance. I can't speak for anyone else, but I liked the idea, well, sort of.

What guy could forget the shock of his first 'ladies' choice'? Since we were so young, none of us boys ever came to a sock hop with a date (at least not that I can recall), so this was the first "hook-up moment" of the night whereby the opposite sex could openly express an interest in you, a moment we all knew for good or for bad could last two, three, or even four minutes. And, as I remember it, only slow dances were ever played for that undertaking.

Because some of you recall our sock hops in junior high, you may also remember that like our dance classes once a 'ladies choice' announcement was made, the guys were all turning, moving, and hugging the farthest walls of the gym, trying to look cool, some hiding, some a step or two away from the wall waiting, hearts pounding, a torrent of sweat trying to break through

that extra dose of Bay Rum or English Leather we might have dabbed on just before leaving home, and, of course for those that had them, hoping against hope that our cowlick wasn't our most prominent feature.

Since these 'ladies choice' opportunities did not come along all that often, I think the girls were pretty well set on who they would make a beeline for once the announcement was made. And like any 13 year old, I can only hope that if any of them recall heading in my direction to ask me to dance, I responded politely and said 'Yes, I will. Thank you.' in my savviest, but ever-changing, pubescent man/boy voice.

All of which begs the question about having a major 'ladies choice' dance - did we ever do the Sadie Hawkins ritual? I don't remember - and I can only hope that's because my memory is a bit impaired at this stage of my life and not because I wasn't invited. :)

I did get feedback indicating that some people recall being at the 'hops' wearing personally decorated socks. I can't say that I recall anyone ever doing that, but my recollections center more on being at sock hops after basketball games. The ones I remember were short in length, maybe just 45 minutes to an hour. Nothing truly special about the ones I recall.

The most crucial part of any good sock hop, besides who you danced with, was, naturally, the music, and for our sock hops, it came from a record player. I'll assume classmates brought in their favorite 45 rpm singles to play because I can't fathom the school having a collection of our style of music.

The classmate with the good, but fuzzy memory singled out 'At the Hop' by Danny and the Juniors, while some others mentioned 'Rock Around the Clock' by Bill Haley and His Comets, 'Johnny B. Goode' by Chuck Berry, and 'Yakety Yak' as being their dance favorites. Can't say I remember any of those songs except for the titles.

Also, almost everyone who e-mailed me included 'The Twist' by Chubby Checker as a remembered classic. Some said they liked it because it was different - they liked it because it was both a song and a dance. That being said, I don't believe I ever got my hips, knees, and shoulders in sync to do what the dance required me to do. So rather than 'twist again like we did last summer', looking at me dance it, my rendition probably would have fallen under the title 'The Tortured' rather than 'The Twist'. Yes, seriously.

For dances performed by us together in groups (well, by some), I got a few responses from those who liked to boogie to the 'Hully, Gully' and the 'Stroll', along with doing the 'Bunny Hop' and the 'Hokey Pokey'. I'll stick with having a singular partner doing a 'Y dance' as my favorite. No torture there.

Thanks to all who added to my memories. I appreciate your help - this time and always.

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Sock Hop Response - #2

I hate to intrude on your e-mail box space so much lately, but since the responses to my sock hop question keep coming, I'm passing them along in the hope that you like hearing what classmates have to say as much as I do.

One classmate remembers having a sock hop in 7th grade and decorating her socks with buttons and bows, and, as she said, having all the shoes lined up against the wall.

She didn't believe we had too many sock hops, but remembers all the songs and still loves to dance, even doing the Twist (and hopes to do it some more this summer at the mid-reunion). She also remembers a Sadie Hawkins dance at Valentine's Day and the girls getting to ask their favorite guys.

Another classmate, whose car I loved, went to St. Catherine's and remembers many of his friends were from Fair Lawn. He commented that many of the Sadie Hawkin's dances he recalls occurred at a grange hall at the bottom of Radburn Road.

He mentioned that the church had CYO dances and when he was in the 5th or 6th grade, St. Catherine's brought in a dance instructor and everyone learned to dance, hence, from his point of view, "most of us guys were used to doing the asking to dance". I wonder if that was the same instructor couple we had in junior high.

After reading his Blackberry commentary, I now know I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. This is because the classmate's fondest memories were of block dances held in Fair Lawn during the summer, which was too far for me to walk and riding my bike would have given the wrong impression this emerging teenager might have wanted to project. He did say this was in 6th, 7th and 8th grade and way before Glen Rock had them.

Since many of his friends were from Fair Lawn, he, however, would walk to the Memorial Pool area at the end of Berdan Avenue and, as he lovingly writes, "There they would be. Strange women. Actually probably 14 or 15 years old. But totally uncharted territory, not your familiar classmates."

I love his following perspective on all of this – he wrote, “Somehow they looked cooler and they dressed differently and wore makeup. Many of the girls wore ‘Angel blouses’. It was a new fashion trend and aptly named.” He said (and I don’t doubt it), “I will always remember just dancing the night away outdoors and under the stars with these dream girls.” Wow, I can feel his passion, even now, can’t you?

Still another classmate loved that I mentioned the ‘ladies choice’ option, although she only vaguely remembers that part of it. But while reading about it, “it dawned on her that the tables were turned in more than one way. . . not only did the ladies get to do the asking and feel the uncertainty of whether the guy would accept the dance with them, but the guys got the opportunity to see what it felt like to wonder if someone was going to ask you to dance, or if you were going to stand by the wall all alone. Looking back on it, I think it was a great learning/understanding experience for all of us.”

She continues, “One other thing about the "ladies choice". . . would it surprise you to know that we held secret admirations for some of the guys, too? And, when those (ladies choice) came up, it gave the girls the opportunity to ask that secret someone to spend just a few minutes with us where we might not otherwise get that chance. Of course, there was also the concern that 14 other females in the class were going to make a bee-line for our "Mr. Cool" and we'd get there too late to dance with him.”

I don’t recall if she ever picked me, but 50+ years later I sure hope so. I would have liked to have been someone’s ‘Mr. Cool’.

Thanks again for your insights and memories. I do love reading your recollections.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

American Made –

Those of you who know me well know I like cars. Other than it being a guy thing, I'm not sure why that is, but maybe I can liken it to the freedom expressed in the olden days when a horse was tied up outside and someone could saddle up anytime they wanted and ride off into the sunset.

When I was much younger and had access only to a bike, it was pretty much the same feeling. I could hop on my red Schwinn Corvette, with its chrome fenders and three gears, and feel free by pretty much riding to any place where I wanted to go - keeping in mind, however, I would have to eventually pedal myself back home (dinner was pretty important to this growing boy.)

Maybe it was being in a car and taking the family rides and vacations to which my parents indulged my sister and me. I loved looking out the window and seeing new places; I liked flipping through the AAA trip folder cards; I loved playing the license plate game; I liked curling up and sleeping on the backseat on the way home from Sunday night ice cream trips; I liked – well, you name it; I just know I liked cars.

What stands out most in my memory bank for this recollection is being in a car dealership with my parents in the mid-fifties as they contemplated what their next new vehicle would be like. As I recall, it was a long process picking the options they wanted and choosing the perfect color.

Two-tone cars were popular back then and I remember my parents sitting in the salesman's office moving the various over-lays around and watching them pick the right color combination – at least the right one for them.

Unlike today wherein there are rows and rows of vehicles to pick from, back then an order was placed and the automobile was literally built for you. There were always a few cars on the dealer's lot you could buy, but my family never did that. We wanted our car our way.

As I recall, there was some discussion, too, about which automatic transmission to get. My mother wanted to stay with the two-speed gear box she was used to driving (imagine having just two speeds – maybe my mother thought it meant either fast or slow), but my dad won out and they contracted for the optional new three-speed automatic being offered.

If you can recall driving an automobile with an automatic transmission from the early to mid-fifties, those early ones were rather sluggish in their performance. I'm just guessing here, but I would think it probably took 12 to 14 seconds to get to 60mph, even with my dad's wished for three speed transmission!

Nowadays, automatics rival a manual gear box in their performance and most have six speed gears, with 7 and 8 speeds automatics becoming more and more common – cutting the zero to 60mph time down to 6 or 7 seconds for a lot of cars.

My mom didn't speed, and if she did, it wasn't by much, but she had some good advice when driving in Jersey City. She said, "Two wrongs don't make a right, but three lefts do. " Moms are always right, especially when wanting to make a left.

My dad when questioned once about his going over the speed limit told me, "Remember, Dave, street lights timed for 25 mph are also timed for 50 mph." It took me awhile to figure that one out.

Our new two-toned car came with an option I hope none of you experienced - a clear plastic overlay for the seats. Somewhere, somehow, somebody must have thought that was a good idea, but it wasn't. Maybe on our family's Sunday ice cream runs I was dropping too much stuff on the seat. Who knows? But the plastic covering was crackly cold in the winter, hot to the touch during the summer, and aged to a yucky, muted yellow pretty quickly.

I doubt the clear plastic covered our seats for more than a year or two. However, some cars I remember seeing during that time period had severely cracked plastic coverings. Many had numerous splits with somewhat parallel lines opening up to the cloth seats below, but people still used them.

Over the years, a lot has changed in the car buying world. Safety overcame the use of massive amounts of chrome and unusual tail fins to become the new mantra for today's cars. Some automobiles now come with eight different airbags. Way back when, if I were in the front seat of our family car, the only safety feature I can recall was my mother's outstretched arm quickly placed across my chest if she was about to brake too suddenly.

Common stopping distances from 60mph for cars from the fifties were about 180 feet. My Audi A5 stops in a world class distance of about 110 feet. That 70 foot difference is about three to four car lengths. Can you imagine the youth of today driving the cars from our era? There'd be no stopping them. :)

Back in the day when we were young, even if you weren't into cars, it was easy for anyone to tell a foreign car from a domestic one because they were so different. Not anymore, except maybe for the exotics. And, of course, some foreign manufacturers have established auto manufacturing plants here.

It gives a whole new meaning to American Made, doesn't it?

And in case you never noticed, you never really learned to swear until you learned how to drive.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

A Tender Moment in Time -

A pressure cooker, if you recall, is a large cast iron or steel pot with a tightly fitted lid which you turned and locked securely in place.

The idea behind using a pressure cooker was that the boiling point of water was raised and, thusly, at this higher temperature, cooking times were greatly reduced, but, yet, since everything was under pressure, as the meat cooked, it was significantly tenderized.

From Mr. Hollinger's physics class, I remember learning that air is constantly pressing down on us with a tremendous force (about 14.7 lbs. per square inch), but since we're so accustomed to experiencing it, we don't notice it. I can just imagine what its pressure would be in those old pressure cookers. Better minds than mine will figure that one out.

Anyway, as I recall, the fast cooking action of my mother's pressure cooker cut the cooking time to about a third of that of conventional cooking methods. Mom said she first purchased the cooker to do some vegetables she canned during the war, but liked it better for cooking meats and stews.

Do you remember when the cooker was fully operational and you saw and heard the noisy, rattling, hissing 'jiggler' on top. The action of that regulator scared everyone out of the kitchen. Well, that was my mother's warning, anyway. No one was allowed in the kitchen when the pressure cooker was doing its job.

And what a great job it was, too. My mother's great beef stew was done in less than thirty minutes – and the meat was as tender as it could be. Pot roasts were good, too. Maybe that's where the term came from. Anyone know?

I can recall my mother using her pressure cooker throughout the 1950s, but have no memory of her utilizing it in the 60s and beyond. In any case, from her initial kitchen warnings, I'm guessing those cookers were not totally safe to use and gave way to people using slow cookers – I know we don't have a pressure cooker, but my wife, Nancy, has three crock pots.

Maybe someday I'll remember my mother's old beef stew recipe and give it to Nancy to try in her new All-Clad Electric Slow Cooker (its purchase was the trigger for this memory, by the way).

And then maybe I won't. Some history is best left as it is - as are short e-mails.

- Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

The Hot and Cold of It –

Thank you. All of you are so generous. In response to my last e-mail, I've had offers of tried and true mother recipes for delicious pressure cooker beef stews, an invitation that if I'm ever out a certain classmate's way 'to come dine in pressure cooker splendor' (her words, not mine), and an inquiry from someone who has a brand new pressure cooker in his garage wanting to know if I would like to have it.

I've graciously passed on those offers from classmates who wanted to send me stuff, but I certainly do look forward to the dinner invite happening at some future point in time!

With your stories of pressure cookers exploding and spewing pea soup, pork loin stew, and bean soup, along with the possibility of some applesauce, up on kitchen ceilings after malfunctions occurred, I'm glad to have read the design flaw of the noisy, steam juggler regulators in some older units has been remedied in the new digital models.

Next time I'm out and about, I'll have to do some window shopping and check out the new pressure cooker designs. I'm curious to see what they look like, but I'm actually more of a sauté type cook myself, so I doubt any purchase will be made. Besides, I try to avoid prolonged prep and cook times - and thankful to have ample restaurants and take out places in my area, especially in the summer.

Moving on to a slightly different topic which was brought about by a classmate who stated she had knowledge of her mother's pressure cooker exploding at home while she was in school - it got me to thinking about schools and food, and, finally, to the realization that I never owned a lunchbox . What with the jr.-sr. high having a cafeteria, and my elementary school not offering a lunchroom, I never had much of a need for one.

As mentioned in a previous e-mail, Byrd School's morning session was over at 11:30 and we didn't have to be back in school until a quarter-to-one (seems a lot longer in time to say it that way than we had to be back by 12:45); anyway, we always had ample time to go home and eat lunch – with plenty of time to have fun and frolic on the playground, too.

My sister may have had a lunch box (why – I'm not sure), but our household did have a good sized thermos bottle; however, again, for what reason, I do not know.

I will speculate that because my dad worked for a ship design company and times might have been a bit hectic during the war for him, he may have brought his lunch to the office, thus having the possible need for a thermos, but it's only a guess. I just know he never carried his lunch with him when I was little.

I was intrigued, however, with the inspired, yet practical, idea of a bottle that kept hot things hot and cold things cold when either condition was required, but I don't think I ever used it. The only reason I remember a thermos being in our house is that I may have been the person who broke it.

It did break, of that I am sure, but whether or not I'm the one responsible is lost to memory. Remarkable as it may sound, my recollection can be fallible at times, and this is certainly a good time for it to be that way, but I truly don't recall breaking the thermos bottle.

I'm guessing it was at least 12-15 inches tall and held at least a quart. I have a sense the polished metal on the outside was stainless steel (what other kind could it have been) and it securely enclosed a mirrored glass container. The metal lid, which screwed on, was comprised of two individual drinking cups - all in all, a rather ingenious device.

Out goes a question to all of you – does anyone use a thermos anymore? Oh, and what broke - the glass, of course. I was told there was a vacuum inside which aided the thermos in doing its job and I may have been curious as a young child as to how it got inside the metal container (thinking of vacuum as a cleaner rather than a space lacking air) and may have tried to tamper with it. I could have been fixated on why there was mirrored glass inside, too.

The thermos was never replaced so I believe my parents had moved beyond the need for having one, or else they thought the same fate would befall a new thermos bottle.

And why do I believe I broke it – well, my parents were the responsible kind, my sister was older, and, so, who else could have done it but the youngest child - me.

I'm surmising that some of you may be analyzing your family's pecking order right now and may be able to identify with my simple logic and can sympathize with my dilemma of casting doubt on who could be at fault when no certainty exists.

And I also know being the totally inquisitive kid I was, I was forever into things, always curious about how things worked, so playing around with a thermos bottle to see what magic resided within it would not have been out of the norm for me, no matter how simple it was in its construction.

Vacuum cleaners, radios, and especially clocks were also on my list of things to ponder. All were scrupulously taken apart – always with the best of intentions of getting everything correctly back together again, but invariably there may have been an occasional part or two mysteriously left over.

Wind-up clocks, especially the ones with the alarm bells on top, were of great interest to me. Once the case was removed, I loved seeing all the gears and swinging levers and wondered how they all came together to move the hands so precisely – it was an amazing little gadget.

Once I got the clock apart, I was in awe that someone knew exactly how it all fit back together. Eventually, with trial and error, and only if I didn't mess up the spring too badly, I was able to get some clocks back together again. But I'll tell you from lots of experience, once that coiled spring became un-sprung, replicating its former taut position and getting everything back to its proper working sequence was a nightmare.

I can also see that my time is up and I've gone on too long but thanks for letting me ramble once again.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

A Foregone Conclusion –

I know – with a title like that I only have three more conclusions to make in order to be done with this e-mail.

All homophones and silliness aside, during a recent telephone conversation about our respective childhoods, I asked a classmate who went to the old Coleman School on Harristown Road where his school's playground was located. He didn't remember any, but he did inform me that the new Coleman School on Pinelynn Road was built in '54, and while he didn't attend school there, it had a playground.

And the reason I asked him that question was that I loved the jungle gym at Byrd School – as did many of my early classmates, and by the time I got to 600 Harristown Road, it was a junior high and I never saw any playground equipment. I can't imagine not having a jungle gym to fool around with and play on during my formative years.

But then, I can't come up with any good reason as to why it's called a jungle gym. It didn't look anything like a jungle or a gym – not that I personally saw the insides of either one of those at an early age.

And come to think of it, while I wasn't too fond of 'see-saws', how did the 'see-saw' get its name?

If you were up, could you 'see' something and when you came down, could you then say that you 'saw' it. Or maybe 'see-saw' mimics a log being cut in half by two men? And who was this Margery Daw? I haven't a clue to any of it.

The only real conclusion I can make is that I loved being a kid growing up in Glen Rock, New Jersey. But after writing all my e-mails, I believe that's truly a foregone conclusion.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

A Foregone Conclusion - part 2

Since I usually respond to follow-up e-mails, you knew it was inevitable that I would add an ending to my 'Foregone Conclusion' memory, didn't you? And it sort of goes with the title, doesn't it?

Most of the responses I received pertaining to playing on a jungle gym were from guys. That wasn't altogether unexpected. During my younger school years, I don't recall girls being on the jungle gym before school or during lunch break very much. I can only surmise that's because they wore dresses to school and being high up on a jungle gym was not 'lady-like'.

As I got older, my Byrd School classmates that played on the school grounds in the afternoons or on weekends used the jungle gym as the holding cell in a game called 'Prison', also sometimes called 'Prison Break'. It was a game based on a variation of tag in which players of one team seek to tag and imprison players of the other team.

Once somebody was in prison, any uncaptured player could make an attempt to tag the prisoner(s) or in some cases just the jungle gym needed to be tagged, and then anyone in prison gets to run and hide again.

Once everybody is in jail, the first person to be put in jail became 'It.' When the game was played fairly, 'Prison' could go on for hours, especially if a fair number of people were playing. This game had a few variations, but was always fun and filled with cat and mouse strategies for all involved.

Oh, and some of you said the jungle gym you remember playing on was called 'monkey bars'. And while I remember hearing the term, I always associated it with a playground's horizontal ladder. Who knows?

One classmate responded to the mystery of where the old Coleman School playground was by stating he recalls "it was on the left side of the school towards the back when you faced the building. There was also the teachers' parking lot in that area, too."

"Plenty of us grew up close to the school and I remember spending more time in the woods behind the school. And for you guys who became scouts how could you forget the jamborees as I think they were called. That took place directly behind the school and then they moved them to Ramapo area."

He continued by writing, “The woods became an Indian encampment for a few days and it was like stepping onto a movie set. I can easily recall the tepees, tents, campfires, knives, axes, lots of Indian decorations, outfits, even dances being performed. The best part of living nearby, I could venture over at night, walk thru the different scout camps set up, or watch everything by the light of the campfires blazing thru the trees and see Scouts wearing war paint doing dances around the fire to the sound of drums.”

“As a young boy, it was very impressive and as an older man it is one of those great memories that you conjure up while trying to recall something quite different.”

That happens to me all the time.

Thanks to all who wrote and added to my memories.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

No Mystery About It –

I am not going out on a limb here when I say I grew up in a very ordinary Glen Rock, New Jersey, household - or at least I believed it was ordinary.

My mother stayed home and devoted her time to the laborious tasks of trying to complete the daily household chores. You know the tasks I'm talking about: the cooking, the cleaning, the laundry, etc. - the ones that in our daily lives of today we try to accomplish in thirty minutes or less. :)

By the way, if my mother didn't hug her dryer when it first arrived, she should have. I can't imagine doing the wash without one!

My dad commuted to work – first by train, then taking PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) to NYC, and finally by hailing a taxi to his Battery Park area office. If Dad were alive today and still going to work, I believe little in that scenario would have changed much in today's world, except now the trains and cabs have air conditioning.

Whether one or both of your parents worked or whether they commuted to their workplace by public transportation is not my point – although it may seem so from the way I started this e-mail. No, what I was aiming for was the word typical.

Not much changed in the 18 years of my life in Glen Rock or in that of my family's routine. Oh, sure, TV altered my homelife's entertainment routine a bit, big band music gave way to 'rock and roll', and satellites began orbiting the skies above our house like shooting stars, but, overall, nothing changed much in my day-to-day life.

One supreme constant in our house were books. Sure, we can include comic books in that category, for they played an integral part in my super-hero fantasy world (with a few of my sister's Archie type comics thrown in, too), but I mean real books.

My dad loved reading Isaac Azimov. He may have begun with some of Asimov's short stories and fictional work, but soon was deeply attracted to his non-fiction writings, especially anything having to do with astronomy. Azimov wrote hundreds upon hundreds of books (not sure how he found the time), but my dad probably read every one.

My mother read mostly romantic novels, although a few Agatha Christie stories popped up now and again, especially since my mom knew Christie also wrote romantic novels under a pen name that I can no longer recall.

What I find interesting is that some of the best movies and TV shows I have seen were adapted from Agatha Christie's work - for example, the fantastic movie 'Witness for the Prosecution' – truly a classic from beginning to end and the superior TV series about detective Hercule Poirot which aired for years on PBS.

From the time I could master reading the written word in chapter books, I became a Frank and Joe Hardy Boys' freak and probably read close to fifty of those. And I'll even admit to reading a few of the Nancy Drew stories, too. I moved on to like Raymond Chandler's short stories as well as his novels, and I often thought I wanted to be Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade when I grew up.

That didn't happen, of course, but I'm still a murder mystery nut and like the John Sandford 'Prey' series the most, the ones with Lucas Davenport as the lead detective. By the way, if you'd like to start reading Sandford's novels, begin with his first, 'Rules of Prey', and then move on down the list. Sandford's written about 20 'Prey' books and they're all very good.

Getting back to Glen Rock - being the last to come into in our house, I was relegated to having the smallest bedroom, but my parents made sure there was room for books. When it came time for me to get a grown-up bed, I got one with a built-in bookshelf. All the bedrooms in our home came equipped with a ceiling light fixture, but my bed's headboard had two goose-necked lamps nestled on top which made for great personal reading lights.

I knew where I was headed with this e-mail when I began it, but as usual I've rambled on too much (no mystery there), so I'll save the topic of the real constant in my life, the town library, for another time.

But I'll tell you now, I loved the downstairs children's library my mother introduced me to at a very young age and loved when I graduated to using the upstairs section. And it was great having it enroute home from jr.-sr. high!

The Ridgewood Library on Maple Avenue may have had more books, but ours had the unique character of a small town library. It was cozy and

intimate and personal. Everything was easy to find. If you can't tell, I loved being there.

And although I've never been inside, I hope that feeling was preserved in our town's new library, but I think not.

And I won't go, either, for I like my memories just the way they are. No mystery about that, that's for sure.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

What was the Tallest Building in Glen Rock?

I suspect you know the answer to that question because I said I was going to do a follow-up to my last short-winded e-mail.

Oh, and why was this the tallest building?

Because as any child knows, regardless of its size, the library always has the most stories.

What – you thought I was going to do a knock-knock joke. Okay, I will.

Knock, Knock -

Who's there?

Aaron!

Aaron who!

Aaron on the side of caution whenever I do one of my e-mails!

One day the little kid in me is going to grow up and then what am I going to do?

In any case, do you remember the children's library? It was, as indicated in my previous e-mail, downstairs from the main library. The library was entered from the left side of the municipal building. There was a small parking lot off Rock Road for what I am guessing would have had the capacity for about 10-12 cars.

There was plenty of parking across the street by the railroad tracks, and also in the Kilroy's Wondermarket parking lot. Other than the fact it sold 'Wonder Bread', I can't for the life of me figure out why it called itself a 'Wondermarket'.

Okay, moving on - other than the popular nursery rhyme books we all plowed through as kids, one of the first real children's books I can recall reading is 'The Little Engine That Could'. It was probably read to me a hundred times (just so my parents could instill in me the idea that anything is possible), but I do remember reading it early on by myself (most likely from rote memory, of course).

I haven't won the lottery yet, but, as I just stated, I do hold out hope for I was shown that anything is possible. Someday I'll have to actually buy a Mega-Millions ticket and find out for sure.

Something tells me this may become a silly e-mail. Or has it already?

Anyway, as I recall, the downstairs library was small, having three shelving units around the walls and two round tables with children-sized chairs. There was one protruding set of shelves obscuring a doorway (maybe for a closet, not sure).

When I was little, my mother, who shopped at the Grand Union and didn't frequent the Wondermarket all that much (the Grand Union was closer for us), would on occasion drop me off at the children's library if she had to run into Kilroy's for something or she wanted to go upstairs to get some books for herself. I loved the alone time. Not that I didn't mind my mom selecting books for me, I just liked being alone at four or five years of age and picking out things for myself.

Let's jump forward quite a few years to my senior year in high school. In English class, we were required to do a senior research paper, and although I don't know what topics you were assigned in your class, in Mrs. Punchard's class it had to be a thesis paper on a famous author.

To digress now for just a moment, in the mid-fifties, the movie 'Robinson Crusoe' came out and I loved it. I think of myself as a loner, always have, and although it may not be altogether true, it's how I picture myself. So when given the chance to do a paper on the author of Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe, I jumped at it.

Yeah, I know what you're thinking – Dave was an idiot. And I think you may be right.

I hadn't read any of Defoe's writings and knew very little about him, except that he was the author of the fictional character Robinson Crusoe.

I don't remember too much about my research paper, except we were told we needed to do it because we would have term papers in college and had to know the proper method for writing one. Does anyone remember how difficult it was to leave room at the bottom of your pages for footnotes? For me, it was a nightmare getting the margins and sizing correct.

And the joke was on me, too. Since I went into psychology, research papers were written in the APA style (American Psychological Association), which not to bore you, meant footnotes were placed at the end of the research paper, not at the bottom of every page.

I can come clean now because Mrs. Punchard has already marked my paper and I graduated, but I never read Defoe's Robinson Crusoe in its entirety –

wanted to, tried to (really I did), but just couldn't get through it. Too many olde English words like nay, whence, and whilst, etc. But what was the absolute worst part was that every fifth word or so was capitalized. I haven't a clue as to why, but it made for awkward reading. Oh, did I tell you it was written sometime around 1720. Boring, boring book, but the movie was great! Hope you saw it. :)

So what does this have to do with the town library? Well, I still needed to do some research and all we had at home was 'The Book of Knowledge'. Something tells me its salesman got to our doorstep before the 'Encyclopedia Britannica' man did. There was a lot written about Defoe so the research end of it was relatively easy (with some time spent at the Ridgewood Library thrown in, too), but the reading of Defoe's actual work left a lot to be desired.

The only other thing I can remember about Daniel Defoe was that his last name was originally 'Foe' and he changed it. The why of having the need to do it I'll leave up to Mrs. Punchard to answer.

Thanks for hanging in there with yet another one of my ramblings. I'm trying my best to keep them short.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

The Luck of the Arrow -

I don't know how you wound up doing what you did for a job, but I hope your work was satisfying and gave back to you as much as you put in.

Some of you may have known all along what you were going to do with your life and some of you may have pursued what just came your way.

Like the old but very true saying from our childhood, 'The un-aimed arrow never misses its target.'

When I was little, I never had a vision which led me to believe that destiny had a place for me in the work-a-day world. I was never what you would call overly ambitious, never had much of an ego, and never set out to have goals I felt I had to achieve.

Believe it or not, in some ways as my new career as a senior citizen begins, I am still the same way.

As a youngster I always liked putting something together or taking something apart (as my recent 'The Hot and Cold of It' email detailed) or visualizing how things worked and how they could be made to work even better.

All very emblematic of an inquisitive little boy, I suppose.

I liked doing a variety of kid's stuff, but none stood out in any way that would have pointed me in the direction of a vocation, career, or profession.

I don't know how many of you will remember doing this, but in junior high, during one of our health classes, Mr. Brown, our guidance counselor, gave our group a vocational aptitude questionnaire.

You might be better able to recall taking this test if you can recollect using a metal push-pin device to punch out your answers. It was round on one end like a ring and fit over one of your fingers.

Well, in any case, we used this push-pin device on something akin to heavy Manila paper and completed a hundred or so multiple choice inquiries about our personal interests in questions that went something like this –

What would you rather do -

- (A) act in a play
- (B) design clothes
- (C) construct a new town

Whereas it may seem easy to pick just one out of the three, it wasn't; I liked them all.

What stutterer wouldn't love to see himself as the star of a play? What guy wouldn't want to lay claim to inventing short-shorts? And what former builder of tree houses wouldn't want to create a new town?

When I met with Mr. Brown in his office to discuss the results, it was determined from the myriad of holes I had punched into my answer sheet that I would enjoy working outside and being with animals. While I never once envisioned what my future job would be, by no means did I ever see it as being connected to a zoo, leading an African safari, or owning a farm. And, of course, it wasn't.

While the psychometrics approach didn't accurately predict my future (as you saw, I probably over-analyzed each question too much), my parents always thought my love of cars and/or working on them would eventually lead me in the automotive direction and did some initial planning to bring that about. For those of you who have read my other e-mails know that also didn't happen (good luck to whoever bought White's Gulf Station), but I still like cars and enjoy reading the seven automobile magazines that arrive in my mailbox each month.

When the time came, I went off to college not knowing what my major ought to be, but thinking I wanted to emulate not my shop and/or auto mechanics teachers with whom I had much in common, but Mr. House and Mr. Gemma. I thought that it would be neat to become as fantastic a social studies/history teacher to others as those two were for me. That, too, didn't happen.

In any case, whatever led me to do what I did with my life I sense it was more by happenstance than by design, but I'm glad I wound up doing what I

did. And whether your life was planned out by you or occurred by chance or default, I hope you feel the same way.

And as we all know by now (and it goes without saying, but I will anyway), I sure am glad my parents' house hunting arrow, aimed or not, eventually found its target in Glen Rock, New Jersey.

I know I say this a lot, but thank you for allowing me to invade your mailbox once again.

Dave Lamken diamken@comcast.net

Bull's Eye –

I can't express enough appreciation for those of you who have memories far superior to mine and remembered the name of the questionnaire we took back in ninth grade to be The Kuder Preference Test.

By some of you recalling the test's name and sending it on to me, I can assume it made more of an impression on you than it did on me. Four of you even went the extra mile and searched the Internet for the test and sent me various website information about it.

Originally, I had written I thought the test had over 100 questions, but to know it had exactly 138 makes my recollection of it even more special, so thanks to you all.

Over the years, I've read how grateful you are for the class e-mails I have posted as they have spurred the recall of your own Glen Rock experiences and tended to put some things into focus for you about your childhood. But truly the effort many of you have displayed by writing me back and adding your own insight and memories into what I've written is equally appreciated.

Some of you questioned how I got started thinking about last week's topic. It was really rather simple. I was questioning myself as to why with all the intelligent classmates we had why no one became a doctor. That got me to thinking about how it was probably a lifelong dream for anyone who did want to enter the medical field - and from that simple, idle thought one thing led to another.

I was struck by how many of you stated the un-aimed arrow was a major contributor to how you wound up doing what you did with your life. Of course, some of you followed your dreams, but most of you were pushed or pulled in various directions (and many of you more than once) as you entered the workplace after high school, the armed forces, college, grad school, etc.

In writing to me, some of you expressed again how my e-mails should be turned into a book, but for anyone wishing to write a book, this latest topic has the essence of a really good best seller. Do some research and your own ISBN awaits. Our class is a treasure trove of good stuff when it comes to stories about career choices.

Just to illustrate that point one reply stated how the Kuder test indicated a very noble and satisfying future lay ahead for this person in animal photography. Low and behold after retirement in an entirely different profession, this classmate can be found 50 years later out in a kayak doing just what the Kuder test had projected this classmate would be doing in the future.

And who said that test didn't show much promise. Oh, that would be me!

It was also not my intention to spur thoughts of how you met your spouse, but clearly the un-aimed arrow played a major factor in achieving that goal, too. Those stories were precious.

And I know I've mentioned this before, but you should consider hitting the 'Reply to All' tab when responding to something I've written. I know your classmates would enjoy reading your stories as much as I do.

From those of you who write to me periodically to those I rarely hear from, it has been quite a pleasure getting acquainted with you through e-mails over these past 15 years and I'd like you to know how much that has meant to this shy kid from Glen Rock.

I thank you for making me your bull's eye with your aimed arrows and for enriching my life with your own remembrances.

By the way, when I look in the mirror anymore I hardly recognize that old man who is staring back at me, but as I scrolled through the Villages Reunion photos which were posted in the last month or so, I didn't have a problem figuring out who was who. Considering I may have once looked as good as at least one or two of you, that's not fair.

But it may also explain why I don't stay long at the regular class reunions. It's a bit depressing to overhear someone whispering - 'Who is that guy with the white hair and beard?', 'Oh, that's Dave Lamken.', 'My, my, I never would have guessed!'

And that's with me wearing the picture ID tag which Karen Nielsen graciously provided to us many moons ago at another reunion.

But it's comforting to know how little my classmates have changed – and since I'm somehow remotely connected to this group of super genetically

empowered people, there may be some hope for this Glen Rock High School graduate. At least I hope so.

And soon - because our 50th will be here before we know it.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Oh, What a Beautiful Day –

When I reflect back to my childhood days in Glen Rock, it's hard not to picture the weather as always being perfect. Oh, sure, it could also have been snowing, but that's also a perfect day for any child, isn't it?

Most of my enjoyable good weather memories center on my riding my bike somewhere, playing games in the neighborhood, being at the pool, or just outside having fun in the woods behind my house or down by Diamond Brook.

I have also elaborated about what it was like building snowmen, going sledding on Cedar Avenue, ice skating at the Ridgewood Duck Pond (does anyone know if that's its real name? I don't believe I ever referred to it as anything else), and throwing snowballs at passing cars (yeah, I'll admit to doing that at least once or twice).

The only rainy day memories I can recall are playing Monopoly at a neighbor's house on Greenway Road. This non-classmate lived two doors away, across the street from Chris Johnston. What I liked was that he'd call when it was raining and invite me to play marathon Monopoly games in his basement rec room with some of the other neighborhood kids. Of course, I can only recall the times I was there. Maybe there were Monopoly sessions played at his house without me, but that's an imponderable, and I can't answer that.

I just know what I know - and I loved being in his basement with the rain pouring down around his house and being oblivious to it all. What was also memorable was that he always seemed to have an endless supply of those little thin pretzels and RC Cola. I don't believe I ever had Royal Crown Cola anywhere else. I knew what it was, of course, but we never had it at home and I can't recall buying it on my own anytime when I was out and about.

What I can recall with certainty is that sometime in the mid-50s my family vacationed in Virginia. What's special about that was not visiting Luray Caverns (which was neat), Williamsburg, or even venturing out to the site of the original Jamestown, but that we spent some time at Virginia Beach.

I'm guessing it was the near arrival of Hurricane Cathy, Carol, or Connie that roughed up the surf for us on that particular day, but whatever hurricane

it was, the waves were spectacular. Wait – my sister’s name is Carol so I would have remembered that – but it did start with a ‘C as I recall, so it was either Hurricane Cathy or Connie. Whatever hurricane it was, it was a ten year old kid’s dream come true to be in the ocean on that beach on that day.

Blow-up rafts were available on the section of the Virginia Beach we were on and my sister and I got to rent two of them. We had so much fun in the water we didn’t want to leave. At first, Carol and I had trouble staying on the rafts, but we quickly learned where the sweet spot was and started to ride them like a pro in that wild surf. But tumbling off and swimming after the raft was fun, too.

My family always went on summer vacations to various places, and we always spent additional time at the Jersey shore each summer, but nothing was as much fun as that one memorable day on Virginia Beach – not even the time I had parrots perched on my shoulder, outstretched arms, and head at Parrot World in Florida.

On our way home, we stopped in Washington, DC, and stayed at the Statler Hotel. It is now called the Capital Hilton and is two blocks from the White House. Touring DC was a lot easier back then. We were there last year showing some relatives around the Capital and it wasn’t as much fun - must be my age. :)

By the way, as I write this, I am sitting out the last of the remnants of Hurricane Nicole so I’m going to end this e-mail before the computer link conks out on me, but I just wanted you to know I wished you all lived closer so we could have our own marathon game of Monopoly.

I’ll bring the pretzels - and does anyone know if they still make RC Cola?

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The Time of My Life –

I am not sure when in my childhood I first learned that a day consisted of 24 hours, but it wouldn't have mattered if a day only had 12 hours back then, for I always seemed to have enough time to do what I wanted.

I had time to walk to school; I had time to play after school; I had time to do any of the meager chores asked of me, then after that to have dinner, help clean up, watch some TV or attend an evening scout meeting at Byrd School. I will admit to a few occasions when I was out playing somewhere and having missed the shout-out call to come home for dinner, especially when the coming of spring made daylight more available, but I always felt like I had time.

And unlike a classmate who lived up the block from me, I didn't wear a watch when I was younger, although I liked the cool way he did it by wearing the clock face on the inside of his wrist; but, watch or no watch, I still had time.

I am guessing because of a good body clock I always got to school on time; I was never late - ever. I left school at 11:30 for the almost three-quarter of a mile walk home to have lunch and was always back to school with plenty of time left over to take part in whatever activities were going on in the playground before the start of the afternoon session at 12:45, even if I meandered a bit coming and going.

After school, getting home in time to change into my play clothes (yes, I had play clothes) and then having time to be out in the woods or riding my bike to who knows where was never a problem. I had time.

It was fun time, relaxed time, leisure time. It was my time. There were a few instances where on the weekends I probably forgot to come home for lunch - and I really loved how peanut butter melted ever so slightly on a toasted PB&J sandwich (sometimes accompanied by a few thin lengthwise slices of banana), but I was in all likelihood too engrossed in what I was doing outside to care.

I wasn't really responsible to anyone else for my time except me. Okay, maybe around Halloween I felt a little rushed trying to visit as many houses

as I could in order to see how many bags I could fill with trick or treat candy, but it was still my time.

Same with jr.-sr. high – after riding a bike to school was no longer the cool thing to do by the spring of 7th grade, I met up with classmates in the morning at the ‘Rock’ and walked with a growing ensemble of guys to school. I was never late. I had time.

After school, I had time for activities and sports and still had time for whatever homework I did and to watch TV. Weekend nights were spent on dates or going out in search of girls who I hoped would become a future date. I preferred the former to the latter, but I knew I wasn’t going to spend my weekend nights at home. I seemed to have it all – the time, that is, not the girls.

I never seemed rushed, or hurried, or bothered that I would ever run out of time. Okay - maybe on a date I felt a little of that, but, overall, I had time.

I’m not sure what happened, but now in retirement, it doesn’t seem like I have as much time as I did as when I was a kid. And it’s not like I’m busy – far, far from it; I make up my own timeline and do what I want whenever I want, but it doesn’t feel like I have the same 24 hours in a day that I remember relishing so much as when I was younger.

And now I wear a watch, an atomic timepiece that keeps perfect radio-controlled time. I have to assume – correctly, I hope – that the hour hand moves at the same rate it did as when I was a youngster, but for some inexplicable reason it just seems to move more quickly now.

Occasionally, when I think back to my childhood days, I wonder what it would be like to have my old life back with all the time at my disposal that I seemed to have had back then.

I truly don’t want to do it all over again – seriously, I don’t, even with all the writings I have done about it, but as some of you might have already guessed after reading my class e-mails, it was the time of my life.

Oh, and I know what you might be thinking - if I didn’t write so many class e-mails, I’d have more time in my retirement to do other things. Not sure that’s going to happen.

I hope you had the time to read this, and if you did, then thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to do so. :)

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Off the Beaten Track –

I was never a hobo – I guess it wasn't in my nature to leave the comfortable existence I had grown to love in Glen Rock, but I easily could have been.

As a kid, with a canteen swung over my shoulder and a Snickers bar in my pocket, I was good to go. And go I did. And often. Whether by myself or with others, I made a lot of trips down the beaten track, the railroad track, that is.

It was the Erie-Lackawanna tracks on the west side of town that I traversed the most, but I can recall walking along the tracks that were on the east side of our downtown area a few times, too - the one my father referred to as the Bergen Line. The tracks where I played around on the most he called the Main Line.

Navigating the railroad tracks was always an adventure. I loved stepping from tie to tie, which, as you can imagine, got easier with each passing year. I loved walking the rails, too, balancing myself with each careful step and often envisioning myself as the next Karl Wallenda, the world's greatest tightrope walker. That never happened, of course, but as a kid I was imbued with a good imagination like everyone else.

Sometimes as I walked alongside the tracks, I would skip stones and count the hops hoping to improve on the number of bounces with each new toss. I wasn't always successful, but I sure had a lot of rocks to pick from.

But it was the exploration along the tracks I liked the most. There was always something to find. Not sure whether the items were tossed off the train or came out of a window by accident, but you were always certain to find something interesting in your travels.

Of all my discoveries what astounded me the most wasn't something tossed from a train, but something built by the railroad company alongside the tracks. Early on in my travels, I was walking southbound from town and came across an area just before Route 208 that once was the site of a huge train turntable. It was in a spot near a pond built up from water from my beloved Diamond Brook. For those of you who lived and played in that area, you probably discovered it, too. It was along the Boulevard near Fairview Avenue (Road?) on one side of the tracks and Ferndale Avenue on the other.

There wasn't much of the turntable left, just a few remnants still spread out in a very large circle, and of course I hadn't a clue as to what it was at first, but an upper classman, Jack Tent, related to me what it once was. I was fascinated by the existence of an old railroad turntable in our vicinity and wished it was still in operation.

The only train turntable I had ever seen was on a vacation jaunt my parents took me to in Pennsylvania. In our travels we stopped in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, and visited a roundhouse in operation. I was mesmerized by the whole process of what it took to turn a train engine around and wished we still had something like that in operation in Glen Rock. I think I would have been there every day if the turntable had still been there - so maybe it was good thing it wasn't.

And I haven't a clue as to why our little town needed a turntable by its tracks – it's not like Glen Rock was a hub for anything industrial, right? It would be interesting to know why the turntable was originally placed there, though. Anyone else remember seeing the ruins and asking about its origin? I'd love to know.

Oh, and getting back to my canteen. I can't say I was thrilled with the taste of the water in the metal container, but it sure beat whatever came out of a garden hose in the summer. Remember that taste?

First of all with hose water, you quickly learned to let the water run a bit because initially the water was always a tad too warm from the hose sitting out in the sun, and, secondly, it was hard to get past the rubber hose taste. That's one memory that's so easy to recall, isn't it?

Yuck, I feel like I can still taste it. That rubber aftertaste is so memorable it makes you move your tongue around your mouth even now and smack your lips, doesn't it?

And while I'm on the subject of water, do you remember drinking as much of it as we seem to do now. Everyone seems to have a water bottle close by, even in the car.

When we were kids, we didn't have cup holders in our family vehicle back then, and, besides, I don't believe my parents allowed soft drinks in their

automobile. Maybe they did, but I just don't remember drinking anything in the car.

I don't recall being such a water freak as today's kids are. Of course I drank some water whenever I was thirsty, but that didn't seem as often as everyone does it nowadays, plus I know I didn't have water conveniently around me 24-7.

And in today's world, we even have water and ice dispensers on refrigerator doors. What's the world coming to – besides if I truly had my choice about those things, I'd rather have an ice cream dispenser automatically dishing out a generous serving of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream. :)

But, as usual, I've gotten off the beaten track.

Anyway, I'm glad you can't hear me now for I'm singing a song – and the best way I carry a tune is in a briefcase, but here goes –

I've been workin' on the railroad,
All the live long day.
I've been workin' on the railroad,
Just to pass the time away.
Don't you hear the whistle blowing?
Rise up so early in the morn.
Don't you hear the captain shouting
"Dinah, blow your horn?"

I know the rest of the song makes little sense, but something tells me, just like water from a rubber hose, some childhood things are hard to forget, and you're singing it now trying to figure out what Dinah in the kitchen has to do with a railroad.

Thanks for hanging in there with me.

Fee, fie, fiddle-e-i-o.
Strumming on the old banjo.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

I Hear the Train a Comin' -

I hear the train a comin' - It's rollin' 'round the bend.

And what it is carrying are your follow-ups to my last e-mail. I love when the train stops at my house and you give me insight into what I have written.

A classmate who lived on Ferndale Avenue (not Fairdale as I had questioned) pointed out to me that that was what it was. Much appreciated.

She also said that Ferndale didn't end at Main Street as there was a short extension of the road that butted up to the tracks. Her older sister said that their dad, who worked for the railroad, mentioned the turntable to her a long time ago, but it was gone long before they moved to Glen Rock in '45.

Another classmate indicated that I had mis-ordered the two rail lines and had their placement switched. Another thumbs-up. I did catch that but only after the recollection had arrived in my e-mail box and I had re-read it. The Main Line was the one closest to the 'Rock', and the one near Boro Hall was the Bergen Line.

Also, this classmate made me so jealous by writing he had slept in a roundhouse when he was younger. Wow! Yeah, that's what I said, but I'll say it again - Wow! I can only imagine how neat that must have been.

Plus, he and his friends chased trains with the help of one of the dads and took pictures of the trains, and then developed the film in their own darkrooms. How neat is that? Okay, worth at least another 'Wow!'

Someone else sent me the following. It shows the turntable area that I remember (minus the trees) and offers a bit of information - just no 'why' as to how come it was there in the first place. Somebody must know.

<http://www.glenrocknj.net/environment/pdf/DiamondBrookBrochure.pdf>

Thanks for keeping the tracks as straight as possible for me.

And I hope the train keeps comin'.

- Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

A Stroll Down Memory Lane –

The World Series is over and the Giants won. How do I know that – well, like everyone else, I'm not clueless as to what is happening in our country, but I was landing in San Francisco last week when the skies over the city lit up Monday night with celebratory fireworks as the pilot came on informing us of the team's series clinching 3-1 victory.

I'm not a huge baseball fan by any stretch of the imagination, but it got me to thinking whether the kids of today will remember the names of this team's players 50 years from now as well as I can recall my favorite players from the 1950s New York teams I grew up with.

I can do better naming players I grew up than I can for my current local team, the Philadelphia Phillies. Pardon any misspellings as I try to recall a few; here goes – Brooklyn Dodgers: Sandy Koufax, Carl Erskine, Pee Wee Reese, Don Newcomb, Don Drysdale, Roy Campanella, Gil Hodges, and, of course, Duke Snider.

For the Yankees, let's start with our famous hometown resident – Mickey Mantle, then add Tony Kubek, Elston Howard, Don Larsen, Whitey Ford, and, who could forget, Yogi Berra.

I suppose the main reason for recalling those standout players is that team members were not traded so often back then, and so they were on a team for years. Of course, the whole Brooklyn Dodgers team moved to LA in the late 50s, but my dad did take me to Ebbets Field in Flatbush once.

Why not more often – well, my dad was a big Yankees fan, but he wanted me to see the Dodgers play on their home field at least once. They lost, and against whom I can no longer recall, but I did like the hot dogs better at that stadium. I remember that - well, I was about 11 or 12 when I went there and food was important to this growing boy. I wonder, though, if they were Nathan's - probably not since I wasn't at Coney Island watching the game, was I?

Sad to say, the only New York Giants player I can remember right now is Willie Mays. A good one to remember, that's for sure, but he's the only one. I'll probably recall a few more after I hit 'Send' button. :)

I realize this is totally off topic and what I'm about to say may seem ludicrous and out of synch to what we see and hear happening all around us every day, but in our lifetime, there have been very few new inventions.

Think of anything you find to be of great use to you in your everyday world, something you would not like to live without, and it's probably an enhancement, refinement, or off-shoot of something that was already invented.

Even the computer at which I am sitting at right now and writing this obtuse e-mail owes its heritage to something invented in the 1930's.

Granted, the improvements to any of those original items are over-the-top and go far beyond what the originator might have envisioned his invention eventually becoming - and no one wants to go back to the days before air conditioning, TV, or computers, but almost all of the conveniences we have come to depend upon so much in our daily lives had their beginnings in a time before us. I believe the first television was invented in the late 1920's.

Okay, back to the topic I had in mind when I started this e-mail, but it wasn't baseball players I was thinking of when I began this e-mail - no, believe it or not, it was strollers.

I know, a silly thing to think about, isn't it, but this past week when I was out visiting my grandkids, I couldn't recollect seeing strollers when I was little, especially to the extent we see them today. Baby carriages, yes - strollers, no.

I am sure there must have been strollers, but I can only recall seeing baby carriages in town when I was little. I was probably in one myself at one time, but no matter how good some of you may think my memory is, it doesn't reach back that far to state that fact with any certainty.

Since most stores weren't equipped to handle baby carriages, I can remember mothers leaving their carriages outside some of the Glen Rock stores when they went inside to shop (sometimes with the babies still cuddled up inside them). The two bakeries were popular places to do it, and sad to say, so was the liquor store.

I guess because the windows were big and weren't crowded with display items, thus making it somewhat easy to keep watch over what was

happening outside as the moms made their purchases. An indictable offense in today's world, I suppose.

Our own children, of course, were pushed around in collapsible strollers, especially those new-on-the-scene umbrella type strollers, and that's easy to recall, but I truly don't remember seeing full-size strollers when I was little. I could have been oblivious to how tots were moved around back then, that's for sure, but for those of you who were the oldest in your families, do you remember your younger siblings being pushed around in a stroller?

Please let me know if you do, okay?

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The Meaning of the Word Grand –

I raised two children in what now seems like a blur. They grew up far too quickly.

Of course, I remember the important things about them - like seeing them take their first steps, watching them learn to ride a two-wheeler, visiting them in college. Yes, it all really went by that fast.

I'm not sure how it all happened, but it sure seems time flew by more a lot more quickly when I look back on their childhood years than at my own.

What I am enjoying now, though, is the more graceful pace of watching my own grandchildren grow up. Granted, the time for changing their diapers could have progressed more quickly :), but everything else seems to be moving along at an enjoyable rate.

I know some of you had grandparents who lived close by – a few of whom even lived in Glen Rock or in surrounding towns. That had to be a great experience for you and I'd love to hear your stories.

When it comes to my childhood, I had only one true grandparent – my dad's father. My father's mother passed away in childbirth and both of my mother's parents died before I was born.

My grandfather remarried when my dad was about seven so I do have memories of a grandmother. They never had any children of their own so they doted on my sister and me as much as was the practice for grandparents to do in those days.

I worded it that way because I know the role grandparenting has changed a lot over the years. I don't remember my grandfather ever getting down on the floor to play with me like I do with my grandkids – a three, a five, and a seven year old.

My grandfather was 70 years old at the time of my birth so maybe he learned early on after playing with my older sister that getting up off the floor with a sense of grace and balance was becoming way too difficult – just like I'm finding out now with my third grandchild :) – and, besides, I preferred to be on his lap.

But no matter to what extent I may complain afterwards about how much my back may ache, I love it when the three of them pile on top of me. I may be

the one on the bottom, but I feel like I'm on top of the world when they're playing with me. Or should I say when I'm playing with them. It's hard not to be over taken by their giggles.

My grandfather was a very good man – very personable and as kind to his fellow man as anyone could be. He lived in Jersey City and seemed to know just about everyone. It was rare to walk down the street holding his hand to get ice cream at one of the corner stores and not hear people say over and over, “Hi, Rob, how are you?” and have him answer back acknowledging them by name and telling everyone as we walked that I was his grandson.

During the Depression when my grandfather found himself out of work, his childhood friend, Frank Hague, who had become Mayor of Jersey City, told my grandfather that he'd make a call for him and to go down to the AT&T company and fill out an application. He did. He wasn't hired because of his age. My grandfather was 55 at the time.

Later, when Mr. Hague, who was Mayor for over thirty years and a bit of a mover and shaker in local, state, and national politics, found out my grandfather was turned down for a job, he said he'd make another call and for my grandfather to re-apply - but this time asked him to put down his age as 39. He did and he was hired.

What is interesting in that story is not that my grandfather fudged his application a bit to get a job (remember it was during the Depression), but that he held a position in the company until AT&T's mandatory retirement age of 65. Yes, that's right – on paper my grandfather was 39 when he started, but when the company retired him at 65, he was actually over 80 years old!

My grandfather loved going to the office, never missed a day, and although people at work knew he was a bit older, they never suspected he was 81 when he retired. He came to live with us at the age of 87 and lived to be 93. He's greatly missed.

By the way, I called him Grandpa. He was grand in every sense of the word, and while the number of my grandparents may have been limited, the memories aren't.

Oh, and my grandchildren call me Grandpa, too – and I love it.

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One Grand and Stroller Follow-Up –

Strollers, I am told by some, were around when we were quite young, even though no one from my family remembers having one. Some classmates sided with me, but those who replied in the affirmative either remembered that their family used them with younger siblings or recalled seeing strollers.

The common colors mentioned were chrome, gun metal grey, or blue (I'm thinking that must have been the stroller lining part). And most thought they were heavy. One classmate recalled the weight to be around fifty pounds! I'm just glad I had my children when I did. Those umbrella strollers were perfect.

No one mentioned that the strollers they recalled seeing were totally collapsible, but some remembered the handles came off so the stroller could fit in those large car trunks that automobiles had back in the day.

It was also brought to my attention that department stores offered strollers for in-house use. When I was little and before the Paramus malls opened, my family shopped at the Meyer Brothers Department Store in Paterson; I can't say I remember seeing any strollers there, but back then my main focus was riding on the elevator.

I enjoyed the fond memories some of you sent regarding your grandparents. I can only imagine how much they meant to you.

Besides the title 'Grandpa' that I used, and the common enough Grandpop and Gramps, I was struck with the assortment of names you sent for grandfather titles - Boppa, Grampa, Grandpappy, PeePaw, GrandDad (as a bourbon drinker I wished I had thought of using that one, but putting 'Old' in front of it wouldn't have been very satisfying), PawPaw, Poppa, Bompa, Pops, Poppy, Bampa, Pop-Pop, Papi, and Boppa.

Granted, some of you are even called different things by your grandchildren from your children's different families, but the variety of names offered was interesting. I am curious whether Bompa, Bampa, and PeePaw are a family tradition or if there is an interesting story as to how those names came about.

I didn't write anything about my beloved grandmother, so I didn't get much referencing for interesting names in that direction, except for one. The name I did receive is as sweet as can be. The classmate wrote, "She calls me

"Hammi" (originally she couldn't pronounce "Grammy"), but it's the best title in the world!!” Knowing who it came from, I am sure it is!

Thank you again for your replies and for stating my e-mail brought back many great memories for you.

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The Grandiest of Follow-ups -

In the intervening time between emails mentioning 'Hammi' for a grandmother's name and Rob Hoog's recent offering of 'Grassy' for his grandson's name for his wife, Cindy, and Mooey for his own grandmother, I have only received a few other grandmother nicknames.

Here's what you have sent me so far beyond the typical Grandma and Grandmom: MomMom, Ona, Grammy, MeMaw (no connection to the person who originally sent me PeePaw), and Gammy. I'm sure there must be more, but that's all I have, save for the stories that went with the following.

Art Smith wrote us saying, "My wife's nickname with our grandchildren is Adoo. This came about because she used to say "Inka Dinka Doo" to our oldest grandson, Hayden. For those of you old enough to remember, this was a 1934 song that Jimmy Durante took on as his theme song. Even though Hayden was pretty verbal as a young kid, all he could say was the Adoo part. Nancy said this to him often enough to him that he tagged her with Adoo. The other grandkids have now picked up on this as her name."

And from Bonnie Kromka (Decker), who owns a farm and raises horses, came the name Tractor Granny. Grandkids know how to hit the nail on the head, don't they?

Another classmate wrote, "As for other names for grandmothers, my own mom - when my son was born - determined that she wanted to be called "MiMi" - and that's what my son and my two nieces always called her. My own grandmothers were MaMaw and Maw. What I found amusing was that my son found his own way to distinguish between his two sets of grandparents. My mom and dad were "MiMi" and "PawPaw". . . his other grandparents he called "MeeMaw" and "PeePaw".

A classmate who sent me "Ammy-O" as her granddaughters' name for her also wrote, "Silly, isn't it, what a name can do to your heart?" I couldn't have said it any better!

And, as you must know by now, I will only include your name in my e-mails if you send your reply to 'Classmates' and not just to me.

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Remote Possibilities –

Before I get started on what I wanted to write about, I would like to share the following with you.

Last week, in a glorious exchange of emails with a classmate and his sister, I was enlightened to know how little I remember about Glen Rock when it comes to comparing my selective memory to theirs.

The topics covered in our back and forth dialogue was three-fold: our town's telephone exchanges after the direct connection to an operator became passé, our utility company, and bus routes. I was able to come up with a few inconsequential facts, but fell far short of their superior recollections.

I hope they don't mind but to shorten things up a bit I'm going to intertwine their writing with mine, but they deserve the credit for this opening topic and for most of the information offered.

The easiest recollection for me was the gas and electric company that serviced Glen Rock - the Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G). Its office was near Sealfons in Ridgewood, diagonally down and across the street from the Warner Theater.

The only reason I can remember its location was that my sister's Girl Scout troop had a cooking class in the company's demonstration room and when my mom and I went back to pick her up, I entered a raffle with the rest of the visitors and won some of the brownies the Girl Scouts had baked.

I was probably six or seven years old at the time and had never won anything in my life, save for a few useless Skee-ball trinkets down at the shore. Some things like winning freshly baked brownies leave a memorable imprint on a little boy.

I was told that Ridgewood and Glen Rock had similar telephone exchanges, but there was no separate exchange for Glen Rock. Gilbert (GI) was the first, and several years later OLiver (OL) was also assigned. You could always tell who lived in Glen Rock the longest by their exchanges. With their helpful information, I was able to recall my telephone number.

As for the bus lines, I was totally out of the loop. Except for a bus trip on New Year's Eve with Rob Hoogs and Doc Savage to Times Square, and a few jaunts to the Bronx to meet up with my dad to see a game at Yankee Stadium, I don't remember being on a bus often enough for it to have made an impact.

But I was informed there were four bus routes passing through our town, each with their own color schemes. One of the routes had multiple destinations beyond Glen Rock.

Public Service bus route #72 was on Rock Road through town and #170 was on Maple Avenue (gray and creamy white colors).

Inter-City Lines, which were orange and brown, left from the Bergen County Line railway station at the Municipal Building and went to New York City. These buses mostly went over the George Washington Bridge to a terminal at 167th Street in the Bronx near Yankee Stadium, but there were also rush hour trips through the Lincoln Tunnel to the Port Authority Terminal.

I was told that in later years, you could also take this bus to the Bergen Mall in Paramus, but when you needed to return, you actually had to walk over the cloverleaf at RT. 4 and 17. A comment offered up at the time of our discussions was 'talk about crazy... and my mom let me when I was in 8-9th grade!'

Because it skirted our town, the other bus line was less well known and went down Lincoln Avenue. This was a smaller independent bus company that came from Paterson through Hawthorne and then traveled along Lincoln Avenue to Godwin and on into Ridgewood. It never turned into Glen Rock. Their colors were dark red and blue.

As a side note, I was also reminded that you could make a 'U' turn on RT. 17 by turning from the left hand lane and crossover the highway to go in the other direction! The following comment made at the time of our discussions rings true for me - 'The thought still blows my mind!'

Okay, now on to my original thought for a topic. In a few previous e-mails, I touched on the TV shows my family used to watch together in the 50s. I was glad to hear many of you remembered those shows.

I also mentioned the succession of TVs that came into our house and what ‘fun’ it was to change the vacuum tubes in the early models.

I didn’t mean to sound the least bit sarcastic in saying that; as explained before, it was fun to take the tubes out, go down into town to test them, and bring home new tubes to get the TV up and running again.

What was also fun was operating one of our newer TVs with a remote control. They are so common now you don’t even give them a second thought (and I doubt you can even buy a TV nowadays without a remote). The only time a remote may pop into your head now is when you have misplaced one or are thinking of ways to remove the remote control clutter from your coffee table, sofa, etc. I currently have five remotes sitting out in our den.

The TV that came into our home in the 50s had a remote. It was a great addition. And some of you may recall referring to your remote as a ‘clicker’. The reason for that, of course, was because the first remotes clicked – and loud enough to be noticeable.

What was neat about any early TV that had a remote was if you jiggled your keys in front of them, it turned the TV on or off - or even changed channels.

When I was so engrossed in a TV show that I wasn’t paying attention to what my dad was saying, he jiggled his keys! It’s funny what you remember.

I’m going to have to assume the early remotes operated because some sound was being emitted. It was either the clicking noise of the switches themselves or some other sound caused when pressing a switch; I just don’t know. Today’s remotes use infra-red light – that I do know.

And compared to today’s remotes which have upwards of 40 to 50+ buttons and control various devices, our first remote had only two buttons. Our next TV, a Zenith, had four on its Space Commander remote. These four buttons were in a row, with the higher and lower ‘channel changing up and down buttons’ on the outside and the volume and mute buttons in the middle.

There was some way to adjust the color with that remote, but I don’t recall how it was done with only four buttons; however, I do remember it was possible.

And have you noticed a distinct learning curve when being at someone's house and not knowing which remote does what - or even how an unfamiliar remote works? So glad the grandchildren are there to teach me. :)

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Remote Possibilities Answered –

In response to the collaborative e-mail from a classmate, his sister, and me on bus transportation in and around Glen Rock, another classmate passed along the following great enhancement to all that information:

“Enjoyed the reflection on public transport back in ‘the day’. Since you’re interested in such details, the 167th bus station in NYC was actually in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, across Broadway from the Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, about 10 blocks below the George Washington Bridge and a few blocks above the Audubon Ballroom where Malcolm X would be assassinated during our college years. That bus station was my Ellis Island as far as discovering the new world of NYC on my own, something my father encouraged me to do, and one of his few suggestions that have stood the test of time.”

He went on to say, “There was also a bus that went from Glen Rock to the Port Authority Bus Terminal on 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, gateway to Times Square in its good old sleazy days. I think it was bus #41 that went to the Port Authority Building and Bus #54 or 51 that went to 168th ST. Then it was the IND A train right down to W 4th ST.”

I certainly would have liked to have known this classmate better in school, and I’m surprised we didn’t cross paths going into to New York on our independent excursion trips. Although as a fourteen year old, I thoroughly enjoyed Times Square the way it was back then, but I’m glad former Mayor Rudy Giuliani cleaned it up.

Regarding the changing of the color on the TV using a Space Commander remote, one of you was kind enough to pass along the fact that on his remote it was done using the two outside buttons, the channel-up and down buttons, which served a dual purpose. He didn’t remember which controlled the red hue and which controlled the green hue, but at least it satisfied my curiosity that I wasn’t totally off base with that memory.

While reading a couple of the replies you sent me, I realized some of you may have wondered how I was able to recall that the remote we used in our home was called ‘Space Commander’. I don’t believe I would have remembered it either if it weren’t for my mother asking on occasion where the remote was and my father responding with, “The Space Commander sprawled out on the floor has it.” And I believe in the 60s that ‘Space

Commander' moniker may have been changed slightly to something a little less flattering. :)

Okay, now for one of the most precious memories I have received concerning remotes – and I say that in all honesty for a classmate wrote the following, “Our remote was my older brother's toes. He would lie on his back on the floor so that his right foot just reached the channel changer. He really got quite skillful at it, but it used to drive my mother batty.”

What a great memory that is to have, and since I used to spread out on the floor in front of the TV with a sofa pillow under my head for added comfort, I can easily identify with someone doing that - I just wished I had thought of it!

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Happy Holidays –

I touched on a Christmas memory awhile back when I wrote about the beautiful annual display at Carl Kemm Loven's house outlining his holiday show on the grounds of his Rock Road home, complete with lights, music, and the over 100 Disney figures he had carved from wood; but this time, on a much smaller scale, I'd like to relate what it was like setting up Christmas trees at our house on Greenway Road.

For some reason, my parents really wanted my sister and me to believe in Santa Claus – I mean really, really believe that there was a Santa Claus, and so when we were very young, they would send us to bed early on Christmas Eve and then go about discreetly setting up the tree.

I know, I know – since we most of us have experienced the amount of time and trouble it takes to set up a tree and all that goes into trimming it, even as I type this out, I find it hard to believe that's what they did; but they wanted, for some unknown reason, to have us believe that Santa came to our house, brought the tree, and put all the gifts beneath it; well, most of them anyway – since the important ones, for sure, were always marked 'From Santa'.

As my sister outgrew the notion of there being a true Santa, she had to keep the secret until I got to the age where I questioned his existence. My parents had to have had a great sigh of relief when that discovery came early for me, since I can just imagine how hard it had to have been for them to work so late into the wee hours of the morning and get everything accomplished. It had to be an insane time.

Once the Santa ruse was over in our family, I got to go with my dad to buy the tree. He relished picking out just the right one. It was fun going with him as he looked at every tree, even when it was as cold as a witch's ____. There was nothing he overlooked. I was the official tree holder as he judged the tree from afar. If it met with his approval, his favorite thing was to then jostle the tree up and down to see if any needles fell to the ground. If one tree passed muster, we weren't done until all the trees he liked were surveyed in the same manner and then a final choice was made.

Next came getting the tree home and sizing the height to be just right for the living room, stand and all. Only then was it brought into the house. As you entered our living room, our tree was always placed in the far right back

corner. Only a chair had to be moved to accommodate it, so it was a most perfect place.

The only thing about having a live tree in our living room was that our cat, Tiger, thought it was his Christmas gift. Once or twice he tried to climb it, but more often he just settled for nestling himself in between the gift boxes and napping all day long on the tree's apron.

As for trimming it, my dad always undertook the job of putting on the lights and situating the Angel so perfectly atop the tree. Remember how the old lights were connected in a series circuit and if one light went out all the bulbs on that string did, too, as well as any string of lights connected to it. If you were lucky, sometimes you could tell which bulb was burned out, but you usually had to test more than one bulb. Thank goodness for the arrival of parallel circuits.

Carol and I trimmed the tree with ornaments the best we could and each year it got easier. As I got older, my growth spurt helped in reaching the higher branches, but she was the over-all supervisor. If I remember this all correctly, I was relegated to putting the less satisfying looking ornaments in the back of the tree. We had a special box for those. I think they included some ornaments I was selling for the Boy Scouts one year and my mother felt obligated to display the ones we bought, albeit a bit out of sight.

I don't know how many of you recall the silver tinsel that was a popular addition to a tree's decoration back then (which at that time was made of tin and lead alloy), but it was never a job for a guy to do – at least not this guy. My placement of tinsel always seemed to have a clumped look about them. Granted, I knew the tinsel should be strung out one strand at a time, but I never had the patience for it. My area was always getting a do-over from those who wanted an ever so flawless looking tree.

Carol always set up the miniature Christmas village beneath the tree. I especially liked how she used a mirror for an ice skating pond. It looked pretty cool with the miniature skaters doing their thing. I once used that area under the tree with the houses and such as a backdrop for an extension to my Lionel train set I got as a gift one year. Once the train was up and running, it was pretty cool.

This year is the first Christmas I am not having a tree in my home. We are going away for Christmas, and while that's not unusual on Christmas Day itself (we usually go to my sister's in Ridgewood, but she, too, will be away), we are also not expecting anyone to come to our house for this holiday season at all, so we are thinking of taking a trip.

Everything considered it just didn't seem worth the effort to put up a tree, especially since we have always had a real one and there wouldn't be anyone home to tend to it - but it's sad to see a 65 year old tradition fall by the wayside.

And while I will end this e-mail by proudly saying that for the past 40 years or so I have been fortunate to celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah (my children and grandchildren are Jewish), these recollections of mine are about what I remember when I was a kid living in Glen Rock, so enough of that. But that, too, has been a great experience.

So Happy Holidays, everyone, and may the coming year be the best for you in health, happiness, and peace of mind!

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Cold as Ice –

Regarding my ‘Happy Holiday’ e-mail, I loved your replies – and I can’t believe I forgot to mention laying out cookies and milk for Santa. Thanks for reminding me of that ritual.

One classmate even added the following tidbit to that tradition – “When our kids were small, they always left cookies, milk, and carrots for the reindeer. In the morning, they would inspect check the plate for the cookie crumbs, and to see if the carrots were gone.”

Santa always wrote us a thank you note and it was always in the same perfectly scribed penmanship as my architecturally trained father’s was. I never suspected a thing because my dad said Santa wanted to make sure it easy to read, but I did wonder why my dad’s favorite cookies were always the ones being put on the plate. :)

I am amazed at how many of you cited Christmas trees being tipped over – whether caused by a house pet climbing on it or nudging it over, or because an unbalanced situation occurred during its trimming or after it. The use of guy-wires seems more common than I thought. I’ve used them once or twice when the grandkids were very young.

And one classmate recalls her cat playing with the ornaments and knocking over her tree three times in one night! He was ultimately relegated to a closed bedroom.

Some of you related that your grown children have come to expect a live tree when they visit – and those who still reside with you want one, too.

Many of you revealed you have switched to an artificial tree and that some of you did it so long ago your tree still has the old large-sized lights on it. Good for you for not running out and modernizing your tree a second time!

There were also comments about when upgrading (?) to an artificial tree you no longer had to worry about the tree stand leaking and having sappy water seep onto the floor. I can easily identify with that desire having had that happen to me once.

I was also glad to hear that having a Christmas village beneath your tree was still a tradition in many of your homes, too, as well as having a full-size Lionel or an HO scale train encircle your tree.

Not always following your mother's instructions as to drape the tinsel one strand at a time was a little universal in your replies, too. Since the reply comments came from both chromosome pools, it must have been a 'kid thing' and not a 'guy thing' as I had originally thought.

Two of you made mention of having reflectors behind your tree lights. I can't recall ever seeing those, but they must have enhanced the lighting on your tree quite a bit.

One of you noted having the unique bubbly ornaments that looked like a candle. I didn't have any of those, but I sure remember them now that it's been mentioned.

While our tree purchase has always a Fraser Fir, some of you like having Balsam, Douglas, or Grand Fir trees. Scotch Pine was mentioned, too. Considering its name, I wonder if it's a close relative to a Fraser Fir. I'll have to check it out next time I'm near a tree farm.

And one classmate summed it up perfectly when she wrote, "There's nothing like seeing Christmas through the eyes of little ones who still "believe." So true.

Okay, on to my next winter thought.

What a difference an inch makes. When we were young and went to the Ridgewood Duck Pond in the winter to skate, do you recall being disappointed by seeing a 'No Skating' sign posted?

And it was such a public place that even if you wanted to test it out, you couldn't stay on the ice very long before being told you couldn't skate there and had to get off. Not so with the small pond in the woods behind my house.

Now, technically, the pond was behind my house, but not immediately behind it. As I've mentioned numerous times before (probably too many), when I was growing up, there were woods beyond my backyard and I loved exploring there. I discovered a pond that was probably in Ridgewood, and, although it sat in a clearing, it didn't look like it belonged to anyone. There were no homes bordering it and no docks, diving boards, or worn out paths leading up to it.

To give you an idea of where the pond was, I lived on a road with five houses on my side of the street. Lincoln Avenue and Greenway Road made up one corner and Greenway Road and a yet unnamed side street corner made up the other demarcation for my block. If you travelled north through these woods (in an area that eventually became a four or five block long stretch of homes along a newly developed road called Lowell), you'd come upon the pond.

But for most of you, it might be easier to picture the baseball field at the community pool and visualizing going west behind home plate. If you went through the woods and crossed over to the other side of Diamond Brook, you'd come to the pond. Back then not a recommended way to go, but if you did, you'd find it.

Back in the day, that pond was in the middle of nowhere. Not a good place to be if you ran into trouble, but a great place to be to have fun. It was a fairly shallow pond with loads of frogs, salamanders, and an occasional landing spot for ducks.

In the winter, I would go there at an early age to skate, even before I was old enough to have skates. I guess you could call it shoe skating, but it was fun – real ice skates or not.

Not sure at this stage of my life if I can recall what fed the pond its water, but it might have been Diamond Brook; however, it could also have been spring-fed.

Does anyone remember drinking water from the spring that was directly behind home plate at the community pool? There was often a board or two stretched out to make your passage to that bubbling water a little easier.

Okay, now back to skating – in Boy Scouts, we learned the rudiments of knowing when ice was safe enough to be on. We were told if white ice had air or snow appearing within it, we should consider the ice to be suspect - and new, clear ice was usually the best for it was the strongest.

To decide whether ice was safe enough to support you, these were the recommended thicknesses we were taught regarding new, clear, hard ice:

3 inches or less: Stay off.

4 inches: Walking on or skating was safe.

5 inches: Party time (Okay, the Scout leaders didn't use that term, but you get the idea).

For those of us who ventured out at an early age on their own in the hope of discovering things, I am not sure how the thickness of the ice was to be determined. As a kid, cordless drills weren't invented yet, and how many of us carried a hammer and chisel in our jacket pocket when we went exploring?

In some ways, though, I wish when I was younger I had learned those ice thickness guidelines a little earlier, for in my memory bank there are a few images of some close calls.

I know I learned the sound of cracking ice at a very early age - and, for odd some reason, I was always amazed that ice seemed thicker in the middle of the pond than around the edges. It always seemed like an anomaly to me.

Taking a running jump to land on the thicker ice to avoid the wet areas and the thinner ice near the edge of the pond might have seemed like a perfectly good idea at the time, but it wasn't always the best idea. I'm just glad my growth spurt was delayed a bit when I was in my 'young and stupid' stage because being a heavy weight at the time of my 'icecapades' would not have been a good thing.

I haven't been skating in a long time, as my ice skates are long gone, but I may just try some shoe skating if the conditions down here in Cape May allow for it. However, I don't look forward to it being as cold as ice this winter.

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Pass or Fail -

At an early age, I don't know how many of you did this activity with your father (or mother), but since I loved cars and him, the bonding of the two certainly cemented itself as the both of us would trek to the inspection station in Ridgewood for the required annual checkup of our family's car.

Greenway Road, where I lived, was near Lincoln Avenue, and we'd get up early on a Saturday morning and after devouring one of his superb breakfasts, we'd climb into the car and head down Lincoln turning right at the light at Godwin Avenue.

Those of you who lived on the other side of the tracks you may not recall that Godwin curved to the left as it entered Wilsey and Garber Squares which then led into an underpass at the railroad tracks by Ridgewood's train station. As Godwin exited the underpass and went into downtown Ridgewood, the road became Franklin Avenue.

It also might help some of you to remember what I'm about to say if you recall that if you exited the underpass and went down Franklin for two blocks and turned left, you would be on Oak Street, the site of the YMCA - the place of many good times for most of us on many occasions.

But it's not the 'Y' or EMOC that I'm writing about, it's car inspections - and while I'm not 100% positive, I'm 99% sure that the long, cavernous, single lane, inspection station was located diagonally behind the YMCA on Chestnut Avenue - which, as I recall, was a dead-end street. I'm hoping there's someone out there with a better memory than mine that can verify whether all this is correct - or not.

In any case, what I do remember is my dad turning left on Chestnut, going down the street, doing a classic 3-point turn, and then coming back around to wait in line. I mentioned earlier that my dad and I would set out early on this task, but it seemed to me that no matter what time we left, there would always be a line of cars ahead of us. My dad often joked he thought the owners of those cars must have spent the night.

Back in the day, the actual car inspection was routine and covered all the basics. You knew your car might not last forever (except for Howard Stillman's), but if you passed inspection, you were at least assured your front

wheels had good alignment. Remember how your car rolled over a simple gauge that indicated the toe-in, toe-out position of your wheels (basically showing whether or not your tires tracked properly) and how the inspector also tested your car's ball joints by jacking up the front end and shaking the wheels back and forth to check for anything worn or loose.

He examined the headlights for correct brightness and directionality and checked your brake lights and turn signals, wiper, and horn to make sure all were in working order. He then drove the car and tested the brakes - all within the space of about 30 feet. And you always hoped you would leave the inspection station without the dreaded 'red' sticker.

The reason I'm writing this e-mail is because I took my wife's car to be inspected this morning. What is neat about living here in Cape May County is that I can schedule an inspection for when I want it done. So giving a nod to my dad, I made an early morning appointment - just not a Saturday morning one, but I did stop for a great breakfast on my way to the inspection station, which is about two miles from my house.

At the entrance to the building (a single lane, elongated, brick building just like what stood in Ridgewood), an attendant did the familiar, routine paper check to make sure my auto insurance, car registration, and driver's license were all in order.

After that, I got out of the car, walked along a roped off area, and waited for my car. On modern cars, the headlights come on automatically so the inspectors didn't have to check those and there wasn't a 'check engine' light glowing on the dashboard indicating something was out of order with the car's various operations.

By the way, if your car needs to be inspected and your on-board computer is showing something's amiss, you can disconnect the battery for a few minutes and the computer will re-set itself. You'll have to re-program your car's preset radio stations, but you won't fail inspection because of some glitch that you can always correct at a later date.

Looking back at my car as I walked, I heard the car's horn being honked and then saw the car moving slowly forward to the exit line. I was waved over, given the okay that the car had passed inspection and was struck with the thought that it had all happened so quickly and with no brake check, no

emissions check, no onboard computer check - just the horn. I didn't even see the wipers move. I strive to maintain my cars, but I wasn't impressed with New Jersey's new lack of inspection thoroughness.

The old four year inspection sticker has now been replaced with a two-year one. Nancy drives a Toyota Avalon and will probably be getting a new vehicle soon, so I doubt if the Avalon will ever be inspected by us again, but if for some reason it is, I hope for my sake it all goes as easily as this inspection did. In fact, maybe I could just drive by and beep the horn.

As regards to my Audi A5, since it's relatively new, I received an add-on sticker in the mail which extended my inspection date without ever having to go to get the car inspected.

I'm thinking they could have done that with the Avalon, too, but retired people have to have some reason to get up and out, right?

It's also nice to know that at my age certain things about me are still passing tests.

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Replies to 'Pass or Fail' -

A thank you to those who re-affirmed my thinking that the inspection station was on Chestnut, the street behind the YMCA. And thank you to others who informed me it is no longer there. I guess the neighbors complained about having too many idling cars on their block.

I'm also glad to hear some of you girls remember going through that inspection process with either your mom or your dad. And that you, too, remember the long lines.

Some of you remembered the challenge you had in picking out the right radio station during the long wait because of who you had in the car with you. I had forgotten all about that.

Although I don't recall doing it, I like the idea that some of you served as inspectors before your car ever left for the inspection station. Your parents were pretty smart having you walk around the car as they turned on the high and low beams, stepped on the brakes, and used the turn signals.

By the way, have any of you tried to replace a halogen light bulb on a new car. I'm glad it doesn't happen often because it's certainly not as easy as it once was. A daytime driving light burned out on my Corvette and it was not as easy as 1, 2, 3 replacing it - more like 8, 9, 10!

A few also related difficulty you had in getting your modified cars through the inspection process. Glad to hear you were all ingenious enough to come up with a way to do it - some before you went, some of you after getting a 'red' sticker.

One of you wrote that having a pretty new Volvo didn't let you escape failing a smog inspection test, but \$3,000 later you are now in compliance. WOW - that's more than I'll be getting in the recently announced COLA raise for Social Security! But I believe your state is first in the nation with the most stringent of smog restrictions.

Some of you commented on the long lines you experience in your states, whether it be a single lane station or one with multi-lanes. Maybe you should prompt your state into initiating a sign-up schedule like we have in New Jersey.

A classmate sent me a pdf notice indicating that as of last year New Jersey will no longer be checking for mechanical problems - and will only be doing emission checks.

I'm sure that was initiated because of our state's huge budgetary problems and not out of concern for our cars' well-being. And if an emission check was done when I was at the inspection station this past Monday, it must have been really fast and was accomplished by a slight of hand maneuver, for I never witnessed it.

I can only hope the IRS will someday go through the same process of simplification.

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Keys to the Castle -

Okay, I realize all of you know I don't live in a castle - just a house a lot like the one in which I was raised, but if I did live in a castle, I wouldn't have the keys to it - at least not with me. And I don't have keys to my house, either - well, at any rate, I don't carry them with me.

When I leave home, the only thing I have with me is a car key - and, of course, what with the modern day automobile push-start ignitions, that magical key fob doesn't even come close to resembling an old fashioned key of any kind. If you have one of these new car keys, then you know what I mean - it looks like a mini, 2-3 inch, TV remote, doesn't it?

And while I'd love to have a discussion on the merits of the newest convenience features in the automobile industry, growing up in Glen Rock is what I truly like to write about - and so if you haven't figured it out yet already, what got me started down this particular Memory Lane remembrance is recalling that as a child I never had a key to my house - and never needed one.

In fact, to the best of my knowledge, the only time our house was locked was when the family was all together in the car traveling to visit relatives, going somewhere on vacation, or otherwise not being home for awhile.

If the doors were ever locked when the family went to sleep, I'm not aware of that either - and since I was an early riser (still am), I believe I'd remember unlocking the back door to retrieve the milk from the dairy box on the back porch steps, but I don't ever recollect doing that.

I do recall the screen door to the porch having a hook-latch setup, but that was designed more to keep the door closed than it was to keep it locked. You could slide a twig or a piece of folded paper up and away to unlatch the hook. After playing out in the woods behind my house, I know I did that quite a few times when I was too lazy to walk around to our front door.

In terms of daily living, as I remember it, when school was over, Mom was practically always home, but on those very rare occasions when she wasn't, two cookies were on a plate in the kitchen and a glass of milk had been poured and set aside for me in the refrigerator, but the house itself was never locked. I'm just guessing that the cookies were meant for me and not a burglar.

I'll go out on a limb here and say that if your mother was a stay-at-home mom, then you, too, didn't have need for a key, either. Let me know what you remember of your early years regarding this subject. I'm curious as to what age you remember having a house key.

But with that said, things certainly have changed now, haven't they? Although I live in a very nice, quiet neighborhood, and no break-ins have been reported in the area in all the years I have lived here, our house is kept locked (the front door, sliding door, French door, and a outside door in the garage) - all double bolted in fact, and the house is even equipped with a burglar alarm.

And you may be thinking if that's so, Dave, then why don't you need to carry a house key.

Well, like many of you, my car is equipped with a built-in remote garage door opener and since there's a door that leads from the garage into a small mudroom, egress into the house is so easy, so there's no need for me to have a house key - and, therefore, I don't carry one.

It makes me feel like a kid all over again.

Anyway, with regards to the beginning of this recollection, if I did live in a castle, the drawbridge would always be down for you guys to stop in and visit. No key needed in that scenario, is there?

Thanks again for putting up with my odd little ramblings - and thanks for your great replies to my car inspection station memory.

Oh, and the keys needed for our 50th reunion are less than a year away.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

The Unlocked Castle -

Some of you didn't remember one way or the other about having a key to your childhood home in Glen Rock and that wasn't too surprising. And the number of you who replied stating you didn't have keys to your childhood home wasn't totally unexpected either, but the fact that some of you still don't lock your doors was enlightening, at least to me.

I didn't hear from anyone residing in Glen Rock or who still had relatives living there - and the people who did post their comments about not locking their doors live in areas of the country where doing so didn't come as a total shocker - and, so, a comparison of our good old days of having unlocked homes relative to our present timeline wouldn't be totally fair, right?

Many of the replies of not ever needing a key were often followed up with the thought - "Was this because there was always a parent at home?" And when some of you remembered having a key, it wasn't so unexpected in most cases. That was because both of your parents worked or because you had moved - either to a big city, an apartment of your own, or into a dorm.

The need for a key nowadays was put rather succinctly by this reply - "I'd have to say, if I recall correctly, my first house key was in the first apartment I rented. And as for carrying a house key today, I learned the hard way - when you rely on your garage remote to open up your home to you, and you experience a power outage, you've got a problem."

When it comes to being out and about in my car down here at the Jersey shore, I tend to lock it, but one classmate added her perspective - "Once more I am reminded how blessed I am to live in a small, isolated, and safe town. My kids also grew up without a house key. I feel no need to lock my house or my car, though I did get my glove compartment burgled once and lost a nice little flashlight."

Other postings brought to light that some of you now reside in an active retirement community and now that you live there, "...it's back, most of the time, to no keys. It's a great feeling." I wonder, though, do any of you ever need to lock your little electric golf cart?

I was surprised, too, by the replies I received about my remembrance of the back door milk bottle deliveries. Some even recalled when the weather was

freezing the milk froze and the bottles' paper caps came loose. Although my recollection of getting milk was meant to solidify my unlocked back door scenario, I love that you thought to add more to that memory.

I'll pass along that I also recall we recycled our trash back in the day; we stopped doing it in the late fifties, and now have come back full circle. Of course, we don't tie up newspapers in those easy to handle, neat little bundles anymore - or at least I don't, as my town uses large plastic containers for its paper collection.

And remember bottles - I loved the fact we used to look for glass bottles and, depending on their size, got either two cents or a nickel for them. New Jersey doesn't have a deposit law like some states do. If it did, I might be looking for bottles along our bike path, but more than likely they'd be plastic, anyway.

And, of course, trash men don't retrieve the cans from behind our house and return them like they used to do back in the day. They don't even put the lids back on. I have to do all that. Woe is me.

Not totally sure why we ever distanced ourselves from using a recycling program for the stretch of time we did back then, but for our grandchildren's sake, however, and for all future generations, I hope we stay 'Green' forever. And on another entirely different note - how many of you remember when learning how to ride a bike being told to ride against the traffic, and then around age eleven the rule changed and you were asked to ride with the traffic.

The original way made sense in that you could see if a car was coming straight at you and at the same time it made no sense in that I wouldn't want to see what was going to hit me head on. If unable to get out of the way, I think I'd rather be totally surprised and unformed about my last moment on Earth.

Oh, and not to get started on a totally new topic, but how many of you still ride bikes and do you lock those? No reply necessary. I think I know the answer by now.

Dave Lamken diamken@comcast.net

I Remember Mama -

Of course I remember my mother, but the title of this e-mail refers to an old TV show that aired on Friday nights at 8:00pm. However, the reason I am writing about this series is because of my own mother.

My mother was half-English, half-Swedish, and although 'I Remember Mama' was a long running television, thirty minute series about a Norwegian-American family living in San Francisco, the show was close to my mother's heart.

As mentioned in another e-mail, we got our first television in the winter of 1949-50 and 'I Remember Mama' aired on CBS, which was Channel 2. For the longest time, as many of you might remember, the New York area had only six television stations so I can't be too far off no matter what channel I chose – Channel 2-CBS, 4-NBC, 5-DuMont, 7-WJZ (which was later changed to ABC when we were in junior high, I believe), 9-WOR, and 11-WPIX.

'I Remember Mama' was a show which combined comedy and drama and was an immediate hit with our family. It ran for a 39 week season, which was typical back then, and was on for seven or so years. It was a live broadcast so I doubt there were any re-runs.

The series was about the life in 1910 of the Hansen family who struggled with everyday problems. The show had an interesting premise since it was told through the eyes of one of the daughters – a hopeful writer - as she wrote down the trials and tribulations of her family's daily living in her diary.

The lead role of 'Mama' was played by Peggy Wood, who would later go on to be nominated for an Oscar for playing the role of Mother Superior in 'The Sound of Music' – my wife's all-time favorite movie.

The son, Nels, was played by Dick Van Patton, who many of you may recall later starred in a TV series entitled 'Eight is Enough'. The patriarch of the Hansen family was a carpenter named Lars, better known to everyone as 'Papa' and there were two daughters, Katrina and Dagmar, all of whose real names I can no longer recall. It's even doubtful I ever knew them.

I hope you all saw the show and can summon up some remembrance of watching at least a couple of the episodes. I'll tell you what easily stands out most in my memory about seeing the show. It was the program's beginning

lines - "I remember the big white house on Steiner Street, and my little sister Dagmar, and my big brother Nels, and Papa. But most of all, I Remember Mama."

And what I also recollect and cherish the most about that show is recalling the times my mother would be situated on the living room couch, sipping her evening coffee and eating a slice of her always wonderfully made homebaked cake, and thoroughly enjoying a TV show that meant so much to her.

For you see, I remember Mama, too.

And how can I not – for long after I had quickly finished my own piece of cake at the beginning of the show, she always managed to save the last two bites of her slice for me.

Thank you for letting me invade your space once again.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Mama Replies –

Oh, if only that title could be true, but, sadly, I am only referring to your e-mail replies to my latest posting.

I wish I was as smart as some of you, but my memory isn't any better than it was in high school. Boohoo! So let me start things off by re-stating the beginning introduction of 'I Remember Mama', but this time doing it correctly.

A classmate replied that it should have been, "I remember the big white house on Steiner Street (not Elm Street as I recalled it being), and my little sister Dagmar, and my big brother Nels, and Papa. But most of all, I Remember Mama." Thank you for that.

I also said that one of the sisters' names was Katherine, but was reminded by other classmates who watched the show with their families and paid better attention than I did that her name was Katrin. It was also pointed out that it was she who was the diary writer in the series if I had forgotten to mention that along the way.

It was related to me by another classmate that Papa, or Lars Hansen, was played by Judson Laire, who I am told also did a lot of other acting parts on many TV shows through to the late 60s.

I agree that there was a Channel 13, but it is nowhere in my memory bank for being a television station that carried any show that I can remember watching when I was a little kid.

And that was what my original e-mail was all about – a show from the early 50s. I do know that Channel 13 was privately owned and then became a PBS station, but I wasn't referring to something that occurred in the 1960s – so, please, if any of you can recall what was being shown on Channel 13 in the early 1950s of any great interest that we would have watched it, I'd love to hear from you. I could then fill-in another one of my empty cash drawers in memory bank.

And, of course, receiving many replies that went something like the following are always great to collect – "COOL I remember watching the show with the whole family", or "You're always welcome to invade my space.", or "It was a great show, wasn't it; love reading your emails."

As are receiving the much appreciated personal replies that go like this – “You are a lucky man, Dave, to have such good memories of the past and your family. Keep up the good work.”, or “Your memory astounds me. Keep writing so mine will be forced to continue to work.” (Again as mentioned in a much earlier email, all of you remember as much as I do, it’s just that I chose to write about my recollections, but thank you.)

In any case, with follow-up replies like those, you are all invited to invade my space anytime.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

A Slacker –

Before I start with the true topic of this e-mail, I would like to clear up one detail about the ‘I Remember Mama’ TV series.

It’s a small matter, but then that has never bothered me when it comes to correcting my mistakes. It has to do with one of the daughters’ names. It was not Katherine as I had once indicated nor was it Katrin as I had mistakenly typed in a follow-up reply e-mail. As graciously pointed out by a Byrd School classmate, it was Katrina. I left off the ‘a’ and should learn to proofread my writings. I hope I have laid that topic to rest.

Also, as far as watching any shows on Channel 13, two classmates replied with the cartoon series ‘Farmer Brown’, with one saying it was also known in some areas as ‘Farmer Grey’. The two story lines offered up was ‘The farmer was always battling a seemingly endless supply of mice.’ and ‘He was always getting over-run by mice and these mice drove him out of his house every time. It was like the predecessor to the Road Runner cartoons.’ I have no recollection of watching either one of these cartoons, but then, as mentioned before, Channel 13 held no interest for me; however, I do deeply appreciate their follow-up.

Now on to the real topic about which I would like to write – my childhood. Well, not mine exactly, but close – my mother’s. Well, that’s not it either. It’s an aspect of my childhood remembrance as it relates to my mother’s finally coming of age.

Some memories stand out as clear as day. When I was in junior high, I can remember with picture perfect clarity my mother slowing coming down the staircase, turning, and asking the family, ‘What do you think?’

I, of course, hadn’t a clue as to what she was talking about, but my dad said, ‘Perfect!’ and my sister said, ‘They’re great.’

Then my mother turned to me, waited just a bit, and said, ‘Dave, how about you?’ Being roughly 13 at the time, I hadn’t a clue as to what I was being asked to respond to, but after a second or so, I finally joined with my sister and said, ‘Yeah, they’re great.’

Do I recall the exact words being proffered – no, of course not, but they’re as close as my memory will allow me to get, of that I am sure.

As for my mother, she was asking about the change in her attire. This is because for the first time – ever - she was wearing pants. It was monumental. My mother, who was born in 1910, had never worn pants before - always a dress, always. Well, sometimes a skirt and a blouse, but her main style for everyday living was to don a dress each and every day.

Can you imagine being a little girl and always in a dress. Then becoming a teenager and going through the Roaring 20's always wearing a dress? Maybe you can, especially if you're female, but then how about being in your 20's and going through the Depression era and then going through the war time years in your 30's and always in a dress. And by the time the next decade rolls around and it's drawing to a close and you're in your late forties and you decide to change your style of clothing - monumental.

Coming from a grown man, I realize this next comment may seem a bit odd for someone to say about his mother, but my mom had great gams. She looked good in a dress. But she was so excited to be wearing pants that from that time forward it always took a special occasion to see her once again in a dress.

When you consider all of what women had to do to keep a household operating efficiently back in the day (my mother even ironed my socks!), none of our mothers could ever be considered a slacker but my mother certainly was when it came to wearing pants. And I love the fact that I can recall the first time she became a slacker.

I can picture it all perfectly: she twirled; she strutted; she smiled like she had just won the lottery. Well, for us back then, it would have been the Irish Sweepstakes, but you get the idea.

She deserved it; she was my mother.

And now she officially shared the wearing of the pants in our family. Not bad, mom!

I do not recall any of my other relatives wearing pants. My grandmother certainly never did nor did my two aunts. I don't have any recollections of their reactions toward my mother's new attire, but I am guessing it must have been as positive as it was for the three of us on that first day for she continued to wear slacks when she visited them.

Do any of you have a memory regarding your mom becoming a slacker? I hope so.

Well, onto a totally different topic, however brief. Do you remember eating shredded wheat? You know the old large kind of shredded wheat that had a pillow-shaped form somewhat like the Dobie kitchen sponges used today.

The inherent dryness of this biscuit-looking thing sitting at the bottom of my cereal bowl never appealed to me. I tried it once, but even with milk that was enough for me. I was more of a Cheerios kind of guy.

What I do remember the most about shredded wheat is that my grandfather loved them, and he would save those informational printed cardboard inserts which separated the various biscuit levels. He gave them to me on my various visits. Each of these cards was different and showed you how to tie knots or displayed a map of where Route 66 crossed the country or any of the other multitude of encyclopedia facts.

Considering my grandfather was 80 when I was 10 years old, he was either hoping I would someday appear on his favorite TV show 'The \$64,000 Question' and wanted to prepare me the best he could or he was a doting grandfather and wanted the best for his grandson. At the time, the latter seemed more likely.

However, twelve years later he was in attendance at my college graduation and he gave me \$64. He said that the thousands would come later. He died the next year at the age of 93 and missed my graduate school ceremonies the following year. But as a gift I was presented with a check that stated 'From Grandpa' in the memo box. It was my parents way of saying, your grandpa always knew you were a winner - even if I was his only grandson.

My parents had long since moved to a new home in Wyckoff, so I know this part doesn't exactly fit the timeline of my recollections of growing up in Glen Rock, but the memories associated with my grandpa's gift is a perfect memory and I wanted to it pass along. By the way, the check easily covered a joyous three month jaunt around Europe in the summer of 1969.

Oh, and while I'm off topic for being over 18 and out of Glen Rock, can you all remember the late 60s for the long hair, those pointy-collared Paisley shirts, the large bell-bottom jeans, the suede vests (I still have mine), and should I dare mention - the platform shoes. Okay, maybe not, but I loved being six foot two for just a little while.

And, of course, being dressed like that I probably looked like a slacker, but not in the same great way my mom did. David Lamken

A High School Minute –

Although technically ninth grade wasn't part of our true high school experience (and I hope Glen Rock changed that bizarre demarcation), when we think of high school, most of us think of them as having four years.

With that thought in mind, I'd like you to consider what you did during your last four years of school in Glen Rock and how you spent your over two million minutes during that time (my calculations are at the end of this e-mail).

Sure - it includes weekends, holidays, and summers, but that was all part of our of our high school experience, too, right? There was no way around it - we were always thinking about the next class, our new homework assignment, what we needed to tell someone at lunch, an upcoming sporting event, the forthcoming weekend, a future date, our next dance, the prospect of another school year, and so on.

We all have major milestones that we can remember. For me, it was when I wrote about learning how to drive in 'A Rite of Passage' (page 131), or experiencing the first front door kiss in 'That 'First' Uncertain Moment in Time' (page 238), or the two sporting events I highlighted when our school beat Woodridge 7 to 6 in a football cliffhanger for an undefeated season and beating the high-and-mighty Ridgewood in a basketball game in 'Glen Rock Sports' (page 85), and so many of the other things I have touched on over the years.

But it's truly the little things that made our high school time so special. I know it wasn't baby steps that got me through it all (I was too big for that) and giants steps are too big of a leap to categorize my time there, but, sometimes, just sometimes, I do wish I could have a few of those two million minutes back.

At least as far as the ones wherein I might have hurt someone's feelings or done something that made any of you mad at me. I know I annoyed some of you by looking at the notes you wanted me to pass along. Sorry for that, but, at least, I did pass them along for you.

Do you recall the teachers who occasionally snagged the passing notes and read them aloud in class, the teachers who just tossed them in the trash, and the ones who return them to you unread at the end of the period?

Not bothering to wait for a message to be delivered by the usual method – the passing of it student to student, row by row, how about the neat way some of you tossed your notes into the air in the direction of your intended target when the teacher’s back was turned .

Of course, some of you just folded your piece of paper and flung it hoping it would land close to the person, but others of you perfected a folding technique with origami-like precision, creasing and bending your little sheets of paper like a ninja and tossed it with exactitude worthy of a side-show knife thrower.

I have trouble remembering what was written in any of those messages I read or in recalling what was so darn important in knowing or telling that it couldn’t have waited until the period was over; however, I wish the notes that elicited the shorthand yelp or gasp from the intended receiver had been passed in my direction. Now those I might have remembered.

Moving away now from simple note passing activities, however few the minutes it took to accomplish, we know the time we spent in high school was special. Year after year, we were all pulled in so many directions as our responsibilities grew – academically, athletically, and socially.

Hard enough as it was to juggle those three things, a few of you worked. I recall a Byrd School classmate who was employed at The Mande Shop, another friend at Sher’s Glen Rock Sweet Shoppe, and another at Hoitsma's Bakery on the corner of Rock and Valley Roads. I recall a classmate saying he delivered pizza made at The Oven, someone else who worked at Kilroy’s, and a good e-mail friend who worked at White’s Gulf station. A few girls I know worked at the Lehman’s Glen Rock Bakery (my favorite). I loved hearing the rat-a-tat-tat of the vibrating slicing machine and could always be seen exiting the bakery’s door eating a slice of that freshly made bread.

I don’t know how you combined work with the various activities of being in high school, but in any case, it amazes me how we got through it all. But that’s what makes it special, each in our own way, but yet we are all in it together. And when it’s over, it’s over.

In a high school minute, as I graduated, I knew my life was about to change drastically. My parents were discussing where they would move and what kind of house they were going to build and I was to begin college in the fall. My graduation signified the end of one road and the linking to yet another

path. Who knew where it would lead at that point, but I always knew I would remember my time growing up in Glen Rock.

I just never knew I would write about it so much. :-)

By the way, your comments to me about my 'Ten to One' e-mail were hilarious, insightful, touching and perfectly spot-on. When I finished writing that e-mail, I truly debated whether or not to hit the 'Send' button, but I did want to enjoy pulling your leg (and I don't even care to know where that phrase comes from).

Thank you for your replies. They are always appreciated.

Please go back to replying to 'Classmates' if you wish. From the date on some of the replies I received, there were a few classmates who didn't read my last e-mail until after mid-week so for their sake, I thank you for honoring my request not to utilize it.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

60 minutes X 24 hours = 1440 minutes in a day

1440 minutes in a day X 365 days = 525,600 minutes in a year

525,600 minutes in a year X 4 years = 2,101,400 minutes in high school

And, yes, I could have stayed with our three year high school timeline, but I thought 'over two million minutes' sounded better than 1,576,800.

David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ

And Now A Word From Our Sponsor –

In a previous e-mail I wrote about not liking shredded wheat, a favorite breakfast cereal of my grandfather's. Thinking about that got me to wondering about the commercials we no longer see on TV. Don't ask me how, it just did.

I'm not sure why all the TV commercials we used to see are no longer on – for example, watches. There used to be tons of commercials for Timex (takes a licking and keeps on ticking), Bulova (America runs on Bulova time), and Gruen watches (the beauty of time). Now there are none. And yet most of us still wear a watch. My watch is a solar powered Citizen that is so reliable it keeps time to the second from the atomic time-keeper system in Colorado and updates itself automatically as I pass through time zones.

It seems like a lot of other commercials besides watches are no longer on TV, but what I really miss are the old, live promotional ads. They used to be on for two to three minutes and had a single purpose and now have been replaced by four to eight different fast-paced commercials in the same time period. Oh, well, times change.

Getting back to cereals for a minute, where did Post Alpha-Bit Cereal go or Kellogg's Sugar Snaps or its Pep Wheat Cereal. I don't watch any children's shows so there might still be advertising for them, but I'm not aware of it.

Continuing on with the food theme for just a bit, whatever happened to the Swift's brand for beef, lamb, and veal. My mother liked their quality cuts of meat. And so did I - at least the way she cooked them.

Over the last ten years or so, I am aware that we have been inundated with commercial time that has been taken up with the proliferation of medical advertising that we never saw on TV when we were young. With many of them spouting scary warnings of wildly adverse side-effects, I can't imagine them attracting many users, but that's not about our childhood days so I'll stop pontificating.

Well, just one more thing before I continue. Those late night thirty minute infomercials that have gotten very popular over the last ten years or so -

what's with those! For example, who's going to sit still long enough to watch a half hour commercial showcasing an ex-TV star wearing a bad hair piece who is promoting exercise equipment. Forget the fact he's got a beautiful former model as his sidekick. Okay, now I'll continue with my theme of old commercials.

Is Brylcreem still around? My hair wants to know. I just don't see that commercial for men on TV anymore - or how about commercials for Lustre Crème Hair Shampoo for the ladies? That was on TV quite often.

And what about Bactine, the facial cleaner. Or Noxzema's shaving cream (the closer you shave, the more you need Noxzema). Has anyone seen a recent TV commercial for either one of those products? On a side note, I always liked the strip-tease music that played in the background for the Noxzema ad as a good-looking guy was shaving off his stubble with that sexy voiced blonde narrating the commercial. My mother didn't, however.

For allergies and hay fever, does anyone use Dristan anymore? I don't see that ad on TV anymore, either. And Bromo Seltzer? What about Carters Little Liver Pills, to which the government made them drop the word liver from their title? And Luden Cough Drops – anyone still use those?

And now that I'm getting older - how about Geritol for iron-poor tired blood? Don't know if I have tired blood or if it is iron poor, but I don't see that commercial anymore.

Are Keds making a comeback? I think I saw a commercial for those sneakers, but then it could have been a print ad.

And speaking of things to wear, what happened to Robert Hall? Those ads ran quite often.

And then there was one for Goodyear 'Life Guard' tires. Do you remember the ad for the 'tire within a tire' if you got a flat? Sounded like a good idea.

There was one commercial that suckered me in back in the day. It was for the show Winky Dink and You. For 50 cents, I got a plastic sheet and four crayons. Not sure why they scrimped on sending just four crayons, but I did

use the plastic sheet on the TV screen. I'm surprised they don't bring something like that back for the kids of today's new generation. It got you involved with what they were doing on TV, and, as a young kid, I thought it was pretty neat. I liked solving the puzzles to their stories.

Well, I think I've far exceed my limit of sixty seconds for my own self-promotion commercial time, so I'll stop here, but I do want to thank those of you who replied to my 'A High School Minute' email. Someone reminded me of those of you who reached in the trash to retrieve someone else's note and then read it. I had forgotten all about that.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ

And Now A Word From Our Classmates –

I learned a lot from your responses to my e-mail about commercials, and while I must confess to shortening the replies a bit (which makes reading all of the following a little odd), I thought the rest of you might like to know what I was told.

One classmate responded with –

"Yes, David, I, too, had the Winky Dink with crayons on my TV screen, it was fun back then. Remember, too, the cigarette and beer commercials? I'd walk a mile for a Camel! Of course we haven't had those ads in years, which I think is a good thing. It doesn't promote bad unhealthy habits for the young and us older ones too. Of course, there is nothing wrong with a beer or glass of wine occasionally! Thanks again for helping us to remember the good old years!" I'll drink to that

.
Another classmate wrote a lengthy reply to which I've paraphrased this part –

Her father was once associated with the meat company we all knew as Swifts. She informed me that it was absorbed by a few companies along the way and is pretty sure it is now under the control of the conglomerate ConAgra Foods.

She continued with -

"Anyhow - back to your questions about things like Bactine, Noxema, etc. . . . I receive a catalog almost monthly from the Vermont Country Store, and a lot of the items they have are the old time labels we used to take for granted. Here's a link to their website. . .

[http://www.vermontcountrystore.com/store/?searchid=7SPDBRND&feedid=googlebrand&jadid:52830618&jk=vermont country store&js=1&jmt=1_p_&jp=&jkIdŠ8ae4e72eba61ca012ec9e836663bb3&jt=1&jsid 123&gclid=CP6YtsaZ8q8CFSIHRQod_HKLYQ](http://www.vermontcountrystore.com/store/?searchid=7SPDBRND&feedid=googlebrand&jadid:52830618&jk=vermont%20country%20store&js=1&jmt=1_p_&jp=&jkIdŠ8ae4e72eba61ca012ec9e836663bb3&jt=1&jsid%20123&gclid=CP6YtsaZ8q8CFSIHRQod_HKLYQ)

"They have one item that I love!!! It's called "Tired Old Ass Soak"!!!! It's great to sit in a hot bathtub with that in it, and soak your "tired old ass"!!!!
"As for Luden's cough drops. . . we can get those at the local independent pharmacy here in small-town-USA! They have the licorice ones as well as the cherry ones.

"Thanks for the memories, my friend!" No - thank you.

Someone else sent me the following link when he wrote –

"Dave, I remember the Noxzema ad girl having an accent but couldn't remember what it was, so I searched the Internet and found the commercial. Here's the link --
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkpGM_MvZ2Y&feature=related
Enjoy.”

I did enjoy it and the ad was almost exactly as how I remembered it.

A reply from a Byrd School classmate went as follows:

“All day long yesterday I drove myself crazy remembering advertising jingles. They were so insidious, they still stay with me after all these years of not watching TV. Notably, "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is." Now I can't get it out of my mind.

Bryllcreme, a little dab will do ya

Rice-a-roni, the San Francisco treat

You'll wonder where the yellow went, when you brush your teeth with
Pepsident

Shall I go on? Or did I exact my revenge by planting a jingle in your head?

“And going way back, the burma-shave signs! We probably drive too fast for them to work anymore. But weren't they fun?

“Another good one, David.”

Since my parents took me on vacation every year, I loved reading those signs. I sent her the following as part of my reply and thought you might like be interested in viewing a few of them, too.

‘I'm sending you a link to over 600 Burma Shave jingles. Click on a year, then click on a phrase. Have fun. I did.’

<http://burma-shave.org/jingles/>

From others, I learned that it was Post and not Kellogg's that made - and still continues to make - Alpha Bits cereal. It recently showed up in a commercial about money with Jimmy Fallon and a kid in a high chair. Sugar Snaps are apparently no longer available, but Brylcreem endures and now

comes in an assortment of cream, gel, wax and gel wax varieties. I wish I still carried a comb.

Someone else wrote and relayed to me he still uses the Lavoris brand of mouthwash and that it continues to come in the original cinnamon flavor he liked when growing up. Wow - now that's dedication to a product.

I do appreciate all your feedback. Thank you.

Dave Lamken

Once Upon a Tree –

Not sure what my fellow classmates from the southeast part of town may have done around the Coleman School area for fun, but when I was younger I loved to climb trees and the northwest area of Glen Rock where I lived was loaded with them.

And climbing trees was fantastic. It was an adventure every time I did it. I wasn't a daredevil at it like some I can recall, but I did like to climb to the highest point that I could.

In the woods behind my house, I had a lot of trees to pick from. I soon learned that to climb most of them I had to bring along my own makeshift rope ladder since many trees had branches that were initially too high. It was tricky trying to sling the rope up and over a branch just right without getting it tangled, but eventually I got pretty good at it.

On the other hand, on occasion, I would hammer some ladder-like boards onto the trunk of my favorite trees to aid me in reaching the lower branches with ease. Maybe not the best thing to do to a living tree, but I knew by fourth grade my days of having those woods all to myself were severely numbered since the woods were slowly being developed into a Roughgarden Construction housing development.

For those of you unfamiliar with this area, if you face northwest, it is located behind the community pool and across my beloved Diamond Brook or going up what eventually became Rutland Road it was on the right.

Other than the fact that the trees were just there, I am not sure why I wanted to climb them (and, sorry, no, it wasn't because of the monkey in me), and once you were at the top, or at least as high as I would daringly go, you really couldn't see much of anything besides more trees because of the flat terrain, but climb I did.

Naturally, I tested each branch as I made my way up the tree. Some branches were a bit iffy, but if I spotted a good one just past a dubious one, I would often take a chance that that one would hold and I would springboard up and reach out to grab it.

Only once can I recall that strategy not working out all that well for me. I did fall, but luckily, I did not tumble all the way down and out of the tree - for if I had fallen to the ground, it would have been days before anyone would have found me.

I once alluded in another e-mail that my mother, a city-bred girl, thought those woods were dark and deep (of, course, for me not so much) but, nevertheless, because there were no walking paths back there, a little boy lying motionless on the ground would not have been an easy object to spot.

Somehow along the way I neglected to build a tree house. Not sure why that was. I did build a perch once, but that's not really the same. Having my own house away from my home would have been nice. It's a shame I can't go back in time – not counting my memories, of course.

What I find interesting (and it will only be of interest to my Byrd School neighborhood classmates) is that as the woods were being developed and the trees were being cleared away for roads, my favorite huge oak tree was left standing in the middle of what was to eventually become Lowell Road. For the longest time, we played baseball back there and used that tree as a backstop for un-hit pitches. And although by the time junior high rolled around I had outgrown my tree climbing exploits, I was hoping it wouldn't be cut down, but sadly once that area was fully developed, my wish was doomed.

When I was older and a Scout at Camp Yaw Paw, I was asked by an Explorer (the oldest level of Scouting back then) to go into the woods with two others to help chop up a tree for a generous supply of firewood and carry the logs back to camp for our traditional end of our session's celebratory bonfire. I was so excited - I had never done that before and all I wanted to do was to hear myself yell 'TIMBER' in my loudest voice when the appropriate time came for the tree to come crashing down.

Now, you may have noticed something in the above paragraph's depiction that I totally missed 55 years ago. There is a big difference between cutting up a tree for firewood and cutting down a tree - a BIG difference. When I found out we were going to look for the perfect fallen, dead tree, the silent

disappointment within me may have been as loud as what my cry ‘Timber’ might have sounded like if I had been able to unleash it.

I so much wanted to yell out ‘Timber’. I have since been able to do that as I have cut down trees on my property, but doing so as an adult is not the same thing, now is it? And I wasn’t very loud in calling out timber as I was the only one in our yard at the time, but there is great satisfaction having a tree fall exactly where you want it to fall.

And if you wonder how this obscure e-mail ever got started, well, a classmate wrote to me recently asking the following – “Dave - I need to pick a brain. When I was a kid, I remember peeling open a maple tree seed and sticking it to the bridge of my nose. What the heck did we call them? I remember how funny they looked with the "wing" sticking off the top of our noses.”

I responded with – “My side of town called them 'Pollywogs', as most people in the Ridgewood area did, but I can remember the other side of town using the word 'Pollynose' as a name - and, of course, 'helicopter' was often heard as the Maple tree seeds fell to the ground. That's the best I can do. I hope that helps jog your memory.”

As you can see, that’s what got me started on thinking about trees, and one thing led to another.

And, yes, I do realize the title should probably have been ‘up on’ a tree, but then, of course, ‘once’ wouldn’t have been correct, either, now would it?

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Twice upon a tree –

I thought I'd share some of the replies I received. For uniformity, I edited the e-mails a bit for font style, size, color, and paragraphs.

First up is a reply from a neighborhood friend and Byrd School classmate –

“Thanks, Dave, as always, for the memories.

I also wanted that huge tree in the middle of Lowell to stay, and I was shocked when it was suddenly gone.

A question: if two people are in a tree together, does that make them ‘social climbers’? (Sorry, couldn't resist).”

Just a sign of the same witty sense of humor he displayed as a child. Thanks and don't resist - I loved it!

Another classmate replied with -

“Hi, David, I just love your memory stories; they make me remember more of my own childhood.

I didn't climb trees too much, but what I remember is the big field next door to my house on Glen Ave - better known as the pumping station (which is no longer there). The neighborhood kids would play there, everything from Giant Steps and Red Rover to softball and even putting on circuses to make money for MS.

I have very fond memories of getting together with all of the kids and it's sad that they had to put up more houses and take away our playground!

I think the twigs we put on our noses were called Pinocchio noses, at least that's what we said on our end of town.

Take care and keep the memories coming!”

I wish I had known about your neighborhood putting on a circus; I would have easily been a good choice for the clown! Funny, too, is how we all thought we lived at the end of town.

From another classmate who didn't spend all his childhood in Glen Rock –

“Good story, Dave, and it seemed that growing up in Glen Rock was a lot safer than growing up in the Bronx.

As a youth I did some pretty crazy things for adventure, the most exciting was ‘the free ride’. When a city bus would stop, one would get up on the back bumper and hold onto some small brackets and ride along for free (after all it cost 10 cents to get inside).

I wasn't hurt, but every now and then I heard stories of children (that's all we were) being killed doing that. Pretty stupid huh?”

I think we'd all agree with that summation, but ten cents was a lot of money in those days. It would have bought two full size candy bars back then – which probably cost two bucks today.

From another classmate who also spent some of his time in the Bronx came the following –

“On the southeast part of town we had the woods/swamp that is now part of the Bergen County Park system going from Glen Rock, through Fair Lawn and across Route 4 and into Paramus.

We had a large group of kids who attended both Coleman and St. Catharines and we had kids from all ages. Our little “gang” consisted of kids who would later be going to GRHS, St. Lukes and Bergen Catholic. All of us went to Yaw Paw also.

As far as the maple tree seeds, we called them pug noses. Believe it or not, when I returned to the Bronx on weekends (my mother's side of the family) there was an abundance of the maples yielding pug noses on my grandmother's street!

Of course the primary pastime when going back there was stickball played on the local streets, lined with cars on both sides, but that's another story.

Keep up the good work.”

I wrote back that I, too, played stickball, but at my grandparents crowded street neighborhood in Jersey City.

There are no Norway Maple trees around me, but if I happen to come across one, I'll try to bring some pollywogs (or whatever you called them) with me to our next reunion. Besides putting them on our noses, do you recall positioning them between our fingers and using them as a whistle. It worked really well.

Thank you for sharing your memories with me and thank you to those who also wrote something short and sweet about stirring their memories.

Dave Lamken

How Quick is Quick?

Time passes - we all know that. Sometimes it goes by as fast as the blink of an eye or depending on what is going on in your life, sometimes it moves as slow as molasses. We all know that, too.

You may recall I mentioned in an earlier e-mail that for one aspect of my life the passage of time seemed an eternity. It was between the ages of 13 to 17.

It was not the stage of beginning to date that seemed so long. No, when I was going out with the prettiest of girls known to mankind, my life's passage during those times went by so quickly, I don't even think I had time to blink. Too bad I can't have a do-over for those experiences again - wow!

No, specifically, the slowest period of time was when I had to wait until I could drive a car. That seemed to drag on and on. I always had an interest in automobiles – still do, but I'm unable to put an exact timeline as to when my awareness in cars became so involved. However, it was well before I was changing the oil in my parents' car at the of age 13 - and wishing that I could legally drive it.

I used the word legally because as you may recall I did drive one of my parents' cars when they were not around. I never drove far - usually I'd go across Lincoln Avenue and cruise the quiet streets of Upper Ridgewood. Don't ask me why, but somehow it seemed as though if I rode around up there, I wouldn't get caught. Luckily for me that turned out to be true.

If I were to reflect on it accurately, in most aspects, my entire childhood seemed to move along rather slowly. By comparison, middle age went by in a blink of an eye – so fast in fact, I am unable to remember most of it and as far as being a senior citizen is concerned, as we all know, this time period is still a work in progress.

In one of my last e-mails, I touched on Camp Yaw Paw. For those Boy Scouts who are interested, I did do an entire recollection of it on page 207 (Be Prepared), but I forgot to mention something else pertaining to scouting that I'd like to share - and this is pertinent to both boys and girls.

Quite some time ago, I queried a neighborhood classmate, who happens to be an Eagle Scout, if I was correct on the name of a store, and he assured me that I was. So here it is - do you recall going to Cobb's for your scouting outfits? Cobb's was in Ridgewood near the train underpass and was a narrow, L-shaped store filled with everything having to do with our

uniforms. The Scout uniforms were always in the window on the left. What I liked about Cobb's was it had one of those ladders on rollers to reach things that were stacked up high on the long back wall. The clerk would push himself along until he found the right box.

For an eight year old, accompanied by his mother buying his first Cub Scout uniform, I thought that ladder was pretty cool. By the time I was twelve, I was riding my bike there and purchasing my own Boy Scout attire but still thought the moving ladder was pretty cool. I may have mentioned this before, but Cobb's was also where I brought my first pair of dungarees. Does anyone use that word anymore?

And you always bought the dungarees longer than was required and you rolled up the cuffs, usually they were neatly folded twice. Why – I don't know, but many of you also you did that to the sleeves on the accompanying t-shirt that you wore, sometimes with a pack of cigarettes tucked into the sleeve. And I didn't even smoke! Still don't.

And not to belabor another point too much, but from another e-mail reply about the Norway Maple with its helicopter seedpod that you split open and stuck on your nose (to which I referred to as a 'pollywog'), a classmate recently reminded me that a pollywog is also another name for a baby frog. No matter the similar look it may have had, how that ever got translated into something you put on your nose, I'll never know. But it's better than calling it a tadpole, I suppose. And I love the fact you keep me posted on these things.

And how quick was that for one of my e-mails! It was so short you probably only blinked twice while reading it.

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A Reel Memory –

I was eight years old - I know we all were, but I was eight when I saw the film ‘The War of the Worlds’, and I remember it like it was yesterday. I saw the movie with my family at the Oritani Theater in Hackensack.

And what a spectacular movie it was. It starred Gene Barry (of TV’s Bat Masterson fame) and told a great story that had some really super special effects.

The movie certainly had a huge impact on this little boy. He went home and a day or two later went to the library and took out the H.G. Wells’ novel The War of the Worlds.

I soon learned from reading that book that films based upon novels don’t always follow the exact same story line, but what did I know at the time. I enjoyed both.

And what I also enjoyed was going down the street a block or so from the Oritani Theater and having ice cream at Baumgart's Ice Cream Parlor - a great place. I hope you all went there at one time or another – maybe after a shopping trip to Packard-Bamberger's, a kind of department store that also had a supermarket (a very popular style of doing things in Europe, by the way).

Moving up the timeline a bit, somewhere around the age of 14 or 15, I took a bus into New York City to experience a Smellivision movie. Or was it Smellovision? I can’t remember which it was right now, but it certainly was a weird enhancement on the movie viewing process.

As I recall, the movie starred Elizabeth Taylor and Peter Lorre and was entitled appropriately enough, ‘The Scent of Mystery’. If you saw the film or can guess its new feature by its name, then you know that during certain scenes different aromas were released into the theater. It was peculiar to say the least, but I’m glad I went to see it and gladder still that I can remember it.

In the great movie going experience, what is also not hard to forget is wearing those cheap red and green lensed cardboard glasses and watching a 3-D movie. There were a slew of 3-D films that came out when we were younger. They seemed to have disappeared for a number of years, but have made a come-back recently in mostly animated form.

In the early fifties, I remember seeing the movie 'It Came from Outer Space' in 3-D, with Richard Carlson, who, if you recollect, also starred in 'The Creature from the Black Lagoon', a non 3-D movie. I recollect that Vincent Price was also in numerous 3-D films, but I don't recall any of those titles. I guess none of them were singularly memorable to me or maybe they were all so similar they melded together.

And thinking about those 3-D movies and sitting there wearing those flimsy glasses, I bet you probably lifted them up or took the glasses off sometime during your viewing experience so you could see what the film looked like without them, didn't you? Yep, so did I. Weird what we remember, isn't it? And I am told the glasses are plastic now.

My wife, Nancy, and I still have date night and go to the movies quite frequently, but I haven't seen any 3-D movies recently, however maybe I will go sometime just for the heck of it. An IMAX experience in 3-D might be nice.

And I can only hope it might bring back even more 'reel' memories.

To digress just a bit about a previous e-mail, a classmate wrote to me about 'pollywogs' and added to its various meanings we had discussed. He alerted me to the fact that pollywog is also a term used in the Navy concerning sailors who have never crossed the equator. And here I thought it was just something kids put on their nose. Just thought you should know.

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How Things Change –

Before I begin on three very short topics, I wish to say thank you to all who replied to my heads-up concerning Facebook changing your personal e-mail address to one of its own on its website and how to remedy it. Much appreciated.

Anyway, somewhere along the line during the time when we were growing up, there were live ads on TV for a product called a Radarange. I remember a bald-headed pitchman doing the first commercials. Does anyone else recall those ads?

Well, anyhow, my mother knew instinctively from the get-go she would never let one of those microwave machines in her house, especially after my father related to us how it was initially discovered that radar technology could be used to heat things up.

As best as I can remember his story, it seems the director of a lab that researched radar tubes was standing near an experimental apparatus and noticed that a chocolate bar in his pocket was melting. (I just hope the chocolate bar was not in his back pocket.) The scientist was so intrigued by what was happening that he went and got a bowl of corn and watched how the kernels were being heated to the point of popping.

Needless to say, my parents never had a microwave oven in any of their homes, but it is something I use almost every day for defrosting, cooking, or reheating food.

Things do change. I just wonder if my mother would have approved.

One of the advantages of ‘classmates’ is that there is an additional e-mail address entitled ‘Chat’ that John Sheldon set up so we can post and spout off about things political and other controversial worthy comments about this and that without upsetting the entire class with our banter. If you are interested in getting on the list, please contact John for a spot on chat@grhs63.com

It was on this site that a classmate posted some funny observations on the recent Chick-Fil-A controversy. I wrote that I had never eaten their chicken and asked whether it was good. I was told it was.

That got me to thinking about fast food places. In high school, I can recall telling my parents about the McDonalds that opened on Route 4 (better

known as Broadway along that section of highway in Fairlawn). This is the one that most of us frequented after basketball games, etc. If you recall, the milkshakes (20 cents) were rather thick, the French fries (10 cents) were a tad too greasy, and the hamburgers (well, what can you say about them) were not like the ones from our backyard grills (18 cents with cheese, 14 cents without).

I didn't convince my parents to try it, and in today's world it is hard to believe but I don't remember my parents ever being in a fast food place of any kind. The closest they ever came to visiting a fast food establishment was eating at a Howard Johnson's, and that's only when we were on vacation.

Is Howard Johnson's still in operation? In my vacation travels, I have been lucky to visit 49 states and I haven't seen any in years.

And speaking of travel, how many of you went on childhood vacations with your family and remember taking those AAA Triptiks along with you. I loved sitting in the back seat flipping through those rectangular booklets page by page. The longer your trip was the thicker the booklet.

And the Triptiks were so ingenious - on each page, one side was a detailed map of one of the short stints of roads and intersections you'd be encountering on your planned trip, and if you flipped it up and over and turned it around, the other side highlighted the stops you could make at various points of interest. I recall there were also highlighted warnings of upcoming speed zones on some sections of small town roadways, especially in Georgia.

Now we have Mapquest on our computers at home and GPS in our cars. With all the new technology, it is not much of a hands-on experience anymore for a backseat driver like I was as a kid. What can I say except I believe children miss out on a lot by not having the informationally packed Triptiks, the large foldable maps, and the promotional booklets and travel brochures to peruse while biding their time on the crossroads of America.

I guess some things really do change – and not always for the better. What a shame!

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How Things Change – follow-up

As you've probably seen by the recent classmate replies of Paul Brown, Art Smith, and Alan Furler, when it comes to my memory of fast food type places, my recall is seemingly not that good because I was informed that Howard Johnsons survives as a Wyndham Hotel group brand, see <http://www.hojo.com/> .

I did check out the impressive website and the 400+ places listed were hotels and inns, not the original stand-alone Howard Johnsons restaurants I was thinking about when I wrote my recollection. You know – the Howard Johnsons with the great pancakes or waffles for breakfast, the good milkshakes, and, of course, the great variety of ice cream flavors.

However, another classmate informed me of the following –

“Dave, there are only two of the original Howard Johnson's restaurants left in the United States, both of them were franchised from the original Howard Johnson's company.

“They are located in Bangor, Maine and [Lake Placid, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Placid,_New_York). I got this from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Johnson's Scroll down toward the bottom of the page to the year 2000.

I thought you'd like to know.”

Yes, I do - and I've been to both of those places, just not that recently. I might have to go back there once again to see whether either of those original Howard Johnsons could ring a big memory bell for me about my family's vacation travels.

All of those replies were good to know and I do appreciate people doing the research for me. It is also teaching me to become a better descriptive writer in my postings and write about what I'm thinking rather than thinking about what I should be writing.

And in my discussion on the price of McDonalds hamburgers, one classmate wrote:

“Dave – Do you remember the White Castle hamburgers. They were square and cost five cents. Five cents! They were small and could be downed in two big bites if you were hungry...”

I can, but for the life of me I can't recall where our local White Castle was. I'm thinking East Paterson past the end of Lincoln Avenue near a soft-serve ice cream place, but I'm not absolutely positive.

“Triptiks, David, Triptiks! Just like you I loved to flip through them when I was a kid. I sense I didn't travel as much as you did, but whenever we were in the car going someplace far, we used Triptiks. Thanks for highlighting those. I had completely forgotten about them.”

“Dave – You can still get Triptiks at AAA. I'm a member, but have a GPS so I don't use them, but they were available a couple of years ago”

Thank you for your replies. I wished my parents had saved our Triptiks. What a treat it would be to go through them again.

Another classmate sent me the following concerning my recollection of my father's story about the invention of Amana Radaranges -

“[This is bad of me, but!!!!](#)”

“noticed that a chocolate bar in his pocket was melting. (*I just hope the chocolate bar was not in his back pocket.*)”

[Do you know how desperate I am for things to laugh about right now? This one tickled my fancy!!!! Thanks, I needed it!!](#)”

Glad to know my sense of humor gets noticed, and, better yet, glad to know it is of some use.

Another classmate wrote:

“David, you are so good at remembering things from our childhood. If you haven't seen this slide show clip from YouTube, you should. It is about five minutes long and very good. Just 'X' out the commercial at the bottom of the screen.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04x0ZjkrnYk>

Keep those memories coming, okay?”

I’ll try, but after a video like that what more can I add? Loved the music, though!

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

To Pet or Not to Pet –

Before I begin, I must apologize for any duplicate e-mails you may have recently received from me. ‘Classmates’ would not accept my e-mails so I sent them out a couple more times. This was done a day or hours apart, even though they all showed up in your e-mail boxes at the same time - 11:16am. I don’t know what the problem was with our website last week.

Back to when I was younger - I loved to date. When I was old enough to drive, I loved going to drive-in movies. But that’s not what this remembrance is about.

No, rather it’s about having a pet, being around other people’s pets, and loving to pet them.

Craig Lampe had a Collie - a beautiful, friendly Collie named Sandy that I got to pet on my way to school every day. Craig originally lived on Rock Road (before moving to Hamilton Road), across the street from Mark Schlageter. Craig’s Collie would come down from the house to a retaining wall and I’d go up the driveway a bit and reach out to pet Sandy. The dog was so precious. It was like having my own version of Lassie.

Wayne Bonhag had a Collie, a long haired one. Her name was Bonnie. It, too, was a great dog, so loving and playful. I got to play with Bonnie whenever I was at Wayne’s house, but it wasn’t an everyday sort of thing like it was with petting Sandy.

Our neighbors, the Spencers, had a brown and white beagle named Winston with very floppy ears. I often took care of him while they were away. Winston had the wettest of noses, but he loved to be kissed.

My own dog was a mutt. What more can I say except he was black and white and my family was so original at coming up with a name for him. Can you guess what it was? You got it - we named him Spot. He loved to jump up and put his feet on your chest. That’s wasn’t too bad since I was little at the time.

Spot died of a heart attack when I was just beginning the third grade. It was traumatic, that’s for sure. Spot loved being petted, though - loved it. And I loved playing with and petting him.

Miss Doremus, my third grade teacher, had a student teacher, Miss Hoffman, for part of the year. She lived right down the road from Byrd School. She heard of my sorrow of losing Spot and offered me one of her cat's kittens.

Before I brought the kitten home, I asked my parents' permission, of course, and to my surprise they said okay. I'm thinking they thought it would be easier than having another dog - little did they know.

I had the pick of the litter and the first cat that came up and nuzzled my hand in the kitten box was the one I selected – or rather he picked me. I named the kitten Tiger. Hey, it was my cat and to me he looked like a tiger. No one else thought so, but they went along with its name. It did have stripes, so I wasn't too far off.

When Tiger was first in our home, he liked jumping up on the curtains and holding on to them with its claws and swinging on them. He soon outgrew that habit, but, to say the least, my mother was not pleased with having to replace her curtains. I say 'hers' because back then mothers sewed.

Around the holiday times, the only thing about having a live tree in our living room was that Tiger thought it was his Christmas gift. Once or twice he tried to climb it, but more often than not he just settled for nestling himself between the gift boxes and napping all day long on the tree's apron with its mirrored ice pond and little skaters.

Tiger loved to be petted. He loved his ears petted, the bridge of his nose gently rubbed, and if you were tender, even having his belly scratched. If done right, he'd purr like a kitten no matter how old he got when he was petted. I'm told that's a little unusual with cats. Tiger even grew to like having his fur brushed. It took a little time, but he came around.

Tiger was an indoor-outdoor cat. He liked bringing home trophies, small animals of all sorts. My mother did not like this fact. If the birds and other critters were alive, we'd trick Tiger into letting them go and we'd set them free, but more often than not they weren't. He even brought home a baby box turtle once. Why - I haven't a clue, but, needless to say, that one was alive.

Tiger lived a long time and I attribute that to the love he got. He'd jump up on your lap and circle around once or twice before cozying up and settling

down. He knew he was going to be petted. I loved the fact that he knew what was coming next.

I sometimes wish I was a pet.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

A Walk Up Memory Lane –

Thank you so much to all of you who sent me your heartwarming replies to my ‘Pet or Not to Pet’ email. The stories of your past or present pets were extremely touching, and I’m glad to know that I was the catalyst to bring those thoughts to the forefront.

On to the topic of the day - I realize when most people talk about remembering something in the past they usually refer to it as a walk down memory lane, but, in this case, I’m recalling some things from before Kindergarten and going all the way to my senior year; so, therefore, I thought I’d be truly accurate by saying I’m taking a walk ‘up’ memory lane.

In the era before Kindergarten, I had only one true playmate my own age in that glorious, worry-free time period that all of us enjoyed before embarking on our life-long trek through our school years. She lived down the block from me. In advance of the area around my house being developed, I lived pretty much in solitude on a dead end street that had six homes on my side of the street (with blocks and blocks of woods behind it) and four homes on the other (with blocks and blocks of the former Ridgewood Country Club golf course to play in, sand-pit bunkers included), and, whenever I wanted, I was allowed to walk down the hill to her house three doors away.

What fascinated me about this sweet, precious, and gorgeous little girl was her family had a piano in their basement rec room. And while initially I might have thought I was truly playing the piano by just hitting the keys at random, after a number of times seeing me at the piano and hearing my pretend concert noise, she did teach me to play ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’. So far, that’s been the extent of my musical talent.

In Kindergarten, I met a girl who lived by the ‘Rock’. She, too, was beautiful – and still is from the pictures I have seen of her on Facebook – and has one of the best smiles I have ever encountered. Since she lived just down the block from Byrd School and I also needed to go in that direction, I pretended I was walking her home. I can’t say she was my first girlfriend, but it sure felt like she was. I missed her when she transferred to another local school and didn’t re-enter our public schools until ninth grade.

Miss McGuirk, my First Grade teacher, was the prettiest woman I ever encountered up close and personal – and she taught me how to read! I was in the Bluebird Group - ‘Look, Jane, Look! David is reading.’ Giving credit to where credit is due, my mother truly gave me a head start when it came to

reading, but I will be forever grateful to Miss McGuirk for her patience and dedication as she quickly pushed me through the beginning series of the 'Dick and Jane' books.

Second grade is when I began to stutter. God knows why it happened to me at that point in time - I sure don't. I do know I wasn't a stutterer from the early years of learning how to talk. So maybe I did fall out of one of those trees that I talked in one of my recent e-mails, injured my head, and don't remember doing it - but having a stutter was certainly a curse on my life, that's for sure.

People have told me I'm a compassionate person. I believe we all are, but if I were to pick a time when I realized this might be true, it was when I was in Miss Doremus's Third Grade class. She was disabled and, at times, needed to use a cane to get around. Since Miss Doremus always needed assistance, everyone in her class helped her as much as we could, especially when we went outside for recess as she needed to grab onto our arm. And while I know it wasn't always the case, I want to feel she picked me the most. At any rate, I always got to school early, so when Sam, our custodian, was helping her out of her car and across the street to the school, I was there to carry her bags. The squeeze of her hand and the 'thank you' that went along with it is hard to forget.

In Fourth Grade is when I did one of the dumbest things of my life. A classmate who lived on Rutland Road came over to my house one afternoon to play. I'm not sure how it came about, but boys will be boys and I showed him the kerosene my dad bought for a portable lantern we had just gotten for when the power went out. We were igniting a little bit of it in a jar and then covering it up to extinguish the flame. We then had the bright idea to take the jar to another classmate's house two doors away. This classmate had a playhouse in his backyard and we all fit inside to play with our fire jar. Although there was little damage, it didn't turn out all that well, and, because of the aftermath, I lost an opportunity to become very close with this great guy. Our parents - I believe - told us individually to stay away from each other. And although the two of us flew kites together, played badminton, and earned money shoveling snow in Upper Ridgewood, we never became very close - my fault and my loss.

In Fifth Grade, I got my first Corvette. It was red and was very fast. I know what some of you are thinking who have been to my house, the Corvette you drove was fast, alright, but it was silver. You are right, but that was my

second one. My first one was a Schwinn Corvette – red, with bright chrome fenders, and was a three-speed – not a six speed like my car. It had a luggage rack on the front, hand brakes, a headlight, and white-wall tires of all things. The bike cost \$52.00, which was equal to over 1,000 full-size candy bars back in the day.

Very early on in my postings to the class, I wrote about going on a 50 mile bike hike in the summer after sixth grade with four of my classmates to Greenwood Lake in order to finalize the requirements for earning a bicycling merit badge. It is one of the strongest and best memories I have. Why is that you ask? Because the adventure started off so great and ended so magnificently, and in between it had its ups and downs - and not just because someone chose riding the hilly countryside to Greenwood Lake. We had multiple flat tires on one bike, had to take turns walking the disabled bike so everyone could say they participated in a 50-mile bike hike, and had to be picked up by our parents around dinner time in the middle of nowhere (who then took us to a gas station to get a new inner tube and then made us ride the rest of the way home, with an unexpected stop at The Dairy Barn for some ice cream). Oh, and to this day, not one of them has ‘fessed up to choosing that route. I just know it wasn’t me.

With entering Seventh Grade came a breath of fresh air - new classmates, new teachers, and new walking scenery to admire. And with that, I started to date. For the most part it was only taking a girl to a Saturday matinee at the Warner Theatre in Ridgewood. One of those was a very pretty blonde in our class. For a fledgling teenager at the time, I felt like I was on top of the world. I thank her for that and wish she was still with us.

Speaking of going to the movies, in Eighth Grade, I saw Ben Hur. It’s a movie that told a great story, had lots of action, and, of course, starred Charlton Heston, so it is very easy remember. I do wonder, though, how many other people there are in this world named ‘Charlton’. I’ll assume it’s a made-up Hollywood name.

At around the age of seven or eight, my father taught me how to play chess and when I got to where I could checkmate him as often as he would me, I was told I was a good player. With Ninth Grade came the culmination of this talent with me being the President of our school’s Chess Club. Not having much of an ego, I always considered myself to be a so-so player, but I had my fair share of wins. Being a ninth grader, on a Saturday morning in the spring, I did go to a Bergen County Junior Chess Tournament at the Vo-

Tech school in Hackensack. Out of the over-whelming number of students there, I finished just out of the top ten, and, so, unlike today's kids who acquire a trophy for just showing up at an event, no plaque, medal, or award for me – just the memories.

With Tenth Grade came football, a game I loved to play. I'm not in any sense of the word a competitive person, never have been. I just loved to play, win or lose. I loved the hitting, the blocking, the tackling – everything. I guess I took whatever aggressions I may have had as a 15-16 year old out on my opponents. During a game, if I knew the ball was coming my way either on offense or defense, my adversary was either down or moved out of the way. I could definitely be counted on to do my job. A knee injury in my Junior year derailed my career (if you could call it that), but, again, not the memories.

Of course, who in Eleventh Grade could forget getting behind the wheel of a car for the first time (legally, of course), certainly not me. I loved cars and loved to drive, still do. I had more fun in, around, and under my cars than I could ever explain to someone who doesn't feel the same way. If I could go back in time, that's where I would want to be – either tuning up an engine, having a date sitting next to me blocking the view out of the rearview mirror (who ever thought that having a center console in modern cars was a good idea, anyway?), heading to New York State for some underage drinking (oops, forget that), or cruising down to the shore for a dip in the ocean and a few hours of sunbathing with two on a towel. Hey, I can dream, can't I?

My last year in the Glen Rock schools is a blur – sure, I could pick a memory or two from my Senior year to write about in a short little paragraph like I did with all the other years, but in doing so would minimize the great memories I have of that year. And I'm sure you're pretty tired of reading my short missives so I'll let you reflect on your own remembrances of that time and leave it at that.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Bike Hike – page 60

[David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ](#)

A Senior Moment –

In my last e-mail when I passed over the 12th year of high school and didn't write anything, some of you wanted to know what I might have highlighted if, indeed, I had mentioned something.

My senior year – our senior year – had the definite dichotomy of blending the end of one frenetic era with the beginning of another one. Starting in the spring of our junior year, and continuing for over one hectic year, it was questions, questions, questions and decisions, decisions, decisions. Starting with Kindergarten, it was a time of twelve years of certainty quickly coming to a close. We always knew what we were going to do between September and June of each year, but the within that last year of our public education was the blending of a phase of great uncertainty regarding what direction our lives would soon be taking.

Throughout the year, how many times did we query classmates about what they were going to do once they graduated, only to learn a little later that many of them had changed their minds and were motivated to go somewhere else or do something different with their lives.

Although the pronouncement about our impending life-changing decision always seemed like it was ours to decide, we discussed the choices with our parents over and over again in short little diatribes about what we should do, might do, and, possibly, could do with our future.

Most of us decided to continue our education. At our commencement exercise on the football field, Mr. Bradford, the school's Superintendent, said that 92% of our class was going on to higher education – that being placements in college, seminary, academy, and technical institutions, as well as art, nursing, secretarial, and beauty schools.

As for an important social activity, I have already written an extensive class e-mail about my before, during, and after recollections concerning our fantastic graduation dance, which I entitled 'An Affair to Remember'. As you might recall, the dance itself was entitled the 'Sophisticated Circus' and

featured the Si Zentner band, and, even though I included a picture of my date in that memory, there's no need to further that remembrance.

However, there was another important social activity that most of us attended in our last year of high school - and that was the senior prom. It turned out to be pretty good, too.

The first picture shows Paul Avakian (a good friend) arriving at the high school entrance with Christina Schmitt (my down-the-street-before-Kindergarten playmate from a previous e-mail). Kathy Wilkerson, my underclassman date, and I were just walking up to the door. A photographer/reporter saw us and asked if he could take our picture, and, of course, as you can tell, we said 'yes'. It made the newspaper. Priceless.



The second picture shows both Kathy's magnificent dress and her sophisticated and stylishly coiffed hair. I, on the other hand, was neither magnificent nor sophisticated, but was trying to hold my own the best I could.



A more perfect date could not have been imagined.

Overdramatic I know, but, oh, so true.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

An Affair to Remember – page 191, with another picture [David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ](#)

Kitchen Encounters –

I know I've said this before, but whenever I post something pertaining to growing up in Glen Rock, I am pleased to know that many of you are able to make your own connection to those postings from something similar that occurred in your childhood.

Fifteen years ago when I started to write these class e-mails, I didn't save the initial ones. I didn't see any need to do so as I was just stating the obvious things we already knew about our childhood in Glen Rock, but in a personalized way of my own. However, once I had posted nine or ten of them, some of you thought I should formulate them into a book. A couple of you even thought they could be the basis of a film.

I thank you for thinking my e-mails were worthy of that, but it did get me to thinking how wonderful it would be to archive them and have a collection of stories for my grandchildren to read once I am no longer around. So as you all know by now, I did start to save them - and John Sheldon was kind enough to let me have space on our class website, although I can't imagine anyone taking the time to read those 450+ pages online.

This missive gets its unlikely start from me reaching for a pot under the range top in my current kitchen. The pots are kept singly, each with its own lid, but that's not how things were organized in my childhood kitchen.

My mother stacked her pots and pans – four pots of varying sizes with a long handle were stacked as best they could one inside each other, three stock pots each with two side handles were stacked on top of each other, and two sizes of frying pans were laid one on top of the other. All the lids (some fitting multiple pots or pans) were separate and stood upright in a rack. Funny what you remember.

What I don't recall, but was often told as I was growing up, is that whenever my mother was cooking, I constantly amused myself as a very young child at my mother's feet with the extra pots she wasn't using. I can't imagine the noise I must have made playing a stacking and re-stacking game with those pans over and over again. My mom was a saint.

In my old home, the space under the sink was taken up with a small wastebasket-sized trash can on the right, a dish towel rack on the left door, some Bon Ami and SOS pads boxes, and a dish detergent bottle.

I know, I know – a trash can. One of those would never fit under my present sink. Not with a watering can for indoor plants, the anti-bacterial counter top cleaner, the soap container for the hand soap dispenser, the refill bottle for the dish washing soap that that's applied to the sponge, and the box of those little soap detergent pods which are used in the dishwasher.

Back in the day, our dish towel was replaced with a clean one every two days, three if we went out to dinner. Now we use paper towels to clean up our counter tops and dry our hands. And our present day sponges are no longer those natural, irregular shaped, light brown ones, but, rather, the small, rectangular, synthetic, non-lasting ones.

And speaking of trash cans, I doubt our basket ever got full after a day or two of use like it does in today's world.

And don't get me started on the use of paper towels. When I'm out shopping, I always think I'm coming home from one of those big-box stores with more paper towels than I'll ever need, only to realize a week later I should have purchased more.

When I was around ten years old and just being called upon to dry the dinner dishes my sister washed and put in a drying rack, my parents decided to remodel the kitchen. And you guessed it - their remodeling included a dishwasher. How lucky was I!

Although the sink was replaced (it stayed where it was below a window overlooking the backyard), other new appliances got new locations. Besides being moved from its old location, the most important new addition to our kitchen was a refrigerator with a sizable freezer. Up to that time, our refrigerator was a one door unit - and not frost-free. The freezer didn't hold much more than ice cube trays and a container of ice cream. Not that it really mattered because back in those days there was not much in the way of

frozen food that came into my house. I still prefer the taste of canned corn over frozen corn.

And what did one encounter when looking in on a kitchen back then – well, maybe a toaster, and a small one at that. Nowadays, most counters are cluttered with a coffee maker (I'm lucky – neither Nancy nor I drink coffee), an electric can opener, a large toaster oven, and maybe even a microwave if it's not built-in.

I'm sure you can add to that list without much effort for you know I left out soap and paper towel dispensers, napkin holders, canisters for cookies, sugar, and flour, a cutting board and a myriad of other little counter occupiers.

Thanks for letting me into your time and space once again, but now I need to get back to my kitchen and cook something before Hurricane Sandy turned storm of the century for us at the Jersey Shore causes a possible power outage here in Cape May County.

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Ether Or –

I am pleased that my ‘Kitchen Encounters’ struck a note with some of you. The fact that some of you remember the time your kitchen was remodeled was great. Going from white to bisque colored appliances was popular. Then, of course, we’ve gone through the black phase, back to white, and now on to stainless steel - and the newest ones don't even leave fingerprints.

One classmate wrote, ”We also did a kitchen remodel and I remember when the painter was there. He said to my mother ‘Why of course you can have red countertops and pink walls.’ So, we went from light green walls to pink with red Formica countertops.”

I wish I had seen that transformation. Worthy of a photo layout in a magazine, don’t you think?

Your own stories of defrosting the refrigerator ice box certainly rang true for me. Many of you recalled the ice box freezing up so much the ice cube trays were encased with frosted ice and were unmovable, and that was the definite visual sign to begin the defrosting procedure. Well, it wasn’t so much of a process, was it? You opened the refrigerator door, turned off the refrigerator, and put a pan on the top rack to catch the melting ice water.

I was also taken with your notion that many things we currently place in our refrigerators weren’t put there years ago – like open ketchup or mustard bottles (which we stored back in the cupboard) or fruit (often just placed in a bowl on the table).

I can remember that on occasion bananas and apples were put on our window sill. Whether it was either to aid in their ripening or for picture perfect decoration purposes I’m not quite sure, but in the warm weather the kitchen window was always open and there was always fruit nearby.

And as you might have noticed, I did use ‘either or’ in that last paragraph, but I didn’t misspell it in the title.

That’s because I’d like to touch on the topic of when we were younger and we went to the dentist. Can you recall like I can that he used to put us to

sleep for various procedures with ether or nitrous oxide? Back in the day, I doubt some of you who recall going through a tooth drilling or tooth extraction truly thought of the latter as ‘laughing gas’ either.

My dentist was Dr. Schmacher. His office was on Prospect Street near the downtown area of Ridgewood. He was our family dentist. My sister had a lot of dental work done – so much in fact that Dr. Shumacher was invited to her wedding. I think that was because he had spent so much time with my sister he became a natural extension of our family.

But it’s not her ether experiences I wish to relate, it’s mine. I have vivid memories of being put to sleep a couple of times and dreaming these fantastic dreams – out of this world, fantastic dreams.

Maybe it was because of the great outer space films I was drawn to viewing as a child (The Day the Earth Stood Still with Michael Rennie, It Came from Outer Space with Richard Carlson, Forbidden Planet with Walter Pigeon and Anne Francis, and so many more) that all of my dental slumbers were accompanied by alien encounters.

I’ve never been much of a dreamer (at least sleep-wise I’m not), but those few times I was put under by Dr. Shumacher were spectacular. I was never abducted nor the hero in any of my ether induced dreams, however my experiences were so tangible, so life like, it seemed as if they were real.

Even though my down and out time probably never lasted more than 20 minutes or so, I can remember my time sometimes being extended by hearing Dr. Schmacher telling me to take another depth breath and then after a while being finally urged to wake up and me not wanting to do so. I wanted so much to continue my journey into my new galaxy life.

I’m glad in some ways that Novocain has taken up where the various gas procedures left off, but I do wish I could revisit those childhood dreams, at least one more time. I believe I could have discovered the mystery of life – or something else just as important if just given the chance. :-)

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Were You Ever Mellow in a Marsh?

As the title suggests, it asks a question for which many of us cannot answer. Yes, we may have been in a marsh at some point in our childhood (I know I was), but did you ever get the feeling of being mellow when you were? It certainly never crossed my mind to think about it one way or the other.

So as you can see, there are many odd things about my youth that intrigued me – that includes feelings, thoughts, and words.

And now for those of you who read my class e-mails, you probably already know where I am headed with this posting.

I have always been fascinated with the word marshmallow – and, yes, although we are not accustomed to seeing it this way, marshmallow is also spelled marshmellow - and how the word ever became associated with a spongy little cube of fluffy sugar I do not know.

What I do know is that I like remembering the fun I had in the summer roasting them. In the late forties, my father built a barbecue in our backyard (it would have looked funny in our front yard, right?). We didn't call it a barbecue, though; our family called it a fireplace - it was made out of stones (rocks, really) garnered from our yard, and it was sizable.

I always needed a few tries to get my marshmallows roasted just right. I liked mine toasted differently than many of you probably did. I'm going to make an assumption here, but I'd say you waited until the marshmallow caught fire, then removed it and let it burn out. The flame, as you know, runs out of fuel when the outside of the marshmallow caramelizes. And you liked the caramelized taste.

I was never one for the look and taste of a blackened, roasted marshmallow. The crisp outside always tasted of burnt sugar and the inside was a little bit too gooey for me. You probably waited a few seconds for the outside to cool enough to be touched, and then you pulled it off and ate it before getting to the insides.

If you used a barbecue skewer, you probably ate straight off it. But if you used a stick, you found yourself biting into just a bit of the stick, right? And as the stick would burn a little you liked hunting for an even better one to use.

As for my marshmallow favorites, I always liked the ones that were ever so lightly browned. I liked the look and preferred the taste. Besides, I could eat more of them in the time it took to roast a caramelized one.

Thanks for your time and for mellowing out with me.

And S'more memories will probably be coming before the reunion. Just don't get me started on Peeps.

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I Only Wish –

Back in elementary school, I learned the capitals of all the states. I have rarely had to call upon that part of my memory bank, but it is nice knowing I can recall – let's say - the state capital of South Dakota at a moment's notice. Sometimes, however, I only wish I could remember where I put my glasses. Oh, and for those who are interested, the capital of South Dakota is Pierre.

By the way, sixth grade is also where I learned from my teacher, Mr. Hawkins, the proper use of the words 'capitol' and 'capital'. He said to remember the 'U.S. Capitol' building has a dome on it and dome has an 'o' in it. That stuck with me.

When I entered Seventh Grade, I was amazed to learn that there was a rifle range in the basement of the junior high. I know, I know, how crazy was that! But it was there, trust me - my memory on this topic is perfect. And probably this question will be more appropriate for the guys than the girls, but I wonder how many of you remember going to school on your days off and using the rifle range when it was open to the public? And now you probably know what's coming – I only wish there was a way in today's world to protect children in our schools from ever seeing a gun in their building.

Eighth Grade brought a plethora of old and new things, so I will focus on just one. In science class we had a unit to further study our planets, solar system, and universe and to do it in more depth than we did in elementary school. Back in those days we had nine planets and now we only have eight - being that Pluto has now been relegated to that of a dwarf planet. Earth, was our rock, from which all things were measured, and now, of course, we learn that it is now moving away from the Sun. The universe, as we also now know, is expanding. I only wish my waistline wasn't expanding along with it.

In Ninth Grade there was a feeling that we were on top of the world, but isn't odd that we were soon to be sophomores without ever having been freshmen. I don't recall any of the other schools in our division having just a three year high school, but from the sports' factor alone, we were at a disadvantage, especially in football having to start to play as sophomores. I only wish Glen Rock High School was a four year experience for us.

Tenth Grade brought a new awareness for increasing our vocabulary (like the word 'ignominy') as our English teachers were preparing those of us who may have wanted to take part in the SATs in the fall of our junior year to be fully prepared. I won't 'disgrace' myself by telling you how well I did, but I only wish I was closer to scoring 1600 than I was.

By the time Eleventh Grade rolled around I was ready for a car, but I never had a car that anyone would have wanted; however, a couple of classmates owned cars I really liked. I'll mention just two - one was a 1956 black Ford convertible with a white top and great fender skirts and another was a 1956 Ford Crown Victoria (you know – a coupe having a stainless steel band that stylishly 'crowned' the roofline passing right over the car as an extension of the B-pillar line). I am in the search for a new car and I only wish automobiles hadn't increased in price by 10 to 15 times since our childhood years.

By the way, for those of you who don't know, the 'A' pillar is the one by the windshield, the 'B' pillar supports the roof by the door, and the 'C' pillar is the rear window connector from the roof to the body.

Twelfth Grade had its high and lows. The high being we were graduating and the low being that we were graduating. Nobody wanted to stay, but leaving wasn't so easy, either. I only wish I could go back and get to know all of you as well as I do now. Over the past 15 years through e-mails and Facebook, I have had the supreme pleasure of connecting with many of you that I barely knew in high school. I would have loved to have known you all better back in my school days.

I only wish all of you could make it to our 50th reunion.

Dave Lamken

The Need to Feel Safe and Secure –

When I was little, very little, I had a stuffed animal as my security blanket of sorts. It was a lamb. I know – how pathetic is that. A kid named Lamken having a lamb as a toy animal. But Lammy was mine and I clung to it as if it was my forever pet. It slept with me every night and was usually with me everywhere I went in the house.

Not sure if you can recall your snugly or even remember ever having one, but if you did, I'm sure, like mine, it was a comfort to you.

As I got older and was allowed to go outside on my own, I no longer needed the security of Lammy. It was tough being 18 and no longer having my companion with me, but it was time to let go. Just kidding. I was four or five, but it felt like I was 18, as a new world was opening up to me.

Walking to Kindergarten was a great experience. Once I was shown the way by my older sister and was comfortable doing it on my own, I walked the two blocks from my house out to Rock Road, turned left and walked three more blocks until I got to the Rock, then turned right and walked another block to Byrd School. Knowing me, I probably skipped (something I don't do anymore – I guess I could, but for some reason I don't) most of the way, for school was a good place to be. Kindergarten, as I have touched on a few times before, was fun. It was First Grade that got scary.

And it wasn't because of the academics; it was because of the air raid drills. I wrote about that many, many years ago – it can be found on page 53 in an e-mail entitled Cattle Call. I only bring it up now because I want to touch on my neighbor's bomb shelter. I guess I should correctly call it a fallout shelter.

To the right of our house lived the Spencers. Mr. Spencer was vice-president of the Hudson City Bank in Jersey City. Not that that means anything, but I'm supposing that in the beginning of the nuclear age that we grew up in, if something cataclysmic occurred, he wanted to feel as safe in his home as he might have felt in his vault at the bank.

The Spencer's home, like ours, had a small, mini knoll leading down to the backyard. It was about ten feet from the house, maybe four feet from the back porch. The knolls added character to our backyards, but the grass was a pain in the neck to cut since you had to be careful that the mower didn't tip over.

Well, Mr. Spencer decided to build his fallout shelter from his house, going from the basement to under his porch and extending to about where the knoll began. It made sense since the area was raised from the rest of the backyard and that once the shelter was finished you wouldn't even know it was there.

In the beginning, my dad asked Mr. Spencer what he was doing and whether he needed any help. Mr. Spencer said he was building a wine cellar and that, no, he was fine doing it by himself. He just wheeled-barreled the dirt out to the woods behind our homes and distributed it.

It wasn't until my dad saw the bunk beds being delivered that he figured out what was going on. I am not sure how many of you can recall, or even knew, whether any of your neighbors had a bomb shelter. This is because, as my dad had surmised in Mr. Spencer's case, no one wanted anyone in the neighborhood to know they had a fallout shelter in the event there was a doom's day panic situation and they would have to turn people away.

Dad didn't reveal any of this to me at the time. It wasn't until the mid-sixties when the weight of three, four feet of dirt above some rotted wood caused the shelter's roof to collapse. Mr. Spencer then just filled in the bunker – luckily for him, the Cold War was coming to an end. And I guess now I can correctly call it a fall-in shelter.

Dave Lamken

Then and Now –

Over the years I have been fortunate to have had dinner with a few classmates. Most recently, two of my Byrd School classmates and their spouses dined with Nancy and me in a nice South Jersey restaurant.

Since I have known these classmates from way back, it was interesting for the three of us to put our heads together and reminisce about dating, our houses, classroom teachers, etc. from our childhood.

However, what struck me the most was how the spouses got along. Each of them individually had met Nancy before, but the bonding between the three of them was so good that to a casual observer in the restaurant it would have appeared that all six of us had known each other since childhood. It speaks well to the women we married.

In regards to my last e-mail, some of you replied that you, too, as a young child had special ‘Binkies’ as one of you called them. Mine was the only lamb, but many of you had teddy bears and stuffed dogs you carried with you everywhere. One of you had a giraffe – that must have been fun. Another told a sweet story of how she had to stay overnight in the hospital at the age of three or four and her parents gave her a teddy bear to make her stay more bearable (sorry, couldn’t resist). It was truly her lifesaver I recall her saying.

There were ‘Blankies, too. I only hope they were the size of a hand towel for I couldn’t imagine dragging my bedroom blanket around the house, crib sized or not.

As far as fallout shelters go, no one commented on knowing anyone in their neighborhood having a truly underground one like my neighbor's, but some remembered seeing them in the corner of people’s basements. Not sure if in a nuclear blast the houses would have withstood major damage overhead, but at least some sort of preparedness on their part was taking place.

To remind you of the devastation an atomic bomb can cause and the resiliency of people, I would like to share with you a video a classmate sent me about Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the time of the atomic bombing and how it looks today. It's only about a minute long. And by the way, where did all the radiation go?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir2tt5wbQdQ> Dave Lamken

The Cornerstone of Life -

A classmate recently shared with us that her Nana was celebrating her 100th birthday. It's hard not to applaud that.

Had my parents lived long enough to read this e-mail, they would have been 102. Somehow I am hoping they might just be doing that.

However, what I would like to think is one thing and what I know is another. I appreciate that my parents gave me the knowledge that both those things are important in life.

I like to ponder, daydream, and analyze the 'what ifs' in my everyday life. It's fun. Of course, the reality of knowing that much of what I think about will not come true is not fun. But does that matter? My parents told me it's not.

Of course they never said that out loud. They never gave me instructions on how to dream or gave me directions on how to ponder, but they did allow me the opportunity to voice my opinions on things they knew were never possible in the realm of everyday life.

One such time was when I was around six or seven years old and I expressed my desire to fly - not piloting a plane high above Earth, but with my arms outstretched and my body flying at great speed over rooftops.

I came away from that discussion knowing my parents didn't want me to try anything foolish in pursuit of that thought, but also knowing that having grandiose but impractical ideas was not such an outrageous thing. Part of their learning curve for me was allowing me to dream aloud.

I don't verbally express my thoughts out loud much anymore. I believe I would embarrass myself if I did - and it would take up too much time if I elaborated all the things that pop into my head every day.

And I learned the art of negotiating pretty early in life, also. It didn't take long to realize when I was pushing my mom's buttons a bit too much. All she had to say was 'Wait 'til your father gets home!' and I knew that was her final and best offer. I quickly came to know that was the time I should own up to whatever I was doing wrong and apologize.

It is nice knowing that in both of my parents I had the cornerstone of life loving me like no one else (other than my wife) and allowing me to be me.

By the way, there was a kid in my neighborhood a year older than myself who did jump off a roof with a makeshift Superman cape and who broke his arm. I guess we might all know someone in our neighborhoods like that. I'm just glad it wasn't me.

On to a totally different topic - and I hope you can remember which teachers did what since many of them made our school day interesting:

In class, which teacher innocently pointed the middle finger at the board or at you?

Which teacher drove the nicest car and what was it?

Which two teachers taught us something we all wanted to know?

What teacher was known by the phrase 'I just knew it'?

Which teacher married a sibling of a classmate?

'Readily' was what teacher's nickname because the word was used all the time?

Which teacher required you to memorize a lot?

Which teacher quoted poetry in class all the time and rarely stayed on topic?

To emphasize a point in class, which teacher would get up on a chair or desk?

What coach was known by the name Ziggy?

Answers -

Mr. Krause - Math

Mrs. Punchard - Ford Thunderbird

Mr. Bing and Mr. Zaisser – Driver's Ed

Mr. Joshua Hewitt - Mechanical Drawing

Mr. Cheska - History

Mr. Hollinger - Physics

Mr. Waterson - English

Mr. Okey Chenoweth - English

Mr. House – History

Mr. Zaisser - Soccer

Easy, right?

In closing, and for those who are interested, on page 154 you will find a long ago written e-mail about how my parents got together in a biography of my father entitled ‘Dad’.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Reunionitis –

I have started to notice an ever increasing amount of medications being advertised on TV. I am lucky that I don't need to take anything, especially since the side effects for these medicines are so egregious and seem worse than the ailment they are trying to cure.

Just the other day I believe I saw one about people being affected by reunionitis. I can truly understand the nervousness some may have when it comes to encountering people they haven't seen in years, and taking medicine for it may be beneficial, but please consider any side effects.

I don't recall the name for the particular medicine for combating reunionitis but the ad warned that it might cause serious allergic reactions in some people. Please stop taking it if you notice swelling of the face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat, or neck, or if you have trouble breathing or have a rash, hives, or blisters. Zits weren't mentioned.

The ad also alerted viewers that severe cases of this reunionitis medication may cause suicidal thoughts or actions or unusual changes in mood or behavior. These changes may include new or worsening depression, anxiety, restlessness, panic attacks, anger, irritability, agitation, aggression, dangerous impulses or violence, or extreme increases in activity or talking.

To those who may be touring our high school or old hometown area, it mentioned to a lesser degree reunionitis medication may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet, and this swelling can be a serious problem for people with heart problems. It may also cause sleepiness. Do not drive or operate machinery until you know how this medication affects you.

You will probably not experience any side effects. But if you do, it's important to know that there are a few simple things you can do. The following works the same for everyone, so be sure to keep these suggestions in mind when you enter the door to our Friday night's gala dinner.

1. Take a deep breath.
2. Smile.
3. Say 'Hi' to everyone you meet whether you happen to recognize them or not – even the wait staff.

4. Tell everyone how great they look even if you don't know who they are (heck, in some cases it's been 50 years so you can't possibly recall everyone's name – and they probably don't know yours, either).
5. Say 'Thank you' when someone compliments you on how little you've changed, even if you know it's a lie.

And as far as anyone recognizing me, I'll make it simple. I'm still the tall, good looking guy my mother always thought I was back in high school, and I haven't changed a bit – except for my hair (white), beard (white), and glasses (rimless). It's not polite to mention someone's weight gain and so I won't. And neither should you. :-)

Dave Lamken

Reunion Address –

On Facebook a short time ago, Bill Rudolph posted a wonderful article about Abraham Lincoln and this missive comes about from that message

In ninth grade, my history teacher, Miss Gibbs, offered an extra credit ‘A’ to anyone who wanted to memorize the Gettysburg Address and recite it in class. And although I never spoke or was called upon to answer questions in class unless I voluntarily raised my hand, I decided I couldn’t give up an easy ‘A’. I can still recall most of it to this day, as I can for some of Mr. Watterson’s poems and Mr. Ludwig’s ‘Merchant of Venice’ required passage.

With that in mind I decided to write my own version of the Gettysburg Address and re-title it. Lincoln’s was better, but here it is -

“Two score and ten years ago, our teachers brought forth on this continent a new class, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all classmates are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great 50th reunion, testing whether our class, or any class so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met in a great hotel for our reunion and have come to dedicate a portion of that reunion, as a final resting place for those who gave their lives that this class might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this reunion. The brave classmates, living and dead, who struggled to get here and be remembered have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what I say here, but it can never forget what our classmates did here.

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated to the unfinished work which our classmates have thus far so nobly advanced. We here highly resolve that our work was not in vain and that our class of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

I can’t speak for everyone – but I will. The reunion was great and it can’t be emphasized enough how much we owe the organizers for their effort to bring this reunion to fruition. I know they did it out of love for our class and I would like them to know how much we all appreciate what they did for us.

Oh, and for those not on Facebook, I posted the following –

“Yesterday I attended my fiftieth-year high school reunion. It was great fun being around people who shared so much of my childhood up to the age of 18. We were a great class (and still are), and although some classmates may have changed a bit (me, the most), it was incredible to see how much we are still alike. I wish all the best to the 1963 graduates of Glen Rock High School in the coming years and hope for many more reunions.”

Thank you – and for anyone who cares to know - my real address is:

14 Olin Drive, Cape May Court House, New Jersey 08210.

Dave Lamken

Nickel and Dime –

I liked that some of you appreciated my creativeness with my last e-mail entitled ‘Reunion Address’. Of course, I truly owe that one to Abraham Lincoln. And although Miss Gibbs was not one of my favorite teachers, I am glad some of you remembered her and her history class.

And considering the precious little free time we seem to have to ourselves anymore, I don’t want to nickel and dime you to death with my e-mails, even if they are free; however, it is through your replies to my writings about our Glen Rock experiences that often spark an opportunity for me to conjure up more ideas about what topics I should post; so, as mentioned many times before, I truly appreciate having your two cents on things.

However, with that said, this particular e-mail’s subject matter did not come from an actual reply, but, rather, from a discussion at the Hilton reunion with some of our colleagues.

In one of my little confabs with some of you, a group of us were trying to figure out what store was in place before Mande’s opened. Some thought it was Woolworth’s, but we never had a Woolworth’s in town, did we? Sure, we had a five and dime, but it was called AJ Grand Five & Dime – of that I am certain, but I’m not so sure it was replaced by a Mande store. Anyone have thoughts about that?

Oh, and since some of you went through the Glen Rock downtown area recently, is the Mande’s store still there? Is Mande’s still in business anywhere? Curious minds, like mine, would like to know.

Well, if you haven’t guessed it by now, then you have been lax in reading my other e-mails because the topic of this one is Woolworth’s – who would have thought, right? But it is the Woolworth’s in Paterson rather than the one in Ridgewood that has my memory’s attention. I loved that store, absolutely loved it.

When I was little, my mother would take me with her to Paterson to shop at Meyer Brothers and Quackenbush’s department stores while my sister, Carol, who was three years older, was in school. Woolworth’s was always the last store we visited and I loved having the store and my mother to myself. I think I had my mother wrapped. :-)

In any case, I can't figure out what was my absolute favorite part of the store. I'll begin with the lunch counter, but since it also served breakfast and probably dinner, I guess it should be called a food counter.

Before the age of five, my mother would lift me up and put me on those tall stools. I'd sit on my knees, crawl around and hold on to the seat back and think I was 'King of the World'. I would try to rotate or spin as much as I could before the food arrived, or, rather, as much spinning as my mother would allow me to do on those swivel seats. I felt so big, so old, and so independent when sitting on those stools. It was a great feeling.

I don't recall ever having hamburgers at home other than the ones grilled outside on the fireplace barbeque my dad built, but at Woolworth's, I think I can remember every one of them. They were perfect. And I always got a strawberry milkshake. Okay, I'll admit it - I was a momma's boy. She would spoil me whenever she had the chance - as in, sometimes we would share a banana split. It felt like she ate one third - the chocolate part and let me eat my two favorite parts, the vanilla and strawberry.

As I got older, my mother would let me stay near the book racks while she quickly shopped for a few items she needed at the nearby cosmetic counter. I was always in eyesight of her, but since I had plopped down on the floor after picking out a comic book or two to read, she knew I wasn't going anywhere.

As some of you might recall, lined up around the bookcases and the magazine shelves, there were six metal carousels which were about five feet in height held all different kinds of comics. I quickly out grew the Marge's Little Lulu, Bugs Bunny, and the Porky Pig hand-me-downs my sister had saved for me and, since I was an early reader, by the first grade I was now totally engrossed in the Batman, Superman, and other Marvel character comic books of the 1950s. I might not have known every word early on, but I was always allowed to bring one home, two if I was really good. And I learned to be very good, really, really quickly when out shopping with my mom in Paterson. :-)

Comics, as you may recall, cost a dime when we were little, but there were those 'Giant' editions that ran 80 pages and cost twenty-five cents. Remember those? They had two complete stories, plus a teaser of a third story that was serialized and continued on into the next big issue. What a bummer that was.

And while on the topic of comics, it's hard not to forget the ads that were within them. They were a hoot, weren't they? Do you recall the 'X-Ray Vision' glasses for a dollar, or the ad for 'Live Sea Horses? How about the 'Charles Atlas Muscle Building Ads' or the ad to buy an 'Ant Farm'? Actually, I did have an ant farm. No queen ant, and so the ants didn't last all that long, but I thought the ant farm itself and the tunnels they built were amazing. However, I didn't get mine through a comic book ad. No, the one I got came from – you guessed it – Woolworth's.

I didn't have much of an aquarium when I was a kid. It was just a rectangular glass box that replaced a large fish bowl on top of a small bookcase in the living room. I dropped the fish bowl as I was attempting to clean and refill it. We did keep various fish in it over time. It started out holding the goldfish my sister and I would win at the Glen Rock Fourth of July Fair by throwing a ping pong ball into a small glass jar. There were also guppies and sea horses and, on occasion, there were baby turtles that I had brought home from playing around my beloved Diamond Brook.

I liked the turtles the best. I liked holding them, seeing them swim, and staring at them lying perched high and dry on the little rocks in the tank - they also lasted the longest. The guppies and goldfish, while not in the tank at the same time, seemed to be short lived. The turtles, by the way, were always returned to the brook after a stint in my house.

And that brings me to the pet area at Woolworth's. It was hard to miss if you were into those kinds of things. There were tanks filled with a variety of fish – including the adorable sea horses, bird cages with canaries and parrots, and, yes, turtles. It was fun just to walk around and look at everything.

And before I left Woolworth's it was always neat to check out the toy section. There were dolls with their various little dress outfits to entice the girls, but planes, soldiers, trucks, and toy guns for me to wish for. And as I exited the store I also yearned for those hot little nuts that were roasting away by the candy counter and hit your olfactory glands when you first entered the store.

A nickel and a dime bought a lot back in the day, didn't it? And I hope no matter where you lived when you were little, you had the same type of experiences I did when shopping with your mother, in a Woolworth 5 and 10¢ store or not. Dave Lamken

Stamp of Approval –

For those who care to know, the consensus of replies to my Mandee location question is Mandee did indeed replace the AJ Grand Five and Dime that was next to Kavner's. I have been told that while there is no longer any Mandee shop still in Glen Rock, a spouse of one of our classmates indicated that there is a Mandee store still in existence in Hawthorne.

As far as my Woolworth's memory email goes, thank you for not agreeing with me that I was a momma's boy (my mom would have agreed with you), but I know otherwise.

Whether living in the Glen Rock region or not, I'm glad some of you had similar experiences growing up and shopping at various Woolworth's. Some classmates (guess which ones) gave the jewelry counter a few hits for their abundance of nifty little items, as did the replies for the food and candy counters – five mentions alone for their delicious nonpareils. My mother, like many others, called them snow caps – easy to understand.

There was mention of W. T. Grants by some classmates who didn't live in Glen Rock when they were younger. They said Grants was their favorite place to shop with their mothers. I am told a five and dime I never heard of named Kresge's morphed into Kmart – that's quite a morph, don't you think?

But on to the main topic of this e-mail - one day I was in the Post Office getting patriotic stamps and it was one of those stamps that triggered this old memory. It doesn't take much to do that anymore.

In any case, when I was in Byrd School, our scout unit took a Saturday trip to the Statue of Liberty. My dad went with us as one of the chaperones and it was a great field trip not only because of where we went but who I was with. My dad grew up near the Statue of Liberty and was a walking encyclopedia on the subject. I learned so much that when my own children were growing up, I took them, and I hope one day, when the littlest one is big enough, to take my three grandchildren there to experience the statue's awesomeness, too.

Even if you've never been there, you might still recall that the statue is located on Liberty Island (the one we knew as Bedloe's Island when we were young), and, if you have been there, then you might recall that Liberty Island is just south of Ellis Island and accessible only by ferry.

Built in the mid 1880's, the Statue of Liberty had copper siding that has since oxidized to such a degree it is now covered with the familiar green patina we have all come to associate with the statue. Can you imagine how much that copper would be worth today? Wow!

From atop its pedestal base the view is really quite nice since you can walk all the way around it. The view from the statue's crown is not as spectacular as one might expect. It is grand, that's for sure, but since the statue faces out to the harbor to welcome incoming ships, the view of New York City and the surrounding area is more than a bit restricted. I was never allowed to go up to the torch. It was closed off to the public and the reason for that is lost to memory, but the view from up there would have been spectacular.

By the way, as mentioned before, I have been to 49 states and with that I have seen many smaller replicas of the Statue of Liberty all around the country. Maybe you have seen some of them, too, in your travels. And as a side note, there is one my wife and I viewed in Paris on the Seine River. When you take a cruise or walk along the Seine River, you'll see it on its own little island. It faces west, toward our Statue of Liberty in the New York Harbor. The French know a good thing when they build it.

Touring our Statue of Liberty in my young childhood was a fantastic experience and it certainly gets my stamp of approval. I hope you have a similar childhood memory of being there as I do or will plan to go there someday soon.

Just keep in mind that from the ground up to the crown there are a lot of steps, so at our age you might want to consider taking the elevator to the top of the pedestal to avoid the first set of steps. The rest of the way up to the crown is only accessible by stairs – and they are steep and narrow.

Oh, but walking down, instead of waiting a long time for the elevator, is not so bad for those so inclined – or declined as the case may be.

Dave Lamken

Pecking Order –

Back in our parents' day, it was not uncommon to encounter families consisting of 4, 6, 8 or even 10 children. After WWII that seemed to change quite a bit, but as we grew up, we all knew someone who had a lot of siblings.

I'll assume that for most of us the family size was generally one, two, or three siblings large. As you may recall me mentioning, I have an older sister. After my son and daughter were born, I can recall my father saying I could stop having children because I now had a 'rich man's family'. As time went along and the children grew, what with car purchases, college expenses, and a wedding cost – let alone the money now spent on grandchildren, I truly got to know what my dad meant by saying that.

In today's world, I cannot imagine how I would have managed if I had had eight or ten children - and the grandchildren they would have brought into the world for me to dote on. Wow!

Even my being born second had its own pecking order of sorts, though. The earliest scenario of this that I can recall is our household's Easter egg hunt. My parents hid eggs in the living room for Carol and in the dining room and kitchen for me. Something must have happened early on that I don't know about for them to have come up with that idea, but at least this way the two of us didn't interfere with each other's search for eggs.

We had to find a total of eight eggs each and bring them one by one to our parents who were sitting on the staircase dividing the two areas. We put them into separate baskets. It wasn't until later that I learned my parents had hidden nine eggs for each of us to find. The reason, although only obvious to me later, was that this way Carol and I would never be frustrated by trying to find the last colored egg (which was probably well hidden) and my parents could look for the last two at their leisure.

Oh, and after Easter, who can't remember having days of sliced egg sandwiches or the amount of egg salad that was served up at lunch time. Although I wasn't aware of it at the time, another example of a pecking order consequence dealt with the opposite sex. Let me explain.

In the year before I entered junior high, I liked two girls. We were too young and never dated, but I thought of each of them as a good friend. So as Valentine's Day approached, I bought two gold necklaces with a heart shaped pendant at the jewelry store next to the Glen Rock Pet Store (home to our beloved chimpanzee, J. Fred Muggs, of the Today Show fame) and gave one to each of them.

I know - you can see the mistake I made right away. Where were you back then when I needed you?

The girls, who were friends - really good friends, were oblivious to the fact that I thought each of them was special to me. Well, it wasn't long before they became aware of what I had done. Neither of them wanted to be thought of number two, so while skating at the Ridgewood Duck Pond, each of the girls separately came up to me and returned her necklace – saying, thank you, but no thank you.

I was truly too young and naïve to have understood what I had done (but in hindsight should have known better); however, I did think I was doing a nice thing at the time, but they were right.

I returned one of the necklaces and gave the other one to my mother. Yeah, you can read momma's boy into that sweet gesture, I suppose. And, luckily for me, the classmates still e-mail me and consider me a friend.

One area that does stand out for me during my childhood in the pecking order scenario of things was gym class. Mr. Monro, Thomas, Bing, and Smith all did a good job of having us line up, call out numbers, and pick teams in a very random way, but we all knew who were the best athletes in our class at the time and wanted to be on their side.

Once the calling out of the number sequence was begun you could see some classmates changing their location in line so they would be in the right place for the number they wanted. You know – 1, 2 for odd-even, 1, 2, 3 for three teams, 1, 2, 3, 4 for four teams.

The one area where you were completely on your own was during the gymnastics sessions. You know – the floor exercises, the Pommel horse, the rings, the parallel bars and rope climbing. There was still a pecking order for

exercises, but only because we were in awe of the guys who were so good at them.

I'll start with my favorite exercise first - rope climbing. I was not the fastest nor the smoothest or the most agile, but I got to the top. I believe I can attribute that to my tree climbing days in the woods behind my house. I used a rope on many occasions. Sure, it wasn't as thick or as long as what we had to deal with in gym class, but I was used to rope climbing, albeit in my own way.

I would climb to the top of the rope using mostly my arm and shoulder strength. My legs were not wrapped around the rope in any discernible manner, just as they weren't when I climbed the ropes in the woods. I just went hand-over-hand until I got to the top.

On the way down I needed to ensnarl the rope around my legs to slow my descent. No matter the speed I chose in climbing down, though, I always got rope burns and didn't like doing it that way; but I was much higher up than I would have been out in the woods and couldn't risk a fall.

I wish I had a picture of me at the top of those ropes. Of course there would be no way I'd be waving from up there, however the smile on my face would tell the whole story of how much fun I was having better than I am doing right now.

I know there are more pecks to be put into order but I can see this e-mail is getting too long, so I'll wait until another time to continue this topic.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

If The Shoe Fits –

In my ‘Pecking Order’ email, one of the replies I received supremely dealt with solving one of the ‘who got what first in our household’ scenarios – and it rang, oh, so true, at least for me.

My sister wrote me that in our family when it came down to dividing the remaining part of a cake into two pieces, whoever got the right to slice the last piece of cake into two pieces, the other one got to pick which slice they wanted. That seems fair and so logical it should be on one of those Facebook posters. Although I had forgotten about it, I’m sure that particular family ritual saved a lot of childish bickering.

As far as my gymnastics routine goes, I would like to tell you that I could do an ‘Iron Cross’ exercise on the rings. But first, for those who don’t recall what it is, an Iron Cross maneuver is when you are up on the rings and are holding the rings straight down at your side as you slowly push the rings outward from its perpendicular position to the floor to one where your arms are parallel to the floor. You then hold your arms outstretched and steady for as long as you can and then pull your arms back down to your sides again as you slowly rise up.

As my left and right arms moved outward to the five and seven o’clock position it sure looked like I had it under control, but as they approached the four and eight o’clock position, I knew I was in trouble. At the Iron Cross position of three and nine o’clock, I could hold my arms outstretched for a count of one thousand one. If I could say I was able to do it for a count of one thousand one, one thousand two, I would be really proud of myself, but I can’t.

A count of one thousand one just means I barely felt the rings in the correct position before I felt my arms keep going up and over my head. And once that happened, I was unable to get my arms to stop moving upward and pull myself back to the original starting position.

What I don’t understand is why I was able to climb the ropes using just the strength of my arm and shoulder muscles, but unable to properly execute an Iron Cross. I haven’t a clue as to why that was.

Anyway, back to the topic of this missive. Growing up, I had two pairs of shoes and a pair of high top sneakers - athletic shoes as they were called back then. When I was little, if there was another brand besides PF Flyers I

wasn't aware of them or a color other than black and white. The Converse brand didn't appear on my horizon until high school and white was the color of choice then.

In elementary school, one pair of my shoes was categorized for dress while the other pair was my everyday shoes. What astounded my mother was how fast my feet grew and when that happened a new pair shoes were bought (always in a size much larger than I needed), which became my dress shoes, and the now the old dress shoes became my everyday shoes.

Such a logical progression and it sounds so simple, right? Well, in my case that is not always the case. Sometimes even the dress shoes were also outgrown at the same time and two pairs of shoes had to be purchased. I can still remember the look on my mother's face when that happened!

Now I have work boots for walking behind the snow blower in the winter, an outdoor pair of yard sneakers for use in the summer (a pair of shoes for the fall and spring work), three pairs of dress shoes, seven pairs of loafers, and three pairs of sneakers (none are high-tops, but all are white).

And all my current footwear fits - and have for years.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Treat or Treat –

As you can see, Halloween has certainly changed from the time when we were young, hasn't it? My grandchildren – 6, 8 and 10 - are perfect (as are yours, I am sure), but when comparing the costumes we had as kids to theirs, ours were not as sophisticated. At least mine weren't.



My costumes were mostly put together with things found around the house. I once went out trick or treating as a lumber jack. I wore my dad's checkered work coat – with the sleeves rolled up, of course, donned an ear-muffled cap of his, and carried a small handled ax. I used a Lone Ranger type black mask to hide who I was - yeah, as though that really fooled anyone in the neighborhood.

And that ax - imagine bringing an ax to school in today's world. I probably would have to sit out the Byrd School Halloween parade in the Principal's Office.

And I realize when I write to all of you, my remembrances may apply only to me, but I hope I am wrong with the following. How many of you recall the classmate who came to school every day dressed in a superhero costume? I loved it. I thought this was great, and because I always wanted the classmate to show up, it may have been the reason why I had a lot of perfect attendance certificates - other than my mother pushing me out the door, of course.

I marveled at the persistence showed by this student to wear a costume every day and how oblivious the classmate was to all the others in class who wore normal attire. And although in every class we shared, I didn't always get to sit next to this classmate, I just loved having a superhero in school with me, real or not.

I don't recall if this student ever participated in any sport, but if I looked around I usually saw the classmate in the viewing stands. I liked looking over and feeling no matter where I was that if something unforetold was to happen we had a superhero in our midst to protect us. I know that sounds silly to proclaim now, but it was what I felt back then and I hope when you saw this classmate you had a similar feeling.

Not being able to recall this classmate's name off the top of my head, when I was at our last reunion I wanted to look in the yearbooks, but being busy talking to some of you cut my time short and I wasn't able to do it. I am hopeful I will have more success at our next reunion.

And now to continue on, what I also marveled back in our school-age years was how some students doodled on their notebook covers. I'm guessing it was during class, but I'm not certain of that. And while I don't want to appear sexist on this topic, I do recall most guys tended to draw tanks, planes, and scenes with bombs exploding, while the girls tended to draw horses, beautiful flowers, and other pretty things. However, some classmates often drew a large colorful heart with an arrow through it and put theirs and someone else's initials within it.

After a period of time, on those covers, I would notice someone's initials were blackened out and sometime later a new notebook would appear on their desk. I am deducing here that drawing tanks or horses was the cheaper of the design options.

I can also recall that rather than getting up to sharpen pencils some students had these little plastic pencil sharpeners. Granted, some had little disposal compartments, but the really small inch-plus sized ones had no place to put the shavings.

If you held the pencil in one hand and the sharpener in the other, the shavings landed either on the top of your desk or down on the floor. If you wiped the desktop shavings off and into the inkwell or onto the floor, then your hand got dirty from the graphite. If you were wise enough to first put a piece of paper down on top of your desk, you still had to get up to throw the paper with its shavings away. If you did that, then why not just get up and use the school's wall sharpener in the first place. I never understood the need for a little sharpener. A lot of if's in that paragraph. :-)

Recently, I was in California when my grandchildren's elementary school had what's known to them as 'crazy hair day'. I'm glad Byrd School never did that because it was more bizarre than Halloween. Students could use hair paint, wear odd hats, and tease and re-shape their hair in any wild style imaginable. The more insane their hair looked the better.

As the morning bell rang on the playground and the students began to line up by class with their crazy hair, I noticed this little boy wearing a coonskin cap. As I moved closer, I saw that it was a real coonskin cap and asked him where he got it. He said his grandfather gave it to him to wear, and he followed that up with it was his grandfather's grandfather's original hat.

As I walked the three blocks back to my daughter's house, I wondered not only if this boy's great, great grandfather had actually killed a raccoon back in the middle of the 1800's, but also how anyone could have seen a raccoon romping through the woods and have thought it would make a great looking hat, notwithstanding the Hollywood notion that offered up Fess Parker's Davy Crockett needing to wear one. I'm glad the best I can do is look good in a baseball style cap, although I do have to 'hunt' one down in a mall when its replacement time comes.

Oh, and I forgot to mention the superhero costume the classmate always wore was that of the 'Invisible Woman'. Maybe you never saw the student. Maybe the classmate was never there. Maybe it was just the wishful thinking on my part of being a child who wanted to fill an empty seat with a

superhero. Or, better yet, maybe it's just my obtuse sense of humor coming through once again. Sorry to have led any of you astray.

But if you did see her, please keep it to yourself - otherwise I have a strong suspicion that people may think you're just a little bit strange, as some of you are doing to me right now. :-)

David Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Trick or Treat Follow-Up -

Although some of you didn't like my recent e-mail, some of you did, so I'm not going to apologize for sending it out. With that said, I wonder how many of you saw the movie 'Attack of the 50ft Woman'. It came out sometime in our junior high years as I recall. I don't remember who starred in it, and it wasn't very good, as in it being a bit weird – a lot like my last missive, I suppose. However, wouldn't she have made for a great classmate to have around? Sorry – I had to say it. :-)

As for my comment on Davy Crockett's hat, a classmate, whose memory we can all trust, wrote and told me that Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln both wore coonskin caps. Like I said, I am glad to have grown up in today's world. Well, I could have done without part of my childhood, as you'll see.

Many years ago, I wrote about what it was like enduring air raid drills at Byrd School (one classmate can still recall how the cool cement block wall felt on his back), having my dad drive the family up to see the missile launch bases in the hills of Mahwah (those white missiles were quite impressive), and, not too long ago, I touched on the fact that I recalled my neighbor's bomb shelter. But, in any case, another memory just popped into my head – and that was of 'Air Raid Shelter' signs.

As you might remember the threat of incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles was real, or at least we were told they were, and that we needed protection from the radiation from those exploding ICBMs. The signs for the fallout shelters were often yellow and black, but I do recall white and black ones, too.

In the top two-thirds of the sign, there was a large circle encompassing three upside-down triangles that formed a kind of odd-shaped pyramid, and the bottom of the sign had the words 'Fallout Shelter', sometimes accompanied by an arrow directing us to its location.

What drew my curiosity, even at a young age, was that there was often a capacity limit stating how many people the shelter could accommodate. What would have happened if I got in, but not my dad (we were in New York together more than my mother and me). With panic in people's eyes,

how could anyone see themselves closing the doors on people wanting to get in?

Not me. Granted, I realize you couldn't keep the doors open, otherwise what good was the shelter, so I guess the survival instinct has to kick in sometime.

And then, who decides when to reopen the doors, and how long do you wait - a day, a week, a month? And what if exploding bombs had been felt, how long do you wait then? Sure, an all-clear siren was supposed to sound, but what happened if it had been destroyed?

I'm guessing once the food and water ran out that would make the most sense, but not all shelters were so equipped. Some were not even in building basements - they were just down in the lowest levels of the IRT and IND subway lines. Sorry, I can't recall the name of the third subway line just now. And what do you do with people who want to get out so they could go check on their families. It was an uncertain time in which we lived, wasn't it?

What was always comforting to me during that time period was the holiday season that is just weeks away. I loved getting presents (who doesn't) and the present that I received when I was little (actually it was a present times two) that was the absolute best was two large blue and white cylinders of American Bricks (they preceded Legos which came out in the 60s).

Each container held about 500 to 600 red plastic building block pieces, with assorted white doors and windows, and a few green roof pieces. I was in heaven. If I received anything else during that Christmas, I can't remember or didn't care. The American Brick building blocks was my favorite toy for years and years, and I got more of them over time. I was one lucky boy, that's for sure.

Okay, let's change the topic again and all digress just a wee bit more to the first and best humorous thing you can remember. I can recall the joke I liked from my earliest school years and it went like this - 'Say the word lettuce and then spell the word cup.' I thought it was funny (try it), but then I'm a guy; however, my parents didn't and told me not to repeat it.

Maybe I'll wait for the next reunion and try that one out again. You've been warned.

Oh, yeah, the other subway line was the BMT. I wish my thinking process was a bit more structured like it was in my youth. I once wrote and likened my recent memory lapses to one of those old carousel slide projectors. The cartridge may have to make more than just one revolution before it stops at the correct or desired slot, but eventually it will fall into place, be in focus, and I will remember whatever it was I wanted to recall.

If your current memory is like mine, it's just a shame we can't get a new projector like we can a new heart.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Follow-Up to the 'Trick or Treat Follow-up' –

In regards to my air raid shelter recollection, a classmate wrote and said, in part, "I remember the air raid drills in school when I lived in NYC and we all thought 'Oh, no, not again'. It was all amazing when you know the facts like we would have been buried in tons of rubble after the blast and more than likely we all would have perished. I'm sure our politicians of the time were telling us the truth. SURE THEY WERE."

In response to my memory of the earliest recollection of a funny joke, a classmate was reminded of what was said in his house when he was growing up, and I quote, "My mother used to say to her kids: Eat every turnip and pea on your plate..."

That made for interesting family dinners, I am sure.

And also in reply to my 'Say the word lettuce and spell the word cup', another classmate passed along the following:

Where do the bees use the bathroom?
The BP station.

Not sure what fascinated us so much about that topic when we were kids.

My inquiry also prompted the following three 'Knock, Knock' jokes being sent, and they brought back memories.

Knock knock!
Who's there?
Wendy.
Wendy who?
Wendy wind blows de cradle will rock.

Then there's this one someone sent me -

Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Boo.
Boo who?
Don't cry; it's only a knock-knock joke.

And here's the one we probably all remember because it says it all -

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Banana.

Banana who?

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Banana.

Banana who?

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Orange.

Orange who?

Orange you glad I didn't say "banana" again?

Yes, we are.

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Catch a Falling Star –

So here I am at 4:06 this morning awaiting the delivery of the morning paper to be thrown onto my driveway guessing that with a title like that, everyone is either singing the rest of the Perry Como song from the mid-1950s or is thinking to themselves is it even possible to catch a falling star - and if so, why would anyone want to do it?

Of course, being more of a ponderer than a singer, I am wondering why people would then want to put a falling star in their pocket.

And following that logical thought just a little bit further, why would anyone then want to save it for a rainy day?

And a rainy day is what this e-mail is about.

I don't recall ever having an umbrella as a kid. I can remember being sheltered under my parents' umbrellas on occasion, but never having one of my own. How about any of you?

My mother was a stay-at-home mom, and so on days of inclement weather my sister and I were shuttled to and from school. In a downpour, how I got from the car to the school building without getting drenched is anyone's guess, but I know I did it without an umbrella. And remember, I had a perfectly coiffed pompadour hairstyle back then - and I know for sure I wouldn't have wanted to get that wet.

And those umbrellas from our childhood years were huge, weren't they? Those umbrellas, when opened, were easily wide enough to house more than one person and, as you hurried along, you always had to worry about poking someone's eye out with it.

Those umbrellas were long enough and strong enough to be used as a cane or walking stick. And what was the need for the three or four inch metal spike at the end of the umbrella? No one was going to use it to pick up litter because back in the day, as compared to today's world, there was very little litter to be found on sidewalks.

And speaking of pointy objects, how many of you remember having an electric woodburning stick when you were a kid. It was about eight inches long and came with some interchangeable tips that were used to engrave wood.

I got mine when I was in about fourth grade and had fun with my woodburning stick. The only thing I didn't like about it was that the electric cord was only about four feet long. Great for when you were working on a properly equipped workbench, but in other places the cord was pretty much useless.

I often went out into the woods and after chipping away at the bark, I carved my name into logs that I found there. I know what you're thinking, but I would bring the wood back to the house and use an extension cord while I worked in the garage or on the back porch, and then I would drag the wood back into the woods.

There was never any purpose to what I did, except maybe hoping that someday the Lenni-Lenapi Indians would come back to Glen Rock and try to find out who I was. Come on now, remember, I was only nine or ten years old when I was doing this!

By the time I got to seventh grade, I rarely used the woodburning stick anymore, but in Industrial Arts class I learned that it was officially called a pyrography pen.

Oh - and going back to the subject of umbrellas, I do now use one on occasion. I keep it in the car.

It is one of those mini-umbrellas which incorporates a little button on the side of the handle that you push to open and close the umbrella. How neat is that! And there's no pointy, litter picker-upper on the end of it.

And some new umbrellas are windproof, unlike the umbrellas from the olden days that would horribly turn inside out whenever they were given the slightest chance to do so and would often bend or break its tie-rod ribs.

The paper's here, gotta go, but given the fact I now use an umbrella, maybe I should have entitled this, "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" (Never More).

Dave Lamken

Know When to Hold 'Em –

I figure many of you play cards, or at least you did growing up, but disregarding cards and Kenny Rogers's song, this is about holding another person's hand.

You got to know when to hold 'em, as in when it wasn't always necessary or warranted, but you probably did it anyway out of necessity since they were reaching for yours.

You had to know when to fold 'em, as in whether or not you just cupped your hand inside the other person's or you intertwined your fingers within theirs.

You had to know when to walk away, and, as the case may be, you had to know when to run.

Now that I'm finished talking about holding one of your parents' hands, let's start talking about doing it when you were a teenager.

There was probably a gap of seven or eight years after your parents stopped reaching for your hand and you started dating and reaching for someone else's.

I know with a memory as good as mine you probably think I know who was the first person I held hands with; I do, but as it is my policy not to embarrass anyone - mainly me if she vaguely remembers who I am :-)) - I won't mention her name. Besides, this memory encompasses the experiences garnered in the holding of a variety of hands in many situations, not just the first one I held in any sort of a romantic way.

Where do I begin? Anyone who ice skated on the Duck Pond in Ridgewood probably held hands with someone, so that's an easy start. Granted it was when you were probably wearing gloves, but it still counts as hand holding, right? And not when you were gathering people to do a 'whip' formation, either, but when you skated with someone as a couple, even if it was for just a short time in doing one or two laps around the pond.

I loved the innocence of skating with a partner. No pressure, no commitment, and no awkwardness – it was great. Just the pure fun of skating

around the pond with someone. I liked, too, learning how to synchronize your movements with another person. Great learning curve – just wish it carried over into my dancing.

And learning how to coordinate your skating movements made it easier to learn how to walk alongside someone when holding hands. You remember innocuously skipping a step or two to get yourself into a certain walking rhythm with them, don't you? I hope so.

And how about knowing when walking on a sidewalk together the guy took the position of being closest to the curb. I was told this was because the guy was to protect his girl from traffic errors. I can't remember ever being in a situation when a car jumped the curb and the two of us were in danger, but that polite mannerism did cause me a little trouble on one occasion.

Once when walking with a girl, I can recall a car hitting a puddle and drenching me 100% with water, head to foot – and it wasn't even raining! I'd like to say the girl was shielded from all that by me, but I can't. I think she got drenched 90% from the puddle's spray. So much for me being the great protector.

I was never much for walking with my arm over a girl's shoulder, and other than when having our picture taken at a prom or a dance, I wasn't much into putting my arm around a girl's waist. I know I did it, but it just wasn't as meaningful to me even though it put us closer together during our walk.

Being somewhat of a burgeoning romantic back then, I was partial to the sweet innocence of holding a girl's hand. I liked knowing someone thought enough of me to want to be that close. I liked feeling connected even for a brief time.

Back in my school days, I never dated any one particular girl for a very long time. I don't think too many of us did, but whoever's hand I was holding at the time, I thought it was going to be forever. I know I wanted it to be.

As for now, whether on the couch, in a theater, or in the car, I am still a hand holder. And, yes, I still like the feel and closeness of intertwined fingers – and I have the perfect loving wife to do it with.

And what about one of your grandchildren reaching for your hand. Don't get me started – I could go on for pages as to how good that feels.

I do believe that some things learned from childhood are good to keep reinforcing when you're an adult.

I love knowing I know when to hold 'em.

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Umbrellas and Hold ‘Em Follow-ups –

It’s nice to know some of you had umbrellas of your own back in the day and some of you still remember the color. I thought there were only black ones back in the 50s. It must be a guy thing.

Two of you replied saying you wore ponchos. I can’t say I ever remember seeing those in elementary school, only in the mid-60s during the hippie era.

And galoshes – some of you wore those to school – wow! Of course, I am assuming it was to school. You just mentioned you had them as part of your rain gear.

Another classmate wrote, *“I walked roughly a mile to school and if it was raining, I wore a yellow rubberized raincoat and yellow rubber hat. I’m sure I looked ridiculous, but I was saved by the fact most other kids wore the same thing.”*

I wrote back saying, “A yellow raincoat and hat, my, my, how good you must have looked. Let’s hope someone took a picture you can post.” He replied that there weren’t any. Oh, well, I can use my imagination on how cute this must have looked, can’t you?

As far as replies to the “Know When to Hold ‘Em” email, one classmate wrote, *“I was hoping for a memory on card playing, not hand holding. Carding playing was a big part of my life in Glen Rock. You missed a good story there.”*

I told him, “I remember you having card games at your house. I wish I was a better card player than I was. Others may write about card playing so there’s hope, or you could do it, right?”

Another classmate replied, *“Although interesting, what about going back to when you used to write about the really good stuff. I miss that about your emails.”*

I wrote back saying “I can only write about what pops into to my head when I sit down to write an e-mail. Maybe someday you’ll find something worthy of reading once again.”

However, there were other replies like these, *“This was terrific, Dave!”*

I replied with, “Back in the day, other than helping you out of the pool, I wish I had a chance to hold your hand.” :-)

To which she followed up with, *“Memories that bring a smile to your face are just delightful. Thanks for the smile, Dave!”*

Another classmate wrote, *“Your observation about the process of dropping our parents' hands and reaching out for the hands of others bordered on the profound. A great insight. Hope all is well.”*

I wrote back saying, “Here I am thinking I'm writing something light and breezy and you compliment me on writing something profound. I'll take your insight on it anytime.”

I got another reply that said, *“Too cool, and I remember whose hand I first held and he was my first love when I was in the 7th grade! My husband and I still love to hold hands too and we'll be married 50 years next year!!!!”*

I replied by saying, “I'm glad you liked my e-mail, glad to hear your memory's good, and really glad you're still a hand holder. I believe I'll be in a wheelchair by the time I'm married 50 years. :-) Good for you.”

A classmate to whom I write to a lot said, *“Another good one, Dave, brought back some good memories.”*

I chided him with, “You know I only write this stuff so it brings back memories just for you, right? :-) Thank you for the nice reply.”

And someone else wrote me saying, *“One of your best, Dave.” :-)*

For which I thanked him for thinking it was - smiley face and all.

Someone else sent me this, *“OMG! I love it when my two year old grandson reaches up and places his little hand in mine. There's nothing like it in the world.”*

Can't agree more, right?

Another classmate wrote and said, *‘So good, Dave! So good - as usual. Thanks for the memories!’*

I realize it looks like I'm a bit braggadocio in this e-mail, but I like being able to stir up some lost memories, and just so you all know, out of the over

165+ class e-mails I have written, there are only two remembrances I took some time composing.

The first was entitled, 'Dad', on page 154 and the second e-mail, 'To Speak or Not to Speak', on page 160.

The reasons for that effort should be obvious – in the first one I was writing about my dad's life and how he met my mother, so I wanted it to be spot-on in case the two of them were looking down on me.

And in the second one, it was to Bruce Emra's English class so that one had to be more than a casually written e-mail.

All the rest are off the cuff and will always be that way - mistakes and all. Oh, yes, and profound – very, very profound. :-)

And thank you for your replies no matter what they are. As mentioned many times over, they all are truly appreciated.

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[David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ](#)

A Little Help Here –

Okay, classmates, do you recall a time when the railroad tracks in our town just had flashing warning lights?

I can remember I was quite young when my dad said he wished the gates were never installed. Why - because sometimes he would zip across the tracks well in advance of a train a comin'.

My dad did it safely and always in good time, but still back in the day cars easily stalled and were not as reliable as they are today, so it may not have been the ideal thing to do.

And in remembering what my dad said, I would like to come up with a definitive answer as to when the crossing gates were installed. I queried a non-classmate who wrote the following reply to me:

“The gates were not there when I started Byrd School in 1947. They were installed sometime thereafter, but before 1952.

I lived on Ferndale and had to walk down Main Street, across the tracks at Rock Road, and then on to Byrd School. I was in your sister's class but was transferred to Central School after Mrs. Rhores' 4th Grade class.

Those were the days of the steam locomotives. Do you think you'll write a story about the tracks once again? I loved your e-mail about you putting a penny on the tracks. Boy, that brought back memories of me doing the same thing.”

A classmate of ours, who has had a definite affinity with trains since his early childhood, and with whom I have been having a discussion about all of this, had someone e-mail him a photo from that time period, but there was no time stamp on the picture other than it being labeled '1950ish'. Helpful, but in no way definitive – see attachment; the 'Rock' is on the far right.

That's why I could use your help. If you or a member of your family can pin down a year from between 1948 to 1952 as to when the railroad crossing gates were installed, I would much appreciate hearing from you. Thanks.

Okay, now on to a meaningless little topic that requires no help.

When I was first able to eat breakfast cereal on my own, I would always eat Cheerios. I loved them, but always ate them in a particular way.

Rather than put milk in the bowl with the cereal, I would eat a spoonful of dry cereal and then take a sip of milk to moisten them. I know, a bit odd, but it worked for me because I didn't like having soggy cereal at the bottom of my bowl at the end of breakfast.

Cheerios is still my breakfast cereal of choice, even today. What has changed though – yes, I now put milk in the bowl, but that's not it – is the number of Cheerio flavors there are. Of course, there's still the original flavor available, but on the shelf next to it are the following:

Honey Nut Cheerios

Multi Grain Cheerios

Multi Grain Cheerios Peanut butter

Apple Cinnamon Cheerios

Frosted Cheerios

Chocolate Cheerios

*** Tired yet? Keep reading. ***

Banana Nut Cheerios

Cinnamon Burst Cheerios

Fruity Cheerios

Yogurt Burst Cheerios

Dulce de Leche Cheerios – whatever that is :-)

Honey Nut Cheerios Medley Crunch

And, finally, Multi Grain Cheerios Dark Chocolate Crunch

I kid you not - 14 choices in all to pick from, and with that many varieties there are certainly more to come, of that I'm pretty sure.

When you're in a large supermarket, stop by the cereal aisle and have a gander at all the cereal boxes. Not a small corner grocery store, mind you, but one of those big supermarkets. As you go down the aisle, I think you'll come away shaking your head like I did.

And, although you may have overlooked the smiley face in the list of cereals, I do know what Dulce de Leche means; however, I can't imagine that a kid going down the aisle picking out a Cheerios box will, even if he likes caramelized candy.

I have never tried any of the varieties. I guess I'm just a kid at heart and like mine the old fashioned way – original and with milk, and as I said no help needed.

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Shimmy and Shake –

When querying the class about a timeline for the installation of railroad gates (no definitive date has been offered up as of yet), I made mention of the fact that since automobiles were not all that reliable as they are today, cars often stalled out on railroads tracks

I can't fathom why automobiles picked railroad tracks as their favorite place to stall, but, as I remember, it wasn't an uncommon occurrence for that to happen back in the day.

I'm a car guy and always have been one. My dad, who drove a car for 62 years, owned 11 cars. I've been driving for only 52 years and I've owned 18 so far.

My first car was a tan, 1952 Ford Coupe. It was a flathead V-8 with a three speed stick-shift and an electric overdrive. It was a great first car, but I soon got a 1956 copper and white Chevrolet BelAir.

The only thing about it that took some getting used to was the PowerGlide transmission. It was a two-speed automatic. I got the car in the fall of my senior year and since I loved working on cars, I went right to work making sure it was ready for the rigors of my driving style.

I changed the transmission fluid, adjusted the valves, removed and cleaned the carburetor, replaced the spark plugs and wires, installed a new distributor cap and rotor, and changed the filters - and, of course, washed and waxed it. I thought the car was good to go.

Oh, and if you're not familiar with a PowerGlide transmission, it was not a get-up-and-go type of drivetrain like in today's cars or like you were used to having in a stick-shift car. I think the term 'Power' in the transmission's name was a bit of false advertising - Glide was accurate, though.

And in remembering about cars' idiosyncrasies made me think of a little shimmy and shake my old Chevrolet once had. It was of my own doing, so maybe it was my shimmy and shake, not the car's, but let me explain.

During a party on Dunham Place, I was invited to participate in a friendly drag race. For those who care to know, Dunham Place is a street that runs parallel to Doremus Avenue on the northwest side of Diamond Brook, behind the community swimming pool, and not far from Upper Ridgewood. You got to Dunham Place from Doremus by going up Rutland Road (where Wayne Bonhag lived) to Lowell Road and then turning right.

Anyway, sometime during the end of the party, someone mentioned that my car was pretty fast. It wasn't, just the driver was. Anyhow, the subject of a drag race came up.

One of the dark haired beauties of our class drove a two-tone, black and white 1956 Chevy BelAir and mine, as mentioned, was the same year but copper and white in color. How this drag race first presented itself is lost to memory, but I do recall waiting at the starting point, looking over at her, and thinking to myself I should be asking her out, not racing her.

Besides looking like I did back then and knowing how special she was, the other thing that did not make this race equal was the fact that her car was a stick shift. I know what you're thinking – I didn't stand a chance with her or with winning the race, and you're right on both counts.

I did rev the engine like she was doing - and waited for the flag to drop (it was a Glen Rock jacket with white sleeves, but, hey, it was something we could see in the dead of night).

At the appropriate moment, she popped her clutch and I dropped my transmission into Drive. My car shimmied and shook to the point that I thought to myself you're not going to do this ever again. It took a moment or two for my transmission to know what it was supposed to be doing and to finally get into action, but by that time I was way behind the other car.

By the way, it was a great party, held by one of our sweethearts, and we played one of my favorite games from back in the day – the Limbo. Why it was a favorite of mine, I have no idea, but it was, and I was terrible at it - absolutely terrible, maybe because in this case I had no shimmy and shake, unlike my car.

I have no idea what a 'ankolimbonee' is, but for those of you who don't recall the lyrics to 'Limbo Rock', I've included them.

Every limbo boy and girl
All around the limbo world
Gonna do the limbo rock
All around the limbo clock

Jack be limbo, Jack be quick
Jack go unda limbo stick
All around the limbo clock
Hey, let's do the limbo rock

Limbo lower now
Limbo lower now
How low can you go?

First you spread your limbo feet
Then you move to limbo beat
Limbo ankolimbonee
Bend back like a limbo tree

Jack be limbo, Jack be quick
Jack go unda limbo stick
All around the limbo clock
Hey, let's do the limbo rock

La, la, la
La, la, la
La, la, la

Get yourself a limbo girl
Give that chic a limbo whirl
There's a limbo moon above
You will fall in limbo love

Jack be limbo, Jack be quick
Jack go unda limbo stick
All around the limbo clock
Hey, let's do the limbo rock

Don't move that limbo bar
You'll be a limbo star
How low can you go?

And for those who got this far, I've included the Chubby Checker audio
version –

www.whosdatedwho.com/tpx_10499/chubby-checker/tpx_2065936



Shimmy and Shake Follow-up –

I am pleased to note that some classmates were able to identify the driver of the black and white Chevy, as well as the sweetheart of a classmate who had the party on Dunham Place.

I didn't want the last e-mail to get bogged down in too many specifics about transmissions, but I should have mentioned that the automatic PowerGlide transmission used in my car had the unsafe gear selector sequence of P-N-D-L-R. It was changed in the late 50s to the now-standard P-R-N-D-L sequence.

The earlier sequence had been criticized on grounds of safety for placing reverse after a forward gear, instead of having neutral between reverse and the forward ranges.

For example, a driver could easily overshoot Low and go into Reverse, possibly causing permanent damage and/or catastrophic failure, although it was necessary to lift up on the shift lever in order to shift the transmission into reverse. Its initial sequence also earned the two speed PowerGlide its nickname of 'Goofy Glide' due to the P-N-D-L-R selection.

I am also glad that the Limbo was a favorite routine for some of you, too. And I have to agree with the replies that I received that the guys were not as good at it as the gals were. Do I guess that it had something to do with height? Well, maybe.

In any event, perhaps we could try it again at our next reunion. However, it might not get as many participants as the Bunny Hop, but we can always get things up and running with The Stroll. You were into that, right?

Bunny Hop - www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gL2kRGA3SM

The Stroll - www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrGLNtZ0rEg

So corny, I know, but I thought some of the Strollers looked like they could have been from our class. :-)

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Sex in Our Youth –

As I write this e-mail at 3:00 this morning, I am looking out the window and there's snow on the ground. It is three days until Spring and time for Old Man Winter to stop playing around with the weather.

Anyway, whether I'm attending a reunion or reading through your various replies pertaining to something I've written, I've been queried as to why I have never emailed anything about sex and our experiences with it while growing up.

As I am now approaching 500 pages of my childhood memory collection and will be ending this odyssey at some point, I figured it was about time I touched on the subject that has been on some of your minds, as well as my own.

I used the phrase 'our experiences' because, although I can't truly speak for you or for anyone else, I know many of my personal remembrances have rung true for you in some manner, shape, or form, as I'm sure this subject matter will, too.

But before I start on another memory journey of mine, I'd like to remind you that in case you have forgotten - drive-in movies were termed 'passion pits'. And if we didn't need a movie for an excuse to make out in a car, then we parked somewhere to see the fabulous 'submarine races', water sightings not always needed.

You should know that as I begin to write this missive, if any names are mentioned, all those people in this remembrance are near and dear to me, so please don't look down on them – or me.

And for those of you who do not want to know more about our youthful experiences with sex, you should stop reading this posting right here and now.

Yeah, I didn't think any of you would do that - so here goes.

I realize I sometimes get ahead of myself too much, but since I wore pants and my sister didn't, sex for me was delineated pretty early on in my childhood and I knew the two of us were different right from the get-go.

I don't recall girls wearing anything but skirts and dresses to school, and the Byrd School class pictures people brought to our last reunion seems to confirm that memory. If any of you remember things differently in that regard, please let me know.

In the summer, I do recollect my sister wearing pedal pushers (for the guys, those were three-quarter length pants - some came with cuffs as I recall), but that's about it when it came to girls wearing pants

I say summer because I don't have a memory of any girls riding their bikes to school like the guys did. It seems girls gave up riding bicycles pretty early on, which is understandable what with 'poodle' skirts and the petticoats they wore. It had to be difficult to gracefully ride a bike wearing those. Also some 'poodle' skirts had flowers on them rather than a poodle. Anyone recall any other designs because I don't, and as I remember it, the poodle was always on the left side. Was there significance to that?

While I'm on the subject of bikes, I'd like to know why the female sex had baskets on their handle bars and the guys' bikes didn't – a much more practical way of carrying things than the slip and slide metal rack used to transport things on the back of ours, and that was way before bungee cords; I used an old belt to secure what I was transporting. And don't get me started on colors. My three bikes were, in order of ownership, black, red, and British Racing Green. They hardly stood out in a crowd of bikes, unlike the pink, purple or white bikes the girls owned.

And speaking of carrying things, the sexes were different there, too. In junior high, I started to carry a wallet, and a thin one at that – no credit cards of course back then, just a list of a couple phone numbers and maybe two or three dollars, which came in handy when I stopped at Irv's for a Graveyard drink on my way home. Not sure why I had anyone's phone number for I don't recall ever needing to call anybody. I don't carry a cell phone, but I still have phone numbers in my wallet, along with ubiquitous credit and

debit cards, ID and membership cards, and medical and dental insurance cards. Carrying a slim wallet is no longer possible.

Girls were different. They carried purses, still do, and I have no idea what was in all of them back then, but in today's world some are as heavy as an overnight bag, aren't they? And after finishing writing this e-mail I may go take a look into my wife's purse before she wakes up, but then maybe, just maybe, I don't really want to know. We'll see.

Speaking of phones, that's where girls were different than guys, too. Their sex talked more on the phone than guys ever did. Not sure what we did with all the extra time not spent on the phone, but if our conversation lasted more than thirty seconds in duration, it was considered a long call.

A typical phone call answered by a guy back then would have been – “Hi – Yes – No – 8:00 o'clock, great – I'll see you there – Bye”. That still rings pretty true for today, doesn't it?

Oh, and my sex never had sleepovers. Okay, maybe one or two, but not as many as the girls did. Not sure why that was, but it's ringing true for the grandkids in today's world, that's for certain. Hardly a weekend goes by when one of my granddaughters is not at a friend's house or has someone over to hers for a sleepover. My grandson doesn't venture out overnight. That might change, but I doubt it.

And speaking of sleepovers and such, on TV shows back in the 50s when the storyline came to putting actors in a bedroom, the programs always showed the couple in twin beds. When the censorship committee controlling what was allowed to be shown on TV changed direction and producers were allowed to film scenes with a couple sharing a bed, the man always had to have one foot on the floor. Funny how TV has changed - well, maybe not so funny. There seems to be way too much sex on television nowadays. I'm not complaining, mind you, just making an observation.

I know I have been rambling about different things and since this posting is getting too long, I will have to wait for another time to add the so many

more memories I have about this subject. I promise I will come back to this topic sometime.

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Sex in Our Youth – part 2

When I posted the original ‘Sex in Our Youth’ last Monday morning, I stated it was snowing. We got an unheard of eight to ten inches for this area of South Jersey. Tomorrow night a Nor’easter is headed our way. All I can say is that Mother Nature and Old Man Winter need to resolve whatever is going on between them and get things back to normal.

Okay, back in the day it was called a pocketbook, now it’s a purse or a handbag as some of you mentioned. As long as I am never seen carrying a ‘murse’, I’m okay with any name you give it.

The opposite sex (from me that is) used lipstick. In the winter, I used Chapstick, that was it. The color never changed (pink, as I recall, but it went on clear), as it did with the lipstick girls put on their lips – and on my shirt collar.

I wrote about the changes to my hair while growing up (The Mane Attraction, photos and all), but I never did anything to my hair once it was a certain way. I can’t say that about the opposite sex. The amount of hair accessories and styles I saw on any one girl while growing up was amazing.

One year in eighth grade, we had a beloved classmate who divided her hair and colored it orange on the right and green on the left for St. Patrick’s Day. Very creative. Do you remember that? I hope you do - it was special.

I’m not sure why the opposite sex felt the need to change something about themselves on an almost daily basis. And that doesn’t go just for hair, either. How about clothes? I don’t want to get started going down that road, but I can’t recall dating anyone who wore the same dress or skirt and blouse combo twice. I am sure my selection of shirts couldn’t compare to what was hanging in my date’s closet.

And what about the differences between the sexes with their before bed and after shower routines? The opposite sex’s routine was much more laborious. I could be in and out of the bathroom in no time, whereas my sister’s procedures took forever – what with the crèmes, gels, sprays, lotions, and makeup she used.

I can recall one time when she came downstairs for dinner and my father told her to go back upstairs and wash her face. I knew it wasn’t dirty, so it

had to be because of her make-up. I thought she looked good, but then what does an eleven year old know about his 14 year old sister anyway.

Girls were always trying out new products of shampoos, soaps, deodorants and perfumes. How do I know that, you're thinking? Well, if you dated a girl more than three times and she smelled differently each time, then you knew.

As far as personal hygiene for this guy was concerned, in high school, I had one deodorant (Old Spice), one shampoo (Prell - I believe it was green), and one after-shave. It was Bay Rum, which my sister gave to me. I used it until 1970 or so, and ever since then I have been using Paco Rabanne, which I love.

The opposite sex also cared more about their bedroom's décor as far as paint color, bedspreads, and draperies was concerned than guys did - well, me anyway. I don't think I had ever picked a color or a style for anything in my bedroom. That's what my mother was for.

And this should come as no surprise, but I noticed early on that girls wore more jewelry than I ever did. In fact, until our class rings were distributed, I didn't wear any. Still don't.

Something else I noticed that the opposite sex did more than I did when I was out and about with them and that was sing. I'm not sure why it was, but I find it interesting. I sure hope it wasn't because they didn't want to talk to me. :-) And they knew all the words to the songs, too.

I once remarked about writing notes in class, and I'll just add to that memory by saying girls wrote far more messages to be passed around the classroom than guys ever did

When we grew up, one distinct difference to being male was when it came to participating in sports. In the fall, guys had soccer and football, in the winter it was wrestling, basketball and fencing, and in the spring it was baseball, tennis, and track. What did I miss? Oh, yeah, golf, that's right. And what did the girls have? Nothing as I recall. Intramurals, sure, but that doesn't really count. Now does it? Not sure when it all changed, but I'm glad it did.

As far as me going to mention names as I stated might happen in the first e-mail, I realize that I would have been embarrassed if I misspelled any of them, so just look in your yearbooks and conjure up your own memories of your dates and what you did with them (or wanted to do and didn't), okay?

Besides, most of you discerned in last week's e-mail that I wasn't going to write anything incriminating about anyone anyway, right? Moreover, some memories are best left locked away. But I will tell you it was Lynne Van Dien who colored her hair, so I guess I let one cat out of the bag after all.

Oh, and I took your advice and never emptied out my wife's purse to see what was in it. I guess not knowing is better than knowing when it comes to the mystery of what she carries around in there.

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[David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ](#)

Knock, Knock –

I am thinking you were hoping for another remembrance of a Knock-Knock joke or two, but, sorry, that isn't what this memory is about. This recollection outlines what I recall concerning growing up with the inevitable door-to-door salespeople who would show up at our house pitching their wares.

The first business that comes readily to mind was the Fuller Brush Company. Not sure if the enterprise's name came about because it was started by someone named Fuller or because its brushes were 'fuller'. I'll have to look that up, but its salesmen were forever coming around and I don't know why that was either, since their brushes were long lasting - at least the ones we bought were.

How many of you recall the J. R. Watkins Company, the seller of liniments, baking products, and kitchen spices? Probably not as much as you do the Avon Company, but it was popular. And although I have about 50 spices in a kitchen cabinet that are years and years (and years) old, the shelf life of spices is limited and that's why the Watkins Company was popular. They came to our house and made the disposal procedure easy by selling you new spice packages. I believe the recommended expiration date for various spices is from one to three years. How often do you replace yours? Probably as rarely as I do – or at least you did until now. :-)

Avon, of course, serviced the woman of the household with cosmetics and was very well known. I don't know how long cosmetics last either, but a lot of repeat business was done with their products because I remember the Avon Lady person being in our home many times. I wonder if Avon still makes house calls anymore. They don't come around my current neighborhood, but I'm sure they must still be popular somewhere.

We had the World Book Encyclopedia in our home, but you may have had the Encyclopedia Britannica or a set of Colliers. In any case, they probably came by the way of a door-to-door salesman. Ours had 22 volumes and a few annual updates. I don't recall being in the living room when they were purchased so I was either too young to remember it or I was put to bed before the salesman arrived. In any case, the World Book was a great addition to our bookcase. I loved thumbing through it and looking at the pictures. I'm guessing I would have been smarter if I had read all of it. :-)

There were also the Hoover and Kirby vacuum cleaner salesmen that came around, as well as one from the Singer Sewing Machine Company. We had a Hoover, but I don't know where it came from – and that goes for my mother's sewing machine, too, although I believe it was purchased at the store across and down the street from the Warner Theatre. As I recall, she got a lot of use out of that Singer.

Oh, and there was some company that sold kitchenware products. I can't remember its name, but I can recall the sound the pots and pans made as they were being taken up to our front door.

Okay, I can't resist; here's one somewhat relevant Knock, Knock joke –

Knock, Knock!
Who's there?
Botany.
Botany who?
Botany good vacuum cleaners lately?

I can't just stop at one, now can I, so here goes –

Knock Knock!
Who's there?
Doris!
Doris who?
Doris locked so I can't come in and sell you anything.

Sorry – as I said, I couldn't resist, but now you know why the field of Special Education was a good fit for me. :-)

Dave Lamken

Knock, Knock follow-up –

Thank you to those classmates who wrote and told me the Fuller Brush Company was named for its founder, Alfred Carl Fuller, and not because its brushes were ‘fuller’. I should have checked that before I hit ‘Send’, but I tend to rush through these e-mails before I change my mind about forwarding these trivial, inconsequential memories.

I was also informed that the company was started in 1906 and when the salesman came knocking at your door he always stated, "It's the Fuller Brush Man!"

I was apprised that the pots and pans company servicing most of our homes back in the day was probably the WearEver Company. Considering what they sold, I am surprised it wasn't called the ‘Ware Ever Company’, but then that wouldn't have addressed the pots and pans proclaimed durability, I suppose.

And those of you who wrote back to me about having had an encyclopedia in their home as a child, stated that the sales of those volumes always included a free bookcase. Of course, otherwise how in the world were you going to neatly stack and organize 22+ volumes?

One classmate similarly wrote and told me, “We also had World Book Encyclopedia in the house. It came with its own table along with volumes of books to read. I saw the same table on Everybody Loves Raymond.” So maybe when the sets were ordered they came with either a table or a bookcase depending on your parents’ needs and wants.

Okay, one last time -

Knock, Knock!

Who's there?

Ima.

Ima who?

Ima Fuller Brush salesman.

Knock, Knock!

Who's there?

Dozen.

Dozen who?

Dozen anyone want to buy an encyclopedia?

I know, I know – grow up, David, it's time grow up.

I have been waiting for that to happen, but at my age I seriously think that may never occur. :-)

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How Times Have Changed –

Last week, a classmate gave us an eloquent snippet of the differences between his own youthful experiences while growing up and what his nine year old son is dealing with now in his life.

I'd like to go back a little more in time and raise a few thoughts about what my grandparents who were born in 1876 had to deal with when I was quite young. I don't know the answers to some of what I am remembering, but that's why I like sharing my writings with all of you.

First off, my grandparents lived in a nice duplex they owned in Jersey City. My father's two aunts lived upstairs. What is special about that house is that I can remember my grandmother having a coal burning stove in her kitchen. She baked, boiled, and sautéed everything with that stove.

I get how she was able keep an eye out for things cooking on the top of the stove that she boiled or sautéed, but there was no baking thermostat installed on her coal stove. I can set the temperature control knob on my wall oven at 375 degrees, put on the timer, then walk away and check on things when the buzzer goes off.

Depending on what my grandmother was baking and how warm she wanted the oven to be, maybe she counted the lumps of coal she put into the oven. There had to be times, though, when her oven got too hot, or wasn't hot enough, especially when cooking a huge Thanksgiving turkey for hours on end. How did she control the temperature in her oven and how even was the heat? I haven't a clue. It was replaced around the time I was six or seven by an electric operated one.

I'm just glad that's one thing our generation didn't have to deal with. And hooray for the automatic temperature sensor button on the new microwaves. It sure takes the guess work out of timing anything I want to reheat to the right temperature.

I can also recall the old ice box at my grandparents' house. It had a small door that opened through the wall to the outside which the ice man was able to access, allowing him to put an ice block in the unit without having to come inside. My grandfather installed a drain tube wherein the melted ice water ran to the outside of the house instead of being collected at the bottom of the ice box. That was great for then drain tub never needed to be emptied.

Clever idea. That, too, was replaced when I was six or seven. The ice box, not the clever idea.

And thinking of that makes me realize that my grandparents probably never had any frozen foods. I can't fathom that, can you? Sure, they would send my sister and me out to the corner store to get ice cream, but that was it. And the ice cream was hand-packed? Do you remember that? Didn't you always feel like you were getting a little more than you should when it was done that way?

My dad remarked a few times that when he was a child there was no hot water running to the bathtub - the hot water always came from atop the stove. I don't recall that being the case because I always remember there being hot water at my grandparents' house, so I don't recall when that change took place, but can you imagine not having hot water in the bathroom?

But I do remember the toilet's water tank being placed high on the wall and you pulled a chain to release the water and flush the toilet. Not sure why that was. That, too, was replaced around the time I was six or seven.

My grandparents were 80 years old by the time I was 10, so the changes in their lives were more dramatic what with the invention of electricity and the light bulb, the telephone, airplanes, automobiles, motion pictures, etc., than anything we were exposed to having for the first time. Although I must say looking up and seeing Sputnik high in the sky in 1957 was an amazing and unforgettable experience, now wasn't it?

And can you envision being nearly 80 and getting a TV in your house for the first time? We're not even there yet in age and I can't imagine what that must have been like for them. Granted, back then it only received 6 or 7 channels as opposed to the hundreds and hundreds of channels now offered to us, but, wow, what a new experience for them. However, they still liked listening to the radio on Sunday and hearing, "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows..." You remember that show, right?

How times have changed.

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Because I Said So –

A couple of weeks ago, I had a conversation with a classmate who called to let me know that a former neighbor of his had written a book. The girl was seven years old when she developed a severe stutter and, now that she's 30, she's compiled all of what she has experienced into an interesting read.

Her name is Katherine Preston and the title of her book is Out With It: how stuttering helped me find my voice. It not only chronicles her personal struggles with the disability and how she had to deal with it, but the book also discusses the variety of therapies available to people seeking help - some good, some not (the therapies, not the people).

I would recommend the book to anyone who works in speech therapy or knows someone who stutters. It's a good book.

As with any communication with a classmate, a myriad of other topics were touched upon ranging from who did we date in school, to the experiences we had when it came to friends, teachers, and career options.

It was the last topic that caught me by surprise. This classmate, who went to college as a business major, commented that he enjoyed a psychology course he took back in the day so much so that after twenty years in the banking world he switched careers and became a Special Education teacher – a position he absolutely loved. He lamented that our guidance department in high school could have done a better job vetting our choices when seeking out what we could have done with our future.

This past week, a Byrd School classmate visited Cape May for the first time and we had dinner together with our wives at the Lobster House, a Cape May dining tradition for tourists. It was fun discussing things with someone I knew in Kindergarten and a friendship that has been almost 65 years in the making.

And one of the many topics discussed that night was the comment the other classmate passed along to me about the lackluster job our guidance department did. We talked about those useless vocational aptitude tests we all took. You remember those, right? 'What would you like to do one day – pick one - sing a song, build a house, write a mystery story, plant some flowers?'

This classmate, who owns a very successful engineering and environmental services company, agreed that he could have gone in another direction with

his life if the guidance department had been more pro-active (but was glad he didn't because otherwise he wouldn't have met his lovely wife). Useless counsel from our guidance department may have affected some of your career choices, too.

Okay, so on with the topic that had me up and writing so early this morning. When I was younger and on the living room floor watching TV, building something with my erector set, or constructing some tall skyscraper with the American Bricks set I loved playing with, I was often asked by one of my parents to do something – you know, like take out the garbage, clean my room, etc.

I would usually jump up right away and do it. I know, don't ask me why, but I did. Really, I did. However, there were times when I was so engrossed in what I was doing, I was often requested a second, or even a third time, to follow up on what I was supposed to do.

When that happened, I would often respond with a quizzical 'Why?', and my parents' rejoinder was sometimes the 'Because I said so!' response.

I knew that was the end of it; I knew that questioning their motive was useless because I knew there'd be no direct answer other than 'Because I said so!'

I can't tell you how many times I've been in the mall, at a supermarket or on the boardwalk and heard parents arguing with one of their children to get them to do what they want and I rarely hear them use that phrase. It's more of a negotiation match between them – and the child usually wins.

I rarely hear that tried and true response our parents used on us being offered up in today's world. I'm not sure why that is because it worked so well back in our day, didn't it? Once that phrase was uttered, we knew all was lost.

I hope you can all remember back to that time and place like I can - unless, of course, you never had to be told twice to do something. :-)

Well, that's all I have to offer today. Why? Because I said so.

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[David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ](#)

Life's Not Fair –

I think I once brought up the fact with some of you that I don't like growing old - I know, who does, but I referenced it to the circumstance of finding it very difficult anymore to stand on one foot while putting a sock on the other. I had been doing that for well over 60+ years.

I now find the need to sit down on the edge of the bed to put on my socks. At my age, I believe I have earned the right to keep doing things the way I have always done them. Why has nature gotten in the way and complicated such a simple task as putting on socks? I don't think that's fair. Lucky for me, summer's coming and I won't be wearing socks as often as I do now.

Something else I don't like is how much longer it takes me to get up off the floor when playing with the grandkids. There are times when I will look at my watch and tell them it's time for us to head to the Boardwalk. The kids will be out the door, in the car, buckled up, and counting their Skee-Ball tickets by the time I have struggled and maneuvered myself over to the arm of the sofa (which I need to grab onto in order to push and pull myself up). Life's not as easy as it once was, that's for sure.

And as I'm finally walking out to the car and ready to go, I'm guessing the grandkids are wondering what the heck took me so long to get to the car. However, they know I am still a pretty good Skee-Ball player and are counting on me to win them a few extra bonus tickets - so they don't make any comments. In that regard, I am blessed.

Speaking of changes in my life, looking back to when I was learning how to drive a car and putting it in reverse to safely back up, I was once very capable of turning my head far enough so that I was able to clearly see out the back window. I was even able to put my right arm over the back of the bench seat to aid in that task. Of course, few cars have bench seats anymore so that movement of an appendage is not a problem any longer, now is it? And with that said, I'm truly not sure when the ability to turn my head that far around diminished.

Luckily for me, my current vehicle is equipped with a superb back-up camera. It is crystal clear with a great warning device alerting me to any cars, shopping carts, or pedestrians, dog walkers, etc., that are currently in my way or even headed in my direction.

The car also has a detection device to warn me of cars in the left or right-hand blind spots. It's a little creepy having a car that sees and knows more than I do, but a welcome addition to any vehicle and great to know that I am surrounded by so much safety. In fact, if I resided in my car, I could possibly live forever. Nah.

And on a side note, when I'm at a stop sign looking to make a left hand turn, I have a wife who will alert me as to when it's safe on her side to go ahead and make the turn. She didn't come with the car, but clearly a welcome addition as I get older.

Speaking of being out on the road, I miss the sole use of paper maps when traveling and having to find my way somewhere. With my car's great navigation system, maps are totally unnecessary and so old fashioned. And whether it's going to some place new or driving locally, the system offers live traffic updates, accident reports, and construction alerts, and it displays alternate routes to be taken if so desired.

Also, my car has the ability to list where dozens of gas stations are located and the current price for fuel. Can't beat that, especially when you can recall those times when you were traveling and wished you hadn't just stopped at the first gas station you spotted because sometimes you came upon one with cheaper fuel right down the road. That used to happen to me a lot.

But I miss seeing the bigger picture of what a paper map truly offers - the location of where I am, where I've been and where I'm going, and any great roads and attractions that are nearby. So much so that I bring along state maps as I travel this great country of ours. However, I am more likely to peruse them in a hotel room than I am in the car, but still find maps quite useful when traveling to places I've never been to before.

And another change I've noticed in my aging process has to do with the adjustment I have had to make to my slumber routine. I used to be able to sleep through the night dreaming of... well, everything, and now those dreams are interrupted with having to make a pit stop. The doctor says that's normal, but why is that normal now after 60 years of uninterrupted dream land. I rarely if ever get back to what I was dreaming.

Life sometimes is not fair in the aging process, now is it?

Dave Lamken

Father's Day –

My dad taught me so much. I'm not even sure he was aware of it at the time, but I owe him more than just the beginning of my life. I owe him almost everything I am today. And not to slight my mother in any of this, I owe her, too.

For example, my parents were huggers and I inherited that trait. Just ask classmates that come in contact with me. I can't help it. That's the way I was raised.

As for travel and vacations (and I know I've discussed this topic a few times before), my parents' love for getting in the car and going somewhere was always the highlight of my youth, no matter how short the trip.

For instance, when I was very little, my parents took my sister and me to Paterson's Great Falls. Not as impressive as seeing Niagara Falls, but I hadn't been there yet as I was only about five years old (that would happen later when I was 8). We then went on to West Side Park (along the Passaic River) to see the first submarine ever built.

When I was recently out to dinner with a classmate, I was reminded that the two of us had ridden our bikes to the Passaic River when we were about 10. I wanted to see that submarine again, I suppose – a great ride, a great adventure. Thanks for the remembrance, Alan.

I could go on and on, but it is Father's Day and you have better things to do than to read my ramblings.

Please just know that when it comes to my dad, remembering him is easy, I do it every day. Missing him is the heartache that never goes away.

Happy Father's Day, Dad.

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Freebies –

The 50s were a great time for shopping, if you call getting things for free a form of shopping.

Of course you had to buy something to get something for free, but let's see if you recall it being the way that I do.

How many of you remember the old boxes of Oxydol laundry detergent coming with free glasses, dishes or towels hidden inside? I'm not sure what would prompt a company to put glasses or dishes inside a laundry detergent box, but towels certainly seemed appropriate. And they were dish towels as I recall; anyway, beach towels wouldn't have left much room for any detergent, now would they?

Also, can you imagine how mad your mother would have been if the glasses or a dish had broken inside the box. She would have had to throw everything away so there wouldn't have been any chance of glass shards being left in the detergent and then winding up in the washing machine.

I believe my mother got a pearl necklace one time in one of those boxes, too. Probably fake and I am not sure she ever wore it. My mom undoubtedly passed the costume jewelry on to my sister.

I don't know if Oxydol is still being sold, but I don't need any more glassware, dishes or towels. Just wondering, that's all.

I once wrote about my mother collecting S&H Green Stamps. She had books upon books of them. One time I can recall her coming out of the catalog store with a toaster. And, yes, kids waited (somewhat patiently) in the car back then, windows rolled up or not.

If you remember, the S&H store was on the same side as the McDonalds on Rt. 4, you know, the one where we used to go after basketball games in high school for our 15 cent hamburgers and 12 cent French fries. I'm guessing it was Fair Lawn, (East Paterson maybe?). Is the S&H Green Stamps Company still in business anywhere? Curious minds would like to know.

As far as other promotional items being given out by businesses is concerned, gas stations offered free glasses, along with steak knives, and dishwares back in the 1950s. I don't know what was required to obtain any of those items, especially if you recall gas was only about 20 to 25 cents a gallon. And although a car's fuel tank held much more gas than the ones in today's automobiles, a full tank might have been only five or six dollars.

Jelly jars when empty (did I need to say that?) were also turned into drinking glasses. I'm not sure if the lid screwed on or not – otherwise the ridge would have been rough to the lips for drinking and it wasn't. My mother kept two of those glasses on the counter top for everyday use, one on either side of the sink. Not sure why there were two nor why they weren't together.

'Freebies' has taken on a whole new meaning in today's world, now hasn't it? Free health care, free school lunches (even breakfasts), etc. The world is changing and here I am just thinking about the good old days.

I suppose some things never change.

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Freebies Update –

I am glad my ‘Freebies’ memory struck a chord with many of you – and I, too, wonder what the S&H Green Stamps gifts were at our graduation dance. I haven’t a clue.

But now that I think about it, I’m guessing that’s because the guys never got a prize - or did they and I was just left out.

And when it came time for our mothers to hand over their stamps, it must have been hard for them to give up their booklets. :-)

As far as the old S&H Green Stamps are concerned, I was informed that they are still viable, but not from the same company. So if you are hoarding any of your mom’s stamp sheets or booklets from the good old days, please know they are redeemable.

To show you how to do it, check out the following informational website -

www.comparerewards.com/archives/605

Thank you to all who wrote to let me know that Oxydol is still a product on the shelves in many stores, albeit without any glassware inside.

Looking at the ad for the present containers, I concur that they wouldn’t easily fit inside the current packaging.

To see the products Oxydol now sells, click on the following link –

www.oxydol.com/Products.html

And it’s nice to know that some of you are still using the free gifts from the past. Your mothers would be so proud, I am sure.

Hey, they went through the Depression so it’s a meaningful tradition for them.

And since we were lucky to be born when we were and to be raised in Glen Rock, maybe they should change our generational title to that of the ‘Luckiest Generation’. We were lucky, weren’t we?

Past, Present, Perfect?

In all likelihood when my sister, Carol, reads this e-mail she will probably be a little devastated. Why? Because back in the early 50s one of her favorite comic book characters was Archie – and now, according to the news, he's dead. He dies a hero, helping others like he has always done, but he is no longer with us.

In the pages of "Life With Archie", an offshoot of the regular comic book series, the characters - like Archie, Betty, Veronica, Jughead and Reggie - are at their core the same, but their hometown, Riverdale, in this series has changed with the times.

The town of Riverdale you read about now is like any other city in America, and Archie has had to deal with its problems. In fact, in a strange twist of things, it shows that Archie has connected with - and married - both Betty and Veronica, but, thankfully, not at the same time.

In the case of Archie's death, he dies shielding and taking a bullet for his gay best friend. Boy, the comic book world has changed a lot, hasn't it? Just like ours, I suppose.

When they kill off Superman, Batman and Robin, maybe my life will be over, too.

Another thing that has changed from when we were younger is how we have been warned to protect our skin from the rays of sun. Hopefully, most of us do. We have been advised to either avoid being in the sun as much as possible or apply a good sun block when we can't. I'm more of the avoider type.

When I wrote about going to the Glen Rock pool as a kid every day for hours on end, I mentioned how people used baby oil or Coppertone to enhance getting a good all-around tan. What I would like to mention now is how I also remember seeing some guys who had rubbed on a product called Man Tan prior to coming to the pool. Luckily, I can't recall any class members using it.

Man Tan, as you may recall, was a product that was supposed to give your body this look of having a natural tan. That may have been the idea, but the color was more orange than tan. Does anyone remember Man Tan? Man – it was no tan!

On to one more short subject. My wife, Nancy, and I were recently visiting the Finger Lakes Region in New York State. It is a very pretty area - enhanced by the many wine tasting establishments along Route 14 from Watkins Glen to Geneva, which has some of the most beautiful and spectacular homes on the East Coast. What we also encountered was a freight train hauling 47 cars.

Where I live (Cape May County) passenger train service was halted years ago and freight trains stopped coming this far into South Jersey well before that, so I have no idea if that's a typical size for freight trains anymore.

What I do remember was being on vacation as a child in various states and being trapped at crossing gates and encountering huge freight trains that fortunately never found their way into Glen Rock. As a matter of habit to pass the time, I would sit in our automobile and count its cars.

The longest one that I can recall was when my family was on vacation west of the Smokey Mountains, and we encountered a freight train pulling 152 cars of coal. Whether that's a record or not, I'll leave that up to the train aficionados in our class to decide, but it sure was long, that's for certain. Especially for around 1953 when you are stuck in a car without air conditioning and all you want to do is to get moving again and feel the breeze coming in the windows.

I hope you all live in areas wherein you don't have to wait for a freight train to pass, even with the AC on.

Dave Lamken

Past, Present, Perfect? – Follow-up

I liked that some of you have been to the Finger Lakes and enjoyed Geneva, seeing its homes that bordered Lake Seneca, and liked the wine tasting offered in the surrounding area.

My sister's response to my last class e-mail and learning about Archie follows -

Archie? Dead? Oh, yeah, certainly was devastated!

What I never told you about was that our former art teacher was married to the guy that owned "Archie." He was quite a bit older than she was but he was rich; she wanted to be married and she wanted to have a child.

Since he had kids of his own with a former wife (wives?), he wanted no part of caring for another kid. They married anyway and Nancy (Lind) did take care of the daughter.

When her husband died there was a mess with his kids and the comic book. There is still a feud going on between the kids and Nancy and, in fact, it appeared as an article in the New York Times not so long ago.

Nancy did say he would "reappear" sometime in the future, but not like a Bobby Ewing (Dallas) creation. She did say "spirit."

Trains! Almost every time I go to Glen Rock I inevitably have to wait for the upper train and I think of all the evenings we spent waiting for dad to come home...great memories. I still find myself looking.....

One of our classmates, who is a lifelong aficionado when it comes trains, answered my question about the length of freight trains. I was amazed at learning the world record. Glad I wasn't counting the cars for that one!

His response follows -

Some of us train nuts go out of our way to sit and watch freight trains pass! Usually we pull over at the crossings and jump out to watch though. Sue and our kids and grandkids are used to this.

Glen Rock actually did see some 100+ car trains pass when we were kids, always on the Erie Bergen County Line by the Municipal Building, frequently at night.

Now the longest trains in the Glen Rock area run on the Susquehanna line through Hawthorne and Midland Park. They can run over 150 cars. There are also long ones further east in Bergen County along the West Shore of the Hudson, including lots of new tanker trains of oil now coming out of North Dakota.

FYI, the longest U.S. train ever was a 550 car test. Over 200 car trains are common now, particularly in the western U.S.

Worldwide, the record longest train ever was ~ 4.5 miles long, and consisted of 682 ore cars pulled and pushed by 8 locomotives. Assembled by BHP Iron Ore, the train travelled 171 miles from the company's Newman and Yandi mines to Port Hedland, Western Australia, on June 21st, 2001.

Thank you for all your postings. I liked learning some of you still encounter freight trains and will count the cars on occasion - just like you did as a kid.

I love not being entirely grown up, don't you?

Dave Lamken

Cloak and Dagger -

There were no cloaks or daggers for me to be worried about in my childhood. Well, maybe. Or maybe not.

I can't recall anyone carrying around a dagger, that's for sure, but my grandfather did have a pocketknife with him at all times. It was a simple, one bladed knife, roughly four inches in length, and black in color. He used it to open the mail, trimmed my cowlick with it on occasion, and, when in a hurry, used it to cut into a loaf of bread to make me a sandwich.

My dad also had a pocket knife; his was multi-bladed and dark red in color. It only had three blades so it was not as fancy as a true Swiss Army knife; however, it was very practical.

The regular knife blade could be locked in place and was very, very sharp. I'm guessing my dad kept it that way. Another blade was a combination slotted screwdriver and bottle opener – very practical tools back in the day. And the third blade was what I would best describe as a long and very sharp toothpick, but it wasn't used for that purpose.

One of the reasons I know that is because when I was helping my dad with yard cleanup one autumn day, I was bitten on the arm by a tick. He quickly got out his pocket knife and used the toothpick-like blade to painlessly remove (at least for me) the bug from under my skin. A little alcohol and I was good to go – the alcohol, of course, went on my arm. :-)

A classmate who lived four doors away sometimes carried a red Swiss Army knife. I was impressed, but never saw the need for one myself, although on occasion I wished I had had one.

Around the age of ten, I did try my hand at throwing daggers – kind of. I took a set of steak knives from the kitchen and attempted to throw them at a tree in my backyard.

The knives in our childhood seemed more heavy duty than the ones we use today. Since they were steak knives, however, can I say they were meatier? Well, I guess I just did. But in any case, in the beginning of my throwing routine, I was not very successful.

Once I got the right rhythm and actually hit the tree, the knives for some reason wouldn't stick. Maybe the trunk of the chestnut tree was too solid to have the knives penetrate and stick to it or maybe it was the kind of knives I was using – I don't know. What I do know is that some of the knife points got bent up a little.

And how do I know that? A few days later my mother queried me as to how come some of the knife tips were damaged. Of course I said I didn't know but would go into the basement and use the vise to straighten them out. Actually, a pair of pliers worked the best.

I hope you can recall someone in your circle of friends and family who carried a pocketknife - it seems it was part of our heritage. In any case, I never came into contact with anyone who carried a dagger. Thank goodness.

As far as cloaks are concerned, I remember being reminded that our coat closet at Byrd School was called a 'cloak closet'. Why? I have no idea. No one wore cloaks to school, but grade after grade whenever I said I needed to go into the coat closet, I was told by teachers it was a cloak closet or cloakroom.

And since it was the width of the classroom and about four feet deep, I doubt a cloak 'room' would have been an appropriate name, also.

Because it was built around the same time as Byrd School, Central School probably had these closets, too, but I'm not sure about Coleman School since it was built in the 50s.

In any case, none of my collection of ancestral photographs show any of my relatives wearing a cloak and of none of my teachers that I can recall ever wore a cloak.

In fact, other than Monsignor Mooney at St. Catherine's, I never saw an adult, let alone a child, wear a cloak. Do any of you know someone who did?

And Sherlock Holmes doesn't count.

Dave Lamken dlamken@comcast.net

Puzzling Outcome –

As far as my recent ‘Cloak and Dagger’ email went, I am surprised at the number of you who remembered the style, color, and number of blades your father’s or grandfather’s knives had. I guess we’re not that different, are we?

Uh-oh, I’m starting to feel sorry for some of you. :-)

I’ve written a lot about my childhood in Glen Rock and, as commented before, many of you have been gracious enough to respond to what I have written, both in class e-mail replies and in personal ones to me, and, to that end, I immensely like the convenience of having what wasn’t available to us as children - a computer.

Times change – things change – we all know that. And with the presence of computers in today’s world, I cannot fathom what our lives would have been like 60 years ago had we had the technology of today’s world to occupy and consume our time.

And although I made a promise to myself that I would only write about what I recall from my earliest years through high school, and to pass those recollections on to you, the differences in generational experiences is something I have often pondered about, and I assume you have, too.

I am retired with a vast amount of free time on my hands, or at least that’s what I tell myself (but I always seem to be busy doing something). I do, though, find the time to be on the computer a great deal.

Not for very long at any one sitting mind you, but for many short stints throughout the day. If I were to put all those intervals together, on most days, it would easily add up to close to two or three hours, or more, I am sure.

And while checking Facebook, reading and forwarding emails, reviewing my investments, and forever Googling queried items of interest are all fun and attention-grabbing, it does take away from what I once considered my free time.

Not that I mind it, though, it’s just that it’s different. What did I spend my spare time on when I was a kid? What we all did – playing, of course. But

what did I do in those intermittent periods of free time during the day when I was in the house? Jigsaw puzzles.

Jigsaw puzzles had their own place in our living room - on a card table that was set up for all who passed by to enjoy. The table came and went as puzzles were solved, but its presence was such that when it wasn't there awaiting another puzzle to show up, nothing took its place. Oh, except at Christmas when a tree stole its honored ground.

When the uncompleted puzzle pieces were out in view, it was difficult not to stop and put at least one or two pieces together every time you passed by – okay, maybe more than one or two, but by then you were probably sitting down. :-)

And as the final pieces were put into their places and after everyone had viewed the completed puzzle, the puzzle would be broken up and put back into the box. However, not for long.

Sure it was put back in the box, but sometimes only to be emptied out once again by me. This time, though, the pieces were positioned blank side up. I know for some of you that may seem crazy, but it wasn't. It was fun doing the puzzle without the picture. And if you can believe it, easier.

Easier you're thinking? Yes, in most cases, easier. Many of the pieces in a puzzle are the same so you're just fitting the pieces together and not worrying about matching the color scheme. It was fun.

And, of course, the biggest blank jigsaw puzzle left for me to solve is life itself. And as I move more pieces into place I have no idea what the picture on the other side will be – or if I will ever get to see it.

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And A Half –

I know that ‘a half’ is not very much, unless you’re talking about a half a million dollars.

I’m not going to talk about money here; however, ‘and a half’ was really meaningful to us growing up.

How many of you can recall the times when you said you were 7 and a half, or 10 and a half, or, more importantly, when you wanted to be a teenager and said you were 12 and a half?

I can.

Age was important to us at one point, so much so that we always wanted to be accurate and for some reason older.

I don’t know when that all changed, nonetheless somewhere along the line it did. I believe I was 39 for three or four years. :-)

It changed once again last summer when someone asked me how old I was. I answered 69 and a half. I almost felt like I was a little kid again.

And maybe late next summer if I am asked what my age is and I want to feel like a youngster once more, I might just use the phrase 70 and a half.

Some things - other than me - never grow old.

Dave Lamken

Electrically charged –

I may not be electrically charged, but someday when I need to be, I hope there's someone around with those electric paddles.

But this is not what this e-mail is all about. Thank heavens. :-)

Over the weekend, Nancy and I went out to dinner with a classmate and his wife and I asked if they recalled how many flashlights they had in their homes when growing up.

My wife and the classmate said none that they could recall but there probably was one, and the classmate's wife said there were two in her home – one in the house and one in the garage.

I have no idea how many flashlights your household had when you were a child, but we had one in our home. One - that was it. One!

The flashlight was kept in the back hall closet by the staircase leading down to the basement. And since we had electric lights downstairs like everyone else, I'm not sure why it was kept there, but it was as good a place as any, I suppose.

I currently have nine or ten flashlights stored around my house, in the garage, and in my shed. We do lose power on occasion, so they definitely come in handy. What's neat about them, though, is that some of the flashlights have LED lights – they're so bright and radiant, aren't they?

Although, hopefully, the season of falling snow is over now, I am fortunate to have a gas-powered, two-stage snow blower, which makes my life a lot easier when the white stuff feels like it needs to cover our driveway to the point of making life miserable for us; but what's really nice about the snow blower is that it's electrically started. Plug in the cord, push a button, take away the cord and away I can go removing the blanket of pretty white stuff from my walkways and driveway. Not as simple a job as I just indicated, but the electric start-up sure beats repeatedly pulling on a recoil cord to get the motor running.

And let us not forget the battery operated, lighted wreaths that are hung on each side of my garage door every Christmas holiday. The timer sets them to come on and go off with regularity. It's nice not to have to run power cords over to them.

Also, who could forget the effortless rechargeable, portable toothbrushes that make our teeth shine. Well, maybe your teeth, anyway.

I also have on hand more than 15 DeWalt and Ryobi 18v power tools ranging from torque wrenches, sanders, drills and saws to lawn equipment like hedge trimmers and weedwackers. It sure makes life easier than in the olden days (did I just say that - I guess I did) when you had to contend with an electric extension cord attached to them. One really, really long one when it came to doing yard work, that's for sure.

And, of course, the ultimate favorite man tool of all time – the TV remote control.

Back in the day when we only had five or six channels, a remote wasn't a necessity, but now with hundreds and hundreds of channels available to us, what guy could possibly live without that, especially since I watch two or three shows at once, driving Nancy a bit crazy as I flip back and forth between them.

And all of us may soon be electrically charged by the number of innovative cell phones, electronic tablets, and Apple's new watch, among others, that keep coming our way to enable us to pay our bills at the checkout line, confirm play or movie tickets, or check-in at the airport, etc., with the simple swipe of a device.

I, for one, am charged by it all - how about you?

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Re-born -

No matter what your beliefs are related to the cycle of life, I think you may agree that I am correct about the following things regarding the beginning and end of that cycle.

I was born in Glen Rock and when I was an infant, I didn't know the people around me, I couldn't understand what they were saying, and I probably needed help in blowing out the candles on my birthday cake.

If you have been around people in the final years of senility, you know that they, too, don't know the people around them (including family members), don't always know what you are trying to say, and they need help blowing out the candles on their cake. Sad, but true.

When we were infants, we wore diapers, we needed help in feeding ourselves, and we had someone push us around because we couldn't walk.

You know where I'm going with this – senile people, for the most part, wear diapers, need help feeding themselves, and, for mobility sake, are usually placed in a chair and wheeled around.

The love and attention we received as infants from our parents and relatives is now being repaid in a similar fashion as we now care for them.

Don't get me wrong – I wouldn't have it any other way. The senile people I knew were near and dear to me and deserved to be cared for in the same loving way as they treated me.

I can only hope that as I approach the age of senility I will not be re-born in that regard and thus need my children, or anyone else for that matter, to care for me as we would an infant.

And as you might suspect, I don't have an answer for any of this, so any good suggestions you may have are more than welcome.

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Re-born Again -

Okay, I have not been re-born and I never will be – this time or ever again. My e-mail today, thus the ‘Re-born Again’ title, is a follow-up to my last convoluted posting about the similarities between what we experience during infancy and senility.

I was taken aback by the replies I received about some of your concerns with getting Alzheimer’s, even though I never mentioned that term by name. We all forget things as we age and that’s normal. And we repeat things as well. That’s because we all forget things as we age and that’s normal – oops.

Sorry, my obtuse sense of humor does get in the way sometimes. And I am thinking my wife, Nancy, hopes it is the first thing that will go as I move up in years.

Your replies to me concerning the care you gave your parents and other relatives who were well into their nineties was very touching to say the least, and I admire you for everything that you did.

The hardest part - for some of you at least – seemed to be the placement of your family member(s) into an assisted-living community. I can easily identify with that as I went through the process of seeing my wife having to deal with her father’s ten-plus year battle after a stroke.

Nancy’s dad was a very successful and affable person who was so engaging to those around him. But, as his condition deteriorated, some of that good-naturedness faded away as he dealt with the nurses and attending staff who took care of him.

As far as requesting some good suggestions as to what I might do to lessen the burden on my family members when I find myself in a similar situation, I was enlightened by some of you who told me there are currently five states that offer legal assisted suicide. For those who care to know, they are Washington, Oregon, Montana, New Mexico, and Vermont.

Thank you for that, but I don’t want my family members at my bedside as I go slip-sliding away into the after-life, if there is one.

One classmate mentioned starvation, saying and I quote, "...with plenty of water, it is not unpleasant to starve to death, and can be accomplished in as little as three weeks, two months max. There apparently is no pain, though you can get hallucinations towards the end."

And here I was wondering if it was possible to just pass away by overdosing on dark chocolate. :-)

Speaking of overdosing, I was told that there is a highly effective drug for that purpose and it is available on the Internet. Since this posting might eventually find its way into my collection of e-mails on the Web, I am not going to disclose it here, but if you write me, I would be happy to share it with you.

And here is the final tip given to me for a solution to my avoiding a long term stay in a dementia ward.

I was told that I should apply for the right to be considered for that wonderful one-way Mars landing expedition. It's a novel approach that does meet some of my criteria.

It is just highly doubtful, however, that when the people in charge of the selection process for astronauts do their in-depth research on me and read my 'Recollections' folder, I'll ever be considered a serious contender for a seat on that spaceship - especially if I include this posting. :-)

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Can and Can't –

When I was younger I rode a bike. I have written about that a few times in some of my recollection stories and where I traveled.

What I probably failed to mention was that when I rode down the street it was often without touching the handlebars. I enjoyed doing that, but I can't do it anymore.

I now use an electric bike and it goes 20 miles per hour. It would travel about 60 to 80 miles with the battery being regenerated along the way if I went down hills, etc. Trouble with that is I live in an area of South Jersey with barely any hills, so I've never actually tested the full limits of the bike's battery.

Although the Biria Easy Riding Electric Bicycle is a terrific German made bike and I love riding it (or having it be the one to take me for a ride), the childhood habit of bicycling with my arms folded across my chest looking like a person in charge of things is no longer doable. My age and new bike make it far too wobbly and dangerous. Shame how you miss doing the little things in life that made your childhood memorable.

Another thing I can remember is being in Kindergarten when my teacher, Miss Singer, told us to roll out the mats for rest time. Some of my classmates actually did nap – I couldn't, but I laid still enough so as not to appear to be going against the teacher's directions.

Fast forward a few too many decades and it's hard to recall a day when I haven't napped – or at least wanted to do so. I guess I'm reliving my Kindergarten years in earnest.

Some of you with whom I communicate periodically know that for the past five or six years I have been going out to breakfast every morning with some Romeos (Retired Old Men Eating Out). We meet at 7:00 am, sit at the counter, and chit-chat about this or that.

The restaurant I go to, Clary's, has a \$2.22 special from 7:00 to 8:00 – two eggs, two pieces of bacon, and two pancakes. I never vary from the discounted menu.

What's strange is that when I was real little I can recall never wanting to eat bacon or eggs. I ate dry cereal – Cheerios being my favorite. I didn't even put milk in the bowl. Rather, I would take a spoonful of Cheerios, put it in my mouth, and then take a tiny sip of milk. By the way, I can remember only one kind of Cheerios, but now there are at least 15!

Needless to say because of my retired life's new breakfast routine, I rarely have cereal anymore, but if I did, I would probably put milk into the bowl.

As a child, I can also remember knowing quite a few phone numbers. Now, other than my own home phone, I don't have any truly locked into my memory bank.

Also, as you may recall, when we were little, most homes had only one phone. I currently have five throughout my house – three downstairs, one upstairs, and one in the garage by the workbench. And if the party you are calling does not have a landline, but uses only a cell phone, if you want to talk to more than one person in the house at a time, you can't, unless they put you on speakerphone.

I can go on, but this e-mail is getting too long, so I really can't.

Thank you for sticking with me this far.

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The Way Things Were –

Our childhood was filled with things that were different than they are today.

Do you remember waiting until 7pm to use the phone to make a long distance call because it was cheaper? And placing that call by talking to an operator?

Now when we're in a car going 70 miles per hour on the Parkway at any time of day, we push a button on the steering wheel and instantly speed dial anyone in our telephone address list regardless of where they live or what time of day it is – and the cost of doing so never enters our mind.

When we were kids, we didn't have bottled water – we had rubber garden hoses. The taste was always a little bit strange until we let the water run for a while, but it sure quenched our thirst on a hot summer's day, didn't it?

Back in the day if I wanted to download a song, I used to sit with my cassette recorder next to the radio and wait for a cool song to come on and then hit the 'record' button. Now with an iPhone I can play any song anytime I want on demand.

When I was a kid, I ran barefoot in the yard, played in the dirt to my heart's content, fished in the nearby pond with homemade poles, and stayed outdoors until dinner. And then after dinner, I ran back outside to catch lightning bugs in jars. I felt free to walk down the road without being afraid because I knew our all my neighbors. The kids of today play inside and rarely, if ever, come outside. Many kids today don't know their neighbors and vice versa.

During autumn I would often rake leaves. It was an inexact science at best and I sucked at doing it. The lawn always looked better than when I began, that's for sure, but often I left leaves on the lawn as I raked. Now with the help of a lawn vacuum, it literally sucks via a more exact science sort of way, leaving the lawn with barely a leaf in sight.

Also, as I can recall when growing up, there weren't any landscape contractors working on anyone's lawn in my section of Glen Rock. Currently, about half the residents living in my neighborhood hire outside garden services to tend to their lawns. As I age, I may soon have to add myself to that list.

And, of course, some things never change. No matter how old I get, and when the need arises, I am still going to mentally sing the ABCs to see which letter comes next.

Apparently, some things that were – still are.

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A Friend I Never Really Knew –

As most of you know by now, Craig Preslock passed away two weeks after his 70th birthday, on Friday, September 25th.

To say I never knew Craig would not be totally accurate - we went to the same junior-senior high school, and the best I can say from the far reaches of my memory is that I knew his name. We might have been in the same gym class, but that was about as far as it went for us ever being in each other's company.

Craig was late in joining our class e-mail list and only came to one reunion – our last one. It wasn't until the past few years that I got to know him – and got to know him quite well.

Craig liked my memoirs about being raised in Glen Rock. He began writing me and commenting on my stories. Since he was serious about reading them all and I know how annoying it is to read over 500 pages on a computer monitor, I sent him a hard copy of my 'Recollections' folder - and that's when the correspondence between us took off.

I found his insights into what I had written to be fascinating and often told him I wished I had known him in high school. Craig's comment was regularly – 'No, you don't. We would have gotten into too much trouble together.' I believe he was right. We probably would have.

If any of you knew him well, then you know his first name was Jon, but no one called him that. Craig and his brother, Tim, who is six years younger, moved with their parents from Sacramento, California, to Glen Rock in 1957.

Craig confided that in his youth he had more than a few go-arounds with his parents – even moved in with friends a few times, never really liked school at all (although I could tell he was bright), and that his family had some connections with gangsters. I know, all a big surprise to me, too.

Craig's love of motor vehicles drove him to own auto-truck places, and he loved riding his motorcycles, tractors (huge ones), and, in his quiet times, playing golf.

Craig's immense love of animals was only surpassed by the love of his life, Barbara, his wife of almost 38 years. He told me often about how much she meant to him and how he couldn't imagine his life without her.

Craig took a journey out of Georgia this summer to come up north and make a rare visit to family and friends. I was on his list of people he wanted to stop and see, but unfortunately I was in Europe at the time he had scheduled to come to New Jersey. I am so sorry I missed him and the opportunity to meet Barbara.

I guess I did know Craig Preslock fairly well, just not in the way I really wanted it to be – personally.

Dave Lamken

One of the Greatest Guys –

I wish I had met one of my best friends, Tony Rizzo, in elementary school, however, no, I had to wait until 7th Grade for that supreme pleasure – but at any time in my life it would have been worth it.

For whatever reason, we made a special connection. Early on, we didn't socialize very much outside of school because of the distance of living on opposite sides of town, but we ate lunch together every day.

Some of you may remember my writing about using those origami folded pieces of triangular paper to play modified football games across the lunchroom table. The guys might recall doing this sometime during their lunchtime, but you girls may not have a clue as to what that was, so here goes –

You slid a small, folded triangular piece of paper across the table by flicking your finger. If you got the football to hang over the edge to any degree, you scored a touchdown, thus entitling you to attempt a kick for an extra point by flipping the wad of paper through your opponent's upright, finger-positioned, goal posts.

Over the six-year period of playing football five days a week with Tony, I don't recall beating him very often. Scoring points was not easy for anyone, however, for some reason, Tony was very, very good at it. He could have been a pro, if there was such a thing for that game.

In the summer, Tony crossed town and we met up at the community pool. We would play a sneaky game of pool tag when we could get away with it. Learning to walk quickly, not run, on the pool's surrounding concrete area was an art that Tony mastered quite well, but you always had to jump or dive in at the corners of the pool.

Although a true baseball player, Tony also liked playing touch football near where the girls laid on their towels sunbathing. I haven't a clue as to why that was. :-)

A lot of that childish fun stuff changed once we got our driver's licenses. We cruised downtown Ridgewood together on Friday and Sunday nights (but not always in the same car), went down to the shore to walk the Wildwood

boardwalk to look for girls, and went for a rum and Coke or a beer in a New York state bar to meet – you guessed it – girls.

My memory has us playing car tag in the nearby Ridgewood hills after a YMCA EMOC dance night. Car tag was not dangerous the way we did it. You started a block apart and within a 10 to 15 minute window of opportunity the foremost driver tried to move ahead to get to a point where there were more than three blocks separating the two cars. If the driver in the lead vehicle did that, he won.

One time that is quite memorable is when Tony was driving his parents' Ford Country Squire station wagon. He had at least four guys in it and after beating me and coming back down from the hills of Upper Ridgewood a little too quickly, Tony met up with a cross street and hit a bump in the road. Well, it was more of a dip than a bump at the crossroad, but it had the same effect. The tail end of his station wagon hit the road so hard that the straps holding the gas tank broke.

No one was injured, no fire broke out, but Tony was stranded. Since I was right behind him, I got Tony to a pay phone (remember those?) a few blocks from the EMOC location and he called his parents to come and help him. The guys crowded into my car with my two friends and I drove them home. If I correctly remember what he told me the next day, Tony explained to his father that he was with a girl and someone took her home. Not sure if his father believed him, but it had to sound better than saying he was playing car tag.

In high school, Tony and I worked a night shift one summer at a supermarket on Broadway (Route 4) in East Paterson. It was just down the road from the McDonald's where a lot of us went after basketball games. We got to the market at 10 at night and were locked in the store until 7:30 the next morning.

If the night shift hustled and got the shelves 99% stocked by 4:00a.m., we were allowed to stretch out on the checkout counters and take a nap until about 5:15 or so – the night boss did, too. It paid \$1.25 an hour, plus a 25 cent bonus for working the late shift. Pretty good money back in 1962.

Tony always worked quickly and, when needed, helped me finish up on my aisles. There was always the cleanup and straightening left to do at the very

end of our shift so it looked like we were busy all night when the morning crew came in.

You could always count on Tony, and I will miss him. He was one of the best friends I had in school and one of greatest, most decent guys I have ever known.

Dave Lamken

The Guy I Knew as Ted -

I am going to assume we all knew Ted Betts. Some may not have known him well or that his first name was Edward for he never went by that, but we all liked him no matter the name he went by.

My first true encounter of getting to know how awesome Ted was began in the ninth grade and watching him play soccer. I never played soccer before going out for the team, but Ted did. He was really good at handling the ball – and, of course, by saying handling I mean by using his feet.

If you never saw Ted play, it's pretty impossible to accurately describe how fantastic he was. One of his classic moves was getting to the ball before it flew out of bounds and kicking it up and over his head and back onto the playing field. You'd have to see it to believe how remarkable Ted truly was. He easily impressed Coach Sutherland, too.

Some of you may know Ted lived in a house that was expanded from what I believe was once called the Grove Street School. For those of you who don't know where Ted lived, his home was at the intersection of Rock Road and Ackerman Avenue and was located on the right side of the street when traveling west toward downtown on Rock Road.

I'm not sure why it was called the Grove Street School since Grove Street is - I'm guessing here – six or seven blocks away. The one-room school house, if I remember correctly, was built in the mid-1800s, so there probably weren't many roads nearby back then, therefore I suppose Grove Street was close enough.

Ted once said that people would knock on the door and ask if they could see inside. That had to be weird, but he told me his parents were always very accommodating, even though there wasn't much left to see.

The prompting of Ridgewood's closure of the school started the movement in the late 1800s to create the town of Glen Rock - so Ted's home had a lot of good history – and it stayed a school until Central School was built in the early 1900s.

My elementary school, Richard E. Byrd School, dedicated to the North and South Pole explorer, was built around 1930 and enlarged a bit after I went to junior high. There are now six schools in Glen Rock – not that that matters.

As far as Ted's lifelong love (besides his family), it was teaching. He would on occasion e-mail me about a student with special needs and hoped I had some insight as to what could be done to remedy a situation the child had with school.

Ted loved being in education and especially cherished his position as golf coach. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Dave Lamken

A Thought or Two -

A classmate wrote to me a while ago saying she was reading my memories about growing up in Glen Rock, and although she didn't spend her early childhood years there, one of my recollections about school rang a true for her. It was one of my first e-mails to all of you involving air raid drills entitled 'Cattle Call' on page 53.

The classmate remembered, like I did, first being asked to crawl under her desk and then eventually being lined up in the hallway to sit against a wall. She, too, can still recall the chill on her spine emanating from the cool cement block.

What she added to what I had written was that in her school, students were presented with name tags on a neck chain. They were told to wear them every day so they could be identified in case something happened. What she came to realize later was that it was similar to the armed forces where dog tags are used to identify bodies, not live ones.

She found out much, much later that fingerprinting or tattooing of children were also considered, but those ideas were finally rejected because a nuclear blast would peel the skin off and nothing would be identifiable.

I'm glad we didn't have name tags, and I'm glad I was too young and oblivious to know what was going on outside of my own little world in Glen Rock. I couldn't imagine putting on a name tag every day and thinking it was there to identify the remains of my body if something horrific should happen.

Now on a totally different note, here's something I can recall from Kindergarten - the nursery rhyme Hickory Dickory Dock.

Hickory Dickory Dock.
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down!
Hickory Dickory Dock.

As I recall, there are twelve verses to that involving other animals, but I don't remember any of them. What I can recall is my Kindergarten teacher,

Miss Singer, sitting in a chair with all of us around her as she recited that rhyme.

Just before she got to the line ‘The clock struck ...’, Miss Singer would hold up her fingers and we would all chime in and recite that line with her. What she did for numbers 11 and 12 with her fingers, I don’t recall.

What I can remember is my father telling me his version of the first line of Hickory Dickory Dock. It went like so –

Hickory Dickory Dock.
Three mice ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
And two mice ran down!
Hickory Dickory Dock.

After over sixty-five years and to this very day, I don’t know what happened to that mouse. Was it knocked off the clock? Was it impaled by the minute hand? Was it killed? I have no idea.

Like the title said, that’s my thought or two for the day. Well, at least one of them was my thought.

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[David Lamken's Recollections of Glen Rock, NJ](#)

The Square Root of Nothing –

If I remember correctly, we were all taught the multiplication tables in the third grade and by the time we were finished we learned the squares of the numbers from one to twelve. Of course, we didn't call them squares back then, we just knew 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, 36, 49, 64, 81, 100, 121, and 144 were derived from multiplying each of the numbers from one through twelve twice.

For whatever reason, I have used those numbers on more than one occasion. The last time I can remember was in trying to figure out how many chairs were in a priority seating area. Why? I have no idea, but as a somewhat excessive-compulsive person, there are some odd things I do to keep my mind occupied.

So, I am glad I was taught the squares of certain numbers.

What I have never used is what I learned in Mrs. Trerotola's (sp.) math class in junior high – finding the square root of a number. Thank goodness for the invention of pocket calculators for if I ever did need to find the square root of a number in today's world, I would be dumbfounded as to how to calculate it with a pencil and paper – too many decimal points and an odd way of dividing. That weird equation process has been moved into the lost area of my memory bin.

By my calculation, whoever invented the slide rule was unquestionably a genius and helped us all when dealing with logarithms. The slide rule worked because it is marked in such a way that the distance from 1 to x is proportional to the logarithm of x . It sure was faster moving the slide rule than it was looking up the answer in a multi-page logarithm table reference book. Remember those?

Back in the day in the mid 60's on an episode of the Johnny Carson Show, Tony Randall revealed everything we needed to know to function normally in our daily lives was learned in elementary school. I tend to agree with that.

Besides learning how to read and write, we were taught how to write checks; we acquired the knowledge of identifying the location of US states and other countries in the world; we memorized 'My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Nine Pies' to help us remember the names of the planets and their

logistical order from the Sun (I wonder what they use now that Pluto is no longer considered a real planet), and we learned so, so much more.

What fascinates me is the fact that the further we continued with our education, the less time we actually spent in class.

For instance, in junior and senior high, we sat in class five days a week for about an hour learning the major subjects. In college that was reduced to three days a week, and in graduate school each class was once a week. And for those who went on for a Ph.D, you know that once you acquired enough credits, you met with your major advisor every three or four weeks for about an hour (usually less) to discuss your precis, thesis, or dissertation and how it was coming along.

Okay, so for this particular square guy, he is at the root of his writing for this morning and so, classmates, you guys are like me – you have nothing to show for it but a waste of time reading nonsense about our time in school.

Sorry.

Maybe I should go back to elementary school and learn something useful.

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Out and About -

There's nothing new here – just a different perspective on how I see things now that I am all grown up. Or maybe not so grown up.

As you all know by now, I grew up in Glen Rock and lived there until I was in college and my parents bought a new home in Wyckoff. And it's only now, with the benefit of hindsight and being firmly entrenched in the madness of today's world, that I look back and realize that Glen Rock was actually a lost paradise.

Back then, suburbia was one huge playground for us children. I was lucky living in a moderately sized house, with a garden, the fields, the woods, the banks of Diamond Brook, pets (a dog and then a cat), some goldfish, and, outside, a pet turtle.

And oddly enough - and this is perhaps the major difference between my childhood and that of today's children - we were allowed out. By ourselves. Free and clear and unsupervised. That's so hard to believe in today's world.

My parents let me go out and play in the woods, alone and with friends, from the age of six, and there was no grown-up to supervise us.

No one seemed to be as frightened as they are now. There was hardly any traffic, even on the busy streets, so crossing a street like Rock Road or Lincoln Avenue was not the near-death experience that it can be today. And the truly local streets on which the neighborhood kids played were almost devoid of automobiles.

Grown-ups didn't panic when we went outside... in fact, they encouraged it. Nothing stopped them from letting us out to play. They seemed to understand the intrinsic need for children to get fresh air and exercise, along with the added benefit that children will take risks and learn the basic life lesson that actions have consequences.

So what did ‘play’ mean back then? There was barely any TV worth watching, no iPhones or iPads, no internet, computer games, and no PlayStations. We had only the simplest of equipment: bats, balls, badminton nets, and bicycles.

We often made up our own games and rules. No one seemed to complain. We just wanted to be outside having fun.

When we weren’t playing games, my friends and I were climbing trees, bicycling everywhere, or experiencing the wonder of what was to be found.

We sometimes preferred more daring games, such as jumping off a garage roof – which seemed quite high back then but probably wasn’t. And most daring of all, we tried tight-rope walking between two trees. We didn’t come close to succeeding on that one, but it was fun trying.

What was my mother thinking to allow that? Did she even see us doing it? I doubt it.

In fact, she seemed to leave us to our own devices most of the time. No after-school this, that or the other.

This must all sound so primitive to today’s young. How would they cope with just five channels of black-and-white television that wasn’t even broadcasting 24 hours a day? And just the one rotary-dial telephone in the house?

So how did we manage?

I don’t want to sound like a show-off here, but we used our imaginations. We had to. There wasn’t anything much else around. We used our resourcefulness and learned about the great outdoors. At least we boys did. What you girls did, I’m not too sure.

When friends weren't around, I escaped and would go to the children's section of the library at the bottom of City Hall. Only books, mind you - there were no DVDs and no PCs in the library. Or at school either - where in the earliest years we had little pots of ink on our desks and dip pens.

For us, new technology meant a lever fountain pen. No cartridges. I still think cartridges are wasteful — a few drops of ink wrapped in all that plastic. But we were altogether far less wasteful back then.

When you think about it, our mothers were the first recyclers in an earlier age of austerity. Soon, we might have to be following their example: darning socks, turning lights off, sharing baths and saving brown paper bags — which is something I still do. They're perfect for kitchen trash bins.

Like most other Glen Rock mothers, my mother cooked everything, because there were no ready-made meals or fast food back then. No wonder she rarely came outside. Stuck in the kitchen, like all the other housewives, slaving away at their stove tops, ovens, and pressure cookers. Does anyone still use a pressure cooker?

But at least, in Glen Rock, they had plenty of space - somewhere to hang out the washing, wring things out through the mangle (yes, early on in my childhood we still had one).

And with all the home-cooked food and running about, we children seemed to be healthier than today's kids. I never heard of health foods when I was growing up, but neither did I hear of obesity.

That was the thing about the suburbs in the Fifties - while children had freedom and lived rather care-free lives, the grown-ups didn't. They worried about atom bombs.

I haven't been back to Glen Rock and driven down any of the old streets that I remember, but if I did, I know I wouldn't see kids playing outside.

So many Glen Rock residents probably now spend much of their lives indoors stuck in front of screens like the rest of us, their brains scrambled by information overload, glued to Google, Facebook, CNN and HBO, or reading e-mails from classmates.

I need to stop lamenting, for I will never be able to bring back ‘the good old days’, but I wish I could.

Let the kids of today be bored the same way we were. :-)

I am out of ideas right now, and you’re about to say when is David going to learn to write shorter e-mails.

I can’t. Not when I’m out and about.

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Ah-ooo-gah –

I know what you are thinking – well, I believe I know what you are thinking, and while this email doesn't have much to do with our childhood, it should ring a bell with some of you – or at least a horn.

Although spelled a few different ways, I like the ah-ooo-gah spelling for it gives a very accurate interpretation of what the horn I am remembering sounds like. In fact, some of you may recall the sound of the blast certain cars made with that loud and eerie horn.

And the reason why I am writing this posting is, well, I wish I had one of those ah-ooo-gah horns. No, not that I would like to blast it at this moment, but, boy, oh boy, could I use one when I am in my car at certain times.

Living where I do in South Jersey, I have to use the Garden State Parkway in order to get to some movie theaters or to dine at the franchised restaurants that don't exist in Cape May County. While Cape May is a nice place to live in the summer with its many restaurants, it is pretty bleak down here when they close for the summer because there are no Applebee's, Chili's, Carrabba's, Friday's, Longhorn Steak House, etc. I believe it has to do with the restrictive liquor license requirements.

Anyway, for most of the 35 mile journey up to Atlantic County where there are a lot of places to eat and drink, the Parkway is a two-lane road in each direction, And because it is somewhat of a rural highway (not unlike Rt. 208 was back in the 50's), most people travel at 75 to 80 miles an hour (the speed limit is, of course, 65).

What infuriates me is when I encounter someone in the left lane thinking they are speeding when they are doing 66mph. Technically, I guess they are, but they won't move over to the open spaces in the right lane and are oblivious to cars lined up behind them.

And that's when I wish I had an ah-ooo-gah horn to blast at them. They'd either move over – or they would slam on their brakes. Not sure which, but it would get their attention that there are people behind them who would like to go faster than they are.

And just a quick note – have you realized that living in New Jersey you park your vehicle in a driveway and travel on a parkway. Shouldn't it be the other way around? It makes more sense to put your car in a parkway and speed along on a driveway.

Oh, and don't get me started on being in the Philadelphia area stuck in bumper to bumper traffic on what's known as the Philadelphia Expressway. Such a misnomer, right?

Of course, many states have freeways that are toll roads. Now, how free is that?

And you don't need to blast your ah-ooo-gah horn in my direction right now. I'm stopping and getting out of your way so you can speed past me and go read your other more interesting e-mails.

Dave Lamken

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Coincidence or Fate? -

In a recent telephone conversation with a classmate, we discussed the benefits of retirement. Being able to do what we want when we want was high on both of our lists.

The classmate has been working on restoring a sports car and spending time in his second home in Florida. I related to him that I enjoyed volunteering my time at an animal shelter.

Beacon Animal Rescue is a small shelter located about 20 minutes away from my home and the owners allow me to come and go as I please. Since all I do is pet the cats, I don't have to sign in or come on any pre-selected days like dog walkers do. I just go in, open the door to the cat section, sit in its only chair, and wait until the cats come to me. And they do.

Once seated, some of the cats will jump up into my lap, lick my fingers, crawl up and around my shoulder - in other words, be my best friend. By now, they sense who I am and since I bring special treats in my pocket for them to nibble on, they know after a while I will eventually feed them.

Funny how things jog your memory. A few days after my telephone conversation with the classmate, I made a connection between the name of the animal shelter I visit and Camp Beacon in Mahwah. I had an experience working there the summer before ninth grade. It was a camp for special needs children.

My neighbor, Mr. Spencer, vice-president at a Jersey City bank, had a co-worker living in Ridgewood that wanted someone to accompany his disabled son to the camp. He wondered if I would be interested in doing that, and I began to ponder that option.

Mr. Spencer continued by saying the camp was open from 9 to 1 for a five day two week session and the parents were willing to pay \$25 a week for my support. As soon as he said that, I said yes I'd be interested. That was a lot of money back then. I went for an interview and was hired a week later.

The boy, who his parents called 'Little Jimmy' was seven years old (his father was Big Jimmy) and, at first, appeared to be deaf. His parents told me their son does not pay attention to you if you are not directly in front of him and even then, it was hit or miss.

I found that out as soon as we reached the camp and got off the bus. Little Jimmy took off running to the lake and wouldn't listen to me until I ran ahead of him and confronted him. He turned and ran to an area with huge plastic building blocks. He spent hours putting together a biplane. It was quite an achievement.

It took a few more incidents like that until I got a handle on how to cope with his disability, and after a few days I sensed he liked me calling him just 'Jimmy'.

Jimmy, of course, wasn't deaf; he was what we would label today as 'autistic'. Back then, it was a huge learning curve for me, that's for sure.

Jimmy didn't smile or laugh, frown or cry; he just was in his own little world. The other camp counselors, who were high school or college students, left Jimmy alone for the most part since they knew I was with him.

It was difficult to get Jimmy to join in on many of the activities that were offered at Camp Beacon, but at the end of every day before the kids boarded buses to head back home, there was always a group activity wherein everyone was expected to participate.

Typically, it was a sing-a-long, a petting zoo, a clown act, etc., and one day it was George Wolfe, the renowned cartoonist. He was good and even held Jimmy's attention.

After his session was over and as the kids meandered back up the hill to the bus lineup, Mr. Wolfe began packing up his easel and drawing materials. I found my way down to him and introduced him to Jimmy.

As Mr. Wolfe said, 'Hi', I related that Jimmy was not too responsive, but he did like airplanes. Mr. Wolfe put his large paper canvas back up on the easel and asked Jimmy to draw four lines in any direction on the paper.

Surprisingly, Jimmy complied. And Mr. Wolfe took those four lines, told a short story as he always did, and transformed those lines into this awesome caricature of Jimmy flying a plane. It was good.

He signed the page, tore it off, rolled it up, and handed it to Jimmy – who didn't take it. I said 'thank you', took it, and headed on up to the buses. As I was doing that, Mr. Wolfe said to say 'Hi' to my dad.

Later that night when I mentioned all this to my father, he said Mr. Wolfe was a friend for years and that he helped George establish the Bergen County Blood Bank. He also mentioned they were both born in the same year – 1911. Why I can remember that fact is a good question.

Whenever we got off the bus at Jimmy's house, he always ran straight inside the house and I headed home. This time, however, I knocked on the door and gave his mother the roll of paper. Jimmy's parents were pleased with the drawing. Who wouldn't be? I can't imagine what a signed drawing of Mr. Wolfe's art work would be worth today.

About a month later, I got a call from Jimmy's mother inviting me to his 8th birthday party. I reluctantly said 'Yes'. It was a good thing I did because out of the ten children who were invited only one other kid showed up at the party, and he was the next door neighbor.

As a gift, I brought Jimmy two balsa wood airplane kits with rubber band engines. He put them together in no time and was out the door flying them on a perfect windless day. Thankfully, the planes came with an extra rubber band for in about ten minutes one had already broken.

As I was leaving, I yelled 'Happy Birthday' to Jimmy, who surprisingly ran over and gave me a hug as I was walking down the driveway. He turned and ran back to flying the planes as quickly as he could.

I guess it's no wonder why I became a Sp. Ed. teacher for forty-two years, is it?

Let's Get This Party Started –

Before I do however, I would like to thank Art Smith for all he has done and continues to do in order keep our two websites up and running – grhs63@googlegroups.com for emails and grhs63.org for our class website.

I would also like to thank those of you who responded through Classmates or through my personal email about my recent missive 'Coincidence or Fate'. I liked reading your thoughts about my interaction with 'Jimmy' and your encounters with George Wolfe. He was a special person.

One reply I received said that those balsa wood airplanes were made near his Grandpa's home in Wakefield, Mass., where his dad grew up. He said he received many of them as gifts when he visited there. I wish my grandparents lived there.

Okay, now on to the main reason for this e-mail. I was recently out on a classmate's boat enjoying a perfect day in the back bay area of Cape May. What was also fun was a discussion later that night at dinner as to why I have never written anything about birthday parties in Glen Rock. I had no explanation as to why that never occurred – other than I never thought of doing it – so here goes.

My mother was a great cake baker. Her cakes from French crumb cake to regular cakes were always spectacular, although the French crumb cake from the Glen Rock Bakery was pretty darn good, too.

Whenever I went to a birthday party and was given a slice of highly decorated birthday cake, I always took a few polite bites, but never finished it. That's not why I came to the party. It was for the congeniality of playing games with other kids.

Whether the games were inside playing charades or Pin the Tail on the Donkey or outside trying to keep the non-helium balloons afloat, everyone had a good time.

What was extra special was the opportunity to play Spin the Bottle or Post Office. Spin the Bottle was most kids' favorite. In its utmost simplistic form, a group of kids sat in a circle, alternating between a boy and a girl. A group larger than 10 or twelve was a bit much. Luckily, most parties never had more than a dozen kids – and not everyone wanted to play, anyway.

You spun a bottle and if it pointed at the opposite sex you leaned over, took a step or two on your knees, and gave that person a kiss, usually on the cheek; but depending on who was involved, lips were not out of question.

If the spinning bottle stopped and was pointed at a player of the same sex, the person either got to go again or the bottle was moved to point to the person next to them. I was always surprised at how often the bottle stopped and pointed to the same person - it was a curious occurrence.

Post office was an odd game wherein a person went outside the room and knocked on the door and said 'Postman'. Then someone accepted the letter and paid for it with a kiss. Obviously, the games were not all that complicated.

Although Postman was not too popular, another played in the middle grades was – Seven Minutes in Heaven, an enhanced version of Spin the Bottle. After the bottle was spun, the two people selected went into a closet for seven minutes. I know – how scandalous is that, but it rarely lasted that long.

Although, for the most part, there was probably just a lot of whispering going on, it does give two people the privacy to do whatever they wanted. I'm guessing a kiss or two is about as far as most people went, but since the door was closed, we'll never know, now will we?

The last game I can recall is 'Apple Passing'. It was a pretty simple game wherein you took an apple, placed it under your chin, and passed it along down the line without using your hands. With kids entering puberty this game could get interesting very quickly.

I don't know about you, but childhood birthday parties are one aspect of my life I don't want to revisit. Been there, done that.

And if I missed any of your parties – Happy Birthday!!!

- Dave

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A Means of Transportation –

Recently I went on a great boat ride in a classmate's boat around the bay in the Cape May-Wildwood area, and during our outing a discussion took place about bikes we had as children.

I'm going to assume that as a kid you all liked to ride a bike. I know I did. Still do.

Starting out on a tricycle was fun, but it didn't get me very far – or at least my parents didn't allow me to take it very far. And that was okay since I lived halfway up on a hill on a single, dead end street.

I mentioned once before that I resided in the section of Glen Rock that was part of the old Ridgewood Country Club and golf course, and other than Greenway Road where I lived there were no other streets in my neighborhood.

The only connecting road to anywhere at that time was Lincoln Avenue, and my parents didn't allow me to ride there. I didn't like the traffic so I wouldn't have gone up there anyway. It wasn't until the early 50's that my area was developed into a true housing area with streets and about 50 homes.

I quickly progressed to my sister's old two-wheeler, but quickly outgrew it. My parents did get me another bicycle. It was used but in excellent shape. I rode it for a few years until my ninth birthday when I received a red Schwinn Corvette bike. It had chrome fenders and was beautiful. I rode that bike everywhere.

Isn't it interesting that back in the day we used our bikes as a means of transportation, but today's children are driven everywhere by their parents. Where I live now it is rare to see kids riding a bike. I would have been miserable had I not owned a bike to take me where I wanted to go. My mother would not have driven me. Yes, in a downpour, she would take me to school, but my mom never would have taken me to all the various places I wanted to go every day.

To continue with bikes for just a bit more, in seventh grade, on my way home from school, I was hit by a car going in the opposite direction on Hamilton Avenue near Gramercy Place. A young male driver was in a hurry

and passed a car in front of him. He said he didn't see me. I found that hard to believe or at least I did once I got out of the hospital.

I was thrown off my bike and landed on my head and had other bruises here and there. And, yes, I know what you are probably thinking about my head, but no matter.

Policeman Neil Finn (later Chief Finn) was first on the scene and accompanied me to the Ridgewood Valley Hospital in the ambulance. He stayed with me until my parents arrived. We stayed friends over the years. He lived on Doremus Avenue two doors away from another classmate's house.

Needless to say, my Schwinn bike was totally ruined in the accident and I got a new lightweight Raleigh bicycle to replace it. The bike was dark green, was made in Britain, and had three gears. It was a super bike.

I now own an electric bike, a Biria made in Germany. It's great. It has seven gears and can go for about 50 miles on a single charge. Living in flat Cape May County, and only a block from a bike path, it was a perfect choice for an aging bike rider.

It is sometimes my means of transportation as I have taken it to the supermarket, Post Office, and Home Depot. Bikes continue to be a way for me to get around, and they will always be a part of my life.

How about you?

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Another Day or Two or Three –

The reunion was great. While the number of attendees was lower than I would have liked, we all had a great time. Being around people you have known for over 55 years is marvelous. And thank you to all who had a hand in organizing it. You did a wonderful job.

After writing my memories about playing in Diamond Brook, waiting for my chance to win at musical chairs, entering school through a boys' only or girls' only entrance, proms and dances, etcetera, etcetera, I have finally reached my limit of Glen Rock remembrances. I will try to come up with other mini-histories, but I am slowing down.

But before I let go of all of this, I would like to pass along something my wife, Nancy, and I recently learned from Art Smith on a cruise last week around Cape May Point with Alan Furler and his wife, Susan, on their boat.

Sure we enjoyed having at least a dozen dolphins playing in the water alongside us, a terrific ocean view of a lighthouse or two, and an up close assessment of a WWI sunken concrete ship – the SS *Atlantus*, but it is what Art mentioned in a conversation with Al and me that truly enlightened me. You may know the following, but I found it very interesting.

Art revealed that if you wanted to know what year it was for us when we entered first through ninth grade, just look at the last digit of the year. So, for first grade it was 1951, for second grade it was 1952, for third grade it was 1953, and so on through 1959 for ninth grade.

And just when I thought I knew everything about my years in Glen Rock, I learned something new, interesting and unique. Thanks Art.

Thank you to all who have commented to me over the past 22 years about my writings. I have truly enjoyed reading them as much as I have loved reminiscing and writing about my childhood. Or should I say our childhood? Whatever the case may be, it has been fun.

For any of you who may have missed some of my class e-mails, I have attached a 'Word' edition of my writings. It makes it easier to enlarge the type size than the pdf copy on the class website.

It also provides a ‘Search’ option so you can look up what you may want to find – like dance, Mr. Krause or Mr. Hollinger, or Duck Pond, etc. But in any case, I can’t imagine anyone reading the over 550 pages on a computer or printing out what I have written.

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<http://grhs63.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/A-Boy-His-Life-and-Glen-Rock-New-Jersey-2016.pdf>