

MOUNT VERNON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



CLASS OF 1968

40 Year Reunion

MEMORIES OF MAIN STREET MT. VERNON FROM THE CLASS OF MVHS 1968

from Barb Thomsen Neal:

One of my favorite places on Main Street was the Maidrite. You could buy a chocolate ice cream cone for 10 cents. I don't think you can even buy bubble gum for that price any more. Who could forget "Dirty Joe's"? You could buy penny candy, frozen Milky Ways and lemonade pop, and of course on popcorn on band concert nights. Hmm...do you think I love food?

from Patti Forde Mussig:

There are a lot of memories, good and sad: Dancing up at City Hall before I had to catch the bus home. Going to games with my girlfriends and checking out the cute guys. I will say no names! Working at the Sun news and at the dean's office at Cornell while I was in school. I thank all for giving me good memories. We don't need to remember the sad times.

from Steve Andrew:

Bauman's...Smitty then and now. Some things never change.

from Sharon Broulik Kadlec:

Walking uptown after school, looking to see what new records came in--I believe it was the hardware store. At that time I remember Mr. Studt, if it was Vernon, I'm not sure. But he would joke with us. And of course the bakery was always the smell uptown. Oh, but the fat that went to the hips. (Ha ha) The memories...

from Candy Miller Plotz:

I was a bus kid so remember the wonderful bus driver named Laverne Herbst! He was the best. French fries at the small restaurant by the dime store. All the Friday night dances after the football games, especially with the Stompers.

from Jane Colehour Pospisil:

Growing up in Mt. Vernon was a wonderful experience for me. It was a safe town full of good people. Parents welcomed whole groups of children into their homes and yards. Nicely, parents were usually married back then...only one of my friends came from a split home. We'd spend hours away from home, checking in with our folks only periodically. We loved summertime, when we'd play ball until it grew dark, then switch to Ghost to Ghost. We caught lightning bugs and picked apples off neighborhood trees and grapes off ancient vines, and the owners just waved at us and smiled. We'd pedal to the swimming pool and coat ourselves with baby oil and iodine... a sure way to get a tan...at least we thought so. We'd paddle around in the water perfecting our "synchronized swimming" routines. We all but drowned, but wouldn't give up! No, I wouldn't trade my childhood for anything. None of us seemed to have any more than the others and, if they did, they simply shared. Friendships were strong and lasted for years.

Growing up I just loved Main Street (actually 1st Street, but it was always Main to us) in MV. It seemed like Midway at a carnival. During our annual town festival (MV Fun Days, MV Crazy Days, MV Kolach Day, MV Heritage Days, etc.) it was truly magical.

As a child I loved the dime store (Stoll's) and the bus stop. There we could buy a bunch of penny candy, all in crinkly, brightly colored paper. A quarter would net enough to get us through an afternoon...even if shared among our constant posse of friends.

In junior high and high school a favorite hangout was Day's Café. It was tucked away behind Mr. Day's barbershop where the Sun is now located (I think!). A whole gaggle of us girls would crowd in after school to share French fries and bottles of Dr. Pepper. It was a happy, carefree time.

We also loved the Maidrite. It sat up on the corner where the Walden building is now. Heck you could get an ice cream cone for a nickel a scoop...so we'd have 3! Caddie corner across the street was Clay's Jeweler's. One of my first gifts from Kenny came from there....I was in 8th grade! Mr. and Mrs. Clay were always nice to us.

For a short while there was Manny's Corner, a little pizza place on the south side of the street. We young ones probably drove the owner half crazy with our chatter and presence in general.

The An-Nu dress shop window was always an attention-getter. The ladies in there would let us try on clothes, knowing we'd probably not be buying a single thing. Jenny's Shoes was always fun, too. Diana Petrick's grandma was Jenny, and she put up with Diana and her silly girlfriends. The guys always went to Bauman's. We'd go there, too, sometimes to buy jeans. We'd then hurry home to stitch up the legs, so they were good and tight. We needed just the right look to go with our mohair sweaters. I never had one of my own, but my friend would always let me borrow one of hers. We must have all looked a little silly to outsiders... all dressed in the same clothes, wearing our hair the same way. Ha!

*One of my all-time favorite places was the Strand Theater. Oh, my. The thrill of watching **The Fly** sitting next to my sisters...and having boys try to scare us silly. We'd flirt and giggle, and it was the best. I remember when one of us had the first "date" there. We were all so jealous. I remember, too, watching some of the older kids "necking" away in the balcony. It was so exciting! Mrs. West would walk down the aisle with the look of death on her face, and we'd all sit forward and not say a word as she shone her flashlight in our row. Don't think we fooled her at all, but we sure thought we did.*

from Carol Pospisil Lee:

You would never find a place like Dirty Joe's candy store today! And can you believe a men's store like Bauman's has lasted all these years!

from Leonard Ditch:

The teen dances behind the police station, which were after the Friday night football and basketball home games. Manny's Pizza Place.

from Robert Davis:

I remember cruising Main Street in my '57 Chevy, and after all the gas stations closed, I'd stop and drain all the gas out of the hoses on the gas pumps, usually enough to get another couple hours of cruising time! I also remember getting caught in South Cedar Park after hours and having to pick up litter one weekend at the park as punishment.

from Janet Henderson Lacy:

Across the street from the high school was Wes Kleineck's Standard Station—good for a quick cold pop, Buresh Implement, Dr. Rahn's office, Stoltz's Dry Cleaning, Beranek's Hardware, Dr. Ware's office, Shutt's Pharmacy, The Wooden Horse Gift Shop, the popcorn stand open on band concert nights, I think manned by Dick Bensmiller's sister Linda, An-nu dress shop (our blue gym uniforms were ordered through the shop), Stoll's Ben Franklin, Blackie's Variety on the north side, Johnson's Hardware (North side). I would purchase 4-H project supplies and it had all of those oak drawers full of nuts, bolts and stuff and a string dispenser hung from the ceiling. Kaliban's Appliance—Karen played piano accompaniment for band contests.

Jenny's Shoes(Diana Petrick's grandma), Jane Colehour's parents' Care Center—our 4-H group sang Christmas carols and visited for service projects. Jane's monkey that wore a diaper. Marching band first period and the little girl across from Ward School—I think she had cerebral palsy, who would laugh and giggle when we'd practice our street marching and Mrs. Wallace, junior high math teacher, would get upset because we'd stop and play for the child (loudly). Marching 100 strong in a school of 300, the Iowa Corn Song, straight rows and in step. My tumbling across the football field when the bells got a cross wind—Mr. Smykil deciding “those aren't for you—you have to be able to reach the top bar and hold on.”

Mr. Addis' dedication in my receiving homework and credit for extra work when I was home with a long stretch of illness. Mr. Craig's first year of teaching, erasing the blackboard with nothing on it, tripping over the wastebasket often—perhaps size 15 shoes had something to do with it—and having No Idea how freshman girls react when having a fainting spell.

Woof N Poof, every leftover known to the kitchen on the lunch menu. Cherry bombs going off in the bathroom next to Mr. Beckman's German classroom. Mr. Beckman playing the piano and the class singing German songs.

Boy/ Girl combined gym classes due to one space. The boys literally moving you around like chess pieces during volleyball. The terror Esteban and Luis felt at their first fire drill, thinking it was an earthquake.

The student teachers from Cornell. Having prom in the commons on April 1st and it snowed! The school board was adamant about no out-of-town dances because of a girl's death coming home one year. GRA sweetheart dances at the country club, decorating the gym for Homecoming, band concerts in the park during the summer, playing at the cemetery on Memorial Day, learning to drive a stick shift on these hills with Mr. Frantz. Mr. Wallace's cow that ended up in his yard on various occasions. Mr. Hickey who picked up "extras" at Ward School so they didn't have to walk to the new elementary.

Friendships that were formed and contributed to our lives in ways we still cannot fully appreciate. Even though the Vietnam War was on the Nightly News and many of our school members were being drafted, high school was an isolated, safe place to grow, learn, prepare and plan. Not all of our Then Dreams developed, but along the way it prepared us for today.

40 years, oh, my! The class ring sits in my jewelry box, photos in a folder, and memories near and dear and yet I still haven't decided what I'm going to do when I grow up. The lessons learned at Mt. Vernon High School are still relevant!

from Linda Carter:

Here's my remembrance of Main Street Mt. Vernon from high school years. Since I was only there for my senior year, I may have some names or details wrong, so please feel free to fix up what I've written so it's correct.

Office practice class (or Secretarial Training, or whatever it was called—Mrs. Fossler's class?). Some of us worked a couple of times a week in a real office in MV. A couple of others and I worked in the superintendent's office. Judy Penn was in the office as well as ??? And of course the superintendent ???? The cool thing was that we got to leave the school building DURING THE DAY! And walk from the school to the office all by ourselves. DURING THE DAY!!!! We were such hot stuff! The office was on Main Street across from it seems like a bank and maybe the fire station, and was on second floor.

And remember the portable buildings they put in that year (that consumed part of the parking lot)? Mr. Landis had government in one, and the other was the music building (Mr. Stine, Mrs. Kopacek, and Mrs. Edwards).

And the oh-so-beautiful Cornell College campus. So truly elegant. Lush green rolling hills and King Chapel.

And the guy who owned the quonset/duplex half a block north of Main Street where it crosses the street at the closest corner of campus, who drove along Main Street in the mornings and offered rides to kids he saw walking to school.

And I remember the train derailment that happened in MV close to the beginning of our senior year. We walked to where it had happened, and I picked up a squashed Spam can or something like that. I was excited that I had moved to someplace where things happened. (Oh, to be of a mindset again that that seemed like something big.)

And Stoll's department store—the store with two storefronts it was so big! And the cool sale they had on artwork. We got some pics for only a dollar.

Of course, I'll always remember the slumber parties our gang had almost every weekend. And Gayle's colored popcorn—I loved that.

from Craig Sheetz:

Well here goes: Just sitting here at my desk trying to reminisce about Mt Vernon brings back some good things (hard to believe that it has been 40 years). I can remember sitting in class at the high school on a warm spring day with the windows open hearing the bell ring at Randall's gas station as cars were stopping to get gas. What was it then, 30 cents a gallon, and look at it now. Can also hear the tractors running at International shop (I believe it was Buresh's). You mentioned Yeisley's Bakery, I can remember going there everyday after school and getting an apple square which was one of his specialties. I can also remember going to Joe's Confectionery to get just about anything you wanted that you probably couldn't get across the street at Stoll's Ben Franklin. I can remember that if you needed a haircut, you had three to choose from, Kudart's, Day's and I can't remember the third one (next to Dr Prall's). Had two dentists (Dr Harrison, Dr Prall), three doctors (Dr Ware, Dr Rahn, and Dr Sautter). Can remember going to the Strand on weekends to watch the latest released movies or going to the Maid Rite (I believe it was still on the corner) to get a quick sandwich or go to Day's for lunch. If you needed anything from the hardware, you had Johnson's Hardware, or if you needed anything from the drug store you had Schutt's. There was also a meat market (can't remember the name) that always cut meats to perfection according to Dad. If you needed to buy a watch or needed to buy some jewelry there was Clay's. And of course you cannot forget about Bauman's. That was the place for the guys to get all the up-to-date clothes that we need to wear, and the girls had An-Nu. You had Randal's gas station on one corner and the DX across the street. You had Jack & Jill for groceries, Kaliban's for appliances, Roberts for photos, 2 dry cleaners (Waldens behind Bauman's and Stoltz's along with a laundromat). There was just about everything that was needed for a small town that we did not have to go to Cedar Rapids all of the time. And there was the famous U-Turn on both ends of Main Street. These were always fond memories. You could always find the smiling faces of either Sid or Cookie delivering the mail everyday. And if you were thirsty there was always the drinking fountain on the corner (water was always cold), or if you needed to go to the bathroom while you were uptown there were the bathrooms in the basement of the City Hall. Dances at the American Legion, and who could forget Press Hill during the winter trying to see who could sled the furthest towards the end of town and remembering that long walk pass Ward (Jr High) back to the top to do it all over again. Those were the days.

from Rita Suchomel Dudley:

Main Street was always a meaningful space in my life, having grown up behind the old Shell station on the corner of 1st Street and 5th Avenue. The city park was our back yard and my dad walked to work each day to the Mt. Vernon Hawkeye Record office. At the age of ten, I moved to a new house across the street from Washington Elementary, so I walked to the Ward Junior High and the high school, with Main Street a part of my route. I can remember Dirty Joe's candy store, but had to salivate over the treats from the outside, since my mom didn't approve of us buying unwrapped candy sold from the huge jars on the counter. I do remember Topsy Tull, a Cornell prof who lived near us, took us little kids us in the store one day to buy popsicles for each of us. I remember Johnson's and Beranek's Hardware stores because my dad was always buying something needed to for repair jobs at home and we would tag along on the trip. Beranek's sold LP stereo records—my first and only purchase of an LP there was classical music piece I had heard at Gayle Wallace's house and fallen in love with. I remember Connie Lehman and I walked to school as freshmen and passed Beranek's window each day, allowing enough time to stop and gaze at the new Beatles' album on display in the window and swoon over our favorite Beatle.

Experiencing Yeisley's Bakery was a must in town. In the fall, freshly made taffy apples would show up on the shelves just before school was let out and on a few occasions I allowed myself the spending money to buy one. The glazed doughnuts were to die for. Just the smell of sweets baking made the whole of Main Street a warm, homey place to be.

I loved looking at the jewelry at Clay's and bought a ring there with a black pearl and a white pearl—my birthstone. Trudy was fun to play with because we always got to scoop through the shop. Elmer was Santa Claus at the dime store on several Saturday mornings before Christmas each year and I didn't quite know how to regard him outside of his shop context. My folks never accompanied us to go sit on Santa's lap—we just walked up the hill and did it ourselves for the free bag of candy.

Jenny Petrick's grocery store was a fun place to be after school, too. Diana Petrick, her granddaughter, is a second cousin, so she would stay with her grandma on nights she didn't ride the bus home, and we got to play on the second floor level where the office and storage were located. We could look down through the lattice work that separated the first and second floors and watch the tops of customers' heads as they shopped, spying on the purchases they put in their baskets.

Later that location became Stoll's Ben Franklin store, and my! what treasures from Japan we could find there! I remember the little tin cars and cheap toys for a dime, the coloring books and Little Golden books we bought and the everyday supplies. It was in Stoll's that I first saw a sweatshirt with writing on the front—a Cornell sweatshirt—and I thought it was so neat that you could identify yourself with writing on clothing. Before the mid-sixties, no one had logos or writing on clothes, a huge change from today. I remember buying a magazine rack there for a Christmas gift from all six of us kids to our parents the first year we decided we should be giving them Christmas gifts. Stoll's was a great example of the expanding consumerism of the 60's and 70's, as it added a new section to its square footage each year, eventually overtaking a quarter of the block.

The Wooden Horse brought a cosmopolitan touch to provincial Main Street. Our eyes were opened to the idea that we could buy kitchen utensils that not only worked, but provided décor to the room. Antiques were now the rage for decorating. Colors were trendy and current, and some items were just for show. The display was nicely arranged so that items for sale were not just lined up on a shelf in rows or piled in bins. Each piece, we could tell, had been lovingly selected to stand out for the customer. Style had come to retail trade.

Roberts' Photo lured customers to its windows to gaze at the most recent portrait or wedding photo on display. We ugly duckling teenage girls could imagine ourselves in one of those senior photos eventually, knowing the camera could make us look much better than the mirror did.

Main Street Mt. Vernon had all the requisite shops a small town in the 1960's needed to serve its citizens. We were quite self sufficient back then!

from Randy Harman:

My most memorable spot on Main Street would have to be Manny's Corner where the Stompers not only got their musical start, but when we would perform following home football games on Friday nights. This was a great social meeting place for not only MV high school kids, but a lot of outside high school kids as well.