

Middle Grade School Memories

Love it when the idea for a story idea falls in my lap – feel like a street portrait artist, with mine being word portraits. Will share memories from 5th thru 9th grades including some classmate names.

I was totally enchanted by **Bill Rudolph's** "Blue Suede Lake," included in the class "Writing Collection." <http://www.mihsclassof62.com/Writing%20Collection%202002%20Reunion.pdf>

Mercer Crest 5th Grade with Ms Noseworthy 1954-55

Delivering milk bottles with **Dave Svendsen** before lunch to our wing to go with our bag lunches. Remember an early price of two cents. In high school it was paper cartons for four cents.

In class beating out **Dave Anderson** to win first place in the stand-in-front-of-the-room US State Capitol naming contest – not dreaming I would later visit all now 50 states and live in four corners of the country plus Alaska: New London, Conn; Atlanta, GA; Los Angeles and Monterey, CA; Fairbanks, AK.

Writing about the Civil War cotton gin in my spiral notebook. Hating diagramming sentences with my English book. In my South Seattle Skyway 4th grade class Mrs Thoreson had said, "Just write, don't worry about grammar," as I waxed eloquent with "An Adventure on Saturn with Allan, Albert and Andrew, Part 1 and 2," 18 printed pages. I had fallen from the castle parapet to the dungeon!

In School Safety Patrol walking with one of the girls Monica (?) **Taylor** down the madrona tree-lined dirt road from the school to 40th Street, then up to the corner at 40th and 85th Streets to assume our posts at the crosswalk. Seeing **Marsha Piercy** and her sister **Patty, Fred Franke, Louise Wilkinson, Al Miller, and Diane Godfrey** and others walking to school. Watching the world go by. Pastor Charles Dion giving us a cheery hello each morning as he walked from the manse to his Lutheran Church across the street.

Feeling embarrassed as Pastor Chuck would lead songs including a "Hi Schosh!" yell at the monthly Cub Scout Pack meetings in front of **Christy Grage** as she attended with her younger brother Hans. The pack Meetings were held in the wooden South Mercer Community Club building in woods that became the south end shopping center.

Playing kickball with **Linda Green** and others during recess.

Friday after class high school football games on the at times muddy Mercer Crest grass field which later became the stadium field. Me pulling out sticks during recess to get the water to flow down the drains at the bottom of the steep dirt slope that is now the stadium bleachers.

Bus #4 having a difficult time going up Gallagher Hill one morning when it was almost out of gas.

Lakeview 6th Grade with Mr. Slater 1955-56

The school is new and we are the senior class. Each morning I walked over to **Steve Hanson's** house at the bottom of MercerWood Drive (now in front of the Shore Club) to get picked up by the bus along with **Paul Jones, Frank Lyon and Janet Naylor**. It would continue on picking up **Jon Eddy, Dave Page, Francie Wood, Sue Klovee, Cathy Close, Bob Aura, Ken Clark, Rick Boston** and others as it circled all the way around the south end before going up to the school.

Some days **Paul Jones, Frank Lyons** and I would take the bus down the center of the island as we left class at the end of the day. At least once **Frank, Paul, Linda Green, Linda Stevenson**, myself and others all crammed into the back bus seat. **Frank, Paul** and I would get off at Mercer Crest, and proceed thru the school grounds and along the north high school wall, looking in the classroom windows including the Home Ec room on our way towards 40th street and on to our homes. Attending high school seemed so distant.

Frank boasted of having a plastic comb in his back pocket which reduced the severity of blows he received in a paddling from Mr Slater. Several of us boys received baseball fielding practice from Mr Slater, kneeling down on a knee to help scoop up the ground balls. I was frequently able to borrow **Frank's** excellent mitt.

The girls watched a Disney video on reproduction. The mothers wanted us boys to view it also, but Mr Slater got embarrassed watching it, so we boys didn't see it. The girls were very energized that spring, and cleaned out some of the close-in forest area so it looked wonderful. The whole class got in the mood, and I remember bicycling from my house to meet **Dave Svendsen**, and then walking our bikes up a dirt trail above his house that later became SE 53rd Place, a main road from the Appleton East Mercer area up to the top of the island near the Islander Middle School built there later as we proceeded to school.

I'm upstairs in the small film projection room as we watch weekly movies in the multi-purpose room. Keeping the reels straight and film winding correctly thru the projector.

Some of the young women were very nervous about not being "normal" as we all were weighed in the area near the nurse's and principal's office. Later I would learn that the "normal" bell-shaped curve is the whole curve, not just the middle measurement number.

Mrs Allsworth (**Jim's** mother) and Mrs Lowe (?) (husband was a volunteer fireman and the Firemanship Merit Badge Counselor, son ahead of us in school) brought the school lunch cart at lunchtime. Was lunch twenty-five cents? Hot dogs on Wednesday, ice cream on Friday. Some of us helped wash dishes. The overhead hose over the sink would jump up as you squeezed the handle and water squirted out.

In a reading group with **Jon Eddy** and **Dennis Overbye**, and feeling a little behind. We make up a test for the rest of the class, and they make up one for us. Racing to see who could finish the tests first and hand them in at the front.

Mr Slater reading from the "Cruise of the Dipsy Doo," and later about firefighter jump school. We initially could draw and write as he spoke, but later not allowed as notes had been passed.

Loved the Friday night square dances in the school multi-purpose room. One dance where one by one we ended up in the middle of the circle with the others yelling "Caw, caw, caw," something about crows?

Assisting with an evening Parent - Teacher open house. **Janet Naylor** and I lead a group of parents thru the boiler room, and the boiler starts up for us on cue!

7th grade Jr-Sr High School 1956-57

We go up by bus to visit as we finish 6th grade. During the ensuing week-long summer hike the more senior Boy Scouts try to scare us with stories of us new boys being locked out of the locker room and standing outside on the grass with no clothes on.

Starting the Jr-Sr High School and looking all the way up to the seniors: Being that old "It's never going to happen – I'm never going to grow up!" Don't even think about it. The old school busses with the long noses. Remember seeing an old annual with the girls in nearly ankle-length long dresses - would enjoy seeing annuals from all these years.

Ms Cunningham surprises us in two-period History – English class with a pop quiz the first week. Later I'm one of few who answer her question about afternoon thunderstorms in Mexico City, her favorite summer retreat. I get a thank you note from her the last day of class. Teachers don't coordinate workload, so it's huge or small amount of homework. All the assemblies Mr Barton arranged with the short classes and strange schedules. The faculty-student basketball game with Ms Bartleson frequently sitting on the ball fixing her hair and makeup. Someone putting a smelly item in the room of an after school dance - were they jealous?

Speech class with Mr Barton with a debate on subscription TV. Art class with Mr Petersky – I still have my paper mache fish. Sitting behind Lauralee Watson in Ms Dorsey's Algebra class. A sweet dream about her I didn't get to share with her before she left us. Ms Shurr's Reading class

My first skiing at Ski School on Saturdays up to Snoqualmie Summit. Meet at Mercer Crest to catch the bus – it's so dark out – lots of loud happy voices as we load the buses to go! All day rope tow for a dollar. Riding on the Poma Lift. Throw your money away for all day chair on the one lift up to the Thunderbird Lodge for \$3.50! A Thunderburger and fries for a buck for lunch.

Sock hop on the polished gym floor to "Victrola and his Needles" or similar title. Hearing Jimmy Rogers and "Kisses Sweeter than Wine" all night long. My first suit purchased for the dance at ValuMart in East Gate, still remember the metal buttons. Could see the neon sign of the

alternately flashing “Sun” and “Set” of the East Gate Sunset Drive-In theater across the East Channel from our house balcony in the evenings.

I take over half of Steve Page’s, **Dave Page’s** older brother’s afternoon Seattle Times paper route at end of school year, extending on East Mercer from then Highway 10, now I-90 down to near MercerWood Drive, later extends further down to Neff’s house, a couple of turns north of Ferncroft road. Initially pick up papers in a small wooden building delivery center at corner of now Island Crest Way and 40th street. In the next year **Jim Morris** and I move and share an afternoon bundle drop at US 10 (now I-90) and East Mercer, he heading north, and I south for the next five years.

Rick Boston and **Jim Allsworth** have similar routes in the south end where they use motor scooters.

8th Grade 1957-58

For Mr Chafee’s science class project I visit Puget Power in Bellevue (the only two story building in town?) to get information on high tension power lines. Person talks about kilo-volt amps on the lines coming over from the hydro dams on the Columbia River.

Mr Barton hosts noon movies – I can’t watch as a “Creature from the Black Lagoon” reaches for a comely woman swimmer. More assemblies – talking with **Judy Fry** in a covered walkway above the gym on one of the strange schedule days.

Cathy Close and others leading a class project to clean up the brush above the new lower area art and shop wing. Going to the island downtown for lunch afterwards.

School paper with students posing for the ads. “The sack” dress (wasn’t there another name for it?) evolves into the “shift.” Description of “back interest” in fashion reviews.

Mrs Lannigan’s two-session History – English classes. We memorize the Constitution pre-amble to give in front of the class, **Jon Eddy** does the Gettysburg Address. Lots of book reports in front of class. All of Classes watch Frank Capra’s “Why We Fight” series together. Hearing Mr James teaching an interesting sounding economics class across the hall. Algebra with Ms Cohen.

9th Grade at South Mercer Jr High 1958-59

Was selected with 20 or so others to be on 9th grade School Service club. During late summer we assist with setting up school, unpacking books, moving chairs. When school starts we raise money with a multi-purpose room lunch time snack bar. We will be the senior class here. More noon movies from Mr Barton.

Mr. Wedemeyer's General Science class rejects the given textbook, and we use a college text. Those end of chapter homework questions in the book were hard! Book reports out of Scientific American magazine. Class projects each quarter. With guidance from Dad I first make a one-tube radio, and end with a talking light beam using auto headlights to create and capture the light signal. Learned all my organic chemistry from Mr Wedemeyer – the information just flowed in, the sign of a great teacher. We called our class the "Family" – our volleyball team had the same name. Five from the class go to MIT. The night before the final I take my own test and do well, and proceed to an activity at church.

Mr Wedemeyer also brought in some great bands for weekend dances.

At one of the school dances newly arrived **John Green** and **Jennifer Ballard** are a sensation on the dance floor.

After school ballroom dance class, with jitterbug to "Rockin' Robin." Take the Activity Bus home.

Should have had more direct instruction about footnotes to use in my English paper on Vacuum Tubes. Neighbor Skoog boys are playing at their expansive waterfront lawn on a gorgeous May Sunday afternoon – I better get back home and finish that paper! Another paper for Washington State History class using Harold Mansfield's new book, "Vision, the Story of Boeing."

Margaret Mounsey asks me in the hallway, "What would you do if Mount Rainier blew it's top," a question for the school paper. "Head for the hills" was my reply.

Bob Spielholz and I share all the same classes

Longest free throw as **Larry Vandenberg** wins a basketball game with his game-ending effort. **Jean Stanislaw** takes her group of cheerleaders across the gym floor to say hi to the opposing team cheerleaders.

Earning Eagle Scout with **Jon Eddy**, **John Davis** and **Paul Jones** (others?)

Again the school bus goes all the way down East Mercer and around the south end of the island before going up to the school. Again occasionally catching the center island bus home.

As we head back to the **high school** the next year as sophomores the "Mushroom" multi-purpose room has been completed, and will host a split lunch time and all the dances now.

Allan