Olney Memories # 130

  March 14, 2017

 

Greetings to all of you and hope you enjoy reading the issue of OM # 130. Be thinking of more memories to send in for the next issue!

Please don’t forget when you have an address change to let me know when your e-mail changes so you won’t miss any issues of the Olney Memories!

There are some e-mails that are being returned to me because of wrong addresses which I am listing below in hopes that some of you can help by giving me their current e-mail. Thank you for your help.

Jim Scherer

Georganne Barthelme

Vicki Slunaker Merritt

Brad Richardson

Cheryl Farrar

Cindy Cribs Combs

Brad Martin

La Donna Cook Golf

James Paul Fish

Bill May

Carol Britton

Bob Taylor

Ann Weesner King

Class of 1960

Pianoann97@aol.com

Richard Williams

**Hello “OM” readers!**

**You can help us help some RCHS 2017 graduates!**

**The Tiger Alumni Center (TAC) and the Tiger Pride Alumni Association (TPAA) are nearing the end of their combined 2017 Richland County High School scholarship drive, with the goal of $20,000 resulting in 20 scholarships of $1,000 each.**

**Last year, with the help of many individuals (local citizens, past graduates, staff, and many others) and businesses, the TAC and TPAA were able to provide 20 graduating seniors with $1000 scholarships.  The Richland County High School scholarship committee (composed of select teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators) chooses the recipients of the scholarships based on the TPAA's criteria:**

**• Students in good academic standing and at least a B average.**

**• Students who have demonstrated the RCHS Core Expectations of Respect, Responsibility, and Work Ethic.**

**• Financial need of the student is considered in the selection, but it is not the sole criteria.**

**Donations with checks made payable to Tiger Pride Alumni Association may be sent to:**

**Janet Everette**

**906 E. Cherry Street**

**Olney, IL 62450**

**Your support is very much appreciated!**

**The 2017 scholarship drive is latest of six with the first one raising $4,000 in 2012.  That drive was administered by TAC founder Richard Ray Williams with the cooperation of then ERHS principal Chris Simpson.  Both TAC and the Tiger Pride Alumni Association (TPAA) have provided the leadership for the last two drives.**

**The total raised since then, including the 2016 drive, equals over $51,000 or 51 scholarships of $1,000 each.   To learn more about the history of these drives, “OM” readers are welcome to visit the pages of the Tiger Alumni Center’s website. Click on the link** [**erhsalumni.net**](http://erhsalumni.net)**.  Then visit the Scholarship pages listed on the left of each page.**

**Richard Williams**

**Class of 1960**

**TAC and TPAA Founder**

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John Helm

mlehjerhs@gmail.com

Enjoyed both Harvey Zimmerle's note and Jim Totten's note; Jim, that's exactly the way the Olney Tigers song went!  I don't remember any other verses.  I must agree with Harvey; our generation was in absolutely the very best time for things which happened at home and at highschool.  The kids in my neighborhood had all sorts of games we all played together; "Mother, may I?" was a popular game, along with "Red rover, red rover, let Anne come over".  There was a vacant lot right next to my late wife's home, and we played many a game of softball there.  I hit a long one, right into Perdue Atwood's garage window!  I apologized, and paid for the window.  As a kid in grade school and Jr. High, I rode my bicycle all around town, and the streets seemed to be SO wide!  Now when I visit Olney, the streets have magically shrunk!  Or, maybe they're the same size, but look different now.

John Helm

Class of '58

Dorothy Douthit

dorothy.douthit38@gmail.com

Thanks for sending Ann. They told me about their sleigh and horse, but love seeing this picture and article.

Dorothy Douthit

Gaile Herrin

herringaile@gmail.com

Here are three memories I have thought of below that happened in our household when I was a child. I recently shared them with my own children and want to share them with you.

I saw a post on a very posh new refrigerator. Brought back memories of days gone by. When I was 6 years old in 1939, we moved to Beaver Dam, WI before returning back to Olney. We had an ice box. The ice man delivered ice in a horse drawn wagon, covered with canvass to slow melt and to keep it clean. Each customer had a card divided into 4 parts with the numbers 25, 50, 75, 100 on it. In your front window you would put up the # with the quantity ice you wanted to buy that day, so the ice man could see it from the road and save an extra trip to the house for him. He would bring the ice in and put it in the ice box. All the neighborhood kids followed the wagon trying to get ice chips made when he took an ice pick to divide the hundred pound pieces into 25, 50, or 75 pound pieces. Of course the hundred pound pieces did not have to be divided, if the customer needed that much. Mom made tea and lemonade a lot in summer, to use what was left of the last delivery so room would be made for the new delivery.

During WWII and after for a while, all kinds of things were rationed. You filled out forms for all the family members, and the rationing board determined how many stamps for various things you were eligible for. I believe butter may have been one food item. Anyway, margarine became a butter substitute. It was pure white, in a plastic bag, with a small plastic yellow bubble insert, which you broke and were to kneed thoroughly to mimic butter. Us kids thought it was great to turn the white to yellow, but if you did not do it thoroughly, you could end up having yellow streaks and white streaks. We lived in Palmyra, Wisconsin at the time, the dairy state. Because of this, they would not sell margarine, you were supposed to use butter. This suited my dad fine as he did not like margarine. However when we visited relatives in Olney, IL, (when we had enough gas stamps to make the trip), we bought quite a bit of margarine to take back to Wisconsin. It was cheaper than butter, and mom would use it in cooking and baking. But to please my dad we always had a butter plate on our table at mealtime.

One more items that I specifically remember were rationed were sugar and shoes. We were growing kids and my folks worried constantly that we would either wear out or outgrow our shoes before new stamps arrived. My dad bought a shoe last and other tools to be able to repair shoes and learned how. He would repair his and mom's shoes so they could use stamps for us. If we had not outgrown them yet, he would fix ours. If we had just outgrown them, they were repaired and handed down to the next kid. How many kids now days wear used shoes with new soles on them??

Gaile Herrin

Class of ‘51

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| Ann HillAnthill33@gmail.com  |

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|    I know this store well. Burt Cooksey and his wife Jessie - who was a Landenberger - were the very first owners of that store. (Grandfather Landenberger owned the general store which was located next door to the Litz Hotel). In the 1930's the Cooksey's sold out to the the King family thus King's store was born. The Cookseys moved to Florida and stayed there. There used to be a Cooksey sign in the sidewalk in front of the front door but I think that is gone now. I don't know if this helps at all but thought I would pass it on. Ann Hill***---------------------------------------------------------------------------------*** |

Mike Eckel

mikecr5@wabash.net

**Subject:** **Olney Tigers Fight Song.**

The rest of the fight song goes....
"Ja-hee
Ja-ha
Sis-Boom-Bah!
Olney!...Olney!
Rah! Rah! Rah!"

Mike Eckel

Class of ‘72

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Bernard Morgan

bernardmorgan@mchsi.com

DRAGGIN MAIN

On any given Friday and Saturday night it was the busiest and most traveled mile and a half in the county. Before cell phones and facebook, there was "Draggin Main", the social media of the 50's and 60's. That hallowed route stretched from the Dog N Suds on the west side of town to the Town Talk on the east side. Both restaurants featured a circular drive and curb side service. A lap consisted of beginning at one, circling the drive, driving to the other, circling the drive, and returning. Draggin Main was the Olney version of Cruising.

Cruising is defined as aimless driving. Chuck Berry said it best with his 1964 hit, \*"NO PARTICULAR PLACE TO GO". Ridin’ along in my automobile, My baby beside me at the wheel, I stole a kiss at the turn of a mile, My curiosity runnin’ wild, Cruisin and playin the radio, With no particular place to go. Also in 64 the Beach boys paid tribute with their \*\*"FUN, FUN, FUN". Well she got her daddy's car, And she cruised to the hamburger stand now, Seems she forgot all about the library, Like she told her old man now, And with the radio blasting, Goes cruising just as fast as she can now, And she'll have fun, fun, fun, Til her daddy takes the T-bird away".

Cruising had its origin in Los Angeles in the 20's. One of every two people there owned a car, compared to one in seven nationally. Used Model T's and A's were readily available and cheap. Fenders were taken off, engines modified, and the cars were raced on the dry, desert lake beds. Evolving from that beginning, Mexican Americans in the Los Angeles Barrios created their Lowriders in the 40's. This then spawned the customized creations and muscle cars of the 60's. All these groups shared the love of showing off their vehicles. Driving slow on the main street of the city was a perfect way to accomplish that. War rationing was over, cheap and plentiful gas, a new generation of drivers, a sixteenth birthday, and a new found freedom all combined to create this new phenomenon. Cruising had been born.

Hop in, we'll take a lap, and I'll tell you about some of the sites along the way. My timemachine is set for wayback. Hope you enjoy the ride as we Drag Main in 1965. We'll begin our ride at the Dog n Suds. Dog n Suds was the 1953 creation of two U of I music teachers. At its peak there were over 600 in 38 states. Now fewer than fifteen remain. The oldest continuous operating Dog n Suds is in Robinson, Illinois. It was the second one and began in 1953. This one in Olney began in 1955 is owned and operated by Jack and Mary Lou Propes. Before the Dog n Suds everyone turned around next door at Wally's Root Beer Barrel. It was a barrel shaped building that sat out by the road just west of the Dog. I'll tell you the story of Wally's at another time.

As we begin our journey, the Modern Courts Motel is on your side and the Tip Top is on mine. Also out my window is the Coca Cola Bottling Plant. Coke had its beginnings in Olney in 1905 on South Fair Street. After being sold a couple of times it was purchased by Midwest Coca Cola in 1927. In 1940 the plant moved to its present location. That brings us to the intersection of Routes 50 and 130. Service stations sit on all four corners. Trainers Pure is on the South east side and Wades Conoco is across the street on the north east corner.

Up ahead at the end of the next block on my side is the Blue Flame Gas Company on one corner and east across the street on the other is Keen's West Main Shell. On your side is Walkers Deep Rock Station and east from them on the opposite corner is Fehrenbachers Service Station. Lots of filling and service service stations back in the day. Not so many now.

As we drive east towards downtown we're listening to the hits of 1965. Yesterday by the Beatles, I Can't Get No Satisfaction-the Rolling Stones, Stop In The Name Of Love-Supremes, I Got You Babe-Sonny and Cher, You've Lost That Lovin Feelin-the Righteous Brothers. AM radio was king. The music and the disc jockeys were the best then. The 60's were the greatest era in music-our generation.

We just passed Burch's Grocery, and we're almost to Ludlow Street. Turn left(north) on Ludlow will take you to the Olney City Park. The Park and Fairgrounds combined there in 1879. The State Fair was held here in 1887 and 1888. That was the last time that the State Fair was held outside of Springfield. Homes occupy most of our route until we get to Camp Street which is the beginning of what I call downtown of those days of 1965. Just before Camp on the north is Virginia's Flowers and Drew Gulf Service Station on the corner.

On your side (south looking east) on the corner is the beautiful Congregational Christian Church. In the future the church will relocate and Prairie Farms will purchase the property and remove the building. Prairie Farms Dairy is next. It began as Producers Creamery in 1934 on North Walnut Street. After that is the DX Service Station and then the Railroad Tracks. Back to the Church and on my side is Rich-Law Service on the corner. West Side Mike's Ice Cream Parlor is next. Mike's was owned by Harold and Joyce Michels from 1958-74. They also owned and started East Side Mikes which later became Hovey's. After Mike's is Rural King Supply which just opened this year in 1965. This building was the Ford Auto Dealer back in an earlier time. Nix Brothers International Dealership and Hardware and then Berger and Sons brings us to the Railroad. The O & M Railroad came to Olney in 1855. It became the B & O in the 1890's.

Crossing the tracks and out your window is the Court House. Completed and dedicated in 1916. An earlier one built in 1874 burned in 1913. Here is what I see on my side starting at the tracks. City Cigar Store also known as McGregor Pool Hall, Oasis Tavern, McWilliams Plumbing and Heating, Olney Plumbing and Heating, VFW, and Rechtors on the corner. Walnut Street is the dividing line between East and West Main Street.

There on your right is the First National Bank. There has been a First National in Olney since 1866. The current Bank was chartered in 1934. This block is a narrow block and on this end (north) the bank occupies the entire end of the block. Starting from Walnut and going east on my side are these stores: Wieldt's , Kory-Kora Bakery, Crackel Appliance, and Gaffners Drug Store. Gaffners began busness in 1880. All other blocks on Main begin and end with a street dividing them. The 100 and 200 block of East Main occupy the same block. Reason being Whittle Avenue if extended north would seperate the 100 from the 200. Incidentally Whittle is the only avenue abutting Main, all others are designated as streets. Now after Gaffners is Shermans Department Store, Tressler's Five and Ten, Janet Shop, Musgrove's Shoe, Musgrove's Men's Wear, Woolworth's Dime Store, Jim's Men and Boys, Wieland Goudy Hardware, LaRuth Shop, Drew's Radio and TV, Arcadia Movie Theatre, and Goberts Bootery. The Arcadia opened prior to 1926. The theatre may have been an Opera House and also shown silent movies in its early days. It still has the Orchestra Pit. In the future it will be twinned and then a third sister added. In 51 years in 2016 this grand old lady will pass away. At that time Olney will be without a theatre. This is a long block and your side is just as populated as mine. Your side begins with the Bank separated by Whittle. On the corner is the Jupiter Variety Store, Sessengood Jewelers, Stanley Insurance and Real Estate, McKinney Auctioneer, Goldsmith's Paint and Wallpaper, Bower Drug Store. Bowers began in 1845 and is the oldest business in town. Bowers will be heavily damaged by fire in 1974. After Bowers is Blue Moon Grill, Merle Norman Cosmetics, Tiny Tot Shop, Lynn Ann Store, Kent Barber Shop, Fabric house, Abegglen Brothers, Schmaulsen Drug Store, Don's Department Store, the Eagles Lodge on the corner. Schmaulsen originally was on the corner. After a fire in 1938 they moved two doors west to their present location. Fair Street divides the 200 block from the next, the 300 block.

We'll begin on your side of the car. J&M Cafe, Sears, Dixie Cream Donuts, Anneda Baby Shop, Montgomery Wards, Kings Furniture, and Mullinax Insurance on the corner. On my side I see JC Penny. They didn't have cash registers on the ground floor level. Your money and your saleslip were sent to the second floor and your change returned via a wire mechanism. Penny was a three story building and AM Radio WVLN began on one of the upper levels. Western Auto, Luigi's Pizza, Larkin Shoe, Tracy's Tavern, and Tracy Standard Service Station complete the block. Boone Street splits this block from the next.

Your next sight is the Olney Carnegie Library which was built in 1904 and is now a Museum. The library moved to the new location on West Main in 1990. Moto Gas sits on the east corner. The view from my side starts with the Litz Hotel which in an earlier time was Poland's Garage and Packard Dealership. Chamber of Commerce, Aubrey-Witsman Insurance, Olney Cleaners, Hovey's East Side Mikes, Mac's East Main Shell complete this block. Morgan Street separates this block from the next.

Built in 1915 the old Olney High School, OTHS, occupies the entire north block. After the High School moved to the new building in 1953 it became the Jr. High. The Jr. High moved to the new Middle School in 1976, and the old OTHS building was taken down in 1983. Incidentally the OTHS Athletic Field was at the City Park from 1927 to 1951. In 1951 it moved to the new location which was completed before the new High School. There were several teachers that made the transition to the new High School. Most notably Gus Sliva who began in 1939 at OTHS and served at ERHS until 1977. The block sits vacant today, but the memories will never fade. If you look on your right Dycus Marathon, and Phillips's Brothers Garage sit on this block.

We're now passing the site of the old Olney Sanitarium, Olney's first Hospital, established in 1898. When the new Hospital was completed in 1953, the patients were moved to the new location. Can you imagine the prices at the new hospital in 1953? $12 for a room in a ward, $16 for a room in a double, $20 for a private room, and ER visits are a ghastly $3. What's this world coming to? This block is empty today, but in 1972 the Olney Trust Bank will build a new Bank here. On the south is Leo's Texaco and Dale's Printing Shop.

Out your window on the corner is the Main Street Southern Baptist Church. A McDonalds will sit there in the future. On mine is Hahn's Pure Service, the building and signage are still there today. This completes the downtown as we knew it in 1965. There are several businesses along the cruise route to the east from here as well as a lot of homes. I'll mention a few and also point out some highlights before we reach our destination.

We're going by North Mill which will lead you to the Hospital. Next is North East Street. This will take us to Bird Haven. Founder Robert Ridgway established it in 1906 with the purchase of 18 acres. Later another 96 were added. Ridgway was world renowned in his research of botany and ornithology. HIs lifetime study of birds and plants resulted in over 500 published books and papers. He worked with the Smithsonian Institute over 50 years beginning at age 17. He created the Color Standards and Color Nomenclature. This book features a chart of 1115 colors which is the standard for use in the scientific world. Sadly much of Bird Haven is now under water. Borah Lake opened in 1955 and sat next to the nature sanctuary. The 1971 East Fork Lake project increased the city water supply but put all but two and a half acres of the original eighteen under water.

North Jefferson and North Lincoln are the streets that lead to the High School from Main. On your right is the Olney IGA Foodliner. When not Draggin Main or sitting at the Drive Ins, Cruisers liked to congregate at business parking lots. Grocery stores are popular with their large areas. Different clicks each have their own favorite locations.

There on your right is the Star Station. Usually gas and cigarettes are cheaper here. Today gasoline is thirty one cents and an average price of smokes is about a quarter. On my side is Reabans. Best Hamburger joint in town. Seven burgers for a buck, and they were great. Back in the day before there was a Reabans on this lot, it was Forsyth A-W Root Beer Stand. Cruisers turned around here before the Town Talk was built. Also noteworthy, the Forsyth brothers, John and Ben served as Chief Illiniweek at the U of I. John in 57, 58, 59, and brother Ben in 60, 61, 62, and 63. Sadly Chief, forty two years in the future, will dance no more at the U of I.

That brings us to our destination, The Town Talk. Jerry and Thelma Jones own and operate the Town Talk. It began as a restaurant and added parking and curb service behind in 1962. In 1970 it will be gone. Replaced by a Kentucky Fried Chicken. We'll circle the drive to see who is here. Maybe stop and have a malt. In those days there were no combo meals like today. We had Baskets. Hamburger Basket , Cheeseburger Basket, Fish Basket, or a Tenderloin basket. You got your sandwich, fries, and a drink in a basket. Actually this gem from the past is starting to reappear on menus. Now it's off and back to the Dog. It was easy to drive fifty miles in an evening, " Draggin Main".

Sometimes we vary the route. We'll go out further west to the Skating Rink and the Bowling Alley. We'll stop and go in. Usually the skaters are not of driving age. Lots of youngsters. It's a fun happy place. Skaters glide along to live organ music provided by Fred Noerenberg. The Bowling Alley built in 1953, was reminiscent of a time past, though small. A larger one on South 130 will close this one. Across the street is The Olney Drive In Theatre. Built in 1947 it was popular with families as well as the youth. It was only open during the warm months. Each year it's annual opening was always widely anticipated. During the season it featured Buck Nite. A carload got in for a buck. Dusk til Dawn Shows featuring four or five movies were always fun. It was cheap entertainment for a family in the 50's and 60's. Many brought their own snacks. The kids would go to sleep, and the parents enjoyed a night at the movies. There are less than 350 left in the US today and less than 15 in Illinois with Newton being the closest.

Cruising as we knew it in our glory days is gone forever. Many towns and cities have actually outlawed it. In some, young drivers passing locations more than two or three times an evening are issued citations. Other problems leading to the demise are traffic congestion, accidents, loud engines and stereos, conflicts among cruisers, littering, loitering, and damage to property. Social changes also played a part as well as the gas shortages in the 70's, higher price of gas, cars got smaller and were less exciting among other reasons. Today's youth social interaction is on a phone rather than in their car. A while back I was in Champaign. We were stopped for a long slow moving train. Two girls in the car in front of us opened their doors, ran around the vehicle twice, and hopped back in the car. I laughed and gave them a thumbs up as they passed on their second lap. A double Chinese fire drill. Life is good.

As the Beach Boys said in their 1989 hit, \*\*\* "Still Cruisin". "I'm still cruisin after all these years." In my heart, I'm still "Draggin Main" after all these years. Storyteller Merry Christmas

\*Author makes no claim of ownership. \*Chuck Berry-No Particular Place To Go, \*\*Beach Boys-Fun Fun Fun, \*\*\*Beach Boys-Still Cruisin.

Reference credits. Richland County-A Pictorial History and Olney-Richland County 1841-1991.

Bernard Morgan

Class of ‘67

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