

Memories of Kirkland

The Babysitter and the Centurion by Judi (Smith) Kavaney, Feb. 2017

Helen Strom and my mother (Carole Smith) were friends, both young wives having come to Kirkland in the 1930's and both trying to decide how they fit into the community. The Strom children were older than my siblings and I, "Punky" (Carole) being one of the glamorous teenagers in town and my mother loved to recount her escapades. For instance, how she, running crazily through our backyard one Halloween night with her friends, hung herself on our clothesline. In due time Punky became my babysitter.

"Chuck" Charles Strom was Punky's younger brother, a large intelligent boy with unruly hair and a marked lisp. He was a couple of years ahead of me in school. In those days (I like to call it the era of Marion Hake), we put on a fall play and a spring play and on one particular year the spring play fell during Lent and it was therefore decided that we would produce "The Robe," a solemn undertaking for high school students, but we thought we were up to it.

Marion Hake was a talented English teacher and drama coach, out of NIU, volatile and emotional. She had little tolerance for the tricks we would inevitably play. In the story Marcellus, a Roman centurion, played by Chuck Strom and Diana, his sweetheart, played by yours truly, have a tender parting scene as Marcellus is led off to his execution, martyred for the Christian faith. There was no kissing in high school plays in those days but we stood close together and professed our everlasting love. I could never manage to do that scene straight-faced because my centurion spit all over me each and every time.

Chuck went on to great academic accomplishments and more than average sadness in his life but I smile whenever I think of him. He will always be my Centurion.

P.S. (from Carole Strom Buhl): As Judy stated my mother, Helen Strom and Judy's mother, Carole Smith became very good friends when both of them became residents of Kirkland, Illinois in the mid-thirties. The Strom's had three children when they moved to Kirkland and a son was born to them in Nov. of 1937. His name was Charles Ray and my dad always had nick-names for young children...After Chuck arrived at the Strom home, my father gave him the Swedish name of one of his brother's which was "Oscar". Not long after he was born, the Smith's welcomed their first child, and named her Judith. But once again, this didn't work for my dad, Jim Strom, so he gave Judy her own nickname....which was "Oscarette". Judy grew up with that tag, and always would ask her mother, "Why does Mayor Strom call me "Cigarette"? Those two nicknames remained with Chuck and Judy for many years even into their adulthood. It was always a story the two of them loved to share with other kids in the little village of DeKalb County. [Charles "Chuck" Strom died December 15, 2016.]

Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941
Written by Pam Smith as told by Tom Prindiville

Yesterday we had been out on a routine target practice, and now we were layed up in the harbor.

It was a lazy Sunday morning, and the ship was in preparation for inspection. All the ammunition was locked up and shiny guns, with barrels pointed downward, (which made it easier for the general to see in) were lined against the dock.

I lay in my hammock, half asleep, still in my underwear, and wondering when the planes from Hickamans field would lay off. They were buzzing over head and it made it rather tough for a guy to sleep in a dock hammock with all that racket. It seemed to me they were getting pretty low as I rolled over begrudgingly to see what was going on. I know I'll never forgot the look on that "Jap's" face as long as I live. For just as I rolled over a "Jap fighter plane" swooped down so close that it seemed every pore on his face was distinguishable. He was grinning from ear to ear and the white teeth framed in the yellow complexion shone all the more.

I couldn't get out of that hammock fast enough! I was a gunner and we had been trained on what to do in such emergencies, but the element of surprise always leaves anyone scattered.

The key to the ammunition box was no where to be found and it made it no easier to find it now that the decks were swarming with frantic, excited men from below.

I picked up a hammer which lay near by and shattered the lock on the box. From then on it was thick fighting for the men of the U.S.S. Maryland.

I can remember a friend approaching me during the fighting and saying, "The Arizona pulled out." But my friend was wrong. The Arizona had not run. She had met disaster, and now the mighty freighter lay helpless on her side.

I immediately thought of a man [Willard Aves] from my home town who had been in the boiler room of the Arizona, but realized that when the bomb was dropped down the smoke stack he never knew what hit him.

The "Japs" had come in three waves and as suddenly as they appeared they were gone. There were a few captive pilots. Each had a map strapped to his leg with an X marked on the ship in the harbor which they were to bomb. These captives provided no information, for rather than live and committ themselves they had grenades under each arm, and when approached they lifted their arms, which in turn set off the grenades.

I was sent down after the fighting to try and rescue some of the trapped, helpless men. First we were sent down with long pipes to tap on the ship's sides to gain some response. Next we were sent down with torches to cut.

As for the men of the Arizona nothing could be done and even now she lies in the dark depths each man stationed as he was 19 years ago.

[Thomas Prindiville was born Aug. 22, 1921 and died Apr. 18, 2004. He served in the Navy from Sept. 5, 1940 to Aug. 18, 1946. Pam Smith wrote this paper while in high school.]

Memories of Kirkland
by Suzanne (McCoskey) Hill, Spring 2017

Remembering—a great place and time to live. I am so thankful for my parents, friends, teachers, neighbors, values and experiences that made Kirkland home.

School was an important part of my life. We usually walked to and from school. I started first grade in 1948 and graduated in 1960. Many in the class finished twelve years together.

Music was a joy to me: piano, band, chorus, going to district and state contests. Mr. Montanus was wonderful encourager. The school year ended with a Memorial Day concert at a cemetery. The band played wearing hat, wool uniforms. I played Pomp and Circumstances for graduation. Hearing this now takes me right back to the old gym.

I remember ice skating, before there were ice rinks, roller skating with clip on skates on cracked sidewalks, riding bikes on country roads (and wrecking), playing cowboys and indians by the creek, and sledding on Strom's hill. Punky Strom was my babysitter. I watched t.v. with Charles and Kenny Fruit. Remember Howdy Doody and Buster Brown? All phones had party lines and popsicles were a nickel. In June ice cream socials were held at the shelter house. July 4th brought excitement—the parade, the rides, the Lion's Club food tent, and especially the fireworks.

Detasseling corn was the best way for teens to make money. We thought it was fun to meet early in the morning with bag lunches and climb in the back of a truck to be driven to the Dekalb County corn fields. We detasseled row after row of corn, got sunburned and yet sang on our way home.

While in high school some of us were allowed to spend a Saturday in Chicago. The train would have to be flagged down in Kirkland. We would walk from the station in Chicago to Marshal Fields. We would shop, eat lunch, go to a movie or sometimes a museum. We would return home, feet sore from wearing high heels but feeling very grown up.

Cherished memories are of homecoming, hayrides, dances, proms, church and MYF, slumber parties, music contests, dates, and basketball and football games. Kirkland will always be a big part of my life.

Class of 1960



Saved by the Corncrib
by Judi (Smith) Kavaney, Feb. 2017

The Swanson farm was an easy distance out the Malta Road, where Carl grew corn and raised some sheep.

Mart was Mom and friend to everyone in my circle, a nurse who was the first to step up when trouble came to the small town. Later, when I was in nursing school, we would share many secrets, cigarettes and irreverent laughs at their kitchen table.

Their daughter, Judie, and I started 1st grade together, initiated into academia by the stern Elma Hemmingway. Because she was a "farm girl," my lucky friend got to ride the school bus and carry her lunch in an intriguing metal box. I, of course, was insanely jealous. So anytime I could wrangle an invitation to ride the bus and stay overnight at the Swansons, I was delirious. A multitude of adventures awaited two young girls on the farm.

It was spring lambing time and the babies were irresistibly appealing so we thought we might catch one. Carl was driving the sheep from one pasture to another and Judie and I were in hot pursuit of a particular lamb when the ewe got wind of what we were up to and launched her counter attack. With her head as a battering ram, she butted my wailing friend again and again, while Carl watched complacently. The teaching moment was at hand. In retreat, Judie ran up the side of the corncrib, where bruised but unbowed, fear quickly turned to laughter and the episode became legend.

I found new respect that day for a mother's fierce protective instinct. I have never chased another lamb.



From Judie Swanson-Janowski: "I truly enjoy receiving the "Historian" and other news from home. The new "Memories of Kirkland" segment is terrific. My friend Judi Smith Kavaney is a wonderful contributor." **Thanks Judie!**

We have two more Kirkland stories/memories to publish (from Beulah Ecklund Bauman & Judi Smith Kavaney). We would like to have "your" stories, memories and/or photos of Kirkland.

Memories of Kirkland
by Beulah (Ecklund) Bauman, Class of 1961, June 5, 2017

Going upstairs above the store watching Lillian Gray, as the telephone operator, inserting wires (plugs) in little holes.

Fern Worden delivering Mothers Day corsage to our mailbox on the farm east of Kirkland on Rte 72.

Dr. Barrowman had his little middle finger missing. Wonder how that happened!

Having the snake dance on Homecoming eve going through Sparks Tavern on W. Main Street.

My teachers:

First Grade: Miss Alma Hemmingway, must have taught every kid in Kirkland.

Second Grade: Mrs. Campbell

Third Grade: Mrs. Dundore, read all the Laura Ingalls Wilder books to us.

Fourth Grade: Mrs. Mildred Buhl, quite an artist. I had the measles that year.

Fifth & 6th Grades: We were all bused to Fairdale, IL for school, 4 room school house.

Fifth Grade: Mrs. Williams

Sixth Grade: Mr. Karry Woodyatt

Seventh Grade: Mrs. McCoskey

Eighth Grade: Mrs. Bernice Carlson