

SHARING OUR STORIES

VOLUME II

Excerpts from Conversations with Some of Windsor's Long-Time Residents

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Photo by Barbara Connors



WILL BLAKE

William Andrew Blake, born in Windsor in 1950, grew up on North Street back when it was a dirt road. Through his mother, Doris Thompson Blake, he counts Windsor ancestors going back at least to the Revolutionary War. Will remembers a childhood spent in the woods, and how that set him on his life's path, with a few twists along the way.

From the Woods of Windsor . . .

“Ever since I was a kid, I always walked. I would go out every day after school. As long as I was in the woods. Grandma called me a lone wolf. I hunted windows in my backyard with a slingshot, and then a BB gun. I was a terror of chipmunks.”

“Tracking was one of the things you'd do . . . all kinds of animals, you'd try to find out where they go and what they do. There were no moose then. There might have been a bear or two, but not like today . . . they're a woodland animal, and our woods have grown up. When I was a kid, they were all hayfields.”

“When I was 14, I remember Dad taking me for a ride with Joe Mattis in Plainfield because they had been seeing a mountain lion there. I remember spending the night in an old pickup truck, driving around, not seeing anything, just talking about it. I thought that was great.”



Will Blake at 7 or 8 years old [Photo courtesy of Will Blake]

To Okinawa, Japan . . .

“First color TV set I ever saw was when we watched our draft numbers being drawn . . . in 1968 or '69. Mine was 94. I got a notice from the draft, but I fooled 'em. I enlisted in the Marine Corps instead.”

“Japan's a phenomenal place. At the foot of Mt. Fujiyama, their sacred mountain, there's a military base. Most of the time you're playing war games. Once, some friends and I had a three-day pass to Tokyo. On Sundays they used to close down the main street, this is 1971, and

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have a bazaar. The Beatles just came out with some record and they were giving away 45s with a yo-yo attached. We're stupid, clowny guys: ‘Oh, let's take 'em. We want the yo-yos. But what do we do with these records? Let's give 'em to girls.’ These girls would not take them from us. We had no idea what they were saying, they had no idea what we were saying.”

After a stint driving 18-wheelers cross-country, where, in Arkansas, he saw his first armadillo, Will attended Berkshire Community College, landed a job, got married, and settled down.



P.F.C. Blake in Dad's Dress Blues, 1970 [Photo courtesy of Will Blake]

And Then Back to the Woods . . .

“After all that time in the woods, I went into environmental science . . . then worked 33 years for the city of Pittsfield, in wastewater treatment. It's like a chemical plant in that you're mixing chemicals and making sure everything runs. It's out in the wilderness . . . with bears, moose, fox, coyotes, bobcats. Herons in the morning, rabbits all over the place. I was one of the few people that used to walk around, because you could hear, smell, and see things that you can't sitting in an office or a truck. I'd say, ‘There's something wrong with that, I hear it.’”

. . . And Finding the Perfect Home.

“I forget how many houses we looked at . . . but I remember we walked into that little house on Peru Road and I said, you know, this is just what I want. Small, easy to take care of . . . nine acres backed up by thousands of acres of wildlife managed land. If I had my druthers, I would live in the last house on a dead-end, dirt road.”



NANCY KERSTETTER

Nancy Peck Kerstetter, born in Windsor in 1951 (shortly after her family moved from Becket), remembers a childhood and youth involved with Windsor's Congregational Church and the Snip Snap Sewing Club, which was taught by Ceil Zink.

An Active Church Community . . .

"The first pastor I remember was Rev. Mary Clapp. I remember Rev. Harvey Lake because Nick Sturtevant and I wanted to join the youth group . . . we were only twelve, and you had to be a teenager. But we did get to teach the youngest Sunday school class, and had a great time. Rachel Tirrell would play piano and we would sing our little songs and then go to our classrooms. In the early days, they had classrooms in the parsonage."

"Pastors Mike Harry and Paul Carr stick out in my memory. Mike was very understandable. He didn't get into big theological concepts. Paul Carr was fun, he liked to tease. Paul and Connie Carr



1954 Kindergarten and Primary Groups, Sunday School, Windsor Cong. Church [Courtesy of Nancy P. Kerstetter]

renovated the upstairs of the church with classrooms, so we didn't have to bundle up in winter and run over to the parsonage. They also started a youth group, which we hadn't had since Rev.

Lake. I was president . . . We started with myself and Marlene Drew, and that grew and grew. We would have sledding parties in the winter, a hayride once, activities like that. We also painted the church . . . all the members came . . . we had a picnic and painted it ourselves."

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"When we started Sunday school, we would get this little pin depending on how many weeks you attended, a little wreath . . . The second year there was a thing that attached to it that said something like 'First Year' . . . if you attended a lot, you had a long string of them."

. . . With the Annual Children's Day.

"Every year, when school was getting out, we had Children's Day. The children would have different parts to memorize or read, and we would have a presentation for the church family. One year we went to Look Park in Northampton and had a picnic; one time it was at Notchview. That was very exciting for a kid. Each child would get a little plant, Mrs. Dorothy Budd was in charge of that. Third or fourth graders would get a Bible—King James version, so I am sure none of us understood it, but we still have it."

Stitching with the Snip Snap Sewing Club.

"We would get off the bus and walk the long road to Ceil's house, which was fine when the temperatures were nice, but I remember more than one time being very cold by the time I got there because the wind would just blow."

"First, we made a pot holder, then an apron, and from there blouses, dresses . . . whatever we felt comfortable doing. Ceil had an electric sewing machine. My mother had a treadle; that was what I was used to. At one point, I'm on this electric machine, pushing the material through and the needle went right into my finger. That was an "ouch" moment, but we had a good time."



Windsor Church 1971, Nancy Peck in handmade period style dress [Courtesy of Nancy P. Kerstetter]

"Every spring we would go to the 4-H Fair in Pittsfield . . . you would get ribbons based upon what the judges thought of your entry: the stitching, the difficulty of the project. I have ribbons from April '62 (I was only ten), '63 and '64."

"When I was a teenager I got my own machine, electric, and I made blouses . . . and the dress for the Bicentennial." 

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