

SHARING OUR STORIES

VOLUME VIII

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

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Photo by Barbara Connors



MARNIE MEYERS

Marnie Meyers, a lifelong Windsor resident, grew up on Hinsdale Road, in a farmhouse originally owned by her great uncle. She returned to Windsor in her mid-30's and, with her husband, Bob, built their home a short distance from where Marnie grew up. Living there today, they nurture a menagerie of rescued animals. Marnie and Bob have been active contributors in our community, currently serving on the Green Committee. Marnie shares what it was like growing up in Windsor, surrounded by family.

Homesteading: "Like Little Women"

"My father courted my mother for fifteen years and had to use all of his powers of coercion to get her to marry him and move up here because, back then, you quit your job and had a family. My mother was a career woman, a nurse and social worker. She was 31 when she married, 37 when she had me; and I was the first of three."

"The family home was a small farmhouse, added onto by a great uncle, who also built a cabin up the road. He died very young and when it came to a bank sale, my parents bid and got the house and 13 acres for \$800. That was back in the '30s."

"It was a good time in Windsor to be a kid."

"My grandchildren feel as though it was a very deprived childhood, because we didn't have electronics and everything they have. But we had the rivers and the streams and the mud and the trees and the fields. We were outside from dawn to dark, coming in for dinner, when pressed. With two brothers you have built-in protagonists and antagonists,

so we played amongst ourselves a lot: climbing trees, playing hide-and-seek, snowshoeing, sliding. It was a good time in Windsor to be a kid."

"Our aunts and their families lived near us on either end of Crane Road, and we would say, 'I'm going up to Aunt Dow's, or Aunt Fee's' and hike up the mountain and spend the day. I think we spent as much time at their house as our own, and vice versa."

"My mother and her sisters were the core. They got together and had work bees: wallpapering, putting up meat from the animals, canning pickles, jellies, jams, and relishes. It was like *Little Women*."

"My father raised chickens for eggs and slaughter, and pigs and lambs for slaughter. I am a vegetarian now and it's a wonder I didn't become one then. I would cry every time the animals would go off to slaughter. They were my pets. One of the lambs was called Lambs-Eat-Ivy-A-Kid'll-Eat-Ivy-Too, or Divey."

"We did a lot of work to take the edge off finances. We had an old coal furnace and one of our jobs — for a penny a pail — was to go out and check the cinders for coals that were not burned down. My job with the chicken slaughter was to pluck them in the hot water. I fished,

and I don't know why I did it, except to be out by a babbling brook and as a way to bond with my father, who was very quiet. I would catch the fish and go: 'Oh, this is hurting you . . .,' but I did it, I was in the culture. Things change."



Marnie at age 5.

Remembering Two Teachers


"At Crane Community School, I had Miss Viva Bates. I remember thinking: 'This must be what my grandmother looked like when she was a teacher.' My grandmother taught at one of the one-room schoolhouses when she was a young woman. I have a certificate that says: 'Agatha Brinkman, being found to be an upstanding, fine young woman of an eighth-grade education, has been deemed suitable to teach at [such-and-such] a school in Windsor.'" 



Photo by Barbara Cormois

REED FULLER

Reed Fuller, born October 20, 1944, moved with his parents from Dalton to Windsor when he was four years old. They bought a place on North Street, back when the road was dirt and only five families lived on it. His father worked in ordinance at General Electric and his mother was a cook for Colonel Budd at what is now Notchview Reservation. After high school, Reed joined the Army and was stationed at Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks, Alaska, where he trained and was on the ski team at the military-owned Birch Hill Army Ski Resort. He shares what it was like to grow up in Windsor, working hard and having fun.

A Sturdy house out of the wind . . .

“We moved to Windsor because land was cheap. The house had been abandoned for years and was dilapidated, but my grandfather, a carpenter, spent a couple of summers reconstructing it. The person who built the house was a shipbuilder, so it was very well constructed. They jacked up one corner to rebuild the foundation, and it jacked the whole house up . . . this was more than a hundred years after it was built. A post and beam, it was magnificent. All the siding was shiplapped, so you never got any moisture . . . and no wind.”

“There were only five families on North Street then: the Kings, the Jenkses, the Fullers, the Jakeses, the Driscolls, and the McCormacks. We were all friends. It was a dirt road . . . you could hear cars coming a lot easier than on tar, and you could tell by the sound of the car who it was and, by the time of day, where they were going.”

A good life of hard work & fun . . .

“I enjoyed that part of my life very much. You always had something going on outdoors. I was shooting guns by the time I was twelve . . . wouldn’t shoot anything unless you eat it. We used to go sledding on the road. There was a rock way down

past Jenks’, and if you made it to that rock, that was a miracle. When you’re going for distance, you’d get as many people on the sled as you could, then take off. It was a lot of fun.”

“There was haying. Because we had horses — four or five at one point — we used the loose hay that was too rough for the balers. You’d pile it up so you could go by in a tractor later and load the hay. We’d put that in the big barn, built by the same gentleman. These forks that came out from the steeple

“You could tell by the sound of the car who it was and, by the time of day, where they were going.”

would drop down, grab the hay, and the tractor would pull the hay up into the loft, dump [it], and you would spread it with a pitchfork. That was all done by hand, just pitchforks and labor. Dad used to buy us a case of soda to keep us focused.”

“We had quackless ducks, the horses, a goat or two, one cow for milk, eggs from the ducks and chickens. We had half an acre of potatoes that we used to bag and sell in the fall. We fed ourselves from

the garden, had a freezer with beans and peas, not too much corn, but Swiss chard, spinach.”

“We used to get twenty-five cents a week for allowance that mom would save for us and we’d go to the Cummington Fair . . . our big event for summer, just before school started.”



Reed (front row, first on the left, kneeling) at Crane Community School 1954.

Measuring up for Crane Community School

“Miss Bates was our first grade teacher. She would say, ‘If you can bring your arm over and touch your ear, you’re old enough to go to school.’ We had all the classes in three rooms: first through third; fourth through sixth; and seventh/eighth. There were eight people in my eighth grade graduating class.”

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