

Dedicated To The Memory
Of My Brother, Jack, Who
Would Have Known All The
Right Answers.

Acknowledgements

I had the easy and fun part of this book: I wrote the story. My wife, Gloria, and daughter, Heather did the work.

Gloria typed the whole thing on the computer. Some parts more than once. At first, I could proofread the pages - more fun; but as my eyes failed, she had to read them to me - more work.

Heather had the job of putting it all together. Taking the computer discs, pictures and captions and creating the actual book. I don't know how this works, but if you are reading this, it did.

To both of you I will be grateful forever.

Now, on my next book.....

Introduction

When I started writing this book, I had no idea it would be this long. For this, I apologize. To wade through so many pages of poorly crafted dull and often boring incidents of someone else's childhood constitutes, in my opinion, cruel and unusual punishment. But then, pity me, I had to live it.

This is pretty much a stream-of-consciousness record. No attempt at literature has been made here. Write it down, get it done and go do the dishes. There was only one draft, although I did make minor corrections and additions and allowed my editor to correct errors and syntax and spelling of which there were many, but not content. If my brain could recall it and get the message to my freezing fingers, holding my stubby, felt-tipped pen, then it's here for better or for worse. So start reading.

Dad, Bob, Rob, Robin or Poppa
Take your pick, I answer to all

Forward

No two people will remember an event exactly the same way. Just ask any cop at an accident scene. So the events chronicled here are the way I remember them, even though they may not be exactly the way they happened. Besides, there are only a half dozen or so witnesses who could disagree with me; my sibs (Betty, Dick and Kay), and in a few instances my friend, Derr, and my cousin Foster. Who is to say if I got it right or wrong. No one. But for the sake of this history, I hope I come close.

I know these things happened; I was there. Timelines are where I have the most trouble, “was it before or after,” “during or separate?” I ask you witnesses to please let me know if you disagree. I will add your thoughts and send them to anyone who gets a copy of these memoirs. But until such time, read on and welcome to my neighborhood.

Welcome to the Neighborhood and Andranes House

It was always there. Well, of course it was always there. Things that big don't move around, especially when they are anchored to the ground. What I meant was - it was ALWAYS THERE.

It stood at the southwest corner of Wesley Avenue and 31st St., built (as I recall) of common brick except the front side which was more elaborate. This was a common practice at least in our town. I remember the north side of the house was only about 4 feet from the sidewalk and if the shades were up you could look right in. (They really crammed the houses on the lots in Berwyn).

The house was unoccupied, at least when I got older it was. But it wasn't empty - I don't mean furniture or stuff (more about that later), I mean it was filled with something - like a presence which you could actually feel when you walked by. Spooky was how we described it.

I think it was the tallest house on our block. It stood there in all of it's awful silence like a sentinel or perhaps like a stoic old lady with blind yet all-seeing eyes. I swear those windows - blank as they were - watched every move that we made. It more or less guarded the approach to our neighborhood, at least from the North. No matter if you went the front way (Wesley Ave,) or the back way (the alley) you had to pass it to get to our house. If you came from the South you had to approach within 60-70 feet and worse yet, look at it before you turned into out yard.

The front stairway was very steep and wide, leading up to a high first floor porch. But as high as it was, the porch was always hidden by very tall and dense bushes that ringed the front of the lot and almost grew together over the sidewalk leading to the steps. There was a second floor and an attic above that, but what really contributed to the houses height was the shallow basement.

The side yard was completely overgrown and appeared almost impenetrable from the alley. A ramshackle garage partially barred entrance to the back yard.

All in all the house was about as foreboding as a kid could wish for. It was ANDRANES HOUSE.

The rest of the block was pretty plain. Working south from Andranes you had Holubs. Mr. Holub bought the empty lot between his house and Andranes and turned it into a beautiful side yard. But where his property ended and Andranes began was like night and day - a sheer wall of entanglement.

There were three Holub kids: Lola, Marjorie and Bill. Later on Lola and I shared some grammar school classes and, although Bill was younger than me, we became very good buddies and he remains one of my cherished friends.

Our house was next . It looked like a bungalow from the front which was deceiving. My mother had added on to it during the depression (at a total cost of \$2,000.00); a large playroom downstairs and master bedroom, another bedroom (Jack's and my room) and bathroom upstairs. So we had ten rooms: living room, dining room, music room, kitchen, bedroom and playroom downstairs and four bedrooms upstairs.

We had an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ lot (12 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet- where my parents grew tulips) between us and Ericksons, whose house was a typical narrow, two story frame with a fenced in back yard and garage (and by the way - you never went into Erickson's yard).

Lockees were next (later Franz). Mr. L. had a putting-green lawn which he worked on every evening all summer long.

A vacant lot and then Snyders (later Haynes). That house was the most dilapidated house I had ever seen. Much worse than Andranes, which in fact, was in very good condition.

I never understood the Snyders. They must have been dirt-poor during the Depression and there were a lot of kids. I remember Matt and Gilbert (did Gilbert die?). They must have been okay though, otherwise my mother wouldn't have let us go anywhere near them. I remember being in their basement - Matt scared the bejesus out of me with a mannequin's leg. And the only light in the basement was from kerosene lanterns.

Emmerings and Everetts were next. They were Dutch. When Mr. Everett decided to build his house, he staked it out rather close to Snyders. Mr. Snyder asked Mr. Everett if it would not be better to leave a little more room for the children to play. Everett was so incensed at the effrontery that he built his house right smack-dab on the lot line; not 3 feet from the Snyders.

What an idiot! But he was an excellent tailor. He made my Dad's suits and overcoats. Beautiful.

Everetts lived upstairs and Mr. E's daughter and family, the Emmerings, lived downstairs. Tommy Emmering was our boyhood friend until we got into a squabble one day over a baseball game. Mr. Everett hollered out the window, "Hit 'em over the head with the baseball bat Tommy." End of friendship.

Tom had a sister named Carol and an Aunt named Ricky who lived upstairs with her parents. She was a half-wit; homely as a mud fence and just as dumb. Everetts would occasionally walk her up and down in front of their house (almost like a dog; I'm surprised she didn't have a leash). She was dressed in the ugliest housedress imaginable with wooden shoes and no socks. But Ricky didn't seem to mind and she would always smile at us. But mostly, the Everrts kept her out of sight.

This was all on our side of the street and all that the Andrane's house had to watch over.

There were two kids who lived across the alley (in back of Snyders) who we played with; Billy Plapp (William Frederick Plapp III), a budding ornithologist and just a little precocious and Bunky Fry. The guys lived in the same two-flat and we included them in the neighborhood.

That's about it. By the way, when I say "we" it means Jack, Dick and I. My mother bought eggs from Rhemquists who lived directly in back of us and kept chickens. Betty was friends with Lois and Jean Skoglund and Dorothy Nelson who lived across the street.

Both my parents were envious of Mr. Moline's yard, directly across the street from Andrane's house. Mr. Moline was a Swede whom his friends in Sweden thought would be the second Luther Burbank but instead ended up in the coal business (very successfully, I imagine). He had the nicest house on the block with a beautiful garden on two lots. Dad bought coal from Moline. A truck would dump it in the street in front of the house and one or two black guys would shovel it into leather back packs, carry them to the coal window and dump it into the basement. Not even a wheelbarrow. Those poor guys.

Almost forgot. Marilyn Roach lived across the street in a two flat at the end of the block. She was Betty's best friend and would often be at our house. When it was time for to come home her mother would whistle: wheee.

Marilyn would holler out the door “Yes?” Three whistles---“Come right home.” Marilyn-“Do I have to?” One whistle-“yes.” Marilyn- “Goodbye Betty.”

The alleys on our block formed a T. We lived to the left and Billy and Bunky to the right. The cross bar of the T went from Wesley to Euclid Avenue then south of the alley was a big vacant lot which went to Stanley Avenue and formed the end of the block. We played football and baseball there and shot 39-cent arrows in the weeds when we practiced archery.

So that was the layout of the block I lived on growing up.

We attended the Oak Park Avenue Baptist Church, a block and a half west, at 31st St. and Oak Park Avenue.

We went to Emerson Grade School which was on 31st St. and a few blocks further West.

And of course, we came and went by the alley so we passed Andranes house at least twice a day. I think the old garage eventually fell down but in any event we began to sneak into the yard. There was a grape arbor near Holubs and we would hide in there and watch Mrs. Holub hang out the wash. (If she saw us she never let on). Well, soon we were playing in there every chance we got and we explored every nook and cranny.

I don't know what motivated our next move. Maybe it was because we had conquered every aspect of that forbidden place or possibly familiarity breeds contempt and we were feeling invincible. But someone tried one of the windows under the front porch (it wasn't me) and it was unlocked. Before that we had been perfectly happy to play outside the house. I never even thought of trying to “break in” - my mother had trained us well - but now...

I'll never forget the sensation of crawling through that window. My heart was pounding; it was the first time I'd ever done anything like that. And yet, I was excited and eager. We had of course, looked into the basement many times (we couldn't reach the 1st floor), so we knew what was down there. But to be in there, to feel the cool stuffy damp air and smell the linoleum and other lingering odors was something else.

That first time I don't think we got out of the basement which was fixed up like a summer kitchen with a stove, icebox and sink - very austere. I don't remember if anyone else was with us, except Derr. I believe we kept it to

ourselves. I think Billy Plapp and Bunky Fry had moved by the time we had our great adventure and I know that we wouldn't have taken Tommy Emmering in there. Bill Holub was a different story. He didn't go in with us because he lived right next door, but he may have done some exploring on his own with his own gang. I'll have to ask him. So - as far as I can tell - Jack, Dick and I were the only ones adventurous or dumb enough to pull such a stunt.

The next time we went into the house we were bolder and went up the stairs to the first floor. The upstairs was much more comfortable but "old-fashioned." Everything had been left there just as it was when Mrs. A. died. Why no one lived there or cleared out the house I don't know.

The stairway that led to the second floor was on the north side. Yep, that was side that was four feet from the sidewalk, and there were two windows to light the stairwell. Walking upright up those stairs was out of the question. We were scared enough just being in there, so taking a chance on being seen was madness. So we crawled on our stomachs below the window-sill and made it okay.

Part of the fun of this whole adventure was to leave the house exactly as it was; impossible to detect that we had been there. We prided ourselves on our stealth. We broke, damaged or took nothing. At least not yet.

Well, we finally worked our way to the attic. It was dark - no lights and we couldn't see a thing. That meant we had to come back again and bring flashlights. So this time we planned a night raid. Up we went past the windows again on our bellies. There wasn't too much in the attic that interested us - some furniture, pictures and some trunks, the usual. Trunks? Yes, but look again that one is a foot locker. Hot dog! Lets see what's in it. I'm not sure how we got it open but we did and did we hit pay dirt! Army stuff - uniforms books, manuals - all neatly packed. We proceeded to examine everything. The uniform was that of a 1st Lt. of Ordinance (of course, how much of that we knew then I don't know). The manuals were rather technical and had to do with shells, firing. etc. The rolled up picture was the typical group shot of whole companies that opened to about 2 ½ feet long. There was some other stuff and then - Leaping Lizards - the mother lode. Actual brass shells, probably 37 millimeter. We were beside ourselves. Man, we had to have them.

By now, we had been up there for what seemed like hours. I don't know about Jack and Dick but I was getting mighty nervous. Okay, I'll admit it I was scared to death we'd be caught. "Come on you guys - lets GO!"

We carefully repacked the trunk and left. Have you ever tried to slide down the stairs head first on your stomachs carrying a bunch of brass shells in your pockets? That's about as quiet as a bowling alley. We were finally back home with out loot. Just one small problem - how do we explain the sudden appearance of a pile of WW1 ammo in our bedrooms? So we dreamed up a tale something like this; A guy in my class? Harry Helberg? got this stuff from his Mom's dad who had died several years ago. Harry was living with his aunt who ran the local fish market (true) which stunk (even truer) and so did Harry (even worse). His aunt made him give the ammo away because she didn't want it around the store. Believe it or not, my Mom bought that story.

So there we were - successful burglars at the ripe old age of 9-11 and 13 or so. We had beaten Andrane's house. We could look back at those blank windows and laugh because we'd been behind them. We'd gotten into the old ladies head and discovered all of her secrets. Now we could sneer at her on our way to and from school and church. Her power over us was gone; she didn't rate a second thought. It was over. Except for one final chapter.

We didn't write this one, in fact, we had nothing to do with it. It couldn't have been more than a week or two later when some other guys broke in and trashed the place. They threw things out the window; furniture, clothing, lamps. That beautifully preserved uniform of an American Officer of Ordinance was blowing in the wind from a broken attic window,

I often wonder what happened to the rest of the stuff; those pictures, manuals, the hats. Were they trashed? Did whoever cleaned up that mess pitch them out with the useless lamps and broken furniture. Or did some loving hand pick them up, dust them off and carefully repack them in that soldier's footlocker. Did someone ever rescue that uniform and perhaps, pridefully, try it on? I'd like to think so but I really doubt it.

But one things for sure, I'm so glad we got those shells. There's no telling what those vandals would have done with them. To us they were precious - the Holy Grail. We treated them with respect and showed them off with pride.

The shells are gone now. The last I remember Jack had them (was he going away to college?). Did he give them away, sell them or what? It doesn't matter. They served us well while we were kids.

Yes, stealing them was wrong, but was it really that bad?



*The earliest picture of me I could find.
Dad, Jack Me, Mom, Betty - 1928*



*Choo-choo. Wish I had that train today.
Me in the middle - 1931*



*Somehow this reminds me of "A Christmas
Story" - 1932*



My favorite picture of our family.



*Kay, Dick, Me, Jack, Betty. I think half of our
pictures were taken on the front steps. - 1934*



Christmas - 1941 - what's with the shirts and ties?



Happy Easter - 1937

Our House



Our house at 3145 Wesley Ave. The front porch had been enclosed during Mom's build-on, the stucco was removed and replaced with cedar shakes.

Out of sequence for this book, but this shows how our house looked after the remodeling and how I remember it. The 52 Merc in front.

Our house was a Sears House. That's right, pick up a catalogue and order a house - assembly required.

I didn't know this at the time. I discovered it about 15-20 years ago, when I read an article in the Tribune about Sears Houses and pictured one like ours.

The house was built before my folks bought it (with my mothers' dowry – her father was a banker) and it originally had an open front porch. By the time I came along it had been enclosed with windows that swung outward and made a great summer room.

Beyond the porch was a living room- both porch and living room were the full width of the house. The dining room was off the south half and a bedroom, later our music room, was on the other end with the bath and another bedroom at the back. The kitchen was beyond the DR with stairs sandwiched between the kitchen and back BR. There were two more bedrooms under the roof peak.

The bathroom floor was made out of small hexagon tiles like were used in drugstores and a washbowl like the one in Jansky's Barber Shop. The floor tiles were white with a border design of black or dark blue.

So they had a four-bedroom house to begin with.

But mom like to change things, so she planned an addition (the family was growing). She called in a local carpenter she knew to figure what it would cost. \$2,000.00 and could he have the job. Done.

Here's what she got for her two grand. Foundations, a 22' x 11' playroom off the kitchen and back bedroom, a master bedroom above that, with windows all around both rooms, a bathroom upstairs above the kitchen and another bedroom upstairs, a new roof and an outside entrance to the basement. And finally, a little back porch with steps (over the basement entrance) off the playroom. Such a deal!

Originally, the house was stucco. Later that changed to dark brown cedar shakes. I don't know if that was part of the original deal or not.

Well, mother finally had a sanctuary, her new bedroom was sunny and airy. She would sit up there in a wicker rocker every afternoon she could, and read or sew. We knew it was very special if we were allowed in.

But the playroom was ours, except for meals. We could play, listen to the radio (the Lone Ranger), do our homework, or argue without bothering our folks. It was a great room.

The added bedroom was for Dick and me. It was just big enough for twin beds, a metal wardrobe, 2 dressers and a couple of chairs, and we squeezed in two little cabinets that Aunt Nett gave us. I still have mine. In addition to a regular one, there were two small windows about 2'x 2' that we used to crawl out on the roof, too.

But mom still wasn't through. In the 40's she did another overhaul, and this time my Uncle Roy did the work. She incorporated the front porch into the living room, with a new side entrance. That was one big room!

But I liked the old living room better and that's how I think of the house. She liked to change things around for the summer. She made bright slipcovers for the furniture, which was rearranged, the couch in front of the fireplace. I liked it - we had a new room.

Occasionally, when it was really hot she let me sleep on the front porch. That was an adventure. We had a wicker set out there - couch, chair, rocker and a table. The wicker couch made a great bed. All the windows were open catching every breeze and the leaves dancing in the streetlights' glow would cast constantly changing shadows on the wall. My imagination went wild. It was truly a magical place at night.

But I usually slept upstairs. My room had a door with a plywood panel that had a pronounced grain. The door was always left open (mom didn't trust closed doors) and the light from the hall would play on that panel. When I couldn't sleep, I would stare at it and pick out pirates, cowboys, Indians or monsters. It was better than TV. Or, I'd listen to the trains. There were always trains and those lonesome whistles and chug-chugs were enough to start my mind on all kinds of journeys. All the trains had steam engines. Except the Zephyr. It was hyped for days in the paper that the newest, most modern train in the country would be coming through town on a certain day and time. So we took some folding chairs down to the corner to witness this historic event. We waited and waited until finally 2 hours later it came, slowly. We all whistled and waved. It was beautiful, but certainly no zephyr!

Our living room had a real fireplace, which we used in the winter. We would lie on the floor and stare into the caves the hot coals made "Ooh, look at that one. That one is mine. I'm the king."

Years later when we had the Barn Boys, one of the guys, Neil McDermott would do the same thing. He'd lie there and stare at it until it went out. And if it was still burning when we all went to bed (it didn't bother Neil or us), when it went out, he got up, locked the door behind him and went home.

There was just one thing wrong with where we lived: the basement flooded. My parents were not aware of this when they bought the house. Dad stored a lot of stuff in the basement at first. He lost it all, including a lot of his books.

Whenever it looked like a big rain was on the way, Dad would say "somebody go down and put the plug in". That meant screw a plug into the floor drain. We were very vigilant about this because if we weren't we got water and raw sewage. After the water drained out it took a couple of hours to hose down the basement.

And it only got worse. Once the water floated the workbench and Dick lost all of his vacuum tubes, (Dick fixed radios), and on one occasion the water actually drained out of the basement windows. It cracked the concrete floor too. This kept up until the city dug new sewers. Then Jack and Dick laid a new floor.

One little story, pertaining to our house. There was a comic book character named Andy Gump, his wife's name was Min. Andy had a half-bowl head and a long nose (there was a statue of him in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin). The strip was pretty much adult humor. In one episode he went into the bathroom and evidently ran out of toilet paper. The last picture showed a red-faced Andy shouting "Oh, Min!" My dad thought that was a riot. From then on if anyone needed t.p. we just hollered "Oh Min."

One more, when we were low on food, with company at the dinner table, mother would whisper fhb - "family hold back."

Berwyn

In the first stave of this long, boring, interesting, dumb, informative, forget-about-it (pick the one that fits) memoir, I introduced you to my neighborhood. Now I'd like you to meet the town.

When my parents first moved to Chicago they had an apartment on West Madison (different then). But when Betty was born, they moved to Berwyn. It was a logical move. Dad worked at Western Electric in Cicero and Berwyn was the next community west. Dad walked to the end of the block and caught a street car to work. There were schools, churches and shopping within easy walking distance. Also, the Burlington RR station was uptown; the train took 22 minutes to get to Union Station in Chicago. Yes, Berwyn was a good choice.

It was about four square miles (give or take) and unofficially consisted of north and south Berwyn. North Berwyn went from the Illinois Central RR north to 22nd St. A shopping street that extended all the way to Chicago (10 miles). South Berwyn was south of the Burlington RR to 39th St. with shopping on both sides of the tracks along Stanley and Windsor Avenues, but only extending a couple of blocks on each street.

The north section of town was filled with the famous Chicago-style bungalows and a lot of Bohemians, the far south, big old 2-3 story frame homes and Swedes. In between, was a crazy mix of new and old, 2 flats, single frames, apartments, concrete block, stucco, Sears Homes etc. Ours was a Sears house.

It seemed that the further west you went toward Harlem Ave. (the western boundary) the better quality, and further west towards Ridgeland, just the opposite. Our shopping district, on Stanley Ave. (north of the RR), was about two blocks and included Lafferty Shoes, A&P, and Hicks Hardware.

Hicks Hardware had nothing prepacked, everything was in wooden bins or on wood shelves, except for the nails which were in a 5-6 tiered metal hopper and were scooped out with a claw into paper bags. Raw, wooden floors (most stores had them and they creaked), with a certain smell. I thought it would be cool to own a hardware store.

The A&P was next to Hicks and had a similar wooden interior. The unique thing was that you brought your shopping list to the counter and waited while the clerk ran around the store and filled your order.

There was a bank on the corner of Oak Park Ave. and Stanley which is what they called themselves; The Bank on the Corner. Mother banked there and she was mighty shrewd, too.

There was a drugstore in the bank building that had a soda fountain, and Mr. Chandler sometimes bought us double-chocolate sodas after Legion practice.

There were other stores, but that was pretty much all we needed. Mom bought our clothes in Chicago at the Boston or Fair Stores (never Fields).

Oh yes, I forgot. In the third block was Jansky's Barber Shop where we were shorn. It was a big place with a couple of chairs and a wash bowl smack dab in the middle of the room. There were real spittoons and an old colored guy who helped you with your coat, brushed you off with a long whisk-broom, and also cleaned the spittoons.

Hey, and there was an eye doctor in that block too, where I got my first pair of glasses.

Prince Ice Cream Castle was on Oak Park Ave., and was for sure part of our shopping area.

South of the tracks, things were a little more exotic. The Berwyn Hospital (later to become McNeal Memorial hospital) was east of O.P. Ave. There was another barber shop on the ground floor.

Across the street was a fine example of an Art Deco building called the "Bank Building", (but I think the bank failed), with Shoen-McAllister's Dry Goods store on street level and offices on the 2nd and 3rd floors, where our dentists, Dr. White and her husband Dr. Tolar, had their offices. At least, there was an elevator - but no Novocain! She'd say "raise your hand when it hurts." Was she nuts? I was holding on to the armrest so tight my knuckles were white.

Stephen's Clothiers was in the middle of the block. That was a really classy store. When we got older, we boys bought out clothes there. I once bought a pair of British-Walker shoes for \$16.00, when a good pair of shoes could be had for \$6.00. Mom was convinced I'd lost it.

Next to Stephens was "The Sugar Bowl," some kind of soda parlor. But we weren't allowed in there, that was where the local hoods hung out. But on the corner was Hoft's Drug Store. We went in there a lot, especially after church basketball games.

Around the corner from Hoft's, on Grove Ave. was the Roxy Theater. Movies cost 11 cents when we were kids and the theater had 3 different bills

each week, all double features - Sun, Mon. Tues. the latest releases, then Wed. Thurs. a change, and another bill for Fri. & Sat. Six a week, plus short subjects, cartoons and Movietone news and a Sat. matinee with serials, which mom occasionally let us go to.

There were a few more stores in the next block, another hardware (Turek's) and Krogers opened up the first self-service grocery. But we seldom ventured that far.

However, I did wash windows at the Christian Science Reading Room across from the hospital. I remember there were big beetles in their basement.

All those buildings had second and some third floors where doctors, lawyers and business had their offices (not mention The Sherwood School of Music!).

Neon signs were everywhere. At night it was a sight to see, especially in the rain.

Mom liked houses and I think she could have been a successful home designer. She could look at a floor plan and immediately tell what was good or bad about it. Weather permitting, she liked to take walks on Sunday afternoons. She'd say, "Who wants to go for a walk," which usually meant an ice cream cone at the end, so she always had company.

We'd walk through So. Berwyn and look at the houses. Block after block we would amble along studying each one. It was a lot of fun, especially the ice cream cone.

Mr. Moline lived across the street had a beautiful garden loaded with tulips. In the Spring he would invite dad and mom over for a garden walk, which they were always proud of.

Now, coal is a rather dirty and dusty commodity, sold by the ton and it requires a lot of storage space. The Moline Coal Yards were east of Ridgeland along the Burlington tracks. Some coal was dumped on the ground and some was unloaded via conveyor belts into huge silos. These were for the trucks that would back up to the silos, fill up and then deliver the coal to the recipient by dumping it in front of the house.

The coal company office was uptown in a tiny shed right on the Burlington right-of-way, along Oak Park Ave. no more than 15-20 feet from the tracks. I'd guess it measured about 8'x16' or 10'x20'. As I remember it, there were a couple of chairs, a counter showing different samples of coal, a desk and a coal stove and lots of windows.

Grace Erickson, our next-door neighbor worked there. Even with her close proximity, it seemed that dad always conducted business at the office. “One ton of bituminous, Grace”.

Can you imagine working 20’ from a roaring freight train? I believe the shed was a RR office when it was built. I don’t even remember when it was torn down.

Berwyn had a great lumberyard that covered a whole block. When the yardmen cut lumber to size and had a short piece left over they threw it onto a pile and allowed us kids to take a piece when we wanted. You don’t see that anymore.

When we got older, we’d sneak in and play on the lumber piles along the tracks. Fun, but dangerous. Those piles swayed!

To get a job at the lumberyard was the epitome of summer work; a great tan and muscles. I pulled it off when I was in high school but the yard boss never liked me and fired me. I guess he thought a skinny kid like me couldn’t cut it. He was wrong, I was quite strong. Oh well.....

Initially, garbage pick-up was done with horses. A pair, were hitched to an open metal hopper-like wagon with balloon tires. The horses always had feed bags on and were constantly shuddering and flicking off the flies with their tails. Man, did those wagons stink. You could smell them a block either way. There were two or three guys to each wagon and they sure took their time. They were amiable and were probably glad to have a job, regardless of the smell.

The horses were kept in a barn at the north end of Wesley Avenue , next to the city water tower. Eventually, they bought trucks and got rid of the horses. (More about the water tower later).

Not only did we have the Burlington RR. (The Illinois Central was not a passenger line) and the streetcar, we also had bus service. A big, stinky from cigarette smoke, orange bus drove up and down Oak Park Ave. to connect with the elevated line just north of 22nd St.. I don’t remember what the bus fare was but the “El” cost three cents to Chicago. Of course, in those days 3 cents was 3 cents). We rode it a lot when we were old enough.

Later on, the Bluebird Bus Co. established a route from Berwyn that went directly to Chicago. They still drove up Oak Park Ave. so nothing much changed for us. We simply traded the old cigarette smelling orange bus for a new cigarette smelling blue bus. I remember Glen Fischer took a