

MY CHILDHOOD MEMORIES IN CLINTON, MICHIGAN

As a child growing up in Clinton, I found that it was healthy & rich with activity, and it so much FUN. Maybe, I should make a Child's Book from what we did & had as kids.

I have included more stories below.

My Aunt Ruth has Stories from her days in Clinton in the Early 1910's and 20's. She was born in 1901, in Remus, MI, my Father was born in 1900, and moved to Clinton in 1910, with Hugh & Katherine Hoyt, their parents, from Tecumseh. her stories are at:

<http://www.johnhoyt.com/RgheStrtShow.htm> and another one at:

<http://www.johnhoyt.com/Rghe-Childhood-StrtShow.html> or at a zipfile download at:

<http://www.johnhoyt.com/zipfiles/edwards.zip> 4.4 mb's.

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Playing with our neighborhood children and the lands surrounding our neighborhood was always fun. For neighbors, we had the Martiney's, the White's, the Greenfield's, the Bauer's, the Driscoll's, the Weinberg's, the Maurer's, the Schwab's, the Schuler's, and Haan's and William's and Lancaster's to name a few that we enjoyed playing at their homes and in their neighborhoods, that skirted the town. Our playing areas were, the many backyards, the diamonds, at the schools, & parks, the tennis courts in the Park below us, and the wilderness to the South and S.W of towns proper, and at our home at 319 Clark St., and of the names mentioned above, where we would play gathering & racing games, such as, red light - green light, dodge ball, and many others. And there was of course, baseball & football, being held in many backyards, my below yard was perfect for the game, as well as, football. Yes, the girls joined in. We had races of pull-wagons, tricycle bikes, and go-carts, home-made from scraped old bicycle and tricycle parts. We all would put together these go carts, using 2x4's and a plank, a rope and a big bolt with washers, and 2 iron shafts about 1/3" in width for wheel shafts, and just steer the front wheels with rope and feet on the cross 2x4's, down the paved road to the Light Plant, man-n-n, THAT WAS F-U-N-N-N! We would have races with all the neighbors, and some out-of-the-neighborhood kids would join in. Of course, we had, Wolf, Bear, Lion-Webelows, Cub-Scouts, Boy Scouts, and a few Eagle Scouts, and all the activities and community work and fun in those clubs. I still have my books and badges.

During our time, growing up in 1950's and 60's, in the S.W. Village of Clinton, my Grandfather (from 1910), and Father operated the Atlas Flour Mill, we would always wait & watch the trains to come by our house, about 100' from out across Clark St.. These four giant wheel behemoth's, steam engines with their noises of chug-chug and whistles blaring Hoo-Hoo, they would let them blare when they saw us at the steps of our sidewalk waiting for them. As we would give them the Hand & Elbow up in the air to blow the whistle, then, we would clap and jump & dance around for joy, after the big steam engines, came the big diesel engines, with their murmuring & humming, and just 1 or 2 times let us ride to the Mill, it was so hot and stinking of oil in the Train Cab, but it was the greatest ride we ever had, until the thrill rides of the late 1960's at Cedar Point came into our learning curve when I was in College. Many a coin were smashed on the tracks in front of our home. I even had a dream for years, that a train would come crashing through our house one night, as well as, an Alien Ship, landing in our lower ball field, and would be looking at us, while we were sleeping, or when I had to get a drink of water at the sink, and they would be looking at me through the windows B-r-r-r.. Remember, all the neat first Science Fiction came out about the 50's and 60's. War of the Worlds, This Island Earth, Rodan, after seeing those

flicks, we sometimes would race home, scared that Rodan or some other flying alien would get us between the lighted poles along the streets and the backyards.

Back to the Atlas Mill, we would have so much fun at the back of the mill, at the Corn Cob Pile. A lot of us kid's, would spend all summer nearly every day jumping off the corn cob pile, even in winter, the corn cobs would keep snow off, because as the bottom was decomposing to give off heat and steam. Us kids would go over to the Riverside Park, by us and the Light Plant, and fish, eat the berries off the trees, look for weird insects, and off course in the wintertime, our yard at it all, terraced hills on 2 sides to slide down hill, and anything, that was slippery, toboggans, sleds, sheets of countertop materials, cardboard. Of course, we made hand held and huge slingshots, (See attached photos), to propel anything that would fly. Flying kites was a big item in those days, home-made ones flew well also. We would have string wraps of a foot wide to gather up the many hundreds, and thousands of feet, some of them we had out nearly 1/2 a mile. When the string would break, it would be all over trees to the South to the Old City Dump, gathering up that must string was a serious project. We even left a few out all night long. Not many survived a night, without falling to the ground, some of our kites would have over ten feet of old sheets tied on the bottom of the kite. And of course, I mentioned the Old City Dump. Yes, as we got older, we would go over and see what we could find to salvage for our forts, our play homes, and our race go carts, and wee what was burning or what we could burn in turn. Savings from the Tool Mills around town would be in piles and some of those metals would go up in a sparkling and spitting mushroom the metals becoming hot and the oil drippings, we would get a long stick and push it into the hot burning shavings, and throw them up in the air, creating our own little Fourth-of-July fireworks. Okay, that was a little dangerous, but we kids had danger everywhere, and really did not know that some of the antics would be fatal, until, one day, back of the mill after school, or on Saturday, we would rush down and try to get to on the ropes where the BIG BOYS would be swinging nude, and dropping off into the water. Well, we tried the same thing when we were about 7-78 yrs. old, with our clothes on, and Gary Weinberg, dropped into the water, and as we didn't know how to swim, he drowned before the Mill Operators, Max & Charlie Steffen's, etc. (about 1955-56, when they had just taken over operations of the Atlas Flour Mill from my Father, (Paul M. Hoyt.), could save him. We had a Boy Scout Funeral at the United Church of Christ. That's when we found out about what death was all about, that Summer, as it hit all the kids of Clinton with a sadness, and of course, it has stayed with any of us whom were there that day behind the Mill. I used to look inside the Atlas Mill to see the wondrous machinery and all the belts and pulleys and the above metal rotating shafts drive all the motors, take the lift up to the Fifth Floor, and then to look down at the inner workings of the water wheel, of course, we were Chaperoned most of the time, and to see the Huge Safe in the office, the dusty faces and clothes that the mill workers including My Father and Uncle, and Grandfather had, from the wheat, corn and hay particles circling about. The train cars that would empty corn, wheat, barley, and other grains into the basement, for processing, until the Grain Tower was built in 1955. I have been up there on 3-4 occasions, where we would look out above the town, and see our homes in the neighborhood. It was a long small enclosed shaft & ladder to climb. Always noisy. I've even climbed the Clinton Water Tower at the school yards. Now that was scary. I used to watch the overhead jets as they flew from and to the willow Run airport back in the early and late fifties. Flying boxcars,& F-109's, etc. Between us 3 Hoyt boys we had a lot of airplane and ship models that we took a lot of evenings to build, glue and paint. Yes, we never had a dull moment, when we were bad, and grounded to our yard, we had no problem, the 2 story house camp we had made from refrigerators, the big tree fort we had next door at the huge oak by the Peepers house, now a quad-plex. The stream and dam and Light plant & Sewers works, and then we had Bill Peepers little hut below us to visit. He was a nice old gent, to us kids. The many times that Clinton would have a Festival, and have a Fair with rides at the football field was Great Amount of Fun. Most of all we had plenty to do at the local church, which in our case, was right across from my grandfather and grandmothers, Hugh & Kitty Hoyt, the Congregational, changed later, in the 60's, to the United Church of Christ. We had men and women teachers in Sunday School, that would take us on trips to the lakes, West of town; Evans, Twin, Sand, Wampler's, and more.

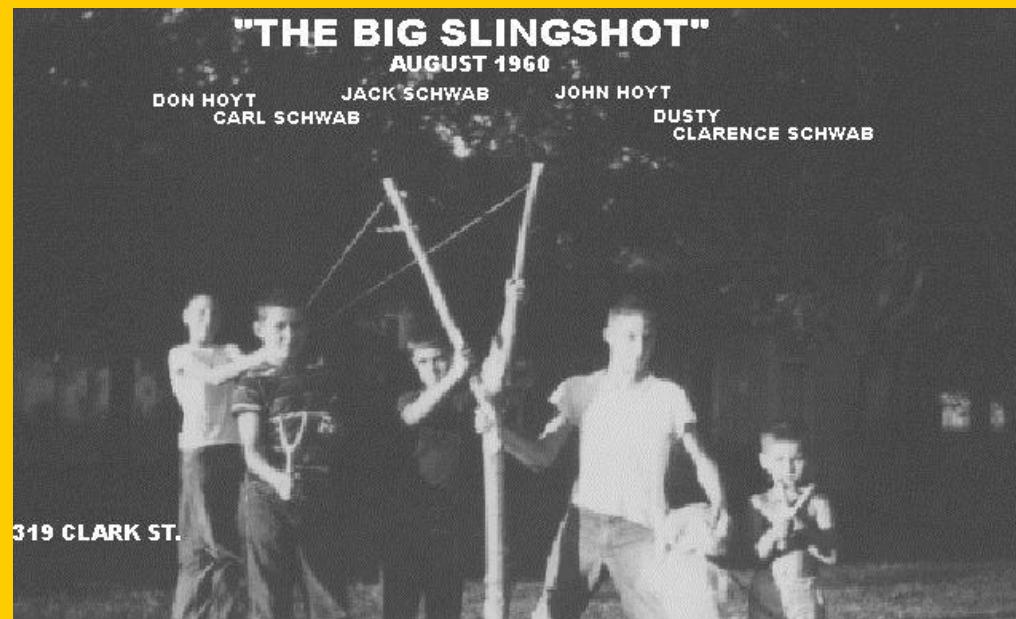
Later as teen-agers, we joined the United Church of Christ Youth Group, when Paul McKenna was pastor, and there daughter, Paula was my Sweetheart during my 8th & 9th Grade years. We had a lot of fun meeting others at different churches around the areas cities. We had a lot of fun in our own group just having doings and work bee's studying the life of Christ at the Church, and having Church Group members and neighborhood birthday parties, was always a treat, and a lot of kids at those birthday parties. Selling Lemonade and Kool-Aid along the city streets, near the Clinton Engines plant and at the Atlas Mill was fun, along with earning some money; picking up thrown away pop bottles, as well as having a paper

route, and selling cards for any occasions, and scraping off sidewalks for a quarter, raking leaves maybe for 50 cents or a dollar, washing windows, for the elderly and neighbors was also a source of money for us kids. Of course, we did this for no pay, the joy of it, for the Church Men would go out to the elderly out in the farmlands, and rake and burn leaves for them and for the Church Youth group helping others out, as did the girls, with their Clubs and Church circles do many jobs and many things for the elderly, and those whom had no sons or daughters, or family to help them out.

Tarzan Camp was one of the best things us boys had. It was across the mill race, (a dug out river for the mills to have water power, by use of a water wheel, that would come from the Raisin River from a canal along the top part of the Upper Dam, along the Riverside Cemetery, under US 112 (now 12), under the Woolen Mill, and onto the Atlas Mill, then Southward about 1/2 mile, until it meets up with the Raisin River again), below by the old Police Practice Shooting Range, (where we would dig out the practice lead bullets in the wood, to melt down for our uses), and South of the Fire Cabin at the Park below us. There was an old cement bridge that crossed the mill race and you would have to go South maybe 100-300 feet to get to our Tarzan Camp where we built many huts on the ground and in the trees. Old refrigerator boxes and wood scrapes, and such, from the Old Dump, which wasn't far to the East. I wonder if there is anything left of those woods and any nails and huts still there to show a presents of humans as well as Indians camped there, as it was an island from the Atlas Mill there was farmland between the mill race to the East, and the Raisin River that flowed to the West of our Tarzan Camp. Many fruits, such as, apples and cherries, Mulberry Trees & other berry bushes and grapes, abounded in the lands South West of the Village of Clinton, as well as, in our own yard.

As I said, I and the other neighborhood children, in the 1950's through the 1060's, enjoyed a full life as a child, and a had wonderful, fun time growing up in Michigan & the Heartland, where parents, townsfolk, fostered care and love, in each person; in their neighborhood, in their church, in their social, and in their schools, in the humble, Village of Clinton.

by John E. Hoyt



Contact John E. Hoyt at Email: jeh49341@chartermi.com