

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.

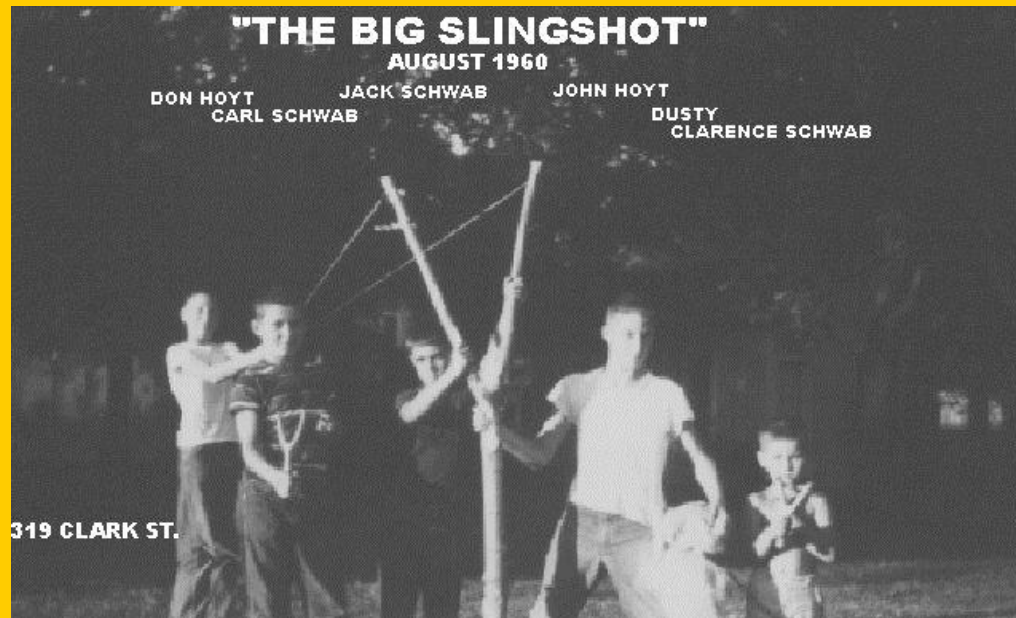
Later as teen-agers, we joined the United Church of Christ Youth Group, when Paul McKenna was pastor, and there daughter, Paula was my Sweetheart during my 8th & 9th Grade years. We had a lot of fun meeting others at different churches around the areas cities. We had a lot of fun in our own group just 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



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