

# Long time gone — It can't be 45 years

This spring and summer have found me doing a lot of walking as I break in a new knee and hip joint from Peachtree Orthopedics in Atlanta. My long time pharmacist, Bob Richardson, correctly advised me to stick with walking since I couldn't run a lick in high school. Newton Drive is a favorite route and I made 50 miles in July, not bad for a gimpy, 62-year-old pudgy guy.

More often than not, I see another classmate Barbara (Shropshire) Thompson who regularly walks 100+ miles monthly and that quickly put me in my place. She may be the only walker who could be ticketed for speeding on Newton Drive!

Reminiscing was the order of this particular day and as I pass the Ficquett Theme School, our third grade move from the old Covington school in 1957 comes to mind. Our class was under the watchful eye of Miss Dorothy Lee and if you caught her watchful eye, some form of physical consequence soon followed. Come to think of it, having her question terrorists would have yielded a lot of vital intelligence. Waterboarding would have been the easy way out in comparison.

I circle through East Ha-



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ven, utilize the fountain as my "watering hole" and soak a hand towel for the return walk home. The Board of Education office is a beautiful facility, but when I think back of the old building, I marvel at how so much was done with so little. The old building wasn't much bigger than the Dairy Queen. In there, you found superintendent Whit Richardson, executive secretary Claudine Everitt, secretary Anne Hubbard and M.D. McRae the system supervisor. The visiting teacher, Miss Clara Mae Hays died our senior year and that was the administration. Whit Richardson was a very capable and fiscally responsible administrator. Newton didn't have much money in those turbulent days either.

As I turn down Newton Drive I notice that "Death Valley" is open and the game is on. The grand old building is showing its

age now, with badly worn bleacher seats and less than perfect floor. Clearly some of these youngsters playing when I arrived could probably place a quarter on top of the backboard!

Apparently, I caught their eye and with a wardrobe consisting of walking shorts, knee brace, gym shoes and a Fresh Air BBQ shirt, it's clear that I played major college ball. One of these young men came over and asked "Hey man, you wanna run?" "I would love to" was my reply, "but you would get embarrassed if I went over you for a LeBron slam!" After the laughter died down, one of the players suggested "Man, you're crazy." He won't be the last to make that statement.

One of the advantages of a history degree is that you have a good memory so I sat in the stands and enjoyed the recollections: Hart, Winder-Barrow, Griffin, Tucker and many others went home with a loss — 129 in a row to be exact...and a national record. When you consider that the girl's teams were always more than competitive, home games were usually two wins. How on earth did some 2,750 fans wedge into a 2,000 seat facility?

Looking across the floor,

I see Herbert Vining, Frank Christian, Jack Meaders and James Hutchins on the top row. All are gone now except James and they all benefitted our community greatly. On many evenings, the town "rolled up the sidewalks" for a game with a sock hop to follow at the Teen Can across the street. The Saharas are playing and might well be singing the "unabridged" version of "Louie Louie."

A full-fledged case of "old home week" has set in now, so the last two miles can wait. I wonder if my "reserved seat" is still in Mr. Sharp's office? He was an outstanding educator and totally committed to his students. Yes, he was a product of the Ozzie and Harriet era and wouldn't that be a great way to live now? Our world was much safer then and life much more relaxed.

There's a faculty meeting in the library and the teachers are coming down the hall. There goes Lee Aldridge and Joe Croom, two outstanding science teachers. If I cared about what was in a leaf, I probably would have done better in Mrs. As' pop tests. Here comes Mrs. Patterson and may the Lord have mercy on your soul if you said "Civil War" in her American history class. I see Mrs. Burke planning

tomorrow's trigonometry test and Senior Tri Hi Y meeting. My college math was easy thanks to her.

As I walk in front of the school, I clearly hear Sheriff Junior Odum's patrol car with sirens blaring arriving to deliver our custodian, John Harper, to the school for a surprise visit as President Johnson. That's a story for another day. Circling around behind the school, I find the old band building is gone, but I'm certain I hear Basil Rigney offering first period study halls to one more of us on a daily basis. Newton's Blue Rambler Band was considered one of the best in the state in the late 1960's.

As I prepare to resume walking, Mr. Sharp comes over the intercom and invites several of us to his office to explain why Mr. Burke's office was "accidentally" filled up with wadded newspaper courtesy of the Covington News. While Mr. Burke wanted us all shot at sunrise, Mr. Sharp found it kind of cute. That is until a member of the Class of 1965 let on that we were going to start on the gym that night. You didn't even step on Bradley's floor with street shoes so filling up Death Valley with wadded up newspaper would, in fact, have been a death

sentence or maybe 10 years of push-ups.

Looking back, Newton of the mid-1960's not only had great basketball teams, but the football and baseball teams were very competitive. The "Y" clubs were the best in the district and the one act play and related activities were well done. The previously mentioned Blue Rambler Band was one of the best in the state. You don't see a lot of precision marching these days. Academically, a lot was expected of us and our teachers were there to help if we wanted it.

Thanks Guys — we owe you a lot!

The class of '66 will celebrate our 45 year reunion on August 27th at Charlie Elliott. A dozen or so classmates have been hard at work on the plans and an outstanding website is up and running. Unfortunately, the Cow Palace will not be catering. Some 75 of the graduates will be there to relive our high school days, but also speculate on the 2011 Dawgs and whether the good old U S of A can get their fiscal house in order before Judgment Day. It looks like a fun evening — see you then!

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