

Growing Up Chatham: Fall-ing Home

part 3 of 4

Submitted by Luke Bruss

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As I write this, I'm sitting in the shade of the majestic oak tree overlooking the Sports Courts, taking in the warmth of summer's dying days. It's a bright, sunny day with barely a cloud in the sky. There's a nice, cool, breeze softly, but steadily, blowing away the last of mid September's warmth and humidity.

This has always been my favorite time of the year. The sweaty days of summer give way to the crisp, cool nights of Fall, while the lush greenery begins to burst into bright reds and oranges. The smell of the fallen leaves, combined with the sound of them crunching under the feet of passers-by still illicit memories of all the great things fall brought to the world of a kid growing up in Chatham Village: football, Halloween, and hockey.

In our youngest days, we played football in the small yard between Bigham and the park. It made for a rough game because of the confined space. The saying "three yards and a cloud of dust" was very applicable. We'd usually use a sturdy leather football, but when Nerf came out with the "Vortex" – a football with a whistle embedded into it – it was a game-changer. Passing started to become more common and for the first few games a defender could get an advantage over the receiver by imitating the sound of the ball flying through the air. It's such a silly, stupid little thing, but it led to arguments and pushing and shoving.

Occasionally, former watchman Lloyd Wilson would be summoned to chase us away and we'd continue the game in the lower ballfield. As angsty teens are known for, those of us with more anti-authoritarian streaks would, at times, make his job a bit more difficult by insisting that we would play wherever we please. Definitely not me though...

Halloween was a big-time Chatham Village event. There were dozens, upon dozens of trick-or-treaters. In my opinion, it even rivaled the Fourth of July for excitement. We would all discuss costume ideas with each other, but no matter how much thought I put into a costume, I'd usually end up disguised as a zombie with

gnarly wounds, or a soldier complete with camouflage and a fluorescently-colored plastic gun, joining the legions of Transformers, Freddy Kruegers, and GI Joes; Penguins, Princesses, and Punk Rockers with purple hair who would flood the sidewalks.

We always met at the Flagpole around 5pm, if I'm not mistaken, and led by a few brave parents, we'd make our way down to the Clubhouse to enjoy hot dogs and apple cider before we began our sugar-seeking sprint from house to house to visit neighbors and collect our treats.

Covering the whole Village was always the mission; sometimes, we made it, sometimes we'd call it a night after the big three courtyards. As we became bolder and braver – with the explicit parental instructions not to eat any candy until we came home – we began to expand into the Mount Washington streets, always following the same path, like pirates following a map to a sweet, sweet treasure. We'd walk all the way up Bigham, then down Grandview turning onto Labelle. We'd cross Virginia Ave., and finally proceed back into the familiarity of the Sulgrave and Olympia courtyard. We may or may not have hit those houses in the Old Village again on our way back home. It certainly made for quite a heavy pillowcase!

The day after Halloween was just as much of a tradition with my group of friends. We would meet at one of our houses and trade candy. I tell you this truthfully: hedge fund managers



and stockbrokers on Wall Street with billions of dollars at stake didn't take trading as seriously as we did with the candy exchange. Baby Ruths and

Gummi Worms; Potato Chips and Pretzels; it was **SERIOUS** business.

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Growing up Chatham Continued....

Fall is also when hockey season really kicked into high gear. As I've written previously, hockey was pretty much a year-round sport for us. But fall was special because it was a reprieve from the heat radiating off of the side of the hill beside the court. It was a time where we all felt like Mario Lemieux, Paul Coffey, and Tom Barrasso replaying the legendary moves we watched the Penguins pull off the previous night.

Mostly, we played with our core group of around 6 or 7 friends. We all competed for one thing: The Howard Cup of Hockey Excellence.

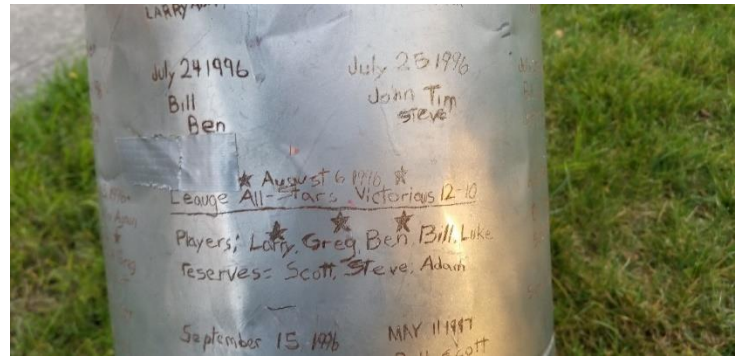


The Howard Cup of Hockey Excellence

Fashioned from a pressed metal wastebasket and a plastic flowerpot that we painted silver, the names of players from the victorious teams would be carefully etched into it. It was our own little piece of Chatham Village hockey immortality. Sometimes the Chatham Village Hockey League (CVHL), as we called ourselves, would take on kids from outside of

the Village. The games were always competitive, and sometimes the games would be friendly. But mostly, mayhem would eventually ensue. Tripping led to cross-checking; cross-checking led to high-sticking; high-sticking led to gloves being dropped and punches being thrown. There were times when the CVHL vs. Grace Street resembled the Penguins vs. the Flyers. What started as a friendly rivalry grew into a deep hatred of each other. It all culminated on one epic day in 1996. The day they stole the Howard Cup.

The biggest scuffle we ever had was when our mortal enemies tried to abscond with our cherished chalice. The "League All-Stars" soundly defeated them, and after the game as we were all sitting along the wall outside the Sports Court – maybe still trash talking – they



(The Chatham Village All-Stars defeated Grace Street 12-10 in an historic battle for Mount Washington)

took our trophy and ran. I won't get into specifics (think of the fight scene from the movie "Anchorman" without the Brick's trident) but we chased them down; there was bloodshed; and our Cup was retrieved. To this day it's in the basement of a suburban Pittsburgh home for safekeeping. I contend that it should be kept in the newly established Chatham Village Sports Hall of Fame, right alongside the likenesses of Chatham Village's 1st pickleball champs: Maripat Cawley and Sharon Ernzer. It is a piece of Chatham Village Hockey League lore, and the names of many Villagers of the past and present are etched into the fabled trophy.

Fall in Chatham Village is always a broad spectrum of spectacular vistas. The views of the trees encircling our private world burst into an autumnal palette that look as though they came straight from Photoshop on my computer. I always have been, and always will be, struck with the natural beauty that we are privileged enough to call home.

In recent months, I've looked into leaving for greener pastures in the professional world, instead of running around like a madman working for myself. But no matter how far away I drive for meetings, interviews or promising leads, I still find myself – just like I did in the days of trick-or-treating – coming back into the comforting embrace of Chatham Village.



If YOU have a story to tell, send it to Katy!

Stop by the office or send an e-mail: office@chathamvillagehomes.com