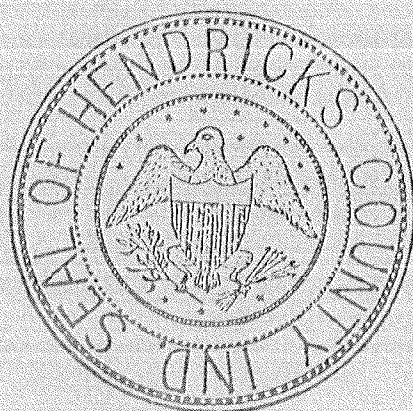


Guilford Township Historical Collection  
Plainfield Public Library  
1120 Guilford Place  
Plainfield, IN 46161  
(317) 834-6602

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# HENDRICKS COUNTY

## HISTORY BULLETIN



VOLUME XIX NUMBER IV  
NOVEMBER 1988  
PUBLISHED BY  
THE HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
DANVILLE, INDIANA

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ORGANIZED 1967

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1120 Stafford Rd.  
Plainfield, IN 46168  
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Tel. 839-6602

Hendricks County Hist. Museum  
Danville, IN 46122  
Open Tues & Sat 1 - 4 P.M.  
For further information call  
(317) 745-4055 or 852-2810

ANNUAL DUES \$3.00 PAYABLE IN NOVEMBER

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The Hendricks County Historical Bulletin is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. It is distributed without charge to members of the Society and to Hendricks County School Libraries. Individual copies of \$2.00. Communications concerning back copies or individual copies should be addressed to our secretary. Contributions or suggestions to The Bulletin should be mailed to the editor.

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PEOPLE WHO WONDER WHERE THIS GENERATION IS GOING SHOULD  
REMINDE THEMSELVES WHERE IT CAME FROM IN THE FIRST PLACE

HENDRICKS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BULLETIN

PRESIDENT'S FALL MESSAGE 1988:

What a super Fall this year promises to be. I can look out my window here at the Courthouse and see the beautiful Fall colors beginning. It renews my faith and is a great gift for all of us. Hope everything is going well with you all.

We all owe a big thanks to Margaret Baker for all of the work that she has done in preparing our Hendricks County History Bulletins. She is easing herself out of that job and will be helped by Libbe Hughes, who is taking over the responsibility. We all owe Mrs. Baker a great big Thank You for the time and effort she has spent in preparing the Bulletin.

Our August meeting was well attended. Leslie Olson from WISH TV gave a super program. You can really tell why she is a TV Reporter. Her enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject were something we all will remember.

We owe a big debt of gratitude to Mary Jeanette Winklemann and the Pittsboro Christian Church for their kind hospitality for our August meeting.

The Danville South Elementary Fourth Grade is preparing a project on Hendricks County History. If any of the members have any interest in their projects, would you contact the following teachers with any help you might give them: Mrs. Tripple - cities, towns and settlements, Mrs. Boatman - history, Mrs. Zielinski - folklore, Mrs. Cramer - transportation, Mrs. Monts - geography & natural resources, Mrs. Martin - agriculture & industry, Mrs. McCoy - graphics. Their telephone is 745-2131. I am sure the students of South Elementary would appreciate any help our members might be able to give them on the topics assigned to teachers.

We are all very excited for our November meeting. John J. Newman will speak on Art for Profit. He wants you to bring photographs to examine, date, and recommend the best ways to care for them. This will be an exciting meeting.

We need to have election of officers at the November meeting. I have appointed a Nominating Committee of Mary Jeanette Winklemann, Chairman, Telephone 892-4351, Eloise Castetter, Telephone 839-4038, and Grace Cox, Telephone 745-2552. I am sure that they would appreciate any input you have for officers.

We are planning the 1989 Program Schedule. Lynn Hopper of the Hendricks County Flyer and Indianapolis Star has agreed to give a program on antiques. Mrs. Hopper is a recognized expert on antiques and writes the Sunday column in the Indianapolis Star.

If you have some ideas for programs you want to see in 1989, let me know.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS  
FOR 1989

The following dates:

February 5th, 1989 Meeting  
May 7th, 1989 Meeting  
August 6th, 1989 Meeting  
November 5th, 1989 Meeting

We are committed to our big project, the Indiana Historic Cities Structures Inventory, to begin in December. As this gets underway, I'm sure our members will be given a chance to participate in writing the book. The Hendricks County Historical Society will be sponsoring the survey. We are still looking for a benefactor.

See you at the November 6th meeting in Plainfield at the Library. Carolyn Kellum will be our hostess.

SPECIAL NOTE: We all want to wish a Happy 90th Birthday to Frances Fisher. Her birthday is November 11th, 1988. There will be a reception for her November 12th, 1988 at the Pittsboro Christian Church from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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#### AUGUST MEETING

The Hendricks County Historical Society met at the Pittsboro Christian Church the afternoon of August 7, 1988. The meeting was called to order by Judy Pingel, Vice President. Invocation and welcome was given by Louise Broyles substituting for Frances Fisher of the host church. President Judge Jeffrey Boles told the story of a chair used for the President of the United States to sit on while he was visiting at Danville. The chair that was used was presented to Dorothy Kelley. Then Judge Boles introduced the speaker for the afternoon, Leslie Olsen, Education Reporter for Channel 8 TV. She told a story of underwater adventure off the coast of Key West, Florida, and spoke of the Ball State University Archeology Department's work with a 1000 year old burial ground. Mary Jeanette Winkelmann introduced the Pittsboro Christian Church Sextet who sang three numbers. The meeting was dismissed and refreshments were served by the host church.

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Our next meeting, on November 6th, will be at the Plainfield Public Library beginning at 2:00 p.m. Former State Archivist John J. Newman will present the program entitled "Art In Profit In Indiana: A History of 19th Century Indiana Photographs With Some Notes As To Their Care." Mr. Newman requests that members bring some photographs for him to examine and possibly date. The Guilford Township ladies will provide refreshments and Carolyn Kellum will be our hostess. The library is located at 1120 Stafford Road. Hope to see you all there as this is certain to be an informative meeting.

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#### MUSINGS FROM THE MUSEUM

The Hendricks County Historical Museum was open on Sat. Oct. 15, 1988 for Swap and Shop. This festival coincides with the Covered Bridge Festival in Rockville, IN. Both towns are on U.S. 36, or we used to call it Rockville Road. Traffic those days are usually bumper-to-bumper.

The Hendricks County Garden Club planted the flower bed with white periwinkle. Garden Club members faithfully watered it and the result was a cloud of white. After the weather cooled off the flowers were even showier. But---we had a killer frost.

The museum takes on an air of festivity when clubs come to visit. Some of the visitors may be new club members who have never come before. The chatter will be questions, comments, and some downright hearty laughter. Large groups of grade school pupils come and it will be nice when pupils from all over the county get to visit. The atmosphere is pretty lively when they stop by.

The pictures that are brought in tell stories of the towns they come from. One can pretty well tell the life of those times from pictures. Collections of newspaper articles say "you were there!" when history was made. The clothing of yesteryear tells of the life of that day. The clothes go well in our old-time fashion shows we take to nursing homes occasionally along with other memorabilia of that day. The residents love it! Some of the modern lassies have more than a little trouble with the tiny waistlines!

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#### THE MILITARY ROOM

As we enter we see beginning on our right, we notice three framed button collections. Standing right under them is part of the paraphernalia used by the G.A.R. in their ceremonies. Lying on top are two gavels and an old-time ballot box. When we open the closet door we'll find it pretty full but it is not like Fibber McGee's. Right over the restroom door is an elaborately framed collection of medals. Right beside the door is a framed newspaper: "The New York Herald" at the time of President Lincoln's death. Beneath it hangs a W.W.I uniform. Coming on along the wall we will notice a tall armoire (wardrobe) and in it we find an overcoat worn by Col. A.D. Streight of the 51st Regiment. Col. Streight's picture hangs on the wardrobe wall. Several volumes of the Adjutant General of Indiana Reports containing a roster of enlisted men, will be found on the shelves as well as volumes on the affairs of the "Women's Relief Corps" (W.R.C.). We see some more G.A.R. "Grand Army of the Republic", paraphernalia. We have several flags.

This next display shelf is what fascinates boys of all ages. Among things we see on the top shelf is a black leather helmet, a billfold, more the size of of a lady's clutch purse. Well, the money was bigger. Maybe that's why it went further! Hm? A long picture taken Mar. 1918 at Fort Hamilton, New York. There are a couple of hard helmets and a C.D. helmet, plus some air-raid instructions. The second shelf holds an assortment of small books and pamphlets related to the military service. There is a W.W.I felt hat, a cap and two bullet-proof helmets. Tucked in there is a picture of the east side of the square in Danville in Civil War Days. The third shelf has more large flags and a host of survival equipment. The fourth shelf holds more of the above mentioned. The boys almost get carried away by it all and have more fun trying on the caps and helmets.

We begin now on the south wall. A 48 star American Flag hangs on the wall. Right below it, on the floor, sits a big, old dinner bell. The model done up in his parachuting equipment makes this writer jump every time she comes into the building. That door leading onto the lift used to be a window but had to be changed to conform with regulations. There's a fern stand and a small table holding some neat little firearms. Next we notice a Navy uniform, an Army uniform and a Salvation Army uniform. On the east of the door is a large collage of mementoes of W.W.II. On it is a full page newspaper account in tall bold headlines proclaiming "Peace at last!", the Japanese Surrender of W.W.II. The "Ketchikan, Alaska Chronicle" newspaper was the publication. Among other things we notice: Rationing books, tokens, savings stamps, gasoline coupons.

The east wall has a W.W.II Wac's uniform, a W.W.II Army nurse's uniform and two service flags. We have a leather jacket that Ralph Wilcox wore when he flew missions in W.W.II. The display shelves contain a variety of items, largely W.R.C. property. Next is a case containing an assortment of medals. Beside that is a melodeon, originally from one of Danville's older homes. Gracing the top of the melodeon are two Civil War pictures. One is a framed picture of a reunion of Civil War volunteers. The building is familiar but we can't place the name. An auto-harp, some call it a "zither", leans against the wall. Behind the melodeon hangs the Sesquicentennial quilt that is such a treasure. A dining room chair has a fur cushion to lean against and the quilt thrown over it is made of silk in the log cabin pattern. The black georgette dress on the model is trimmed with beading, undoubtedly a 1920's creation. A plant stand holds two books concerning W.W.I. The pedestal in the center of the room is part of the W.R.C. materials. As we are about to leave the room we see a medium size picture entitled "A Soldier's Record" - which gives mustering in and mustering out dates and name of a soldier. This concludes this tour. Another time we'll look at another room.

Jewell

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#### DEATHS

It is with great sorrow that we note the passing of society members Mary Canganelli, Franklin Ramsey, Fred Osborn, Howard Hopkins (brother of Frances English, Marie Hopkins, and Eloise Castetter), and Willard Heiss. They shall be sorely missed. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to their loved ones.

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#### PLAINFIELD ROOTS PROJECT

The first certificates of participation have been awarded in the PLAINFIELD ROOTS PROJECT, sponsored by the Local History Section of the Plainfield Public Library for the preservation of family history information in Hendricks County.

To date over 250 ROOTS packets have been signed out by participants who wish to document their genealogy and donate a copy to the library for safekeeping. The packets are made available free of charge through the courtesy of A.H.M. Graves Realtors. Upon submission of the completed packet, each participant is awarded a certificate which is bordered in gold.

The packets include information on Hendricks County and Plainfield history, sources for genealogical information in the county and a supply of genealogical forms and charts.

In addition to participants from Hendricks County and other areas in Indiana, packets have also been signed out by residents of Florida, Illinois, Nebraska, Arizona, Missouri, Nevada, Idaho and California.

Persons requesting packets to be mailed to them are asked to address their requests to Historical Librarian, Plainfield Public Library, 1120 Stafford Road, Plainfield, IN 46168. Please include \$2.00 to defray postage and handling costs; checks should be made payable to PPL - Gift Fund.

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1988-89 Season Set for Guilford Township Historical Society

The program for the GTHS' upcoming season is as follows. Interest persons are always welcome at meetings and individuals are invited to join the Society. Annual dues are \$2.00 per person and may be sent to Dorothy Carneal, Treasurer, 135 N. Vine Street, Plainfield, IN 46168, or paid at the October meeting.

Officers are John C. Miller, President (839-6883); Harriet Craven, Vice-President; Esther Stafford, Secretary.

Thursday, October 27, 1988

7:30 p.m.  
Plainfield Public Library,  
Meeting Room C

"BUT THEY DIDN'T CATCH ME!"  
Pranks and Adventures

Emcee: Bill Stafford

Thursday, January 26, 1989

7:30 p.m.  
Plainfield Public Library,  
Meeting Room C

THRESHER'S A-COMIN'  
Helen Hammond

&

THE PENN CENTRAL'S LAST RUN (film)  
John Copeland

Thursday, March 23, 1989

7:30 p.m.  
Plainfield Public Library,  
Meeting Room C

PLAINFIELD'S MUSIC MAN: CHESTER DRAKE  
Resource person: Frances Drake

Thursday, May 25, 1989

7:30 p.m.  
Plainfield Public Library,  
Meeting Room C

PLAINFIELD PAST-TIMES  
By An Old-Timer

Thursday, July 27, 1989

PICNIC: 5:30 p.m. (pitch-in)  
PROGRAM: 6.45 p.m.  
Plainfield Public Library,  
Meeting Room C

PLAINFIELD'S SESQUICENTENNIAL  
1839-1989

Planning Committee:  
Harriet Craven, Chairperson  
Henderson Davis  
Ida Mae Miller

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CONGRATULATIONS

The HCCHS would like to take this opportunity to congratulate two area librarians upon their retirement. Ruth Fuson retired October 22 from the Coatesville Public Library where she has been librarian since 1976. Mary M. McMillan, Plainfield Public Library director for 24 years, plans to retire effective December 31. Both ladies have been instrumental in improving and maintaining library services for area residents. Their contribution to our county is priceless and we wish them the very best.

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## EDWARDS' CASH & CARRY

In this excerpt from an Oral History interview for the Plainfield Public Library's Guilford Township Historical Collection, Blanche Winsted Edwards recalls how she came to start Cartersburg's "convenience store." The small building which housed the Edwards Cash and Carry store recently burned.

The interview, entitled "Reminiscences of Cartersburg, Indiana," was taped in October of 1976 and is one of several available for reference at the Plainfield Library. The interviewer was Susan Miller Carter.

SM What year was that when you started your store?

BE In '68, January '68.

SM And how did you decide to do that?

BE The little store?

SM Right.

BE Well, I'd been . . . see they had closed the grocery store that we had here in town. We didn't have anyplace you could buy a loaf of bread or a bottle of milk or anything.

XM What was the name of that store they closed?

BE Burton's. They sold . . . they closed . . . they moved to Belleville. And then Dorothy Bayse and her husband, and Wayne Pickerel had it last. He was working up town and he just couldn't do both. So he decided to sell out. Well, then, he had that building down there and he just sold it all out. People just went by and just got rid of it. It was about two years we didn't have no store at all here, I had this little building rented down here to a preacher. So I come in home one evening and I failed to get a loaf of bread, you know. I go through Amo, Coatesville, Clayton, all those places. I go right by those stores and I could have stopped and got some bread. My son was here and I said, I was kind of aggravated, and I said, "You know what I have a notion to do? I have a notion to just go right down there in that little old building and put in a little store and start up and sell milk and, you know, all that stuff you want right quick, and bread, and stuff like that." John said, "well, that's a deal. I'll help you." So he, the first thing I knowed, he had bread men coming up here, milk men, and everybody else. And he said, "Now let's open up that store right away." And I said, "Now John, we've got to have shelves, you got to have it fixed so you can start the store. So I went and got the license uptown and I was out on the paper route and I stopped in up here at the Big Wheel, you know where that is? That's where I ended up my Star route. That would be the end. So after my husband died I generally ate breakfast in there every morning before going home. So I was in there one morning and a salesman came in and I said to him, I said, "You don't have any idea who would have a counter and a candy case and stuff like that runs a store because you're in places like that, that would have such as that that you could buy second hand. I'm thinking about putting in a little store, and I don't want to go and buy all new stuff because I don't know how long I'm going to keep the store going." He said, "Yes, I know a place. Right up



here at Trailer City. They've cut down their restaurant and they've stored about half of their stuff." So I get in my car and I drive up there. And they said yes. They had stored their stuff over in a barn over here on 36 and I said, "Well, I don't have time to go over there this morning but let me make an appointment and I'll meet you and we'll go over there and see about it. Maybe I'll buy it." So I did. They even hauled it out here and put it in the building. That's how I started the store.

SM Well, that's real service.

BE So we really started with all that stuff. About the only thing we bought new was coolers, like for pop and stuff like that.

SM And do you cook, too? Do you have sort of a little restaurant there?

BE We have Stewart sandwiches and coffee. And then you have the Hostess stuff and Chesty. And then they buy candy and stuff like that, more trash, I think.

SM So people can come in and visit there.

BE And buy candy and have ice cream and we sell a lot of pop.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Indianapolis Star staff writer Beth L. Rosenberg reported on the fire which closed the doors of the twenty year old Edwards' Cash & Carry. The fire started in a Coca-Cola machine on the front porch and resulted in extensive damage to the building. Blanche Edwards, an 85 year old great-grandmother as well as the store's proprietor, hopes to repair the building and open up shop again soon.

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#### A GIFT OF LOVE

The Danville United Methodist Church is the fortunate recipient of two sets of Danbury Mint medals. These sets are for sale and the proceeds will go to the church. The donor prefers to remain anonymous.

THE LIFE OF JESUS is a 24-medal set of 24 k gold on sterling. Each medal depicts, in beautiful, detail, an episode in the life of Christ. On the back of each medal is a biblical quotation pertaining to the occasion shown on the front. It is well known that these limited editions increase in value as the years go by, so this valuable set would become an important addition to some one's collection.

MEN IN SPACE is a limited 24-medal bronze set depicting each space exploit, starting with Alan Shepherd's first sub-orbital flight of 297 miles. With the recent long-awaited, heart-stopping successful flight of THE DISCOVERY, renewed enthusiasm for the space program is bound to increase by leaps and bounds. What more timely gift for some young space enthusiast or aspiring astronaut than this beautiful MEN IN SPACE set which will be a priceless possession in years to come.

Both sets are encased in a luxurious, hand-rubbed American walnut chest. TAKE NOTICE, PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS ..... Christmas is coming.

If you are interested, or know of some one who is, contact the church office. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 820 West Mill Street, Danville, IN 46122 or call 1-317-745-4330.

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PLAINFIELD POET IS FINALLY RECOGNIZED

(Editor's Note: The following story appeared in a recent PLAINFIELD MESSENGER column under the title PLAIN AND FANCY. The article was prompted by one of our members, Carolyn Kellum.)

Here's the story we promised you last week. Taken from a newspaper in Alstead, New Hampshire, via the "Olney Current," from Olney Friends School at Barnesville, Ohio:

"Nearly fifty years after it was written, a Canadian publishing company will pay \$12,000 to an octogenarian poet of a children's poem. Executives from the Canadian affiliate of Scholastic Inc., looked for almost four years to find Edith Newlin Chase, an 82-year-old author, teacher and mother. On Thursday she will get her royalty check for the "New Baby Calf."

After Scholastic TAB published the poem in 1984, 115,000 copies sold in French and English before the poet, who grew up in Plainfield, was located in 1987.

The newspaper article continues, "Chase ... found her earliest literary inspiration while growing up on a farm in Plainfield, IN. She collected the feed tags from 100-pound bags of grain and tied them together to form a notebook that stayed in her shirt pocket while she did chores. The feed tags were free writing paper, 'money was scarce...and I had no allowance,' recalled Chase. . ."

Edith Newlin Chase says, "I am pleased that the poem has been put into a form that seems to appeal to many children, and may help them learn to read, as well as help them enjoy calves, I hope."

Carolyn Kellum, who tipped us off to this happy story, said, "It's such a fairy tale -- so wonderful that it turned out so "right" for her (the poet)." According to Carolyn, Edith Newlin Chase had two older sisters, Alice and Anna, and a younger sister, Martha.

The Newlin family lived in the brick home which now belongs to Raymond and Eleanor Heald near Sugar Grove. When Bob and Margaret Rumsey were in New Hampshire, they visited the Chases in their home.

The local library has Edith Newlin Chase's book on order so (barring any unusual delays in shipping) it should be available for check out before summer's end.

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HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED

(Editor's note: It is reported that this paper was read at a class 50th Reunion ... where we don't know, but it does almost shock us to realize how times have changed!)

WE WERE BEFORE the pill and the population explosion which, inexplicably, went hand in hand. We were before television, before penicillin, polio shots, antibiotics and frisbees, before frozen food, nylon, Dacron, Xerox and Kinsey. We were before radar, fluorescent lights, credit cards and ballpoint pens. For us, time-sharing meant togetherness, not computers; a chip meant a piece of wood, hardware meant tools and software wasn't even a word.

IN OUR TIME, closets were for clothes, not for coming out of, and a book about two young women living together in Europe could be called Our Hearts Were Young and Gay. In those days bunnies were small rabbits and rabbits were not Volkswagens. We were before Grandma Moses and Frank Sinatra and cup-sizing for bras. We were before Batman, Grapes of Wrath, Rudolph the Rednosed Reindeer and Snoopy. Before DDT and Vitamin pills, vodka (in the U.S.A.) and the white wine craze, disposable diapers, jeeps and the Jefferson nickel. Before scotch tape, Grand Coulee Dam, M&M's, the automatic shift and Lincoln Continentals.

WHEN WE WERE in college - pizzas, Cheerios, frozen orange juice, instant coffee, and McDonalds were unheard of. WE thought fast food was what you ate during Lent.

WE WERE BEFORE FM radio, tape recorders, electric typewriters, word processors, Muzak, electronic music and disco dancing. Almost no one flew across the country, and Trans-Atlantic flights belonged to Lindberg and Amelia Earhart. WE were before Israel and the United Nations. Before India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iceland, and the Phillipines were independent countries. Since our graduation 92 countries - 48 of them African - have become independent nations.

WE WERE BEFORE pantyhose and drip-dry clothes, before icemakers and dishwashers, clothes dryers, freezers, and electric blankets. Before Hawaii and Alaska became States, before men wore long hair and earrings and women wore tuxedos.

WE WERE BEFORE Leonard Bernstein, yogurt, and Ann Landers, plastics, hair dryers, the 40-hour week, the minimum wage. WE got married first and then lived together. How quaint can you be?

IN OUR DAY cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mowed, coke was something you drank, and pot was something you cooked in. We were before coin vending machines, jet planes, helicopters, and interstate highways. In 1933, "made in Japan" meant junk; and the term, "making out" referred to how you did on an exam.

IN OUR TIME there were five and ten cent stores where you could buy things for five and ten cents. A nickel would give you a ride on the subway or the ferry, or make a phone call or buy a coke or enough stamps to mail one letter and two postcards. A new Chevy coupe cost \$659.00, but who could afford that in 1933? Gas was eleven cents a gallon. If anyone in those days had asked us to explain CIA, NATO, UFO, NFL, JFK, ERA, or IUD, we would have said alphabet soup. WE were not before the difference between sexes was discovered, but were before sex changes. WE just made do with what we had.

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## SENIOR CITIZEN STRIKES BACK AT POMPOUS SPECIALISTS

(Editor's note: Betty Pierson, of Indianapolis, is a board member of the Shepherd Center, an interfaith organization for older adults which sponsors classes, lunches, recreational activities, outings etc. very much like our Senior Center in Danville. This article appeared in the INDIANAPOLIS STAR a few years ago. Since we have a few Senior Citizens in our membership, we thought this article would produce a few chuckles.)

Way back in 1917 when I was born, I had to muddle through my baby years with just the occasional help of the family physician, who made house calls and took care of birthing, babies, boils, bunions, blisters, an occasional appendectomy and even put pennies on the eyes of the dying.

Then came the days of specialized medicine, and by the time I had my first child in 1943, I had an OB/GYN and an anesthesiologist to share the limelight and a pediatrician standing in the wings.

Through the ensuing years I became so friendly with surgeons, orthodontists, ear-nose-and-throat men, ophthalmologists, psychiatrists, podiatrists and even oncologists that we were on a first-name basis. The cast grew by leaps and bounds.

Now gerontologists have sprouted like spring dandelions, all wanting to get into the act, and specializing in this new breed of humanity called Senior Citizens. We have been put under their microscopes, and to justify their existence they have made predictions about what to expect from these poor old folks who were never expected to still be around.

Unfortunately, they are all so green -- and the field so new -- I'm afraid I'll be pushing up daisies before they can tell me much about myself that I don't already know.

The obvious changes they mention are hardly worthy of our notice. We all know our hair turns gray, then white if we are lucky -- or just thins and falls out if we aren't. Our teeth get full of holes and usually have to be replaced by dentures. Our skin loses its elasticity and becomes dry and wrinkled. Our joints stiffen, causing arthritis and hammer toes.

And we all have illnesses and ailments which are peculiarly and preciousy our very own.

No, gerontologists are interested in the insidious changes -- the kind that sneak up on us so gradually we aren't even aware of them until it is too late. They have made some earthshaking discoveries.

They are prone to saying things like: "Older adults have increased reaction time. They take longer to respond to an event or stimulus."

Did it ever occur to them that we just might have learned at last to "look before we leap?" Or that "discretion is the better part of valor?" Or that perhaps we are just "taking time out to smell the roses?"

After all, time is what we have the most of. These doctors also say we have less energy and poop out faster, but they salve these wounds by saying we can overcome these little problems by "avoiding time pressures" and "limiting daily activies."

I'm going to use those excuses the next time I bypass housecleaning.

These specialists love to be pompous. How about "sensory acuity declines?" Why can't they just say, "They can't see worth a damn any more?"

Our eyes take longer to adapt to darkness. How well I know! Have you ever walked into one of those dimly lit restaurants and found yourself groping around for the table? Or walked into a dark theatre and can't see the seats?

Cataracts can play tricks on us. Normally, they have a yellow cast, causing a change of colors for those with them. Blue is seen as green. Red seems to be orange. Purple is seen as black.

If I come up to you and say, "I love your pretty green dress" when it really is an azure blue, you will know -- and should tell me -- that it is high time I see an ophthalmologist. If you, too, think the dress is green, we should hold hands and go together.

Or how about: "Hearing losses affect certain sounds. Older adults usually have more difficulty hearing high tones."

I don't believe it. High cackles and voices may get on my nerves, but I certainly can hear them. It is the low, mumbling voice that drives me up the wall.

And how about TV? Do you ever have to turn up the sound to catch the supposedly witty conversation during a gripping scene, only to have them switch to a commercial, and blow you back in your chair with the volume? That's not hearing loss -- that's advertising!

Taste gets into the act, too. "After the late 50s, there are declines in sensitivity to all four types: salty, bitter, sweet and sour."

They are right there! Dill pickles today just aren't as salty and sour as they were when I picked them out of the grocery pickle barrel years ago. That Hershey bar isn't as yummy as it was when I was a kid. (Or is it the fact that I'm spending 35 cents for a nickel candy bar that's cutting down on its sweetness?)

I don't think it is all "taste" either. There is no way a cup of instant coffee today is going to taste as satisfying first thing in the morning as that good, old cup poured from a percolator you have heard go "pe-tuck, pe-tuck, pe-tuck" for ten minutes.

For you sexy senior citizens who are lucky enough to have someone to be sexy with, the word is "Go for it!" Watch your medications, go easy on "happy hour" and don't worry. Sex is good exercise and won't upset the rhythm of your pacemaker.

It may take a little longer, but like Heinz ketchup, it is "Slow Good."

Fortunately, our "intellectual functioning" doesn't even start to decline until somewhere between the ages of 70 and 80, and even then it isn't such a big deal. It rarely interferes with our ability to function.

I'm not too sure of that when these specialists make pronouncements like, "Older people perform best when they work with familiar material in familiar ways. They find it difficult to manipulate unfamiliar material in unfamiliar ways." Would you mind running that by me again, please?

If we have "marked intellectual decline," it usually is caused by "medical or psychological problems," and "the belief that older people have poor memories is a myth."

I don't buy that, but I'm glad they think so. "Mental capacity remains at a normal level." Wishful thinking perhaps, but it keeps me going. "If the older person is depressed, he is more likely to have a poor memory."

Nuts! I think it is the other way around. My poor memory is likely to make me feel depressed. I feel terrible when I can't put a name on a face -- and worse when I stand before the open refrigerator door and can't remember why I opened it.

The advise they give is the only thing that justifies their existence. "Have a confidante. Having intimate, stable relationships where there is someone to really talk to serves as a buffer against the losses of aging."

Now I know why I enjoy the Shepherd Center. It is the one place where I can find people of my own age to really talk and relate to.

To learn something new, to share an old but well-remembered experience, to laugh and enjoy a meal I didn't cook, and to have fun with my peers rests and restores me -- and is a great buffer. The love and concern we feel for each other is an extra plus that makes Wednesdays my red letter days.

Thanks to Shepherd Center, I won't have to muddle through my Act III alone, and I bless them for it.

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