

Our Dad, Chuck Will, with help of his father and neighbour Keith Williams, built our new home on Lot 25 Block 13 in Montgomery Place from May to November 1956. While he was working evenings and weekends on the new house, our pregnant Mom was left with 3 young children and a household to run. One of the only days Dad took off was the day our brother was born in October. I don't know how Mom and Dad coped with all the challenges that year.

We used to travel west on 11th Street with its famous smelly parts, the refinery, the stockyards and the meat processing plant. The smells were topics of many conversations. When we traveled up the gravel road which is now Circle Drive, we were right next to grain fields with the government elevators to the west.

In November of 1956, our family moved into our brand new home at 3109 Ortona Street. I, Pat, was 10, Bev 4, Gwen 15 months and John 3 weeks. After living in a small 2 bedroom wartime house with no basement, our new home was palatial. I had my own bedroom!

Names of our some of our neighbours at this time were Williams, Provencher, Thompson, Shklov, John, Genereux, Strouts and MacLaughlan. Butterfields built next door between us and Thompsons. About 1958, Provenchers left and the Walls family moved in next door at 3113. Henicks moved into 3105 Ortona in 1962. In this friendly neighbourhood we grew and flourished.

I started Grade 5 in the tiny 4 room, brand new Montgomery School. How cozy after leaving the old, very large Mayfair School. My teacher was Mr. Bev Tansley. In Grade 7 and 8 my teacher was Mr. Lee Orge. He had been principal at Mayfair when I attended there.

A few of the games I remember playing -jacks in the mudroom, skipping, marbles, Red Rover, and 7UP, bouncing and India rubber ball against the wall of the school. The school mudroom initially served as a gym and auditorium. I remember Bonnie Gill giving her winning speech about Alexander Graham Bell

At Grade 8 graduation, I won the Girl's Proficiency award and Herb England won for the boys.

We always walked to school, fall, winter spring.

Life was good. In winter I spent many hours at the outdoor skating rink next to the school. Community members supervised and maintained the rink and warm up shack. It was a gathering place for many young people.

In spring we made little streams on the side of the road where the water could run. We spent many hours at the school playground. I remember, singing "99 bottles of beer on the wall" as we were swinging! After the paddling pool was built, I remember making kleenex flowers for the Montgomery Float for Children's Day Parade. Many years later, my sons were excited to ride on the float.

On hot summer days, we rode the bus by ourselves to Riversdale pool.

Church services started in the school mudroom. As a young teen I taught Sunday school. I remember a beautiful little girl in my class with neatly braided blond hair, named Brenda Catling.

I was also involved in Brownies and Girl Guides. I spent many good times with friends and earned many badges. Nina Dennison was my Girl Guide caption.

As moved into my teen years, I was in high demand as a babysitter. In addition to our close neighbours. I babysat for Hyde's, Wilson's, Kiss's, Dunbar's, Mack's, Maloney's, Baldwin's, Moore's, Boatness's, Sufferdine's, Passet's and others.

Barb Thompson (now Biddle) and Jan Strouts (now Manson) and I attended many ball games- dressing in stirrup pants and kerchiefs (so cool). We travelled all over Montgomery on our bikes. Going downtown was a dress up occasion. We wore heels, dresses and gloves. (Just ask Barb!)A fountain drink and toasted tea cake was a favourite treat at Woolworths. Barb, Jan and I remained good friends including being bridesmaids at each other's weddings.

When Trinity Church was built, I helped paint the basement walls. I became a member of the High C youth group. Gordon Cole was a student minister and assisted with the youth. We had a coffee house called the Blue Penguin complete with candles in bottles.

We had to travel by bus to high school. I attended Bedford Road for 3 months of Grade 9 and then moved into the brand new Mount Royal Collegiate in December of 1960. A city bus was designated to transport the high school students. I remember one time there being 100 students and all their books (no backpacks then) on a 36 passenger bus!

We used to walk home in the dark, up 11th street after high school football games at Gordie Howe Park, singing and cheering and shouting out the letters of the flashing Olympic meat packers neon sign!

We enjoyed going to Pioneera at the Western Development Museum which was originally on 11th Street. The chuckwagon races were always a highlight.

There are many more wonderful memories of growing up in Montgomery Place. It was a warm, friendly safe and fun place to live. I hope some of memories are pleasant reminders for others.

Our parents remained in our family home, Mom until her move to Long Term Care and Dad until 2014, Sister Gwen has returned to live in and "look after" 3109 Ortona Street. Even after living away nearly 50 years, I still feel like I am coming home.

I am so glad Montgomery Place was part of my formative years. Many things have changed over the years but not the smiles, love laughter, joy, excitement, fellowship and sense of belonging, sharing and caring.