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Date: April 7, 2009 9:34:48 AM EDT
To: phil@hayesfamily.us

The Fayetteville Observer (NC)

Fayetteville Observer, The (NC)

August 4, 1991

CHILDHOOD HOMES: YOU NEVER FORGET WHERE YOU GREW UP

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Section: Lifestyle

Article Text:

By ELEANOR LEE, STAFF WRITER

When Mary Erwin Olive passes the Haymount house she grew up in, she feels like she's saying hello to an old friend.

So many childhood memories - taking naps under the attic fan on sultry summer afternoons. Having neighborhood children trooping in and out of the house. Playing outside in the oak tree that Hurricane Hazel damaged. Running all over the neighborhood. The white two-story structure has seen a lot of living.

Walking through the rooms of a childhood house elicits a multitude of memories from most. These memories may be especially keen if one hasn't set foot in the house in years. But even if the house has been razed to make way for a pizzeria the rooms with overstuffed chairs, hook rugs and the big fireplace will never be forgotten.

Many Fayetteville residents grew up in just one house before leaving home to be on their own. Others lived in several homes, perhaps moving every few years. What makes one house a favorite childhood memory? A shade tree in the back yard? A spooky basement, an interesting attic?

We asked some area residents to share stories about their favorite childhood homes.

"I consider it a blessing to still be so connected to the house," says Mrs. Olive. The daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Robert King, she lived in the house from the age of 5 to 18. It was built by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lilly in the 1930s.

Her favorite room was the dining room.

"That's the one place where all the family would get together," she says. "We'd wait until Daddy got home, even if it were 7:30 or 8 p.m."

Everyone had duties - hers were clearing the table and doing the dishes, which she shared with her sister.

The house remains in the family and Mrs. Olive comes and goes through the rooms which she ran through when she was 8 and 18. Much of the furnishings are the same. Her room, however, has been redecorated.

Back when Dr. Frank Stout moved into the Ramsey Street (then called Raleigh Road) house the area was considered "the country." The house is still intact, but Ramsey Street traffic whips by and next door the new Mid-South Insurance building is going up fast.

"My dad bought the house from John Oates, who owned a lot of land out here back in the '40s" recalls Dr. Stout. "We got a three-room cabin and 15 acres."

The cabin eventually became a two-story frame house. In fact, Dr. Stout remembers there was always some adding-on going on.

"The two-year project took about 10 years," he says.

His favorite room was the living room.

"There was the most comfortable chair in the house," he says. "I loved to sit in my dad's lap when I was real little in that stair. When he was older he painted an oil picture of the chair for his dad.

"It wasn't very good. I broke all the rules of painting. But he loved it. It's still hanging up," he says. Dr. Stout's son now resides in the home.

Other childhood memories in the home center on television.

"We had one of the first TVs around but you could hardly see it," he says. His favorite shows were "Captain Five" and "The Mickey Mouse Club."

The house has been redecorated but remains much the same. The red barn behind the house is exactly as it was, with one exception. There's a plastic bull atop the roof that came from a restaurant the Stouts owned.

"Daddy had his whimsical side," says Dr. Stout.

The type and style of house we like in our present life is often tied to our childhood memories, says Dr. George Krolick, a clinical psychologist at Cumberland Hospital. "Our homes are where people learn their basic sense of trust and security. It's where we got our needs met," he says. If those memories were good, adults often seek out a similar house. And it's common for them to buy back a family home that was sold years ago.

It's not uncommon, says Dr. Krolick, for someone to go an opposite route as an adult. Those who had to move frequently as a child often put down permanent roots.

Mayor J.L. Dawkins has the distinction of living in the Ellington Street house that he grew up in. His family moved in when he was a child in 1941. It was a big year - Pearl Harbor, a new house and another baby in the family.

His childhood memories are centered on sports - there was often a football or basketball game going on in the yard. But his favorite room was the den.

"That was a big deal. The redwood paneling shipped from California."

Mr. Dawkins left home for college, then returned and lived in a house on Kensington Circle with his new bride.

"We wanted to get back to Haymount. A lot of the old neighbors were still there and a lot of the second generation had moved in," he recalls.

As it turned out, when his father died and his mother moved to Florida, he took over his old residence. His children attended the same elementary school he did. And, says Mr. Dawkins, the old backyard basketball goal that he used is still used by neighborhood children.

Beth Johnston grew up in a house with a big backporch that stood on Turnpike Road.

"I watched them tear it down - it made me sick," she recalls. Another house of her childhood was the Arsenal House, which is partially standing today. That's where her great-grandmother lived.

"I was about 5. I remember running up and down the breezeway and playing in the yard. I remember hearing Gen. Sherman stayed there but that didn't mean anything to me," she says.

Bill Fields grew up in a house on Myrover Street and stayed most summers in a house in Cedar Creek, where he remembers making peach ice cream and that Southern dessert, syllabub.

"But my best memories were in other people's houses," he says. He loved visiting a great aunt in Florence. The house had huge columns all the way around, like something out of "Gone With the Wind." Cousins had a historic structure in Tarboro. There were a myriad of nooks and crannies in which Mr. Fields and his cousins could hide. He also loved to climb steep steps to the top of the cupola and looked down over the railing.

Still another cousin had a turn of the century house in Morganton with landscaped gardens and the first pool in town.

"I lived in very ordinary houses and I don't have strong recollections," he said. "But I loved visiting my relatives' places."

Dr. Harold Godwin, director of Fayetteville Area Health Education Center, lived many years as a child at 901 Branson St.

"We were not affluent. Branson was a dirt road and I remember there was an enormous supply of sandspurs," he recalls. He loved riding his tricycle around what seemed at the time an enormous dining room table. He also recalls the time his billy goat escaped. He disobeyed his mother to chase it down the street, successfully capturing it. This house was razed years ago. A convenience store was built on the spot, which was later turned into a church.

Dr. Godwin's next childhood house was at the intersection of Park Street and Fort Bragg Road. He has particularly fond memories of this home - in the garage he opened up his first medical office.

Longtime Fayetteville resident Elenore Dorsett recalls her favorite home in Flushing, Long Island. She remembers it well, a Tudor-style duplex, with her grandmother living in one side of the house. The house was designed by her father, a young architect.

She loved her room, where she did her homework, kept her scrapbooks and wrote letters on her green roll-top desk.

It was convenient having her grandmother next door.

"I'd just go next door when I had an argument with my mother and was in the doghouse," she says.

She remembers summer days on the sunporch in a wicker rocker drinking ice tea. The porch, which had no heat, was closed off in the winter.

She'll always remember sitting on her bed planning her wedding the night Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Months later around 100 friends and relatives trooped into the house for the wedding reception.

Mrs. Dorsett remembers the furnishings in her home as being "different."

"There was a bust of an Italian noblewoman, an European tapestry, a perfectory table and lots of ornate furniture."

Growing up with such grandeur, even though the house was rather modest, made her regard her playmates' homes as a bit on the dull side.

The Long Island home still stands but the neighborhood has changed drastically. She drives by it sometimes when she's in the area.

"But I can't yet bring myself to go into it," she says.

Staff Photo (color) by MARCUS CASTRO

Caption: Mary Erwin Olive Lived In This Haymount House From Ages 5-18. Staff Photo (color) - KEN COOKE Dr. Frank Stout's Childhood Home On Ramsey Street Is Still Standing.

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Record Number: 528602