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THE WAY IT WAS

By Ben MacLaren

Faith Smith always sang the solo. I loved to hear her sing. Her brother-in-law, Channing Smith, was in the choir, too. He was a note off and a word behind everyone else. I think it was because he "followed" his brother, Tighe, who was in tune and on the right word. Channing sang with his teeth clenched shut to keep his dentures in place so the sound was more like a powerful hum. It came from his heart rather than his chest, and added another dimension to "four parts."

Women always wore hats to church. They usually had a feather sticking out somewhere and we all thought that was beautiful. Now society has progressed to realize that the feathers are better left on the bird.

Every one had his (or her — modern posh!!) own church pew. Some of this dated back to colonial days when there was an actual deed to a particular pew, but more often it was just the way it was. John and Grace Brigham sat beside the stained glass window given by his father, Deacon Dexter A. Brigham. They never made a fuss when someone else sat there because that is the way they were. But, as a boy of 8 or 9, I fully expected the steeple to come crashing down around our heads if John and Grace weren't returned to their rightful place.

The steeple did crash down, once, in the hurricane of 1938. There just might have been a connection. That hurricane was unmatched in Sutton history for devastation, not even by the tornado of 1953 or the floods in Manchaug.

Barns went down trapping animals, trees fell on cars, and power lines were strewn everywhere. When the

Congregational Church steeple blew off it resulted in a marvel of engineering genius undertaken by Vernon Johnson when he rebuilt it. He didn't bother with much of a plan on paper, but, rather, cut each piece and laid it out on the common, and then hauled it up piece by piece and put them in place. When it was all together Bucky Smith climbed out onto a scaffold and stood on tip toes to replace the weather vane at the top. We kids watched this process with fascination for weeks. It was more interesting than parker chasing.

Vernon was the only known Democrat living in Sutton Center at the time, but it was suspected that Wallace King and Herb Ray once in a while bolted the ticket. The Republican Town Committee held firm to the belief that Vernon really "voted right" when he was alone with his conscience. I knew of no one who didn't respect Vernon regardless of his professed voting habits.

We all brought home scraps of wood from the steeple as souvenirs. I put a long metal pin in mine and gave it to my mother to put on her desk to keep her bills and notes on. She raved about how wonderful it was, but it vanished from use within a few weeks. I found it after she died fifty years later neatly stored among her valuable things.

The status bike was a Columbia 28" with balloon white wall tires, a coaster brake, a carrier over the rear fender, and a rear fender reflector. They cost \$26. Woe be unto you if you were caught riding a girl's bike. You could tell them at a glance because there was no cross bar and the seat was shorter.

There was no substitute for a Flexible Flyer sled. The red runners curved up and over at the back and connected to the top side rails in a graceful sweep. Flexible Flyer was written in red on the varnished wooden top.

John Brigham had the only 1936 Desoto that got 64 miles per gallon. He shifted into neutral and turned off the key on every down grade no matter how slight. Home was a long way off when John drove. Unlike for most, his "A" ration card during World War II was never a problem for John.

During World War II every car had a sticker on the windshield (A, B, or C) to let everyone know how much rationed gas the owner was entitled to buy. C was the best, and indicated important driving. — Status!!

The top half of the headlight bulbs were blacked out to reduce the upward glare in case of an air raid. The air raid wardens kept a close watch for infractions. Jim Colton was in charge of the wardens. Signs were everywhere encouraging us to buy bonds, cautioning us not to sink ships with loose lips, and letting us know that "Uncle Sam Wants You." Retreaded tires on the Chevy was a sign of the times. They were still better than the synthetic rubber tires that never quite measured up.

Deacon John Brigham never used profanity, but "What the Sam Hill?" was his every forth phrase. This should have been a swear just as "What the hell?" was when his brother in law, Ed MacLaren, said that. The church ladies looked at Ed with disapproval when he said it, but not at John. That was just the way it was, and was probably the only difference.

Wash day was all day Monday and ironing all day Tuesday. Hot dogs from Wiegert's in Quinsigamond Village and home made beans with brown bread were Saturday night supper. Farm wives made curtains and skirts out of the flowered cloth that some of the grain bags were made of. They were up at first light and put the last clean dish away after dark. Women didn't work in those days. I wonder if anyone bothered to tell them.

Will Davis was of the "old school" of Yankee thrift. My father sold him tires for years. Being friends, the first few price quotes were bottom buck. Will always wanted a little better deal. By adding 10% to the price Pop could give Will 7% off and still leave 3% to apply to those first deals given just so he could get home for supper. Will needled Pop about getting the better of him. Pop would chuckle and say, "Yup, Will, ya got me that time." Even Will must have noticed that the Smith boys got a better price with out dickering than he got after an hour of heated negotiation. I think that the game was worth any price to Will.

The telephone four (and more) party line was the source of news, gossip, and feuds. It was the link between the indian drum and fiber optics. Although

acceptable for shut ins to listen in, there being little else to pass the time, it was not for others. Their eyes dropping had to be "snuck." Every one did it, but tried to act like they would never think of doing such a dastardly thing. There was an art to keeping your finger on the phone cradle and letting it up ever so carefully, thus keeping the click from being heard. Some never got the hang (or unhang) of it. No one seemed to really care as long as you didn't hog the line. Will Davis was on our line and often left his phone off the hook after 9:30 PM so that our calls wouldn't wake him up. This might have resulted in one of those feuds I mentioned, but Will was a near perfect neighbor otherwise, so it never did.

The party line was particularly well suited for getting the "word" out with out actually telling someone that they had bad breath or that you were "interested." It was mentioned on the party line and the grapevine did the rest. A statement could always be denied later, blaming it on some busy body or other, unless, of course, a second third party was listening in and heard it. TV never would have taken over our lives if "THEY" hadn't done away with the party line.

Connie Crosier's folks had the first TV set in town. Before that we went to Millbury and watched Milton Berle on the demo in the window of Sweet's radio store. Hours were spent there standing on the sidewalk. Connie was very popular anyway, but someone less so could have become popular overnight if their parents only had the foresight to invest. It would have served better than a "reputation."

Marge and George Crosier must have had moments of regret. They never were totally without bodies on the couch; many they didn't even know. Some stayed for supper. The TV cabinet was about the size of a refrigerator laying on it's side with a 10 inch square screen on the front. It was made of very nice wood because it was presumed that, once purchased, a TV would be passed from generation to generation as were the six board blanket chests made in 1793.

Reception was a black and white snow storm. The antenna was always blowing off the roof taking squares of shingles with it. Weather announcers were girls with odd dimensions and a talent for writing backwards on the other side of a glass weather chart. I think that the big tall one was called Dagmar. It was really kind of neat.

Sarkis Davagian and his wife, Nartouhi, owned the farm where the center school complex is now. Their cows were cleaner, their fields and gardens had fewer rocks, and their equipment worked better than anyone else's. When Sarkis was a young child his village in Armenia was over run by the Turks and many of his family died in the attack. My grandfather talked about the long scar hidden by Sarkis' hair that was said to have come from a saber cut suffered in that attack.

During the thirties and forties Freeland Hill and Eight Lots was a melting pot, primarily Yankee, but a blending all the same. Fred L. Batcheller, my grandfather, was not a person with formal education, but was wise and good by any standard. There was little question in his mind that Sutton was the best place to live, farming was a noble profession, and he was content with being called a Yankee and a Congregationalist. He did not covert his neighbor's anything, nor did he feel that his anything was any better than his neighbor's. — To each his own. — He didn't understand what the Rosary was about, but his blessings went to those who did. The dirt on his hands and his clean thoughts blended with an occasional glance toward heaven and a supreme being not completely understood. This served as his guide through life and, incidentally, into heaven. His life was exceptional, not in its startling achievements, but in its truth and goodness. His was not the only path. There was a myriad of ways to pull the load, and his God took everyone as they preferred to be. So it was with Steve Cepaluskas, Sarkis Davagian, Abe Greece, Dave Welsh, and Wilfred Shappy. They didn't share his heritage, and not even all of his language, but they were his special friends. The extra effort it took to bridge the language and heritage barrier seemed to add to the mix of Yankee, Lithuanian, Armenian, Jewish, Irish, and French. That's the way it was.

Dick Hutchinson went to Clark University. We all bragged about him. He got all A's except for one D. So much for the importance Hutchie put on French.

Volunteers did it all. Jim Smith took care of the flag on the common. In fact, if no one got around to mowing the grass, he did that, too.

I remember well the day that Jim was riding on the back of the 1941 Ford fire truck when his false teeth fell out of his pocket where he had put them for safe keeping. Morris Perry was following in the old Ford chain drive tanker and ran them over as they hit the road. They became part of Hovey Hill. I wonder if Belle thought that it was as funny as we did; Jim being her husband, and all. A new set of gleamers ran fifty bucks, enough for two weeks groceries.

Tighe Smith, Bucky Smith, and Henry Plante ran the Fire Department after Martin Shaw retired. A fire call emptied the high school, churches, the ball field, barns, businesses, and homes of able bodies as every one rushed to help a neighbor. As Chief, Tighe's biggest job was to make adjustments for the varied egos of all of us who volunteered.

Ed Lacrose was the best Chief of Police ever to wear his badge on a jacket with a garage name on the back. He settled family feuds, pumped gas, directed traffic, changed oil, took people to the hospital, tuned engines, got Cora

Damon's cat out of a tree, fixed tires, got kids and animals out of the street when Al Johnson was answering a fire call, and never got confused nor paid very much for any of it.

Ed MacLaren was more often than not at the school checking up on something very important while his wife, Phyllis, was at home fuming because he wasn't selling tires or putting a stone back on the wall in the North pasture.

R. Gordon "Bunk" King and Walter "Bruce" Shaw started the Little League in town. Bunk died several years ago and Bruce died in the VA Hospital in Brookline, but the Little League continues to go on as a credit to a good effort by good people.

Al Swindell looked after the various money accounts in town; the Scouts, the Church, the Purgatory breakfast, the Men's Club, the turkey suppers, and other activities. We sometimes didn't realize the hours he, Bob LeClaire, and Stan Knapp spent keeping piles of records and accounts.

The women of the Sutton Women's Club served monthly suppers for the Sutton Men's Club. Their profit was mostly in appreciation.

Norman Perry ran the dairy. We kids called him "Nancy" because N.C. were his initials. We thought that was very clever. There was a pad of paper and a pencil tied to a string on the milk cooler door. You went in when ever you pleased, took what you wanted, and Norman billed you at the end of the month based on what you wrote on the paper. I have watched for a similar system at the Cumberland Farm store, but have found none. Those that cheated Norman must share a particular spot in hell, but I doubt that there were many.

N. C. Perry and Sons evolved from The Maples and Perry Bros. Dairy. Several other dairies in town were big enough to have their names on their bottles. Stockwell's, Clark's, Airport, Greece Bros, Eaton's, Frieswick's, and Adams' Dairies rose and fell during my memory. There are no delivering dairies left in town, but it is rumored that Whittier Farms alone produce more milk than was produced during the "hey day" of Sutton farming.

Beside the dairy, Norman was Town Treasurer, sanded and plowed in the winter for the Highway Department, and hauled gravel and fill in the summer. Despite all this he had time for us kids or anyone in need. Everyone swam at Perry's beach on Lake Singletary. Some didn't even buy milk from him. Norman paid the taxes on it, but I don't remember him swimming there. He died when he was 58. My father and Bucky Smith talked about his death with tears in their eyes. Everyone loved Norman.

Norman's father-in-law, Lewis Sherman, drove our school bus when I started first grade. The bus boarding

procedure was always the same, and came of habits well established earlier. His brother, "Milt," drove the horse drawn bus, "The Lady of the Lake." Herb Ray did, too. Some of his habits and procedures were probably carried over. Lewis closed the door behind you, spit "tabacca squirt" into the ever present tin can on the floor beside his seat, gripped the steering wheel firmly in both hands, and demanded "Ge-e- e-e-e-dap."

We boys wore knickers to school and everyone, boys and girls alike, had a spoon full of cod liver oil before we left for school to wad off God knows what. The taste was probably not unlike that of the bottom of a cow linter boot.

The main difference between Lewis' bus and Milt's was that Lewis' had an "enjine" (not engine) to pull it around. Milt's "Lady" had a team of grays. The roof on Lewis' bus was hard canvas, but the one on the "Lady" was canvas stretched over wooden bows.

The last time I saw the "Lady" was in Milt's old barn in the center, next to the blacksmith shop, when the barn blew down. Levi Chase bought her and then later sold her to someone in Shrewsbury. Rumor is that she's now in California somewhere.

Bob and Mildred (Pom) Pierce had a horse that lived to be 36 years old.

Red Bedrosian has been a sort of folk hero with talent to do odd things as well as the ordinary. I was 6 or 7 years old when I saw him pull up his sock and put a thumb tack in his leg to hold the sock up. I thought that he was the toughest kid in the world. It was years before I knew about his artificial leg, but by that time the image of courage had already been implanted in my mind and has endured unabated to this day.

There was a certain awareness by us as "hicks" that the city "slickers" visiting Sutton laughed behind our backs at our country ways. When a "slicker" was "done" by one of us the word raced about town. One such "done" occurred when Bud Gurney had a "slicker" friend visiting from Hartford, CT, who showed contempt for the particular talent it took to "answer the call of nature" on the bottom strand of barbed wire on the pasture fence behind Charlie Putnam's barn. We were often involved in contests in "snow penmanship" or contests for distance. Bud challenged him to hit the top wire which he commenced to do with a display of mockery for any talent involved in Bud's performance. What Bud knew, but the "slicker" didn't, was the purpose served by the little white insulators that held the top strand of wire to the post. That electric shock gave new meaning to pain and a new respect for things you shouldn't do learned by a boy growing up on a farm.

Maude MacLaren, Eunice King, Dora Gerber, Grace Brigham, Alta MacLaren, Ruth Holbrooke, and Mamie

Thompson took a walk one day. They called themselves "Hikers", and, in 1954, started the tradition of the Labor Day Purgatory breakfast, which has continued for 40 years. Their quilts were works of art. The money made by selling them went to "good."

The town dump located on Putnam Hill Road was the place for gathering on Saturday morning. It was opposite the Tucker Lake dam for years, but somehow moved up just below Ray Burrow's farm where it stayed for years more. Now all that remains is a flat spot with little hidden road ways which are kept worn, apparently, by parkers. I am not sure that it is still called "going parking." I hear "Let's party" a lot.

Parker chasing was part of an educational process, and was a sport that ranked with lion hunting when we were too young to go ourselves. Once we experienced parking, though, we never looked back.

When the dump was in full swing it served as a social and political forum much as does Trafalgar Square in London. It was an invaluable source of collectibles, antiques, and building materials of all sorts. The hand forged HL hinges and thumb latch on my son Richard's bedroom door came from the dump. Norman Minor and I made our Saturday morning pilgrimage in our Studebaker pick up. My wife, Marie, and Norman's wife, Betty, had reason to believe that we might not ever leave the dump; it was that full of wonderful things and people.

George Gillespie retrieved a picture of the "Lady of The Lake" from the dump. There was something for every one. The great white hunters could bag upwards of twenty rats each with a twenty two rifle on an average Saturday morning, but they had to be quick. Some of the rats were the size of cats. The dump was a maze of rat holes and tunnels, which always seemed strange because of the fires that burned continuously both above and below the surface. Rat hunting was not my interest, but it kept the rat population in check without poisons entering the predatory animal food chain, and, also, allowed the fittest of the rats an even chance to survive. Everything at the dump was in balance.

Walter Shaw had no fancy town hall office as Town Moderator. He made some of his best appointments at the dump on Saturday mornings. He acted as though he was there to empty his trash and just happened to think of some job or other that you might do for the town.

Some candidates for office, who never otherwise came to the dump, showed up every week during election time with nomination papers in hand, and then vanished after election day, only to reappear the following year almost as a signal of spring. We wondered what they did with their rubbish during the rest of the year.

There were those who came, emptied their trash, and left. These were probably the harbinger of the yuppies.

Nothing they dumped got much attention since their stuff was mostly chairs with chrome legs and such. Once in a while though, they might inherit property and clean out the house or barn. Everything went to the dump to make room for new chrome stuff. Pickings were great on those days.

Kelton Johnson was a dump picker at heart, but often missed out because of indecision brought on by a fear of the wrath of Beverly. She always made him bring a lot of stuff back.

Norman Minor and I filled our barns with great things; old hardware, lanterns, wagon parts, model "A" headlights, 12 over 12 window sashes, blinds, iron kettles, and 2 x 4s with just a few nails to pull.

The big trash compactors of today can not tell a four panel one inch pine door with just a little crack from a box of rotted fruit. In fact, at the dump someone would have taken the fruit for their compost heap and the box, if it were wooden, to put something in. Wives hated the boxes with just a little rotted fruit smell. That's the way it was; a male oriented thing.

What a wonderful place; the dump. But it is gone as is the blue bird family that returned every spring to live in the old apple tree in the woods behind my house. Then one year they didn't come; victims of insecticides, I guess.

Al Johnson and Harold Smith played taps on Memorial Day. Bruce Shaw could hit a baseball a mile — well, it seemed like a mile when you were nine. By actual measure it might have been 200 feet if the bounce and roll were counted. Now they would be errors, but then they were home runs.

Ralph Aspinwall took us Boy Scouts of Troop 143 camping on a regular basis in his home-made 1935 Ford pickup truck. Jim Smith was our Scout Master. George Plante ran the store and the Post Office in Manchaug.

Lewis Sherman could take out a moving spider with a squirt of "tabacca" juice at six paces. Frank Aspinwall, Bruce Shaw, Harold Smith, and I tried chewing some of Lewis's "tabacca" and got so sick we couldn't go to school. Our mothers believed 24 hour flu. Lewis believed funny. We believed death.

Lewis' son, "Wish" Sherman, had a special name for everyone. It was not always a nickname, but a special "Wish" name. Not to be extended a "Wish" name would have been a stigma and a lack of status. Milton Holbrook was "Enock," Arthur King, "Highchin," Alden Perry, "Fat," Bob Johnson, "Frog," Walter Shaw, "Stretch," Al Beaton, "Abe," and Walter King was "Ezra." I was a pudgy little kid, and Wish called me "Puss." Thank God that one didn't stick! Even at that some were worse —

i.e. — "Pieass" was one of the wider bottomed church ladies. He pronounced it "Pious" when his sisters Emily and Olive were within ear shot.

Wish's humor even targeted himself. He claimed not to be one for two baths when one would suffice, and then only if he fell in something. He said that while washing his feet during his spring bath he found a pair of socks that he thought he had lost the fall before.

Walter "Ezra" King drove his 1935 Ford school bus for years, never once shifting without grinding gears. On occasion Hazel drove and didn't grind gears; so much for male supremacy. The bus was called the "chicken coop" because it had wire mesh glass windows. Harold Whittier had a bus much like Ezra's, but the gears didn't grind and the back door stayed shut. Ezra's back door would fly open without warning when he hit a bump or turned sharply to the left. Bob Johnson fell out one day and had to walk the rest of the way home. Ezra didn't even miss him, but Polly, Bob's mother, got pretty upset, and complained to Ezra. "Don't look too much hurt to me," said Ezra, and that was the end of it.

We hung out on the porch of Frank Paine's store in the center. It's now Polly's Antiques. It was Will Davis' before it was Frank's, and belonged to Herb Ray before that. "Chewey" Gagne ran it before Polly Shaw turned it into Polly's Antique Shop. That porch was great.

Francis King and Dintie Dudley were quite a bit older and appeared very worldly. One day they jacked up one rear wheel of May Hovey's 1926 Essex touring car. As intended, May came out of the store, started his Essex, and ground into first gear. The engine roared and the wheel spun at near top speed until the car fell off the jack. May looked like a fighter pilot being catapulted off a carrier deck. No one ever mentioned it, but there were a lot of smiles and winks when ever May drove up after that.

A joy to behold was "Leaping Lena" Gilbert coming up the hill approaching the store in her 1918 Model T Ford. I never knew if the "leaping" applied to the car or the person. Lena was a very heavy woman, and her husband, Will, was quite thin, so there was a distinct tilt to the driver's side. On the hill she shifted several times and the engine roared and the fenders shuddered and, even on a rainy day, there appeared to be dust. There was always a whip of steam from the radiator. Here and there were holes which once had apparently been for nuts and bolts. They obviously hadn't been necessary because nothing important had fallen off. I dreamed of owning that car some day, but never did. I think Hazen Bordeaux bought it.

Leaping Lena was no match for Martin Shaw when it came to announcing his approach. He never got the hang of shifting out of second and into third, but seldom went

under 50 miles per hour either. In fairness, he learned to drive on a horse, and that didn't need shifting. When he was Fire Chief the 1928 GMC fire truck was stored in his barn. The engine revving up drowned out the siren when he drove the truck.

Fred Gifford was our resident "one liner." He watched me replacing brakes on my car without comment until his parting; "A little ignorance goes a long way." To one of the "smart" students at the high school he said, "Best way out of being treated like a dumbbell is to stop acting like one." Another day while reaching to the top shelf he said, "Being short wouldn't be a problem if everyone who puts things away weren't so tall." — I guess you had to be there! — Freddie was the funniest man I ever knew.

Grades 1 - 5 in the Center were in the General Rufus Putnam building; three grades down stairs and two up. There were two teachers for the five grades. Miss Barrows taught 1 through 3 and Mrs. Grace Mills Jordan taught 4 and 5 and was the principal. She was one of those wonderful old time teachers who was there for ever and lived for her students and her church where she played the organ for nearly as long as she taught. Mrs. Jordan was always an early visit when we came home from the army or college. If we were fat, skinny, tall, short, slow, or gifted she loved us all the same. She was always "Mrs. Jordan," never "Old Lady Jordan" or "she." She wore respect like a comfortable pair of shoes.

Alden Perry made what seemed to be 500 trips past the "old" high school on Singletary Ave. each spring with the manure spreader loaded with the winter's accumulation of "heifer dust." Alden never really laughs out loud, and wasn't any different then. But there was a distinct twinkle in his eye when he explained how the spreader accidentally jumped into gear just as he reached the school and it took 200 feet to disengage it. They had been having a lot of trouble with the spreader gears that spring, but he was sure that he had now figured out the cause and had fixed it.

The first day or two was tough, but after that the cars wore the "dust" into Singletary Ave. and the smell gradually went away. Mrs. M. Marguerite Sharon was our English teacher, and always used this as an example of just how alumni should not behave. "What would Mr. Perry (Norman) say?" If Norman didn't know, he was the only one in town who didn't.

After the first day we all began to see the humor which increased as the smell decreased. But M. Marguerite never did. Thinking back on it, she took everything too seriously; even the sex interests of her students. We competed to see whose stage whispered confession or remark could evoke the longest dissertation on the evils of promiscuous behavior. We all liked her, but couldn't resist tormenting her when there was a chance of a quiz

on something we hadn't read. The lecture was preferred over the quiz. We called it first period Sunday School.

Ray Smith does a sterling job as boss of Sutton's Highway Department without the best of equipment, but his great uncle, John Dudley, was a marvel at making do. Except for spring thaw John would be still digging out from whatever winter he started. The tar and feathers would be just about ready for John when the days got longer and the snow melted. Everyone would remember what a nice man he was and give him another year in office. At his disposal for snow removal were two old ton - and - a - half International trucks and about 200 shovels. A good storm would close the schools for three days. We not only didn't have to go to school, but we also could make fifty cents an hour for shoveling with the town crews as well.

The worst drifting was on West Millbury Road just before Lena and Will Gilbert's house. There were often ten foot drifts that took two days of shoveling and pushing to get a narrow path through.

Abe Greece and George Thompson lived on Eight Lots Road. They brought their milk out to the Eight Lots School to be picked up by the dairy with horses and a wood sled because they were often buried for a month or more. I remember a big wooden roller that had been used to roll the snow to pack it down rather than try to plow it. It was parked by Abe's wall for years. Apparently it was an idea that died hard, but died all the same. It passed out of use before my time.

After World War II the town acquired a huge surplus cable operated Holt bulldozer. Once it started, which it rarely did, it was impossible to stop with out hitting something solid. It worked a few storms, destroyed some kidneys, struck fear into the hearts of the shovellers working ahead of it, and then was relegated to a spot in which to rust away.

A Daisy BB gun was the ultimate sign of approaching manhood at ten. They came just before hair began to grow under our arms. World War II was in full swing. We were sure that when German Tiger tanks headed down King Hill we could pick off the tank commander with our trusty Daisys. With out a commander the tank would go out of control and stall right near a pile of brush left by Walter "Ezra" King's wood chopper. We could then pile the brush on the tanks and set it on fire. Thus Sutton Center would be saved from annihilation and our names would go on a rock next to General Rufus Putnam's.

When the Germans heard about our plans they didn't come. We changed to infantry tactics, chose sides, and shot each other from behind walls and trees with our Daisys. A direct hit hurt, but no one cried. After all, we

were ten and in training to withstand pain. We planned on looking old enough when we were twelve to lie about our age and enlist. We each dreamed about coming home bandaged with a little blood still showing. I secretly worried about the pain.

World War II came and went during my boyhood. I don't remember any cowards, but a lot of heroes. Dinty Dudley, Henry Gendron, and John Mateychuck are remembered, among other things, because the Legion Posts are named for them. There were other gold stars hanging in windows. PFC Troy Strickland was a skinny kid who wasn't known that well outside our Freeland Hill neighborhood. He died as an Infantryman in France at age 19. It is hard to imagine the courage that it took to jump out of a landing craft into knee-deep water with men dying on every side. PFC Al Johnson was there and came home with the Combat Infantryman's Badge and a Purple Heart. Sgt. George MacLaren flew 50 missions over Europe and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Sgt. Al Eaton received the Bronze Star. Sgt. John Wallach was early on the area's most decorated soldier with three Silver Stars plus other medals and commendations. Capt. Woody Briel died after the war of wounds suffered in combat. Major Karl Briel was one of the first B29 pilots. Sgt. Chris Briel served the whole war in Italy and Africa. Corp. Alden Perry served in Germany. P.O. George Perry and P.O. Dexter Brigham served in combat in the Pacific. Lt. John MacLaren was wounded in the seat of the pants while bending over making a night raid in the mess tent. He wondered if it was the cook or a "Jap" that got him. Joe Klewicz served the whole war in the Pacific only to be hit by a taxi cab in San Francisco on his way home. He was a long time healing. P.O. Morton Carter received a Navy Commendation for attempting to save a drowning man who had fallen overboard from his ship. Lt. Ray Hutchinson flew C47's in England and Europe. PFC George King was missing in action, but was later liberated from a German POW camp at the end of the war. He received the Combat Infantry Badge and the Purple Heart. Sgt. Randall Robbins was a gunner on a B24. He was awarded the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Roland Young was only 16 when he served as a cook on a Merchant Marine ship in the Atlantic. Capt. John Potts was a bomber pilot. Sgt. John (Dinty) Dudley won the Air Medal and the Purple Heart. He died as a tail gunner. He was credited with shooting down five enemy planes. Corp. Don King won the Air Medal. Walter Balaski died at Pearl Harbor. We named a square for P.O. John Mateychuck who died. Sgt. Frank Dakin was in India for two years.

We have torn down a lot of things that we were proud of once. The old Sutton High School was new for a long

time and served us pretty well for most of 38 years. The class of 1950 was the last class to graduate from there and hear Pomp and Circumstance played at the old Town Hall. We tore down the Town Hall, too. There were ten of us in the class of 1950, and I loved every one of them. Doc Schwab was our class advisor, as he was for most of the other classes. We loved Doc, but most didn't like history. He taught it with mesmerizing dates that few of us could handle, except for Phil Smith who got the History Medal. Doc had a big red nose that he acquired as a Dough Boy during a WWI German gas attack. Mary Savoie sat in the front row and smiled and winked at Doc through out U.S. History. His nose lit up as he blushed and sent her to the back of the room. She deserved better than a C, but that's all he would give her.

We weren't supposed to notice that the Town Hall was torn down and rebuilt just the same, but better, on the very same spot. The committee that did that are my friends, and I respect them all, but I miss the creaking floors and drafty windows. I wish that they had been on a committee to remove and replace a bump in Singletary Ave. instead.

Kids of today will remember the "old" school which is still "new." It has been occupied from 1951 to now. That is 41 years, which is longer than the 38 years we used the "old" school.

We can't go back in time and have our hair back just the way it was. Those scars left by life are there to testify to the way it was. We cannot deny the past. It enriches us equally as much as it broadens our back sides and lowers our chests.

"If I should die before I wake" — what a horrible prayer!! — But if I do, these are my memories; not all of them, but some. That is the way it is.

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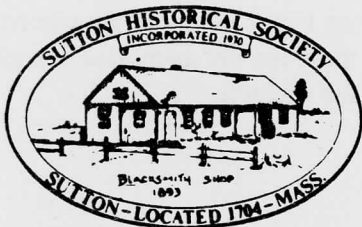
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4 Uxbridge Rd., Sutton, MA 01590

MONTHLY MEETINGS

November 2 - The Society meeting was held at the General Rufus Putnam Hall with twenty persons attending. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Daniel (Tighe) Smith who last attended our September meeting. Nominees for election to the Board of Directors until 1996 were; Francis Donnelly, Ralph Gurney, Myra Pearson, Margaret Ritchie, and Benjamin MacLaren. All were voted in as Board Members. Election of Society officers was scheduled for the November 11 meeting. The speaker for the evening was Police Chief John Annis who reviewed the history of the Police Department with interesting information on personnel, events and progressive growth of the Department. His discussion was illustrated from slides of historical photographs in his collection.

December 7 - The Society met at the General Rufus Putnam Hall with twenty five persons present. The roster of officers voted into office at the November 11 Board of Directors meeting were; Malcolm Pearson, Interim President, Daniel Griffith, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Scott Bennett, Treasurer, Elinor Hutchinson, Assistant Treasurer, Mary Arakelian, Curator, Nora Pat Small, Assistant Curator, Ruth Putnam, and Historian, Mary B. King. The annual Christmas auction as usual dominated the occasion with its inherent antics of wheeling and dealings. Two hundred dollars plus was raised in that confusion.

The Historical Society is presently involved with an ongoing inventory survey and classification of their museum artifacts, documents, costumes, photographs, and many items of Sutton's heritage. Our ultimate goal is to organize viable records for better determination in producing effective methods of preservation and to impliment a viable periodic display of Sutton memorabilia. To accomplish this project which is a "hands-on" experience of a potential familiarization into local cultural folklore. We will welcome volunteers to help achieve our commitment. If you are interested please phone Nora Pat Small, 865-2275 for details and assignment. Thank you.



General Rufus Putnam Hall
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