

**RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS**

**OF A HOPKINSVILLE BOOMER**

**Presented to the Athenaeum Society**

**May 3, 2007**

**By**

**Judge James G. Adams, Jr.**

At last year's open meeting, it was announced that Charles Tilley and I would have the open program this year. (Charles has been excused because of health concerns and Frank graciously agreed to present in his place.) This was unusual in two respects.

First was the fact that the program for the next year was already set. In years past we found out about whether we were on the program for that year and the month when we received our programs in August, along I might add, with a bill. I attribute this to our most efficient secretary, Bob Cope. Of course, what does one expect from an engineer/banker. Both professions are masters of detail. Or obsessive-compulsive, whichever one prefers. But understand we do appreciate Bob and the job he does for the Society.

Second, if you missed last year's presentation, if that is what one would call it, by Dr. Mark Schweizer and William T. Turner, you missed what will surely be remembered as a milestone in the history of the Athenaeum Society. It was a joint presentation a historical, hysterical murder mystery, multi-act play, based on actual events in Hopkinsville's past, with several actors, in costume, and with the audience participating as we struggled to find "who-done-it". I approached Charles and

asked him how in the world were we going to top that. Charles' response was "I'm not even going to try!!!" Nor am I.

My literary consultant, wife Betty, had these words of advice..."For goodness sake, do something light and funny and don't do anything historical, dry and boring. You force me to watch the History Channel, the Military Channel and the Discovery Channel enough as it is. I've had all the history I can stand!!! If I see Hitler storming through Poland one more time I'm going to scream!!!"

Well, I have heeded her advice, like I must admit I usually do, somewhat. This paper is somewhat historical, as what would you expect from someone who has an undergraduate degree in History. Besides that, William Turner would disown me if this paper were not, at least 'partially historical. With all of that aside, the title of my paper tonight is "Recollections and Reflections of a Hopkinsville Boomer".

As a certified member of the baby boom, that post World War II explosion in the American birth rate, driven by the return of hormone charged G.I.s and sailors starting in 1945 and ending in 1962, I have come, in my almost mid-fifties, to begin to reflect on some things in life. Hair turning gray (or worse) falling out, getting heavier, developing arthritis, monthly appointments with the doctor to check rising blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides, the loss of the ability to remember what I did yesterday, or worse, two hours ago, are not my idea of fun. In fact I am

**beginning to ponder the reason and rationale of just why older age is deemed “The Golden Years”.**

**I have also come to feel that those of us, who grew up in the 1950’s and ‘60’s in Hopkinsville, had it pretty good and in fact we were privileged in many ways. So tonight, I want to take those of you who lived in Hopkinsville at that time, on a journey with me as we recall some of the people, places, events and stories of that era. To those of you who were not in Hopkinsville during these times, you may go to sleep now or you may listen and learn some things. Whichever you choose is fine with me.**

**Remember when Main Street was REALLY Main Street and businesses, retail shops, men’s and ladies stores and department stores were in every building? The hustle and bustle of Main Street, especially on Saturday was like a modern day shopping mall, except it was all out in the open and one had to go outside to go from store to store.**

**Charles Store, Cayce-Yost, Woolworth’s, JC Penney, Montgomery-Ward, Arnold’s House of Fashion, John Green Department Store, Shanklin Shoes, Dollar Brother Shoes, Dan Metzler’s Men’s Store, Carroll Kane’s Men’s Store, Klein’s Department Store, Cornett’s Office Supply, Jim Noland’s Western Auto, Higgins’ Drug Store, Hat and Dress Ladies Shop, Happy’s Office Supply, Keach Furniture, Jordan Furniture, Wood’s Drug Store, which just recently closed, McGowan’s**



**Men's Store, Wickersons Ladies Shop, Firestone, Blum's Ladies Shop, and Cassidy's Kiddie Corner were among the retail stores on Main during the 50's and 60's.**

**What about the financial institutions? First City Bank and Trust Company. Planters Bank and Trust Company (the original at 8<sup>th</sup> and Main). First Federal Savings and Loan. Hopkinsville Federal Savings and Loan.**

**Remember the big WKOA sign on the side of the old Holland Opera House above Wood's Drug Store? What about eateries.... of course Ferrell's, the soda fountains at Wood's and Higgins.... The Little Chef. Does anyone remember the Double Cola brass cross walk plates imbedded in the pavement at Ninth and Main both across Ninth and Main and each corner diagonally?**

**I remember the first dentist visit I had. Bill Adkins had just returned from the U of L Dental School and was setting up his practice. Dad and Bill were in the same high school class and were great friends, and because Dad was in the building industry, Dad helped Bill set up his first dental office in the Cherokee Building. I remember going with Dad and Bill and Dad working on the office. When I went to my first dental visit, Bill wrote me a prescription for an ice crème cone from Higgins Drug Store. I have never feared going to the dentist since.**

When I was nine, my family made a trip to my aunt and uncle's in Nashville. Now this was WAY before I-24. We went 41-A and it took two hours. On the way back that Sunday, my mom said, "Jimmy what did that sign say?" (Now "Jimmy" that was what my family called me in those days and which is why you may hear Dr. Ken Dougherty refer to me by that moniker. One can instantly know just how long someone has known me if they call me "Jimmy". I decided in law school that we needed only one Jimmy and that was the President.) I said, "What sign?" She looked at me really puzzled, and said "that last sign." I told her I didn't see it. So, at the next sign she said, "Tell me when you can read that sign." Within about 15 feet I could read the sign. I was told then and there, we were going to see Dr. Joe Bastin that week.

Now this was the early part of the space race. President Kennedy had announced that we were going to the moon before the decade was out and I had decided that my life's ambition was to be, first a fighter pilot, and second an astronaut. We climbed up those steps on Main Street where Dr. Joe's office was at that time and he tested me and announced that I was near-sighted needed glasses and I knew those dreams were over forever.

What did boomers do for entertainment? Well first of all, unlike the modern generation we played outside, baseball, football, and basketball, not organized, like today but within our neighborhood. It was great! It was competition among peers

and the fittest survived. And some of us actually survived to go on and play at the High School level, having been toughened by the “sand-lot” competitions.

But then on Saturdays there was the movies. The Alhambra and the Princess. Our parents would actually allow us to ride our bicycles downtown to see a double feature matinee. The price was 25 cents to get into the movie and popcorn was a dime, as was a coke. So for less than a dollar we could spend four hours on a Saturday afternoon and be entertained. Cowboy movies, War movies, Mysteries and Thrillers, Science Fiction Thrillers and Horror Flicks, we watched them all.

In the summer, we went to Kiwanis Pool or Crystal Springs pool. For 50 cents one could spend an entire hot, brutal summer day in the comfort of cool clear water. Now, growing up in the Indian Hills area, Kiwanis was my choice, because I could ride my bike there easily. I went to Crystal a few times (and also rode my bike) but I preferred Kiwanis because Crystal was spring fed and REALLY COLD!

We also went to Skyline Country Club to swim, as my parents were members. We referred to Skyline as the “poor man’s country club.” But that was OK. We were a happy bunch and had fun. It had a big apple tree on the corner of the pool and to my knowledge that tree never produced a ripe red apple. We would pull all the green apples off before they were ripe and eat them with salt before the summer was even half over.

When I was ten, Dad bought the Phillips 66 service station at the corner of Skyline and Fort Campbell Boulevard....about where we now sit....no, where we are was Jerry's Restaurant, but about that later. That summer, the day after school was out, at 6:30 A.M. Dad appeared in my bedroom and said, "GET UP" to which I replied "Why?" and he said, "You're going to work with me!" Well even though I thought, "Now wait a minute this is my summer," I didn't argue. Why? Well first, this was my Dad and his word was LAW (see I was already learning about the law and I had not even yet decided to make that my profession, though I was only a year away from making that my vocational choice.) Second, I really thought it was neat that he WANTED me to go with him. What I did not realize that first day was that it was going to mean a 7:00 A.M.-9:00 P.M. day. Gasoline in those days --\$.32/9 for regular and \$.34/9 for high test (or as Phillips referred to it "Flight Fuel"). Oh for those days!!! And this was 95 and 100 octane respectively. This was a SERVICE station. Dad insisted that I check all fluid levels, tire pressures, and wash the windshield even if the customer only purchased a dollar's worth of gas!! My pay for this work—a plate lunch at Southern Kitchen, where Hong Kong Garden is now, though they have added on.

Sam and Hazel Wright, Taylor Wright, long time mail carrier's parents ran the place. Mr. Sam and I struck up a fast friendship and before long I had Wednesdays off from the station, as Sam and I went fishing on newly impounded Lake Barkley. Mr. Sam had had some health problems, and loved to fish but Miss



Hazel did not like him going alone, so I became Mr. Sam's fishing buddy. And boy, did we catch fish in those first years of Lake Barkley.

In those days, before widespread interstate highway system, the country was still dependant on the U.S. highway system. As a result, Hopkinsville was on THE major north/south highway between Chicago and Miami—US41 and 41A. Our station was the last service station at that time on the southern edge of the city limits of Hopkinsville. As a result, we got a lot of customers who wanted to fill up before leaving Hopkinsville. As a result I got to fill up Elvis' Cadillac and meet him, fill up Bear Bryant's car, Adolph Rupp's car, UK football coach, Charlie Bradshaw's car and the truck of drag racing legend "Big Daddy" Don Garlis. Big Daddy had this strange looking trailer behind his truck. When I asked him what was in it, he opened the trailer and there was his rail dragster complete with supercharged Dodge Hemi engine and big slicks and parachute to stop it. My eyes must have been as big as saucers and I exclaimed, "You're Big Daddy Don Garlis!!" He said that he was and wanted to know if I wanted to sit in his dragster. Did I!! At that time I read everything in "Hot Rod" magazine and read monthly of "Big Daddy's" exploits on the track. He won the National Hot Rod Association Nationals about every year. I thought I was in heaven sitting in that dragster.

Jerry's restaurant was next door. Now for my generation, Jerry's was THE hot spot to see and be seen. At that time it was both a sit-down restaurant and a drive-in out back. All the teens cruised Jerry's. It was the happening place. But I



discovered that later. To me in the mid and late 60's, it was where we went for a work break and a piece of strawberry pie. And oh, by the way, the city limits ended between Jerry's and the Holiday Inn, now the Econo-Lodge next door. To the south of that was the Skyway Drive-In where the Bradford Square Mall and K-Mart is now.

In the early 60's, our family's idea of a night of entertainment was to load up the family station wagon (remember those in the days before mini-vans?) with a paper grocery sack full of home popped popcorn, with me and my younger sister in our pajamas, and go to the Skyway to watch a double-feature. Except my sister and I never made it to the second movie and rarely through the first. The neat thing about station wagons is all the back seats folded down and one could make a pretty good bed with a cheap piece of foam rubber. I later learned that teenagers had other ideas for the Skyway than watching a movie, as I later heard it referred to as "the passion pit" and station wagons and panel trucks were used for other purposes than a bed to sleep in....

Speaking of Fort Campbell Boulevard, which it was named after being four-laned in 1955, do you remember the businesses there during that era? Duncan and Sons, Cunningham's TV, Coach and Four Restaurant, which had a big neon, sign that advertised "cocktails" and I remember asking my mother once why they were advertising fruit cocktail. Skyline Shopping Center with Big K (now Save a Lot), Sheinberg's (now Sears) Higgins Drugs Number 2 (now Baldwin Appliance),

**Drury's Grocery Store (now Honda of Hopkinsville), Grant Plaza (now Big Lots), Chesmotel Lodge (now Taco Bell, Blockbuster, and Advanced Auto Parts), Ivory Tower Inn (now Heritage Bank), Dairy Queen (now Enterprise Car Rentals), Burger Chef (now Goodwill Industries), McDonald's (when it was open air), Hudson's Furniture (now Herb Hays), Lum's restaurant (that my Uncle, Lynn Adams, managed which featured "hot dogs steamed in beer" where Hu Nan's is now located), The Colonial restaurant (now Scott Nissan).**

**Do you remember when "Deepwood" was newly opened and that end of Country Club Lane was called Country Club Lane Extension? Having grown up on Roney Drive, I remember going with my Dad hunting in what is now Deepwood. There was no Country Club Lane past Lafayette Road, or as it was then called, Palmyra Road.**

**Remember the Bob-O-Link on the corner of Lafayette (or Palmyra) Road and Country Club where Century 21 Town and Country Real Estate is today before the road was elevated? It was a tavern and I remember a big picture of a mug of beer underneath a tap with the message "Beer on Tap" painted on the side of the building.**

**Do you remember when Indian Hills Shopping Center opened? At the time, we thought it was huge. Drury's Supermarket, number 2, Major-Dray Drugs, Ryan's Ladies Shop, Indian Hills Barber, where I still get my hair cut and Fritz Sporting Goods are some of the businesses that were located there.**

Fritz Sporting Goods was one of my favorite places to hang out. Sol Fritz was a legendary sportsman in this area and his store attracted other legends such as Ural Hester and they always had a hunting or fishing story to tell. Someone once caught a hog-nosed snake and put it in a terrarium in the window. The snake was about 3-4 feet long and we would take it out and play with it. In case you don't know, one of a hog-nosed snake's defenses is that it will flatten its neck just like a cobra. Well, I wrapped that snake around my arm, and the snake responded by flattening out his neck. I proceeded to walk next door to Quinn Ryan's dress shop. That caused quite a stir, as one might imagine. I don't know whom Mrs. Ryan was maddest at, Sol or me. She let us both have it with both barrels!! She later laughed about it, but she sure wasn't laughing at the time.

And finally, do you remember the little neighborhood markets? Most of them did not have a full meat counter, but many had a cold cut case and one could get the best deli sandwich.

Gilligan's on Rozelle Avenue and Greenville Road, run by Mary Evelyn Higgins, Happy's mom, Campbell's on East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Carter's across from Crystal Pool on Butler Road, Underwood's on East 18<sup>th</sup>, Jarman's on South Fowler, Wallace Moore's, better know by locals as "Wally Mo's" on 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Simmons' West Side Market, on Kentucky Avenue (run by Amos and Elenore Simmons, my great uncle and great aunt), White Front Market on South Virginia, run by Selden Dixon (more about that shortly), Giles on 18<sup>th</sup> Street operated by George Ely Giles and later by Bob Bush, Haddock Brothers on 9<sup>th</sup>, operated by Jack and Jim

Haddock and later Gary Haddock and now by Jim "Mouse" Gardner, and the one I frequented the most Dunn's Southside Market on Wooldridge Road.

I have several stories to relate about some of these stores. Dunn's Southside Market was on the corner of Faulkner Drive and Wooldridge Road, literally a stone's throw from my home on Roney Drive. Operated by Orin Dunn, Phil Dunn's Dad, it was a true neighborhood market. One could get a sandwich, coke, and candy or just spend time with Mr. And Mrs. Dunn, which I did a lot. They subscribed to the daily Louisville Courier-Journal, which my parents subscribed to the Sunday paper but not the daily. So, I would usually go to the market and visit with Mr. Dunn every day, drink a coke and read his paper. From him and him allowing me to do that, I became an early fan of the Courier-Journal.

As for Selden Dixon's White Front (where 2323 Virginia Street Apartments are now), my grandfather in my early years lived on Kenwood Avenue and "traded" with Selden. He was a carpenter and got paid by the week. On Friday he would go to Selden's and "settle up" for the week. I would go with him and every Friday I got a "Goo-Goo" cluster candy bar. To this day, it is my favorite candy bar.

When all is said and done, as I look back on some of these memories and stories, I have reached some profound conclusions. Those years in Hopkinsville were the essence of small town existence. No one locked their homes or cars. Everyone knew just about everybody. My friends parent's were just as likely to give me a spanking if they thought I need one and then would call my parents, tell them about it, at which point I got another. We as kids actually played outside and used our imaginations. In short, we really had a Beaver Cleaver way of growing up.



Having waxed nostalgic, I am also saddened that the Hopkinsville in which I grew up, in many ways no longer exists. But also, in some ways we are better. While we still have a long way to go, race relations are better and I am greatly encouraged with some of the programs that have recently been announced to address that issue. We are now the sixth largest city in Kentucky. Our economic base has changed from largely agricultural to a mix of agricultural, manufacturing and services. It is still a good place to raise children and I have a glimmer of hope that at least some of our sons and daughters will return to Hopkinsville after college.

In short, to paraphrase Merle Haggard, I'm proud to be a Boomer from Hopkinsville.

Thank you!!