

Blast from the Past!

By Carol Woolridge

The world of today has become very troubling and often difficult to understand. Crime, drive by shootings, murders, child abuse and abduction have become far too commonplace. You can't pick up a newspaper today without seeing this type of disturbing article on nearly every page. I'm not saying it didn't happen in the 60's, but it certainly wasn't as commonplace as today.

Now grown, most children of the 60's, remember their childhoods fondly; you often hear them stating proudly, 'When I was a kid,' to be followed with whatever happy memory they want to share. Bloomsburg created those happy memories for me when children played safely and without fear. Our parents provided all the comfort and protection we needed.

The early 60's were great years to be a child. Instead of cell phones, computers, PSPs (Play Station Portables), and Nintendos, we busied ourselves outside, with sidewalk skates, hopscotch, kickball, red light, green light, tag, superballs, hula hoops, and board games. If you were lucky, your parents might have gotten a new washer or a refrigerator, making the box the perfect place to build a hideaway fort.



Housenick's Motor Company

Those days you ate breakfast at home, lunch at whichever friend's house you played at, and went home when you saw the streetlights go on. Just as people have changed, so has our downtown. Main Street Bloomsburg, a place where so many people gathered and shopped in the 60's, was quite a different venue from today.

In 1964, across from the Town Hall at 300 E. Main stood the Housenick Motor Company building, a large red brick building built in 1919. In its heyday it was known as the second oldest Ford Company in the country. Later the first floor was converted to a garage, doing car repairs and inspections.



Building Housenick Motor Company

The second floor at times had tenants such as a dance hall named the ‘Casino’ and also was a training area for George Keller’s circus animals. Though the businesses inside have changed, the building still stands today.

Across the street at 150 E. Main St. was Berrigan’s Sub Shop, a very handy and tasty sub shop with hoagies, hot and cold, and many other items, now under the name Steph’s Subs.



Berrigan’s Subs and Keck’s Linen and Gift Shop

Keck’s Linen & Gift Shop was located at 146 E. Main while King Brothers’ Upholsterers could be found at the rear of the building.

Another of my favorite places to eat was The Texas Lunch at 142 E. Main; the hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and hotdogs surrounded by crispy French fries were the best. A personal favorite of mine was a hotdog with everything: fried onions, mustard, and a tasty meat sauce. You could either eat at the counter or one of the booths in the back.

Phil Taomina Shoe Repair at 140 E. Main was a place to get shoes and boots resoled, and sewn up if ripped. In addition, they made custom inner soles to help comfort your feet, and sprays, polishes, and other items to keep your footwear looking its best.

The Waffle Grill at 138 E. Main St had great short order cooking for breakfast and lunch, waffles of course, soups and sandwiches, and a thick milk shake to wash it down. It was also a great place to relax with an icy vanilla coke.



The Waffle Grill in front of the white car at left

The Wash Basket laundry was located at 134 E. Main. It was a laundry; not much to report there. Sneidman's Jewelry Store at 130 E. Main was originally A. B. Hess Jewelry Store. The tall clock standing outside had to be renamed after Sneidman's bought the store. Sneidman's was where I bought my Bloomsburg High School class ring; it was white gold with a beautiful topaz stone.



Texas Lunch, Sneidman's Jewelry Store, Spick & Span Cleaners

Spick and Span Cleaners was at 126 E. Main.

The Wolf Shop, the second shoe repair business within the block at 120 E. Main Street, shows you how essential these businesses were at the time. They offered an assortment of repairs, sprays,

and polishes just as the other shop. Shoe repair shops had piles of shoes to sew and repair every day. In today's throw-away society, shoe repair has unfortunately died out.

Hess's Tavern at 116-118 is still open to this day; its history goes back to at least 1896, when it did business under the name Jerry A. Hess Restaurant.



Hess's Bar & Grill, Ritter's Office Supplies, Racusin's

Ritter's offered office supplies and was located between 112-114 E Main. It was a choice place to purchase ledgers, notebooks, copy paper, furniture, and all sorts of office supplies.

Racusin's was a favorite store of mine, at 102-108 E. Main. On one side of the store was ladies clothing; on the other side was the men's clothing, which always had the best choice of jeans. A teenager, or any age, who loved blue jeans shopped there. It was a time long before the current style of shreds in your knees or up your legs. It took a long time to get your jeans to the point where they were well worn and comfortable; then just as you got them right, they started showing signs of wear, later rips, and tears in your knees. Then it was time to start the process over again.

Another fashion was hip huggers. They were replaced by high-waisted pants; now they were the new norm. Bell bottoms and the larger-legged elephant bells, (which were wide enough that they flapped around your legs as you walked) rounded out the fashion selections. My thought at the time was you could probably fit an elephant leg inside. Instead of a zipper, they often had snaps, which were a bit of a pain. Racusin's reached to Iron Street.