

TAKE A STROLL IN THE PARK, STOP AT THE OLD SCHOOL SITE

Revised April 2012



Those of us fortunate enough to have lived in the Perry Street neighborhood during the 1940s, '50s and '60s can revive our memories by taking a walk through what is now Grant Park, Grant Elementary School and the site of the old Grant Grade School. The school was at 10th and Ivory, a block west of Perry. A metal fence with diamond-shaped "openings" surrounded the entire park.

Today, Grant Park is between 10th and 11th Avenues, west of Perry. It has displaced old homes of some of Spokane's early residents. Some of them housed generations of families whose children attended Grant Grade School.

The old Grant Park and Grant Grade School area is a good place for a stroll. Drive to 10th Avenue and Perry Street and then west into the cul-de-sac. Park your car. Remember that the old Grant Park went from 9th Avenue to 10th Avenue. A fence separated the park from Burgan's grocery on Perry at 10th and Murphy's gas station on 9th. It extended west to Ivory.

Start your stroll on the old sidewalk on the north side of 10th headed west. As you walk you might remember the people who lived here and homes that were here and were removed on 10th and 11th. This makes up the new Grant Park. One such person was our art teacher, Mrs. Ruth Harber, who lived in one of the early homes and after she married the former sheriff, George Harber, the couple raised their daughter, Georgene in the same house. She was brokenhearted to have her home demolished. That house was located near the large tree where we hold our annual July Grant Alumni picnics.

Now 10th Avenue is all grass. As you walk down 10th look north and remember the old softball – baseball field with its large backstop where many people stood to watch a game. We looked down because 10th Avenue was higher than the field. In the spring Grant students played fast pitch softball. Remember Karl Nehammer and John McGwire winding up and snapping the ball to the plate where it popped into the catcher's mitt. In the summer we could see uniformed Grant players as they played baseball and one of them, Jack Spring, went on to play professional baseball for 17 years. He pitched for seven major league teams, two of them being the Philadelphia Phillies and the Los Angeles Angels. Jack Lancaster was the park leader and baseball coach. Bob Hoagland remembers that he played first base for four summers. He could field, but could not hit. One time he hit a double and Jack, the coach, stopped the game and gave him the ball to keep.

Across the field is where we played football in the fall. Teams from south side grade schools played one another in two-handed touch football. Sometimes a few of us played just one-handed touch and later we played flag football. In high school we learned to play tackle football with much football equipment. There were also two softball fields in the grass in this area where we could play workup, 500 or choose up sides. We also played "Kick the Can." The Park was a popular place in the summer and many rode their bikes to the Park and stayed all day long.

When the sidewalk, with its old cracks still visible, veers right, we come to the upper park where the wading pool was located – a pool with no fence around it. Down the steps was a small building with bathrooms and a room that held the summertime sports equipment where, Jack, the baseball coach had his office. Close by was gymnasium apparatus, such as large swings, trapeze, flying rings, horizontal ladders, horizontal bars, slides, etc. for the larger children; and a lot of swings, teeters, etc., for the smaller. A structure with several metal poles supported a hip roof that was some 50 feet by 20 feet and about 8 feet off the ground. It

covered a large sand box and a dirt area used to park bikes or play games such as marbles. The large roof was where we played ROOF BALL. To play, kids would line up to hit the ball back up on the roof. Then the next one in line would do the same. Sometimes someone would slicker the ball to the other end of the roof to make the person run. Often roof ball was played on all four sides at the same time. Competition was keen. It seems the sport was unique to Grant Park kids. The area under the roof was dirt which made another spot to play marbles. Sometimes we drew a circle and put our marbles inside. We would then shoot them from outside the circle, trying to knock them out of that magic ring. We kept the marbles we knocked out of the ring. At times we used a steely (a bearing), large marbles and small ones. There were also other marble games.

Close to the wading pool were the tennis courts where the thunk of tennis balls sounded as they hit back and forth. Further down the street comes Ivory which is now grass and parking lot.

In wintertime, the city blocked off the side streets of Ivory from 15th to 10th so we could sled down those five blocks--and maybe on to 9th, and if you had enough momentum going some kids made it another two blocks to Newark. Between 1925-30 people often went from 15th down to Newark. This is one story that was shared with me: One time a couple of young men left from 15th and it was very slippery and fast. They went down past the school, past 9th, past Newark and down the hill past Celesta Avenue and on down over a cliff into Liberty Park. They were killed.

At 13th and Ivory Harold Swenson started and tended a fire where we warmed ourselves before trudging up the final two blocks. Some kids wrapped potatoes in foil and tossed them into the fire's edge and retrieved them on their trek back up the hill. Holding those potatoes was

a great way to warm hands. They were also good to eat. It was great fun to slide down the hill, but boy, it was a long ways to walk back.

At 9th and Ivory the old school stood on a small rise. Today on that corner, up above the cement wall, is a large evergreen tree. It was a small tree in 1961, when it was planted. The tree had been promised on October 4, 1960, at the dedication of the Grant's final four classrooms, which were attached to the six classrooms that had been added in 1951. Eight of these ten classrooms ran along 9th Avenue, to the north of the original school. The tree was planted on Arbor Day 1961 by the principal, Miss Martha Dickman, and the PTA president, Mrs. Helen Erickson Fogelquist, class of 1925. Assisting in the planting were the three eighth-grade teachers: Miss Olive Bennison, Mr. Kenneth Stroh, and Mr. Glenn Clark. Today the tree stands stately and tall, a living tribute to all who served at Grant.

About half way up 9th Avenue toward Arthur are the concrete stairs built in 1960 for students who used the new classrooms. Furthur up 9th are three concrete steps used by students coming and going to and from school to their homes. As Patrol Boys and Girls we used these steps as we walked to 9th and Arthur to do our patrol duty at that corner.

Return to Ivory Street and as you walk up the hill you see the old stairs that once let students gain access to the old school entrance are long gone. Continue up the sidewalk and turn right. If you look left toward Perry you see the route we took when we were in grades 4 through 6 where we walked to Released Time at the Liberty Park Baptist Church where we had singing, Bible stories and various games.

As you head west you are walking alongside the site of our old school. The Park is on your left and where houses from the early days of the Perry Street neighborhood stood on the south side of 10th and the north side of 11th is all grass, part of the Park. Envision the old school building. As you continue on, you come to an old driveway entrance that was used by cars and

trucks that came to our school. They could come to the side door where they could go to the office or deliver items to the basement.

Lila Smith was the principal from 1943 to 1947 until she retired and was succeeded by Arthur Ewy who was there from 1947 to 1956. Oliver Soot was our janitor. (Is his name really Soot?) Yes it was, and it is a great name for a janitor. He had an office in the basement in the boiler room. Remember the noise of fans and pumps running and the smell of hot air, coal dust and oil in the dimly lit room? When we saw Mr. Soot his clothes were colored mimicking his name: Sooty. He mixed clay for all the classes. In addition, Mr. Soot had a very unique and special task that most of us students knew nothing about. There were at least 13 eight-day wooden clocks that needed to be key wound every week on the same day and that was his task. Many parents in the PTA thought our education would be improved without the ticking of those clocks, so the PTA raised money to purchase new electric clocks. In the spring of 1951 electric clocks were installed in place of the old key wound ones. Students were offered the opportunity to buy a clock. It was told that Art Rosenau got the clock that was in Mr. Ewy's office. The clock that Ken Zimmerman bought for fifty cents came from Mr. Soot's office in the furnace room. Mr. Soot told him that that clock had been made by the E. Ingraham Company of Bristol, Connecticut and had been the first clock that was in the school from when the school had only one clock. Ken's was the only clock that did not work when he bought it and it needed a pendulum. Mr. Soot said he used parts from that clock to keep the other clocks running. Later, when Ken moved to the Los Angeles area where he lives, he found a pendulum and he replaced the dial pan, dial paper, bezel and glass and the clock ran for many years. Later when it needed a complete overhaul he took an adult education class on the repair of mechanical clocks. Sixty years later it is still in running condition. He later designed and built a replica of the old clock in a woodworking class. The old clock has more ornate woodcarving on it than the new one and the carving design is tied to early Christianity. The replica is an exact copy, except for the carving. Every joint and detail was copied from the original. Ken did not have the tools

or skill to do the carving. Stan Holm's father influenced his interest in woodworking and the clock his interest in mechanical clock repair. That 50 cent investment had a strong influence on him for a long time.

Several students rode their bicycles to school where they parked them in the bike rack, near the building and we could see all those nice, shiny, knee-action Schwinn's. We waited on the gravel parking lot talking to our classmates until the sound of the bell called us in. Kindergarten and grades one and two were in the basement; grades three and four were on the first floor along with the art room, music room and the office; grades five through eight were on the second floor. The first order of the day, every day, was for students to stand, face the flag, place their right hand over their hearts and repeat the Pledge of Allegiance.

The lighting in our classrooms was not as good as it could have been. One daily subject was penmanship-- making pages of ovals, circles, and "up and downs." Each student had little brown notebooks to fill. In art class, there was the smell of clay and paint. "Times tables" and multiplication charts were used in our learning. Each desk had an inkwell, filled by one chosen student. When the big bottle was empty, we went to Mr. Soot for a refill of the pungent ink.

When school began in the fall, there was the smell, feel and looks of the new school supplies which the school provided. Most students walked home for lunch on our hour long break. If we lived more than one mile away, we could bring our lunch in a pail or bag and eat it in the classroom. After lunch we would go outside again to play and run around and wait for the bell to ring for the afternoon session.

As temperatures dropped, we heard the steam venting off the cast iron radiators in every classroom. There was also the smell of dust burning off those radiators. Each room had a cloakroom where coats hung on the rows of hooks with boots stored below each person's coat. The lighting was dim and the air was filled with the smell of wet coats and overshoes.

Mrs. Reed, our second grade teacher, was a rather large lady. She wore wool next to her skin in the winter. Her class studied birds--three of which were the Catbird, the Downy Woodpecker and the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird.

Many of the women teachers were old (or so it seemed to us youngsters) who had taught at Grant for many years. In the fall of 1947 the fifth grade class had a first year teacher, Mrs. Hoefel, who was young and beautiful. No blue hair on her head.

Mr. Hagen was our seventh grade teacher and our sports coach. His jacket sleeves matched his yellowed, nicotine-stained fingers. During the winter, we often met in the basement for recess where we climbed a dark colored rope. It seemed like it was three inches in diameter but was probably only one inch. The rope hung from the 18 foot ceiling and under the rope were dirty, gray mats to soften the blow should anyone fall. We also used the mats for tumbling and boxing--and to learn the latest versions of xxx, "in goes the good air, out comes the bad air," we would repeat with each xxx. During the day, Mr. Hagen visited Mr. Soot's room to enjoy a cigarette and the smell clung to his clothes when he returned to the classroom.

Periodically we had fire drills with loud bells ringing. From the second floor we had to walk down the outside fire escape stairs which were only metal slats. Some kids were nervous because we could see the ground below and some were too afraid to use those stairs. The girls were afraid that the boys would look up their skirts once they were on the ground. The principal timed us to see how fast we could exit the building to safety.

There was the smell of hot solder in the metal shop in the seventh grade. In the eighth grade the air in the woodshop had the smell of sawdust. Next door to the boys' shop was the Home Economics room for seventh and eighth grade girls. During the wintertime we would have the sound of ice sliding off the roof.

Miss Bennison was our eighth grade teacher who had been at Grant for many, many years. In 1926 she was the coach of the Grant baseball team that played for the city

championship that year. Miss Bennison was one of several teachers who taught more than one generation of some families. She was an excellent teacher who prepared us for high school.

Our music teacher was Mrs. McCray who wore a lot of makeup and whose hair said she must have spent time in the beauty parlor. She played popular song music over an amplification system in the hallway on the second floor, for example: “*Swamp Folks Strumming ‘Neath Lily Pads*” and the Japanese opera “*Mikado*”. I can still hear Nankipoo sneezing his head off. Mrs. McCray had us sing the cantata “*Childhood of Hiawatha*.” The song begins, “By the shores of Gitche Gumee, By the shining Big-Sea-Water, Stood the wigwam of Nokomis, Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.”

Christmas was a special time with Mrs. McCray directing our chorus in many Christmas songs—one of which was “*O Holy Night*.” For many, it was a new song. Lanny Fowler remembers that he played the lower note of the chime bells. His “bell” was a three foot long crowbar that was hanging from a cord in a doorway, well hidden to the left of the stage. The higher note was a similar crowbar, but only two feet long. Our musical direction was to “just hit the bar with the hammer now and then.” The west end of the wide hallway on the second floor was where the chorus stood on a stage to sing to our parents sitting on chairs in the hallway to listen.

Music was an active part of our school. Art Rosenau, a member of the class of 1952, wrote the music for their graduation program.

Other teachers that we had were Ruth Woodward, Estelle Owen, Vera Bradley, Olive McEachran, Vera Henderson, Agnes Dempsey (who had the blue hair), and Eva Payne. **Who are the teachers that you remember?**

At the end of school each day there was the task of cleaning the blackboard and the erasers which gave a dusty smell of white chalk. During World War II we had paper and tin can drives. We went house to house to solicit these things. There was class competition and a big

box stood by the south door to hold our collections. We also brought dimes to school for the war effort.

Whenever a neighbor's dog got into the school there was a fun distraction. On the north side of the school there was a coal chute with big steel doors, polished by the pants of students sliding on them after school. Our school had a dusty playground where we played marbles in the spring with pots of marbles, big circles and a game of "Chase." We also played soccer there and games of "7-up" which was hitting a tennis ball against a wall of the school.

One of the greatest days of the school year was the PTA potluck luncheon in the spring provided by the mothers of and for each classroom. One mother's specialty was baked beans. Hot food smells permeated the entire building. We each bought little cartons of milk to go with lunch.

Two portables stood on the west side of the school, one of which was used to show movies, present plays and where we learned to square dance, and dance to songs like "*Glow Worm*." At least once, when we were there to see a movie, the film melted in the projector and we had to wait until it was repaired. We played "Simon Says" while we waited. The second portable was used as a classroom. In 1952 a gymnasium was built on the south side and the two portables were removed and six classrooms were added to the old building on the west side.

As you walk west from the school you will come to a few homes that remain from years gone by, but on the left side is the new park. If you walk south across the Park you will come to 11th Avenue where Stadacona Park once stood. It was a circular park in the middle of 11th Avenue. One story from that park goes that one couple (one, Gordon Hoagland—1924, grew up on 13th and the other, Vera Aldrich—1923, grew up on 10th) met at the park to study. This relationship continued through high school and later they married. Their two children, Robert—1951 and Donna—1953, also attended Grant Grade School. Now Stadacona Park is a part of

the new Grant Park. You are able to see where we used to drive on the north side of Stadacona Park when we drove west, but now there is only one road on the south side of 11th.

As you walk east on 11th you might well remember the people who lived in the houses that are now gone. Mrs. Smith lived near Stadacona Park and she sold penny candy and goodies, milk products and other items from her home. It is where one student said she bought her first chewing gum. Continue east on 11th Avenue and it becomes apparent that the left side is now all park. As you walk toward Perry you come upon the new tennis courts. As you near Perry Street, you can see the windmill on 11th and remember the good bread, cookie and doughnut smells from the bakery. North across 11th was Helphrey's grocery store, and next to that was Bowles hardware store. Then there was Balkan's café and the shoe repair shop. The next store was Mrs. Nehammer's store. She sold delicious hard ice cream cones. When she retired it was told by a salesperson that over the years she sold more ice cream cones at her store than any other store on the South Hill. Next to her store was the alley and on the other side was the barber shop and Noel's grocery store. During WWII we brought cans of bacon fat to the butcher to be used in the war effort. Next door was the Library. The dime store was next and they sold a lot of neat stuff that one could buy for little money. At Halloween time they put bars of soap on the window ledge out front so that we would soap the windows and not use wax. Altamont Pharmacy (which is now the Perry Street Café with great food and wonderful smells) was on the northwest corner of that block. The pharmacy was in the back where we could get our pharmaceutical needs. Inside the front door was the soda fountain with stools to sit on and a variety of great drinks to be fixed for a person as they sat at the counter. They put all kinds of fizzes in the drinks. Across 10th Street was Burgan's grocery. Altamont Pharmacy moved there later. Next was an auto repair shop and Murphy's Chevron Station on 9th and Perry. The Rainbow gas station was across the street and at one time we had four gas stations on the four corners. On the east side of Perry Street was our old gymnasium—which was

owned by Liberty Park Baptist Church. When I was in seventh grade a classmate stepped through the floor where the wood had rotted, so in eighth grade we did not have a place to play basketball.

So as we walk the sidewalks, we see the sights that remind us of the old days. Oh the sounds, sights and smells of the different places in our memories. **What sounds, sights and smells do you remember?**

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*I want to express my thanks to the following who shared their story with me:*

*Barbara Walker Trapp, Grant '51, Bob Hoagland, Grant '51, Stan Holm, Grant '51, Lanny Fowler, Grant '51, Ken Zimmerman, Grant '52, Bev Smith Vorpahl, Grant '52 and Albin Fogelquist, Grant '61 who also helped to write and edit this story.*

## *Attention as you read:*

If you have a story you would like to share or something special about a teacher you would like to share, please do so. Write it out and tell Jim where in the story you would like it inserted. Send your written suggestion to Jim by e-mail to [bailnybo@msn.com](mailto:bailnybo@msn.com) or send by USPS to Jim at 1819 S Airpark Drive, Spokane Valley, WA 99037-9410.