

MEMORIES OF ROANOKE

By Shirley Hudgins

I will start with an event I don't actually remember, but was reminded of it a lot. Mama and Daddy took me to Elmwood Park. The year was 1936 and I was only 4 years old. I disobeyed and was running down the hill and I fell and broke my collar bone. I had to wear a brace a, a board across my chest and another across my back. My sister said when I would cry she had to rock me, so she would never forget it. So much for Elmwood Park although I can't imagine Roanoke without it.

Oh yes, I remember downtown Roanoke. I took piano lessons from a Ms. Utt who lived in Grandin Court. I would catch the bus on "Old Hollins Road" and walk about a mile because we didn't have bus service at my home place. I would pay 5¢ to go downtown and get a free transfer for the bus to Grandin Court. Upon returning I would do the same thing - 5¢ bus fare and free transfers. I can still remember standing at the city market building waiting for the bus and the smell of the hot dogs at the Roanoke Weiner Stand across the street and it was almost too much to stand. At that time the hot dogs were 10¢ and I rarely had the money to buy one.

In downtown Roanoke there was a Harris cleaners on the corner. My mother worked there for a while. She would give me fifteen cents and I would go to the downstairs lunch counter at Kress 5 & dime for a sundae. We had a lot of "5 & dimes" (That's what they were called at the time) - Woolworth's, Grant's and McClellan's. Also, there was a Standard Drug Store on Campbell Ave. Daddy would buy us candy and I will never forget the green & white box it came in.

There was a Pugh's Department Store downtown. It had a "Toyland" department. Toyland was never opened until the day after Thanksgiving to ring in the Santa Claus season.

One of my favorite places was the S & W cafeteria. Whenever my aunt & uncle from Kentucky came to visit, they would take us there and then take us to "Guy's" for a Frosted Malt.

There were several movie theaters - Rialto (western movies), American & Jefferson Theaters. When my husband and I were dating, we would go to the American Theater on Sunday afternoons.

Up on Jefferson Street was the Patrick Henry Hotel. I spent the first night of our honeymoon there. Of course, I'll never forget that!

Oh yes, the corner of Jefferson & Campbell Ave. was the Colonial American Bank. A Mr. Jonas was the manager and was very nice. I went in there many times with my mother. At the time, the big, beautiful clock outside would chime.

Then, there's the Old American Legion Auditorium. It's long gone but the memories are still very much alive as my husband and I went to many dances there. Even saw Fat's Domino perform.

I'll always remember the Thanksgiving Day parades and the VMI & VPI football games. We didn't miss any of the Christmas Parades downtown. It would be cold and maybe snowing but we would bundle up and go.

Victory Stadium, although it's gone, memories remain all over the Roanoke Valley. I remember hearing about the Dedication Service. Movie star, Greer Garson, attended and that was quite an honor for the City of Roanoke. Another Victory Stadium memory was 1973 and I forget who they were playing, but, it was William Flemings homecoming and our daughter, Dee-Dee, was Homecoming Queen. Can you imagine the pride her father and I felt as she came riding into the stadium atop a convertible – Unreal!!

Of course, the Norfolk & Western Railroad was a big part of our lives. My Dad worked there for 52 years and we could ride the train for free. We took many trips! My husband, Bo Hudgins, worked there also for 42 years. He was Foreman of the Machine Shop – East End Shops. His hometown was Crewe, on the main line to Norfolk so riding free, the kids and I took a lot of trips. I would take the kids down to meet Bo when he got off work. At 3:30 the whistle would blow and in a few minutes he would come across the bridge. Nothing sounded any better than the N & W whistle at 3:30.

A lot of memories of Mr. Peanut on Jefferson Street. I have fond memories of the Texas Tavern on Church Ave. There's a sign in there – "We seat 1,000 customers, 10 at a time" – How unique!

I have been so blessed to have been born and raised to be a member of the Hollins Road Church of the Brethren. It's a great church and I'm so proud to be a lifetime member.

I could go on and on about this wonderful city and it has been and continues to be the greatest place to live in the world.