

Remembering Blenheim

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Interviewed by Veronique Klimonda

My Mom and Dad were living in an apartment in Alexandria but wanted to move to the country and own their own home. They wanted a small community with good schools and other children for my older brother and me to play with. So they started looking and found houses available at a new subdivision in Fairfax County, in the Town of Fairfax, called Country Club Hills. They placed an order for a home at the outrageous price of \$19,500. We continuously visited our house while it was being built and I remember it was very exciting for all of us.

On one of these visits, Dad found an inspector looking around. Because the house was nearly finished, Dad asked him what he thought of the place. The inspector said it was a nice home, but it was too bad that it had to be torn down. After my father collected himself, the inspector told him that Stafford Builders had added an extra house along Pinehurst Avenue and because of that our house was too close to the property line. Dad appealed to the county zoning board and received a variance to allow the house to stand. A nice start in the neighborhood! After we moved in, Mom stood at the window and cried because she thought Dad had moved her to the middle of nowhere. Not all the houses were complete at that point and it was just that quiet.

Country Club Hills was still being developed in 1955. Mr. Stafford kept his construction equipment and trailers on a portion of the Blenheim property, which at the time was owned by the Scotts. They were very nice people and never minded if we played around the house or even in the old barn. The barn had horse stalls and a loft with large doors that opened for loading hay. We used to swing on a rope to get to the ground. One evening, I think in the fall, while our family ate dinner, we noticed a glow in the sky and it turned out to be the Scott barn burning. We could see it clearly because there were no trees between our home and the barn, so we just watched it from the dining room window. It's hard to imagine with all the large trees you see at Blenheim today, but back then there were only apple and pear trees, and very few of those. We never found out what caused the fire, but my father thought it could have been done for training purposes. One day, determined to see if the rumors were true about wall graffiti in the attic, I decided to go to the Scott house. Knowing that I wasn't allowed to write on walls made me wonder, I guess. I knocked on the door and Mr. Scott answered. He couldn't have been more kind and he gave me a personal tour of the attic. Once I got upstairs, with Mr. Scott's special attention, he explained that the house had been used by wounded and sick soldiers during the Civil War while they recovered from various battle injuries. It was an amazing sight for a young fellow. To think that grown-ups actually wrote their full names right out on the walls! In some spaces they wrote very large, right across the wall.

Many years later, after moving back to Country Club Hills with my own new family, I had another chance to briefly speak with Mr. Scott and he was still the same nice gentleman.

The Scott house remained a favorite place to play for all the neighborhood children. We had a baseball diamond there (Dad cut it out of the high grass with his lawn mower) and my parents made sure I had a baseball glove. Another favorite game was flashlight. Not sure if children still play that game. The object was to shine the flashlight on hidden friends. Kind of like “tag you’re it”! We even flew homemade box kites there. One Christmas, Santa Claus brought me a Wham-O boomerang. Boy, I loved that toy and played with it all the time. The Scott property was the perfect place to throw it. Unfortunately, I lost it in the tall grass and finally, after many days, had to give up looking for it. Thirty-five years later, a neighbor found it while cleaning up his backyard and I got it back. I must hold the record for length of time for a boomerang return!