

UP THE RUN

Life on Boggs Run, 1948-1966

We felt safe on Boggs Run, and we never locked our doors. In fact, we didn't have keys; we didn't need any because we didn't have locks on the doors.

From the time I was about five, our cousins lived next door to us, just up the run. John Clarke was the same age as my brother, Sam, and they were constant companions. I was three years younger than Paula, but we were very close friends for all the years we lived there. Cousin, Mary Beth, was older.

My Aunt Ruth Clarke was my dad's sister, and I would say our families were close. Sometimes Sam and I were at their house, but, usually, Paula and John were at ours. We were together nearly every day, but our families never socialized, never ate meals at each other's houses. My mother never went to the Clarkes' house, but Aunt Ruth often walked down the road during the day and sat with my mother, as they smoked cigarettes and drank coffee. But there was a separateness to our lives; we weren't in each other's business.

With the hills, pastures and woods all around us, we kids spent long hours roaming around the land. Our parents never seemed to worry if we were gone for long periods of time; that we could be injured in some way - or abducted - was not a consideration.

Some people don't know what it means to love the land, but I do. I had my favorite spots in the woods and I would go there alone, sit in acres of wild flowers and pick huge bouquets. On the hill behind *our home*, I would climb up in the apple tree and stay there for hours, just thinking. Always very serious and intense, I enjoyed nature and felt at peace in the country setting.

There was always something interesting to do in our world. Sometimes we played in the old washtubs filled with water, or we sat in the garden and ate tomatoes. We also spent lots of time in the creek, catching crawfish, or just following it to reach other locations.

On property owned by the Kubanik family down the run, there was a spring that ran into Boggs Run. At least, Dad told us it was a spring - and we drank the water. It was a spectacularly beautiful area, with waterfalls and a large water basin below that we played in.

In addition to owning this picturesque piece of land, the Kubaniks also owned numerous German Shepherds that seemed to serve as guard dogs. They resided near the house and patrolled the right side of the yard that held an abundance of machines and equipment. I was terrified of those dogs and I've had a lifelong fear of big dogs.

We also had a creek beside our property that came down from Benwood Hill. Raw sewage probably didn't run into it, as it did the Boggs Run creek in front of our house. In the winter, the frozen parts of the creeks provided another surface for having fun.

When Mom and Dad first bought *our home* on Boggs Run, our next door neighbor, going down the run, was the Harold and Loretta (Andreas) Hess family. Next to them was the family of Mrs. Hess's sister, Mildred (Andreas) Fisher. Their brother, Harold Andreas, lived in

the next house. I think Harold might have designed and built the houses, at least the Hess house and his own. Those two houses were the mirror images of each other. - Many more of the Andreas, and the related Knollinger families, lived on Boggs Run.



Sam and Linda Cunningham with Sandee Hess.

The summer before I started first grade in 1953, we got a television. Our signal was from an "aerial" that was placed on the hill above the Hess' house. There was only one quasi-reliable channel, the one in Wheeling, but occasionally there was fuzzy reception from stations in Johnstown and Steubenville. My mother loved Jackie Gleason, but we couldn't watch it on our TV. On many Saturday nights, we went to Fulton and watched it at my mother's brother's house.

A couple years later, we got a telephone, one of eight on a "party line." There were two sides to the party line. We only heard four of the rings, but when we picked up the phone, we could hear any one of the other seven parties if they were using the phone. We weren't allowed to use the phone casually because it would "tie up the line" and someone on the party line might need to use it. When picking up the phone, it had to be done carefully, because one of the other parties might be talking. The only way to find out when they were finished talking was to keep picking it up. Each phone number had a distinctive ring: ours was 4 short rings; the Fishers' was one long and 3 short; another was two long, etc.

And the following photo reminds me that we had goats... Pictured is Frisky. He was bought for the purpose of keeping the hill behind *our home* free of the fox elders, which we called "water weeds." Frisky resided on the hill and was chained to a dog house. He was on a long chain - a very long chain - but, in the end, it was not enough. For a long time, he ate his way across the hill. But, sadly, he ventured down the hill one day and fell over a wall that was a remnant of the foundation of chicken coop - or something. The chain was not long enough for him to land safely on the ground. It was a devastating event.



Tommy Hess with Frisky.

Later, we got another goat, also named Frisky, and he was bought along with his mother, Mamie. Mamie produced milk and my mother made goat's milk fudge. But we ended up selling Mamie to a family whose doctor prescribed goat milk for the children - maybe three children. All of the children were born with either too many fingers and toes, or not enough; I forget. Allegedly, the goat milk was going to rectify the situation. Unlikely, but I have often wondered about those children.

Frisky II lived in a doghouse under a big pear tree on the left side of *our home*. He was such a good goat and we loved him - and we would have preferred to keep him in the house. One winter, it was 16 degrees below zero and I was fretting about Frisky being outside in the frigid weather. I was probably 8 or 9, and it seemed like the *best* idea to heat Frisky's dog house. So, I carried bucket after bucket of boiling hot water and sat it inside his doghouse. A week or so later, he was found frozen solid. My mother said I had given him pneumonia by "heating" his doghouse.

When I was six or seven, the Hess family moved to Wheeling. Mrs. Hess had been sort of a mother figure to my mother, and they were good friends for the rest of my mother's life. When Mrs. Hess had cancer in the 1970s, my mother, a nurse, helped with her care when she returned home. Mom died at age 55 in 1984; Mrs. Hess died in 2002 at the age of 92.

The Hess property was bought by my dad's lifelong friend, Don Crow, in the mid 1950s. Don and his bride, Mae, lived there for the next ten years. Their son and daughter were born during that time and I was their babysitter. When Don had the time, he went to our camp with my dad. Mae and Mom were very good friends; one year they made rag rugs in Mae's basement and sold them. The Crows moved closer to Moundsville around the same time we moved to Allendale in 1966. Don died on Christmas Eve 1999. Following his death, my dad's health declined dramatically, and he died several months later.

The home of Harold Andreas became the home of Milton and Jody Green in the mid 1950s, just before their first child was born. They had three children: Kelly, Forrest and Leif. Jody was a nurse and Milton owned and operated Green's Donut Shop in Wheeling. Milton was also one of only 4,643 owners of a Studebaker Avanti sports car, produced by Studebaker Corporation between June 1962 and December 1963. - I babysat for the Green children for years. I named my daughter, Kelli, after Kelly Green; and, like Jody, I became a registered nurse, with a specialty in psychiatry. They moved to Bethlehem about 1965. Milton died in September 1999; Jody died of ovarian cancer on November 1, 2003. [See more about Jody: <http://www.lindapages.com/nurses/nurses-inspir.htm>]

In the early years of my life, we stayed home most of the time. Mom didn't learn to drive until I was about six or so. In order for her to have the car during the week, we had to get up early and take Dad to his welding job on 19th Street in Wheeling. Then, we would have to go all that way and pick him up again at 4:30, so it wasn't practical to do this too often.

But when we did take Dad to work, Sam and I would not have had anything to eat. If Mom had a dime, she would stop at Morris' store on the way up the run and buy a package of Hostess Cupcakes for us to share. This was a wonderful treat because I loved Hostess Cupcakes. I hoped and wished all the way that Mom would stop for the cupcakes, but I never asked my mother if she had a dime, or if we would be stopping. If she had a dime she would stop; otherwise, mentioning it would make her feel bad. All my life I have valued Hostess Cupcakes because I remember how meaningful they were when money was scarce.

Picking Dad up at work was a rather long process. First, we had to wait in the car until he came out. Next, of paramount importance in my dad's daily program, was a visit with his parents. Every day after work, no matter what, he stopped and spent a few minutes with his parents. He loved them, he respected them, and he revered them.

Also a part of the daily tradition was a stop at "Doggie's," aka "Dragon's Place," for a beer. When his dad worked at the mill, Dad stopped and drank a boilermaker with him. For most of his years he stopped at Doggie's, but there was a time that he stopped further up the run, at a place owned by Bill Musilli.

But Dad couldn't always afford to stop for a drink, although he certainly always wanted to. He said there were many times in his life when he and Mom were penniless. He said he knew he could have asked his parents for money or a loan, and they would have given it to him. But that was never an option for him. He said he could have had the money but he would have lost his self-respect. Worse, he would have lost the respect of his parents, and he could never have looked his dad in the eye again. - My parents never had much in the way of material things, but they never borrowed money, never bought anything they couldn't pay cash for. And if someone tried to give them something free, Dad felt belittled; he viewed it as charity, and that was not acceptable.

When I started first grade, Mom took a job as the second cook, under Clara Morris, at the Boggs Run School kitchen. She rode the school bus with us in the morning, and when she got done in the early afternoon, she walked up the run to Aunt Helen's house (which later burned down) and waited until Gene, the milkman, picked her up and dropped her off at home.

Mom was also involved in the PTA at the school. And during the polio epidemic, we walked the entire distance from our house to Brown's Run, collecting money in a can for the March of Dimes. She was a staunch Democrat and was always an activist for her candidates during

campaigns. On election day, she, Aunt Ruth Clarke, and Grandma Cunningham worked at the polls.

In the 1950s, Boggs Run school principal, Harry Sonderman, got a juke box and began having Friday night dances at the school. At her own expense, Mom made the cakes for the cake walks that were held at each dance. Once in a while, Mr. Sonderman would give her a box of yellow, government-issued cheese. But she made the cakes because she wanted to, even though it was usually a sacrifice. We did not have cakes like that for ourselves, and in all the years the dances were held, my brother and I never won a cake.

To raise extra money, Mom crocheted doll clothes and dressed and sold little dolls, like the Gibson Girl, Little Bo Peep, etc. She also took in ironing, and made the aforementioned rag rugs.

But one day, Mom decided she wanted to be a nurse. With only an eighth grade education, she applied for admission to the B. M. Spurr School of Practical Nursing at Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Glen Dale. A high school diploma was required but she gained admission and then excelled in all of her classes. She was a wonderful nurse!

Once mom started nursing school, Aunt Ruth Clarke took her job as a cook at the school. After Clara Morris retired, our neighbor, Mildred (Andreas) Fisher, filled her position. I loved the school years at Boggs Run School. The teachers were excellent and I liked all of them.

In first grade, Jessie Rider, was the teacher; it was her first year at Boggs Run. The North Benwood School had closed and Mrs. Rider, as well as Harry Sonderman, our principal, came to Boggs Run. Mrs. Rider, born in 1901, was the daughter of Moses Bell and Pauline Zearott, residents of Boggs Run. Mrs. Rider's brother was Ervin Bell, father of the Boggs Run "Bell Twins," Leola and Leona. Mrs. Rider died in 2003 at the age of 101.

My second grade teacher was Thelma (Riggs) Andreas. She was from Sherrard but she married Carl Andreas, a son of George and Bertha (Pfeister) Andreas of Boggs Run; they lived four doors down from us. George Andreas was the son of Henry Andreas and Fredricka Koehler, early residents of Boggs Run. George died in 1957 and soon after, his son, Frederick "Fritz," moved with his family into the home place. Bertha lived in a nice trailer in the yard. - Mrs. Andreas, the teacher, taught my class at Boggs Run in the second, fourth and fifth grades. She taught my brother's class in second, third, fourth and fifth grades. - Of course, at that time there were two classes in her room at the same time. When I was in second grade, Sam was in the same room but in the third grade. When I was in fourth grade, Sam was again in the same room, but in the fifth grade. - Mrs. Andreas died in 2006 at the age of 99.

Mrs. Amy Brannon was my third grade teacher. She was a good teacher but I don't know much about her. I do recall that she had no children and she doted on her nephews. One was Doug Paisley, father of country singer, Brad Paisley.

In the sixth and seventh grades, our teacher was Mary Wiseman. Her husband, Sam, was the principal at Union High. They built a new house on a hill on Glen Dale Heights. One Christmas, Mrs. Wiseman asked my dad, a welder, to make them a large metal star for use on top of their house, as a frame for their outdoor Christmas lights. The result was very nice, with the star shining high on the hill.

Finally, Mr. Harry Sonderman was our teacher in the eighth grade. Actually, he taught us math in seventh grade but we were in his room full-time in eighth grade. Mr. Sonderman grew up in the Brown's Run-Boggs Run area, in close proximity to my grandfather and his siblings. He finished high school and continued his education to be a teacher; my relatives left school to work at the mill. Mr. Sonderman was serious and intense, as well as very stern. He was a no-nonsense type of person and he was passionate about wanting students to work hard and prepare themselves for the future. Some students didn't like him - or they feared him. He was in World War II and had an old army belt that he would whack students with for their misdeeds. - But I loved him! He was very wise, and he had a tremendous impact on my life. Certainly, he was one of the most memorable people I ever encountered. He did acts of kindness up and down Boggs Run and beyond - but he did so privately. When I was still a nurse at the hospital in Glen Dale in the late 1960s, he was my patient. At that time, he had cancer. It was extremely emotional for me to see him under such circumstances - but I got to talk to him, and that was a meaningful experience. He died in August 1970, a month short of being 70 years old.

I was supposed to go to Union High but I went to Sherrard High instead. I liked the idea of a smaller school, but I did lose touch with most of the friends I had grown up with on Boggs Run. Then, once I graduated from high school, everything changed. A year or so later, the Greens, the Crows and my parents left the run. Four years later, I was married and living in Pittsburgh. But for all these years, I have treasured the memories of my childhood on Boggs Run.