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REGRETS AND HOPE

Once in a while, someone will query me if I have any kids. For a split second, I'll flashback many years ago to a grassy bluff alongside a hospital and remember tears, broken headlights and a smashed up front end of a 1967 Chrysler Newport, and then tell a little white lie, "No, but I've adopted scores of them," referring to my Track and Cross-Country stars. As I watch my kids run, I wonder what my blond haired blue eyed son would have accomplished if things would have been different. Once, I let down my guard and told the parents of one outstanding student that their daughter was the first kid that had made me regret I didn't have one of my own. She was Class Valedictorian, a State Champion in Track and Cross-Country, played in the Band and was one of the most humble kids I have ever met. Time goes by so fast, and that young lady is in her second year of graduate school at the University of Michigan and engaged to be married. Still a star, still humble and caring as always, and still my hero.

All summer long, I'll take a carload of my kids out to the park a few times a week to run hill work, preparing for the grueling cross-country season in the fall. I admire these young men & women for their sheer determination and guts. Long-Distance running is considered other sports punishment, but my kids thrive on it. I watch them acting silly, dancing to their music, racing to the car for the shotgun position and

giggling at jokes...doing normal kid things. They are all good kids and always respectful to me. We work hard all summer, running together, talking about short and long-term goals, and dreaming about going to State Finals. In the Fall, I will cheer them on during the exhausting races and live vicariously through them...reliving my glory days back in High School, when I was a kid, full of promise and racing towards manhood. I am so proud of what they stand for and what they do. They competently carry the banner of Allen Park High and we can all be proud of them. When the season is over, I feel a little let down, knowing I won't see them until the next season.

Thankfully, time goes by so fast and before you know it, they come spilling out of school to meet for practice again. Year after year this parade of youth marches on and I stand on the sidelines watching them go by. As each one graduates and moves on to the bigger world that lies ahead of them, I wish them the best, hoping that in some small way I have helped prepare them for the greatest competition of all...LIFE. I now understand the tears that bathe parent's cheeks as they watch their children walk down that aisle to receive their diplomas. We are all so proud of them. I wish them all the best as I remember my own tears, broken headlights and smashed up front ends.

MORE COOL OLD STUFF

Here is a shot of Allen Park taken back in June, 1956. This never before published photo is of George Schaefer's farm located at Allen and Goddard. The empty field on the left side is the current location of Martenson's Funeral home. It is a little ironic that the cows are standing in what is now a McDonalds...long known for their "two all beef patties." Note the nervous look on the cows face. The Schaefer farm was established in 1862 by Mr. Schaefer's German immigrant grandfather. Mr. Schaefer was a well known dairyman and won may awards for his milking herds. He was also our last City President of Allen Park Village (the post was retired when we became a City in 1957). Schaefer High School was named in his honor for serving 34 years on the school board. Many old timers will remember that this was the site of the last cattle crossing in Allen Park. Notice that Allen Road was a two lane asphalt road with a gravel shoulder. Thank you to Arlene Maas for lending me this rare photo. I will gladly forward it to our Historical Museum. Incidentally, I still have copies of the historical photos book, published by Sharon Broglin, in my office for sale. Price is only \$20.00 and I guarantee you will enjoy the great collection of photos.



This is a photo of one of my kids, Amanda Vandongen, who graduated this year from Allen Park High School. She was the captain of the cross country team her Senior year, a very dedicated runner and an inspiration to all her underclassmen teammates. It has been a great pleasure watching her run over the years and she will be greatly missed by her teammates and coaches. Amanda, I am so proud of you!

ALLEN PARK - PLEASANT PAST, BRIGHT FUTURE

PUMP JOCKEYS

Check out this photo of the old Mobil gas station on the corner of Allen and Ecorse (currently Beacon Brakes). Picture was taken on August 7, 1949, when the 2,586 square foot building celebrated its grand opening. Photo was submitted by Ann Caulfield, LMSW PhD (Individual & Marital Psychotherapy-7602 Allen Road), who's father, Richard Caulfield, built and owned the business. His partner was Earl Riney, Ann's Uncle. Old timers will remember Richard Caulfield was on Allen Park City Council during the Lada era.

Back in the day, service stations filled many functions. Lost travelers could stop in for a fill up and get directions to their destination. Customers never pumped their own gas. Pump Jockeys took care of that labor, come rain or shine, while you relaxed behind the wheel of your car. There were no canopies over the pumps and the jockey was at the mercy of the elements. While the gas tank was being filled with leaded gas, the jockey would clean your windshield and headlights, check the air in your big fat whitewalls,

lift the hood and check all of your fluids, belts and hoses, searching for any signs of potential trouble. After the fill up, you handed him a five dollar bill and he went inside to get change!

Jockeys often wore some sort of uniform, company cap and black, formerly shiny shoes, with a pinkish, grimy shop rag tucked in the back right hand pocket. Often they would know you by name. Most service stations could change your oil, lube the front and rear end, replace tires, do tune ups, brake jobs and perform other mechanical repairs. Often, neighborhood guys would come around just to hang out and talk about cars. Believe it or not, there were actually "gas wars" between different stations, competing for your business, by continually lowering the price of petrol. Today, we pump our own gas (\$4.00/gallon) and are lucky if they have towels and a squeegee. We pay at the pump with credit cards and buy groceries, lottery tickets and snacks inside. The owner is usually behind bullet proof glass.



Allen Park Sales Results

As of June 17, 2008, we had approximately 188 homes (a nine month supply) on the market in Allen Park with an average list price of \$130,285.00. Paint is peeling off the signposts with an average time on the market well over 1 year. 126 properties have sold since January 1, 2008 with an average sale price of \$107,440.00. Looking back an entire year shows us an average sale price of \$115,097.00 and 250 total sales. The difference between the two numbers shows us that sales prices continue to tumble, along with the rest of Michigan's feeble economy. Average sales price in 1999 was \$120,529.00, so, unfortunately, we have backslid almost 10 years in value. In 2005 our average sales price was \$150,392.00, our high water mark. The incredible amount of equity sucked out of our wallets has doomed anyone who had to sell to a slow death march towards foreclosure. Despite all the hype about banks helping with short sales (where they actually settle for less than owed on the mortgage at closing), this has not been a major help. Most sellers end up bringing money to closing or simply walking away, leaving the keys in the mailbox.

Statistics can be misleading though (cue the sun rising with a rainbow on the horizon). The average sales price has taken a tumble, partly due to the fact that

mostly lower priced homes and foreclosures dominate the sales statistics. Higher priced homes linger on the market because smart buyers are waiting for the prices to stop declining. Once they see that happen, we will see a sales spike that will make us all forget the gloomy past four years. This will come to pass. Things will be OK. We all need a place to live. We all need a home that is paid for when we retire and collect what pension, social security and interest income we have earned. You do not want to be burdened with a monthly housing payment when you are 65 years or older. **Never refinance your home to pay off debts.** Pay a little extra on your mortgage every year (one extra payment a year will shorten a 30 year mortgage into a 21 year payoff). Give me a call if you are thinking of selling and I'll be happy to do a free market analysis for you...no charge.

P.S. Help keep Allen Park values up...I know I'll probably get in trouble for this, but if your neighbors lawn is getting out of control, due to being vacant, why not give the front yard a quick mowing and edging? Nothing ruins a great neighborhood quicker than one unkempt yard. Let's all work together to keep Allen Park tidy.



You can count on me!

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A map of Allen Park, Michigan, showing a grid of streets. Landmarks include the Municipal Auditorium, Bocabella Memorial Park, and the Community Center & Arena. The map is overlaid with the contact information for Lynn Ketelhut.