



Haverford Township Historical Society



HAVERFORD CLASS OF '63

By Richard D. Kerr

Some time back we received an inquiry from the Haverford High Class of 1963 reunion committee about the possibility of conducting a guided bus tour of Haverford Township. I agreed to serve as tour guide. In planning the route and sights, I came to realize that the Class of '63 is a special year that really punctuates the recent past history of our township. A lot has changed within their lifetimes.

Most of the people in this class were born in 1945, making them older than "Havertown" itself! The U.S. Post Office invented the word "Havertown" to rename a post office building and its service area effective January 1, 1946. Before that, the postal address for this part of our township was "Upper Darby" and previously "Llanerch." The address of Haverford High was "Brookline, Upper Darby, Penna.!"

At about the time the members of the Class of '63 were born:

- America was still fighting World War II. Food, gasoline and tires were being rationed. "D Day," "VE Day" and victory in the Pacific theater were still to come. The Atomic Age was yet to start, with a bang (actually two large bangs). The Berlin Wall and the Cold War loomed on the horizon.
- The Pennsylvania Railroad was still operating coal-fired steam locomotives on the Newtown Square Branch through the township.
- Most homes in the township were heated with coal. Instead of collecting "trash" and "recycling" the township collected "garbage" and "ash."
- There was an open field where Manoa Shopping Center is now.
- The Philadelphia Chewing Gum Corporation was established (1947) and would soon locate its "Swell" bubble gum factory on Eagle Road in Oakmont.

While the Class of '63 members were growing up or in their school years:

- Haverford Township residents could now dial phone numbers themselves, instead of asking an operator to do it.
- The school district built Lynnewood Elementary School (1951), Chatham Park Elementary (1955), the Senior High (1956) and Coopertown Elementary (1958).
- Bobby sox, saddle shoes, fluffy petticoats, poodle skirts and bowling were "all the rage."
- West Chester Pike became four lanes wide through the township, after the West Chester trolley line was abandoned.
- Home delivery of dairy products and bread was common. The milkman took back the empty bottles for washing and re-use.
- We still had lead in our gasoline and paint, and we used asbestos in pipe insulation, electrical insulation and house siding. Water-based latex paint was just becoming available.
- Owner Samuel T. Jacoby and his employees at the National Wood Preservers plant on Eagle Road (across from the chewing gum factory) simply dumped thousands of gallons of waste

chemicals on the ground, later to become the EPA's Havertown PCP Superfund environmental remediation site.

When the Class of '63 graduated:

- The Haverford State Hospital on Darby Road had just been built and opened.
- The Ardmore trolley line still ran in between Darby and East Darby roads past Llanerch School, the Junior High School and Oakmont School. Discounted student tickets could be used to get to school.
- A "shopping mall" was opened in nearby King of Prussia.
- The Ford Mustang was a sensation, and Chevrolet would soon respond by making its Corvette a Stingray. Ralph Nader was deciding that the Chevy Corvair was "unsafe at any speed."
- The United States Post Office introduced Zip codes, with the help of the "Mr. Zip" stick figure.
- We were still all in the 215 telephone area code and had phone numbers that included exchange names like Hilltop, SUNset, Midway, etc.
- British rock and roll groups were poised to start their "invasion" of America.
- President John F. Kennedy would be assassinated that fall.

It's enough to make your head spin, isn't it? Congrats to the Class of '63 for making it back to Haverford Township and for their Magical History Tour!

[This article originally appeared in "The Haverford Herald" newsletter of the Haverford Township Historical Society, in the Fall, 2018 edition.]

©2018-2022 by Haverford Township Historical Society. Personal non-commercial use permitted; all other rights reserved.