

“Where Were You in ‘62?”

We asked Society members and local residents for their recollections about the decade of the 1960s, and included here are some of the responses received via telephone, letter, email, and Facebook groups such as “You Know You’re From Metuchen NJ If...” and “I Grew Up in Edison NJ.”

Tom Cheche:

The following excerpt is from “Exit 10,” a new book by Tom Cheche (MHS ‘65) which is available for sale through the Society.

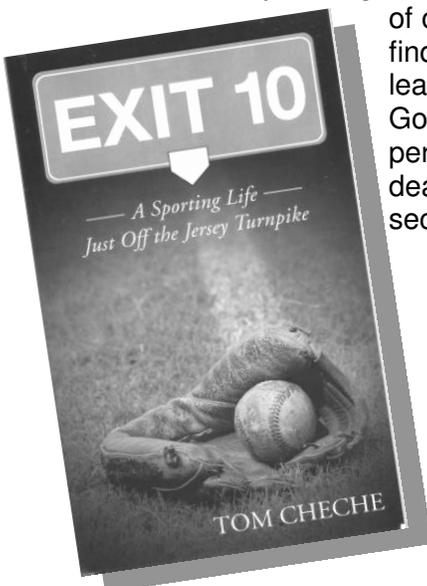
On Thanksgiving morning all over town, the Hopeful festooned their cars with blue and white paper signs proclaiming a prayerful “Beat Highland Park,” stirring the excitement level with assurances that, if for no other reason, the law of averages said we had to win one eventually. By then, I believe there were only two living persons who remembered Metuchen winning a Thanksgiving Day game, and they had the credibility of cranks who claimed to be the lone survivors of Custer’s Last Stand. We headed into our senior year Thanksgiving Day game already oh-for-three, facing the ignominious prospect of going an entire four-year high school career without ever beating the demon Owls. This was a possibility no one believed could happen, though most of us realized these were not mortals we faced. Clearly they had made a pact with the devil, confirmed yet again on Thanksgiving Day of my senior year.

The Bulldogs, clad in their noble blue and white, representing all that is good and right in America, heroically and against the most unseemly

of odds, managed to find themselves with a lead (A lead, Praise God!) over the perfidious Owls. But, like death and taxes, with seconds on the clock,

Highland Park pulled off a miracle play, scored the winning touchdown, and left the Metuchen crowd in stunned silence.

Another Thanksgiving, another disaster.



MHS Class of 1965:

The Metuchen High School Class of 1965 created their very own website with memories, photographs, and alumni lists. Visit it at www.metuchen65.com.

Karen Jones Woodard:

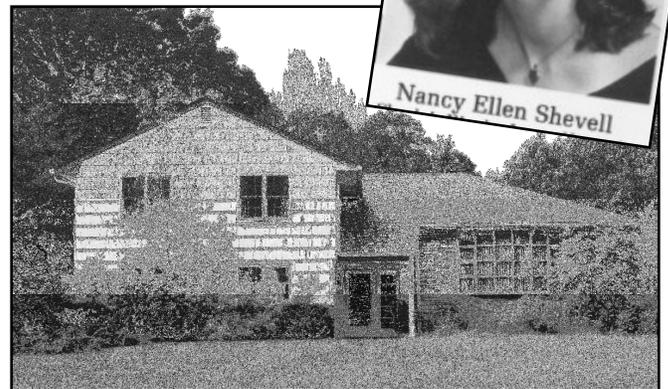
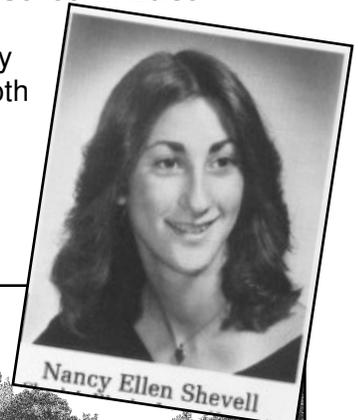
On October 5, 1962, I was born in the living room of my family’s home at 229 Durham Avenue!

Tom Clark:

On the day JFK drove down Amboy Avenue, my mother jumped off the porch of our house, and ran out and shook his hand.

Walter R. Stochel, Jr.:

What’s more “1960s” than The Beatles? I attended JP Stevens High School in Edison with Nancy Shevell, who married Sir Paul McCartney on October 9, 2011! We both graduated in 1977, and pictured here is her senior yearbook photo and a picture of her former home at 30 Clive Hills Road.



Chris Crane:

In 1962 I was in the 3rd grade at Washington School in Miss Hendolwich’s class.

The stores on Main Street in ‘62? Morris Stores, Seldows, Boyt Drugs, Hitching Post, Danfords, Me-N-U, Fischer TV, Metuchen Center, Werniks, Marmax Shoes, Sherwin-Williams, Western Auto, Reydel Pontiac, Rossmeyer Brothers, Boro Ford, Mayfair Supermarket, Drake’s Hardware, Metuchen Hardware, Boro Hardware, Metuchen Builders Supply, A&P Market, Forum Theater, Metuchen Savings & Loan, Commonwealth Bank, Metuchen Liquors, Key Liquors, and a whole lot more I cannot recall.

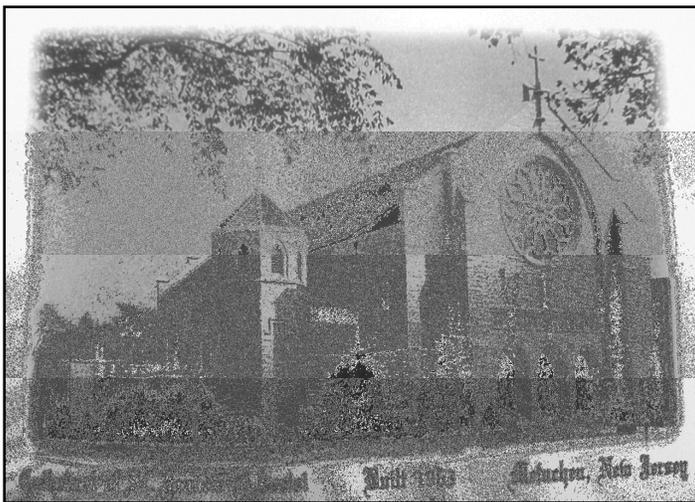
Regina Bossong:

In 1962 there was an outbreak of Chicken Pox, I was in first and second grade. There were over 70 little first graders, all girls, in one class. That was the Baby Boom for you! I had so many playmates at home in my neighborhood... almost every house back then had children in it. It was a rarity to be an only child, and I was and am an only child. I loved playing at other people's houses!

On Main street, I remember three pharmacies, a Chinese laundry, and two convents: St. Francis and the White Sisters.

The White Sisters moved to Piscataway in the mid-60's. Their convent was on the corner of Middlesex and Grove. It was an old Victorian home with large grounds. It was black. It was demolished and several homes were built there. I remember the inside as being in that classic Victorian style. The sisters were kind, worldly, and loved talking to a gabby six year old (*moi*). The sisters gave me an album of music they had recorded. This same order of sisters performed on Ed Sullivan. They were quiet in their own way, modest to a fault, but they also performed internationally to raise money for the missions in Africa. Years later, when I was in college, I met some of the progeny from these missionary schools. I went to college with girls from Africa, some of whom were taught by this same order. One became a very dear friend.

[editor's note: The White Sisters' house was on a three-acre lot and burned down sometime in the 1960s. The land was sold to a developer who built the houses on Stirling Court. The White Brothers resided in a house on Hillside Avenue]



Marty Jessen:

Philip Carteret founded the English colony of New Jersey in 1664. In 1964, which was the 300th anniversary a committee was formed to help celebrate this event. Among the many suggestions for different events, was the thought to have a sidewalk sale. Further discussions refined this thought into blocking off Main Street, and setting up booths in the center of the street to "show off" our downtown. It would be a fair where local service clubs, charities, girl scouts, boy scouts, churches, and public information groups could all participate, and raise money to support their programs. This was a time of vigorous service clubs, (the Metuchen Rotary Club had over 60 active members), large church attendance with active women clubs, and men clubs.

A date in the fall was picked, stories were placed in the newspapers, and mailings were sent out to possible participants. The Metuchen Chamber of Commerce helped, as it realized this would be an opportunity to advertise Metuchen's business district, which was being threatened by strip stores, and shopping centers.

The Country Fair was a hit. The food was great, and many booth volunteers that signed up for a two hour shift, decided to stay most of the day. People engaged in the now vanishing act of face to face conversation. The merchants put their best foot forward, and gathered future customers. One Boy Scout troop earned enough money to pay for some of their less fortunate member's costs for summer camp.

A lot of years have gone by since 1964. Many groups have dropped out of the fair, with the primary reason being the lack of volunteers. The first instruction letter sent to a fair participant was one page. Today the instruction letter is over twenty pages and growing. Regulations affect so many aspects of our life, including the country fair. Be sure to come out and enjoy this years Metuchen Country Fair.

Marianne Lynch:

I graduated St. Francis in '64. The girls and boys were separated by floors... no co-ed classes. We even had separate recess areas across the street from each other. They were just parking lots...not a blade of grass anywhere.

The bakery downtown would donate the unsold "buns" and danish to the Sisters of Mercy convent at St. Francis. On Sundays, I would walk downtown just before the bakery closed. I would collect the goods and on the way back home I would deliver "The Buns for the Nuns."

This is just a small sample of what we've collected on the 1960s... and we have much more in the archives, including photographs, oral histories, and newspapers. Visit us in the Grimstead Room to see more!

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