



NANNYKIDS



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The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society Newsletter for "Kids"

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LONG PANTS, A ROLLER COASTER, & ICE CREAM

The following story is taken from Allen C. Hansen's 2001 book, "The Hole in the Doughnut," about his life growing up in Metuchen during the 1930s. Copies are available in local libraries and are for sale through the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society and the Metuchen Area Chamber of Commerce.

In the 7th and 8th grades many of the boys, myself included, wore pants that hung tightly just below the knees and long stockings slipped under the pants to cover our legs. These "three-cornered pants," called "knickers," were an accepted style for that age group at the time. But when I entered the 9th grade, one other boy in my class, Jim Hughes, and I were the only ones still



Metuchen High School Class of 1939, as sophomores. Allen Hansen's brother, Henrik, is one of the young men above wearing long pants. Photograph thanks to R.E. Layburn.

wearing that style. This was no way to build my self confidence as a "highschooler." We both argued with our parents that we were now in high school and should be wearing long pants. I suppose my parents didn't want to spend the money to buy more pants for me, but eventually I was able to discard the old style about the same time that Jim's parents relented. Seeing what students wear to school these days, it is hard to believe what we wore then, and how Jim and I stood out, to our great concern, as high school freshmen.

Among my school buddies was Doug Waring... Doug was a very inventive guy. In his large backyard he built, with the aid of some of his friends, what he called a "roller coaster." It

consisted of a pair of wooden tracks running from a platform about ten feet high built against a big tree in his back yard. The tracks were just the width of the wheels of a little red wagon. When the project was finished, he had designed it so that if you sat in the wagon at the top of the run, you could ride on down to the ground for a distance of ten feet or so to where the ramp bent upwards a few feet and then down again. The little red wagon, moved by the force of gravity, gave its occupants a nice ride. He held a fair in his back yard once and this ride was one of the main attractions. Little wonder that he later became an engineer.



Whenever I was visiting Doug, and his dad was home, he would usually be in his study and we had to be careful not to disturb him. The family lived in a large, sprawling house that, in later high school years, was the scene of some terrific parties. His sisters were all younger than him.

One of them, Doristelle, was so pretty that she reminded most of us young boys of Jean Tierny, a beautiful movie star at the time.



Another day that I went home from school to spend the afternoon with Doug we stopped off at Danford's, a general store on the corner of Main Street and Middlesex Ave., just across from the Boro Hall. Doug wanted to get a banana split or an ice cream soda. They were 25 cents which he plunked down on the counter. I just sat alongside and watched him eat it, impressed that he could spend all that money just because he felt like having a treat! I thought that, gosh, it must be nice to be able to spend that kind of money whenever you felt like it.

If you have any comments or suggestions for future editions of **NANNYKIDS**, please send us a letter by email to "ayersallenhouse@msn.com" or by snail-mail to **NANNYKIDS**, c/o the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, P.O. Box 61, Metuchen, NJ 08840. We'd like to hear from you!

Nannykids is published by The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, Tyreen A. Reuter, Editor.