

The following excerpt is the 3rd in a series about the history of the Village being compiled by the Cherry Hills Land Preserve. The final version will be presented to the Cherry Hills Village Community in 2007.



GROWING UP IN CHERRY HILLS VILLAGE

by Councilmember Klasina VanderWerf

Have you ever wondered what it was like to grow up in Cherry Hills Village—say fifty years ago? Or perhaps even earlier than that, say, before this area was Cherry Hills Village.

Imagine this: your parents have just moved out to the far ends of the earth—miles from Denver, miles from your old friends and your former school. Sure, your parents promised you a horse, but they forgot to mention all the responsibility that goes along with this. They also forgot to mention that there was going to be a small herd of sheep as well—and you are expected to help take care of them. But you learn to put up with all the other stuff, maybe a little begrudgingly, because there is all this great space to play in and it is so much fun.

There are plenty of Villagers around who remember their growing up years in CHV (which speaks volumes for how much they love the area: they've returned to raise their own children here.) When they talk about their childhood memories, it isn't unusual for a mischievous smile to come to a few faces. There were responsibilities, sure, but there were also plenty of rough and tumble good times.

The list of what kids gained by growing up around here would have to include learning the responsibilities that go along with caring for animals, drawing on one's own imagination, and the joy that comes from interacting with one's surroundings. But the stories themselves say this so much better. . .

Callae Buell Gilman is the Villager who probably has the earliest childhood memories. She was the oldest of Marjorie and Temple Buell's four children. The Buells bought their home from the Alexis Caldwell Foster family who had built the home on the 168 acres they owned at the corner of the intersection of the dirt roads of Hampden and University in 1918.

In 1982, Cynthia Wolf, the last surviving member of the Foster family, wrote a letter to the *Crier* and also shared some of her memories of life in what has often been described as the area's first mansion. She and her sister and friends played hide seek in the tunnel that went between the main house and the garage, rode the dumb waiter between floors, and had races sliding down the two stairway banisters.

In 1936, when the Buell children moved in, they took over where the Foster kids had left off. Callae remembers riding horses "all over" The stable on Clarkson that was part of the Cherry Hills Club (today the Cherry Hills Country Club) was where the Buells kept their horses. The bridle path around the Club served well enough for a short ride; but if they wanted something longer, the children headed for the road along the Ditch (the High Line Canal).

There were not a lot of children in the area then, so frequently school friends from town would be invited to the Buell home for the weekend. There were often eight children at the dinner table on weekends. "My mother was wonderful," Callae remembers. "We had open house all the time."

The Buell children also grew up with numerous animals. There were usually as many as six dogs of varying breeds around at any one time. But the pet that perhaps still has the greatest notoriety was the young deer the Buell children kept. They came by the animal because its mother was killed at the Camp Hale shooting range. Temple Buell had drawn up the ground plans for Camp Hale and was handy when a home was sought for the motherless fawn. Callae remembers how her mother would put a rope and collar on the young deer and lead him around. He was usually kept within the confines of the family's tennis court, though there are many stories, to this day, describing the animal's adventures inside the Buell home. "Well," Callie offers with a straight face in response to these tales, "he may have been in the house a couple of times, but stories that he *lived* indoors are greatly exaggerated!"

Virginia Shafroth Newton, daughter of Abby Stanton and Morrison Shafroth one of three families who purchased acreage at the corner of Belleview and University in 1927, has similar memories. The property came complete with a Shetland pony and a dog. The Shafroth family lived in the farmhouse during the spring and fall months. One memory Ginny is particularly fond of involves riding her horse to Graland, where she and her sister Ellen attended school. They got to ride to school on the one day during the week the Hottentot Riding Club met after school. In those days, according to Ginny, Graland students' education often involved spirited historical re-enactments. Because they already had the major props, their horses, Ellen and Ginny got to re-enact jousting during medieval times. Ginny recalls that they drew straws to see who would lose the jousting match. "Poor Ellen drew the short straw and had to fall off her horse," Ginny recalls.

Joanne Little O'Kane, the oldest of the four Little children was 11 when her family moved to their home at the edge of civilization in 1941. Their father, Joe Little, would become Cherry Hills Village's first mayor in 1945. While the Littles didn't have horses, "We had everything else, including pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, turkeys, and steers," Joanne said.

Some of the Little's steers came to them by way of the Denver Stock Show. Joanne, her brother David (who is a Village resident), and her sister Elizabeth Starbuck remember one in particular they had, named Patton—yes, after the general. Today, they point out, because of newer regulations, stock show steers can only be roped once. This wasn't always true. In former times, they were roped repeatedly. This only served to give the wilier steers practice in figuring out how to get their head out of the rope's noose. Patton, apparently, was one of the most accomplished at this sleight of head. On one particular occasion, Patton managed to finagle his way out and through fences on prom night. Joanne recalls chasing after him in her light blue organdy prom dress, pulling herself up over fences and running through corn fields to find the ornery steer. "I finally found him in Englewood. He'd gotten all the way to Logan and Quincy." Despite—or perhaps because of—the bull chasing, Joanne characterizes her growing up years as "wonderful."

Ron Loser, son of Earl and Edith Loser found no dearth of playmates when his family moved to South University in 1940. On that side of town, the Cherry Hills Club was the favorite playground in winter. "The young boys would build a ski jump on Hole #1 and play ice hockey on the lake on Hole #18 when it froze over. "Everything was pretty informal then," he points out.

Ron and his buddies also found their way over to the Frank Kistler property in the summer. The Kistler's owned what is now the Village Club and the acreage that now is Carriage Lane and which served as a vacation retreat for the Kistler family. It was the swimming pool that the Kistlers put in that made it the favorite spot for some of the area children.

The Cherry Hills School also ranks high on the list for providing memories to those kids in the area during the years before incorporation. In addition to sports, the activity that attracted numerous students was band. It was a teacher, Mr Trustman, "who wanted desperately to have a wonderful band," who encouraged students to take part. Ron played the clarinet. Early yearbook photos show rows of children proudly holding their instruments.

Cherry Hills School teachers also had to put up with the shenanigans of students raised in the great outdoors. Mrs. Rahiser, a teacher who hailed from Texas and with a temper to match her fiery red hair was up to the challenge. Bob Warren remembers how she picked up the snake they had planted in her top drawer with the words, 'Oh, what a beautiful bull snake. Here, Bob, you can take it outside.' "It kind of took the fun out of the prank," he points out today.

Bob Warren now lives in the eastern side of the Village, but he grew up on South Lafayette street. His grandparents were Margaret Dake and Louis Bansbach, both of whom had been purchasing parcels of land in this area as early as the 1890's. Bob's grandfather Louis, had teamed up with a man named C.S. Baker and the two not only farmed their own lands, but those of many other property owners in the area. Of course, the grandchildren got involved in the harvesting. Bob's grandfather would place him in the combine which was pulled behind a tractor. "I'd sit there in the combine with that wheat pouring in on top of me—up to my neck. Then, I'd wiggle out, eat some of it and throw a bunch around."

Of course, some of the games engaged in during those early years are ones the adults were not privy to. Bob Warren and his buddies foreshadowed a cross between the Civil War re-enactment and paint ball crazes of today. During a few summers in the early 1950's, he and his buddies would gather for their own version of the duel. The Yankees would head for Roger Knight, Jr.'s house on Quincy and the Confederates would go to Pat Burnham's on Summit. The Yankees would wear their Cub Scout uniforms, blue shirts with kerchiefs. "The Rebels were always rag-tag," according to Warren. The boys would also carry their bb-guns and actually take aim at each other. "Oh, no. Of course the adults didn't know about it," says Warren. "We'd send out patrols along Little Dry Creek to scout out where the other team was. It was great fun."

Jeff Welborn, former mayor and current resident, grew up on Lynn Road. The Welborn kids raised cows, chickens and horses and were very involved in 4-H. The 4-H club they belonged to was called the "Cherry Hills Busy Bees." As Jeff's mother, "Salty" Welborn, describes it, animals were a large part of her children's growing up years. "They loved animals—it's a part of their souls."

There may have been one animal Jeff would just as soon forget. This was the feisty rooster, Floyd, who jealously guarded the hen house. Jeff and his brothers gathered the eggs by having two of them distract Floyd at the gate to the hen yard while one of them climbed into the hen house through the back window and collected the eggs trying not to break them on the way out.

No story about growing up in CHV would be complete without some mention of the fun that took place in and around the High Line Canal—or the Ditch as it was known then. Water coursed along the Canal banks during the warm months in those years, and children and adults found all means of transportation to float along on that water. Jeff and his friend "Bud" Davis built a wooden raft that they floated from upstream to Bud's house on Quincy and the High Line.

Bea Taplin, a Village resident who moved here in 1958 and whose children are grown and gone, thinks raising kids in the Village was one of the best parts about their decision to move here. "It was idyllic," she says. "Every child should have a childhood like that."

