

Memories are made of this

What it was like to grow up in the Fifties

By Melinda McCracken

Out Osborne Street

Winnipeg is one of the flattest cities anywhere. Like most cities, it has its north, east, south and west parts, to which people informally refer and by which they orient themselves. Each part has acquired an identity of its own, and each implies a certain economic level. Because of the flatness, directions are indicated by 'out' rather than 'up at' or 'over in'.

The north end, 'out Main Street', and across the Salter Street Bridge, is immigrant and ethnic, with its Jews, Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Icelandic's, Swedes, Métis and Indians living side by side. Most of the City's new growth has taken place in the west end, 'out Portage Avenue'; towards the City of St. James Portage Avenue becomes a strip of pancake houses, car lots, drive-in restaurants, and gas stations; high rises and middle-class suburbs such as Silver Heights have grown up there too. North of Portage, the west end is older and working-class. There is no east end as such, as the east end was. Always St. Boniface, a separate city of French Canadians. But since St. Boniface's amalgamation with Metro Winnipeg in 1971, English-speaking Winnipeggers have moved into its suburbs, Windsor Park and Southdale. The south end includes Winnipeg's most affluent areas, River Heights, Tuxedo and the less affluent Fort Rouge; the south end is generally associated with the middle and upper-middle classes. The outlying suburbs of Winnipeg are referred to by their official names-Elmwood, Norwood, East, North and South and West Kildonan, Fort Garry, Wildwood Park, Charleswood, Transcona and Selkirk.

Fort Rouge is south of the Assiniboine River west of the Red River and east of Pembina Highway. It is named after a fort which used to stand at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and which was built in 1738 by a merchant named Delamarque. The fort was actually called The Forks by La Verendrye and Delamarque, but a 1740 mapmaker decided on Fort Rouge. The area was an independent community called West St. Boniface until 1882, when it was incorporated into the City of Winnipeg, and named, by the city council, Fort Rouge.

Fort Rouge is the south end, out Osborne Street. (In Winnipeg, avenues run east and west, and streets run north and south.) Osborne runs from Portage Avenue southeast until it hits the Red River. The Red runs east across the foot of the street, then loops back west in a big horseshoe and continues to flow north to Lake Winnipeg. The horseshoe encloses the school district of Riverview. West of Osborne is a triangular area contained by railroad tracks, the Pembina Highway and the Red River; this is the Lord Roberts school district. Riverview and Lord Roberts school districts together comprise South Fort Rouge.

In the late 1880s and early 1900s the two focal points of South Fort Rouge were the Fort Rouge Yards and an amusement park called River Park, located on the banks of the Red at the foot of Osborne Street. The yards, built in the first decade of the twentieth century as the main shops of the Canadian Northern Railway (later part of the CNR), filled the tip of the right-angle triangle west of Osborne Street, where their huge 212-foot smokestack was a familiar landmark.

River Park opened as a race track in 1893 and offered racing winter and summer. It was owned by James Bert Austin, who also operated horse drawn streetcars after 1882 and electric cars after 1891. The first extension of the electric line, called the Park Line, was made along Osborne Street to River Park, and it was used to transport merrymakers and picnickers to the park. In 1894 the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway Company bought out Austin's interest in both the street railway and River Park. The amusement site soon began to celebrate the glories of the age of Edison with new delights-whippets racing after an electric hare, electric horses that revolved around a track, six in a row, and electric lights-and for more than forty years was one of Winnipeg's favourite entertainment areas. It had western Canada's first zoo, a roller coaster, a carousel, flying boats, and rope-pulled swings for boys to swing their sweethearts on. A miniature train on a tiny track pulled people around the park. People drank sarsaparilla, but off Jubilee Avenue was a bootlegger who sold beer under the counter of an ice cream parlour. There was a baseball park, and in winter a track was cleared on the ice for harness racing with sulkies. There was a skating rink and a toboggan slide, dog-team races and snow-shoeing on the Red River.

The Red River is flat and wide, its brown face dimpled with eddies and currents. It flows by green Manitoba ash leaf maples and elms on banks of Red River gumbo, grey muddy clay that dries and cracks

on top but stays gooey underneath. Along the banks, by River Park, trails and cracked mud paths snaked through the bushes; here lovers cycled or strolled in the light of the silvery moon. Leading across the river to St. Vital was a romantic pontoon footbridge, a seasonal wooden span with chicken-wire sides, strung with electric lights. Lovers could pay a five-cent toll charge and walk over to the other side. Further west was another trestle toll bridge, the Elm Park Bridge, built by Americans in 1912 as an investment.

Contained within natural boundaries cutting it off from the rest of the city, South Fort Rouge has always been very stable. The railroaders settled on the west side of Osborne Street, to be near their work at the yards. On streets near the yards, houses are grouped close together on twenty-five-foot lots; they are quaint wooden bungalows with glassed-in verandas, and each is definitely separate from, though close to, the next. From the south side of Rathgar Avenue, south to Jubilee, the houses are large, three storeys high and wooden; some have barn-shaped roofs, and glassed-in verandas; they rest on fifty-foot lots and are very close together but detached. The trees were planted in 1919, about the time most of the houses were built. Jubilee was named after Queen Victoria's 1897 Diamond Jubilee, which celebrated her sixty years on the English throne.

Many of the other landmarks on the west side were built around the turn of the century. The barns where streetcars were serviced were built just south of Morley Avenue in 1906. Lord Roberts School, an imposing grey stone structure named after Earl Frederick Sleigh Roberts, a British field marshal famous for his achievements in Afghanistan in the late nineteenth century, was built in 1910. Rosedale United Church, originally Rosedale Methodist Church, was built in 1910 by money raised by district Methodists. St. Alban's Anglican Church at Osborne and Rathgar was built in 1910. In about 1913 the fire hall at the corner of Arnold and Osborne was built. The firemen lived in and the hose wagon and ladder truck were pulled by horses. Bernard C. Juby opened the Fort Rouge Pharmacy at Rosedale and Osborne in 1913, and the Fort Rouge Curling Club was built in 1919 at Kylemore and Osborne.

The east side of Osborne Street, in the horseshoe formed by the Red River and known as Riverview, is quite different. Except for houses on Morley Avenue, which rest on twenty-five-foot lots, Riverview houses have fifty-foot lots; they are set quite far apart, and built of brick or stucco, with River Park occupying the area south of Clare Avenue to the river bank. The Clare Avenue home of the River Park police officer, Mr. Ottensen, and several other three-storey homes with turrets and large verandas were built, to be followed by smaller stucco houses on the lots between. Riverview School, in the middle of the area, was constructed in 1908, and was the first school erected in South Fort Rouge. The original frame Riverview United Church was built in 1907 on two lots purchased for a dollar near the corner of Oakwood Avenue and Osborne Street. In the east part of the horseshoe formed by the curve of the Red River, a temporary hospital, called 'The San', was opened for advanced tuberculosis cases in 1911. In 1912 H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, Canada's Governor General, and his daughter, Princess Patricia, opened the King Edward Memorial Hospital nearby, and at the same time officiated at the laying of the cornerstone of the King George Hospital, which opened in 1914. And so, duly endorsed by the British Empire, the foundations of South Fort Rouge, both the working-class west side of Osborne and the middle-class east side, were laid. The district continued to grow as other buildings and other businesses were established. The Overlook Apartments, a newlywed set-up having romantic associations with River Park, were situated at the foot of Jubilee, so that their corniced facade peered between the trees, in much the same way as the Arc de Triomphe peers between the plane trees on the Champs Elysees. In 1925 Riverview Church replaced the original structure with a large red brick building boasting a small steeple and a rose window in the front facade. In a store between Baltimore Road and Ashland, a Polish couple, Peter and Anna Kozub, operated a snack bar called the Park Inn, on trade from River Park.

The Park Theatre, also named after River Park, began as the neighbourhood silent movie theatre. It was purchased in 1930 by Rudolph Besler, who installed sound equipment for talkies. The Beslers lived around the corner on Baltimore Road, and ran their theatre themselves. Mrs. Besler sold the tickets and Mr. Besler tore them in half. Admissions were ten cents for children, twenty-five for adults and five for the Saturday matinee. With the price of admission came a large round caramel sucker that usually lasted from the start of the movie until supertime. During the Depression, when the United Church manse on Baltimore Road opened its doors to young men riding the rails in search of work, Mr. Besler renovated his theatre, more to provide employment than to improve the premises. A Safeway food store opened next to the Park Theatre. The Winnipeg Public Library had a branch in the Beresford Apartments opposite, next to the Aldridge and Lamb Meat Market. The Riverview Hardware, on the other side of the movie house, was owned and operated by Charlie Wright, who lived on Ashland Avenue. Mr. Juby moved his drugstore to the main floor of the Beresford Apartments at Osborne and Beresford.

Lord Roberts Community Centre was founded in 1934 at the corner of Kylemore Avenue and Daly

Street. Originally known as The Terriers, the club consisted of two boxcars donated by the CNR. Likewise, the Riverview Community Club, at Ashland and Eccles, got its start from the CNR which donated a boxcar as a place to change skates.

In 1941, the Winnipeg Electric Company sold the forty acres of land occupied by River Park, to a builder-developer, C.E. Simonite, who wanted to put up 250 homes on residential lots along the river bank, with two parallel east and west streets further back. He also planned to build 250 more homes on the twenty-odd acres east of Osborne, occupied by Elm Park.

So River Park closed. Its roller coaster and carousel were sold and moved. Ferris wheel seats and the little engine from the miniature train were stored in a wooden shack on the vacant land and in a shed by Mr. Ottensen's house. The area it occupied became overgrown with yellow grass, milkweed, alfalfa, Scotch thistles and goldenrod. Meadowlarks sang in the elm trees, sections of track. Where the little train had run still snaked through the yellow grass and pieces of sidewalk leading nowhere still remained. The foundations of the bear pits were still there.

The homes built by Simonite began to take form south of Jubilee on the west side. The houses were white stucco bungalows in the new American ranch style or the Cape Cod design. The contractor was careful to avoid sameness; he altered small details on each house, here varying the colour of the trim, the entrances, the roofs, there adding shutters to one picture window and leaving them off another. The houses were of three basic designs: a peaked-roof bungalow of one and a half storeys with an acute peak over the front door and a picture window on one side; a one storey bungalow with a low roof and a picture window; and a two-storey box with two windows downstairs and two upstairs. All three designs had slab doors with one of several window patterns cut into them, the most common being three descending upright rectangles. The houses on the street facing the river were larger, had deeper lots and looked out on a boulevard of elms (the remains of Elm Park) and the river. The streets were named after Second World War generals: on the west side, after McNaughton and Montague, and, on the east, where River Park had been, after Montgomery and Wavell. The street circling the river, Churchill Drive, celebrated Winston.

People who'd grown up in small prairie towns moved into Winnipeg, often for economic reasons, in the twenties and thirties. These newcomers settled in South Fort Rouge. The working-class railroaders in their overalls and straw hats lived in the older houses on the west side. The middle class-former country school teachers, now married, civil servants, employees of Eaton's and of the head office of Great West Life, even the occasional doctor, barrister or a rare professor, as well as shop owners on Osborne Street-lived in Riverview. They had postponed making major moves until after the war. When the war was over, people threw away their sugar and butter-rationing books and their war-saving stamps and dug in to have their children and make good lives for themselves; they talked about how good things had been 'before the war', but the new drive for home, security and family was on.

The C.E. Simonite houses on the east side of Osborne began to go up, and in the morning syncopated hammers banged as workmen put up roofs and shingles. The people who lived in the central part of Riverview were older than those who began to move into the new houses, but both groups started families after the war. Except for a small strip of land south of Churchill Drive, which ran from the foot of Osborne all the way around the area formerly occupied by River Park, Riverview was slowly eaten up by foundations. As people bought up the white stucco houses, the district continued to grow.

My parents moved into Riverview in 1944. Both my mother and father are former teachers who taught in small prairie towns before coming to Winnipeg. My father switched from teaching school to selling life insurance for Great West Life. I was four when they bought their house on Balfour Avenue. Two years later my brother John arrived. Nearby lived the Struthers, good friends of my parents. Ruth Struthers had grown up in Neepawa, gone to school with my mom and later taught school. Mr. Struthers was a barrister. They moved first to Rosedale, then to a house on Clare Avenue and finally to a stucco house on the corner of Ashland and Hay. They had one daughter, Frances, and a second daughter, Susan, six years younger. Next door to the Struthers on Ashland lived Mr. and Mrs. Herman Carson. Both Mr. and Mrs. Carson had gone to art school at the University of Manitoba, and Mr. Carson worked in the display department at Eaton's and designed the annual Eaton's Santa Claus Parade. They had one daughter, Frances, a year older than Sue and I, and a son, Bob, two years younger. On the other side of Hay Street, on Ashland, the third house down, lived Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Kaye; Mr. Kaye worked for Winnipeg Supply and Fuel, a coal company. The Kayes had one son, Alan, and two daughters, Barbara, the same age as Sue Struthers and I, and Carolyn, several years younger.

All four families were middle class, had had baby girls in 1939 and 1940 and lived near each other. The four girls, Sue, Barbara, Frances and I, were friends from the very beginning.

Progress

Although much in South Fort Rouge has changed, things are very much the same. Some big changes express the ideology of progress-big, blank, efficient, impersonal concrete constructions. Some local businesses which formerly were privately owned have been taken over by foreign multi-national corporations. Still, as a result of hard work, a few of the more established personal businesses and stores have survived the last twenty-five years intact. And a flurry of strange, dusty, fly-by-night efforts has sprung up between large and small. Generally the old was personal and individual, and the new is corporate and impassive. America's triumph is virtually complete.

The old pontoon bridge at the foot of Osborne Street has given way to the new St. Vital Bridge, built at a cost of \$3.5 million and opened by Manitoba premier Duff Roblin in 1965. Twenty one homes, including the Hodges' on Montague and Kozub's Kozy Korner, were razed to make way for this humming concrete span. As a result, traffic on Osborne Street is much heavier and cars can now quickly eat up the distance across the Red and out to the Trans-Canada Highway east. In spite of the convenience, long-time residents grumble about Osborne Street traffic and the sound of motorcycles roaring across the bridge in the still of the night.

On the former streetcar barn site is a new high-rise senior citizen's complex called Fred Tipping Place, after Fred T. Tipping, a teacher, and later vice-principal, of Lord Roberts School for forty years, and a long-time Winnipeg labour and political activist. Next to Fred Tipping Place on the original site of the Fort Rouge Curling Club, stood in the winter of '74 a huge empty Loblaws store. Wearing plywood blinds over its plate glass, ready to make way for a controversial new subsidized housing project. Loblaws was a victim of competitive exclusion by the cosier, more established name of Safeway across the road. And the grim grey fortress of Mr. Scurfield's day, Lord Roberts School, has been demolished and replaced by a flat dark brown brick complex, with its name in white letters mounted on the wall.

The Top is almost dead. The Beresford Apartments, which formerly housed Campbell's Drugstore, Greeves, the Osborne branch of the Winnipeg Public Library, the Aldridge and Lamb Meat Market and Austria Furs, have been purchased by Esso, which wishes to expand its gas station on the next corner. The stores are now rented without leases, and, except for Mr. and Mrs. Reiss's Austria Furs, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 1973. They are peculiar temporary looking enterprises. By the winter of 73-74, Campbell's had become the Venus Variety Shoppe. With the name in gold and black mylar letters on the window, offering assorted grotesque ceramic objects. By summer Venus had given way to Liberation Books, a radical bookstore with a scant supply of feminist, socialist and third-world literature guarded by a gentle long-haired idealist in a bush jacket. Greeves itself is now the home of Betty Lee Newton Ceramic Enterprises, called the Ceramic Greenhouse, with two or three pots in its dusty windows.

The building at the corner of Rathgar and Osborne which used to be Johnson's Pharmacy is now a used furniture store which had a fire. Next to it are two new enterprises, Ronald's Shoes and Speedwash Laundromat, in a new building, and beside that, in a new building that at first housed the new Johnson's Drugstore, then Brickman's Pharmacy, is the Fort Rouge Pharmacy where Laurie Johnson has ultimately established himself as pharmacist to South Fort Rouge. This drugstore, associated with Western Drug Marts, has successfully combined corporate and personal elements.

Riverview United Church still stands behind the lane at Oakwood and Osborne; its new Christian Education building, Marshall Hall, was dedicated in 1960 to Reverend George Marshall, Brenda's father, who died in 1957 of lung cancer. Unlike some churches in Winnipeg which are having financial problems, almost to the point of closing, Riverview's congregation is still healthy because of the neighbourhood of families it serves.

At the corner of Oakwood and Osborne, Provincial Electric is still run by Oscar the fix-it man, although the store is up for sale. Oscar still wears the same sort of khaki baseball cap with the peak turned up, round steel-rimmed glasses and parka. Mr. Esselmont's jewellery and watch repair store is still there, exactly as it was twenty-five years ago, and Mr. Esselmont still lives on Balfour Avenue. Beside his store is Nu Ideas Unlimited, a strange enterprise with air fresheners and little glass jars containing aromatic plastic flowers displayed in the window. Riverview Hardware still bears the same name and the same sign, though it has passed from the ownership of Mr. Wright, on Ashland, to that of Ernie Turnbull, who used to live on Balfour and is now deceased, into new hands.

Beside it, the Park Theatre still flourishes. Since it was sold by Mr. Besler in 1965 to the British Odeon-Morton chain, and its identity changed to that of a quality cinema, it draws customers from all across the city. In the winter of 73-74, it showed *Kamouraska*, Truffaut's *Day for Night*, *Instinct for Survival*, *Triple Echo* and Mel Brooks' *Blazing Saddles*, which ran from April till August. The Park still

shows monster movies on Saturday afternoons, and evt;n in winter these draw the same lineups of toqued, chattering kids, their breath steaming in the air. There are lineups for the adult movies at night now too, as in other cities, and admissions are the standard \$2.50. The Beslers still live around the corner on Baltimore Road. But Mr. Nelson, your friendly Odeon Morton manager, takes tickets, and inside there's a concession selling the usual overpriced popcorn and chocolate bars. The Park's original thirties decor, the work of unemployed Depression hands, has gone; the theatre's walls have all been painted quality black and the seats upholstered in red, and in place of the old green curtain a sophisticated lightweight red one swishes across the wide screen. From the thirties only the stylized torches on the wall remain. Still, in spite of the transformation, you know you're in the Park. There's something familiar about the space, the smell, the way the sound moves around the room, the way the floor slants.

The shelves of the Osborne branch of the Winnipeg Public Library in the old Safeway location next door have been vastly expanded by Canadian books. Next to the library, in the green stucco building on the corner of Baltimore Road, Keith Routley still carries on the dental practice he's had for many years.

Ellett's is still on the opposite corner of Baltimore Road.

Not the Ellett's of yore, mind you. The candy-striped soda fountain image has been usurped by the Dairy Queen, the A & W and MacDonald's. After two renovations, one in 1958 when Jack Ellett first got a liquor licence and kicked the kids out, and another in 1960, Ellett's has gone all coach-housey; its front window is divided up into panes, with coach lamps on either side and a display of Diners' Club cards; inside it has red carpeting and dark wood tables and chairs. It is now a dark little dining room offering good but not expensive food, its decor based on an Early Manitoba theme, with muskets on the walls and halves of wagon wheels mounted on the dividers between seating areas. In the back dining room is a small paddle wheel, turned by real water. On the back wall of the lounge area wire Indians on horseback and buffalo cavort with coloured plywood shapes, and over the sound system comes a Lawrence Welk arrangement of 'Little Green Apples', alternating with 'Those Were the Days my Friends'.

The Top has always had a plethora of hairdressers competing for the neighbourhood curls, and now there are even more of them. Sophie's Hair Styling, the green bungalow with the pink fieldstone front where we got our pixie cuts, was closed in 1974 because of Sophie's illness, but is now back in business.

The building which housed Kozub's Park Inn and Mr. Tactfor's Tailoring is now Emilio's Grocery, an Italian store full f Romano cheese and cans of Unico products, avoided by long-time residents who fear an influx of Italians into the neighbourhood.

The Park Alleys' eight lanes seem much smaller. The same acrid smell of sweat and smoke lingers in the air, but the clientele appears older, more hardened, and the sound of balls clinking against pins mingles with the cranking of automatic pin setting machines. Mr. Bradshaw has sold out and retired to Texas.

The Thunderbird Mixed Billiard Lounge next to the alleys is the new focus for kids at the Top. Rock music blares, while long-haired boys in T-shirts and sheepskin jackets, with cigarettes drooping from their lips, test their prowess, with nary a girl in sight. Central Geophysics next door is new, while Artistic Upholstery, established for years, still displays its chesterfield in the window.

There are hippy batiks in the windows of the Overlook Apts.

The former Jewel Store at Jubilee and Osborne, now called The Fresh Air Experience, specializes in backpacks, bicycles and freeze-dried foods. In the summer it does a thriving business renting canoes, and in the winter it does an even bigger business renting and selling cross-country skis.

As the rest of the world has congested, Riverview has correspondingly improved. Cut off even more by the increased flow of traffic along Osborne Street, and by the enclosing Red, Riverview remains a quiet backwater of respectable homes. House prices have gone up, and with its large lots and boulevards and its scarcity of people, Riverview has become a desirable place to live. Many long-time residents live on in their houses, preserving the valued stability of the area, and houses rarely come up for sale.

The area looks more cultivated and resolved. The original prairie seediness has been smoothed out, the boulevards sodded long ago, the crossroads paved and neatly curbed. Over twenty-five years, the trees have grown much taller, giving the area a luxurious, park-like feeling, especially on summer days when the quiet streets are dappled with sun and shade. In winter, except for the sparrows in the scrub oaks, the streets are silent and deep with snow under the brilliant blue sky; not a person walks the streets at night. In summer the well-kept lawns and gardens full of marigolds, petunias, sweet alyssum, salvias, zinnias and canna lilies brighten house walls, giving a cumulative impression of neat middle-class optimism. The 'new' houses on Wavell, Montgomery, Montague and McNaughton now look settled and cozy.

With the advent of diesel locomotives, it was inevitable that the Fort Rouge Yards would disappear. Lightning struck the car shops in 1956, setting off a spectacular fire, and the car shop personnel was transferred to Transcona. The shops closed in 1959, and, with the construction of the Symington Yards,

remaining work slowed down, until in 1963, after forty-five years, the 212-foot smokestack was levelled with dynamite, bringing to a close an era of railroading in the Fort Rouge area. Part of the yards has become the site for a new Winnipeg Transit garage, housing 650 buses. To be near their work, bus drivers and mechanics moved into the homes formerly occupied by railroaders and union families. So the Lord Roberts side remains working-class.

The Elm Park Bridge remains, but is closed to all but pedestrian traffic. The area we called the Prairie between the dyke and the river has been filled and sodded and smoothed into a grassy plain called Churchill Drive Park; the lumps and bumps have been ironed out of the toboggan hills at the foot of Osborne Street, and many of the remaining 'Monkey Trails' turned into an official gravel bicycle path that follows the Red River to the municipal hospitals. Kids ride their bicycles down the path in the summer, and gather on the park benches to smoke dope. The river itself has many more pleasure boats on it, some of which are docked at a marina near Churchill High School. A paddlewheel boat with a crummy band plies the river on hot nights, its rock music competing with the flashes of heat lightning and rising wind. In the winter, toqued figures in knickers on cross-country skis langlauf down the river of chuff snow, through the bushes on the bicycle path. The dyke is no longer gravel but velvety asphalt all the way round to the school.

Churchill High School, like the rest of Winnipeg frozen solid six months of the year, is preserved like new from the day it was built, lying sprawled along Hay Street under the merciless sun which beats against the glass bricks in summer until classrooms are eighty-eight degrees and unusable. Two additions, with a total of twenty-four classrooms, have been built on behind, but the school looks exactly the same from Hay Street. Inside, the school is mellower, but impeccable. In the vast green gymnasium, two huge stylized bulldog faces glare down from the walls; during lunch hour, rock music is blasted over the P.A. system, and long-haired boys in sweat pants and T-shirts dribble basketballs around. The lockers lining the halls are no longer painted institutional grey, but bright red, green and blue. There are even more pictures of Winston Churchill around than there used to be.

The principal's office is now guarded by three secretaries.

When this office was vacated by Scuff in 1965, an annual scholarship was set up in his honour. Scuff went on to be assistant superintendent of the Seven Oaks School District, then retired to his home, his wife, his children and grandchildren and his begonias. I went to see him in the winter of 1974. At seventy-four he looked exactly the same as always, but he was wearing the cardigan and slippers of a retired gentleman, padding around in the living room of his home. He remembered the first class at Churchill well, the good students especially, whose father had died, whose mother was pushy, who was earnest and who was conscientious. When he pointed his finger at me, I knew who was principal. In October of 1974, Mr. Scurfield died of complications following surgery.

Since 1965, the principal's office at Churchill has been filled by Scuff's right-hand man, Zorro (so called because he was everywhere at once), Le. Mr. W. J. Madder, a calm, crisp gentleman with greying temples, glasses and the same thin line of moustache he always wore. His face is orderly and conservative, though the shoulder vents in his impeccable grey suit betray a hint of the swinging liberal he might have been, if it weren't for the school system. On the brick wall behind him is the obligatory picture of Winston Churchill beside an official portrait of Queen Elizabeth with the bathing beauty blue ribbon across her front. The chair opposite Mr. Madder's desk is frightening in its power to turn anyone sitting in it into a student with that old father fixation attitude toward authority. But unlike Scuff Mr. Madder is not an overpowering principal. Rational and kindly, he wards off the educational greyness that threatens his personality with a sympathetic twinkle in his eye.

From an original population of 861, the number of students at Churchill peaked in 1966 at 1635, with the coming to high school age of the postwar boom babies. Now, owing to the movement of families from the area out to the suburbs, and to the decline in the birth rate, the attendance has shrunk back to 1200. The population of suburban schools has grown, while Churchill's has declined, and Churchill is now considered almost an inner-city school.

Although the school looks the same, things have changed at Churchill. The old narrow-minded rigidity has opened to the outside world and its variety, and many of the changes have been in the direction of more individual freedom for the student and much more help for him. However, it's hard to know if the changes are real and basic, or if they are just superficial trimmings, the old ways jazzed up to give the appearance of progress.

Things at least have different names. Home rooms are called teaching stations. There's 'team teaching', and 'contract teaching'. Classrooms are now equipped with overhead projectors, so instead of drawing his diagram laboriously on the chalk board and getting it all smudged, the teacher can draw it permanently on an acetate sheet, and project it on a screen behind him. There are filing cabinets full of

research material, extra reference books and closed circuit TV; some rooms are wired for sound. Other rooms have carpets and drapes, bulletin boards that can be moved around and used as dividers, and movable chairs and tables that will fit together in a variety of formations.

The effort by the school to provide a programme more suited to the individual was generated, says Mr. Madder, not by student demands, but by the teachers who saw students struggling with the material, but couldn't help them. The problem now with trying to give so much individual attention, he said, is that the demands on the teacher's time are almost impossible. But the general idea is to offer the student a variety of choices and influences so he can, you guessed it, do his own thing. The student council president and vice-president and the editor of the school newspaper are on the school's budget committee, though all policy is subject to staff ratification. The painting of the lockers in different colours was carried out on student initiative. Students seem to be considered a little bit more trustworthy than they were twenty years ago.

The old-fashioned school tea has been superseded by a much more sophisticated event, the November fest, held in November, perhaps to avoid association with Oktoberfest beer. Instead of the large tea room in the gymnasium, different kinds of refreshment and entertainment are provided in several different rooms—an English tea room, a coffee house, a French sidewalk cafe, with students doing the can-can, games of skill and chance in the lunch room, a supper bar with a cold plate. The inevitable sale of home baking takes place. But instead of a white elephant sale, there is a sale of plants and terraria grown in the school. School dances are a losing proposition and aren't well attended. Rock bands cost too much, and records are unthinkable.

No longer is there one single guidance teacher advising students to join the army, as Charlie Martin used to do. Instead, there are now four full-time guidance instructors who help students with their personal problems, in a special guidance office complete with magazines, several private cubicles for individual consultations and one large room for group discussions. The Child Care Clinic sends both a social worker and a psychiatrist around to the school. 'Oh,' sighs Mr. Madder, 'we have our drug abuse problems and alcoholism.' Drugs? Would Winston Churchill have endorsed drugs?

Mr. Madder showed me the huge barren lunchroom, the automotive shops, the video-taping equipment and the music room (where Henry Folsom's sister Eileen is now the teacher), overflowing with double basses, violins and cellos and set up with music stands for sixty-five musicians. We looked at the library with its 'liquid carrels' wired for tape recorders and audio-visual equipment. We ran into some of the teachers of old: John Wright, who was vice-principal, his hair white, looking healthy and well put together in his Black Watch tartan jacket, gave Mr. Madder a look of long-standing respect and affection; Mr. Bell, the physics teacher, was dapper in a checked jacket; Mr. Curry the chemistry teacher still had his white lab coat, round ruddy face, rimless glasses and shy smiling James Stewart manner, exactly the same; Mrs. Bond was exactly the same in her cardigan sweater and straight skirt. They were all exactly the same; time had done absolutely nothing to alter their essential beings. Standing in the halls, they were like those life-sized cardboard figures you sometimes see in drugstores; they could have been exact replicas of themselves. But if they were still the same, how much could the school have changed?

Room 8, Miss East's home room of 1955, was unchanged.

There were the green blackboards and the wood of the 'singlepiece arborite desks', slightly darker with age, a still life frozen forever in time, while the bright sunlight bounced off the snow and slanted in through the 'vision strip' as it always did. The minute hand on the clock overhead clicked on its interminable way. The only change was that the old wooden teacher's desk at the front of the room on the left, instead of bluntly facing the class head on, had mysteriously opened like a door to stand at an *angle*.

On the honours board outside Mr. Madder's office, there were our pictures—mine (with a pixie cut) for a scholarship, John Hodges's picture twice, for an award and for being school president. I scrutinized the most recent pictures; the award winning kids looked much the same; short haired, clean-cut, pimply, and awkward. As I bade good-bye to Mr. Madder, he said that one of the things about being principal was that you spent more time in administration and less time in personal contact with the students. He confessed he missed being called Zorro.

At the end of the lunch hour, kids crowded against the glass in the front foyer and overflowed into the hall. A boy hawked tickets to a performance by the hypnotist Reveen. The kids were awfully short. The girls wore jeans and T-shirts, like the boys, not a tunic or Kitten sweater among them. The boys all had long hair. They milled around instead of lining up. The old teachers stood like rocks awaiting the noisy onslaught as it poured into the halls and flowed around them. I walked home, down the sidewalk on Hay, in the brilliant sunshine, feet crunching in the cornstarch snow, remembering how worried we used to be that we'd freeze our legs beneath our short tunics before making it home. It was as cold as it ever was.