

# Barnesboro in 1956

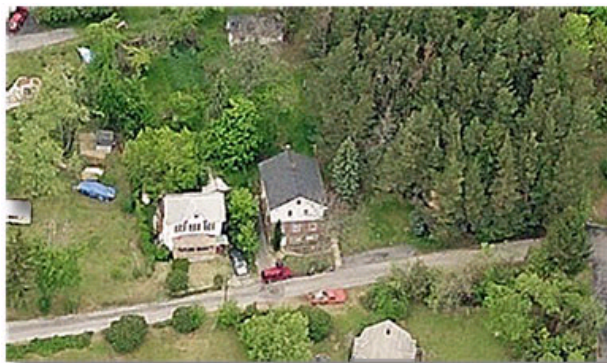
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thursday, march 19, 2009

## Barnesboro in 1956



For a few years until about 1956 my family lived in a house on a road now named Lester Street in Barnesboro which is now named Northern Cambria in Cambria County, Pennsylvania.

It is the house with the orange truck across the street from it, the house with the tall cedar growing on the left side of the front of the house. There is a red vehicle in the yard below the cedar. You can see all this and more in the amazing Virtual Earth aerial photo of the very house we lived in over 50 years ago. Click the picture for more detail.

My parents rented the house from a man named Scro. When we lived there the front of the house was a grand brick porch with two or three arches. On many rainy days this porch was our place to play. This porch also had the perfect view for the fireworks which lit up the sky between two hills across the valley in which Walnut Run ran. There were big black Carpenter ants on the steps of this porch and some kid used to cut them in half with a butter knife.

Directly across from the porch steps was a peach tree but we weren't allowed to pick the peaches. This peach tree was not the best climbing tree, it seemed you would get a handful of sap with every grabbed branch and the peaches were small, green, and hard.

I had an old pocketknife which I kept hidden in a garage made of glazed clay blocks. I bet the glazed clay blocks were made at the Patton Clay Works. Inside the garage, on an old ladder, I could climb up to the top of the walls where the roof was connected. Here is where I kept the pocketknife. The garage was up in the back of the yard. At that time the hill was open and the wind would come howling down. I would stand by the uphill side of the garage and wonder what life would be like in ten years when I was seventeen. I could not imagine.

I can't tell if that is the whole garage in the aerial photo or just the foundation. It is way up the back of the yard behind the house. There used to be a boney pile on the far side of that group of pine trees, it was an old boney pile even then, it had lost all the coal color but was still loose shale-like material with nothing growing on it. It only needed another thirty or so years to support life again.

One time I buried a stash of marbles in an interesting little wooden box. The box had a sliding lid. I buried the box half-way up and dead center of the boney pile so I would be able to find it easily. A great hiding place, still there they are (unless someone else found them). I never did find them again and I spent a good deal of time looking. The box will be gone I am sure but those marbles are mine.

My uncles were wonderful uncles and they were great teasers. I have heard that my granddad Byrnes was also a great tease. Teasers can make you laugh and challenge you, they may make wagers on how many ears of corn you can eat. They may send you up into the woods with a salt shaker believing you were going to catch some birds. They may help you set up a tent and get the fires going for you and your friends to camp out overnight, and then scare the hell out of you later on by making animal sounds in the dark.

So blame my uncles or genetics for me handing my three year old sister Diane a small dead Garter snake in the back yard of that house on Lester Street so many years ago. Blame them for me telling little Diane it was a 'Posey' and to take it in the house to mom. "Edward Arthur" my mom screamed, "Get in here and get this thing out of here!"

I called Diane today and apologized. I asked her if she remembered how birds would hit the widows at that house and fall stunned or worse to the sidewalk on the side of the house. I reminded her of the time the Flicker flew into a window and died. Diane said that I was the scientist even then and of course I would remember those things.



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Send your Byrnesville & Barnesboro area memories, facts, stories, & anecdotes directly to:

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I am trying to think whether I had to unhook Diane from her harness to let her take the snake into the house. I can see the little steel buckles. To keep her out of the woods her harness was hooked to a rope looped over the clothesline. The harness (of course) must have been the anti-choke kind for it gave Diane all the freedom she could use between the clothesline poles.

Diane barely remembered Smokey Joe though, a glossy black Cocker Spaniel mix of a dog we had as a pet. That dog would follow me all up and down the hill, up into the woods and all around. If he wasn't at my side, all I had to do was whistle and he'd come running like my pockets were full of dog bones. He always came even if I didn't have bones for him. Smokey Joe, boy that was a good dog.

I spent a lot of time exploring the hill behind the house. Climbing was little effort and you could fly coming down the hill. I used to marvel that I didn't trip on exposed roots and shrubs on the way down. The hill was so steep, if I did trip; I wouldn't have touched the ground for ten or fifteen yards.

The back yard at that house looks like it has some trees growing in it now. It was a big yard of grass for us kids, lots of dandelions, clover, and bees. The swing set was also way up in the back yard up near and just to the left of the garage.

The man next door had chickens in his backyard, free-range backyard chickens, they were that chicken red color and white. I saw the man chop the head off one. I couldn't believe how long those chickens could run around without a head. I think I was both horrified and amazed. More amazed initially and then maybe horrified in retrospect after telling my mom the story.

Swinging on that swing on a warm summer day, I swung out and a big bumblebee flew into my ear and stung me. After being fixed up by my mom the nurse I was swinging again when I saw my grandfather in the yard. Running barefoot through the yard to see him I stepped on another bee and was stung again. The next day I had to go to Miners Hospital in Spangler as there were red lines running up my leg. They thought it might have been blood poisoning or a bee reaction or both. Anyway I had to spend the whole rest of that day in bed with my leg raised on a pillow. That wasted a good sunny day too.

My dad was a teacher and at the time, I think he taught in Moss Creek. One day I brought my whole class over to the house there on what is now Lester Street for a science demonstration. My dad had been teaching a unit on rockets and built a little rocket out of a straw and some paper. We were all pretty excited as he put gun powder into the straw and let a little trail out on the board the rocket was on. It must have been raining because my dad did the demonstration in the living room of our house. He lit the powder and the rocket was gone in a flash hitting the opposite wall before any of us even saw it move. All totally amazed we went outside and I watched as everyone walked home.



At the top of the hill behind this house on Lester Street is the Barnesboro Pool. One cold, snowy, windy day, two of my friends and I, after a few hours of playing in the woods, decided to walk on up to the pool.

Once up there we saw that someone had pulled part of the fence back so people of our size could get in under the fence. Now all we did was get in there and go up to the edge of the pool which was frozen solid anyway and had a bunch of hard crusted snow on it.

With my legs and anchor firmly on the concrete, all I did was stick my leg out over the ice and try to kick it in a little. No luck, and it was cold, and I was wet already anyway, from the snow, so we went home.

Back then you couldn't get away with anything in Barnesboro. Everybody not only knew everyone else but they knew what they were doing, what they were wearing, who their kids were, occupations, birthdates, and their mom's uncle's fourth cousins Confirmation names. So I shouldn't have been surprised at all to hear my mother yelling at me from inside the house about being up at the pool before I even got into the back yard.

Posted by [Edward Byrnes](#) at 13:53 | [1 Comment](#)

Last modified on 2009-03-20 04:55

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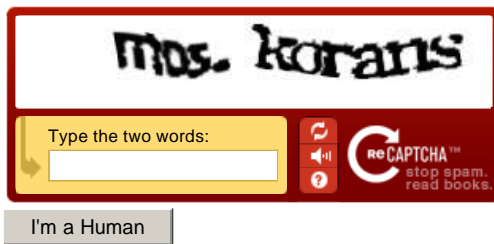
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