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# Gary Ditto's Newsletter

NOVEMBER 1995

## Maggie Hahn: Seven Decades of Montgomery County History Up Close



The hat was felt, it was bright blue, the evening was warm with promise, and she was 17. It was Maggie McMillan's first date with Carl Hahn, the man she would later marry. The year was 1938.

"We went to Glen Echo when it was an amusement park," the Bethesda-turned-Clarksville resident now recalls. In those days Glen Echo boasted a roller coaster, Fun House, and the still-intact carousel. And there, up on the roller coaster, her lovely spring hat blew off. Not to worry—she got it back.

"There was a booth just for that," she laughs, "a booth for collecting hats people lost on the roller coaster. This was back in the days when you got gussied up for dates."

Mrs. Hahn's roots date back from the mid 1920s, when her parents moved to from Washington to Chevy Chase. When Maggie Hahn's parents bought the red brick house on the corner of Walsh Street and East Avenue in Chevy Chase, the land was being sold in parcels by a farmer named Walsh. Indeed, most of Georgetown Road at the time was farmland, according to Mrs. Hahn. The Walsh tract became known as the Leland Development, which gave its name to the next street over.

### School Days

As an elementary school student, Mrs. Hahn attended the Rosemary Elementary School, a square, two-story brick building not far from Connecticut Avenue. "It was really dark red brick, and it had oiled wood floors," says Mrs. Hahn. Though Rosemary Street was nearby, Mrs. Hahn was never quite sure the school didn't take its name from its principal, Mrs. Rose.

The memory of one childhood prank still amuses Mrs. Hahn. A water tower stood in a circle in front of the school. Unlike modern ones on stilts, it was a round metal tower with a turret, painted a rusty barn-red, with stairs winding around to the top. One winter afternoon, after school, she and a friend climbed up the tower's steps, which were encrusted with ice. Apparently, a neighbor saw them and called the police, who cut short the girls' vertical odyssey two-thirds shy of the top. "The police took us home and reported us to our parents, says Mrs. Hahn. "The story got back to school and the whole student body was lectured never to do that again," she chuckles. And at home? "Well," she says, "I got grounded for at least a week."

For Mrs. Hahn, as for most children, winters could be a delight. "The furnace at school was always breaking down, so we got lots of holidays in wintertime," she recalls. "It didn't even have to snow."

Maggie Hahn was one of the first to graduate from Bethesda Chevy Chase High School when it was on 44th Street. "When BCC's first wing was built onto Leland Junior High," says Maggie Hahn, "East-West Highway was a dirt road." The fledgling high school had a basketball team, but inter-school football was prohibited. It was considered too rough a game, says Mrs. Hahn. Maggie Hahn's

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recklessness included secretly driving with her school friends to the quarry in Dickerson, Maryland, some forty miles northwest of Bethesda.

### Preserving the Past

Maggie Hahn's instincts for chronicling the past are natural, given her parentage. Her father, Robert F. McMillan, worked for a time at the Smithsonian, and throughout his life amassed a large private collection of Native American relics. Most were flint arrowheads and other stone weapons. Mr. McMillan didn't travel much, so the lion's share of his collection came from Native American tribes on the Eastern seaboard. "By the time he died in the 1940's most of the relics had migrated to an upstairs closet," his daughter now says. The collection, which numbered in the hundreds, was eventually donated to the Smithsonian.

We are fortunate that Maggie Hahn has carefully preserved her memories of a time that has long since past.

*(In a future issue, we'll tell you more about Maggie Hahn's experiences during World War II and later.)*


*-Lenny Granger*



**VISIT FOREIGN LANDS**  
**Travel to India & Nepal**  
 Nov. 13 7:00 pm. Slides, talk and Q & A with Carl Guam, retired U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

*At the Kensington Park Library. Please pre-register by calling 897-2211.*

Make room for pumpkin pie with the thirteenth annual  
**TURKEY CHASE--10K Race**



On Thanksgiving Morning  
 Thursday, November 23rd, 8 am  
 At the BCC-YMCA  
 Fundraiser for  
 Bethesda Youth Services  
 Call 530-3725

### Lighting the Town Tree

Come join your Kensington neighbors at the Kensington Community Center/Town Hall for the holiday tree lighting, cider and donuts, music, caroling, and maybe more. At press time, the date hadn't been set, but the Kensington Community Events Committee called to tell us it will be very early in December. Watch for the date, tell your neighbors, and plan to come!

### Up Next at Kensington Park Library

*Here is the preview of events in coming weeks at the KP Library.*

#### FOR THE CHILDREN:

Nov. 2 10:30 am Time for Twos. Stories, songs and finger plays about food.\*

2 yrs.

Nov. 8 7:00 pm Family Storytime. Native American stories and songs.\*

3 and up

Nov. 9 10:30 am Preschool Storytime. Repeat of Family Storytime, above.\*

3 and up

Nov. 16 10:30 am Preschool Films. "Curious George goes to the Hospital" etc.

All Ages

#### FOR MOMS AND DADS:

Nov. 8 7:00 pm Parenting Workshop. "Self-esteem and Children" with Eugene Ridberg PhD, child psychologist.\*

Nov. 20:00 pm Reading Success. Improve your child's reading habits. Tips from Elizabeth Hicks, Reading Specialist.\*

#### FOR BOOKWORMS:

Nov. 9 10:00 am Book Discussion. Topic: *No Ordinary Time* by Doris Kearns Goodwin.\*

\* Please preregister by calling 897-2211



Gary Ditto's Newsletter welcomes ideas and news items from community members. It is edited by Kensington Communications. Kendra Fanconi helped with this issue.