

I love our William Penn neighborhood

The Bethlehem Gadfly Neighborhoods, Northside 2027, Serious Issues December 26, 2018

*(the latest in a series of posts on Northside 2027 and on Neighborhoods)
(see Gadfly's "[Memories of William Penn](#)" — Oct. 27)*

Martha A Larkin is a lifelong learner, linguist, caffeine connoisseur, and country road commuter. She has found her teaching home in a rural community in the northwest corner of the LV that we call Tiger Country. She attended and graduated from Bethlehem schools (K-M.Ed.). Bethlum is where she resides.

To the Gadfly:

I love our neighborhood. I live in the home that I came home to as an infant. The only one of my six siblings born in Bethlehem. I went away for awhile but my roots are here. They're firmly planted in a neighborhood rich with things that I love: education, history, and trees. I'm not The Lorax; I don't speak for the trees. I'm the Larkin; I speak of several trees in this neighborhood that I've grown with.

There's a tree on the corner of Main and Fairview Streets at William Penn school that I helped to plant one year on Arbor Day. It always makes me smile. I enjoy pointing it out to friends. I often wonder who else helped to plant it and what year that was. It had to be between 1972 and 1977.

The foundation of my interest in education research began at William Penn. I was self-aware enough to realize that all the visitors to see our "pods" in one of the two open concept schools were observers and guests. We had peer:peer math and spelling. (I have a whole other story about my a self-diagnosed spelling disability as a result of "ita" and peer:peer spelling.) We were always fortunate to have student teachers from Moravian. I later learned about John Dewey lab schools, so my romanticized version of my elementary years puts William Penn in this category. My actual memories include a brightly decorated space with 70's color carpet and NO gum chewing. We had wonderful teachers;

many of the Gadfly's sons' teachers were mine too. There was also Mr. Gary Marsh. He's the teacher I miss the most.

As a result of walking past Jon Amos Comenius everyday, THE father of education, when it was time for me to become a teacher, my roots brought me back to the neighborhood. The day I made the decision to quit my job, go back to school, and change careers, I made that decision while volunteering at William Penn school. One of my best memories of attending William Penn was seeing the Moravian college student teachers around the neighborhood, because we all lived and walk around here. There are amazing old trees in front of Comenius Hall where we used to play and climb. My roots were becoming branches.

I do not know whether I'm an alum or product, but I've done all right at schools in the neighborhood from William Penn to Northeast and then Liberty. I can do a 3-mile loop that I like to call the "Old School" walk from my house. I then went on to Moravian and Lehigh. I'm happy being a teacher today; everyday I learn something.

Martha