

voted it down, primarily because of strong opposition from the Greenbrier Civic Association. As a result, the land lay vacant for a number of years. Their loss was our gain, because it was like having a forest preserve close to home. The nursery was divided into two sections: One section had large trees and bushes, along with paths you could wander. The other section was essentially an open field with tall grass.



Smear the Queer in action—Scott was *it*.

If you wanted to play a pick-up game of baseball, football, or "Smear the Queer" (so named simply because it rhymed), there were three parks with plenty of space. Smear the Queer used a football, and the object was to hold on to the football as long as possible while the other players tried to tackle you or take the ball. It was a challenging game. During the late 60s and early 70s, it wasn't unusual to get a group of kids together to play a pick-up game of football, soccer, Smear the Queer, or baseball, because there were so many kids in the neighborhood. The three parks in Greenbrier were Greenbrier Park, located on the northern edge of Greenbrier close to the school; Frontier Park, an open field on the eastern edge of Greenbrier, just south of Ladd Street; and Verde Park, a smaller park in the center of Greenbrier, at the intersection of Champlain Street and Verde Drive. Verde Park was the closest option for me, because it was located at the end of my street.

Going to the White Hen

On a June day in 1975, a time when kids rode their bikes freely around the neighborhood unescorted, my friend Doug and I headed to the White Hen Pantry. Located in a strip mall called Greenbrier Plaza, at the entrance into Greenbrier, it was an ideal destination for kids in the neighborhood because you didn't need to cross any busy streets to get there. It was our main source for candy, and they had a broad selection. If we didn't find what we wanted at White Hen, we went to Northgate Pharmacy in the same strip mall.

Today, I was on a mission. Over the last several years I had started to collect "Wacky Packs," and I heard that White Hen had them. Wacky Packs were trading cards, only each card was a sticker with product spoofs on it. For example, there

was "Skimpy Crummy Beanut Putter" instead of Skippy Peanut Butter and "Cap'n Crumb...tastes cruddy even in milk" instead of Cap'n Crunch cereal. The artwork on the cards was top-notch, which added to the appeal. To a seven- or eight-year-old, this was humor at its best. They were packaged just like baseball cards, and came with a stick of bubble gum. They sold out pretty quickly, so they were a hot item when they were in stock. Doug didn't collect Wacky Packs, but he loved Hostess Suzy Qs, so he was more than happy to accompany me to the White Hen. While I waited in my room for Doug to arrive, I looked over my Wacky Pack collection, which I kept in a shoebox.



**Me, in my Cap'n
Crumb Wacky Pack
T-shirt.**

Although Doug and I were close friends, we were different in many ways. Doug was clean-cut and neat. He always kept his room clean. His hair was always neatly cut and was pretty much the same year-round. He didn't watch too much TV and was even tempered. I was a little more free spirited. My clothes were always clean (when I left the house), but often less orderly than Doug's. My hair was almost never orderly, for two reasons: First, Grandpa Hinesley always cut my hair—from my first haircut until I went off to college. (For this reason, I tried to keep haircuts to a minimum.) Second, during the 1970s, just about everyone in the United States had bad hair, thereby making it easy for me to slip through the cracks.

Frisky began barking downstairs, so Doug must have arrived. He waited patiently for me out front.

"I'll be right there, I just need to grab my bike," I yelled, on my way to the garage. "Mom, Doug and I are going to White Hen!" I shouted, attempting to duck into the garage before any negative response came.

"Be back in time for dinner!" Mom hollered from downstairs.

I opened the garage door, and I saw my bike leaning against the far wall. It was a Schwinn Stingray, a hand-me-down from Scott after Steve and Scott received brand new Schwinn three-speeds. I was grateful to have it, and even though it was an older bike, was still pretty cool. It had green tires, which were great for making skid marks on the sidewalk.

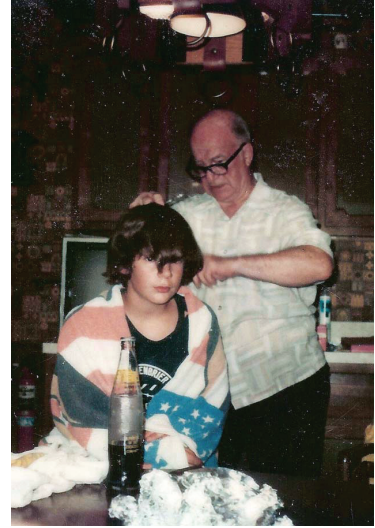
"How's it going?" Doug asked as I led my bike out of the garage.

"Pretty good. What do you think you'll get from White Hen?" I asked.

"I don't know—I wanna look around, see what they got."

"OK, let's go!"

I sped off down the driveway and into the street. Doug and I reached coasting speed as Champlain Street curved to the left. From there the street sloped downward, so you could see a good distance down the street. About two hundred yards down, I could make out a group of kids playing touch football. I knew a number of kids in that area—Tom Dobleske, Jim Kluka, Scott Dittmer, Mike Stuertz, and Rob Wall. It was most likely those guys, and maybe some older kids I knew around the neighborhood. As we got closer, Doug and I rode up onto the sidewalk, so as not to interrupt their game. Sure enough, it was Dobleske, Kluka, and the rest. We waved and shouted that we were headed to White Hen. As we came to the end of Champlain Street, we checked Alleghany Drive for cars, then crossed the street.



Grandpa Hinesley cutting my hair during the summer of 1975.

Across the street stood two buildings from the Greenbrier Apartments. We rode our bikes between the two buildings toward the back parking lot. A tall fence stood on the border of the Greenbrier Apartments parking lot and the rear of the Greenbrier Plaza strip mall. A large gap in the fence made a nice shortcut to get to White Hen. We walked our bikes through the gap and got back on to ride to the front of the building. The strip mall itself was shaped like a box, except for the White Hen portion of the building. White Hen jutted out from the rest of the building in a half-circle of tall glass windows. This was ideal for a kid biking to the store, because you could park your bike right outside the store and keep an eye on it while you were inside.

We parked our bikes and went inside. Like all convenience stores, the White Hen had a number of aisles for food and other goods—but we were focused only on the candy. The candy racks were connected along the service counter, which stood in the middle of the store like an island surrounded by a candy covered coastline. I scanned the White Hen's vast selection of candy for the Wacky Packs box. My eyes skimmed over the Paydays, Zero bars, Oh Henry! bars, Bounty bars, Almond Joy and Mounds bars, 100,000 dollar bars, and Chunky bars. It was never-ending. My eyes lingered on the long shape and red wrapper of the Marathon bar, which I loved—it was an eight-inch bar of braided, chocolate-covered, caramel goodness. However, I was on a mission, and couldn't let myself get distracted.

The chocolate bar offering changed often as manufacturers tested out different products, and it was tempting to see if there was anything new. There was also a large quantity of boxed candies, like Milk Duds, Sno-Caps, Good & Plenty, Lemonheads, Atomic Fireballs, Junior Mints, Dots, Goobers, and Raisinettes. I continued to scan the racks. Next to the boxed candies were the two-packs of cake products like Hostess Twinkies and Ho Hos. Beyond those were the Topps sports trading cards.

The Wacky Packs weren't with the sports trading cards either! My heart began to sink. I was just about to ask the man behind the counter if they had any when I noticed a box on the countertop that was slightly obscured from view by a jar of Dubble Bubble Gum. There, to my relief, was a half-full box of Wacky Packs! I bought four packs, and also a bag of Gold Rush bubble gum. Gold Rush was little nuggets of yellow gum that came in a cloth pouch tied with a string. The gum itself was barely a mouthful, but the nuggets tasted good and looked cool, and the pouch was a neat touch. I learned from an early age that it's all about the presentation.

Once I bought my Wacky Packs I started getting antsy, and wanted to leave the store as quickly as possible so I could check out my newly acquired cards. Doug was ready to go, so we cheerfully left White Hen with our loot and sped back to my house. As we biked up to my house, I noticed Grandpa Hinesley's brown Buick sitting in our driveway.

"Isn't that your Grandpa's car?" Doug asked.

"Yeah, they must be having dinner with us tonight."

It wasn't unusual for my grandparents to visit us on the weekends and play cards, so I wasn't surprised to see their car.

We parked our bikes on the sidewalk and sat down in my front yard. Doug started in on his Suzy Qs, while I tore open the Wacky Packs. There weren't many cards in a package, so if you got doubles you always felt gypped. Soon my mouth was packed with a good-sized wad of gum.

I was admiring some of the stickers I got when Doug asked, "You're playing in the softball championship tomorrow, aren't you?"

"Yeah, are you coming for hot dogs and ice cream after the game?" I mumbled, as best I could with a mouthful of gum.

"I don't know, I think we are." Doug answered.

Just then, Mom's voice rang out into the evening air, "Steve, Scott, Tom—dinner!"

"Well, I guess that means I have to go," I said, as I gathered up my Wacky Packs. I discarded my wad of gum in the empty wrapper. "Thanks for going to White Hen with me," I added, as Doug got on his bike.

"No problem. Good luck tomorrow!" he said, as he rode away.

I hadn't thought about the big game much until Doug mentioned it. It still seemed like a long time away. Steve was right behind me when I walked in the door—he had been at his friend Rob's house across the street when Mom called us.

"Go wash your hands," Mom bellowed as we entered the house.

As I washed my hands, Scott came bursting in covered in dirt, from playing catch with Dad. Scott, of course, was pumped up for championship game.

Greenbrier's Big Game

Saturday afternoon was the 1975 championship game for the Greenbrier Boys' Softball League. The league was organized in 1967 by the Greenbrier Civic Association. The first couple of seasons were only roughly organized. Greenbrier boys between the ages of six and twelve were eligible to play. In order to give the league parity, each team received an equal distribution of players from each age group.

The original teams wore hand-dyed T-shirts as uniforms, and brothers could play for different teams. Steve and Scott played for different teams in 1969, and Scott's team won first place. In following years, brothers played for the same team. Soon, all the teams had standardized T-shirts, with different team colors. The front of the shirt had the Greenbrier Boys' Softball icon printed on the front, along with the season's year in the center of the ball. Each team had its own sponsor, so a logo or sponsor name was printed on the back of the shirt.



In 1970, the local paper began publishing the results of the game. In the early years, the top three teams received a felt patch. From 1971 on, there were organized team photos, mostly in black and white. By 1975, teams received trophies for first place. There was even an organized all-star game, with trophies for the all-star players, as well. The end of the season brought a championship game between the "American League" and the "National League," along with the trophy ceremony, followed by a cookout and ice cream party.

The 1975 season was a special season. Unknown to anyone at the time, Greenbrier Boys' Softball had peaked. In the seasons that followed, interest and participation dwindled down. Although the end-of-season celebration continued for several years, its size diminished, along with the number of eligible players in the neighborhood. Soon only a few teams remained, and by the late 1980s, the league faded away.

1975 was Scott's last season of eligibility. He had become a powerhouse for hitting home runs, averaging four per game and gaining a reputation among the teams in the league. Not to detract from his glory, but hitting a home run was relatively easy, because there weren't any walls to stop a ball. If any ball got past an outfielder, it was a guaranteed home run, as long as you weren't slow running the bases. Dad coached the team with one of the other dads, Mr. Novesel. By 1975, Dad had been coaching for four years. He could really teach kids how to catch. The way to win was to reduce the number of errors to a minimum. Steve helped out as an assistant coach. It was my second season, and I was becoming a decent player. This year our team was the Blacks, and we were sponsored by Kunkel Realtors.

Our team had dominated that season, going 13 and 0 and ending the season as "American League" champs. After winning a game, we usually went to the local pizza joint—Barnaby's—for a victory celebration. Located in Greenbrier Plaza close to White Hen, Barnaby's was a sponsor for one of the softball teams. Despite trouncing the Barnaby's team that season, they still let us into the restaurant. We were grateful. In addition to the good food, we could watch the pizza being made in the kitchen.

As the big game approached, we practiced during the week. We had to be ready, knowing we were going to be without a couple of players who were on vacation, including our first baseman. There were ten players per side, which included the extra position of short center field. During practice, Dad sent me out into short center field. We had been working on catching all season, and Dad wanted to test my skills to make sure I was ready. He hit a long hard drive out to me, and I made a fantastic jumping catch. All in all, the practice went well. We were all looking forward to the game on Saturday.



Scott at bat during the 1975 Greenbrier softball season.