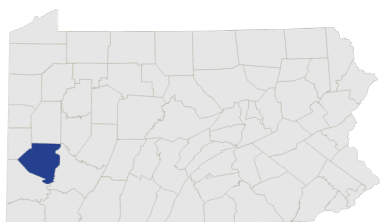


My Story



Childhood Memories

Sheraden Park

By Marianne Muraska, Park User

"Our mothers would cook their specialties at home and pack them in baskets. Dads would bring the horseshoe posts and shoes. The kids brought hula hoops, bikes, and bathing suits."

My experiences and memories with Sheraden Park are from the late '50s and '60s when I was a child growing up in Sheraden. My parents and their friends were believers of activities with family on Sundays. So each Sunday we would always go to church and in the summer time, instead of eating dinner at home, the friends would gather at Sheraden Park for a picnic. There was a core group of eight families who met every Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day-- without exception--at Sheraden Park with food, games, and beverages to celebrate our families. It all began at noon!

Our mothers would cook their specialties at home and pack them in their baskets. Dads would bring the horseshoe posts and shoes, the baseball gear, volleyball net, and the badminton net, and set them up for all to play. The kids brought hula hoops, bikes, and bathing suits. If it rained, they would nail up blankets and tarps



Keystone Fund Investment: \$250,000

Total Public/Private Investment: \$500,000

around the small shelter to protect the tables from getting wet for card games later in the evening.

There was no separation of activities by age group or sex. Our fathers taught us how to bat and field a baseball. We all played

volleyball and learned the strategies of serving, using three players to hit the ball, and how to spike a ball to our advantage. There were nature walks down the far end of the park to what our parents referred to as Bum's Tunnel; we had to be with adults to walk down there. After a hard afternoon of ball, we walked up to the old pool to cool off, and our parents taught us how to swim and not be afraid of the water. Dinner was next and everything was family style. It was not a case of "this is mine, not yours." Our families shared everything: snacks, main courses, sides, grilled foods, dessert, and beverages. After

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dinner, we would all move to the horseshoe pits and watch our fathers play, learning the game so we could play as we got older.

At nighttime, they would pull out the lanterns and set them around for the couples card games of 500 bid and pinochle. As kids we would watch and learn the games, knowing that one day we would know how to play and join them. Around 8:30 we would help pack the cars and return to the grove, where one of the dads took out his accordion and played old songs we all sang together. The final three songs were always the Lithuanian national anthem (all but one family was of Lithuanian descent), "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" (for the one Irish family), and the "Star Spangled Banner." Then we would all depart for home.

Our families gathered together every summer Sunday for about 15 years. Then it became less frequent as the kids were off to college and permits became mandatory for the shelter. We were able to get two weeks at Sheraden Park; we gathered at North Park all the other weekends. But there was always a picnic on Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day Sunday at Sheraden Park.

The original pool was up near the park entrance and there was a picnic table area that we sometimes used if there were other families at the lower-end shelter. The ball field is still where we played baseball every Sunday. The swings and slide were old but we brought waxed paper to make them more slippery for us to fly down. We landed in the dirt and had a lot of skinned knees and brush burns, but that never stopped us. Our moms always had a first aid kit filled with peroxide and bandages. It wasn't until years later that they built the pool

where it is today, along with the tennis and basketball courts.

These were great times for us when we were children, growing up with families who did everything together.

For several years the park was under construction, with no water access or bathroom facilities, so many people stopped using the park. It would be wonderful to see the park come to life again for families to use and explore.