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## Find your part in Wenatchee as a newcomer to the area

by Nancy Warner | Gathering Our Voice | [Aug. 29, 2014, 10:29 a.m.](#) | [Comment](#)



Photo provided

Longtime friends (from left to right) Mike McKee, his father Fahy McKee and Dan Jackson recalled memories of living on Wenatchee's western edge during a 2012 interview. Fahy died later that year.

If you're new to the area, you can get to know your Wenatchee neighborhood in several ways. You can, for example, walk and bike the roads and paths, study the irrigation system that carries water to your yard and garden, and read local histories such as the 2012 book "Wenatchee," recently published by the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center.

If you're lucky, you can talk with people who grew up in your neighborhood — people who remember what Wenatchee was like in earlier days and who can share stories of some of the times that have shaped this place.

I was fortunate to have such an opportunity in 2012 when I talked with 94-year old Fahy McKee, his son Mike and their longtime friend Dan Jackson about the neighborhood between Western Avenue and the foothills. It's the area I've lived in since 2000.

Fahy grew up in a cement block house many of us admire on Springwater, part of his family's 10-acre orchard that has since

largely been replaced by housing. Mike has many happy memories of the times he spent with his grandparents there and with neighbors, including Dan Jackson, who attended the same church as the McKee family. Excerpts of the interview transcribed by AmeriCorps volunteer Maria Davis follow.

People knew their neighbors when Fahy was a young man and shared many of the same values, hopes and experiences. While his parents came to Wenatchee from Oklahoma in 1907 and 1910, many of their fellow members at the Church of Christ came to the Wenatchee Valley from Arkansas, notably Izard County. Fahy remembered a time in the 1950s, for example, when preacher Franklin T. Puckett from Izard County spoke to “a crowd of over 500 people,” at the church on Okanogan Street. “About three fourths of that crowd was from Izard County,” he remembered, noting that Puckett had “either baptized them or taught them in school.”

Besides sharing common roots, members of the Church of Christ shared musical traditions that helped hold their community together, particularly a capella singing, harmonizing without the use of musical instruments.

“Everybody learns to sing harmony,” Dan said of the church, with each person finding their part as a soprano, alto, tenor or bass. “We’d start singing, and everyone would come along with you,” he said, “and it really sounded good” especially when several churches would pool their members for a special Sunday afternoon sing.

People also came together for potlucks and dinners, strengthening their social networks along the way. “We would eat with somebody or have somebody in our house, nearly every Sunday,” Fahy remembered. Prominent on the menu each week was chicken, one of the many foods Fahy’s family and others in the neighborhood raised along with pigs, rabbits and big vegetable gardens irrigated by waters delivered via the Highline Canal.

Fahy recalled that music, around his mother’s piano, complemented many a meal.

While the Wenatchee Valley was dominated by small farms, it wasn’t always possible to make enough income to support a family with fruit sales, particularly while paying off the land or going through tough times. “During the Depression,” Fahy remembered, “the apples didn’t pay enough” so his father “bought a dozen cows and we bottled our own raw milk. I was 14 and we’d load the milk truck and my kid brother and I would deliver the milk on the way to school.”

I can see, after hearing some of the stories, that there was no shortage of work for young people in the earlier years of my neighborhood — from irrigating and weeding the orchard to picking fruit and mastering the art of making fruit boxes to pack the crop. “My kid brother and I we were racing to see who could make the most boxes in an hour,” Fahy remembered. “We were making 60 boxes an hour,” he said, “when I was 16 years old.”

It was also relatively easy to find work when you needed it, even in the later years when Mike McKee spent time at his grandparents’ home on Springwater. “People knew each other or they knew somebody else and it was just a word-of-mouth thing,” he said. It was a neighborhood where people could find their part, and together, sound really good.

*To read the transcript of this interview, visit [gatheringour voice.org](http://gatheringourvoice.org). To listen to excerpts of this and other interviews and learn more about the history of the Wenatchee Valley, see the Listening Post Network for the Apple Capital Recreation Loop Trail at <http://bycell.co/bkyl>. Contact the IRIS office at [irisncw@gmail.com](mailto:irisncw@gmail.com) or call 509-888-7374 to learn how you can help gather the story of our region.*

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