

## **It Was Neighborly Most of the Time But...**

by Kern Hagg

(#4 of Series)

I would guess the time to be about 1958. The vacant lot on the southeast end of Woodford had been sold, and a very nice ranch home was built there. Coincidentally, the boys in our neighborhood had been in the habit of playing baseball in the Windsor Parkway. From time to time, a ball hit to right field would roll across West Windsor and up onto the new lawn at the new home at the end of Woodford. An elderly couple had built the home, and the husband took great exception to young boys retrieving baseballs from his lawn or from under the bushes planted along the front of his new house. In those days, most of us played Little League baseball, so we were quite proud of our batting prowess. Although none of us were left-handed, once in a while, that ball would find its way onto this corner property.

After four or five incidents, the elderly gentleman came out of his house to bark at us. We were forbidden to step foot on his property ever more. We were not necessarily able to control the direction of flight of the baseballs we hit when our adversary began running out the front door of his house to pick up the ball and run it back into his house – never to be seen again. This happened four or five times. (We always had a spare baseball.) And the old man was getting tired of the annoying kids playing baseball across the street.

One day in the summertime, we discovered a landscape service planting three to four-inch diameter Maple trees on home plate, the pitcher's mound, (It was really a depression and not a mound.) and onto second base. These were good-sized trees, and they were staked-up with rope to hold them steady as they took root. That was the end of our playing baseball for a few weeks.

At the end of May, I had a birthday, and on this occasion, my parents gave me a two-man canvass tent they had bought from Sears. Dad helped me to set up the tent in the backyard, and he allowed one or two of my friends to sleep over on Army cots and sleeping bags he also bought for my birthday. Therefore, it was not difficult for us to plan a counter-espionage sleepover with two or three of my friends. With flashlights and saws in hand, we walked the length of Woodford at about 2:00 a.m. We cut the ropes which were steadyng the trees, and then we cut the trees as close to the ground as possible with hand saws. On our way back to Derbyshire, we dragged these three trees and left them in a row on the old man's front lawn. The baseball games resumed just a few days later. During that summer and the one following, we had numerous sleepovers. On most occasions, we ran around the neighborhood in the middle of the night with flashlights. But we did not practice vandalism. We had acted on that one occasion to defend our baseball diamond. The trees were never replanted, and we tried harder than ever to play the right fielders deeper, and we made every effort to keep our line drives off the old man's yard.