



Longevity in North Avondale: 3923 Leyman

## Description

Get ready to meet longest resident, or at least that I know of to date – **Wilhelmina Branson at 3923 Leyman Drive.**



Byron and Wilhelmina and their three children moved to North Avondale in **June 1964**. They came

from a log house and 18 acres in Amelia. But Amelia could not pass their school bond levies and children were going half days to school. As their daughter was in first grade, they knew they needed a better school. They had friends and fellow Quakers, Jack and Judy Brown, who lived at 3923 Leyman Drive who were moving back to Washington state and offered to sell them their house for the same price that they had paid for it – \$20,000! So, in they moved!

At that time, 3923 Leyman had a sewing room and a maid's room, plus a bedroom and a master bedroom, so they had plenty of room for their three children. The property has lots of land and a back yard where the children had a swing and they could even play croquet and badminton. They were "grateful for a big backyard" and that they could walk to school.

Wilhelmina recalls, "the school was the center of this community when we moved here". All three children went to North Avondale School and then Walnut Hills. The family loved the Pupil Enrichment Program at North Avondale School and how the very involved parents brought extra classes to the children. *(Author's note: when I moved to North Avondale in 1985, we were told that the CPS schools were terrible and we would definitely have to consider private schools. What happened in the 20 years? Was this change real? Did it have to do with changing North Avondale School from a neighborhood school to a magnet school? What do people think of the schools today? I LOVE hearing that people came to North Avondale for the schools, but I don't know that we hear that today.)*

In addition, Wilhelmina recalls that neighbors "invited all the new people in for supper" and "they felt so welcome". North Avondale "was a very exciting place to be". They joined the Clinton Hills Swim Club and immediately worked with other members to integrate the pool. Wilhelmina likes to swim and is still a member of the Swim Club!

Wilhelmina says other than one child (daughter, Hannah Branson moved back to North Avondale in 2007, to raise her two girls at 754 Red Bud Avenue), her other children have found it hard to find a community like North Avondale. Different races do not play together; they do not become each other's best friends. The Branson family, in the late 1960's in North Avondale thought integration was the wave of the future, but it just did not happen everywhere. She says, people "remain separated from each other". She says people "just have to get acquainted. Talk to each other. You don't have to read a book about it". We "learn by knowing each other, by listening to each other's stories".

Byron was a scientist studying radioactive fall-out from bomb testing in the western United States at Taft Sanitary Engineering Center and later became involved in nuclear medicine at University of Cincinnati. Wilhelmina was a Registered Nurse and worked in public/community health until she was fired two years ago from Central Community Health Board when all the RNs were replaced by LPNs. Even after that, she volunteered and administered vaccines at the health department. The Bransons were also part of a community that brought the Quakers to Winding Way. Beyond this, they had great neighbors; doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, president of the NAACP, and even the creator of the Mr. Magoo cartoon character.

Wilhelmina says North Avondale is a good place to raise children and grandchildren. It is a "real community". Her husband, Byron, if alive, likely would have chosen a retirement facility for them, but Wilhelmina is here to stay!

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