

Don't just ride — Ride to remember

(Submitted by Harbor Hospice)

Ride to Remember for Harbor Hospice on May 24, 2014. This family-friendly 15-mile bike ride to benefit Harbor Hospice is sponsored by the Fruitport Lions Club and Fruitport Chiropractic Center. The ride starts at 11 a.m. from Fruitport High School, 357 N. Sixth Avenue, and concludes at Pomona Park just in time to get a Lions Club Ox Roast lunch. Check-in begins at 10:30 a.m. The registration fee is \$15 for adults; \$5 for children under the age of 16. Registration includes a free Lions Club lunch at the conclusion of the ride.

Lots of door prizes make this event even more fun. After the Ride to Remember, why not spend the afternoon enjoying some of the Fruitport Old Fashioned Days events, many of which are free. Make it a fun-filled day for the whole family!

Lime green t-shirts can be purchased with advance registration. Advance registration is appreciated for the ride; however, you can still register on the day of the event. Forms are available at Harbor Hospice and the Fruitport Chiropractic Center. Both have downloadable forms on their websites. For more information, please call Linda at Harbor Hospice at (231) 728-3442 or Julie at Fruitport Chiropractic at (231) 865-6545.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the Leila and Cyrus Poppen House Residence, a program of Harbor Hospice located in Fruitport Township on nine wooded acres near the Lakes Mall. This home-like residence with 14 private patient rooms, serves people who are terminally ill when home care is no longer the best answer. •

Old friends and new friends

by Mike Simcik

If anyone thought kids hanging out at a bowling alley, shooting hoops, playing sandlot baseball and shooting pool or golfing with friends was a waste of time, then I am guilty as charged. I don't know how we found time to go to school. I probably wasn't brilliant, but I had some great old friends.

When I was in grade school, Mom and Dad took my bicycle away, grounding me because my grades were dropping. Again, in high school, they took my motorcycle away for the same reason. After I graduated, they took my car keys either for being late to work or too late coming home at night. If I have to explain why, you're not following the story.

At a twenty-lane bowling alley, ten 12-year-old kids set pins and we were paid for it, plus quarter tips tossed down the alleys. The owner let us bowl for free while the food service was cleaning up and closing down.

Sand-lot baseball wasn't only on the weekends. We didn't just have teams back then for the "Big Game." It was more the north side gang versus the south side gang, and God help the pitcher who hit a batter with the ball. We shot hoops in my driveway for hours on end, and the sewer cover in the street was half court.

Most of my friends were really tough guys, but they respected their parents, defended close friends, were very honest, and protected for their neighbors.

Our local roller skating rink had two pool tables. That's where many of us were introduced to a new world of getting into trouble. One of the best educations I ever had was driving fifty miles, twice a week, to a place called the "Crystal Bowl," where I got hooked on playing pool in a league with the big boys. It was there we learned the game fast, or get our fingers broken.

Anyone would think we were a bunch of no good bums, just playing our lives away like grasshoppers, and they would be wrong. All but one of my friends went into the military, and he became a teacher. After military service, two of my buddies were firefighters, five were police officers, one a police chief. Two of the best friends a guy ever had became home town heroes, both decorated posthumously with their names on bronze plaques on our town's memorial.

Funny, I must have paid penance for missing so many days of public school. I attended four schools while I was in the Navy, another when I got out of service, and three more years of night classes at our community college in the late 1970s.

Now in my early 70s, I am retired and still go to school to learn with other seniors. Some of us meet as often as we can to discuss literary works that we write to test our abilities, hoping to please readers as well. I'm still not brilliant, but I have some great new friends.

It's a joy for me to spend time with 30 guys my age, playing golf in a spring-summer league. After we embarrass ourselves playing nine holes, we meet for lunch at a local restaurant and poke fun at each other's golfing blunders. Every time I see these men, I think that all of them could have been my friends in my old school days. Most of them wear Korean or Vietnam war memorial caps, and one of them wears a WWII cap. He is in his 90s and still plays golf better than I do.

Sometimes I go to the Senior Center to shoot pool with a fine group of guys I met. It's strange how memories can come back to life, by playing eight ball, talking about good times, "old friends and new friends." •

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