

One day, way back when I was employed as a kiddie wrangler at Lampson Street School – a doughnut Thursday to be exact – I was preparing for the rigours of another morning recess on tether-ball patrol. As teachers and lowly staff like myself milled around the goodies table, chatting and subtly jostling into the best position for nabbing a coveted maple cream before dashing out the door, I mentioned how I thought the street name "Norma Court" sounded like the heroine of a Harlequin Romance story. One of the teachers said, quite pointedly, she didn't think they wrote romance stories about trailer trash.

I learned a few things that day. One was it is impossible to look dignified while sucking maple icing off the front of a walkie-talkie. The other was to watch what I said around teachers who commuted to Esquimalt from Gordon Head. It wouldn't have done much good to point out that I actually knew a few people who lived on Norma Court and not one of them would be considered trailer trash in my books. Not even the one with a pick-up in the drive-way and 3 big dogs wrastling in her backyard. Mind you, I'm from Alberta where we take the measure of a man by the diameter of the tires on his high-clearance, boony-basher-special 4X4.

It's been a few years now since I've gone sprinting up the hill on a regular basis to don the day-glo vest and walkie talkie uniform of an elementary school yard guard. And I don't miss riding herd on packs of 8 years old too much – saving them from their inner-lemming urge to run across the top of the still rain slicked giant rock formation at the back of the school yard. "Because you're too young for a hockey player smile, dear." Or going through that terrible slow-motion run towards the jungle gym as one cute little muffin squealing down the slide intersects with another cute little muffin standing at the foot of said slide exploring the contents of her left nostril.

Of course there are lots of good memories from those days.

Like the time I overheard a 10 year old Romeo calling his buddies over to check out the babes walking by fence. Of course I took the young man aside, quietly talked to him about respect and acceptable ways of referring to young women, and, most importantly, in future to make sure, when making such a reference, the mother of one of those 'babes' wasn't supervising the playground only a few feet away from him.

I may not be walking up that hill daily but I still know a few folk who live on Norma Court and at least one of them will own up to knowing me.

Quite recently this quiet little cul-de-sac became world famous all over the greater Victoria region when the majority of residents took action against a threat to their peaceful part of the planet. The most remarkable part of this story is how they carefully put together a community effort and brought about a peaceful solution to the problem without resorting to pitchforks, torches, tar and/or feathers.

In all honesty, given the same situation, I can't say I would have showed anywhere near the cunning or patience these folk used to resolve the situation. But knowing how strong the neighbourhood spirit is on that wee street, it isn't surprising. It's the kind of place where the kids wander about playing outside, migrating from yard to yard and a few adults can usually be found gathering at one driveway or another just to talk about the day's frustrations. It's the sort of place that just isn't found very often these days; at least not in a relatively cosmopolitan area.

This is the address of one young woman who decided the best way to remember her aunt was by helping with the fund raising efforts of the local Hospice. Along with her family, the neighborhood rallied around her efforts and "Team Norma Court" came into existence. The Swim-a-thon has never been the same once these guys, under the

dignified supervision of their lawn penguin mascots, dove into the pool.

This is the same young lady that organized the annual Afternoon of Music, also to raise funds for Hospice. And the same neighborhood that pitched in, doing whatever needed being done to help make the event a success.

I guess it isn't very surprising that once the words "crack house" and Esquimalt were joined in a single sentence, the on-location trucks and big city newspaper reporters would discover Norma Court. Not surprising considering uniformed police executing a search warrant makes a much more interesting (and believable) picture than an Esquimalt teenager mobilizing her friends, family and neighbourhood for a fundraising drive.

I keep hoping, however, that one of these days Esquimalt will become world famous in Victoria for places like Norma Court and the teenagers roaming those streets, dangerous punks like Dayle putting together an afternoon of music year after year; high school gangs of musicians playing everything from international music competitions to the sunrise Easter Service at Saxe Point; a community with the highest enrolment in those infamous colour identified gangs of Sparks, Brownies, Guides and Pathfinders anywhere on the south island.

Yeah, no-one would believe it anyway. Best stick with finding names for a fictional characters living in a trailer park.