

The New Friend
A Tribute to Jim Lewy
By Jeff Morgan



We were two boys kicking around a soccer ball on the school athletic field across the street from my house. A new kid came down the hill from the direction of where Chatham Street and Lum Avenue intersect. Evidently, he had crawled under the fence that surrounded the field. We kept an eye on him even as we kicked the ball around. When he got about 10 feet from us he asked if he could join us. Our first response was “No!” We were tight, didn’t know who he was, and weren’t interested in making a new friend without learning more about him. Without saying another word, he moved between us and picked up the ball. Bruce/Bob (*Bruce Chesterman/Bob Gilray*) moved quickly and tried to grab the ball away from him. The two began a tussle over the ball that turned into a full-out wrestling match. I knew that Bruce/Bob was strong, scrappy, and didn’t give up. But this new guy was taller, seemed athletic, and obviously could take care of himself. Both guys wrestled around with neither one getting the advantage until they were tired and backed away. He had gained our respect. When everyone had calmed down, he told us he had moved from Maine into the house on Chatham Street next to Saint Patrick’s parking lot. The house that the Stickle family had moved from to a house on Fairmount Avenue. The three of us kicked the ball around for a while until we got bored, then went over in the corner of the field by the hill where we could smoke a cigarette unnoticed by anyone unless they were on the field. Since I was the only one with a pack of cigarettes, I lit up and we took turns puffing on it, occasionally spitting out a piece of tobacco. On the way home, the new guy went up his drive and in the front door of his house as I continued down the street.

Over the next several years we became good friends and had many adventures. In fact, some of the local police referred to the three of us as the Three Musketeers.

We slept out in the backyard in the summer and walked around town after midnight until shortly before dawn; skinny-dipped in the Colony Pool; got burgers and cokes at

The New Friend
A Tribute to Jim Lewy
By Jeff Morgan

John's (The Mast) where we could smoke; climbed up on the roof of the Washington Ave Elementary School; hitchhiked down to Bond's to try and drink three milkshakes (no bathroom breaks) in order to get our names on the wall and a free fourth milkshake; blew up tin cans with cherry bombs; hiked up the hill to hang out at the Fairmount Cemetery; walked the railroad tracks; hung on to the back of a snowplow and slid along snow covered Washington Ave. from Dave Radcliffe's house all the way to Watchung Ave; rode around in his parents station wagon with other guys and girls; played pickup games of softball in the borough and out in Green Village; hung out at the Jersey shore with Jay Ahrens; surfed a little; got in trouble with the Lavallette police trying to buy a case of beer when we were still underaged, which ruined a planned weekend at Dave Radcliffe's house—sans parents—on West Point Island; moved a VW Beetle on Halloween night from the street onto the front yard down by Pat Troyer's house; gathered around Mary Lippincott's front door talking with her about John; "studied" at the library on weeknights; stayed one step ahead of the law—most of the time—having fun without doing anything actually arrestable; bowled and swam at the Madison YMCA; staged a fight in the high school hall that drew a big crowd until we picked up our books and walked away as if nothing had happened; played round-robin ping pong at Steve McCarthy's; ran from the "Crazy Russian" (who was German) by Dave Trench's house, resulting in my dislocated elbow; walked from Bruce/Bob's house through the woods onto the Cemetery grounds to hang out and smoke cigarettes; rode sleds down Fairview Rd. and the cemetery hill; drank Whisky Sours at his house during Christmas break where Bruce/Bob and I got a ride home from a frozen stream courtesy of the Chatham Ambulance Crew (thanks guys for saving our lives).

I watched him on the track and field team as a pole vaulter, and the football team as an offensive lineman; and we walked down to some event at the high school the time I wore a muumuu dress, large straw hat dressed as a girl (which won me a coconut

The New Friend
A Tribute to Jim Lewy
By Jeff Morgan

presented by Steve Dungan) for which I don't remember why. That must have been 10th grade.

The last time I saw him was 1968 when I was home on leave from Army basic training before flying out to California for training at the Army language school in Monterey. I picked him up around 6pm and we drove my dad's 1964 Pontiac down the Garden State Parkway to Seaside Heights. It was the beginning of May. At some point there were flashing lights behind us and I pulled the car over to the side of the road. A New Jersey State Trooper clocked us at 80 miles per hour. I think the speed limit was 70 at that time. When I pulled out my driver's license, I made sure the Trooper saw my army military ID card. The trooper asked me where I was going so fast. Told him we were headed to Seaside to see what was happening before I shipped out to my next assignment the following day. I suppose the crew cut and army fatigue jacket gave me away. The Trooper let me go with a warning and even wished me good luck. We made it to the Seaside boardwalk; talked to a couple of girls; walked around smelling the ocean air and listening to the waves breaking on the shore; got a sandwich and a beer; and were back home by midnight. I pulled into his driveway to drop him off. Before he got out of the car, we shook hands—something we had never done before—and he wished me good luck.

That was the last time I saw or spoke to Jim Lewy. I hope he had a good life.