



The following was written by a resident of Snow School Apartments, an affordable housing community that is owned and operated by Avesta Housing in Fryeburg, Maine. The apartment building was built on the site of the Charles A. Snow School, an elementary school that was closed in 2017, and the author was a student there for grades 4-6.

Charles A. Snow was part of my life from 1964-67 and was a good school that gave me a fine education. I did not begin school there but rather at the Sadie F. Adams school in North Fryeburg. I attended grades K-3 there, and after that, it was decided to bus children on the southern end of West Fryeburg to the “village” school, as we called it. I began at Snow School in grade 4 with Mrs. Pipe being my teacher, and she couldn’t have been nicer! Grade 5 was Mrs. Palmer, who was equally as nice, followed by grade 6 and Rev. Derby, who was a most empathetic teacher (plus he lived on “the other side of the river,” which made it feel like he was one of us).

There was a bit of friction between the town students and the West Fryeburg/North Fryeburg students, because the other side of the river was made up of predominantly farming and logging families. At Sadie F. Adams school, we were two grades in one room, so when I got here, the fourth grade was kind of like a refresher class, which put my fellow West Fryeburg classmates and myself in a position of being a bit more advanced academically than our peers – it did not gain us any favors, to be sure!

In grade 4, we used to walk over to the yellow junior high building, which was also on site here; it housed grades 7 and 8. There were four classrooms, and the “big kids” got to change classrooms for the different periods. Our fourth-grade teacher was able to teach French, so depending on the day of the class, the seventh and eighth graders would walk over to our classroom and we’d go to theirs to have a science class. We felt pretty special and couldn’t wait for the day we could be big kids!

During my sixth-grade year at Snow School, my parents decided it would be cheaper to close our big farmhouse in West Fryeburg down for the winter and rent an apartment in the village. The apartment my parents rented was on Portland Street over a grocery store, which now meant my brother and I were “walkers”! We did not ride the bus from October to April that year. As if that was not enough, at the end of the year it was announced that the junior high building would no longer house the junior high! All the junior high-age students in Fryeburg were going to be sent to the Sadie F. Adams school in North Fryeburg. It was bittersweet for me, because I was REALLY going home to my side of the river plus going back to my old school and reconnecting with my friends from North Fryeburg and Stow – BUT, I was NOT getting to be a junior high student in the much-coveted “yellow junior high building” (the big kids’ building!)

It wasn’t all bad here. Friends were made, and some continued to be friends for the remainder of their lives. We’ve lost a few over the years. One in particular, Lisa, may you rest in peace for being so accepting of a farm girl trying to fit in among a world that was so unfamiliar! Marbles were played, won, and lost out here in the back where the cars now park in the small lot. Where the hedge separating the house on Pine Street now stands, there used to be a dodgeball “court” (just a bit of a sunken area so the ball would stay in and not roll onto the driveway). Out in the back field to the left, there was a playground with swings, monkey bars, a jungle gym, and an infamous slide where I one day witnessed from my fifth-grade classroom a sixth-grader fall from the top of it! You should have seen how fast Mrs. Palmer left the room to get out there! The sixth-grader was OK, but she had the wind knocked out of her. (Probably not a fan of slides any longer.)

In the front left corner of the backfield was a small tool shed for the janitor to keep his equipment in. We were told to not play too close to the building, but we used to sit in the shade during hot days at recess. The far-left corner of that field was all very sandy with little shrubby-type foliage. At the far-right back corner was our kickball field. (Lots of memories of embarrassing myself in that arena! If I managed to kick the ball, it was a miracle surpassed only by my success of reaching the base!! “Grace” is my middle name, and always has been. That’s all I’ll say on that.)

I'll never forget how my best friend and I used to be able to bring a note from our moms to give to the teacher for us to have permission to walk up the street at lunch time so we could go to the five-and-dime store (Kenerson's) on Portland Street. Age 9, grade 4, walking to the store by ourselves to get penny candy at lunch time after we ate! Can't tell this old girl that those weren't the good ol' days!

Fast-forward, and life happens. The years fly by, and souls come and go. I married and lived for 33 years in Mexico, Maine, where my late husband was from (Rumford, actually), and we had two sons. Six years after the oldest son was born, my husband passed away, leaving me to raise our children by myself. He also left me with two apartment buildings, and I got to be a landlord myself for 33 years.

My sons grew up, went to college, and moved on to their lives' paths. I made the decision to sell my apartment buildings and come home to Fryeburg. In Mexico, it was a hard sell, and not a very lucrative one either. I was forced to rent as real estate exploded. I was not able to afford even the smallest of homes, and apartments weren't looking much better. I found a temporary rental, but the owner decided to sell the house. My brother and I were renting the house together, and we were forced to look for something else. This was post-pandemic, and even together on our fixed incomes, we were displaced! I went homeless at 68 years old!!

I found a room to rent from someone I barely knew. Four months later, I moved into a camp on Sebago Lake with my college roommate friend of 44 years. It was cold, but I was with my dog Noah and my dear friend, and we were in contact every week with Avesta Housing about a home at Snow School Apartments. My brother found a room in a home in New Hampshire, but also lived for almost a month in his car! He's 66! I began inquiring about a place here from the moment a sign went up on this site in April 2023. I called weekly for updates and was put on the "interested list," which thankfully did come to fruition!!

I am SO VERY thankful that I was able to find a home here in my hometown of Fryeburg and that my brother was able to as well so that we can check on one another daily. When I moved in here, there were only a few residents, but over time it has filled up. What has struck me as so moving is how 27 strangers came together under one roof and that we're all different but yet all so very much alike! Our stories are unique to us, but we've become like a big family helping one another. It may sound corny, but being here, I feel daily like I can knock on a door and that a new friend will be there if I need one.

This is a beautiful building in a great location, and I honestly love my apartment! I'm able to have Noah, and we're not alone anymore. Here I am, back on Portland and Pine Street again! My next chapter: Home.

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About Avesta Housing

Avesta Housing is a nonprofit affordable housing provider with more than 50 years of experience as a leader in affordable housing development and property management in Maine and New Hampshire. The organization is headquartered in Portland, Maine, and operates 100 affordable properties, more than 3,000 apartments and two assisted living facilities, providing safe, affordable homes for more than 4,000 people every day. An additional 1,100 new homes are in the development pipeline. Avesta has been named a Best Place to Work in Maine in 2024. Avesta's mission is to improve lives and strengthen communities by promoting and providing quality affordable homes for people in need.

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