

How Did “Angel Park” Get Its Name?

(This is a true story of how it actually happened.)

At the foot of Alter Road, where it becomes Riverside Boulevard, is a large park that is run by the City of Detroit Department of Parks & Recreation. The name of this park is Alfred Brush Ford Park. Back in the day, the west and north edges of the park were lined with boat docks and a boat yard. The portion of the park that borders the Detroit River was for recreation.

During the day, this tree filled park was full of young children playing on the swings and having picnics with their families. All along the waterfront, both on the canal side and the Detroit River, you could find fishermen trying to catch the biggest fish while sharing stories of the “big one that got away” yesterday.

Now if you grew up in the area, you are well aware that after dark the activities of the park changed from families to lovers who seldom left the coziness of the cars that were parked along the edge of road with front bumpers against the chain that outlined the park.

One hot night during the early summer of 1953, the three children of a family that lived on the corner of Philip and Avondale along with some other neighborhood kids took a ride in dad’s car down Alter Road to the Alfred Brush Ford Park. The three siblings were a fourteen-year-old boy who was the driver, an eleven-year-old girl, and their younger brother who was eight-years-old and usually the brunt of any joke that could be played on him. Let’s call these siblings “Gary”, “Jackie”, and “Dennis”. All of these children attended Catholic schools. Jackie and Dennis attended St. Martins on the Lake located at the other end of the neighborhood on Drexel and Avondale.

As the car approached the end of the road in the park that memorable night, Gary turned into a parking space to turn around. As the car pulled in, the headlights shined on a 5 by 8 inch sign mounted on the chain hung between steel poles. The sign read, “Angle Parking.” Dennis, being eight years old, was in the early stages of learning to read. And being a good Catholic young man, he always listened to what the good IHM sisters taught about God and His legions of Angels.

As Gary was backing the car out of the parking space to complete the turn-around, Dennis asked the fateful question, “Why do they call this ‘Angel Park’?” A huge roar of laughter rang out and the other kids in the car, all older, began making fun of Dennis since those in the parked cars were being anything but Angels. I think they were “watching the submarine races.” This story made it around the neighborhood in record time and the name of Alfred Brush Ford Park was changed forever!



[Alfred Brush Ford Park versus Ford Brush Park](#)
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