

FRANK NIEMEIR / Staff

Allan Thames looks out on land off Enon Road in College Park where he played as a boy. His book describes his and his companions' escapades in the summer of 1968, when the now-built-up area was rural and wooded.

Book depicts boys' blissful summer

By **LESSIE SCURRY**
For the Journal-Constitution

In his book "The Boys of Enon Road," Allan Thames of Douglasville chronicles the fictional shenanigans of six cousins as they entertain themselves during the summer of 1968 along what was then an isolated country road in College Park.

Thames, a catalog manager and former minister, said the characters are an amalgamation of cousins and their families, written about in such a way that a reader cannot assign names with certainty. The nostalgic book, Thames' first, is about a character based on himself when he was 12 and girls didn't matter.

The pages tell of the countless times he and his cousins played army in the woods and baseball in the front

yard. Baseball rules mandated that some players would play multiple positions, and if anyone hit the ball across Enon Road, it was an automatic home run.

Bikes provided transportation from one play area to the next and when they went hunting for squirrels and fishing for the legendary "Moby Bass," which had evaded other fishermen for generations.

The cousins looked forward to the games and refreshments at Vacation Bible School at Union Christian Church, shooting skeet in the woods and shopping for stiff new blue jeans at Greenbriar Mall just before back-to-school time in the fall. Thames never will forget the time his younger brother and cousin ran into their

► Please see **BOOK, J4**

Book: Author chronicles happy boyhood times

► Continued from J1

house in a panic for jugs of water to try to douse a fire that had started mysteriously in the field.

"We ended up breaking up pine tops and beating it out," he said. "To this day they haven't admitted to how that fire started."

"The Boys on Enon Road" is set in the Clifftondale community between Campbellton Road and Stonewall Tell Road, where Thames' grandfather purchased 125 acres in the late 1800s. Thames' parents, Hayward and Vera, still live in his boyhood home, only now the backyard looks out on the development of the newest phase of Wolf Creek subdivision, where new homes are priced about \$300,000.

"Grandpa never had an idea it would look like this," Thames said.

Other subdivisions are in various stages nearby as well, replacing the wooded acres that once hosted camp-outs, adventure treks, Christmas tree searches and pet burials.

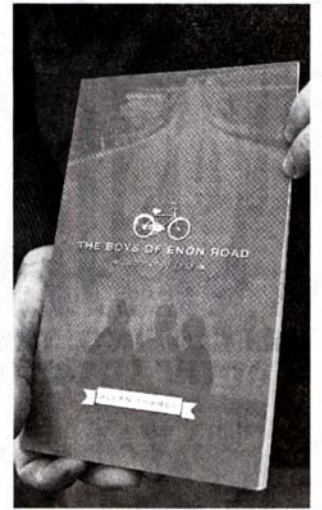
The lake where "Moby Bass" evaded so many boys with fishing hooks and big dreams now has a "no fishing" sign posted beside it and is surrounded by tennis courts and expensive homes.

There's heavy traffic now on Enon Road, and airplanes fly in and out of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport around the clock. Once they were heard only in the morning and evening, Thames said.

The area has changed, too. Enon Baptist Church, with a predominantly African-American membership, recently put up a new building. Thames said "white flight" left Union Christian Church on nearby Union Road with few members. Crime is an issue now, including burglaries and the unsolved 10-year-old murder of a former church member, in an area where residents never used to lock their doors.

Where are the cousins today?

"They're in the wind," Thames said. "They've split. Some are in Florida, some are in Tennessee and Georgia."



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► "The Boys of Enon Road" (\$12.99, Tate Publishing) is available at amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, target.com, walmart.com and tatepublishing.com.

► Proceeds will go to Woodland Christian Camp in Temple, where Thames and his wife have been counselors each summer for more than 25 years.

► For more information, call 1-888-361-9473 or e-mail rita@tatepublishing.com.

Thames, who has begun planning his second book, about the murder of Chief William McIntosh of the Creek Indians, said he wrote "The Boys of Enon Road" because he would love for life to be as simple as it was when he and his cousins played there.

"I have desperately wanted to be back on Enon Road, my own town of Mayberry like the TV show," he read from his book. "One day I realized that many people wanted to find a town like Mayberry, or a place like Enon Road, but maybe Mayberry and Enon Road aren't places as much as they are moments in time, moments before the sin and evil in the world overwhelm us.

"They are moments in time when we live simpler, easier, less stressed lives. They are moments of innocence and tranquility."