

The Sal Yuppa Story

by Artie Maglionico

85 year old Sal Yuppa, lifelong resident of the borough of Lodi, remembers a time when doors went unlocked, and automobiles were scarce and made their way over dirt roads and open fields.

“I grew up on Avenue A with my brothers, Carmine and Frank, Jr.,” recalls Sal. “My parents, Frank and Lena, made sure that there was always food on the table and clothes on our back.”

Sal, a 1955 graduate of Lodi High School, remembers hanging out at Charles Luncheonette with his pals Duke Scimeca, George Ciliberto, and Frank Muscarella. “I enjoyed high school,” said Sal. “Didn’t learn too much but we had a lot of fun.”

Among the street games that Sal enjoyed as a child were Kick the Can, Basketball, and stick ball. “It was mostly bikes,” said Sal. “We were always painting our bikes a different color. Everything was second hand. We used to take them apart and put them back together since new bikes were too expensive.”

Sal also recalls going to the National Oval (now the Inspection Station) to watch people fly model airplanes. “As kids we used to go to Pete’s Deli on Avenue C to buy potatoes,” recalls Sal. “5lbs of spuds for 25 cents. We chipped in a nickel each and roasted them on the curb in front of my house. We only used salt since butter was too expensive.”

Back in Sal’s day, the area around what is now the MV Inspection Station was all woods and streams. Sal and his friends spent the after-school hours hunting there for squirrels and rabbits. “My Mom used to clean them and cook them in sauce,” recalls Sal. “We also used to catch

catfish in the Saddle River by the black bridge on Outwater Lane. During the warm weather, we'd swim in that same river. Behind Panama's, there was a beach where people could rent a rowboat and spend the day picnicking with the family. There was also Tucci's pool where we'd swim if we had the money."

On Avenue A, Sal's uncle, Charles Lascari, kept a horse named Georgie, which he showed at community gatherings and parades. Sal remembers riding around town in the horse-driven cart driven by his uncle. "After the war we'd clean out the stable," recalls Sal. "He'd pay us with WWII candy bars."

On Avenue E and Main Street stood a popular haunt for area residents named Al's Bowlo Drum, which later became Phil's Auto Parts, owned and operated by the Mobilio family. Sal and his friends worked there as pinsetters for \$3.00 a night, which was quite a tidy sum for that day and age, especially for a youngster. "Gasoline was 19.9 cents a gallon," recalls Sal. "We'd chip in 25 cents each for gas and drive around all night long."

According to Sal Yuppa, everyone got along famously during his childhood. "Neighborhoods were safe," said Sal. "People looked out for one another and spent many a hot and sultry summer night on one another's front porch since there were no air conditioners."

As kids, during those hot summer months, Sal and his friends used to walk the railroad tracks into Hackensack toward Cogers Farm on Route 17. "For a nickel, you drank all the apple cider you wanted," said Sal. "It was worth the trip." Sal Yuppa retired as a Driver for Yellow Freight in 1997 after a 25 year hitch.

This was one life in Lodi with many heartwarming memories.