

Artful Thinking - April, 2018

I'm going to start this column off by saying hello to a charter member of the Artful thinking fan club - Lodi's own Marie Trocola. She says that she enjoys my poetry and asked if I could write something about the beginning of spring time. Well Marie you're in luck because I just happen to have one available for you reading pleasure. It's titled springtime and it was taken from my most likely never to be published book of children's poetry called The Poetry of Westervelt Place.

Springtime

By Artie Maglionico

Springtime is here

And we say hello

To the warm sun above

And the flowers below.

Laughter is ours

As we greet the new day.

Life is so bright

In the fields where we play.

The robins are singing

As they fly with the breeze

The fresh scent of blossoms

Makes some of us sneeze.

Let winter be far

And summer be near.

The earth is so happy

Now that springtime is here.

Library Director Karyn Gost suggested that I include a poem a month for each of my columns, and you know something folks, that's not a bad idea. After all, my poems and stories have been collecting dust in the dark recesses of my bedroom closet where only spiders and broken dreams exist. Why not let

them see the light of day along with the myriad rejection slips that have been buried along with them? Okay Karyn you talked me into it. A poem a month it shall be.

As you know by now every so often I like to wander off the beaten path and tell you about life beyond the hills of Lodi. This is one of those occasions and the topic of the day is Music. I told you about that marvelous twin sister musical duo from Austria who are based out of Liverpool England - The Mona Lisa Twins.

I might also have mentioned another musical duo from around here who call themselves Two for the Road. For those of you who don't remember, allow me to refresh your memory. Their names are Artie Maglionico and the king of karaoke Jack Sepede. You can catch their act at the Lodi Senior center on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Admission is free but it will cost you \$ 2.50 to leave. Anyway folks, I wanted to tell you about this amazing saxophone player that I heard perform recently and who happens to be living right here in Lodi by the name of Lonnie Youngblood.

Lonnie was born in Augusta, Georgia on August 3, 1941. He has been on the entertainment circuit for 65 years and has played alongside some of the biggest names in the music industry. He played with the king of soul James Brown at Yankee stadium and Madison Square Garden. Lonnie jammed with rock legends Chuck Berry and Jimi Hendricks. "Jimi had a touch that made him unique" recalls Lonnie. "He had a style that was all his own. It was unmistakable." During his career, which is still boiling, Lonnie became close friends with the "peppermint twister" himself Joey Dee of Joey Dee and the Starlites fame. Lonnie met Joey Dee while performing at the Peppermint Lounge in NYC. Some of you kids from the hill during the early sixties might remember Joey Dee sitting on his front steps with his band members at his house on Westervelt Place. Yes folks, he rented the house near the corner of Contant Avenue and Westervelt Place. As usual, if you don't believe me then ask my cousin Anthony.

Now here's something interesting folks. Lonnie actually played at Lodi's own Choo Choo cCub. Do any of you remember seeing him there?

Lonnie Youngblood often took his act on the road, and aside from performing throughout the USA, the Saxophone player extraordinaire made extended visits to Italy, Germany and Japan where he was met with much love and appreciation. "While in Italy we did two shows a day." Recalls Lonnie "My wife May, who was a dancer, traveled with us. We did 31 cities in 17 days."

Lonnie is still a very active performer and at 77 years old he's not even remotely considering retirement. "I'm not looking at the end of the road." he says "rather what's around the corner and the next opportunity." You can catch Lonnie's performance at the Stony Hill in Hackensack, Bareli's Supper Club, and a NYC night spot called Parnell's on the east side. Also at the Village Grill in Waldwick and the Italian Bistro 202 in Lincoln Park. Lonnie can also be seen at private birthday parties, corporate parties, and funerals. I know something about playing at funerals since those who have heard me perform tell me that I should bury my act.

Lonnie's childhood inspirations include saxophonist Louis Jordan, Billy Holiday and trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Today Lonnie, a Lodi resident, travels with a band of his own called The Blood Brothers Band featuring key board player Melvin Davis, drummer Craig Stewart and guitarist Kelton Cooper.

Lonnie's wife May, who he married on September 18, 1965, handles the business end of the gigs and is technical assistant and DJ on the senior citizen circuit.

"I got my own horn in 1949." says Lonnie. "My dad finally broke down and bought one for me for \$128.00. My sister Georgia Mae introduced me to a guy by the name of Willy Brown who taught me how to begin. I have been playing ever since."

You didn't know that we had a celebrity living right here in good old Lodi USA, aside from me and Jack Sepede of Two For the road fame, of course. We recently entered a singing contest. A few days ago one of the judges called me with the results. He told me that he had good news and bad news. The good news was that we came in second. The bad news was that we were the only entrants.

Well that's it for now folks. I'll meet you here next time with what Karyn Gost called "The Poem of the month."

You can catch Lonnie Youngblood at the Village Grill in Waldrick on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Be sure to visit our local history page on the Lodi Memorial Library's website at <http://lodi.bccls.org/lodi-history.html> for more Artie's stories.