

For Immediate Release
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FIRST: A well-known Port Chester baker is murdered as he steps out the door of his house in the early 1920's. Suspects are caught the next day. Then they are released.

Today the murder of J.J. Cassone remains one of Westchester County's oldest cold cases. (Check it out in archives of Port Chester Daily Item: WASHINGTON PARK BAKER MURDERED was the headline on July 16, 1923.)

THEN: In 1960 a 10 year-old boy learns the story of his grandfather's death from an aged Cassone family friend. Keeps the family's secret for years.

AND: As a young rock 'n' roller in the early 1970's, he makes a name for himself as the Cakeman as he brings cakes from his grandfather's bakery to the stars at his doorstep...Port Chester's legendary Capitol Theater.

NOW: Today, Putnam resident Chris "The Cakeman" Cassone, once a successful recording engineer who worked with icons such as Peter Frampton, Dr. John, Mercer Ellington and KISS' Ace Frehley; who, while singing with The Earls performed at Madison Square Garden and the Nassau Coliseum, and was recording engineer for Chazz Palminteri's "A Bronx Tale," is bringing his story to Armonk's Whippoorwill Hall for several performances of his musical memoir "The Cakeman Chronicles" on Friday, Sept. 12 and Saturday, Sept. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the theater at the North Castle Library on Whippoorwill Rd in downtown Armonk..

A multimedia experience, "The Cakeman Chronicles" has Cassone performing along with a top-notch rhythm section (Howard Stern's band,) with musicians on a large video screen and with is poignant storytelling that connects the dots through four generations.

THE CAKEMAN STORY

For Immediate Release

Contact: Chris Cassone

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“THE CAKEMAN CHRONICLES” PREMIERES AT WHIPPOORWILL HALL

In the early 1970's, Chris Cassone, the grandson of bakery founder J. J. Cassone, regularly finagled his way through the stage door of Port Chester's legendary Capitol Theatre by delivering sheet cakes to some of the biggest names in rock star history: Janis Joplin*, Grateful Dead, Climax Blues Band, Rod Stewart, Ginger Baker and Bonnie Raitt to name a few.

*Cassone delivered a cake to Janis Joplin at the Capitol Theater on August 8, 1970. That was her last New York appearance. She died on Oct. 4, 1970 after overdosing on heroin.

Cassone, who became known at the Capitol as “The Cakeman,” was a musician himself. He played in a band while attending Fordham University and, after graduating from audio school, became chief engineer in Chip Taylor's North Lake Sound studio in White Plains.

A Hartsdale resident, Taylor, who wrote *Wild Thing* and *Angel in the Morning*, is the stage name of James Wesley Voight, younger brother to Academy Award winning actor **Jon Voight**.

Cassone's days at North Lake are among his brightest and darkest in the world of rock music.

“I started to work for everybody. I brought in my good friend, Ace Frehley. I knew him in the Bronx before he was in Kiss. I was the Golden Boy,” Cassone said.

But after a while - after Cassone became addicted to cocaine and Jack Daniels – his Golden Boy status began to slip.

“I had a drug and alcohol problem for years but I didn't really know it,” Cassone said.

But, as Cassone recalled, no one gets fired from a studio unless “you do something really bad.” And while he never did anything awful, Cassone found he was working less.

“I started to get fewer jobs,” he said. “And then I didn't get asked back.”

But that was not the end of Cassone's run in the music world.

“I met The Earls and I started to play with them,” Cassone said. “Madison Square Garden. The Nassau Coliseum. Carnegie Hall. Radio City Music Hall.”

Cassone said it was at this time that he first met a young film-maker who was a friend of The Earls. Cassone helped Chazz Palminteri with the soundtracks for some of his student films.

His connection with Palminteri would prove to be an important one. In 1993 it was Palminteri who sought out Cassone when he needed a recording engineer to record the soundtrack for his movie, *A Bronx Tale*.

Eventually Cassone left The Earls and his addictions behind. Clean and sober for ten years now, the Patterson resident started his own business, Treasure Hunt Adventures, which promotes corporate teambuilding.

“I took the Scandinavian sport of orienteering, my pastime outside of the studio, and brought it into the conference center,” Cassone said.

Still, like Palminteri, Cassone had his own story to tell. But several things had to occur before Cassone would feel the not-to-be-denied urge to create his multimedia production of *The Cakeman Chronicles*.

The first step was getting back on stage which Cassone did at Carmel’s Arts on the Lake Open Mike Nights. There he found an appreciative audience and a houseful of talented musicians and artists.

“I saw Chris Casaburi’s little film and I started to think about all the possibilities of multimedia and singing,” Cassone said. “It was perfect.”

The next step occurred when Cassone watched Palminteri perform *A Bronx Tale* on Broadway last fall.

“That’s what crystallized it for me,” Cassone said. “I had had this story of my grandfather percolating around. I knew it had to be told.”

Cassone’s story begins with J. J., the Italian immigrant who started the bakery dynasty in Port Chester in 1910. And without giving away the plot of *The Cakeman Chronicles*, the story reveals how J. J. died in 1923 and the impact that shocking event had on the entire Cassone family for decades.

To say that Cassone is excited about his *Chronicles* would be an understatement.

“This is always what I wanted to do. I want to take this to a off Broadway this winter and Hollywood next spring,” he said.

The Cakeman Chronicles will premiere at 7:30 p.m. on Fri., Sept. 12 and Sat., Sept. 13 at Whippoorwill Hall at North Castle Library, Whippoorwill Road, Armonk, NY. Adm: \$15. For reservations call: (845)225.2539 or email: rsvp@cakeroo.com. www.cakeroo.com
www.myspace.com/chrisccassone

Kent show blends rock, man's family history

Grandfather's legacy provides inspiration for Patterson resident

Michael Risinit
The Journal News

The old man wore a fedora. A pocket watch on a chain looped across his worn, three-piece suit. Burlap sack in hand, the man plucked dandelion greens from the lawn in front of the home on Westchester Avenue in Port Chester.

To the young Chris Cassone,



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what the man said — in broken English and bits of Italian — was as confusing as his foraging for salad fixings.

"He said 'boom, boom' to me," Cassone, 57, said, mimicking the man on that early 1960s day by forming a pistol with his hand. "He told me he was really proud of my grandfather."

Please see SHOW, 8A



Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News

Chris Cassone sings a song he wrote called "Cake for the Band" at his Patterson home on Tuesday. He will perform a multimedia production today at Arts on the Lake in Kent.

Kent show mixes rock, man's family history

SHOW, from 1A

Another 10 years or so passed before Cassone, whose grandfather, J.J., founded the family bakery on South Regent Street, figured everything out.

Almost a lifetime later, the Patterson resident has folded all the elements together — from his grandfather's murder and its fallout to his own play for meeting well-known rock 'n' roll musicians passing through Port Chester — into a story for the stage that makes its premiere tonight in Kent.

It wasn't until Theresa, his grandmother and J.J.'s widow, died in 1972 that Cassone understood what the man known as Froggy had meant a decade earlier. Standing in St. Mary's Cemetery above Ridge Street, he looked at his grandfather's headstone and the date he died.

"That was the trigger for me. I left the (post-funeral) party and went right to the library," he said.

There, he found the Port Chester Daily Item from July 16, 1923, and his answer.

"WASHINGTON PARK BAKER MURDERED!!!" the paper's front page blared.

Carrying two boxes of yeast and his keys to the bakery, J.J. Cassone, 43, was gunned down before dawn that summer Monday, five years after World War I. Theresa Cassone found her husband on the path leading from the family's backyard along West Street to the bakery, bleeding from shotgun slugs fired at close range.

"It wasn't an edict — 'Don't talk about this' — but nobody ever talked about it," explained Cassone, a musician himself with ties to Hollywood and the music industry.

Police deemed the motive to be "money, financial competition and business enmity," according to the next day's paper. During the war, J.J. Cassone had leased his building to another operation and gone into the wholesale flour business. In 1921, he took his tenants to court to regain his bakery. Police interrogated a New Rochelle bake-shop proprietor, the proprietor's brother and two employees. But with no eyewitness identification and little evidence, the suspects were released.

By the next week, the case fell out of the news. Theresa Cassone ran the bakery and raised her seven children. Some of her sons went into the family business, though Peter Cassone, Chris' father, became a doctor. Froggy remembered that, too, as he picked dandelions, asking young Chris if he was the doctor's son.

A few blocks south of where the

If you go

"The Cakeman Chronicles" starts at 7:30 tonight at Arts on the Lake, 640 Route 52, Kent. Tickets are \$10, \$9 for members. For reservations or more information, call 845-228-2685 or visit www.artsonthelake.org.

pair stood on that early 1960s day was the family's bakery. Just down Westchester Avenue was the Capitol Theater, a vaudeville-turned-movie theater that would soon, for a brief time, become a rock 'n' roll palace.

Cassone graduated from Port Chester High School in 1968. About two years later, Pink Floyd, Joe Cocker, Van Morrison and other acts hit the Capitol's stage. For a man with a guitar who played in area bands, it was nirvana.

Ticketless and rebuffed at the door of the Cocker concert, Cassone conceived a plan rooted in his family's business. Flour, sugar, butter and eggs ended up being his ticket to meeting Janis Joplin, Traffic, Santana, Derek and the Dominos and others.

"I said, 'I've got a great idea,'" Cassone recalled. "Cake for the band. The door would open and I'd go up the stairs. Cake for the band, the door at the top of the stairs would open and I'd go right in."

Bonnie Raitt, whose debut album came out in 1971, partook of Cassone's confection — a white sheet cake decorated with flowers and pink writing that said "Welcome Bonnie Raitt." Kathy Kane, Raitt's manager, said this week that the musician recalled "it being a lovely and delicious gesture."

A photograph shows Peter Haycock, lead guitarist, and the rest of the Climax Blues Band surrounding a cake decorated with Santa Claus and several poinsettias, with Cassone in the middle of the shot. In an e-mail this week, Haycock said he was surprised when Cassone showed up with the dessert.

"I admit I can't remember the ingredients exactly. But when I saw the picture I had a good feeling in my saliva and belly, so it must have been really delicious!" he wrote.

Cassone's cake runs lasted about two years, about as long as the Capitol hosted the rock concerts. On show nights, he climbed into his white, 1966 Volkswagen Bug, picked up a cake at the bakery, "right up the street from Korvettes" (the discount department store in the Route 1 shopping center), and headed to the theater near the train



Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News

Chris Cassone of Patterson has brought together elements from his grandfather's murder and its fallout to his own play for meeting well-known rock 'n' roll musicians passing through Port Chester, and crafted a story for the stage, which makes its premiere tonight in Kent.



Cassone family photo

A photo of Chris Cassone's grandfather J.J., who started the baking business in Port Chester.

station. The only door that didn't open was the one behind which was the Grateful Dead. "They took the cake, though. They were hip to security by then," Cassone said.

He became a sound engineer at North Lake Sound Studio in White Plains, working on albums for Kiss' Ace Frehley and remixing some lost Duke Ellington tapes. In the early 1990s, he was the music recording engineer for Chazz Palminteri's movie "A Bronx Tale." A bout with alcohol and drugs, though, pushed away other opportunities. He describes himself now as "nine years sober."

Palminteri's recent Broadway version of "A Bronx Tale" prodded Cassone, a father of three and a grandfather of one, to wrap together his grandfather's murder and a bit of his own experiences. "It was an aha moment for me, seeing him tell his story," Cassone said.

Cassone's production is "a little play with music." At Arts on the Lake in Kent tonight, he will be accompanied by Mike Latini, Jim Nowak and "Fuzzy" Joe Gerardi.

"If I don't get in, I'll surely go mad. Maybe, maybe, they might let me in with my cake for the band," he sang one morning as he played

Join the discussion



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his guitar.

John Arrucci of Kent, musical programming director at the center, has a small role in Cassone's production. The show, he said, carries the classic themes of love, loss and family loyalties.

"It can't but touch everyone who hears it," said Arrucci, a percussionist and composer.

Bobby Cassone, 63, a cousin and limousine driver, said no one talked about the murder. "It really wasn't mentioned that much," he said. "But music was Chris' first love. I'm quite proud of him."

For Chris Cassone, his play isn't so much about J.J. Cassone's death as it is about his principles and how they affected the family.

"This play is not about the murder of my grandfather. It's about his actions, how he was courageous in how he had to face his killers," Cassone said. "It's reverberated through my family to me."

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Several Glimpses of “The Cakeman Chronicles”

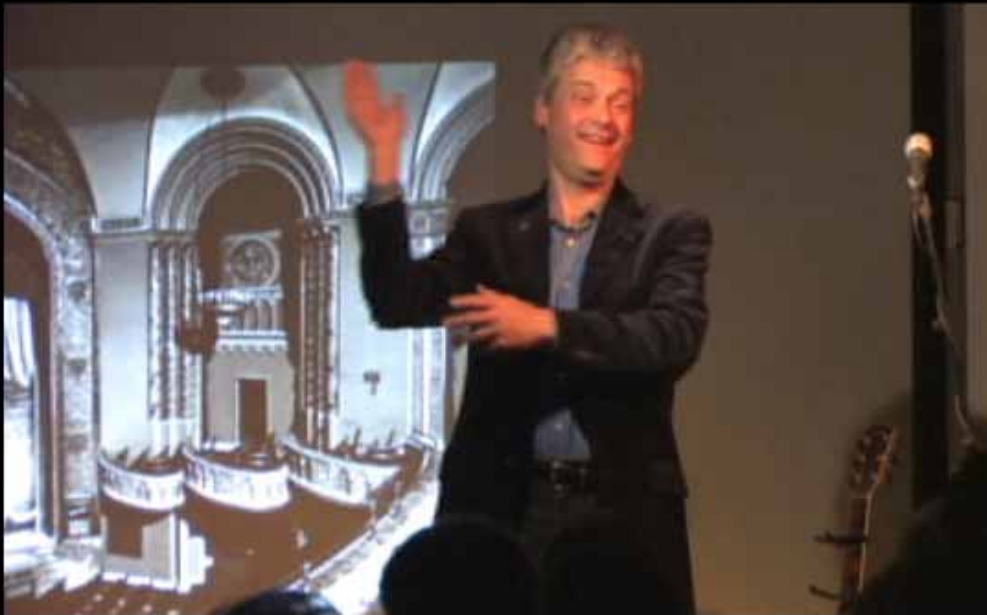


Singing with the Earls





"The Little Cupcake"



The Capitol Theater – "A Cake for the Band"

A BRONX TALE

MUSIC SESSIONS



Left: Butch Barbella, music director; Nik Skeadas, manager; Ron Gendlin, director; Chris Cassone, engineer