

**THE
VAGABONDS
A MUSICIAN'S ODYSSEY**

Thomas Gambino



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A Musician's Odyssey
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For my beautiful Lorry and our incredibly loving family

*“Life is a wave, which in no two consecutive moments of its
existence is composed of the same particles.”*

–John Tyndall (1830-1893)

The author thanks his family members, friends and colleagues who have contributed vignettes, support and insights for this book, and he extends a special thanks to Dr. Arthur Frank and Mrs. Roberta Frank for their enormous contribution in guiding this book.

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1904 to 10/11/53

I AM AN Italian-American. I am a proud descendent of the Romans, and before them, the Etruscans, the Greeks and the Phoenicians. My ancestors planted the seeds of Western Civilization.

I will always be grateful that the American People allowed my families to become part of the United States, the greatest nation the world has ever seen. I will also be ever grateful that my families had the courage to chart new lives as Americans. I am proud to be an American citizen.

Pietro and Emilia Berluti, my maternal great-grandparents, lived in Sinyallia-Ancona, Italy, on the Adriatic Sea, south of San Marino. They had two children: Umberto and Maria (Mary). Umberto was my grandfather Robert, born on August 16, 1900.

According to research done by Borge S. Croce in Italy, references to the name Berluti dated back to the 15th century in the town of Fermo, where those bearing that surname held public office. From Fermo, the family branched out into Ascoli Piceno, San Severino, Macerata, into central Italy and in some localities of Latium. Mr. Croce said, "Noteworthy are Giovanni Berluti, famous jurisconsult of the 16th century; Andrea, who fought for the country with the rank of captain; Pietro, doctor and philosopher of great renown and Vincenzo, professor of Canon Law and very famous orator."

Other research showed that the House of Berluti had a coat of arms, which consisted of seven vertical stripes, alternating in red and silver.

On the other hand, 33-year-old Pietro and Emilia Berluti, 26, were poverty-stricken farmers by all accounts. I often wondered what they must have felt when they gathered their children and all of their belongings, left Ancona and traveled to Genoa, Italy, where they left for the 17-day voyage to America on the ship Citta Di Napoli on September 27, 1904.

According to Ellis Island records, the Citta Di Napoli (City of Naples) was built by Harlan & Wolff Limited in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1871. She weighed 3,984 gross tons. She was 420

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(bp) feet long and 40 feet wide. Four tall sail masts, fully rigged, dominated the deck, where one very small smokestack sat in the middle. The ship had a compound engine and a single screw. Her service speed was 15 knots. She carried 1,166 passengers. Of that number, 166 people sailed in 1st class. My great-grandparents were among the 1,000 in third class steerage.

The Citta Di Napoli was built for White Star and Dominion Lines and was originally named Republic. She conducted a regular Liverpool to New York service. In 1889, the ship was sold to Holland-America Lines, flew the Dutch flag, and was renamed Maasdam. She provided Rotterdam to New York service, until she was sold to La Veloce Line in 1902, re-named Citta Di Napoli and began sailing a regular route from Italy to New York. The ship was used as accommodations for earthquake victims at Messina in 1908-09. She was scrapped in Italy in 1910.

About the time the Berlutis began their voyage to America in 1904, Harlan & Wolff began transforming their Belfast shipyards in preparation for their most ambitious and historic venture: the construction of the Titanic.

New York's Ellis Island was opened on December 31, 1890 as the Central Receiving Station for all immigrants entering the United States on the East Coast. Those who left Ellis Island entered New York City, a boot camp for America, if you will, where the newly arrived could take that last breath of trepidation and, with all the others from every other point around the globe, disperse to every part of the country.

None of these immigrants had ever seen anything like New York before, but New York sure did. It handled this wave of immigrants and shifts in the origin of its population as easily as it had always done from the very first day the Dutch arrived on its shores.

The four Berlutis arrived at Ellis Island on October 14, 1904. They were part of the more than four million Italians that entered the United States between 1880 and 1920. It must have been a heady experience for them.

Pietro and Emilia didn't know anyone in America, nor could they speak English. Pietro had \$100 in his pocket. They traveled up and down the East Coast of the U.S. and looked for any kind of work they could find. They were poor, but resourceful and eked out a decent living. If they heard that work was available in Boston, they rode the train to Boston. They picked cotton in the South. Their daughter Evelyn was born in a house built on stilts on an onion farm in Ohio. The house was elevated because the farmland under it flooded frequently. The Berlutis eventually settled in South Plainfield, New Jersey, because in that small town they met someone they knew from Italy.

(At this point, and at various other points throughout this book, I need to give some historical background to events that will happen later. Much of that history will be familiar to you, but I need to reiterate it anyway, and at the same time, provide a new slant and context with information that may be new to you. I have tried to be respectful of your time and keep these mini-historical treatises to a minimum. I promise that their usefulness will become apparent.)

The world was changing by quantum leaps when the Berlutis arrived in America. Photographs, once viewed one at a time, were now becoming movies, or 24 photos per second speeding across a screen.

The first leg of the New York City subway system opened on October 27, 1904, barely two weeks after the Berlutis' arrival on Ellis Island. A ride from City Hall in Lower Manhattan to Harlem cost five cents and stayed at that price for years, even as the system expanded. The various stops on that original stretch of track inspired the George M. Cohan tune, "Give My Regards to Broadway," written that same year. Simply recite or sing the lyrics to the song and you'll hear the history.

Transportation by ship, train and car continued to close the time distances between cities and continents, which could now function 24 hours a day, thanks to Edison and the electrification programs that continued to light the world.

The Model T Ford, one of the first mass produced cars, was introduced by Henry Ford on October 1, 1907. By 1925, Model T Ford Runabouts were rolling off assembly lines that worked overtime to fill the demand. The Ford boasted four cylinders and got 25 miles to the gallon. Gas stations popped up all over the country. Price wars between them became common. More car manufacturers came into being, and every state in the United States embarked on big road-building programs.

Alexander Graham Bell's telephone showed great promise, while Marconi's radio could further the communications revolution.

Thomas Edison favored the cylinder for recording music, and he demonstrated his system when he recorded his famous rendition of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on it. After Edison's archrival, the Victor Talking Machine Company, based in Camden, New Jersey, invented the Victrola phonograph in 1901, John Phillip Sousa and Enrico Caruso became that company's first musical recording stars. And Edison's cylinder fell by the wayside.

The Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, and the United States became embroiled in the First World War.

As the world began to move faster and faster, so did the music. And jazz soon followed. On February 26, 1917, the first jazz group, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band led by Nick LaRocca, recorded in the Victor studios in New York City and became an instant hit. Jimmy Durante, a young Brooklynite musician, led the Original New Orleans Jazz Band and began a career as an actor, musician and comedian that lasted for decades.

If the Italians had an early grip on the music recording business, then they were merely setting the stage for others.

Jazz, both the music and the word itself, took America by storm. Jazz bands and jazz dancing became the national rage, much to the consternation of many religious and political conservatives. Phonograph records of the music found their way to Europe, and jazz became the rage there, particularly in France, where "Hot Clubs" fostered by such critics as Hughes

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Panassie sprang up all over that country.

The recording groups themselves soon found their way to Europe, which also learned more about jazz from the American soldiers and musicians stationed there during the First World War. The black marching bands, among the most famous being those led by James Reese Europe, played their Ragtime-influenced music all over the continent.

Trumpeter Louis Armstrong was part of the great migration from New Orleans, the Southeast and Europe to Chicago, New York and the rest of the North and West. That migration was not without its racial and social upheavals.

Perceived in his youth as a troublemaker, Armstrong had taken up trumpet after being sent to the Colored Waif's Home in New Orleans. Born in the Battlefield section of that city, Louis was befriended by a Jewish couple who became his patrons of sorts.

"Satchelmouth," or Satchmo," as he was nicknamed, played trumpet in New Orleans with Joe "King" Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. When he moved from New Orleans to Chicago, Oliver invited Armstrong to join him at the club called Lincoln Gardens, located under the El. Armstrong arrived there on August 8, 1922 and soon became the talk of the town, especially among the white musicians who flooded the city to hear black musicians play.

Among them was early trumpet virtuoso Bix Beiderbecke, born in Davenport, Iowa in 1903. Beiderbecke's star would not last long, though. He died young from alcoholism.

Louis Armstrong made his first recording, "Chime's Blues," at the Gennett Record studio in Richmond, Indiana, a KKK bastion, on April 5, 1923.

Armstrong and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet, who had a reputation as a brawler, were among the first to go to France. Armstrong fled there to escape from his manager, Tommy Rockwell, who was connected to mob boss Dutch Schultz.

Whether it was because of the money, or the respect they received as artists, or because of an opportunity to escape gangsters, racism and poverty, these early great black musicians easily became stars and played to packed houses wherever they went in Europe.

More than anyone else, Sidney Bechet made the saxophone famous, especially the straight soprano sax. When he arrived in Paris in 1925, he met a young singer and dancer named Josephine Baker, who was performing at "La Revue Negre."

A black woman with Native American blood, Josephine Baker was born Freda McDonald in St. Louis on June 3, 1906. She had appeared on Broadway and at the Cotton Club in New York, then moved to Paris and soon established herself as a star. With her pet monkey and leopard, she and her entourage paraded around Paris.

Josephine Baker teamed up with Pepino Abotino, a Sicilian who fancied himself a count. Posing as her husband, Abotino became Baker's manager. He arranged for singing and ballet lessons for her. She learned French, developed a phonograph recording career, appeared in a few early French movies and put together a new act.

Wearing a short skirt with a belt of hanging bananas, Baker's Banana Dance, performed

topless on a stage decorated with jungle scenery at the Follies Bergere, made her the toast of Paris and Europe.

During the “Roaring Twenties,” New York’s Harlem also became a hotbed of cultural and institutional development in all of the arts. During that same time, the curved saxophones we know today became a standard fixture in jazz orchestras and concert bands alike. Composers began writing all sorts of compositions for the instrument, and sometimes for specific individuals who excelled in some aspect of the instrument. And saxophonists themselves began to compose for themselves and others.

Among those attracted to Harlem was Edward “Duke” Ellington, who brought his band (and his doting mother) there from Washington in 1923. Called “Duke” because of his suave demeanor and stylish clothes, Ellington had studied classical piano as a child, while acquiring a deep affection for Ragtime music. One could hear the merger of those two styles in his early compositions, especially Ragtime’s unique rhythms and the Romantic and Impressionist sense of harmony and color (using imaginative instrumental combinations to create hybrid sounds). In the fall of 1923, Duke Ellington and his Washingtonians, a six-piece group, began a gig at the Hollywood Inn, a cellar club in Times Square.

Society bandleader Paul Whiteman and his Ambassadors performed George Gershwin’s jazz-influenced composition “Rhapsody in Blue” at the Aolean Hall in New York on February 12, 1924. Whiteman and Gershwin were trying to uplift jazz (as if it needed it) by putting on performances in concert settings and making it more palatable to rich and middle class white people.

Meanwhile, at Roseland, a dance hall then located on Broadway and 51st St. in Manhattan, black bandleader and composer Fletcher Henderson, Whiteman’s friend, hired Louis Armstrong in September, 1924. On that gig, Armstrong began to influence musicians of every stripe, including Duke Ellington, who heard him there.

Armstrong started “scat singing,” a nonsense-syllable vocalization of his horn’s sound. He also started calling musicians “cats.”

Also attracted to Harlem rent parties and jam sessions were a growing number of white musicians. And black and white musicians alike headed for the all-night “cutting sessions,” where pianists like Willie “The Lion” Smith challenged their colleagues, contemporaries and young Turks out to make a reputation for themselves.

Near the end of the First World War in 1918, when son Robert was 18, Pietro and Emilia Berluti opened the Lehigh Inn, a restaurant near the train station in South Plainfield. They prospered, because people could get off the train and get a great Italian meal. Italian food was a novelty to many people in the area, and it was a taste of home for the Italians. The restaurant had a pool table and slot machines.

Pietro and Emilia’s daughter Mary Berluti married Stanley Phillips, the brother of the police chief in South Plainfield. Phillips was the Americanized version of their Polish name.

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And Pietro and Emilia changed their name to Berlute.

The Volstead Act (Prohibition), conservative America's grand stab at social engineering, became the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States in 1920 and created more of a market for the alcohol it banned than had existed before. And it created an underworld set of characters who did more to pervert the rule of law than any other national threat.

After Robert Berlute married my grandmother Carmela Morano, born on July 3, 1902 in Jersey City, they moved to Trenton, New Jersey and bought property there. My mother, Dora Berlute, was born to them on College St. on July 8, 1920. Robert and Carmela's son Peter (Pietro Giovanni) was born on Butler Street in Trenton in September, 1921. Dr. Tempesta was so taken back by Peter, 15 pounds at birth, that he offered to buy him for \$1,000, a fortune then. Carmela refused, of course.

Robert and Carmela moved back to South Plainfield, and daughter Louise was born in a hospital there on October 9, 1924. Very sickly from birth, Louise did not come home from the hospital until a week after Carmela was discharged. Pietro and Emilia sold the restaurant and the entire family moved back to Trenton, where they built a big, six-bedroom house at 1333 Cedar Lane (at Olden Avenue) for a cost of \$7,000. Eleven people lived in that house: Evelyn and her husband Charles Rubino and their children Frank and Ceil, Pietro and Emilia and Robert and Carmela and their three children, Dora, Peter and Louise.

Pietro Berlute was a thin, quiet man who never took a bus and walked to all of his destinations, regardless of the distance. He often walked a few miles from Cedar Lane to Chambersburg, the Italian section of Trenton.

It was Emilia who ruled the roost. Carmela wanted Robert to get his own house, but he didn't want to leave his mother. When Robert worked and got paid, he gave his paycheck to his mother, not Carmela, so in 1926, Carmela said, "You don't need me around anymore," and she left him and moved back to her mother's house in South Plainfield.

Yes, the world was changing. On May 5, 1925, teacher John Scopes was arrested in Dayton, Tennessee for teaching Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection, referred to as the evolution theory. Scopes was put on trial and convicted, but his conviction was overturned on appeal. Called the "Monkey Trial," the proceedings featured lawyers Clarence Darrow for the defense and prosecutor William Jennings Bryan, a former presidential candidate. The trial was dramatized in the movie called "Inherit the Wind."

The aviation industry grew tremendously. Pietro and Emilia had arrived in the United States barely a year after the Wright Brothers flew the first plane at Kitty Hawk, NC on December 17, 1903.

After the First World War, both civil and military aviation began a period of intense development. Air mail service was started by the U.S. Post Office in 1918. The Post Office drew from the pool of pilots who flew during the war and "barnstormers," pilots who flew from town to town, putting on shows of acrobatics and stunts for local carnivals and fairs.

Charles Lindbergh's solo transatlantic flight to Paris aboard the Spirit of St. Louis ended in 33 1/2 hours on May 21, 1927 at 10:24 p.m., Paris time. Lindy was greeted by a cheering crowd of 25,000, all waving American flags as other aviators carried him from the cockpit to safety. Amelia Earhart duplicated the feat five years later.

The world learned about X-rays, Picasso and Freud. There was Einstein and his definitions of time and space. And, worst of all, there was modern warfare and the incessant preparations for the next conflict.

The Columbia Broadcasting Company (CBS) began operations in 1927, the same year that the first talkie movie, "The Jazz Singer," was released. It starred Al Jolson in blackface.

When little Benjamin was born on May 30, 1909 in Chicago to poverty-stricken Russian immigrants David and Dora Goodman, little did they realize that Benny, their ninth child, would forever change the face of jazz. Indeed, by the time he was 12 years old, Benny Goodman was already playing clarinet in dance bands. By age 16 in 1925, he was playing with Ben Pollack's jazz orchestra. A perfectionist from the start, Benny Goodman developed his style of improvisation by applying his classical training to what he learned by listening to the black bands in Chicago. Benny Goodman made his first recordings about that time.

While all of the jazz bands were still segregated, "Negro" and white jazz musicians increasingly mingled behind the scenes in large cities like New York, Chicago and, to a lesser extent, Los Angeles. During Prohibition, Harlem's reputation as "Jazz Central" grew, much to the consternation of middle class Negroes living there.

Aside from outlawing alcoholic beverages, Prohibition was also a crusade to deny the public what its supporters regarded as booze's attendant evils, such as gambling, Prostitution and, of course, the musical anthem of all vice – jazz.

Well, needless to say, the schemes backfired. There were soon over 5,000 "speakeasies" in New York alone, and all of those "joints" needed musicians.

In 1927, Duke Ellington, then managed by Irving Mills, assumed the leadership of the orchestra at the Cotton Club in Harlem. Duke's colorful harmonies and chord voicings were perfect for the "Jungle Music" revues he composed, particularly his thrilling musical composition, "Black and Tan Fantasy." The Cotton Club gig propelled Ellington to the national and international spotlight on radio and in film.

The stock market crash on October 29, 1929 devastated the country. The markets had gained 496% from 1921 to 1929 and it all came crashing down on the stock exchanges in New York, then all around the world. As investors and brokers lost billions of dollars, many jumped out the windows of their skyscrapers. Also wiped out were thousands of small investors who had bought stocks on margin after receiving "hot tips" from others in and out of the stock market.

The Great Depression had begun in earnest, raising unemployment to 15 million people. According to Sean McCollum's article "When Confidence Failed" in the *The New York Times*

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decades later, 85,000 companies closed their doors in 1932 alone, and by 1933, 9,000 banks failed, and \$2.5 billion in depositor assets, uninsured at that time, evaporated. And so began an economic slide that idled over one-fourth of the American workforce for over 10 years. Hoover implored Americans to take “new courage to be masters of their own destiny in the struggle for life.” Americans took many such steps, including voting overwhelmingly for Democratic candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Governor of New York, in the 1932 presidential election.

People couldn't afford to buy records during the Great Depression, so radio, free to the listener – and increasingly national in character – became the dominant dispenser of music in general and jazz in particular.

On March 1, 1932, the world was horrified to learn about the kidnapping of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lindbergh's baby, Charles, Jr., from their East Amwell, New Jersey estate.

In 1932, Adolf Hitler, born in Braunau am Inn, Austria in 1889, became Chancellor of Germany. One of his early proclamations banned jazz music on the radio. Franklin Roosevelt became President of the United States in January, 1933, setting two of the leaders on the stage for one of the great military and political confrontations of all time.

Prohibition ended in 1933, when the 21st Amendment was passed to cancel the 18th. Some states refused to give up Prohibition and took their zealotry to great extremes. For example, one could not order a drink on a plane when it flew over Kansas.

During the Depression, Robert Berlute was a milkman who made house-to-house deliveries in the Chambersburg section of Trenton. The horse pulling the milk wagon knew just where to go. If Robert lingered too long while visiting one of the houses, the horse would continue the route without him. Dora, Louise and Peter played with the horse quite a lot.

While Dora and her siblings exchanged letters with their divorced mother in Jersey City over the years, they rarely saw her, because there were few cars and there was no money during the Great Depression for the 65-mile train trip. And, of course, few people could afford food, much less a telephone.

Pietro and Emilia had a store, so eating wasn't too much of a problem, despite the fact that the store wasn't too profitable. Many people bought food from them on credit and then couldn't pay, so the Berlutes were forced to close the store and declare bankruptcy.

After that, the elder Berlutes wanted to open a bar, but, because they had declared bankruptcy, they had to get a front partner and put the license in his name. After a while, the partner took off with the license, leaving them high and dry. The Berlutes then lost the house, which still had a considerable principal due on its \$7,000 mortgage.

The entire family then moved to another house in the neighborhood. After that, they bought one of the city's old trolley cars, which were being phased out, and they converted it into a sort of mobile home, not an uncommon practice in those days. They parked it on a vacant lot they owned a few doors down on Cedar Lane. They planted a large garden on

that property.

They loaded the best vegetables onto a horse-drawn wagon and Emilia or Pietro would drive it to Chambersburg, selling all of the vegetables along the way. Most hucksters just filled their carts and called to people from the street. Not the Berlutes. They took two pieces of plywood and made an "A" shape, then stacked the produce on both sides so people could see its quality from their windows. The Berlute garden was near the entrance to Our Lady of Lourdes Cemetery on Cedar Lane, so they also sold flowers on that corner. They were hard working, resourceful people – real survivors. Emilia was a lifelong diabetic and went blind from the affliction toward the end of her life.

Dora, Louise and Peter attended St. Anthony's School. Peter was a brilliant student, while Dora was slightly above average and sister Louise, whose IQ was probably fairly low, was a borderline student.

Dora and her family went crabbing often in Barnegat Bay during the summer. Her grandfather had a grape arbor with a picnic table under it in the back yard. They had an outdoor sink so they could wash up. In those days no one ate outside, but they didn't care about that. They'd sit under the arbor and eat the crabs so they wouldn't mess up the house.

In 1935 Louise stayed with her father Robert in Trenton, while Dora and Peter decided to move in with their mother Carmela in Jersey City. Carmela lived with her boyfriend, Albert Fernandez, born in 1903 in Spain. Living together outside of marriage was unheard of in their circles during this time. Carmela's siblings George and Lena Morano lived in Jersey City, too.

Dora went through her junior year in high school in Jersey City, but the more urban environment proved very difficult for her. She studied Gregg Shorthand in Trenton, but she discovered that the totally different Pitman Method was used in Jersey City. She quit school at 16 after she got a summer job as a pleater at a lamp shade factory.

Meanwhile, Pres. Roosevelt bucked up the morale of the population with a number of radio broadcasts called "Fireside Chats," a term coined by CBS radio journalist Robert Trout. Later, a young actor named Art Carney sometimes imitated FDR's voice and delivered those chats when the president was either too ill or too occupied with other business. Roosevelt was one of the first presidents to understand and effectively use the power of electronic media.

From January 3rd to February 13, 1935, the world was riveted to the somewhat hysterical press coverage of the Flemington, New Jersey "Trial of the Century" of carpenter Bruno Hauptmann, who was eventually convicted and executed for kidnapping Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lindbergh's baby.

Louis Armstrong was playing all over Europe, but had to return to Paris to recover from lip injuries in November, 1933. He returned to the United States in January, 1935.

Benny Goodman achieved fame after appearing on Oneeda Baker's "Let's Dance," a three-hour weekly national radio program on NBC. Appearing with two other bands, Goodman filled his allotted hour with music arranged and composed by Fletcher Henderson, who sold

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his music book, the collection of these arrangements, to the clarinetist and others, including Chick Webb.

In fact, the Webb and Goodman orchestras dueled one night at the Savoy (as in “Stompin’ at the Savoy”). By all accounts, Webb won the contest by playing the same Henderson “charts” (arrangements), only faster, hotter and technically better.

“Let’s Dance” was canceled in March, 1935, because the sponsor Nabisco’s employees went out on strike and the company couldn’t continue to fund the show. Goodman kept his band together by accepting a number of one-nighters through the “Banjo Belt,” as some called the American Midwest. The musicians were forced to travel by car over bad roads through all kinds of weather. Their audiences were less than receptive to their music, their clothing and their attitudes.

Things looked bleak until the Benny Goodman Orchestra arrived in Los Angeles on August 21, 1935. After months of rejection in the Midwest, Goodman and his players were greeted by a mob of fans at their gig in the Palomar Ballroom. They quickly dumped the banal crowd-pleasers they were forced to play during their road trip. Benny pulled out all of their “A” material from the broadcasts and brought down the house. The Swing Era had begun.

Meanwhile, a riot broke out in Harlem on March 19, 1935 over the unfounded rumor that a Negro boy had been killed by police. The officers were breaking up demonstrations against white Harlem merchants who refused to hire Negroes, as African Americans were called then.

In Paris, Pepino Abotino made Josephine Baker the richest Negro woman on Earth. He also got rid of the monkey and the leopard. In 1935, Baker and Abotino bought Chateau Les Milandes, a deserted castle on 600 acres of land. They discovered that property near Dordogne and Cénac at the beginning of their relationship. Baker became a French citizen in 1937.

Josephine Baker then returned to the United States to become the first Negro woman to star in the Ziegfeld Follies, although she had to share top billing with white actress Fanny Brice. Cole Porter and the Gershwin Brothers provided the new music, including “Begin the Beguine.” George Balanchine was the choreographer.

In addition to the overt racism that confronted her, Baker’s performance was panned by the theater critics. In a rage, she sent Abotino back to Paris, where he died shortly thereafter.

Sidney Bechet reunited with Baker after she opened Chez Josephine, her new nightclub in Harlem. The club was a financial failure and Baker returned to Paris on March 14, 1936, the same day that Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland.

American black athlete Jesse Owens angered Adolf Hitler at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Owens’s victories – and four gold medals – flew in the face of Hitler’s racial superiority theories.

Life in America during the Great Depression was truly the gruesome experience touted

in the history books. Shanty towns, called “Hoovervilles” by their homeless residents, sprang up all over the country. Frustrated by the Supreme Court’s seeming campaign to fight his New Deal initiatives, Roosevelt threatened in 1937 to “pack” the court with those more politically akin to him.

The world’s biggest disaster at that time was, of course, the explosion of the Hindenburg on May 6, 1937, after a spark of electricity from the mooring mast ignited its hydrogen gas, though that explanation of the cause is still in dispute. Like all of the zeppelins produced by the Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei Company in Germany, the Hindenburg was built by backers of the Nazi Party. Hydrogen was far more explosive than helium, but helium was considered a war material. So the United States, which controlled the world’s supply of it, refused to sell any helium to the Germans, the Japanese and all of their allies.

No one expected a disaster when the Hindenburg tried to moor at the mast at Lakehurst Air Station in New Jersey that fateful afternoon. Least of all Herb Morrison, who was announcing the arrival for a Chicago radio station. “It burst into flames!... The fires are crashing! It’s crashing terrible... This is one of the worst catastrophes in the world!... The flames are 400, 500 feet into the sky,” Morrison said. His excited remarks were literally heard around the world in the coming days and years, as he described events and ended with the words, “Oh, the humanity and all the passengers!” Then he lost all composure. “I can’t talk, Ladies and Gentlemen...” 35 passengers were killed in the explosion.

In 1937, Dora and her brother Peter moved back to Trenton, where they stayed with their aunt and uncle, Charlie and Evelyn Rubino. Sister Louise was still living in the trolley with her father.

Dora worked as a waitress at Zotto’s, a restaurant on nearby Hamilton Avenue. Peter, an excellent academic student, graduated from high school and attended art classes at the town’s college, Trenton School of Fine and Industrial Arts. The school, located in the Henry Kelsey Building on State St., was built in 1911.

Dora then got a job at Tastyeast, a local candy factory. She worked for 18 and 3/4 cents an hour, or a virtually tax-free \$9.00 a week. The Tastyeast candy bar was made of chocolate and contained a yeasty sweet center that was supposed to be healthy. Dora worked in the section of the factory that made chocolate covered cherries. From time to time, she’d transfer to the area where chocolate covered pecans were made. But the work was only seasonal – Christmas and Easter time – and she was laid off. The company gave each employee a five-pound box of candy for a Christmas bonus, but most of the workers were sick of the sight and smell of them by that time. Radio spots played the company’s jingle: “Tastyeast is tempting/ To your appetite /Creamy, wholesome candy/Try a luscious bite.”

Dora paid \$5.00 per week for room and board to her uncle Charlie Rubino. Her bus pass cost \$1.00 per week, leaving her \$3.00 per week to save for the room and board that she still had to pay during her unemployed spells. Haircuts were five cents, so Dora walked up Cedar

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Lane to the barber shop on Liberty Avenue. She hated always being forced to get a boyish bob, a short but longer lasting haircut.

Uncle Charlie Rubino was a witch, Dora recalled. His jealousy of Evelyn was so strong that he burned all her clothes in the heater one day and said, "Now you can't go out! You have to stay home!" He barred her from going down the street to the butcher, claiming she was flirting with the old man working there. Evelyn always had shiners.

Finally, when their children Frank and Ceil were teenagers, Evelyn left Charlie and moved to her sister Mary's home in South Plainfield. She then returned to Trenton and lived on Kossuth St. with her brother Robert. At the time, Robert was managing Gambino's (no relation) Gas Station on Southard St. The owner, Anthony Gambino, also owned the Trenton Oil Co.

Peter slept in the upstairs front bedroom with his father Robert, who kept a revolver for protection. Dora slept with her sister Louise in the adjacent bedroom.

Peter walked in his sleep, so one night in 1935, Peter decided to take a little sleep stroll – with the gun. He walked into Dora's room, woke her from a sound sleep and said, "I'm gonna shoot ya." Dora screamed, waking Peter and the whole family.

"Oops," exclaimed Peter. Everyone hoped the gun was unloaded.

While afflicted with scarlet fever one night, Peter got up and walked to the window at the end of the hallway, opened it and nearly jumped out of it. Whenever someone in the family heard Peter walking around, they automatically followed and stopped him.

After her layoff, Dora, 18 years old, went to a municipal training center, where she enrolled in the Home Economics course. After Dora completed it in 1938, the center found her a job as a maid for the Jobes Family in Yardley, Pennsylvania, just across the river from Trenton. She traveled there on Sunday nights by bus. Dora had to be in the Jobeses' house by midnight.

Dora did the washing, ironing, cleaning and cooking for the Jobes Family and cared for their two children. She lived in their home and had off on Sunday and half a day on Thursday. The Jobes Family was good to her, so she worked for them for two years. Dora's pay was \$7.00 per week, with room and board. She had a private room and bath on the third floor. The minimum wage was 25¢ an hour then.

Orson Welles's Mercury Theater radio version of "War of the Worlds" was broadcast nationwide in 1938. It detailed a fictional alien invasion of Earth, starting in Mercer County, New Jersey, of all places. (Trenton, the state capitol, is also the county seat of Mercer County.) Few heard the fiction disclaimer at the beginning of the broadcast, so panic broke out all over the country.

Benito Mussolini, known as "Il Duce," (Leader) and his Fascist Party Blackshirts had marched into Rome in 1922. Mussolini declared himself Prime Minister and took over the

Italian government virtually without opposition. He used poison gas during his invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. And Mussolini and Hitler supported the Fascist “Nationalist” government of Generalissimo Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War, from 1936 to 1939.

Despite the Austrian government’s opposition to Anschluss (union with Germany), many of the Austrian people were longtime supporters of it. But Hitler wasn’t convinced that the plebiscite would pass in his favor, so he ordered the German Army into Austria the day before the vote. Austria’s union with Germany became a reality on March 12, 1938. Hitler visited the country immediately and consolidated his political power in all of the major Austrian cities.

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was a happy man on September 30, 1938. He stood on the steps of #10 Downing St. and proclaimed the success of his Berlin Conference with Hitler and his staff. He said, “My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace in our time.”

But only the gullible believed it. The German Army invaded Czechoslovakia on the 15th of March, 1939. Italy invaded Albania the following month.

It took Robert Moses three years to build the 1939 World’s Fair in the 1,200 acres of ash pit meadows near Flushing, Queens in New York City. When the fair opened on April 30, 1939, people walked through the art deco entrance, looked up at the dirigibles flying overhead, gasped at the Trilon and Perisphere, and visited all of the streamlined, futuristic exhibits. By the end of that first summer, over 30 million people had attended the exposition.

Dora’s brother Pete won First Prize in a poster contest – a trip to the World’s Fair. He took Dora with him by train.

On June 18, 1939, Dora stepped up to the outdoor microphone and appeared on one of the first television broadcasts, singing Jimmy Van Heusen and Eddie De Lange’s tune, “Heaven Can Wait.” The song had been recorded that year by Tommy Dorsey, known as the “Sentimental Gentleman of Swing.” The television demonstration at the fair, received by about a dozen sets, was the project of David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), owned by Edison’s company, General Electric.

Televisions had just gone on sale for the first time in 1939, but the concept had been around for a while. In fact, the first transatlantic TV signal was broadcast in 1928.

The World’s Fair, a testament to technology and urbanity, was New York’s attempt to restore the city’s pre-Depression glamor and greatness. In that respect, it was a great success.

Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov was a happy man on August 23, 1939. As the man who ran the Soviet Union’s daily operations for Stalin, Molotov and Baron Joachim von Ribbentrop, his Nazi counterpart, had just signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. And while parts of it were made public on that date, giving the impression the document was merely a nonaggression pact, key sections concerning the postwar carving of Europe between the two countries remained secret.

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There were two million people of Italian descent in the United States by 1939. In fact, Vittorio Mussolini, Benito's son, was warmly received here. J. Edgar Hoover began to draw up the pre-internment A, B and C Custodial Detention Lists. Prior to Pearl Harbor and World War Two, the Italian waiters at the Italian Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair were arrested and confined on Ellis Island, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. They were then transported to Grand Central Station and sent by prison train with bars on the windows to Fort Missoula, Montana, which had been used as a camp to detain Native Americans before World War One.

Yes, Dora dreamed of a singing career, but that was soon to be forgotten. To amuse herself, Dora attended a Trenton skating rink one evening in October of 1939. She couldn't skate and spent most of the night holding onto the railing.

On a dare from his friend Red Cowell, 23-year-old Alfonso Gambino approached her and said, "Do you want to skate?"

"I don't know how," Dora said.

"That's all right, I'll hold you." At the end of the evening Alfonso said, "I'll meet you here next week."

Sensing that Alfonso wanted to avoid paying her way into the rink, Dora said, "No, if you want to see me here next week, you're going to pick me up and bring me here."

So Alfonso picked up Dora the following week and drove her to the rink in his Chevy, his favorite brand of automobile. On the radio was Glenn Miller and his Orchestra playing "In The Mood," their first big hit that year. The Chevy was Alfonso's car, but it was in his father's name.

Dora met Al's friend Bill Williamson and his girlfriend Clara Zefutie, who lived around the corner from Alfonso's home at 1318 Princeton Avenue.

According to the previously mentioned researcher Croce, the Gambinos had distinguished themselves in law and public service in Italy, even serving with the expeditions of Guiseppe Garibaldi. Some parts of the family were among the nobility in Sicilian society. The Gambino Family's coat of arms was described by Dr. A. Marigo di Casalgerardo as an "argent at the green tree, spread at the tip of the escutcheon, supported by two blue lions facing each other."

My great-grandfather, also named Alfonso Gambino, of Agrigento, Sicily, was not among that upper crust of the family, nor part of the more infamous branch that was making a name for itself in New York at the time.

Great-grandfather was one of 21 boys. His son (my grandfather), Domenico Gambino, was born on March 23, 1892. Domenico's brother was Francisco and his sisters were Angelina, Anna, Assunta and Caterina.

Domenico was married in 1915 to Sundina La Mandia, born in 1898, also of Agrigento. My father, Alfonso Michael Gambino, was born to them on January 12, 1916. Sundina fell ill while helping the afflicted during the Great Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918, which killed 40 million people in Europe and another 10 million worldwide. Sundina was among

those who succumbed to that disease in 1918, when my father Alfonso was two years old.

In 1919, after service in the Italian Army – and a stint as a prisoner of war in Austria during World War One – Domenico married Vincenza Ingrassi, a 16-year-old. Jenny, as she was called, was born on April 10, 1903 in Casteltermini, Sicily. She and Domenico were married in San Guiseppe Church in Casteltermini on November 18, 1919. Vincenza had two brothers, Carmelo and Pietro, and a sister Marianna.

So, leaving his wife and son behind, Domenico Gambino, 28 years old, left Naples, Italy alone aboard the ship *Belvedere*, bound for New York. He had \$20 in his pocket.

According to Ellis Island records, the *Belvedere* was built by Cantieri Navali Triestino in Monfalcone, Italy in 1913. She weighed 7,420 gross tons, was 437 (bp) feet long and 51 feet wide. She had a steam triple expansion engine with one smokestack and a single screw. Her service speed was 13 knots. She carried 1,544 passengers: 144 in first class, and 1,400 in 3rd class, Domenico among them.

The *Belvedere* was built in 1913 for the Austro-Americana Line, and flew the Austrian flag. She provided Trieste to South America and Trieste to New York service. She was sold to the Cosulich Line (Italian flag) in 1919 and continued with Trieste to New York service. The *Belvedere* was seized by the U.S. Government in 1941 and renamed *Audacious*. She was scuttled off the Normandy coast in 1944.

Domenico arrived at Ellis Island on July 8, 1920, and quickly found his relatives in Trenton, New Jersey. After finding an apartment at 41 Sheridan Ave., he sent for his wife and son. Yes, Domenico arrived in the United States on the same day my mother Dora was born!

Alfonso Michael Gambino was four years old when he and his stepmother Vincenza (Jenny), 18, left Palermo, Italy aboard *The Braga* around December 20, 1920. They carried \$50.00. The *Braga* was built by Russell and Company in Port Glasgow, Scotland in 1907. She weighed 6,125 gross tons. She was 415 (bp) feet long and 49 feet wide and had a team triple expansion engines, one smokestack and a twin screw. Her service speed was 16 knots. She carried 1,480 passengers (130 in first class, 1,350 in third class).

The *Braga* was built in 1907 for the Fabre Line and flew the French flag. She provided Trieste to New York and Trieste to South America service. She was laid up in Brazil from 1914 to 1917, then seized in 1917 by the Brazilian Government and flew the Brazilian flag. The *Braga* was then transferred to Additional Arrivals later in 1917 and renamed *Europa*, under Lloyd Nacional (Brazilian flag). She was given as reparations to Additional Arrivals in 1919 and sent back to France, where she was transferred back to the Fabre Line in 1919 and renamed *Braga* and provided Marseille to New York service. The *Braga* was wrecked during a storm off the coast of the Greek islands in 1926.

Jenny was seasick during the entire sea voyage to America, so little Alfonso roamed the boat unattended. He collected sugar cubes to bring to his mother because he thought they would cure her of her malady.

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Mother and son arrived at Ellis Island on January 5, 1921, but were prohibited from leaving until Alfonso's ear infection cleared up. He and his mother sat waiting as they watched the 5,000 people per day being processed through the facility. Domenico traveled from Trenton to the island every day for over a week, until Alfonso was released from the hospital at 2 p.m. on January 14th, two days after his fifth birthday.

After taking up residence in Trenton, Alfonso was enrolled in school that September. But because Domenico wouldn't allow anyone to speak English at home, Alfonso couldn't speak a word of it and neither did his friends and family. He had a difficult time in school and left to work after the 4th grade. Tough times demanded that he get a full-time job if possible.

Domenico and Jenny had three more children. Theresa Mildred (Millie) was born on November 13, 1921, Catherine Vincenza on February 20, 1933 and John (Giovanni) on November 10, 1939. They were Alfonso's half-sisters and half-brother respectively.

As I said, my grandfather Domenico had been an Italian Army prisoner of war in Austria during the First World War. He survived his internment on a steady diet of polenta, which he learned to hate for all time.

Domenico was a pushcart huckster in Trenton. He kept Alfonso out of school so he could wake the boy at 5 a.m. every morning and travel with him to the Philadelphia produce markets. Like all of the truckers lined up there, they often had to bribe the police to cross the intersection to the market. One time, as they returned to Trenton, Alfonso saw a snake that evidently had hidden in the bananas and now was wrapped around the side view mirror on the passenger door.

Alfonso, nicknamed "Fo-Fo," had an extremely strict upbringing. He wasn't allowed to have a sled, skates or toys of any kind. If Al acquired those things he had to leave them elsewhere, usually at Bill Williamson's house. Since he was a southpaw, Alfonso's parents tied his left hand behind his back to break the 'habit." Some thought this trait was somehow akin to the "evil eye," as practiced by the Jettatori.

A Jettatori was a person who was born with what some people considered a harmful gaze, according to the Kabbalah of medieval Jewish folklore and mysticism. The Jettatori gave the "evil eye," often without even knowing they had done so. Italians who used it as curse yelled "Mal occhio" while they waved the index and pinky fingers of the right hand at the "victim."

Alfonso, Bill Williamson and their other friends often played baseball in the open field opposite their home on Princeton Avenue. One could roller skate in the street, because there was so little traffic during that time. Every time Alfonso came to his turn at bat, his father would whistle for him to come home immediately, almost as if Domenico were watching from the window and waiting for just the right moment to whistle. Domenico was the master of "Tough Love."

Alfonso sold newspapers near the New Jersey State House on State St. in the summer-

time. He was allowed to buy one hot dog for lunch and return with all of the rest of the money, which he gave to his mother. Alfonso decided to save for a bike by skipping his lunch and diligently saving the money, which he hid beneath the linoleum under the bathtub. After he had saved quite a bit, his father asked in Italian, "Fo-Fo, what are you going to do with all that money in the bathroom?" Alfonso was shocked that his father knew about it.

"I don't know," Alfonso said sheepishly.

"Well, I guess we'll buy you a suit." Domenico took the money and Alfonso to South Street in Philadelphia to buy a suit. And he never did get the bike.

Alfonso was ten years old in 1926. He came home crying one day and when his father asked what was the problem, Alfonso said, "Where's my mother?"

"What do you mean?" asked his father. "She's in the other room."

"No, no," said Alfonso. "The man at the grocery store told me that she's not my mother."

"I was going to wait until you got older before I told you," Domenico said, and with that he went to the store and scolded the man. What a terrible way to find out such information. Despite this, Alfonso always thought of Jenny as his mother.

Both Domenico and Jenny worked during the Depression, so little Alfonso was often left with a relative. Although Alfonso's parents gave eggs and other food to that kin, Alfonso usually got only peanut butter every day, a simple thing that created great tensions in the family during those Depression times. The relative's house was still under construction and had no running water, so Alfonso had to walk across the fields to bring them buckets of water.

As a young man, Alfonso (Al) was built like a bull. He and Bill Williamson were rumored to have pushed a car from the Jersey shore to Trenton, about a 50 mile trip. The boys and their friends were crazy about cars. Whenever one acquired a new one, Al would take it to the back alley and dismantle it and reassemble it. Once they were circling and admiring a beautiful Cadillac parked on the street when they were approached by a cop who wanted to arrest them for attempting to steal it. They avoided being jailed.

When he met Dora Berlute, Al was working as a submarine battery maker at Stokes Rubber in Trenton, the same plant where his father worked. When he left the job later, he took an extremely sharp steel knife with him. It became a family heirloom of sorts.

Al usually picked up Dora at the Jobeses' home on Sunday morning and they'd go to church in Yardley. Then Al took Dora back to the Jobeses' house, where she'd make breakfast for the family and clean up. After that, Al and Dora would spend the day together.

Dora was a beautiful woman, so she was approached by young men often. But once they heard her say, "Fo-Fo is my boyfriend," they respectfully backed away. Alfonso was not a man to be reckoned with. Aside from that, the men simply respected the fact that she was "spoken for."

Al's sister Millie was engaged to Vincent Piazza. They kissed good night at the door once, and after the door closed and Vincent left, Millie turned and received a slap from her mother,

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who was not happy with any kind of display of affection, public or private.

When Al and Dora married on June 29, 1940, brother Peter Berlute and Agnes Gabriele were the witnesses. Al's parents, Domenico and Jenny, gave them a kitchen set, but Al's father refused to give him his Chevy, so Al bought another car, a Ford.

As they did during their courtship, Al and Dora headed to the Jersey shore and other points to hear their favorite big bands that summer. They were great jitterbuggers, too.

The French had constructed the Maginot Line, a long fortification along the German and Luxembourg border with France. Named for the French war minister Andre Maginot, its walls, forts and bunkers were designed to stop any invasion by Germany. But the German air force simply flew over it and German troops went around the fortification through the lightly defended Ardennes Forest. The German Army seized it and defended it for months before the French could reclaim it.

France had fallen to the Germans in May, 1940 and the Nazis marched into Paris. Most Americans managed to leave France by that time, except the young black performer, Josephine Baker, now a French citizen.

Baker became the darling of the German High Command in Paris. She wined them, sang for them, enjoyed their parties and generally ingratiated herself to them, much to the consternation of the enemies of the Third Reich, and Harlem musicians in particular.

The German Army invaded Poland from the west on September 1, 1940. Then the Red Army invaded Poland from the east, and Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3rd. Japan, at war with China, signed the Tripartite Pact, an alliance with Germany and Italy on September 27, 1940. The New York World's Fair closed in the fall of 1940.

On October 1st, Albert Einstein, his stepdaughter Margot and his secretary Helen Dukas became American citizens at the U.S. District Court in Trenton, New Jersey. All of Trenton was excited when Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie made a campaign stop in Trenton on October 31, 1940.

Al and Dora's first apartment was two rooms on the third floor of a house on Chestnut Avenue. After marrying, Dora quit working for the Jobeses and was unemployed until December of 1940. She applied at the West Trenton General Motors plant and got the job on the assembly line. She was told she'd be making \$30.00 per week, but she couldn't believe she'd be making such a handsome sum.

Sometimes Dora was a seat adjuster; sometimes she worked the punch press. There were other women working there, but the workforce was mostly men. Women did many of the smaller jobs on the assembly line. Al was making \$21.00 per week at Stokes Rubber.

The newlyweds bought an ice box, which required a new block of ice every day. The water dripped out of the box into a pan at the bottom. An ice box was not required in the winter because they placed their food outside the window. They purchased a bedroom set

and a rug for \$500.00. Dora took her \$30.00 pay and delivered it to Lieberman's Furniture every week until the bedroom set was paid off.

Because it wouldn't fit down the steps, Al and Dora lowered their furniture out the third story window and moved it around the corner to another third floor apartment on Walnut Ave. Mr. Lieberman helped move them from one apartment to the other. Dora went to Lieberman's Furniture to look for a washer, complete with a cranked wringer and an open washing bowl. But she wound up admiring a refrigerator. The ice box was such a pain.

"You like it?" Mr. Lieberman asked. Dora said she couldn't afford it. "You like it, you take it. I trust you," he said. After all, Dora delivered her entire paycheck every week, so her credit was good. So, when they delivered the washing machine, they delivered the refrigerator, too.

Al and Dora's rent on Walnut Ave. was \$19.00 a month. When she was laid off from General Motors and started collecting unemployment benefits, Dora told Al that this would be a good time to get pregnant and she did.

Dora was fatigued from running up and down three flights of stairs every time the doorbell rang. The landlord discovered that Al worked overtime at Stokes, so he continually raised their rent until it reached \$30.00 a month. Al and Dora did not have a lease, and rent control regulations didn't exist before the war. Among other things, the landlord, who shared a bathroom with them, complained that they used too much toilet paper.

Alfonso's sister Millie, who left school after the 9th grade at Junior High School #1 in 1935, married Vincent Samuel Piazza in St. James Church on August 2, 1941. Born on July 16, 1917, Vincent, who also left school after the 9th grade, came from a large family. His brothers were Carmen, Robert, Joseph, Albert, Samuel and Ronald. His sisters were Catherine, Sally, Nina, Lorraine and Rose Marie. That's seven boys and five girls, an even dozen.

Among those attending the ground breaking ceremony for the new, massive military headquarters in Washington, DC on September 11, 1941 was Major General Leslie R. Groves, who would oversee its construction ordered by the president on July 17, 1941. Plans were presented to the president by July 21st and the Pentagon was completed 16 months later.

Dora was visiting her Aunt Evelyn on December 7, 1941. It was early morning in Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands territory in the Pacific, but it was afternoon in New Jersey. She heard the news report about the 350-plane Japanese attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor and it instilled a great fear in her and all others on the home front.

All told, 1,100 American men and women had been injured and 2,388 had been killed there, with 1,200 lost on the USS Arizona alone. In addition to the Arizona and the Oklahoma, sixteen other vessels, nearly all battleships, were sunk during the two-hour attack that day. Other ships were damaged. 164 planes were lost and another 150 were damaged in attacks at 8 a.m. through 1 p.m. Oil slicks and smoke were everywhere.

Mostly as a result of "friendly fire," 68 civilians were killed and 250 were wounded.

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The Japanese also sent five two-man mini-submarines to attack Pearl Harbor with torpedoes that morning. They all were ineffectual. The skipper of one captured sub became the first prisoner of war held by the Americans.

On December 7th and 8th, Japan also attacked China, the Philippines, Wake Island, Malaysia, Singapore, Guam, Midway, Hong Kong and Thailand.

Speaking before a joint session of Congress on December 12, 1941, Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke of that “day that will live in infamy,” saying, “No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American People in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.”

“Loose lips sink ships” became one of the mottoes in use at the time. It was meant to instruct people not to talk about their defense work with others.

Dora was convinced that she was also going to be bombed and became quite nervous every time a plane flew overhead. At first, people couldn't believe that Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese. Some thought that a drama had been made out of court-martialed General Billy Mitchell's warnings in the '20s that this could occur, given the American military's resistance to a full embrace of air power. Some were convinced that it was only mis-reported American maneuvers. Some took comfort in knowing that blimps were patrolling the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coasts to protect America against Japanese and German submarine attacks.

Some wondered how many of those planes and bombs that day were made from the scrap metal America sold to Japan. Due to shortages, all domestic American production of metal items, such as cars and refrigerators, stopped during the Second World War. Scrap metal and rendered fat were collected to help with the production on tanks, planes and explosives.

Was the attack truly a surprise? After all, we had broken the Japanese military and diplomatic codes long before our hostilities with Japan began.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover executed the Custodial Detention List in February of 1942. The G-men affected mass arrests of Japanese, Italians and Germans in the middle of the night. Most people were arrested on suspicion alone.

We all know the story of the detention of over 120,000 Japanese-Americans. Many of them died in West Coast internment camps, while most of them lost nearly everything they had, including farms, homes and businesses. One of the largest camps, the Manzanar War Relocation Camp, 200 miles from Los Angeles, occupied less than one mile and had over 10,000 residents.

As many as 600,000 Italian non-citizens living in the United States were called Enemy Aliens and had their rights abridged in one form or another. Most of these people, aging parents of natural-born Americans, never learned much English and never applied for citizenship. They were too busy surviving during the Depression. Many of the informants against Italians were merchants who wanted to eliminate their competition. Many of those Italians

lost their businesses due to their long imprisonment.

The Pledge of Allegiance, written for a children's magazine in 1892, was revised and became official in 1942.

All of Trenton was abuzz when actress Deanna Durbin visited Trenton in mid-February, 1942 and led the town in a grand parade to promote the Trenton Plan for the sale of Series E War Bonds. \$18.75 became \$25.00 at maturity years later, and \$75.00 became \$100.

Times Square and all of New York was blacked out for the celebration of New Year's Eve. Despite that, overflow crowds filled the intersection and everyone thumbed their noses at Hitler.

New York Metropolitan Opera basso Ezio Pinza was arrested without charges as an "enemy alien" on March 12, 1942. Among his primary accusers were his own jealous friends and colleagues and antifascist leader Carlo Tresca. As related later in a television interview by his granddaughter Sarah Pinza Goodyear, "They walked in through an unlocked door, into the house, did not knock and they said, 'Are you Ezio Pinza?' and he said, 'Yes.' And they said, 'In the name of the President of the United States, we put you under arrest.'"

Pinza was taken to the courthouse in Foley Square, where he was fingerprinted and grilled. He was then imprisoned without any formal charges on Ellis Island, from where he had entered the U.S. ten years before. He was assigned a bunk bed, then released after eleven weeks, following pressure from prominent New Yorkers, including Fiorello LaGuardia, the greatly respected and longtime Italian-Jewish mayor.

The FBI also paid a friendly visit to Grandpop Domenico Gambino. They went to his attic and took away his World War One Italian Army uniform, his short wave radio, his Italian flag and his bust of Benito Mussolini, whom Domenico admired because of his benevolence to the Italian poor. In his early days, Mussolini behaved as would any American gangster or city machine politician, doling out favors and creating an air of stability. The FBI agents did not arrest Domenico. He was a lucky man.

In all, over 10,000 Italians in America were taken from their homes during World War Two.

To determine the nation's supply of used rubber, FDR called for a collection drive from June 15th to June 30th of 1942. FDR called on all Americans to volunteer and help. The oil companies agreed to collect the rubber at all of the nation's gas stations and pay one cent a pound for it. Scrap metal and junk drives were aided by Boy Scouts and other children. Rendered fat was also collected.

The Gambinos bought a row house at 64 Hobart Avenue for \$2,400 in 1942. The property taxes were \$85.00 a year. Dora's brother Peter lived with them and brought along his own bedroom set. Peter was working in an aircraft factory in Pennsylvania and had just purchased a new Chevy when he got his draft notice. He wanted to marry before he entered the Army, but his girlfriend Dot resisted.

Alfonso continued making submarine batteries at Stokes Rubber, then went to work as a

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mechanic at Trenton Transit, the then-privately owned bus service that had started as a trolley company. Its original tracks met and overlapped at State and Broad Streets and could be seen peeking through the asphalt covering them for years.

Al was not drafted into the Army because he was working in transportation, which was considered an essential civilian job. When the draft board considered changing his draft status from exempt to draftable, Alfonso had to show them that Dora, my mother-to-be, was indeed pregnant.

I was born in Mercer Hospital at 8:30 p.m. Eastern War Time on July 15, 1942, and from the beginning I confused night with day. The later I was able to stay awake, the more interesting night became. Days were mundane; night had the action. I hated to sleep – period.

Eastern War Time was in reality Daylight Savings Time, designed to help the war effort by giving an additional hour of daylight year around to workers and factories.

Daylight Savings Time was originally proposed by Benjamin Franklin in a humor essay in 1784. The idea gained some credence in 1907 in England, where it was suggested that advancing the clock one hour could be an effective way of extending recreation time. The British instituted it in 1916 as a way of conserving energy for defense needs during the First World War. The U.S. followed in 1918. By the beginning of the Second World War, the practice was generally accepted in the United States, but the decision to implement it was a local matter. DST became mandated across the country during the war.

Grandpop Gambino was very upset that Mom and Dad were breaking the age-old tradition of naming the first son after the paternal grandfather, a process that limits the naming possibilities a family could employ. For instance, Charlie Rubino had three brothers, two of whom had also named their sons Frank after their father. When Aunt Evelyn, Uncle Charlie and their son Frank visited the brothers for a family gathering in Philadelphia, the four boys went out to play and they all got lost.

Years later, Frank told me, “We all got bored and decided to take a walk. All the streets in Philadelphia looked the same. Our goal was to just walk around the block, but the eldest Frank decided to take the lead and literally ‘led us down the primrose path.’ Our parents drove around looking for us. The police put out an APB for us. The police found us and took us to the police station.

“They asked us our names. With exception of Leonard Jr., we responded down the line, ‘Frank Rubino,’ ‘Frank Rubino,’ ‘Frank Rubino.’” The cops were not amused.

“Our parents retrieved us at the police station,” Frank said. “Of course, ‘old school Italian justice’ was administered to all of us when we returned home.”

There were no Thomases in our family, so Grandpop Domenico thought that my being given “Dominic” as a middle name was not a compromise, but a great insult. He refused to visit Mom and Dad for a year. When Mom and Dad visited him with me, Grandpop would either be mute or leave the room. He never made a fuss over me or picked me up. He refused

to talk even when Dad visited him alone. Grandmom Gambino was okay.

Grandpop Robert Berlute, a more modern businessman who lived mostly in America, and Grandmom Carmela and her live-in beau Albert Fernandez believed that everyone should live their life according to their own dictates. Besides, Grandmom Carmela had enough of elder meddling during her marriage to Robert Berlute.

My naming was the first collision in procreation traditions between the Old and New Worlds in our family. It was a fundamental confrontation in many other respects, too. While I was an infant and knew nothing of this, I wondered later about the depth of my grandparents' assimilation after living so many years in America.

According to journalist Mike Wallace, I was born in the middle of humanity's greatest battle between good and evil.

Things looked bleak for Italians who were being detained in the camps, until FDR's Attorney General Francis Biddle fought the interment policy. He became a hero to many when he took on his most committed opponent, General John DeWitt, who was in charge of all interments on the U.S. West Coast. Biddle convinced FDR in August of 1942 to rescind the policy and it was announced on October 12, 1942, Columbus Day, at Carnegie Hall that the Alien Enemy Status would be lifted. The U.S. military, planning an invasion of Italy, needed the Italian-Americans and the Italians to teach the language to American officers and also act as translators after the invasion. And Roosevelt needed the heavily ethnic big city vote for the upcoming 1944 presidential election.

But the original detainees in Ft. Missoula, Montana remained there with "PW" – Prisoner of War – printed on the back of their fatigue uniforms until the end of the war. Many were sent there because they didn't renounce their Italian citizenship. Others were released to fight in the American Army after the invasion of Italy. The other "enemy aliens," the Germans and Japanese, were offered no relief from the abuses.

Many concessions to ethical conduct were made by the Allies during that war. After all, the stakes were very real. We justified our alliance with the Soviet Union on strategic grounds, never publicly looking too carefully at the horrendous record of Joseph Stalin (Steel), who was, to put it mildly, one of the cruelest murderous, rotten bastards who ever lived. Still, the American government and the other allies operated on that old saw, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," a phrase first used by Chairman Mao Zedong.

In October, 1942, Alton Glenn Miller, already a renowned bandleader, applied for a commission in the armed forces and was made captain in the Army Air Force. Working from the Army Air Force training center at Yale University in New Haven, Miller disbanded his civilian orchestra, then created a number of military and dance bands, which he supervised to one degree or another.

Glenn Miller led the Army Air Force Band, consisting of over 50 musicians. Miller's band was used for marching events, etc., but was best known for the hundreds of radio broadcasts

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from the States and, later, broadcasts and over 800 live performances for hundreds of thousands of Allied troops in the European Theater.

The first World War Two-era cadets graduated from West Point and for the first time some went directly into the Army Air Corps, which had already been sent to the Pacific Theater. Preceding them was the Flying Tigers, led by Claire Chennault and made up of commercial and mercenary pilots and former Army officers who joined the action before Pearl Harbor.

The Flying Tigers and the Army Air Corps were in China and India. They bombed the Burma Road and conducted an air strike over Tokyo. American forces went into Greenland and Iceland, landed in Ireland and England, and prepared for the landing at some distant time in France. Aid to the Soviet Union was given in the form of tanks and planes. Many American convoys in the North Atlantic were lost to German submarines in that effort. Meanwhile, British General Bernard Law Montgomery and his 8th Army clashed with German commander Rommel on land and in the air over the Libyan desert in Africa.

The U.S. population was 130 million people then. Out of that number, 250,000 women joined the Army and the Navy. These WACs and WAVES worked behind the lines at home and abroad, transporting medical supplies, testing machinery and weapons, nursing, and even forming the first women's motorcycle corps.

Ronald Colman, Bing Crosby, Greer Garson, Hedy Lamarr, Irene Dunn, Jimmy Cagney, Abbott and Costello, and Ann Rutherford are among 50 Hollywood stars helping to sell war bonds by visiting 300 cities that each promised to sell one million dollars worth. They raised over \$1 billion in one month, the equivalent of more than \$10 billion today.

Enlistments into the armed forces included actors Clark Gable, Jackie Coogan, Tyrone Power, Jimmy Stewart, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., fighter Joe Louis (who infuriated Hitler by defeating German Max Schmelling in a Yankee Stadium rematch), Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy, and FDR's sons, James and FDR, Jr.

The Army needed a simple vehicle to give its officer corps some mobility to visit their units and headquarters, and transport firing power to an area quickly. This General Purpose (GP) vehicle became an instant hit with the troops. GP became "Jeep," and underwent many modifications in the field and in development.

Here is another theory about how the Jeep got its name: Jeep was the name of a child character in a Popeye cartoon that was released a few months before the debut of the vehicle. Jeep could go anywhere and do anything, including walking through walls.

Attempts to make the Jeep double as a waterproof boat failed because of weight restrictions. The Army tried to send a shaft up the middle of the Jeep and attach rotor blades, while shaping the rear of the Jeep to resemble an airplane fuselage. This attempt at a flying Jeep failed because of stability problems.

The Army also needed a way for officers to communicate with each other and the enlisted men, so they developed the walkie-talkie, a very large telephone-type device that

transmitted using radio waves over short distances.

During World War Two, the daughter of an Austrian banker and ex-wife of a European arms manufacturer, Eva Maria Kiesler, better known as actress Hedy Lamarr, felt guilty about being in Hollywood while her family struggled in war-torn Europe. She collaborated with an engineer she met at a party and in her spare time helped develop the “spread spectrum theory,” a radio wave torpedo guidance system which was used successfully against the German Navy.

In 1943, Vincent Piazza enlisted in the Navy and served two years as a Baker 1st Class on ship #861, which saw action in the Pacific Ocean near Okinawa and Japan. My cousin Robert James Piazza was born to my Aunt Millie on September 29, 1943.

As soon as her divorce from Robert Berlute was finalized in 1943, my grandmother Carmela married Albert Fernandez. In that same year, my grandfather Robert remarried, too. His new wife Mae had two children, Agnes and Charles, from a previous marriage. Robert, a very frugal man, disliked Agnes intensely, calling her a moneygrubber. Agnes was married three or four times during her life.

Glenn Miller created his Army Air Corps big band for marching, dance music and broadcasts by June 5, 1943, then overcame the more traditional military brass by creating swinging marches. He began a weekly nationwide broadcast called “I Sustain the Wings,” which mostly aired on NBC for about a year. Miller used actor Broderick Crawford for Air Force recruiting skits.

Then Miller and the aggregation was shipped out to London, just in time for the buzz-bombing of that city. Miller immediately wrangled transportation for his entire organization to Bedford, an RAF base outside the city. His London headquarters was destroyed the next morning.

There was a race riot in Detroit on June 20, 1943. 1,000 people were injured. Twenty five Negroes and nine whites were killed.

Mom’s brother Peter entered the Army, and typically, Mom and Dad put the star in the window, denoting a family member in one of the services. He never returned to live in Trenton again.

The Army sent Uncle Pete to Yale to become an officer. In the dormitories, he stayed up nights studying with a flashlight under the covers and graduated third in his class. My mother and father, my grandfather Robert and my great-grandfather Pietro drove to Connecticut and attended the Yale graduation. I was left with Mae and Agnes.

Peter became a 2nd Lieutenant and was stationed in Denver, Colorado. All enlistments were for the duration of the war. He stayed in the United States during the war, perhaps as an aircraft navigator. He never talked about the true nature of his work or its location.

Mom returned to work at the West Trenton General Motors plant when I was five months old. Kindly Mrs. Barrett, our neighbor from across the street, used to baby-sit me. Her love of

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children was always evident. She often came to take me for the day when my Mom wasn't working.

Both sets of grandparents were invited to my first birthday party in July of 1943, but Grandpop Gambino refused to come.

"You know what, Pop," Dad said while visiting him before that day, "I'm telling you now. If you don't come, you'll never see me here again."

So Grandpop came, but he sat on the porch and refused everyone's entreatments to come in. Finally, he relented.

Mom later said to Dad, "If we ever have another boy, he'll be named Alfonso and your father won't be able to say a word about it."

Mom was sort of a permanent substitute at the General Motors plant, located near the Mercer County Airport, so she worked at assembly line slots that were vacant for the day. The ratio of men to women at the plant changed during the war and women assumed jobs that previously belonged to men alone.

Mom was a true "Rosie the Riveter" during the war. She and her partner, a young black woman who had been a chum in high school, donned their hair nets, called snoods, and riveted the cockpits of Avenger fighter aircraft. The young "colored" woman (as Dora called her then) joked with her, saying about the rough work, "I don't know what's happening. I go home from work and change and there's a black ring around my collar. I didn't think this stuff rubbed off!"

When I was about one and a half years old, our neighbor on Hobart Avenue, Mr. Kaufman, gave me a penny, which I swallowed. Mom grabbed me by my legs, flipped me upside down and banged my back until it came out.

We didn't go to supermarkets. There weren't any. Instead, we made daily trips to the A&P, which at that time was a chain of small grocery stores with very little selection and variety. The clerk used a pole with grasps to bring down the item desired from the shelves that extended to the ceiling. He'd write the amount of each item in pencil on the unfilled brown bag. When we finished, he added the numbers by hand.

Mom paid with cash and offered the merchant coupons from her wartime ration book. It was filled with red tokens for meat and green and brown coupons for rubber and tires, coffee, butter and sugar. An "A" coupon from your gas ration card entitled you to purchase three gallons of gas. All of this was regulated by the Office of Price Administration from its inception in 1942 until the end of the war.

Gasoline was rationed, but Grandpop Berlute ran a gas station, so supply was never a problem for our family. Since car manufacturing had stopped, everyone took special effort to keep their autos in good repair, often by hook or crook (literally) and improvised parts.

The country endured meatless Tuesdays. Though you could eat meat on that day, you couldn't buy it. The meat available on other days wasn't decent and was mostly hamburger.

The butchers loaded the meat with ice and water to raise the weight. Mom and Dad rarely bought shoes for themselves, because I was growing so fast and they used their yearly shoe allotment on me.

Thanks to her family's background both in Italy and during the Depression in America, Mom was already skilled at gardening and canning, and she used them to make every dollar stretch, including trading some rations for more important items.

Our Aunt Rose Cuccurello in Jersey City knew a lot of important politicians, so she always gave Mom and Dad a lot of sugar, coffee and other rationed items. Her son, my cousin Louie, was stationed at Fort Dix. When he was released from the service, he visited Mom and Dad for a few days and then they transported him home. Aunt Rose was so grateful she loaded them down with hard-to-get items.

I remember when my cousin Louie returned from the war. He had changed so much. His hair had turned white prematurely. He had lost his sense of humor and became very quiet, even when I sat in my little red wagon and he pulled me down the street.

And, of course, the new technology known as television would have to wait until victory was achieved in the war. We would have to make do with radio, invented by the Italian physicist Guglielmo Marconi, who shared the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1909 for his invention. Also, in 1901 Marconi was the first to transmit transatlantic signals, which consisted of a 3-dot signal between Canada and England.

Everyone kept up with the events of the war through radio, the newspapers and the newsreels shown prior to the movie in the theaters. I didn't understand the political discussions on the radio and my parents rarely listened to them while I was awake, unless the President was speaking. I was so young, innocent and sheltered from the violence in the world.

Mom and Dad listened to Gabriel Heater, who would say, "Oh, there's good news tonight," or "Oh, there's bad news tonight." He'd then fill in the details of the day. Or they listened to Walter Winchell or H.V. Kaltenborn, self-styled Dean of the Radio Commentators. They always read Ernie Pyle's front line battlefield reports in the newspaper.

Propaganda wasn't only used by the Allies. In Europe, Axis Sally played American jazz on the radio and extolled Allied troops to surrender, while Tokyo Rose fulfilled the same role in the Pacific Theater.

Josephine Baker's charade as a French collaborator had come to an end in 1943. She was really a courier and spy and had used her special position to spy on the German brass and pass the information to the Allies and the French Resistance. Chateau les Milandes had been seized by the Nazis and she fled France for Casablanca, North Africa.

Baker underwent medical treatment there and lost her ovaries, then became an entertainer for the Allied troops, using the opportunity to introduce integration among the ranks. During that assignment, she fell in love with and married bandleader Joe Bouillon, and, after performing for the survivors of Buchenwald, the couple returned to Baker's castle in France

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in 1947. Baker and Bouillon promptly filled their castle with orphans from all over the world. "My Rainbow Tribe," she called them.

After the war, Josephine Baker was awarded many honors for her contribution to the war effort, including the French Legion of Honor in 1961.

At 12:41 a.m. EST on June 6, 1944, called D-Day and code named "Operation Overlord," the invasion of the five beaches at Normandy, France by 175,000 troops from America and 12 allies began. Also participating were 5,000 ships and 11,000 planes. By nightfall of the first day, 4,900 Americans were dead. Of the 10,000 Allied casualties by the end of the invasion, more than 6,000 were Americans. General Eisenhower and his staff had taken two years to develop the plan in absolute secrecy.

The initial word of the invasion came from TransOcean, the German news agency, but Eisenhower, addressing his troops, said in a radio broadcast from London hours later, "Soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force: You are about to embark upon a great crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you." NBC Radio impressed on all its affiliates the importance of the coming messages by adding a fourth chime, the same note as the first, to its signature.

It was the beginning of the end of Germany's control of the European continent. Paris was liberated three months later on August 25, 1944.

My father was naturalized and became a U.S. citizen in United States District Court in Trenton on November 22, 1944.

In the fall of that year, Glenn Miller, by then a major, planned a six-week tour of Europe. On Friday, December 15th, he boarded a plane for the short trip to Paris, the base of operations for the tour. Flying in bad weather, the plane disappeared.

Among others, drummer Ray McKinley, who had played with Miller in the Dorsey Brother's Orchestra, took over some of the band's performances for the duration of the war.

In February, 1945, Roosevelt met with Churchill and Stalin in Yalta, Ukraine. And by April, 1945, the Allies were well along in their task of destroying Hitler and the Third Reich. As the Allies liberated Auschwitz and Buchenwald, it became inescapably obvious that the Nazis had inflicted the Holocaust on the Jews.

Meanwhile in the Pacific Theater in 1945, eight million civilians and millions of troops had died in the eight-year war the Japanese waged across Asia. And now, four years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had been pushed from every Pacific island but Okinawa and their homeland.

The Japanese girded for the final Allied onslaught on their country, which would come if they lost Okinawa. In April of 1945, vessels of the American Navy sank their last remaining battleship, the Yamato, which had a crew of 3,600 men. In addition, nearly one million Japanese troops were stranded in Manchuria on the Asian mainland, much to the chagrin of

General Korechika Anami, Japanese Minister of War.

Bound to a wheelchair and ravaged by polio and other ailments, Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage at his retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia on April 12, 1945. In a bizarre twist, Japanese Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki, one of the few survivors of his country's 1936 coup attempt, sent a secret condolence message to Eleanor Roosevelt.

I vaguely remember the great national sorrow after Roosevelt's death. After all, FDR had been president for 12 years and was beginning his unprecedented fourth term. He was the "savior" of the Great Depression and the heir-apparent to a world free of Naziism. I remember seeing movie theater newsreels showing the mourning crowds as his coffin passed. "Should I cry, too?" I asked my mother. She just patted my head and looked away, dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief.

It would be an understatement to say that Vice President Harry S. Truman was unprepared for the presidency. Roosevelt had kept him out of the decision-making loop on most things, including the top secret Manhattan Project. Run by Army Corps of Engineers leader Major General Leslie R. Groves (built the Pentagon) in Los Alamos, New Mexico, the Manhattan Project was named for the groundbreaking work in atomic physics conducted at Columbia University in New York City in the 1930s.

As the work progressed at that time, Enrico Fermi and others persuaded Albert Einstein to write to Franklin Roosevelt and urge him to pursue the research on nuclear fission, citing German efforts in the same direction.

In that letter to FDR dated August 2, 1939 and delivered on October 11, Albert Einstein said,

"Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future. Certain aspects of the situation which had arisen seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the administration. I believe, therefore, that it is my duty to bring to your attention the following facts and recommendations.

"In the course of the last four months it has been made probable – through the work of Joliot in France as well as Fermi and Szilard in America – that it may become possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium-like elements would be generated. Now it appears almost certain that this could be achieved in the immediate future.

"This new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable – although much less certain – that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed. A single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the

surrounding territory. However, such bombs might very well prove to be too heavy for transportation by air.

“The United States has only very poor ores of uranium in moderate quantities. There is some good ore in Canada and the former Czechoslovakia, while the most important source of uranium is Belgian Congo.

“In view of this situation you might think it desirable to have some permanent contact maintained between the administration and the group of physicists working on chain reactions in America. One possible way of achieving this might be for you to entrust with this task a person who has your confidence and who could perhaps serve in an unofficial capacity. His task might comprise the following:

“(a) To approach government departments, keep them informed of the further development, and put forward recommendations for government action, giving particular attention to the problem of securing a supply of uranium ore for the United States.

“(b) To speed up the experimental work, which is at present being carried on within the limits of the budgets of university laboratories, by providing funds, if such funds be required, through his contacts with private persons who are willing to make contributions for this cause, and perhaps also by obtaining the cooperation of industrial laboratories which have the necessary equipment.

“I understand that Germany has actually stopped the sale of uranium from the Czechoslovakian mines which she has taken over. That she should have taken such early action might perhaps be understood on the ground that the son of the German under-secretary of state, Von Weizsacker, is attached to the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut in Berlin, where some of the American work on uranium is now being repeated.”

Roosevelt agreed to Einstein's points and work in the area was continued at the University of Chicago under Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, head of scientific research. Drs. Enrico Fermi and Edward Teller worked there, too. Oppenheimer, who initiated the first self-sustained chain reaction in Chicago on December 2, 1942, ran the Los Alamos, New Mexico installation.

Truman held his first Cabinet meeting the day after Roosevelt's death. Present were, among others, Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall, Secretary of War Col. Henry L. Stimson, Asst. Sec. of War John J. McCloy and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Ernest King. Truman learned among other things that low flying planes had been carrying out raids with incendiary bombs over Tokyo and other Japanese cities for well over a month. This tactic was necessitated by the Japanese strategy of building war plants in residential neighborhoods.

After the meeting, Stimson approached Truman in private and arranged for General Groves to brief him on the Manhattan Project and the unproved atomic bomb, all developed with British and Canadian involvement. (The Russians learned of it from their spy, Klaus Fuchs.) Employing

some 200,000 people, the Manhattan Project was assembled over three years at a cost of \$2 billion, a remarkable sum in the 1940s.

Three atomic bombs, called “gadgets” by the select few in the know, were built by the time Truman became president. The first bomb was made from uranium, while the other two were plutonium. One plutonium device was to be used for a land test and the other two would be available to drop by air on Japan if no way could be found to get an unconditional surrender from them.

The 509th Squadron, flying the B29 bomber out of its home base in Roswell, New Mexico, trained for precision bombing with an instrument approximating the size and weight of an atomic bomb at a base in Wendover, Utah, though none of the personnel knew any details about the weapon beyond that.

In Japan, Foreign Minister Shigenori Tojo attended a cabinet meeting with, among others, Prime Minister Suzuki, Gen. Anami and Navy Minister Adm. Mitsumasa Yonai on April 14, 1945. In the meeting they vowed to fight any invasion to the death of every man, woman and child – all armed with bamboo spears, if need be. But after the meeting, talk rose of a military takeover of the Japanese government, while civilian government leaders talked of trying to convince the Russians to help strike a deal for an end to the war.

On April 28, 1945, Mussolini and his mistress Clara Petacci were captured before they could escape to Switzerland. Both of them were executed by communist partisans, then hung by their feet in the village square in Lake Como, near Milan. Crowds of angry Italians passed their bodies, spat on them and swiped at them for hours.

Mussolini’s wife Rachele, her two sons, Romano and Vittorio, and her daughter Edda Ciano (widowed by the dictator) survived the war. 18-year-old Romano started a career as a jazz pianist about ten years later.

Adolf Hitler and his wife Eva Braun committed suicide in their bunker in Berlin on April 30, 1945. Their bodies were then burned. Berlin fell to the Russians a few days later. (Rumors persisted for years that Adolf Hitler and other key Nazis were alive and well and living in Argentina.)

Germany delivered its unconditional surrender to the Allies shortly after midnight, German time, on VE Day, May 7, 1945. And, as the defeated Germans surrendered in ruin to the newly formed United Nations, the Allies, including the Russians, celebrated Hitler’s apparent suicide and the end of Fascism in Europe.

In a radio broadcast to the nation, Pres. Harry Truman said, “This is a solemn, but glorious hour. I only wish that Franklin D. Roosevelt had lived to witness this day. General Eisenhower informs me that the forces of Germany have surrendered to the United Nations. The flags of freedom fly all over Europe.”

In Europe, the Allies had methodically and systematically brought the war back to the bunker in Berlin where the corrupt brain that started it all lay smoldering in a poisoned carcass. Hitler was too cowardly to face his personal just desserts.

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At the time, Truman said, "Our offensive will not cease until the Japanese military and naval forces lay down their arms in unconditional surrender." The remarks were directed to the American people and, most importantly, to Emperor Hirohito, the supposed descendant of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. After Germany surrendered, the prevailing public speculation was about how many hundreds of thousands of Americans would be required to achieve the capitulation of Japan.

After Truman's speech, Marquis Koichi Kido, cousin of the Emperor and Lord Privy Seal, met with Suzuki to discuss the course of the war. Kido was asked about his willingness to discuss with Hirohito the possibility of sending a representative to Moscow to sue for peace, provided he could get Hirohito to authorize the trip. Hirohito agreed in June of 1945, citing the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact they had signed in 1941.

In America, the first meeting of the Interim Committee was held on May 9th. Chaired by War Secretary Stimson and attended by Secretary of State James Byrnes, the committee's task was to recommend to Truman what course of action should be taken in the use of the atomic bomb. By June 1st, they decided that it should be used without prior warning.

Okinawa fell to the Americans after a two-week battle that ended on June 21, 1945. By battle's end, there were 72,000 American, 131,000 Japanese and 150,000 civilian casualties. In the end, American soldiers had to flush the Japanese out of their hiding places in the caves by using flame-throwers. But the Japanese Kamikaze pilots continued to hurl their planes at American ships.

Dad lost his draft card in the summer of 1945 and had to visit the draft board to get another copy. Men in civilian clothes had to carry it all the time during the war or face arrest. At first the clerk refused to give it to him and informed him that he may be reclassified as draftable. But Dad needed it to go out of town, so they relented and gave him a card with the same classification. Dad was a lucky man.

In Tokyo on July 12th, Hirohito sent his cousin Prince Konoye to Moscow in the hope he could get an interview with Stalin before the beginning of the Allied conference in Potsdam, Germany. But Stalin, who had promised the Allies he would declare war on Japan three months to the day after Berlin fell, avoided Konoye before and after the meetings.

Truman, Churchill and Stalin – The Big Three – met in Potsdam on my third birthday, July 15, 1945, and they began discussions on the division of Germany and Berlin and the wording of the ultimatum for the unconditional surrender of Japan. The very next day, quite unbeknownst to the American public, the first ground test of an atomic bomb occurred at the Trinity test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico. As the bomb detonated, strains of an intercepted radio broadcast of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" played over the speakers in the bunker.

That first atomic bomb had the explosive force of 20,000 tons of TNT and sent a mushroom cloud 41,000 feet into the air. The flash of light could be seen for ten miles, and the explosion could be heard 50 miles away. A soldier standing 10,000 feet away was knocked

down and another soldier five miles away was temporarily blinded. A blind girl many miles away saw the light.

That same day, after touring a desolated Berlin, Truman was told of its success by Secretary of War Stimson, who was authorized by Truman to tell Winston Churchill.

The first of the two remaining bombs, a uranium bomb called "Little Boy," left Los Alamos for San Francisco by truck and arrived there on July 16th. Its crated components were put aboard the USS Indianapolis (CA-35), which headed for Tinian Island in the Pacific. The Indianapolis, with a cruising speed of 30 knots, was commissioned in 1932 and, as a ship of state, transported FDR to South America and the Caribbean in 1936. It was one of the few ships to escape the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor.

Noting that the Russians were due to declare war on Japan on August 8th, Harry Truman told Stalin about the bomb at the July 24th Potsdam session, but Stalin, already informed by spy Klaus Fuchs, did not seem surprised. Perhaps he couldn't fathom the force of the explosion to come. Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, noted for the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact – and also noted as the namesake for the gasoline, bottle and cloth "cocktail" – was present also.

The incendiary bomb raids on Japan continued with increasing vigor during the Potsdam Conference. It was there that Truman, with Churchill's strong support, approved use of the atomic bomb after August 2nd, the day of Churchill's departure from Germany. (Winston Churchill was out of office by the end of the Potsdam Conference, replaced in a British election by Clement Atlee.)

On July 26th "Little Boy" aboard the Indianapolis arrived at Tinian Island, now home base for the 509th B29 Squadron out of Roswell, NM. The plutonium bomb, "Fat Man," arrived soon thereafter by plane. Both bombs were uncrated and assembled.

After the Potsdam Declaration was issued on July 28, leaflets were dropped on Japan, warning of the dire consequences to come if the Potsdam surrender terms were ignored. The Japanese government still vowed to fight to the very end. Talk of a coup against Hirohito and the civilian government grew. Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki addressed his military over the radio, using a Japanese word which could have meant either silent contempt for the demands or a hint to negotiate. The address was intercepted and sent to Truman, who was about to leave "The Little White House" in Babelsburg, Germany and take the five-day Atlantic Ocean voyage to America aboard the USS Augusta.

On Saturday, July 28, 1945, a U.S. B-25 bomber piloted by Lt. Col. William F. Smith Jr., flew into the north side of the Empire State Building's 79th floor, 913 feet above the ground. One of the motors shot through the south wall and landed on a nearby roof. Many people thought New York City was being bombed.

Two elevator cables were severed, sending two cars and their passengers into a free fall. In all, fourteen people were killed: pilot Smith, two crew members and eleven people working at their desks in the building. More than 24 people were injured. The toll could have been

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much higher if the event had happened on a weekday.

Smith's plane, flying at about 200 m.p.h. through extremely thick fog, was headed from Bedford, Mass. to Newark, NJ. Smith was instructed to land at Municipal Airport (now LaGuardia) in Queens, but insisted on clearance to land at Newark.

About \$1 million in damage in the building was reported. The B-25, sticking about half-way out of the facade, was removed, and within three months the 78th and 79th floors were completely repaired.

On July 30th, the Japanese submarine I-58 sank the USS Indianapolis off the shark-infested waters of the coast of Guam. The ship was on its way back to the Philippines. Truman, en route from Germany to the United States, heard the news from General Curtis LeMay's headquarters on Guam on August 2nd. Representing two-thirds of the crew, 883 men were lost aboard that ship, mostly from the fierce shark attacks as they waited for rescue. The ship had no anti-sub escort, nor any underwater detection gear. The commander, Capt. Charles B. McVay III, was accused later of being derelict in his duties because he didn't take evasive maneuvers to avoid the submarine.

Little did the American people and the peoples of the world know of what was about to happen. On August 6, 1945, as Harry Truman continued his voyage across the Atlantic, and as the Japanese prepared for a ground invasion of their homeland, the Enola Gay B29 bomber, loaded with Little Boy, took off in the early morning hours and headed for Japan, piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbets, and the copilot, Captain Robert Lewis.

The navigator was Major Theodore "Dutch" van Kirk, and the bombardier was Major Thomas Ferebee. They were joined by the weaponeer, Navy Captain William "Deke" Parsons; the radar officer, Lt. Jacob Beser; and the tail-gunner, Staff Sergeant Bob Caron. Also present were Flight Engineer Sgt. Wyatt Duzenbury, Radar Officer Sgt. Joseph Stiborik, 2nd Lt. Morris Jeppson (the Electronics Office), PFC Richard Nelson, and Sgt. Shumard.

Because so many B29s had been shot down in previous days, Capt. Parsons decided to arm the bomb during that flight.

The Interim Committee in Washington had selected Hiroshima, Kokura and Nagasaki as primary targets. Kyoto was ruled out, because of its cultural and religious significance.

The Enola Gay reached Japan by 8:05 a.m. local time and at 8:15 a.m. dropped its 9,000 lb. atomic bomb, covered with messages, on Hiroshima, a coastal town heavily populated by the Japanese military.

The city was leveled and many of its people were incinerated. In all, 130,000 Japanese were either dead or injured. Many thousands more died in the following days, as they consumed food and water contaminated with radioactivity. The dead were far better off than the living in many respects.

Pres. Truman was notified aboard ship and he told the sailors. In a radio broadcast from the Augusta, he said, "Let there be no mistake. We shall completely destroy Japan's power to

make war. In order to spare the people of Japan from utter destruction, the ultimatum of July 26th was issued from Potsdam...If they do not now accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air the like of which has never been seen on this earth."

And still, Japan refused to surrender, holding out the hope that the Russians could broker a deal. Many in the Japanese leadership were convinced that the Hiroshima bomb was the only one in existence.

On August 8th, exactly three months after the fall of Berlin, three Russian armies invaded Manchuria and engaged the Japanese Army. The Russians had hopes of sharing in the occupation of Japan. On the same date, President Truman saw the photos of Hiroshima, addressed the American people and renewed the Allied ultimatum to Japan.

The B29 called Bock's Car, piloted by Capt. Charles Sweeney, left Tinian Island early on August 10 EST and headed for Kukora, Japan, but a cloud cover forced the plane to head for its secondary target, Nagasaki, and drop Fat Man, the second atomic bomb.

Emperor Hirohito talked openly about surrender in the days to follow. The coup attempt to oust him never materialized and the Japanese surrendered unconditionally on August 15th, 1945.

The war that consumed 50,000,000 people was finally over. There were 405,000 American fatalities from among the sixteen million Americans that served during the conflict.

Mom, Dad and I were on vacation for a week at the Jersey shore when the first atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like everyone else, my parents stared at the newspaper's photos of the mushroom clouds that fanned out for miles above those cities and shook their heads in disbelief. They put away the newspaper whenever I approached them that day.

After the initial shock over the magnitude of the bomb abated, everyone was so happy. They felt no remorse, because Japan had started this war. So many people had died at Pearl Harbor and in the years following the attack there.

Most people thought this was payback time. Most people were also convinced that many American lives had been saved by using those bombs. After facing dire trepidation after FDR's death, most people respected Truman for being a no-nonsense president who ended the matter so quickly after assuming the mantle of power.

For the first time humans had the potential ability to destroy all life on Earth, and it was a fact that could not be "back-stepped" or erased. These events were the defining moments of my young life, but I was, of course, unaware of the awe all must have felt about those detonations, nor the meaning of the great joy that erupted when the Second World War ended. I was too young for that.

Scientists had long contended that the radio waves of everything ever broadcasted on Earth have headed out into the universe and, theoretically, could be intercepted over time by distant planets. If that were true, then our atomic bombs surely sent out our business card to the rest of the universe.

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The Japanese rivers and the grounds in front of the Imperial Palace flowed red in the days following Japan's surrender. Harikiri (ritual suicide by kneeling and thrusting a knife into the abdomen) was performed by humiliated soldiers, including General Anami. To alleviate some of their fears, occupation troops gave candy to the children and nylon stockings to the women. Many Japanese men reacted to this by committing suicide, because their women and children accepting gifts from a conqueror was considered a humiliation.

On September 2, 1945, declared by the Allies to be VJ Day, the formal surrender of the Japanese was signed on the battleship Missouri. Accepting it was Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who would lead the occupation of Japan. MacArthur nearly single-handedly wrote Japan's postwar constitution, a democratic document that gave full rights to the Japanese people and disarmed their military, but allowed them to have a self defense force and keep their emperor as a figurehead.

FDR had once said, "More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars." In that regard, Roosevelt had worked tirelessly for the establishment of the United Nations, formally composed on October 24, 1945.

The signing of the United Nations Charter by the first 50 nations had taken place earlier, on June 26, 1945 in Dumbarton Oaks mansion in the Georgetown section of Washington, DC. Poland became the 51st signatory a few days later. The General Assembly passed a resolution marking October 24th as United Nations Day. By Presidential Proclamation, United Nations Day is also celebrated in America.

As the process of setting up the United Nations continued toward the October date, Albert Einstein issued a number of public statements concerning the work being done. On September 14, 1945, Einstein said that the only hope for the "human race lies in the creation of a world government with security of nations founded upon law..." not resolutions. His September 29th opinion, as were all the others, was ignored by all but a few. That day he said, "The pathetic attempts made by governments to achieve what they consider to be international security have not the slightest effect on the present political structure of the world, nor is it recognized that the real cause of international conflicts is due to the existence of competing sovereign nations. Neither governments nor people seem to have learned anything from the experiences of the past and appear to be unable or unwilling to think the problem through."

After the war, Germany was divided into East Germany (People's Democratic Republic of Germany), ruled by the Russians, and West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany), administered by the French, British and the United States. Berlin, completely surrounded by East Germany, was divided into four Allied sectors.

In one of his first postwar acts, Pres. Harry Truman proposed National Health Insurance – Medicare – to Congress in 1945. The bill was defeated, primarily by Republicans.

Glenn Miller alumnus Tex Beneke, a singer and saxophonist with Miller before the war,

served in the Navy during the war and took over the new civilian Glenn Miller Orchestra for a while.

Ho Chi Minh defeated the Japanese in Indochina (Vietnam), only to find the French under General Charles DeGaulle ready to stop him from realizing his goal of a country united under his Communist leadership. Ho Chi Minh immediately began a war of attrition against the French, who were backed by the United States.

Shortly after the Second World War, Albert Einstein said, "My first axiom is that the quest for international security involves the unconditional surrender of every nation, in a certain measure, of its liberty of external action, of its sovereignty, and it is clear beyond all doubt that no other road can lead to such security."

In 1946, Winston Churchill said about Europe, "An Iron Curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitols of the ancient states of Eastern and Central Europe."

On the Soviet side of that line were East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Albania was there, too, but was more a client of the Chinese than the Russians. And Marshal Tito's communist Yugoslavia was fairly independent of them all.

As I said, my parents never showed me the newspaper with a picture of the atomic bomb. I remember seeing my first view of it as I sat in a movie theater later and saw the newsreel on the big screen. I was stunned. I had just turned three and I became an official member of the first generation unable to live any significant part of their life without the constant threat of warfare using nuclear weapons, although I didn't understand the ravages of the past war and its deeper significance.

On the other hand, my parents and those before them did experience a life free of the menace. But now their world was also turned upside down again. Just as they had recovered mentally and emotionally from the Great Depression, the war came along. And just as the war ended, the specter of the horrific possibilities in future wars became evident.

Life was getting better now, but those innocent pre-nuclear days were over for us all.

I didn't understand its meaning at the time, but I remember the day Mom heaved her ration book into the trash with a great flourish. Everyone after that day seemed so much happier. I assumed all of those smiles were simply about better food.

The giant task of rebuilding Europe fell to the United States, the only remaining major power to muster such an undertaking. General George Marshall was given the job and later won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

The Nuremberg Trials began in 1945 and ended in 1946 with numerous convictions of the Nazis who perpetrated the war. Among those convicted of war crimes was Albert Speer, who designed many buildings in Germany, including the stadium in Nuremberg.

Uncle Vincent Piazza decided to ply the trade he learned in the Navy during the war. He and Aunt Millie opened their first small bakery on Cummings and Division Streets in 1946.

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They moved to their second bakery on Paul Avenue in 1947.

After leaving the Army, Uncle Pete Berlute stayed in Denver, Colorado, where he met and married Lucille Cummins, a farm girl from Sarcoxie, Missouri. She had moved to Denver with her brother to find work. Uncle Pete met her at her job in an office at Lowry Air Base.

Peter got a job as a sign painter for Coca-Cola of Denver. He painted billboards, signs and sides of buildings, some of which still exist today. He began a large collection of Coke memorabilia dating back to that time. He eventually became the advertising director for the bottler in that city. His daughters Pam and Kristine became graphic artists, too.

By the end of the Second World War, Trenton was on its way to becoming a powerhouse of manufacturing. It was a leading producer of linoleum, tires and other rubber products. Thoikol and Stokes and DeLaval and Trenton Pottery had factories there, as did General Motors. Famous for its porcelain and pottery works, Trenton was also home to Lenox China and American Standard, a leading toilet and sink manufacturer.

In their recent photo and essay book called "Images of America: Trenton," authors Cathleen Crown and Carol Rogers sharpened my childhood recollections of that city and added insight into the history that nurtured me.

One of the photos in their book caught my eye. Four men sat in an enormous 500 pound, 50 gallon bathtub, made for Pres. William H. Taft at the J. L. Mott Company in Trenton in 1909. William Randolph Hearst bought the tub after President Wilson assumed office.

The American economy also stayed in high gear after the war. The United States was the only major industrial country that was physically untouched by the war, except for Pearl Harbor. Pent-up domestic demand for clothing, automobiles, refrigerators, tires and a wider variety of food commodities was only outstripped by the demand for housing. All of the countries of Europe and Asia needed anything and everything we could sell them.

Too many dollars chased too few goods and that led to a great bout of inflation, for which Truman took much heat. He had to deal with a Republican Congress, which he labeled "The Do-Nothing Congress." And maternity wards all over America were bursting at the seams.

Within a few years, anything Asian interested many Americans, who had not thought much about that part of the world prior to the war. Hawaiian shirts became popular. Many American men returning from the Pacific brought Japanese war brides with them, much to the chagrin of many who hated anything Japanese. But the grace and charm of these women soon won over many of the resisters.

In January of 1946, when I was three and a half, we moved from Hobart Ave. to 102 Wayne Avenue, on the corner of Willow Street, off Ingham Avenue. Mom and Dad had bought the house from the widow Mary Apelmeir, who lived next door (half of the structure was hers, half was Mom and Dad's). We shared a front porch with a bannister between the two units. A wire fence divided the backyard in half.

"I don't like this dirty old house. I want to go back home," I cried, as Dad ripped off and

replaced the plasterboard all over the house. I was already a “neat freak.”

Life must have been stressful for my parents in those days. I remember eating while in my highchair. Dad was working three jobs as a mechanic. He came home for dinner, barely able to wash off the truck grease before going on to his night job fixing trucks for another company. He sat there bent over his food as Mom sat across from him, obviously distraught over some financial matter. Dad listened but said little, causing Mom to raise her voice more.

Finally, without even looking up, Dad reached for the glass quart bottle of milk and poured it over her head.

Mom took me for my first ride on a train the next morning. I had to kneel on the rattan seats to see the trees speed by. While it was exciting to me, Mom was quiet and a little sad. We arrived at Grandmom Fernandez’s house in Jersey City a few hours later.

Dad came to visit Mom two days later. They went into the living room while I helped Grandmom and Aunt Lena in the kitchen, my favorite thing. Mom and Dad emerged from the front room all smiles and hugs. We all sat down to a great dinner, then went back to Trenton in Dad’s car. That episode was the first and last time my father ever showed disrespect in any way to my mother.

Dad found a patch of wild cardunas growing in the alley behind our house. (“Cardoons” in English, related to the artichoke with edible leaves and roots.) He boiled them, cut them into smaller pieces and fried them with scrambled eggs on the old wood stove. I hated that vegetable dish and asparagus, the mere smell of which made me gag.

There wasn’t much to do in the neighborhood, except waiting for the coal truck, which sent the coal down a chute into our basement bin. We also had regular deliveries from the milkman and the bread man.

I played with my new little friend Paul Pollack, who was Jewish and lived across Calhoun St. His mother’s cooking smelled completely different than Mom’s. I also played with my other friend Heinrick, who lived with his immigrant German family in a horrible little “apartment” in a dingy factory further up Calhoun St. and down Ingham Avenue. His mother always cooked sausage, cabbage and potatoes.

Our neighbors across the street were Camille and Roger Persichilli. Roger was a baker and a paperhanger. The Persichillis had a son named John Roger, but everyone called him Roger, too. The elder Roger papered our house when we first moved there. He then became a partner in Romeo and Juliet Restaurant on Ingham Avenue after Romeo died. (Yes, a real Romeo and Juliet owned the place.)

Prior to her marriage, Camille Persichilli lived in New York City. Her father was a waiter who worked on Restaurant Row, on W. 46th St., between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. Camille’s father owned the apartment building in which they lived. After Camille’s mother and father died, she sold the apartment building and moved to Trenton.

The elder Roger went into the renovation business after selling the restaurant. His compa-

ny, Roger-Lee Home Improvement, remodeled kitchens and sold storm windows and siding. He built a house on Lower Ferry Road in Ewing Township (West Trenton). He sold that house years later and bought another, which he turned into a mini shopping center. The Persichillis occupied an apartment upstairs from the business.

On the days when my mother worked, my cousin Ceil Rubino would watch me at our house. I loved to play in the small back yard with my tricycle and my constant companions, Skippy, a little fox terrier, and, of course, Raggedy Andy. These playthings represented more toys than my father ever had in his entire life.

Skippy loved the outdoors, but saved most of his bodily functions for the living room rug. I had promised to care for the dog, but, like a typical five-year-old, I slacked in my duties. One day I went to the yard to play with Skippy, but he was gone. I ran to the kitchen and asked Mom where he was. She returned the grating, which resembled a small manhole cover, to the cast iron coal- and wood-burning stove and said, "Skippy escaped this morning. He snuck out under the fence and ran away."

I moped for days, playing quietly with my jacks and marbles and wearing my cowboy hat and firing off my six-shooter cap guns quick-drawn from my double holster. But Mom seemed a little brighter and the living room mess was gone forever.

I had a number of pets in those early years. There was Chippie the Parakeet, who flew out the open door one day, never to return. I took it personally. Then Mom and Dad bought an aquarium, which we stocked with guppies. I would stare at the aquarium for hours, particularly when the pregnant fish was put in the plastic enclosure with small openings at the bottom for the baby fish to fall through. This prevented the momma fish from eating her young.

Mom and Dad often took me to the boardwalk at Seaside Heights, New Jersey. I didn't like the "Laughing Lady," a big fat dummy fortune teller sitting in a glass booth in the middle of the boardwalk. She laughed hideously at all who passed. A recording provided the sound. Most people were amused, but the dummy frightened me and I cried profusely whenever I saw it.

Aunt Evelyn's second husband and Navy veteran, Ernie Revesz, was so kind to me. He took out his guitar and sang to me when we visited. He took me to fish on the banks of the Delaware River. I'd laugh at his jokes, sip on my Kern's creme soda, and even catch a few fish. The river's water level was often so low that the rocks on the river bed were visible. One could practically walk across it to Pennsylvania.

Mom made me take a daily one-hour nap in my preschool years, so I'd lay in bed and watch the second hand on the clock go round and round. Sometimes I'd sneak out of bed and play with the "tchotchkes" (knickknacks) that sat on opposite sides of her Richard Hudnut-DuBarry makeup kit and powder case on her mirrored vanity. In particular, I liked to play with the two ceramic horses – one a gray mare with a black mane, and the other a brown pony with a black mane and white feet.

After the Second World War, Republican Richard Nixon campaigned for Congress against Democrat Jerry Voorhis, a five-term incumbent in California. Nixon paid for his campaign from his poker winnings while serving as a Navy supply officer on Guam during World War Two. Nixon branded Voorhis a communist and won that 1946 election.

Nixon became a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee and, while failing to win prosecution of Alger Hiss as a communist, Nixon helped get a perjury conviction against that diplomat after two trials.

Four years later, Nixon won a campaign for a California senate seat against Helen Gahagan Douglas, wife of actor Melvyn Douglas. He branded her a communist, too. And she branded him "Tricky Dick." The name stuck.

My brother, Alfonso Michael Gambino, Jr., was born in February, 1947. Al had blue eyes and curly blonde hair, rarities among Italians, but not unheard of in Grandpop Berlute's northern Italian hometown. Later that year I started kindergarten in St. James Catholic School on Paul Avenue, off Princeton Avenue.

We attended St. James Church, too. Father Thomas Rocco would come out during Mass. Holding a basket attached to a long pole, he would mumble something in Italian about the destination for that particular collection, usually some religious facility in Italy. Fr. Rocco would then pass the basket, always stopping it momentarily to embarrass the person who didn't contribute to his liking.

The principal and Mother Superior at St. James School was Sr. Colombina. During the 1947-48 school year, I attended kindergarten with Sr. Amelia. Then in 1948-49 came Sr. Angelina, then Sr. Agnes in the 2nd grade. During 1950-51, I was in the 3rd grade with Sr. Angelica.

By the end of the Second World War, the patent battles between Philo T. Farnsworth and "General" David Sarnoff (head of the Radio Corporation of America) were pretty much over, with Farnsworth, the holder of many lapsed patents, the big loser, despite receiving a million dollars from Sarnoff. One of Sarnoff's scientists, fellow Russian Vladimir Zworykin, had developed a lot of the hardware to make television a practical reality. In fact, the transmission of color images had already been developed by 1941.

The new television industry took off with a bang, and changed the American and world culture forever. Sarnoff used his genius for organizing radio networks to do the same thing with television. NBC Television was born under the RCA banner, as was the radio network before it.

An expert at communications, Sarnoff was called "General," after being named brigadier general under Eisenhower during the Second World War. The title stuck when he returned to civilian life.

My neighbor across the street, young Roger Persichilli, was my age and we became fast friends immediately. Roger decided he'd come visit me one day. I was shocked when I saw him run across the street without looking and get hit by a car. He looked at me in mid-air

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as he fell to the ground, but he was unhurt. The Persichillis were expecting a baby, but the older Roger was working at night as a baker when baby Lorraine was about to be born, so my father drove Camille to the hospital.

Mom took me to see the movie “The Fabulous Dorseys” when it was released in 1947. The brothers, Tommy on trombone and Jimmy on alto sax, played themselves. They didn’t appear to get along very well, but Mom told me I’d do better with my brother when we grew up.

Strange reports about flying saucers were coming out of the Western United States. I didn’t know the meaning, but I do remember seeing strange flying saucer sketches in the *Trenton Times* and the *Trentonian* newspapers. Evidently, our atomic calling cards had been heard and answered.

On June 25, 1947, pilot Kenneth Arnold was flying over Washington State and reported seeing a number of unidentified flying objects in the sky near Mount Rainier. He described them as looking like “flying saucers.” His description of the UFOs eerily resembled some 30,000-year-old drawings found in some Franco-Spanish caves and some other works of art throughout history. The name for the UFO stuck immediately in people’s imagination, including mine, as more and more sightings were reported over the United States.

Roswell Army Airfield in New Mexico, the world’s only nuclear-dedicated base and the home of the 509th Bomber Group and the *Enola Gay*, became the center of attention on July 7, 1947, when the alleged remnants of a flying saucer on a nearby ranch were reported to the military. The wreckage littering the ranch was said to have strange properties of resiliency, elasticity and tensile strength – and it had even stranger markings.

Much later, witnesses would claim that they saw small, grayish alien bodies with large heads and large black eyes being removed from the area.

The Army authorized press coverage of the find at first, then, as the word filtered up the chain of command, the military reversed itself and began to attribute the wreckage to military balloons designed to spy on the Soviet Union. Few people bought the explanation, but at first even fewer would entertain the notion seriously in polite conversations, where a person’s credibility could be harmed or called to account.

And while the government put out a smokescreen for the public, it allegedly formed “Operation Majestic Twelve,” later called “Operation Majic,” a secret committee of six military people and six civilians charged with examining the wreckage at Roswell. Some contend to this day that “Operation Majestic Twelve” itself was another attempt at misinformation by the military.

Much has been said about the events of those days. In the aftermath of all that publicity, did the American military and civilian government cover up a truly incredible story in order to secrete and back-engineer its find? Were alien bodies recovered and brought to various bases for anatomical studies? Did these events happen in any other place in the country? The world?

My young mind toyed with these ideas on a very elementary level, to be sure, but the

subject entranced me as I grew older. I had the sense that space travel was in our future. I began to wonder if humans would ever meet beings from other worlds in my lifetime.

Before it could be formed for all time, my cosmology had begun to change, and with it, my willingness to accept concepts like up for Heaven and down for Hell. Or Original, Mortal and Venial Sin. Or men in robes, all white, sitting on clouds, sporting halos and wings, playing lyres. Or possessing a “soul” that did not have physical properties. I found ways, immature and mostly unconscious to be sure, but ways nonetheless, to flaunt the authority the Church and its surrogates – nuns and priests, parents and family – tried to impose on me. I wasn’t prepared for just how difficult it would be to keep their indoctrination out of my thinking processes.

I put the validity of their story on the same par as the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus. To a small degree, I also resented that my parents and others lied to me all of those years regarding the latter two. I’m sure they thought such beliefs were cute, but it shook their credibility with me. I vowed to always be truthful to my own children some day.

As I matured through my preadolescent years, I began to also wonder just how religions and the religious, particularly the more radical, would be affected if we were to be visited by otherworldly beings of a secular nature. Would those aliens have experienced the same sort of “salvation” on their planet(s)? Would their religions (if they had any) resemble ours? Would their creeds overwhelm ours? Would they scoff at the idea of a Supreme Being? I wondered about these things early on in life.

Sometimes I’d laugh at the pictures of the angels in the catechism. Even at that young age, I thought it was all gobbledygook. Perhaps I instinctively knew that to accept Catholic dogma was to fall into a pernicious circle of illogic. I think the nuns sensed that I never bought their program, so they tried to make every little infraction I committed a whackable offense. I was unfazed by their efforts. They didn’t understand that I knew how to take a whack from my experiences at home with Dad and “The Hand.”

So they decided that they would make me kneel on marbles for a while after or during school. When my right knee swelled later and Mom took me to the doctor, he recommended I wear an Ace bandage, which I did for over a year, to no avail. I came to believe that the ligament was permanently torn, thanks to Sister Vicious.

Mom asked me if I liked the cream cheese and jelly sandwich she made. I said yes and that was my school lunch every day until I complained months later. Dad would occasionally make my lunch, too. He asked me if I liked one of his favorites, hot dogs and egg sandwich. I said yes, and that was the lunch he always made for me until I got sick one day and was sent home. Our brown bag lunches – and the milk that arrived every morning – were not refrigerated in school and my food had spoiled. Fortified with those lunches, I could survive anything Sr. Vicious wanted to do to me.

In addition to religion studies, we learned some elementary Italian, some math, and lots

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of penmanship exercises, in which any deviation from the correct form invited pages and pages of written homework. The nuns were not happy when I used my penmanship to write love notes on oily brown lunch bags to the cute little girls in the class.

On November 2, 1947, industrialist Howard Hughes flew the Spruce Goose, also called the Flying Boat, off the water for the first and last time. Planned as a taxiing test, the plane flew one mile at an altitude of 70 feet. Designed by Henry Kaiser during World War Two and built by Hughes, the amphibious plane, the largest ever built and flown, was made from nonessential materials, mostly laminated birch wood, not spruce. At 218 feet long with a wingspan of 320 feet, the plane was to be used as a troop transport for 700 troops.

The Spruce Goose eventually went on display as a Disney attraction, then found a home at the Evergreen Aviation Educational Institute in McMinnville, Oregon.

Construction on the 39-story United Nations Secretariat Building in the Turtle Bay section of Manhattan began in 1947 and was completed in 1952 by a team of architects headed by Wallace Harrison, using innovative designs and materials. The United Nations Secretariat was the first building with a “sheet of glass” facade in the city.

The 18-acre site bordered First Avenue to the FDR Drive and E. 42nd St. to E. 48th. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. had bought the land from William Zeckendorf for \$8.6 million and donated it to the United Nations. The ground became extraterritorial – an international zone. Because of this, New York became the only state to have a hole in it. (New York City now contains many U.N. missions and consulates that also fit the definition.)

Referring to our growing confrontation with the Soviet Union, financier Bernard Baruch coined the phrase “cold war” in 1947. Others attributed the phrase to Herbert Swope in the same year.

As he walked through a New Delhi garden to evening prayers on January 30, 1948, popular Indian leader Mohandas K. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi), 79, was assassinated. A London-trained lawyer, Gandhi preached “satyagraha,” or “true force,” which was nonviolent, passive resistance to injustice. He first employed and developed these techniques in Southern Africa.

Gandhi could meld crowds to his will simply by fasting, and, in doing so, was instrumental in quelling the violence prior to India’s independence from Britain in 1947 and after, when India split and Pakistan was formed on Northern India’s eastern and western borders. (East Pakistan later became Bangladesh.)

After I read his biography later, Gandhi became one of the heroes of my life.

The United Nations established the State of Israel, which came into official existence on May 15, 1948. A holy war (Intifadeh) against the Israelis by Palestinians displaced by the action began that very same day.

After Truman, an advocate of Civil Rights in the South, accepted the Democratic nomina-

tion at the convention in 1948, most of the Southerner delegates, called Dixiecrats, walked out. They vowed to support Gov. Strom Thurmond for president and deprive the Democratic Party of their support in the South.

In one of the greatest political upsets in American politics, Harry Truman and his vice-presidential running mate, Kentucky Senator Alben Barkley, toured the country and ran against the “Do-Nothing Republican Congress.” They won against New York District Attorney Thomas Dewey and his running mate, Governor Earl Warren of California, on November 3, 1948. Not even the Democratic Party expected Truman to win! The next year, the 71-year-old Barkley became the first and last veep to marry while in office.

Second World War Japanese leader Tojo was hanged for war crimes in 1948.

The first Emmy Awards were given out during a special television show in 1949, although none but the rich had televisions on which to view it. “Emmy” is from an alteration of the word “Immy,” which, according to the dictionary, was a “nickname for image orthicon, a camera tube used in television.” The name made its debut at that first Academy of Television Arts and Sciences awards show in 1949. The television industry had barely made an impact on broadcasting and media and it wasted no time giving itself awards for its efforts.

The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical “South Pacific” opened on Broadway in New York in April of 1949. It starred Ezio Pinza, who performed, among other songs, “Some Enchanted Evening.”

The Soviets blockaded Allied access routes to Berlin, so Truman supplied the beleaguered city with the Berlin airlift, which ended in 1949. It was one of the great victories of the much-tested Pres. Harry S. Truman. NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was formed on April 4, 1949 to provide a common defense against the Soviet Union. The original members were Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Italy and Iceland. The Soviets reacted by forming the Warsaw Pact with its European puppet governments.

When I was seven, my tonsils were removed during an overnight stay at St. Francis Hospital, my first time there (aside from my birth). I spent a few days on the living room sofa, listening to the radio shows, eating my ice cream, which, of course, was my reward for not fussing. I watched Mom fix her hair with a Richard Hudnut perm, while Little Al played with a Slinky, invented by accident by Richard James in Philadelphia in 1943 and marketed two years later.

We had a “party line” telephone, which meant the line was shared by more than one household. Four-party lines (one line shared by four households, each with a distinctive ring for identification) went to 2-party lines when service was improved. These party lines were a boon to nosy people. They literally practiced being undetectable while picking up the phone to spy on the others using the line. Long distance calls were a costly event and only businesses and the rich had private lines and more than one phone.

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I had to learn to resist the Pavlovian response whenever the phone rang, because two short rings meant the call was for us, while our neighbor or neighbors, depending on how many shared the line, had a different combination of rings.

I loved to visit my godmother Agnes “Aggie” Gabriele, who lived in a big house with her parents, brothers and sisters. They were deeply religious people and very friendly with great senses of humor. Aggie lived on Alden Avenue, near the Trenton Reservoir, which was unfenced and unguarded, so I’d walk up to Pennington Avenue with my brother and we’d stroll around the rim. No one ever threw anything into the water. It offered a real moment of solitude.

In Denver, my Uncle Pete and my Aunt Lucille Berlute’s family had grown over time. Their children were Robert, Jr. and Pamela.

We visited our family in Jersey City often. In the beginning, we traveled up Route 1, and later we used the New Jersey Turnpike when it was completed and opened in 1952. Grandmom Carmela and Grandpop Albert Fernandez lived on Mercer Street, then on Montgomery Street in Jersey City. I couldn’t wait to visit them in their new 2nd floor apartment in a building on Varick Street. I loved them and the rest of the family so much.

Grandmom put the leaf in the kitchen table, dumped a big pile of flour in the center, made a well, filled it with eggs and began to make ravioli dough. She’d give me a big bowl filled with ricotta cheese, and I’d mix in all of the eggs, grated cheese and parsley. By that time, the dough was rolled out and she’d begin the process of laying down a row of ricotta dollops, then folding over the dough, pressing down the edges and cutting them into half moons with a wavy-edged pizza cutter.

Grandpop Fernandez showed great affection to me by teasing me, calling me “Baby Jay, Sourpuss.” The more he teased me, the more I acted just like a baby-jay sourpuss, which just made his day.

Grandpop Albert was Spanish and he’d regale me with stories about the fishing village from which he came. And I’d dream of sitting on a dock in Spain, watching the fishing boats leave to ply the waters off the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

In the summer, city workers in Jersey City would hang sheets in a park or in the common courtyard shared by the whole block of tenements. As we sat on the lawn in our chairs, we’d munch on cakes, fruit or ice cream and watch movies. One of the first films Grandmom took us to see was Al Jolson in “The Jazz Singer,” the first talking picture. Jolson was in blackface, as was common in minstrel shows in the ‘30s.

Grandpop and Uncle Charlie worked for Colgate Palmolive-Peet. I remember them going to a funeral once because one of their coworkers fell into a soap vat and died.

Aunt Lena and Uncle Charlie Lopez lived on the first floor with their son Anthony and their two daughters, Dorothy (Dot) and Louise, my second cousins. Dot’s boyfriend Bob Cavanaugh had served in the Army and was in law school. He and Dot had been together since they were 14 years old. Even though Bob participated in all of the family affairs, his

mind and hands were never too far away from his books. He was an excellent student, and became my role model for how one should approach the scholastic life.

Bob Cavanaugh had such a great dry wit! Bob's tongue was often so far back in his cheek that it probably tickled the back of his throat.

Nearly every weekend Mom and Dad scheduled some activity. If we weren't visiting family or some site, we'd pack a ton of food and head for the picnic park in Crystal Cave or Washington Crossing State Park. The trip up River Road was always beautiful. Even the County Jail and quarry we passed had its rustic charm, but I'm sure the residents didn't feel that way.

We went crabbing in Barnegat Bay often. We'd wake at 5 a.m., pack a big box of sandwiches, drive to Becker's Supplies, rent a rowboat and traps, buy bait and head out for the adventure. Aunt Lena, Uncle Charlie, Dot and Bob, and Grandmom and Grandpop Fernandez often came with us. Everyone but Grandmom Fernandez got in the boat. She preferred to stay on the dock.

We'd fill a few wooden baskets with our catch, return to Trenton, clean the crabs in the back yard, put on a big pot of tomato sauce and boil the crabs in the sauce. We'd make enough spaghetti to pay lip service to the reason for making the sauce in the first place. Then we spread newspaper on the table and spent hour upon hour picking at the tomato-laden crabs. We'd have a contest to see who could make the biggest pile of empty shells. I loved to eat crabs and did my best, but Mom and Grandmom Carmela were the champs.

During one of Grandmom and Grandpop Fernandez's visits to our house, Dad suggested we all take a trip to Pennsylvania.

"Oh, we can't do that," Grandpop said. "I have to be at work in Jersey City in the morning."

Dad said nothing and convinced them to take the trip. We all got a good laugh after we went over the Trenton bridge to Morrisville 20 minutes later. "There," Dad said to Grandpop. "We're in Pennsylvania."

Sometime after Grandpop Fernandez died, we convinced Grandmom to give the rowboat at Barnegat a try. She agreed, and as she climbed down into the boat, it started to move away from the dock and she fell into the water up to her hips. We all laughed, but she saw little humor in it and restated her vow never to attempt that again.

The United States government was not happy in October, 1949, when its longtime ally, Nationalist China under Chiang Kai-shek's leadership, fell to the communists led by Mao Zedong. In the revolution's aftermath, another quarter of the world's population fell under communist domination. Chiang, his family and all those of his Kuomintang Party fled to Formosa (Taiwan) and the outer islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

During the Christmas holidays, Bill Williamson, Dad and I visited a farm where the men each bought half a fresh pig. Dad took his half and cut it into chops and roasts, but for the

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most part he made the pork into homemade Italian sausage, complete with fennel seeds and spices, and encased in the fresh intestine casing he had also purchased. He'd run the meat through his own grinder and arrange the sausage in giant circles on the kitchen table.

Dad cooked the sausage, both hot and sweet, in a big pot of sauce and we'd all enjoy it in torpedo rolls after Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and during our New Year's Eve open house parties. Mom and Dad loved a house full of family and friends. I'd sneak off with my glass of Grandpop Gambino's homemade wine.

After school, I'd run down to my Uncle Vince's Bakery on Paul Ave., on the same street as St. James Church and Grammar School. I loved the long buns filled with silky white cream. I couldn't understand why my cousin Bob didn't sneak cakes, pies and donuts all day long. He told me that the constant smell of those confections dulled his senses to them and his appetite for them.

We always went to the Feast of St. James on Paul Avenue, which was blocked off as the uniformed Italian marching band played on a platform in front of the church in the middle of the block. Hearing all of those instruments play together live was a real treat for me, and I listened to them play for hours.

Then they'd march the statue of Mary up and down the street. There were always plenty of lucky wheels, sausage and meatball sandwiches, spun cotton candy and everything to drink.

Italian music was always played in Grandpop Gambino's house, particularly opera. Although that medium didn't interest me much, I think it gave me a strong sense of melody and a deep affection for the human singing voice.

Grandpop Gambino always read "Il Progresso Italo-Americano," the Italian language newspaper which began publishing in New York in 1880. The paper chronicled all Italian-American events, including all of the television and radio broadcasts of his favorite operas.

Mom and Dad bought our first television in 1950. It was a 10-inch Philco, which cost about \$500, a tidy sum in those days. Other television brands were RCA and Dumont, and each company had a network. All signals were broadcasted and received in black and white. Crowds of neighbors came to our home to see it. Getting the antenna into the right position to clear up the fuzzy picture was always a major project.

I had a lot of favorite shows. Milton Berle dominated Tuesday night with his "Texaco Star Theater," which ran from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. until 1954. Water pressure dipped dramatically in every city every time a commercial came on during that show and people ran to the bathroom, and more so when the show was over.

No one wanted to miss whatever wacky costume Berle wore. No one wanted to miss how he'd barge into and "ruin" a comedy sketch his forewarned guests were performing. Nightclubs changed their off-night from Monday to Tuesday. The popularity of Berle's show sold a lot of televisions.

Also, there were variety-comedy shows with Eddie Cantor, George Jessel and Jimmy

Durante, who closed his show with the line, "Good night Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are." Then he'd walk away through a series of ever-smaller spotlights. Sam Levinson, an ex-teacher-turned-humorist, had a show in which he railed regularly at the "decline" of American values and morality, which were changing dramatically from year to year. In the afternoon, Al and I watched "Aesop's Fables," a cartoon show with very primitive animation. Then came "My Little Margie," "Our Miss Brooks," and, of course, "I Love Lucy," which debuted on October 15, 1951.

I loved to watch Ralph Bellamy in "Man Against Crime." I never noticed that the space rangers on "Captain Video" wore business suits and space helmets made from plastic fish bowls, but shows of that genre inspired my love for science fiction. "Captain Video," played by Richard Coogan, then Al Hodge, ran from '49 to '55 on the Dumont Network. I also watched "You Are There," a show where historical figures were interviewed as if it were coverage of a current event.

We'd wait in the afternoon for the test pattern to arrive on the TV screen and then disappear when the programming started, but more often than not, we would also see the "Please Stand By" sign fill the screen at least a few times a week. Television service had not reached a point of true dependability.

I was among the first kids on the block to have a Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd) metal lunch box. Hoppy, as he was known to all kids and all of the good guys in his tales, was the first television character to appear on such a lunch box.

There were so many shows that recounted the great battles of the Second World War. I watched NBC's half-hour weekly series called "Victory at Sea," which had a great Richard Rodgers score. I watched "Crusade in Europe," narrated by Dwight Eisenhower every week. There I first saw graphic film and photographs concerning the Holocaust against the Jews in Europe during the Second World War. I saw row upon row of emaciated bodies either nearing death or lying dead in ditches. I saw films of the gas ovens, still filled with the half-burned remains of the victims.

It was a disgusting sight, especially to me as a young kid of eight, and my parents didn't want me to watch it. But I insisted on sitting there and watching the whole thing. I thought everyone should have been required to watch it, because any human being of any age who wasn't repulsed by such a sight was probably also a victim dehumanized by an event as bad as this. Or they weren't human at all.

I always found the term Holocaust to be insufficient, but I've yet to find another single word to take its place in describing the horrible genocide the Nazis perpetrated on the Jews and others. I felt a sense of guilt for all humanity against the perpetrators, and I felt deep anger against those who looked the other way while this was happening.

I was raised on a steady diet of anti-semitism at St. James Church. After I saw the war documentaries, I refused to believe the nuns about anything they had to say about anything.

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They had lost all credibility with me, despite their attempts to enforce those beliefs with a ruler across the knuckles and worse.

And if I were rapped in school, my parents would most likely be told and I'd get it again when I went home. I vowed to escape the Church at the very earliest opportunity.

They'd say, "If you don't do this or that, you'll go to Hell."

I'd mutter to myself, "There is no Hell, other than the one you've put me in right here."

They'd say, "The Jews killed Christ, you know." When I got older I discovered that it was my ancestors, the Romans, not the Jews, who actually committed the deed. After all, Pontius Pilate was an agent of the Romans, the ancestors of the very people who have run the Catholic Church for over 1,900 years. In the killing of this maverick Jew, Jesus Christ, the Jews probably hoped to ward off the worst anger and vengeful intentions of their oppressors.

As I got older and heard reports that Pope Pious XII had done little to help the Jews escape the Nazis, my attitudes against the Catholic Church began to harden more. I vowed that I would never, ever utter an anti-semitic remark in my life, nor allow such a remark from others to go unchallenged.

In the Second World War, the Arabs sided with the Nazis, because they shared their hatred of the Jews and wanted to preempt the postwar creation of the State of Israel imposed by the victorious Allies. Indeed, the Arab Intifadeh against the Jews in Palestine started the day after that world war ended and has not abated. In that context, the United States had no choice but to support the establishment of the State of Israel.

Yes, believe it. At eight years old these considerations did weigh on my little mind.

It was at about that age that I learned, in terms of the difference between my religious beliefs and those around me, that I might as well be on a mental island. I learned to protect myself by not uttering too much, because there was just too much enforcement around me that was willing to try to dissuade me from my "radical" beliefs.

While riding my bike (I always had one, for some reason) to Roger's house, above Romeo and Juliet's Cafe, I cut through the alley, up to the laundry plant, rounded the corner and blacked out. I was disoriented for at least the next few days. I've always wondered what happened to me during the period of time I lost that day.

I rode my bike all over Trenton as a child. I'd pedal to Fritz's diner, on the corner of Calhoun St. and Princeton Avenue, then down a way to the Giant Tiger, which was the first supermarket I'd ever seen. Then I'd drive down that street to Princeton Avenue and my grandparents' home.

Some of the neighborhood kids, mostly my age, would pick on me nearly every day. This annoyed Dad to no end and he sent me back to the alley with this admonition, "Give him a whack, or I'll give you one."

The boy tried to run away when he saw me approaching him in the alley with all of the facial fury I could muster. I gave him a right uppercut and knocked him down into a puddle. Then I kicked him in the butt a few times for good measure. He ran away crying. While I

gloated over the moment, it was the first and last fight I ever had in my life. And no one ever bothered me again.

Old Stock Beer and Champale Sparkling Malt Liquor were made in Trenton, as well as E. L. Kerns soda (with the elk on the label). E. L. Kerns sponsored basketball and bowling teams, while John A. Roebling's Sons sponsored a host of teams and special affairs.

Everyone in and out of town knew of the special contributions made by the John A. Roebling's Sons Company. John, the father, designed the Brooklyn Bridge, the first cable suspension bridge in the world. John's three sons – Charles, Ferdinand and Washington – controlled the company. Charles ran the company, while Ferdinand handled sales and finance. Washington supervised construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, strung with cable made in their factory complex in Trenton. Roebling cable was also used in the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Charles's son, Washington Roebling II, died on the Titanic in 1912.

Roebling wire and cable was also used for Alexander Graham Bell's phone lines. The Otis Elevator Company used it to pull its boxes up the world's tall buildings, including the Empire State Building and the Washington Monument. The company's cable flew with Lindbergh in the Spirit of St. Louis.

Roebling moved his operation to Trenton on the urging of Peter Cooper, who, with Abram Hewitt, operated the ironworks that produced the first I-beam, so essential to modern tall building construction.

Yes, Trenton had an interesting history, which probably helped inspire my love of the subject.

In 1679, 20 Quakers from Yorkshire, England, led by Mahlon Stacy, left Burlington, New Jersey and settled on land they bought near a rocky bend in the De La Warr River. Their neighbors were the Lenni Lenape Indians. William Trent bought 1,600 acres from Mahlon Stacy, Jr. Trent built his businesses in Trent's Town and sold subdivisions of the purchased acreage to others.

I'd occasionally visit William Trent House, built in 1719 as a summer residence for Trent, who was a wealthy Philadelphia merchant. Martha Washington often rested there during trips from Mount Vernon to New York City, the then-capitol of the United States.

Mrs. Washington was among many who used Trent's Town as a rest stop. Trent's Town and its residents prospered during those years. They even enjoyed regular steamboat service to Philadelphia while Robert Fulton was still experimenting elsewhere with that mode of travel.

Sometimes I'd ride my bike to the Five Points park at the Battle Monument, an obelisk with a statue of George Washington at the top. The monument, dedicated on October 19, 1893, commemorated the Battle of Trenton during the American Revolution.

Washington left Valley Forge and crossed the Delaware in Durham boats just north of Trenton on December 25, 1776. British and Hessian (German) troops were housed in their barracks near Front Street, close to the Delaware River in Trenton. The barracks was built in

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1758 to house British troops during the French and Indian Wars.

A Tory spy tried to warn the British commander at the barracks that the Continental Army was approaching, but the colonel was playing cards and refused to be interrupted during his deal. The spy sent the colonel a note, but the colonel put it in his pocket unread. Washington traveled down what is now known as Pennington Road and Pennington Avenue and attacked at dawn on December 26, 1776.

The Battle Monument was built on the spot where Washington placed his cannons and shelled the Hessian and British soldiers encamped at their barracks that morning. Capt. Alexander Hamilton led the American soldiers into battle, and it was over by noon. The Continentals captured all of the enemy after killing 150 of them, including the commander, the British colonel. No Americans were lost in the battle, but future president James Monroe was badly wounded.

After the Battle of Trenton, Washington retreated across the Delaware to Pennsylvania, returning to Trenton on January 2, 1777. He attacked 10,000 British troops at Princeton to the north. Washington escaped after defending the Assunpink Creek Bridge three times.

Trenton became the capitol of New Jersey in 1790, then became the U.S. capitol for a few months in 1794. Trenton lost by one vote to the supporters of the Potomac parcel of land in its bid to become the nation's permanent capitol.

All acknowledge that the Battles of Trenton and Princeton were the turning points of the Revolutionary War. I loved to visit what was left of the Old Barracks, scene of that Revolutionary melee. I loved to entertain the notion that I was born near the gate to American liberty. I couldn't wait to see how far I could push the limits of my own personal freedom.

"Here we go again," my parents said when the Korean War started on June 25, 1950. After the Second World War, the Soviet Union took control of the northern part of Korea, while the United States controlled the south. After North Korea invaded the south, the United Nations voted to start a "Police Action" when the Soviet delegation, which had been boycotting the U.N. that month, went to lunch. Television news covered the story and, amid the primitive map graphics, newscasters like John Cameron Swayze showed us our first visible war, complete with recent film, on a daily basis.

On July 17, 1950, Julius Rosenberg was arrested for spying on America for the Soviet Union. His wife Ethel was arrested three weeks later. Ethel's brother David Greenglass testified against them at their trial. Prosecuted by noted anti-communist Roy Cohn and others, the Rosenbergs were convicted. Pres. Eisenhower refused to commute their sentences and they were both executed on June 19, 1953.

When Washington Post music critic Paul Hume panned the singing of Harry Truman's daughter Margaret in 1950, Truman, a piano player, threatened in an open letter to punch him in the nose.

Composer John Cage, a radical composer who always looked for new ways of expressing

music and art, decided to premiere his latest composition, "Sonata for Twenty Three Radios," at a New York theater. When the curtain opened, the audience saw 23 radios placed on risers on the stage. They hushed as the radios were turned on, each on a different station, and people moved around the stage to try to alter the different sounds into an atonal, abstract musical piece. Suddenly, every station's programming was interrupted for a special speech from President Truman and the audience sat there laughing.

In the beginning of the Korean War, the North Koreans pushed the Allied troops back to Pusan and the sea. Then the Americans countered with an amphibious invasion behind the North Korean lines at Inchon, turning the tide as they retook Seoul, South Korea's capitol, in March of 1951. The Allies pushed the North Koreans northward beyond the 38th Parallel and into North Korea itself and then right to the Chinese border. The Chinese joined the war on North Korea's side the very next day.

The Korean War introduced the first mass use of helicopters in warfare. They were nicknamed "eggbeaters" or "whirly birds." The Korean Conflict was also the first war to use jet planes, flown by officers of the Navy and the United States Air Force, a newly formed separate branch of the Armed Forces. Previously, airmen flew for the Army or the Navy.

The war in Korea was the first in which the United Nations played a key role in diplomacy and warfare. The Korean War was also the first of a new type of war theater, where the Soviet Union and China used North Korea as a surrogate fighter and we did the same with the South Koreans, our client state.

The "Police Action" continued at a virtual stalemate for the next 18 months. There was Pork Chop Hill and Heartbreak Ridge in 1951. There were arguments between the North and South Korean negotiators over the shape of the peace table, arguments orchestrated by the real powers.

MacArthur wanted to attack the Chinese, and did not rule out the use of nuclear weapons in his strategy. He chided and contradicted administration policy on a regular basis. He accused Truman of appeasing the communists all over the world. Truman fired MacArthur for insubordination on April 11, 1951.

The Republicans controlled Congress and allowed MacArthur to address a joint session a week later. MacArthur completed his remarks before Congress by saying, "I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads, which proclaimed most proudly that old soldiers never die; they just fade away. And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away. An old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty. Goodbye." And fade away he did – but only after an unsuccessful attempt to secure the Republican nomination for president.

Later, I wondered if "Seven Days in May," a book and film about an American general's attempt at a coup d'état, was based on the incidents surrounding MacArthur's dismissal.

In 1951, the Republican-dominated Congress passed, and the state legislatures ratified, the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, which essentially limited the President of the

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United States to two elected terms.

We all flocked to the new Woolworth Department Store on E. State St. when it opened in February, 1951. Mom scolded me as I repeatedly rode the escalator up and down between the first and second floors. Most times we'd shop at Yards Department Store or S. P. Dunham's. I couldn't even afford a tie at F. W. Donnelly's men's shop.

I'd run home from school to watch the Special Committee on Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce hearings, chaired by Senator Carey Estes Kefauver, a Tennessee Democrat. The hearings started in May 1950, around the time we got our first television set, and went on until summer of the following year. The culmination of the roving hearings came in New York City during the week starting on March 12, 1951, when over 50 witnesses detailed the existence of La Cosa Nostra and its infiltration into American life.

While that coverage was politically enlightening, it didn't help us Italians much. The media attention and exposure propelled Kefauver into the national spotlight later, and he aborted his own presidential candidacy to accept the second slot on the ticket with Adlai Stevenson in 1956.

Dad sometimes took me for swimming lessons at the large pool at the YMCA on E. State and Clinton Sts. I never learned to swim more than a few perfunctory strokes, but it was nice to go out with my father.

I saw the Soap Box Derby on television in 1951. The national event, a slide down a steep hill in Akron, Ohio, was open to all boys nine years old and older. As per the rules, Dad did not help me build my decrepit little model racing car according to a set of design rules for the local race in Trenton. I couldn't get the thing to run more than a block or two before at least one of the wheels fell off, so I didn't enter the race.

Dad and Uncle Vince took Dad's brother Johnny, Uncle Vince's son Bobby and me to see the Dodgers at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn and see the Phillies at Shibe Park, which was renamed Connie Mack Stadium in 1953. I had fun being with my cousin Bob and my young Uncle John. And, of course the food was great, until I got really sick on the ride home in Dad's new '51 Chevy.

Dad loved the football games at nearby Princeton University, so nearly every Saturday in the fall of 1950 and 1951, we'd drive to Palmer Stadium and watch his hero, quarterback Dick Kazmaier, Class of 1952, lead the Tigers in battle against another visiting Ivy League school.

Dick Kazmaier, an All-American rated tailback from Maumee, Ohio, played flawlessly in Coach Charlie Caldwell's single wing formation during those two seasons, winning nearly all of his last 22 games. Kazmaier led his team to the Lambert trophy that year, and he himself won the Heisman Trophy and the Walter Camp Award. He appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine after being named Associated Press's Player of the Year.

Kazmaier was drafted into the NFL by the Chicago Bears, but he opted instead for Harvard Business School, then the Navy. He eventually started a financial services firm.

Dad sure knew how to pick his sports heroes, because Kazmaier was honored as the

Princeton Athletic News Player of the Century fifty years later.

I enjoyed all of the football games for a while, although the games bored me eventually. I went anyway. I didn't want to hurt Dad's feelings and I enjoyed being with him. We rarely had time together, because he worked so much.

On the way to the stadium, Dad always drove through the tree-lined streets of Princeton, never failing to pass Albert Einstein's simple home at 112 Mercer St. One time, we saw Einstein strolling down the street. Dad spotted him first. It was a great thrill for us.

I knew that Einstein usually wore no socks, was relaxed, wore sweaters and was the smartest man on Earth. But, as did most Americans, I didn't know anything about the Einsteinian space-time continuum, consisting of four dimensions: time, length, height and width.

There were 75 children in my brother's kindergarten class at St. James School. Mom walked both of us to school in the morning, but Al was in kindergarten for only half days, so Mom walked back and picked him up at noon. Instead of going home, she'd walk to Uncle Vince and Aunt Millie's bakery down the street to wait for me. Uncle Vince would give Al a piece of dough and he would play with it. (Uncle Vince had invented Play-Doh and didn't know it.) After Al got the dough good and dirty from play, Uncle Vince put it in the oven and baked it.

Things were not going well for me at the beginning of my year in the 4th grade in St. James School. I had a great deal of trouble sleeping then. Once a nun told us we each had to bring a dollar to school for "the pagan babies." Mom told me that she didn't have a dollar. "If I don't bring in a dollar, the nun is going to holler at me," I said. (And she did.)

Then the nuns said to the class, "If your parents don't make their Easter duty (take Communion at least once during Lent), you should run away from home."

I told Mom and Dad. The very next day, Dad pulled me out of St. James and enrolled me in Jefferson Elementary, a public school. I felt a great victory. The next day, a Saturday, a priest nonchalantly approached my father, who was sitting with me on the front porch. They had a brief conversation, but I remained in public school.

Uncle Vincent and Aunt Millie Piazza had been embarrassed by the same nuns at Bobby's First Communion rehearsal. The Piazzas couldn't go anywhere until they closed the bakery, so they arrived late.

"Well, look at this!" the nun shouted to the assembled parents. "Now they walk in! No wonder their child is the way he is."

Aunt Millie took Bobby out of St. James. Uncle Johnny, my father's young brother, was taken out, too, and he went to Junior H. S. Number One, which was just behind Jefferson School.

During my First Communion ceremony at St. James Church, an English-speaking priest questioned the children. When he asked who had a birthday on Christmas, I excitedly raised my hand and he called on me.

"It's Santa Claus's birthday," I shouted and the congregation broke into laughter. I got my first taste of show biz and I was hooked.

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Jefferson School was a welcome relief for me. Mrs. Katharine McCann, the principal, was a warm and friendly older woman, as was my first public school teacher, Miss Margaret Wrenn, with whom I spent the bulk of the 1951-52 school year. Then came 5th grade with Florence Voorhees. Then I began 6th grade with Mrs. Stone in September, 1953.

At home, we watched as Dave Garroway hosted the "Today Show" which first aired on the morning of January 14th, 1952. As the broadcast went on, people on the street waved through the window at the RCA Exhibition Hall in Rockefeller Center in Manhattan.

Along with his signature bow ties and horn-rimmed glasses, Garroway was imported from Chicago by NBC. His "costar" was J. Fred Muggs, a chimpanzee who had full run of the studio. Steve Lawrence and Edie Gormé also appeared there as young singers. They fell in love and began a lifelong marriage. Garroway hired a very young Barbara Walters as one of the writers. Her dad, Lou Walters, owned the famed Latin Quarter nightclub.

Dave Garroway left "Today" in 1961 and hosted many other shows after that. While recovering from open heart surgery, Garroway committed suicide in his home in Philadelphia on July 21, 1982.

I loved to watch the daily broadcasts of the old science fiction serials called "Flash Gordon," starring Buster Crabbe, a former Olympic swimmer. Based on Alex Raymond's comic book characters, there were three Flash Gordon series in all, and the episodes originally ran weekly in movie theaters in the 1930s.

The characters included the evil Emperor Ming the Merciless (Charles B. Middleton), the conniving Princess Aura and Lady Sonja – all rulers of the planet Mongo. Helping Flash were his companions Dale Arden, Dr. Hans Zarkov, and, of course, his allies, especially the big, fat guys in Centurion uniforms who flew around with giant wings. I dreamt about visiting all the weird places these space travelers frequented. "Buck Rogers" (also starring Buster Crabbe) came later, along with his spaceship with the sparklers sticking out of the back, but Flash was my man.

Mom and Dad took us to South Street in Philadelphia to buy our suits. We would leave by 6 a.m., because, according to Dad, the Jewish businessmen that ran the stores thought it was bad luck for the first customer of the day to leave without purchasing something, anything. Dad wanted to be that first customer so he could haggle a good price by threatening to leave the store. But the merchants sent signals to each other if we left without a purchase, so the other merchants wouldn't sell to Dad, forcing him to return to the original location and buy. I often chuckled to myself at this display of human interaction.

I participated in my first talent show in Jefferson School. I donned my brand new South Street suit, put white powder in my temples, summoned every ounce of guts in my little body, took a deep breath, walked all by myself onto that stage, faced forward into the bright spotlight, gazed momentarily at the row upon row of people there, threw my voice as low as it would go and imitated Ezio Pinza singing "Some Enchanted Evening," from the Broadway

musical "South Pacific." Then I sang an imitation of Johnnie Ray singing his hit, "Cry."

My brother Al sang "Eh! Cumpari." He affected the whistling lines of the tune by sucking in instead of blowing out. My cousin Bobby played the accordion.

On occasion I was called to the office at Jefferson School, where I'd see my brother sitting there, hair all wet. My brother would sometimes wet his head in the water fountain or the sink in the school bathroom.

I did my first drawing, a Nativity scene, in mid-December and Miss Wrenn promptly tacked it to a hall bulletin board for all to see. I got so many comments from the other teachers and the students. I loved art from that point on and I tried to copy just about every drawing or painting I came across, some more successfully than others. So, at Miss Wrenn's fervent encouragement, Mom and Dad enrolled me in the Trenton School of Fine and Industrial Arts, the same private school my Uncle Pete attended in his youth.

I became infatuated with the rather unique painting style of Grandma Moses, as did most of the country and President Eisenhower, who touted her message of positivity.

After art classes on Saturday, I'd cross the street and visit the lobby of the Hotel Hildebrecht, opened on the corner of W. State Street and Chancery Lane in July of 1929, just before the Great Depression. I'd study its opulence in detail. I'd note its unique staircase and railings at the entrance, its chandeliers, and its lower level replete with upscale shops.

I'd pass the Stacy-Trent Hotel, which was not far away on State and Willow Streets. A rival of the Hildebrecht, it was opened in September of 1921. The hotel was named after Stacy, Trenton's first citizen, and Trent, who was the city's namesake.

After I studied his life in school and visited Gettysburg with my parents, Abe Lincoln became my hero. I drew his portrait many times and I memorized his Gettysburg Address, which, to me, signified the great sorrow this plainspoken man must have felt. The speech was given shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg, which started on July 2, 1863. A young Italian-American Marine Band musician named John Philip Sousa was present when Lincoln gave the speech.

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

by Abraham Lincoln

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot

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hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth.

How could one not be interested in a war in which two percent of their country's population was killed? Slavery was rightly the great moral issue of the war, but I was also interested in the economic and political pressures that came to bear before and after the Civil War.

We also visited Valley Forge and Bowman's Hill, a Revolutionary War observation tower in Washington Crossing Park, Pennsylvania. It was built in the style of an English castle. We'd climb to the top of the stone tower, look in all directions and try to picture the Redcoats, or "Lobsterbacks" marching in formation with drum and fife accompaniment across the open field.

As the park literature said, the hill itself, 360 feet above sea level, provided views of the Americans in Pennsylvania and the British across the Delaware in New Jersey, all useful information as the Americans prepared for the Battle of Trenton. The tower was built as a tribute in 1930.

Mom always read classic books, such as James Fennimore Cooper's "The Last of the Mohicans." Thanks to Mom, I became an avid reader early on. I read her small but excellent collection of American and world literature classics by Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Guy de Maupassant and Zane Grey. I loved to read her poetry collection. I became a history buff at 10 years old, thanks to Dad and our family visits to historic places. I drew and painted pictures of knights and jousts, and the drawing led to more reading. I also became intrigued with Ernest Hemingway's life and work and I read everything of his I could find.

The playgrounds of Jefferson School and Junior High School Number One bordered each other. Uncle John, just a few years older than I, attended Junior One and was a patrol boy along that border. When Bobby, Al and I met with him at lunchtime, he would constantly have to remind us that he didn't like us to call him "uncle" in front of his young friends,

Al and I often fought with each other during the daily walks to and from Jefferson School. Sometimes the black kids chased us and hit us along the way. Getting home had much meaning for us.

Fish and chips (deep-fried breaded codfish with tartar sauce, served with French fries) were popular then, so Mom and Dad used to take us to a joint near Junior One.

I watched a somewhat fuzzy broadcast from London of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on February 6, 1952. Elizabeth ascended to the throne after her father, George VI, a heavy smoker, died of lung cancer.

I was caught smoking because I burned a hole in my bedspread, so Dad soaked one of Grandpop's Italian stogies in wine for a few days and let it dry for a few days. Then, in an effort to impress on me the evils of smoking, he insisted that I smoke the whole thing in front of him in one sitting. I did, but I didn't get sick. I got drunk – I think.

In 1952, the military's investigation of UFO phenomena, called "Project Sign" and "Operation Grudge," became known as "Operation Blue Book," and officials use that designation to try to explain away every reported sighting as a misinterpretation of natural events, while at the same time, removing the unexplainable from view.

I loved Jefferson School. I was selected by Principal McCann to go on my first trip to a summer camp. Two children were selected out of each of Trenton's public schools and sent on a two-week stay at the camp. This was my first solo trip away from home and my parents fretted over my being homesick.

I got homesick. The food was terrible. I postponed a bowel movement in the fly-infested open latrine for the first three days. The bugs bit us all the time. The counselors failed in their attempt to get me to swim. I felt it was unnecessary for anyone without gills.

I couldn't wait to get back to civilization. On the way home from that camp, the green toothpaste oozed out and colored all of my clothes in the suitcase.

Dad took Al and me to Yankee Stadium once. Al went to the lavatory and standing there, out of 50,000 people, was our Uncle Stanley Phillips from South Plainfield. What a coincidence!

The crowd in Yankee Stadium booed Ted Williams, who played baseball for the Boston Red Sox of the American League. Williams was the last player to have a .400 batting average or higher for the season.

Dad wanted me to play baseball on one of the local Little League teams, so I made him happy and went to the tryouts in the public park off Brunswick Avenue. Too many kids tried out for the teams, so they had to create a second, minor league to handle the volume. I was perfectly willing to give my slot to any one of those kids.

I made it onto the last-rated team in the minors. While the regular league players had real baseball uniforms, we minor league guys had a tee-shirt and a hat. But we got to use the new dugouts and the newly landscaped infield. The outfield was delineated by a brown slat windbreaker fence, which was brought about ten feet closer to the infield when we played.

Our team set records every game, including the record for the longest string of shutouts in the history of kiddie sports. We were the shutees. In the middle of the season, our team somehow managed to get three boys on base – at the same time! I wondered if the other team was engaging in charity. It was my turn at bat.

I caught the ball just right as it came over the plate. It flew higher and higher and crossed the fence. I rounded the bases, bringing home all three of the players on base. I pounded my feet on home plate and kept running out of the park to home, never to play baseball again. What the hell, I figured. It's always better to leave a career on a high note.

During the week of July 14, 1952, Mom and Dad packed up their 1951 Chevy two-door sedan, and we all took a three-day drive to visit Mom's brother Peter and his family in Denver. Except for parts of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, opened on October 1, 1940, there was no interstate highway system. We traveled mostly on two- or three-lane highways (in total for both directions!), with frequent stops for traffic lights. We took a different route going and coming. On the way there, we stopped in Clyde, Ohio and stayed in a cottage at Grand Camp on US 20 the first night.

By the middle of the second day of our trip, Dad tired of my naming the make and year of every passing car and told me so in no uncertain terms, so I sat sullen for a while. I only wanted to relate to my dad, the mechanic, but I overdid it. I quickly recovered. After all, I had a brother seated beside me to torment.

After passing Truman's home in Independence, Missouri, we approached a funky motel the second night. No other motel in the area had a vacancy. While Dad was in the motel office, Mom was in the back seat of the car with Little Al. I began playing with the steering wheel. Suddenly the gear went into neutral and the car began to roll backwards down the hill. Mom flew into the front seat and engaged the hand brake.

Despite our early start the next morning, it was dusk by the time we finished traversing the endless wheat fields of Kansas. The sun beat down all day, but the Chevy had a permanent metal visor above the front windows. Dad was miffed because the restaurant in Kansas couldn't serve beer with his dinner, but his mood cheered when we reached the outskirts of Denver, and he, like all of us, got a shot of adrenaline from the anticipation of seeing our family that night.

Uncle Pete and his wife Lucille had two children, Pam and Bobby. Their house was a ranch-style house with a western motif, most of which was constructed by Uncle Pete himself, as was the pair of lamps whose bases were western boots filled with cement. When I looked out his window, I could see the Rocky Mountains in the background. There was a stone barbecue on which he cooked venison steaks in the backyard.

The steaks came from Uncle Pete's hunting forays into those beautiful Rocky Mountains. He was more than happy to take us on a few day trips. One day we went to Pike's Peak, but Dad was not willing to test his Chevy's mettle on it. Another day, we climbed into the mountains, this time with Uncle Pete at the wheel and Dad in his most unaccustomed role as a passenger. Uncle Pete talked to us all nonstop, but Dad's eye was on the sparse clearance between the road, its short railing and the 14,000-foot plunge to a certain death. Much to Uncle Pete's amusement, I could hear Dad hitting his imaginary brake pedal constantly.

But we made it to the Continental Divide. Despite the cold and the snow in July, we only wore sweaters while we played with the hungry chipmunks.

On the way back to Trenton, we stopped at the Chicago Zoo and then on to Lincoln's tomb in Springfield, Illinois.

For three days at the end of July, 1952, a number of UFOs were seen over Washington, DC. The objects appeared on radar, which tracked them as they entered secure airspace over the Capitol Building and the White House. On those occasions, jets were scrambled to pursue the objects, which then disappeared from view and radar, only to return when the jets left.

Dwight David Eisenhower, better known as Ike, became President of Columbia University in New York after the war. He could have had the presidential nomination from either party, but, being a military man, he leaned toward the Republicans and accepted their nomination. I watched the Chicago convention on television for the first time.

The 1952 Democratic Convention, also held in Chicago, was televised, too. Truman chose not to run again, so he got only a few votes from Missouri delegates wanting to honor their favorite son. The convention chose Adlai Stevenson for president and Alabama Sen. John Sparkman for the second slot.

As was customary in Republican politics, vice-presidential candidates were given the attack dog role, while the person at the top of the ticket played the statesman. In his previous runs for office, Richard Nixon, Ike's choice for V.P., had proven he could fill that attack dog role admirably.

The *New York Post*, then a liberal paper, discovered Nixon's little \$18,000 "slush fund" set up by some of his wealthy contributors. Pressure grew on Eisenhower to replace Nixon on the ticket. Nixon responded by giving his famous "Checkers Speech" in Los Angeles on September 23, 1952.

Nixon acknowledged the existence of the fund, but said that "not a cent of the... money... ever went to me for my personal use." He said it was not a secret fund, adding, "And third, let me point out, and I want to make this particularly clear, that no contributor to this fund, no contributor to any of my campaigns, has ever received any consideration that he would not have received as an ordinary constituent."

Nixon proceeded to lay out the case for his innocence, including a description of his assets and debts. He said, "I should say this, that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat, and I always tell her she would look good in anything.

"One other thing I should probably tell you, because if I don't they will probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election.

"A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention that our two youngsters would like to have a dog, and, believe it or not, the day before we left for this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was?

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“It was a little cocker spaniel dog, in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted, and our little girl Tricia, the six-year-old, named it Checkers.

“And you know, the kids, like all kids, loved the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep it.”

Yes, I was developing a deep distrust of this man, who was called “Gloomy Gus” by his college classmates and “Tricky Dick” by me. I considered Nixon one of the most dangerous men in America.

Mom and Dad, noting that Uncle John and cousin Bob were taking accordion lessons, encouraged me to do the same. In all honesty, I couldn’t see myself shaking those bellows while playing “Lady of Spain” for the rest of my life. My life became a tug of war between my accordion lessons and Howdy Doody.

Howdy won. Mom was trying to help me learn the instrument, and was also learning to play it in the process. She was not happy when I finally quit.

I loved all of the characters on Howdy’s show. There was the host Buffalo Bob Smith and the ever-silent Clarabell the Clown (Lew Anderson). There were other puppets, including Phineas T. Bluster, Flubadub, Dilly Dally and the old prospector Oil Well Willie. I would run home from school to be sure to catch the show’s beginning. I had a tremendous crush on Princess Summerfall Winterspring, so pretty in her Native American costume and headband with a single feather. The show was on NBC, so I’d sit by the television every day and watch for the test pattern that signaled the beginning of broadcasting for the day. Instead of the usual Indian in the center, it showed a portrait of “my man” – the great Howdy Doody.

There were other great kiddie shows, such as Chief Halftown and Sally Starr the cowgirl. And there was that great hand puppet, Berty the Bunyip. There was Willy the Worm, the first cartoon on television, and Aesop’s Fables and Farmer Gray cartoons. Of course, I never missed the kiddie show “Kukla, Fran and Ollie.” Fran Allison interacted with Burr Tillstrom’s puppets, called Ollie (a dragon hand puppet with a big front tooth) and Kukla (a high-voiced, bald man puppet). Named the Kuklapolitans, the troupe was a mainstay on kiddie television for years.

From time to time we’d visit Great-Grandpop Pietro Berlute, who still lived in a converted trolley. The place smelled and was always in a disheveled state. After they cleared the lot to make way for a real building, he relented some time later and moved in with his son, Grandpop Peter Berlute.

We always spent Christmas Day at Grandmom and Grandpop Gambino’s house. The adults sat around the big table in the dining room, and Al, cousin Bobby, Uncle Johnny and I sat at the kiddie table in the kitchen. Grandmom and the women prepared dinner while the men watched sports. I loved to learn cooking from her, so I stayed in the kitchen and helped, too. Grandmom once said to me, “The trouble today is people no taka no shit.”

I answered, “The trouble with people today is that they take too much of it.”

Dad bought our first set of Lionel trains that Christmas. Al and I sat mesmerized by the

train as it rolled round and round the 20 feet of track. Dad built a setting for us and we nailed down the tracks, the tunnels and the switching mechanism.

Grandpop Gambino could never watch a war movie. The men usually retired to the living room after so many of our holiday family dinners. If there weren't a sports event to watch, then they'd turn on either a war movie or a documentary, then promptly fall asleep and start a snore-fest. Grandpop, a former prisoner of war, would leave the room when those shows came on. He couldn't bear to watch them.

Grandpop loved to watch any Italian opera broadcast. They were fairly rare at that time. He'd return to the television and tune in his music whenever the men decided to sit around the dining room table and recreate the great naval battles of World War Two. They used salt and pepper shakers, nuts and fruit to show everyone's position. To hear Uncle Vince tell his tale, he was on the bridge of the ship rather than in the galley baking bread. I didn't appreciate the inherent danger in doing that seemingly simple task until much later in my life.

Since Dad's brother Johnny was born with a birth defect in his leg, he always walked with a pronounced limp. Grandpop Gambino took him to many doctors, but no one could find the problem. He always wore a brace and had special shoes. He needed an operation to straighten out the leg, but he never did get it. Since the leg limited his mobility, he was always overweight and out of shape.

I was the eldest grandson, so I helped Grandpop retrieve the wine from the basement during those holiday dinners. The basement ceiling was fairly low, which was okay for him, but a little low for me as I got older and towered over him. All of his barrels of wine were lined up along the wall with all his presses and other winemaking equipment. How he enjoyed putting up so much of it. It smelled so great!

By then, Grandpop and I had such a nice relationship. He had a little metal kitchen table in the basement and we sit there for a while and talk. He listened a lot, because it was difficult for him to hold a conversation in English and I spoke no Italian. Except for my grandparents, everyone in the family spoke English without an accent.

In 1952, Richard Milhous Nixon managed to stay on as Dwight Eisenhower's vice presidential candidate on the Republican ticket. They ran against Democratic contenders Adlai Stevenson and his VP running mate Alabama Sen. John Sparkman and won. My most enduring memory of that campaign was the photo showing a reclining, weary Stevenson and the hole on the sole of his shoe.

They called Stevenson an "egghead," because he talked in complete sentences and tried to make his campaign a model of scholarly reasoning. But we elected the war hero, whose transcribed speeches and press conference remarks were a nightmare of syntax, far worse than mine then and now.

The Cuban Revolution against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista started on July 26, 1953, when lawyer Fidel Castro led an abortive attack on an armory at an army base. After

that ill-fated unsuccessful raid, Castro and a few of his remaining followers fled to the mountains, where they were captured and arrested. Castro was sentenced to 15 years in prison, but the Batista regime released him soon thereafter. They feared Castro's jailing was building popular support for him among the Cuban People.

I also became more aware of politics on the local level. The congressman for the district that encompassed Trenton and Mercer County was Rep. Harrison A. "Pete" Williams, Jr., who, after a stint as a Navy pilot in World War Two and obtaining a law degree from Columbia University, filled a vacant seat in the House in 1953. Williams ran for a full term the following year and won. He lost his House seat in 1956, but won a Senate seat in 1958. A great friend of organized labor, Williams continued to win reelection, due to his immense popularity and effectiveness in passing legislation to aid the cities.

My neighbor Joe Naticia took up drums. One day in 1953, while the sound of Joe's drums filled the streets, I heard a recording blasting from his house. Someone sang, "One, two, three o'clock, four o'clock rock," and, as I soon discovered, rock and roll was born. The record was "Rock Around the Clock," performed by Bill Haley and the Comets. It was also the hit song from the movie "The Blackboard Jungle."

Ironically, the record was produced by Milton Gabler, owner of Commodore Records and the Commodore Music Shop in New York City. In the 1930s, Gabler had recorded such greats as Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong, pairing the latter two on a recording for the first time.

A trip to the Jersey shore was always a welcome treat, and in July of 1953, we went to Seaside Heights with Grandmom and Grandpop Fernandez. We traveled on to Baltimore, Mount Vernon and Washington, staying overnight in a motel. On the way back, we stopped at Atlantic City, where we entered George Hamid Sr.'s Steel Pier and caught an afternoon set by one of Dad's favorite big bands in the ballroom. We also saw the diving horse at the end of the pier.

Eisenhower vowed to go to Korea and find a way to peace if elected. He did just that. The Armistice was signed on July 27, 1953 at the negotiation center at Panmunjon, a small village on the North-South border. The area, on the 38th Parallel, had become a demilitarized zone. There was no peace treaty – just a cease-fire.

In all, 40,000 Americans were killed in Korea. One hundred thousand men and women suffered wounds; and 8,200 were MIAs.

By the end of the Korean War, Negroes were finally integrated into units of the armed forces. Battlefield necessity had overruled the military's resistance to the idea for once and for all time.

Veterans returning from that war did not enjoy the same warm reception afforded returning troops after the Second World War. After all, there was no clear winner in the Korean War and Americans couldn't stomach such an ending.

On August 3, 1953, Mom and Dad sold the house at 102 Wayne Avenue to Samuel and Modiestine Gibbs for \$9,000.00.