



"America, for me, has been the pursuit and catching of happiness." ~Aurora Raigne



WILDWOOD by-the-sea: Nostalgia & Recipes COZY MORLEY

by Anita Hirsch, author of
"Wildwood-By-The-Sea: Nostalgia and Recipes"

Cozy Morley is a living legend in the Wildwoods. Now 85 years old, he retired to Florida in the winter and North Wildwood in the summer with his beloved wife of almost 25 years, Bobbie Morley. Cozy and Bobbie met when she was a waitress at Cozy's.

Not too many years ago, Cozy was appearing at the Lighthouse Point. A capacity crowd of his admirers were there waiting to hear Cozy sing: "On the Way to Cape May". Or another song the audience loved was "When Your Old Wedding Ring was New".

His fans waited to hear him tell the same old jokes. He told the one about the Philadelphia cop who saw a horse die on Moyamensing Avenue. When he was filling out his report, the cop realized he couldn't spell Moyamensing so he dragged the horse to Second Street.

Another joke that the audience loved to hear was the one about the time his mother got him his first banjo. Cozy said that he and his mom stood outside the pawnshop looking at the banjo inside and she said "are you sure this is what you want?" He said "yes", so she picked up a rock.....

Cozy was born in Philadelphia and grew up in South Philly, in the Irish neighborhood around Third and McKean Streets. He enjoyed music and learned to play the banjo. He went on to study the clarinet and the saxophone, borrowing instruments from the nearby Mummer's String Band Clubhouse.

After he graduated from high school, he went right into the music business at the age of 18. And he found his way to North Wildwood and Club Avalon at Spruce and Olde New Jersey Avenue, owned by Eddie Suez.

Cozy would pack the place which held 1,100, for his four hour shows. There were rows of tables pointed down to the stage, "like a beer fest hall", says Cozy's sister-in-law Mariellen Hawthorne and the people would sit at the tables and look down to the stage. He referred to his club as the "toilet"

because it was so dirty. If it was raining, the roof would leak. There was no air-conditioning, only fans in the windows and in the ceiling. But he had his followers and they filled up Club Avalon every night in the summer. He made his money "talking down his own place", says Bob Bright. "The place should have been condemned, but it was so much fun", remembers Bob Forstburg.

Eventually Cozy took over the ownership of Club Avalon and renamed it Cozy Morley's. Cozy was the emcee at the club. He told the jokes, all clean jokes, he didn't have to curse to get laughs, and he sang and played a few instruments in between acts.

To cover up his shyness, he took on a classy funnyman stage personality. He also had his own orchestra. Howard Reynolds was the bandleader and sax player. Before the shows, Howard and hostess Bebe Flanagan seated 1000 in less than two hours.

He was able to bring in some of the biggest entertainers of the 50's and 60's such as Joey Bishop and Al Martino.

Westy's took over the club in 1996 and it was rebuilt. All that is left now are the red steps that went into the original Club Avalon. Westy's Irish Pub was built around those steps.

After Westy's took over the club, Cozy appeared at the Sands Casino in the Copa Room in Atlantic City. He filled the room on Tuesdays and Wednesday afternoons with his fans. And on Friday nights he appeared in the Casbah Theatre at the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City at 8:00PM and at 10:00PM.

When Cozy retired, after 58 years in show business, his fans wanted a tribute to him in North Wildwood. They hired Zenos Frudakis to make a clay sculpture of Cozy which was then cast in bronze.

On Memorial Weekend, 2003, at Westy's Irish Pub in North Wildwood, the eight foot bronze statue of Cozy Morley was dedicated in what is known as Cozy's Corner. When the statue was dedicated,

COZY'S FAVORITE

Clams Casino

- 18 (approx) fresh littleneck clams, cleaned & shucked
- 3 Tb olive oil
- 3 oz. diced pancetta or bacon
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 1/3 cup chopped shallots
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 tsp dried oregano
- 1/3 cup dry white wine
- 3 Tb fresh parmesan
- 3 Tb shredded mozzarella
- Salt and fresh black pepper

Heat your oil in a large heavy skillet. Add the pancetta (bacon) reserve approx 1 oz. and saute approx 3 minutes until crisp. Drain on paper towels. To the same skillet, add your bell pepper, shallots, garlic and oregano. Gently saute about 5 minutes until shallots are tender and translucent. Add the wine and simmer until almost evaporated, about 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and completely cool your mixture. Then stir in the reserved pancetta and and 2 Tb. parmesan.

Preheat your oven to 500°. Line a heavy baking sheet with foil, and arrange your clams. Mound the vegetable mixture on top of each one. Mix your remaining parmesan with the shredded mozzarella. Generously sprinkle on each clam, and bake approx 10 minutes until cooked through and golden. Cozy says "Enjoy"!

there was a three day tribute which included a parade and a roast. The then North Wildwood Mayor Aldo Palombo called Cozy "Mr. North Wildwood: he is an institution. He brought good times to the Wildwoods," and "his exit from North Wildwood severely impacted upon the business in the entertainment section."

His wife Bobbie says Cozy still enjoys entertaining friends and family in his home. He will play the banjo and the piano and repeat some of his jokes. Bobbie planned a surprise party for him in April for his 85th birthday. "He is still the most loved and beloved local entertainer and humanitarian," says Bobbie Morley.

Thank you to Cozy Morley, Bobbie Morley, Mariellen Hawthorne, the Wildwood Historical Museum, and Bob Forstburg for helping with this article.



A postcard of Eddie Suez Club Avalon



Cozy Morley at the dedication of his statue in Cozy's Corner in 2003.



Cozy Morley's Continental Motel once stood at 8th and JFK Boulevard in North Wildwood.



August 1951, Magnolia Ave. Beach, Wildwood (L-R) Joe Bennet, Tom (Cozy) Morley, Lee Hesser
Picture submitted by Lee Hesser, N. Wildwood summer resident. He was a boy scout with Cozy (Tom Morley) in Troop 212 at Front & Christian street in a church basement, from 1937-1939. Lee recalls what a great 'ear wiggler' Cozy was when they were young boys.



Cozy Morley's Club Avalon in North Wildwood in the late 1950s. (L-R) Teddy Squadowski (aka Squash), Joe McMonagle (Grandfather of editor/publisher Dorothy McM. Kulisek) and Cozy Morley