



## Life & Times of Joe MacClain

**“The Life & Times of Joe MacClain”** was presented by David & Teresa Williams of the Wildwood Crest Historical Society this year. We at The SUN would like to give honor to this long time Wildwoodian as well. Joe was born in Philadelphia. His parents moved to Wildwood in 1933. They resided on the 100 E. block of 8th Ave. in North Wildwood where Joe attended Margaret Mace Elementary. He went onto Wildwood High where he graduated from in 1946. The presentation of Joe’s life was a combination of a slide show along with memories of significant events in Joe’s life. If you know Joe, you are aware of his uncanny ability to remember details from long ago. Recollections of his high school years and of growing up in Wildwood during war time are particularly interesting. Joe was asked the question what was life at Wildwood High like in the 1940’s? Joe states that “life was different then - we didn’t think much of material things, maybe because we were so used to rationing during WWII. But we enjoyed life in Wildwood and our years at Wildwood High!”

During his presentation, Joe points out that many people are not aware that most of his Wildwood High class started a strike in the Fall of 1943. Joe recalls, “Dr. Lozo, who was the Principal at the time, would not us have sports like basketball and football. No dancing was allowed either. His reason for this was because our country was at war. One day he came into the gym while we were exercising and he said since it was wartime we should snap to attention when he entered the room! The main problem with all of this was that we were the only school in Cape May County with these restrictions. During assembly one day he said he was watching us eating lunch in the cafeteria and we reminded him of a bunch of barnyard animals. That was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Soon the cries of STRIKE! could be heard all over Wildwood High. The main leaders of the strike were Charlie Johnson and Riddy Snyder (who lost his life in April 1945 when his ship, the Indianapolis was sunk by a Japanese sub.) Many of the students marched around the school carrying placards that read “Oink! Oink! Do we look like barnyard animals?” with most of the students out of school and on strike and playing mass hookey, things had to come to a head. Our strike had wide support of our parents and there was a meeting in the school auditorium, the place was jam packed! Many students and parents spoke angrily to Dr. Lozo with a long list of complaints. Dr. Lozo resigned and months later Mr. Young was named Principal. During the strike I was one of the many playing hookey. Encouraged by Dinty Moore, Buster Craven and

Joe Jackson, we spent the day playing cards at Dinty’s home. Since we did not play for money because we were all broke, they devised a system of doling our punishment if you lost a hand. I wasn’t very good at cards so I lost almost every hand. Some of my punishments were putting my hand in the canary’s cage and letting the bird bite my fingers, drinking worchestershire sauce, and eating lemons. I recall thinking that I would have had more fun going to school that day. The worst punishment was when I came home after 3:30 and my mother cheerfully asked me what I had for lunch in the cafeteria. I said it was a peanut butter & jelly sandwich. She replied ‘That’s funny! the Truant Officer was here and said you skipped school and that was the first pebble on the road to crime!’ The first and last time I ever skipped school and there I was, trapped like a rat!

We had Blackouts during the war. The Boardwalk was open every summer despite the war, but you could be up there and suddenly the alarm would sound and all the lights went out. We had German subs in the Atlantic and many ships were lost during 1942-1943. Oil would wash up on the beach and after bathing in the ocean you would have to use kerosene or gasoline to get the tar off your feet. At times bodies washed up on the beach. Germans who spoke good English were known to come ashore in the dark in a rubber raft and buy sodas and snacks at some of the stores. We had ships and blimps hurling depth charges at the subs and sinking some of them. It became routine to be sitting at the dinner table and all of the sudden hearing a loud boom, we knew what that meant. We also had the Naval Air Station on Airport Rd. and Navy pilots were taught how to fly dive bombers. We learned years after the war was over that some 40 pilots were killed in crashes into the bay or in the woods.

On Saturday evening Feb. 3rd, 1945 at 8:30pm, the Greater Wildwood Youth Center opened its portals to the jitterbugs of Wildwood. Housed in the old Avenue Theater building, the center provided music supplied by the juke box playing all the latest records. Jim Cafiero started a small orchestra which played music for dancing there. Frank Verna also had a small band playing at the Youth Center. The only serious objection heard on opening night was about the ten cent coat check charge!”

These are just a few of the recollections of Joe MacClain. If you would like to reminisce some more of the good old Wildwood days gone by, you can find Joe every once in a while at his old teenage hangout, Snuffy’s (now the Depot) in Wildwood Crest.



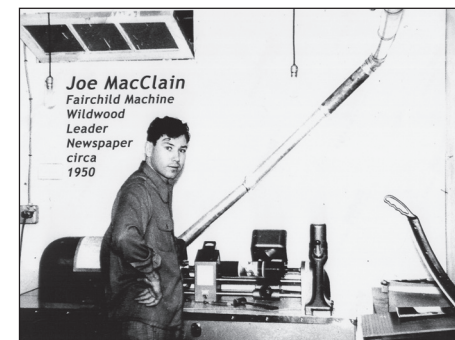
Joe MacClain, Wildwood High School 1946



Joe MacClain & Friend  
Military Police in Kyoto, Japan, circa 1947



Joe & Gloria MacClain with their son Bruce, circa 2003.



Joe MacClain  
Fairchild Machine  
Wildwood  
Leader  
Newspaper  
circa  
1950



Joe MacClain age 2



Bruce MacClain, age 4



Joe MacClain with family and Friends



Margaret Mace Class of 1943. Joe is 4th from the left, Sen. Jim Cafiero is on the far right.