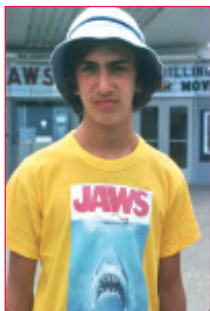


# THE SHOOBIE SHUFFLE - Tales from Wildwood Fanatics, Near and Far

## *Vincent Sculli: "Joe Jaws" and the Summer of '75*

BY AL ALVEN



"Joe Jaws" Wildwood Blaker Theater, 1975



"Joe Jaws" at Universal Studios in the JAWS ride.

This summer marks the 35th anniversary of the release of *Jaws*, the film often credited with creating - and defining - the seasonal blockbuster genre.

The second project completed by then-28-year-old director Steven Spielberg, it became the first movie to gross over \$100 million at the box office. In fact, it accomplished that feat by the end of the Summer of 1975.

The tale of a killer shark terrorizing a small resort town sent moviegoers into a frenzy, nationwide. But in the Wildwoods, the story resonated in a unique way.

It also helped create an unlikely local celebrity out of a 14-year-old kid from Yeadon, PA named Vincent Sculli, who held court daily at the Blaker Theater (Atlantic & Cedar).

"I became known as Joe Jaws," Sculli fondly recalls, noting that he saw *Jaws* an astonishing 68 times that summer. "The ushers started to recognize me and gave me that nickname, and it stuck."

Tall for his age and generally decked out in his favorite attire - a bright orange t-shirt with a *Jaws* logo and bucket hat - Sculli became a recognizable figure around town after being featured in the *Wildwood Leader*.

"Merle Paul, the general manager of Hunt's Theatres, arranged for a reporter from the newspaper to come interview me one day. Merle really knew how to generate publicity. He was very creative.

"Anyway, this reporter, he had to sit down next to me in the front row and talk to me while I watched the film. I never took my eyes off the screen because I was determined not to miss a second of it!"

As the Blaker's unofficial VIP, Sculli would stand outside the box office before each showing, discussing the film with the large crowd that would gather and even signing autographs. He was repeatedly offered free admittance to the show, but always declined.

"It was very important for me to get the ticket stubs from every show, which I collected. I could only get the stubs if I purchased a ticket.

"But, Merle, [Blaker manager] Mike Quattrone, and the staff took care of me in other ways, like taking care of concessions and things. They always treated me so well, and became like my extended family."

The following summer, Sculli would go on to fulfill one of his goals when he was hired by Paul to work at the Blaker as an usher.

He would spend three summers under the employ of Hunt's Theatres, also working one year as a game wheel operator at Hunt's Pier.

"What a magical time that was in Wildwood. The pier in its prime - with classics like the Golden Nugget, the pirate ship (Skua), Jungleland, the Flyer... so much excitement. It was just the place to be!

"And working as an usher at the Blaker, during an era when so many iconic hits were showing, including *Rocky* and the first *Star Wars*. I remember those long, long lines that used to wind down the Cedar Ave. ramp and down onto Atlantic.

"We knew it wouldn't last forever. Nothing does."

Except, perhaps, for Sculli's undying enthusiasm for the Wildwoods.

"It's still the best vacation spot on Earth. I've been coming here my entire life and I always will. Now, I bring my family down, and we create new memories together every year."

Happily married with two children, Sculli works as an area sales manager for Océ North America in Bala Cynwyd, PA.

"I'm just your average Joe Jaws these days," he jokes. "Great family, huge Eagles and Phillies fan, still a movie nut, and just as in love with Wildwood as I was when I was a kid. That's pretty much me.

"I often think back to that one summer, and can't help but smile when I think of those times. It was simpler then, of course. I had no bills, no worries really.

"My primary concern in life was trying to see *Jaws* at the Blaker as many times as possible. It was so much fun, and a time in my life I'll never, ever forget."

This story contains quotes from a three-part interview with Vincent Sculli. Check out [Wildwood365.com](http://Wildwood365.com) to read the extended three-part feature, "Catching up Joe Jaws."

Al Alven is a lifelong Wildwoods visitor and enthusiast. He works as a freelance writer in Philadelphia, where he lives with his wife Angie and son Lucas.