



the **SUN** by-the-Sea

"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things." ~Robert Brault

Oh Those Happy {Wildwood} Days!

by Rita Cullen Canning

Growing up on West Pine Avenue in the heart of the Wildwood's in the 40's & 50's my childhood memories of things past seem like just yesterday!!!!

Hot dog stands under the Boardwalk... Laying on the marbles tournament slabs after swimming~ similar to frying in a frying pan... Collecting soda bottles on the beach, 2¢ a piece for a little extra spending money... Every once in a while going to **Sportland Pool** for the entire day... The big **Montgomery Ave. playground**... **Old Casino Arcade**~ If you were on the boardwalk, you always made sure you went through the old arcade on Wildwood Ave. Where you could buy: A piece of **Rickie's pizza**, a bag of **warm potato chips** and a **Hires root beer**. I did not know at the time, but my husband's (Pat Canning) family was the original owner of the warm, potato chip stand. His maternal Grandfather Bennett would make the potato chips at home and sell them at the stand. Later they bought the chips from Snyder's, but they were always the best because they were warm... **Snowcones** at the entrance to the arcade on the ocean side. Whatever syrup flavor you had poured over the ice, there was always little bits and pieces of that fruit in the syrup. Yum!!!!

Warm waffles and ice cream... Johnson's Popcorn (I always remember a mother and daughter, as the owners, working the popcorn stand). In later years Johnson's moved to the Ocean City Boardwalk... **Nate's Hot Dogs 5 for \$1**. Just to name a few! Not only did we have 2 movie theaters year round, the **Casino** and the **Shore**, but three more theaters in the summer... the **Regency**, the **Strand** (still there) and the **Blaker**. When it was really, really hot what a treat it was to go to the freezing air conditioned movies! **Bargain nights at the movies**, in the winter only, were every Wed. and Thurs. nights for 10¢ admission.

I remember the FABULOUS DOWNTOWN AREA during the 40's, 50's, & 60's... the **5 & 10¢ stores**... **Murphy's**... **Woolworth's**... **Newberry's**... and many, Many great Restaurants, Drug Stores (I remember getting an ice cream cone at the counter at **Corson's Drug Store** on Wildwood Ave!... **Shoe stores**... **Bakeries**... **Supermarkets**... **Fruit Stands**... **Men's & Ladies Dress Shops**... **Ralph's Diner**... **A Toy Store**... **A Camera Shop**... plus all the **Utility Companies** were on the island too. Does anyone remember the old fresh horse-radish grinder on the corners of Wildwood and Pacific Aves. every summer? Also from approx. 1946 to 1955, my Dad, William (Bill) Cullen, had a restaurant downtown on Pine and Pacific Aves. called **Cullen's** and **James** (Mayor Ralph James) early on, and then **Cullen's Restaurant** in the later years. I have many memories of the years we spent in the restaurant, but I do not have any pictures of the inside of the restaurant. I was told the restaurant was sort of a hang-out at the time for some of the

high school kids. I thought maybe someone may have taken pictures of friends inside, and if so I would love to have anything pertaining to the "inside" of the restaurant. If you could get in touch with me at the P.O. Box Number at the end of this article, I would greatly appreciate it.

I have such wonderful SCHOOL MEMORIES... at the **Old St. Ann's School** (1949 to 1957). As sort of a whole school field trip at the end of the school year, we all looked forward to the annual school picnic at **Lake Lenape** in Mays Landing. Those who didn't go by car took the bus. We knew we were almost there when we passed the Old Glass Factory. Throughout the day they would make the announcement that a certain class should go up for a free ice cream cone at the food stand. We would all run to get there. All of the rides were free the entire day. There was canoeing, row boats, and of course swimming in Lake Lenape. Great, great fun!!!

Going to **Wildwood Catholic** from 1958 to 1961 was one of the best of times. We had so much fun... Glee Club, the Senior Play, Cheerleading, going to basketball games, dances every Saturday night at the **Crest Pier**, and of course the **Summertime in the Wildwoods**. We didn't always get a chance to see our friends in the summer, because we all had jobs, so by the end of the summer we were always glad to head back to school, mainly to see our friends.

At the end of every summer about 4 or 5 girlfriends and I would take the bus to Philly. Even though we wore uniforms to school, the first month we could wear our regular street clothes because the freshmen at the time were being fitted for their new uniforms. We would buy things such as skirts, blouses, dresses, shoes (and of course matching bags). At the time the fabrics were quite warm, but that did not matter. Even if the temperature was in the high 90's, we all had our finery on that we bought in Philly for that first month.

I worked at **Motley's Restaurant**, at the time across from St. Ann's school, Magnolia and Pacific Aves. Eventually the Motley's bought **Duffy's on the Lake**. The restaurant on Magnolia Ave. closed at 8p.m., so we would all run home, freshen-up and head up to the **Starlight Ballroom** on the Boardwalk every single night. The dances were so much fun!!!

My husband **Pat Canning**, (who went to Wildwood High School Class of 1961), and I met in our Junior year of High School at one of our High School dances. We married in 1963, we have 3 daughters who all went to **Philip Baker School** and then on to **Crest Memorial School** and **Wildwood High School**. I am a Crossing Guard at the Crest Memorial School now (**MISS RITA**).

When I think back to our childhood days, I think how lucky I was to grow up in such a magical place called the Wildwoods.

Happy memories!!
Rita Cullen Canning



In 1958, everyone got dressed up in their Easter finery and went to the Boardwalk. I took this picture of my girlfriends. We all went to **Wildwood Catholic, Class of '61**. The picture was taken at Marine Pier in front of the Caterpillar Ride, with the Wild Mouse in the background. These are the girls maiden names: Top L-R: **Marie Fala, Mary Frances Deets, Miriam Jaggard, Rita McAlarnen, Diane Lanza, Donna Meyer, Mary Belsito, Jo-Ann Versaggi**. Bottom L-R: **Annette Solis, Judy Cavalier**



Remember the Warm Potato Chip stand in Casino Arcade? the lady in the picture is my husband's **Aunt Florence Bennett**



1961 Wildwood Catholic Senior Prom Pat & Rita Canning

I thought maybe someone may have taken pictures of friends inside, of Cullens Restaurant. If you did, could you please get in touch with me at: Rita Cullen Canning, P.O. Box ##, Wildwood, NJ 08260. Thank You!



Approx. 1949 outside of our house on Pine Ave. When it was really hot, this is how we dressed to stay cool, because we had no air conditioning back then. **Paul Cullen, neighbor Tommy Taylor, Rita, Maureen Cullen Manlandro**

I love your paper and hope it will go on and on. It always feels like the present rejoicing with the past.
~Rita Cullen Canning

P.O.Box for Rita?