



"We do not remember days; we remember moments." ~Cesare Pavese, The Burning Brand

A Blast From the Past!

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WILDWOOD HISTORIC SOCIETY

P & O Friends



Lana L. Turner
WHS 1965



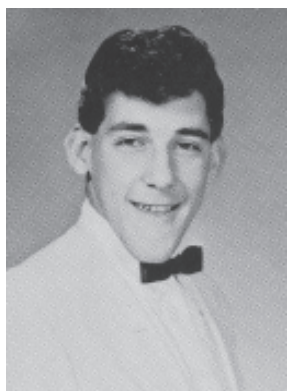
J. Edward McLaughlin
WHS 1964



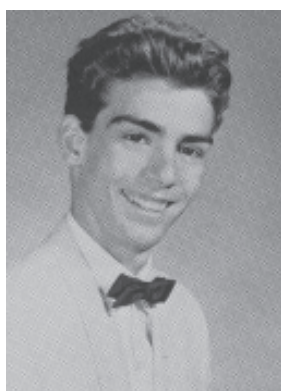
John J. Neborak
WHS 1963



3401 Pacific Ave., Jackson's Drugstore on the SE corner of P&O, 1960s



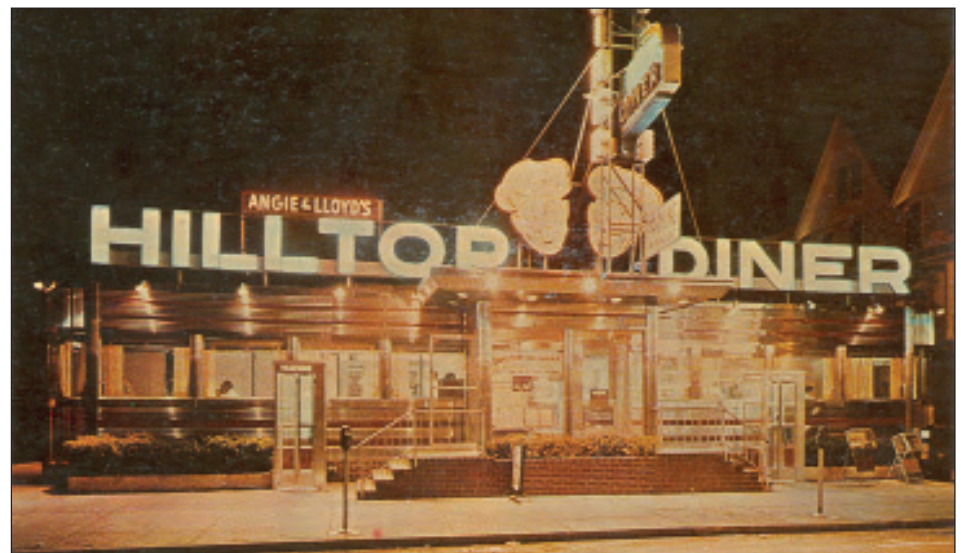
Joseph C. Hess
WHS 1964



Kenneth A. Petrosky
WHS 1964



Carol L. Turner
WHS 1967



A postcard of Hilltop Diner from the collection of Wildwood Historic Society



Michael J. Burke
WHS 1963



Ronald P. Borden
WHS 1963



Robert Osborne
1962



Robert Ansell
1962



John Kill
WCHS 1963



Carmen 'Splat' Bersani
WCHS 1963



212 E. Oak Avenue, next door to Hilltop, 1960s



“There are some truths about life that can be expressed only as stories, or songs, or images.” ~Dana Gioia



...a brief history
From the 60's to our 60's...wow!

As Labor Day passed so did the end of summer and the beginning of fall. Back then the day after Labor Day meant that the town was basically empty, except for the locals and a handful of 'shoobies'. The town was 'ours' again. The majority of tourists have departed, most of the clubs were closing or closed, the restaurants and diners were being boarded up, the boardwalk was once again void of people, the beaches were lonely again, save for a handful of people, mostly natives, most of the traffic lights were turned off or put in the blinking mode. The streets were again safe and somewhat lonely and the noise had abated. And **Starlight Ballroom** had played the last record of the summer. Mack's had served it last slice of pizza and cup of Birch Beer. In a way it was great.

A few young men, who had been close friends for quite some time, growing up on the island were looking for something different to do. Not much to do in Wildwood after Labor Day, especially in 1959. The guys had played sports, at the old 'rec', went to dances, went to parties, hung out together and just had fun. Never any major trouble with the law, a warning from time to time, but that was part of growing up. They were very close, always there for one another. You know 'All for one, and one for all.' They were basically inseparable. Then the bright idea of hanging out on a corner came up. Like their summer friends from Philly did. Pacific & Oak Avenues seemed like the ideal spot, it was mainly the focal point of the town. At that time **Jackson's Drug Store** occupied the corner and was connected to a soda shop. So a few of the boys started spending their idle time standing on the corner, at least it was something to do. **Joe Hess, Ronnie Borden, Mike Burke, Eddie 'The Flea' McLaughlin, Benny Mawhinney** and **George 'Virgil' Anderson** became known as the original P & O Boys.



George reminisces
on the corner of P&O
Summer of 2006



George & Eddie McLaughlin- P&O -
Jackson's Drugstore- December 1963

The P & O Boys

by George E. Anderson, Co-founder of the P&O Boys

As time went by and winter came and passed, and as spring and summer of 1960 was approaching, the group attracted a few more members. **John 'Rateye' Neborak, Bob 'Ozzie' Osborn, Carmen Bersani, Johnny Kill** and **Jimmy 'Brownie' Brown**. There were even a few girls that liked to come by and be with the boys. **Lynda Phillips, Donna Phillips, Brenda Giacalone, Jonlyn Fulton** and **Linda Donovan** became the P & O Girls.

We couldn't wait until Easter Sunday, when **Mack's Pizza** opened, and Memorial Day which meant the start of summer and soon **Starlight Ballroom** would be rocking again, and we spent almost every night there. Talking and dancing with the Philly girls and hoping to walk them home. We spent most of our days on the beach at Maple Avenue, usually near the boardwalk where we played 'buck buck,' 'mum freeze' or some other game we learned from our Philly friends.

Then Labor Day came again and it was back to the corner. Doo Wop became a passion for us and most nights you could hear us out there harmonizing. At that time the songs we were singing weren't that old. This was what we enjoyed, and it made the winter pass a little more quickly. Along with playing 'Stinky Joe' on occasion. (Stinky Joe was a version of hide and seek.) Hopping parking meters, lying down in the middle of Pacific Avenue waiting for a car to come, became a pass time as well. Sometimes we would go to **Bargain Night Wednesday** at the **Shore Theater** where a double feature cost a quarter. We would hop that old gray wooden fence that once surrounded **Maxwell Field** and sneak into a **Wildwood High School** football game. Sometimes we would get caught, but were successful more times than not. A couple of the boys played for WHS then, and it was fun watching them.

In the spring of 1961 we invited two more guys to join us. **Harry Hastings** and **Kenny Petrosky** were new in town and thus became the newest members of the P & O Boys.

As time passed, others came by just to sing doo wop with us. **Bobby Ansell, George Sloan** and a few others whose names I cannot recall. **Charlie Sangillo** came by just to hear us sing. He really liked doo wop, and was a collector of records. The old 45 RPM's, which many he still has today. A few of the **Kelleher girls** and the **Turner girls, Lana and Carol**, and **Marci Liemberg** and other young ladies from the area would hang out occasionally, just to hear us harmonize and pretend to swoon. It was truly a great experience, one I will never forget. The police would come by and ask us kindly not to congregate on the corner. So we would go to the **Hilltop Diner** and sit for a while. Or we would go up to the boardwalk by Starlight and hang out there until it was time to go home. We grew up at the right time in the right place. I was part of the greatest bunch of guys and girls you could ever imagine.

We survived the flood of 1962 and a couple of us even wound up at **Margaret Mace School** after being evacuated, where we spent a couple of days and nights, falling asleep counting Kellehers'. We got through the assassination of JFK in 1963 and the start of The Vietnam War and the beginning of the Beatles, Rolling Stones and the entire British Invasion.

Eventually in the mid to late 60's most of us got married. Some of us were in each other's weddings. A couple of the boys got married to a couple of the P & O girls. We still hung out from time to time, went to dinner, to the movies, had parties, talked about the 'good old days' and how much fun we had when we were kids. We're all in 60's now. Our hair is a little thinner and grayer now, our steps are not as brisk, our faces have a few more creases, our eyes have become weaker, our hearing not as astute and our memories may not be as sharp. Some of us have had major surgery and minor set backs. All of us have lost loved ones over the years. We've had aching hearts and proud moments. Some of us have maybe even gained a pound or two. Perhaps our dance moves may leave something

to be desired now. We're all on different kinds of medication now, and visit doctors regularly, but we made it this far. (If I knew I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself.) (From the 60's to our 60's wow!) We have grown children of our own now and grandchildren to share our stories with. Some of the guys and girls still live in the area and others in different states and countries. Unfortunately there are a few that aren't with us any more. **Eddie 'The Flea' McLaughlin, Kenny Petrosky, John 'Rateye' Neborak, Harry Hastings, and George Sloan**.

Although the corner of Pacific & Oak has gone through many changes in the last fifty years, as has the town itself, the memories will always be there. The friendship and togetherness we shared. The long winters and short summers we spent with each other. Starlight and the Hilltop Diner are long gone. Jackson's Drugstore is just a memory. But the corner is still there.

Every time I come back to Wildwood and go to the boardwalk, I hesitate at Oak Ave., look in the direction of where Starlight Ballroom once stood, and remember the nights of my youth and how the floor would sway whenever a 'stomp' record played. When in town I always stop, park the car, and go stand on that corner for a few minutes. I take a deep breath. I look around and reflect on what was the happiest times of my life. I'd give anything just to go back for one day, or one hour to stand there once again with all those guys and girls. Just to hear the laughter, the voices, to see the smiling faces, and enjoy the company of the P & O Boys once more.

I've been told that if you drive by there in the winter and stop, lower your car window and listen very intently, you can still hear a few of the boys singing their version of 'Over The Rainbow.'

Photos courtesy of George Anderson & Wildwood Historic Society. Thank you George for sending in your memories, *The Sun by-the-sea*