



"Enjoy yourself. These are the "good old days" you're going to miss in the years ahead." ~Anon.

1940s on the WILDWOOD BOARDWALK

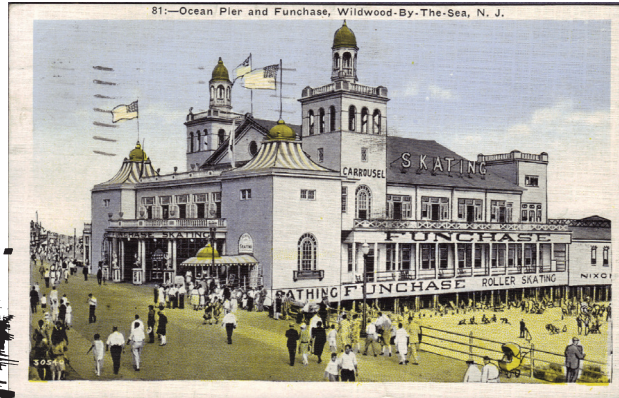
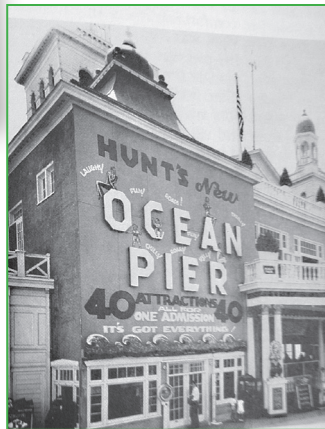
with **Charlie Neill**

By Jessica Westerland Mumford



Airman
Charles W. Neill,
U.S. Navy Fighter
Squadron VF-22

Hunt's Ocean Pier announced 40 attractions for one price. Rides were 3 for 25¢



FUNCHASE PIER, WILDWOOD BY-THE-SEA, 1935
{HUNT'S OCEAN PIER}

a jolly 'haha' kind of laugh, as she welcomed people onto the pier. He also mentioned the cranky Midget who was a sort of guard and watchman who was often heard yelling. There was a theatre that showed cartoons all day, and all of the basic amusement rides such as the merry-go-round, carousel, bumper cars, ferris wheel, and roller coaster. But there were also attractions that we don't have today, like a wire cage ball with a motorcycle and rider who would circle it, and a disc that spun around and you sat in the middle trying not to slide off. There was a game called "pull a string get a thing," in which there was a booth with tons of intertwined strings all attached to prizes, and you chose the string you hoped was attached to the prize you wanted. There was also machine that looked like a Doctor offices' big scale, "but when you put a quarter in the whole thing would vibrate your feet- it was called the Foot Ease!" Charlie explained.

Charlie also remembers how World War II touched the Wildwood Boardwalk. "The war was on, and I remember all the lights facing the ocean got painted black, because there were German Submarines out there."

Charlie and his friends used to work on the boardwalk, but not just the piers. They walked around with shoe shining boxes to earn money, but they also used to work under the boardwalk as well, collecting money the visitors would drop through the cracks in the boards. They made homemade sieves from a wooden frame and screens, and would pick places under the boardwalk that had lines of people above, where they would be more likely to open their wallets and lose change. "We would find a few soda tops, but a pretty good amount of money for kids those days!"

Be it pig races and cartoons, or mini golf and laser mazes, the Wildwood boardwalk is still amusing and entertaining tons of visitors every year, and giving each visitor their own brilliant memories to keep throughout the years. Charlie's memories recall an era on the Wildwood boardwalk that may one day be forgotten, lest we keep them alive.



By the summer of 1942, it was common to see men in uniforms on the boardwalk.



Laughing Sal greeted visitors to the Pier's new Funhouse and Laff Theater



the wonderful Hunt's Ocean Pier was completely destroyed by fire on Christmas Day 1943.

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FOR THE ULTIMATE IN WILDWOOD NOSTALGIA

Photos courtesy of Wildwood Historic Society, Penna. Historic Society, Wildwood by-the-sea book

It is amazing how things can simultaneously stay the same through the years, but can still be so different.

In the 1940s, the Wildwood Boardwalk had a slightly different feel to it then it does today. There were cartoon showings and pig races, shoe shiners and a motorcycle cage; and Charlie Neill remembers it vividly.

Charlie worked on Hunt's FunChase Pier at the pig races. It was set up like a maze, and you would pay money to throw a ball at a target, and if you hit the target the cage would open and little runt pigs would slide down a slide and choose one of two doors to go into~ one door got you a prize and one door didn't. Charlie's job was to hold the bottle, or 'ninner' to reward the little pigs. Charlie reveals the secret: "They trained all the pigs to go into the door with no prize, by having a bottle of milk waiting for them. They never went to the other door because all they wanted was the bottle. Kids didn't care though, all they wanted was to see that pig go down that slide," Charlie laughed. "And you know, we didn't have the word shobbies then, they were just tourists. But we loved them, we always loved our summertime friends." Charlie also chuckled as he could not recall what the actual prize was because he rarely gave one out.

Hunt's FunChase Pier had a mechanical "Laughing Lady" a huge, oversized statue of a woman who had