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“A FEW BOLTS FROM THE PAST”

SUMMER CIRCA 1956: Pat Sole is just about to make the last turn of the wrench and the fire plug on the corner of Judson & Indiana will be on full force. Suddenly, Donald Bove shouts, “Meat Wagon!” In a flash, Donald, Pat, Perna, Tac, Jocco, and Angelo Salvatore are running down Judson St. The Cops jump out of the police wagon and one cop is grinning from ear to ear, as the other cop begins to chase after the guys. The grinning Cop shouts to the other Cop, “Don’t worry about catching them. We have what we want. The wrench is still on the plug.” The Cops turn the plug off and quickly return to their wagon with the wrench and drive away. All of us younger guys, Miluzzo, Rulli, Bart, Ernie, Petchie, Frank Nicastro, Big Sal, and Squid, are looking at each other in amazement. We are in shock. After several minutes of silence Bart finally speaks, “Without the wrench there will be no way to turn the plug on this summer.” I am so upset, because I am at last allowed to go under the plug, compliments of Dr. Salk and his vaccine, and this has to occur. A few days after this incident one of the older guys who hangs on the corner Vinny “Chang”, sees me outside of “Benny’s Grocery Store” on the corner of 24th and Indiana. Vinny tells me that he has come up with a great idea on how to get the plug on without the special wrench. Vinny says, “We need all the hacksaws we can get. Spread the word to all your friends and ask them to get a hacksaw from their fathers.”

My brother Anthony tells me to collect empty soda bottles for the deposit money and buy the blades at “Gillman’s Hardware Store”. I passed the word to all the younger guys and by this Friday in the fourth week of July all of us have given over 15 hacksaw blades to Vinny. It is now a few minutes after 10 o’clock Friday night, and as I lay in my bed I hear the most beautiful sound. The sound of water forcefully coming out of the plug. Its a very hot night and the temperature is still in the upper 80’s. I run down the steps and Uncle Al says, “Put your shorts on and lets go under the plug.” Everybody else must have the same idea, because it looks like the whole neighborhood is on the corner. Gino Angellini is dunking his head under the gushing water. The Antonini’s are sitting curbside and are enjoying the cool water splashing over them. Theresa Rulli and her Mom are cupping the water and pouring it over their shoulder’s. Joe Crescenzo with his pants rolled up and bare feet is throwing a bucket of water on his brothers Butcher and Franny. I begin to walk further down Judson St. There are more people outside now than at 12 noon. Art & Julie DeBenedetto are walking in the stream of water quickly moving near the curb. Aunt Grace and Uncle Sam Panico are washing their steps, as Eddy Lynch drenches their daughter Nicoline from her head to her toes. Tim Ruggieri is laughing at the site of Squid’s Dad wetting his wife Jennie. Jimmy and Kay Himes are

having a great time playing with a small toy boat floating in the curbside water. Pat Dizenzo and his Dad Phillip are walking in the street toward the fire plug. Returning to the corner, Joe Arcaro is making a spray by cupping his hands over the mouth of the plug and there are so many people under it. Tito, Tim and Albert Nanni and their sisters Edda, Yetta, and Yolanda, are jumping into the spray. News must travel fast in our neighborhood, because I can see so many people from around 21st and Indiana who are also enjoying the cool water on this hot summer night. I see the Eobbi’s, Navarro’s, Bob Gatto, his cousin Johnny Yardout, Alphonse Parise, Joanne & Anthony Cossa, Nails, Jabber, and Chicky moving around under the spray. The spray stops only momentarily, as Jack-la-Rue takes over for Joe, while his buddies Nigua, Ray Bello, Siati, Roache, Paulie and “Konerts” squeeze their way under the already crowded spray. What a great night! Thanks to the ingenuity of “Chang”. His idea to remove the four bolts that held the lid of the plug in place had worked out perfectly. After the bolts were hacksawed off it allowed the lid to be removed, then the brass valve to turn on the plug is exposed and can be turned with a regular monkey wrench. Its about 3 am now and the cops show up to turn the plug off. The Cops return to their wagon and never noticed that the lid has been tampered with, because the top half of the bolts were returned to their original position. Stay Cool!!!!!!!