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“A VERY CORNY FALL MEMORY!”

FRIDAY, AUTUMN 1958. I can hardly bend my legs, as I step off the 60 trolley, into a light drizzle at 21st and Allegheny. Yesterday in Gym Class at CD Mr. Sinclair gave us various calisthenics to perform, but it was the fifty, 4 count squat jumps that have my thighs sore and tighter than Floyd Patterson's fist. The trolley passes by me and Marty Dunn from Corpus Christy Parish is pointing out the window, laughing at the ridiculous way that I am walking. Suddenly, Steel Heddle's whistle blows and quite a few men come rushing out from the factory. Tony "Nelson Eddy" Pacifico is now walking in front of me, as I struggle to carry the heavy brown canvas, (Dick Crean Special), book bag. Nelson is talking to my Uncle Sam Panico about the fact that he is singing at the "Chicken Coop" tonight. Following closely behind them, as we reach 21st and Indiana passing by "Mingnone's Tailor Shop" they wave to Jimmy McHugh. He is outside of "Ambrose's Billiard Room" talking to Billy McConnell and Johnny Arot. Jimmy sees me and shouts, "Aspetti un momento, per favore", in perfect Romano Italian. Johnny says, "Not bad for a mezza Midigan." Just as I wave to Billy, Moony Alimonte gets him in a headlock, but Billy breaks away and they begin to jokingly jab at each other. The Heffern sister's seem to be content just watching the action from their porch. Eileen Nolan and Carol Costello walk by me and we talk about our new schools for a few

minutes. Approaching what was my Grandpop's house, (until his death this past April), my Uncle Jack McDade begins to chuckle and asks me, "Why are you walking like you have polio?" I explain to him about gym class and he immediately gives me advice on some remedies. "Ben-Gay, Witch Hazel, and hot baths with Epsom Salts." Thanking him, I slowly walk into the house at 2056 and even though my Granpop Panico has been gone for seven months, I can still picture him laying in the casket in the living room where he was in view for two nights after his death. I quickly say hello to my Aunts Anna and Helen who are preparing to make the "abulenda", (polenta), and return to the porch and sit on a green wooden rocking chair and talk with Uncle Jack. My cousin Marianne comes onto the porch with her friend Kathy Bona as they walk into the house. The drizzle is now a downpour and the Galloways, Aunt Zita, Uncle Jack, Johnny, David and Mary Rita rush by heading toward their house. Looking down the row of porches, I can see Jean Scarnera talking to her neighbor's the Iannucci's, as my Cousin Mary and her children Philomena and Stephen come running across the street and rushing onto the porch. They quickly go inside, after we all greeted each other. It took about another half hour and the entire family was gathered around the kitchen table with the "abulenda" in a huge mound on the macaroni board. Each of us with a spoon in hand ready to carve a niche

in the cornmeal covered with tomato gravy. I have been told by all my Aunts and Uncles that this was a frequent meal for many Italian Americans during the depression years. I enjoy eating this with the family, but I don't think it will be rated as one of my most favorite meals. After dinner my cousins Sophie and Nicoleine and I walk outside and sit on the porch. The rain has stopped and the darkness is slightly interrupted by the street light near the corner of Lambert Street. Tommy Marcucci is walking pass the corner followed by his sister Madeline. A few minutes later the quiet is broken by a large group of kids gathering under the street light. Its Billy Potts, John Pepper, Bobby Mangini, Donny Pacifico, Walt Cannon, Tommy Torzone, Mike Piccione, Tommy Nicolucci, Raymond Spera, and Joey Grasso. They begin to choose sides for a game of "Buck-Buck", when Walt shouts out, "Lamppost!" The sides get sorted out and with the sound of, "Buck-Buck number one coming", being shouted by Bobby, the game begins. Joanne Cossa comes walking by with her brother Anthony, closely followed by Mr. & Mrs. Nicastro. Joanne stops and talks with my cousins. While this is going on I hear, "Aron you want to play some cards?" I can barely see Richard Campolie on the sidewalk in front of the porch. "Why not?", I answer. I pass the rest of the evening sitting on a cardboard covered pavement playing cards with Rich & "Buzby".