

“FALL, MORE THAN A SEASON CHANGE”

Saturday, November 1959:

Arriving at the corner of 22nd & Clearfield, I am in awe of the huge crane with its wrecking ball crashing into the Hornung Brewery Building. A number of people have gathered on all four corners to watch the demolition of this towering building that stood for over fifty years shadowing the surrounding two story homes. Mr. & Mrs. Coleman along with Mario “The Mop”, lawyer Dan DiGiacomo, and DiPietro the beer distributor are all standing in quiet observation. Franny DiRosato is looking from the basement steps leading to “Rosie’s Steak Shop”. Sr. Mary Zita and Sr. Mary Germane are talking to Fr. Cornally, outside of St. Mary’s, as they watch the building’s slow demise. I can see “Captain Nemo” and his little sister Carol DeBlasis standing with Gerry Iacavelli on the corner of 22nd and Lippincott. Carmen & Sammy Doranzo are standing outside the “Bird Watchers Of America” office on the 3100 block of 22nd Street. It seems like only yesterday I was sitting in one of those classrooms on the Clearfield St. side of St. Mary’s School, daydreaming about the Hornung Brewery and all the stories I was told about the building by my brother Anthony. He told me that they used to get “free” beer in the brewery after the North Philadelphia Angels baseball games at Collins Field. I can even remember Santo Minghenelli drawing the building with one of his futuristic cars parked in front of it, but we never expected them to pave over the “33” trolley tracks and replace the trolley with a bus. Mario Amici and I used to get out of class for a few hours and go to Maggetti’s religious store on Girard Ave. for the Nuns. Walking down 22nd St. toward Indiana Ave. I stop to ask Pat Traitz who is standing in front of his Flower Shop,

what they will be putting on the lot after the Hornung building is gone. Just as I ask him the question Pat says, “Excuse me!” Then calls to Sam Silnutzer the Haberdashery store owner across 22nd St., “Sam what do you think of the window display.” Sam answers, in a very thick German-Jewish accent, “Very patriotic! You always remember”, as he places three American flags in the holder on his store window. As I take notice of the patriotic display that includes pictures of men in various armed forces uniforms, I get side tracked from my original question. I can’t remember why the display is in the window in November. Pat reminds me that November 11th is Veterans Day. Pat continues, “This display is for all my buddies who never came back, who lie beneath those white wooden crosses and stars of David in Belgium, France, Normandy, etc. Who like myself, fought for God, Country and Flag! WWII was my war, my buddies’ war, and we carried the sight of it from one battleground to another and there was nothing we could have done for those buddies that lie beneath the ground. Except perhaps to pause a moment and mumble “thanks old-pal” for being my buddy. May God have mercy on your soul!” “What was it like over their Pat?” “As Churchill once said, “War is Hell!” But we did go. And like my buddies, I longed for the war to be over, and it was Hell. I went with the greatest reluctance and fear – but always with the thought of God and his blessed Mother as my sole protector. I only knew what I saw in the eyes of my buddies---tired, dirty soldiers who were alive and didn’t want to die! Long darkened convoys in the night. Shocked silent men staggering back down the road from battle. Chow lines, atabrine tablets, foxholes, Jeeps, burning tanks, half-

tracks, gasoline dumps, smelly dirty bed rolls, stinking blankets, “C” rations, uniforms, and boots---filthy and wet from weeks of wear. And anger, cursing hatred for the “Krauts”. And worse of all the bodies, bodies, bodies---both “Krauts” and GIs. I remember while in the Hell of a freezing foxhole with a buddy, you actually sleep with your eyes open! Regardless of the battle or campaign, you are never short of supplies---whether they are rations, ammunition, boots, rifles--- all compliments of your buddies that the good Lord decided had earned their place of honor with “Him” in “His” vast domain.” I am standing there, speechless and Pat says, “ We got a little side tracked, from your original question. The building is being removed so the City can build a playground.” I slowly continue to walk down 22nd St. toward Indiana. Passing by what was once “Farber’s Plumbing Supply” now being renovated as a Laundromat. When I get to “Santanello’s Men’s Shop” I am relieved that its still there in view of the fact of how fast things are changing. Using the money I made simonizing Freddie Chiarlanza’s car this morning, I buy a long collar button down shirt to go with my olive drab three-button suit. Leaving Santanello’s store I literally bump into “Pibby” Mangini who is with his girl friend Judy Citro talking to Maryanne Pacifico. Walking up Indiana Ave. I pass Mary Olivestro talking to Maggie Sciarra. Joe Riccardi is turning down Croskey St. in his tow truck. At the corner of 23rd St. “Carpy” Laurenzi is talking to Girt Barra. Arriving at the corner of J&I, I am heartbroken when I notice that a green plastic cover has replaced Capriotti’s canvas awning. Marty Keane consolingly says to me, “Looks like there will be no more awning ball on this corner!”