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## “FIRES OF A WINTER GONE BY!”

**FRIDAY, SUNSET, JAN 6, 1959.** I am leaving Butch Minghenelli's house on Allegheny Ave. where we have been studying Chemistry for a test on Monday morning. Among Bony, Ferere, Butchy and myself, we have no idea how Fr. Benecheck expects us to pass this test, because we can't even get one of the study problems solved. Passing 25th St. I can see a Christmas Tree burning near Willard St. Walking closer to the fire, my nephews, Angelo and Larry Juliani and their friend Anthony Lamberti come running around the corner from Hilton St. to also get a look at the burning tree. I ask them if they know who started it? They all answer, "No!" The fire quickly burns out and I cut over Hilton to Fox and walk down Fox toward 22nd St. Outside of "Rosen's Cut Rate" Connie D'Amore, with her daughter Paula, and her niece Denise Dambra at her sides, is talking to Marie Brascietta. Turning the corner and crossing 22nd, then down Indiana Ave., passing "Leo's Barber Shop" Anthony Passamante is talking to Butchy Venditto. I stop and listen to them talking about, "Little Old Squirrel", The monkey that was launched into space. Anthony enlightens us on the workings of the nose cone missile used for the launch from Cape Canaveral. We all see this bright light suddenly appear to be coming from VanPelt St. We rush around the corner and see this huge Christmas tree burning in the street. Pete Festa, Freddy "Bones", and "Tino

"come running from Stella St. and ask us who started it? We all answer simultaneously, "Not us!" The fire dies quickly, so I return to walking back up Indiana toward 23rd St. At "Giuffredi's Grocery", I stop and listen to Sammy and Mario discussing the price of the winter vegetables with Rose Simpson. Deanna Paone waves to me from across the street in front of "Victor's Meat Market", as little Paula DiGiacomo seems to be tapping her way up 23rd Street. Just as I get to Bonsall St., I see another tree burning in the street. Nicky "Spoon", is surrounded by little "Ony Iekson", Steve Meahan, Dominic Mialetti, and the Falso brothers. Once again no one seems to have a clue about how the fire started. On the corner of J&I, Jake Petruzelli is still talking about the number of knockdowns there were in the Moore vs Durelle fight this pass fall, as his brother Carmen listens quietly. My listening to Jake is interrupted by the sight of another tree burning, this one is in the middle of the intersection of 24th & Indiana. Running toward the burning tree are the Santora boys, Joe Madden, Dominic Mateo, Joe Marino, and Eddy Trignani. Looking up Indiana we all see another fire at the corner of 26th. Heading toward the burning tree passing Ringgold Street, Peggy Jackson is looking at the fire, as Tucker comes zipping out of his house and runs down Ringgold toward another burning tree at the intersection of Cambria. He is followed by Lester DeBelle and his

brother Pat. When I reach the corner of 26th a crowd has gathered. Carmen the hairdresser is looking out from his shop. Joe and Edith Salvia with their son Joey are talking to the Vianello's about the fires. Jules Petrone is observing the excitement from the corner of Bambrey St. This fire is not going to burn out as fast as the others, because there are at least ten trees burning. I can see red flashing lights coming from Lehigh Ave. Now I can hear the sirens. Someone called the fire department. The firemen quickly put the fire out with hand held extinguishers. The crowd dissipates rapidly when the engines pull away. I head back toward J&I and as I get to "Peoples Market", Anthony Carpinello is coming out of his house, rushing toward the Square where there is another tree fire. Johnny Giargiari and Ritchie Petruzelli come running up Mayfield St. to get a glimpse of the blaze. I watch the fire until the last ember flickers and then head toward home. When I arrive I am told by Aunt Martha that I smell like I have been in a fire. After dinner I wash and dress, as fast as I can. I meet Ronny Tucci on the corner at 7pm. We begin the long trek to the "Bowlerdrome". Passing "Sambucca's at the corner of Marston & Allegheny our trip is interrupted by another tree fire, but this time I view it from a distance. Jesse DeFrancesco, Bobby Farabella, John D'Orazio, Marty and Billy Carroll and Lou Rago pass by us on their way to observing the fire.