

“OUR RENDEZVOUS WITH YESTERDAY”

Who was it that said, “All good things must come to an end?” Was it Shakespeare, Mother Ursula, Miss Pascuzzi, or a line from an old movie? I can’t recall who said it, but I don’t believe it anyway! That cliché is passé and it belongs with other old adages such as, “What goes up must come down!” Now we all know that isn’t true anymore, because all we have to do is point to the sky and think of all the satellites that have gone up but will never come down.

Many of you write to me about what it was like in the “old neighborhood” and we all think of it as in the past. Even those thoughts seem to be in question, because the “old neighborhood” does live on. It continues in script and in cyberspace. Well at least the memory of it continues to survive! The interesting thing to me, and I am always thinking of you and yesterday is, how did this fascination begin for me?

As you should all remember, the “old neighborhood” sort of just stopped being our home somewhere in the past.

The fact of the matter is that it was all over in 1976. Even more fascinating, is it has never ended for many people, especially those who moved to Roxborough. There were so many “old neighborhood” people living in Roxborough that if you visited the Ridge Avenue shopping area on a Saturday afternoon it was like a walk down 22nd street. They even nicknamed Valley Avenue in Roxborough, “Ravioli Hill.” I have never lived in Roxborough, but I worked for over twelve years at Roxborough Memorial Hospital. I came in contact with many “old neighborhood” people who were either patients or visitors at the hospital.

The following story is my understanding of how I believe that “Our Rendezvous With Yesterday” began.

SATURDAY, Circa 1976 I had never heard of Andorra Springs until a few weeks ago when my sister Mary asked my wife Pat and I if we would like to attend a “Saturday Social” tonight. Turning left off of Ridge Pike into the narrow gravel covered, tree-lined road leading to the private club, Gary Brascetta directs us to where we are to park our Chevrolet Kingwoods Estate station wagon. The air seems to smell different around this wooded area. It rained a bit on our way here, but now the stars are shining brightly and the moon resembles the one depicted on the Conte Luna macaroni box!

Walking into the club we are greeted by our hostess, Marie Brascetta and her husband and restaurateur Moe. They direct us to the cocktail lounge where the festivities have already begun.

What a surprise it is to see so many of our “old neighborhood friends.” The combo is playing a rendition of “Same Old Saturday Night” and of course we join in dancing. As we twist and turn doing the jitterbug or as some call it “fast dancing”, we say hello to many people we haven’t seen in what seems like a long time. In reality it is only a handful of years. Nancy and Joey Giangrecco, Vicky and Ralph Diciano look as sharp as we remember them to have been in the old neighborhood.

Boston Martosella’s wife Margaret is talking to my sister Mary and my brother-in-law Angelo Juliani. Emily “Pizza” and her husband Rocky Luciano are enjoying a drink at the bar. The band finishes the song and immediately begins to play “Chances Are” and the dance floor becomes very crowded. Holding Pat close to me as we slowly circle the floor, I make eye contact and quietly gesture hello to many people. I see MaryJo and Gerry Iacovelli, Nicky and Rose Bello, Rose and Angelo Proietti, Phillip and Connie D’Amore, George and Mary Moccio, and Del and Tony Trifiletti.

In the corner of the room away from the dance floor Paul and Maryanne Loschiavo, my brother Anthony, his wife Donna and Raymond Bello are talking with Colletta DeLuca, Pete Felici and his wife Jean, Johnnie Calabrese, Jimmy Calabrese and his wife Eleanor.

The evening progresses all too quickly. At the end of dinner I separate from Pat as she enjoys a smoke, she is talking to Peggy Gatto. Most of the men have gathered, so I join them in conversations. Pat Nicastro and Freddy Chiarlanza are discussing sports with Denny Digregorio and Tony Perna. Jimmy Lardani, Mike Mangini and Chicky Warrington are gathered with Harry Calabrese and Bobby Verichia. Gary Brascetta who is mixing up cocktails is talking to my nephews Angelo and Larry Juliani and two girls from Roxborough Donna and Doe.

The combo is playing as Joe and Helen Martosella, Jo and Harry D’Ambra, Betty and Harry Frattini, Rita and Al Ciarlante, Angelo and Pat Fioravanti, Marie and John Peditto and Lena and Callo Geri strut around the dance floor. I look like I am in the conversation, but my mind wanders to a different time and place. I see many of the people in attendance that night as they were back in the ‘old neighborhood.’ You know what I think? None of these people are any different than they used to be. It is very comfortable to be among them once again. That’s the beauty of the relationships from the “old neighborhood.”

That evening was the first of many of these Saturday evenings until Moe and Marie I presume sold the Andorra Spings Club. I didn’t realize it at the time, but it was the Brascetta’s that set the stage for what was to be more of our “Rendezvous with Yesterday.” In this perpetual “Rendezvous”, I hope to see all of you from the “old neighborhood” at the Ramada on April 30, 2004!