

## “MOON OVER HUNTING PARK AVENUE”

**Saturday, January Circa 1960:** I heard someone on the radio the other day mention that our generation is called the “Jet Setters”. I haven’t had the opportunity of flying on a jet plane yet, but Man life on the ground has been moving very fast. I am standing on the corner of J&I expecting to do the usual hanging out when Walt “Boom Boom” Cannon pulls up in his 1959 Black Olds, “Get your brim we’re headed to see some trim, Jim.” Liven asks where he is going and he mentions “Gellards Ballroom” at 5<sup>th</sup> & Rockland Sts. The two of us jump into his car and off we go. Petchie and Horn follow us riding with Balloons in his father’s Chrysler. Walking into Gellards, I am greeted by Tom Cooney, Al Oriente, Brother Priscilla, Jimmy Reese, and Tony DeMichael, schoolmates of mine from Cardinal Dougherty. I’m amazed at the number of people crowded into this old movie theater that has been converted to a teenage dance hall. A few of the guys are already dancing. I see Bony with a few guys and chicks up on the balcony standing by a soda machine. I wave to him and he motions to me to come up. It took me awhile to navigate my way up the narrow stairs, but when I arrive Bony introduces me. I shake hands with two guys from Nicetown, Johnny Able and George Davis and two chicks from East Falls Mary Kohler and Judy Kolbeski. After a little bit of who do you know that I know talk, the Bristol Stomp begins to blare away. I ask Mary to dance and we make it to the dance floor. The noise is astounding as 300 plus kids all begin to Stomp. The night is progressing nicely, especially dancing every dance with Mary. Suddenly girl’s screaming voices are heard over the extremely loud music. The massive crowd is pushing backward from the stage

toward the entrance of the hall. More of the girls begin screaming and guys begin swinging at other guys. The lights go on and the music stops. We all begin to make it to the exit. Once I am outside Walt is nowhere to be found. At the suggestion of Liven the entire crew of Able, Bony, Mary, Judy, George, and myself, take the R bus on the Boulevard to the “Hot Shoppe”. Arriving at the “Hot Shoppe”. (This is the first time for me) I am surprised to see so many of the neighborhood crowd in the car stalls either eating or ordering food from the female “Car Hops”. Standing up on the cement walk on the outside of the restaurant, I see “Big” Jules with Jim Stuffo talking. Next to them is Eddy “One Ear”. Able immediately walks up to “One Ear” and begins to harmonize as George chimes in to “There’s A Moon Out Tonight.” Bony bums a cigarette from Stuffo, lights it up, and says, “How perfect! Look at the huge moon in the sky.” Mary and Judy go inside the “Hot Shoppe” and I follow them. At the counter across from the cash register are Lavanga and Ferere who are sipping on two thick delicious looking milkshakes. BG, Franky Sciarra, Barbara “Fidget” Menghetti, and three other girls I do not know are sitting in one of the large dark beige booths. Fidget waves to me. The three of us sit down at the counter opposite Moe Frattini, Vinny “Chang” and Tommy Barnabeo who are all eating. This pretty colored waitress, her nametag reads Helen, asks us for our order. Mary and Judy order black & white shakes and Mighty Moe’s. I order a vanilla coke and french fries with brown gravy. I leave the girls to go to the men’s room and Fidget calls me over to her booth and introduces me to the three girls who are from K&A, Ann, Sue and Ginny Lepp. Coming up the aisle are Denny

Natale and Lou Cleary making their way over to a table in the back dining room where Vicky Vitale and Santo are eating. After about twenty minutes the level of noise begins to rise as everyone is talking across the room to each other. The manager Mr. Anderson comes walking out of the kitchen and asks us all to be quiet or else we’ll have to leave. We all order our second round of beverages and the noise quiets down for about ten minutes and then begins to gradually get back to an intolerable level. Mr. Anderson comes out of the kitchen as two cops from the 39<sup>th</sup> district enter the front door. We are all politely asked to leave and we do so orderly. The cold wind is blowing and there is no chance we can stand outside for too long of a period of time. George shouts, “Lets all make it to the “Bowlerdrome!” Some of us walk up HuntingPark Ave. toward the Bowlerdrome. Able begins to sing... Blue Moon! You knew just what I was there for. BG starts with the background, “Bombbabomb bombababomb dadangdyang dang” Now the entire crowd is singing “Blue Moon” as we reach the “Bowlerdrome”. The place is packed, but a few of us put our names in anyway for the next available lane. We are not exactly interested in bowling, but we have to make it look good or else it’s out in the cold again. We wait until 11:00 p.m. and we all have to be home before the midnight curfew so we leave the bowling alley without bowling. Mary and Judy walk up Henry Ave. toward Indian Queen Lane and the remainder of us walk down Allegheny Ave. Near 27<sup>th</sup> St. Passing by the “Lucarini’s Luncheonette” near 27th St the girls from K&A get on the 60 trolley. We start to walk much faster, because the wind begins to howl when Lavanga shouts, “Bella Luna!”