

## "THE DAYS OF PINK CARNATIONS"

### MOTHERS DAY, CIRCA 1960:

Mario Amici who is with his mother Dora calls out to me, "Aron, come get your carnation", but I decide to wait until the crowd of about twenty guys gathered around the table outside of St. Mary's church are finished. Standing on the church steps is Freddy Chiarlanza who is having his pink carnation pinned on his lapel by his girlfriend Marci. Ernie who is walking with his mother Julie whispers to me in passing, "Catch you later at Cat's!" Balloons walks away from the table with two pink carnations and walks over to his mother Minnie. She pins the pink carnations on him and his brother Rocky. Horn gets out of his father Pete's blue Plymouth and opens the door for his mother Antoinette. Petchie walks by with his mother Sylvia, and makes a gesture like he is shooting pool. Horn looks over at me and winks. Bobby Gatto walks from the table with his brother Paulie both of them with pink carnations on their jackets to honor their mother Laura. I pass the word on to Bobby about meeting at Cat's later. The Nicastro brothers, Pat and Livin, are walking with their mother Carmella and Petchie whispers to Livin. Livin then gives me the sign that he understands about later. Roger Serpico is entering the church with his mother Nancy and Squid with his mother Jennie. I notice a huddle between Bart Musitano, Squid, Roger and Ernie. I say hello to Eileen Campolei and her sister Marguerite walking by me with their mother Edith. Tino Tino sporting a pink carnation greets me with, "A 50 pointer at Cat's after Mass?" The crowd begins to thin out at the Lady's Sodality table displaying their annual mothers day paper carnations. I buy a pink carnation from Elaine Borgioni and ask her co-worker Helen Coleman to pin it on for me. As I turn around I notice Michaeline Davino and her Mother Annie talking to my cousin Noline and her mother Grace. With my pink carnation on, I'm now anxious to get the Mass over with and get down to Cat's. In church I

sit in a pew with my two mothers Mary and Martha, my sister Mary, and her family. I am a very lucky person, because circumstances have allowed me to have two mothers. I wonder if I should wear a pink carnation on each lapel? Immediately behind us are my cousin Sophie and her mother Pansy sitting next to Albert and Tim Nanni with their mother Yolanda. The bells chime, and onto the altar comes Fr. Busco and the altar boys Jimmy Citro and John Galloway. The Mass progresses slowly, probably because I want to get over to Cat's and shoot pool. During the sermon Fr. Busco asks us to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary and ask Her to intercede with Her Son, to protect and guide our mothers to carry on their most difficult mission in life that of raising their children. As I'm walking back from receiving Holy Communion, Joanna Giannetti and her mother Fannie are kneeling in the first pew next to all the Sposato's. A few pews up I get a smile from Anita Saulino who is with her Brother Bill next to their mother Catherine. The Mass ends with the usual prayers and the entire congregation reciting "Save Russia!" The usual situation occurs outside of the church after Mass with everyone gathering around and talking to each other. I know what's on my mind and I can see the impatience on all of the guys' faces. We're all anxious to get over to Cat's Club. The crowd disperses and begins the short journey to their homes. My family walks across the street to my Aunt Pansy and Uncle Hatch's house. This is my family's usual Sunday gathering after Mass. I'm so anxious to get going that I even refuse one of my Uncle Hatch's delicious meatballs that are simmering in the gravy on the stove. I quickly make my exit after I am instructed that we will all be going to the Pub in New Jersey for dinner. We will be leaving at about one o'clock, because we're going to the cemetery before going to eat. This gives me about one hour to shoot some pool. Walking down Toronto Street in the middle of the

block I see Moe Brascetta talking to Philip D'Amore and Nags Grasso. As I enter the club, Cat, in his gray sweatshirt with the ragged cut sleeves that has X MARINE written on it in black crayon, is giving Ernie hell. "Your gonna break that cue stick!" Ernie shouts, "Cat the stick is warped. I'm just trying to straighten it out!" Cat becomes even more furious, as Ernie continues to try and straighten the stick out by putting the cue stick behind his back and under his arms. He begins to exert pressure with his arms. Suddenly there is a loud snapping sound. The stick breaks. Cat runs from the back of the Club to the front where Ernie is standing with the broken cue stick in his hands. Cat shouts, "That's it! You're barred!" Ernie tries to reason with Cat, to no avail. As Ernie walks quickly toward the door, Cat continues shouting, "It'll be a long time before you see the inside of this club again, Mr. Barbells!" All the guys in the club are laughing loudly until Cat turns and gives one of his you better shut up looks. The laughing quickly subsides. BBBL is sweeping the kitchen area, as Wink Blink and a Nod, is playing a game of eight ball on the first table against Frank Lavanga. The club is packed and I wait patiently for my turn to challenge the winner of a game of points between Mike Piccione and Phil Yaccovone. On the next table playing a game of nine ball are Joe Commentucci and John Nicolucci. In between his turn John talks to me about last weeks dance at St. Joe's. He wants to know if I am going to be there next Sunday night to see if I can get to dance with Dottie Heffren. I gradually make my way to the center table where Pat Astaire and Moony Alimonte are playing a very serious money game of points. I look up at the clock and realize that I am not going to get to play. I wish to myself that I didn't have to leave. As I am ready to walk out, John Nicolucci puts on his suit jacket and I realize he has a white carnation on his lapel and instantly I forget my regret and thank God that I'm wearing a pink carnation!!!!!!