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"THOSE NOT SO WILD WILDWOOD DAYS"

Labor Day Holiday Weekend,

1961: It took a lot of talking on my part to convince Aunt Martha to let me go down the shore with the guys for the weekend. I made her a solemn promise that I won't get into any trouble. Now that the day has arrived to depart you might say that I am a little anxious to leave. I'm the first one on the corner of J&I waiting for the guys to show. I'm about an hour ahead of time and its only 7am, but I'm still tempted to start tapping on my set of bongos that I bought at Dick Crane's last night. It seems like an eternity but the guys finally show up and we walk to 22nd Street and take the 33 Bus to the Greyhound Bus Terminal at 13th and Filbert Street in Center City Philadelphia.

The ride to Wildwood New Jersey seems even longer than I expected, because of the holiday traffic and the halfway stop to pick up additional passengers. As the bus eventually pulls into the station in Wildwood the excitement that we J&I guys feel cannot be contained any longer. Suddenly Petchy grabs my set of bongos and begins tapping out a beat and humming the melody to the song Davy Crockett. We all knew this was our clue to begin singing to Joe "Chestnut" DeFrancesco. BG begins with, "Joe-Joe Wildwood -King of the Wildwood Sea!" Horn, Livin, Bony, Able, Puppet, Lavanga, No-Neck, Umberto, and I chime in with, "Born on the boardwalk in New Jersey. Raised on the beach till he new all the sea - Killed himself a crab at the age of three- Joe-Joe Wildwood King of the Wildwood Sea!" We all begin to laugh and so are most of the other teenagers on the bus. Our laughter soon turns into concern, as we get off the bus. This huge tough looking Cop calls me over. "Son, do you know that bongos are outlawed in the city of Wildwood?" Without waiting for me to answer he shouts, "Hand them over! My first thought is to give him some

lip, but Petchy begins to reason with the Cop. It doesn't matter how elegant our mouth peace Petchy sounds, the Cop takes the bongos. The bongos cost me \$10 of hard earned money that I made washing and waxing cars all summer. We shake the experience off and quickly our attentions turn to all the "chicks" roaming the streets. With our school-bags-converted-to-luggage in hand we walk to the Treasure Island Apartments. Immediately after the lecture we get from the women manager about the rules and regulations pertaining to our stay, we unload our stuff in our rooms and we make it over to the Magnolia Avenue beach which is known as 'button down beach' because of all the conservative guys and chicks that hang out there. You know what I mean, those Ivy League dressers. It takes Petchy and Horn all of about three minutes to strike up a conversation with a crowd of chicks who say they are from K&A. The rest of us lay our towels down and join the crowd. The remainder of the day on the beach was great and after the "you-know-who-from-whenever" sessions were over, we make arrangements to meet the chicks at the Starlight Ballroom around eight pm. After we shower, we eat dinner at Mack's Pizza and decide to lounge around on the boardwalk and look at the sights. In order to get a better view I lift myself onto the railing on the beach side of the boardwalk. Within a matter of minutes I am in custody of the same Cop. "It's a \$50 fine for sitting on the railing. It looks like your taking a ride to the Cape May Courthouse!" Thirty minutes later and a lot of "BS-ing", the Cop relented, but gave me fair warning that the next time he would arrest me. After this latest incident and my conscience reminding me of the promise I made to Aunt Martha, the rest of the weekend is going to be a subdued kind of a celebration.

The dance is fantastic and since my steady chick Patti Gallagher was not allowed to come down for the weekend, I get to dance with a lot of different girls. I even entered a twist contest with Barbara "Fidget" Menghetti from our neighborhood and her girl friend Ginny Lepp from K&A. They are both great dancers. Sunday morning we all eat breakfast at Perkins Pancake House and go to the beach. The sun is not one of my favorite things, so I spend most of the time under the boardwalk near the snack bar working on my "stripe-tan." I see a lot of teenagers from our neighborhood and have a second lunch with Lucille and Terry Grosso and Jo Mary Taglianetti. Later Sunday night after the dance at the Starlight I run into Lucille, Terry and Jo Mary on the boardwalk and we pass the time talking. "Holy Mackerel", I shout! "Its one am!" I say goodbye and run as fast as I can to the apartments, but I can't get in. Not wanting to bring problems for the other guys I decide to forget about trying to sneak in. I quickly remember about Crocker telling me how he always sleeps on the beach at night and gets away with it. He told me he gets a trashcan and turns it on its side and places it under the boardwalk, with the open part facing the ocean. Then he digs a hole in the sand behind the trash container and sleeps in the hole. He claims this always fools the beach patrol, but with my luck I'll wind up getting arrested. I spend the night roaming the boardwalk and playing skeet ball in an all night penny arcade. Monday I sleep on the beach. Walking to the bus on the boardwalk at sundown BG begins to sing. "Arrivederci Wildwood! City of a million teenagers- City of a million sun tan Ivy Leaguers- Arrivederci Wildwood." I'm glad to be going home and considering the close calls I had with the law, I'm very happy that I didn't break my promise! ENJOY THE SUMMER!