

“WASN’T IT ONLY A MOMENT AGO?”

SUNDAY, AUTUMN, CIRCA 1960: “J&I Mambo! Ole! Ole!” J&I Mambo! Ole! Ole! Pat Gallagher, Barbara Menghetti, Peggy Finn, Marie Torzone, Betty Moore, and Mary Lou Tozzi are shouting the J&I cheer as they move vigorously from side to side waving their blue and Gold Pompom’s. With only seconds left on the clock, according to BG the timekeeper, we need six points to defeat Germantown. This victory would mean so much to all of us guys from St. Mary’s parish. This is not for any trophy, official title, or a league championship. It is for the word of mouth title of sand lot football. Petchie says to us in the huddle, “You guys have to block.” Livin utters, “Just give me the ball, I’ll do it.” Albert Nanni vocalizes with, “Pass the ball to me I’ll catch it.” Lavanga gives us some incentive by reminding us, “We need to win this one for No-Neck and his broken leg.” My head is feeling like I have been locked in a vice all day since Jules Petrone and Jimmy Stuffo have me wedged between each of them and protecting me as I center the ball. Barbell remarks that, “We gotta make a move.” Horn says, “Lets go I wanna hit these guys.” Sal Davino arrives with a galvanized bucket of water. Petchie finally gets control of the huddle and gives us the play. “Livin, I’ll lateral the ball to you. You pass it to Albert in the end zone”, which is about fifty-five yards away. “The rest of you guys better block as if your life depends on it. Aaron, you long center it to me on the signal 22&A.” With those words we all return to our line formation. Tino-Tino limps to the line hanging on to John Stuffo followed by a very weary Bobby Farabella. Serpico lines up at the opposite end of Albert. Petchie calls, “Set, Lehigh, Judson, Cambria, 22&A.” The play breaks into action. Liven has the ball and he is scrambling in the backfield, shouting, “Block! Block! Block!” With his last shout he throws the ball with an unbelievably perfect spiral. The ball travels high and far over the end zone. All of us look up at the

ball in amazement and are certain that it is overthrown, but incredibly out of nowhere we see Albert leaping into the air. He makes this most fantastic finger tip grab and falls into the end zone. BG blows the whistle! Everyone of us is shouting, “We Won!” We Won!” - while running for Albert with our adrenalin propelled energy. Livin cries out, “The Victory party is at my father’s funeral parlor.” Someone yells, “I’ll go to Shelton’s on Sergeant Street and get the beer.” After we pile into the cars, we all drive to the Hot Shoppe and circle around it several times like a caravan, tooting our horns and shouting. We ask the cheerleaders to get some steak sandwiches at Sharkey’s and we all meet later at Nicastro’s. With all the excitement nobody even cared that there were a man and a women’s bodies embalmed in their caskets. Balloons starts to do the twist until his shoulder slips out of the socket. Horn helps him off the floor while the rest of us keep dancing. Mary Lou is shaking her hips so fast that it is like watching a blur. Everything is going great until the song, “Silhouettes On the Shade”, comes on the radio. I begin to slow dance with Patty Gallagher. Livin is dancing with “Peachee” and the words, “What a lovely couple they make” are sung. It suddenly strikes me about the couple in their respective caskets and as it is getting close to six o’clock, when Patty has to be home, we say good-bye with the party still in full swing. On our way out we see “The Puppet” and Lou Cleary pull up in Lou’s VW Beetle. Patty and I begin the walk to her home at 2724 Dover Street. Walking past the Rectory and down 23rd Street we notice Alex DiGiacomo talking to his dad, Tommy “Wawa”. Rose Simpson is coming out of her house with her daughter Roseanne. Passing by the corner of J&I it is unusually deserted, probably because everyone is at Livin’s party. Lucky for us as we cross over 24th Street we see Walt & Carmela in Walt’s

Oldsmobile. They offer us a ride, so we take them up on it. This is great especially since I am exhausted from the Germantown game. They let us out on the corner of Dover and Somerset Street and Patty gives me a congratulations kiss and I asked her if she would like to go to Chinatown and a movie downtown next Saturday night. She answers, “Okay!” Then quietly walks down Dover Street to her house. Walking home, I get to 25th and Cambria Street, and I stop to talk with Joe Delarso who asks me if I want to sell Christmas trees with him this year. So we make plans to make some cash for the holidays. Just as I am about to leave, Alberta Spraga comes out of her house and is heading to St. Mary’s for a novena. I walk with her and at the corner of 25th and Indiana we see Anita Saulino who was waiting for Alberta. At the corner of Taylor and Indiana we meet Rosie Pittore who is waiting for both of them. Ziggie Cappa and his wife Norma are coming out of their house on the corner of Taylor Street. I tell Ziggie about our win against Germantown and he comments that we must of cheated, and we both laugh. At the deserted corner of J&I the girls say good-bye and I sit on Capriotti’s steps for only a minute or two. Out of nowhere comes Franky Sciara in his sixty Chevy and asks me to take a ride with him to the Hot Shoppe. When we get there I see Butchie Minghenelli standing talking to Walt and BG. Franky goes into the Hot Shoppe and I stop and talk to the three of them. They begin to sing and ask me to chime in. “Zoom! Zoom! Zoom! Zoom! Zoom! Went the strings of my Heart!” We continue to sing for another twenty minutes or so, drawing a crowd around us. They keep applauding and asking us to sing another song. Finally, Butchie says, I have to go! Butchie gives us a ride home and we talk about how good we sounded. Butchie proposes we form a group. We all agree and we set our first practice at Butchie’s house for next Friday night!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!