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## "WHAT WERE YOU DOING NEW YEARS ?"

**TUESDAY EVENING, DEC. 31, 1957:** "Man, that was a fabulous Texas Weiner" shouts my cousin John McPeak, as we leave the Greek's restaurant off the corner of 22nd & Lehigh. My cousin John lives in Tacony, but he is staying with his grandparents, the Buonviso's, who live on Indiana Ave. We begin to walk up 22nd St. Approaching "Passon's Steak Shop" we hear singing. Turning the corner onto Somerset St. we see Tucker, Billy Bannon, Mickey Passamante and Eddie "One Ear" who are singing background harmony to the lead singer Claude Gamble. The song is appropriately titled "What are you doing New Year's" and they sound better than the group "Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers". We both stand behind Tucker's sister Joanne and Claude's sisters Eleanore & Bunny and listen intently to the great harmony. After the song is over we join in the applause from at least fifty people who have also stopped to listen. We continue to walk over Somerset St. toward 24th St., so we can walk by Jeannie Johnstin's house, (a girl from St Columba's), hoping she is outside. As we get to her house she is standing on her porch with two of her friends Anita Seccia and Pat McGrath. We join them for a little chit chat and then continue to walk up 24th. Making the turn at Cambria St. toward 22nd Dell who is talking to Sheila and Joanne Cutillo shouts to us "Happy New Year". As we pass "Pierce School", I see Mr. & Mrs. Bello who

are being greeted by their daughter's Rita & Adele. Al Ciarlante, Rita's husband and Tony Trifiletti, Adele's husband both see us as we run up to them and wish them a "Happy New Year". Al says, "We are all going to Castle Hall tonight" Tony chimes in with, "And we are going to be late!" Al rubs his hand through my hair and says, "See you Al!". Just as we are saying good-bye, I notice my brother Anthony, Mickey "Crow", Johnny & Jimmy Calabrese at the side entrance to the "Cambria Inn". All of them are decked out in their charcoal gray, sharkskin suits that are visible, because they have their six button benny top coats open. They look sharp, especially with the high crowned silk Stetson hats they are wearing. Passing all of them, I notice the clock in "Goodman's Drug Store" it reads 8:45. John and I both have to be home at 9, so we say good-bye and head in the opposite directions. Arriving at home, Aunt Martha & Uncle Al are ready to leave for the party they are going to and Mom is waiting for me. We are going to my Aunt Helen's & Uncle Cosimo's house for a family party. Mom is decked out in her red wool dress and says, "Hey kid lets go play Pokeno!" Walking down Indiana Ave. we pass Cucinotti's Pharmacy where some of the older Italian men, including my Grandfather Juan, are standing. Mom begins to talk Italian to Grandpop and I hear one of the men say to his friend, "all of a da snow we hava disa yeara isa from da Roosh-sha's Spu-ta-nik!" Another

conversation is about a communist plot to contaminate our water with this chemical, "Flor-ried-da!". Later at our family party, Uncle Jack updates me on tomorrow's bowl games. He likes Navy over Rice in the Cotton Bowl. My cousin Maryanne is talking about the 22nd edition of the "Shipstad and Johnson Ice Follies" that she saw yesterday. The TV is showing people dancing to the music of the "Guy Lombardo's Band". Aunt Anna and Aunt Helen are preparing some food for all of us, as Tsi Cos pours a shot of "Rock & Rye" for Grandpop. Mom is dancing with my cousin Sophie. I begin to read the cover of Time magazine about Nikita Khrushchhev, the Soviet leader, being selected as "Man Of The Year". Now I am totally confused, because I wonder why Khrushchhev is being given this honor and we pray at mass "Save Russia". I will have to ask Fr. Busco about this tomorrow after Mass. Uncle Jack asks Tsi Cos, if he thinks the Yankees will take back the World Series title in 1958. I chime in and tell him, "I think the Milwaukee Braves will win it again." Aunt Pansy is having a good time just watching all of us playing Pokeno, when Tsi Cos says, "Its a tooa sec-onds-a-tooa New Years!" We all get the pots and pans and wooden spoons and head outside to bring in 1958 with a bang. Out on the porches of Lambert St. we see the Saracino's, Stelaccio's, Zito's, Cannon's, Bona's and Menghetti's saying, "**HAPPY NEW YEAR**"!!!