

## **“WHO KNEW IT WASN’T GOING TO LAST?”**

**Friday after Thanksgiving, circa 1962:** Walking across Indiana Avenue. I start to talk to Joe Madden, Barbells and Joe DeLarso who are standing in front of Giannetti’s candy store. Franny Laurenzi emerges from the store eating a chocolate Tasty Kake cup cake and quickly runs over to the group of guys playing basketball near the telepole on Indiana halfway between Judson and 24<sup>th</sup> streets. Jare dribbles the ball as Ray Ciocari tries to block his shot, but to no avail as Jare hooks one into the make shift net that is literally a large lettuce basket with the bottom missing. Bony is cheering his man Jare on, as Umberto now gets into the game and quickly passes the ball off to Joe Ravenna who fakes a shot and passes it to Dell who feeds one down the middle to Umberto. Just as Umberto is ready to lay one up he is distracted by a car horn being blown by Frank Sciarra who pulls up to the corner and double parks. Bobby Risynychock takes advantage of the opportunity and steels the ball and shoots it into the basket. With Bobby’s shot not only does the ball fall to the ground, but also the make shift basket comes tumbling down. This creates quite a stir and all the guys on the corner immediately drift over to see what the commotion is about. Bony is telling everybody that it was Ernie GaGa’s fault and we all starts busting on GaGa. Ronny Tucci talks to Jules Capriotti about letting us have another basket and Jules is quick to oblige with a large tomato basket. Since my house is the closest, Balloons asks me to go get a hammer and nails. Before I could get across Indiana Avenue, Muldoon pulls up in his Oldsmobile and asks me if I know if my cousin Al Vassallo is playing cards at my house tonight. My brother-in-law Ang, who is in his milk truck near my house answers him, “Yea were all playing.” This delay works out

perfectly, because I see Joe Bello picking up his brother Ray at his house at Ringgold and Indiana. I run over to them and ask them if they can help us get the basket mounted on the telepole. They drive over to the pole and Nick Berlangieri who is the tallest guy is elected to stand in Joe’s truck and Mount the basket with a hammer and nails supplied by Ray. All the guys let out a huge cheer for the Bello’s as they pull away and the game continues. Yardout and Tino-Tino are talking to BG about where they’re going to go tonight. Johnny DiBenedetto is talking to Rocky Giannetti and Mario Amici about the basket and if it will stand up under the barrage of shots that will be thrown at it today. Joe Commentucci who is walking passed the corner with his older brother Andy makes a quick stop to ask what is happening tonight. Franky Grosso mentions that he is going to St. Joe’s dance at 17<sup>th</sup> and Allegheny, but Liven chimes in with, “I’d rather go and hang out at the Hot Shoppe than go to that dance.” Anthony Passamante and Mario Amici say they might just hang out on the corner. Petchie mentions that Trignani knows these girls in Olney who are babysitting and invited him over, but he needs five more guys for her girlfriends. Balloons and me are quick to volunteer. Mike Pasciullo says he will be hanging out at the Laundromat at 24<sup>th</sup> and Clearfield next to Connie Ciocari’s house. The crowd begins to disperse as darkness inhibits our ability to play and dinnertime is approaching. A few hours later the gang starts to gather again, this time we are all dressed and polished with the expectation of possibly meeting some chicks tonight. Pat Nicastro, Muscles, Vinny Chang, Donald Bove Tony Perna, Freddie Chiarlanza and Angelo Salvatore all older guys are discussing which club they will be

going to in Jersey. What a coincidence, they mention Jersey and Jimmy, Johnny and Albert Stuflo pull up. We all greet them with surprise. We didn’t expect to see them on the corner again, since their families have recently moved to New Jersey. A few minutes later Lou Cerone and his brother Anthony pull up and double-park. This is another surprise, since their family also moved to Northeast Philly. Ron Tucci and Lou engage in conversation and as the night progresses guys keep coming and going. Franky Sciarra drives by with his chick Sue and Walt Cannon stops by briefly with his chick Carmela Sullo. Barbells drifts away slowly down Judson Street to meet his girlfriend Barbara Mayne. The Stuflo’s along with Bony who hitches a ride with them make it to the Hot Shoppe. Ed Trignani and Horn show up after closing time at Nicastro’s Pharmacy. Petchie decides that he will make the fifth guy and come with us to Trignani’s girlfriends house in Olney. The five of us, Ed, Petchie, Horn, Liven and me jump in with Balloon’s who has his father’s Chrysler and head out to Olney. We all kick in fifty cents for gas and off we go. When we arrive at the chick’s house she is babysitting alone, because her girlfriends all decided to go to a drive in movie with some guys. Trignani decides to stay and we head back to the corner disappointed. As we approach the corner of J&I we can’t believe our eyes. The corner is crowded with guys and cars are double-parked along Indiana Avenue. It seems after talking to the guys that nothing panned out for any of us, so we all returned to the corner. I said to Petchie, “This is like a reunion.” Petchie comes back with one of his philosophies, “Aaron enjoy it now, because in a few years this will be just a memory.”  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!