

Neighborhood Memories



Elia Contipelli and Rayno "Skinny" Antognozzi

Cuyahoga Heights 2018 Centennial



Norbert and Gloria Chase Family

(top) Longtime Village Clerk, Norbert Chase and family, including parents:
Stanley and Helen Chase and Placido and Irma Pallini.

(bottom) The day Norbert and Gloria moved from Cuyahoga Heights in 2006.

This was the last picture taken of the family on the front steps of their home at 4941 East 71st Street.

...leaving but not saying goodbye!

Neighborhood Memories

by Joni James Mihelich | Katherine Bodziony Bacci Unger | Laura Bacci Merhaut | Norbert Chase

The James Family Home by Joni James Mihelich

Five generations of the James family have lived in the white farmhouse on the corner of East 71st Street and Dressler Court. Throughout its 120 years, the James home has sheltered many family members, witnessed many memories in the making and stood solid through many renovations.

The James home was built by Ebenezer James for his family in 1898. Ebenezer was the youngest of five children born to Thomas and Caroline James, immigrants from Wales. Ebenezer was the first of the children to be born in the United States, nearby in Newburgh Township. Ebenezer was just a baby when his mother died and as was customary at the time, his father Thomas remarried. Thomas too died before Ebenezer was 10. Ebenezer's older brothers scattered, his sisters were placed in homes as servants and Ebenezer was sent to an orphanage. As Ebenezer recounted the story to his grandsons, there wasn't an orphanage that could hold him! Ebenezer's one goal was to get back home to be with his sister Sarah. Ebenezer would run away from whatever orphanage he lived in at the time. He would run away, authorities would catch him, place him in another orphanage until he ran away again and the cycle would continue. Three long years, later Ebenezer realized his dream and was allowed to live with his sister Sarah. By this time Sarah was married to Albert Bletch and they built a home on East 71st Street. That home is now owned by the Waldemarson family.

Once back home with Sarah Bletch, Ebenezer didn't roam far. In 1896, Ebenezer married Nellie Hecker who lived down the street. Another old Cuyahoga Heights family, the Hecker family lived at 4726 East 71st Street. Nellie was one of eight children born to parents Adam and Flora Hecker. Nellie's brother George was one of the first constables in Cuyahoga Heights.

In 1898, Ebenezer and Nellie built the original three-bedroom home for their growing family. Ebenezer raised their two children Flora (Florence) and Walter in that house. Flora married J. Harold Traverse of East 49th Street and became the first female councilwoman in the village. Walter married Alice Stophel of Cleveland. When Walter and Alice started their family, Ebenezer built the addition on the house where Nancy McAleer now lives. The addition provided a separate kitchen, bath, living room and two bedrooms for the young family. The two homes are connected by a door connecting the kitchens and another door connecting the upstairs hallways. Walter and Alice had three boys, Richard, Donald and Dean who were raised in that home and the connecting doors were always open.

According to her grandsons, Nellie was a wonderful cook often cooking for the entire extended family. Nellie not only fed a large family, she loved to feed the neighborhood cats as well. The young boys remembered their grandmother taking pancake scraps out to the backyard to feed any cat who came around and the cats came running! To this day the James home is a magnet for stray cats. When Dean and Noreen James owned the home, cats were abandoned in the yard and dropped off at the front step.

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When Tracy and Joni were young, the doorbell rang and Noreen answered. The mailman was standing at the door holding a kitten. The mailman explained that someone had deposited the kitten in the mailbox located at the corner, next to the phone booth that stood on the town hall side of East 71st Street and Dressler Court. The mailman wondered since we seemed to like cats, would we take this one off his hands? Noreen said, what's one more. She took the cat and handed it back to Tracy and Joni who were happy to have another playmate!

As Nellie was feeding the neighborhood, she was also feeding three growing boys. Dean was the youngest of the three James boys who always had a twinkle in his eyes and a grin on his face. When Dean was about ten years old, the Willow Freeway was under construction creating quite a bit of increased and unusual traffic in the village. Dean and his friends, including the future Mayor Louis Bacci, decided to have a little fun. The boys stole the detour signs and rerouted the detour directing the traffic up Dressler Court and behind the town hall. The boys climbed up on the garage roof to watch the fiasco. It didn't take long before the laughing boys were rewarded with all of the rerouted cars jammed up in the parking lot behind the town hall.

As a teen, Dean worked at the bowling alley in the basement of the town hall where the police jail was also located. Dean worked and saved his money to buy his first car. A Cuyahoga Heights local was selling an old clunker and Dean was determined to buy it. Everyone begged him not to waste his hard-earned money on a car that wouldn't run, but Dean knew better. He bought the car and enlisted the help of his friends to push it home. At the time, the home had a beautiful rose bush filled side yard and an old single car garage with a workshop attached. Dean parked the car in the driveway and proceeded to dismantle the engine, laying each piece out carefully in the drive and in the yard amongst Nellie's rose bushes. The neighbors all stopped by to watch the spectacle. Mr. Polcen, who lived next door on Dressler Court was particularly intrigued, looking out the window periodically and stopping by to offer his opinion. He told Dean he'd never get that car running. To Mr. Polcen's surprise, he looked out to check on the progress late in the afternoon and saw the car driving down the street with Dean at the wheel. Dean's talent for fixing things would come in handy later in life, not only in his career, but also for his family.

Dean continued to work at the village bowling alley and hoped to attend college. He was working one evening when a neighbor came in to bowl and asked Dean how his father was. Dean said his father was fine. Puzzled, the neighbor said didn't you know your father was hit by a car as he was crossing East 71st Street and he looked in bad shape. Dean ran home and his father passed on from his injuries later that night. Attending college was no longer an option so Dean went into the service. His older brothers, Richard and Donald joined the Army and both were stationed in Germany. Dean joined the Navy because he loved the water. In the Navy, Dean trained as an electrician and served during the Korean War. Although Dean loved the water, he often experienced severe seasickness and would visit the base hospital. There he met Noreen Bouvier, a young WAVE (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), who worked at the hospital—the rest is history.

Dean and Noreen married and eventually had four children: Jesse, Deborah, Joni and Tracy. After their marriage, Dean remained in the Navy and the couple started a family. With two children and a wife at home, Dean's absences while out at sea were becoming difficult on the family.

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During this time, Nellie passed away and her cousins, Eva Bowen and daughter Nancy McAleer, moved into the small house addition. Eva and Nancy had no car so they walked everywhere they needed to go. Nancy remembers catching rides with family members and neighbors. Mr. Masek from Cuyahoga Heights often stopped to give a ride, even the Cuyahoga Heights Police would stop to pick them up. Nancy said there was always someone from the village who would give them a lift and on the rare occasion no one passed by, they walked.

A couple of years later, Ebenezer became ill and died in 1956. He left the house to all three grandsons. Dean was the only brother interested in the home so he bought out his brothers, left the Navy and moved his family home.

By this time the white farmhouse was 60 years old. Dean's talent for fixing things came in handy! To modernize the home, Dean moved staircases, enlarged the kitchen, bolstered the limestone basement and leveled floors a quarter inch at a time for years. Joni was the third James child, born in 1964. As a school age child, she remembers rolling a quarter across the floor to check the level. More than 15 years later the floor was leveled and remains so.

By the time Tracy, Dean and Noreen's youngest child was born in 1969, Eva was retired and helped care for the younger children. At that time an important member of the family was a big orange bruiser tomcat named "Cougie". Cougie liked to fight and was missing a piece of his ear and he often got into trouble. Debbie remembers Cougie climbing the phone pole across the street in front of the school. The problem was, once Cougie was on top of the pole he couldn't climb back down! The family called the fire department. There was no bucket truck back then so the firemen pulled out the tall ladders and one of them climbed up to bring Cougie down! Tracy was still a toddler in a stroller when Joni started school. Eva would walk Joni to school in the morning pushing Tracy in the stroller and of course, Cougie joined in. He would walk with the family all the way to the elementary school doors. Joni came home from school at Tracy's nap time so Cougie would meet Joni outside the school and walk her home. Cougie was a favorite of the family and lived a long life. Although the family missed him when he passed, Cougie left behind a son which the family named "Spitten" because he was the spitting image of Cougie.

Originally, the lilac bush Ebenezer planted for Nellie and two trees stood in the front yard. One was a huge old maple that was planted when the eldest child, Richard James was born on May 19, 1927 and the other, a buckeye tree. Although the lilac bush and the maple tree were treasured and still are, it was the Buckeye tree that generations of neighborhood kids remember. Because of that buckeye tree, the James yard was a playground to every child in the village. Every summer, children stopped by to pick up buckeyes from the yard, have buckeye wars, have contests to see who could find the biggest buckeye and make buckeye jewelry. Many years later, a Brooklyn Heights nursery caught on fire. Jesse dragged home a half burnt evergreen tree. Dean refused to allow it in the yard claiming it would never live. Jesse was confident and planted it in the Northeast corner of the yard. The tree is still there and grew so large, Tracy has to trim the bottom branches so people can see around the corner from Dressler Court.

Generations of the James family have enjoyed many happy memories in the white farmhouse at the corner of East 71st Street and Dressler Court. Tracy James Murphy and Nancy McAleer reside here today and *those connecting doors remain open.*

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My Old House by Katherine Bodziony Bacci Unger

I moved into my house on March 1, 1971 with my then husband Lou “Gigi” Bacci and my nine-month-old baby, Ricky. As I was only 18, and Gigi was 19, the house was put into my mother and father-in-law Lou and Lillian Bacci’s name to be deeded to us when we were older. The house was in pretty bad shape. Many of the 74” high windows were nailed shut and those that weren’t had to be propped open with a stick. There was definitely a huge mouse problem. The dirt floor basement was infested with toads and centipedes! There was still coal in one of the rooms in the basement, and a cold, dark wine cellar with a tunnel, which I later named “The Aardvark Pit” so my children would never go into it! The sandstone walls leaked so bad when it rained that I had to leave a big pair of cement boots at the bottom of the stairs so that I could get to the laundry room without wading in the water. Our original plan was to live in it for five years, knock it down and build a new house in its place. That dream never happened as “Gigi” passed away on September 7, 1974.

This house was a two-family home. The front porch was closed off in 1971 to make a bigger living room. In 1972, baby Sandi was born and the garage was torn down and the new four bay garage was built in its place. In 1974, after Gigi passed, the house was deeded to me. I had the kitchen and the bathroom remodeled because the rental kitchen sink would drain down and back up in my bathtub! In 1976, the basement was dug up to make a higher ceiling and real cement floors and walls were built!

In the fall of 1978, I married Rick Unger, Sarah was born in 1980, and Ryan in 1982. We found ourselves with four children and only three small bedrooms. To make more room, because there was a large difference in the ages of the children, in 1983 we built a hallway through the dining room and made a large bedroom out of the dining room and smallest bedroom. We also added a wet bar and carpeting to the basement and used it as our living room. The old living room became a fourth bedroom. In the late 80s, we turned the coal room into a bathroom in the basement. In 1992, we put a sunroom addition with a deck on the back of the house. No other remodeling was done for a long time after that!

The upstairs apartment was also in dire need of a makeover. I never had any problem renting it, but the three bedrooms were really small and the bathroom had a bathtub located under the attic steps so you couldn’t stand up! My brother took the bathtub out when he lived there and put in the smallest shower I ever seen! It was an improvement but if you dropped the soap, you were in trouble! Since then, the upstairs was eventually remodeled along with some updates in my kitchen.

I feel very fortunate to be living in Cuyahoga Heights. I have lived here more than 48 years and it is truly my home. I have gone to school here; lived here; raised my children here; and all of my nine grandchildren have gone to school here, too. I worked for the village for 16 years and many of my Bacci and Unger families are still living in the village. I suppose if my house could talk, it could tell a lot of stories, and it probably would be happy that I didn’t tear it down!

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Casa di Vincenzo by Laura Bacci Merhaut

We were told the house came from a military installation somewhere and it, along with Mrs. Smith's home two doors away, was moved to its location at 4933 East 72 Place...lately, historians believe materials came from a military site—perhaps deconstructed barracks...but who knows...this home was Grandma and Grandpa Bacci's home—humble as it was. There were two official bedrooms, living room, sun porch, kitchen, dining room and bath upstairs—that sunroom had ten windows plus the door—each with a venetian blind—dusting them was a royal pain, but we did it faithfully. There was also an open porch to the south side of the home where the postman delivered our mail.

The lower level was built into the hill as a “walkout” to the rear yard. There was a laundry room with a rough stall-like half bath; an extra room that housed a boarder named Rugie in the early years; a pantry, wine cellar and huge open area. This was the summer kitchen as it was much cooler to cook meals and bake homemade bread downstairs during the hot summer months. It is my understanding that quite a few European immigrants would have a second kitchen in the basement for this very reason. When we were kids, the sink was ancient and the windows of this level were huge framed panes that swung into the room—the light was lovely. The entire area beyond rustic...painted floors, rugged walls, nothing remotely fancy.

After Grandma Aldegonda succumbed to diabetes, Grandpa lived for some time alone. He would pick me up and drive me to the house—we'd have a bit of Mott's apple juice, then I would dust and vacuum the rooms for him. He'd pay me a couple dollars, give me a stick of double mint gum and drive me back to 4574 East 49th Street where we lived.

Having come through the Great Depression, nothing was ever wasted...I remember when our Dad eventually replaced some of the windows, Grandpa snatched them up and built this wild greenhouse in the back yard. When wooden venetian blinds were later abandoned (yay!) he repurposed them into a picket fence surrounding his garden.

Some of us will also remember our parents or grandparent using an old window to create a “mini hothouse” to start plants in the garden before it got warm enough to set them out without protection. The glass panes absorbed the sun and helped the plants grow early on. These folks knew all the tricks.

At some point, we moved in with grandpa so dad could have the capital necessary to buy equipment to operate his own cement finishing company. It was tight—Charlotte and I slept in the sunporch, Gigi and John shared the second bedroom and mom and dad, the other. When Jack came along—a crib was placed in the dining room.

Before Jack was born, the entire downstairs “walkout” was renovated. Mom's dream of having a wood-burning fireplace was becoming a reality. This trait or love of a wood-burning fire was passed along to each of us. A kitchen/living/dining room open floor plan was created long before it became *de rigeur*... Dad got an office for the business, a real bathroom with a petite shower was created within the extremely nice laundry room. The formal open dining room was carved out of the old pantry. Some years later, the entire upstairs was gutted and rearranged to create two bedrooms, two full baths (one with a dressing room), a sewing room, huge cedar closet and the sun porch became a sitting/TV room.

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Finally, a new garage was built attaching it to the house with a breezeway and the entire home was sided with brick. The old garage became a huge bedroom/living room with fireplace for the little apartment at the rear. There was a spiral stairway installed to gain access to the lower level. An *en-suite* laundry closet was created for the tenants' convenience.

Approximately 94 years of being the Bacci family home and Lillian's passing in 2017, 4933 East 72nd Place found a new owner, firefighter Brad Unger. We have great memories and hope you have many happy years, Brad.

“A Walk Around” by former Village Clerk Norbert Chase.

The Businesses and Homes on East 71st Street and the Courts of Cuyahoga Heights.

January 22, 2019 Edited Text

“Thank you for joining me on my remembrance tour of the old neighborhoods.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.”— Norbert Chase

Between the cemetery and the proposed school site was the Miller home. Two sisters, Mary and Stella, lived with their brother Henry in this house. They both worked at the Kaynee Knitting Mill on Broadway Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. They were great neighbors and walked every day from the War Avenue street car turn around to their home Monday through Friday.

Brother Henry had a Model T Ford Roadster which he hung up in the rafters of their barn during the winter months. This was one of the great experiences living in the village with great neighbors. The house to the south was, as I remember, occupied by the Wojciechowski family and was at one time the Willow Inn. With the construction of the school, the home was moved across the street next to the Joseph Hanousek property and became the home of the Elia Contipelli family. The high school tennis courts and bus garage originally occupied the Millers and the site of the Willow Inn. I played tennis almost every day during the summer with Ray Skiba, Charles Podolski, and one of Chuck's friends from Orchard Avenue/Goose Town neighborhoods which was the area north of Grant to Park Avenue.

Going north from the cemetery was the Hecker two-family home, which was bought by the Immaculate Heart parish. Walter and Hattie Baciak lived in the front apartment, and Joe and Dottie Andrews lived in the rear apartment. Joe and Walter helped with the upkeep of the cemetery. Helen and Stanley Chase lived in the front apartment in later years until their deaths.

The next home north was on the gully site and moved to its present site when the parish moved the caretaker home. This became the Malek home. Adjacent to the Malek home was the original dump site for Cuyahoga Foundry, and then an open field to the Domzalski home. Next north was another home and farm that went into the gully. I don't remember the name, but I think they were called Coffee. This site was later occupied by the welding company, and now the Firefighters Community Credit Union.

Chapek's Grove, now called Klima Gardens, followed. The original site had a wooden dance pavilion and several other buildings that sold refreshments along the north property line. In front was the Chapek Saloon later the VFW hall and custodian apartment occupied by the Frank Crooks family. The upstairs was renovated to be used as a small party or meeting room and later dedicated to former Mayor George Gallitz.

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Along the fence line across from the dance hall were outdoor restrooms. The dance hall and restrooms were removed to install a bob sled run down the ravine and onto a flat portion of land. After a little while, it was abandoned because the base turned into an unstable quicksand condition.

A softball diamond and dugouts were developed. Little League and women's teams played there. To the rear was the gully area that the village used for its fireworks display. Due to a spark igniting the entire fireworks supply one year, a serious condition occurred and debris flew into the spectators. Fortunately, we did not have serious injuries. Later, the display, with the cooperation of the school, was held in the football stadium. The VFW disbanded in 2011 resulting from a lack of membership, primarily because most of that "Old Gang of Mine" had passed on.

The open field north was bought and developed by the Tocco Company. Next door to the north was Ashland Oil Company. Albert and Alberta Bass worked there. Then came Angell Nail, which set well back from East 71st Street, but they added an addition that brought the building closer to East 71st Street. My daughter, Marilyn Chase, worked there, along with Ben Stawicki and several Brooklyn Heights people. At the curve of East 71st Street, the Yarmesch family built a tavern. These are more of the nice people that made the village so great to be a part of in those days.

Then came the beautiful and quaint Brodhead-Garrett little office on East 71st Street: a huge lumber storage yard with a railroad siding; and an office/boiler house to dry the lumber. A great number of village residents worked there. I had a summer position in the lumber shipping area. My wife, Gloria, was there for a while, and if anyone wants to know more about what a great place it was, ask Harriett Koren. Tony Wencke worked in the boiler house before he was hired on the fire department of the village. Later, the cute office was replaced by the present building.

Next came Cuyahoga Foundry, and then Harris-Seybold. Roland Venchi, Al Aguzzi, and Joe Andrews were some of the village workers there. As you went over the tracks, there was Benjamin-Moore and then the Kaminski Tavern and dwelling. It was a large building covered by imitation brick asphalt siding, and it reached from Benjamin-Moore to the end of Grant Avenue at East 71st Street. It was torn down to improve the intersection, and the area became a parking lot for Benjamin-Moore. Son, Don Kaminski, became a policeman in the village and later built a home on East 71st Street.

While we are in the area, heading west on Grant Avenue was the Baracz home. Daughter, Rose, married Harry Pellini; Gertie married Fred Casavecchia; Stanley was a foreman at US Steel—Cuyahoga Works; and Steve married Bernice eventually inheriting the home.

Next was a Mr. and Mrs. Stawicki, then the Smosarski's, with mom and pop downstairs and Ray and Pat upstairs. Moving west was Fritz Woodrick's big four apartment building. Stan and Helen Chase were there a short time. Mrs. Guilfoyle also had an apartment here. Next was Apex Smelting, Millcraft Paper, Columbia Metal, and just past the railroad was the Ford Motor Company, and later a few other operations—now Joshen. Across Grant Avenue was Hauserman and Lee Carpet. This area housed the first village fire station that was torn down for construction of the I-77. The new station was built on the opposite corner of the freeway. Then came Detroit-Pittsburgh Trucking and Pendergast Lumber where Gloria later worked. This was replaced by Al Balon Manufacturing Company that was started by his invention of venetian shade lamps.

There were numerous industries on the east side of East 49th Street south to Grant Avenue and Grant

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Avenue east to I-77. The industrial zone on the west side of East 49th Street from Grant Avenue to Harvard Road and then west on the south side, approximately 1000 feet was Newburgh Heights. The remainder was Cuyahoga Heights to the Harvard Denison bridge and Harvard hill to the Cuyahoga River. It then went north along the river and incorporated sections of the Republic Steel operations and bordered Newburgh Heights on the east back to Harvard Road about to the main Alcoa property. There were also east of Harvard Road portions of industrial property that ran along I-77 back to the south to Grant Avenue.

Returning to the East 71st Street and Grant area, the East side of 71st Street south was the North American property, Harris-Seybold parking lot, and open land to the original town hall, which became the home of Casimir and Domei Pallini. They originally lived at East 71st Street and Canal Road which is now Bacci Park. The City of Cleveland had a rubbish burning plant on this property, right where the hill is within Bacci Park. At times, horrible fumes emitted from this location, and it was a real blessing when they ceased operation and it was torn down.

Next to the Pallini's south was the home of the Spear sisters. They were two grand old ladies who were a great part of early Cuyahoga Heights. Casimir Pallini in later years built a home between the old town hall and the Spear sisters' home. Son, John Pallini, and Betty Yarmesch owned the old town hall and did a great deal of remodeling. Then there was a ravine and an empty lot where Mr. Rayno Antognozzi, owner of Hillside Tavern on lower East 71st Street, built his new Hillside Tavern and Party Center. The former home of Mayor Kennedy was moved from the new school site and was inhabited by the Tomczyk family. It is now the Kennedy House and home to our historical society. The next parcel was the Krieger estate and was inherited by daughter, Geraldine, who married Chester Suchocki. They raised their family here. Chester was a member of the VFW Post 6566 and volunteered to run the refreshment center of the post.

There was a large open field south to the Alvin Bloam home, which was the location of the Washington Creeping Bent Company owned and operated by a man named Cy. Creeping bent was one of the best lawns and was created by taking chunks of the grass and dropping it in spaced fields, where it grew together and was cut in rolls of several feet; laid side-by-side; and formed into a completed lawn. This property was later developed into homes: first, by Leo and Jennie Billi; then to the north Lynch; Feuerstein and Koren, who lived in the middle of the creeping bent operation for some time. Much later, Frank Domzalski Jr. and Ed Glass built homes here.

John Jackson built his home south of Bloam, then came Ray Wasky. There was open land south all the way to the Contipelli property which was the former Willow Inn moved here from the new school property across the street. From Wasky south, new homes were built by Gawne, Chester Luck, Fred Casavecchia, Gaida, Frank Kaczmarek and Fazio. The Byrne home, formerly the Farrar home, was moved from the new school site.

South from Contipelli was the original Joseph Hanousek property, which stretched to the Pellini homestead next to what was the baseball field adjacent to the new village hall. There were trees with roots so large they raised the sidewalks. These were removed when the village decided on a tree program. The Wesleys occupied the Hanousek home, then later homes were built by Wanda Skocki and her brother, Bruno Mack. Next to Skocki heading south were the Gutfranskis and then John Hanousek family, who moved from Marceline Court and East 71st Street. This home is now owned by Cheryl Harris. Eventually, Harry and Rose

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Pellini built their home and then Alio and Donna Pellini, built south of the old Pellini family homestead owned by Kathy Unger.

The new village hall included an apartment for the caretaker. There was a living room, small kitchen, bath and a bedroom. The original caretaker was Mr. Al Shatto. He and his wife were the kindest people, another Cuyahoga Heights milestone. Other caretakers were Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Umerley, Mr. and Mrs. Tim Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Chase, and then Mr. and Mrs. Joe Dorris.

In the lower level of the hall, there were two original bowling alleys. There were two pool tables as you entered from the rear door and stairway. To the left of the rear stairway was the original police office with three jail cells. Back in the alley area to the south was a two table ping pong room. The bowling alleys were quite active and a great hangout for us, as there was not much to do in winter. Several men's and women's leagues were held on Monday. Later, it was decided to add two more alleys, and thus the pool and ping pong rooms were eliminated. A few others and I used to set pins by putting pins knocked down into the pin rack. The first setters were all manual, but later a touch type machine was installed that did not require the hand lowering of the racks. After a while, we learned how to pick up four pins at a time and put them in the rack. As fewer boys wanted to set pins, it was decided to remove the wall between alleys so the pin boy could cover two alleys. It turned out to be a dangerous operation, because pins could come flying in from the other alley while you were trying to pick up pins. There were a few strong male bowlers, that forced you to climb out of the pit because the speed of their throw would bounce pins up and over the ball return rack. We made two cents a game - now that is history! When it was decided to close the alleys due to termite infestation, a kitchen and small party/meeting room was dedicated to former Mayor Ralph Contipelli. During deconstruction, I found old German newspapers under the alleys that had to be from the men who built the original two alleys. I thought they were saved and placed in the village hall showcase.

At one point, there was an original cannon at the south front yard of the village hall, but it was dismantled and sold for scrap during World War II.

Returning to homes, the first house on Dressler Court at East 71st Street belonged to the James family. It passed down through the family and is now the home of Nancy McAleer. Moving east on Dressler Court, the original home belonged to the Polcen family. Eleanor and Ed Koran built their house and had a little apartment above their garage that Ted and Harriett Koren lived in until they built their home on East 71st Street. Chester and Gertie Dunne built next to the Koran's home. These ladies were all sisters. Henry Chmielewski built next, and Frank and Dorothy Bartczak had the last house on the south side. Jim and Pat Koran built a home on the north side of Dressler Court.

Next to the James home south on East 71st Street was the original home of Jacob Gallitz, brother of Mayor George Gallitz. It was bought by Alice and Harvey Bloam. The Bloam family lived in a rear apartment above the garage. Grandson, Todd Bloam, renovated the home out front. The Weitz family is another of the original group and were some more gems of the past. Then came the Kruzal family. Dorothy married Frank Bartczak, and brother, Kenny, was killed in World War II. Another brother, Bobby, was my age and on one Halloween night he lost an eye during a squash throwing event. I don't know what happened to him or his sister, Harriet. Raymond raised his family here.

The next home belonged to Lloyd Wey Wojciechowski who married Concetta Casavecchia. He was

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a brother to Ray Wasky and worked at Harris-Seybold.

Then came the William Baur family. They had a son, Bill, that hung around with Don Boing, “Squinky” Pallini, Alvaro and Ray Iacopucci and me. Daughter, Helen, married Ralph DeSantis and inherited the household and raised their family here. Senior Baur became the police chief, and there are enough department records to demonstrate his contribution to Cuyahoga Heights. His wife was the daughter of the Hirsch family who had a gas station on Canal Road that moved up to East 71st Street across from Bletch Court. At some point, a group of young entrepreneurs worked in this garage souping up custom autos. The Zaworski family and eventually Steve Nagy lived here. Laura Bacci Merhaut and her husband, Norman, now reside at 1 Bacci Place.

The corner home at Marcelline Court and East 71st Street was the home of a family named Steiger. They had son, Allan, and daughter, Janet. They left and the Hanouseks moved in. John and Louise later built on East 71st Street and raised their family. We spent many a day and night with John and his wife, “the big Swede,” Louise. We went through many political campaigns, home days, VFW events and bowling at the Golden Pin. I never found any better people and was always disappointed that John never succeeded in his mayoral campaigns. I think he would have been a good one.

Sowinskis bought this home and later rented the rear portion to a couple named Dunn. He operated a deli in Maple Heights on Dunham Road. They moved out and the Swartouts moved in and eventually became sole owners. The next property is a home that holds a great deal of Cuyahoga Heights history. That would be the Bletch home which is now the Waldemarson home. You can find pages of history about that property and its owners, but I can tell you more personal things, having been their neighbor for decades. Walter Bletch, Helen Bletch Dustheimer, and husband, Oscar, were the greatest people to talk to and discuss many things. Also, I would listen to Helen play the piano in her piano room. Before I planted lilac bushes in the little island between our yards, our kids and several neighbor’s kids use to play kickball using their drive as their playground. They never said a thing, but just sat on their little porch and watched the kids play. I remember talking to her son, Larry, and his wife, Shirley Finnie, who lived there a short time, and enjoying the two young teachers who later rented the east portion of the home. When the Waldemarsons acquired the home, we watched Kathy and Scott grow up and have their own families. I could never ask for better neighbors, but sadly Rick did not live to finish his dream for remodeling the home. He would be proud of what Sandy and Scott completed.

Our home that I speak of next door was built by Placido Pallini in 1938. When Gloria Pallini became my wife on February 26, 1949, we moved into this home. Son, John, married Clara Pawlicki and joined us in sharing the home. Ma and Pa Pallini built a new home across the street next to the Boings. John and Clara moved to the downstairs apartment with ma and pa upstairs in the new home. Gloria and I bought their first home at 4941 East 71st Street and raised our family here. In 2006, we decided to move in with our daughter, Micki, who lived in Medina, Ohio.

Across Bletch Court on the east side of 71st Street was the first Contipelli home and store. When the Willow Inn was moved to the site home across from the high school, Pete Reali bought this house. There were many renters upstairs, including Reno Reali and his wife, Hermine; Charlie and Eva Reali; and Chester and Corrine Smith. Then the Lovisas bought the home, with Dale and granddaughter Annette Lovisa Babka

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upstairs. The next property was the original home of another historic pair, Roy and Jean Shatto. They loved ice skating on Sunny Pond, down below Marcelline Court and East 72nd Place. This home is now owned by Jimmy Fonte who also owns Lovisa's former home.

Another big part of village history is the Fontana store. One day while golfing with the Wednesday gang, Vic Trevisani told me that many Italians owed money to Pia and Jan, who had written off their debts never requiring folks to pay them. Placido and Irma lived there and also ran the store. Guido and Theresa Fontana lived in the front apartment upstairs until they built their home on East 49th Street. Gloria and I spent Fridays at their apartment watching professional wrestling on their oval Zenith TV. This building housed so many different couples before finally being owned by the Ottavio and Francesca Pallini family. Our friends Jean and Fred Zaborowski lived in the rear upstairs apartment.

Mimi and Anna Adorni; Ray Wasky; and I think, Irene and Jim Fontana; and the Prenzlows ran the store at one time. It was our hangout before Jessel's opened, and you could always find a group of young adults sitting on the front steps.

Continuing south was the Casavecchia home with the Santini home directly behind it. There was vacant land all the way to Caruso's home. Placido Pallini bought the land heading south and sold to the following families: Ernesto Santini, Reno Santini, Roland Venchi, Steve Zmija, Don Kaminski, Sikorski and Dobrovolski. Eliasons bought the Caruso property, and Ron Dorris built just before the original Hillside Tavern. Rayno Antognozzi built a dwelling off the driveway, south of the old tavern. Also on that hill were two houses in the rear where Luella and Ray Ryan lived on the left and Iaopucci's on the right. Next came the Werner Woody home; Falia Casavecchia's home; Theodore Nobili and finally the Pytel home.

Coming back up East 71st, prior to Willowbrook Drive, was a huge non-working farm occupied by the Milczewski family. They had a big family. The son my age was Auggie. We hung around together but I lost track of him when they moved. He had several older brothers who drove trucks for Kaiser-Nelson Sand & Gravel. The company's driveway was across from the Old Boat House located on Canal Road in Valley View. It later became Cabala's but was dismantled. What a shame—that was history! The Milczewski property was appropriated to remove the curve of East 71st Street and with the coming of the Willow Freeway, a ramp was created to I-77 north and Route 21 south to Independence.

The next property was the Trevisani home. Luigi was a janitor at Cuyahoga Heights School. Daughter, Delia, can tell more of his story. Yolanda Trevisani married Sam Amari and built a home on Marcelline Court. Sam's sister, Nancy Amari Calcei, resided in the original Amari family home which was later bought and sold by John Bacci. The homes built from Trevisani south were built much later and part of the development of Willowbrook Drive.

Ben Kaczmarek's house was the next coming north. He had three boys: Ron, David, and Larry. Ben was the brother of Walter. Further down the line was the Harry Henry home. Harry was lost on a boating accident on Lake Erie. Son, Ron, was a fireman in the village, and his son, Brian, bought the Kaczmarek home, tore it down and replaced it with a new one. He has since moved. He also remodeled the original Henry home.

Then came the Vacchers, whose sons Marco and Ludi were friends to many. Marco married and moved to Maple Heights. He was a great artist. Ludi married Ruth, and they lived at East 72nd Place and

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Bletch Court. After the Vacchers moved from this home, a family named Novak moved in with two sons, Robert and Jack. When the youngest boy graduated, the family moved and the Pannizutti family bought it.

The Joe Hanousek home followed. They moved from the homestead on East 71st Street across from the school. Joe was a Justice of the Peace and Jodi was the first and longest crossing guard for our elementary school. With Jodi's passing, the house was torn down.

Next was the historic Willow Baptist Church. It became the Toscana Club that was destroyed by a huge fire. I know there are many pictures of this historic place. I have special memories, because this was where Gloria and I had our wedding reception. It was before any remodeling, and we crammed people into the dinner and bar area and had to have two seatings because of the large amount of guests invited. Corrine Contipelli and Chester Smith had their reception in the newly renovated hall. Wooden floors and pine walls were the invitation to disaster when it caught fire and burned. What a great time we had in the old hall attending Toscana clambakes.

The Adorni home next door is where Cleri and Anne were born. Anne married Al Aguzzi and built a home on Willowbrook Drive. Cleri married Albie and built a home on East 49th Street. Cleri and Albie's daughter, Gail, married Rick Baciak and took over the home site. They have since moved.

Then came the Billi house. The family originally lived on Marcelline Court and East 72nd Place and moved to this location. Daughter, Rena, married Don Doskey and moved into the second-floor apartment. They later built on Willowbrook Drive. Another daughter, Delma, married Jerry Traffis. They lived on the third floor of the Nobili home on Bletch Court before they built on Willowbrook Drive. Sadly, their daughter Sherri, had Lupus and died young. Son, John, married Denise and bought the Doskey home when they moved to Florida.

Behind the Adorni and Billi homes were the Fabio Guidotti home and the Renato Guidotti home which was recently purchased by the Pflugs. Originally, Margaret and Vince Guidotti lived here but built a home in Sagamore Hills. Next came the front garage property owned by Norman and Laura Bacci Merhaut which was covered previously and then north to the Placido Pallini home. He and son, John, were both firemen in Cuyahoga Heights. The home is now owned by the Grabowski family, a niece of Clara Pallini. The Boing home came next. This was a place that I spent quite a bit of time with son, Don Boing, in my childhood years. Ironically, Don's son, Darren, married a sister to our son Mike's wife, Terri Smith, and thus became another branch of the Chase/Pallini chapter. The home is now owned by Frank and Kim Schoeffler. Kim being kin to the Walter Attewell family, and another of the historic chapters of Cuyahoga Heights. Their son, Ken, married Lee Ann Schab, and they bought the Humphrey home. The Humphrey's built this home. Later Marian's mother and father, former Mayor George Gallitz and wife, Lou, moved in when they sold their home on Bletch Court to the Geca family. Tracking north was the original home of the Knaack family. Ernie was a policeman in the village and had a daughter, June, who served as a WAC in World War II, and a son, William, who graduated in 1947. With the passing and moving of the family, the house was bought by Carl and Mary Casavecchia. These four homes have been greatly remodeled and present quite an improvement to the past. Each owner has done a wonderful job.

Charles Major's home was next and he operated a sheet metal shop. They built the new home which is now owned by Dan Tucholski, son of Mildred Major Tucholski and her husband, Clem. They resided in

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the original Major home at the rear of the property and now owned by Gary Tucholski.

Next door was John Crooks and then the Evans Family. Mr. Evans was a councilman with Mayor Kennedy. They had a daughter, Louise, who married a Seskes boy from Valley View. Sons, Walter and Joe, were musicians and played in a band that performed in several saloons in the area. Daughter, Felicia, married Joe Piasecki. They built a home and raised their family on Willowbrook Drive.

Behind the Evans home was the Kalfas Dairy. They closed the dairy and moved to Brunswick, Ohio, where Mr. Kalfas became engaged in real estate. I believe his location was in the Route 303 area. The Evans home was bought by the Antonette Billi family and has passed down through four generations. The home is now owned by great grandson, Michael Cimperman.

One of the Kalfas daughters lived in the rear of the drug store that was the next property north. She married a man named Smerda that operated a furniture store in Cleveland. The store was reopened by Eugene Jessel and was the hang out for many of us. He was a great little man and another of the gems of Cuyahoga Heights. The dairy and store were demolished to build the new elementary school and basketball courts.

Then came the Kennedy home which was moved to 4651 East 71st Street next to the Krieger home. Lastly, the Farrar home which was moved to 4795 East 71st Street now owned by Rick and Noel Centa.

Moving to the hub of the east side of Cuyahoga Heights—the Courts. On the south side of Bletch Court was the Nobili triple decker. What history in this house. We can start with the parents, Dominic, who died in 1970, and his wife, Amelia, who died in 1971. I covered the story about the murder of their daughter, Irma, in 1936. Then there was daughter, Ida, who was the greatest secretary to the clerk until her death in 1986. Son, Henry, married a Brooklyn Heights girl, Jeanette, and they lived on the second floor and raised two great boys: David and Jimmy. When they built a home on East 49th Street, Allan and Barb Zenkewicz moved in. Delma Billi, who married Jerry Traffis, lived on the third floor and eventually built on Willowbrook. So many memories of being on all three floors, remembering all the other renters, and then the sale to George Suhy, Jr. The open lot that was part of the Nobili property was also sold to the Suhy family who built their home there.

Next came the Tony and Edna Wencke home. Edna was a daughter of the East 49th Street Schuschus. I don't recall where the home was moved from, but I know it was moved.

The John and Marie Bloam family home followed. I certainly spent a lot of time in that house. Their daughter, Marie, was a close friend of my sister, Ester. They were involved in a lot of village activities—the main one being the acting group with Dorothy Kruzal, Ken Farrar, Helen Baur and a few others. They put on plays in the town hall auditorium. When I was clerk, I went back stage and was shocked at how small the dressing rooms and stage were. That group accomplished a great deal. Daughter, Pat, married Al Ezzo and built their home on the north side of Bletch Court. Their children are Marlene and Brian. They grew up with the Chases and are still part of our family activities. The third Bloam daughter, Luella, married Ray Ryan and lived above the Cricket Tavern and later in the north home behind the original Hillside Tavern. Son, Jim, became a fireman and married Jean. They also built a home on Willowbrook Drive.

Laura Bacci and Dave Rice rented an apartment above the Bloam's garage when the Suhy's owned the property. Talk about memories.

On to the Collecchi family, another of the older families. They had three sons: Roy, Bruno and Lidio.

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There are many memories of all of them. Roy worked with me at US Steel and built a home in Medina. I am sure many residents can recall Bruno and Lidio.

Another of the older families lived in the next home: the Iacopo and Maryanna Angiocchi family. Daughter, Julia, married Robert Hine who was a policeman in the village and moved on the north side of Bletch Court. Michael Angiocchi, a grandson of Iacopo and Maryanna, also owned this original Angiocchi home. Later, Arthur (Pasqual) Pasqualetti built a home on the hillside on the south corner of Bletch Court and East 72nd Place. Then Giocondo and the grand old lady Augusta “Coke,” Pasqualetti Perozeni, who everyone knew and loved, owned the next house down the drive. Adjacent to their home lived Ruth and Ludi Vaccher. Ludi was a policeman and quite a jokester.

On the north side of Bletch Court and East 72nd Place was the original Hess family home. Franklin was a village policeman. His sons were Ronald, Richard and Frank, Jr. who also became a police officer. Frank retired and moved to Independence, and then Lidio and Connie Angiocchi bought the home.

Next was the Clark home which became the home of Sue and Dan Tucholski. Daughter, Dorothy Clark, married Chris Prenzlów from Valley View. His parents ran the village store for a while and lived on Willowbrook Drive.

The Blue family purchased the original home of the Red Bower family and raised their family here. Harry was a fireman and a great softball player. They had great kids in Dennis, Bruce, Tom, Mary Jane, and Dan. The next was the home of Robert and Julia Angiocchi Hine as already mentioned. They had three children: Mark, also a policeman in the village, Roberta, and Paul.

Moving west was the home of Walter and Lottie Kaczmarek. Walter was a fireman and later became the fire chief of the village. They were well-liked and a couple more of the gems of our community.

Then came the original home of the former Mayor George Gallitz, Sr. family. I have a lot of memories in that home over my political years. George was the man that talked me into running for clerk and was of great help in my training years. He was superintendent of the Newburgh South Shore Railway on East 71st Street and Park Avenue in Cleveland. He sold his home to the Geca Family when they moved in with daughter, Marian Humphrey, on East 71st Street.

Finally came Al and Patty Ezzo, as previously covered. This is also the home where Pat died in a fire. She was one of my dedicated assistants in presenting me with the payroll information.

Back to East 72nd Place, in the southeast corner was the home of Gega Vaccher and her son, Dean’s family. She was another of the gems and had many moments in the history of Cuyahoga Heights.

The next home was where the Slipota family lived here for a short time but sold to the Stan Smith family. Then moving north was the home of Sam and Edith Fonte and her brother, Louie Ezzo. She was the sister of Al Ezzo. Then came the Bacci enclave. The memory of two great people anyone would want to meet, in Vincent and Aldegonda Bacci. This was the home of Mary, Anne, and, of course, Louie and Lillian Bacci. Half of our lives was being associated with each other, including the aches and pains that went along with the work put into our futures as young, raw kids—in elected public service!

Next to Bacci’s was the stairway to get to the chemical plant in Garfield Heights, off Warner Road. Down below and to the north was Sunny Pond, a favorite swimming hole for the boys in the summer and all the winter recreation—sliding down the hills onto Sunny Pond on our sleds, playing hockey, and ice

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skating. This was our main winter recreation area. It was wonderful to watch the old timers like Jean and Roy Shatto and Luella Bloam Ryan figure skating.

On the north side of Marcelline Court were the following homes: Calcei/Amari, Sam and Yolanda Amari, Dorothy and Bruno Guidotti, Stanley Klima, John Jackson in a move from East 71st Street, the Crooks and Davis families. Lester and Lois Davis were above the garage, with Lisa and Jude in the original home.

On the south side were the following homes: Paul Koran, James Masek, Bass, Kvasnok, Snoddy, Marty Malek and Kitty Wey families. Then, the original home of the Ottavio Billi family before they moved to East 71st Street when it became home of the Joseph Blue family. This home is now owned by Jim Fonte.

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