

**INSIDE:  
PHOTOS FROM  
FEASTA DI  
SAN VITO**



# TO FRANK, IN RETURN FOR SICILY

Tennessee Williams dedicated his play "The Rose Tattoo" to Peterstown native Frank Merlo. The positive influence that Frank had on Tennessee is well documented. His play captured the personae of Frank's family and neighbors in the Italian enclave of Elizabeth, NJ, a tribute to the culture that so impressed the author.

Frank Merlo wanted to be a writer and so he moved to Greenwich Village in Manhattan. It was the late 1940s, after World War II, in which Frank served in the navy. The Village in the 1940s had become the catchall for the people shaping the arts and literary world. Musicians, poets, writers and artists were cramming into the old tenements for the cheap rent. The mixture of talent brewed relationships from which grew some of the best American contributions to art, theatre, film and literature. This was the Beat Generation and the Beatniks were somewhat of a mystery to the blue collar world Frank left back in Peterstown. The image of the bohemian lifestyle was of counter culture and anti establishment. Artists did not need the approval of society; in fact they thrived more efficiently in the free form model of their own community.

Frank did not develop into a writer in his own right but he did have a profound effect on Tennessee Williams, one of America's greatest playwrights who he met in 1947. Williams had just experienced his first critical success with his play "Glass Menagerie". His career and life were improving. His youth and early adulthood was plagued with misery and challenges brought on by family problems and depression. The themes in his plays reflect those personal struggles. So it is with respect that biographers attribute Merlo with giving Williams the mental and emotional stability necessary to utilize his immense talent. During their sixteen year relationship, Williams was his most prolific, achieving critical acclimation and recognition. Glass Menagerie had won the NY Critics Circle Award and then in 1947 Williams won the award a second time for "A Streetcar Named Desire", which also won him a Pulitzer Prize. He would write ten more plays during this period including "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" in 1950, earning him another Pulitzer, and "Night of the Iguana" in 1961. His play "The Rose Tattoo" received the Tony Award for best play in 1951.

Williams made his home in several states. His choice for living was sometimes made due to his work, as when his plays were produced in Chicago or New York and sometimes he would live in places that inspired him, like New Orleans, Louisiana, the setting of many of his plays. He especially liked Key West, Florida where one of his favorite hang outs was Captain Tony's Saloon owned by one time Key West mayor and another Peterstown native Tony Tarracino. Even with all his travel and experience, Tennessee Williams still expressed a great fondness for Peterstown. And although his play, "The Rose Tattoo" is set in New Orleans it could have as easily taken place in Frank's old home on the corner of John Street and Third Avenue. The Merlo family lived behind what is now Cafe Italia. The three story back porch had a view of the corner, which was as lively as the French Quarter.

It was exciting for Frank's family to keep track of the couple's success. Frank would get tickets for his family whenever a play would open on Broadway. When in New York he would always make it a point to visit. One day in 1947 "A Streetcar Named Desire" was playing on Broadway and Frank and Tennessee wanted to treat their lead actor, Marlin Brando, who was craving spaghetti and meatballs, and took him to Frank's mom's house for the real deal. The role would launch Brando into super stardom.

The Rose Tattoo is an indication of the stability Frank offered Tennessee. It is the only play he wrote that actually has a happy ending. It may have been autobiographical depicting his relationship with Frank. Most of Tennessee Williams plays are dark and full of despair, filled with intense symbolism. Most critics agree they reflect the turmoil of his life battling tragic relationships with his parents and sister. He also fought his own demons and battled with an intolerant culture over his sexuality. The anguish that dominated his life seemed to end with Frank.

The time Frank and Tennessee spent with his family was sporadic but it must have had a grounding effect on them. The solid family values and strong sense of community was in direct contrast to the celebrity lifestyle that they were living. Just knowing it was there may have offered them some comfort.

Frank Merlo developed lung cancer in 1961 and died two years later. It had a crushing effect on Tennessee. He sunk into a profound depression, began self medicating and succumbed to alcoholism.

There is much to be said about how two people can complete each other. Frank Merlo and Tennessee Williams were two loving souls that passed through this world and found each other.



(above) Frank Merlo was an extra in the movie version of The Rose Tattoo shot in Old Key West.



(left) Frank Merlo, top right, and family at their home in the Peterstown Section of Elizabeth, NJ. His brother Tony is standing next to Frank. His sisters Katie Canu and Annie Deleo are just in front of Tony and Frank. His sister Connie Barone is in front of Katie and Annie. Tony's wife Sarah is to the left of Connie. Their mother Rosalie is wearing a black dress and standing to the right of Connie.

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**President's Message**



I can't believe how fast time flies by. This is our 58th issue of Around About Peterstown. We will hit our 10 year mark in October. The reality of how long it has been becomes clear when I flip through the old issues going back to the first issue in December 1998. Especially when I look at pictures of the kids. They change so much in ten years. The newspaper is valuable for a few different reasons. It promotes organizations that are doing community services and it records the oral history of the people from the neighborhood, which otherwise may be lost. The newspaper also promoted, our club, the Sons of Peterstown and our events.

It was all made possible by the support of our advertisers and we thank you. The prices never changed in the ten years we've been publishing though the paper grew to 24 pages and 15,000 are now distributed.

If you have an old picture or story you would like to share please call Joe Renna at 908-447-1295 or email him at joerenna@joerenna.com. Thank you and God bless.

John Sacco, President

**PRESS RELEASES**

Press Releases that benefit the community of Peterstown are offered free of charge. Every effort will be made to accommodate appropriate articles when time and space allows. Send any info in early.

**ADVERTISERS: CALL TINA RENNA**  
 908-709-0530



Visit our website. Leave a message on our Peterstown Message board.



**Letters to the Editor**



**LETTER POLICY**

Around About Peterstown welcomes Letters to the Editor at our postal, fax or e-mail addresses. Letters must include sender's name, address and phone number (only name and town will be printed). Letters should be typed. Letters appear as space permits. We reserve the right not to print a letter without notifying sender.

Dear Joe:

I'm interested in knowing whether anyone out there was every acquainted with one of my aunts on my father's side of his family.

My father was Daniel (Donald) Colchie and he and his siblings were raised on Cameron Place in Elizabeth. A small dead end street off Pearl Street with Rector Street sitting along the back of the dead end. Breidt's Brewery sat on Pearl Street going around the corner toward St. Elizabeth Hospital near Broad Street and across the street from part of Pearl over near East Jersey Street. The Elizabeth High School sits on the site now.

My aunt's name was Rose Colchie and from what I understand from stories my father told me about her when I was a child is that she along with a girlfriend of hers, Lizzie Rowe, who resided on High Street in Elizabeth when I grew up, belonged to the St. Don Bosco Club at St. Anthony's Church. As the story goes, my Aunt Rose died at 24 years of age in the 1920's. Would anyone out there or any archival records from St. Anthony's have a photograph of Rose Colchie?

Cynthia Rose Colchie Rosa  
 Toms River, NJ

Dear Editor(s),

As a lifelong resident of Elizabeth, reading your newspaper always brings a smile to my face and a slim bit of envy- because I never resided in Peterstown, nor am I of Italian decent. I do, very much, admire the brotherhood, the unity, and the respect that I read about in the wonderful stories in your paper.

I am writing in hopes that you would drop off papers at my family's business. We have been in Elizabeth for well over 40 years, and we have many customers of all ethnicities that I'm sure would enjoy reading your paper.

We are located in the Bayway section of Elizabeth, right on Bayway Avenue. Our business is "Pastime Tavern" at 520 Bayway Avenue.

Thank you  
 Bath Kotarski  
 Elizabeth, NJ

Dear Mr. Renna,

Alphonso Cautillo was grandfather to my Mom (Lillian Cautillo Richel) as well as Genevieve Cautillo Hickey. The April 04, issue #33, cover story about the Gallo/Cautillo family was of much interest to Gen who is living in Mobile, Alabama. She has been looking for her family roots and I've been trying to fill her in the best I can. She did visit Valata, Italy several years back looking for information, which she did find.

Thank you.  
 Lillian Richel Tussel  
 c/o Genevieve Cautillo Hickey,  
 Mobile, AL

**HATS OFF TO BILL MANHARDT**

Bill Manhardt has been contributing news about the Knights of Columbus to Around About Peterstown.

Dear Joe,

My name is Joseph O'Boyle a close friend of Bill Manhardt's. My dad was his friend and when he died I started helping Bill. I'm from Roselle Park, but I'm very active in the 4th degree Knights of Columbus, John Dawson Gilmary Shea Assembly of Elizabeth. I know a lot of the old timers from Peterstown from the K of C mostly through my dad and I have stayed in touch with most of them, a lot of them have fallen asleep with the Lord. I am married with 4 children and I'm very active with my church, the Church of St Thersea in Kenilworth (catholiczone.com).

Brother Sir Knight William Manhardt is still Patriotic. Bill is an honorary life member of our assembly and still stays active. He keeps us updated on patriotic events and continues to fly the flag. Bill is past Faithful Navigator of our assembly and Past Grand Knight of the Elizabeth Knights of Columbus Council 253. Bill is an Elizabeth native.

Bill is a life member of the John Dawson Gilmary Shea Assembly having been a 4th degree member for 39 years. He has been a member of the Knights for 49 years.

Bill Manhardt has told me how good you have been to him and I told him I would keep you updated on both the John Dawson Gilmary Shea Assembly and Bill. He told me he met you and enjoyed talking to you.

Best regards,  
 Joseph O'Boyle  
 Roselle Park



**FRANK SANTILLO**

Frank Santillo, 54, passed away on April 26, 2008, at home in Los Angeles, Calif. Born and raised in Elizabeth, Frank moved to Los Angeles in 2000. He was a health coordinator in Carmel, Calif. Frank is survived by his

mother, Theresa Colicchio Schade of Edison; his sister, Patricia Conforti and her husband, Eugene, of Toms River, and his brother, Joseph Santillo and his wife, Gina, of Linden. He was predeceased by his father, Frank Santillo, and step-father George Schade.

Dear Neighbors,

Recently, the Elizabeth Garden Club celebrated the end of their 84th year with a luncheon at the Garden Restaurant in Union, New Jersey. Mrs. June Ford, the outgoing president, welcomed the newly elected president, Mrs. Alice Holzapfel, as well as 1st Vice President, Mrs. Jeanne Sheils.

The club will continue with its fund raising, scholarship award, distribution of flower arrangements to local care centers and hospitals and assembling and distributing to the Visiting Nurses Association sixty (60) gift bags for them to distribute to their patients during the holiday season.

All members are looking forward to the Elizabeth Garden Club's 85th year.

Patricia A. Corsentino  
 Elizabeth Garden Club  
 Elizabeth, NJ

Joe,

I read the article about Cleveland Middle School Reunion for the classes of 1956 to 1960 in your April 08 issue and you did a great job. Sorry not to thank you sooner, but as we get older we get slower. I really liked the way you reproduced the class shots and was happy to see them so clearly.

As we move the reunion along we would like to remind the many classmates reading this to register to attend by emailing cleveland5660@hotmail.com.

Thanks  
 Tom Fiorillo  
 Union, NJ

Joe,

I just read the Peterstown newspaper. Great articles. I see you included my Jefferson High School 30th reunion picture. We are having our 55th reunion on Sept. 11th.

Regards Don Schiessl  
 Warren, NJ



(above, l-r) Knights of Columbus Administrator Dennis Bruschi meets with Bill Manhardt. Though Bill's ability to maneuver is limited he has not slowed in his dedication to do help the organization with their community service. His wheel chair is a mobile office and he is wired to the world though his computer from his bed in the Delaire Nursing Home in Linden, NJ. He is flanked by flags he had donated from Merck & Co.

# Editor's Opinion

*everybody has one - this is mine - by Joe Renna*

It would be wonderful if everyone had a muse, a guiding spirit, and a source of inspiration as Tennessee Williams had in Frank Merlo. The term, muse, from Greek Mythology, is reserved for people in creative walks of life, writers, artists, poets, philosophers and the like. I want to extend the concept to people in every day walks of life.

The relationship between the muse and the artist is similar to what we experience in Peterstown. We inspire and are inspired by one another. Though our pursuits are not as lofty as those of the artist, they are just as important to our own small community. Especially when it comes to helping others in need.

The way our community groups help each other is a thing of beauty. Starting with St. Anthony's Church, the anchor of our community, to all the community service and social organizations, we have giving down to a science. Or should I say, an art form.

There are some people who have a knack for doing good, a talent, if you will. They should be held with high esteem. They should be the recipients of our support. The rest of the community should be encouraging and inspiring that person, for they are the

one with the talent. So much more can be achieved when we each use our own special talents and work together.

I get support for publishing this newspaper from many people. The advertisers allow me to afford the printing; the readers contribute their personal stories; and the organizations share news of their events that benefit the community. It is very gratifying.

This newspaper is now in its tenth year and is the result of many people contributing their experiences and stories. I may put the ink on paper, but the community gives it life. My neighbors, friends and family are my inspiration. My wife, Tina, is my muse. I know I am able to achieve much more than if I was going at it alone. ♪♪



**Not for Nothing But...**

do I muse you?



## SUBMIT TO OUR TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY BOOK

Ten years of Around About Peterstown will be rolled into one book. October 08 will complete our tenth year in print and all past content will be published in one big book.

If you have content for the paper and would like it to be included in the book submit it soon.

Old photos, family histories and old memories are welcomed. Obituaries and remembrances of deceased family members can be included in a section of the book that will serve as a memorial.

### UPCOMING REUNIONS IN 08

#### ELIZABETH H.S. CLASS OF '78

Reunion Date: Saturday, November 29, 2008

Please send us current names & addresses of classmates. E-Mail: EHSClassof78@aol.com or call 908-820-3808.

#### ST. ANTHONY'S CLASS OF '62

Jerry Oriscello, Frank Malta and Mike Minitelli are spearheading a 45 year grammar school class reunion and are looking for classmates. If you are one, please call Mike at 908-687-5213 or Frank at 908-355-1176.

#### ROSELLE CATHOLIC AND GIRLS CATHOLIC CLASSES OF '78

Saturday, November 29, 2008 at The Kenilworth Inn.

Email: RCGC78reunion@yahoo.com for information.

Leave contact info and if you have interest in playing Golf earlier in the day. Rooms are reserved for attendees if you would like to book one.

#### THOMAS JEFFERSON H.S. CLASS OF 1953

Thomas Jefferson H.S. Class of 1953 will hold its 55th year reunion celebration on September 11th at The Beacon Hill Country Club, 8 Beacon Hill Road, Atlantic Highlands.

Contact Jack Padavano 732-929-1666  
john668@netzero.com  
or Don Schiessl 908-353-0867  
dasretired@aol.com.

### REGISTER FOR ST. A'S NOW

St. Anthony's Grammar School is taking registration for 2008-2009 school year. For more information call the school at 908-352-7419, Monday through Friday from 9am to 12 noon or 1pm to 2pm.

Ask about our scholarship program!

Make submissions to:

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### UNICO CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

*Submitted by Joseph F. Sutera, President*

The Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO is committed to funding various organizations such as Cooley's Anemia, The Arc of Union County, Center for Hope, hospice & Palliative Care, Occupational Center, Scholarships for Italian American Collegian Students, and many other charitable organizations, who desperately rely on our donations to continue their services.

We humbly ask you again to help us achieve our goals this year. Please make a contributions to our Souvenir Journal by completing the enclosed application.

This year we will be honoring Jennifer Conte Barrett as the 2008 Citizen of the Year. Our Award Dinner Dance will be held on Sunday, October 19, 2008 at L'Affaire Fine Catering, 099 Rt. 22 East, Mountainside, NJ. Tickets are now available at \$100.00 per person.

To purchase tickets, please call:

Pat Arena 908-352-8353

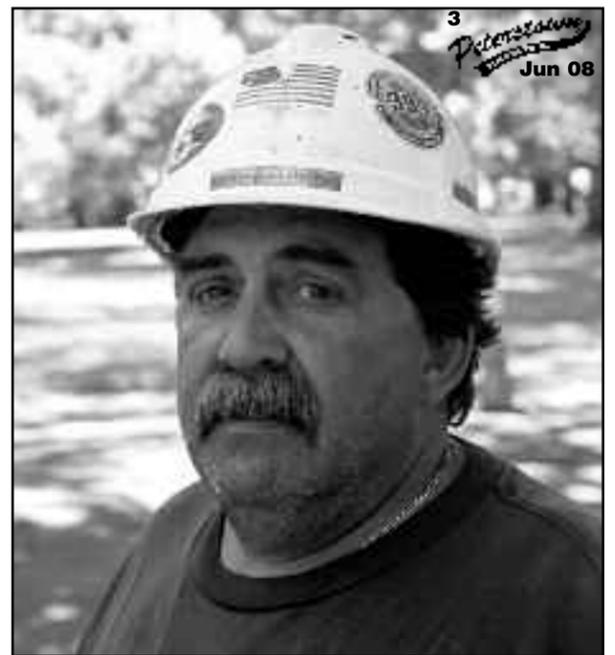
George Marretta 908-925-9211

Courtney Villani 908-862-3333

Joe Caporaso 908-241-4796



Jennifer Conte Barrett



(above) Jack LaBrutto

## LABRUTTO NAMED NEW PREZ OF LOCAL 394

Jack LaBrutto has stepped in as president of Labor Local 394. The union hall, located at 647 Marshel Street in Elizabeth, NJ has 475 members. The local's business agent is Al Castanza with field director Joe Gulino as assistant BA. Carmine Insolaca is the recording secretary.

LaBrutto, Castanza, Gulino and Insolaca all hail from the Peterstown section of Elizabeth and continue a long tradition of the community's involvement with the building trades. Jack is the third generation dedicated to the trade. His grandfather, Jack, retired from the Union after 32 years. His Father clocked in 47 years before retiring and his Uncle Joe shaped the hall for 53 years. Jack has been a member for 32 years.

Jack is committed to seeing that his members get steady work, at a prevailing wage. LaBrutto says of his charges, "We are hard workers who just want to earn enough to raise our families comfortably."

Labrutto and his crew are finishing up a yearlong project in Warenanco Park in Roselle, NJ. The stream restoration project sponsored by Merck and Company rehabbed a 1/2-mile run of river, added a new stream and constructed four bridges. ♪♪

*What Is UNICO?*



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Advertising starts at \$45 for a business card size ad, up to \$600 for a full page. Anyone interested in placing an ad can contact Tina Renna at (908) 709-0530.

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## ★ ★ ★ WORLD PREMIER ★ ★ ★

**Around About Peterstown** Presents Code Placer, Created by Michael Anello, email: anellodesign@gmail.com

**HOW TO PLAY CODE PLACER:**  
1. Each row horizontal and vertical must contain one set of all letter. 2. Each 3x3 space square must also contain one set of all letters and spaces. 3. Letters in shaded squares must be arranged to spell out phrase. Hint: One row is completed. Solution will be in the August 08 issue of Around About Peterstown.

# CODE PLACER

BY MICHEAL ANELLO

N		E		R		F		
F					O			E
P	R	O	F	W	E	N	T	S
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“ ”

### Letter Place Created by Michael Anello

E	I	T	A	E	Z	H	L	B
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A	L	B	H	I	T	Z	E	E
T	A	E	I	Z	E	L	B	H
I	B	H	L	A	E	T	E	Z
L	Z	E	T	B	H	I	A	E
B	T	A	Z	E	I	E	H	L
H	E	I	E	T	L	B	Z	A
Z	E	L	B	H	A	E	I	T

### SOLUTION TO JUNE 08 PUZZLE

Mike Anello's creation Letter Place was debuted in the April Issue of Around About Peterstown. The key word, highlighted in the diagram to the left was "Elizabeth".

The solution to this Month's puzzle will appear in the August 08 issue of this newspaper. The first reader to send the correct solution in, will get credited in the next issue.

**HOW TO PLAY LETTER PLACE:** 1. Letters used spell out a word or words totalling 9 letters including spaces. 2. Each row horizontal and vertical must contain one set of all letters and spaces. 3. Each 3x3 space square must also contain one set of all letters and spaces. Hint: One row, randomly selected spells out the word or words used.

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# DICOSMO ARE DOUBLY BLESSED MEETING TWO POPES



**Not for Nothing But...**

it's nice to meet people  
in places on high.

(left) Mike and Ann DiCosmo both take hold of the hand of Pope Paul VI during a visit to the Vatican in 1972.

(left) In 1979 Mike and Ann once again had face-time with the Holy See, John Paul II. Mike is hand to hand with the pontiff, Ann is a few lengths down the rail to his right.

Mike DiCosmo and his wife Ann had the privilege of shaking the hand of two Popes, once in 1972, Pope Paul VI, and a second time in 1979, John Paul II. Both encounters happened during trips to the Vatican as part of vacation tours with friends. The DiCosmos traveled through Italy with about 20 close friends. Once in Rome Mike contacted another friend, a monsignor who worked at the Vatican. On both occasions he arranged for Mike and his party to obtain tickets to be in the audience of the Pope. It was sheer cunning on his part to get himself and Ann to the front of the crowd.

Pope Paul VI headed the Catholic Church from 1963 to 1978. Pope John Paul I who even at the relatively young age of 65 was quite ill and died after serving only 33 days as Pope succeeded him. His successor was Karol Józef Wojtyła, a priest from Poland who eventually became a bishop and Cardinal. He would be the first Polish Pope, in fact the first Pope ever who was not Italian. He took the name of his predecessor and became John Paul II. He was just 58 years old at the time. John Paul II had a very popular and inspirational tenure as Pope that lasted 27 years. He died in 2005. The nod then went to a German born cardinal who took the name Benedict XVI. He is presently serving as Pope.

Photos of the two encounters hang on the wall of Mike and Ann's son's Gary's Deli, DiCosmo's, on Raritan Road in Clark. Ann still has fond memories of those trips and of those with whom she traveled.

**Not for Nothing But...**

I thought he wanted to  
be called John Paul  
Too, as in also.

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# GUERCIO HAS WORDS WITH POPE PIUS XII

Joe Guercio from Roselle Park, NJ served in the U.S. Navy from 1948 to 1952. His assignment during the Korean War was on a ship touring the Mediterranean Sea. Joe's parents were from a town in Sicily named Polizzi Generosa. Joe served as an Italian/English interpreter and loved to take Liberty in Italy.

Joe visited the Vatican during one of his breaks. He was squeezed in a sea of servicemen and could barely see over his shipmates as Pope Pius XII walked into the room. To no one person in particular, the Pope asked the group in Italian, "Where is your ship?" A small voice

from about six rows back answered, in Italian, "It is in Naples."

Hearing the response in Italian Piqued Pius's curiosity. He looked around and asked "Who said that?" Joe answered but still was not in eyesight of the Pope. Then his shipmate, Frank "Big Mhert" Mhertens, a mountain of a guy, lifted Joe and shoved him to the front of the crowd, Joe felt like he was airborne, and ended up face to face with the pontiff. Pope Pius asked "Are you Italian?" Joe then explained how he was an American born of Italian immigrants.

# BEN16 IN NYC

Pope Benedict XVI's visit to New York City on April 19, 2008 was documented by local photographer Harry Marples. Harry and his family, wife Veronica and children, waded through the crowds and intense security for the opportunity to capture the moment. Though they were not fortunate enough to have gotten into St. Patrick's cathedral, they were able to watch Benedict celebrate Mass on a large screen TV out side.



(above) Photo of Pope Benedict XVI taken through the windows of the Popemobile which was fitted with bulletproof glass after the assassination attempt of John Paul II in 1981.



(left) Joe Guercio, kneeling second from right, got helped getting his front row seat from buddy Frank Mhertens (top right) in the audience of Pope Pius XII.



(left) Joe Guercio, now living in Pine Wood Hall in Roselle, NJ, cherishes the 1952 photo, below, of himself and fellow shipmates with the pope at the Vatican.



(right) Portrait photographer Harry Marples is an Elizabeth, NJ native and operates out of his Grove Street office. He can be reached at 908-352-2088.



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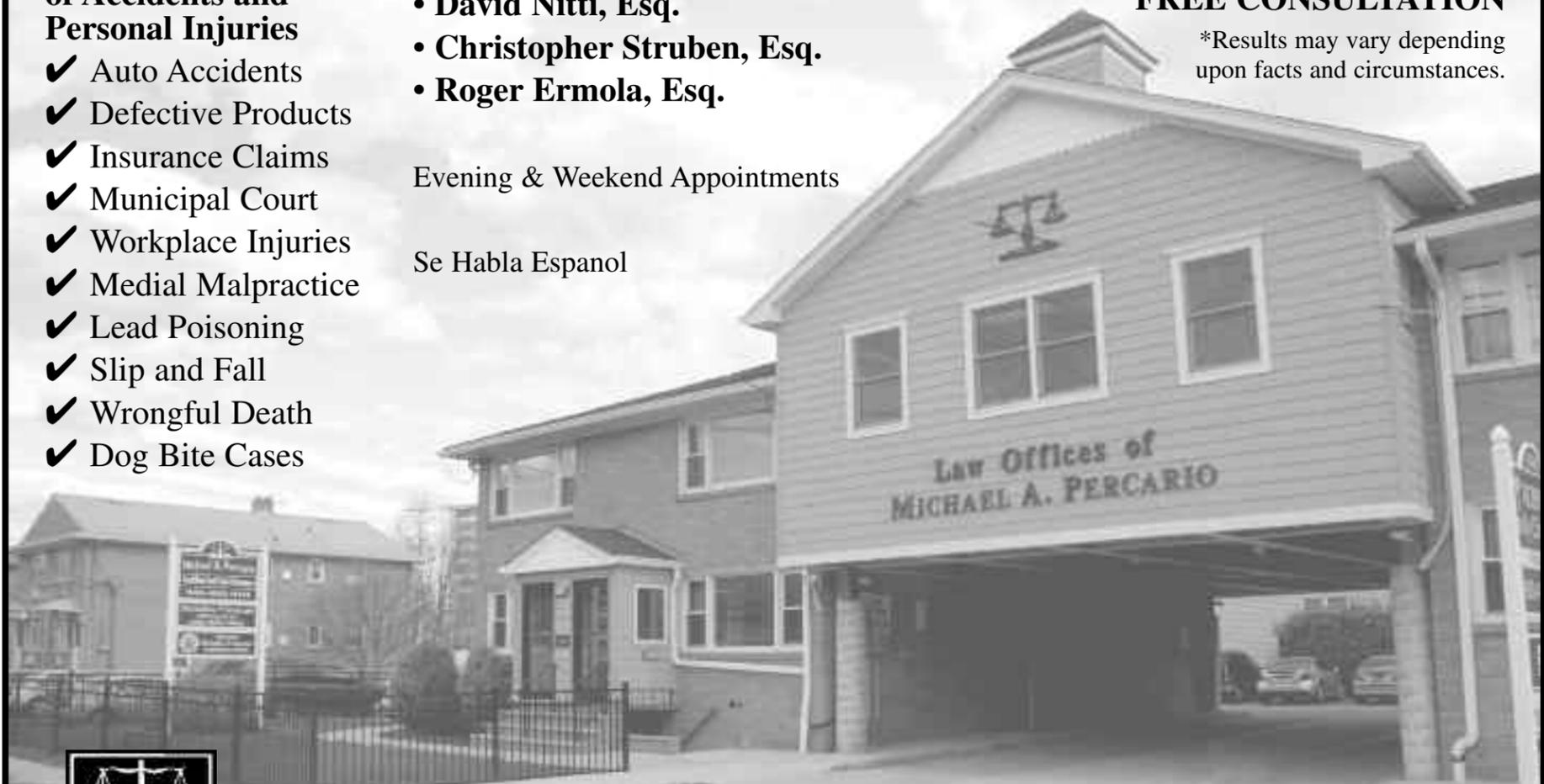
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# TATTOO ROSE PLAYS ON PLAY'S WORDS



(above) The Rose Tattoo, a play by Tennessee Williams was the inspiration behind the Peterstown based band Tattoo Rose. The play was made into a movie in 1955 starring Burt Lancaster and Anna Magnani, after playing on Broadway and winning a Tony Award for best play in 1951. The leads were played by Maureen Stapleton and Eli Wallach, both of whom also won Tony Awards for Best Featured Actor and Featured Actress in a Play.

In 1971 Lou Filipe, Lou LaBrutto and Joe Phiffer got together in Filipe's Elizabeth Avenue bedroom to form a band. Filipe sang and played the drums, LaBrutto played the organ and Phiff was one of the best guitarists to come out of Elizabeth. Thier first song was "That Boy" by the Beatles. They were liking what they heard and having fun to boot. They put the call out to their musician friends from the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ and started building the band which would become a tour de force on the local music scene.

It was Gary Tripidi, saxophonist and vocalist who suggest the name of the band be "Tattoo Rose". He had just read the play, "The Rose Tattoo" written in 1948 by Tennessee Williams and thought the name evoked a pretty cool image. Not to be so litteral in its reference to the play, he inverted the words. The play had a historical tie to Peterstown in that it was inspired by Williams' experience spending time in the neighborhood visiting the Merlo family on John Street.

The band played into the 80's at local clubs and lounges. In the early years they were a staple at the then popular school dances. The bands most shinning moments were their concerts in the park, in their case, the School 3 Playground. They would play under the

shelter for hours tirelessly having as much fun as the throngs that would fill the outfield and bleachers.

There was an ebb and flow of members through the years including bassist Vince Fenminelli, Eddie Martines on Guitar, vocalist Billy Cullen, Victor Firenzi and Ron Marshott both bass players and Charlie Saracino on organ.

When Louie Filipe left the band to go to college, John Hass sat in on drums. The group were friends first, the band was their playground. If there was any riff between members no one knew. Off stage they mixed in with the day-to-day of the rest of the neighborhood. A case in point, when Louie Filipe graduated college and was ready to play again the band did not want to slight Hass so they played with two drummers for a while.

Thier catalog consisted of the music of Eric Clapton, The Beatles, Moody Blues, Doobie Brothers, Dave Mason, Santana, CSN&Y, The Doors, and the like.

Though they were talented enough to do so, no one ever pursued music as a career. A few continue to play professionally and others may emerge to do a gig or two.

Filipe has been a regular with the Jobananno & The Godsons of Soul, which sometimes has Saracino sitting in. Joe Phiff can be seen playing his guitar in the Fossils. They both still rock like they did 30 years ago.

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# PEACE, LOVE, WOODSTOCK

Tattoo Rose regularly played outdoor concerts, in the School Playground, for all comers. As the news spread the field would fill up with free spirited local youth. Sometimes the show was structured as part of a planned event, other times it was impromptu.

Concerts would turn into all day fests with barbecues sparking up and frisbees flying. For whatever reason, these types of shows were definitely a sign of the times.

(below, clockwise) Tattoo Rose playing at The St. Rocco's Feast in 1978: Victor Ferenzi, Eddie Martinez, Louie Filipe, Charlie Saracino, and Joe Phiffer.



Check out where Louie Filipe is playing by visiting [www.jobonanno.com](http://www.jobonanno.com)

Information about Joe Phiffer's and the band The Fossils can be found at [www.myspace.com/jerseyfossils](http://www.myspace.com/jerseyfossils)

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 what is considered counter culture at one point, will be mainstream establishment later on.  
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Submitted by Jaime Santamaria II, M.D.

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In cataract surgery, the natural lens is removed, and today we use a new lens in the "eye camera" to replace the old cloudy lens – it is called the intraocular lens implant, or IOL. In my opinion, the crystalens® is the best intraocular lens now available for patients. It allows for both far and close vision without glasses.

The crystalens® imitates the natural eye by accommodating--it actually moves forward slightly adjusting to the change in distance, just like in the natural eye. When you look at something far away and then at something close by, this accommodating lens focuses and you can see both. This is different from the standard intraocular lens, which gives you either far

vision or near vision without glasses, but not both.

The other type of FDA approved implant that can give you far and close vision without glasses is the multifocal lens. This type of IOL does not adjust to the distance, but rather you are looking through a specific area of the lens for distance or for near. These lenses can produce halos around lights, giving poor night vision. The accommodating crystalens® has no such disadvantage.

Even though most of our crystalens® patients see quite well for far and close, some patients may need glasses for something, usually reading fine print. This is the only downside to this exciting new technology. The accommodating crystalens® is ideal for computer users since intermediate vision is usually excellent. Multifocal intraocular lenses on the other hand, frequently lack good intermediate vision. The crystalens® is the implant I would place in my own eye if I had a cataract, and the one I would recommend to anyone in my own family.

If you would like to determine if you are a candidate for this outstanding breakthrough in vision correction, Dr. Santamaria is available for consultation in the Edison or Perth Amboy offices. 📞

(above) Jaime Santamaria II, M.D. with offices in Edison and Perth Amboy draws many clients from surrounding counties due to a new cataract surgery procedure.

Santamaria Eye Center, on the web at [www.santamariaeyecenter.com](http://www.santamariaeyecenter.com) and [lasiknj.com](http://lasiknj.com), can be reached toll free at 877-454-4362 or 732-826-5159.

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# FIRST FEASTA DI SAN VITO IS BIG SUCCESS

Peterstown residents young and old, past and present, filled Centre Street from Fourth Avenue to the dead end in the first Feasta di San Vito presented by the Frank O. Mazza Civic Association.

The setting for the family festivities were centered on the Vallatese hall. On Saturday night, June 14, 2008, three generations got together for lessons in making pasta and bread, a St. Vito Day tradition. The next morning, the bread was walked in procession from the Valletes Club to St. Anthony's Church for blessing at the altar. Children carried signs they had made during arts and crafts sessions the night before.

Italian Mass at St Anthony's was full to capacity, as in years past, and Fr. Sesto commented on how happy he was to see the Italian community could still come out and support the Parish. He hoped for every Sunday to be San Vito Day.

After the church service a double lined procession snaked through the streets of Peterstown behind a statue of St. Vito being carried on the shoulders of community faithful following Father Sesto and deacon Joe Caparoso.

The procession ended with the outdoor feast complete with food vendors, music, dancing and games. The fun continued into the evening with Quadriglia and Tarantella lessons that ended in a contest. The story of St. Vito and cultural history was the focus of the two-day event.

Several outside vendors participated with all the

traditional foods prepared by members of the Frank Mazza Civic Association which included Dolce Restaurant, Tommy's Pizza, Centanni's Meat Market and Michelino's Restaurant, all donated their time to make the event successful. The bread and pasta that was made the night before was served.

Organizers thanked the City of Elizabeth, the Police and Fire departments, Public Works Central Licensing and Emergency Medical Services for all their assistance.

Master Pig Roaster Larry Trujillo who donated his entire day for a good cause cooked two 100-pound pigs

The Statue of San Vito was restored. It is now on display in St Anthony's Church and accepted donations during the feasta. Over \$2,500 was donated to St. Anthony's Parish of which Fr. Pat Diver was extremely appreciative of for helping the Parish continue to serve the Peterstown Italian American Community.

Plans for next year are to expand to a two-day festival and add more instructional lessons for the children in hopes that they will not only learn of their family's history and culture, but also become proud of it and continue the traditions with their families for generations to come.



(top and above) Younger generations learned from elders how to make pasta and bread as part of the St. Vito celebration.

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# FEASTA DI SAN VITO

*June 14 & 15, 2008: The tradition of baking bread for the feast of St. Vito was passed down a generation in the Vallatese hall on Saturday evening. Sunday started with a noon mass at St. Anthony's Church followed by procession through the streets of Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ ending with an indoor and outdoor feast at Vallatese Hall, Corner of Fourth Avenue & High Street.*







(above, l-r) Ralph Sotolongo and brothers Pablo and Jerry Varona partnered up to open Cubanu Restaurant in Rahway, NJ.

“The Cha Cha Sampler, is the best appetizer. The yummy Pescado el Vara-dero, Tilapia baked in a banana leaf with herbs, potato and fresh plum tomato is remarkable.” - Len Trugman, ABC News

“The huge portioned herb flavored Short Ribs in a red wine reduction with roasted vegetables is splendid and for true meat lovers with hearty appetites.” - Michael Fotinas, Owner, Buttonwood Manor and Scarborough Fair

## CUBANU RESTAURANT OFFERS TASTE OF CUBA

For several generations Elizabeth, NJ has cultivated the rich traditions of Cuban-Americans. As the children and grandchildren of immigrants come into their own a new wrinkle is emerging in the fabric of society. Cubanu Restaurant/Lounge in Rahway is representative of this segment of American culture rooted in Cuban traditions.

The difference between Cubanu and the Cuban establishments in Elizabeth of past generations is that it is noticeably catering to the general population. Where cafes and shops were situated within Cuban neighborhoods in the past Cubanu is part of a diverse downtown that features a dozen different restaurants featuring Irish, Italian, Portuguese and American cuisines.

The staff of Cubanu are locals, generally from Elizabeth and specifically from the Peterstown area. The owners, two brothers, Pablo and Jerry Varona and Ralph Sotolongo are childhood friends who attended St. Anthony's Grammar School and St. Mary's High School together. The chef, Rudy Lopez, also hails from Peterstown. He has been a favorite of local dinners and has quite a following.

Rudy, who owned and operated the 640 Club in Elizabeth from 1999 to 2007, was also a chef at Michael's Back Street Cafe in Springfield which featured Cajon fare, the Italian restaurants LaGriglia in Kenilworth and LaStalla in Roselle and Sinclair's in Millburn where he specialized in seafood.

Though Rudy has eclectic skills in ethnic cooking, Cubanu is distinctly Cuban which is real home cooking for him. Rudy's parents came to America from Cuba and settled in Elizabeth in 1958. Dinners may be

treated to specials that sway from the theme, almost all dishes stick to tradition and are highly recommended.

The restaurant recently received a surprise visit from food critic Gail Gerson-Witte and was given an extremely positive write-up in New York Daily News. She was accompanied by Len Trugman of ABC News and Michael Fotinas, Owner, Buttonwood Manor and Scarborough Fair, who echoed her enthusiasm.

The following is a sampling of the menu that is bound to whet anyone's taste buds. Appetizers include Empanadas, Papas Rollena, Bacalaitos, Cubanitos, Ceviche Seafood, Cha Cha Sampler, Camaron al Ajilo, and Golden crusted mashed potato balls, from Jerry and Pablo's mother's kitchen, Entrees feature Guajiro Short Ribs, Varadero, Mar y Terra, Cameron Enchilado, Pollo Babalu, Churrasco Skirt Steak, and Lecon Asado, a marinated slow roasted suckling pig.

Rudy does not stop at the main course. He also masters the dessert portion of the evening crafting his own selection of desserts.

Cuban's decor is interesting but subtle. It is obviously newly renovated with fresh ideas. The separation between the lounge and restaurant is so that it seems like two places. Anyone interested in a quiet dinner is not distracted by the sights and sounds of the lounge area. And conversely, those looking for a fun and lively evening at play can find it at the bar and dance floor.

Cuban has evening entertainment from Thursday to Saturday. Sports and other programming can also be enjoyed while eating a Frita Cubanu (Cuban Burger) at the bar with a group of friends starting at 11:00am, Monday to Friday and 4:30pm Saturday and Sunday.



(above, l-r) Serving are Rudy Lopez, Jr., Angela Morales and Anthony Sanchez. Cubanu's youthful staff is a perfect fit for the casual and light atmosphere. They also reflect the authentic Cuban roots of the cuisine and friendly family flavor of the restaurant. Most of the staff are lifelong friends of the owners from Elizabeth.



(above) Cubanu's signature drinks gets a big thumbs-up from staffer Christina (CJ) Rodriguez.



(right) Patrons can dance to Salsa beats or Latin Jazz on Thursday, Friday and Saturday Nights.

(below) A great night out in Downtown Rahway would be dinner at Cubanu, the Ultimate Elvis Show at the Union County Arts Center and back to Cubanu for some dancing.

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## Recipes

Submitted by Rudy Lopez  
Cubanu Restaurant, Rahway, NJ

### Mambo King

#### INGREDIENTS:

4 Pork Chops, 1 1/2 inch  
2 cups Veal Stock  
2 cups Port Wine  
1 cup Maderia  
1 bowl Shallots, finely chopped  
1/2 stick Butter

#### PREPARATION:

1) Melt butter in sauce pan.  
2) Add Shallots and caramelize.  
3) Add Pork Chops, Port Wine and Maderia and cook until sauce is reduced by 1/2.  
4) Add Veal Stock and simmer for 20 minutes.

### Pollo Babalu

#### INGREDIENTS:

4 Boneless Chicken Breasts,  
butterfly opened and pounded  
1 1/2 cups Black Beans  
1 Sweet Plantain, sliced and fried  
2 links Chorizio  
2 small logs Goat Cheese, crumbled  
1 soup spoon Cilantro, chopped  
1 soup spoon Parsley, chopped  
1/2 cup White Wine  
1/2 cup Chicken Stock  
Olive Oil  
Salt and Pepper

#### PREPARATION:

1) Mash together Black Beans, Sweet Plantain, and Chorizio in a bowl until chunky.  
2) Mix in Goat Cheese and add Cilantro and Parsely  
3) Sear both sides of the Chicken in sauce pan with heated Olive Oil, add Salt and Pepper to taste.  
4) Stuff chicken with Mixture from bowl and place in a baking dish adding Wine and Chicken Stock, then place in oven heated to 350° for 20 minutes.



(above, l-r) Young Rudy soaks up a cooking lesson from his dad who is assisted in Cubano's kitchen by Paula Hernandez and Marco Marino.

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(above, l-r) Nancy serves sisters Olivia and Siouxsanne and dad Joe Pielach long awaited lemon ice. Joe is a postman who used to service Peterstown. His daughters were born on December 3, 2003 along with their brother Zachary, are triplets who first appeared in the April 2001 issue of Around About Peterstown.

## ICE STAND OPENS AFTER ONE MONTH ON ICE

DiCosmo's Italian Ices, a landmark in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ for almost 100 years, suffered a temporary injury when a SUV, driven by an inexperienced and unlicensed driver, plowed through its front door.

Proprietors, John and Nancy DiCosmo, ham radio hobbyists who live next door, happened to hear their address come over their police scanner about 2:00am on the Sunday morning of April 26. They ran outside to find a vehicle jammed into the front of their ice stand. The story goes that an 18 year old took his mother's keys and

snuck off with the mini van to drive around Peterstown in order to teach himself how to drive. He failed miserably.

It was a terrible setback for the DiCosmos since their business is only opened during warm months. Repairs were done by their next door neighbor who owns Sinatra Construction. The doors reopened for business on June 7 and patrons are once again swarming to the corner of Fourth Avenue and High Street for the famous homemade treat.



(above) Proprietors, John and Nancy, who live next door to the ice stand, were first on the scene and captured the moment on their digital camera.



(above) The repaired ice stand open for business.

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# LENNY RENDA NEW PARTNER AT FRONT STREET SMOKEHOUSE

Retired Elizabeth police officer Lenny Renda partnered up with Bruce Kain in operating Front Street Smokehouse and Saloon. The restaurant and bar offers a unique cuisine of Memphis style barbecue using a smoker to do all the cooking, no flames.

Renda, has been on the police force for 25 years and was a patrolman for the department and walked the beat along the Elizabeth waterfront where Front Street is located. He liked the place and became familiar with the business. When owner, Bruce was looking for a new partner, Lenny saw an opportunity to step in.

Standing outside the bar on the corner of Front Street and Elizabeth Avenue, patrons can watch the huge container ships loading and unloading across the Arthur Kill while tug boat and boat traffic scooter by. The corner also features the entrance of the city's waterfront development project. A courtyard paves the way to a waterfront boardwalk and observation deck and sits next to the Elizabeth boat marina. It's a safe and enjoyable place to walk before or after lunch or dinner with an inspirational view across the water.

Besides the close friendship he developed with Bruce, Lenny saw many of his fellow city employees stopping by for lunch and some folks he new from Peterstown. He's there most evenings from Wednesday through



**Not for Nothing But...**

how long has it been since you drove to the end of Elizabeth Avenue?



(above, l-r) Patron Mark Sompel and Lenny Renda swap stories of daily life on the Elizabeth waterfront. Lenny patrolled the area as a policeman for 25 years and Mark has been working for the city of Elizabeth as a heavy equipment operator at the marina for 15 years.

Saturday and really enjoys the social aspect of running the place.

Front Street has been hosting Karaoke on Wednesday nights from 7 to 11 but Lenny has started his own special evening on Fridays inviting all to "Emergency Services Night" featuring specials on beer at \$2 drafts and \$2.50 for domestic bottles. A way to unwind after a week of saving lives. 🚒👮

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(right) Bill Normyle is glad to be back in New Jersey. He is currently available for wakes, weddings, Barmitzvahs, and wherever a free meal is being served. He can be reached at futurehasbeen@netzero.com.



(left) A photo of Bill Normyle Sr. that appeared with an article about him in a 1952 issue of Motorcycles In Competition Magazine (below).



(below) Bill and Nancy in Atlantic City in 1961.



## FUTUREHASBEEN BACK FROM LA LA LAND

Bill Normyle has pursued his dream of becoming an actor in Hollywood. We went to Las Angeles with his eyes wide open, knowing it would be a tough row to hoe. He went with his wit and talent and stayed 15 years. Bill has returned from L.A. to apply his creativity in his home state of New Jersey.

Though he did not land any major rolls in movies or television, Bill continually worked in the entertainment industry, mostly in production. He never stopped honing his acting skills and he kept his wits sharp by writing.

Bill was born in the Port section of Elizabeth, NJ. He tried to maintain a connection with his hometown and when he found the Peterstown Newspaper he quickly subscribed. He also regularly corresponded with the publishers. Though the Port and Peterstown are different neighborhoods, there is comradery under the umbrella of the shared experiences that came from being in the same city.

The Normyle family lived at 4th Street and Broadway, as Bill describes it, under the flight path from Newark Airport and the shadow of the Turnpike across from the railroad tracks and surrounded by one way streets! He explains, "Somehow we missed the Turnpike

demolition, but every time there was talk of them expanding my mother would have out the rosary beads praying - not to stay, but to leave! She kept hoping they'd buy us out!"

Bill describes his family as mostly Irish, with a little Welsh that they don't talk about. Bill is just kidding about the Welsh bit, there's a bit of self effacing humor in his style of writing. He does, in fact, have dual Irish citizenship.

Bill is a graduate of St. Patrick's School, attending 12 years from first through high. His family was devoted to the church. The only time he remembers ever going to another church was on Holy Thursday, when his mother used to go around visiting all the other churches and then it was such a big deal! His parents were involved in every church fundraiser from bingo to the church picnic and from the strawberry festival to the Chinese auction. After her third term as President of the Rosary Society his mother Nancy finally told them they had to find somebody else to take the job. Bill served as an altar boy and even worked in the church rectory. He has such great memories of growing up in Elizabeth, which fuels his creativity. 🍀

## A FATHERS DAY TREAT

Bill Normlye submitted a short piece he wrote about his father for publication. His contribution is much appreciated. It is a fitting tribute during a time we honor fathers on Father's day.

Bill father was also named Bill. He worked for the City of Elizabeth in the City Yard from around 1955, the year he got married to his wife Nancy, until 1983, when he retired at the age of 70.

Bill Sr. was also a professional motorcycle racer. He

started racing in 1935 and continued into the 50's, He had to postpone racing when he served in the Navy at Pearl Harbor during World War II.

After reading the piece, there is very little wonder where Bill got his sense of humor. 🍀

(below, l-r) Bill Sr. celebrating his 70th birthday with his wife and sisters in 1983.

Margaret, wife Irene, Nancy, Bill, Betty and Isabel.



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# DIDN'T EVERYONE HAVE A CHIMP AT THEIR B'DAY PARTY?

Submitted by Bill Normyle

I don't want to make it sound like we lived in some Tobacco Road shack. It was just that my father didn't want to spend money to fix anything. He preferred to spend any extra money he did have on more practical things – like parties! Every year for my birthday he would surprise my mother by going out and hiring some form of entertainment. My poor mother would be in the middle of my birthday party and the next thing she knew there would be a band setting up on the front porch, a puppet show setting up in the living room, or a clown blowing up his shoes in the bathroom! When I graduated from high school, he hired "Mr. Jiggs," a roller skating chimp whose resume included several appearances on the "Ed Sullivan Show!" The place was falling apart, but we had a gun toting cigarette-smoking primate roller-skating around the house!

There was always something going on at my house. After my father retired from motorcycle racing, he got a job as a mechanic for the city. He repaired street cleaners and dump trucks, but in his spare time he would fix his friends' cars in the back yard. There was actually nothing wrong with their cars – it was just a place for them to get away from their wives or sometimes they would just leave their cars at our house because they had no other place to park them! We had this long board outside the garage that my father had placed on some old milk crates so he could use it as a bench. Some nights there would be so many guys out there that there would be three conversations going on simultaneously – it was like the old "Tonight Show!" My father had a few regular "panelists" and a rotating cast of characters. These guys were all old-school blue-collar types – real manly men! Guys like Al Faella - a man so manly he managed to convince his wife to name both of his children after himself. It wasn't like they were even twins – he just had a son named "Al" and a daughter named "Alice." It was Mary, Al, Al, and Al – Al was

like the local version of George Foreman! Al was so macho that he used to go on our family vacations with us and tell his own wife to stay at home! Although my mother's theory was his wife was probably glad to get rid of him for a few days! My father also seemed to have friends with great names like Shnitz Ross, Meyer the Buyer, Bunchy Grant, and Oscar the Human Ash Tray. They called him that because he used to flick his ashes into the cuffs of his pants! Then there was a guy my father called "88 Keys" because he played the piano, but I called him "Crazy Joe" because he was always drunk! His breath would knock you out and whenever he talked to you his eyes were constantly blinking. He would bring his car over and tell my dad, "Bill, I don't know what it is, but there's this rattling noise I hear whenever I come to a stop." Rattling noise? It was probably the empty liquor bottles rolling around in his trunk! Joe worked for this company called Regina that manufactured this thing called the Electric Broom. Don't let anybody fool you – it was a vacuum cleaner! I don't know what he actually did there, but he was always selling these things because he got a deal on them. I think everybody in my family had a Regina Electric Broom! If he had only gotten together with Oscar the Human Ash Tray they could have created a new personal grooming device! 🐼

.....

**Not for Nothing But...**

Normyle's parties were  
far from normal.

.....

(right) Pro motorcycle racer, Bill Normyle, Sr. inspired his son Bill to blaze his own path.



(below, l-r) A pair of Bill Jr's mentors, Elizabeth born actor Daniel Hugh Kelly and Elizabeth legend Al Faella at a late 1989 St. Patrick's reunion.

Kelly's impressive filmography can be found on [imdb.com](http://imdb.com), including over 50 TV credits as an actor, director, producer and writer. He earned initial notice as daytime TV hunk Frank Ryan in "Ryan's Hope" in 1975. He had his own TV series, "Hardcastle and McCormick" in the 80's and he played Brick opposite Kathleen Turner's Maggie the Cat in a 1990 Broadway revival of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof".



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# WHY NOT A TRIBUTE ARTIST CONTEST FOR CHEECH MARIN?

Riding the wave of popularity of the New Jersey Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest that will be held in July, event planners in Peterstown are planning their own contest to recognize locals who have worked hard to resemble famous characters. The impersonators do not perform professionally, but do maintain their discipline for the love of their craft. - *Not!*

every so often. Below are three more Peterstown folks whose portraits will hang in the celebrity look-a-like hall of fame. They get nothing for the recognition except for some razzing from their friends. The photo of Anthony Caravano, who has passed away since, was taken in 1979.

Interestingly enough, Bill Normyle was a stand-in for Paul Giamatti on the set of one of his films, but not because of his looks but because of his height.

Long time readers of Around About Peterstown may remember the "Separated at Birth" feature that appeared

**Not for Nothing But...**

noses run in my family.



Bill Normyle



Paul Giamatti



Paco Lino



Paul Savino



Anthony Caravano



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# NEW JERSEY ULTIMATE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST CONTEST AND FESTIVAL ANNOUNCED AS PART OF 150th ANNIVERSARY CITY OF RAHWAY CELEBRATION

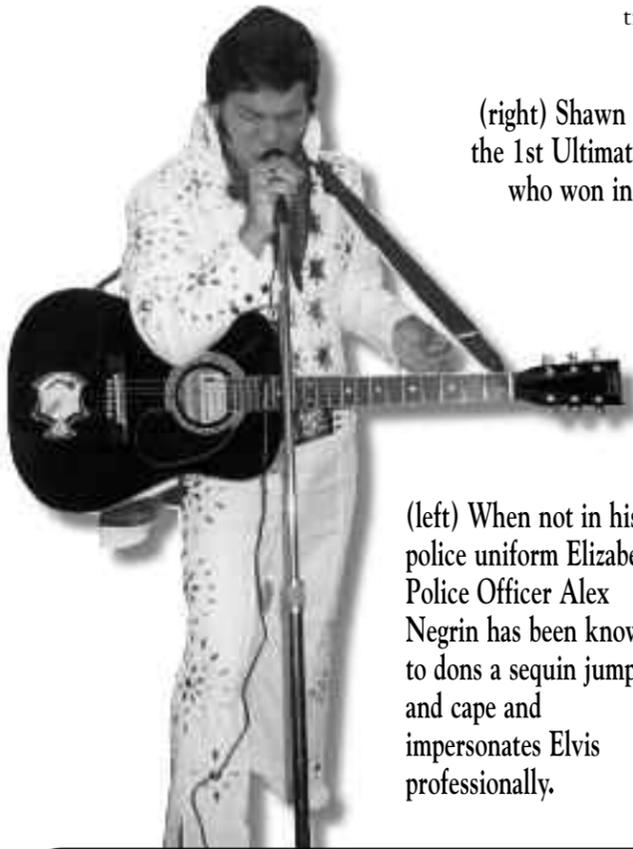
"ELVIS" will be in the building at the Union County Performing Arts Center from July 3-5, 2008 as Rahway celebrates its 150th anniversary. Over 20 ELVIS Tribute Artists from all over the US and Canada will compete in the NJ Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest & Festival produced by Ren Media Publishing, Inc. Officially licensed by Elvis Presley Enterprises, the preliminary Grand Finals will feature Shawn Klush, 2007 winner, host Bob Shannon from WCBS-FM 101.1 and Ray Walker of the legendary Jordanaires.

The New Jersey Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest and Festival preliminary contest will award more than \$10,000 dollars in prize money. The winner of the New Jersey contest will earn the opportunity to compete for the title of "Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist 2008" and participate in the qualifying rounds and finals of the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest held in Memphis during Elvis Week in Memphis, August 9 through 17, 2008.

Visit [www.ELVISnj.com](http://www.ELVISnj.com) or call 732-382-6815 for tickets and full schedule of weekend events.



(above, l-r) Elvis and Frenchy



(right) Shawn Klush, the 1st Ultimate Elvis who won in 2007.

(left) When not in his police uniform Elizabeth Police Officer Alex Negrin has been known to dons a sequin jumpsuit and cape and impersonates Elvis professionally.



## THE REAL DEAL

Elvis played Las Vegas every year from 1969 to 1976 usually doing two shows, one in the afternoon and one at midnight. Nancy Gersick, nee Francis Nigro, had the opportunity to see one of the earlier shows, pre-jumpsuit, with Elvis wearing a simple black suit on a dark stage.

She had a second opportunity of seeing him in the lobby of the hotel and approached him. She wanted to take a photo but had no camera. Nancy asked Elvis if he would wait until she ran up to her room so she can get her camera. Amazingly he said "OK" and actually waited the time it took for her to get her camera.

It is incomprehensible how accommodating the King was to a random fan when imagining him extending that same curtesy to millions of fans.

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# RAY VELLA RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS JEFFERSON AWARD

The Jefferson Awards were established by the American Institute for Public Service to encourage and honor individuals for their achievements and contributions through public community service. This year there were twenty five recipients statewide in New Jersey. Ray Vella of Elizabeth, NJ was one of them.

Ray was recognized for the work he has done through his organization, Ray Vella Civic Association (RVCA). The organization raises funds then distributes them to other service organizations. The RVCA is in its fourth year of operation and has grown steadily. The impact it has made has been significant.

Ray's focus is strictly on helping the residents of Elizabeth. Most of his efforts are geared towards youth as well as families in need. An example of the activities the RVCA participated in 2007 were the Special Olympics where participants were awarded with trophies and medals during an awards ceremony. The RVCA donated the food for the event and personalized windbreakers for each athlete representing Elizabeth.

RVCA supported several youth sports organizations including Saint Mary's Elementary Athletic Association, North Elizabeth Baseball, Elmora Youth League, and Elizabeth Giants, a Pop Warner football and cheerleading organization.

Student development programs were also supported. Donations were made to J.U.S.T.I.C.E. (Just Us Striving To Increase Creative Education) and R.I.S.E. (Reaching Individual Student Excellence), Upper Academy School and The Elmora Theatre Arts Institute at Elmora School 12. RVCA awards an annual scholarship to an Elizabeth High School student.

For the third year in a row the RVCA enabled Santa to visit School #1 to deliver presents to students involved in Elizabeth's Special Needs Recreational/Instructional Program.

Sponsorship of community events included Elizabeth's 2007 Night Out, Elizabethport Pride Day Parade, Tour de Elizabeth Bicycle ride and the Elizabeth War Veterans Central Committee activities.

In 2007 RVCA donated 75 turkeys with cooking trays, boxed mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, and cranberry sauce to St. Mary's, St. Anthony's, Immaculate Conception and the Second Macedonia Baptist Church. The donation was used to feed about 400 people on Thanksgiving day.

Turkeys may be the measure of growth for the civic association. In its first year it donated 25 dinners on Thanksgiving, the amount has tripled by their third year. Their success has been due to donations from businesses and individuals, and the numbers have been growing. The number of families that RVCA has been able to help has grown also.

There is a tremendous amount of time and effort that Ray Vella and his committee people dedicate to their cause but they give all the credit to those who give generously and to the organizations that they in-turn support for doing the work they do. RVCA's model of giving amplifies the effectiveness of every dollar donated.

Inquiries and donations can be mailed to Raymond Vella Civic Association, P.O. Box 9250, Elizabeth, NJ 07202. 📧

(above) In 1972, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, U.S. Senator Robert Taft, Jr. and Sam Beard founded the American Institute for Public Service, a 501c3 public foundation, to establish a Nobel Prize for public and community service - The Jefferson Awards.

The Jefferson Awards are presented on two levels: National and local. National award recipients represent a "Who's Who" of outstanding Americans. On the local level, Jefferson Awards recipients are ordinary people who do extraordinary things without expectation of recognition or reward.



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(above, l-r) Carmen holds her son's Ray Jefferson Award Certificate as he holds his medal, with Angela Salazar, who nominated Ray, and his dad Carmine at the ceremony held at the NJ Performing Arts Center.



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(left, l-r) The RVCA Executive Board and Dinner Dance Committee from their 4th Annual gala, Nelson Gonzalez, Marlena Nilsson, Dave Strochek, Angela Salazar, Raymond Vella, Honorees, Woman of the Year, Ms. Katie Hall and Man of the Year "Caz" Kowalczyk, Clara Gooddridge, Luis Atienza, Al Borrello and John Moretti.



(left) Ray Vella standing on the RVCA float from the E'Port Community Day Parade.

(right) Ray Vella was honored by the North Elizabeth Youth Baseball League by being named Grand Marshal of their Opening Day Parade.



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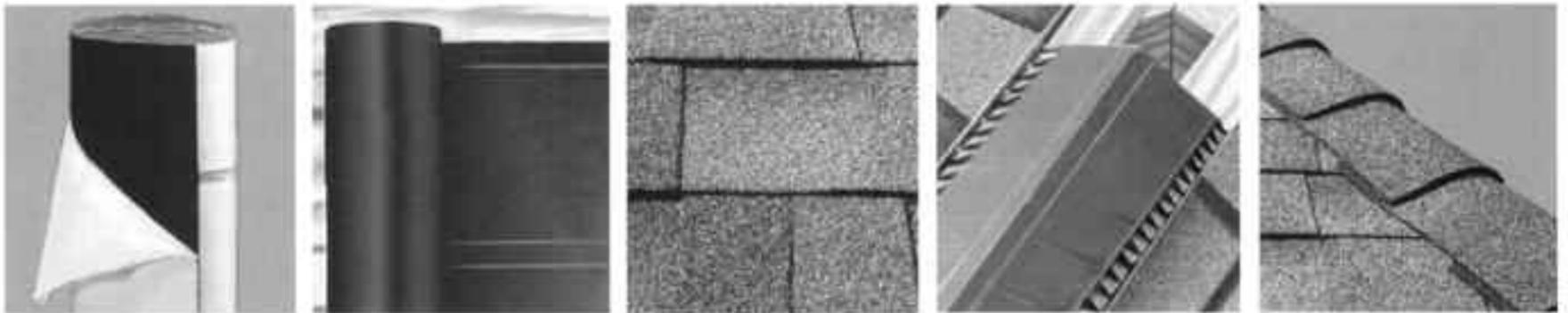
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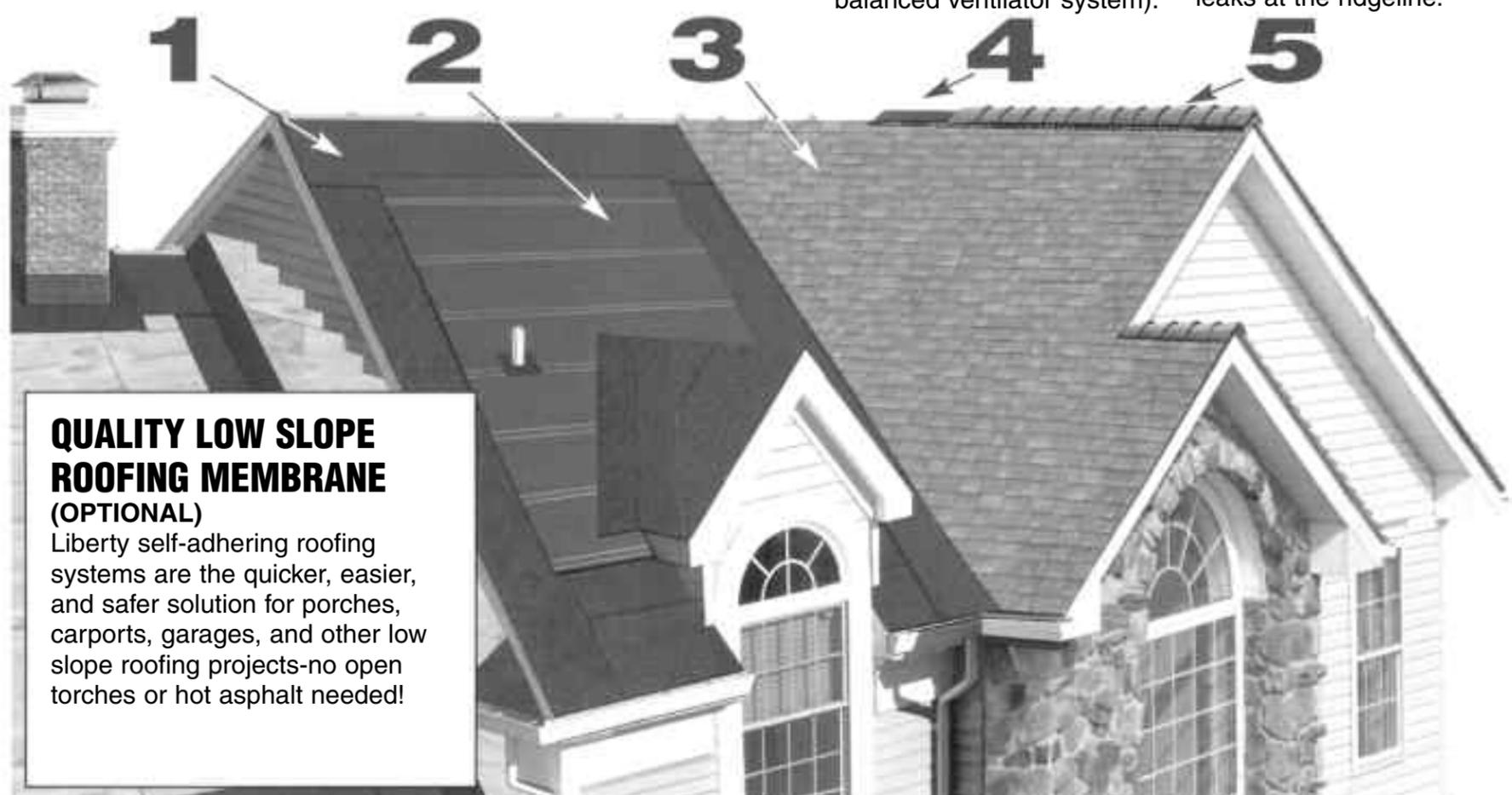
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