

CROSSROADS
OF THE ALLEGHENY VALLEY

FREE

ISSUE #3

TARENTUM MAGAZINE

**FEATURING: The Alle-Kiski
Sports Hall Finds its Home**

Plus:
**The Tarentum
Treasure Collectors**

and
Willy T's Cuts



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Tarentum Borough Magazine was created for Tarentum Borough residents and surrounding communities to enjoy and engage in the good works and pleasures of others. Tarentum Borough Magazine is available online and in print. The magazine promotes community values that make Tarentum Borough an asset to all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Upcoming Events 3

Downtown Saturday Night 6

Tarentum Fights Blight 8

The Alle-Kiski Sports Hall of Fame 12

Highland Tire Celebrates 60 Years 14

Hometown Treasures 16

**Tarentum Cooks -
Peanut Butter Pie Recipe 21**

What's Playing at the Manos? 22

Willy T's Cuts 25

Flying Jewels 27



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UPCOMING EVENTS

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August 26- 56 East Band with Mary Ann Mangini

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Thank you for reading TARENTUM MAGAZINE: *Crossroads of the Allegheny Valley*! We want to have the whole community contribute. Please feel free to send your stories, news, or beautiful photos, and you could see it end up here!

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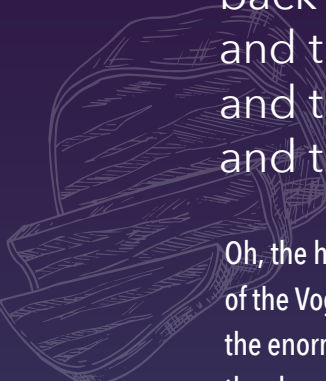
DOWNTOWN SATURDAY NIGHT

POEM BY RICHARD ESSLER, *FROM ONCE UPON A TIME IN TARENTUM*

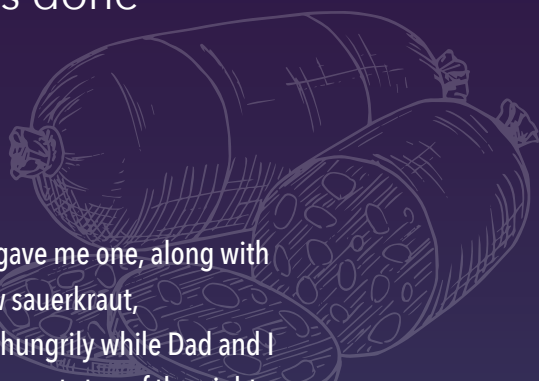
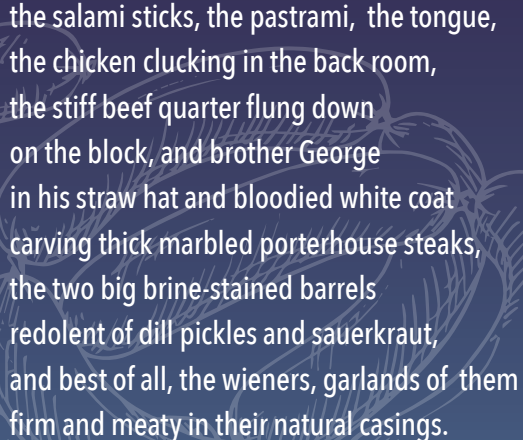
.....

Oh, the smells and tastes of Saturday night

back in the years when the week's work was done
and the farmfolk rode into town
and the townspeople all went downstreet
and the stores stayed open till ten o'clock.

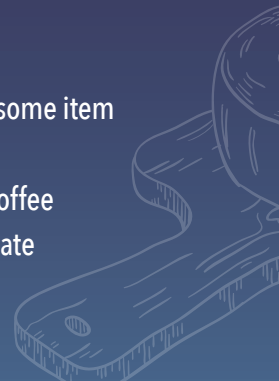


Oh, the hickory smoked smell
of the Vogeley brothers' butcher shop,
the enormous dark-skinned hams,
the clean pigs knuckles, the liver pudding,
the knockwurst, the corned beef,
the salami sticks, the pastrami, the tongue,
the chicken clucking in the back room,
the stiff beef quarter flung down
on the block, and brother George
in his straw hat and bloodied white coat
carving thick marbled porterhouse steaks,
the two big brine-stained barrels
redolent of dill pickles and sauerkraut,
and best of all, the wieners, garlands of them
firm and meaty in their natural casings.



George always gave me one, along with
a handful of raw sauerkraut,
and I munched hungrily while Dad and I
walked on to our next stop of the night,
our market baskets swinging.

Oh, the exotic odor of Bill Chantler's grocery,
a welter of jumbled shelves and tumbled piles
of canned goods and half-empty cases
presided over by our friend Bill
in rumpled vest and sagging pants,
peering through dirty spectacles from some item
lost in the delicious confusion, all of it
spiced with the smell of fresh ground coffee
and cinnamon sticks and bakers chocolate





and basket-fired Japan tea and whole cloves
and nutmegs and peppercorns and floor wax
and Pears soap and molasses taffy
and wooden boxes of dried fruit.
Bill was always good for a handful
of raisins and all the gingersnaps I could eat.

Oh, the rare aroma of Fred Hill's cheese store,
all gleaming white tile walls
and a floor spread with clean sawdust,
the wire baskets of brown and white eggs,
the fresh smell of the big tubs
of newly churned butter,
the clouds of flavor hanging over
the great orange wheels of cheese,
the tart savor of schmierkase,
and Fred, beaming and bulging
in his apron and white hat,
carving sample slabs of cheese,
and I in the shadow of my father,
nibbling on a hunk of nutty swiss,
salivating at the old time tang of cheddar.

Oh, the tree-ripened fragrance
of Bordonaro's fruit stand,
the pyramids of huge naval oranges
like globes of juicy sunlight,

the plump velvety peaches,
the yellow pears with fat, red cheeks,
the purple grapes as big as my eyes,
the hanging stalk of golden bananas
where lurked, according to my friends,
deadly tarantula spiders,
the crisp lettuces, the crackling celery,
the pomegranates with blood red seeds,
the big Italian chestnuts,
and a bewildering variety of apples
in season - rough skinned Russets,
Pound Sweets so big I needed both hands,
Summer Ramboes, Seek-no-furthers,
Northern Spies, Baldwins, and Snows.
Papa Joe in a Garibaldi mustache
would pull off a banana for me
and top it with a small tangerine.

So with our baskets full, Dad and I
paced slowly up the long Corbet Street hill,
stopping at the cobbler shop of Carlo Puleo
for a big bag of hot roasted peanuts.
All the way home I cracked shells
while the fruit juice dried
on my busy chin, and I was well content
with my Saturday night downtown.



by **Anthony Bruni** Code Enforcement Officer, Borough of Tarentum

Beginning in 2019, Tarentum Borough Council approved funding to demolish several abandoned and dilapidated houses in the Borough. Many of these houses had been vacant for ten years or more after they had been damaged by flood, fire, or the elements. All of these houses were hazards to the neighboring homes because they harbored rodents, posed a fire risk to adjacent houses, and were targets for criminal activity.

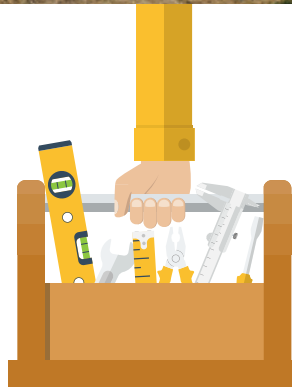
These abandoned houses also had the potential to affect the property values of other homes in the neighborhoods. Borough Council, aware of the impact of blighted properties on the mental and physical health of its residents, as well as the economic health of the town, decided to aggressively attack the blight by ordering their demolitions and eliminating these eyesores. Demolitions began in November, 2019,

but they were put on hold at the State-level for several months in 2020 during the Pandemic shutdown. When demolitions were allowed to resume, a total of 23 houses were condemned and demolished by the end of 2020. Spring 2021 has ushered in a new round of demolitions. We now have three different demolition contractors working in the Borough. Twelve houses have been demolished this year so far. As of this writing, including the project completed in 2020, we have demolished a total of 35 houses. There are 12 more on the contracts and because the bids came in lower than expected, we may be able to add a few more to the list.

Many homeowners have already taken advantage of a program administered by Allegheny County that allows them to purchase the empty lots next to their homes after the blighted houses are demolished. These same



homeowners have had to tolerate living next to abandoned, dangerous houses for years. Dubbed the “Side Yard Program”, the Allegheny County Vacant Property Recovery Program enables Tarentum homeowners to acquire the empty lots. They can create a side yard and increase their property value and provide more room for families and pets to enjoy outdoor activities. Through the program all the delinquent taxes and liens are exonerated so that the new owner of the lot is not responsible for any of the back taxes. The buyer is responsible for some administrative fees and closing costs, similar to a traditional real estate sale. They then start paying the taxes again when the deed is transferred. Not only does the homeowner benefit from the program, these once-abandoned properties are placed back on the tax rolls that provide much-needed



revenue for the Borough, County and School District.

The presence of long-term blight and neglect can contribute to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Tearing down houses that are symbols of economic decline is a positive first step towards economic revitalization. With a significant number of abandoned, dangerous houses now gone, Tarentum is already a safer and more attractive place. There are some additional efforts forthcoming by the Borough to improve and enrich the lives of its residents and visitors in the coming months. For centuries, daffodils, crocuses and tulips popping through the snow after a long winter have been enduring symbols of Spring and Hope. Now the people of Tarentum can be assured that bulldozers, excavators, and tri-axle dump trucks can be signs of hope as well.



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2021

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Jacob Allan	Carnahan	Emma Jane Howell	Breanna McKay	Elisabeth Gail Ryan	Lillian Emma Trent
Alexis Altfather	Jaden Anthony Chambers	Jonas Hughes	Drake Lee McKendrick	Skylar Sacco	Elliott Alexander Turka
Sydney Altfather	Danayla M. Chapel	Hattie James Johnson	Parker Matthew McMillan	Lamar Salter	Christopher Tweed
Zachary Altfather	Michaela Coriale	Brian Keith Jones	Shayna Phillie Mick	Jeremiah Saunders	Caleb Martin Ricardo
Sadie Elizabeth Angely	Justin M. Crilley	Dylan Josefowski	Justine Miller	Robert Paul Jack	Uhrinek
Jacob T. Atkinson	Emma Crowe	Logan J. Kaminski	Evan Cole Misejka	Sawhook	Liberty Ann Vasey
Danyelle Joyce Bartchy	Breona E. Csizmadia	Sara Karns	Egidia Inez Musico	Audry Meaghan Scheer	Adrianna Vergerio
Joie M. Beacom	Callen H. Danielson	Kiley Rae Karolkoski	Jeremiah Lee Nelson	Joslyn R. Schrag	Brian C. Vickers
Joshua Ryan Christopher	Chase J. Danielson	Tyrus Raymond Kerr	Skylar Olivia Newcomer	Robyn Leann Schreiber	Izac Thomas Visnick
Beck	Tessa Deemer	Lillian King	Gabriel Michael Norris	Lindsey C. Sciubba	Jaden Dominique Walker
Luke Ryan Beer	Ethan Dennis	Alyssa J. Kocon	Ian Nikolas Norris	Bella Scolaro	Douglas Neal Waldron
Ethan James Bernat	Donovan Desabetino	Alexander Korber	Bradann Negley O'Neill	Nicholas Robert	Naya Simone Walters
Madison Olivia-Anne Bernat	Julia Marie Desanto	Suzanne Nicole Kunst	Noah Lawrence Pecman	Seabaugh	Stephen Wardrop
Noah Elijah Bianco	Jason Tran Do	Austin Michal Langer	Logan Pertinaci	Ashton Seeley	Gabrielle Westerman
Trent James Bielak	Emily Rose Dorinsky	Zachary Lantz	Dominic Pesci	Morgan Renae Shearer	Ethan William Wetmore
Madison Black	Olivia Duncan	Beatrice Latina	Nico Charles Pesci	John Paul Singer	Paige Mackenzie
Destin Bolt	Brandon Elliott Lee Erb	Anthony Michael Leheh	Steven Paul Pitkivitch	Russell Smith	Whealdon
Noah James Bombalski	Brooklyn C. Field	Mason C. Litwicki	Anna E. Pochan	Mason Wayne Smith	Kaeleb Daniel White
Olivia Bondra	Cody E. Flatt	Alexandria Lobaugh	Chyna Lee Polachek	Vada Jean Soenen	Tomas Miguel White
Mckenna Lynn Bordonaro	Jack Willard Ford	Leonard Lee Locke Jr.	Audrey Propp	Sommer Karen	Joshua Tucker Whyel
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Tyler Anthony Brzezinski	Colin Daniel Gorman	David James Loveland	Lawna Reid	Alize Stilitino	Gregory Edward Wygonik
Austin Jeffrey Burchell	Jessica Elizabeth Haduch	Olivia Lumsden	Kimberly J. Remper	Jazmine Rose Strader	Kellen J. Yunt
Owen Burrows	Isaiah Paul Hayden	Bud Mallard	Callen Ritchie	Eli Cooper Streblick	Benjamin Zitzka
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Kathy A. Myers, Susan H. Marcinko*

The Alle-Kiski Valley Sports Hall of Fame

by GEORGE GUIDO

The Alle-Kiski Valley Sports Hall of Fame finally has a place to call home.

The local hall has been placing its signature plaques and photographs of past inductees in a gallery at the renovated G.C. Murphy Building on Corbet Street.



THE HALL'S DIRECTORS were recently invited to place its plaques in chronological order inside the main hallway and the process should be wrapped up in the coming weeks.

The hall of fame inducted its 50th class in 2019, but has postponed the last two banquets because of the pandemic. A total of 366 local athletic greats have been enshrined.

For more than a decade, the hall's plaques and shadowboxes have resided in a storage room at the New Kensington Quality Inn, only to be displayed on banquet nights. Some of the memorabilia had been on display at one of the smaller rooms near the main ballroom, but it was used by ladies' clubs luncheons and other purposes that didn't quite identify with a sports setting.

One of the problems the local hall of fame faced was not being able to publicly display the prowess of many great athletes of the past.

In one instance related by the late Bob Tatr, former chairman of the hall's committee, involved a youngster from California visiting the area and saying that his grandfather was in the A-K Hall of Fame and wanted to see his

recognition plaque, only to be told there wasn't actually a "hall" to visit.

Once the hall of fame gallery will be up and running in a few weeks, residents can visit on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday visits will eventually be pre-arranged at a later date.

The A-K Hall started in 1970 by co-founders Tatr and then-Valley News Dispatch sports editor Bob Schank. It originally centered around high school football and basketball athletes who were named Players of the Game during WKPA Radio broadcasts. The idea was then hatched to honor former athletes with the current ones.

THE LEGENDARY ROSIE

ONE OF THE FIRST-YEAR INDUCTEES was Tarentum's Albert K. "Rosie" Rowswell, long-time Pirates broadcaster who died in 1955. Rowswell was in the broadcast booth at Forbes Field for 19 years, but he was most famous for recreating away games.

At the time, broadcasters did not travel with the team. For away games, a teletype

ticker gave the information to the radio studio – usually about an inning behind – and broadcasters like Rowswell would recreate the game with sound effects.

Announcers had to inject their personalities into the broadcast so it wouldn't appear as stale as reading a ticker tape. And that proved to be right up Rowswell's alley.

His most well-known line was used when a Pirate would hit a home run. Rowswell would yell to a fictitious "Aunt Minnie" that the home run ball was heading outside the ballpark toward her house.

Rowswell would yell "open the window Aunt Minnie," but it was too late, and the sound effect of a baseball breaking a window would be played. He also had a number of quotes such as "the bases are F.O.B. (full of Bucs) when the Pirates had the bases loaded. A pitcher with a particularly effective curveball would be throwing the "old dipsy-doodle."

Rowswell was well-known as an after dinner speaker in the Pittsburgh area.

He died just before Pirates spring training in 1955 and his place was taken by Bob Prince, who helped Rowswell with the sound effects.

For a number of years, Rowswell leased a cottage at the Pittsburgh-Tarentum Campgrounds in Harrison Township.



Former Tarentum resident and Pirates broadcaster Albert K. "Rosie" Rowswell did a promotional shot for KDKA TV in 1953 at Forbes Field with his fictitious "Aunt Minnie."

*photo courtesy of
Alle-Kiski Sports Hall
of Fame*



George Guido is a local journalist based in Lower Burrell and has been a hall of fame committee member since 2011. Guido has authored two books about our region, "Alle-Kiski Valley Sports History," and "New Kensington, The Photographic History." He is currently working on a soon to be published book on the colorful and unique neighborhoods of our region.





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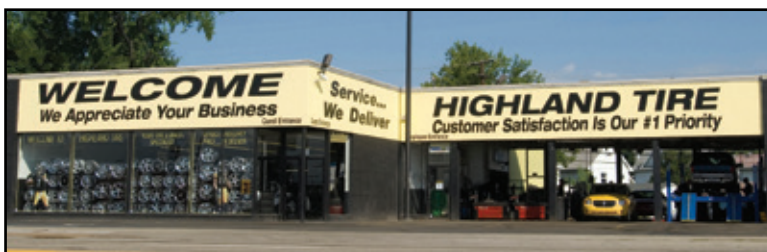


We want every friend and guest to leave 100% satisfied and feel their expectations were exceeded.

In doing so, the team at Highland Tire is following in the tradition their founder, mentor, and friend Butch Bonnet initiated sixty years ago.

Butch Bonnett first opened the doors of Highland Tire in 1961 in a small building that was originally in the Sinclair gas station at Second Avenue & Corbet Street in Tarentum.

As the business grew, it was moved to two other locations in the area before it settled at its current location at 200 Boyd Street in Tarentum. The Natrona Heights locations opened in 1985, followed in 2015 by Highland Integrity Alignment, also in Natrona Heights.



This August of 2021, Highland Tire will celebrate sixty years of service, integrity and price as well as their goal of 100% Customer Satisfaction. Early on they established the offer of beating any out-the-door price from any other tire dealer, mass merchandiser, internet site or department store. And with their huge inventory, they can please almost anyone because if it isn't in their warehouse, they can more than likely get it for you.

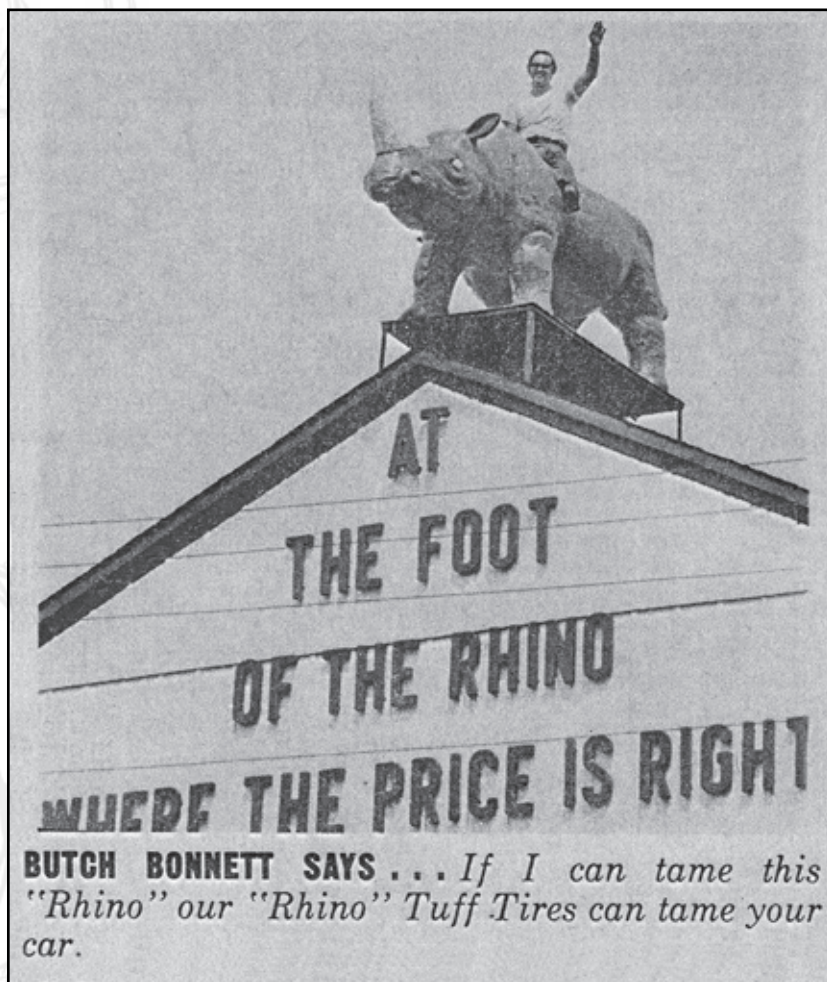
Their products include passenger, performance and light truck tires as well as lawn and garden and trailer tires. Their Custom Wheel Department has the largest selection of custom

and factory wheels, in the Alle Kiski Valley.

Over the years, Highland Tire has kept up with innovations like state of the art computerized tire balancing and installation, major and minor tire repair, routine tire maintenance, nitrogen inflation and TPMS (Tire Pressure Maintenance System) service too.

The Natrona Heights location provides batteries and complete oil change services as well and their newest location in Natrona Heights offers Highland Integrity Alignment, wheel alignment to name a few of their services.

Highland Tire thanks all their friends and customers for voting them "Best Tire Retailer" for the past twenty-eight years. And they pledge to remain true to their mission statement that reads: "To provide enthusiastic, caring, world-class service to the community, to never forget our founding principle of integrity in all we say and do."



TARENTUM REMEMBRANCE TREE



\$40.00 per leaf

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3 lines

23 characters & spaces

"100 Leaves Available"



\$125.00 per Rock

Rock Size 3 x 5-1/4"

3 lines

23 characters & spaces

"Rocks will be limited"

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HOMETOWN TREASURES

by Carrie Fox

**Faded photographs, covered now with lines
and creases Tickets torn in half, memories in
bits and pieces**





It's hard not to be reminded of the song, "Traces" when you meet and talk with the ardent collectors of Tarentum memorabilia. But that oldie is about a romantic love that didn't work out and this story is about love of community and an appreciation for everything and that reminds them of our town's rich and colorful past.

If it says "Tarentum," it's a treasure to these collectors. On a daily basis, they search out bottle openers, yearbooks, glass, plates, pictures—anything and everything that was stamped, imprinted, engraved, painted or etched with the name of their beloved home town.

A friendly storefront Diamond Antiques on Sixth Avenue, owned by Diana Roney will celebrate fifteen years in business this year and it is a favorite stop for the enthusiastic Tarentum collectors because Diana, has a special interest in seeking out many unique items.

Diana, who grew up in Oakmont, says she loves our community because it reminds her of Oakmont. She has always enjoyed bringing antiques back to life. "Refreshing furniture with a coat of paint makes a piece come to life again" The work she does reflects her love for antiques and her business is her passion. Diana

creates special events to help boost, grow and draw people to Diamond Antiques. Antiques displayed take your back in time.

Here are a few of our community's most enthusiastic collectors.

Marlene Campbell, a resident of Tarentum and an avid collector all her life was born, raised, and graduated from Tarentum High School. She even worked in the Borough and always loved small town life. Being raised by her grandmother in the Baltimore House located on 4th Ave, she remembers the old stores, streets full of people and that feeling of belonging. When Marlene married, she and her husband raised their daughter in Tarentum.

Marlene beams with pride when she remembers marching with the band through the streets as a majorette. Looking back, those memories and feelings are what make her the happiest.

She starts her day by going place to place searching for treasures of the past. Her most prized possessions are an 80-year-old doll named "Bubbles" and a key to Tarentum. Her collection includes signs, glass pieces,



thermometers, keychains, Christmas bulbs, plates and more.

Marlene believes in keeping the community's history where it belongs, here in Tarentum Borough. "I wouldn't know how to live anywhere else. Tarentum is home to me."

Cindy Homburg started collecting 35 years ago. She moved to Tarentum in 1972. Her mother graduated from Tarentum High School so Tarentum always had a place in her heart.

Cindy likes to collect money banks, bottle openers, plates, books & High School yearbooks and more. Her most prized possession is the head of the Hebe statue that had been destroyed in an automobile accident near the Tarentum bridge. She is always on a constant hunt for Tarentum items, asking and searching. Cindy loves talking with other collectors about their finds. Cindy is very well versed in Tarentum history and was made a member of the "History and Landmarks Foundation". She feels young people should know about the history of Tarentum. "Tarentum History and Landmarks" placed historical plaques on buildings in Tarentum. She loves being part of this research. History shows in all that she gathers. So many friends have shared their treasures with Cindy so she can enjoy them in her home. Her treasures mean the world to her. "I love this great town and its great people"

Tim Rapp a member of the Tarentum Recreation Board and employee of the Tarentum Water Plant was born and raised in Tarentum. He used to watch his brothers and sisters go to basketball games at the Tarentum High School and loved the black & red varsity letters on the Tarentum jackets as he recalls. Tim remembers

going to Chapmans so he got intrigued when he seen a Chapman glass bottle & that's where it started. His collection is from signs, glass, High School memorabilia, old pictures, calendars, cans & plates. Tim said, "You could get anything you wanted in the little town of Tarentum." "No one knew who was rich or poor." "I like keeping those memories alive." His collection is filled with many memories of times gone by. Tim enjoys the game of searching for Tarentum history items. These things take him back in time. He loves to think about where things have traveled through the years?

Skip Garrett son of Don and Jan Garrett was born and worked in Tarentum all his life. His family's business "Carl Garrett & Son" has operated in Tarentum since 1960. Skip loves Tarentum collectables and started collecting 30 years ago. "I love Tarentum" that is why he started to gather his great collection of things of the past. He has many photographs in binders. "If I see something interesting, I pick it up". The yard sticks, signs, mugs, thermometers, and more shows his compassion for times of the past. Encasing these items and sharing them with others are important to him. Many friends have passed on collectables to him. You can hear the love for Tarentum when you speak with Skip. He is interested in keeping history alive for all the right reasons.

Cindy Morgano fell in love with Tarentum in 1992. She loves to keep history ongoing and alive; Cindy is always on the lookout for interesting items and facts about Tarentum and believes people should know what a special place Tarentum is. Her pride for the Borough is unreal and wants everyone to feel the same. Her

collection of medicine bottles, saving coins, banks and Tarentum calendars are preserving the past and bringing her joy today. "This has always been my passion all my life". Anything that says "Tarentum" she wants to treasure and put up on a shelf. One of her prize possessions is a Toepfer receipt book from Toepfer's feed store which was located on 4th Ave.

What appears to be old, faded, creased or wrinkled, to these Tarentum Collectors it is very valuable. So next time you run into something that says "Tarentum", don't toss it, give to one of them. They will give your "Find" a home and treasure it for a lifetime.



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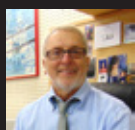
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TARENTUM COOKS

PEANUT BUTTER PIE

recipe submitted by Cindy's Soft Serve & Hometown Food

- 1 Cup Peanut Butter**
- 1 Cup Heavy Cream**
- 8oz. Cream Cheese**
- 2 ¼ Cup Powdered Sugar**
- 1 tsp Vanilla**
- 6oz. Oreo Pie Crust**

Pour heavy cream in bowl and beat until stiff.

In a separate bowl - peanut butter, cream cheese, powdered sugar and vanilla- whip on high speed until whipped forms.

Fold in heavy cream. Pour in pie shell. Refrigerate until chilled.
Top with whipped topping.

Submit your favorite recipe to
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WHAT'S PLAYING AT THE MANOS?

Stop In and Have a Look!

by Francine Costello

Brian DeFelices has been renovating houses in Tarentum for over twenty years. Why? Because he thinks Tarentum is a beautiful town with a *walkable* main street and, he likes to remind everyone, it has a waterfront and friendly people. Why wouldn't anyone want to live here!

So, at the very moment, in March of 2020, when the Pandemic came crashing into our lives, shutting everything down, DeFelices started renovating his newest acquisition, the landmark, Manos Theater building. "The building," he says, "had gone through a few remodels that made moving forward harder." But move forward he did and in the late summer of 2020, on the evening of Tarentum's first Night Market, Brian turned on the lights and opened the doors of the former Manos Theater and introduced the community to the The Manos Gallery.

From the very start, the feedback was overwhelming. People were thrilled to see art return to Tarentum and the positivity has just continued. The local papers love writing about the Manos Gallery and word has spread to such an extent that DeFelices says it has become something of a destination, attracting visitors from Ohio, Delaware, West Virginia, eastern PA and even Florida.

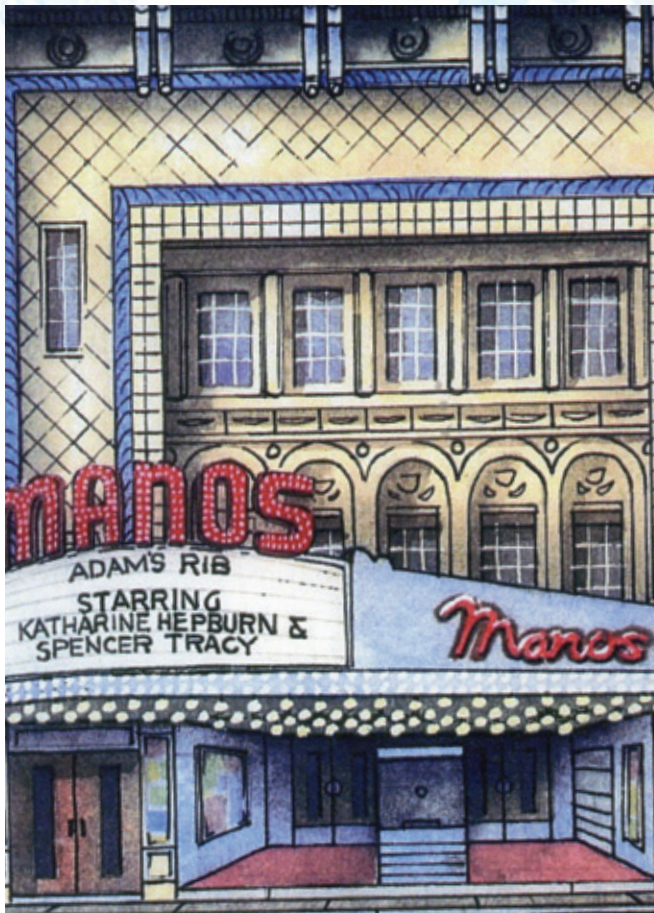
Brian's partner, Ernesto Comacho, Jr. of East Liberty is an artist and it had always been



his dream to own a gallery. Early on, Comacho had struggled to make his way in the art world. His opportunity came in 2006 when an art gallery in Reading gave him the opportunity to show his works and suddenly the tide turned for him. Now, he feels the Manos Gallery is his chance to open doors for other artists.

In addition to showing the works of up-and-coming artists, the Manos Gallery is becoming a center of art education, giving children and budding artists the opportunity to take classes in a space dedicated to the joy of making art. So far there are several classes for kids called "Little Paint Brushes," usually held Saturdays at 11 and likely to expand to weekdays in the summer.

The look of the renovated building is decidedly fresh and unique, with its grand splashes of orange—a color that symbolizes creativity and expression. And speaking of expression, in addition to the gallery and classrooms, the



lovely old Manos building is also providing smaller spaces for working artists and artisans who need a dedicated place in which to create and sell their pieces.

Brian says, since they have had so much success having the occasional musician add to the ambiance, he and Ernesto plan to branch out by inviting musical artists from a wider variety of genres be showcased at the gallery as more pandemic restrictions are lifted.

With all of this expansiveness and joyful expression, why wouldn't people want to secure the Manos Gallery for their celebrations. So far, there has been a baby shower and a dozen private parties with more reservations coming in on a regular basis.

Both DeFelices and Comacho see a bright future for the Manos Gallery but one thing they are seeking are photos and memorabilia from the original Manos Theater. They're putting the word out to anyone who may have anything from movie posters to tickets or photos, to help them create a memory wall to honor the building's rich past.



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WILLY T's CUTS

by TOM COSTELLO

I stumbled upon this curious barber shop accidentally about 3 years ago. I was taking my lunch hour walk through downtown Tarentum, near the corner of Lock Street and 4th Ave. There on the sidewalk was a modest black and white sign bearing the words: Willy T's Cuts—with an arrow pointing into a small courtyard of shops. I followed the arrow, walked a few feet, and there it was: a well-appointed establishment with windows so large you could see everything inside.

You could also **hear** everything inside. Lots of loud (but not too loud) rap music. Lots of rap among the four barbers and the 6 or 8 patrons being cut or waiting to be cut. Lots of laughter. A very cool, mellow atmosphere, a feel-good place. Willy T's Cuts tee shirts on the walls and for sale. Great assortment of candy bars and soft drinks.

After about a 15-minute wait, it was my turn. One of the barbers called me over to his chair. I plopped down.

"I'm Ishmael," he told me.

"Have you read Moby Dick?" I asked him.

"No. Why?"

"It begins with the words 'Call Me Ishmael. Ishmael's trade is chasing whales.'"

Ishmael the Barber said he'd heard about Ishmael the whaler and would look it up. He asked me



how I liked my hair cut. I told him not too short. All around me I could see young barbers doing the most amazing designs on young men's heads. Some of the designs are so intricate I figured it must take a ton of time to do, but the barbers seem to be enjoying this kind of creative cutting.

I settled in and let Ishmael work his magic on my head. He cuts quickly and moves his scissors with quiet confidence. I spent some time admiring the artwork on the walls. The place has lots of light, aided by several walls of large mirrors. It was fun watching all the barbers because it's obvious they enjoy their work. They tell jokes and stories and break into frequent laughter. I closed my eyes and came close to napping. I could feel the slight pressure of Ishmael's hands moving my head. Snip snip snip.

Before I know it, Ishmael was holding a hand mirror in front of my face. "Looks good," I told him. "Smells good too." I paid my bill and let him know I'd be back in about a month. We bump fists.

Now it's been two years since my first visit to Willy T's. I enjoy going there for my cuts. Compared to the salons I had frequented in the past, I feel comfortable there. A year ago this March, Covid-19 shut down Willy T's Cuts for several months. It is the longest I've ever gone without a haircut. Last week I met with owner William Travarez aka "Willy T" and asked him if it was difficult to keep the business solvent during this period.



“It was a challenge at first not knowing when we would reopen,” Will said. “But the community stuck with us and when we finally opened our doors again it got very busy and has stayed that way. Everyone who comes in here has to wear a mask. We observe all of the state guidelines.”

Is he happy with the Tarentum business district? “Yes, very pleased with Tarentum,” he said. “I originally opened in New Kensington in 2012 but moved to Tarentum in 2014 when this location became available. It’s lively here. There are a lot of new businesses opening in town bringing more people to the area.”

What does Willy T like most about the barber business?

“I like that we get to see our customers on a regular basis. They keep coming back. It’s crazy to see kids go from elementary school to high school and now to college. They always come back for their cuts and they send their friends too. That kind of loyalty is very satisfying.”



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Flying Jewels

by Jim Bonner

Earlier this spring a welcome traveler returned to our area.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) started showing up in Tarentum around the third week of April and will be with us through the end of summer. There are over 330 different hummingbird species (all of them found only in the Western Hemisphere) and the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only one found regularly in our area. Each year, these little birds migrate around 2,000 miles each way between here and their wintering grounds in Central America. An amazing feat for a bird that weighs only about as much as a penny!

Ruby-throats get their name from the brilliant red throat that male birds display. Surprisingly, those feathers do not contain any red pigment and the throat color can change depending on its angle to the light. Females, who are larger than males, have white throats and duller colors overall, which helps them to stay hidden when sitting on their nests. Those nests are about the size of a quarter and made with lichens, mosses, and other small plant fibers, all “stitched” together with spider web. The spider web acts like elastic, allowing the nest to expand as the chicks get larger. The female lays 1-3 eggs (each smaller than a pea) and does all of the incubation and parenting by herself. The



total time from when the egg is first laid until the young bird leaves the nest is about 5 weeks.

Hummingbirds are fascinating to watch and are quite bold around people. The best way to get them to your yard is by putting out a hummingbird feeder. One of the primary sources of food for hummingbirds is nectar, and sugar water is an easy substitute for your feeder. You can purchase specialty mixes, but most people make their own at home using a 4:1 water to white sugar mix (see Nectar-making tips).

Hummingbird feeding basics:

- There are many types of hummingbird feeders, but they fall into two general categories – saucer and bottle. The saucer-type allows for

better viewing and are easier to clean. The bottle-type are usually fancier and often hold more liquid. Hummingbirds like them both!

- Place the feeder where it will be easy for you to watch and easy for you to reach. As long as the birds can fly to it, they will find it.
- Try to avoid placing it in a location that gets all-day direct sunlight. That can cause the sugar water to spoil more quickly. If it is in prolonged direct light, change the sugar water every 1-2 days.
- Clean your feeder at least weekly. A diluted bleach soak (10:1 water to bleach ratio) for 30 minutes works great. Make sure to rinse thoroughly!
- Most saucer type-feeders have a well in their center that you can fill up with water. This creates a moat that keeps ants and other crawling insects out of the feeder.
- Hummingbirds are highly territorial and ounce for ounce are some of the most aggressive birds out there. Don't be surprised if you see only one bird at a time at your feeder or see one chasing other birds away from the feeder. Also, don't be alarmed if the birds seem to disappear for a while in early summer. There are lots of native plants in bloom at that time and they may be filling up on them. They will return in late summer when many plants quit putting out nectar.
- There's a chance you may see other birds at your hummingbird feeder. Woodpeckers, orioles, and chickadees are all known to stop by for a quick sip, as will moths and butterflies. Raccoons and flying squirrels are also known to stop by for a "nightcap".
- Sit back and enjoy the show.



NECTAR-MAKING TIPS

- Use only white cane sugar. Do not use brown sugar or honey – they contain ingredients or compounds that hummingbirds cannot digest.
- Mix 1 part sugar with 4 parts water. If putting the entire amount out immediately, just stir until the sugar granules dissolve and fill the feeder. If making a larger batch that you will use over a week or more, boil the mixture to make sure it is fully dissolved, then store it in the refrigerator until you use it.
- **DO NOT ADD RED FOOD COLORING TO THE MIX.** Red food coloring may contain ingredients that are harmful to hummingbirds. Although Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are attracted to red colored things, the feeder usually has some red on it.
- Make sure the sugar water has warmed up (if taking it from the fridge) or cooled down (if it was just boiled). The temperature of the sugar water should be the same as the nectar would be from inside a flower.
- Consider making up a simple syrup mixture, which is a one-to-one ratio of sugar and water. Boil it at a rolling boil for several minutes, then once cool, store it in a closed jar in the refrigerator. When you are ready to fill your feeders, add three parts water to one part simple syrup, stir, and serve. One batch of this concentrated mixture should last you several weeks. In addition to saving you time making nectar, you will always have some simple syrup in your fridge if you want to make homemade lemonade or a mojito to enjoy while you watch the hummingbirds at your feeder!

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