

Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 31 • Issues 7&8 • July 4, 2026

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**AS WE ALSO CELEBRATE AMERICA'S BIRTHDAY THIS JULY**, we're reminded how fortunate we are to live and work in a community built on opportunity, hard work, and strong local connections.



**WE THANK CLIFTON** and the surrounding communities for your trust and support throughout the years.

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# Happy Birthday, AMERICA



## ★ *Clifton's Chapter of the American Dream*

By Jack DeVries

**Happy 250th birthday to the boldest, brightest, and biggest nation** to ever inhabit the earth – a quarter-of-a-millennium experiment in democracy.

We're a nation full of triumphs and tumbles, consensus and conflict, and one grounded on the principle that all men (and women) are created equal ... though it's taken time to achieve that belief (some say we're still working on it). We believe in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, a credo developed by our rabble-rousing forefathers from 1776.

The City of Clifton has been a part of this democracy experiment – including back when this land wasn't called "Clifton." And, for more than three decades, the *Clifton Merchant Magazine* has told about our city's story and contribution to America.

Here's a brief informal history of Clifton's chapter of the American dream ...

If you time-traveled back to 1776 and were hungry, good luck finding The Barrow House or The Hot Grill. If they even existed then, you wouldn't be able to order "two all the way" – unless you spoke Dutch. Most settlers in this farming community were from Holland and the area wasn't even called "Clifton" – known then as part of "Acquackanonk," an area founded in 1693.



*George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. Courtesy: National Heritage Museum, Lexington, MA.*

The name is derived from Clifton's first language – that of the Lenni Lenape Native Americans. Acquackanonk means "where gum blocks were made for pounding corn" or "rapid stream" – take your pick.

# A Lot of What I Know Today I Learned

## AS A PAPERBOY



From the **Editor**,  
Tom Hawrylko, Sr.

When I consider how I got to be the owner of Tomahawk Promotions and editor and publisher of *Clifton Merchant Magazine*, I go back to my youth in Perth Amboy.

My big break came in 1967 when my brother John made the Perth Amboy Panthers basketball team and had to give up his paper route to make practice.

So I basically inherited the family business. I was 10 and the paper was the *Perth Amboy Evening News*.

My route was five blocks in our old Budapest neighborhood, named for the many Hungarian families living there. Everyone read newspapers back then and I had 75 or so customers. Before I got started, I would fold the papers so that I could hang the bag over the front of my Sting-Ray the grab and toss the folded papers onto stoops or porches.

Bundles of evening newspapers with our name and route written on it for the five paperboys were delivered in the afternoon to a neighbor's garage. There we would swap school stories as we folded our papers, eat a snack and have a soda before we got started.

Back then, I used to get sidetracked a lot, just like I do now. As I was folding the papers, I'd see a headline about the Vietnam War or the drug issues facing our hometown and I'd stop and read the story. Then, before I got started, I'd find another story, and read that, too.

Being a paperboy taught me to be a please and thank-you guy: knock on doors, ask for the sale, give good service. Deliver papers on time and get paid for the work you do.

My route took about an hour, six days a week, rain, sun, summer or snow. I got out of the Ukrainian Assumption Catholic School at 3 pm, changed out of my school uniform and by 5:30, I'd be finished. From the money that I earned, I was able to buy what I wanted.

Saturday mornings we paid our bill. Mrs. Horvath ran the newspaper office on Hall Ave. across the tracks in the Puerto Rican neighborhood. We paperboys, pockets filled with bills and coins, lined up before 10 am to settle our accounts. I was a paperboy until I was 14. Then I worked four years as a janitor in an Edison factory. By 1976, I joined the Navy and in 1980 moved to my adopted hometown, Clifton.

Being a paperboy taught me to be an honest hustler. I'm still a hustler today—ask the advertisers listed on the right. I asked them for their ad support to enable my team and I to create this block-buster salute to America and our hometown. These folks put their trust in me, allowing me to do what I do best: *storytelling*. How lucky can one guy get?

After over 32 years in business, I expect to finish my career in newsprint, the way I started.

Thank you all for trusting in what my team and I do.

### Clifton Merchant Magazine

# CLIFTON

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# Acquackanonk

## The Lenape

In the 1600s, when the Dutch reached Acquackanonk, the first people they encountered were the Lenni Lenape tribe.

Historian William W. Scott, who in 1922 wrote *History of Passaic and Its Environs*, calculated that the Lenni Lenape, which means pure or original Indian, arrived in New Jersey around 976 A.D., after they had forced out the Mengwe, a previous tribe.

Scott writes that the Lenape were a strong and healthy nation when the Europeans first arrived, and were willing to share Acquackanonk, which encompassed modern-day Clifton, Passaic and Paterson. However, he stated, as a race, few lived past the age of 60.

The Passaic River was bountiful and the area near today's Dundee Dam—between Garfield and Clifton—was a place for religious services and also a prime fishing location. He also noted that the Lenape regarded the turtle as “creator of all things.”

They taught the Dutch how to use the so-called Lenape fish dams (called slooterdam by the Dutch), which was V-shaped, pointing downstream with a sluice in the center where a woven basket was set to catch the fish.

The Lenape also made use of the fertile land near the Dundee Dam where they grew maize and other crops. In fact, the Passaic River offered so much to these people that it was home to a permanent settlement, covering most of the land east of Second St., into present-day Passaic.

They often lived in 7x24 foot longhouses, which accommodated up to a 12-person family. To the east of Sixth St., where Passaic and Wall Sts. are located today,

were the homes of about 500 original Lenape. There was a trail from the river to the Great Notch and on to present day Rifle Camp Rd. where they had a spot to rest and replenish.

The greatest of all the Lenape meeting places, where they gathered after the harvest, was the dancing grounds along the Third River in Delawanna. Eventually, the new settlers took their toll on the Lenape. The Dutch introduced alcohol and disease, which sent the population spiraling and, by around 1700, the Lenape migrated west.



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**A Call for Independence**

The Clifton area was first settled by the Dutch in the 1600s. When America declared its independence on July 4, 1776, many in Clifton supported the patriots' cause. As expected, this call for independence enraged King George and the British Empire.

After initial battles at Massachusetts' Lexington and Concord, and Bunker Hill, the Red Coats chased General George Washington and his Continental Army out of New York and into New Jersey.

Washington's battered army of 3,800 – many ill-clothed, shoeless and unfit for duty – re-



treated to Hackensack and continued to Acquackanonk, where a bridge over the Passaic River promised escape.

The Continental Army did cross that bridge, providing salvation and the chance to fight another day. Our hometown patriots had much to do with that crossing – thus saving the American Revolution. During the long “War for Independence,” Washington would return to Acquackanonk, accompanied by his aide Alexander Hamilton and General Marquis de Lafayette. Later, his wife Martha and future first lady Abigail Adams would ride through the area.

# “Thank You Fellow Veterans for Spreading Years of American Freedom”

**Antonio Latona**  
Senior Master Sergeant, US Air Force





# Why not call it **Clifton**?

## Taking Shape

Outside of the Hamilton and Doremus Houses being built, the Morris Canal flowing through Acquackanonk, and a fresh-water pearl rush taking place among prospective treasure hunters, not much happened in Clifton following the revolution ... outside of crops growing.

However, by 1867, things began changing. With buildable rural land situated between growing Passaic and Paterson, the Clifton Land and Building Association started buying up and offering sellable lots.

Back then, “Clifton” described an area within a half mile radius at the intersection of Clifton and Getty Aves. – a small village within Acquackanonk.

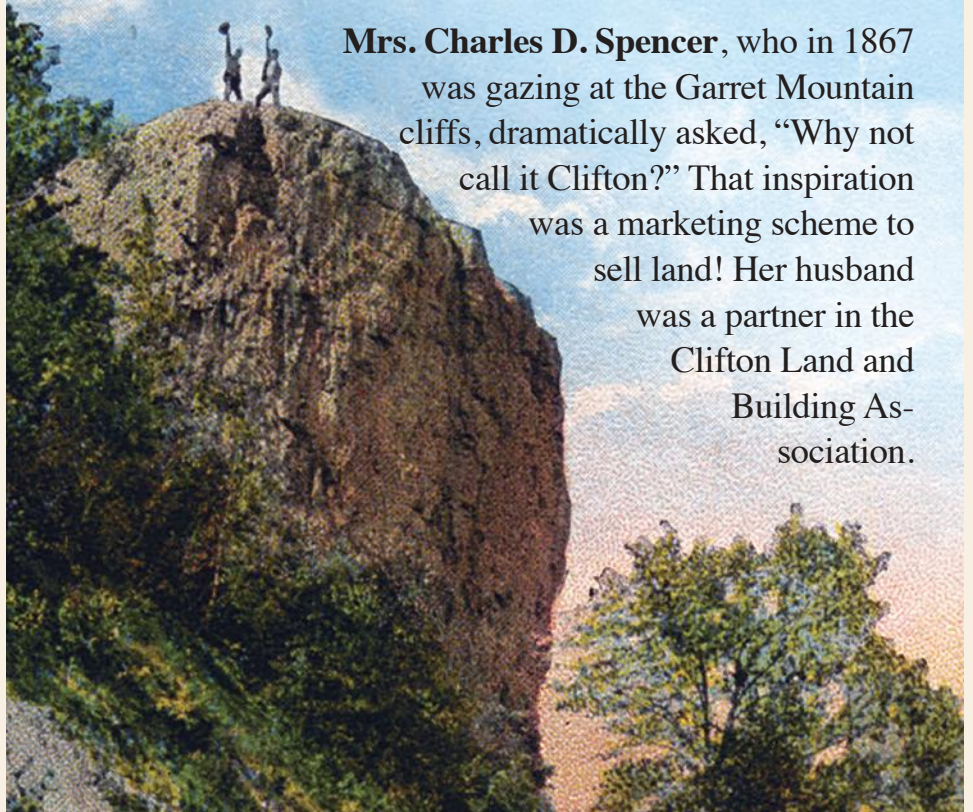
The catchy name worked. People bought buildable property and the land filled with residents. By 1875, there were 1,631 spread across Acquackanonk. This included people in Delawanna (taking its name from the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad); Richfield (christened for its farmland); and Athenia (named for the Greek goddess and previously known as Centerville, West Clifton, and Claverack).

There was also Allwood (originally known as Speertown, named after a well-known Dutch family); Albion (named after property owner John R. Gould’s descendants); and Lakeview (its moniker due to a lake in neighboring Paterson teeming with eels). Later, the Botany section would be named after the massive Botany Worsted Mill that spread into Passaic.

## Off to the Races

In Acquackanonk, a train depot was built, Scotto Nash grew his prize American Beauty Roses in what was then a swampy Nash Park, and a racetrack was constructed (on

Mrs. Charles D. Spencer, who in 1867 was gazing at the Garret Mountain cliffs, dramatically asked, “Why not call it Clifton?” That inspiration was a marketing scheme to sell land! Her husband was a partner in the Clifton Land and Building Association.



the grounds of Main Memorial Park). Before long, up to 10,000 people were taking trains from New York City and other points to bet on the horses. (Ever wonder why our teams are called Mustangs? There’s the answer.)

The Clifton Race Track was an exotic location. *The Courier-Post* of Camden reported in 1882: “A tribe of Ottoman gypsies with their horses, monkeys, bears and babies are encamped on the Clifton race-track, between Passaic and Paterson.”

# AMERICA HAPPY 250TH BIRTHDAY!



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In 1888, the Clifton Race Track went big time. It was purchased for a then astounding \$115,000, according to *History of Passaic and Its Environs* by William W. Scott.

The next year, it would hold 103 racing days. The new owners built a glass-enclosed grandstand featuring seating for 10,000 with steam heat and electric lights. Bookies and gamblers filled the track.

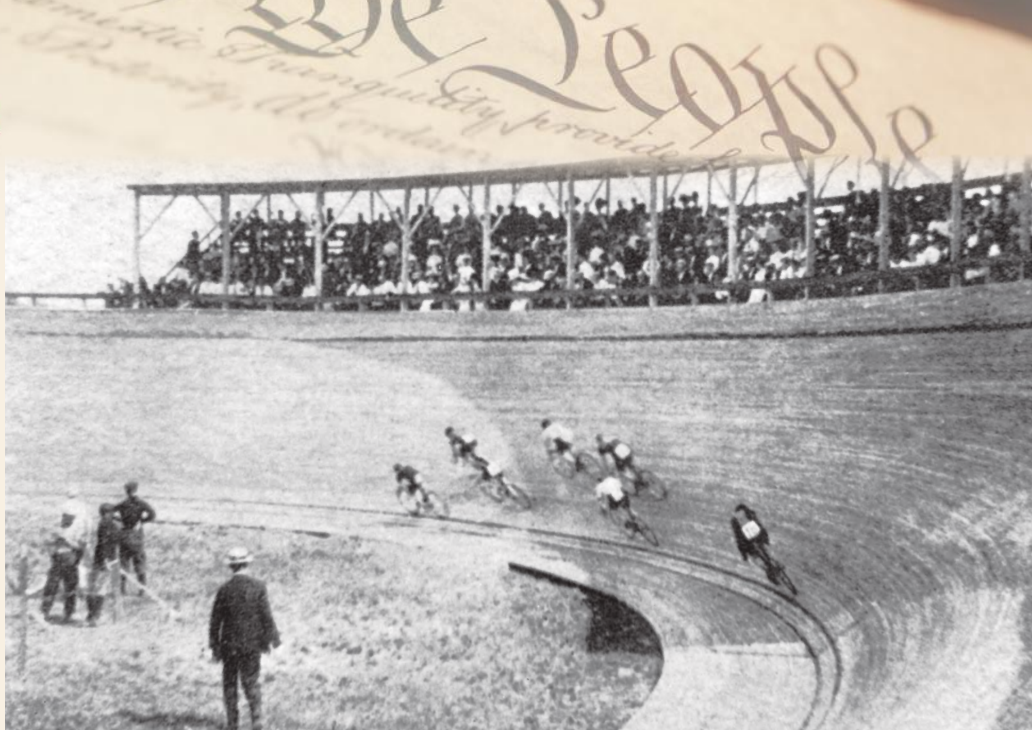
Clergy, led by Dr. Philo F. Leavens of the Passaic Presbyterian Church, ultimately shut down the track by 1891. It was later used as a velodrome for bicycle and motorcycle racing.

When that facility burned down in 1911, the property welcomed Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, perhaps because Annie Oakley bought a home at 304 Grant Ave., in Nutley.

More historic land was across the street when Olympic Park was built (the site of Corrado's Market today). Owned by Thomas Van Houten, the athletic field attracted barnstorming major league teams like the Cincinnati Reds and African American squads like the Paterson Smart Sets.

In 1887, P.T. Barnum brought his circus to the Olympic Grounds, parading through Paterson into Clifton with a great variety of animals.

Olympic Park also featured "The Last Days of Pompeii." Featuring 250 performers, the seven-night extravaganza told of the ancient city's obliteration by the volcano Vesuvius. Up to 7,000 a night watched the show featuring a small lake, gondolas and fireworks. In 1896, Olympic Park got its first professional baseball team. Future New York Yankees GM Ed Barrow brought his team to Olympic Park to become the Paterson Silk Weavers of the Atlantic League.



*After the horse track was decommissioned (on the grounds of what is today Main Memorial Park), it became a velodrome for bicycle racing. Scotto Nash grew his prize American Beauty Roses in what was then a swampy Nash Park.*



The squad included future Hall Of Fame shortstop Honus Wagner. After two seasons, Wagner was sold to the Louisville Colonels of the National League and the Silk Weavers faded and were no more.

As the century turned, the federal government purchased 52 acres of Athenia farmland for a federal animal quarantine station. Opened in 1901, 18 buildings were built to house animals and administrators.

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# Happy Birthday, AMERICA



## New Century

In 1905, the *Passaic Daily News* reported a group of “New York capitalists” leased Olympic Park from Van Houten and would pour \$100,000 into the grounds to create “Fairyland,” an amusement park to rival Brooklyn’s Coney Island.

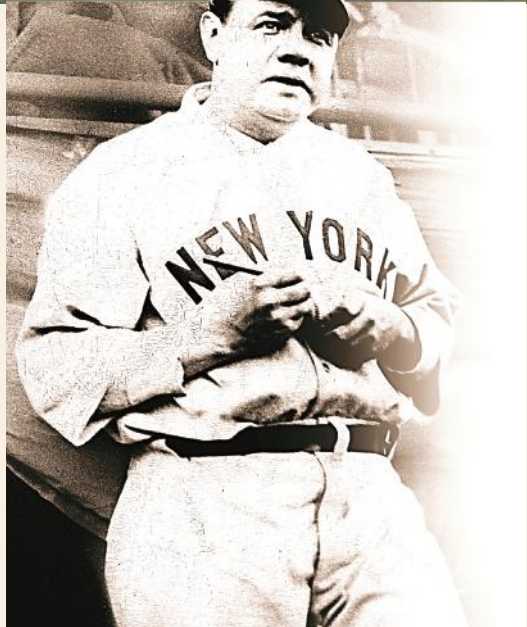
Workmen ripped down the ballpark’s fence and installed a dance hall pavilion, amusement rides, and structures replete with columns, steeples and circular porticos, all connected by concrete pathways.

Inside Fairyland, they built attractions like the “Cave of the Winds,” “House of Too Much Trouble,” and the “Laughing Gallery.” There was a Ferris wheel, roller coaster, and a small children’s train. A vaudeville playhouse and a gypsy camp were other attractions, as were fireworks and circuses.

After 1907, attendance declined. Two years later, Van Houten bought the buildings and fixtures for \$1,000 along with assuming the park’s debts. He ran it for a summer before converting Fairyland back into a baseball park. It remained an athletic field until 1952 when Good Deal supermarket bought the property.



*The Doherty Silk Mill at 1500 Main Ave. today with Aura as its anchor. Top facing page, the Doherty Oval ball field on Getty Ave. from 1913 to 1927. Top of page, Fairyland postcards courtesy of Mark S. Auerbach.*



The great 1913 Silk Strike, which formed primarily by workers in the mills in Paterson and Haledon, began in Clifton at the magnificent Doherty Silk Mill, which can still be seen at 1500 Main Ave.

To help mend the wounds from the strike, owner Harry Doherty built a “field of dreams” baseball field behind his mill (above) and a parade of the game’s Hall of Famers, including Negro League stars, played in Clifton against his Silk Sox team. In one game, Babe Ruth hit a mammoth home run that caused a happy riot at the Doherty Oval. By 1927, the Silk Sox were gone and Getty Ave. cut through the ballpark.

In 1917, Clifton sent its sons to war in France, and many never returned.

At home, politics was the rage – as stormy as today. Voters in Botany, Lakeview and Downtown Clifton wanted to become a city; rural voters of Richfield, Athenia and Albion disagreed.



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# Happy Birthday, AMERICA



On April 24, 1917, in a city of 24,000 residents, 2,263 voters turned out to have their hometown become New Jersey's 12th city. Results show 1,276 cast a yes, with 948 opposed. Voters then elected Clarence Finkle, Sr. as the city's first mayor.



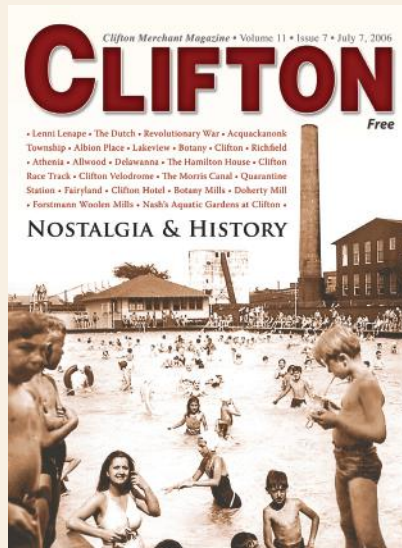
The "yes" voters did not want to be annexed by Passaic or Paterson; naysayers said taxes would rise. In a city of 24,000 residents, 2,263 voters turned out on April 24, 1917. The Home Rule League supported becoming New Jersey's 12th city and hired detectives to watch the polls, looking for illegal activity. Clifton was born.

In 1918, Clifton faced a pandemic even deadlier than this century's. The Spanish Flu roared through Clifton in the fall, killing the aged, the young, or healthy. WWI enlistee Albert Sisnerlin was shipped from Fort Dix to be buried on Sept. 29. Albert T. Leonhard was the first to die in the city, leaving a wife and three small children. By the next year, the flu was gone, leaving multiple deaths in its wake.

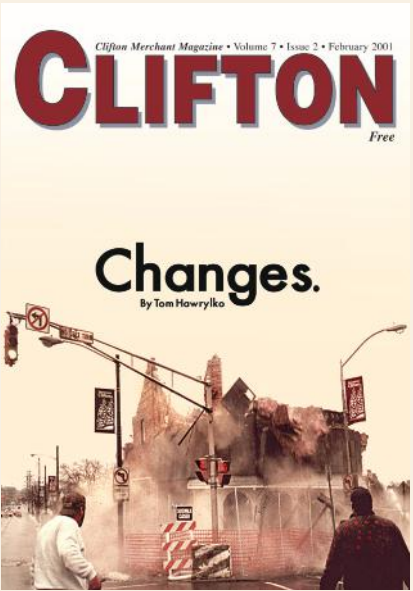
By 1920, the racetrack property was purchased by the Board of Education and the city's high school (now Christopher Columbus Middle School) was built on the site, joined three decades later by Clifton Municipal Stadium.

Progress continued. In 1928, Rutt's Hut opened. The next year, Hoffmann-La Roche relocated to the Nutley-Clifton border. Clifton's population grew to 46,875 by 1930. The Clifton Pool (originally named Rentschler's Pool) was built in 1932 and up to 2,000 people paid a nickel to swim on hot summer days.

Cliftonites watched air-conditioned movies at the opulent Clifton Theatre, opened in 1927, at Main and Clifton Aves. Closed during the Depression, it re-opened on New Year's Eve 1937 as the "New" Clifton Theater, showing Paul Muni in *Emile Zola* and Bing Crosby in *Double or Nothing*.



Rentschler's Pool from our July 2006 cover and an ad from the New Year's Eve 1937 opening of the Clifton Theater, at Clifton and Main Aves. Below, the Clifton Theater in 1953, courtesy of Mark Auerbach, and the Feb. 2001 cover of our magazine as the structure turned to maroon and gray dust.





# A Legacy of Learning, Love & Community

5 Prospect Village Plaza, Clifton • 973-473-4912 • [thenewbairnschool.com](http://thenewbairnschool.com)



Some of the staff at New Bairn, from left, Mary Feliz, Destiny Velez, Jannett McCourt, Alfred Frontauria, Kristin Frontauria, Brianna Berry, Erlinda Deda.

In a city rich with history and community pride, few Clifton institutions have made a lasting impact on area families as The New Bairn School.

Since 1973, this beloved childhood center has shaped the lives of thousands of children, earning a reputation not just for education—but for excellence, care and deep-rooted tradition—and families that return generation after generation.

New Bairn owners and staff pride themselves in the powerful belief that children thrive best in an environment grounded in integrity, structure and genuine care.

Since 2020, owners Kristin Frontauria and her husband AJ worked with the late co-founder Lynne Ascoli-Shaw, building upon Lynne's legacy that *every child is known and valued, and that every family is known and cared for.*

## In Loving Memory of...



Lynne Ascoli-Shaw

Co-Founder  
New Bairn School

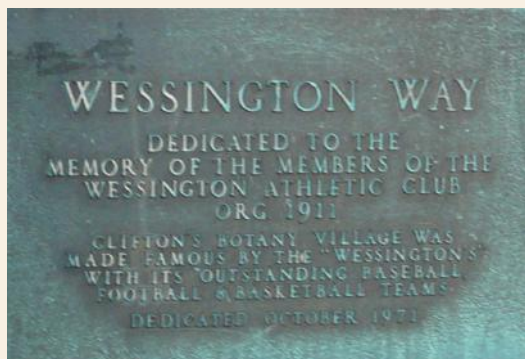
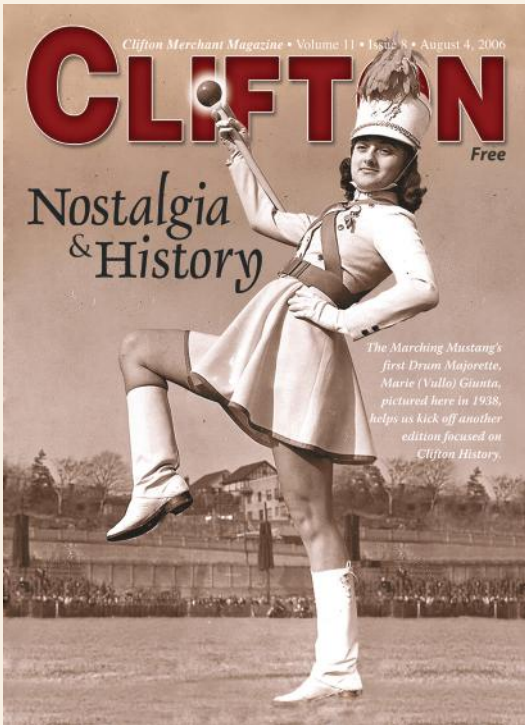
Clifton Originals

During the depths of the Depression, two Clifton originals got their start. In 1938, before they tread upon the emerald field at Clifton Stadium, the first Marching Mustangs Band high-stepped upon the hard-scrabble lot of Wessington Stadium before a football game (now the site of the Passaic Valley Water Commission on Main Ave.).

Nearby, Hap Nightingale lost his deli business in the Depression. Along with friends Joseph Jorlett and Ken Force, they started serving small beef tenderloins on sliced bread – and the iconic beefsteak dinner became a Clifton institution.

Beefsteak: Made In Clifton

Beefsteak dinner—that sumptuous meal of sliced beef tenderloin draped over a piece of French bread and bathed in margarine was conceived where Mustangs roam and Routes 3 and 46 drone. Clifton’s gourmet contribution to the world is served nearly the same way the late Hap Nightingale and his two friends conceived the beefsteak in 1938. Hap’s son Bob headed the business from 1968 to 1997 and now his son Rob, seen here, continues to run the firm from West Second St.



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# Happy Birthday, AMERICA



Looking back at Memorial Day 2004, Clifton's WWII vets in front of the monument in Main Memorial Park.

Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 20 • Issue 10 • October 2, 2015

# CLIFTON

Free, Please Take One

Clifton Stadium Opens...

## 1950

Emerging  
AS A  
Prosperous City

- Old Spice: Made in Clifton
- Housing & Industry Boom
- Building Libraries, Schools
- America's First Modern Mall
- WWII POW Mario Talamini
- Rabbi Eugene Markovitz



WWII vets from left: Hank Gola, Raymond Chitko, Raymond Yannetti, Stephen Mihalovic. Bottom row: David Eagler, John Jay Grace, Mario Talamini, unknown. Below, Joseph Sperling.

In 1941, America and Clifton went to war and more than 5,500 city residents served in the military (Clifton patriots would also answer the call in Korea, Vietnam, and future conflicts, and nearly 300 would make the ultimate sacrifice).

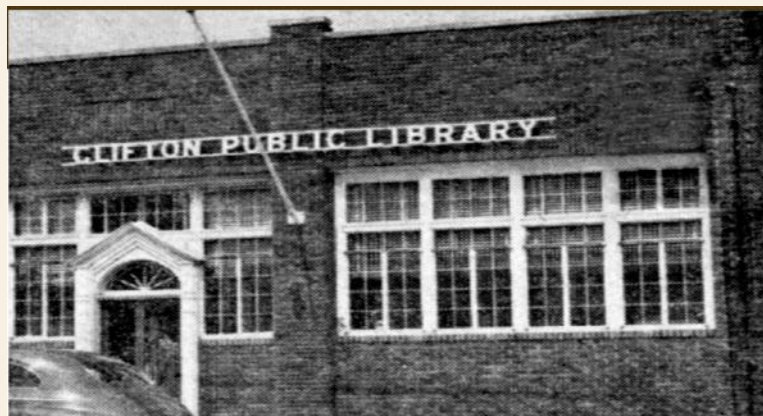
At Pearl Harbor on the deck of the USS Curtis, Clifton's Joseph Sperling – who lived at 30 Richardson Ave. – watched as a Japanese plane tumbled out of the sky toward him. It was the last thing he saw.



Sperling became the first Cliftonite killed in action in WWII, leaving behind six sisters and three brothers, along with his mother. Sperling Park on Speer Ave., was later named in his honor.

After World War II was won, the city began transforming itself from a quiet farming community to a thriving and busy city.

The spirit of the recently ended war was evident when Mayor Walter F. Nutt issued a proclamation making the month of November 1948 “Clifton War Memorial Month ... in an attempt to raise sufficient funds to erect a World War II memorial in the form of a public library.” A year earlier, the City Council appropriated \$100,000 to the building fund and designated that the structure be constructed in Memorial Park on Piaget Ave. at the end of Third St.



*The Clifton Library near Clifton and Main Aves. in 1938*



*At Piaget and Third Aves., in 1953 and today.*



Ford dealer Henry Fette (top left) was chosen to head up the campaign. In February 1951, the Council approved an additional \$224,056. Ground was broken on April 6, 1952 and construction began.

But Clifton was always a cost-conscious community. After receiving the funds, Fette wrote that the group took to the “task of cutting down and eliminating to save money.” They did just that and soon moved from the First and Clifton Aves. library to the Clifton Memorial Library on Jan. 31, 1953. “The city now owns its own public library,” Fette concluded, adding it was built “in memory of the young men who gave their lives for their country.”

Fast-forward to Nov. 5, 1989—ground was broken for a new main library. The city bonded \$3.5 million, the state contributed \$200,000, and \$500,000 was raised through donations. The new structure was officially dedicated on Nov. 10, 1991.

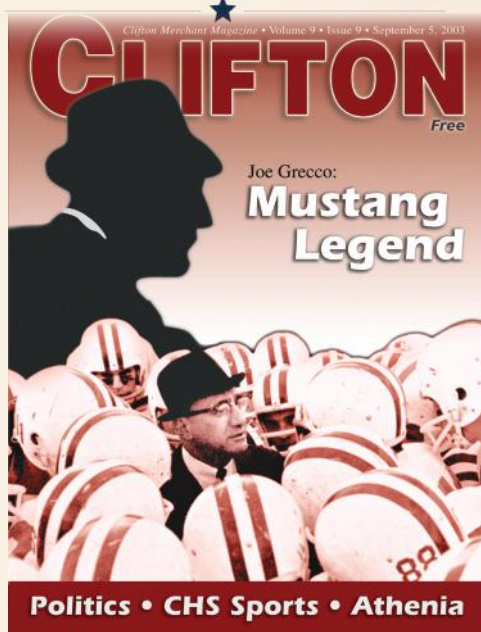
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A tribute to the legendary and beloved Coach Joe Grecco in September 2003. From left in 1999 Grecco's Fighting Mustangs, Bob Smith, Coach Bill Vander Closter (who followed Grecco as coach in 1964), Larry Kolk, Bob Gursky, Pete Lehr, Mike Novack, George Telesh and Bob Leciston. In front, that's Rich Imhoffer and Ernie Niederer. Inscribed with the 1957 win over the Montclair Mounties, the wood was taken by Imhoffer's father from a seat at Montclair's stadium when the Mustangs whipped the Mounties.

### Fighting Mustangs

Thanks in part to the GI Bill, a developer named Steve Dudiak who built new homes throughout Clifton, and a football coach named Joe Grecco, our hometown found its identity.

Up to that time, Clifton's problem was there was no feeling of "Clifton." The Main Ave. area was considered "Clifton," but those in Botany, Lakeview, Athenia and other sections identified with their individual neighborhoods with no emotional glue to hold them together.

That changed in 1946 when Grecco's Fighting Mustangs would become football state champions and unite the city, giving it an identity.

By 1950, Clifton would build a new stadium and the city became known for its powerhouse football, basketball, and baseball teams.

Churches and schools grew to keep up with the population, which rose to 65,000 by 1950. Near the quarantine station, the Shulton Company, makers of the iconic Old Spice scent, began employing many city residents.

Clifton had become a dynamic community – desirable for businesses and residents alike. No longer a bucolic bumpkin to neighboring cities like Passaic and Paterson, in the 1960s and 1970s, Clifton forged an identity all its own.



On Oct 14, 1952, Albert A. Stier, pictured center with some cow-girls, hosted a Hollywood-style opening of Styertowne Shopping Center. With 16 retailers on two levels, a free-standing anchor (first Levy Brothers then Rowe Manse Emporium) and offices on the second floor, plus parking for 1,600 cars, Stier put Clifton on the map with what was hailed as "the first modern suburban strip mall in America."



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## Happy Birthday, AMERICA



The 1960s began with an investment in the city's youth. In May 1960, voters approved nearly a \$6 million referendum for a new high school, befitting the Garden State's seventh largest city (population 82,000). Critics said building one high school, pictured at right in 1964 at the gym entrance, instead of two facilities was to keep the dominant Fighting Mustangs football team intact.

That September, Cliftonites witnessed the dawn of "Camelot," as future President John F. Kennedy stopped at the former Clifton City Hall on Main Ave. on a campaign visit. In October, then Vice President Richard Nixon passed through the Albion section, making more memories for city residents.

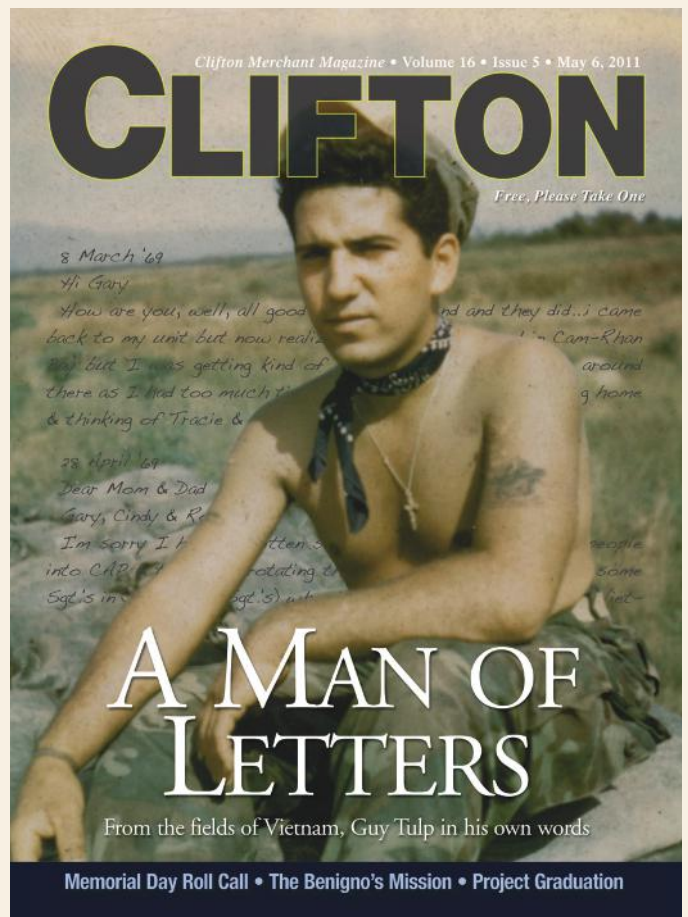
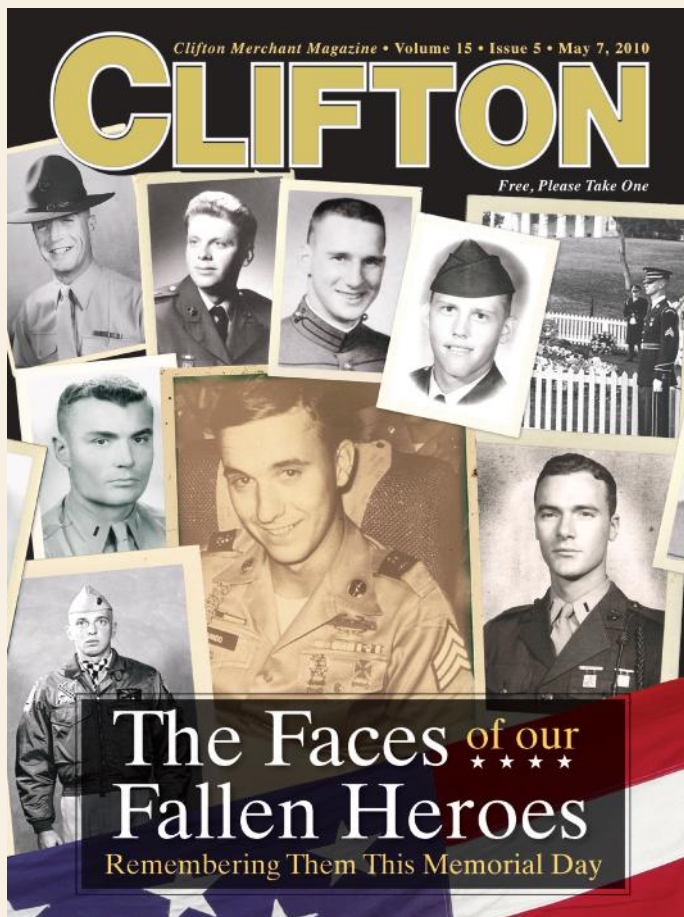
### Swinging Sixties

Times they were a-changing in American and Clifton. Tom and John Foukas opened the Mid-Town Grill at Main and Barrington Aves. on Oct. 26, 1960. A year later, The Hot Grill hosted its grand opening on Friday the 13th, 1961.

Hair got longer, music got louder, and older residents shook their heads in disbelief at the younger generation. The conflict in Vietnam set the country ablaze in protest, but the city's sons and daughters still answered the call to fight. Many never returned.

During the 1960s, the Clifton High School Mustang Band began their journeys to Europe to compete in international music competitions. The Boys Club (founded in 1947; the Girls Club was formed in 1965), purchased Camp Clifton in Jefferson, and they created more memories. In 1967, the city celebrated its first 50 years with "Clifton Day" at Yankee Stadium in April and a huge city parade in June.





Thanks to advocates like Rich DeLotto, we continue to tell the stories of the 29 Cliftonites Killed in Action during the Vietnam War. They include: Alfred Pino, Thomas Dando, William Sipos, Bohdan Kowal, Robert Kruger, Jr., Bruce McFadyen, Carrol Wilke, Keith Perrelli, William Zalewski, Louis Grove, Clifford Jones, Jr., George McClelland, Richard Corcoran, John Bilenski, Donald Campbell, James Strangeway, Jr., Donald Scott, Howard Van Vliet, Frank Moorman, Robert Prete, Guyler Tulp, Nicholas Cerrato, Edward Deitman, Richard Cyran, Leszek Kulaczowski, William Malcolm, Leonard Bird, John France and Stephen Stefaniak Jr. We also remember the enlistees on their way to US Army boot camp who died in a Nov. 8, 1961 plane crash: Robert De Vogel, Vernon Griggs, Robert Marositz, Robert Rinaldi, Raymond Shamberger, Harold Skoglund and Willis Van Ess, Jr.



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# The Wonderful years

By Phillip Read

**The year was 1964.** The place: Harrington and Woods End Rds. in the Allwood section, a true post-war tract development of Cape Cods and the occasional ranch. And it was the height of the Baby Boom. How else could you get 15 kids in a picture without throwing a party?

There's Bill Read, with a stray cat dubbed "Snowball" and younger brother Phil, to his right. Also there is Debbie Daves, who lived a few doors down. Then there's Dorian Flint and her brother Ross, whose house next door (noticeable for its truly Colonial appearance) had the most incredibly big (though rocky) three-level backyard.

Among the other neighborhood kids, though not necessarily pictured, were Laurie Springle, Debbie's next store neighbor, and the Meffins, two boys and a girl. Music was important, as it is with every youthful generation. The

"band" was make-believe, seen through a picture window, "playing" early Beatles songs, the record player off to the side. It was a gig that would be re-produced for "talent shows" then held at Mt. Prospect Park down the street, along with best pet parades, always a bring-em-out affair.

Entrepreneurs, we were. I sold flower and vegetable seeds door-to-door and I fondly remember that Mr. Peterson, whose home was across the street, was my best customer. Money could be earned in other ways too, from shoveling snow to collecting bottles for scrap.

Our "Man From U.N.C.L.E." clubhouse was in the backyard, soon filled with newspapers collected for the few quarters a recycler would pay for them. There was the movie house run out of the garage, admission 25 cents.

Popcorn was sold, too. There, we'd run my Dad's old 16 millimeter projector, showing silent films of Our Gang, Buck Rogers, and the cartoons of his day, even though it was the 1960s. I remember later trekking down Harrington to try to find a light bulb for the old projector, reaching an electronics repair shop that was once near the Allwood Theater and a gift shop.

It was cold, the dead of winter, with much snow on the ground. Frozen, and perhaps 20 more houses to pass en route to home, I desperately turned into the walkway of the Spences, seeking help. Mrs. Spence ushered me in, quickly seeing my plight. (It was Mr. Spence, the real-estate agent, who helped my family buy this, our first home, in 1962.)

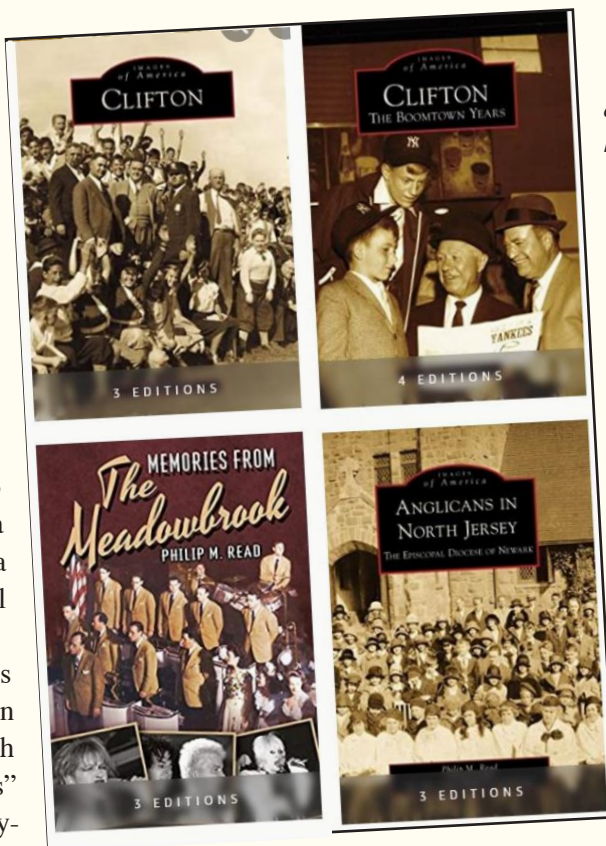
They called my folks, who found me well taken care of, a blanket over my shoulders and a cup of hot cocoa in my hand. I'll never forget that kindness.

We even held Haunted Houses (same charge, same garage), in which we'd pull the kids through in a red wagon, with "monsters" jumping out at them. One money-making job I wish I could forget: shoveling heavy, deep snow from a neighbor's sidewalk, a burdensome experience for which I was rewarded with 50 cents. And this from the people we shared a party line with! I expected at least a dollar. I never shoveled that walkway again.

The Spence house was not too far from the corner house where I attended Den meetings of Cub Pack 22. It was on that corner, in 1963, when I learned that President Kennedy had been shot and killed. Two older boys yelled the news to me when I turned that corner, on my way home from School 9, the 9 that still shines in that unforgettable school song. "I don't believe you," I said, only to run into the corner house and sink in a big, padded chair.

I remember watching the TV recant the darkness and tears of that day, a day when government was viewed as an instrument of good, a hand put forth to aid others in need—not the reputation it has today at the endless verbal beatings by those who'd attack "big government" at every turn. Sad.

Harrington Rd. will always share a special place in Clifton's History. The new '63 Chevy Impala, white with red interior, would be parked there, a testament to America's growing affluence. The old Hillman, acquired by my Dad under the cover of night, sat in need of repair long enough that a dutiful neighbor alerted police to its unwanted presence. No more memories of the long smoke trail it left on a fun-filled ride past that shiny School 9.



*Philip M. Read, CHS '73, is an award-winning journalist who got his start at The News of Paterson and worked for many years at The Record of Hackensack and The Star-Ledger. He, too, is a former member of the Clifton Historical Commission.*

*He has authored numerous books, including "Clifton," "Clifton, The Boomtown Years," "Montclair & Environs, 21st Century Chronicles," and "Memories from the Meadowbrook. From big bands to dinner-theater to rock 'n' roll."*

*Since 2014, he has published 27587 Magazine — "A North Carolina Original," taking its name from a zip code that's home to 82,000 in the state of his birth, North Carolina.*

*You can read the magazine and purchase some of his books by logging on at 27587magazine.com.*

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*The Clifton Hotel near Main and Madison served as Clifton's first city hall. The new city hall was constructed at Harding and Main Aves., at right. Below, a rendering of the current city hall. Below that, US Animal Quarantine Station Superintendent at the main shop (now the city's gas pumps near the Van Houten Ave. entrance). Facing page, Mayor Anna Latteri. And in 1992, Mayor James Anzaldi with Clifton's 75th Anniversary Committee members in front of the soon-to-be Valley Regency during construction.*



In the 1970s, new leaders emerged and veteran ones stayed the course. Anna M. Latteri was elected Clifton's first female mayor on May 26, 1970 and controversial City Manager William Holster and Superintendent of Schools Bill Shershin worked together to keep taxes low and services high.

Plans emerged to move City Hall from Main Ave. to the former U.S. Animal Quarantine Station where the city hall and CHS are located today. From 1900 to 1979, nearly 95% of imported animals entering the nation passed through the station. Clifton acquired 15.5 acres of that land from the U.S. in 1956 and another eight acres in 1959. The 23.5 acres were used to develop Clifton High School, which opened in 1962.

The purchase of the remaining 27 acres occurred in 1966, though the actual possession of the land could not take place until a new quarantine site was found. The station was to relocate to Stewart Air Field in Newburgh; that's when the fight began.





By 1977, over 1,200 residents signed petitions distributed by the Committee for Civic Center Alternatives opposing construction of a new City Hall. Along with the historical loss, many saw an impending negative impact on Main Ave. commerce—something most agree came to fruition. At the time, Holster called the CCCA’s position “sabotage.”

Before he died, Holster, who had long-since retired and

spent days watching the traffic on Main Ave., said that he regretted championing the move of City Hall from Downtown Clifton.

The Federal Government vacated the site in 1979, construction began and the new City Hall was dedicated on Sept. 14, 1980, relocating hundreds of city workers and Clifton Police from the corner of Main and Harding Aves.

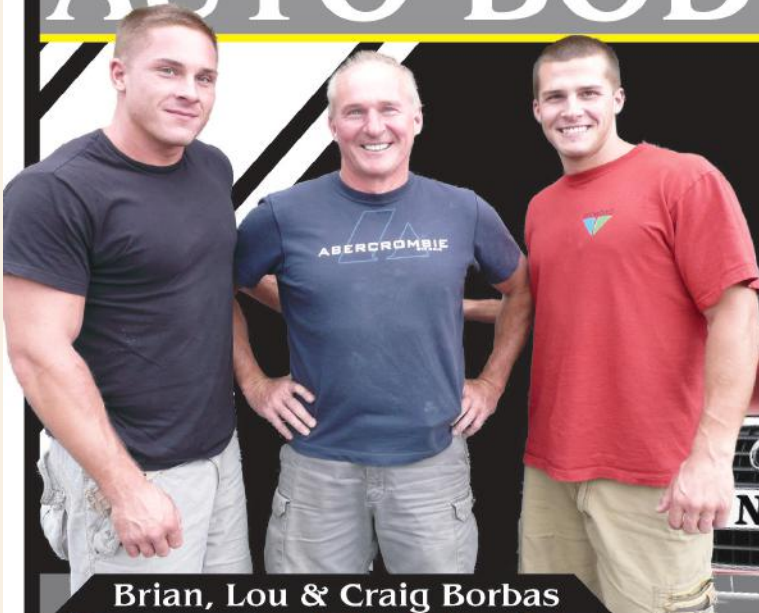
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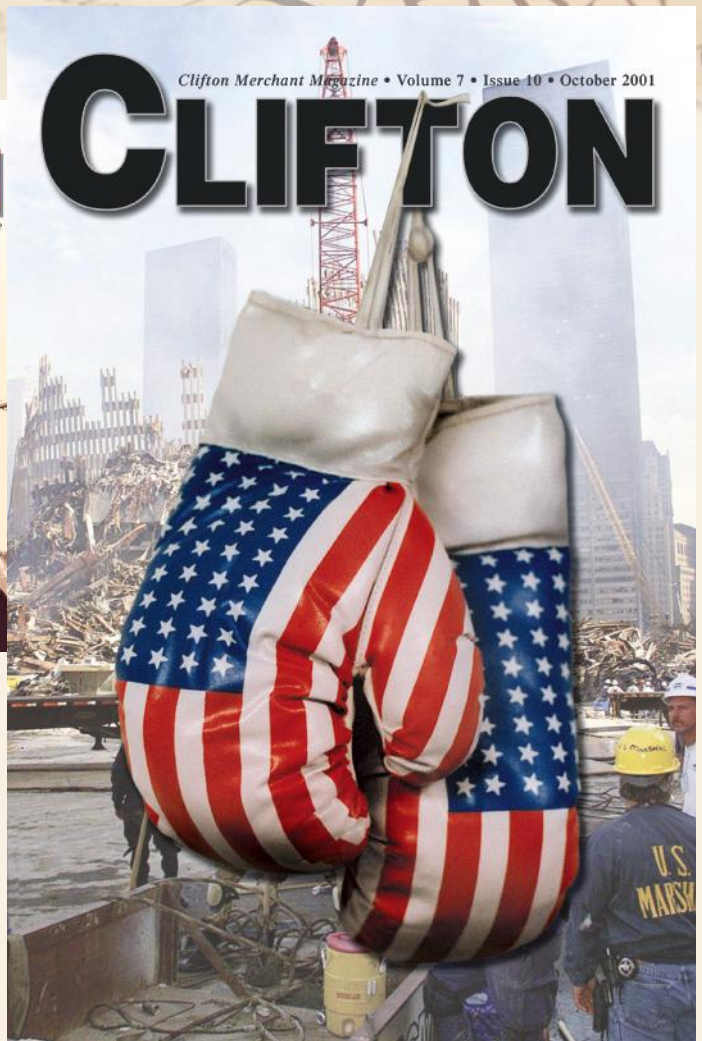
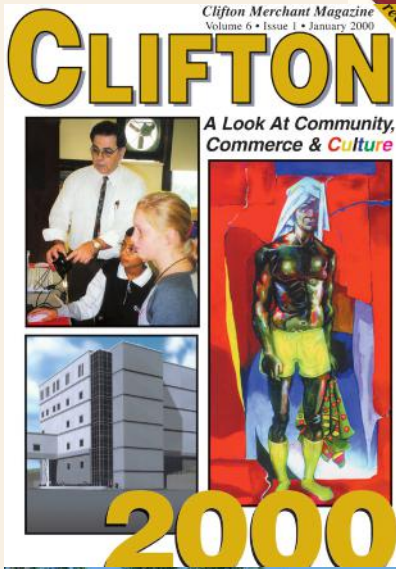
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**More Patriots**

In 1990, Clifton elected James “Jimmy” Anzaldi as its mayor, a position he would hold for 32 years, leading with a personal philosophy based on “compromise and consensus.” The next year, the city built itself a new library and, in 1992, Clifton celebrated its 75th birthday.

As the year 2000 approached, Clifton, along with the world, sat on the precipice of the new millennium. There was a sense of foreboding as “Y2K” loomed. When the calendar changed, some believed mankind’s technological mousetrap would implode as computers would not be able to cope with the “2000” date. Y2K turned out to be a non-event, but the foreboding was well-founded. The next 10 years would be a bumpy ride.

On Sept. 11, 2001, the world changed. Terrorist attacks killed more than 2,900 people, including 11 Clifton residents in NYC, as the World Trade Center was no more. Tragically, Clifton’s Sandra Grazioso, at left, lost both of her sons, Tim and John Grazioso, in the 9/11 attacks.

Two years later, there was more heartbreak. Clifton motorcycle officer John Samra was killed responding to an accident – the first policeman to die in the line of duty in the city’s history. Clifton also lost U.S. Army Special Forces Captain Michael Tarlavsky, a 1992 CHS graduate, who died fighting in Iraq in 2004.

In the midst of tragedy, Clifton responded with patriotism and resolve.

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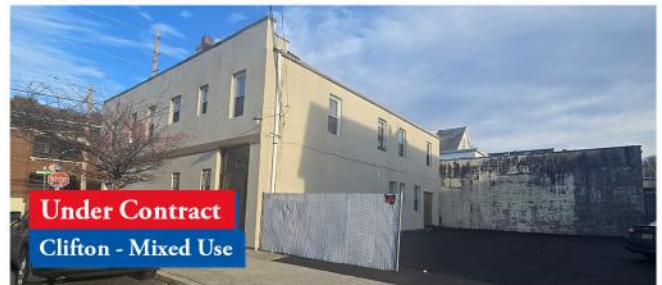


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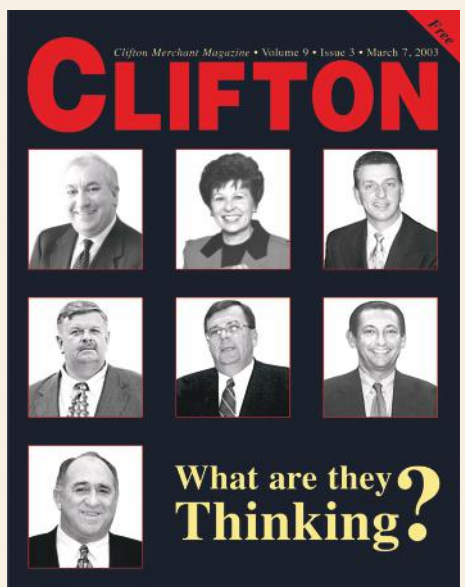
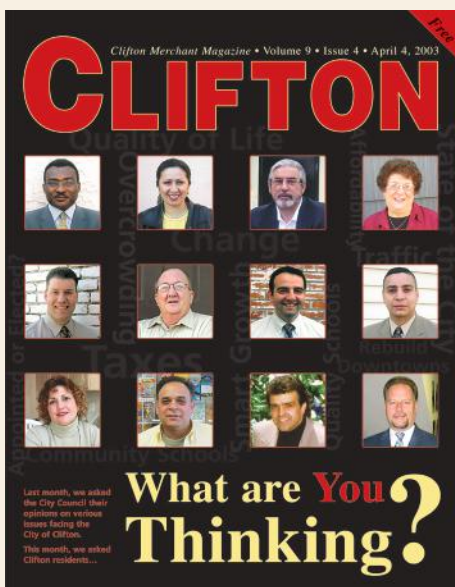
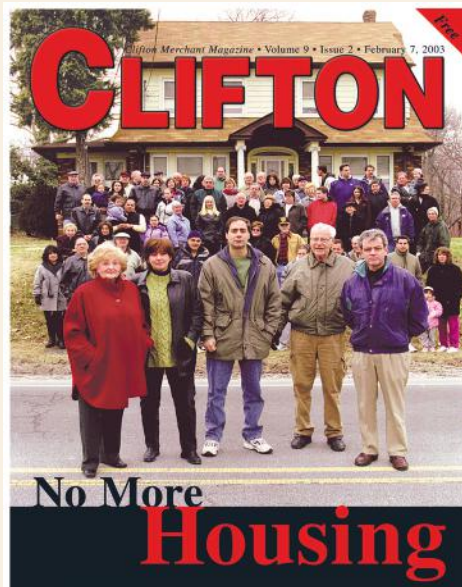
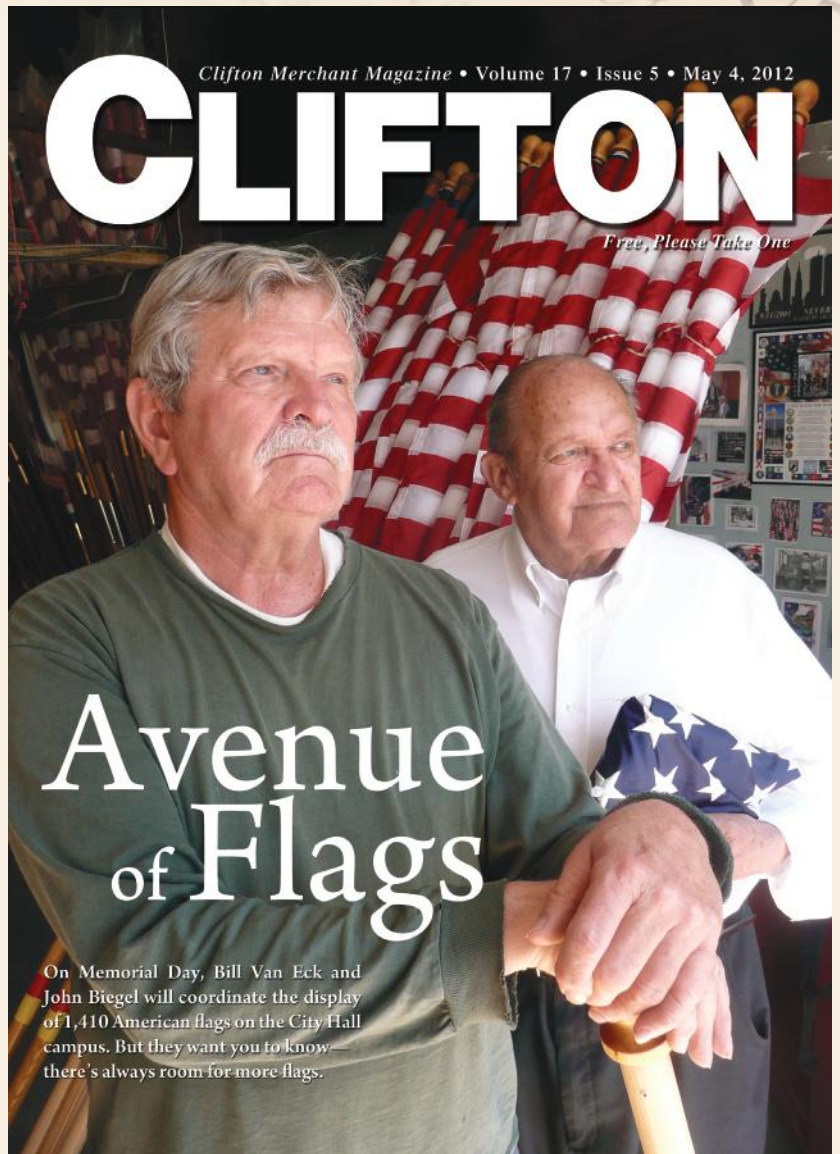
The city instituted an “Avenue of Flags” in 2002, the brainchild of WWII veteran Walter Pruiksmas, along with John Biegel Jr. and Keith Oakley. The first celebration (now held on Sept. 11, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Fourth of July, and Veterans Day) featured 200 flags, each representing a Clifton veteran. Today’s Avenue of Flags days feature over 2,300 flags decorating the roads around City Hall.

While 9/11 and its aftermath would be the new decade’s greatest challenge, other issues awaited. Clifton’s next 10 years would be defined by its burgeoning population and resulting development.

The added city residents would forever alter Clifton’s landscape and ethnic makeup. While the new Cliftonites added diversity and enthusiasm, the city grew more congested and crowded, lamented by long-time residents. Clifton High School seemed ready to burst as hallways resembled “mosh pits” each time classes changed.

**No More Housing**

During the previous decade, Clifton’s City Council looking for tax ratables had encouraged development. Expansion began, like Cambridge Crossing, a 637-unit housing complex that opened in early 2000 and built on the former 42-acre Shulton (which closed in the 1990s).



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Along the Passaic River in the Delawanna section, K. Hovnanian built its 246-unit River Walk I and II property. The former Athenia Steel property on Clifton Ave. was earmarked for a 125-unit senior housing and was considered for a school site, as well as a park.

Vacant businesses along Route 3 were turned into mega high-traffic shopping areas to rival any town, like the Costco site, Clifton Commons, and The Promenade Shops at Clifton. As the 12-square-mile city became crammed with new development and housing, many questioned if the growth came at the expense of their quality of life.

Clifton Merchant went from a community publication to a burr in the Council's side, asking about the lack of growth planning and representing the views of disgruntled residents.

"We moved safe and soft stories to the back of the magazine," said publisher Tom Hawrylko, "and became fair and frank in the front. I sensed that I was not the only one fed up with the lack of planning and over-development in Clifton."

Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 9 • Issue 10 • October 3, 2003

# CLIFTON

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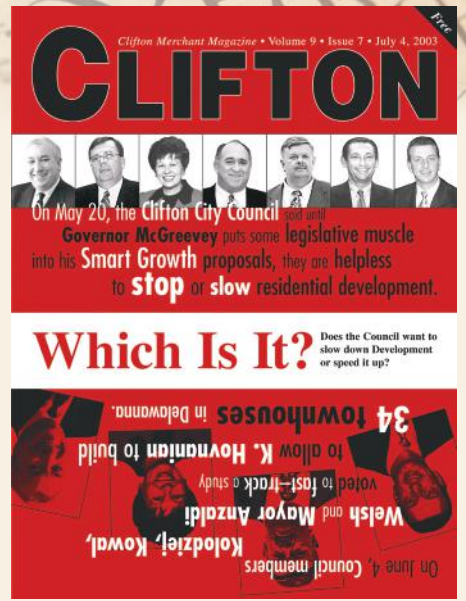
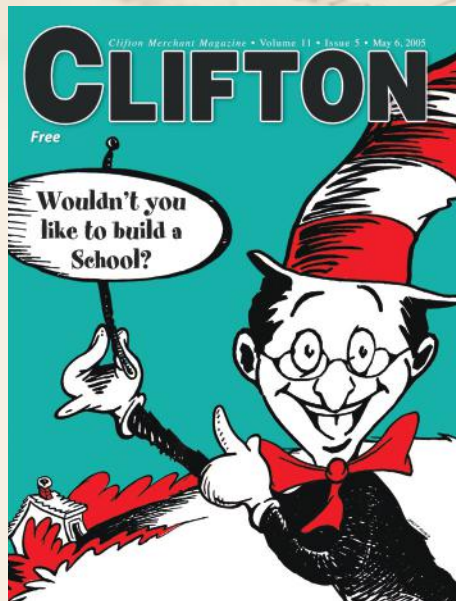
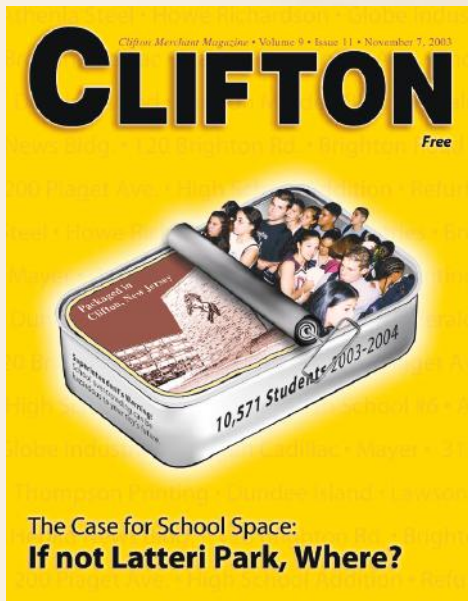
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RIVER WALK I & II	Near Kingsland & River Roads	246 Townhomes	K. Hovnanian Former Industrial Complex
GROVE HOLLOW	76 Grove Street	8 Homes	
CAMBRIDGE CROSSINGS	400 Colfax Avenue	637 Townhomes	Town & Country Former Shulton Property
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Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 10 • Issue 8 • August 6, 2004

# CLIFTON

What's Happening to Our Mountain?





In 2002, more than 1,300 residents signed a “No More Housing.” By 2003, the movement was in full bloom. Unfortunately, it came too late as the pain of overcrowding had become a reality in neighborhoods and our schools.

The need to expand schools posed a conundrum: how to build with limited revenue? Developers had the answer: add housing units. And projects were being proposed across the town, as illustrated on our October, 2003 cover. This put a lot of heat on the members of the Board of Education and City Council, pictured below in 2003.

In August 2004, *Clifton Merchant's* cover asked: “What’s Happening to Our Mountain?” The mountain crown framing the city that inspired Mrs. Charles D. Spencer’s “Clifton” name in 1867 was no more – reduced to rubble to make room for K. Hovnanian’s Four Season’s at Great Notch, an 800-unit complex straddling the Clifton-Woodland Park border.

School Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice (illustrated on our May 2003 cover) spearheaded the drive and voters approved School 17 in Botany, which opened in 2004.

Below, Board of Ed Commissioners from top row from left.: Jean Bernstein, Ken Kurnath, Jim Leeshock, President Marie Hakim, John Traier, Joe Kolodziej, Steve Kolakowsky, Lizz Gagnon and Jim Smith.



The Mayor and Council:  
Top from left: Mayor Jim Anzaldi;  
Council members Don Kowal,  
Gloria Kolodziej, Eddie Welsh.  
Bottom: Frank Gaccione,  
Stefan Tatarenko and  
Steve Hatala.

Plans to build a school at Latteri Park and 17 other locations were rejected, but enclosed walkways to alleviate student traffic were added at Clifton High at a cost of \$2.4 million.

During the decade, the Mustangs rode again. The Boys Bowling team won the State Championship in 2002, and the Boys Cross Country team won the NNJIL for eight years in a row (1998-2006).

The Girls Cross Country team won for three consecutive years (2004-2007). But the 2006 Mustangs Football team gave the city its biggest thrill – winning the NJSIAA North 1, Group 4 state title. Or so we thought. In 2007, the Lady Mustangs Softball team, for the eighth time since 1990, won their state title.

### Tough Times

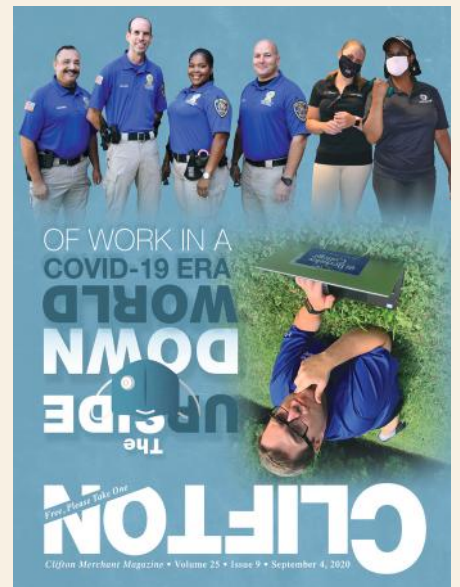
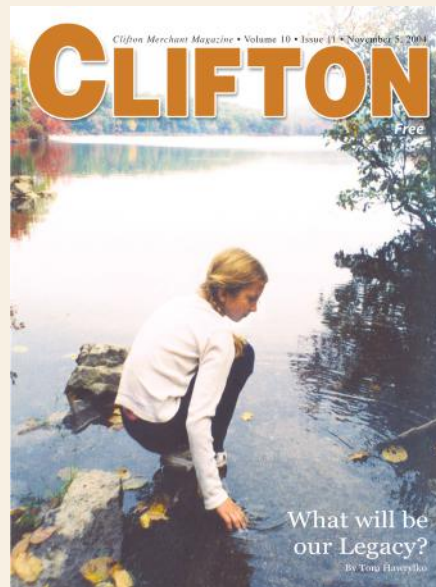
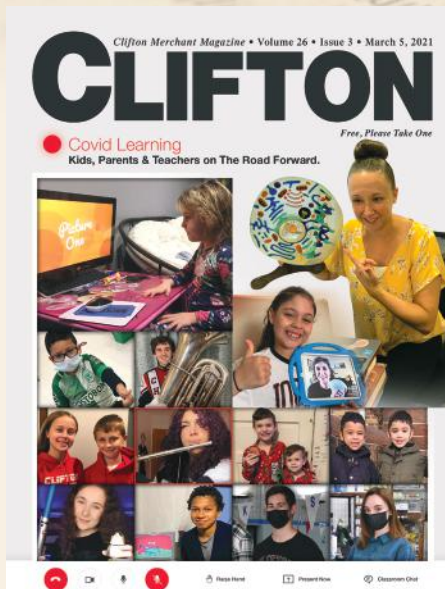
In 2007, the Great Recession arrived. Like other Main Street communities, Clifton felt the effect as businesses and residents suffered.

Charities also took a hit. Saint Peter’s Haven Director Marsha Hook said that individual donations were down, as well as grant money. Saint Peter’s, which provided three days of food to 640 families after their food stamps ran out, was counting on a \$15,000 grant from a foundation.

Instead, it would receive no more than \$5,000.

Despite a sputtering economy, Clifton hung on. As its population grew to 84,000 by 2010, the city’s consumers and businesses delayed purchases and postponed maintenance and repairs. Stop-gap measures became the new norm. The economy would not fully recover until 2016.

In 2019, Clifton, along with the nation and world, would grapple with COVID-19, which shut down schools and businesses, altering lives, and causing hardship through 2023. A bad memory that brings to mind facemasks, vaccines and hoarding toilet paper – it was a strange and awful time when nearly 400 Cliftonites lost their lives to the disease.



### This Is Our City

By 2020, Clifton’s population would eclipse 90,000. Two years later, Jimmy Anzaldi would serve his last day as mayor, with Ray Grabowski taking over the post. A new City Council would be little about “compromise and consensus,” instead more passionate about their members’ positions on issues, creating ongoing political storms.

This is nothing new to Clifton ... or America, as history proves. Whatever the future holds, if Clifton’s story demonstrates anything, it’s that the city always rises to the occasion. There have always been differences of opinion, cultures, and people.

However, throughout the years, the resilient people in this city have thrived, grown, and moved on to new opportunities and overcome challenges – and probably will continue doing so for another 250 more.

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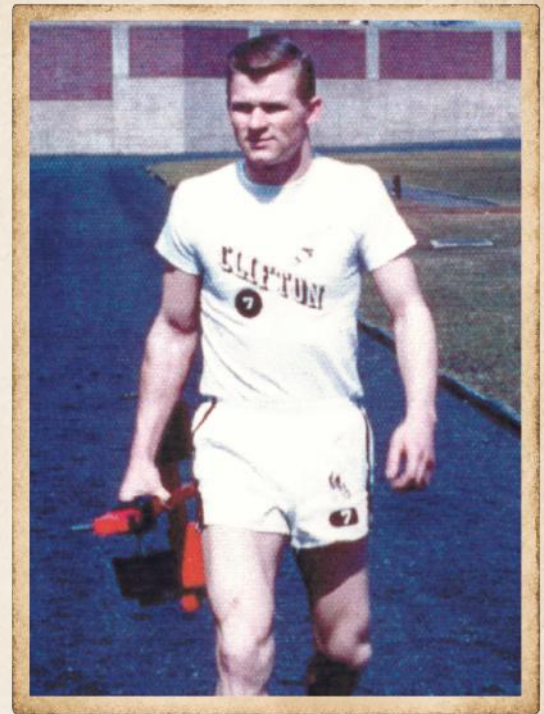
M-F 9-7:30 • Sat. 9-7 • Sun. 9-3

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# Proud to be an *American*

★ CLIFTON HISTORY ★



“  
*The only thing I can think of today is that I’m so happy to be an American citizen.*

- George Telesh

”

★ This Clifton Graduate lived a life of service, strength, and patriotism.



For one **Fighting Mustang** in 1957, beating Montclair wasn’t the biggest thrill of his week; it was the second.

Three days before the fabled Clifton-Montclair game, George Telesh left school to go to Paterson for an important appointment. The boy who had spent time in a German concentration camp during WWII, where his father died, was going to mark a new chapter in his American journey by becoming U.S. citizen.

After the ceremony, he returned to Clifton High and Coach Joe Grecco drove him to the Lions Club luncheon for some pre-game discussion.

“At the luncheon,” said Grecco in a 1997 interview, “they asked George how we were going to do in the game. George got up and said, ‘The only thing I can think of today is that I’m so happy to be an American citizen.’”

“I was so proud of him,” Grecco recalled. “And it reminded me how special being an American citizen was.”

After the big win, and rushing for 200 yards and three touchdowns, Telesh’s American experience lost none of its luster. Coming off the field after the win, he was asked by a Clifton fan if this was the best moment of his life. Telesh replied, “My greatest wish came true Wednesday when I was naturalized an American citizen. Too many youngsters don’t realize what a great country this is.”

Telesh went on to graduate from Cornell University, join the U.S. Navy, and become a doctor specializing in trauma cases. “What I said 50 years ago is still true today,” says Telesh, who lived in Florida until his death in 2019. “Of all the games I played in, nothing compared to becoming an American citizen.”

# For over 100 years, at the center of Clifton's Legal and Civic Affairs.

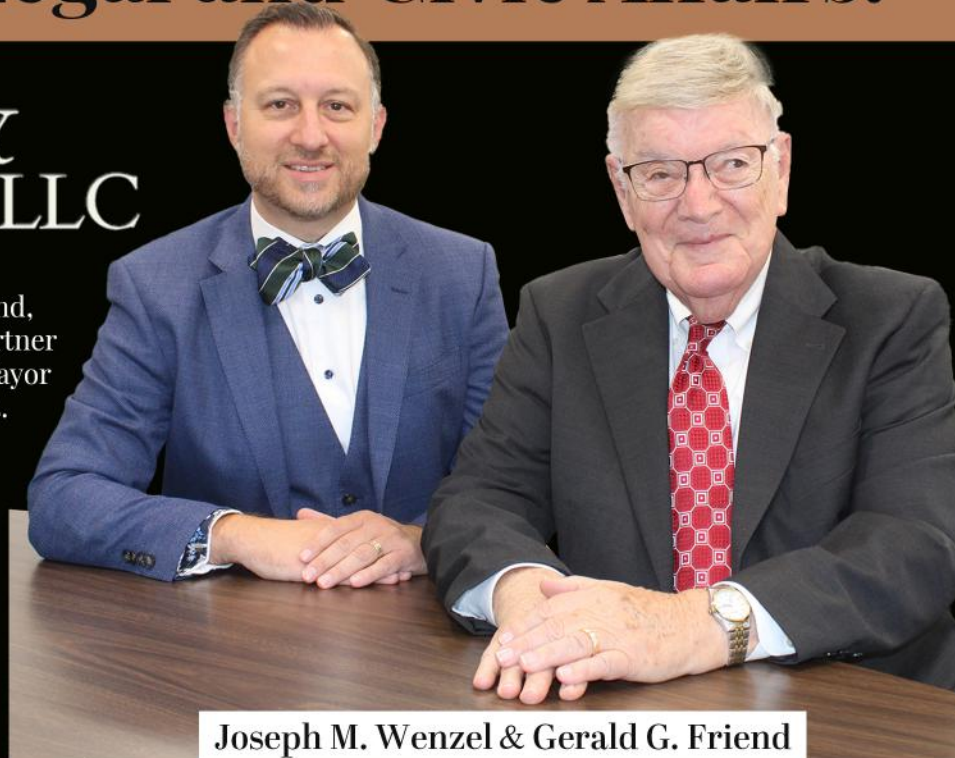


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Started in 1924 when Israel Friend and his brother, Fred Friend became partners, three of Israel's sons later joined the firm. They are: Herbert, who became a Superior Court Judge, William, who passed away in 2014 and Gerald, still a member of the firm. In 1994, Gerald's son Martin joined the firm, making it the first to have three generations practice law together. Martin married and moved to Florida in 1998 where he and his family still reside.

In 2012, Joseph Wenzel joined the firm and became a partner in 2017, at which time the name of the firm became Friend & Wenzel. Today the staff includes two additional attorneys, Carola Marquez and Richard Hawkins, and two administrative assistants, Kim Andrews and Fran Pritchard.

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*In celebration of your years of devoted service to Nova UA Federal Credit Union and the Ukrainian-American community, we present this plaque on May 19, 2026.*

As **Chairman, Board Member, and Counsel**, your guidance has been our compass; as a central pillar of Passaic and Bergen Counties, your passion has been our foundation.

We recognize your tireless efforts to build, protect, and unite our Ukrainian-American community, championing our cause with the skill of a fierce advocate and the heart of a true friend.

We are forever grateful for your monumental contributions, your vision, and your enduring spirit of service that has strengthened our future for generations to come.



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Chairman

**Walter Voinov**  
Vice-Chairman

**Nick Kosciolek**  
Treasurer

**Pavlo Figol**  
Secretary

**Dr. Michael Lewko**  
Member



*On May 19, from left: Nova CEO Val Bogattchouk, Board members Walter Voinov, George Oliarnyk, Pavel Figol, Nick Kosciolek, Ken Wanio, his daughter Lara Bevacqua and Wanio's long-time legal assistant Lynn Marakovitz, and Claire Giancola, Nova's director of operations. At left, Ken and his late wife Myroslawa. The couple were married in Soyuzivka, the Ukrainian Heritage Center in Kerhonkson, NY, on June 19, 1971.*

# Bank From Anywhere.

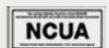


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## Clifton's Revolutionary War Hero

The tale of Lakeview's "Captain" John H. Post and the birth of a nation.

By Jack DeVries

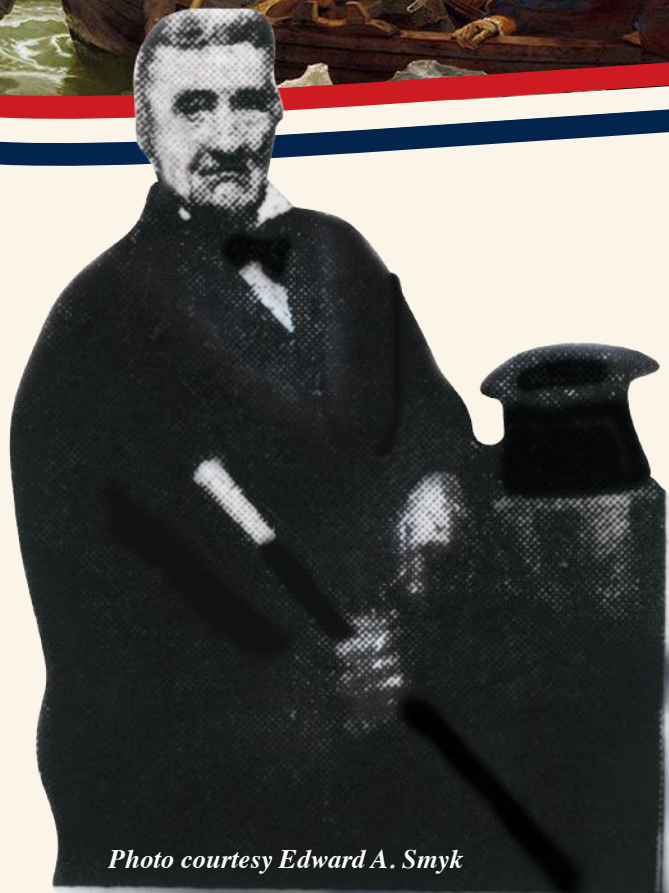


Photo courtesy Edward A. Smyk

Have you heard the legend of "Captain" John H. Post – the man who tore down the Acquackanonk Bridge after Washington's Continental Army passed over it, saving the American Revolution?

Never heard of Post? He lived for years in Clifton's Lakeview section (then part of Acquackanonk) and died in 1847. But in 1933, he was big news. That year, a large \$10,000 monument honoring Post was erected behind the Saints Peter and Paul National Catholic Church on River Rd. in Passaic. The inscription reads:

"In Memory of the Minute Men of 1776 and the soldiers and sailors of the Revolutionary War and especially of Captain John H. Post who lies buried here and whose

destruction of the Acquackanonk Bridge saved General Washington's Army from capture in its retirement from Fort Lee to this spot on November 21, 1776."

Though the legend is printed in granite, Post was never a captain. As far as saving Washington and slowing the British by ripping down the bridge ... well, there's much more to the story.

### War for Independence

After America bloodied the British in New England and declared its independence July 4, 1776, the Red Coats struck back against Washington and his Continental Army, later routing them at Fort Washington Nov. 16.

Through a telescope, Washington witnessed the battle across the Hudson River in Fort Lee. After his troops surrendered the fort bearing his name, he watched as they were marched through a gauntlet of Hessian soldiers, who kicked, punched, and butchered them by sword.

"I was witness to Washington's tears at the death of his men ...," wrote Private Daniel Parkinson.

After losing Fort Washington and abandoning Fort Lee, Washington's remaining army of 3,800 – many ill-clothed, shoeless and unfit for duty – retreated to Hackensack.

This is where the legend of "Captain" John H.



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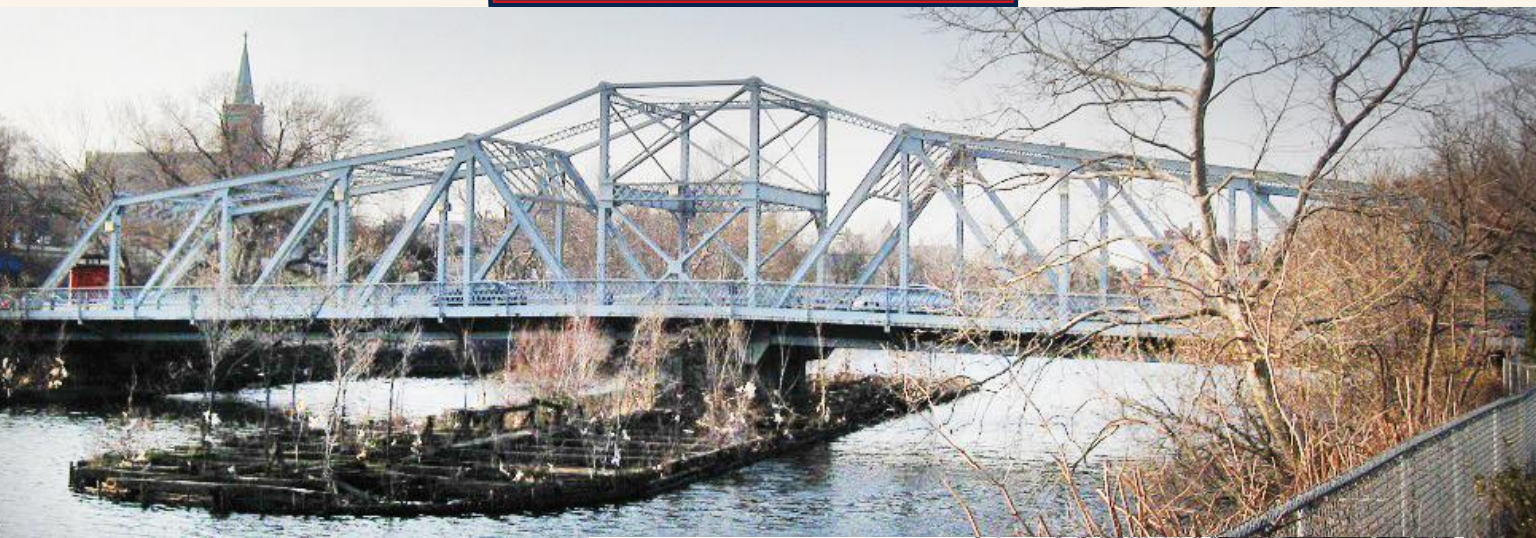
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Ed Smith, Joe Smith, Jack Meyer and Nick Genchi



Post begins:

An 1898 *Passaic Record* article wrote that Washington knew of the bridge at Acquackanonk (between Passaic and Wallington today) and hoped to get his army south and west to regroup.

This is true. But here's where the story gets hazy. The article told of John Post coming to Washington's tent and volunteering to destroy the bridge.

"My dear man," said Washington, "the attempt would cost you your life. No spy could pass the British pickets."

Post said he could, to which Washington replied, "Go, my brave youth and if you succeed, I will make you a captain in my army."

*The Passaic Record* goes on to say Post hurried to "the sleeping Dutch town of Acquackanonk" and went "door to door" awakening friends, telling them, "We must destroy the bridge or the American army will be lost."

Almost instantly, Post was "surrounded by sturdy settlers." A half-hour later, the bridge fell into the river.

When Washington learned the bridge was down, he told Post, "My dear friend, you have saved us. Henceforth you shall be a captain."

The article ends by saying Captain Post was with Washington until the British surrender at Yorktown in 1781.

Most of this article is false. Here is the real story of George Washington, the Acquackanonk Bridge, and the heroic John H. Post.



*The current bridge over the Passaic River and historical marker, seen from the Wallington side. The Acquackanonk Bridge was near this spot.*

### Patriot Days

Born April 10, 1760, Johannes Helmeigh "John" Post was only 16 during Washington's retreat. He was the great-grandson of Adriaan Post, one of the founders and settlers of "Acquackanonk Patent."

According to former Passaic historian Robert D. Bristol, Post was born in "Slughter Dam," an area along the Passaic River (where Garfield is today). An illiterate farm boy, Post spoke Dutch and a little English.

The area's Dutch families never accepted Britain as their model for living. So, when the revolution began, young Post joined the patriots and the New Jersey Militia.



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250<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY

1776 - 2026



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Passaic County's roots run deep in the American story. During the Revolutionary War, General George Washington made his headquarters at the Dey Mansion in Wayne, one of the most significant colonial sites in New Jersey. As the nation marks its 250th anniversary, we invite residents and visitors to step into that history firsthand.

Tour the Dey Mansion, explore one of the many parks across the County and discover the landmarks that shaped a nation. Passaic County is proud to be part of America's enduring legacy and honored to celebrate 250 years of liberty, resilience and progress alongside our fellow citizens.

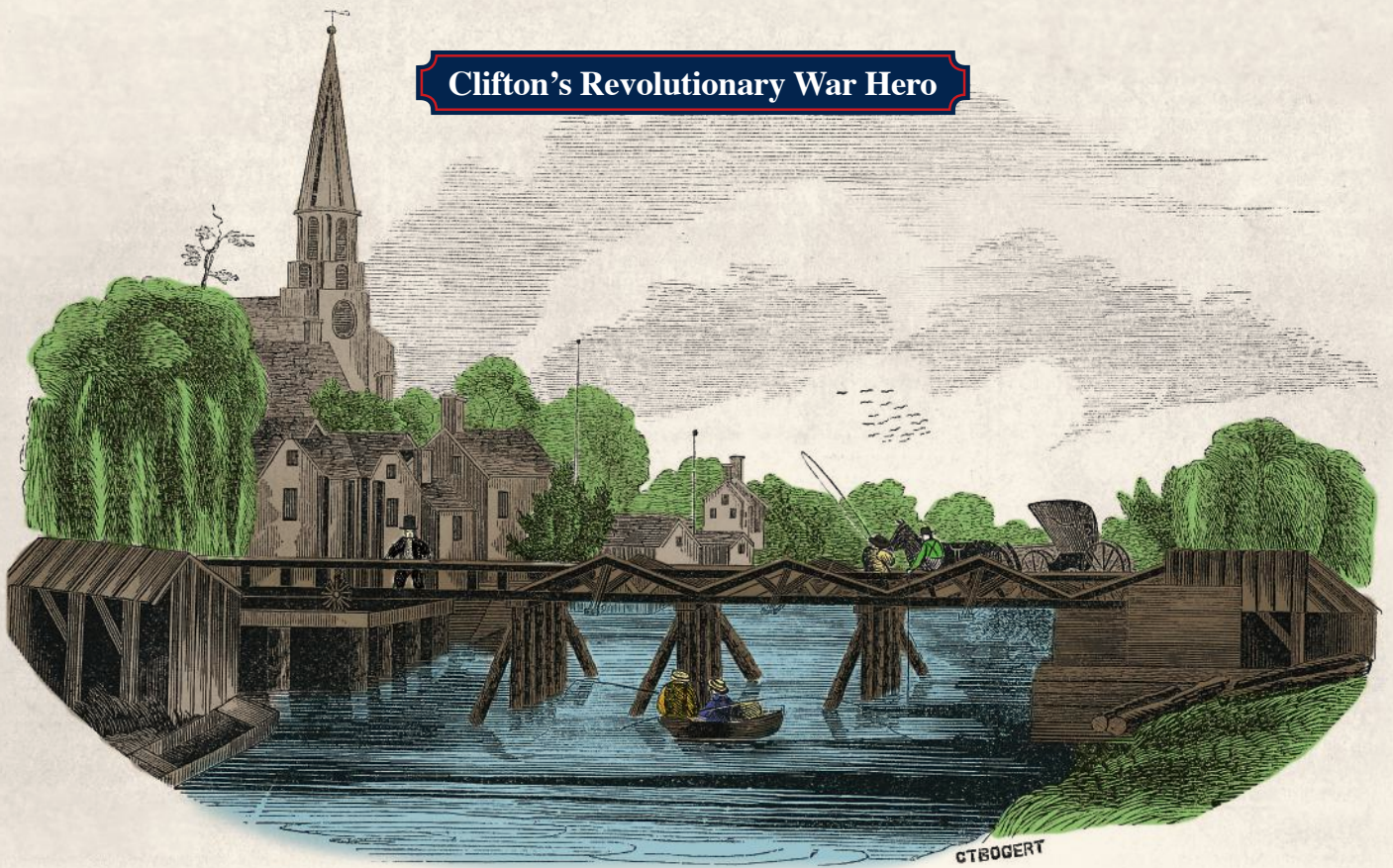
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John W. Bartlett • Rodney A. De Vore • Bruce James • Michael Ramaglia • Christina Schratz

**Sheriff** - Thomas Adamo  
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Visit [seepassaiccounty.org](http://seepassaiccounty.org) to explore local 250th anniversary events and historic sites.

## Clifton's Revolutionary War Hero



*Acquackanonk Bridge, 1853, courtesy Mark S. Auerbach.*

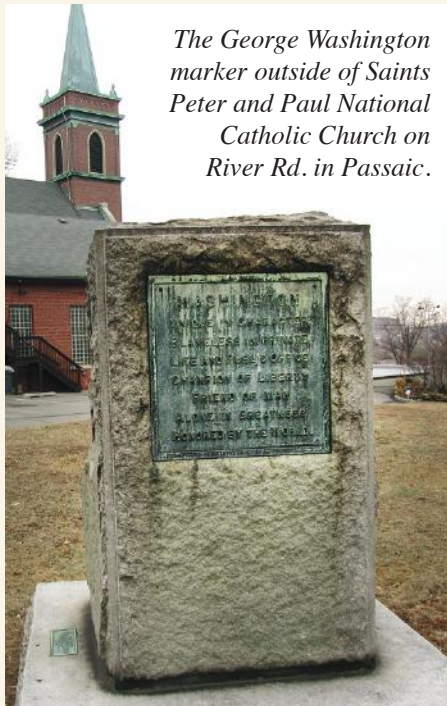
According to his Revolutionary War Pension Records and Bounty Land Warrants application (completed in 1832 when he was age 72), Post served under Captain Carinus Van Houten and was stationed in New York City during the summer of 1776. Unlike Continental Army soldiers, militia men served shorter terms. When the British landed in Staten Island, Post was marched back to Hackensack and his month-long term ended.

In his handwritten pension narrative (certified by his "X" mark), Post said he volunteered again some time in October and November, serving six weeks and stationed near Paulis Hook (now a Jersey City neighborhood).

He also spent time near Fort Lee, patrolling potential British landing spots and guarding inhabitants against plundering by the Red Coats and their loyalists. Post said he was in the militia when the British attacked Fort Washington on Nov. 16.

Post likely witnessed Washington's hasty retreat from

*The George Washington marker outside of Saints Peter and Paul National Catholic Church on River Rd. in Passaic.*



Fort Lee (the Red Coats found the American's breakfast still cooking on the fire). He may have known of or perhaps seen Washington's army marching to Hackensack and then continuing west toward Acquackanonk, where they arrived on Nov. 21.

With Post's militia duty likely ended by then, he would have returned home to nearby Slaughter Dam, close to the path of the retreating army.

### **The Acquackanonk Bridge**

During the next two days, the American Revolution's greatest salvation would be a rough wooden bridge over the Passaic River, wide enough to fit a single wagon or four men marching abreast. According to a 1935 *Herald-News* article written by Bristor, the wooden bridge was 16 feet wide and extended 277 feet. It stood near the present bridge on Gregory Ave. connecting Passaic to Wallington. Because of its strategic importance, the Acquackanonk Bridge had been fortified earlier



*The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, Jan. 3, 1777, by John Trumbull. Mercer led his troops across the Acquackanonk Bridge prior to Washington's retreat.*

that month and was the only direct route to Newark and points south. At the foot of the bridge on the Passaic side was a tavern owned by James Leslie. The Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Acquackanonk stood about 100 feet northwest of the tavern, where the Saints Peter and Paul Church in Passaic stands today.

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## From the Avenue of Flags

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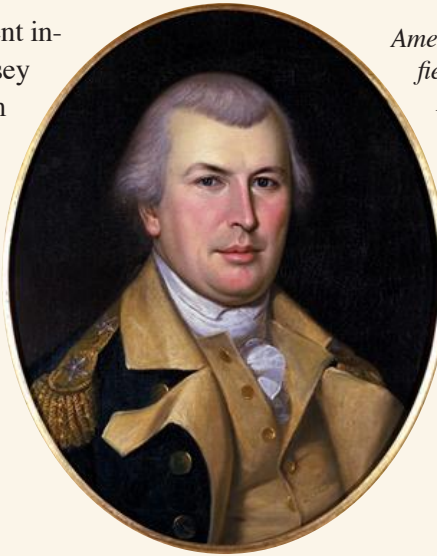
**- Thomas P. Giblin, NJ Assemblyman, 2006-2023**

## Clifton's Revolutionary War Hero

Arriving at the bridge, Washington went inside Leslie's tavern and wrote to New Jersey Governor William Livingston, telling him of his army's sad state and requesting Livingston call out New Jersey's militia.

After Washington's rear guard arrived the next day, the Americans fled over the bridge and made the bridge unpassable for the British. Some accounts say the Acquackanok Bridge was burned – unlikely since there had been so much rain.

Dismantling was a better option.



American Gen. Nathanael Greene, who fortified the Acquackanok Bridge; facing page British Gen. Charles Cornwallis.

In three stories written at least 100 years after the event, one account said Post was recommended by tavern owner Leslie to lead dismantling efforts. Another story said Henry Garritse gave Post the job. And a third account cites Captain William Colfax as selecting Post to take down the bridge.

Post never mentioned tearing down the bridge in his war pension narrative, but the bridge did come down. Captain William Beatty of the Maryland Line wrote: "We now began our retreat through the Jersey 16 by the way of Aquackanack Bridge Which Was tore up after Our troops had pass'd it."

But who "tore up" the bridge?

Undoubtedly, Post had a leading hand and was assisted by Continental soldiers and local farmers. Other heroes? Acquackanok's African American slaves.

By 1790, there were more than 4,000 slaves in Bergen and Essex counties (which encompassed present-day Passaic County). The only clue of the slaves' participation comes from Post's family history. Telling of his ancestor's role, Garret Post wrote:

"Mr. Garritse, who not only favored the (bridge-dismantling) scheme, but, gathering many neighbor's slaves, hastened with Post to the Bridge, which soon as our troops had crossed was destroyed by men led by Post, thus preventing enemy from capturing Washington ..."

The slaves' participation is likely. Garritse owned a family of slaves and other locals owned many more. Using slaves to help dismantle the bridge was logical – giving these nameless and forgotten people a crucial role in our history, helping save Washington's army and the American Revolution.

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## Clifton's Revolutionary War Hero

### Aftermath

After traveling over the bridge, Washington escaped to Newark, later crossing the Delaware and surprising the Hessians at Trenton, on Christmas night – a much needed victory for American morale.

However, things got worse in Acquackanonk.

Arriving and finding the bridge gone, the British pressed into service Adriaan Post (John's relative) to help them ford the Passaic River. At the point of a bayonet, Adriaan waded through the cold water, showing the British the shallowest route, which they crossed below the Dundee Dam. Led by General Lord Charles Cornwallis, the Red Coats ruthlessly plundered Acquackanonk's farms, stealing livestock, clothing, food and valuables.

In his pension narrative, John H. Post detailed that his one-month militia commitments totaled 23 months of war service. He served in Millstone, Hackensack, English Neighborhood (now Leonia), Paramus, Elizabeth and Pompton, and he was involved in seven enemy "skirmishes."

During the war, Post married Elizabeth Ackerman, sister of wealthy Abraham Ackerman, known as "the prince of merchants." A disagreeable, frugal and solitary man, Ackerman was rumored to have supplied the British during the war. Ironically, Post later lived and farmed on his brother-in-law's land in Lakeview.

Post's obituary notes that he and his "Bessie" raised 12 children and had 62 grandchildren. He also lived on the Clifton side of Crooks Ave., renting a small house near the Erie Railroad tracks. Later, he helped grade roads like Clifton's Main Ave. with his horse and cart.

Bessie inherited her brother Abraham's sizeable estate in 1828. Along with his annual war pension of \$76.66, Post enjoyed his retirement, called



"Captain" by his admirers and "Potbelly Post" because of his figure. He died March 7, 1847, at age 87.

Clifton's John H. Post was indeed an American hero – in legend and truth.

*Thanks to the late Passaic County Historian Edward A. Smyk, Passaic City Historian Mark S. Auerbach, John H. Post family member Betty Lou Walker, and Jack DeVries Sr. for their help in researching this article and providing photos or images.*

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# Medical Miracles



OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS as Clifton's Storyteller, we've covered numerous medical miracles, harrowing health stories, and inspiring stories of grief and recovery.



## THESE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVORITES:

### Dr. Pete Smith

Pete Smith has been a teacher for decades, but that wasn't always his original career plan. His big career break took place in his driveway in February of 2000.

"My wife says God gave me a little push," laughed Smith, who had a dental practice on Clifton Ave. from 1983 to 2000. "I think He could have done it a little easier."

Smith came home from work that day and started a competitive game of basketball with his son, Dave. He was going in for the winning shot, slipped, and took a fall that

broke his right humerus and yanked him out of the dental game.

"My orthopedic surgeon pretty much laid it out that first day. He first said that I'd be out at least a year," he recalled. "Then I asked him directly about practicing dentistry; he stopped and looked at Maryellen and that's when I knew I'd never practice again." Smith started his rehab journey while simultaneously trying to figure out his next career step. In late 2000, Maryellen suggested substitute teaching. His next big break came in Clifton Schools.

“I found that I enjoyed teaching,” said Smith. “Bill Leiss (former Superintendent of Clifton Schools) guided me through the process of becoming a provisional teacher.”

Smith continued to sub at Clifton while obtaining his certification, but ultimately his first full time teaching job was at South Orange/Maplewood, where he worked for three years. He is currently an educator and coach in Nutley.

“Life happens. True friends can be relied upon,” he explained. “We all have something deep down inside that you probably have not realized is there until you need it. Prayer helps. There is always someone who has it worse than you.”

### Peter Salzano

Those who knew Peter Salzano would describe him as a big personality, a person with an irreverent sense of humor who was always able to find a way to laugh no matter what life threw at him.

That personality was put to the test in May 2003, when headaches and balance issues caused him to visit a doctor.



Former CPD Chief Gary Giardina (center) with his wife, Cindy, and cousin, Mark.

That led to an MRI, which led to an advanced glioblastoma diagnosis, and emergency surgery 24 hours later to resect the brain tumor.

“The doctor told me on Tuesday that if I didn’t have the surgery, I would’ve been dead by Saturday,” said Salzano.

Within a year, the surgery and radiation drove the cancer into remission. But part of the secret to survival was levity.

During treatment, Salzano had a weekly newsletter “Peter’s Press Release”, which he sent to fam-



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ily, friends, and eventually strangers who were inspired. He performed at comedy clubs, and even wrote his own book, *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Laugh*.

Not content to just beat cancer and make others laugh, Salzano sought out to make a lasting difference as well. In 2004, he launched the Salzano-Smith Foundation for Brain Tumor Research with his friend. The foundation has raised more than \$100,000.

"I'm completely blessed, and I believe that God has a plan for me," said Salzano, who was a long-time Supervisor of Counseling and Student Services for Clifton Schools. "Part of that plan includes helping children who have gone through the same thing. I had two students who've had brain tumors, so I was able to counsel them."

Though he ultimately passed in 2022, Salzano is still keeping good on that promise.

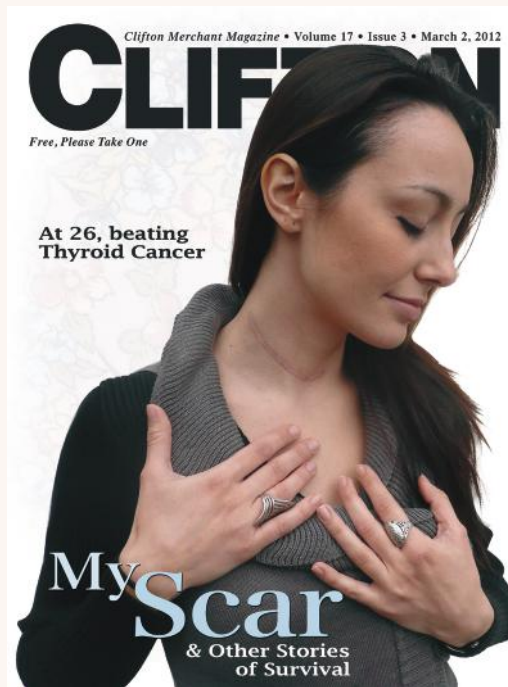
### Gary Giardina

"Do you remember the Batman series on TV, when the lights spin when someone got hit?"

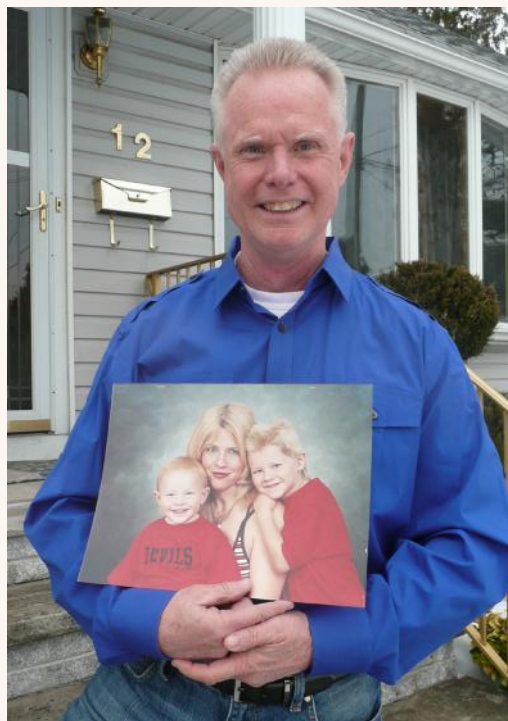
Gary Giardina can joke now, but even The Joker wouldn't be laughing at the situation that the former Clifton police chief found himself in during the early morning hours of March 10, 1984.

Giardina, then a young Clifton patrolman who just got married, had pulled over a car on Route 3. The routine stop quickly became anything but when a speeding car struck Giardina and fled the scene, leaving him with severe injuries to his elbow and knee.

The incident kept him out of work for six months, in pain for years, and it left him with permanent scars on his arm and leg. But it wasn't until years later that Giardina learned that traumatic incidents can also have non-physical consequences.



Rosangela Tumminia and Bill Gibson.



"Thirty years ago, no one spoke of PTSD," he explained. As Chief, Giardina, he set out to install programs to address the issue. "Having the military recognize it helps. Congressman Bill Pascrell calls it the invisible wound."

### Rosangela Tumminia

In 2011, Rosangela Tumminia was 26 years old and 4,500 miles from her Clifton family when she visited a doctor in Sicily due to unexplained hair and weight loss. "The doctor was looking at my neck," recalled the 2003 CHS grad. "And suddenly stopped me from talking and asked me to swallow."

The doctor confirmed the presence of a mass, and following a whirlwind of tests and flights to see specialists, a stage 3 thyroid cancer diagnosis was confirmed.

Fifteen years later, Tumminia is cancer free, no longer has a thyroid, but she gained a four-inch scar across the front of her neck.

Prominently raised and darker than the skin around it, what was once a source of anxiety is now a source of strength, a reminder of what she went through, and a badge that brings awareness to the disease and binds her to other survivors.

"It reminds me every day of what I went through and how strong I really am."

### Bill Gibson

According to the doctors who treated him, it was a combination of chemotherapy, radiation and a stem cell transplant that saved his life. But Billy Gibson will tell you it was a portrait of his wife and two kids that hung on the wall in his hospital room to force his cancer into remission.

"I just remember saying, it's not my time to die," Gibson told *Clifton Merchant* in 2011. "I've got a beautiful wife, young kids ... I need to be there for my family."

Gibson's health story started in 1997, after he

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## Medical Miracles

took his mother for her check-up, and the physician convinced Gibson to get a physical. Forty-five and fit, Gibson was surprised when he was told to come in-person for a follow-up. A subsequent battery of tests confirmed the multiple myeloma diagnosis.

“I had never even heard of it before. It’s not really fear, it’s more numbing,” said Gibson. “You’re trying to digest everything, mentally get yourself in order. What do we do from here? Is it terminal? How do we address this with the kids? Where do we go from here? What the hell just happened?”

The four month treatment regiment entailed a cocktail of drugs, stem cell transplants, and chemotherapy, which was debilitating and at times required isolation due to his compromised immune system. The physical challenges were daunting but manageable. The mental impact was far more challenging.

“At several points, you just sit there and think, ‘Am I really going to die in this room, isolated all by myself?’” he recalled.

The motivation to press through endless treatments was simple: family. His family was a constant presence in the hospital for treatments. While undergoing chemo in 2000, Gibson traveled to Sweden to watch his son, Scott, represent the US in a soccer tournament.

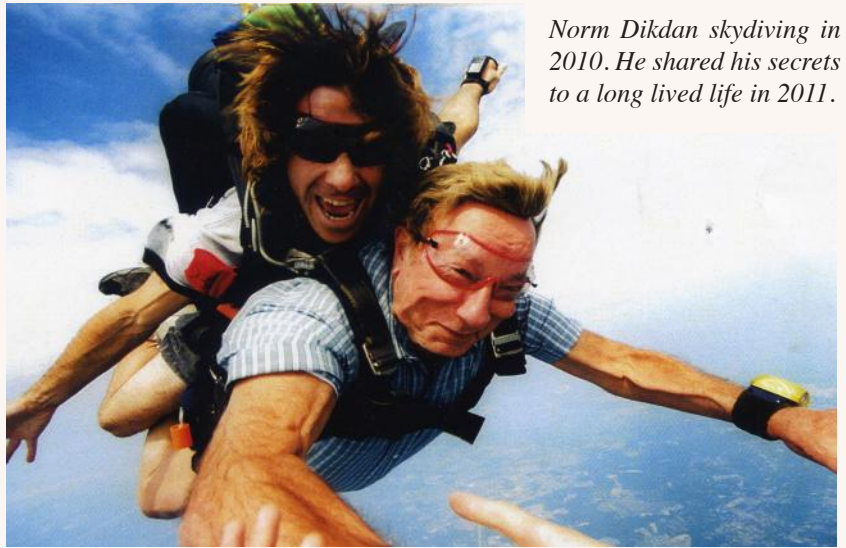
“You realize that some things in life that you think are important really aren’t,” explained Gibson, who passed away in May of 2026. “Like your health. My family is the most important thing to me, number one.”

### Norm Dikdan

Norm Dikdan was a spry 85 year old when we first sat down with him in March 2011 to learn about the secrets to health in old age. The recipe is simple: two glasses of milk per day, cod liver and fish oil, weekly church service, and occasionally surprising your central nervous system by jumping out of a plane at 10,000 feet.

“People my age are dropping. Others have had a lot of surgeries. I’ve been lucky,” he observed with a chuckle. Dikdan, who passed away in June of 2014, picked up skydiving in his 80’s. “All I had was my appendix removed. God has granted me many years.”

A career salesman and WWII US Navy vet, Dikdan has always had the gift of gab and a unique perspective on life, aging, and staying active.



*Norm Dikdan skydiving in 2010. He shared his secrets to a long lived life in 2011.*

A native of Paterson, Dikdan settled in Clifton following the war, when he married his “real blessing” Laurice and got his first job over at Bright Star Industries on Getty Ave. The couple raised five daughters on Standish Dr. and had 14 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

A budding entrepreneur, Dikdan owned an auto repair shop, a used car lot, and even patented a pull tab for old wax milk cartons. He based his approach on the old YMCA slogan: healthy spirit, mind, and body.

“The point is you have to keep your mind working, never stop thinking,” he said. “Always exercise your brain.”

### Bob Foster

Bob Foster was enjoying time with his family at his god-daughter’s 16th birthday party in 2004 when he suddenly felt faint, light-headed, and overwhelmingly hot.

“I took ice packs and put them under my armpits,” he recalled. “My whole body felt like it was overheating.”

His first thought was a heart attack. His second thought was, “I don’t have time for this.” Foster soldiered on to the party’s end and went to work the next day, but quickly sought help when the symptoms persisted.

Doctors determined the incident was actually heart arrhythmia, but it led to the Boys & Girls Club Director starting the full court press on his overall health.

“My wife is the one who handles the doctors really well and keeps me on track,” said Foster, who was 47 at the time he was diagnosed. “They continued to monitor me, because I would go out of rhythm once a week and I’d have to go lie down.” In 2005, Foster underwent radio ablation to deaden his heart nerves and stabilize his heartbeat.

Once that was behind him, Foster turned his attention to the other issues that were uncovered during his 2004 health scare and the tests that followed.

“Once you turn 50, you fall apart,” joked Foster. Maybe it was a half joke? The list of ailments besides the arrhythmia includes an a hyperactive thyroid (likely the cause of the heart issues), a ruptured peroneal tendon in the foot stemming from an injury from his basketball league at The Club, and an enlarged prostate.

Thankfully, because he was proactive, and because he was under the watchful eye of his local all-star medical team, Foster is still able to enjoy an active lifestyle. And still managed to only miss a couple days of work following his heart surgery.

“Work before health,” Foster joked.

### Nancy Read

“Life to me is very much circular,” explained Nancy Read, looking back on her career as a registered nurse in 2001. “Each phase transitions toward another, leading us further along in our journey. We need to view death as part of that circle in the journey. I don’t necessarily view death as the ‘end’ of anything.”

Shortly after graduating from Mountainside Hospital School of Nursing in 1978, Read spent her early years as a maternity ward nurse at Dover General. Her late career focus was end-of-life care as a hospice nurse.

Though seemingly at odds with one another on the sur-



*In 2005, former B&G Club director Bob Foster (second from left) is able to still play basketball thanks to the help that he received from his doctors, from left, John Cubero, Jeffrey Miller, Daniel Rice, and others.*

face, it’s a career shift that made perfect sense to the former Cliftonite.

“I held those precious little lives in my arms wondering what sort of life they’d grow into and with whom they’d live it,” recalled Read, who is also an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church. “To walk with the dying to the edge of their life, and gently hand them over to yet an-



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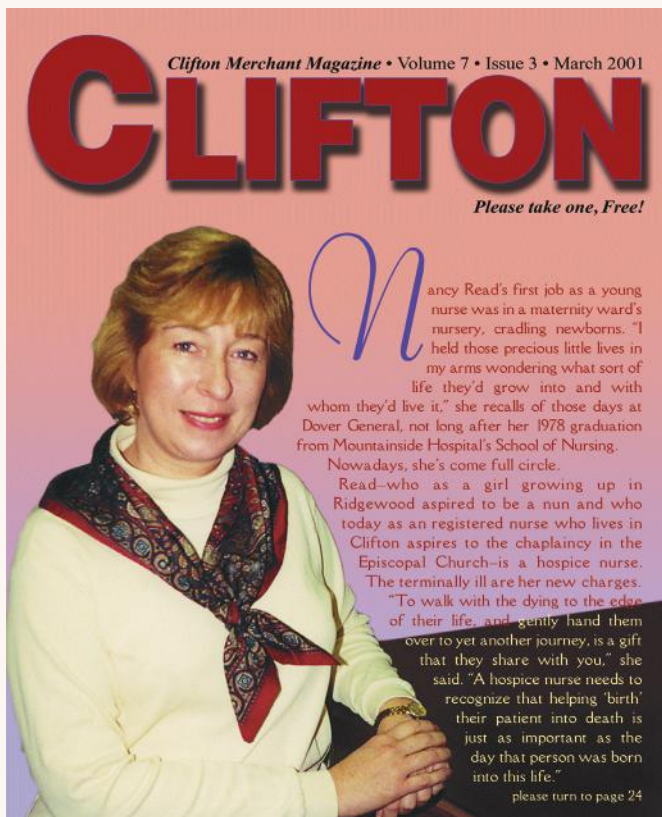
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other journey, is a gift that they share with you. A hospice nurse needs to recognize that helping ‘birth’ their patient into death is just as important as the day that person was born into this life.”

Read’s faith is inextricably linked to her career, giving her a similar charge to caring for those in need not unlike nursing. She likes to call it soul nursing.

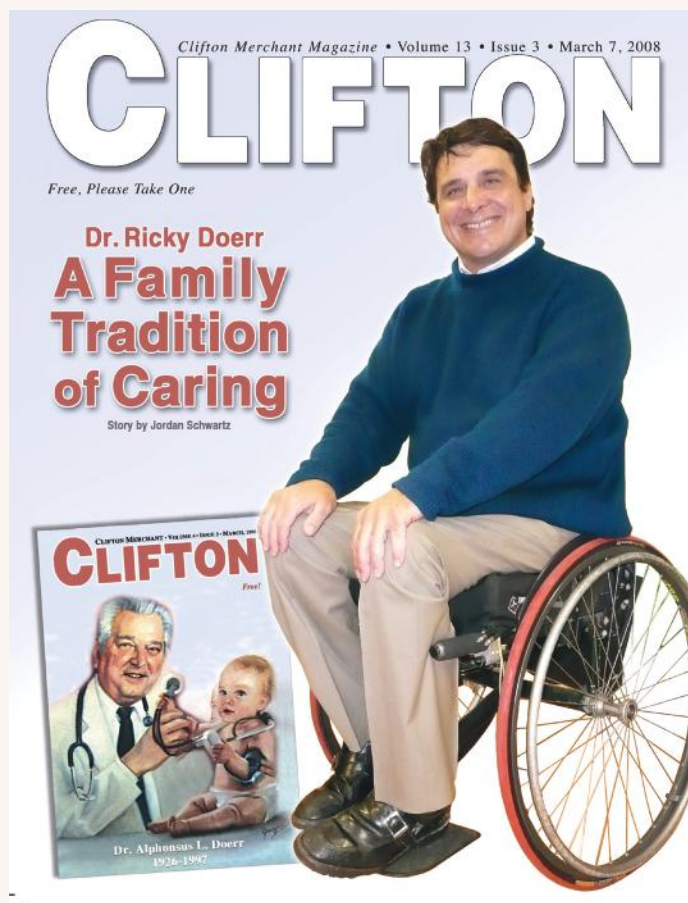
“I think it’s very much a life’s calling that I have chosen to listen to and to follow out,” said Read, who took Clinical Pastoral Education at Christ Hospital in Jersey City. “My own sense of spirituality has deepened to an extent that I don’t think it could have without having done hospice nursing.” She treasures these words from Emily Dickinson:

*This world is not conclusion; A sequel stands beyond,  
Invisible, as music, But positive, as sound.*

### Dr. Ricky Doerr

After growing up in the shadow of his father, Dr. Ricky Doerr is also something of a legend.

A renowned hand surgeon and world-champion sailor, he is a second-generation doctor, the sixth child (of seven) of legend. Dr. Alphonsus L. Doerr, Sr. was a well-respected Clifton physician who was always busy helping people. “We saw him at dinner and occasionally on weekends, once in a while in the morning,” said Alphonsus, Jr.



So, in order to spend some time with his father, Doerr would often tag along on house calls in the 60’s. “I’d eat cookies and watch football games while he treated the patients,” recalled Doerr of his medical apprenticeship.

Formal medical training did eventually follow: New England College for undergrad, then University of Colorado for grad school, and he finally obtained his MD at the University of Health Sciences in Chicago.

Doerr’s dream of becoming a surgeon was almost sunk on July 19, 1992 when the Clifton native was in a roll-over accident and awoke paralyzed from the waist down.

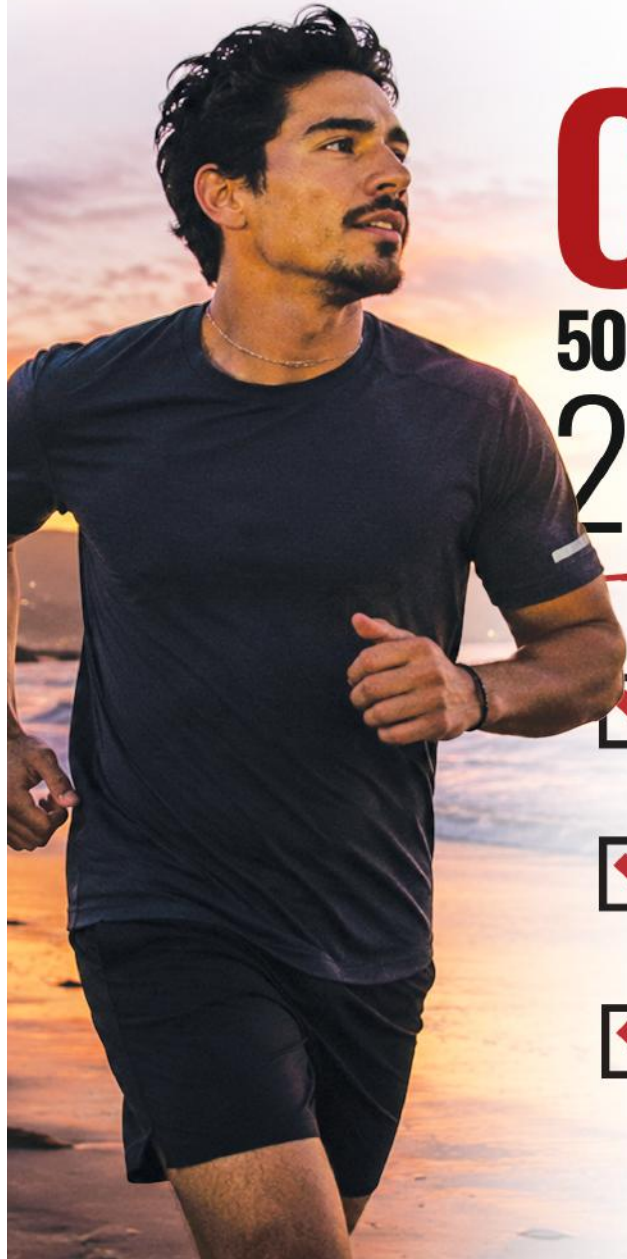
“I couldn’t really complete general surgery at the time, but I found that hand surgery could be done sitting down,” he said. “The good thing is, hospitals are set up for wheelchairs.” Also an avid athlete, Doerr adapted by picking up sports that he could do from a wheelchair. Sailing, which he had done previously, quickly became an obsession.

The surgeon joined a team and unsuccessfully tried qualifying for the Paralympic Games three times before making it to the 2008 Games in Beijing, China. His crew, Team Odyssey, also won the 2007 World Championships.

Life’s obstacles made him a better sailor. “Dad would never let me dwell on the bad,” he said. “In sailboat racing, you have to stick to the plan, because there are always things changing. In the end, consistency pays off.”

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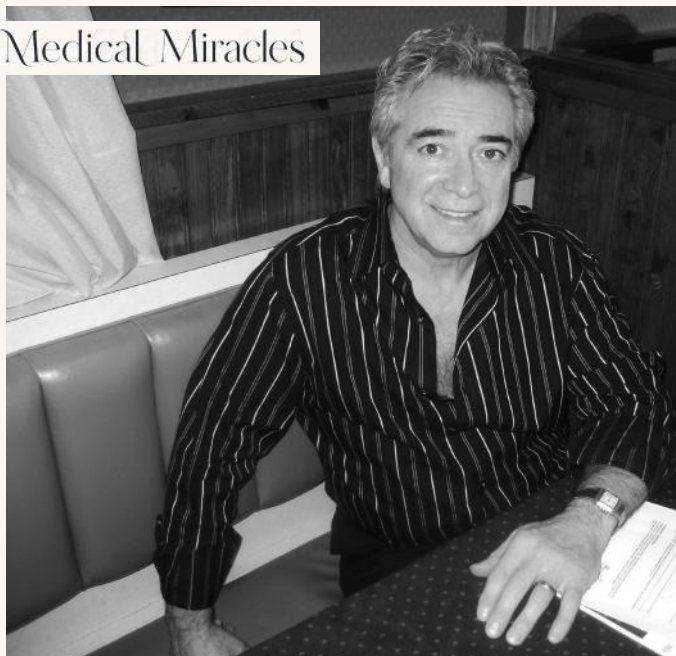
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### Guy Anthony

Breast cancer? As a man? Impossible. Guy Anthony had the same thought, until it happened to him. In 2008, Anthony was at his salon, Guy Anthony's in Richfield Plaza, and noticed blood on his white shirt. Only, he didn't have a cut — the blood was coming from his nipple.

"It was like a pimple," he recalled. "You'd squeeze it and blood would just come out. Only, it didn't stop."

His doctor helped expedite his mammogram, which revealed a clogged duct, which was actually early stage intraductal carcinoma. "It was frightening, really," he recalled. "First, you pray. Then you think, how is your family going to survive without you? Bottom line? Enjoy every day like there's no tomorrow."

Anthony, above, had always been a proponent of regularly checking his body, but breast cancer was not something that he was expecting to look for. It's rare, accounting for less than 1% of all breast cancer cases annually.

"It's a matter of paying attention to your body. Had I not caught it when I did, it could have come out and spread," he said. Anthony also had reconstructive surgery to balance his chest, and have a new nipple tattooed on. "I had a radical mastectomy. They cut out all of the tissue."

Anthony missed about a week of work following surgery, but returned as he went through the rehabilitation process. "I've been in business for so long now that I think I pick up women's diseases," he laughed. "In the business I'm in, you're constantly talking to people and you learn from each other's experiences. I'm not embarrassed. By me expressing myself and what I was experiencing, I think it really was a big plus."



### Joe Kolodziej

Fate. Destiny. Divine intervention. Call it what you will, but Joe Kolodziej is sure that a factor other than luck prevented him from dying in a 2010 workplace mishap.

"Things don't happen to us, they happen for us," he explained. "I was in an explosion, and it could have killed me. The real lesson isn't, what should I learn from this? It's, what will I bring to the world from this experience?"

On that day, the Councilman was working at his family's business, Conveyor by North American, when a delivery truck containing canisters of odorless acetylene pulled into the Huron Ave. building's loading dock as expected. The fireball that followed was anything but.

Kolodziej, wearing shorts and a t-shirt, bore the worst of the accident, with second to fourth degree burns over 25% of his body — a life-threatening wound.

"My wife said to me, 'Whether you realize it or not, you keeping a sense of humor helped me in terms of not panicking,'" he recalled. "I kept on saying how I was extra crunchy now or how I like my chicken crispy."

Levity and optimism were critical to get through more than a month in the hospital, daily scrubbing of his necrotic burns, and a skin graft that took months to heal. Kolodziej, whose family attends St. John Kanty, also attributed his faith for what got him through the harrowing ordeal.

"I don't see any major changes in what I believe in. I was raised Catholic, was an altar boy and the whole nine yards," continued Kolodziej. "I've always had a solid relationship with God. But spiritual people, they have a greater capacity for freezing the moment, smelling the flowers, and realizing the whole beauty of the rose."

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- Grace Lisbona

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Mustang Bob Castronovo Sr. (second from left) was the CEO of the Meadows —and he and his wife Nancy, daughter Laura and son Robert Jr. are seen with Bruce Springsteen, in 1999.

working service Instagram was launched to the public, which would end up connecting people of all ages from all over the world.

But there were many important messages being delivered to kids in our community as well. One arrived in 2011 when Death came to visit Brian Bender in a cautionary PSA to help put an end to drunk driving.

Other Mustangs are today serving their community on their career paths, like Victor Campolattaro III (CHS 2013) has done during his years working for Clifton's Department of Public Works.

As for some other former Mustangs who ended up going the distance for their community, 2015 grads Kimberly Finkler and Cameron Hebron ended up working for the Clifton Health Department and running for the Board of Education, respectively. Mustang sweethearts included Jim and Christy (Zoecklein) Fraunberger (CHS 2011), Ryan and Kaitlyn (Amoruso) Hariton (CHS 2012), and Nick and Adriana (Rakic) Glodava (CHS 2014).



### The 2000s

It was a decade of champions, but *Clifton Merchant* certainly got the ball rolling as we selected our Teams of the Century in February and April of 2000. Some Cliftonites agreed with the final line-up, whereas others made their opinions known. We also highlighted the coaching

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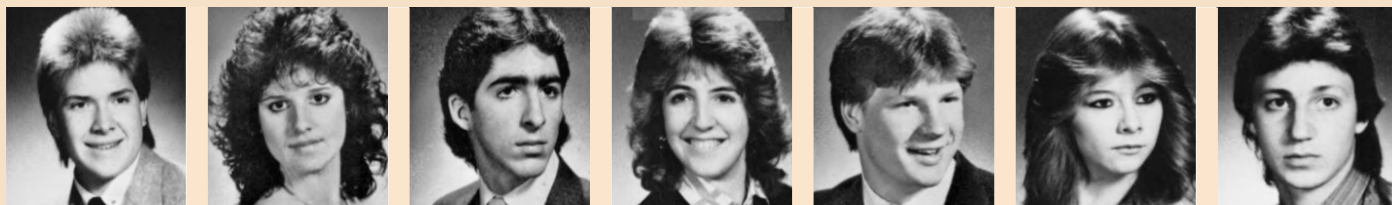


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## A Look Back in 10s



At left, the late John Filippone (CHS 1946). Above: Sandra (Spence) ('56), Ethan ('18), Samantha DeRose ('86), Ryan, Ron, Arthur DeRose, Sr ('55). The DeRose family has been part of our city's fabric for over 80 years.



From the Class of 1986, Andrew Zurawski, Carolyn Kasich, Joseph Gaccione, Debra DeRobertis, David Szott, Donna Dandregmond, Jack Corradino.

legends with profiles on Joe Grecco in September 2003 and Bill Vander Closter in September 2005.

But Clifton sports wasn't just nostalgia and history; they were making moves in real-time.

Clifton Hockey won the State Championship in 2001, years after bringing home the Handchen Cup in 1989, 1990, and 1995.

Fast-forward to the 2006-07 academic year, the Mustangs were more than a force. They turned their hometown into The City of Champions.

Clifton Merchant Magazine • Volume 11 • Issue 12 • December 1, 2006

# CLIFTON

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Next Stop:  
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On Saturday night, December 2, in the Meadowlands, Clifton's Fighting Mustangs square off against the Paterson Eastside Ghosts for the North 1, Group 4, State Title. To get here, the Fighting Mustangs stunned Ridgewood, St. Joseph and North Bergen before going on to beat the Randolph Rams 14-6 on November 18, when these photos were taken.

Photo Graeme Carmichael

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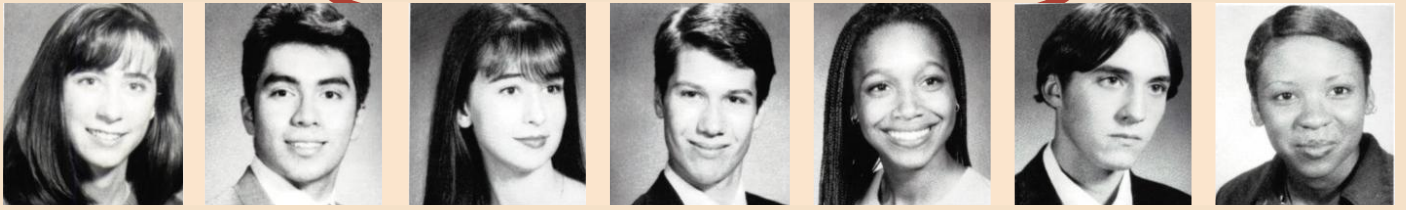
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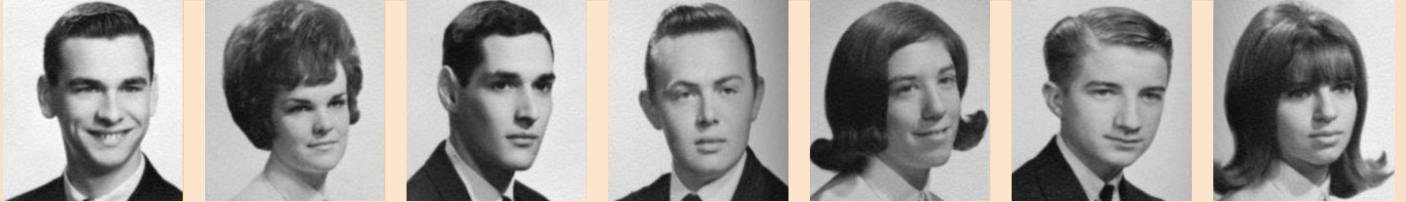
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## A Look Back in 10s



From the Class of 1996, Lindsay Whiting, José Raúl Torres, Anna Zielinski, Brian Witte, Tiffany Michele Starr, Michael Prawetz, Tamara Powell.



From the Class of 1966, Robert Morgan, Diane Donkersloot, Donald Nadel, Eugene Duda, Jacalyn Sussman, Kenneth Brand, Madeline Postal.

First, the Fighting Mustangs rode an 8 seed all the way to Giants Stadium on Dec. 2 when it shutout the Eastside Ghosts 26-0 to capture its first state title in 24 years.

Next on June 9, 2007, Clifton Softball added another chapter to its storied history by picking up its fourth Group 4 State Championship. Cross Country, Boys Volleyball, and Clifton Golf also all won league titles.

As for Girls Winter Track and Clifton Bowling, they were crowned as league and county champs. And even though they shared the Passaic County Championship title on two separate occasions, who could forget when Girls Soccer deadlocked 0-0 with Wayne Valley in 2007 and 1-1 with Wayne Hills in 2009? It was a great decade to be a Mustang!

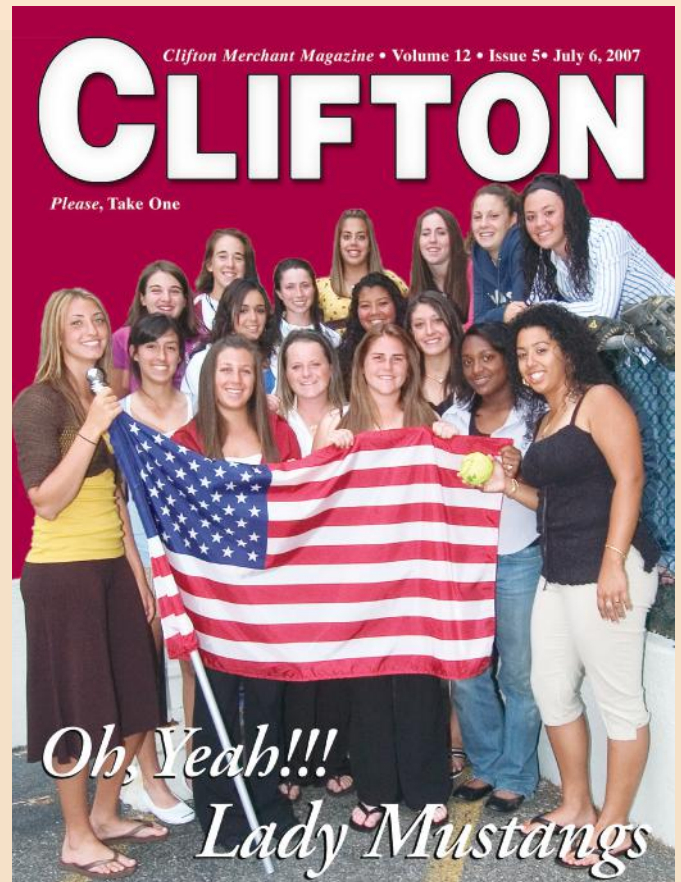
### The 1990s

A rebellious spirit captured the essence of some Mustangs in the 90's — and who better to represent the label than Maria (Dal Pan) Dias?

Her graduation speech in front of her fellow Mustangs, their families, and educators spoke truthfully about their “four-year sentence”; a tongue-in-cheek reference to the recently installed security cameras and restricted outdoor access on school grounds.

It led to the administration's attempted censorship of her speech, yet the Class of 1996's president delivered it anyway and was delayed in receiving her official diploma until local newspapers picked up the story.

The lesson that she took away from the experience? It's always worth taking risks and being true to yourself and others.



There were additional national and local headlines that decade. The final Calvin and Hobbes strip was published and The Grateful Dead embarked on one final tour before the legendary Jerry Garcia passed away and the band split.

Closer to home, Rich La Duke's 1997 Clifton Softball team caught lightning in a bottle by capturing the program's second state group title following a triumphant 31-0 season.



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## A Look Back in 10s



From the Class of 2006, Joseph DeSomma, Jessica Cornett, Jennalynn Pizzimenti, Anthony Shackil, Brian Barbera, Sarah Bekheet, Patrick Errico.

### The 1980s

Big hair and even bigger achievements defined the 80's in Clifton, but Mustangs weren't limited to staying within our city's borders. It was clear that the community could expect big things from the Mustangs, particularly the Class of 1985, when Drum Majorette Lisa Koller led the Marching Band in Washington, D.C. for the Jan. 20 inauguration ceremony of President Ronald Reagan.

That commitment to community fueled many graduates in different classes, including the Class of 1986 who went on to become volunteer football coaches, create "Forever Friends" with their classmates that they met in middle school, and build careers in fields like education and law. It was a good decade on many fronts.

It was also an era that now feels foreign and baked in nostalgia. How so? Postage at the time cost 24 cents and a gallon of gas was less than \$1.

Meanwhile, it was pre-cell phones and no one was on the internet. If you wanted contact lenses, you also had to get a prescription. Feel like it was another world? We agree!

### The 1970s

Coming of age in the 70's meant welcoming change — like the de-escalation and official end of the Vietnam War — and celebrating camaraderie with classmates who were entering adulthood alongside you. It was particularly poignant for the Class of 1976, who recently gathered to mark their 50th high school reunion.

It was a class of characters. One character, according to Brenda (Ludvik) Calandrillo, was "Ed"; a perpetually tardy student who encountered Calandrillo as she worked in the front office. That Mustang ended up writing her poem entitled, *The Girl in the Office* about said tardiness.

Another '76 grad who went on to make his mark in Clifton Public Schools is retired Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mark Tietjen. The former Mustang taught as



a Social Studies and Special Education teacher at Woodrow Wilson Middle School and became a vice principal at Christopher Columbus for six years, starting in 2004.

As for Mustang alumnus John George, he's the man to thank for coordinating the class's Golden Reunion. George, who was senior class president, has chaired reunions for decades. But others may remember him on the Football, Wrestling, and Track teams. For Student Council president, there was Ed Kocsis in 1976. In the nation's bicentennial year, CHS' principal was none other than Aaron Halpern.

### The 1960s

Robert Lions (CHS 1964) kissed Elizabeth Taylor when she and Richard Burton visited Clifton Stadium to support a family whose son was paralyzed from the neck down. Taylor called for the artist who drew her poster to come to the stage and when he did not appear, Lions stepped in and planted a kiss on her cheek. In 1966, CHS students protested adding speed bumps to the school parking lot. Clifton's rising political star Bill Bate is also not to be forgotten. His bitter defeat came when Council members appointed runner-up Joseph Vanecek as mayor despite Vanecek trailing Bate by 1,200 votes. What a decade!



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# The Clif Tavern, *a Place for* Clifton



As America celebrates 250 years of history, independence, and community, The Clif Tavern is proud to celebrate a much smaller but meaningful piece of that story right here in Clifton.

Long before today's televisions, smartphones, and social media, neighborhood gathering places brought people together. They were where friends met after work, where local news traveled faster than any newspaper, and where communities were built one conversation at a time.

For well over a century, The Clif Tavern has been one of those places.

Originally part of the historic Acquackanonk Hotel, The Clif Tavern has stood through generations of change in Clifton. Factory workers, teachers, police officers, firefighters, business owners, families, and lifelong residents have all passed through its doors.

Friendships have been formed here. Stories have been shared here. More than a few couples even met here.

## **BUILT ON FRIENDSHIPS ROOTED IN CLIFTON.**

Much of that spirit was carried forward by long-time owner Skip Kazer, whose personality and presence became part of The Clif's identity.

Skip believed a neighborhood tavern should be more than a place to have a drink. It should be a place where people feel welcome, where familiar faces gather, and where community matters.

Today, that tradition continues.





“ *A place to watch the game, enjoy a meal, celebrate milestones, reconnect with old friends, and meet new ones.* ”

While Clifton has grown and changed over the years, The Clif remains what it has always been at its core: a local gathering place.

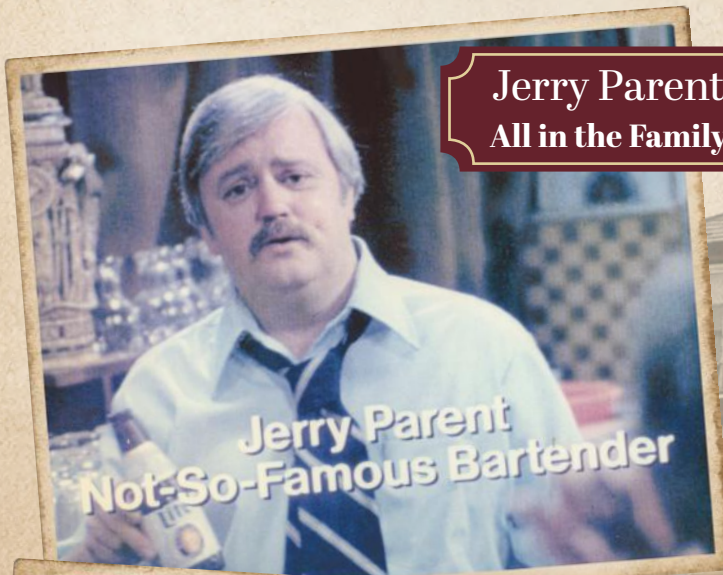
As we honor 250 years of America, we are reminded that the strength of our country has always started in its communities. Places like The Clif Tavern—where neighbors come together, share experiences, and build lasting connections—are a small but important part of that story.

Here's to Clifton, to community, to the memory of Skip, to the generations who have made The Clif Tavern part of their lives, and the generations still to come.

*Happy 250th Birthday, America.*

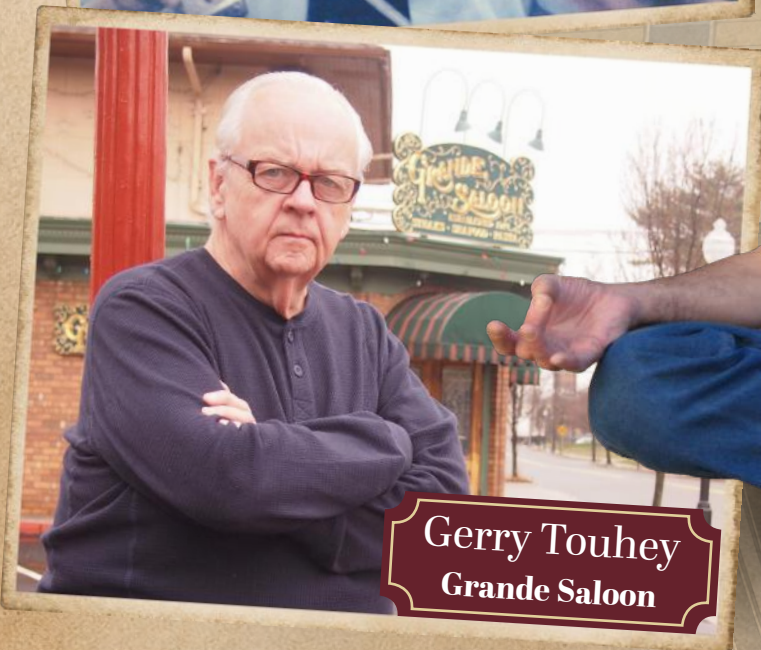


*Alex & Anthony Barone*



Jerry Parent  
All in the Family

Jerry Parent  
Not-So-Famous Bartender



Gerry Touhey  
Grande Saloon



Skip  
"The Guru of Brew"  
The Clif Tavern

# SPIRITS of Clifton

Landmark Joints.  
Great Bartenders.  
Lots of Memories.  
Tavern History.

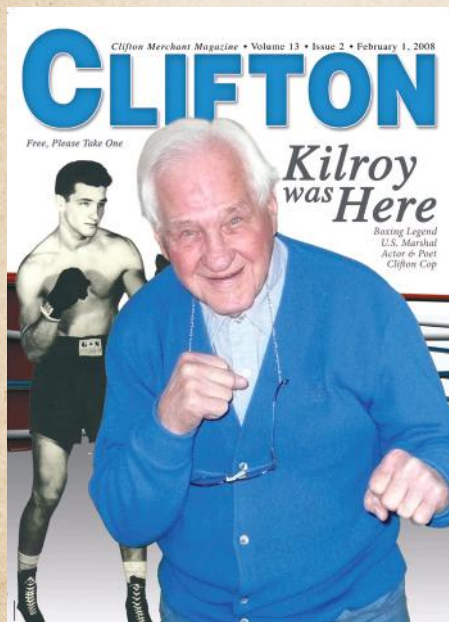
For decades, taverns were the cornerstone of the neighborhood. They were where workers would go to relax after a shift in the factory, a place for buddies to meet up on a Friday night, or — in a back room off the bar — a reception area where family members would celebrate the birth of a child or the life of a loved one after a funeral.

The guy or gal behind the tap was more than just a bartender. He or she could be your confessor, a sounding board for your next great idea, or the friend who told you when you had one too many to drive. On these pages are a tribute to some of the folks that we remember as the Spirits of Clifton.

**Clifton Tavern Owners  
from the Distant Past...**



*From the July 2003 CLBA meeting at Bogey's, from left: Joe Stolarz of Stolarz Tavern, Vick Rossi of Rossi's Tavern, Ed Radomski of the Silver Star, Giuseppi Lonati of Giuseppi's Sports Cafe. Second row, from left: Angelo Curcio of Bogey's, John Penkalski of Johnny's, Gerry Touhey, The Grande Saloon, Morris Giannelli, Courtside Pub, Fred Barnes, Dingo's Den, Mary Chacon, Capo D'Ano, Hope Rodgers, Rumors Pub. Third row, from left: Skip Kazer, The Clif, Pat Brady, Darby O'Gill's, and Joe Adamski of Remember When. Rich Hanke and Phil Lessi of Pub 46 were also present but missing from photo.*



**Billy Ramoth  
Neutral Corner Bar**

*Billy Kilroy Ramoth on our Feb. 2008 cover and in 1975 when he opened the Neutral Corner Bar at Highland and Second St. From left, Jerry White, Ronnie Bouse, Ray Nolan, Billy, Ira "Cook" Van Dorn and former Canadian welterweight champion Fitzie Pruden.*



**Rossi Family**  
**Rossi's Tavern**

*On May 15, 2015, Rossi's Tavern, 254 Dayton Ave. had its 70th anniversary and last call. Brothers Vic and Felix Rossi are seen with some of the regulars. At its peak, the Rossi brothers said they were one of 10 bars around Parker and Dayton. FWith shift work, factory workers stopped in all day and night for a good lunch, a shot and a beer. After they sold the three-story building, renovations were being done in the summer of 2019 and the structure was was demolished in August of that year.*

### **Skip Kazer**

In a world where “peace and love” can feel like they’re in short supply, Skip Kazer always served it up at The Clif. Patrons of the Clifton Ave. neighborhood bar remain fully committed to remembering Kazer’s spirit, well after his passing in September of 2019.

After all, Kazer became a long-time staple in the community and was known for his Zen-like demeanor.

When Kazer was featured in Clifton Merchant back in 2007, he said about his bar: “This is a place where you can relax, unwind from the day’s stress, and make new friends. I’ve even had couples meet here, fall in love, and marry. You can also come to watch a ball game and cheer on your favorite team.”

A Clifton landmark that is over a century old, The Clif was once the Aquackanonk Hotel. Although Kazer’s last call is completed, owners Anthony and Alex Barone have made sure that his spirit hasn’t left the building.

### **Jerry Parent**

For Jerry Parent, a 30-second brush with fame left him with a lifetime of memories and a few dozen residual checks. Parent, who passed away in Nov., 2005, was the owner of All in the Family restaurant, now Bogey’s on the corner of Fenner and Valley Rd.

His wife, Barbara, and kids Sheryl, Denise, Colleen, and Jerry all had a hand in the business that first got started in 1972. Jerry and brothers Bill and Ray served up classic Americana food and Parent’s famous sliced steak sandwich. In 1978, fame pulled up a chair when Parent became the Miller Lite Not-So-Famous Bartender.

His sister Mildred was giving dance lessons to an advertising executive who mentioned that they needed an Irish-looking bartender for a new commercial.

Which is how Parent ended up opposite comedian Rodney Dangerfield, who Parent described in August 2005 as “a regular guy.” And Jerry Parent? A regular Cliftonite.

# SPIRITS of Clifton



Wednesday night regulars at Mario's: From left: Carlos and Myrna Guzman, Al Haraka and barkeeper Sue Pounds. Standing, Rowe O'Mara, Amanda Cabrera, Ken O'Mara and Pastor Torres.



Below left: The door are open at Ghost Hawk Brewing where these gals are making the rounds. Below right: brothers Jim and John Bednar in 2018 with their dad Joseph, and partner Tim Paul, are the founders of Silk City Distillers on River Rd.

Rick's American Bar & Grill at the Allwood Circle being demolished in 2010 after years of speculation, making space for another chain drugstore to replace the iconic watering hole, which was for decades a club house called the Penguin Club Inn.



# Did Alex Komar Run 2 Passaic River Joints?

The jury's still out, but the two images below sure do look different! What we know for certain is, back in the 1970's, lots of us visited the River Rd. watering hole or at least saw Casper's River Barge Inn docked on the the Passaic River across from Rutherford.

That is, until Alex Komar's \$200,000 floating restaurant and cocktail lounge broke loose from its moorings and sank. "These two women said they'd been drinking at the bar when the boat leaned over," said Bill Bahruth in April 1976. "They said they dropped everything and ran."

Bahruth lived nearby, but it's a story some Cliftonites may still remember today. As for Komar, he had a long career as a Passaic County politician. Komar, who died in December of 1988, served two terms on the Passaic County Board of Freeholders between the late-50's and 70's. His political career culminated with his appointment as Passaic County Superintendent of Roads in 1973.

The Clifton native wasn't a one-trick pony. Komar dabbled in hobbies from jewelry repairs to selling and collecting antiques. He also traveled extensively and owned two funeral homes — one on Van Houten Ave. and another in Pompton Lakes.

## Casper's Inn Swallowed by Passaic River

By ROGER WITHERSPOON

A \$200,000 floating restaurant and cocktail lounge broke loose from its moorings in the Passaic River in Passaic yesterday and, while startled lunch patrons scrambled for safety, slid out into deep water and sank.

Police said nearly a dozen patrons and employes in the Casper's River Barge Inn on River Road felt the ornately decorated, renovated barge lean sharply to port about 1:30 p.m. They quickly ran up the bending gangplank of the 96-foot barge and made it safely to shore.

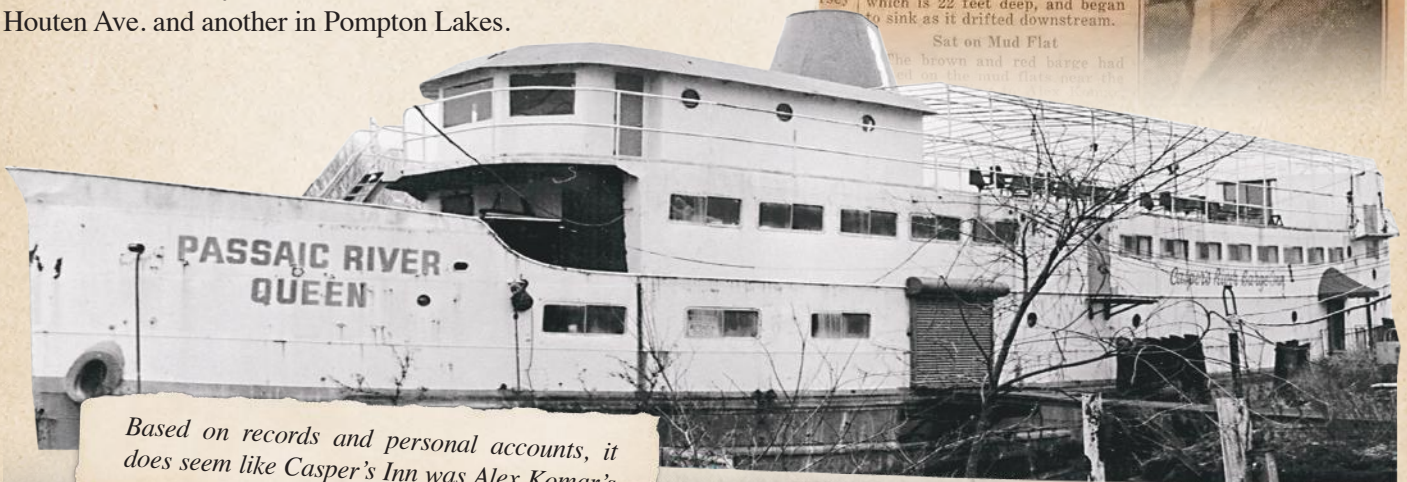
Bill Bahruth, who lives near the restaurant, said he talked to two of the patrons immediately after their escape.

"These two women said they'd been drinking at the bar," he recalled, "when the boat leaned over. They said they dropped everything and ran."

A few minutes later, the two 1½-inch steel cables holding the 1896 barge to its berth snapped, and the popular restaurant slid into the middle of the river, which is 22 feet deep, and began to sink as it drifted downstream.

Sat on Mud Flat

The brown and red barge had  
sunk on the mud flats near the



*Based on records and personal accounts, it does seem like Casper's Inn was Alex Komar's sole Passaic River joint. Unless our readership knows better?*



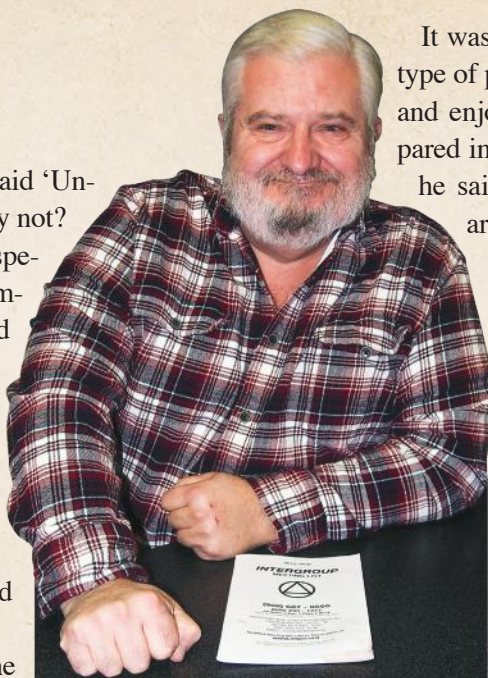
# SPIRITS of Clifton

“I was the fun guy, the party guy,” said ‘Uncle’ Roy Stesko about his life. And why not? Stesko loved being around people, especially when they were enjoying themselves at a club or bar. People liked Uncle Roy, too. He was a man full of experiences and stories.

Roy was a former Mustangs football player who loved to hit. He was a rock drummer whose band played on the same bill with the Shangri-Las. He’d gone to college down south and went to Saigon with the US Army.

Stories, tales, and adventures—he had it all, plus Roy was great behind the stick, serving up your favorite drinks at bars like the Surf Club, Bill Budd’s.

But in 1983, Stesko learned of a bar in Athenia for sale at 819 Van Houten Ave. It would become the home of Uncle Roy’s. “I was going to name the bar after my dog, Brandy, but that name was taken,” he said. “But ‘Uncle Roy’ was available.” Uncle Roy’s was a fine addition to the Van Houten Ave. bar trail, a poor man’s Grande Saloon.



It was comfortable, welcoming, and fun—the type of place to relax, play pool or shuffleboard, and enjoy one of Roy’s great hamburgers prepared in his tiny kitchen. “Being it was small,” he said, “I could move fast without running around.”

That Uncle Roy was sure a character. And there was one more thing—Roy Stesko was an alcoholic. If he hadn’t gotten help after his three-day bender ended on June 8, 2011—he might have been dead.

Stesko stayed sober the rest of his life. “The reason is that I’m connected with AA is that it’s a bunch of good guys who have been through the exact same thing.”

Roy spent his last few years socializing at the Clifton Senior Center, not far from his old business. He’s also reconnected with his high school sweetheart, Cynthia (Scudilla) Van Dam, whom he met again at a reunion. But he past is never far behind.

“If you think you have a problem,” Stesko advised, “it doesn’t hurt to go to a meeting. AA is all over the world—there are meetings on cruise ships, meetings morning, noon and night.” Up until he passed away on Oct. 22, 2025, at the age of 76, Stesko continued to help people stay sober.

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# OUR Sound & Soul

By Joe Hawrylko

*On facing page, Impresarios Stan Jakubczyk and Ellis Berger along with others from the Centennial Concert Series put together a homegrown concert featuring bands from the 1960s on the lawn of WWMS on Aug. 23, 2017.*



## Larry Packer

Larry Packer's sensational string skills have taken him across the globe several times over.

Packer, pictured above, has shared the stage, performed, and recorded with Levon Helm, Maria Muldaur, Lou Reed, Kate and Anna McGarrigle, David Bromberg and Harry Belafonte, backed up Johnny Cash, and was even the Saturday Night Live house band for a stint.

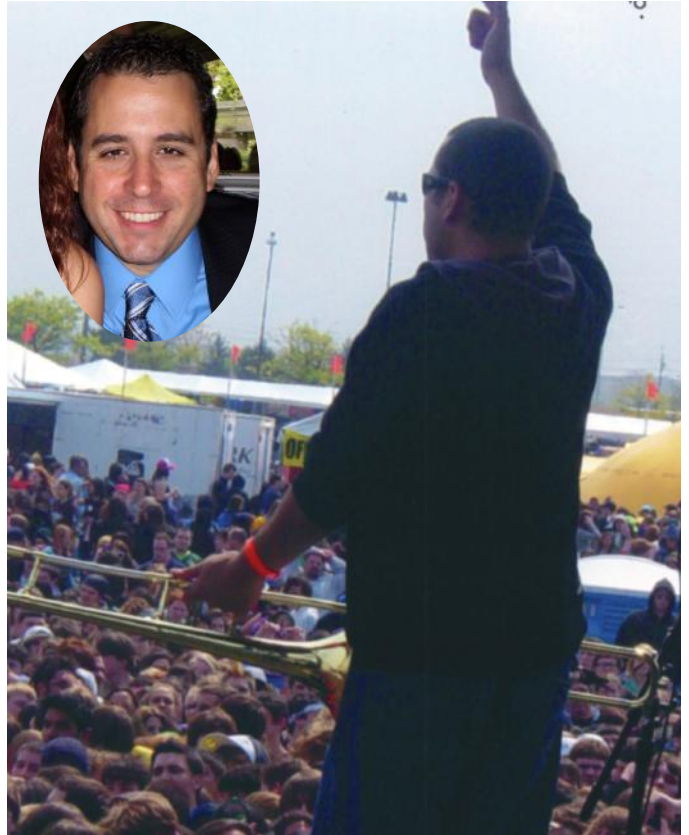
Perhaps he is most known as the opening act for the Jimi Hendrix Experience with his band, Cat Mother and The All Night Newsboys. The band became a feature of the late-60's sound, landing a Top 25 hit in the Summer of '69 with "Good Old Rock 'n' Roll".

Packer had been training since 1959, when the then 11-year-old Packer would hop on a bus toward downtown Passaic to learn from Anthony Sinigalliano in the second floor of the Elk's building on Washington Pl. By 19, Packer was experienced – Cat Mother and The All Night Newsboys were the opening act for Jimi and his band.

"We were doing all the big outdoor festivals and stadiums. We would go on just before Jimi," recalled Packer, who turned 20 in The Summer of Love in 1969. "He had a certain amount of respect for me, because he knew the violin wasn't an easy instrument to play."

The band was on tour with Jimi that year and was scheduled to play at Woodstock. However, the band ended up missing the show due to closed highways leading in and the notoriously muddy grounds, which bogged travel.

"Then he said the only way we could get the band in



was by helicopter and that was ridiculous. Besides, it wouldn't do your career any good anyway," he laughed. "You never know what you are spared from. It's okay, it seemed like there was plenty to do anyway."

Despite not playing the legendary show, Packer formed his own legendary memories with famous artists that he shared the stage with.



“I really loved Levon Helm. Playing with the Band was an honor and a great learning experience, for sure,” recalled Packer. “I’m proud to play violin in David Amram’s quartet. I also loved being the first fiddle player for Kate and Anna McGarrigle’s tours of America and Europe and being in their London debut in 1976.”

### Mike Soprano

If the Marching Mustangs didn’t need a trombone player during Mike Soprano’s, pictured left facing, junior year of high school, he may have never toured the world with Streetlight Manifesto.

The 1997 CHS grad had been around music

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## AMERICA

**Odette and Noel Coronel with their kids: Olivia, Noelani and Noel**

since he was 3, and was already a saxophone player when he made the switch due to the opening on Bob Morgan's legendary Marching Mustangs.

That led to jazz band, musicals, and wind ensemble while at CHS. And eventually, Soprano got into the emerging ska music scene and joined his first band, The Derringers. "Before I joined The Derringers, none of us knew what ska was," he laughed. "I like to tell people we're rock with horns."

Following high school, the Cliftonite went to Rutgers and became a member in two foundational New Jersey ska bands: Catch 22, and then Streetlight Manifesto.

Soprano was a core member of Streetlight Manifesto from 2003-2010, put out several albums, traveled to four continents on tour, and performed at legendary ska and punk shows.

"Warped Tour is the biggest amount of bands we've worked with," said Soprano. "We did a bunch of tours with Reel Big Fish, but this is probably the biggest as far as the number of kids coming to shows."

Even though he's been to countless countries on tour, coming back to shows in New Jersey was always his favorite memory, the top being Starland Ballroom in Sayreville.

"Having the home crowd there makes it the coolest venue," he said. "We played with Reel Big Fish in Montclair at the Wellmont Theater and a lot of friends showed up."

### Charlie Frick

It was 1964 and every freshman at CHS who had dreams of becoming the next Eddie Brigati, Paul Butterfield or John Lennon knew they had to make the Marching Mustangs first. Then under the guidance of Saul Kay, the Mustangs were the first high school band to perform at the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA.



*Here's a bit of Clifton Nostalgia: this album cover for Patti LaBelle and the Bluebells (from left: Nona Hendryx, Patti LaBelle and Sarah Dash) was shot in the the Clifton Boys Club gym in 1971 thanks to Joe Dera. At right, Charlie Frick on Garrett Mountain.*

"Mr. Kay was a very stern taskmaster, but he had the chops to back it up. We'd get standing ovations in five countries, we'd blow them away," recalled Charlie Frick, Clifton's first hippie, Mustang trumpet player, and guide to the local rock 'n' roll scene. "I'm 16 and I'm touring Europe for 17 days drinking Heinekens for a quarter. It was amazing. If I could, I'd go back there right now."

With that background, it's no wonder CHS produced so many successful rock bands in the 60's.

Clifton's official rock historian, Frick fondly recalled some of the biggest bands from that era: The Lords, a greaser band from Athena, The Liberation Army, a horn based band, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Screamin' Jay Hawkins and The Electric Flag, and so on.

Other talented musicians at the time included sax player John Zangrando, who later became a physics teacher, and John Kasica, who went on to be the distinguished percussion chair in the St. Louis Sphyony Orchestra.

Frick's career outside of Clifton's Historian was extensive. He spent decades as a freelancer for many publications, and then spent more than 20 years in television working for "The Uncle Floyd Show" and "The Sports Reporters".

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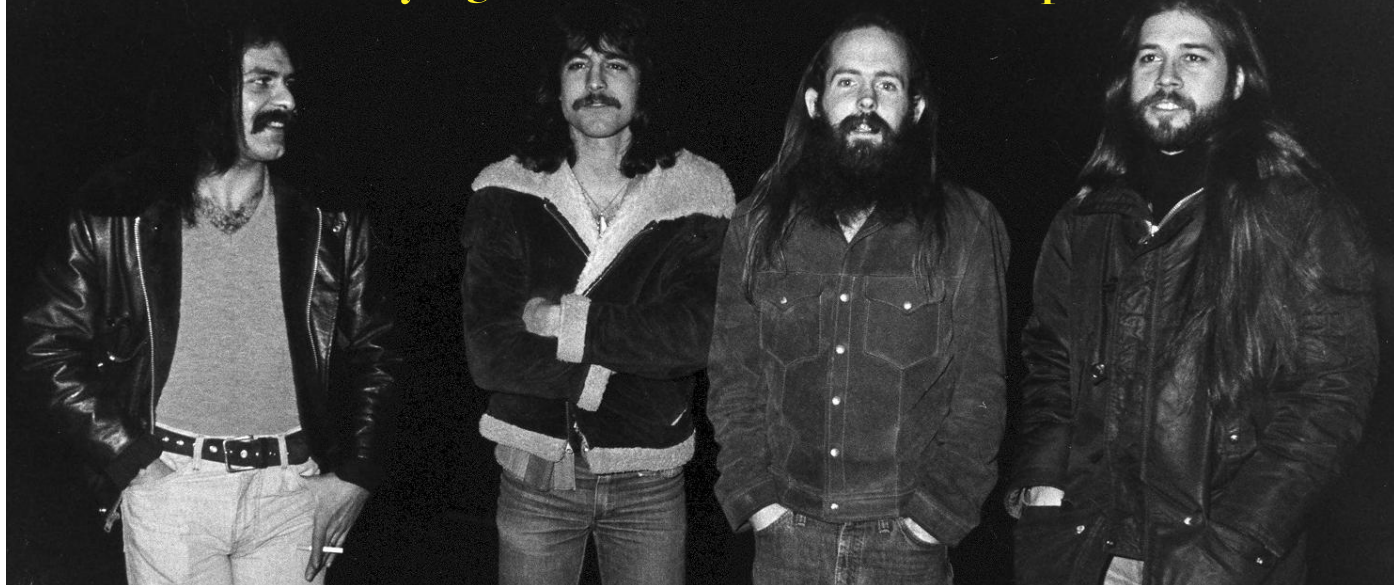
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# Battle of the Bands Pope Paul VI: The Flying Mueller Brothers & Godspeed



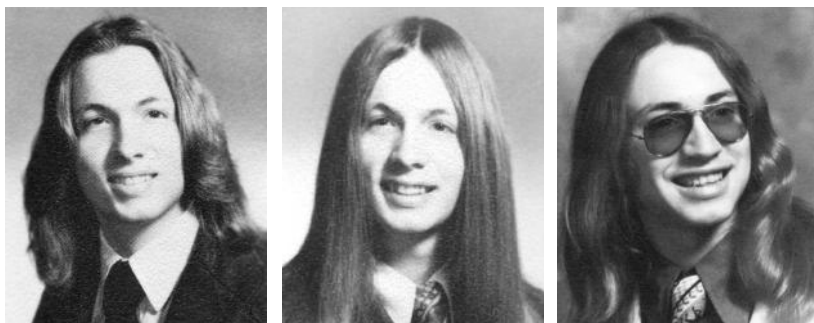
*Godspeed's final line-up from left, Jack Ciminello, Gary Seitz, Terry Hill and Jeff Seitz.*

If you've ever been to any of New Jersey's iconic live music venues over the last half century, you've surely seen the Flying Mueller Brothers. A staple of the Jersey Shore live music scene, the brothers have been rocking for generations of Garden State Residents.

For those Cliftonites who went to Pope Paul VI on Valley Rd. in the 60's and 70's, you'll likely remember brothers Carl, Bill, and Donny Mueller as Impact, the local band who shot to fame after rocking the school's Battle of the Band shows. Or when they infamously had their school talent show set canceled early after they tried playing The Pusher by Steppenwolf.

The other major band from Pope Paul VI's rocker era was Godspeed. Brothers Jeff (CHS '67) and Gary Seitz (CHS '69) were long-haired rockers who had the girls swooning and the guys throwing their fists in the air as they belted out songs by Led Zeppelin, Yes, King Crimson, and The Moody Blues.

"My mother wrote in my baby diary that as an infant, I would sit and try to clap my hands to whatever music was playing," recalled Jeff, Godspeed's drummer. "We were good," said Gary, the band's bassist. "[Steve Giovenco] had studied all his life on guitar and my brother was play-



*Bill, Carl and Don Mueller in their CHS graduation pictures.*

ing drums since he was 10, so he was serious and that musicality came out."

The band was touring in the Tri-State area and began focusing on New York due to the lower drinking age. When New Jersey lowered its age to 18, the band began touring locally more. "It just became like nuts," said Gary. "We were playing all over the place: Dodd's in East Orange, Joey Harrison's Surf Club, The Dunes in Margate ..."

The brothers continued rocking with Godspeed until finally breaking up in 1975. The brothers have both remained in the music scene in the decades since. Jeff relocated to California, and has collaborated with former Police drummer Stewart Copeland for decades, starting with The Police's first world tour. Gary now lives in Sparta, and since 1997 has been playing full time in Parrotbeach, a band that travels the east coast playing Jimmy Buffet vibes.

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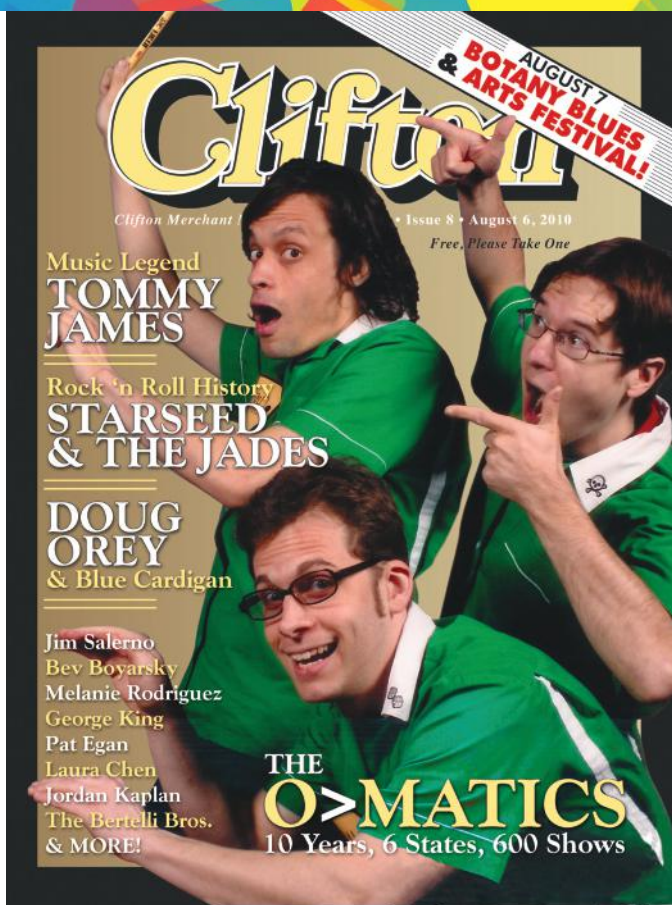
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### Doreen Holmes

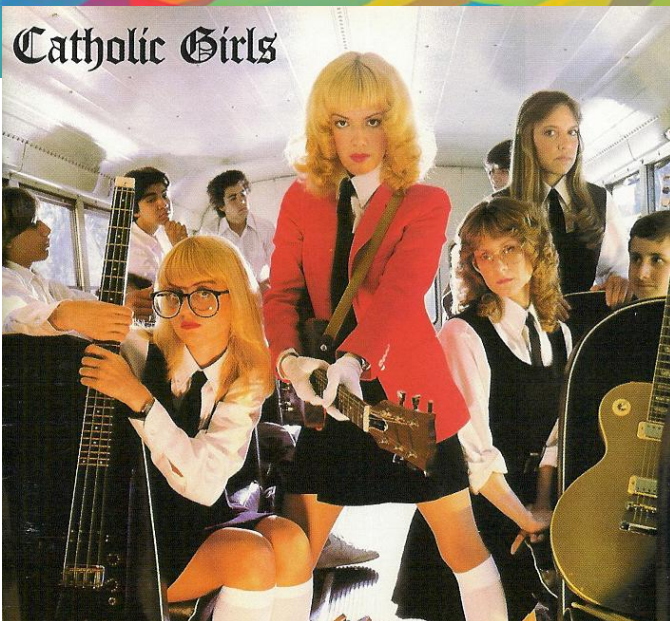
Doreen Holmes knew drums were for boys, but she didn't care. The 1967 CHS grad was a clarinet player by trade, and desperately wanted to drum in the Marching Mustangs, but that was taboo at the time.

"I didn't really like the sound of the clarinet, but my parents already bought it," she recalled. "But I could afford a pair of sticks."

That summer, Holmes entered band camp and emerged as the first female snare drum player in the band's storied history. "I wasn't even playing a year yet," she said. "I worked really hard and practiced three hours a day."

The experience deepened her love of drumming and soon Holmes started to join local bands. Her big break came in 1981 when she joined a Belleville-based band, The Catholic Girls, and immediately joined them in California to record their first self-titled album on MCA records. The band toured nationally, opening for the likes of The Kinks, The Clash, and Judas Priest, and played at major venues like the legendary CBGB and The Ritz in New York, The Dirt Club in Bloomfield, and Loop Lounge in Passaic.

Holmes became tired of life on the road, left in 1984,



*In 1982, that's Doreen Holmes standing at right, the drummer for the Catholic Girls.*

and went on to play in several other local bands before rejoining in 2002. The Catholic Girls began recording new albums and had Steven Van Xandt attend one of their shows in New York City. He liked their top hit, "Rock 'n America" so much it became a regular on his radio show.

"I never think about my age. I think you get a chance to live longer that way," said Holmes of playing into her 60's. "If I thought about things like that, I wouldn't be playing drums, because girls didn't play drums early on."

### The O>Matics

One moment you think you hear a bit of Elvis Costello. The next song, maybe the singing sounds a little bit like something off of an album for The Talking Heads, Ramones, or maybe Weezer.

It's almost as if the O>Matics prefer to be undefined – and original.

"We call it the O>Matic state," laughed Chris O>Matic, drummer for the three-piece band. "We get on stage, put on our costumes and gear, and people are like, 'Huh?' Then, halfway through the set, people are bobbing their heads. By the end, they're cheering."

The O>Matics were formed in 2002 by brothers Mark (CHS '98) and Chris (CHS '95) Mariano. Bassist Jamie O>Matic joined the group shortly after, and the trio spent two decades rocking together.

"It's like we share the same brain," explained Chris. "If someone messes up, we'll catch it and throw in an extra note to cover for it."

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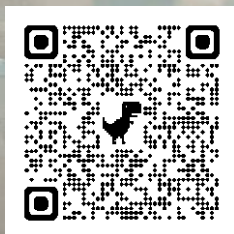
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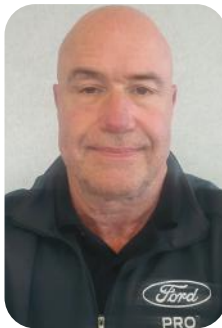


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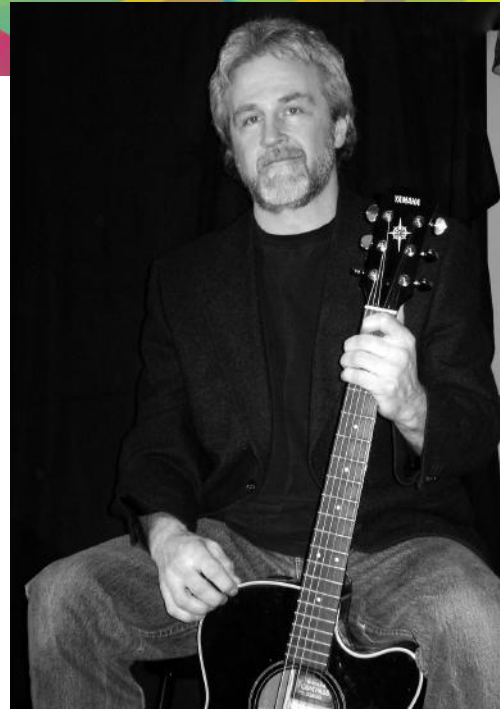
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The band's unique style isn't limited to their sound. It's bowling shirts and slacks, their old retrofitted tour bus they called Carol, bizarre yet memorable performances, and a unique website filled with Mark's cartoons and art, instructional videos for The O>Matic personal sponge, and other 1960s World Fair inspired gadgets, and other ... well, just plain odd stuff.

In some weird way, it all works. The O>Matic adventure spanned 20 years, countless states, and over 600 shows. "It's all for fun," said Jamie. "If it self-sustains, it's great."

### John Dominick

From the very first note that comes out of John Dominick's guitar, there is no mistaking who his major influence is. Not only does John sound like Jerry Garcia, the late guitar player for The Grateful Dead, but he has an uncanny physical resemblance to him as well.

"It was the Skull and Roses LP that first made me want to play guitar," Dominick told *Clifton Merchant* in 2010.

Dominick was a mainstay in the local music scene since the 70's, having first formed The Wizards, with CHS classmates Bill Zemkewiez, Dave Solomon, Joe McKenna, and Kelly Smith in 1978, playing mostly Grateful Dead songs.

McKenna, Smith, and Dominick went on to form The Mystery Cats, a group that went through many incarnations and continued to play well into the 2010s. The group also played with a few other Cliftonites like Ernie Generalli, Ken Straub, Dave DeSantis, and Karl Schaefer.

*From left: Tommy James, Jim Salerno, John Dominick.*

"John and I have played together for over 30 years," said Generalli. "There's an unspoken communication when we play. He's a natural. What he's feeling comes right out of his fingers and through the guitar – and never the same way twice. To me, that's the ultimate goal."

### Jim Salerno

Jim Salerno is a man leading two lives.

To most, he is just a regular coworker, a seemingly quiet financial analyst living an inconspicuous life not far from the banks of gentle Lake Hopatcong.

But you wouldn't recognize Salerno once his alter ego shows up that evening. Jim Salerno is The Lizard King, Jim Morrison, and he's loving every second of it.

"Since I was about 14, I've been intrigued by Jim Morrison," said the former Cliftonite who first joined Renfield's Roadhouse as the lead singer in 2001. "I'm a student of him. I've got every book possible, every possible picture."

In high school, the CHS 1980 grad joined a band, Destiny, which is where he first got his taste for performing. The classic rock cover group also included Cliftonites Lucien Nocelli, John Judge, Larry Midler, and Steve DiFabrizio. "We try to do the whole Doors concert experience," said Salerno. "Morrison did a lot of poetry leading into songs – some freaky stuff. But we do the whole thing the way he did it. It definitely turns some heads."

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At right, in 1990 that's my family just before my dad died... at the bottom is Richie, a great Skipper and Fisherman...and at right, that's mom and me in 2007, supporting the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton....

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- Don Knapp



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### Tommy James

If you came of age with rock ‘n’ roll, you know of legendary singer and songwriter Tommy James and The Shondells. He has 23 gold singles, nine gold and platinum albums, and he has sold more than 100 million records. More than 300 other artists have covered his songs, including Bruce Springsteen, Neil Diamond, and Prince.

But did you know that from 1973-2000, the famous rockstar called Clifton home? A native of Dayton, Ohio, James was living in Manhattan when he decided to move to the suburbs. His friend, music producer Joel Diamond, lived in Clifton and his parents, who owned Diamond Realty, sold James his house on Woodlawn Ave.

“I wanted to get out of the city and I really fell in love with Jersey,” he said. “Jersey reminds me a lot of Michigan, just more crowded. It has the same rolling hills and greenery, just not as much space. Plus, I could go home and see squirrels and have a fence.”

The musician’s favorite local spots were the old Robin Hood Inn on Valley Rd. “I loved the Robin Hood Inn. There was a lot of history there. I heard the theme from Casa Blanca was written there,” recalled James, who now lives in Cedar Grove and is still touring. “I really feel like I grew up there. I still have great fondness for Clifton.”

### Capitol Theater

The world’s greatest rock ‘n’ roll band had just finished a 90-minute set at the Capitol Theatre and now it was time to leave—quickly.

Mick Jagger wished the audience good night, but the crowd didn’t want to let the Rolling Stones go. The old theatre held 3,200 fans and probably half of them planned to find the backstage door to get another glimpse of the band.

The band went to exit but ended up going the wrong way. Instead, they turned around, did a hasty encore of Street Fighting Man, and quickly ran to their limo.

“They had to play more,” laughed Clifton’s Tom Catrino, the then-concert manager for the Capitol, “just to get the hell out of the theatre without getting mobbed.”

The Stones’ appearance had put the Capitol and Passaic on the map. Before the City Council complained about promoter John Scher and his shows, saying they created traffic, noise, and crime. After the Stones played on June 14, 1978—and the national press followed—the little theatre with the amazing sound became a city treasure that attracted stars like Bruce Springsteen, Queen, Prince, and others.

The Place to Rock now long gone, the Capitol Theatre in Passaic lives in music history—an iconic venue that hosted most every big and small act from 1971 to 1989.

**Brookwood**

It was supposed to be a single gig, a quick fundraiser show at Joey's to support a friend. The old Clifton boys getting back together for a one night stand of classic rock hits. Instead, that gig turned into Brookwood.

Who's Brookwood? You've seen them around town.

The quartet of Clifton natives took their band name from the street they all once lived on. Mike Cetinich (CHS '69) sings lead vocals and plays guitar, John Giardina (CHS '69) is lead guitar and vocals; Dan Pugliese (Paul VI High School '69, Clifton), is drums and vocals; and Pete Cetinich (CHS '68) is guitar and vocals.

The group's story starts in the 60's on Broodwood Ave, where the Cetinich boys grew up. At 14, Giardina moved to Clifton and immediately became friends and musical soulmates with the brothers.

All three played in groups during high school and college but eventually put the instruments down for many years. It wasn't until the 2004 fundraiser that the trio connected with Pugliese and started their American rock renaissance that became Brookwood, pictured facing left.



*When Clifton podiatrist Tom Graziano was 14 in 1964, he and his bandmates The Surftones were making music in the Boys Club Teen Center. "We jammed to hits like Wipe Out." Members were Lenny Daidone on drums, Steve Giovenco, and another fellow. Graziano went into the medical field, but he enjoyed being a rock 'n' roller. "That was a Kay guitar from Sears," he said. "That was the first guitar Eric Clapton had. His second was a 335 Gibson, just like me. I guess great musical minds were thinking along the same lines."*



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# How we get our news... from print

## A History of Newspapers

Clifton has existed as a city for a little over a century, but it has a heritage of local journalism that predates its 1917 founding. *Clifton Merchant Magazine* has been part of that history since 1995 and, while we are a relative newcomer, we proudly carry the title of Clifton's Storyteller into our 32nd year.

There were many newspapers serving Clifton, with the oldest being the *Weekly Echo*, founded in about 1869. For a few years, the only remaining general interest weekly newspaper serving the city was *The Clifton Journal*, which in later years became a member of the North Jersey Media Group family of newspapers. The publication traces its roots through purchases and mergers to when *The Journal of Acquackanonk Township* made its appearance in 1914.

*Our love of local newspapers was aptly illustrated when City Hall was graced with two life-sized sculptures by J. Seward Johnson. This one, at right, was entitled Keeping Up, and was displayed from 2010-2013.*



*Clifton Merchant Magazine premiered in October 1995 with a 24-page guide to shopping, top left, in what is now Downtown Clifton. Now in our 32nd year, the magazine averages 60 to 90 pages per month and is known as Clifton's Storyteller. That's Tom Hawrylko, at right, part of a profile written about the magazine that appeared in *The Record's* business section on Aug. 29, 1997.*

# to new media...

# The Story Continues. The Platform *Evolves.*

In the 45 years between the debut of the *Weekly Echo* and the birth of *The Journal*, a number of publications rose and fell, trying to fill the news gap left by the daily newspapers in Paterson and Passaic.

The 1890s also saw the publication of the picturesquely titled *Grumbler*, perhaps a predecessor of today's national tabloids and the online world of angry contributors, which gave way to the *Township Record* and *Weekly Grumbler*, which seems to have folded in 1899.

Another paper, the *Clifton Weekly*, appeared from 1896 to 1898. Into the second decade of the 20th century, two new publications came onto the scene.

*Clifton Times*, started in 1912, lasted until 1937 when it was cut down by the Great Depression. It was owned by the *Herald News* of Passaic. *Clifton Press*, first published about 1913, was out of business by the start of the Roaring Twenties.

Despite declining local coverage caused by corporate buyouts of local newspapers, news media persists — merely in new mediums. Founded in 2021 by Amie Kolodziej, *The Clifton Times* is an online news site that keeps residents up-to-date on our city's events, politics, and entertainment. In 2023, Kolodziej turned ownership over to a new editor, Tova Felder.

An advertisement for ASPEN Tree Service. The background features a large American flag on the left and a large 'AMERICA 250' logo on the right, with the number '250' stylized in red, white, and blue stripes. A utility crane with 'ASPEN TREE' branding is visible in the foreground. The text on the left side of the ad includes:

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# A History of Newspapers

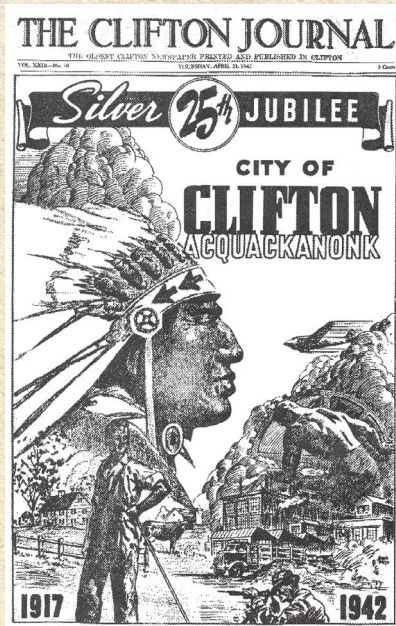
But Felder's role in bringing news to residents pre-dated *The Clifton Times*. In November 2015, she founded the Facebook group Clifton News and Community to provide a more casual, but still informative and respectful, space for information-sharing. The page allows residents to get local handyman referrals or learn more about city policy, meeting dates, school functions, and road closures.

Other Facebook pages that residents turn to are Donna Carpinelli Popowich's "Clifton Citizens Concerns", created in May of 2016, and Guy Madsen's "The City of Clifton NJ, UNFILTERED!", created last November. The group that Popowich moderates touts itself as an environment for civil discussions about city's issues and solutions.

As for Madsen's newer public group, it has amassed over 6,000 members as of early June and invites ideas, concerns, complaints, experiences, and stories about what is currently happening in our community. Group members can share their thoughts under an anonymous "nickname."

If you're looking for Clifton news, information, or opinions, it's probably at your fingertips. Those who are eager to air grievances about Council meetings or neighborhood issues can have their opinions heard and spread faster than ever before.

*Clifton Merchant Magazine* is the last of the old guard, so we feel a responsibility toward preserving the history that brought us here. Let's take a closer look ...



*The Clifton Journal, founded by Max Kroll, in 1938. George and Lorraine Kroll in 2015.*



*Terry LaCorte with his dad, Gus, of The Clifton Leader, at right, which began in 1926.*

## Hometown papers

*The Journal of Acquackanonk Township*, started around 1914, an ancestor of *Dateline Clifton*, was owned by Col. Charles F. H. Johnson. Johnson had served in WWI, was president of Botany Mills, and he owned the Clifton Printing Company, 699 Main Ave., (currently, 1088 Main Ave.).

Following the township's incorporation as the City of Clifton in 1917, *The Journal of Acquackanonk Township*, changed its name to *The Clifton Journal*. During the 1920s, Augustine (Gus) La Corte edited the publication.



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# A History of Newspapers

He soon left to begin his own publication, *The Clifton Leader*, and created a rivalry that lasted more than a half-century.

Following La Corte's departure, Johnson brought in Max Kroll, a special editions developer who was working on a project with Paterson's *Morning Call*, recalls George Kroll, Max's son and later editor and publisher of the paper.

Max eventually purchased *The Clifton Journal* in 1938. In 2015, George said his father covered everything, from sporting events to Council meetings, and knew everyone.

George and his brother Seymour joined their father in the business, with George in news and Seymour in production. In 1947, the Kroll brothers bought the Clifton Printing Company from Peter Van Lenten and Peter Baker, who themselves had purchased the firm 10 years earlier.

Clifton Printing printed *The Journal* through WWII, then the Kroll brothers acquired the printer.

Kroll noted that his father was editor, publisher, and principal reporter for *The Journal*, and the paper continued to add pages and prosper as Clifton went through a booming growth period after WWII.

Max became ill in 1959 and turned over the operations to his sons before he died in 1961. George took on the newspaper full time, while Seymour took over the printing company and ultimately bought George's share.

George began his heavily followed As I See It column. "Following the war, Clifton enjoyed a tremendous boom with home construction and new businesses quickly filling up former farm and dairy land in the city," he said in 2015. "There was a lot going on, and I kept an eye on public officials. I made sure that they remained accountable to public opinion, but not in a mean-spirited way as some publications did."

In 1975, Kroll acquired a competitor, *The Clifton News*, which was operated by insurance executive Richard DeMarco, creating *Clifton News-Journal*.

Seven years later, George merged with the Matzner publication, *Dateline Clifton*, which was launched in 1981 with 23-year-old Tom Hawrylko (founder and currently editor and publisher of *Clifton Merchant Magazine*) as editor. The merged publication was called the *Dateline-Journal*.

Harold Matzner sold all of his newspaper holdings to the company that had purchased *The Herald-News* and George retired from the *Dateline-Journal* in 1985. He then served as a sales representative for *The Jewish Community News*.

## Main Avenue rivalry

A few blocks from where the early issues of *The Clifton Journal* were printed at the Clifton Printing Company, Gus La Corte set up North Jersey Press in 1941 at 1414 Main Ave., to publish his *Clifton Leader* and do other printing. He did it all at the small paper, except bookkeeper. He entrusted that duty to his wife, Sarah.

*The Clifton Leader* came into existence in 1926, when La Corte left after serving as editor of *The Clifton Journal*. The first 15 years at *The Leader* were a great struggle for the young editor, who had dropped out of CHS to help his family, despite his wish to become an attorney.

Indicative of his single-mindedness, La Corte did earn a law degree in 1935.

Much like Max Kroll, La Corte too had an interesting road to success.

After doing odd jobs at the *Passaic Daily News*, La Corte became a reporter at age 15. He studied journalism at NYU part time and was offered the editor's position at *The Journal*, remaining there until starting *The Leader*.

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# A History of Newspapers

The Leader was first printed in Paterson but La Corte determined he could do the job more cost-effectively himself. He acquired a hand-fed press and operated out of multiple Clifton locations.

Later, he bought a web-fed press but, because money was tight, he could not afford to move the press to Clifton and printed out of Hackensack. In 1941, he incorporated North Jersey Press at 1414 Main Ave.

With Clifton Printing Company and North Jersey Press both on Main Ave., a commercial and journalistic rivalry grew.

To gain more market share, La Corte converted the *Clifton Leader* into a daily publication in 1950 and called it the *Morning Leader*. That lasted only about a year.

George Kroll recalled that when La Corte was elected to the City Council in the 1950s, the Main Ave. rivalry became a bit more heated. Rivalry aside, after his brother Seymour's death, George had his publication printed by North Jersey Press.

George, and La Corte's son S. M. "Terry" La Corte, noted that the 20-year post WWII period was one of great



The *Independent Prospector's* final edition masthead, which published on Dec. 30, 1982. Alex Bidnik died at age 85 on Dec. 27, 2019.

growth and activity for their families' publications.

They attributed the booming post-war economy that fueled Clifton's growth, a time when neighborhood stores were the main source for consumer items and weekly newspapers were often the main source of information.

## A discordant note

A history of newspapers would not be complete without a note on *The Independent-Prospector* and its editor and publisher, Alex Bidnik Jr. Begun in 1933 as the *Jersey Prospector*, Bidnik purchased the paper in the

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# A History of Newspapers



Share your tradition

## Retailers meet, prepare strategy to fight inflation

**BY TOM HAWRYLKO**  
 CLIFTON—Scores of stores meeting retail associations of the Main, Mail and Bridge business areas met last Friday morning in a meeting to discuss ways to combat inflation. William Walters to share ideas which they hope will bring shoppers back to the city's retail centers. The meeting was held at the Clifton Public Library. Walters said the group "did that time will be expected difficult for the small business."

## Merchants want Huber reinstated

**CLIFTON**—Representatives of merchants along Main Ave. and Bridge Village appeared before the city council last Tuesday and requested that the council consider reinstating Gloria Huber as the city's commercial coordinator. The merchants claim the appointment is vital to retail business' survival in Clifton.



**ACTIVE CHAMBER**—Members of the Chamber of Commerce gathered last week's meeting over three left to right: Vasek, Compagnone, Larry Bamberger, George Alvarez, William Walters, Barbara DiDonna, Joann Scazzari, Ray Farkas, and George Scazzari.

## Pay hike is questioned

**BY TOM HAWRYLKO**  
 CLIFTON—While a number of retailers of downtown businesses in Clifton had a three member committee to review the city's proposed pay raise for the city manager. The committee is expected to meet next week.

Huber's position, which was funded by a grant from the Federal Housing and Urban Development Program, has been vacant since April when the job title was changed to Commercial Service Planner and a Civil Service job was offered. Huber said she felt the loss because of the confusion caused by the change in title. "The specifications on the job title were for a social worker," Huber said. "I didn't realize they changed the title," she added.

Huber's reinstatement was requested by a group of merchants. During a public hearing on a vote to reinstate Huber, Huber would handle general responsibilities and the coordination of other responsibilities which would allow the merchants to be free on the street.

## Wesley Brook probe continues

**CLIFTON**—The city's investigation into the Wesley Brook State Park case continues. The city manager, Bill Walters, was directed to investigate the case. Walters said the case is still under review.

**More council news - page 3**

Dateline Clifton, which was launched on Dec. 2, 1981, by Tom Hawrylko as editor. At age 24, Tom Hawrylko wrote the slogan "Clifton Our Heart's In It... We Care" as a gift to his adopted city. In 1983, he is pictured seated with Mayor Gloria Kolodziej and at center Barbara DiDonna and Bill Walters of Community Development. The man on left is unidentified.

mid-1960s from Paterson's Patrick Dwyer. Bidnik, like La Corte and Kroll, rode the crest of Clifton's heyday until 1982.

Even among those that have incurred his wrath, many would agree that Bidnik had talent and was dogged in his news-gathering style. His downfall came when his doggedness led him to pursue advertisers too aggressively.

In 1981, a jury convicted Bidnik on five of six counts of extorting advertising or information from Ari Tasiou of The Hearth and Edward Looney of Henry's Deli. Bidnik was also guilty of telling Edward Hahn, advertising director of New Jersey Bank, that he was going to organize a boycott of the bank unless advertising was expanded. Assistant Passaic County Prosecutor Bruno Mongiardo said that he believed the verdict was just. "The freedom of the press was not involved in this case," he said. "Bidnik used his newspaper as an extortion vehicle."

In his final column, appropriately titled, "The Pleasure Was All Mine," he wrote, "I've been at bat many times in the past 20 years. I've pitched and fielded and occasionally threw a curve, although unintentionally."

Going into the 1970s, the environment changed drastically for weekly papers. Larger daily publications began

covering local news more aggressively with their regional sections and offered other media options.

## Evolving media options

Page counts were steadily decreasing and *The Leader* ended its nearly 55-year run in 1980. In 1981, Matzner Publications/Today Newspapers, which served several county communities, launched *Dateline Clifton* with Hawrylko as editor. The formula appeared to be that it was mailed to 31,000 homes weekly, ensuring delivery, an attractive feature to advertisers.

By the end of 1982, Bidnik's *Independent Prospector* had folded, and *The Clifton News-Journal*, acquired by Matzner Publications, had merged with *Dateline Clifton* to become *Dateline Journal*.

Around the same time, the *Paterson News* folded and the Drukker family sold *The Herald News* to Media News Group, owned by Dean Singleton and Richard Scudder.

In the mid-1980s, Matzner sold *Dateline Journal* and all other weeklies to a national concern with out-of-town managers. Late in the 1980s, these papers were again sold to Singleton's Media News Group. Reflecting changes in the newspaper industry in the 1990s, the *Herald*




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# A History of Newspapers



Some newspapermen who covered Clifton: From top left, Bob Whiting, Augie Lio, Joe Lovas, Vic Winkler, Tom Sullivan, Jerry Costello, Richard Sokerka, and Jai Agnish. At right, photographer Jack Anderson and George Homcy.

News, *Dateline Journal*, and its sister publications in Passaic and Bergen counties were sold to Macromedia, the parent company of *The Record* of Hackensack.

The scramble of newspaper mergers and acquisitions was still on in 2016 when the Borg family sold North Jersey Media Group to Gannett Co., Inc. and the USA Today Network.

Seeing an opportunity in the community, *Clifton Merchant Magazine* was launched in October of 1995 as a monthly by editor and publisher Tom Hawrylko. He was the owner of Tomahawk Promotions, a firm that he founded in 1990 that did “advertorial” writing for newspapers, as well as public relations.

The goal of *Clifton Magazine*, Hawrylko said, was to create an independent publication to tell Clifton’s story in-depth and in ways that a weekly or daily newspaper could not and were not doing.

For the first two years of its existence, *Clifton Magazine* tried hard to reach that goal of being “Clifton’s Storyteller”. Due to a lack of advertising sales, it remained a skinny little “rag” of 24 pages or so.

From 1995 to 1997, the magazine was mailed to 31,000

homes along with other junk mail. Printed in black and white on newsprint, *Clifton Magazine* was lost in the mix of mailboxes. In October of 1997, that all changed.

Hawrylko wrapped his newsprint magazine with glossy and colorful paper. He added pages, he hired writers to expand stories, and he used space to play up photos. He cut the print run to 16,000, stopped mailing 32,000 copies and he instead started asking merchants to display the magazine on their shelves.

Now with the glossy cover, brighter and whiter stock, and without the expense of mailing the magazine, the magazine has grown significantly. Today, *Clifton Magazine* has a circulation of 14,000 and averages 60 to 90 pages of story telling not found in other publications.

## News of the Paterson Diocese

While general interest, weekly newspapers may have declined, Clifton's journalistic heritage has expanded into newer spheres with focused audiences.

*The Beacon*, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson's weekly tabloid newspaper, published its final print edition on Dec. 26, 2024. It is now on [beaconnj.org](http://beaconnj.org).

Begun in 1967, the paper has had four editors guide its progress. They are Jerry Costello, who later worked for the Archdiocese of New York, Vic Winkler, Richard Sokerka, and now Jai Agnish since July of 2022.

The publication features stories on churches, schools and facilities affiliated with the diocese, an opinion page, and a weekly column by Bishop of Paterson Kevin J. Sweeney. According to Sokerka, who had a long career as editor at Today Newspapers before joining *The Beacon*, the paper has won numerous journalism awards.

The paper's role is to be an advocate for social justice issues and a voice for churches and schools. "Our focus is to tell the good news of the Paterson Diocese," said Sokerka. One of his favorite projects was a special edition done to commemorate the 1995 visit by Pope John Paul II and the celebration of the Mass at Giants Stadium.

## A Final Tribute

In 1962, Chester Grabowski decided Polish Americans needed a voice. With help from Gus LaCorte of the *Clifton Leader*, he started *The Post-Eagle*, a national weekly newspaper from his home and office on Van Houten Ave.

Grabowski died on April 25, 2012, just seven months



*The Grabowskis in front of The Post-Eagle on Van Houten Ave., from left, Matt, Valerie, Ray, Chris, and dad Chester.*

before *The Post-Eagle's* 50th anniversary, and his daughter, Chris Grabowski-Witmyer, managed the newspaper with her own steadfast dedication to Polish-American causes and preserving their ethnic heritage.

Although the paper stopped print publication in 2015, it remained online until the website closed down this year. Stalwart in its defense of the Polish-American image, the paper, published in English, helped the ethnic group strengthen its political power by supporting Polish-American candidates in many elections.

The newspaper was also active in charity work and helped raise money to bring Polish children to America for medical assistance. It also helped Polish immigrants locate jobs and assimilate into American culture.

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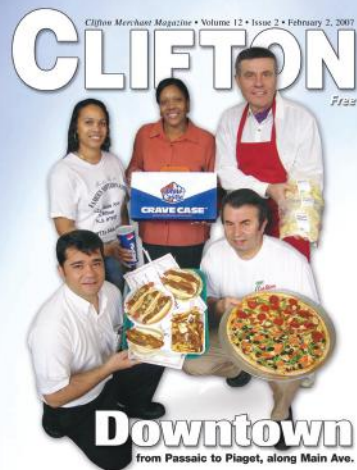
# CLIFTON IS A C

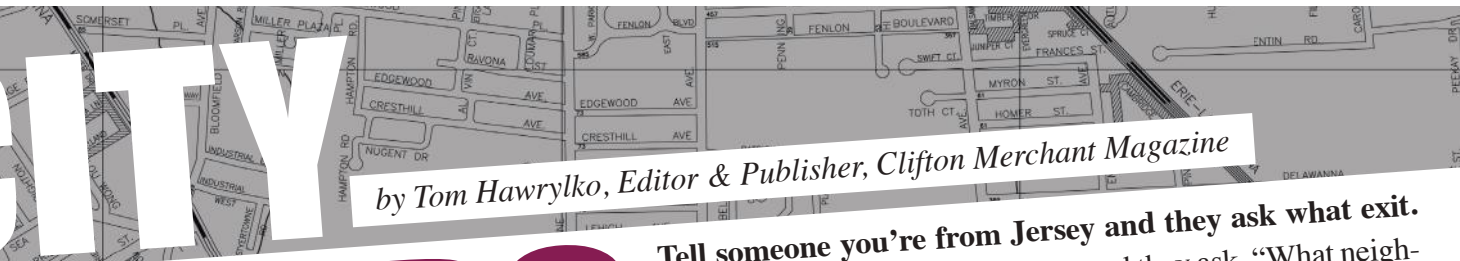
# OF NEIGHBORH



### *Downtown Clifton and Middle Village*

Downtown Clifton and Middle Village incorporate Main Ave., as well as Piaget Ave., also known as Rt. 46. It also takes in Main Ave. at the Paterson border at Crooks Ave., and up to Hazel St., to Kuller Rd. and Paulison Ave. Once the heart of Clifton when City Hall was there, landmarks on Main included DeLuxe Cleaners with its Art Deco facade, the Rec Center (a former US Post Office built circa-1930) at Washington, the 'new' Post Office at Madison, and hundreds of businesses to the Passaic border. These businesses continue along Clifton Ave. to Lakeview and up to Paulison Ave., where Prevident Liquors, Wines & Spirits is the landmark boundary.





# CITY HOODS

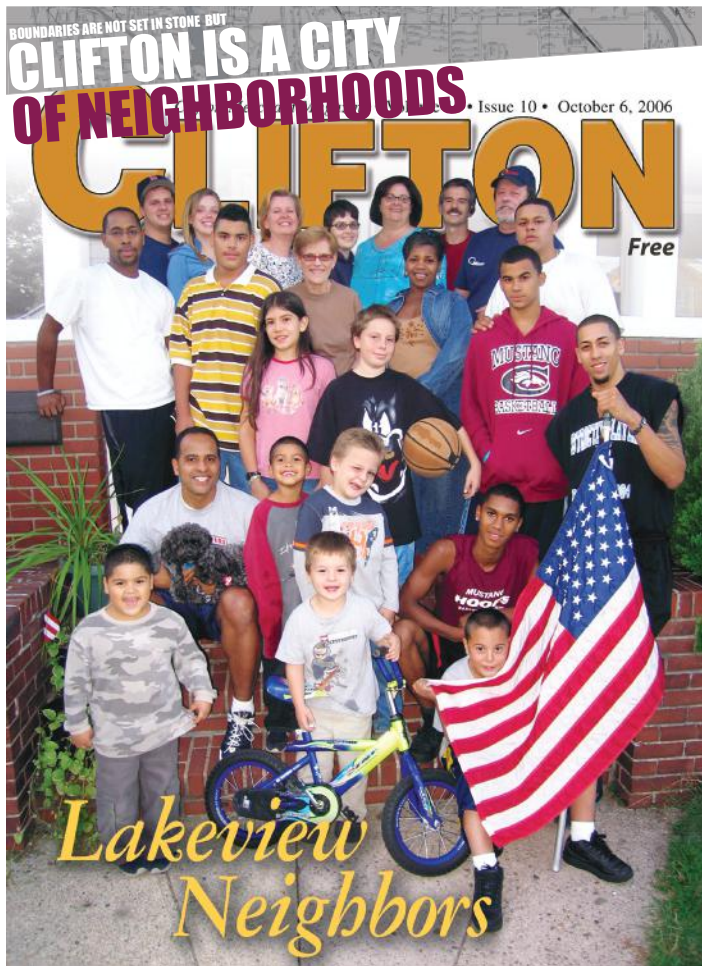
by Tom Hawrylko, Editor & Publisher, Clifton Merchant Magazine

**Tell someone you're from Jersey and they ask what exit.** Tell a Cliftonite you live here now and they ask, "What neighborhood?" From Athenia and Dutch Hill to Richfield and Allwood, to Lakeview, Downtown, Botany, Hazel, Rosemawr and Montclair Heights, here's a guide to help you find your way around our hometown.



## *Dutch Hill*

Weasel Brook Park is the 20-acre green centerpiece of Dutch Hill with a namesake creek and pond that begins at Paulison Ave. Surrounded by old but well-maintained homes, the compact neighborhood starts at Clifton Ave., with Paulison, Main and Highland Aves. serving as boundaries. Along Clifton Blvd., industrial buildings dot the road that leads to the NJ Transit rail station, offering a connection to Hoboken.



**Lakeview**

Lakeview begins on Crooks Ave., at the rail crossing at the Paterson Farmers Market. The neighborhood is bordered by the Passaic River and stretches all the way to Clifton Ave., which is separated from Botany Village by Lexington Ave. Lakeview Ave. is the busy commercial road that is at the heart of the dense residential community.

**Historic Botany Village and Botany Plaza**  
 Historic Botany is one of the city's oldest and, with the addition of Botany Plaza and its national retailers, it continues to grow and evolve. Clifton Ave. forms the western border, and Lexington Ave. boxes it in from the bottom. Located across the Passaic River from Garfield, Historic Botany offers unique shops, services, and old-world style.



**Athenia**

Centered on Van Houten Ave., often called the heart of Clifton, Athenia begins at Clifton Ave. and continues along Van Houten, which is the main thoroughfare, toward Passaic. Landmark establishments include The Grand Saloon, Mario's, Polonia, and the Athenia Veterans Post, which is on Huron Ave.



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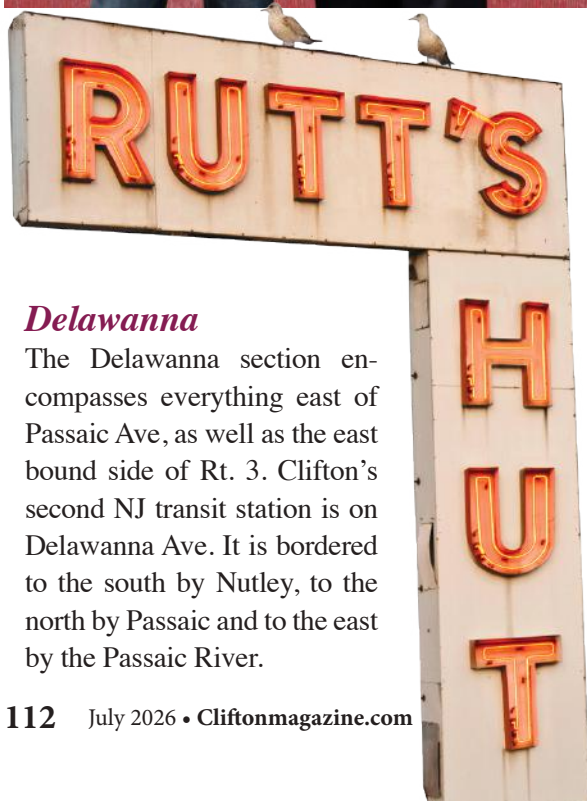
*The Barrow House on Van Houten Ave. is a destination for dining and cocktails. Above: owners and brothers Dean and Tom Maroulakos.*



*The Morton family of Richfield Farms: Jack, Jess, Debora, and Will.*

**Allwood and Richfield**

Allwood and Richfield are separated from Montclair Heights by the Garden State Parkway. Landmarks include The Allwood Diner, Richfield Farms, Clifton High School, and Woodrow Wilson Middle School. Main neighborhood roads include Van Houten, Grove, and Broad. The neighborhood comes to a point at the northern tip, where the Parkway intersects with Rt. 46, at the city line between Clifton and Bloomfield.



**Delawanna**

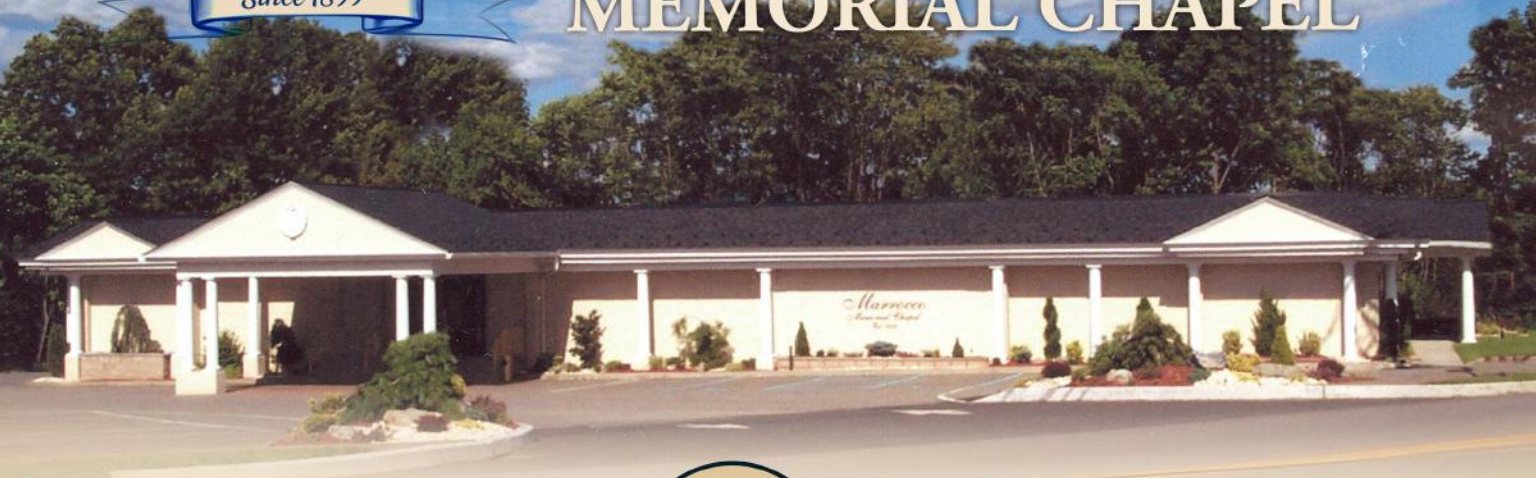
The Delawanna section encompasses everything east of Passaic Ave, as well as the east bound side of Rt. 3. Clifton's second NJ transit station is on Delawanna Ave. It is bordered to the south by Nutley, to the north by Passaic and to the east by the Passaic River.



*Clifton's hot dog joints are legendary national landmarks, often cited in gastronomic tours, locally, online, and in all forms of media.*



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## *Albion and Valley Rd.*

Located at the eastern base of Garret Mountain, Albion stretches on Valley Rd. from Paterson to Montclair State College. Hazel St. and Kuller Rd. separate it from Clifton Center on the east, with Rt. 46 acting as an artificial border to the south.



*Bogey's Sports Bar & Grill is a long-standing watering hole that dates back to the late 1800s at the corner of Valley Rd. and Fenner Ave. and today remains a favorite place to dine, drink, and listen to music.*



*Bartlett's Greenhouses & Florist on Grove St. marked 100 years in April, 2020. Pictured, Maryetta Bartlett Downing, Skip Bartlett, Nancy Bartlett, and Daniel Bartlett. At right, the Montclair Beach Club, also on Grove St.*



*For locally-grown produce, this August visit Ploch's Farm, which is in its 155th year on 16+ acres at 158 Grove St. at the Rt. 46 overpass. Seen in a file photo with Rudy Ploch is his sister Lin and his daughters Christine and Donna.*



## *Rosemawr*

Spacious homes populate Rosemawr, the most western boundary of Clifton. It begins at the roundabout at Styertowne Shopping Center, then stretches to the Nutley border. Dwasline Rd. cuts through its middle to Bloomfield Ave. at the Tick Tock, and Rt. 3 borders it to the south with Passaic Ave. as the border nearest to Nutley.

## *Montclair Heights*

As the name implies, this section is bordered by Montclair to the south. Like Albion, Garret Mountain is to the west, which is where Little Falls begins at the intersection of Rts. 3 and 46. Rt. 46 is the border to the north and the GSP is the eastern border.



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# Memories of Botany

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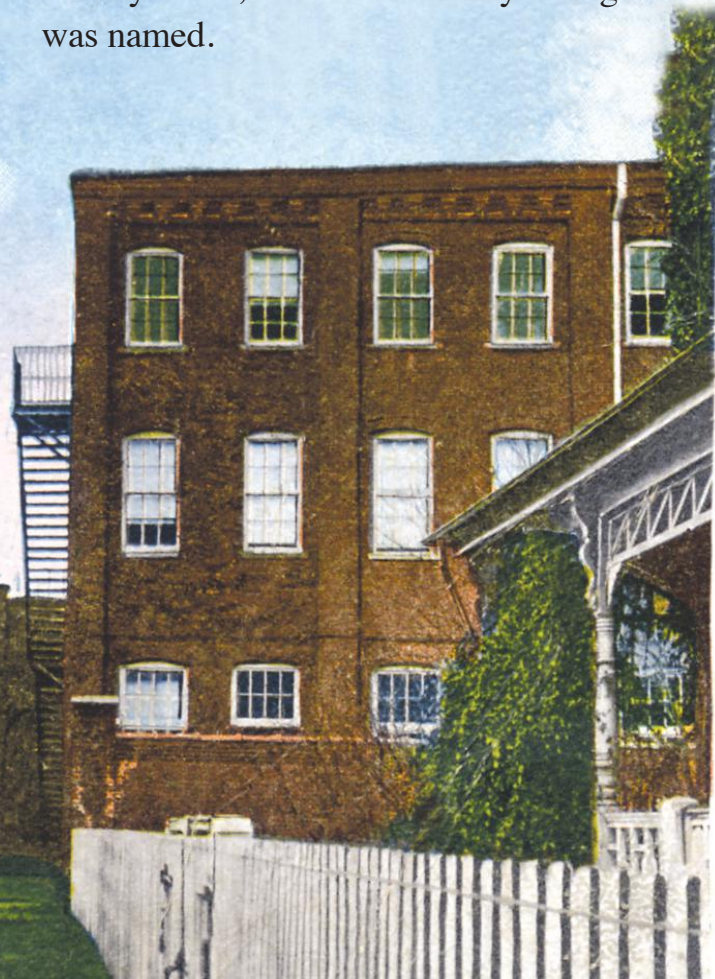
*As told in April 2019 by Helen Berkenbush,  
pictured below with her late husband Roy.*



Over a century ago, Clifton relied on an economic engine of mills and workers, many who lived in Botany Village. For city resident Helen Berkenbush, those times came alive nearly a decade ago as she catalogued Botany's unique history.

In 2017, the Passaic County Historical Society received a collection of materials related to Botany Mills of Clifton/Passaic and Forstmann Woolen Company of Passaic/Garfield. The collection was given by the now-closed American Textile History Museum in Massachusetts.

Berkenbush, then 80, had the task of inventorying the collection along with other volunteers. It included three skids of material—264 boxes of sample books, pieces of cloth, and some weaving hand tools, with the vast majority relating to Botany Mills, for which Botany Village was named.





A lifelong Clifton resident who once lived in Athenia and Maple Valley, Berkenbush resided in Botany since 1962 and been a Passaic County Historical Society volunteer for the previous five years. She used her experience cataloguing the large ledger-sized books of fabric swatches to write an article in the Newsletter of the Passaic County Historical Society in late 2018.

As Berkenbush recounted in her article, "Clifton and Passaic residents will remember seeing the huge brick buildings on both sides of the Passaic River belonging to Botany, Forstmann and Hird Mills (of Garfield) as you crossed the Ackerman Avenue Bridge."

She went on to tell Botany Mills was established in 1887, followed by Forstmann Woolen Company in the early 1900s. Samuel Hird established a Clifton plant, on the corner of Clifton and Paulison Aves., which became the Black Prince Distillery, now Clifton & Co. Luxury Apts.

"As a youngster," Berkenbush wrote, "I remember going to feed the sheep that he kept in the fenced lot alongside the building."

Berkenbush detailed on the Clifton side of the Passaic River, the Dundee Canal was built in 1861 in conjunction with the Dundee Falls. The resulting Dundee Water Power and Land Company provided water and power for the factories.

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Illustrated above, a rendering of a days-gone-by center in Historic Botany Village.

“In the 1920s,” Berkenbush wrote, “there were over 16,000 workers employed in the wool and silk mills located in and around Passaic. This workforce represented over 39 nationalities and approximately half of the employees were female. The largest, Botany Worsted Mills, employing 6,400 workers.”

The fabric swatch books date back to 1901-55 and contain an array of colors, tweeds, and plaids that reflect the changing fashion of the times.

“In its heyday,” Berkenbush wrote, “Botany 500 Suits for men were made of fine woolens and worsteds sold on Broadway in New York City. The company’s advertising brochure, *Botany: An American Institution*, details several other products for men, women and children including wrinkleproof ties, beachware and Lanolin cosmetics.”

For her article, Berkenbush spoke with noted WWII veteran and Cliftonite Walter Pruiksma, who in 2019 resided in Brick.

The late Pruiksma worked as a quality control examiner for Forstmann Mills, as well as a salesman.

He said employees working in the processing of the

woolen goods were sworn to “need-to-know” access to their factories, keeping the processes secret (the same was true for Botany Mills).

“During World War II,” Berkenbush wrote, “the tan fabric for all the Naval Officers’ uniforms were made by Forstmann Mills.”

Berkenbush also uncovered some significant Marching Mustangs history through Pruiksma, who said Botany Mills had a company band. When it was disbanded in the late 1930s, the instruments were donated to the Clifton Public Schools.

“In 1938,” she wrote, “the Mustang Band at Clifton High School was established with these same instruments.”

To house Botany and Forstmann Mills employees, Clifton developed an area along the river called Botany Village (a similar development along Passaic’s Dayton Ave. was also established).

“The Mills in the Botany Village neighborhood,” Berkenbush wrote, “are protected as part of the Dundee Industrial Historic District.”



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# Hard Work Got Taras HERE.

**At 16, he came from Ukraine not speaking a word of English. Today, he is School 14's Principal.**

**The American Dream is more than a reality for Taras Petryshyn.** It's a reminder that perseverance, a strong support system and natural leadership can benefit a community for generations.

Petryshyn's journey began as a CHS freshman in 1997 after emigrating from Ukraine with his parents and younger sister. "The first year was very hard," Petryshyn recalled, who was then 16. "I didn't know English and I had no friends. I just focused on studying."

By senior year, Petryshyn was able to test out of Clifton's ESL program and graduated in 2000. He enrolled at Bergen Community College to study English and set up his schedule to take morning classes so that he could work as a Clifton Schools custodian to cover his tuition and expenses.

Petryshyn's father, Mykhaylo, had worked as a custodian for Clifton Public Schools. When another job opened up, the younger Petryshyn applied for the position. He worked in CHS' Central Wing in the afternoons and evenings.

Soon he transferred to the district's administration building on Clifton Ave. There, he not only cleaned offices but many in the building noticed his can-do attitude. Conversations led to people learning about his life's journey and Petryshyn's goal of becoming a teacher.

Among those with whom Petryshyn enjoyed talking to was then-Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Rice.

Petryshyn also got to know Janina Kusielewicz, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction, who was then the Supervisor of Basic Skills and Bilingual Education. "As he was going about his cleaning duties, we would chat about his studies and his plans for the future," said



Kusielewicz in 2014. "He became well-known in the building for his work ethic. It was very impressive. He was working full time and going to school full time. It's the kind of commitment that we look for when hiring teachers."

Petryshyn completed two years at BCC, then enrolled in William Paterson for the Teacher Education program. His semester as a fifth grade student-teacher in Passaic led him to like working in an elementary school.

It was late summer of 2006 while cutting the grass on the front lawn at School 6 that Kusielewicz approached Petryshyn and informed him that a last-minute, temporary third grade teacher was needed at School 13.

A week later, Petryshyn was in the classroom for the start of the school year. When the regular teacher returned from a leave of absence in January 2007, Petryshyn was asked to fill in for a month in a first grade class at School 17.

He replaced another third grade teacher at School 5 to finish out the school year. Learning how to adapt to sudden changes and pivoting his focus ultimately prepared him well for the future. "You get to see where your strengths are as a teacher," said Petryshyn. Petryshyn's permanent posts included fifth grade in School 1 and School 8.

Just before his third year in the Delawanna school and his seventh year as a teacher, Petryshyn enrolled in a Fast Track program to earn his Master of Arts in Educational Leadership at Montclair State.



Fast-forward to 2018. Petryshyn interned at School 14 before starting his administrative role as assistant to Principal James Habedank. Petryshyn became School 14’s acting principal in 2024, then was officially appointed in 2025.

Perhaps it was Rice, who concluded his career by retiring in 2025 as the 44th State Superintendent of Public In-

struction for the Michigan Department of Education, who put it best when he acknowledged his mentee’s remarkable career trajectory back in 2014. “He’s a real Clifton success story, and I’m very proud of him. What he has done is proof that, if you work hard and study hard, you can learn a lot and make a contribution to the community.”



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# Diverse?



# Indeed!

A Look at Our Community's Cultures & Religions



When Clifton turned 100 in 2017, we at this magazine promised to continue telling more about the great people who make up our hometown. Over the last three decades, Clifton has evolved from what many considered to be a 'white' community to become among the most diverse in New Jersey. Over that time, we have documented the changes with stories and photo essays. Once again, we are proud to do that on the following pages of our magazine.

Clifton is made up of many faces ... individuals of various ethnicities, races, and religious beliefs. It's often easy to notice the differences among us, but let us also remember to make time to

## MANY FACES



clifton  
new jersey

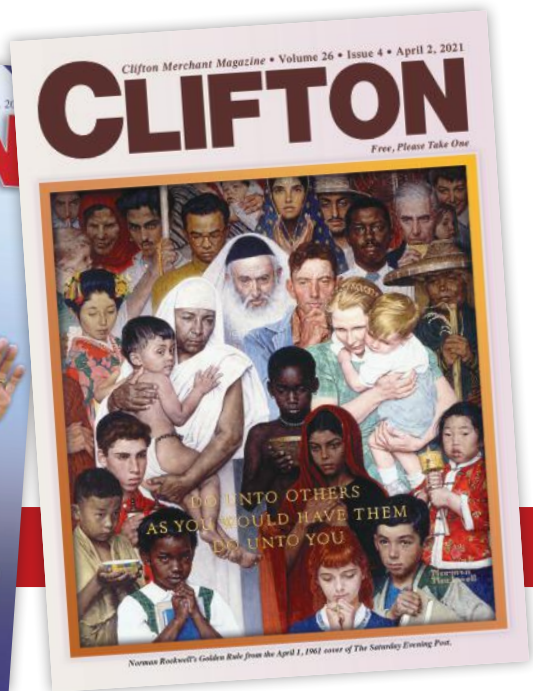
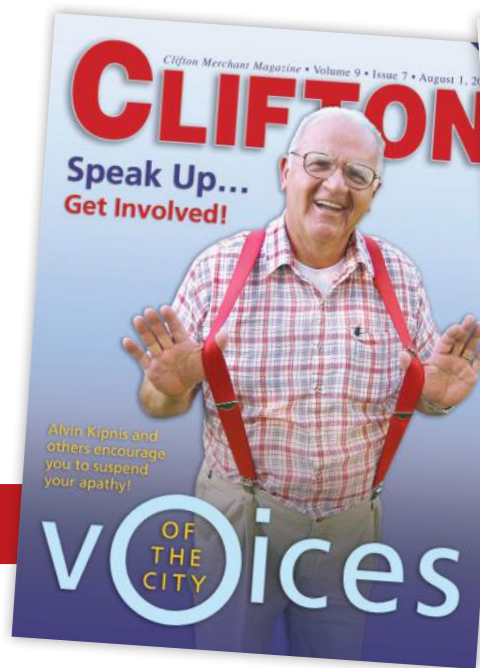
## ONE FAMILY



## Portraits Of Our Community

Many Faces - One Family is published by **TOM•A•HAWK PROMOTIONS** to celebrate the diversity of Clifton

In 1998, Clifton Magazine was awarded an Advocate's Award from NJ Gov. Christie Todd for our Many Faces, One Family publications. Facing page: Katherine Ardoff with her two daughters, Katherine and Lindsay. Their mom was born in Ireland and came to America to live in 1987. Also pictured the October 1998 magazine, featuring from left, Luisa Castillo who is Filipino, Rich Smith an African-American, John Pogorelec, a Slovakian, Sohail Mohammed, a Muslim from India and at center, Sophia Constandinou, who is of Greek ancestry.



embrace our common bonds. While each of us is unique, we are all living in America. And here, in our town, we are part of the family, the Clifton community.

So, how can we make it a better place to live, work and raise our families? Let's continue by being respectful and recognize that we need the resources of people from every neighborhood to help Clifton grow. We may not always understand each other, but we have to remember, we're in this together.

Some time ago, the State of New Jersey started a campaign with the theme *Many Faces—One Family*. The goal is to celebrate ethnicity and promote respect among all cultures.

Neighbors were encouraged to get to know one another and leaders in towns across the state were urged to foster communication among its residents.

That is the theme that we began some-three decades ago and the stories that we continue to tell today.

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# Diverse?... Indeed!



*There's no single way to celebrate diversity, and we've tried to share that in over three decades of Clifton storytelling. These are some of the voices in our community and how they've shared their identities to uplift themselves and embrace others.*

## Alam Abdelaziz

For Alam Abdelaziz, Clifton became much more than just his home; it was a land of opportunity. "Where else can you be a young guy, run for the City Council, and be welcomed by so many people and helped by so many candidates?" said Abdelaziz in 2014.

Abdelaziz (CHS 1994), who came here as a teen from Palestine, was the first Muslim-American to run for City Council. That was back in 2006.

From the start, he knew he would be a long shot. But he gave it his best and tried to learn the issues of the community. And he made his own positions known, plus how he'd be an advocate if elected.

His friendly personality was noticed by many, including his opponents. "They shared information. They invited me to events. They showed me that we can work together to build a better community," he recalled.

In a field of 16, he came in 15th. But the loss did not embitter him. The lessons learned on the campaign trail and the "education" that he learned in the months that followed inspired him to stay involved in his hometown.

The welcoming spirit shown to him by Cliftonites is something that resonates in his soul today. As an entrepreneur, it is what he most appreciates about the country that

he now calls home and the city that has helped shape him into the person he is today.

"I was only 30 and English was my second language," he said of his campaign. "But all the candidates were respectful and helped me out."

Since moving to Clifton in 1993, Abdelaziz has embodied the true meaning of an American Dream and what it is to be an entrepreneur. He began a cell phone company in Downtown Clifton and has been a Realtor for over two decades. He also became a certified EMT and dispatcher for an ambulance company.

Abdelaziz's main goal was to give back to the city that was so good to him and its growing diverse population.

"It's all about understanding one another," he said. "Clifton is welcoming, and it is more mixed than when I moved here."

## Nova UA Federal Credit Union

When Nova UA Federal Credit Union decided to change its name in September of 2016, it did it with good reason.

At the core of the name "Nova" is the concept of innovation — the process of meeting new challenges with new approaches. In Latin, as well as in Ukrainian, the word "nova" simply means new.



At right: Lou Anastos, Kathy Diaz, George Foukas, Tina Anastos, grandkids George and Heleena and Tom's wife Christina (above) who were married for 64 years.

# Η οικογένεια Φούκα γιορτάζει την Αμερική και το Κλίφτον!

Inspired by our late dad Thomas (Anastasios) Foukas and his loving wife, our mom, Christina (Blathras) Foukas, we celebrate Clifton and America!



## Diverse?... Indeed!

On Oct. 20, 2018, Nova UA FCU opened the new bank at 851 Allwood Rd. Pictured are Board members, from left, George Oliarnyk, Walter Voinov, Michael Lewko, CEO Val Bogattchouk, Pawlo Figol, Volodymyr Hunko, Jaroslav Fedun, and Nicholas Kosciolk.



“With our growth in recent years,” said Val Bogattchouk, CEO of the credit union who oversaw this transition, “and the increasing demand for mobile banking and online services, we remain committed to the credit union philosophy of people-helping-people, being owned by our members and serving our community.”

Established in 1961 to serve the Ukrainian-American community of Clifton and Passaic, the credit union has steadily expanded its base of members. From the original charter to serve immigrants of Ukrainian heritage, the credit union’s charter now includes anyone who lives, works, or studies in Passaic County.

This community charter, plus an increase in Ukrainian immigration into our area, are the basis for the credit union’s growth. In 2015, the credit union exceeded \$100 million in assets and membership grew by more than 7.5%. Every year, about 15-20% of the credit union’s earned profits go to support multiple organizations and the local community.

### Joseph Zak

Casimir Pulaski is revered as a great military hero, both in his native Poland, as well as in the United States, where he is known as one of the “fathers of American cavalry” for his exploits on horseback during the Revolutionary War.

The American general is a source of pride for all who claim Polish heritage, including for Joseph Zak, 73, who was honored to be named Marshal of the Passaic-Clifton contingent for the 79th annual Pulaski Day Parade held Oct. 2, 2016 in New York City.

“When I was young, we would march in school, but I didn’t think much of it,” explained Zak. “As I got older, I learned more about Pulaski. Ben Franklin was in Europe



Nancy Shook Garretson with granddaughter Sophia before the 2019 Pulaski Day Parade and Joe Zak in 2016.

recruiting for America’s cause during the Revolutionary War and wrote back that Pulaski would be able to expertly contribute.”

“This is a man who saved George Washington’s life,” Zak continued. “He was a brilliant tactician who lost his life in battle by the age of 34.”

The Passaic-Clifton group is one of 32 contingents that marched in the parade that stretched down Fifth Ave. for more than 20 blocks and lasted more than four hours. After the parade, a gala is held and each marshal is escorted by a Miss Polonia or Junior Miss Polonia.

“I’ve been marching in the parade since I immigrated to the United States in 1967 with my parents, Jozef



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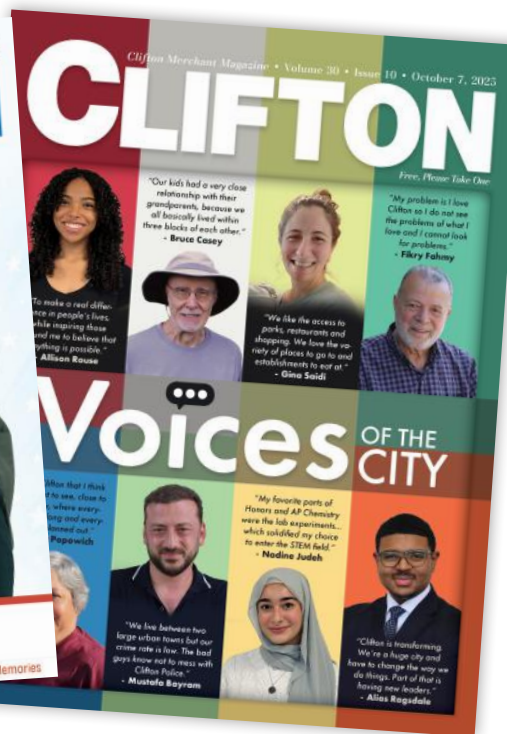
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and Zofia,” said Zak, a native of Przedzel, Poland. In Clifton, parade day starts in Athenia, home to a large Polish community. “We march down Speer Ave, past my church, St. John Kanty, then we go down Huron Ave. and finish at the Athenia Veterans Post,” said Zak.

After the local march, the Passaic-Clifton contingent boarded buses packed with Polish snacks and polka music, hand-picked by Zak, and rode off to New York City for the main parade. Zak was also to thank for the transportation, as the founder of Panorama Bus Tours. “It’s been almost three decades that I’ve provided buses for the parade.”

**NJEDDA**

For nearly 80 years, the North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency has proven to be an indispensable gem for Clifton families who seek its services.

NJEDDA, 1481 Main Ave., has provided more than seven decades of support and educational opportunities for people of all ages who live with developmental disabilities.

But the non-profit continues to grow and achieve with each passing day. Established in Clifton in 1947, NJEDDA’S goal, with the longtime support of local Elks Lodges, is to address the unmet needs of children and adults through medical care, education, and therapy.

In recent years, the non-profit, with funding from the Passaic County Elks Special Children’s Committee, as well as other corporate benefactors and local civic groups, has added a new room for children that provides space for physical and occupational therapy activities.



A blessing at BAPS on Bloomfield Ave. At left, Rachel Herrington, Executive Director of NJEDDA and her predecessor William Weiss, who we profiled in 2013.

NJEDDA Executive Director Rachel Herrington has also emphasized the work done by the Adult Training Center. “Our Adult Training Center provides Day Habilitation Services, including speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy,” explained Herrington.

She became director in 2021 after Dr. William Weiss retired after 43 years of service. Serving as director since 1979, Weiss initiated and established a high school and adult school. Learn more at: [njedda.org](http://njedda.org).

**Sanjay Shah at BAPS**

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, 854 Bloomfield Ave., is open for “darshan”, or viewing and praying to the sacred images. In April of 2021, temple administrative coordinator Sanjay Shah spoke about how the community lives by the philosophy of “Simple Living, High Thinking.”

“We really only need simple things, not very fancy things,” he said. “There are a lot of people who need the money, [so we strive] not to be greedy and not to keep [wealth] for oneself.”

Another Hindu belief that receives a good deal of attention here is the concept of reincarnation. One way to describe it is “a recycling of souls.” The process continues until pureness is met. Another way to think of it is climbing a ladder to heaven. *Continued on page 130*

From left in 1998: James Messineo, Michael Porter, Jr., Michael Porter, Sr., Scott Porter, Keith Porter, and up front, Andrew Messineo.

### The Scottish Pipes

Coordinating the three basic components of playing the bagpipes — walking, blowing into the mouthpiece, and playing the nine melodic notes — usually frustrates a novice, Mike Porter Sr. told *Clifton Merchant* in 2001.

“Once you get the knack of it, it’s no great feat,” he explained. “I started playing the pipes out of fascination. I always wondered how my wife, Joyce, lived through those early days.”

There were a few sour notes, he recalled, but she became immune to it. “The pipes are unique because unlike a brass instrument, pipers must memorize each song. That in itself is a challenge,” he said. Porter, of the Allwood Funeral Home, and sons Keith, Mike Jr., (who died in 2017) and Scott (all CHS graduates) belong to the Kearny Caledonian Pipe Band.



When daughter Dana married James Messineo, the Porters recruited him for the band. Dana danced with the Mary Stewart Dancers, a Scottish troupe also in Kearny. “James is Italian, but once he married my daughter, he had no choice but to join us,” the elder Porter said of his son-in-law. “It’s either sink or swim. He’s a mainstay, and we’re grateful.”

## CITY OF CLIFTON

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"We believe if you do good things in your life, it will come back to you," said Shah.

The ancient Hindu festival Holi, known to many as the "festival of colors" or the "festival of love", represents the celebration of triumph of good over evil and marks the arrival of spring. During normal hours of operation, the temple holds Arti at 7 am and 6:30 pm. The religious ritual of worship is part of puja, during which light is offered to the deities. To learn more, visit: [baps.org/Global-Network/North-America/Clifton.aspx](https://baps.org/Global-Network/North-America/Clifton.aspx).

## Rawan Awadalla

Rawan Awadalla (above left) was the Boys & Girls Club of Clifton's 2021 Youth of the Year, but she was also a leader all on her own. "The feeling of knowing students are looking up to me is indescribable, and it inspired me to take action and become the role model that I want them to learn from and look up to," said Awadalla (CHS 2022). "I wanted them to know that nothing is out of reach; you can accomplish anything you put your mind [to] — you just have to have passion."

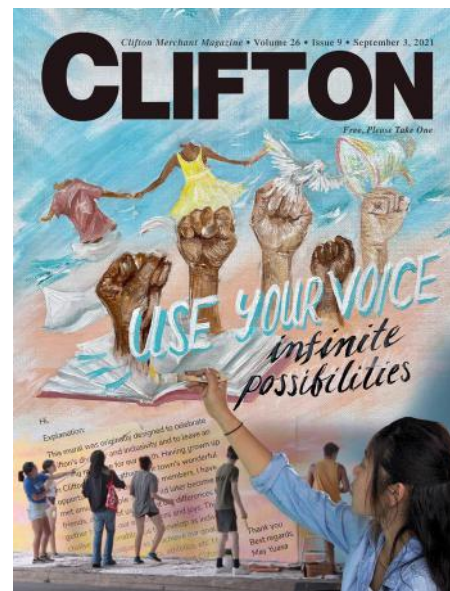
In freshman year, Awadalla volunteered as a counselor's aid and helped students with their homework. She proved her commitment throughout high school by pitching a Diversity and Inclusion Coalition.

The goal was to diversify faculty through the Clifton Board of Education and give a platform for people to discuss racial equality and social issues that affect students.

Awadalla graduated in May from the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied Sociology & Economics. She was also Vice President of the Penn John Marshall Pre-Law Society.

## May Yuasa

May Yuasa (CHS 2020) set out to encourage unity and start a dialogue in her hometown. She achieved that with her city mural in the Summer of 2021 that depicted hands entwined around the words: "Use Your Voice."



The second mural across the Parkway underpass at Allwood Rd. presented children holding hands, amongst the words: "Infinite Possibilities." Despite approval from then City Manager Dominick Villano and the Department of Public Works for her original design, some people likened a raised fist on the "Use Your Voice" mural to communism.

"[This mural] hinted at unifying and doing better as a community and, because of that, it created a lot of conversations throughout the community," said Yuasa.

The alumna of School 11 and WWMS was a majorette sergeant at CHS and on the Cross Country team. She is a 2024 grad of Cornell University and works as an Assistant Consultant, Civil Engineer at WSP USA in New York City.

## Michael Finigan (in his own words ...)

Prayer has always been the center of my life since my childhood as a student at St. Brendan's in the 1950s. I will never forget Sister Mairea. She said, "Jesus was perfect. If you see him as a role model, you will not be perfect, but you will be way ahead of everyone else."

Those words have inspired me throughout my life, in sickness and in health. Through speaking to God in good times and bad, I have found a sense of peace and well-being in prayer.

As a young man, I considered the priesthood with much contemplation, but I decided against it. Now here I am at the age of 73, still single and living alone. When I look back over the decades, I realize that I would have been a good priest. The old saying, "God works in mysterious ways" brings new light upon my long life and lessons well-learned. I have taken my faith seriously and, as a result, have grown stronger in my faith.



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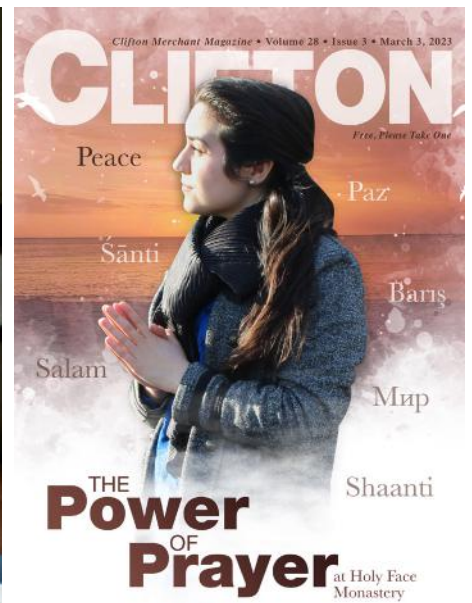
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## Diverse?... Indeed!

Prayer and faith do not always give us what we pray for, but what we learn from our life experience. True faith means that we believe in God, the loving Father, who only wants what is best for us. That is faith and the answer to our prayers. I am thankful for learning this at a young age. I have made mistakes and, in prayer, asked for forgiveness. In this process, I have grown stronger in my faith. That is what faith and prayer have taught me, wrote Finigan, pictured.



### Elinor Alboum

Togetherness is important all year for Elinor Alboum, but even more so during Passover.

“It’s a happy holiday, and we do have Jewish holidays that are not happy,” said Alboum in March, 2023. She and her husband, Martin, have three children. Instead of hosting the Seder in her home, the former president of the Clifton Jewish Center passed the tradition to her daughter.

“Passover is the retelling of the Exodus story and of Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt,” said Alboum. “My grandson, who just had a Bar Mitzvah, will be asking the four questions.” The Seder plate has changed slightly over time. Traditional foods that younger people put on plates can vary and “every family has some kind of tradition.”

There’s also new ways to discuss the 10 plagues that God brought on the Egyptians. “Nowadays, younger families have little toys or objects on the table to illustrate the plagues. When I was younger, nobody did that.” Spending time with family and reciting the story of Passover before the meal, is deeply meaningful. It’s something that the entire family can join in as each person tells part of the story.

### Frank Cortes

Frank Cortes has felt a deep, spiritual connection to Holy Face Monastery for decades. He has lived in Clifton since 2005 and is the President at The Diamond Real Estate Agency. He finds himself up at the monastery once or twice a week admiring the statues of Jesus, the saints and appreciates the reprieve the grounds gave many people.

“I would go there and walk because we couldn’t go inside,” said Cortes in *Clifton Merchant’s* March 2023 edition. “It’s great to meditate and breathe some fresh air. It feels like you’re in Heaven.”

Cortes described the grounds as getting a “nice spiritual massage.” When he needs it the most, he will pray there and sometimes stay for an hour. He said he used to bring his late father there when he was sick for that same peace.

“One word that I come out of there with is: Hope,” said Cortes. “You can walk in there also when you’re happy to say, ‘Thank you, God. Thank you for everything that you do for me.’ I wouldn’t change it for anything. It’s my favorite place.”



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# CLIFTON

Sixteen-year-old Rachel Zegler in 2017 was the star in TLC's production of "Thor-oughly Modern Millie". Zegler made her debut in 2014 at the age of 13 in TLC's production of "Fiddler on the Roof".

In December 2018, Zegler posted her Twitter video performing Lady Gaga's "Shallow" that went viral with over 8.5 million views.

In 2019, the year she'd graduate Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi, she was cast as Maria in Steven Spielberg's West Side Story remake, beating out 30,000 hopefuls.

But she was already on the map—our 2019 Map of Clifton at least, as this is where this photo was from!

Today, Zegler is a Golden Globe winner as Best Actress in a Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy for West Side Story and has won a Laurence Olivier Award for her West End debut in Evita as Eva Perón.

Zegler's Broadway debut was a year prior, starring opposite Kit Connor, in the 2025 production of Romeo + Juliet at Circle in the Square Theatre.



*In May 2004, Alexandra Ortiz with the Clifton and Fair Lawn Honor Guard in Washington, D.C.*



## Alexandra Ortiz

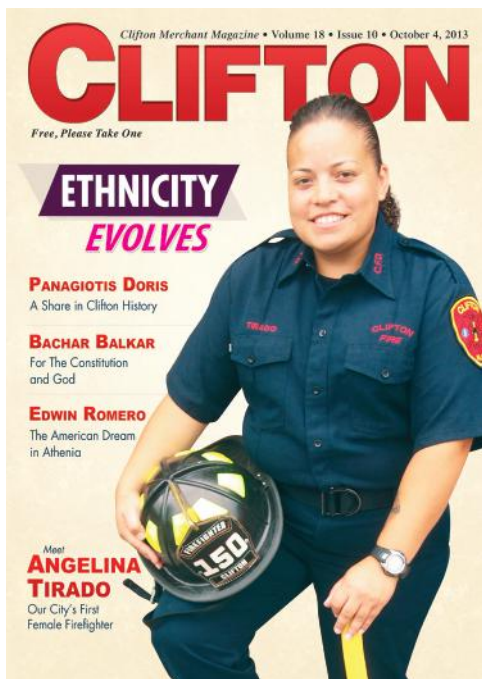
For a decade after joining the Clifton Police, Alexandra Ortiz was literally in a league of her own. On Jan. 14, 1987, she became the first female Clifton Police Officer, alongside 11 male Police Academy graduates.

"I don't think anybody knew what to expect," said Ortiz.

But before joining the Clifton Police, Ortiz served in the US Air Force. She enrolled at the Bergen County Police Academy at age 27. Her military service and age are what gave her an edge, which led to her assignment as the leader of her platoon.

Once tapped by Clifton to join their ranks, it wasn't a seamless transition. Assumptions were made based on her gender and it felt as though Ortiz was under a magnifying glass. As she spent her nights on duty patrolling Botany Village, she tried to acclimate and look positively at the situation.

"It's never easy being first," she said in a 2004 interview. "The trick to surviving anything is to find something good about it." Ortiz retired in 2008 and today is a mother of four and a grandmother.



## Angelina Tirado

Angelina Tirado was carrying on a proud family tradition of “axe-toting” when she appeared in our October 2013 edition holding the blood-red head and a sharpened peen.

Tirado’s father, Alberto, was a Passaic firefighter who made the ultimate sacrifice on May 9, 2001 while searching a burning building for missing children. The kids were later found safe, but the act of conspicuous on-the-job bravery resulted in a posthumous promotion to Lieutenant.

Angelina was a CHS senior in 2001. Fast-forward 12 years, she became Clifton’s first, and at that time only, female firefighter. She took the written test in 2006, passed the physical in 2007, but she wasn’t appointed to the Clifton FD until 2010 due to civil service procedures and budgetary reasons.

But she never gave up on it. “What can I tell you?” said Tirado. “I always just wanted to help people.” In July 2018, Tirado broke another barrier after being promoted to lieutenant, making her the first woman to hold an office position in the city. Tirado is Clifton’s Emergency Management Coordinator in the Office of Emergency Management.





**Kim Castellano**

Kim Castellano has never considered herself “the one” or “a visionary”, but she is a leader and a driving force behind Power of One Christian Coaching and Outreach Ministries. The mission is to change lives with a message of hope. “It’s about [having] one ear to Heaven [and] the other on the ground,” said Castellano in 2017.

Her non-profit organization serves disadvantaged community members by providing life coaching and outreach. It also runs themed programs for the community, such as: “Seniors, We Care”, “Emergency Relief”, “Personal Development”, and “Power of One Families”.

Castellano launched Power of One in October 2011, achieving official nonprofit status less than two years later in May 2013. When it began, it started on the second floor of a vacant apartment in Maywood. Today, Power of One has assisted school principals, faculty, and community workers in distributing thousands of backpacks throughout Clifton’s K-8 schools. Info: [powerofoneccom.org](http://powerofoneccom.org).

**Margaret Kardasz**

If Margaret Kardasz is the glue holding Botany together, George’s Coffee Shop is the glue stick — in other words, the instrument used to push her forward and allow her to do what she can for the neighborhood.

That journey began when an 18-year-old Kardasz visited the U.S. during the summer and was hired by a Polish deli. Originally from Olsztyn, Poland, Kardasz first visited the US at age 16 and wasn’t moved by the experience.

What changed things for her was knowing some English the second visit here and exploring spots like the Jersey shore and New York City on weekends.

Jumping ahead to January 2016, Kardasz became the owner of George’s Coffee Shop in Historic Botany Village, a staple there for over three decades. She also became the president of Botany’s Special Improvement District.

“Clifton is an amazing city, and you can find everything you need here,” said Kardasz. “The people are amazing and very supportive, but we just need to give them a chance and opportunity.”

**Councilwoman Lauren Murphy**

Lauren Murphy did it all — and, as a result, it’s no surprise that residents remember her for her many varied contributions to the fabric of our community. Murphy, who passed away on Jan. 13, 2024, moved to Clifton in 2006 and was elected to the City Council in 2014.

Along with serving as President of the Clifton Democratic Club, Murphy was the Executive Director of the Passaic County One Stop Career Center in Paterson for over 10 years and was an Administrator for the Passaic County Board of Social Services, where she worked for 34 years.

In her adopted hometown, she served as part of the Advisory Committee for Individuals with Disabilities, the Homeless Committee, and the Recreation Committee. She also had a habit of building bridges as seen on the October 2022 cover with her Republican counterpart Joe Cupoli.

After her passing, Clifton’s Free Little Pantries introduced a Pet Pantry in her name and Clifton’s “Code Blue” warming center was named “The Lauren Murphy Warming Center” to honor her advocacy. “I haven’t been in the City of Clifton since birth like some [of the incumbents],” said Murphy in 2022, “but I love this city and put my heart and soul into every committee I’m on.”

## Mayor Gloria Kolodziej

Gloria Kolodziej had a passion that helped her win elections and be held in high esteem within the arts community. Public service is a family trait that began with her husband, Joe, and continues with their son Joseph.

Kolodziej was first elected to the Council in 1981 in a special election. Her husband, Joe, was elected to the city's governing body in 1978, but died two years into his term. In 1982, Kolodziej was the highest vote-getter and was named mayor; in 1986 she won the top spot again and was the first candidate to win back-to-back top place finish.

From 1990 to 2010, she served on the Council. Kolodziej championed the Steep Slope Ordinance to Preserve Garrett Mountain, helped to build a new Clifton Library, and was instrumental in expanding the Boys & Girls Club.

Among the founders of the Clifton Arts Center, she maintained a vision for its growth. In later years, she continued to volunteer at the Gloria J. Kolodziej Arts Center, which was named in her honor in 2010. Kolodziej, aged 77, passed away on Dec. 9, 2016. Today, her son Joseph (CHS 1980) has served on the Council from 2010 to 2018 and was elected again in 2022. He also served on the Board of Education from 1999-2006, spending three years as president and three years as vice president.

## Councilwoman Rosemary Pino

Rosemary Pino thinks outside the box — and, in a similar vein, outside of Clifton's borders. The two-term councilwoman has ambitions as the Republican candidate for NJ's 9th Congressional District while she's simultaneously running to keep her seat on the Council.



*Photos taken in the Clifton Magazine office of Gloria Kolodziej in 2010 and of Rosemary Pino in 2011, during her campaign for Board of Education.*

While she has heard the criticism, Pino said the groundswell for running for both spots has come from the community. Pino has prioritized quality of life concerns, police retention, as well as community engagement and participation. In 2011, she created PINO (Providing Individuals New Opportunity) to promote inclusive and sustainable community development. The ECHO (Educated Communities Help Others) Unity Series is part of PINO that organizes the monthly “Clifton Behind the Scenes” program to give residents an inside look at how their city operates.

Pino was the first of an ethnic minority to be elected to the Council and the first Latina elected to the Board of Education. “The greatest part about Clifton,” she said in 2019, “is the multiplicity of cultures throughout our community and our city’s ability to come together and celebrate.”





Meet a couple of Hall of Famers: Gloria Tramontin Struck (CHS 1942) and Keiko Tokuda (CHS 1998) with her kids.

## Gloria Tramontin Struck

Even at a century, Gloria Tramontin Struck’s face is youthful. She credits the wind, rain, sun, and thousands of miles on her Harley-Davidson. Born in 1925 behind her family’s Lexington Cycle Shop, Struck has been riding since age 16. She rode annually from her Albion home to Daytona, Sturgis and thousands of points in between.

Back in Clifton she remained a proud Mustang, chairing reunions for the Class of 1942 up until the mid-2000s. Riding into her 90’s, often with her daughter Lori, she clocked over 500,000 miles through the 48 contiguous U.S. states and Europe when we profiled her in April of 2018.

Struck was inducted into the Sturgis Hall of Fame in 2011, AMA Hall of Fame in 2016, and received the Sturgis Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017. There are books, TV shows and other media about her. And here is one more milestone: she turns 101 on July 7.

## Keiko Tokuda

Four straight NJSIAA singles titles, an 86-0 record, and a lifetime imprint on Mustang athletics. Keiko Tokuda (CHS 1998) was also ranked 10th in the USA for girls U-18, 650th in the world and played the junior circuit U.S. Open, French Open, and Wimbledon. That’s before she got a full ride to Stanford where she played tennis, two of the four years as captain, leading the team to three championships and earning All-American



distinction. She graduated with a degree in International Relations, focusing on Political Science and Economics, and minored in Psychology.

Tokuda played a year in the Pro Tour, ranking as high as the 400s in singles and 300s in doubles. In 2019, she founded Dare to Grow Coaching to support others in achieving career aspirations and leading a more fulfilling life. Now in San Francisco, she is a marketing executive at Turgon AI.

## Nadia Stavko

Clifton has its own former Olympic swimmer in Nadia Stavko. For over 25 years, the Boys & Girls Club’s Aquatics Director has taught thousands of kids the basics of swimming. Born in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine — then part of the Soviet Union — Stavko came to The Club in 1999.

She swam faster than anyone in her hometown and emerged as the women’s backstroke champion of Ukraine. Next, she was national champion during rigorous competitions throughout the 15-nation bloc of countries comprising the former USSR.

By age 14, Stavko set the Soviet record in the women’s 100-meter backstroke. At 18, she was at the Olympic Games in Montreal. “I absolutely enjoyed my life as a swimmer,” said Stavko. “If I were young, I would do it all over again.” As a long-time aquatics director, she enjoys fostering the talent of today’s youth. “The kids are our future,” she said.



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## NATIVES & NEWCOMERS

### Debbie Oliver

Debbie Oliver is non-stop energy, creativity, and positivity. Where does it come from? When she was a kid, she would run plays and talent shows in her backyard, organizing neighborhood kids to the stage. As the director of the Clifton Recreation Department, Oliver's still making sure that kids have outlets to play, explore, and learn all year long. She directs a fun-loving staff and often gets help from volunteers to bring some great ideas to fruition.

Whether organizing annual events like the "Halloween Parade & HarvestFest", "A Knight for a Princess", "Salute to the Veterans", or "Candyland", or improving park infrastructure and areas of play in the 39 parks, our residents of all ages are better for it. Visit her on the second floor of City Hall and you'll see it all ties back to the four words on the wall of her office: "Trust your crazy ideas."

### Roxanne Cammilleri

The arts have transformed in and around the Clifton Arts Center in no small part due to the leadership and imagination of Director Roxanne Cammilleri. Since 2003, she has



overseen Clifton Arts Center & Sculpture Park's growth and expansion, including when all institutions were forced to close their doors due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Whether it was through physical or virtual exhibits, arts programs, or more recently live music, Cammilleri and her dedicated team continuously strive to bring a sense of community. The Arts Center first opened its doors in 2000. For news and events, visit: [cliftonartscenter.org](http://cliftonartscenter.org).

"We believe mentorship in the arts shapes more than creative ability; it helps develop empathy, discipline, collaboration, self-expression, and good humanity," said Cammilleri, pictured at the Hamilton House with Eugenia Gore.



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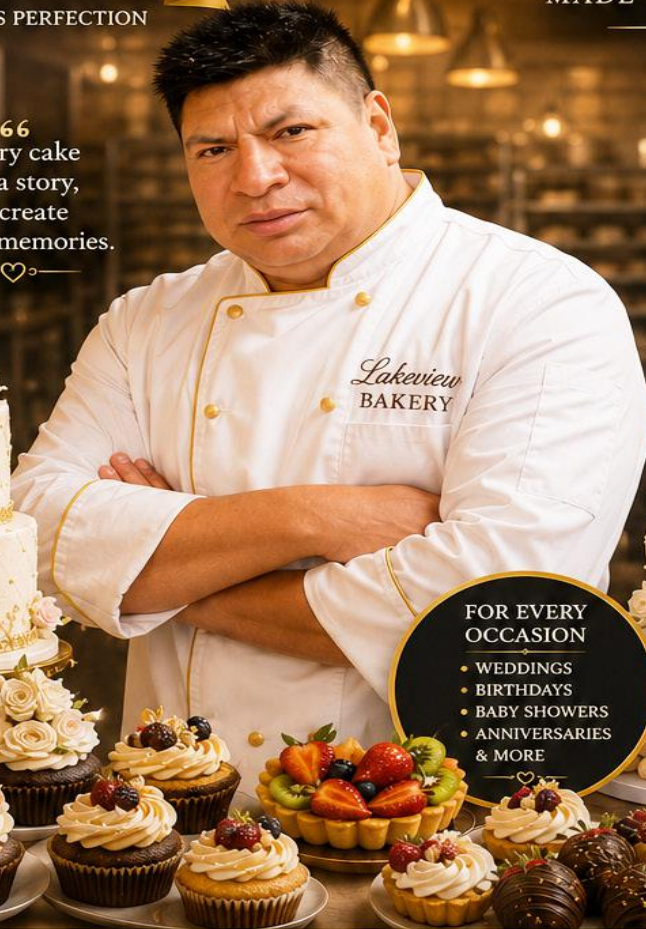
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# “Every town has a Lou Poles,”

dismissed the late, great Mustang sports historian in a 2003 interview.

“Guys like me are the ones people love to talk sports with. We help them remember a great game or player from their past,” continued Poles. “What’s nice is that I often wind up becoming lifelong friends with the people I talk to, or at least lifelong friendly acquaintances.”

Every town doesn’t have a Lou Poles—they’re rare individuals, filled with a love of sports and city that goes beyond that of a normal fan. Poles is a maroon and gray original, Clifton’s own.

A conversation with Poles brings fourth a dizzying parade of games, statistics, and players—each flowing from one story to the next.

“My initials are L.P.,” said Poles, who died in 2017. “Some people say it stands for ‘Long Playing.’”

It’s nearly impossible not to get swept up into Poles’ sporting world when he’s talking—the enthusiasm bounc-



ing along with his rapid-fire, staccato voice.

At his nostalgia sessions at The Hot Grill or Nash Park, he’ll recall Coach Joe Grecco’s halftime speeches (Poles listened by the field house window), Bobby Holly and Ray “Ditch” Malavasi appearing in the Super Bowl, or Dave Szott lining up to battle for his beloved Jets.

And that’s just in the first five minutes. When he’s finished, as was the case after a recent Hot Grill performance, strangers have applauded. “As you know ...” he’ll say as another story begins. His listeners usually don’t know, but that doesn’t matter to Poles. It’s not about who knows more about

sports, or if someone remembers a game a bit differently than he does. To Poles, the important thing is that the stories get told and the athletes live again.



## Giuseppe Rossi

Just before his 13th birthday, Giuseppe Rossi left Clifton with his father, Fernando, to play soccer and never came home. That was in 2000, when he joined Parma’s youth system with the hope of one day playing for the Azzurri — Italy’s national team. He accomplished that and more.

Rossi represented the Italian men’s national team at the 2008 Summer Olympics and the 2009 FIFA Confederations Cup, amassing 30 caps in his senior national team career. Rossi received the 2008 Olympics Golden Boot as the tournament’s top scorer, at age 22, and made his debut with Italy’s senior team that October.

Rossi family ties to Clifton run deep. The family lived on Luddington Ave. Giuseppe’s sister, Tina, graduated CHS and mom Cleonilde was a language teacher there. Fernando, who passed away in 2010, taught Italian and Spanish and coached Mustang Boys Soccer, winning 353 games, 12 Passaic County titles, three sectional crowns, and the 1994 Group IV NJ championship. Today, Rossi is the director of soccer for the Paterson-based New York Cosmos.





**Jon Seda**

Flipping through the 1988 CHS yearbook, you won't find Jon Seda's picture on the Clifton High Drama Club page.

But turn to the sports section, and you can't miss him. Before realizing he wouldn't be the next Bo Jackson, Seda grew up wanting to be a sports star.

Football, wrestling, and baseball were among Seda's Mustang passions. About at the same time, he found boxing and finished second with a 21-1 record at the 1989 NJ Golden Gloves. He hung up his gloves after his first film audition—for the 1992 boxing movie *Gladiator*—landed him a co-starring role.

His mother was the one who urged him to pursue acting—no more guaranteed to make him a star, but far safer than boxing. The acting bug stuck.

Seda went on to work with the likes of Al Pacino, Sean Penn, Whoopi Goldberg, Drew Barrymore, Bruce Willis, Jennifer Lopez, and many more. "I'd like to produce films, have my own production company," Seda told us in November 2009 in a profile we did as he played legendary U.S. Marine and Medal of Honor recipient John Basilone in the 2010 HBO war miniseries "The Pacific". Follow him on Instagram @jonseda.



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## Ed Looney

Ed Looney understood the risk of rolling the dice and, as the Founder and Executive Director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey, he helped countless others with their own journey to recovery.

Looney, who owned Henry's Deli on Van Houten Ave. from 1959 to 1986, ultimately kept his business and saved his family by joining a 12-step program on July 1, 1968. The 1952 CHS grad went on to help found the Council in 1982, become a Certified Gambling counselor in 1988, and was hired as Deputy Director in 1991.

"Most compulsive gamblers are very bright, charismatic and tend to be extremely competitive," Looney told *Clifton Merchant* in February 2006. "However, they usually have low self-esteem, or even depression or anxiety."

Looney, who passed away age 80 in 2016, was a recovering gambler of over 40 years. His compulsion was in sports betting—in particular, baseball. Visit [800gambler.org](http://800gambler.org).

## Angelo Bertelli

Clifton's Heisman Trophy winner knew back in 1943 there were more dangerous opponents in the world than Michigan, Illinois, or all of the top schools combined.

That's because when Angelo Bertelli got word that he won the trophy, he was in Marine boot camp on Parris Island. As far as he knew, he might never play football again.

And he loved playing football for Notre Dame. He was their first player to win the trophy—and for good reason. In his career, the Irish went 21-2-3, with Bertelli throwing for 2,578 yards and 28 TD passes. He also kicked 41 extra points. The best measure of Bertelli's talent, though, was his No. 1 selection in the 1943 NFL draft.

But Uncle Sam called. While at Notre Dame, Bertelli enlisted in the U.S. Marines, which placed him in their V-12 program, a college course for prospective officers.

After boot camp, he served at Guam, which was already secured, as a recreation officer. He saw combat at the Battle of Iwo Jima, where 77,000 Marines fought against 22,000 Japanese, entrenched in tunnels, pillboxes, and caves.

Then, in 1949, Bertelli received a call from former Chicago Rockets teammate Augie Lio. He asked Bertelli to come to New Jersey and coach a semi-pro football team, the Paterson Pan-



*Ed Looney, Angelo Bertelli, below, HF aka Henry Fette with great grandsons, Hart and Dan.*

thers. Bertelli became friends with developer Steve Dudiak who was a silent partner and helped Bertelli open a liquor store in the Styertowne Shopping Center.

"He loved his business, loved his friends here," said his son Michael. "Clifton meant a lot to my father."

## HF and the Fette Family

The Fette family holds a legacy of automotive excellence in Clifton, but their fourth-generation (below brothers Hart and Dan) business reach is far—just like their philanthropic support.

That started when showman extraordinaire "HF" founded Henry Fette & Co in 1952 at Main and Madison Aves. In 1954, he moved to a showroom on the Allwood Circle. Since 1977, Fette Auto Group, now a Ford, Infiniti, and Kia dealer, has been at the intersection of Routes 3 and 46 on what was once the Bowlero bowling center.



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The second generation began when Larry, the 1954 CHS grad, began working with HF in high school. Larry joined the firm full time after he graduated from Rutgers.

“Like my father always said: Customers come first, then employees, and last, the owners,” said Larry. “We pride ourselves on good customer service.”

Larry, who passed in 2008, instilled a similar work ethic in his son John. All three men were committed to growing the business and driven by a desire to improve the overall lives of their clients.

That brings us to the fourth generation, John and Kristin’s twin sons Hart and Dan, who have worked at the dealership for 12 years. Fette Motors continues to respond to business demands. They just purchased Kaytes Ford in Warwick, NY, and are currently building a new truck and vehicle service center on Rt. 46 West in Clifton.

### Joe Padula

Joe “Sarge” Padula hit his personal trifecta in 1981. He had just retired from the Clifton Police Department, bought a new Cadillac and met the love of his life, Elizabeth Verderosa.

It just took Sarge 32 years to cash in that ticket.

In 2013, at age 80, he retired from his second career as the city’s liaison to the Passaic County Prosecutor’s Office. More importantly, he and Elizabeth made it official and tied the knot on June 30, 2013.

Why did it take so long? “We were taking care of our parents,” he said with a smile. “But we still got two homes, Toms River and here. We gotta consolidate.”

Sarge laughed and admitted that might be tough to do. He liked having lunch at The Hot Grill, Tuesday night poker games, getting fresh Gerbino’s bread at Corrado’s, and seeing “the guys.” Meaning old-timers that he grew up with in the Beantown on Valley Rd.

Sarge led the 2013 Clifton Veterans Parade. The Koreaera Army Veteran—“make sure people know I wasn’t in any action,” said Sarge—was named the Grand Marshal for his lifetime of service. He passed at age 85 in 2018.



*Joe Padula, Rafael Cuellar, Stephen Kozak.*

### Rafael Cuellar

We’ve all likely benefited from at least one of Rafael Cuellar’s ventures. While things are evolving in his enterprises, most of it is grounded here in Clifton, his hometown. Cuellar owns Fully Promoted, Crunch Fitness, and President Wines & Spirits Clifton; all at 895 Paulison Ave.

But here’s a backstory: Cuellar was a US Navy Lt. Cmdr. when his dad, Evelio, died in 1996. Cuellar returned home to manage President’s Supermarket in Passaic, which his dad founded in 1984.

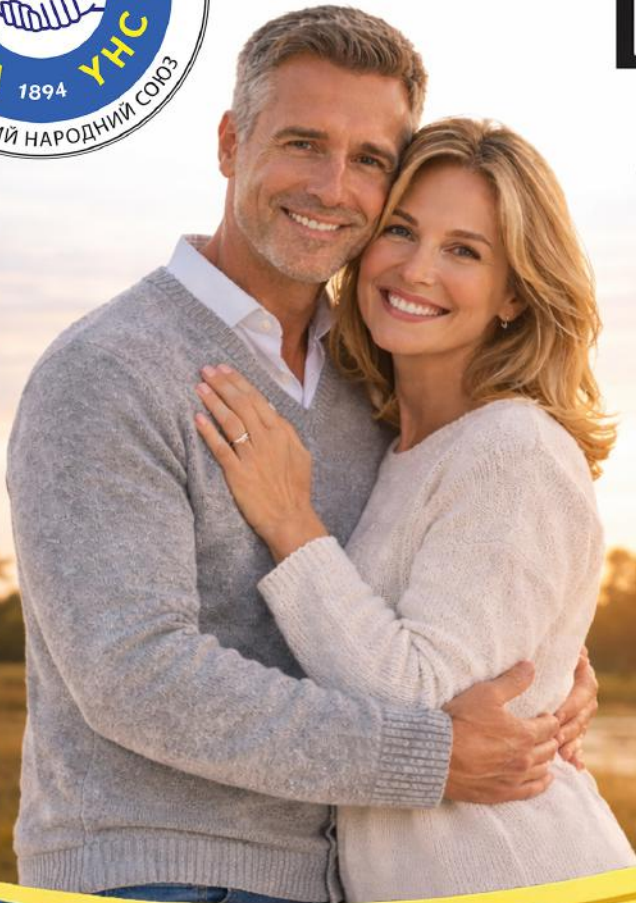
Cuellar then formed Cuellar Family Markets and sold that first Passaic supermarket in 2005. That same year, he purchased the Paulison Ave. ShopRite, which he ran until 2025. The entrepreneur’s latest venture with his wife, Mimi, is D1 Training Willowbrook Mall in Wayne.

### Stephen Kozak

Stephen Kozak can make claim to the title of oldest golf caddy in the United States. It’s not just a Clifton tall tale—it’s a legend big enough to have been investigated by Golf Digest back in 2007. “I’ve been caddying for 40 years,” Kozak said to writer Joe Hawrylko in 2010.

“In high school, I used to go to the Yantacaw Country Club where AT&T and the Clifton Commons are now.” Kozak made it a full-time career in 1985, after retiring from Givaudan, his job for 30 years.

A veteran, attached to the 5th Marine Division in both World War II and Korea, the Cliftonite is primarily known on the links, he also remained active off the course. One of his hobbies was beekeeping, something he picked up from his father Mike. Stephen was 94 when he died in 2015.



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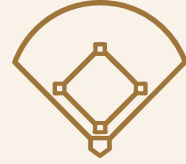
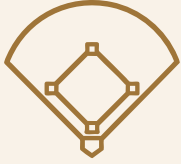
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# DIAMOND DOGS

of

# 1961



By Ariana Puzzo



*Mustangs 1961: first row: F. Zimmerman, F. Simek, S. DeVita, V. Lupinacci. Second row: R. Papa, R. Hazinski, W. Demikoff, J. Ferguson, Edward Sanicki, Coach; Emil Bednarcik, Assistant coach; C. Bauman, A. Perow, J. Schroth, C. Glatty. Third row: A. Tanis, Manager; R. Hovastak, E. Bozzo, D. Reuther, E. Curreri, J. Kuzmich, R. Feder, D. Demchak, D. Martin, C. Aarons, Manager.*

**Collecting singles and lifelong friendships** in 1960s Clifton has meant everything to three city natives. But 1961 graduates Bob Feder, Lew LaMotta, and Ed Curreri didn't make memories alone.

The time spent on sandlots and fields became part of Clifton Sports History, and it remains personal for them.

"We were natural athletes. Today, it's so different. [Players] have equipment, work out, and there are coaches for this and that. We didn't have a lot of that," said Feder, 83. "But we're still tight."

That's in part thanks to the Class of 1961's 50th Alumni Reunion. Feder, LaMotta, and Curreri reunited there and felt as though no time had passed while they reminisced about their shared pasts and updated each other on what followed. To share your memories with them, write to Feder at [derekson211@aol.com](mailto:derekson211@aol.com) or Curreri at [edcurreri@yahoo.com](mailto:edcurreri@yahoo.com).

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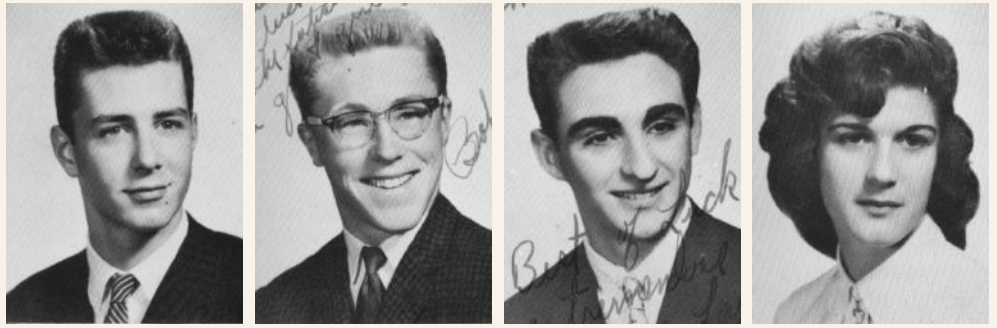


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In 1961: Edward Curreri, Bob Feder, Lewis LaMotta and their future publicity agent Chris Territo Liszner.



The successful retirees get together in Florida, where Feder lives year-round and LaMotta splits his time with New Jersey. Curreri lives in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and travels to see them often. Thanks to their reflections and news clippings, we can reminisce with them...

### Strong Bonds and a Hall of Famer

Strong bonds define these Mustangs, just like the hard work of them and their teammates.

Two of their former teammates were fellow 1961 grads Vince Lupinacci and Dave Demchak. The five men made notable contributions while playing in three major baseball tournaments.

First, there was the CHS 1961 Passaic Valley Conference Championship. Next to follow: a New Jersey American Legion State Runner Up. Third was a trip to Johnstown, Pennsylvania in 1962 to play in the triple ABA National Championship, where the team finished in third place out of 18 teams.

The five boys all belonged to the last team that would win the 1961 Passaic Valley Conference Championship before Clifton entered a new conference.

“We all had that fire in our belly. We wanted to win,” said LaMotta, 83. “That’s what made us so successful in that one particular year and the two years after that. We had a lot of talent.”

Their legacies didn’t end in Clifton. Curreri’s recognition included an induction into the 2010 Clifton Athletic Hall of Fame. He attended School 8 and Woodrow Wilson Junior High before becoming a starting shortstop and winning pitcher at the old high school on Piaget Ave.

Curreri pitched the first no-hitter in Ohio Wesleyan University’s history in 1965. The Delawanna native stayed active off-season with the Fighting Mustangs under Coach Joe Grecco.

“Junior year, I played halfback for Football, and we were undefeated State Champions. Wayne Demikoff was the QB. Bob Papa was All-State and went to Notre Dame,” said Curreri, 83. “We were coached by the best coach I’d ever been around, Joe Grecco.”

His father, Joseph, and Grecco are the two that he credited for “straightening me out.” But he was just as moved by his teammates.

“It’s a terrific honor to be inducted into Clifton’s Hall of Fame,” said Curreri in Clifton Merchant’s September 2010 edition. “Not to demean my college Hall of Fame, but I played with better athletes in Clifton than I did in college.”

Curreri married Susan Smith in May of 1970 and had two sons, Matt and Mitchell. Today, he has three grandchildren: Nate, Ethan, and Samantha. He worked with multiple Telecommunications Companies from 1968 to 2009, mostly in managerial positions.

Golfing, pickleball, and fishing take up his time now, but he fondly recalls Clifton hangouts like Poppy’s, Styertowne, The Red Chimney, Rutt’s Hut, Mario’s, Allwood Bakery, Garret Mountain Overlook, Nash Park, and more.

“Clifton was a really fast-growing community. There were all kinds of ethnic groups ... and a lot of activity regarding housing and restaurants. A lot of big busi-

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*Today: Edward Curreri, Bob Feder, Lewis LaMotta and their current publicity agent Chris Territo Lizzner.*



nesses came into Clifton,” Curreri added. “The school system was great. It was a great place to grow up.”

### All-American Adolescence

That All-American life called out to Lew LaMotta from an early age. About eight years old when his family moved to Clifton in 1951, he played Little League, Babe Ruth League, and American Legion Baseball outside of playing for Clifton Baseball in 1959 and 1961.

LaMotta attended Schools 2 and 14 before WWJH. He was a strong pitcher under Coach Ed Sanicki and was considered a great defensive first baseman who saved many games.

Two games took place in the same week against Montclair in 1959. As a sophomore, LaMotta pitched both games against Clary Anderson’s team. Twice, Clifton emerged victorious.

“I was young ... [and when] he came up to me and congratulated me at the time, I really wasn’t sure of his [iconicness],” said LaMotta. “Montclair was always a really, really good team, and he signed a baseball for me. That is what I remember him being. That kind of a coach.”

LaMotta graduated from William Paterson with a degree in Criminal Justice. He worked for 30 years as a detective in the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office. He now splits his time between living in Livingston and Jupiter, Florida, where he lives with his wife Kathleen Raffelo. He is a father to daughter Michele and grandfather to Autumn Lyn.

Feder’s early years in Clifton began around age 10 after moving here with his family in 1953.

Like other boys his age, he participated in Little League and Babe Ruth League. He attended School 14 before joining his future teammates at WWJH. For his final three years up at CHS, Feder was a great batter and an outstanding third baseman who was no stranger to saving a game with his play.

“My father, Herbert, [taught me the value of hard work],” said Feder. “But it’s hard to explain the feeling [of putting Clifton on the map]. We were pretty good for that era.”

He also lettered in Basketball and Cross Country. Feder and Curreri were part of the infield with the New Jersey Bank team that broke the Triple ABA Tournament record by making nine double plays in five games.

Feder went on to Dean Junior College and then the US Army from 1964 to 1966, where he was stationed in Germany and came out as a Specialist 4th Class. He worked for Aristo Graphic for 10 years and resides in Largo, Florida with his wife, Judith. He is the father of Darcy and Derek.

### No Memory Unturned

As friendships endure, so does the respect that these players have for their other teammates.

Lupinacci played outfield and was recognizable as an outstanding pitcher and hitter. He was a New Jersey High School All-Stater in 1961 and batted .569 that year. Demchak played on the three teams as an outfielder and was a good hitter at the plate with a strong arm.

There were other players on the 1961 Clifton Baseball team who played on at least two of the above-mentioned teams. They included: Paul Bondinel on second base, Ken Hooks as pitcher and shortstop, and Simon Booths playing center field.

There was also Bob Havasy who was a catcher and played fullback for the Fighting Mustangs. Frank Zimmerman played catcher and played fullback in Football. Ron Zimmerman played the outfield in baseball, half back in football, and he was an All-State Half Back in 1962.

Demchak, Curreri, Frank Zimmerman, and Havasy were all teammates on Clifton’s 1960 State Championship Football team, which went undefeated. It was also Grecco’s first time having his team go undefeated.

Since those days, no memory has gone unturned for the Mustang trio. “[It’s been special] ... reminiscing about all of the good times that we had together,” said Curreri. “As you get older, you have less friends. Now I have both of them around.”

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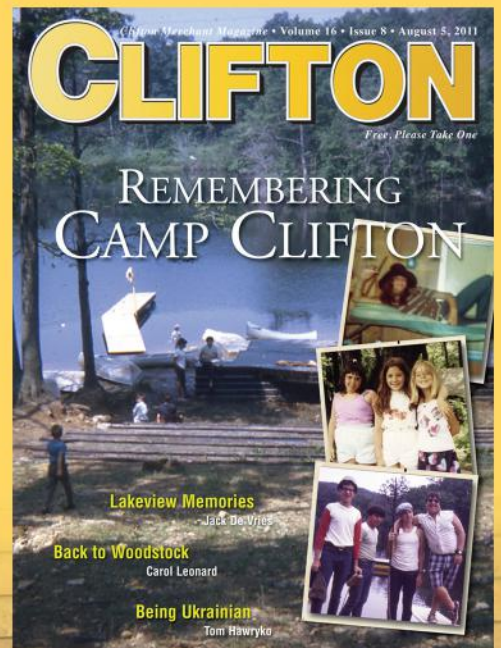
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# REMEMBERING CAMP Clifton

By Julie Generalli Dominick



*Around the blazing council fire light  
We have met in comradeship tonight  
Round about the whispering trees  
Guards our golden memories  
And so before we close our eyes to sleep  
Let us pledge each other that we'll keep  
Camping friendships strong and deep  
Till we meet again...*

In 2011, at the Grande Saloon, alumni campers Tom Di-Donna, Karen Dominick, writer Julie (Generalli) Dominick, Robert Lipala, Keith Oakley, Ray Kalas. Bottom left, a 2009 photo from a Camp Clifton reunion in which old friendships and campfires were rekindled.

The tradition at Camp Clifton was to end each campfire with a song pledging to keep our summer friendships alive, the words to which are on the facing page. We laughed about how corny those lines sounded when we were teens, but decades later — and for generations of campers — those verses have kept us connected.

Photos and comments from former campers — generations of whom have remained friends and some have even married! — tell the story. Camp Clifton holds a special place in the hearts of many of us.

I was a camper and later a counselor at the Clifton Boys Club camp from 1967-1971. Today, 50 years later, I still remain closely connected to those who have a shared history of carefree and blissful days of summers' past.

In 1961, the Clifton Boys Club purchased Camp Ranger in Jefferson Township and opened the camp for boys in 1963. Four years later, Clifton girls were offered the chance to attend a two-week session. By 1968, another girls' session was added due to popular demand. A bargain at \$110 a session, my parents and many others took full advantage and signed all six of us up.



Top: Kathy DeLuca and campers receiving instructions.

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While this story originally appeared in 2011, here are some new photos, from top left: Sue Gogick Gruchacz, Mark Strulowitz, Lisa Shapiro, Staci Kurzer Wilson, Lainie Reisman. From bottom left: Camp Clifton Sign and 1976 Sioux Cabin campers.

## Friendships—Like Families—Forged

“You were the reason my sisters and I went to camp,” Patricia DeLora told me about a decade ago. “Our moms met at a UNICO meeting and the next thing I knew, we were out buying trunks with locks on them.”

Sisters Joanne, Patricia and Linda DeLora also attended the first girls’ session and instantly bonded with me and my own three sisters, Roseanne, Janet and Vicki Generalli. We became so close to the DeLora family that many people thought we were related.

“Maybe that’s because you call my mother Aunt Toot and I call your mother Aunt Gen,” Patricia laughed.

A decade ago, I had a chance to reminisce with Patricia, who resided in Bloomfield with her husband, Dr. Richard Podkul, and their children, Lauren and Alex.

“Remember when the counselors kept playing the soundtrack to *Romeo + Juliet* over and over? Your sister Roseanne drove us to see the movie at the Clifton Theater on Main Avenue in 1968.” *Romeo + Juliet* remained on Pat’s and my top 10 movie list.

The counselors left lasting impressions on us all.

“I remember my [counselor-in-training] Diane Quinn because she was beautiful, so nice,” Pat mused. Diane’s mother was the first camp nurse and is remembered fondly by many.

Kathy DeLuca, whose family name is synonymous with the Boys Club and Camp Clifton, recalled her first days at camp and time spent in the camp infirmary.

“In 1967, I went to see my brothers Vic and Ray on visiting day,” said Kathy, who was only 9-years-



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old, “and everyone loved me. I was just a kid, and they begged me to stay. I went to visit and never went home. Little did they know, I had chickenpox. Our entire cabin had to be quarantined. I ended up staying in the camp infirmary for my first week up there.”

Kathy and I fondly remembered the camp cook, Ben Pierce, who was most likely the first African American man that we knew. Kathy recalled asking Ben every night, “What’s for dinner?” He would answer, “Food.”

Kathy: “What kind of food?” Ben: “Good food!”

Kathy and I would eventually become bunkmates and good buddies. Together, we earned the right to take an overnight trip on the Appalachian Trail, a requirement necessary to earn the coveted red feather that would make us Red Squaws, following in the camp tradition of Native American lore.

“When we became Red Squaws, they made us put cloves under our tongues after the council fire ceremony and we weren’t allowed to talk for the rest of night,” recalled Kathy. Looking back, I realize the counselors were no fools. What a great way to keep us quiet.

### The Golden Years

Kathy DeLuca Pugliese became a certified teacher, who ended up living in Clifton with her daughters, Jacqueline and Victoria, and working as a bar manager in Woodridge. Her brother Victor became the mayor of Maplewood, where he and his wife Janey lived. In 2010, he was inducted into the Boys Club Hall of Fame for his contributions to camp and the Boys Club. By then, DeLuca had been active in politics and civic affairs for a long time.

Vic DeLuca attended Camp Clifton from 1966 to 1969 and started working as a kitchen boy. In 2011, he remembered the historic moment in July of 1969 when the first men walked on the moon.

“We had all the kids in the dining hall to watch this historic event on an old, cruddy black and white television. The picture was so bad,

*From top: Camp Clifton’s Doc Fedor at Pool, Camp Clifton’s Kitchen in 1972, and campers at breakfast in August 1971.*



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*Top row from left: Bob Lipala with Rocky, Sue Lindemann Burman, Amy Lindemann Castillo, Beth Lindemann Bagley, Joe Crivelli, Rich Day, Robin Benjamin and Amy Karbane. Bottom row from left: Matthew Miktus, Kathy Concilio, Josh Gross, Joe Balega and a counselor with youth.*

all we saw was moon snow. Godzilla could have been walking on the moon, for all we knew,” Vic remembered.

He shared his first camp cabin with Bob Lipala, another Hall of Fame inductee. Bob, known to campers as “Magoo,” worked in every capacity at camp before becoming the camp’s director.

“Those years – 1967 to 1969 – were the Golden Years at camp. A time of peace, love and happiness,” said Bob at a mini-reunion held in July of 2011 at the Grande Saloon with camp alumni Keith Oakley, Ray Kalas, Tom DiDonna and Karen Dominick. Upon seeing Bob for the first time in decades, Karen exclaimed, “It’s Mr. Camp Clifton!”

Surrounded by plenty of grass, woods and water, Camp Clifton was a welcome respite for city kids.

### For The Love Of Nature

“I went to camp to catch frogs, turtles and snakes,” Bob said. “I would finish my work in the kitchen, walk down to the lake, catch these creatures and bring them up to the nature shed.” Not surprisingly, Bob would become the nature counselor, a position he loved.

Looking over an old copy of the camp newsletter, Wocanda’s Whisper, Bob mused at his own writings from so long ago.

“Those words were obviously not from someone looking for a paycheck or a 9-5 job. They were from a way of life, a special way shared by all the campers. It was a ‘happening’, a ‘Woodstock of campers.’ Feelings were meant to be alive and shared – coldness and detachment seen as problems to be overcome.”

# CLIFTON ARTS CENTER

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Years later, Bob still knew a great deal of Camp Clifton's history and credited the Board for having the foresight to get funding to buy the camp in 1961. "I'm grateful to have experienced and shared all of those feelings in my lifetime – even if it was a long time ago. There was a special outpouring of love then, and love is its own reward."



## Lifelong Club Membership

In 2011, Bob was the treasurer of the Men's Club of the Clifton Boys & Girls Club and lived in Lake Hopatcong with his wife Rosemary and their children, Nick and Sara. He and his family still appreciated nature and rented a cabin in Stokes State Forest every Father's Day.

Another fellow Boys Club Hall of Famer is Tom DiDonna, whose connection to Camp Clifton is roundabout. Tom claimed, "The Club Board members took a chance with me. I was a goofball, always in trouble. When I stopped terrorizing kids at the Boys Club, he gave me a job at camp." He recalled being paid \$100 for the entire summer of 1969.

At the time, Tom was working at Good Deals, a supermarket located where Corrado's Market is today, and had to take a leave of absence to work at camp. "Your brother Ernie [Generalli] was in my cabin. He gave me a run for my money."

Being a wise guy himself, Tom knew how to handle tough kids. Tom came to Clifton after living in Paterson and at one time, lived in the house next to Juliano's Pizza, the building that is now the Grande Saloon. "My mom was a single parent and the Boys Club provided a safe place for me to grow up."

Tom met his wife Karen at Good Deals and in 2011, they still resided in Clifton and had two daughters. He was a delivery driver for DHL for 18 years. Tom also coached Clifton Stallion soccer.



*From left: Ray McNulty with Scott Wagner and Debbie Yassen with Grace Gentile Biener. Below: Gary Carter, Erik and Kenny at Camp Clifton in 1981.*

"Everywhere I go, I hear people say, 'Hey Coach!' It's a good feeling knowing you made a difference in a kid's life."

Keith Oakley's connection to the Clifton Boys Club is generational and legendary. His mom, Mary, was the secretary at The Club and his dad worked at The Club in many capacities. His brother Wayne and sister Cindy also attended.

Keith liked to brag: "I was one of the first kids to see Camp Clifton when the Boys Club bought it, and one of the last adults on the property when it was sold."

Keith taught Native American lore at camp, which he learned from visiting the National Museum of the American Indian in NYC as a teenager. "I wanted to learn traditional lore and how to make crafts so the experience

would be more authentic.” His ultimate honor as a youngster was when he was inducted as an honorary Golden Chief wearing a full head-dress and war paint standing near the campfire. In 2011, he was inducted into the Boys Club Hall of Fame.

Keith became an active alumni member, as well as a father of four and a grandfather. He worked for Air Chek Window Depot in Clifton for years before retiring and a few years back he and his wife Michelle moved to South Carolina.

As for Ray Kalas, I think he came to the Saloon out of curiosity. He did go to the Boys Club and worked at camp for a short time. He and I had a five-minute romance in CHS and it was great to see him again, looking healthy and fit.

### Lifelong Personal Connections

One of Ray’s camp memories included waking up to Paul McCartney’s “Uncle Albert” as it was blasted through the PA system early in the morning. He moved to Morris Township with his wife and has a daughter. Ray taught as a Communications professor at the County College of Morris.

So many campers, so many cherished memories. The more alumni that I spoke to, the more stories I heard ...

Mrs. Oakley playing Santa Claus at the winter reunions. Counselors sneaking out to the Milk Barn for ice cream. Bags and bags of caramel M&M’s, which were donated to the camp because they ‘melted in your hand.’ Henry Sabot asking: “Do you want to go on a bear hunt?”

Russ Triolo singing “The End” by Jim Morrison. Dave Rainone throwing my sister Vicki in the lake because she was afraid of its orange murky water.

Singing “Miss Ol’ Leary put a Lantern in the Shed” in the dining hall as loud as possible.

The DeVries family, the Vladi-check family, the beautiful MacVicker sisters, Severin Palydowycz, Wally Joblanski, John Mullan, Steve Sneizak.

The list goes on...

Sitting across the table from my camp friends at the Grande Saloon in 2011, I realized that you couldn’t

find six more different people. Yet, once we began to share our camp memories, it was clear that there was a connection between us that had been sealed around a burning campfire many years earlier.

We will always be connected – to a time and a place that was so special to each one of us and to the many others lucky enough to have sat around that same campfire.

*‘Till we meet again.’*

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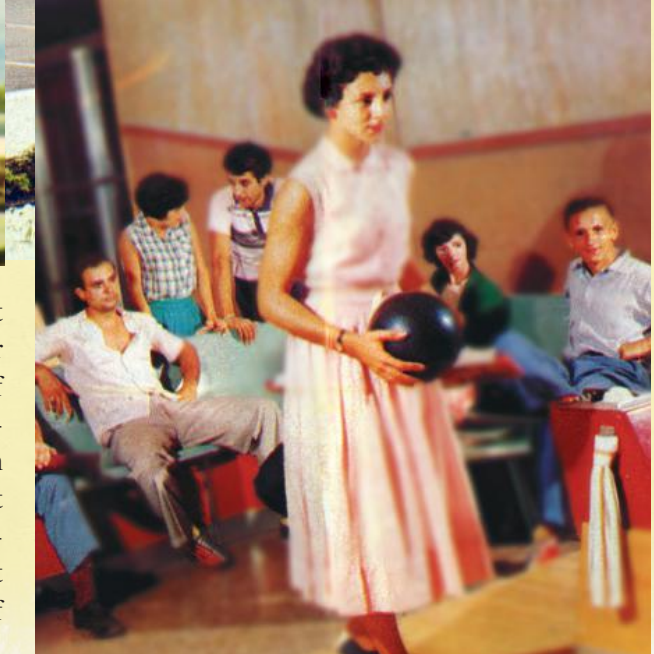
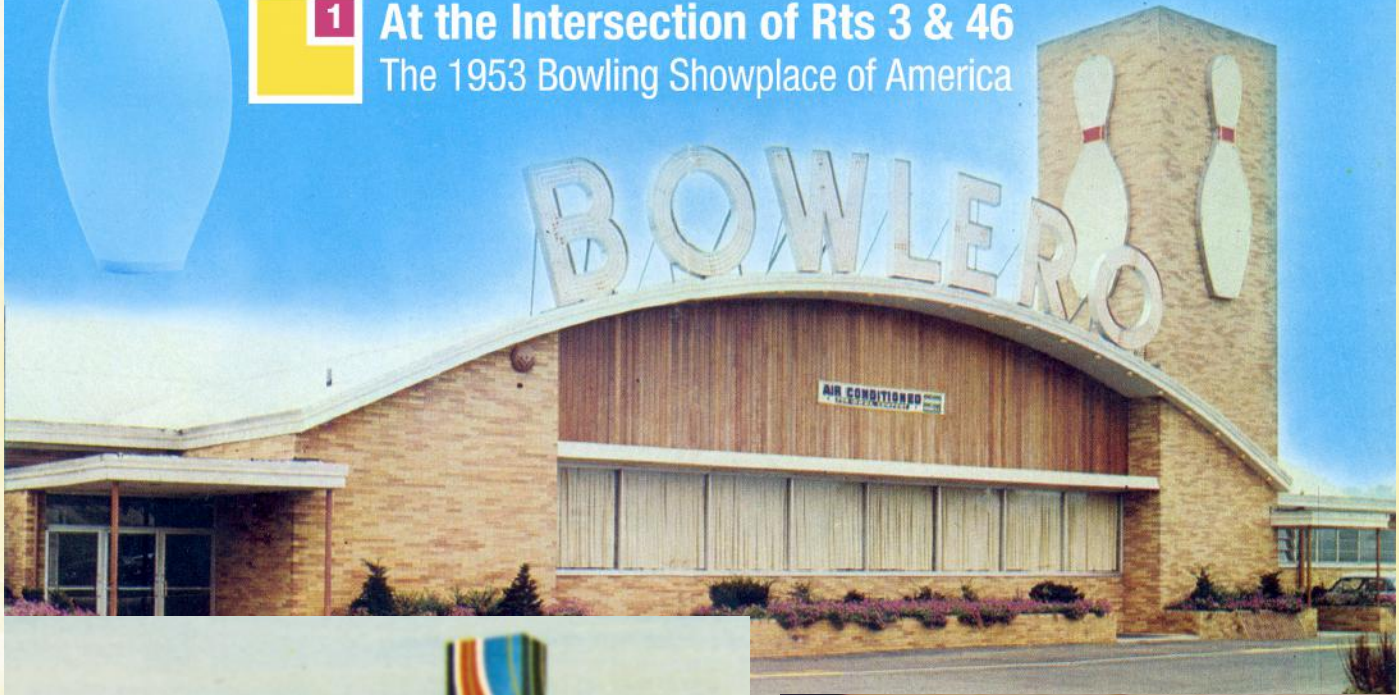
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By Madison Molner & Ariana Puzzo

# ONE FRAME AT A TIME



**At the Intersection of Rts 3 & 46**  
The 1953 Bowling Showplace of America



When Athenia's Van Houten Lanes closed in May, 2015, it became another chapter in the recreational landscape of our city. In the not-so-distant past, Clifton was home to a number of bowling centers, boasting nearly 150 lanes. For decades, families, workers and friends met at bowling alleys, after work or on the weekend, to pass the time or compete in a league. Kids met there for birthday parties or for end-of-the-school-year celebrations. However, things have changed over the decades and that is why, on the following pages, we look back at the history of bowling in our hometown.



Bowlero offered ‘round the clock bowling on 50 lanes, with parking for 1,000 cars. Calling it the ‘Bowling Showplace of America,’ an expensive colorful brochure stated. It offered directions from NYC to the intersection of Routes 3 and 46 when Bowlero opened in Clifton in 1953.

‘Gleaming polished lanes, inviting approaches, comfortable bowlers’ benches, softly padded spectator seats and carpeted promenade—all in a spick and span motif—greet the bowler and fan alike at New Jersey’s fabulous Bowlero.’

Bowlero was state-of-the-art: air conditioned along with new AMF Automatic Pinspotters—as opposed to spares being manually set by pinboys. Booths surrounded a two-level cocktail lounge (pictured) with a rotating center island where Eddie Wayne performed at the Hammond Organ.

Bowlero’s pro shop was run by Angelo (whose last name we could not find), a man with a mountain of patience, recalls Karen Molner a Saturday morning girls’ league kegler. “He would venture out from drilling holes in balls to provide bowling tips to those kids who showed some promise.

“Years later after Bowlero closed, I bowled on a company sponsored summer league at Parkway Lanes,” continued Molner. “Angelo was still sharing approach and release tips to the grown-up bowlers — I can still hear his enthusiastic voice and picture his bespectacled face and toothy smile.”

For reasons unknown, Bowlero closed in the mid-1970s. The intersection of Routes 3 and 46 became the location of Fette Ford Kia and Infiniti since 1977, a Clifton destination in the automotive world.

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# Marking Clifton History

## First Family of Bowling

The Pezzanos have long been bowling's first family in Clifton. The clan was headed up by Chuck Pezzano Sr., a member of both the Professional Bowlers Association and American Bowling Congress Halls of Fame, two of the highest honors the sport can bestow.

Chuck Pezzano Sr. was the first national collegiate bowler to bowl an 800 series while a student at Rutgers University in Newark. He captained some of the most successful teams in New Jersey history and was one of the 33 pioneers who formed the Professional Bowlers Association in 1958.

A sportswriter, Pezzano Sr., wrote for 50 publications around the world and penned 12 books on the sport. He took part in more than 1,000 network TV bowling shows and served as president of the New York, National and World Bowling Writers Associations. His bowling skills and contributions to the sport earned the 40-plus-year Clifton resident election to 17 halls of fame.



The Pezzanos in 1999, from left are Chuck Jr., Curt, Craig, Clay, Chuck Sr.

Sons Chuck Jr., Craig and twins Curt and Clay have carried on the tradition. All were varsity bowlers at CHS. While Mustangs, their teams won league, county and state championships. Clay posted the highest average for a high school bowler, 205 in 1980. Meanwhile, Curt rolled a 299 single game. Curt was named all-county four times and Clay three. All were named high school athletes of the year by the North Jersey Old Timers. Chuck Jr. went on to star at Pace University, Curt at the University of Miami and Clay at William Paterson University.



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*Phil Rizzuto and Yogi Berra at the ground breaking for the Rizzuto-Berra Lanes in Styertowne in 1958. At right in top photo is developer Albert A. Stier.*

In 2015, Chuck Jr. conducted the Junior Bowlers Tour, a tournament group in which young bowlers can win scholarships. Craig, who passed away in August of 2015, operated the bowling pro shop at the recently closed Van Houten Lanes. Curt was the general manager of a bowling center in Delaware, while Clay was an outstanding pro until sidelined by back surgery.

The Pezzanos are in the bowling record book as a family, the first father and four sons to all have rolled a sanctioned 300 game. Prolific Chuck Pezzano passed away in January of 2015 at the age of 86, but his bowling legacy continues with his sons and grandkids.

### Home-Run Service

For two Yankee Hall of Famers, Clifton held the key to their next venture. Now off of the baseball diamond, they were onto the polished lanes of a new bowling alley. The lanes of Astro Bowl, then Rizzuto-Berra lanes, made their



debut in 1959 with famed Yankees Lawrence “Yogi” Berra and Phil “The Scooter” Rizzuto along with nine other investors at the helm.

Rizzuto enlisted his brother Fred to manage the lanes on a day-to-day basis making sure the borrowed shoes came back and got sprayed and bar counters were cleaned.

Rizzuto-Berra Lanes became the pride of Styertowne. Yogi made guest appearances behind the baseball diamond shaped bar or rolling balls with patrons. The talkative Rizzuto *Holy Cow!* charmed customers. Patrons remember the characteristic “stadium seating” behind each lane so team members and competitors had a good view as the balls quickly glided toward the crashing pins.

## Marking Clifton History

However before the doors opened in '59, Robert Stier, son of Styertowne developer Albert A. Stier, recalls the sound of pile-drivers digging into the ground as the structure for the 40-lane alley was taking shape. Stier says the ground was mostly quicksand and proved to be a nuisance for early construction in 1958.

Aside from the famously owned bowling alley, Albert Stier built the 344-unit Styertowne Apartments and the rest of the Styertowne Shopping Center, which continues to provide jobs for hundreds, Stier's original vision.

Shortly after opening, Berra and Rizzuto took a step back and sometime later the name changed to Astro Bowl. In 1981, a few lanes were taken out and converted into Ashley's Restaurant.

Astro Bowl maintained oiled lanes and quick pinsetters until the Spring of 1999 when it shut its doors. In 1999, the Stier family sold Styertowne and its other real estate assets to Jacob Enterprises, Inc.

Robert Stier, a bowling pinsetter in his younger years, also looks back as Astro Bowl was being transformed into stores in that each lane was cut into three small pieces. The chopped alley was then sold to construction outfits, who used the reclaimed wood to furnish tables, chairs and home flooring.

Today Stew Leonard's, Michaels, Stewie the Duck Swim School, and Sherwin-Williams Paints now stand in place of Astro Bowl.

### 32 Lanes Remaining

The next casualty for Clifton bowling emporiums was Van Houten Lanes, which closed in May of 2015.

For over 80 years, the Clifton icon stood strong in the Athenia section, attracting customers with its nostalgic, no frills atmosphere and affordable game prices.

Opened in the 1920s as the 10-lane Pin Boy Bowling Center, Van Houten Lanes did not expand to its 16-lane glory until the late 1950s as the bowling craze took Clifton. Along with six additional lanes, then owners Marty and Vera Budnicki also added a bar and snack counter.

In 1977, the Brady Sheft Corp. purchased the business and in 1985, the Sheft family took over and hired Eric Sudhalter as the general manager, a position he held until the end.

Sudhalter began working at the lanes as a teenager, fitting in shifts after school. From setting pins to oiling lanes



*In 1999 at Van Houten Lanes, Eric Sudhalter, at left, with his daughter Ashley and Rick Lamonico with his son Skye.*

and sweeping under tables, he worked hard to maintain Van Houten Lanes.

Over the years, Van Houten Lanes remained a training ground for CHS bowlers, a place where Passaic County USBC Hall of Famers broke records and where the Pez-zano family continued their bowling legacy.

For many patrons, the closing of Van Houten Lanes was not just a loss of yet another bowling alley, but of the no-nonsense places of the past. Van Houten Lanes was a classic, and that is why people continued to come.

On Wednesday nights, for a meager \$4.50, customers got a game, shoe rental, and a mug of draft beer. And for a few extra cents, one could spring for a song on the jukebox. Van Houten Lanes was always the place for the Tuesday Morning Cerebral Palsy League and of countless birthday party celebrations (including this writer) that were never complete without a slice from the adjoining pizza restaurant.



*Pictured in 1999, General Manager Bob Cumming (right) with Andy Stone, Assistant Manager of Garden Palace.*

### The Final 16

For nearly 83 years, Garden Palace Lanes stood among the pantheon of bowling centers in our city that once boasted nearly 150 lanes. In its last five years, its 16 lanes remained a light in the darkness once those other lanes shuttered.

But the coronavirus pandemic saw it follow its predecessors. The bowling alley closed in March of 2020 during the forced shutdown and was put on the market for \$1.3 million that November.

Garden Palace, 42 Lakeview Ave., opened on Jan. 21, 1938 and the building was once part of a huge industrial complex. Lanes were added as the years went on, until it reached its final size, and it was a hub of major league bowling activity in the late 1930s and 40's.

Garden Palace served the games of the North Jersey Major League and hosted head-to-head matches, featuring all-time great Hall of Famers like Junie McMahon, Eddie Botten, Lou Campi and Lindi Faragalli. All of the top bowlers in the state rolled there, as well as many of the nation's best staged clinics and exhibitions.

Nationwide Bowling took over in 1977 and the late Bob Cumming was hired as general manager. He spent his entire life in bowling and had a special love for the game. He also had great experience as a bowler and bowling official. So much so that, for his contributions to bowling, Cumming was inducted into the Passaic County Men's Bowling Association Hall of Fame.

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*Columbia Bank cut the ribbon on June 13 at their new branch in Botany Plaza. The execs and friends doing the honors from left: Allyson Schlesinger, Branch Manager Riddhi Sodagar, Dennis Gibney, Jim Wainright, Nole Holland, Crystal Moon-Boulware, Thomas J. Kemly and Patricia Reyes.*

**Friends of Clifton Public Library** seek donations for its gift gallery in the Main Library. Items help fund programs, like free museum passes, STEM kits, crafts, musical performances, and author events. Bring items, new or gently used, but no clothes or stuffed animals. Shop the Main Branch gift gallery through July. Also, Leon Vaughn presents “Blacks in the Revolutionary War” on July 25, 2:30. Call 973-772-5500 or write membershipFRIEND-SofCPL@gmail.com.

**City Green’s Farm Stand** is open Wednesdays (3-6 pm) and Fridays (10 am to 2 pm) at 171 Grove St. Pick up vegetables, herbs, fruit, eggs, and honey. Visit [citygreenonline.org](http://citygreenonline.org), or contact City Green for more info: 973-869-4086 or [info@city-green.org](mailto:info@city-green.org).

*Christopher Columbus sixth grader Jackson Oliver was the top winner of the Student Council’s photo contest for America 250. The theme was: “What Makes America Special to Me” and, along with his photo, Jackson wrote that America “honors sacrifice, freedom, and the people who helped to shape the country.”*



**Clifton's Austin Blesing is racking up hardware** on the diamond. The rising junior just finished at SUNY Ulster Community College. An infielder for the Senators, he notched two NJCAA Region 15 Division II honors: All-Region First Team and Gold Glove – First Base.

At the plate, Blesing has been equally impressive: 54 hits, 33 RBIs, a .406 batting average, and a .470 on-base percentage. Blesing has played the game since age 6. The 20-year-old first baseman graduated PCTI in 2024 where he was a three-year Varsity player and part of back-to-back championship teams in 2022 and 2023. He is now looking forward to playing at a four-year school.

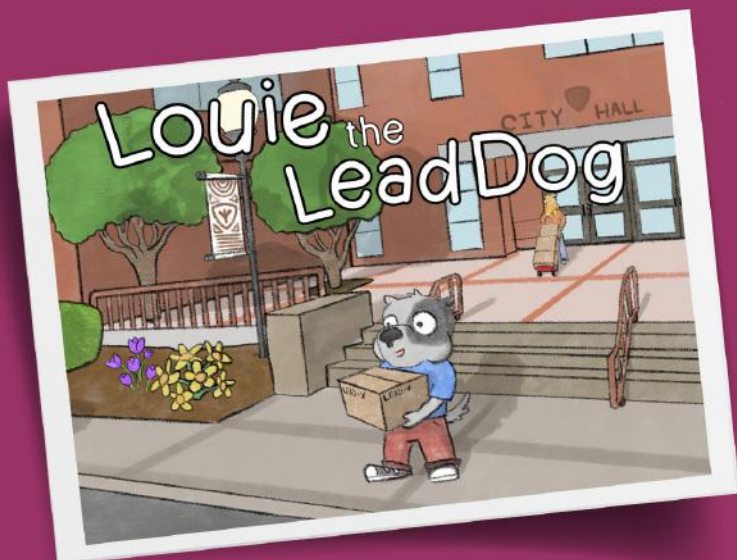
**Clifton Behind the Scenes** gives residents an inside look at how their city operates. Come on July 16 from 4-5:30 pm (in English), 5:30-7 pm (in Arabic), and 7-8:30 pm (in Spanish). Led by Councilwoman Rosemary Pino, residents learn how government works. Future sessions: Aug. 20, Sept. 24. Learn more: [echonj.org](http://echonj.org).

**Passaic County's Outdoor Movie Night** on July 9 is a free screening of "GOAT" at Weasel Brook Park, 1 Westervelt Pl., shortly after sunset (8:45 pm). Bring your own blankets, chairs, snacks, and drinks. For info and more outdoor screenings, visit [PassaicCountyRec.org](http://PassaicCountyRec.org). The series is funded by the Passaic County Board of County Commissioners.



**The CEF's 3rd Annual Endless Summer** reunion for retired BOE employees is Sept. 15 from noon to 4 pm at Shannon Rose. \$40 admission. 50/50 drawing. Details on Instagram @cliftoneducationfoundation or write Kim Puzzo at [cefcommdirector@gmail.com](mailto:cefcommdirector@gmail.com).

## Meet Louie the Lead Dog!



Check out the Clifton Health Department's first published book!

This children's book, called Louie the Lead Dog, teaches kids all about lead-based paint in a fun and easy-to-understand way. Through Louie's adventures, young readers learn important safety lessons about identifying and avoiding lead hazards at home.



Books are available for purchase online for \$12.00 each. They are also available in person at the Clifton Health Department for \$10.00 each. Visit <https://www.cliftonnj.org/412/Lead-Division> for more information.





# SAINT PETER'S HAVEN

By Tara Fueshko

The 1980s saw the founding of St. Peter's Haven, a transitional homeless shelter for families and the city's food bank. In 1981, the rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rev. Jorge Gutierrez, stated to a reporter: "Somewhere I'm sure there's a group whose needs are not being met... maybe the church can begin to meet those needs."

The original idea for St. Peter's Haven came from Clifton resident Donald Fischer. Fischer was the organist, treasurer, and vestry member of the landmark on Clifton Ave. He had read an article about a homeless couple living on the banks of the Passaic River and brought it to the attention of the Vestry, who at the time were debating whether to tear down the original Church rectory for parking.

He asked members how they could vote to tear down a perfectly good building when there were homeless people in need of shelter. With the help of a matching grant from Hoffmann-La Roche, they approved the founding of St. Peter's Haven in 1985 and opened its first shelter for homeless families on Oct. 30, 1986.

Since that date, the services of The Haven have grown considerably as it offers a full complement of support services from its two locations: the original single-family house next to the church, and a two-family dwelling on Burgess Place purchased in 2002.

That includes employment and educational programs, emergency needs advocacy, pre-service placement, ongoing counseling, and transportation assistance, in addition to the emergency shelter and food supplies.

St. Peter's Haven's priorities include accepting families of any configuration, and to keep families intact, so that they can maintain the normal rhythm of life.

In the 1990s, the Rev. Bonnie Perry took up where the Rev. Gutierrez left off, by challenging political leaders on the statistics of homelessness in Clifton. From then on, The Haven continued to expand to meet the needs of those struggling. A food pantry, which had existed to help those in the Haven, expanded to help those not seeking shelter.



Rev. Jorge Gutierrez, Rev. Bonnie Perry, Rev. Hank Dwyer, Donald Fischer.

A parishioner gave a substantial donation to purchase a two-family home now called Ella's House to help further St. Peter's Haven's mission. The Food Pantry expanded again to incorporate fresh food and, through drives and an annual fundraising event, St. Peter's Haven distributes backpacks and school supplies for the school year, Thanksgiving dinner fixings, holiday gifts, and winter coats.

In the mid-2000s the Rev. Hank Dwyer led the church and The Haven, continuing the social justice advocacy until his untimely death during Holy Week, 2005.

St. Peter's Haven operates in part through the generosity of others. Donations help keep its outreach in service. So next time you shop, consider purchasing a bag of groceries and bringing it to St. Peter's.

Celebrate the 40th anniversary of The Haven on July 20 at the Valley Regency at 6 pm. Tickets are \$100. To reserve, call: 973-546-3406 ext. 711 or visit [saintpetershaven.org](http://saintpetershaven.org).



Some years back, the Hamilton House Museum received some gifts: Trustee Arlene Bayeux shows a donated candlestick and Bicentennial commemorative coin minted in 1976, said to be modeled on the image of Mayor Frank Sylvester, in office 1974 to 1978, below. For Hamilton House tours, call 973-470-5758.



**Clifton Rec's Obser Concert Series** opens July 12 with Swingman & The Misfit Mutts in Main Memorial Park, at Park Slope & Main Ave. Shows are on Sundays at 7:30 pm. The line-up: Clifton Community Band (July 19), Priceless (July 26), Tequila Rose (Aug. 2), Cindi Rand Band (Aug. 9), Parrot Beach (Aug. 16), Reminisce (Aug. 23), Big Bang Baby (Aug. 30). Visit [cliftonrec.com](http://cliftonrec.com) or call 973-470-5956.

The **JK Realty team** reminds readers to mark July 16 as the firm presents Polka Legend Jimmy Sturr and His Orchestra at Passaic's Third Ward Park. The show starts at 7 pm with a guest appearance by the Chopin Singing Society. JK is also presenting Clifton Day on July 11 in their parking lot from 1 to 4 pm at 270 Colfax Ave. Those interested to find out how to help out or participate, call JK's Joseph Siano at 973-563-1449.

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# Birthdays & Celebrations - July 2026

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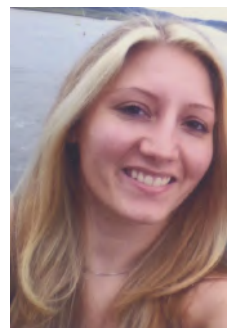
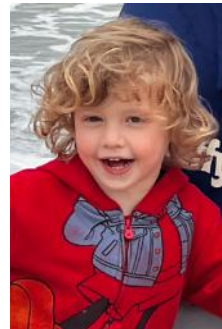


Bassist **Nicolas Calvo** is 17 July 11. **Jesse Hasting** is 41 on July 10 and his dad **Rafael** will be 81 on July 25! **Mammie Angello** is 88 on July 3. **Robert Marriello** celebrates on July 9.



**Samuel Yoda** turns 6 on July 11.

- Isabella Andruch..... 7/1
- Jerry Franek..... 7/4
- Amanda Di Angelo..... 7/3
- Chris Torrao..... 7/4
- Nicholas Iannacone..... 7/5
- Bob Landrith..... 7/5
- Robyn Sue Lord..... 7/5
- Frank Rando..... 7/5
- Lori Lill..... 7/6
- Susan Rego..... 7/6
- Darlene Franek..... 7/7
- Ron Curtiss..... 7/7
- Angelo Grippo..... 7/7
- Thomas Marriello..... 7/7
- Edward Sepulveda..... 7/7
- Anthony Michael Meade..... 7/8
- Jenna De Liberto..... 7/8
- Christopher Landrith..... 7/8
- Cynthia Kester..... 7/9
- Kristi Schopfer..... 7/10
- Brian Counterman Jr..... 7/12
- Anthony Zaccone..... 7/13
- Alyssa Marie Misyak..... 7/14
- Ann Schamble..... 7/15
- Derek Dobil..... 7/16
- Jessica Dobil..... 7/16
- Fanny Chem..... 7/17
- Joanne Gursky..... 7/17
- Carrie Szluka..... 7/18
- Alexander Razvmov..... 7/19



**Jack Labriola** is 3 on July 21.  
**Mairead Kidd** is 18 on July 14.  
**Edward Auletta** is 53 on July 3.  
**Bethany Kievit** is 41 on July 29.

- Ryan Saccoman..... 7/19
- Cocoa Saccoman..... 7/19
- Ashley Jacobus..... 7/19
- Linda Portaro..... 7/20
- Megan Suaifan..... 7/20
- Priya Shah..... 7/22
- Kaitlin Vinciguerra..... 7/22

**Kenneth & Donna Chipura** on July 11 celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary.



**Bill & Trisha Wishard's** 41st year of marriage is July 20. **Barbara and Ted Guzowski** 44th anniversary is July 10. **Gene and Joan Murphy's** 62nd anniversary is July 25.

Ottila Kedl.....7/23  
 George Shamar ..... 7/23  
 Kayla Lord ..... 7/24  
 Anna Schubert ..... 7/24  
 Eva Gasporowska ..... 7/25  
 Kathy Valdes ..... 7/25

Jack DeVries Sr..... 7/26  
 Joseph Lopez..... 7/27  
 Ornella Ganoza ..... 7/27  
 Gina Oliva ..... 7/28  
 Brian Counterman Sr. .... 7/29  
 Amanda Fabiano..... 7/29

Lee-Ann Varga ..... 7/29  
 Stephen Camp Sr..... 7/30  
 Joe Prebish..... 7/30  
 Obs Zayatz ..... 7/30  
 Frances Greco..... 7/31  
 Sue Sadik ..... 7/31



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**JUL 20-26** | **CAMP BARROW WEEK**  
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**AUG 17-23** | **ISLAND OASIS WEEK**  
 Join us for tropical inspired food & drink specials

**AUG 24 MON** | **TIKI COCKTAIL COMPETITION**  
 7pm, cocktails, competition and a crowd favorite crown

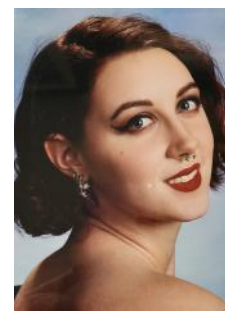
**AUG 26 WED** | **CANDLE MAKING WITH SKYY VODKA**  
 Includes cocktails, small bites & a candle  
 7PM, \$50 TICKETS ON RESY

[THEBARROWHOUSE.COM](http://THEBARROWHOUSE.COM)

# Birthdays & Celebrations - August 2026



**Viviana Wright** is 11 on Aug. 5 and her brother **Rocco** will be 5 on Aug. 12. **Luciana Meneses** will turn 20 on Aug. 23. **Peter & Christina Kedl** celebrate their 23rd anniversary on Aug. 21. Their children **Ottilia Kedl** turned 20 on July 23 and her brother **Alexander** celebrates his 18th birthday on Aug. 28.



**Mackenzie Peterson** turns 1 on Aug. 1. Her cousin **Aiden** turns 2 on Aug. 16!

**Kevin Kurnath** turns 61 on Aug. 30! **Emilie Oakley** will be 33 on Aug. 22. **Aubrey Lynn Toro** turns 18 on Aug. 8. **Reilly Tedesco** turns 23 on Aug. 31.

Margot Villanova..... 8/1  
 Kim West ..... 8/1  
 Angelo Greco ..... 8/2  
 Karen Lime ..... 8/2  
 Michael Urciuoli ..... 8/2

Christian Gomez..... 8/3  
 Kevin Ciok ..... 8/4  
 Scott Malgieri..... 8/4  
 Mark W. Mikolajczyk..... 8/5  
 Christina Sotelo..... 8/5

Ed Gasior Sr..... 8/6  
 Sean McNally..... 8/6  
 Sebastian Satizabal..... 8/7  
 Gladys Shefchik..... 8/8  
 Chiara Crantiello..... 8/9  
 Jean Schubert..... 8/9  
 Emily Hawrylko Crawford..... 8/12  
 Danielle Swede..... 8/13  
 Andrew Cronin..... 8/14  
 Kimberly Mozo ..... 8/14  
 Michelle Smolt ..... 8/14  
 Christopher Antal..... 8/15  
 Peter Bodor..... 8/15  
 Tom Hawrylko Sr..... 8/15  
 Andrew Noblett ..... 8/15  
 Jessica Oliva ..... 8/15  
 Maria Pinter..... 8/15  
 Susan Van Blarcom..... 8/15  
 Daniel Wolfe ..... 8/15



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**Kateryna and Bohdan Baran**

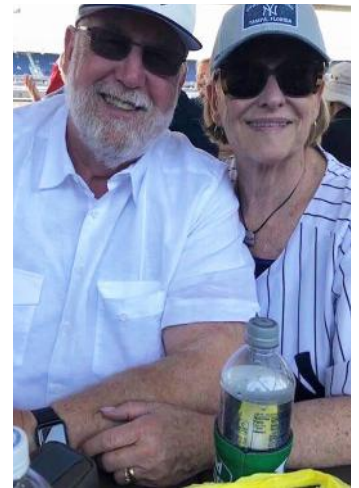
celebrate their 63rd wedding anniversary August 3.

- Arlene Hard..... 8/17
- Bella Bulsara ..... 8/18
- Ryan Joseph Meade..... 8/19
- Alexandria Veltre ..... 8/19
- Michael Melendez ..... 8/20
- Rachelle Swede ..... 8/20
- Luciana Meneses ..... 8/23
- Cara Cholewczynski ..... 8/24
- Yasmin Ledesma ..... 8/24
- Robbie Lucas ..... 8/25
- Eileen Gasior..... 8/26
- Cameron J. Popovski ..... 8/26
- Adam Brandhorst..... 8/27
- Peter Fierro, Jr..... 8/28
- Nicholas Swede. .... 8/29
- Michelle "Mish" Choy ..... 8/30
- Joe Rushen..... 8/30
- Kathleen McKenny ..... 8/31

Send June dates & names...  
tomhawrylkosr@gmail.com

**Ken and Marianne Kurnath**  
celebrate their 61st Anniversary  
on Aug. 22

**Mary Birchell-Skoglund**  
celebrates a birthday on Aug. 8.



**Elena Vatasin** is 32 on Aug 30. **Fabiola Vasquez** turns 74 on Aug. 12 and granddaughter **Luciana Meneses** turns 20 on Aug. 23 **Bruce and Diane Drake** will celebrate their 56th wedding anniversary on Aug. 22.

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Say 50 years and out to legendary Clifton School Traffic Guard Margaret Beissel who put down her STOP sign on June 26. She is pictured on Van Houten Ave. with Traffic Division officers Reci, Colavitti, Lt. Droubi, Baurys and Phillips. We don't know what is next for the Godmother of all Crossing Guards but (sort of) like in the movies, she left the sign—and took her whistle!

**Historic Botany Concerts** continues with The Retro-casters on July 10 at Sullivan Square, 270 Parker Ave. Concerts are free and begin at 6:30 pm. Other dates: The Powertones (July 17), The FrostKings (July 24), and School of Rock House Band (July 31). Find more details: [historicbotanyvillage.org](http://historicbotanyvillage.org).

**Clifton Arts Center Camp for Kids** is Aug. 10-14. Open to ages 7-12, register by Aug. 1. Cost: \$200 (residents) or \$225. Beth Kearney introduces painting, drawing, collage and sculpture. Materials included. Students bring nut-free snack, drink, sunscreen. Call 973-472-5499 or online at [all-paid.com](http://all-paid.com). Visit [cliftonartscenter.org](http://cliftonartscenter.org) for more.

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Alexandra Constandinou  
Broker Associate



**46years**  
Walter Porto  
Sales Associate



**32years**  
Sophia Constandinou  
Sales Associate



**22years**  
Patricia Elmahdy  
Sales Associate



**20years**  
Sheila Esdaille  
Sales Associate



**42years**  
Wendell Maki  
Broker Associate



**32years**  
Gladys Mesones  
Sales Associate



**17years**  
Cesar Guzman  
Sales Associate



**24years**  
Angela Cardenas  
Sales Associate



**27years**  
Bobby Persaud  
Sales Associate



**20years**  
Joanna Arias  
Sales Associate



**22years**  
Ramon Ramirez  
Sales Assistant



**27years**  
Juana Torres  
Broker Associate



**17years**  
Alberto Mesones Jr.  
Sales Associate



**9years**  
Angelica Saenz  
Sales Associate



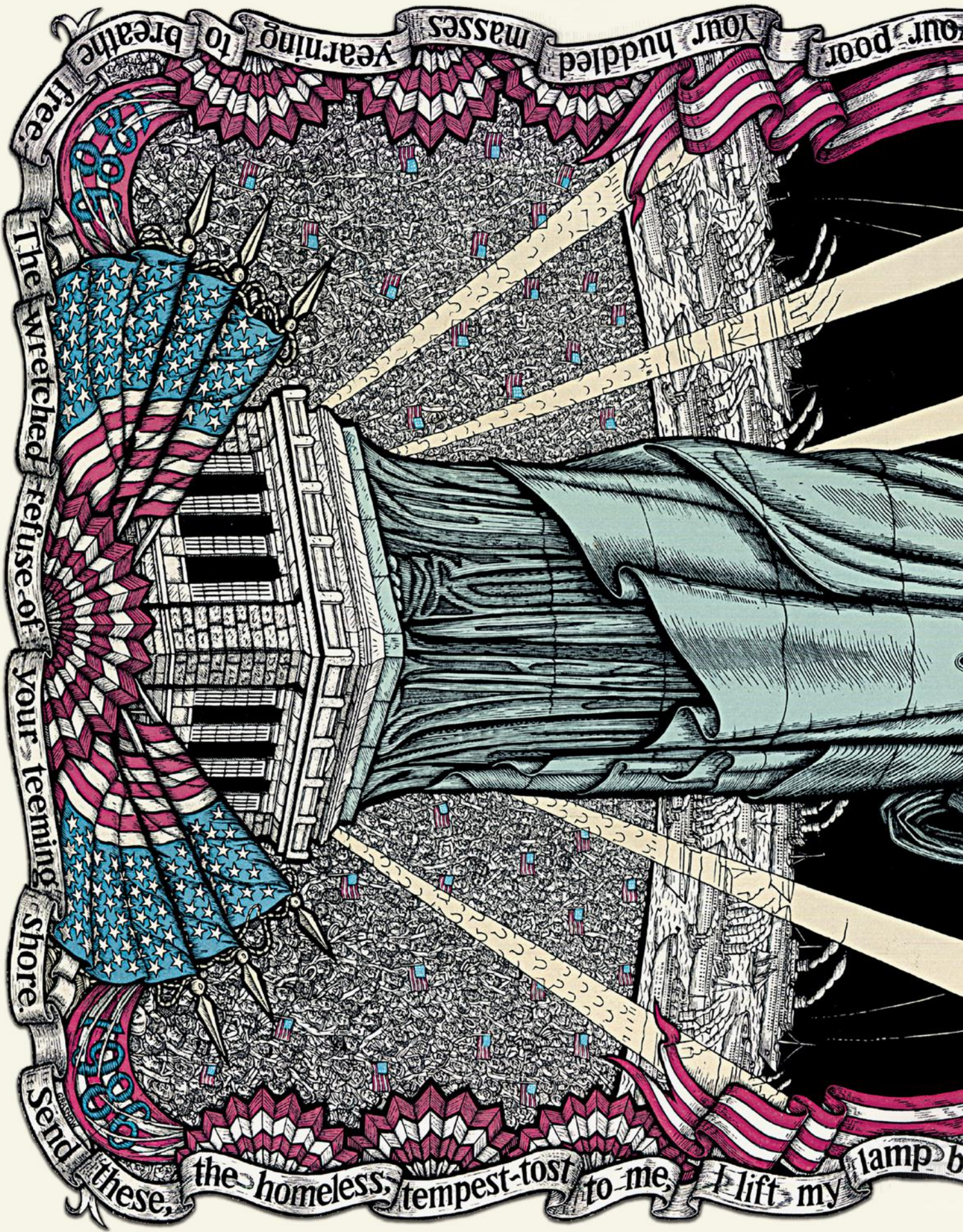
**10years**  
Raquel Familia  
Sales Associate



**7years**  
Denny Cruz  
Sales Associate



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