

Chapter Two- Fight Night



Even more telling and more exciting in my eyes were special Friday nights fight nights. Everyone watched the Friday night fights brought to us by Gillette, and as a little shaver, I enjoyed when there would be something or someone special - like Rocky Marciano or Graziano (a certain proof of the superiority of Italians!).

The inhabitants of 5th Street would close off the street to traffic. No-one called the police or town hall or anything of the sort. WE just closed OUR street to traffic because WE didn't want any traffic. Folding chairs were put in the street in front of the Sacco residence. (Mr. Sacco was a radio and TV repairman and one of the earliest owners of a TV.) People would mingle about and talk until the fight began.

The local hellions, of which I was a charter member, would run wild on such summer nights. There was a carefree, festival air on our sleepy little street.



One of the things I liked the most was when somebody would insist on driving down the street. I would fly in the fathers who had staked this night out as OURS, this street as their own. You never heard such yelling, screaming, and cussing. Of course, most of the later was in a potpourri of languages with their ancillary and expressive hand and arm signs. I was awed by the ferociousness and fearlessness of the quiet, amiable man next door whom everyone called "Kid", our next door neighbor.

When people sped down our street, nearly striking myself or one of my fellow urchins or ruffians, they would become enraged and threaten to do unmentionable things to the trespasser. It was only in these circumstances that I noticed that this little man had the arms of an ape (he worked for a living). If anyone dare give him lip, a congregation of fathers in work/tee shirts would materialize assuring the interloper of the harm he risked. At any rate, we would run wild in the street, play games, and otherwise enhance the aura of excitement and mayhem - something we had perfected

The women would congregate to one side. There would be 10 women and 13 conversations. About what, I don't have a clue. At an early age I had learned that when these women started, it was best to beat a hasty retreat. (And a good time to do something you weren't supposed to do, like go across the railroad tracks (strictly verboten) or get into a fight or two!)

Often we played pitching baseball cards, or we'd play a more elaborate game we had made up with buckeyes (to be described in a future chapter), or better yet a game of baseball with a rubber ball. The ball was thrown against a wall. If it was caught in the air or before it bounced twice, it was an out. If not, it was a hit, double, or home run depending on how far it went.

As the reader can imagine, the constant pounding would have aggravated a saint. But these men were out to watch a fight, not go to heaven. When we pushed the envelope, our hard and conditioned heads would receive a gentle cuffing. After our very existence had been threatened, we'd settled down, some beer arrived, and the entire community, men, women, and children quieted as the fight began.

And so went fight nights on 5th Street in Sharpsburg. It conjures up a group of families who had nothing beyond their own little world, and theirs it was. The street, the kids, the houses belonged to all and to each of them. On these they would stake their claim, and God help anyone who challenged, or, even worse, threatened one of their little ones.

So fight night wasn't so much about what fight was on TV. A community arose in front of the tiny TV in Mr. Sacco's window. It was, no doubt, a re-assuring feeling to one so young - a safe place to run wild amidst the mayhem of tongues and names, where no-one had any money. We just made merry with what we had, and, oh, how merry it would be.