DESTINATION LODI

LOCAL COLOR

Larry and I returned from Florida recently after visiting my brother Rob. While visiting the “good old days” of Lodi always come up in conversation. Rob remembers Chief Chapman (with good reason), camping in the Lodi Community Park and fishing under the Black River bridge. It was simply back then, no ordinances prohibiting the camping and fishing. When my brothers and friends did a little Halloween mischief, Chief H. Chapman knew whom the goblins were, gathered up the boys after talking with the parents and simply cleaned up the mess. Now, I did hear of a chase by the Chief through someone’s front door as the boys ran out the back door, soon to be captured. Not sure what they did, another story for another time.

Rob talked about the Hobos that camped by the railroad, coming to our front door asking for food or a handout. My mom would make a sandwich or two, some fruit and a drink. The Hobos were well educated on what houses were friendly. The Lodi Harrisville Historical Society had a program on Hobos and the symbols they used to mark the houses that were friendly. It was interesting.

During our lively conversation, the name Frank Smith came up, a long time homeless man of Lodi known to all. I would not call him a Hobo because he stayed in Lodi for a long time. He has several “homes’ around town, one was located behind the old United Dairy /Polson Rubber built from inner tubes destroyed by fire. One home was a group of cars located near the tracks before the Lumber Company. Rob remembers someone spray-painted “Ford Motel” on the side of car. I am assuming it was a Ford product. The Klinect family during the winter months would let him sleep in their basement. One winter, Frank was found almost frozen to death in one of his homes, but found in time he survived.

Frank did have a job with the Village of Lodi for a period and was a good worker. When the town insisted he needed to take his earned vacation, he did not want a vacation. With the earned timed forced on him, he never returned to work.

John Sabastian lived behind Bob Young’s barn on Wooster Street. John shoveled the stoker coal off Bob Schempp’s coal truck into the Unites Dairy boiler room at night listening to the Radio. John was hit by a hit-skip driver on Route 42 and killed in the early 50’s.

I have already written about Johnny “Muskrat” who lived out on Railroad Street behind Benson and Son bulk gasoline tanks. His shed was neat and clean where he prepared his baskets for weaving. His picnic and clothesbaskets were in great demand. He would be dumb-founded if he know his baskets go for $300. The Lodi Harrisville Historical Society has a basket on display.

I am always looking for local personal stories. Please, if you have a memory to share call.

Bowling Fundraiser April 20 7-10pm at Strike and Spare. $30 a ticket for bowling and food. Chinese Raffle and 50/50. Come join the fun and support our organization and a local business. Tickets available at bowling alley or call me at 330-635-7294.

The Lodi Harrisville Historical Society will be opened the 4th Sunday of each month from 1-4 pm starting in April.

Our website is lodiharrisvillehistorical.org Also, we have a Facebook page; look for the old film from 1956. Never too late to join us!! Membership forms on website.