

The Brooklyn of the 1930's

By Richard S Parker

I grew up in Rhode Island but lived and worked in New York City for many years. Many of my friends at that time were from Brooklyn. From them I learned about a way of life long since passed.

It was a city of older apartments, most of them without elevators. You walked up, that was the way it was. There was not much money, but rents were cheap. If they were foolish enough to raise your rent, you just moved, as many people did, every year.

Few people had automobiles, but you could take the subway to Ebbets Field to cheer for the beloved Dodgers, affectionately known as "dem bums." Or you could take another subway out to the ocean beaches of Coney Island. Perhaps you might head over to the Brooklyn museum to visit its fabulous collections. The intricate web of subway lines made everything possible. And nobody traveled alone, it was always with friends.

It was a polyglot city with almost every culture in the world represented. At home most of the older people spoke a foreign language, with the kids picking up American on the street and in the very fine schools Brooklyn was blessed with.

The secular center for all of the disparate peoples of Brooklyn was the candy store, with one on just about every block. It was a safe place for children and teen agers could hang out there without annoying anyone. It was also the communication center for the neighborhood, as few people had phones and the candy store did. It was through the candy store that you communicated with family, friends, and lovers.