

## **“I CAN SEE EDGEWATER FROM MY HOUSE”**

New adventures at times start with moves to a new location. Our initial living quarters when we were first married was on Elliott Street in the Rosedale section of Penn Hills. We spent a short time at that address. We decided we needed more room and found a second floor apartment in Verona, Parker Street, about one mile from the initial place. We stayed there for three years or so and then found our dream, a house of our own. All these places were in Verona, looks like we didn't stray too far from our roots. We were both Verona residents all our early lives. The house on North Avenue was in a good neighborhood. From our back yard, I could see Edgewater Steel Company in Oakmont. Our next door neighbors on the low side were the Shaw's. Alex Shaw worked at Edgewater in the office. Marti, his wife, was the kindergarten teacher at Verona schools. She taught our three children at Verona Elementary. Across the street lived the Mauro's, known to us before we moved here.

A very new experience for us, we now owned a three story house with a finished basement to care for along with a demanding outside area. Our time was consumed dealing with the house and upkeep, besides working fulltime. Our energy level was high and we did for the neighbors, especially the Shaw's. We felt that neighbors should assist others. The Shaw's were older than us. Their two boys had moved away to California. The Shaw's would visit the boys in California and the West Coast. Alex was a Shriner and on one occasion while they were away, I borrowed his festive fez and cummerbund for a joke. Mollie dressed the part and we had this act photographed. We still have the picture. Some day someone may see the picture and with no history available may think I was a Shriner.

Alex was a kind and gentle person, well liked and respected by the community. Marti was a teacher, who was strict with all including her own children. Mollie and I respected both of them, no problems. Years passed in the 70's, 80's and 90's. Alex developed Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease. He was an avid driver and loved his four-door Oldsmobile. The time came when it was increasingly difficult for him to drive. With this situation, I would drive Alex and Marti for Sunday outings. Summers came and went, my children grew up and Alex's health deteriorated. This made him depressed and sad, especially now that he could not drive. One particular November dark Sunday morning, I took Alex for a ride. Edgewater Steel was closed and their back parking lot, 200 yards by 200 yards, was now vacant. I decided on my own to take a ride to the parking lot. Alex had worked there for many years and I thought he may like to be there. Upon entering the entrance of the lot, I got an idea that was one of my best or worst, depending on who is looking. I asked Alex if he would like to drive. He was astonished. I explained to him that it would be controlled. The lot was large and no other cars were around. Besides I could turn off the ignition key if an emergency arose. Somewhat reluctant, but was excited for this unusual opportunity. I got out of the driver's side and he moved behind the

wheel. He grabbed the wheel with authority and positioned his feet on the gas pedal and brake. I told him I would instruct him on what to do in respect to turning and speed. We started out excited “go straight, now turn left and then right, keep the speed slow.” We drove this erratic way for about twenty minutes. He was thrilled to do this. I felt so glad for him. As we were turning and making slow “donuts,” I heard a low toned police siren. An Oakmont Police Car had entered the parking lot and instructed us to stop and pull over. Alex did as I directed him to stop. Alex was a little startled by the questioning of the police officer. The questioning started with, “what are you doing here?” I answered for Alex and told the officer that Mr. Shaw had worked here at Edgewater Steel for many years and we were there to reminisce some. The police officer asked why we were driving in circles and making no sense in our driving pattern. Here is where it gets a little bit strange and touchy, and now you the reader will know what I told the questioning police officer, Mr. Shaw is blind and hasn’t driven for a year or more. Yes, I let a blind man drive his car. The officer was astounded. He gathered his police demeanor and said that we had to leave since this was private property. He was too surprised to say anything about a blind man driving. We switched drivers and went home, just one-half mile away. Alex thanked me sincerely and I was elated to have given him one more mile of driving. Within a year he passed away, but in that last year, we talked many times about the police encounter than he never saw.

Frank W. Santucci, September, 2014