

I Lived on a Street in the Bronx

By Chris Hirschhorn

As a child, my siblings and I lived with our parents in a two-story red brick home with garage in the Bronx, which took its name after the Bronc Brothers who had a huge farm in this area before the City became a city of five boroughs or counties: Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island.

Sometimes we had a live-in maid. Sometimes was because when we had more than two children no one wanted to work for us. Our parents were both attorneys. When we could not have a live-in maid, mother had to move her office from the Woolworth building, downtown near the Brooklyn Bridge, to our home on Undercliff Ave.

This home had a large backyard which mother hosed in winter so that we and our friends could ice skate close to our homes. In summers, mother strung a net so we could play tennis. Mother always wanted to have her children and their friends where she could supervise them. Wise woman!

This block was not only under a cliff but also over a cliff beside which flowed the Harlem River. Because we were high up, we had a wonderful view of Columbia University's rowing team as it practiced on the Harlem River which we saw from our west windows. Looking west, we also saw Manhattan, named after the Indian tribe who lived there.

The street, Undercliff Avenue, was cobblestoned. The milkman and the fresh vegetable man delivered their produce to us direct from their wagons. Since horses pulled the wagons, Tony, the street's clean-up man, cleaned up after the delivery horses.

When we were in high school, my brothers and the other guys played stick ball in the street outside our home.

On the north side of our home was a vacant lot with many boulders and bushes. In the fall, Chinese ladies came and stripped the bushes of their berries. We always wondered what they did with the berries.

Eventually, on the south side of our street, some apartment houses were built and close by, a movie theater was built. When the weather was inclement, we could attend a show and sometimes bring home a 'plate,' the gift of the day. And after the movie, we'd stop to visit Larry, the soda jerk at the corner pharmacy. He'd give us ice cream, sometimes free.

After grade school, my brothers took a bus to their high school and I just walked to my school that backed on to our street. My high school, Maplehurst, had been the manor house of the owners of the *Herald Tribune*, which was the other morning newspaper aside from the *New York Times*. There were six girls in my class and under 50 in this high school. I didn't understand how privileged we all were.