

LABOR DAY 2013

“ ... if work was fun and easy, they wouldn't give you money ..” Albert

by Harry Zirkelbach

In the hours between Memorial and Labor Days pre-WWII, there were no school days. Those two monuments defined the end and onset of each child's slavery to classroom learning. Surely, there were some who learned more at summer play.

While both Memorial and Labor Days were celebrated with parades and parties, children were known to emphasize Labor Day, storing the illusion of year-long vacation. Neither onset day had meaning to those children beyond holiday, unless ... Fathers, Uncles, Friends had served in war and as Union leaders, never let others forget the sacrifices made by men, their pals from youth, who had not survived those past conflicts in war and labor strife. Their living paraded, in and without uniform, each Memorial and Labor day with others who had served.

Our school contributed Boy Scout, and Drum and Bugle units, delighted to welcome the first hint of summer with whatever weather May 30 donated, a then again on Labor Day. Parade and be seen. Along with veterans and other celebrants. A leisurely couple of hours between the three months of continuous holiday, joining friends without restriction or dress uniform.

For these children of eternal Summer, Labor Day had the advantage of following Sunday, the natural holiday that week.

The majority of those parading wore no specific uniform. In fact those marching were most often union officials, dressed professionally, in suits, carrying some emblem of their trade. They were known in the community.

The children could not yet know, that unlike the military men, some Labor leaders were despised. Wage gains achieved usually followed some long dispute involving ugly words, too often violence, never full acceptance from the provider of the wage. With each resolution of the dispute one side furious, unforgiving.

Labor Day cheering for these marchers was never intense, seldom raised beyond the respectable. The same youth marching in the May 30 parade, happy to see, be seen.

Afterward, these boys welcomed the food, picnic at a Lake Erie beach, the Lake water now warmed by months of summer sun, sand in sandwiches and other food, hardly noticeable, expected.

Children extended Labor day unreasonably into the late hours, because “poof” Nuns opened the new school year on Tuesday, that morning beginning a pregnant nine months of seasons without parades on the streets, the children running animal free the days before and after. Yet summer games played in sun and rain bronzing bodies a sleek skinny brown, bordering golden, lasting months, still agleam through winter's coat and scarf. Even when boys served midnight Mass, wearing the red cassock, gleaming white surplus, their parents approving, as did the congregation's daughters.

Ah, summer. Labor Day celebrants of Pre-WWII are quiet now. Most forever. Those alive in Windsor Gardens have a fondness for days of youth, and if blessed, will share memories of the day with family members several generations younger, at times without exaggeration.