

There are heroes among us

I am very busy now helping a couple of communities celebrate anniversaries. The Riverdale Parade got off on a damp day, but that did not dampen the spirits of the 75th Anniversary. As I work with Anne DuHaime in Bloomingdale and Ron Assante in Butler, it almost seems they have found the hard drive of an ancient computer with oodles of trivia along with some decent history. More likely they found my stories painted on the walls of ancient caves.

It is truly a labor of love to recount these stories of growth to another generation. I learned at Hope College that a journalist is a true historian. What is written must be accurate and concise. I always tried to reach that goal.

As I reflect on history with the committees a number of thoughts come to mind. I am impressed with how far we have come, and I am amazed at the number of truly unsung heroes there have been.

Pompton Lakes' former fire chief Ed Roach comes to mind. Ed was chief for several terms and put his life into it. There was never a time when he was not willing to serve the community. Bill McColl was chief at Pompton Lakes at just the right time to bring the department out of the old times into the new. With the help of his firefighters, he worked for and got the firehouse which is on the corner of Passaic Avenue and Hamburg Turnpike.

A list like this could not forget Don Krom whose deeds would fill six or seven columns. He was a calming and leveling force in a time of upheavals.

Bits and Pieces



By Howard Lee Ball

Joe Martoccia is called "Mr. Pompton Lakes" today and rightly so. Joe has served the community faithfully for years. There is a story in Rotary which says that a painting made when Washington was at the Yellow Tavern shows Joe Martoccia holding the horse.

Joe was not the only Mr. Pompton Lakes. Izzie Gelman had the title as well as Lou Eis. Izzie was always busy. For some reason he reminded me of Groucho Marx but he was no comedian. He was mayor at a time of change and he stood up to the task.

The Lakeside School referendum passed because Izzie worked to have it pass. Pompton Lakes has sewers and good water because Izzie saw to it. Among his more obscure and less talked about exploits we recall the time he drove a fire truck onto somebody's lawn and the time he flew in a bi-plane which attempted to land where the high school now stands.

Lou Eis was also active in Democratic Party politics and served the community well. After serving his community for many years, Lou took up the banner for older Americans.

We were trying to innovate a program called Meals on Wheels. The

state did not want to fund us and some local governments did not know how serious the situation was. Lou had a small salary from the county and he gave it up for six months so we could start the program. That pioneer program has expanded today to feed hundreds of people. Lou never thought that was heroism. I do.

I started to include all of the communities and found there was too much in my own backyard. I will devote other columns to other towns so don't feel slighted.

Frances E. Reiman, Edwin Hermani, Marie St. Ledger and Tom Hutton were heroes in education. Just as the great Depression was draining the nation, they brought awareness to the children of the little mill town. They found helpers in teachers like Stanley Austin, Helen Lindsley Wyld, Marie Reidel, George Parr, Georgina Stevens Jegge and teachers too numerous to mention. Between the Depression and World War II, it was a time of stress and strain, but they got the kids through it.

As though he was a character out of a novel, Richard (Doc) Colfax looked and acted like a country doctor. He was always vitally interested in the community and the young people. For many years he helped candidates apply for military academies.

The nice part about all of this turns out to be there are individuals today who will qualify for such a column 50 years from now. Is there a writer out there who is up to the task?

Sections plan to move