

BOBBY ABBO

- o Owner, The Roma Restaurant,
3419 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
- o Resident since 1945
- o 39 years old

My family moved to Ordway Gardens in 1940. My father opened the Roma on Connecticut Avenue in 1932. In about 1955, we moved to the Newark Street house. Many years ago (1925-26), my father hunted rabbits in Cleveland Park.

We used to play in Ordway Gardens....underneath the apartments. There were some tremendous catacombs. We called them catacombs, but of course when you're three feet tall, everything looks much, much bigger. Great, big, cavernous boiler rooms and spaces that you would crawl in. When I think back sometimes, I wonder how in the world I ever survived my youth. There used to be so many kids back there. I remember them all. In fact, Lucky Wentworth and Aram Bakshian still live in Washington.

We took the metrobus to school. We used to have these little pink school bus tickets that you wouldI think they cost seven cents.... drop in and take the bus to Woodley Road and walk up to school and then take it back. Other times I walked to school and tried to drop my lunch off the bridge and hit a car. I was never very good. I had terrible eye-hand coordination in regards to a one-hundred foot drop. My father used to put things in like chicken salad. I wanted peanut butter and jelly. He refused to give it to me. You know a club sandwich. You know how flimsy a tomato can get. I mean my sandwiches were all very bizarre. So I always walked across the bridge and tried to drop them on a car. You shouldn't do that. That is wrong, but I didn't really know at the time. I figured a sandwich couldn't make too big a dent in a car. I never hit anybody anyway. Now I know how much trouble it is....how scary it can be....when you're going along. But I always thought that probably chicken salad made a sort of thud.... "smoosh" is a better word.

Sam Tropea was the originator of Tropea's Barbershop. Frank, Sam's son, is running it now. Sam died, but Joe, Sam's other son, was director at Macomb Playground when I was a young boy. Of course, Freddie Kramer was there from time to time. We always had a basketball game during basketball season, ten or twelve guys....always a lot of softball games up there. You had to be careful when hitting a ball to left field, because the field dropped off and the fielder would disappear if you weren't careful.

The Roma's not exactly just a place to come and have dinner or lunch. We're a focal point for a lot of the elderly citizens. They always know we're open. Sometimes it would be easier to close. My father would say, "You have to stay open, because a lot of people depend on it." It gives a lot of people who are inside a chance to get outside. Gives them a chance to see their friends in a social setting. They can get a friendly, casual hello. They come knowing there's a friendly face here.