

HUAC Hunts Communists In Queens In July 1955

Get into a conversation with a long-time Queens resident and you're likely to discover a subscriber of the *Long Island Star-Journal*, a daily paper that informed the community about local and world news until it folded in 1968. A banner across the *Star-Journal* masthead reminded readers that the newspaper's name came from the merger of the *Long Island Daily Star* (1876) and the *North Shore Daily Journal--The Flushing Journal* (1841).

Welcome to July 1955!

The Communist scare was in full swing.

At least a dozen actors and writers in television, radio and theater were subpoenaed to appear in August before a House-Un-American Activities Committee hearing in New York on alleged Communist infiltration of the entertainment industry. In preparation for the hearing, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists circulated a proposed resolution among its members to authorize the fining, censure, suspension or expulsion of any member who refused to say whether they were or had been members of the Communist Party. The deadline for return of the ballots was August 6.

In Queens, the heads of four families in the Queensbridge federal housing project refused to sign required loyalty oaths. Eviction procedures against them were begun. The oath was required under an amendment to the Public Housing Law in 1952, which required all 30,000 families living in 15 projects in the city to sign. The Queensbridge Tenants League had also been declared a subversive organization two months before by U. S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell Jr.

Over the weekend of July 16 and 17, seven more arrests were made along Tavern Row's "Mile of Bars" and other locations on the Rockaway peninsula as part of the ongoing crackdown on "drunk and disorderly" persons. As cases in point, arrests were made for "shouting profanities while drunk" at 3 a.m. on Beach 103rd Street; throwing a drinking glass on the walk at 1:30 a.m.; presenting a false draft card to buy drinks at a tavern; and "giving a cop a hard time."

An ancient College Point landmark, the Eskotter Hotel, was demolished. The sprawling 68-year-old hotel at 14th Avenue and 110th Street had been a mecca for political clambakes and organization picnics on its shady grounds. It was known far and wide as a beer hall. One of its most famous guests was Charles Lindbergh, who visited there some months after becoming the first man to fly the Atlantic. The site was purchased early in the year by the Edo Aircraft Corporation for construction of an annex to its plant. Edo manufactured parts for airplanes and boats for the Navy, mostly under secret contract.

On July 18, a switch was thrown and an electric light bulb was illuminated at the free world's first atomic electric power station at West Milton, New York. The plant was Knoll's Atomic Power Laboratory. Chairman Lewis Strauss of the Atomic Energy Commission officiated at the historic switch-throwing ceremony.

On July 29, the *Star* reported that City Hall had announced that J. Edgar Hoover,

director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, had been offered the position of New York City Police Commissioner. Francis W. H. Adams had announced his resignation as commissioner, but said he would stay on until a successor was named. FBI headquarters announced that Hoover had declined the offer.

Mrs. E. C. Moore of Flushing was helping two survivors of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima through the most important year of their young lives. The girls, 18-year-old Chieko Kimura and 22-year-old Takako Harada, were living at her house while they awaited delicate surgery to remove burn scars on their faces and bodies. They were among 25 "Hiroshima maidens" who had come to the United States for free plastic surgery. The girls were in the basement of a grammar school in Hiroshima when the first atomic bomb had leveled the city 10 years before. Their scars were so disfiguring that they were reluctant to appear in public. When the girls began their treatment at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, they were to be transported there each day by the North Shore Red Cross chapter in Flushing.

The ABC television network aired a pre-



At top right, the Queensbridge housing complex. Above the Mickey Mouse Club. Above right, Mouseketeer Annette.

view of Disneyland, the famous 160-acre amusement park near Los Angeles. The park officially opened July 17, 1955.

The *Star* entertainment page reviewed a new daytime television show aimed mostly at children. It was called "The Mickey Mouse Club." The show was to begin airing in October from 5 to 6 p.m. Eastern time. It featured four 15-minute segments. The first quarter on Monday, Wednesday and Friday was a newsreel devoted to the activities and accomplishments of children throughout the world. The last quarter each day was to be one of Disney's enormous catalog of cartoons, so kids could be introduced, possibly for the first time, to Mickey Mouse, Pluto and others. On each Thursday, there was to be a segment featuring Jiminy Cricket serving up safety tips. Parts of the show were also to be devoted to special serials for kids such as adaptations of the novel *Hans Brinker*, or

The Silver Skates.

New York real estate tycoon William Zeckendorf (who built the United Nations Building) was a guest at an outdoor evening wedding in Tiny Town, Colorado, at the Colorado Sunshine Club. This would not be news except for the fact that the bride and groom were nude, as were most of the guests, including bridesmaid stripper Evelyn (\$50,000 Treasure Chest) West, who wore only a large bouquet of flowers, and the best man. Zeckendorf and fellow guest columnist Art Buchwald were more modest. Buchwald wore striped swim trunks, a black coat and silk hat, while Zeckendorf, in the words of the *Star*, "came as a sheriff." The cool Colorado evening air soon drove most of the attendees inside for the wedding reception or into some clothing, except for West, who spent some time outside chatting with the "goggle-eyed" Zeckendorf, while still wear-

ing only her bouquet. Later Zeckendorf said, "I'm like the kid when he saw the giraffe. If I hadn't seen it, I wouldn't believe it."

Playing at the movies were "East of Eden", starring James Dean and Julie Harris; "Blackboard Jungle", starring Glenn Ford and Anne Francis; "Daddy Long Legs", starring Fred Astaire and Leslie Caron and "Strategic Air Command", starring James Stewart and June Allyson.

That's the way it was in July 1955!

Greater Astoria Historical Society exhibits are open to the public on Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. at Quinn's Gallery, 4th floor, Thomas M. Quinn & Sons Funeral Home, 35-20 Broadway, Long Island City New exhibit, "Lager, Leisure, and Laughter: Long Island City at Play", now on view. For more information, call the Greater Astoria Historical Society at 718-278-0700 or visit www.astorialic.org.