

## Chicago Ave. Movie Memories

By Andrew Guzaldo

The 50's and 60's were times of innocence, exemplified by wholesome and inexpensive movie going. All which made it an enjoyable experience and a fond memory. Unfortunately, today movie going is far too different of an experience than the one kids in the 50's and 60's had. Growing up and living in the Chicago-land area at that time offered no franchised movie theatres almost at every of the city block, like we have today. Nonetheless, we as children were blessed with a single choice, the Fantastic movie theater known as the ALAMO. It was on the 30 hundred block of Chicago Avenue. This was the one retreat from reality which we appreciated to its fullest. Every time I think about the ALAMO, I can almost smell the aromas coming from the candy store that was adjacent to the ALAMO. There you would get your popcorn, candy and fresh licorice treats or whatever struck your fancy. We really did not have much of a choice but to us, it was a vast variety. At the time, nothing was more exciting and filled with anticipation than the double headers in baseball and those Saturday Morning Matinees. Of course the option of the double feature at the movies came close. This has become a thing of the past. But I do not doubt that those that share these memories would do anything to bring back those magnificent feelings.

Together with our cousins and buddies, we would finish buying our treats, which only cost a few cents in the Candy store. And off we were to the ALAMO. As we entered the theater the usher and his flashlight would escort us in. All around the theatre seating, the lights would shine as friends and all of the cousins would gather towards the balcony. This was not just any balcony. This balcony was special it was where the older guys would sit, the guys from the North Side of Chicago. We wanted to sit there with them. Yet they were quite good at making it clear we did not meet the criteria as were younger. It was always done in a good respectful and friendly manner. They were not harsh or cold in anyway. The reality was that we were all friends and they were just older. Finally we would make it into our aisle. It was just a few feet away. This is where we beside John Wayne, were in the saddle riding a horse or defeating the Japanese Army. This is where we learned from Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper how men in the good old USA could be humble and full of dignity. They were good role models. We also learned that on screen tough guys like James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson had a soft side to them. We would read about their lives prior to their acting career. One was involved in the Arts and the other a fantastic dancer. Last but not least, lets not forget those slapstick comedies such as those from Abbott and Costello. Life was different then. Who cared if we got there a little late? If we came in the middle of the Movie we would just stay there and watch it all over from the beginning to end at the next showing. But of course we would have to see those delightful cartoons, which were played prior to the feature movie. We would just sit back and enjoy.

The neighborhood I grew up in geographically had borders, Chicago Avenue and Homan all the way to Pulaski Avenue was predominantly Italian American with Flower shops, barbershops and all the necessities one needed for daily life. Everything was just a few blocks away from your home. As television became more available, roofs became riddled with their antennas. They seemed to grow like weeds atop. With that little "tube" in our home, we would conveniently all sit around and watch the entertainment in the middle of our living room. And with that fewer and fewer people went to the theater. All of these surroundings are very reminiscent to me.

Yet even today nothing is as intriguing and exciting as those days at the ALAMO and the theater that lives in the hearts of so many - the ALAMO We thank you for those good times.





*It Was a Very Good Year!*  
*West Chicago Avenue 1956*