

## The Candy Store

One of the great things about growing up in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania was that every block had its own candy store. I had it even better; I had three candy stores, a movie theater, an ice cream counter, and a pizza parlor all in walking distance of my house. To top it off my house was next door to the city swimming pool; which also happen to be the gathering place for all the kids in the summer.

George's store was a block away and he had all of the classic penny candy.



I must have run up to that store a thousand times with the coins that my mom could afford to give me. It was always a difficult choice. Would it be the milk chocolate squares called Grade A's or the long lasting sweet balls called Jawbreakers, how about Mary Jane's, love the peanut butter. Then there were things like the wax tubes with the different flavors of syrup in them and, of course, Bazooka bubble gum.



George's also offered a nickel soda but you had to return the bottle when as soon as you were finished with it. I spent quite some time standing outside that little store drinking a cherry or an orange soda.

The big candy bars were a nickel. I wouldn't buy them unless I had lots of money, relatively speaking. Why would I buy one candy bar when I could get a variety of things? Those coins didn't come easy and I had to get my bang for the buck, or should I say penny.

There was another little store on the same street. I don't remember its name; it closed when I was still a kid. This store was the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. In the summer, if I could get a hold of thirty cents, I would go and get the special ice cream cone. The man would take a rectangular pint of ice cream, that's how pints were sold in those days, and he would use a big knife to cut it in thirds. I would get one third of a pint of ice cream in a cool rectangular topped cone; that was a real treat.

Now you can get some of the same candy in big bags but it's not the same. The adventure was standing in front of that glass staring at the choices and carefully pointing out the ones that you wanted. That is experience that will not be duplicated in a society of instant gratification.

Our neighborhood wasn't very affluent, but we were all in the same boat. Every kid would get a few precious coins now and then and the candy is where we would go. Penny candy was a big deal, and the corner candy store was our dearest friend.