

Class of 1968

Sharing Memories - "Dining" and Drinking at Penn



Colin Hanna: Penn is where I had my first cheesesteak!

But not at Geno's or Pat's. That little place on 37th street next to Phi Delt. What was its name?



Janet Oberlander Simon: Al's Penthouse - from my husband (Art), Class of '66! No not Al's (Penn House, trying to be punny) but the place next to it. Remember Al's wife? I guess her full name was Cecile, but she went by 'Cile. I could never think of her as anything but Seal!

Jack Goldenberg: The little place next to Al's was a barber shop. My friend Axel Berg dated Al's daughter, Cheryl, freshman year.



Mike Levy: All of my coronary arteries are still pissed at me for eating so many (as in a lot) lunches, dinners and midnight snacks at the White Castle on Spruce across from the dorms. With each bite, I could hear them whispering, "We're going to get even with you, sucker." Because they were rather small sliders, one or two would never be adequate. Oh, I must mention the fries.

Bill Hermann: Bull & Barrel had their own private label beer.

Tad Decker: Jim Collins was a bartender there as well as at Smokes.

Carol Shlifer Clapp Coonley: There was no Wiz when we were students. Only provolone. And we are talking about then, not now. I would have had to take two buses and the subway to get to South Philly.



Karen Whitestone Carr: As Julie Andrews sang: These are a few of my favorite things!

* Fran and I cutting class between 11 and 3 pm 5 days a week to hang out at Houston Hall to eat turkey sandwiches on white bread - and hopefully run into the current boyfriends

* Lorna's for whatever

* Sunday afternoons at a fraternity house eating Ronnie's roast beef hoagies with russian dressing

* Hot shaved beef sandwiches (and whiskey sours - yuk!) at Carney's

* A Mom's burger for Saturday lunch at Grand's

* Senior year doing happy hour at Smokey Joe's followed by cooking dinner for the crowd (at least 5-10) at our apartment behind Smokes

* AND the Walnut Walk! Senior year gathering a group of likeminded best pals starting at Bookbinder's, 2nd and Walnut, finishing at Smokey Joe's, 38th and Walnut (36 blocks!), stopping at each establishment along the way for 1 drink (only!). The guys participated while we girls watched over them (I decided not to name names. You know who you are!). Most of us made it to the end. I think we had a prize... Note: At our 50th reunion, I ran into a group of Penn seniors along Walnut Street in City Center wearing t-shirts saying: The Walnut Walk / 50 years!

Here's to dear old Penn!



Michael Levy: The only reason I had a girlfriend is that ZBT had lox and bagels on Saturdays. But no guests for Thursday nite steaks. If guests, I would have had a much better social life

Leslie Maddin Bayer: I also loved Kelly & Cohen - especially the pickles... but mostly I remember, and am now surprised I survived, my daily breakfast before my 9:00 classes was a full strength coke, a cigarette and a package of Chocolate Tandy cakes!!

Mike Levy: Friends still send me tandy cakes

Leslie: That's it chocolate KandyKakes - can only find peanut kandykakes -? Not nearly as good! Did you find them in Texas?

Mike: And over the years friends have sent me some. They go better with Dr Pepper than my usual (Hostess Twinkies)

Gail Petty Riepe: The day after we moved into Hill Hall, my new roommate and I went down to breakfast together. The food in the cafeteria didn't look so bad, so we went down the line and picked out something to eat, then went to a table and sat with some other girls who looked friendly enough...

I thought it strange that some of the girls had donuts that they cut in half crosswise and put butter or cream cheese (yuk) on them. They didn't look very good to me... I liked glazed chocolate ones or ones with colored sprinkles on top that you just ate around from the first bite.

I didn't say anything then, but later that day I asked my roommate why these girls ate their donuts in such a strange way. She laughed and then told me that they were BAGELS! She was from New York City and thought it was very funny I didn't know what a bagel was.

I guess my life growing up in New Jersey was very sheltered even though I had been to New York several times with my parents... To this day, I still don't understand bagels, which seem to me to be a whole loaf of bread compressed into a donut shape. Give me a real glazed chocolate donut anytime!

Carol Soffer Greco: The night of Yom Kippor Paganos was filled with all the Jewish students filling up on tasty Pizza and terrific Italian food. Few were hungry during the fast.

Mark Rosen: I actually liked the Houston Hall food. My tastes were not so gourmet back then. I can't remember anything specific except the apple pie. French apple pie (with raisins and sugar crust over the pastry) and regular American apple pie (sans frills) were tops on my list.

Student Snack. <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/secure/psa/history.php> Nightly delivery to your dorm room of sugary junk by working students. Seem to recall they had a tray carried waist high with a strap around the neck for support. Hostess cupcakes, Twinkies, Snowballs to name a few.

Ronnie's subs. Nothing like the roast beef with thousand island on a long roll. Used to get one every Wednesday night after bridge.

Veal parmigiana at Pagano's. My favorite dish for years. Broasted chicken was excellent as well.

Nick's rotisserie roast beef au jus on a Kaiser role in South Philly on Jackson Street, the "meal of the gods".

Quad grill. Great breakfasts. Greasy eggs cooked in bacon grease. Yum.

Kelly and Cohen. Only remember that you paid on honor system.

Dirty drug. Almost never went. In my mind that was where the cool kids went, and that definitely wasn't me.

Bookbinders. For when the parents came to town. Too expensive even for that, but good seafood.

And, of course, Tau Delta Phi frat. No specifics, but hearty and good food, plenty of it. The cook, Willis, was so friendly. And a few hands of bridge after dinner near the entrance.

Michael Crow: Having grown up in Texas on a diet of Dr. Pepper, Mexican food, and barbecue, Penn (and Philadelphia more broadly) was a big change. But Black Cherry Wishniak (spelling???) as one regular beverage (beer as another), and hoagies and especially cheesesteak were good substitutes.



Carol Shlifer Clapp Coonley: Look for TastyKake brand. They are sold at Publix, Harris Teeter, Kroger, Walmart Supercenter and Food Lion around here. The chocolate are chocolate cupcakes, not Tandykakes. In DC they are sold at CVS. In Arlington at Giant and Safeway. In Austin at CVS and Randall's.



As a cakelike item they are in a class by themselves.

Carol Shlifer Clapp Coonley: Freshman year I ate at Hill Hall and the Drug or cooked in the suite. Sophomore year I ate at AEPHi and the Drug. Junior year I ate at AEPHi, Phi Ep, and the deli on 40th Street. Senior year I cooked in our suite in the Cheston — I used Mastering the Art of French Cooking. I was taken to Frankie Bradley's by an assortment of Phi Ep dates where I ate roast duck. I liked the fries at the Drug — still the best fries I ever ate, wonderfully greasy, crisp on the outside and soft on the inside. The Drug had good graffiti; one of the yearbooks photographed it...maybe 1967? The first time I ever saw "God is dead" — Nietzsche; "Nietzsche is dead" — God. I thought it was so profound. I think I wrote a line from something of Donovan's. Howard and I each remember getting sick on gin and juice at Phi Ep...I think it was a tradition or rite of passage. It stained. We drank daiquiris in the AEPHi basement where we played hearts and I fell in love with the man I should have married. I ate at the sorority house just so I could stare at our waiter without being questioned.

Elsie Sterling Howard: I loved the Dirty Drug. I knew there would always be a friend there. For me it was a destination as I didn't have a dorm. I was always happy to walk into that smelly crowded space. Did we even have Diet Coke then? I remember drinking Tab. I remember grilled cheese and french fries Oh, those fraternity parties with that vile purple drink. That's when I switched to drinking b..... well... never mind... Beer on Friday afternoons at Smokey Joe's. And my first week on campus, as a senior, at a bar on 37th street? 39th street? A night that changed my life forever. What was the name of that bar? The name of the bar is not what was important that night.

Bill Hermann: Purple Jesus was made from grape juice and grain alcohol.

Mike Levy: Shouldn't there be a sidebar of opinions on Philly cheesesteaks? (Don't get mean, nasty and personal). It ain't just about Pat's vs. Geno's, or Cheese Whiz vs. Provolone. I suggest you all go to...

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cheesesteak+philadelphia

Especially..... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2QNAMT4-6Q>

Also: has anybody mentioned Nick's in South Philly for roast beef in a roll and a pint?

Bill Creeden: No one has mentioned the food trucks, which with exception of a soft pretzel with yellow mustard, I consider them much too dangerous, even if famished. The cheesesteaks and occasional roast beef w/ russian dressing at Ronnie's East on 37th St. across from Wharton and up a few store fronts from the Campus Corner offered the easiest and tastiest lunch offerings. Evening study break might require a walk from Deke up to 40th St. and Ronnie's West Deli

(yes, great dill pickles). Post Deke parties could find a number of us at the diner at 40th and Spruce.

No one has mentioned Ed's. Ed's was located on Spruce several store fronts up from the White Castle toward 38th. Ed, who loved his "tea" especially on weekends, would rally the next morning to make one of the best short order cook breakfasts complete with home fries, bacon, eggs and coffee strong enough to keep Ed standing. You had to excuse his appearance and the inevitable cigarette.

House of Pagano and meal of choice - veal parmesan - was an occasional treat away from training table meals. The Red and Blue Diner on Walnut, where the Franklin Building sits today, was usually avoided. A walk well rewarded was a jaunt to Koch's Deli 43rd & Locust. Everything was good, especially the cheesecake.

Just around the corner from Koch's was Walsh's Tavern on 43rd. However, Smokey Joe's, manned almost daily by bartender, Bobby Hogan, was the watering hole of choice. Then, SJ was located at 38th & Walnut. I wasn't much of a drinker yet, Paul Ryan, its owner, was kind enough to close SJ at 11pm the night of my 21st birthday for a private party. Paul was a huge Penn sports fan, especially football.

Friday afternoons spring junior and senior years on a bench on Locust Walk between Phi Gam & St. Elmo's, fellow Deke and our classmate, T.C. Gardiner(RIP), would share his largesse by offering from a vat his concocted purple passion punch, aka Yucca Flats blend, to all who cared to imbibe. By senior year for many it was a ritual to kickoff to the weekend.

While the frat parties and mixers have their drinking legacies, no one mentioned the ingenuity of classmates to bring alcohol into football games. I know of syringes and whole oranges, but others need to weigh in.

Each classmate had his/her own way to "toast dear old Penn". Stay safe!

Bill Hermann: Frank's food truck was parked daily outside of Franklin Field at the entrance to the parking lot by the tennis courts on the sidewalk. It was painted in the Penn colors.

During the Eagles' games he was at the entrance to the parking garage on 33rd Street near Drexel. (HE) took care of those of us who parked cars.

Marilyn Kanas: One of my favorite dinner experiences for our first Parents Weekend. My parents were living in the Azores (My father was in the Navy) so my grandparents came from Saratoga Springs, NY and my grandmother knew that Old Bookbinders was THE place to go and made a reservation there. In those days there were not many choices for quality dining in Philadelphia.

Susan Goldman Sendrow: The delicatessen, on 40th Street. I lived on 44th Street between Walnut and Locust, and one of my favorite dining options was Koch's Deli around the corner in the 4300 block of Locust across from the Acme. It was the quintessential hole-in-the-wall place with takeout only. The line for service often snaked out the door, and one of the Koch brothers or their mom would place some sliced cold cuts on a sheet of waxed paper that was passed down the line so that waiting customers wouldn't get too hungry -- a wonderful gesture that would never occur in today's COVID-19 environment. The Koch family's remarkable friendliness and generosity were confirmed by the hundreds of personal postcards and photographs mounted on the wall across from the deli counter.

Koch's remained open with the Koch family at least through 2000, when my younger son graduated from Penn. We picked up trays heaped with cold cuts, side salads, and rye bread from Koch's for the graduation party -- not elegant, but no one left hungry. And for those of us from Arizona, where rye bread is often white bread with rye seeds, a Koch's sandwich was a fabulous treat.

With the death of the last Koch brother, I thought the deli had closed. A recent google search produced a website, menu, and photographs showing that the deli is still operating. I couldn't tell if the sandwiches are the same quality, however.

Bill Hermann: Sansom Deli on 39th between Sansom & Chestnut Streets was our late night go to at Sigma Nu. It was run by Bob "Herky" Herdelin who was an all-Big 5 basketball player at LaSalle. He still has a dive bar in Upper Darby.

Phyllis Ettinger Rodbell & Sidney Rodbell: It is amazing that the thoughts of certain foods and especially the smell of certain foods can take one back in time and release a flood of old and delightful memories.

Freshman year, dinner was confined to Hill Hall (and of course the snack bar there with the yummy milkshakes) for me and Houston Hall for Sidney. He also supplemented his freshman diet by going across the street from the quad to the Campus Corner, aka the "crotch", mainly for pinball activity and cheese steaks. My freshman supplement was the Dirty Drug, with pounds of french fries and liters of cokes. And I will never forget the soft, doughy Philly pretzels, never duplicated anywhere. When I return to Penn my first purchase coming off the plane is to purchase at least 3. Sometimes the pretzels make it home to share with Sidney and sometimes they don't.

By sophomore year it was the fraternity and sorority houses that provided the food - especially the thumb print sandwiches by Hank the cook at the Phi Ep house. And, at the sorority house I remember the cute waiters more than the food.

By junior year, Sidney's fondest memory of food was the late night runs to the Harvey House at 17th and Walnut, for the bacon cheese burgers and the "choffee" ice cream soda's. On other nights it was a ride down Race Street to China Town for egg rolls.

Senior year was unfruitful search for fine dining in downtown Philadelphia. We ate at Arthur's, the Warwick and occasional trips to the suburbs to Blue Bell Inn. And--to think that Philly has now become a famous restaurant town.

Phyllis Ettinger Rodbell and Sidney Rodbell: If you want to take a fun look back—check out the DP archives <https://dparchives.library.upenn.edu/>

Lee Gordon: Let us begin by reflecting on freshman year Houston Hall food. Simply put, it was atrocious! And I wondered why I had to eat this “TV dinner” meal in a coat and tie no less! How I survived and thrived freshman year was because of Student Snack and its “piece de resistance”, heavenly Tastykakes. The Tastykake Company had been around just 8 years when the fabulous Betty White was born, and both are still going strong. Just ask Betty (or Mike Schmidt): https://youtu.be/D_kxoxflvYc.

In the evening, our 1960’s delivery guys (work-study classmates) would serve up my classic mainstay, Tastykake Butterscotch Krimpets, in the three-pack. Healthy fare, indeed, for a young college lad! Oh, do Tastykakes rock! “Fluffy sponge cake baked into the unique Krimpet shape, then topped with our legendary butterscotch icing.” Indeed, I devoured these delights in huge quantities and discovered sensuous ways to lift the butterscotch cream off its fluffy base. Little did I realize that I was actually filling my body with extremely hazardous material, registering the highest EWG score possible (10.0) for an unhealthy item. <https://www.ewg.org/foodscores/products/025600003510-TastykakeButterscotchKrimpetsSpongeCake/> Fortunately my University of Pennsylvania antibodies, no doubt developed at the Wistar Institute, have protected me for the last half-century plus.

For our freshman Skimmer (Chuck Berry) Weekend, Sandy (my future wife) and I enjoyed a romantic dinner at Arthur’s, a classic steakhouse on Walnut Street with a romantic ambiance and delectable food. Arthur’s added a classy touch to the evening by placing a shiny dime in the table place card for my next reservation phone call. Why Arthur’s? Because the fanciest and most elite French restaurant on campus, Le Chateau Blanc, was full up and was not taking any reservations.

My freshman roommate Mark Rosen and I were still living independently sophomore year, as was Lonnie Schooler, so we three knew we needed a dependable dinner venue. Hello Pagano’s! Italian fare with all the requisite veal dishes, tastily prepared with generous portions. But there was something special that set Pagano’s apart from its Italian brethren: Broasted Chicken. As a Marylander, I loved and craved fried chicken, but, I mulled, what the hell is “broasted” chicken? Whatever the process, owner Peter Pagano was a pioneer in this now rarely seen pressurized frying system. I say let’s honor this restaurateur for his vision in 1955 when he opened his wonderful establishment at Walnut and 36th Street.

<https://www.inquirer.com/philly/obituaries/Restaurateur-Peter-B-Pagano-Sr-dies-at-83-ran-the-Original-House-of-Pagano-in-West-Philly.html>

Everyone seemed to eat at Pagano’s. At an early Friday night dinner on November 19, 1965, Mark and I saw all our beloved Baltimore Bullets pro basketball team eating in the main dining room. What a thrill to talk with these accessible and friendly heroes (try that today)! By the way, the final score at the Philadelphia Convention Center that night was Bullets 134 - 76ers 124, despite Wilt Chamberlain’s 36 points and 25 rebounds.

<https://www.basketballreference.com/boxscores/196511190PHI.html>

My extra thrill was meeting the great broadcaster, Jim Karvellas whose cacophonous trademark call “Bullseye!” when a basketball gets slam-dunked or swished resonates to this day.

In my junior and senior year, I was just a few steps from my very own Pagano’s kitchen when I moved to an apartment at 128 South 36th Street. That address, I just discovered, is quite historic: a Daily Pennsylvanian advertisement of March 8, 1921 showed this building as the location for the “Standard Hand Laundry” which did business (as precisely stated): “A laundry of Strictly hand work, We are the friend of the bachelor”. Our address later claimed even greater fame as the site of the first imbibing by Penn students of an entire 1963 Chateau Mouton Rothschild (“one of Bordeaux’s first growths and one of the most highly regarded French wines in the world”), occasioned by our next door neighbor, the elegant Lynn Kramer, who served us a dinner to remember in the Spring of 1968.

When I was not eating Italian food or Tastykakes, I enjoyed my dinners at Tau Delta Phi fraternity thanks to our Master Michelin Chef Willis Knight. For takeaway on campus, I loved “Ronnie’s” delicious roast beef nestled in a Kaiser roll and topped with tasty Russian dressing. The huge soft chocolate chip cookie that accompanied the sandwich was a scrumptious dessert.

Little did I realize that the “real deal roast beef sandwich” was a mere 3 1/2 miles away on the extended Penn campus in South Philly: Nick’s on 20th and Jackson Streets. Its “wet roast beef” sandwich was pure ecstasy! Eating at The Original Nick’s is a generational thing. I loved that delicacy so much that I was intent on passing that memory down to my sons — and so I did, 24 years after I graduated. In the early evening of Saturday, March 28th, 1992, I gathered up my three sons, Alex, Eric and Michael, promising them that this will be a night to remember.

As we gleefully scarfed up our scrumptious Nick’s roast beef sandwiches, we watched Bobby Knight’s Hoosiers defeat LSU and Shaquille O’Neal in game one of the NCAA East Elite Eight. But the best was yet to come when we arrived at the Philadelphia Spectrum and witnessed the other Elite Eight game: Duke vs. Kentucky. What we four enjoyed was the most celebrated game in college basketball history: Christian Laettner’s overtime buzzer beater shot propelled Duke to the Final Four and Duke would eventually win the NCAA Championship. For my sons — each one an eventual Duke University graduate — the dinner at Nick’s was indeed unforgettable. As their Dad, what I remember most was just how damned expensive those delicious Nick’s Wet Roast Beef sandwiches were: 12 years of Duke tuition!