

Joseph Anthony Palkovic, Sr.

1916—1971

My Dad
Sharing Stories and Memories

Joseph Anthony Palkovic Sr. was born in the Mont Pleasant neighborhood in Schenectady, New York on March 20, 1916. Joe was the first born of seven children. His parents were Thomas and Josephine Palkovic, Slovak immigrants who came to America separately in the early 1900's and married in Schenectady around 1913.

Joe was my father. He died prematurely at the age of 55. Some of his children were still young and only three of his thirteen grandchildren were born yet. He had lots of nieces and nephews.

School Days



Joe went Hamilton grade school, Mc Kinley Junior High School (later named Stuyvesant Jr. High School) and Mont Pleasant High School. He was 9 years old in this picture.

Joe was a good student, excelling especially in music and math. He graduated (June, 1934) from the technical program (the advanced math-science program).

In high school, Joe was in band, orchestra, and choir. He played the French horn, saxophone and the violin. From his sister Rose, we learned that Joe spent a lot of time in his room playing his sax. Music was a very important part of Joe's life.



This is Joe's high school yearbook picture and the description that was written under it.

JOSEPH PALKOVIC

Main interests: Band, Orchestra, Glee Club, Choir, Boys' Chorus, Physiography Club, Alle Breve Club.

Plans: To be employed in the General Electric Company

Hobby: Practicing scales

J. Palkovic (D.E.)

The Schenectady Historic Society scanned this for us from a yearbook someone had donated to them. Joe signed his classmate's yearbook.

When it was time for him to graduate in 1934, the country was in the Great Depression, and jobs were not available. He stayed in high school for a while longer to continue to enjoy the music program.

Outside Activities

Joe was also active in the Slovak Catholic Church, SS Cyril and Methodius, where he was an altar boy. In those days, social life revolved around ethnic and church organizations. This church had a big hall with a stage; in the basement there was a full size bowling alley. Joe played on the Jednota baseball team and he was a leader in the theater club. This is the church where Joe was confirmed. His sponsor was Theodore Pochily.



Original scans of all the thumbnail pictures in this story are available from our digital library.

A Job Opportunity



In October, 1935, Joe became an apprentice machinist at the General Electric Company.

On December 15, 1939, he graduated from the Apprentice Course for GE, and he was given a job as a tool maker, a skilled trade. As a tool maker, he was a union worker in the factory. I have included a larger copy of the certificate at the end of this document.

Music

Musicians Union

In the late 30's, Joe was a member of the Musicians Union.

He played saxophone for many gigs and was an admired musician around town.

He told me once that he liked to go to Black bars because those "Black Cats" could really play jazz. When he and his buddies would arrive at the bar, his Black counterparts would welcome them with "Here come the White Cats."

Joe also fiddled and played the banjo.

Harmonic Kings . He was part of a group called "Harmonic Kings". This group was featured on May 9, 1940 at the Alumni Night of the Mont Pleasant Musical Festival.



They are from left to right: Joseph Palkovic, June 1933*; Charles Monscka, June 1936; Walter Kowalchuk, January 1936; Robert Quinn, June 1939; Thomas Sullivan, June 1936. (Source: Watchtower. **I think this date is not correct.*)

Choir Alumni. "At that same music festival, the Choir Alumni performed. This was a choir composed of former members of the Mont Pleasant A Cappella Choir, who, since their graduation, continued to return to Mont Pleasant for practice and instruction in singing. Mr. Lansing, the school music director, also directs the alumni's rehearsals and concerts." (Source: May 6, 8 and 9, 1940. *The Watchtower: Music Festival Program Edition*)

Joe was a member of this choir and so was Anna Wurth



We have a copy of *The Watchtower* mentioned above. It has a nice picture of the Choir Alumni, which includes Joe and Anna, and the program of music for the Alumni Night. Many other musicians whose names Joe's children will remember are listed or pictured in that publication.

This was the first Music Festival of Mont Pleasant High School and it was celebrated during National Music Week of 1940.



Just for fun! One day I was surfing the net and I came across this little tidbit New York City: The term 'The Big Apple' was coined by touring jazz musicians of the 1930s who used the slang expression 'apple' for any town or city. Therefore, to play New York City is to play the big time - The Big Apple. (Source: 2011 traveling email)

I looked for verification of the origin of the expression, and found this website and entry salwen.com/apple.html -- The Society for New York City History. Education Committee. It seems as though credit for coining the name "The Big Apple" is controversial. Some of the stories are interesting and feasible.

Marriage

On August 10, 1940, Joe married Loni Wurth, daughter of Gustav and Barbara Wurth at SS. Cyril & Methodius Church in Schenectady, NY. Loni, a college student, had a summer job working for the City at the playground and Joe working at the GE.

Now, Joe's story becomes their story—*Our Family—Joe and Loni Palkovic.*

Certificate of Apprenticeship

