



SAL MAGGIORE

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Don "Red" Menza and I

I had a dream last night (actually I couldn't sleep) after stuffing myself with fantastic barbecue ribs prepared by the man of many talents, Joey Giambra. The event took place at the home of Joe Di Leo Jr. Joe Di Leo Sr, and his wife Toni invited about 35 or 40 guys to this feast. There was a lot of hard work, not only for Giambra, but the whole Dileo family who prepared the Italian sausage with peppers and onions, pulled pork, potato salad, pizza and many deserts. Thank you Joe for having us over to your beautiful home.



A young Don "Red" Menza

Back to the reminiscing. I was a student at Buffalo Technical H.S., not the present Hutch Tech, but the one on North Division and Clinton Streets in 1952. Fellow classmates included Kenny Fehringer, Ron Schiappa, Bob Mangano, Sam Arena, Jack Gullo, Jack Spiegelman and Caesar Naples. Incoming freshmen were given the assignment to write short introduction of themselves. Included in mine I mentioned that I could play the saxophone. Fool that I was, I did try to play it once, but after a year the best I could do was Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.

At the time Tech had a state wide famous orchestra led by music teacher, Mr. Vester, and his right hand man 17 year old genius, Donald "Red" Menza. In their admirable effort to recruit talent, they tracked me down after reading my resume and wanted me to join the band. I begged and pleaded that I couldn't play, but they insisted I try out. Then I played my Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Don took me aside and suggested I tryout for baseball.

It was a thrill to see Menza who came to the barbecue at the invitation of Giambra. Menza was in the area to perform at various jazz venues here and in Canada. In my opinion Red is probably the most famous and best musician that ever came out of Buffalo, shurly one of the best sax players in the country. I told him the aforementioned story once before, after his Sunday performance at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. He politely didn't remember.



"Red" Menza doing what he does best!