

OLD STONEFACE.... Memories Of New York



Nothing to do with books, but everything to do with who I am and who you are.

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OLD STONEFACE

In times of grief, I can usually call on

Old Stoneface to help get me by.

Old Stoneface first appeared in 1968,

outside of a church in Pennsylvania.

The military pallbearers had carried

the casket into the church. The rest of

the honor guard, myself included,

stood at parade rest, outside in our

blues, in the freezing cold, staring at the

church doors.

I thought of the soldier we were honoring;

killed in Vietnam. He deserved respect

for paying the ultimate sacrifice. I stood

taller, staring straight ahead, unblinking

and solemn. Old Stoneface.

I was part of the Honor Guard from

Stewart Air Force Base, New York, my

first assignment from technical school

and close to home. New York City was
home, Jamaica, New York, to be exact.
I grew up close to JFK Airport, back when
we used to call it Idlewild Airport.

My father was a New York City cop.
My Uncle Frank was a New York City
cop. My Uncle Mike was a New York
City fireman. †

My first date was in New York City. I
took a girl named Stephanie to Radio
City, which I knew was right down the
block from the Automat. What I did not
know was that there was more than one
Automat in New York City.

Stephanie wore high heels that day.

She got blisters.

I have faint memories of attending a
game at Ebbetts Field. My brother, Joe,
used to recite the entire Brooklyn Dodger

lineup, frontwards and backwards.

I remember most of them by position.

Roy Campanella, catcher. Gil Hodges,

first baseman. Junior Gilliam, second

baseman. Pee Wee Reese, shortstop.

Don Hoak and Don Zimmer, third

basemen. Sandy Amaros, left fielder.

Gino Cimolli, right fielder. Duke Snider,

centerfielder?

The Duke of Flatbush was somewhere
on the playing field, but to a young boy,

Mickey Mantle was the center fielder

in New York City. Add Willie Mays,

another center fielder, and the Duke

was a distant third, except in the eyes

of my brother, Joe.

I have other fond memories of baseball in

New York City. I was at Yankee Stadium

with my friend, Timmy, and his sister,

Kathy, when Roger Maris hit his 61st
home run. Ten years later I watched the
film clip for the first time, smiled as Maris
circled the bases, and then stepped out of
the dugout and waved to the crowd. Then
the camera circled the stadium,
showing the New Yorkers cheering,
and zooming in on two teenagers
jumping up and down on their seats
as Kathy sat quietly in her seat
between us.

I was in New York City when the
New York Mets won the World Series
in 1969. I was on leave from the
Philippines, saw my son for the first
time, and took my wife to opening
night on Broadway. Three Men In A
Boat, I think the name of the play was.
We got off the train from Peekskill at
Grand Central when the last out was

made and New York City went wild.

I mean wild.

Yes, I saw New York at its finest.

My father worked for New York's Finest.

I, Old Stoneface, did not cry at my

father's funeral in 1975.

I, Old Stoneface, did not cry at my

brother's funeral in 2000.

Yes, I have seen New York at its most

horrible time of late. I picture myself

standing at parade rest, outside of the

Great Doors of Time, and I, Old

Stoneface, can't help but cry.

Jerry Morris,
New Yorker-born
New Yorker-raised
Now residing in Florida
9/21/2001

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