

The Other Side of the Park

by Larry Racioppo
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Photographer [Larry Racioppo](#), whose work is on display in [our current exhibition on Prospect Park](#) for the park's 150th anniversary, shares some memories and photos of the park in this guest post. Racioppo is also working on our Third Avenue blog series with blogger [One More Folded Sunset](#).

Prospect Park was a part of my life long before I became a photographer. Glued to the black construction paper pages of Racioppo and Tenga family albums are photos of my parents and their friends posing 'dressed up' in the park or just outside it, along its stone walls.



My mother and her friends, c. 1947

There are photos here of me and my cousins on the swings and seesaws at the 9th Street playground, on white blankets in the meadow.

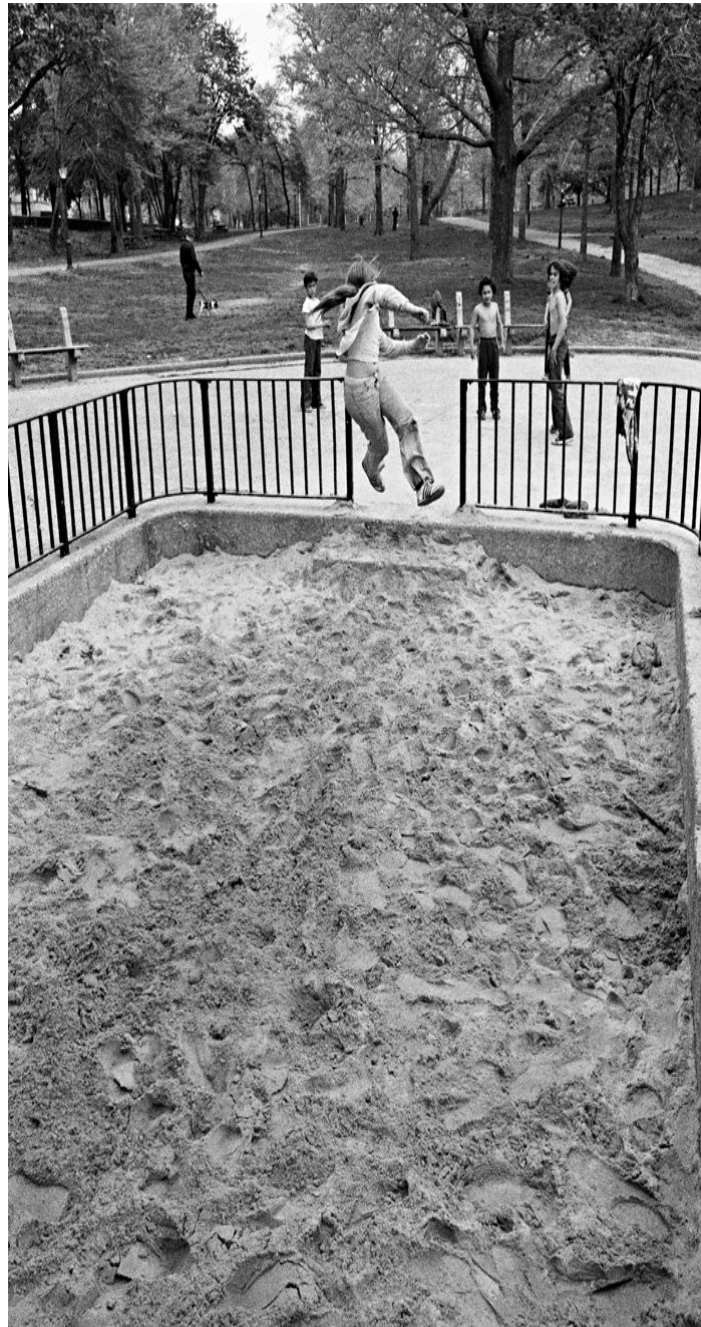


My mother and me in the playground, c. 1950

As a boy, I played football and softball here, rode the Swan boats and went sleigh riding in the winter.

In 1965 I left South Brooklyn for college and then VISTA. I returned in 1970 and eventually moved to 15th Street and 6th Avenue, at the end of Park Slope. I made most of these photographs in the 1970's while I lived in the South Slope, had very little money and was learning how to photograph.

On one of my first return visits to the Park, I walked past the sandbox near Prospect Park West, between 15th Street and the Bandshell. I suddenly had the strangest déjà vu feeling and then remembered that I had often played here.



Kids in the sandbox, 1978

Entering the Park across the street from the Sanders theater (now the Pavilion), I frequently walked to the lake near the tennis courts along an unnamed path between West Drive and Prospect Park Southwest. It was quiet and secluded, featuring a set of massive 'ancient' stairs.



Old stairs, 1972



Two girls on the stairs, 1972



Couple relaxing, 1973



Couple walking, 1974



Bridal portrait by the Lake, 1974



Bridal party by the Lake, 1974

Other times I walked closer to Prospect Park West, passing the decaying bandshell, on my way through the meadow to Grand Army Plaza.



The Bandshell, 1976

I liked places officially recognized as beautiful, like the Boathouse, but I was drawn more strongly to old stairways and trees carved with couples' names.



The Boathouse, 1974



Stairs with Leaves, 1973

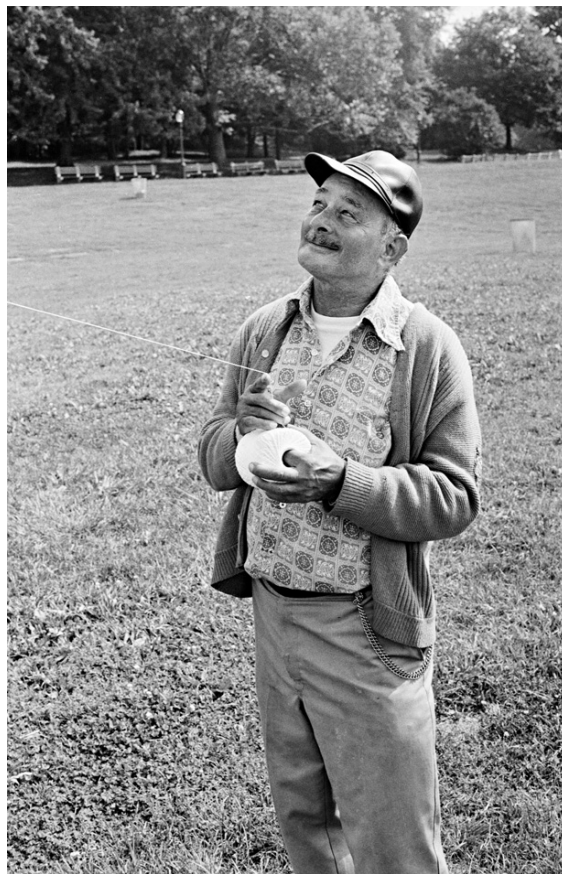


Tree with Names, 1973

Over the years, I walked alone, or with dates, friends, and other photographers. Sometimes keeping to myself, other times engaging the great variety of people I met, from kite flyers to skateboarders, from picnickers to sleigh riders.



Kite Flyer in the Meadow, 1975



Kite Flyer in the Meadow, 1975



Skateboarder, 1978



Picnicking Family, 1978



Sleigh Riders, 1979

I enjoyed the Park as day turned to night, and especially on my favorite holiday - Halloween.



Stairs at Dusk, 1974



Path at Dusk, 1974



Queen of Hearts, Halloween, 1994



Halloween Panorama, 1992

All photos (c) Larry Racioppo. You can see more of Racioppo's Brooklyn-themed work on his website, larryracioppo.com.