

# Sandwich Shop was Top Dog for Hot Dogs

By Bob L. Cox

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Recently, I stopped at a red light in downtown Johnson City at 105 Buffalo Street, opposite the former location of the old city bus terminal. I could almost smell the tantalizing mouth-watering aroma of hot dogs wafting through the air.

Dwarfed between two large buildings (one dated 1888), this diminutive hole-in-the-wall carryout eatery was known as John's Sandwich Shop, owned and operated by John Buda. He opened it about 1950.

Previous occupants at this Buffalo Street address included W. Williams Confectioner (1923), Red "J" Taxi Company (1928), John J. Kalogeros Restaurant (1937), Alexandra Kalogeros Restaurant (1941), Joe Chester Variety Store (1944) and George's Chili and Sandwich Shop (1948).

John and brothers, Alex and Charles, immigrated to this country from Albania after the turn of the century, each sibling pursuing a career in the food services business.

I personally knew this family. John and his wife, Ethel, and their two children, George and Ann, lived in the same apartment complex as my family in the 1940s, the elder Budas occasionally being my baby-sitters.

Buda offered his customers a variety of sandwiches, but it was his hot dogs that, even today, evoke such pleasant memories for the populace.

John targeted those hungry yet busy people who preferred to take their food home or to their work site, as opposed to dining at a sit-down café. For this reason, the numerous downtown restaurants offered little competition for the entrepreneur.

I cannot explain why John's franks were so good; there appeared to be nothing secret about their preparation. Whatever the cooks did to them, it worked.

After placing my order at one of the two windows, the attendant immediately plopped a steamed hot dog onto an equally steamed bun, garnished it with chili, mustard and an abundance of finely ground onions, and topped it off with a heavy dose of salt from an oversized metal saltshaker.

Finally, the delicacy was carefully wrapped in thick white paper, placed inside a brown paper bag and dispensed through the window. The congenial restaurateur always thanked his customers in his heavy Albanian accent.

Area folks marveled how Buda could manage so much business from such a small building. It was not necessary for him to advertise; his scrumptious food effectively promoted itself.

It was not unusual for a patron to order a dozen or more hot dogs at a time, perhaps feeding a business office or a family at home.

After more than 10 years of continuous operation, John's business served its last meal and closed its door and two windows, bringing much sadness to Johnson Citizens.

When John died in 1962, he left a huge void in the hearts and stomachs of his many faithful patrons. Gone, except in our memories, were the culinary delights from John's Sandwich Shop, a small operation that could proudly boast of producing absolutely the best tasting hot dogs in town.

If you can provide additional information about John's Sandwich Shop, please drop me a note.

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**Figure 1 Location of the "Sandwich Shop"**