



Manhattan at Mid-Century: An Oral History

Myrna Katz Frommer, Harvey Frommer

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Experience the mosaic of mid-century Manhattan in this exuberant oral history that begins in the post–World War II years when the city came into its own, and ends in the mid-1970s when it nearly went bust. This is the story of a time when great ocean liners were docked in the Hudson River ports, Checker cabs hurtled across a two-way Fifth Avenue, and the Third Avenue el cast long shadows onto the street below. There are recollections of Friday night boxing matches at the old Madison Square Garden, of peddling tunes in the heart of Tin Pan Alley at the Brill Building, of a Harlem that had a nightclub on every corner, and a SoHo that was saved from a wrecker’s ball by a “bunch of mothers.” Eleven daily newspapers covered the city beat back then, Automats and five-and-dimes were in each neighborhood, and the New York Philharmonic performed free summer concerts at Lewisohn Stadium on the City College campus. Zabar’s was a small dairy store; Balducci’s was an open-air fruit and vegetable stand. New York was becoming the center of haute cuisine and haute couture; the New York School of abstract expressionists had taken the lead from Paris in avant-garde art.

This transformative time when New York City became the capital of the world is captured here in myriad memories that create an often humorous, sometimes poignant, occasionally bitter—but always loving—testament to the magical mystique of Manhattan. Includes interviews with Jimmy Breslin, Bill Gallo, Monte Irvin, Robert Merrill, Herman Badillo, Elaine Kaufman, Jerry Della Femina, Pauline Trigère, Sirio Maccioni, Jane Jacobs, Saul Zabar, Margaret Whiting, and many more.

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