

Tom Ilich's new film on Prospect Park flowers from fond memories

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Bachner for News

Tom Ilich, 66, hasn't lived in Brooklyn for 41 years, but his memories of Prospect Park have given birth to a new short film.

You can take the boy out of [Brooklyn](#), but [Tom Ilich](#) is proof positive you can never take Brooklyn out of the boy.

Now 66, Ilich hasn't lived here since he and his family packed up and moved upstate to [Rochester](#) 41 years ago.

But the heart of this mechanical engineer, teacher and filmmaker has remained in the borough. And Ilich has never forgotten one of his favorite places, [Prospect Park](#).

"One of my fondest memories was during the winter of 1954, when my mom and I left our house and walked to the park on a very cold night to go ice skating. We walked through the Long Meadow, through the Ravine to the Boathouse and felt perfectly safe.

"It's where I learned to play baseball. It's where I had my first date. Prospect Park was my countryside," said Ilich, who used to live on Sixth Ave. in [Park Slope](#). He now lives in [Falls Church, Va.](#)

Last month, Ilich completed a 10-minute video about the park, which the Prospect Park Alliance will use to raise funds. Alliance [President Tupper Thomas](#) narrates the video.

"It's a wonderful reminder of why we love this park and why it means so much to the people of Brooklyn," Thomas said.

Ilich rediscovered the park in 2004, while a friend had surgery.

"I took a train over to Brooklyn and found myself in front of [Public School] 39, where I went to elementary school, and decided to do a documentary about the school," he said.

Ilich visited the park often while shooting. "The people who use the park now are much more diverse than they were when I was growing up," he said. "But the park is in many ways the same. It maintains the gauzy, romantic, sylvan setting that I remember from my childhood."

Ilich also remembered "how depressing the park was in the late '60s and early '70s. It looked like a bomb had hit it. Now, to see how beautiful it is, it looks like a rebirth. What the Alliance has done is incredible."

With some financial help from friends, Ilich produced his video free of charge to the Alliance. He now wants to do a longer, historical piece on Prospect Park.

"It's such a beautiful place to be," Ilich said. "I still think of it as a refuge from the city."

Visit www.prospectpark.org to see Tom Ilich's Prospect Park video.