



Eleanora Duse

October 3, 1858—April 21, 1924

Eleonora Duse was one of the greatest actresses of her era, famous for her interpretations of Shakespearean roles and the heroines of nineteenth-century French drama, and for introducing the new drama of Ibsen and d'Annunzio. She was also famous for her tempestuous love affairs, primarily with men, but also with women.

Duse was born on October 3, 1859, allegedly in the third-class carriage of a train, near Vigevano, Italy. Her parents, Angelita Capeletto and Alessandro Duse, were part of a traveling troupe of actors, and she first performed with them at the age of four in a play based on Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

Her childhood, dominated by poverty and disrupted by constant travel, was punctuated by her mother's death when Eleonora was only thirteen years old. After her mother became ill, Duse took over her roles, portraying characters far too mature for her age. Her first critical success was at Verona in 1873, where she was acclaimed for her performance in *Romeo and Juliet*. But her career really began in 1879 when she appeared in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*.

In Naples, Duse met the young journalist Mattino Cafiero and had her first serious love affair. It ended in disaster: Cafiero abandoned her in mid-pregnancy, her baby died, and shortly there-

after Cafiero died as well. Duse then joined Cesare Rossi's company where she met Teobaldo Checchi, a fellow actor whom she married in 1881. Although they had a daughter, for Duse, whose career now preoccupied her, the marriage had become a mere convenience.

In 1885 Duse embarked on a South American tour with the Cesare Rossi Company. After Checchi learned of her affair with fellow actor Flavio Ando, the relationship with her husband dissolved for good.

After her return from South America in 1886, Duse formed her own company. By this time she had built up a broad and varied repertoire including plays by Ibsen, Scribe, Zola, Corneille, Sardau, Shakespeare, and Euripides. Later she added Pirandello and Gorky to this list, but no playwright was ever more important to her than Gabriele d'Annunzio, whose plays she promoted and personally financed and produced.

Shortly after meeting in 1895, d'Annunzio and Duse became lovers and the relationship, interrupted by Duse's tours through Europe and the United States, remained frenzied and intense. From 1900 to 1911 Duse rented a villa at Settignano, Florence, her first real home, and for a brief period her life with d'Annunzio was productive and idyllic as well as passionate.

The first two years of the century marked the closest collaboration between the two, but this calm was soon to come to an end. Their life together was marred by betrayals and jealousies: d'Annunzio gave the lead role in *La Città morta*, which he claimed to have written for Duse, to her prime rival, Sarah Bernhardt; he had a series of dalliances; and finally, d'Annunzio's manager had to stop Duse from burning down his house.

While Duse was best known for her tempestuous love affairs with men, she also had affairs

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with women that were at least rumored to be lesbian. In 1909, Duse began a relationship with a rebellious young feminist who had been the lover of writer Sibilla Aleramo and who dressed as a man, Lina Poletti. This affair was intense and romantic and almost certainly consummated physically.

Duse's relationship with the dancer Isadora Duncan was also rumored to be sexual. Duse spent several weeks with her at Viareggio, the seaside resort, in 1913, shortly after the dancer's two children drowned in a tragic accident.

Duse was also known for mentoring many young actresses in her company, most notably Emma Grammatica; and she shared a lasting and intimate friendship with the singer Yvette Guilbert. She also savored a long friendship with the costume designer Jean Philippe Worth, who was utterly devoted to her.

It should be noted, however, that Duse held the Church in high regard and expressed concern, if not guilt, about how her life as an actress had subsumed her role as wife and mother.

For many years Duse was plagued by illness and was periodically ordered by her doctors to retreat from the theater. Although she retired from the stage in 1911, she resumed work in 1921. What followed was a series of engagements in major European cities, including London--always accompanied by an oxygen tank.

In 1923, Duse embarked on a final American tour. The tour was to cover twenty cities, after which she planned to retire to the Italian countryside. Although her health was visibly waning, Duse refused to halt the tour.

On April 21, 1924, nearing the end of her tour, Duse performed in Pittsburgh at the Syrian Mosque. While her performance was stunning, Duse nearly collapsed while taking her bows. She developed a

fever that soon escalated, then she lapsed into a coma on Good Friday. On Easter morning she asked to see her actors, and the next day she died.



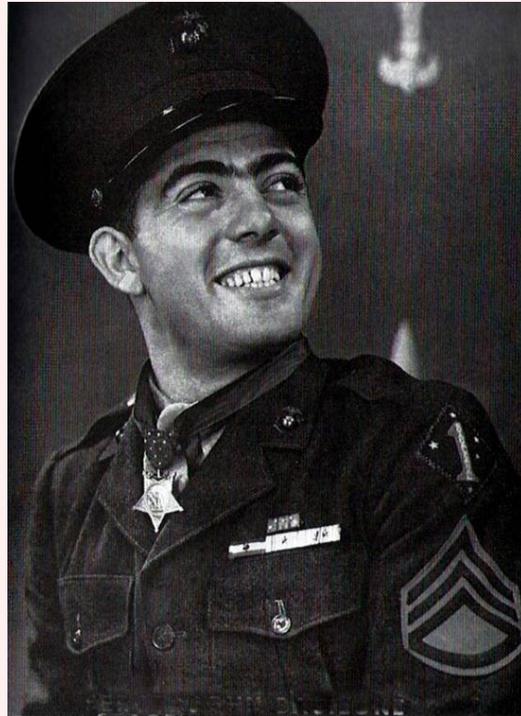
Eleanora Duse, Time Magazine, July 1923

Duse's body lay in state for six days in Pittsburgh and was then brought to New York, where her hearse led a funeral procession directly to the pier of the liner Duilo, which returned her body to her beloved Italy. She was buried in the cemetery of St. Anne at Asolo.

Eleonora Duse died as she was born--in transit. Nevertheless, her acting left an indelible mark in the world of theater. She was noted for promoting subtlety and restraint on the stage and for avoiding the theatrical and artificial. She gained fame all over the world and became, with Ellen Terry and Sarah Bernhardt, one of the greatest actresses of her time.

[Tija Spitsberg](#)





Decorations

- **Congressional Medal of Honor**
October 24-25, 1942, Guadalcanal
- **Navy Cross**
February 19, 1945, Iwo Jima—posthumous
- **Purple Heart**
February 19, 1945, Iwo Jima—posthumous
- **Presidential Unit Citation**
1942 Guadalcanal
1945 Iwo Jima—posthumous
- **American Defense Service Medal**
1941 Culebra, Cuba
- **Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two Bronze Stars**
1942-43 Guadalcanal
1945 Iwo Jima—posthumous
- **World War II Victory Medal**
1941-1945—posthumous
- **American Campaign Medal**
1945—posthumous
- **New Jersey Distinguished Service Award**
1951—posthumous

Memorials

- *USS Basilone—U.S.* Navy destroyer commissioned in 1949.
- Basilone Day, February 19, 2004, has been proclaimed in Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Oregon, Colorado, South Dakota and Iowa
- Seventeen miles of Interstate 5 outside of Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California, named Basilone Memorial Freeway
- American Campaign Medal
1945—posthumous
- New Jersey Distinguished Service Award—1951—posthumous
- Basilone Memorial Bridge, New Jersey, 1951
- Commemorative statue in Raritan, New Jersey
- Annual John Basilone Day Parade
Raritan, New Jersey
- Commemorative postage stamp



Movie Scene: Robert Viharo—Stickup of Buffalo City Hall Treasurers Office December, 1964

I came to Buffalo in 1978 to portray a fictional character in the MGM movie “Hide in Plain Sight.” My role was based on an infamous Buffalo hoodlum who stuck up the Treasurers office in City Hall and whose destiny it was to be the seminal participant in the Federal Witness Protection Program, that, due to him, was created in Buffalo.

James Caan the director, a great guy and fun to work with suggested I not get too familiar with Buffalo. But I knew I had to immerse myself into an unfamiliar culture, so I immediately took the road of the prodigal. The next day Buffalo police Detective Sergeant Sam Giambone who is portrayed in the movie, delivered me to Detective Joey Giambra and ultimately, through his eyes I saw the post-Urban Renewal Italian Buffalo with stunning clarity.

The journey into the culture and heritage and emotional ambience was indeed a philosophical education. Oh, I could play an “idea” of my “character” but to even come close to that would take a year of living with Giambra before working on the film.

Today I make documentary films. As such I believe completely in authenticity. I am a man of much diversity but I am not West Side Buffalo. Though my history, my gut and heart connected me to its people and the environment I still was not West Side Buffalo.

There is a difference between knowing and understanding and being the genuine article. I am, and have always been, an itinerant orphan-hybrid with smatterings of Old Italian influences but I had never been deeply ensconced into the culture even though my great-grandparents of whom I knew little were blood-lined to Tuscany.

I was transported to the world of West Side “Italia.” The warmth and affection freely offered me by everyone I met was because of Joseph (Joey) Giambra. I could call him my best friend but I have to share him with hundreds of others.

In my three months of filming I dined regularly in his then Hard Times Café’ on Hertel Avenue and

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was treated to his Sicilian masterpieces (I can still smell the pungent sauces and fragrances of the side dishes) complete with Guiseppi Di Stefano arias haunting my ears and heart.

Very often I was a comfortable guest at one of the many homes of his family or friends. (And even some who could not differentiate between my movie character and myself. I fully understood this)

And long after hunger had been satisfied I had to be squeezed through the door. My metabolism must have been astronomical because I didn't gain a pound. The metabolic workout must have been the belly aching laughter each family put me through. I was a spoiled child, spoiled by the wonderful Italians of Buffalo who welcomed me into their hearts. If Fellini ever came here, no doubt he would find all the subjects he needed for his masterful movies.

My memory goes soft on people's names. It always has. But I remember people vividly. With Joey as my associate and consultant I made inroads into film financing for projects that explored the culture and legacy of some of the West Side characters. The most important of which is Joey Giambra's 1964 epic masterpiece, a stage play, called "No One is Us." This tone poem is about a unique lower West Side family of outrageous characters and their problems during the Buffalo Urban Renewal madness of the 1960s.

The play is most certainly on a par with that of great American playwrights. I directed No One is Us at the famed Actors Studio in Los Angeles to nightly standing room only and standing ovations. It may sound like hyperbole, and maybe it is, but it's also true. It was a highlight in my creative life.

FULL DISCLOSURE: I know Joey Giambra is associated with this magazine.

But at the risk of embarrassing him I must say this: he is a truly great writer. Giambra captures the spirit and essence of all that was pre-and-post-Urban Renewal West Side Buffalo with such style and compassion and knowledge. As such, he qualifies as that area's Poet Laureate.

His memory is frightening in recalling specific events and people of any era he's ever lived through. He is Sherlock Holmes covered with clam sauce.

To speak of him I speak of Buffalo. I speak of the West Side. I speak of first generation Americans. I speak of the love that is the Buffalo Italian heart.

I love Buffalo in memory. Much has probably changed since I "lived" there. I haven't visited in years but I never met anyone from Buffalo who didn't love their life there and who since needed to return for some kind of rejuvenation.

As for Hide in Plain Sight, it was more a story of a man in search for his children than a story of a character shaped by the special circumstances that were unique to the Buffalo of that time.

If I were to do the movie now as a director, Buffalo would be the lead character and it would be a tragic love story. And I would most certainly cast a West Side male, someone of that culture and that time and place in the lead role.

“I pray sometimes for an unplanned vacation. Something to humble me in the eyes of nature and disaster while I’m reaching out towards the wilds of Africa when all of a sudden an unusual telegram arrives from Beverly Hills: STOP! THE SHOW IS FINE. SEE YOU AT SIX, STUDIO FOUR, LOT NINE! California is nothing more than hollow sounds from a cathedral. There is no mass for actors after seven-thirty. Everyone, the hustlers, prolific, persistent, youngish stout hearted, ambitious, sensitive, lustful and all human have left for Malibu and the tomb of the Unknown Actor.” Tom Signorelli

In 1978, the MGM movie *Hide in Plain Sight*, “wrapped” in Buffalo, New York. On July 3, 2010, Joe Di Leo suggested I contact Robert Viharo and Tom Signorelli, two actors from that movie who befriended me and ask them to write about their experiences while filming here. Good idea!

That evening I called Signorelli who lives in New York City and left a message for him to call me. I called Viharo in California and he agreed to write.

I was cast in *Hide in Plain Sight* because of Robert Viharo. As such I was able to join the Screen Actors Guild. Entrance to that Union is classic *Catch 22*, i.e. Q: How do you get a part in a movie? A: You must be a member of the Screen Actors Guild. Q: How do you get into the Screen Actors Guild? A: You must have a part in a movie.

After receiving my SAG card, thanks to Tom Signorelli, I worked on various movies in New York City. In those days I stayed at his apartment and when he visited he stayed at my home.

I knew much about his life. He grew up as a half-Irish-half-Sicilian “deez, dem and dozers” on Brooklyn’s mean streets. He graduated from Lafayette High in Brooklyn in the late 1950s with a full athletic scholarship to UCLA where he got rid of the “Ds” and put in the “Ts.”

He was extremely bright, and funny with an eclectic albeit chaotic thought process. After college he spurned offers to become a professional baseball player and chose instead to become an actor. That decision led to some movie roles in California. He returned to Brooklyn and was happy to be home because he was hanging with sports guys, which is what every actor wants for his lifestyle, acting Italian, and making everybody happy.

He was accepted by The Actors Studio in New York and trained with Lee Strasberg; training that led to roles in *The St. Valentine’s Day Massacre*, *Bang the Drum Slowly*, *Theif*, *Prizzi’s Honor*, *The Sicilian*, and others too numer-

ous to mention. On TV he starred in *Dream Street*, *Law and Order* and he acted on Broadway with Dustin Hoffman in *Death of a Salesman*. During rehearsals at the Broadhurst Theater, Tom would call me from a dressing room phone and from room speakers I could hear Dustin Hoffman and John Malkovich as they interacted on stage.

Prior to that, in the late 1970s Tom received a Tony nomination for his direction of “*Lamppost Reunion*” an Off-Broadway play about a mega-star who returns to his hometown of Hoboken, New Jersey.

Tom Signorelli ultimately became disenchanted with acting. In a letter to me he wrote, “the public doesn’t know that the scene was done twenty-nine times before someone said, ‘print it!’ The public! It demands that you make them dream of illusions. Wasn’t he strong, wasn’t she beautiful, are you this or are you that? Romance, where are you? You see what I mean, Joey? It’s nothing! It’s blah, blah, and let’s act!”

“Italy, that’s where you make movies. Life there is a natural. You’ve got to act where your roots are otherwise it’s a paid vacation filled with tedious travel, secretaries, arrangements, dinners and foreign juices that water your insanities. Acting is good if you stutter then you get to say it twice. Why say anything twice? Acting does something to your brain and to your sense of feel. It gives you a false sense of security. Acting makes you feel you need to stretch out against defeat.

You can’t make an error when you’re locked into an image and dreams fade when you do Shakespeare young and Neil Simon as a middle aged twenty-seven. It’s tough reaching down and not up! Acting is a great profession for dancers and causes, and cops, and Italians and narcissists. You’re always testing what you’ve known you know. The director knows, the star knows, the studio knows, the agent knows. Who does a play anymore? Where are the new plays, the new playwrights?”

Tom and I discussed the Theatre, the Arts, and stories of his friendships with unknowns who became stars. He knew that every time you turned around a new guy is there and everyone is younger. Generations pass. Brando, Montgomery Clift, Michael Gazzo, Tony Franciosa, and John Garfield are dead.

In 1981 Tom was on a shoot in California. I wrote to him to ask what's happening. His response: "I'm acting. What else? It's dull! Dull and demeaning! Nodding to what you simply cannot respond to or no longer accept. Every five years I want to try a light comedy and stop reading faded yellow movie reviews. Out here it's don't convince, merely perform! It's boring! Applause trickling down empty rivers of weekends in the countries of ex-lovers, sitting by lakes of lazy, lonely gaps of guilt and time, and your dream, like the dreams of excellence slips by, loafing through ideas, comparing one's self with others. I feel a tremendous sense of loss walking to the stage. Why? Why can't an actor be alone? What draws him to the inferior mirrors he must break, control, and re-make? It's so absurd! And with the Goddess of hypocrisy swimming in his chest the actor opens another shirt to the warmth of public opinion and vanity."

"Joey, they sell distance out here. Emotional distance. And if it gets difficult with sunlit days and nights hitting hard, one misreads the barometer of youth, failure, success and lies. People's needs become my only concern. I despise the rehearsal of my life. I'll mix feelings with convenience, trade upon them and always wonder how the dark voices of my past have become room tones. You hide the bad dreams and the false applause and you scream! Life becomes a basic scramble. You start to throw it all over for that split-second of feeling less wrong, less stupid and less taken. There are no alcoves for the sun! There is an echo in space; an echo of us. The night brings desperate hours spent searching how young or how old I've become. One becomes tired and indifferent under the lazy, false California sunbeam and one learns from endless disappointments. Maybe. And yet, Joey, if you were here and had something nice to wear you'd probably hang out like me and everyone else. That's what's happening in California."

Tom Signorelli loved Buffalo and its people. He vis-

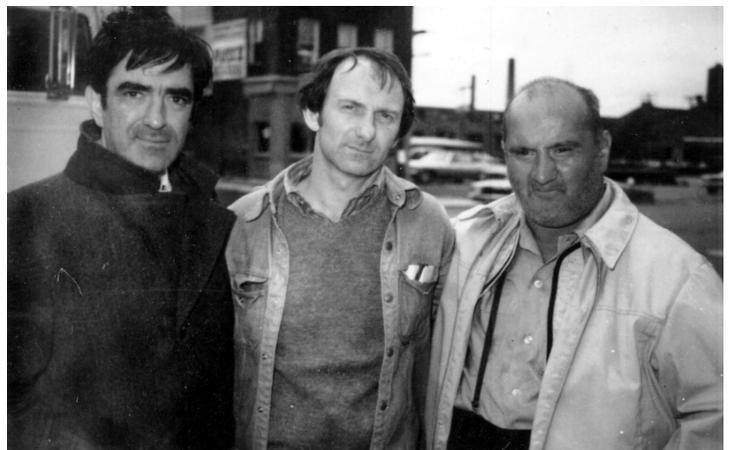
ited numerous times and for many years and often with a pretty woman. His favorite thing here was listening to Jackie Jocko at the Cloister, the Park Lane, and more recently at the Hyatt Hotel. To Tom, Buffalo and Brooklyn were interchangeable. He said "Buffalo is a small Brooklyn and if you put Buffalo Italians on a Brooklyn street corner and put the Brooklynites on a Buffalo corner no one would know the difference."

On Monday, July 5, 2010, at 8:40 PM while in my car my cell phone rang.

I let it ring. A beep indicated a message. Later I listened to the message. It was from Tom Signorelli. He always said funny things. That night he joked about fireworks, the 4th of July, New York, etc. He made me laugh. But then his mood changed. He said, "Joey, we're getting old. Getting old. Call me."

Something in his voice made me sad. I said to myself, I'll get back to him about writing for Per Niente Magazine.

Wednesday, July 7th came and I still hadn't called. That evening, my phone rang at 11:15. I answered. It was Jackie Jocko. He said a woman from New York City who didn't have my phone number called him at the Hyatt and said "Tom Signorelli died last night."



Joey Giambra Tom Signorelli Junior Catalano

1978

In the summer of 1951, I was eleven-years old and living on the Lower Terrace behind City Hall. A neighborhood filled with tenements, multi-unit homes and small businesses. Most of my time was spent with my friends playing ball on playgrounds and watching movies at a myriad of downtown theatres.

It was not unusual for kids from the neighborhood to “hit” the streets without a coin in their pockets. I was no exception. On week-ends I’d ask my parents for fifty cents for the movies; twenty-five for admission and twenty-five for popcorn or candy. They usually complied. However, I needed to find other means of attaining pocket change. So, I decided to test my entrepreneurial skills by shining shoes. The setting was ideal, just a stones throw from downtown and the business community.

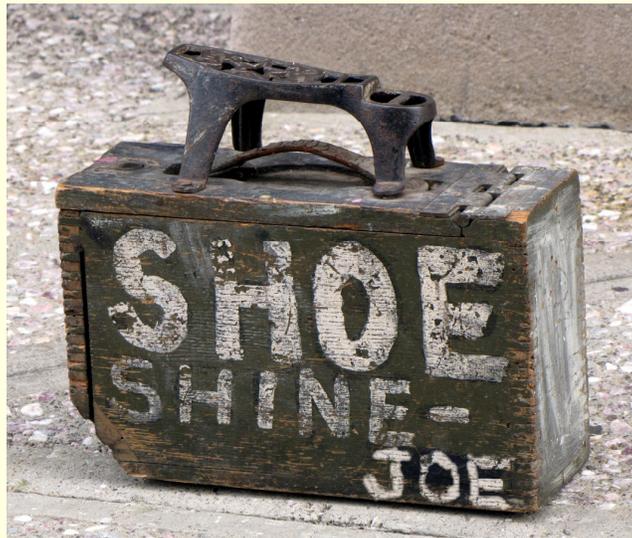
I purchased a shoeshine box: (a World War II machine gun ammunition box) for twenty-five cents at the Army/Navy Surplus store on Seneca Street. Most of my friends had similar boxes. The City required that shoeshine boys be licensed. The “license” was a black and white badge, the size of a 50 cent piece. I acquired one and pinned it to the shoulder strap attached to my shoeshine box.

The tools of the trade were a couple of brushes, bottles of liquid cleaner, polishing cloths, tin cans of Griffin shoe polish and a dauber (a small brush) . That was all I needed when I left my building each morning for the nearby downtown area. I charged 15 cents for a shine; usually a customer would give me a quarter and say, “keep it.” I considered it a good day when I made a

dollar or more.

I clearly remember one hot Friday afternoon. I was broke. So I decided to shine shoes. I raced up the three flights of stairs that led to our fourth floor flat, grabbed my box and told my mom I was going shining.

I hurried up West Genesee Street towards downtown, passing Walsh's Tile Bar, Santi's parking lot and Phil Aliotta's gas station. I crossed over to City Hall and made my way to McKinley Monument. With its proximity to City Hall, the Hotel Statler and numerous office buildings the monument was ideal for shining shoes. The stone benches surrounding the structure were handy as customers could sit while getting a shoe shine.



I began my cadence: “*shine sir, shine sir, only 15 cents.*” A well-dressed gentleman was my first customer. His shoes were black and in very good condition. He sat on the bench and I began my routine. First, brush all dust from the shoes, then apply liquid cleaner with my dauber. Then, wait a few minutes for the cleaner to dry, and then apply the black polish with my bare fingers, working it well into the leather. “Next shoe please” and then slap on the polish once more, allowing the polish to dry on the first shoe. “Next shoe please” and now with a brush in each hand I would begin brushing the polish into a shine, and finishing off with a polishing cloth that I loved to snap as it worked the shoes into a brilliant sheen. The customer handed me a quarter and said “good job”.

“*Shine sir, shine sir, its only 15 cents.*” I repeated my staccato cadence as I circled the monument. Thirty minutes passed, still no customers. It was time to move

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on. I crossed Niagara Square and walked to the busy Genesee Street entrance of the Statler Hotel, an entrance that served as a Van Dyke taxi cab pick-up/drop-off point for guests. From my vantage point I saw the string of monopolistic yellow Van Dyke taxis that surrounded the triangle between the Statler and the Downtown YMCA. The bellman's whistle summoned a cab when needed. There, close to the Genesee Street side of the Statler was a polished-brass-fire hydrant with a flat top that I thought would serve as a seat for potential customers. Standing next to it I again bellowed, “*shine sir, shine sir, its only 15 cents*”. No action. It appeared I would have a slow day. I continued my bellowing until the hotel doorman quickly chased me away. I guess the bootblacks who had a stand in the hotel basement did not appreciate outside competition.

I slung the strap attached to my box over my shoulder and walked up Genesee Street. I turned left on to Pearl Street and headed for Chippewa Street. I planned to visit a few taverns along the way, even though signs in their windows stated, “No Boot Blacks Allowed”.

As I approached the Maroon Grill on Pearl Street I inhaled the stench of stale beer and cigarette smoke and heard the jukebox blaring through the screen door. Peeking through the window, I saw a lively crowd enjoying themselves. I opened the screen door and walked down the line of bar stools. “Shine Sir, Shine Sir it’s only 15 cents”. Before I reached the end of the bar a handsome man sitting next to a beautiful lady turned to me and said, “I’ll take a shine.” He wore a rust colored leisure style suit. His shoes were tan and complimented his white socks. He turned on the bar stool to face me. I opened my shine box and laid the tools of my trade on the floor next to it. I proceeded to polish his shoes taking pains to ensure that no tan polish would stain his white socks. He was enjoying the company of his female friend and stopped paying attention to my performance.

After I finished he told me to give his lady friend a shoeshine.

Wow! Two shines at once. How lucky could I get? Maybe, even a big tip.

The beauty on the bar stool turned around and placed her shoe on the box. She was wearing high heels with very little leather. I wasn’t accustomed to polishing women's shoes. I painstakingly took my time in applying the polish while thinking to myself, “this is going to be a good day.”

As I worked diligently, the couple continued to sip their drinks and cozy up to one another. Suddenly, I sensed something: a young man was coming along the bar and moving swiftly behind me. Upon reaching the couple, he stopped. Over my backside the young man punched the man whose shoes I just shined, knocking him off the stool. He was on the floor and out cold. The woman screamed as the assailant stood over my customer like a prizefighter waiting for more.

Fright overcame me. I quickly gathered my gear, picked up my box, ran out the door and raced down Pearl Street to Chippewa, Out of breath, I stopped running. I kneeled and began placing polish, brushes, etc. into my box. Then it hit me! I was stifed for the two shines at the Maroon Grill. Dejected by this financial setback I slung my box over my shoulder and decided I had enough for one day and headed to the safe confines of Lower Terrace and West Genesee Street.



In his early show business days, Jackie Gleason, like so many other entertainers, performed on the night club circuit. Once, in Newark, New Jersey Jackie was playing at a little bar called the Miami Club, a tough joint nick-named "the bucket of blood".

One night when Jackie was performing, a little short, fat, bald guy in the audience began heckling him. Each time Jackie began to tell a joke or introduce an act this guy would say nasty things to him. Jackie was no slouch and could take care of himself. He often enjoyed downing a few drinks while performing, and this night was no exception. The heckler began to get on Jackie's nerves. Jackie had enough from this guy. He told the owner of the joint "this guy is driving me nuts and when I come out again, if he doesn't stop I am going to take care of him."

So when Jackie returned to do another show the guy began heckling him again. Jackie stopped the show and said to the audience, "ladies and gentleman please excuse me for a moment, I would like to invite this gentleman outside and take care of him, and then come back in and do the show without



Jackie Gleason

any interruptions."

Later Jackie said that he never saw anyone get up as fast as this guy. Once they got outside Jackie turned to the heckler and began to say something. That was the last thing that he remembered. When he woke up, he was on the floor in the cellar of the bar surrounded by the owner and a doctor. He

shook the cobwebs from his brain and said to the owner "who was that guy". The owner responded, "that was Tony Galento." Jackie said "did you know it was Tony Galento? The owner responded "yes", Jackie said, "why didn't you tell me?" The owner said "you're a wise guy so I thought I would let you go up against him."

Jackie was of the mind that what patrons he couldn't win over with his comedy he was more than willing to win them over with his street-fighting skills. Until that night he was starting to think he might have missed his calling as a boxer. But after going outside with Tony Galento, Jackie decided boxing was not his bag after all.

Dominic Anthony Galento (March 12, 1910—July 22, 1979) was an Italian-American heavyweight boxer. Nicknamed "Two Ton" for his reasoning to his manager for being nearly late to one of his fights: "I had two tons of ice to deliver on my way here". Galento was one of the most colorful fighters in the history of the sport. He wrestled an octopus, and boxed a kangaroo to garner publicity for his fights. He also attempted to make some money by boxing a 550 lb. bear.

On June 28, 1939 Galento fought Joe Louis for the heavyweight championship of the world in New York City's Yankee Stadium. At the time Louis, the champion, was a virtual fighting machine and heavily favored (8 to 1) to stop Galento. Galento was not impressed.

The short, balding Galento stunned the crowd, and Louis, by staggering him with a powerful left hook in the first round. In the second round, Louis began hitting Galento with vicious combinations that opened a cut in Galento's mouth and floored the challenger with a powerful left hook that actually lifted Galento off his feet. This was the first time Galento had ever been knocked down in his professional career. In the third round, Louis again was hitting Galento with beautiful, precise combinations, when Galento caught him with a wild left hook. This time Louis went down. Louis, however, got up quickly, but took no chances for the remainder of the round. The fourth round was the end of Galento's quest to win the championship. Louis was overpowering and the fight was



Tony Galento

stopped.

Rocky Marciano once said "Tony Galento was one of the roughest, toughest street fighters in the fight game." Galento was a no holds barred brawler with a wicked left hook. He never let such niceties as rules, or sportsmanship interfere with his goal of knocking out his opponent.

During his prime years as a boxer, Galento owned and operated a bar named "The Nut Club" in Orange, New Jersey. He was reputed to do his roadwork (training) after he closed the bar at 2:00 a.m. When asked why he trained at night, Galento replied, "Cuz I fight at night."



It was the autumn of 1960, within days of my 15th birthday, in a town of some 25,000 called Waterville, Maine -- a tiny place, if you'd spent all your life, as I had, in New York

City. I was a troubled and usually quiet boy, trying to walk tough and look cool -- the only antidote I could muster for my utter and constant dread. As with so many children, beneath the poses my actual feelings were almost unbearably tender, full of yearning and longing, rended by paradox, and consumed with the child's impossible project of trying somehow, in some unimaginable way, to redeem the pain of my family. (In a society like ours, where unhappiness itself is seen as failure, this state of mind is all the more acute.) I'd discovered early what everyone finds out sooner or later: that everything you depend on, everything you assume, and everything you hope for, can suddenly shatter and leave you with nothing, nothing at all, nothing but the look in your eyes. My mother was in a mental hospital somewhere on Long Island; there was no way to call her, and I couldn't be sure she received my letters. My sister and two of my brothers, all younger than I, were in a Catholic home for children in Peekskill. My youngest brother was with my father, but that year my father had apparently lost interest in my whereabouts -- he never wrote or called; I had no idea even if he knew where I was and I certainly had no idea where he was. I was living as a foster child with a minister's family who had generously taken me in; they did their best to make me feel at home, and I did my best to seem at home, but our efforts were awkward, to say the least -- I was then, among other things, a compulsive liar and a petty thief, and awkwardness was all I could manage and, given my defenses, all anyone could manage with me.

My life was desperate but not bleak. Books were my refuge, as they'd been since I was 10 -- they were entic-

ing and insightful, but I still hadn't enough substance of my own with which to meet them fully; I was trying to write poems like Allen Ginsberg's; rock & roll was teaching me (and my generation) how to walk through the world; and all I had to do for adventure was express myself honestly -- that always got a reaction. (For instance, whenever possible I showed off my Brooklyn-style dancing, which seemed to shock the good grown-ups of Maine -- the high-school principal, seeing me dance, once turned up the lights, declared the evening over, fixed with me a Puritan glare and said, "We'll have no more of that!") And there were some good friends, friends who shared my urgent questions -- I remember standing on a deserted beach with Dave, shouting poems and questions to the gray sea and the darkening sky, almost joyful in our defiant desperation.

And then there was Tony Fruscella.

I never actually met Tony Fruscella, and yet we "met" at several crucial times, and we meet again still, all these years later.

Our meetings began at a corny movie I attended in Waterville -- *The Five Pennies*, a sentimental biopic in which Danny Kaye portrayed jazz trumpeter Red Nichols. While the tear-jerker tale attempted to efface anything remotely human in the life of that forgotten artist, the movie's music told another story entirely, for there on the screen was a still undiminished Louis Armstrong, age 60ish but playing superbly, and something in his trumpet realigned my insides. How could so much joy and grief vibrate in the same sound, the same note, the same moment? Could life be lived like that? (A new question for me.) What was this thing called "jazz," that could express our love and pain so freely, so openly, so fearlessly? Who was this man Armstrong, whose face was so happy in expression yet so solemn in repose?

I asked for and received a trumpet -- a beat-up used trumpet, but it had a sweet tone. Joined the school band for instruction. Bought or stole every Louis Armstrong record I could find. And I looked for other trumpet players. I'd vaguely heard of Miles Davis, there he was playing trumpet on a new album called *Kind of Blue*, I haunted the store till I could filch the record. To my enormous surprise, this jazz was utterly different from Armstrong's, just as direct but terribly more complex. (And I will never for-

get first hearing John Coltrane on the first cut of that album. Even on my little mono record player, it felt like he was playing his notes up and down my spine.) Fifteen-year-old boys need, seek, and require, profound shocks to their systems -- shocks that lift them out of their world, out of their minds, and permeate them with qualities that their preconceptions can't grasp but that their souls cleave to. Jazz, for me, was and is a music of such shocks -- a music, a reality, in which even the discords were harmonies.

And there in the record stacks was a gray album showing a young man in a checked flannel shirt, with his head bent and his eyes closed, who cupped the bell of his trumpet in his clasped hands, allowing the horn to rest on his shoulder. He was listening hard. To what, I had no idea. The album title said merely: Tony Fruscella.

He was Sicilian, like me. The liner notes said he'd grown up in an orphanage, like where my brothers and sister were. "Tony subsists without a telephone, and as nearly as can be determined, without an address." Essentially homeless, like me. And he played "a battered hockshop special," like me. I didn't know then that "Fru," as he was called, was a junkie; nor that this was the only record he'd release in his short life (he would die in 1969, at the age of 42). I knew he wasn't great the way Miles and Louis and Trane were great -- even I could hear that right off. His gift was smaller in dimensions, but no less intimate, no less complex for being smaller. He had a quiet, breathy tone -- he made his horn whisper. His music was lyrical, modest, sweet, bitter -- he sounded lost and he wasn't afraid, in his sound, to admit that. Not lost musically: While not great he was very good and knew his horn. But just ... lost. You heard that, in his whispery, almost shy sound. On the first cut, "I'll Be Seeing You," he made an edgy but quiet search into every implication of the melody, and ended near where he'd begun, the statement of a heart that could not find a way out of itself.

Fru taught me the value of the "minor" artist. He taught me, he still teaches me, that you didn't have to be great or famous to make a mark. Sincerity, honesty, integrity, and an open heart -- that could be enough, in art, to reach out and make a difference to someone. You could be a doomed guy from an orphanage, unable to conquer your demons, and still have a few moments in art

that would not be easily erased and that would reach into someone else's needy soul.

Later, at the age of 18, I had a job in the mailroom in Riker's Island prison, in New York, and occasionally I'd read the letters -- and there was a letter about Tony Fruscella! A woman writing her convict boyfriend, reminiscing about how when Fru couldn't get a gig they (she and her boyfriend) would ride with him on the subways while he played his horn for them. And much later, in the late 1980s, nearly 20 years after Fruscella's lonely death, a jazz disc jockey of some obscure station near Albany sent me a copy of an anonymous letter he'd received, a letter from a recovering addict about sharing a pad with Fru and some other addicts in Manhattan, and Fru would sit on the fire escape playing, playing, playing, and it was the only comfort they knew. So, in these strange ways, Tony Fruscella seemed to be seeking me out, literally sending me letters (albeit written by others), to remind me that art isn't about culture, isn't about critics, isn't about fame; art is about an unending attempt to give what we can, where we can, to whom we can, and that there's always something of value to give, no matter how damaged we are and no matter how much hope we've lost. You never know. You can be playing your horn in a junkie daze on a fire escape, and, if you're really playing it (as Fru always did), that can give somebody what they need to go on another day.

Long after he died, a few more recordings were issued: a lovely 1948 studio session that had been thought lost; a live session with Charlie Parker recorded in someone's apartment; a few other live gigs in tiny joints in Manhattan. A total of about four hours' worth of music. Not a lot to show for one lost life. And yet it reaches out. I play those discs now and again -- I'm playing them as I write -- to remind myself that beauty-of-soul is not easily obliterated, even in this massive blaring triviality that we've come to call "culture." And I remember being a lost kid, a kid who knew too much and too little, playing not very well, but with great satisfaction, in a cellar -- accompanying Fru as his solos came out of that small mono record player, trying to find in my horn, in myself, that sound of tender unquenchable longing that Tony Fruscella gave us before he went down.



Sam Arena

BAKED EGGPLANT SICILIANO

Remember K.I.S.S. KEEP IT SIMPLE WITH SAM

INGREDIENTS

- 3 MEDIUM EGGPLANTS
- 3 EGGS
- PROGRESSO SEASONED BREAD CRUMBS
- GRATED ROMANO CHEESE
- VEGETABLE OIL
- 1 QUART TOMATO SAUCE (home made preferably)



Peel eggplant and slice 1/4 inch thick

Beat eggs, add salt and pepper. Dip eggplant in eggs then cover both sides with bread crumbs.

Fry in vegetable oil until both sides are light brown. Place fried slices on a paper bag or paper towel to absorb excess oil.

Cover bottom of pan with sauce, layer egg plant ala lasagna, add sauce on each layer and sprinkle each layer with grated romano.

COVER PAN WITH ALUMINUM FOIL AND BAKE @ 350 FOR 30 MINUTES

Buon Appetito !!!!



JOSEPH IORIO
FANCY GROCERIES AND MEATS
PHONE 129-M

914 SO. MAIN ST.,

MEDINA, N. Y.

1938		DECEMBER				1938	
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<small>Full Moon 7th</small> 4	<small>Last Quarter D.D.</small> 5	<small>New Moon 21st</small> 6	<small>First Quarter 29th</small> 7	1	2	3	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

MADE IN U.S.A.



Caesar Naples
Vice Chancellor Emeritus,
The California State University

Growing up in Buffalo's West Side in the middle of the 20th century was possibly one of the richest experiences any child could imagine. The incredible aromas of Southern Italy permeated the neighborhood: tomatoes, basil, chicory, fennel, peppers, onions, olives, fresh baked bread; and, best of all, the expectation that wonderful combinations of these magical ingredients would be waiting for me when I got home. Years later as I was invited to the homes of my schoolmates from Tech on the East Side, South Buffalo, Hertel Avenue, Bailey and Lovejoy, and Williams Street, I was amazed that they, too, shared a gustatory alchemy that, while different from mine, was remarkably enjoyable: pierogi, kielbasa, corned beef and cabbage, chitlins, sauerkraut, and the like. But, before that coming of age of a sort, my world was filled with Italian wonders that can still excite my taste buds.

I walked everywhere. Niagara Street had its Italian delicatessens with wooden barrels of olives, pungent cheeses hanging from iron racks, glass cases of sausages, bolognas, pieces of pork, beef, veal from which my mother would flavor the Sunday sauce. There was half veal that my grandfather rolled up to make braciole with ground beef, hard boiled eggs, onions, peppers and

other magical things. I continued on past Shea's Niagara theatre that was sure to be offering a film noir thriller starring John Garfield, Lana Turner or Edward G. Robinson (I was shocked to learn that my favorite Italian actor wasn't Italian at all!) about the "Black Hand" or Nazi spies in World War II. My father, who was a city policeman before his death while on duty, worked nights managing the Niagara and later, the Ellen Terry theatre on Grant Street. What a thrill it was to take a friend to the "show" on Saturday and to be let in ten minutes early before any other patrons. We ran up and down the aisle, got a bag of popcorn and took the best seats and watched our favorite characters who were always outnumbered by bad guys and left in great peril until next week. There were at least two cartoons and sometimes more before the feature started.

At Porter Avenue, the neighborhood seemed to open up. We could play in the large parks there and no one seemed to care. I lived a few blocks away but my neighborhood was much larger than the three or four blocks surrounding my home. My grandfather raised thirteen children, including my father, and lived in two homes on Fargo. Across the street my other grandfather lived, and raised my mother and four aunts and uncles. What a treat to spend Sundays there among all of them! They were all family. Long after they were all married, aunts and uncles and countless cousins congregated there for Sunday dinner to enjoy ravioli, pasta and sauce with short ribs, beef, pork and meatballs. If we were poor, we certainly didn't know it.

The houses were all similar: mostly two-family wooden houses with front porches and lawns reaching out to

the sidewalks. I always took their solidity as a refuge for granted.

The neighborhood was a small village. We knew everyone. Transgressions committed safely out of our parents' sight (we thought) were swiftly and accurately reported back to them, sometimes even before we got home. No child was ever "lost" since some parent or neighbor had an eye on him at all times. And no stranger got very far without one of the neighbors watching him intensely. Very little was truly secret in the neighborhood since we lived so closely together. These were mixed blessings, to be sure, but, in retrospect, the trade-offs seem worth it in these days of the strangers next door.

Weekends were special. If we weren't visiting grandparents, we would go on a short motor trip. Summers, it was Crystal Beach. The excitement to cross the Peace Bridge into Canada-- a foreign country-- led us to believe that our world at least had no boundaries. The uniformed officer asked us, "Where were you born?" and our loud practiced reply, "Buffalo!" seemed to be magic words to permit us entry into a less crowded vacation land of charming cottages and glistening sandy beaches. I liked the special treat of cinnamon suckers at the concession at the Crystal Beach amusement park's entrance. When I was older, my friends and I went to dances in the ballroom, having arrived aboard the Crystal Beach Boat, until that fun was spoiled by the gang riots that forced its closure. But that was a way off in the future. Now we danced to famous big bands: Stan Kenton, the Dorseys, etc., illuminated magically by that multifaceted-mirrored ball that spun over our heads.

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Dating required special effort when you attended an all-male school like Tech. Without casual encounters in the cafeteria or hallways, you had to spend some of your leisure time in activities calculated to bring you into contact with the opposite sex. That was one of the prime attractions of the Hi-Y clubs. Each of the YMCA branches around the city hosted boys' and girls' clubs that met once a week pursuing various civic and charitable projects. These were fun, but one certainly less cerebral activity took place after the regular weekly meetings when two or more clubs got together in a large room, dimmed the lights and played records so we could dance. This was a chance for us to socialize with girls in a comfortable setting, an activity that bore fruit, it seems, since at least two of my friends married women they met at those Hi-Y clubs. The evenings would frequently end with a bunch of us from the West Side walking our friends home to the Grover Cleveland or Lafayette High areas from the downtown YMCA. This was possible because of the safe streets then.

At Hutch Tech, I studied math and science, was on the rowing team at the West Side Rowing Club, and captained the school's tennis team. I was student council president as well as president of a number of clubs, such as the honor fraternity, the Hi-Y and the Key club and was also elected president of the city-wide Inter-High School Student Council. One of its more interesting activities was the development of a dress code (how 50s!) that suggested that boys in academic high schools not wear jeans or T-shirts to school and that girls not wear sleeveless shirts or sweaters without blouses or bras. Dress was some-

what more relaxed for students in vocational schools. We put up full-length mirrors at each school entrance and a sign that observed "90% of what others see of you is your clothes;" and, "Dress right! You can't afford not to!" This garnered nationwide publicity: it was mentioned prominently in the Congressional Record, and in newspapers around the country.

I was awarded a tuition, room and board scholarship to Yale the following year. After graduation, I received the first full-tuition scholarship to the Law School at the University of Buffalo. After graduation, I served two years as an officer in the US Army in Germany where my daughter, Jennifer, was born. My son, Caesar, was born in Childrens Hospital in Buffalo three years later.

I was hired by Moot, Sprague, a large Buffalo law firm that represented banks, railroads and other large corporations. Initially, I was a litigator, trying cases in all courts, and arguing appeals. I became counsel and chief negotiator for the Buffalo Teachers' Federation that was about to go on strike. After negotiating a settlement with the school board and the city, I represented a number of teacher unions from the surrounding towns and suburbs. Earl Bridges, then Senate majority leader asked me to serve as counsel and staff director of a select joint legislative committee that addressed the problem of public employee strikes across the state. The committee consisted of prominent labor law experts from universities around the country. I held public meetings around the state and drafted the committee report that served as the basis for the state's Taylor Law that provided mediation and fact-finding services while prohibiting

strikes. Governor Rockefeller appointed me to his staff to represent the state in negotiations with unions representing state employees.

I served as a consultant to a number of states in drafting similar laws, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, California, Nevada, Alaska and New Mexico. I served as General Counsel to the Florida Board of Regents and its universities and after almost ten years, I moved to Los Angeles and became Vice Chancellor of the California State University, the largest public university in the country. In NY, Florida and California, I negotiated the public employee labor agreements and administered the human resources function for their universities. I also conducted searches to fill vacancies among the university presidents.

I was instrumental in developing a mathematics and sciences-based high school near Watts, intended to encourage women and minority students to study engineering and the "hard" sciences, i.e., physics, chemistry, etc. We expected about half of the 100 students in each class to go on to local colleges. To our amazement, 100% of each class goes on to prominent nationally-recognized ones including Cal Tech, Harvard, Yale, Cornell and Stanford, among others. It is a marvelous story.

After ten years, I opened my own law practice and represented public and private universities, including one started by England's Parliament offering on-line education leading to bachelors' degrees. I retired about ten years ago to a home my wife and I built on Lake Tahoe, California.

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SAL MAGGIORE

Maggiore's Corner

Email Sal Maggiore: Smaggiore@roadrunner.com

Charles Mack Wins National Baseball Contest

Pat and Barbara Palmeri are proud of their grandson, Charles Mack for bringing a championship to Western New York.

Charles, the son of Allan and Christina Palmeri Mack was honored in Anaheim, CA. after winning the Aquafina Major League Baseball Pitch, and the Hit and Run National Championship in the 9-10 year old boys division in July.

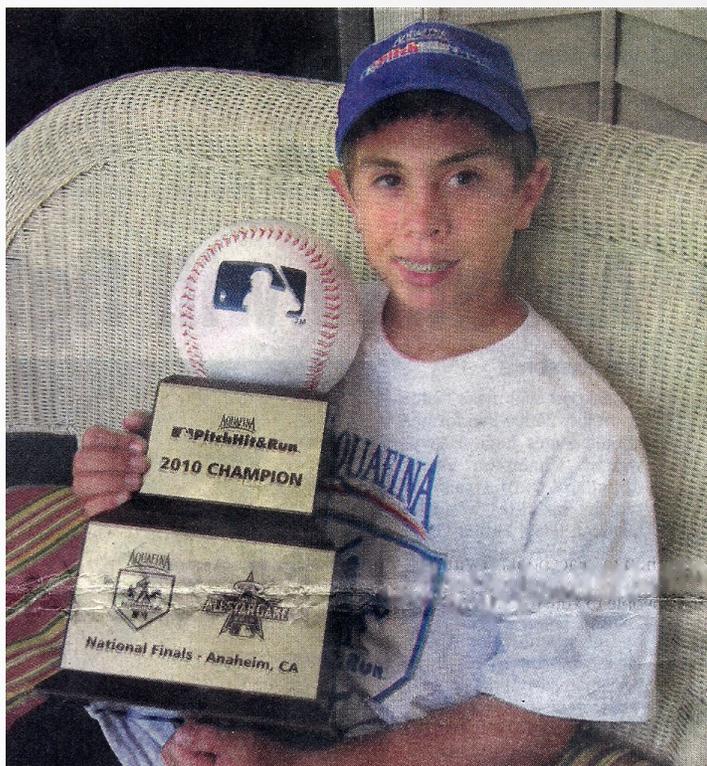
Charles and his dad won an all-expenses paid trip to Anaheim to participate in the competition.

In doing so, Charles broke the long-ball-hitting contest that was held for 40 years after competing and winning a sectional championship at Citi Field, home of the Mets.

Charles won tickets to the All Star Game that was played in Anaheim and was personally congratulated by Alex Rodriguez, Derek Jeter, Albert Pujols and David Wright among others.

Locally, the Tonawanda News and TV stations acknowledged him, and in August he threw out the first pitch in a Buffalo Bisons game at Coca`Cola Field.

Keep your eye on this special youngster. Before long he could be pitching for the New York Yankees.



Flash! Good news. Remember growing up watching macho movie hunk Victor Mature in films like Samson, Demetrius and the Gladiators, The Robe, The Egyptian? As a proud Italian-American youngster, I wondered if Victor Mature, who looked Italian was actually Italian. He was.

Victor Mature was born in Louisville, Kentucky on January 29, 1913 to the Swiss-American Kentucky born Clara Ackley and Marcello Gelindo Maturi, a maker of cutlery who was born in Pinzolo in the Italian part of former Tyrol (now Trentino-Alto Adige/Suditrol, Italy) at that time it was the Austrian Hungarian Empire.

My favorite Victor Mature characters: Doc Holiday in My Darling Clementine, Nick Bianco in Kiss of Death, and Lt. Candella in Cry of the City.

Victor Mature who died in Rancho Santa Fe, California, on August 8, 1999, served in the U.S. Coast Guard during WW II. Believe it or not, I worked at Buffalo City Hall with an engineer who served with Mature. He recalled how he bragged about his affairs with his female co-stars.



Coleen Grey & Victor Mature
Featured in "Kiss of Death"

Surprise Meeting in Westchester

My wife and I were in Westchester County recently caring for our grandchildren while our daughter was in London on business, and Adam, her movie-director-husband was filming in Detroit. So with whom do you think I broke bread (pizza)?

My granddaughter's best girlfriend's father is Mike Torre of Pelham, N.Y. Mike's father is the one and only Joe Torre, former manager of the New York Yankees and now manager of the L.A. Dodgers.

So, one day after school Mike and I took the kids for pizza. (I paid. He bought the ice cream)

Mike, a wonderful person is not involved in baseball but is very proud of his father, and is now a big Dodger fan. We talked about what it was like growing up with a father who was a major league player and manager.

I didn't want to seem like I was conducting an interview but I did mention that before Joe Torre became the Yankee's manager, George Steinbrenner's first choices were Tony LaRussa (who went with the Cardinals,) Sparky Anderson, (who retired) and Davey Johnson (who accepted a bigger contract with Baltimore.) Joe Torre, Steinbrenner's fourth choice, upon accepting the job took a pay cut of \$150,000.

Sal Maggiore

Per Niente's most recent publication, as always, was filled with interesting articles. One, Diane A.Scime's article "The Internment of the Italians" was very personally grasped. It kept me awake recalling events of almost 70 years ago.

Germans immigrated to the United States in large numbers during the latter part of the 19th century. Later, and into the early 1900s, many emigrated from southern Italy and Poland.

My uncle Nick Santa Lucia arrived from Racalmuto, Sicily about 1912 or so, worked hard and sent pennies (literally) "home" to help his younger brother, Sebastiano, as next to emigrate. America entered the 1st world war in 1917; Nick joined the armed forces and was immediately granted citizenship. Things looked good for Sebastiano.

Early in the 1920s the United States government, after many years of seeking immigrant laborers (mostly Italian and Polish) for backbreaking work, conducted a "study" ranking the intelligence of Italian and Polish immigrants. It was concluded that Italians and Poles were the least intelligent of all ethnicities. As such, immigration was tightened and ditch diggers were no longer needed.

What was Sebastiano to do? He decided to immigrate to Canada. The boat (silly to call it a ship) sailed to New York, where its passengers were put on a train to Buffalo where they would

proceed into Canada.

In Buffalo, Sebastiano simply got off the train. Coincidentally, perhaps, his brother Nick was at the station and he took my father to his home and hid him for several months. When Sebastiano surfaced, he associated only with paisani who knew of his situation but kept silent.



Anna and Sebastiano Santa Lucia

In 1928, Sebastiano married a natural born American, my mother, the former Anna Falzone. I was born in 1930. My sister, Rose, was born in 1936. Employment was not a problem as everyone was on welfare.

In April, 1941, my uncle Joe, my mother's younger brother was drafted by the U S Army to serve (he was told) for one year. And was stationed at a base near Pearl Harbor.

Now, Sebastiano, husband and father of natural born Americans' and brother-in-law of an American soldier, felt it was now safe to inform Immigration that he was in America and not in Canada. He was told he was a naughty boy and that he should take civics instruction prior to applying for citizenship. I was 11 years old at the time and I helped my father to study. He passed his tests, applied for his U S citizenship and was told he

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would be sworn in by mid-December, 1941.

On December 7th, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor (uncle Joe's base was strafed as well) On December 8 and 9, Germany and Italy declared war on the US and the US declared war on the three Axis powers.

We (my family) received a letter informing us that my father wouldn't be sworn in, that we should "put our affairs in order" and that we were to be interned within 60 days. My mother was literate but insisted the letter "did not say" what I told her. She said, the only "affairs" she had to put in order were to inform Mr. Fasciana that we might not be able to pay the \$14 per month rent for the flat we occupied and to inform Mister Agro, the grocer, that it might take longer to pay for the food stuffs he had generously provided to our family on credit.

We didn't hear from uncle Joe as all contact with Hawaii was suspended. Now, thank God for politicians - Democrat and Republican. In New York State, German-American and Italian-American leaders screamed at the prospect of internment and within weeks internment was rescinded except for coastal New Jersey and perhaps the west coast as Diane Scime wrote. Japanese-Americans, of course, were interned for years.

Some Japanese-Americans distinguished themselves in combat, especially in Italy, of all places. And, as Diane wrote, 1.2 million Italian-Americans were the largest minority of 12 million combat forces.

Uncle Joe was not discharged in April, 1942 as had been planned. He served the next 4 years in the Pacific.

Two days after Pearl Harbor, my father turned 42 years old. In an effort to emulate his older

brother, Nick, he attempted to join the US armed forces so as to gain quick citizenship. He was told he was too old; in addition to which he had a wife and two children. Ironically, he was an alien in a country he so dearly loved. He couldn't work in a defense plant. My mother could and did.

Italy surrendered in 1943; a successor government joined the Allies and on November 10, 1944, Sebastiano Santa Lucia became a United States citizen. Despite the many obstacles my father encountered I know he truly appreciated and treasured his American citizenship.

Moral of this story... we are a great country, 300 million strong, about 170 million more than 1940. Today, Immigration is still a problem. All I can say is ,, take it easy, there's a lot of Sebastianos out there.



Tom Santa Lucia

Editors note – I know how proud Tom's father was when Tom graduated from law school. Tom has three sons, two of whom are attorneys and a daughter who is a published author. His sister Rose married Hank Nowak, an outstanding Canisius College athlete and subsequent attorney who served in the U S Congress. Their son, Henry Nowak Jr. is currently a Buffalo, New York City Housing Court Judge.

When Angie and I travelled to Sicily in 2006, we visited the small mountaintop medieval town where her father Sam Bongiovanni was born. Montalbano di Elicona is on an old Roman route that connects the Tyrrhenian and Ionian seas, and is dominated by a



fortress-like castle.

'Montalbano' may be derived from the Latin 'mons albus', 'white mountain', because of the nearby snow-clad peaks, or from the Arabic 'al bana', 'excellent place'. The town sits on the slopes above the valley of the River Elicona, hence the name Montalbano di Elicona. In the Sicilian language, the locals call it simply Mun-tarbanu.

Getting to the town was an adventure in itself. My Mapquest route guide said it was 40 kilometers from Taormina, where we were staying, and estimated a one-hour drive. What Mapquest didn't say was that it was virtually all uphill, on curving moun-

tain roads seemingly built for one-way chariot traffic, but expected to carry two lanes of Sicilian grand prix wanna-be's. It took us three hours.

Luckily, we had rented a "Smart" car, a ten-foot long sub-compact with an automatic transmission, which made it a little easier to avoid disaster. It also came in handy when we got into the town itself, where the city center looks much like it did in 1200 AD, when Federicu II built the massive castle that guards it. The granite-paved streets were intentionally narrow, steep and winding, to slow any enemy attack on the fortress.



Federicu gave Sicily (and the world) the first government that could be recognized as a modern nation-state, with uniform laws throughout, and ultimate control by the central government. Because of his political strength, multilingual ability and his patronage of art and culture, Federicu II was called 'Stupor Mundi', the Wonder of the World. His Regnum, or Kingdom of Sicily, included the island and the Italian peninsula as far north as Naples. Federicu also ruled as the Holy Roman Emperor, and as the King of Jerusalem.



The homes and shops in the center of Montalbano were built in medieval style, with little space between the building fronts and the street, and no space between buildings, making a continuous façade

along the way. After eight hundred years of traffic, the stone fronts of the buildings bear scars inflicted by vehicles ranging from too-wide ox-carts to speeding motorists. At intersections many stone corners of houses have a rounded look, from innumerable fender-benders. The Smart car served us well, getting us into and out of some tight spots with relative ease.

I didn't realize how smart the Smart car was, until I returned to Montalbano in 2009, this time with my niece Jackie, who had rented a standard-shift Lancia for our trip. It was not only a stick shift, which I hadn't driven for thirty years, but it was wider and much longer than a Smart car. A common occurrence on this trip was my stalling out at stop signs, especially on slopes, when I let the clutch out too fast, or gave it too little gas, or both. Undeterred, I tried to show my niece the same sights I had seen on the previous trip.

Near the castle, I pulled into a space that I had navigated with ease, when I had been driving the Smart car. But this time, when we returned to the

Lancia, we found that someone else had parked very close, and I immediately realized I would have a problem getting out. I would back up and stall, jerk forward and stall, and so on, making little progress while we drew a crowd: women, children and men, all crying advice in Sicilian: "Cut it left!" "Stop!" "Put the clutch in!" "Stunatu!"

One housewife stood with arms akimbo, shouting "Wait" "Back up!" "O, chi puzza di frena" ("Oh what a stink of brakes!") Finally, disgustedly, she asked "Do you want me to do it?"

"With pleasure!" I replied, and jumped out as she slid behind the wheel. With one cut of the wheel, she backed out, then put it in first and pulled onto the street, leaving it there for me to easily navigate out. Relieved, I said "Multi grazie, Signura" and sheepishly drove away.

As we left town, I told my niece that I would forever be a legend in Montalbano. She asked why, and I answered "Because I'll be remembered as the 'Mericanu who actually let a woman get his car out of trouble."



In my younger days my father often told us stories about growing up on the Lower Terrace on the West Side of Buffalo. On hot, humid evenings, after the sun punished their 4-story tenement that he and his family lived in, dad would often seek refuge from the oppressive heat by sleeping on the fire escape. Papa Frank worked long hours, while Nanna Lucia, managed her four children and her side jobs to help pay the bills. Therefore, Nanna needed to be economical about feeding the family. She knew, as many Italian women knew, what it meant to cook frugally and simply, especially on hot, humid evenings in Buffalo.

Cooking Italian peasant food is wonderful in its simplicity. Inexpensive ingredients like pasta and breadcrumbs can accentuate a plain meal into something quite substantial and healthy.

So today, after working through most of the afternoon heat, with my neighbor, Al, constructing a frame for a loft that will be suspended in my garage, I thought about those stories dad told us.

I boiled water for a pound of spaghetti (salt the water). Earlier in the day I made breadcrumbs from aged Italian bread by breaking it



Lower Terrace/West Genesee Street

down with a rolling pin, then running it through the food processor. I went to my garden to snip chives, oregano, thyme, and basil. I chopped the herbs and added it to 2 cups of the breadcrumbs, then cracked some pepper and added a dash of sea salt. While the pasta cooked, I sautéed 3 minced garlic cloves, a quarter onion chopped in oil and butter cooking for 1 minute on low heat. I added the breadcrumb mixture and gently cooked for 4-5 minutes or until brown and crispy. I added

two teaspoons of capers, cooked another minute, then, spooned into a side dish.

When the pasta was finished, I turned off the heat (reserve the water to add to dish). In the same pan that I cooked the crumbs I added more oil, then, added the pasta as it mixes nicely with the crumb remnants.

I plated the pasta, added a spoonful of reserved liquid, then I added a heaping tablespoon of the breadcrumb mixture and then topped it with pecorino romano cheese and garnished it with basil.

A 2008 Montepulciano D'Abrizzo (Monte Campo) makes a good accompaniment to this dish.



Sara Insana Lepeirs

My wedding ceremony to Richard Lepeirs took place at Holy Cross Church in Buffalo, N.Y., on April 22, 1939. A few months after that, when my mother-in-law was in the hospital for a minor treatment, I ventured to prepare a special dinner

for my father-in-law and husband. I assumed it would be as sumptuous as the Sicilian meals my mother and grandmother prepared when I was growing up.

With my limited experience, since they did all the cooking, I asked them for the recipes (of course from their memory) over the phone. I then proceeded with my planned menu: lentil soup—a mixture of lentils, onions, carrots, celery, tomatoes and basil; a veal roast surrounded with potatoes and vegetables; a green string bean, tomato, and red onion salad flavored with oregano and Italian dressing; ending with freshly baked pignoli (almond-and-pine-nut) cookies and gelato.

The fragrant aroma permeating throughout the house was a pleasurable enticement to our appetites. After we were seated and said Grace, we hurriedly and eagerly sipped our first spoonful of soup. What a shock! It tasted like it was pure salt. I had added “un pugno di sale” as my grandmother directed. Actually she had said, “un poco di sale” meaning, a pinch of, not a handful of salt. How could I have not realized the potency of that seasoning? What a disaster!

My father-in-law took one spoonful and pushed

his bowl away in disgust. Nor could I eat it.

My husband, on the other hand, wanted to support me and ate the whole thing. He drank water galore for a week! The next course was served—the roast was bland and the potatoes were hard. And finally, the cookies were over baked, adding to my embarrassment as the tears came rolling down my cheeks.

Now, as I approach my 94th birthday, I can honestly boast that my culinary skills have vastly improved. Since that unforgettable disaster, the meals I serve are savory and most enjoyable. Inevitably, my guests in Granada Hills, CA. continue to happily respond to my favorite expression, “Mangia.”

Recipe received from a Westside Italian bakery

Pignoli Cookies

Ingredients:

- 2½ cups almond paste
- 2 cups sugar
- 1½ cups finely ground bread crumbs
- 3–4 eggs (depending on size)
- Pine nuts

Directions:

- Roll and cut into 1 ½ inch rounds
- Press several pine nuts in the center
- Bake in a preheated 325 degree oven for 18 to 20 minutes



Albert and Leo DiGiulio, waiters at the Park Lane, late 1930s, prior to their opening the Club 31.

Albert, 2nd from left, Leo is to Albert's left.



Hanging out on the corner of Busti Ave and Georgia Street, early 50s

Top: Billy Licata, Louie Scamacca, ? Petrotta, Carl Fantuzzo

Bottom: Louie Petrotta, John Baldi

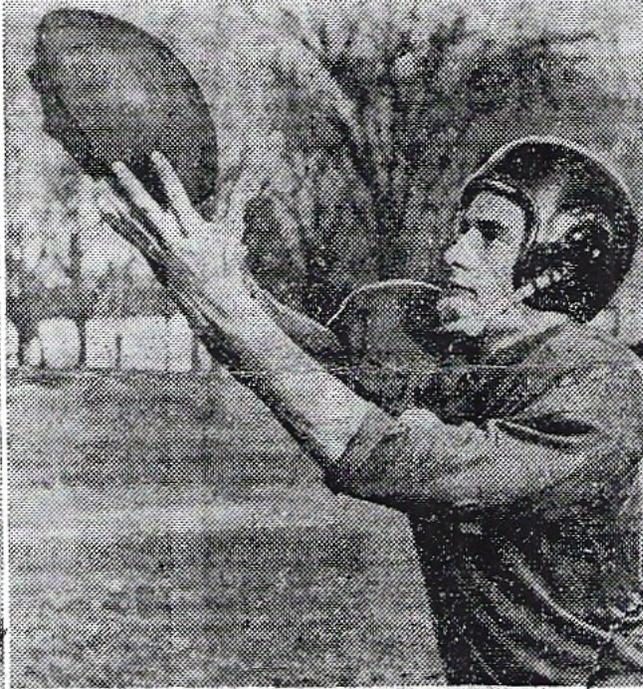


Top: N. Zendano, J. Raco, J. Sacco, P. Guarnieri, A Guarnieri
Bottom: T. Telesco, D. Florko, R Powless, T. Cain, J. Spiegelman

Key Men for Grover Cleveland in Title Grid Game



QUARTERBACK STAN COLLESANO



END ANGELO MARTINELLI

Gridder 'Worked Hard' All Summer

By MIKE CALANDRA

THE football player who wore jersey No. 26 last season for Grover Cleveland High School finished with a six-game rushing total of minus 50 yards for 33 trips.

In five games this season, the player in jersey No. 26 (quarterback Stan Collesano) has moved the ball 265 yards in 44 rushes.

Who wore jersey No. 26 in 1955?

Stan Collesano.

What happened?

"I worked hard in July and August," Collesano said. "I went to Front Park almost every day to run laps and practice sprinting. It sure helped me."

Collesano, an 18-year-old senior, also practiced kicking extra points. He place-kicked only three extra points in 1955. In five games this season, he booted ten extra points.

They Are the Offensive Stars

An 87% average scholar in the classroom, Collesano has played

varsity ball for four years. He was a halfback in 1953 and '54, and has been Coach Paul Misana's first-string quarterback the last two seasons.

Collesano and fullback Don Ganci are the offensive stars for the Presidents, who won the League I title with a won-5 lost-1 record.

The Presidents will bid for the first Harvard Cup championship in the school's history Thursday afternoon against East's Orientals in All-High Stadium. East will be seeking its fourth straight championship.

Ganci, an honor-roll student, is the third Ganci to play fullback for Grover in the last nine years. The first two, Don's older brothers, were John and Phil.

One of the best fullbacks in the series, Don also takes care of the punting and kickoffs, and is a linebacker on defense.

Missed Only One Game

One of the Presidents' best-conditioned gridgers is Angelo Mar-

tinelli, a fine defensive end. A regular flanker for four seasons, Martinelli has missed only one game because of an injury. Martinelli was nursing a thigh injury and Collesano was sidelined with an elbow injury when Grover suffered its only defeat of the season against Seneca.

Perhaps Grover's finest defensive player is Ernest Clinton, who plays end on defense and tackle on offense. A 6-foot 190-pound junior, Clinton executed one of the most crowd-pleasing defensive plays of the season in the Seneca game.

Seneca had four shots at the Grover goalline from inside the 5. On fourth down, from the 1, Clinton grabbed the ball carrier with one of his huge hands and hurled him back to the 10.

Thursday's double-header starts at 1 o'clock with the McKinley-Bennett preliminary for third place. The title game starts at 2:30.