

Per Niente

La Primavera duemiladodici

Volume VIII Issue II

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Spring 2012

Printing by Keller Bros. and Miller, Inc.

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La Ruotaia

(The Lady of the Wheel)

Pages 2-5

Centuries ago, because of illegitimacy or lack of resources, unwanted babies were anonymously placed on "la ruota" (a wheel resembling a lazy susan) that turned to the inside of a local foundling home. This was common throughout Europe.

Authors note: The first four pages of a fourteen-page novellette entitled *The Lady of the Wheel*, written by Angelo Coniglio describes the above in late 1800s Sicily.

The material was conceived while the author was researching Sicilian genealogical records. The work is in publication and will be available for purchase in late 2012. Future issues of *Per Niente* will supply information on ordering the *Lady of the Wheel*.

Foreword

This story is about late 1800s Sicily, which had only recently been under the yoke of Spanish Bourbon rule. Though feudalism had been nominally abolished in 1812, its customs and social restrictions were still felt.

I have used some phrases in the Sicilian language, translated when necessary. The Sicilian convention of names is also followed. Thus, Maria Rizzo, though married

to Antonino "Nino" Alessi, keeps her surname, but her children's surname is Alessi. Their oldest children's given names are derived from those of Antonino and Maria's parents.

The work is fiction, but the names of locations are real. The personal names are typical of the region, as are the customs alluded to, and the choices made for the names of foundlings.

Although it appears in no modern Italian dictionary and it is unfamiliar to even well-educated Italians, the word *ruotaia* was used regularly in the public records of Sicily at the time of this story, in the context explained herein. Other archaic words are used, and are either translated or self explanatory. An actual person with the name and occupation of the protagonist in this story once lived in Racalmuto, Agrigento Province, Sicily. Beyond that, the fictional person by that name bears no relation to the actual person, and none is intended. I thank the real *ruotaia* for the inspiration to write this story.

Angelo F. Coniglio
January 7, 2010

PROLOGUE

Sicily has a history as old as man. It attained its golden age in the time of the Saracens and the Normans, from about 800 through 1200 AD. But since then, "La Bedda Sicilia" has struggled under the yoke of one oppressor after another, causing its common folk to bear famine, hardship and poverty.

A harsh reflection of that poverty is seen in the stories of the foundlings of Sicily in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when starving parents were often forced to abandon newborns in order to be able to care for their other children. In the town of Racalmuto, in the year 1869 there were a total of six hundred twenty-one births recorded. Eighty of those infants, more than ten percent, were foundlings, left in *la ruota*, the 'foundling wheel' of the church.

The abandoned children sometimes were left in rags (*involti nelle fascie* – literally, 'wrapped in swaddling clothes'), but often they were dressed in fine clothes of linen and wool, with colorful embroidery and lace. Records of births were surprisingly well-documented in nineteenth century Sicily, and a record was made for every child born, whether of legitimate parents, or left in 'the wheel'. These records usually showed that the child's father presented the baby to a town official for the recording of the birth. The record typically gave the name, age, occupation and address of the father and the name of the mother, as well as the name given to the child.

But in the case of foundlings, the baby was presented to the official by the person who had taken it from the wheel; invariably a woman, called in some towns the *recivatrice dei proietti*: the receiver of castoffs. This woman gave the official the details of finding the

child, and the clothes the baby was found in, all documented in the written record. Since the parents were unknown, the child was given both a first name and a surname by a priest or a town official.

Foundlings' surnames were intentionally stigmatic, like *Proietto* (castoff), *Esposito* (exposed), or *Trovatello* (foundling); or derisive, like *Fieramusca* (horsefly). Even when more conventional surnames were given, they were 'strange' for the town in which they were given. Thus, Coniglio is a perfectly good Sicilian surname, but if there was no family by that name in the town where a foundling was named Giovanni Coniglio, everyone in town knew that the child was a foundling (and thus assumed to be a bastard). Today, such naming practices might well be considered child abuse.

Chapter 1

Racalmuto is an ancient city in the southwest of Sicily, in the old province of Girgenti, some miles north of the Mediterranean Sea. The town was already old in 830 AD, when conquering Saracens called it 'Rahal Maut', the ruined city. It was even more ancient by 1869, just a few years after Garibaldi had 'unified' Sicily with the Kingdom of Italy, driving out the Spanish Bourbons. From the time of dominance of the Saracen Moors, through the oppression of the Italians, the island had been ruled successively by Normans, Germans, and the French. Then, for more than half a millennium, it had endured a long decline under

the yoke of the Aragonese and their successors, the Bourbons. Surviving the more recent masters, the fabric of the town retained its Moorish and Norman influences.

Women wore black or dark,



Ruota Aperta
(Open Wheel)

loose fitting clothes, and wore shawls to obscure their faces. They might walk through the streets, but only with groups of other women. Lone women were never to be seen outside their home. After age seven or eight, boys and girls were strictly segregated.

Still maintaining their medieval style, the streets were of stone, as were the buildings along their narrow courses. In some seasons, stone buildings may have a desirable effect: as the seasons warm up, the cool stone can alleviate the heat inside a dwelling. In fall, the stone captures the sun's lessening warmth and holds it through the night. But in the dead of winter, when the sun is weak and stingy with its energy, the air is cold, the stone seems even colder, and the walls suck the heat out of the living

spaces. Acknowledging this fact of nature, Sicilian builders had long ago begun to build residences on a simple vertical formula: the ground floor held a family's stock of animals, such as they could afford. The next floor, called the *primo piano*, was a common room used for cooking, eating, and daily life, and the next floor provided a sleeping area. In this way, the warm, if somewhat pungent, body heat of the animals rose to the living quarters, where it combined with the heat of the cooking fire to warm the sleeping area above.

But it was very cold, that winter of 1869 in Racalmuto. Families without several beasts, or too poor to keep a fire going, could almost feel their own body heat fleeing through the stone walls. In one of the stone row-houses, Maria Rizzo sat cross-legged, avoiding the outside walls in a corner of the sleeping room. She shared the room with her husband Antonino Alessi and their children Totò, Grazia, Tanuzzu, and two-year-old Giuseppa. It was early morning, and in spite of the cold, she was sweating profusely. Maria was sweating because she had just given birth. And because the infant had lived.

Nino Alessi had been out of the house for some time, at his job as a *piconiere*, a pickman in the local sulfur mine. As usual, he had left an hour before dawn in the rickety mule-drawn *carrozza* that hauled the men from the town to the mine and back. He would return long after the sun had gone

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down. Their other thin, curly-topped children had murmured and squirmed while Maria was in the throes of labor, but thankfully, none had awakened.

Now Maria looked at the newborn girl and asked herself "Why did I bathe and dress her? I'm going to throw her into the river, after all." She had told Nino the lie that the fetus was dead, that it hadn't moved for a week. He was resigned to the fact. Secretly, he had thought it a blessing.

Nino had worked at the mine for years. The wages, though a pittance, were normally more than he could earn as a share-cropper. But with the recent drought and its spawn: famine, more and more *contadini* had forsaken the plow and taken up the pick. Wages at the mine had plummeted. The lone, scraggly milk goat they kept on *the* ground floor below their humble living quarters had virtually dried up, and it was harder and harder to find food, even if he could afford it. Having another mouth to feed would have been disastrous.

Maria knew this as well as Nino. That was why she had lied about the baby being dead. Soon Totò would be seven. Old enough to work at the mine as a *carusu*, lugging baskets of sulfur ore, dug up by the pickmen, from the depths of the mine to its mouth. That would bring more money to the family, since the mine bosses would soon come

around to offer the *succursu di murti*, the "death benefit" for Totò. They would pay Antonino a few *scudi*, and Totò would go: to work, live, eat and sleep in the mine until he died, or a miracle happened -- he might prove worthy someday to become a pickman like his father, and work in the mine only from dawn until dusk.

Maria's heartbreak over Totò's impending fate was assuaged by the prospect that the



La Ruota in Vaticano

(The wheel in the Vatican)

succursu would help, for a time, to buy food, and that Totò's share of their simple meals could be apportioned to the other children. Keeping this baby would negate those bitter advantages. And even though she had milk, Tanuzzu and Giuseppa were still breast-feeding and there was not

enough for another child.

The fact of her pregnancy had been hidden through the forced lack of neighborly contact during this cold winter, as well as by the bulky clothing she normally wore. In their dark sleeping area, Nino knew, though he never saw her slim body. Once, after intimacy, he had commented, "My *Mariuzz* has grown a *panzedda*, a little belly." She told him then that she was expecting, but though she couldn't see his face in the dark, she knew from his silence that the news had not brought him joy, but rather, concern.

After Maria's dark deed had been carried out, no one must know what she had done. No, she must cast it away, or expose it to be disposed of by the town's mangy dogs.

It would not be the first child she had lost. A year after her marriage, she had brought forth a baby boy, naming him Salvatore after Nino's father. But that first Totò had been sickly, and none of Maria's ministrations, nor those of the local midwife, the priest nor the town doctor could save it.

When it died at the age of three months, Maria was already pregnant, with another boy, who was born healthy and once more named Salvatore. The second boy had survived, but soon he would be given up as a *carusu*. Sicilian mothers knew of loss.

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But this newborn baby was such a beautiful child, and it seemed as though Maria could see her own image in the girl's features. Black ringlets surrounded a round pink face whose cheeks were even rosier, and her remarkable green eyes pierced Maria's heart like thorns, as though the child knew of her mother's plans. Maria could not help recognizing the child's resemblance to herself, and though she knew it was vain, she thought the child, if she lived, could grow to be as attractive as she. Though her life was hard, her wiry body had still retained curvature and softness, enough to inflame her Nino, she thought.

Now she had dressed the infant in the only fine clothes the family owned, the costume of a lovely doll her father had once given her after he had returned from a visit to Palermo. A white silk hat surmounted the curls, trimmed with red velvet ribbons. A frilled white muslin shirt covered the child from neck to toe, a fine grey wool shawl swathed her shoulders, and tiny cardboard slippers, bright red, graced her feet.

Maria wrapped a threadbare cloak over her own shoulders, took up the child, and silently carried her down the stairs, past the sleeping goat, and out into the bitter cold.

She walked with her head hung in sorrow, hardly seeing where she went, through narrow cobblestone streets which seemed to merge with the stone walls of

the darkened houses. She looked up and saw the signpost at a street corner: Via Garibaldi. She spat and crossed herself.

Garibaldi had promised that when Sicily was united with the north in an Italian republic, things would be better for the common people. Her father Gaetano Rizzo had joined with Nino's father to fight beside the Redshirts. Gaetano had been wounded, and Nino's father Salvatore Alessi had died in the fight for 'unification'.

Garibaldi had won, Italy was united, but Sicily was still as poor as it had been under the recent Bourbon rule. Further, the best jobs were now taken not by local men, but by Italians from the north, and the people survived by selling their children to the mine owners.

Maria turned a corner and nearly stumbled on the lowest step of the town's Mother Church, the *Chiesa Madre Annunziata*. She caught her balance with one arm and protected the child with the other. The mis-step had caused her to look up again. That was when she saw *la ruota*. The wheel was set in the wall at the side of the massive church, near the entrance to the foundlings' quarters.

She thought: "If I drown my baby, she will be a *turca*, a Turk, dying without baptism and without a soul. If I leave her in the wheel, whatever happens to her, at least she'll be christened, and have a name, and be a *cristiana*, a Christian." The leaden winter sky had brightened. Now worried that she might be seen, Maria crept along

the base of the stone wall, to the niche beside the oaken 'door of the foundlings'. She sat on the cold pavement by the door, resting her back against the colder marble of the wall.

She looked at her daughter's green eyes, at the same time somehow both trusting and accusing. "At least I can give you something before I abandon you", Maria whispered, as she bared a breast for the baby to suckle. "Go ahead, go ahead, your sister will give thanks for this tomorrow."

When the baby had finished, Maria carried her to the niche. In it was set a little rotating closet, whose flat circular bottom was just large enough to hold the small bundle of life. With a tear and a heavy heart, she placed the infant on the wheel and turned it so that the baby was carried inside. She reached up and tugged a cord that shook a set of chimes within the church, then scampered away from the wheel, back through the grey streets to her house.

When she entered the living quarters, she heard Giuseppa crying, and asked "Pina, what's wrong?" The child sniffled and sobbed, "*Mamma, aiu fame!* I'm hungry!" Embracing the child, Maria cooed, "Here, here, *mammuzza*, don't cry. Here, here, I have milk."

One of the world's foremost classical guitar ensembles is an Italian-American married couple from Buffalo, New York.

Joanne Castellani and Michael Andriaccio have a stellar career of featured concerts in London, Rome, Beijing, Madrid, Budapest and Rio de Janeiro, among other international venues, and they have served as artistic envoys for the U.S. Department of State. Performances at the White House, the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Recital Hall are among the achievements of the duo, who also are acclaimed recording artists with nine CDs.

Critics ranging from *The New York Times* to *Gramophone Magazine* have unanimously praised their "elegance, style, poise and exquisite taste in interpretation."

Michael grew up on the West Side, graduating from Bishop Fallon High School. Joanne was raised on the East Side, attending Bennett High. The couple met when they were studying music at State University at Buffalo.

"We hated each other before we even met," Michael recalls with a laugh. "Our teacher, Abruzzi-born Oswald Rantucci, then a Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra violinist, would tell Joanne that she could never memorize music like I could and he'd tell me that I would never have the right-hand technique that Joanne had." The two students started playing duos to fulfill their degree requirements and the rest is history. They have been married since 1975.

This year, Joanne and Michael are spending more time closer to home as the artistic directors of the JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition. The fifth biennial Falletta Competition will be held



Joanne Castellani and Michael Andriaccio

in Buffalo the week of June 4. They have been co-artistic directors since the event began in 2004, co-produced by the BPO and WNEB in honor of BPO Music Director Falletta, herself a classical guitarist. The Competition will draw talented guitarists from around the globe to compete in semifinals on June 5 and 6. Three finalists will move on to perform with the BPO at Kleinhans Music Hall on Saturday, June 9. Call 885-5000 or visit bpo.org for tickets.

The couple enthusiastically supports the event, which encourages today's emerging guitarists, just as their own

talents were recognized early on. Attending the legendary Guitar '75 Festival in Toronto, they were encouraged by everyone to pursue a career as duo performers. Invited to the master classes of virtuoso Andres Segovia, the most revered classical guitarist of the 20th century, they were awarded scholarships to travel to Spain to study with him.

Joanne and Michael spend a great deal of time in



Joanne Castellani, Michael Andriaccio and JoAnn Falletta

Italy and both speak Italian. They have performed and taught at the Rome Festival in the *centro storico* area for several years. “We know Rome as well as we do Buffalo,” Michael said. “And we enjoy seeing old acquaintances when we walk through the streets of Rome’s historic district.” The two also have become quite knowledgeable about Italian wine, food and olive oil.

Joanne has served as Executive Director of Competitions for the Guitar Foundation of America and is on the UB Music School faculty. She maintains a full private teaching studio at 4523 Main Street in Snyder, NY for traditional and Suzuki students of guitar. “I enjoy teaching very much,” Joanne said. “The greatest pleasure for me is developing each student into an all-round musician who chooses to play the classical guitar, and helping each to discover a greater sense of themselves at any age or achievement level.” Both have participated in summer music teaching and festival activities at Chautauqua Institution.

Michael’s newly-released world premiere recording with the London Symphony Orchestra of “*Goyescana*,” by Grammy and ACE award winner Michael Collina was recorded at Abbey Road Studios. A new DVD, “*The Guitar and a Journey of Two*,” featuring the duo in 24 selections ranging from Vivaldi to contemporary music for guitar, will be released this Spring.

The couple also owns Fleur de Son Classics, Ltd., one of America’s most rapidly growing record labels, founded on their belief that classical musicians and composers of international merit deserve a dedicated record label. The label features 85 titles from a distinguished roster of world-class artists. “We constantly seek new and exciting projects through which musicians and composers may express themselves in chamber music, solo repertoire, early music and works for orchestra,” Michael said.

For the Falletta Competition, Joanne and Michael oversee the application process that attracts guitarists from throughout the world and they recruit the panel of judges from among extraordinary classical guitarists, composers, recording artists and professors – most of whom they have known as fellow professionals for

many years.

Following preliminary screening, eight guitarists will be invited to compete. Their names and countries of origin will be announced in April. Semifinal rounds will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 6 and Thursday, June 7 at WNED’s studios in downtown Buffalo. For the first time, the semifinals will be telecast live on WNED-TV.

“The addition of the live WNED television broadcasts will allow our community to experience the excitement of the Competition in a very personal way,” Joanne said. “They will see the moment when JoAnn Falletta announces the three finalists who will go on to compete in full performances with the Buffalo Philharmonic on Kleinhans Main Stage at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 9. Finalists vie for a prize package that includes cash, a concert tour and a concert guitar.

The five who do not advance to the finals will perform at daytime *Guitar Days* community concerts on June 8 and 9, which are free and open to the public and will take place at schools, hospitals and community locations throughout Western New York. For details visit www.fallettacompetition.org.



1997, performing at the White House

Contrary to popular belief, all Italians were not Roman Catholic. The Protestant Mission Church, between Carolina and Virginia Street, was long entrenched, when, we as youths, passed it enroute.



holic. This long standing edifice: *The Trenton Avenue*
streets, that we called "The Protestant Church" ,
to Saint Anthony's or Holy Cross Church.





Her name was Angelina Pignone (nee Gianvito) and she was truly bigger than life. Angelina was imposing physically. She weighed about 250 pounds and most people thought she was close to 6 feet tall, but, in truth, she was only about 5'5". I think people were fooled by her penetrating blue eyes and her booming voice, always full of laughter and ready with a smile for one and all. She drove a big Chrysler, walked with a cane, and when she was working in the fields usually wore a big straw hat and the type of sunglasses that state troopers wear. Angelina had the biggest bosom in the entire universe. All the kids said so. She usually folded her arms and slept on her bosom after a long day, especially if she had been drinking some of the homemade wine she and her husband made annually, or if she had enjoyed a cold Simon Pure beer, which she liked almost as much. To say that she was flamboyant, colorful, fun-loving, and at times, profane, is accurate.

At the beginning of each picking season, Angelina began her recruitment activity. She used lists of workers from previous years who often suggested others to join the parade to North Collins. At the beginning of harvest season, Angelina arranged for a truck or two to pick up day workers for the Goldsmith and Litz Farms. She often acted as a human alarm clock when folks overslept, going to their homes and rousing them out of bed so they could get on the truck before it left. She always said that the older workers were more dependable than the kids, all of whom picked beans or berries, often under the blazing sun or the torrential rains. The older workers were the tortoises that beat the young hares! They were steady, dependable workers who didn't complain, said Angelina.

Angie, as most people called her, was generous to a fault and a sucker for a sad tale. Once a recently widowed woman and her five young children, were being evicted from their West Side tenement. The woman was beside herself with fear and trepidation. She was a recent immigrant from Italy and could not speak enough English to move anywhere but within the Italian enclave in "The Hooks." However, she had no money to move or for food and some said she was considering taking her children to Niagara Falls and jumping. When Angie heard about this, she offered the woman a life-saving deal. Angie arranged for this lady and her children to live in one of the shacks on the farm for two months and made sure that the woman and her family had food to eat. The older children could work in the fields with their

mother, while the younger ones would go to a daycare center nearby the farm, where Angie drove them everyday and paid the \$.25 fee for each (and that included lunch).

This woman's attitude and outlook changed dramatically. She received love and assistance from many of the other Italian and Sicilian workers, who helped her with food and actually credited her with a small amount of the farm work they performed so she would have a little something more for her children. Angelina's act of kindness spurred many other people to emulate her. It must have been a beautiful thing to observe this transformation as the woman realized some joy in her life at her most difficult time.

Years later, the woman said that this was the summer that saved her life and spirit. It turned out to be one she would never forget. Through the years the family worked on the farms with Angie, and the woman's children grew and became more and more successful so that one day they were able to stop going to the farm in the summer and care for their mother. Wonderfully, happily this family never forgot Angie and her kindnesses to them in their time of need. They tried their best to continue to show love, gratitude and respect for Angie as she got older. When Angie passed away, the woman and every single one of her children, grandchildren and their spouses arrived at Angie's wake each night, dressed in their finest clothes, reminiscing about Angie with old friends and, oh yes, they were also at her funeral mass as well.

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Angie intervened with many mothers and fathers (mostly new arrivals from Italy) who did not want their daughters going out on dates, as was the American way. They thought it was disrespectful and dangerous. They wanted to pursue the old customs where the boy came to meet the family who would then decide whether the two love birds were actually a match. The fact is that many of the girls and boys who met on the farms would marry and most of those marriages worked out very well.

Angelina often drove the farm workers to medical appointments and church when they were too old or too sick to get there any other way. The most vivid memory most people have of her is playing the concertina or the hand-carved castanets made by her father and grandfather in Italy, around the fire after a long day in the fields. It was a scene to behold. The adults and the teenagers often got up to accompany her by singing an old Italian song or two, out of tune as it might be.

Angelina married a wonderful man, Carmine Pignone, who was quite a bit older than she was. She was, in fact, his third wife and he went back to Italy to bring her to



Angelina., Grace, Carmine and young Joe Pignone

America. His first two wives died tragically young, leaving small children who needed care. His first wife, Serafina, who had come with him from Italy with their eldest three children, died of a stroke and some said of loneliness and home sickness, yearning for the old country. She was only 42 at the time of her death. Carmine had to place his two youngest children in St. Mary's orphanage on the corner of Elmwood and Edward Streets, across the street from Immaculate Conception Church. It broke his heart

to do this, but they were too young to be left alone and there was no one to care for them. Maria Grazia was three years old and Joseph was only 11 months old. After about two years, he married Rose. Wife number two, who was a wonderful woman who had been widowed. She also died young as a result of a tragic accident. Carmine was a strong man, but this was almost too much for him. Finally he composed himself and decided he must marry again, for the sake of the children. At least now they were old enough to be left home long enough to allow him to return to Italy by ship and bring back a new wife.

He made all the inquiries and found there was a very nice young woman,

Angelina Gianvito, who lived in the town of Paduli, near the village of Apice where he had lived. Both towns were in the extremely poor province of Campagna. When Carmine returned with Angelina, he knew that he had met and married an extraordinary woman of courage and conviction, not to mention as strong as an ox. Angelina raised his younger children with complete love and concern as if they were her own. She worked along side him and as he got older, in place of

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him, not only in the workforce, but handling the chores around the house.

Although Angelina attended English classes taught by Rose Croglia at P S #3 a few days a week she never did learn to read, write or speak English. In addition, her grandson had the job of doing his best to teach her those skills for which he was paid \$1 a week. He didn't like doing it and was a lousy tutor. But Angelina loved him so much she let him drive her big cars as he grew into his teenage years when no one else ever had that privilege. He later became her chauffeur. He learned, though her English was limited, she was one of the shrewdest and most resource-



Millie Pascal Pignone, Angelina Pignone, unknown
Grace Pignone Martoche, Maria Pignone Muscariel

ful people he had ever met. Angelina was a whiz, an Einstein with numbers. No one could pull one over on her when it came to bartering or bargaining; and if they tried, they would rue the day! It was she whom the grandson went to when he needed money for something his parents wouldn't provide. It was she who staunchly supported him in every disagreement he would have with his family, big or small.

Family and friends still remember her making a party out of the "making of the wine." She supplied not only beer, wine, and pop to those who were helping, but she also put out a spread of meats and cheeses, olives and fresh bread that was to die for. She brought out her famous concertina and played a song or two when people took a break and then she was right back in there helping all the men grind and squeeze the grapes. She

bought old whisky barrels at the Bailey Avenue Market, inspecting them carefully before making each purchase.

Msgr. David M. Gallivan, now the pastor at Holy Cross Church, who, along with Fr. Rick Reina, presided at her funeral mass as young priests and told the story of visiting her. She wore a huge button on her nightgown supporting her beloved grandson who was running for office and she wore an even bigger smile on her face. It is not an exaggeration to say that Angelina Pignone was a force of nature, a force for good. By the way, if you are wondering how this woman who could not read or write English was able to get her driver's license . . . it's amazing what a good cooked Italian meal and two or three jugs of good homemade wine could get you in those days.



Charles Martoche, Carmine & Angelina Pignone,
Grace Pignone Martoche

In 1952 electricity was introduced to my small home town of Santo Stefano, in the Aspromonte mountain range in Calabria, Italy.

Electricians from Reggio Calabria, a large city opposite Massena, Sicily, arrived to wire all of Santo Stefano's municipal buildings and residences. After completing the wiring which had a great deal of exposure both in and out of the buildings, the electricians warned the towns people of the high voltage (220 volts) that was used and the dangers of electrocution if they disturbed it.

The town's people were very excited and happy to be getting this wonderful technology. And so was I. As the son of the town tailor I looked forward to finally stopping my daily task of gathering pine needles and broken branches after a wind blew them to the ground. The needles, after being dried were lit to start a charcoal fire in a small metal box in which my father heated his iron to press the clothes he tailored or altered. It was a ritualistic and lengthy process to complete. At that time charcoal was expensive and elusive. We made sure everything was done sparingly and maximized the pieces of charcoal that we burned. Hence the pine needles to start the fire and supplement the charcoal. Because of this expense, (which my father would have to pass on to his customers if he were to press every item upon completion) my father only pressed clothes once or twice a week to justify the cost. His customers knew this and didn't mind waiting for their clothes.

In anticipation of the electricity, my father went to Reggio Calabria, to buy an electric iron. The trip to Reggio was always a nightmare. The road was narrow and had room for only one car either coming or going. It wound endlessly around the mountains and it was difficult to see anyone coming in the opposite direction. If a car was coming from either direction both parties had to stop and negotiate who would back up to a spot so one could pass. Quite often - Italians being Italians - argued and refused to budge. A trip that took two hours turned into four. Travelers on donkeys would get to Reggio Calabria sooner.

My father used a cloth-covered board when he pressed clothes. On the board sat the metal charcoal heater and his old iron. The first thing he did was to remove them and place the electric iron on the board. We were ready for the electricity.

On the day the electricity would be turned on, all the towns people were told to gather in the center of town (The Piazza). The Mayor told the electrician's to string light bulbs all along the perimeter of the square. It truly was a time for celebration; after all we would soon listen to the radio and hear news about the Korean war and listen to the fights featuring the great Italian-American heavyweight, Rocky Marciano. Soon there would be ice in summer. No more harvesting snow in the mountains and burying it so as not to melt and hauling it down to the town in spring before it did melt. Oil lamps and candles for light would be a thing of the past. We even heard that a lady in town bought a machine to make gelato.

The Mayor, a great showman with much bravado instructed the electricians that the electricity should be turned on for the whole town to see. This was a first for many of the elderly town's people. They weren't sure what to make of it and were a bit frightened after hearing it (electricity) could kill you. After the celebration at the square, everyone was anxious to go home to see this wondrous thing. We were among those that did. We opened the door, the lights were on and we smelled a strange odor coming from my fathers tailor shop. We entered the room. The electric iron was on the floor. It had burned through the ironing board leaving a hole the shape of the iron. Of course we knew what had happened. In the excitement of all that was going on, my father had forgotten to unplug the iron before we left. All I could hear from him in a loud voice was, "MANNAGE ELECTRICITY", i.e. "DAMM THIS ELECTRICITY"

Writers note: Joseph Caserta migrated to the United States in 1956 at age fifteen.



Joseph Bottita

After serving in WW II, my father, Joseph Bottita came home and opened J&A, a grocery store-meat market on Maryland near Cottage Street with my uncle, Angelo Lepore, a butcher and country club chef. I was six or seven at that time.

In the early 50s, my father opened, Bottita's Grocery at 134 Busti Avenue across from Tagliarino's Dairy and Sal & Clara Palermo's live poultry market. At that time my father, mother Lucy, brother Sam, sister Anita, and I lived in a flat at 117 Busti behind Antonio Greco's post office/travel agency and next to his Funeral Home. It was a short walk to our store and other Italian merchants in the area such as Mallia's Frontier Meat Market, Muscarella's Pastry, Avellino's Barber Shop, and Sapienza's hardware store. One stop walking distance shopping you just don't see anymore.

My mother waited on customers. After school I sorted bottles and helped her. Some vendors we had at that time were Mike Mangano from Mangano's Bakery (I still remember that great bread), Harry Merlino of Merlino's cheese, Jack Calabrese of Calabrese Brothers, and the Bluebird Bakery (great chocolate and vanilla cupcakes). Many of our customers were seasonal workers and Dad allowed them to charge groceries until payday and he kept their tabs and payments in an old ledger that we called "The Book." I'm sure when my parents closed the store there were many unpaid debts that just 'went away'. That was the reality of those times.

When not in school I remember going to the Clinton-Bailey Market at 5 AM with my Dad. He always dealt

with James Desiderio for produce and Jimmie Ventura for bananas , great bigger than life guys! I also recall delivering huge orders of cold cuts, rolls and pastry with my Dad to the old Roanoke Hotel for the big weekend poker games. They always gave me a nice tip.

We kept a small stove in the back of the store, and my mother would cook up the unsold or 'near expiration' vegetables and turn them into a delicious minestra for



Joe Bottita, behind the counter at 134 Busti Avenue

dinner at the store. Another favorite meal was pasta with peas or pork and beans, and hopping john (peas, rice and ham), which I still cook today! My wife, Peggy, and I call them our Depression Meals.

Dad was a great practical joker. One day the 7-Up rep and a helper treated everyone in the store to a free 7-Up. They briefly left the store to go to their truck and my Dad replaced 1/2 of the 7-Up in the reps bottles with *One-Two-Three Go* (citrate of magnesia), a clear lemon flavored laxative! They didn't realize it till later when it started to "work", and gave him hell about it later. But

(Continued on page 15)

they appreciated the practical joke.

When the A&P opened on Niagara and Maryland, it was the death knell for small mom and pop grocery stores on the West Side.

After a few years in the grocery business, my dad sold cars for Sherwood Sheehan (Sheehan Motors) on South Park Ave. He later became Sheehan's Sales Manager. When Sheehan closed, he became Sales Manager for Anderson Ford in Lackawanna until his death in 1967 at the young age of 48.

He loved people and always treated everyone with respect and honesty. I learned a great deal from him about working hard and dealing with people in a fair, respectful manner which helped me in my career as a U.S. Government law enforcement officer.



Joe Bottita at J & A Market, Maryland and Cottage Streets

The Lower West side was a great place to grow up, being close to school, my maternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Fond memories of a West Side that is no more.



At 114 Busti Avenue

Steve Bottita, Camille Chiarmonte, Sam Bottita and Joe Chiarmonte.

Across the street: Greco Insurance - Travel Agency, and Greco Funeral Home



Giovanni Mainello, 1890, Giovanni D'Angelo

Photo: 1890

Giovanni Mainello, unknown, Giovanni D'Angelo



Photo: circa 1907

Euplio "Mike" and Mary Perone

Mary's maiden name: Maria Donata D'Angelo



Irene Perone

Elena Perone

8th Grade Class, St Lucy's School : circa 1930

Confirmation photo
1924

Alex Nigro

Euplio "Mike" Perone

Mary Perone

Rose Nigro

The Perones lived at 46
and 59 Myrtle Avenue.

*Mike Perone was born
1880 and came to
America in 1897 from
the town of Anzano
degli Irpini, in the prov-
ince of Foggia.*

*Mike became a barber,
his shop, named "The
Little Palace" was near
the corner of Seneca
Street and Michigan
Avenue.*



Photo: circa 1919

Euplio Perone Mary Perone

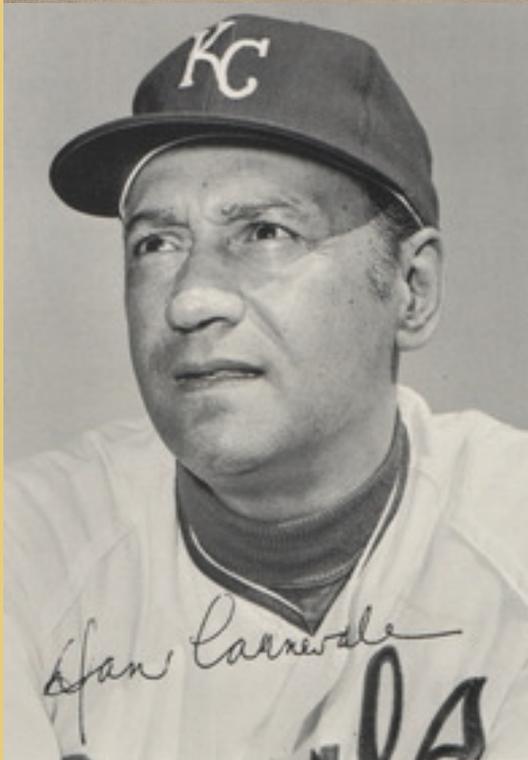
With their children

Irene, Elena

Rocco, John "Jinks"



OFFERMANN
 East Ferry Street - Masten Avenue - V
 Buffalo, N
 1935-



Dan Carnevale
 Infielder
 1938-40
 Manager 1955



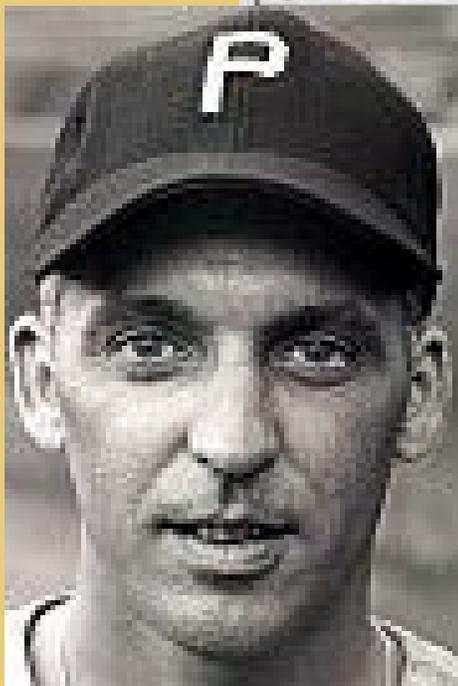
Bill Serena
 Infielder
 1948
 1956-57



Oliver, Angelo, (Ollie) Carnegie
 Outfielder
 1932-45

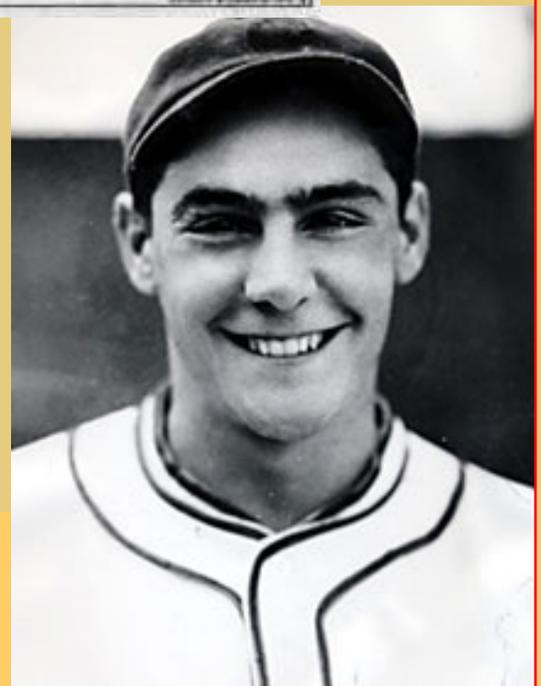


STADIUM
 Woodlawn Avenue - Michigan Avenue
 New York
 1960



Les Scarsella
 Infielder
 1940

John Antonelli
 Infielder
 1946-47



Phil Cavarretta
 Manager
 1956-58

TOMORROW ROCHESTER
THOMAS PANASCI. GENERAL CONTRACTORS-LINCOLN

Be Sure - DRINK
Simon Pure
BEER-ALE
Simon Pure News FULTON LEWIS JR.
W.G.R. 7:00 P.M. MON. THUR. and FRI.

HELP TO
 ★ **WIN THE**
Buy MO
 YOU /

BUFFALO
 NO. POS.
 10 SS
 3 3B
 7 CF
 27 RF
 19 C
 9 LF
 6 1B
 5 2B
 21 P

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 THE KEY TO THIS BOARD**

AB	STRIKES	BALLS	OUTS	AB
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ROCHESTER	0	0	1	0	0							
BUFFALO	0	1	2	0	0							

ROCHESTER
 POS. NO.
 SS 6
 CF 12
 RF 14
 1B 20
 LF 11
 2B 7
 C 5
 3B 8
 P 23

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 NEWARK 0
 TORONTO 2
 MONTREAL 0



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N-6321

WAR ★
BUY WAR BONDS *with SAVINGS*
MAKE AT **NU-WAY**

GAMES TO-DAY

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
4	2	0							
1	5	0							
0									
0									
2	0								1
0	0								2

400
FEET



BE A
PRODUCTION
SOLDIER
Go to Work
for **CURTISS
WRIGHT**

LADIES DAYS
MONDAYS · TUESDAYS · THURSDAYS
LADIES 25¢

GLICKSTEIN'S
JEWELERS OPTICIANS
4 LARGE STORES
CREDIT AT Cash Prices
BUY WAR BONDS *with* SAVINGS FROM PURCHASE

4

For many citizens of the New World, the idea of living in Italy is a romantic reverie. Especially for Italian-American families in North Buffalo that bear the custom of hearing musical fragments of the Italian language around the house, gather with extended relatives on Sunday for abundant quantities of “sauce”, and take part in the favorite pastime for the majority of Italian emigrants and their families: storytelling. One could only imagine what all this must be like with the backdrop of the Mediterranean Sea, ancient ruins supporting Renaissance and Baroque palaces, the Apennine Mountains and their offspring rolling hills peering out along narrow alleys filled with kids playing soccer, homemade wine and olive oil, and the time to hang dry your clothes.

I too fell victim to this fantasy and at 20 years old I picked up and moved to Italy, determined to find the truth of what it means to be Italian and live Italy (because you actually live Italy as opposed to live in Italy).

The most frustrating part of my adventure was not the language barrier, despite the innumerable dialects, because Italians always find a way to get their point across. Although there was a good linguistic lesson to be learned that brought clarity to why I never heard in the streets of Rome what my grandmother from Southern Italy bellowed at our family parties. I learned that from region to region on Italy’s peninsula, the dialects can differ as extremely as unrelated languages. The dialects spoken throughout Italy are rooted in varying speech and syntax that can predate the

Italian language by 1500 years. I also learned that no matter how far I get in becoming an Italian speaker, I don’t think I will ever refer to a pregnant woman as “being in an interesting state”, which is a common Italian idiom. Nor do I refer to my platonic friends by exaggeratingly endearing terms such as, “treasure” or “beautiful.” I learned to appreciate though the very poetic way to converse in Italy, along with the candid insults. The language of poetry has its tragic side too, compared to as much as you hear “amore” and “bella” in the streets you hear profanity, lamenting, and sometimes frank verbal abuse. Just the other day I received the common, “va fanculo” from a woman because I didn’t suck in my stomach enough to let her off the bus. However, the dual nature of charming and impudent public conversation was my first clue to the truth about living in Italy.

Without say is the lack of concern for time that initially impeded my ability to enjoy the dreaminess of fresh markets, open piazzas, strolling and sunshine. The buses have no time tables, and it is completely normal to arrive 3 hours late to a social invitation, and professors don’t even show up for exams. But as soon as I realized that Italian 5 minutes are not those classified by the normal standard defined by the science of chronology practiced in most of the rest of the world, I could learn to adapt, discover, and understand Italian paradoxes.

A friend and fellow American expatriot Jason Cardone who has lived in Italy for over 20 years remembers ad-

justing to the different rhythms of Italy to be a Herculean task. When he describes the process of getting his residence permit and driver’s license as having taken a long time, he doesn’t mean months, but literally years and years.

Cardone has noticed that modern attempts to create order and efficiency in Italy have not proved to be productive. As it comes to forming a line, every Italian from every walk of life still refuses to enter a single file line. They prefer the “cluster” method where they enter left and right of a person attending a service counter, breathing down your neck, pushing their bag against your back in hopes that you will either step aside or somehow let your guard down so he could sneak in. Waiting in line gets you nowhere in Italy. I remember once waiting for a gelato on a hot summer day with my very polite Swedish friend determined to do the right thing and wait our turn. We spent most of the time distracted trying to box people out that we couldn’t enjoy each other’s company. When we finally conceded in conversation and let our guard down for a few seconds, ten people ordered in front of us.

Cardone recalled a recent trip to the post office where they have innovatively installed the number system in an attempt to create civility. What happened instead was that the representative pressed the button for the next customer not when he was finished with the previous one, but when he damn well pleased. After each customer he leisurely made a cell phone call, chatted with a colleague passing by about a

soccer match, exited the booth for a “bathroom break” or decided he needed a cigarette as he looked at 10 people in front of him waiting to pay their bills and get on with their day. Cardone said there was something close to a riot among the customers in the post office recently for the employees not serving people. The paradox I find here is that Italians are generally accustomed to serving people and are renowned for their warmth and hospitality, especially when it concerns their oppressive commitment to family and close friends. However, service beyond anything in their immediate circle is unthinkable.

The practice of “connections” pervades life in Italy, especially as it concerns the labor market. I didn’t realize that even though I performed many day-to-day tasks based on connections in what I believed to be the Italian familial spirit at home in Buffalo, it would play out much differently in Italy. Despite the connections and the neighborly way of offering favors to those you know and love, I was brought up on the idea that success could be based on merit and never understood the consequences of this practice in the job market. I found the commitment to family damaging to the country as a whole, not to mention the ability to make something of my advanced education. The society has been described by financial analysts and sociologists as being heavily anti-meritocratic, with tight concerns on the family impeding on the ability to make decisions that may benefit a larger number of people, like an institution. This does not mean that a qualified professional does not find a job if he does not know anyone, it means that

candidates with virtually no credentials get hired for top positions because they are the nephew of Fabio’s sister’s neighbor. Hence the election of a former show girl, a dancer on one of the Prime Minister’s television networks, promoted to the Council of Ministries as none other than the Minister of Equal Opportunity.

Beyond the incongruities, inefficiencies and injustices of Italy, eventually it was the dualities of the Italian people that brought me back to Italy each year (along with the weather, cuisine, landscapes, cobble stoned streets, and art collections), to tenaciously live the art of getting by that defines Italian lifestyle.

The paradoxes of the Italian people are quite unique. The arts or driving and dining in Rome for example define contemporary life in the capital, but the Italian behavior toward each activity is so inconsistent it makes me wonder if when I have stepped out of the street into a dinner party whether or not I’ve time capsuled to a different place in history or in the European continent. There is no respect for rules on the road, especially when it comes to crosswalks as you are never safe to cross the street as nobody will ever stop for you. But when it comes to dining, breaking a culinary canon such as eating parmesan cheese with fish, or drinking a milk based beverage like cappuccino after noon time is enough to alienate you forever from any social network with Italians. An Italian driver may risk your life in refusing to stop for you on the painted lines only to get somewhere to take his time, but that same character will unconditionally welcome you to a holiday feast.

Despite the fact that Italy’s capital

city is one of the most dysfunctional in the developed world on the verge of collapse, with the taxi drivers voted the worst in all of Europe; it doesn’t scare people away from travelling here. Rome and how it runs never ceases to amaze people, and it ranks as one of the top tourist destinations in the world. Despite the country’s politics as being among the most confusing and corrupt, in modern history having invented fascism, organized crime and “Bunga Bunga”, Italians are some of the most beloved and affectionate people in the world with a sense of unprecedented welcome and geniality.

The balance between rural and urban appreciation is surprising and rare. The people living in the big cities have strong ties to their pastoral traditions and you can find homemade olive oil and cheeses wrapped in straw in almost every city apartment in Rome. Likewise, the smallest countryside town has a deep urban awareness, and does not refrain from the routine fashion show passeggiata around their town of 100 people.

The inefficiencies and incongruities and injustices of Italy are certainly no secret. But they way in which these setbacks accompany the delicate balance ever-present in Italy between rural and urban, ancient and modern, and sincerity behind the flattery and insolence that is inexplicable and addictive. The experience of living Italy is somewhat extreme, but it does have its unique harmony.

*Theresa Potenza
Rome, Italy*



The Manganello Family
Lena, Maria, Josephine, Salvatore, Joseph



Stella and Angelo Sciandra from Montedoro, Sicily to Pittston Pa
Children: Anna Lumia, Louis Proietto



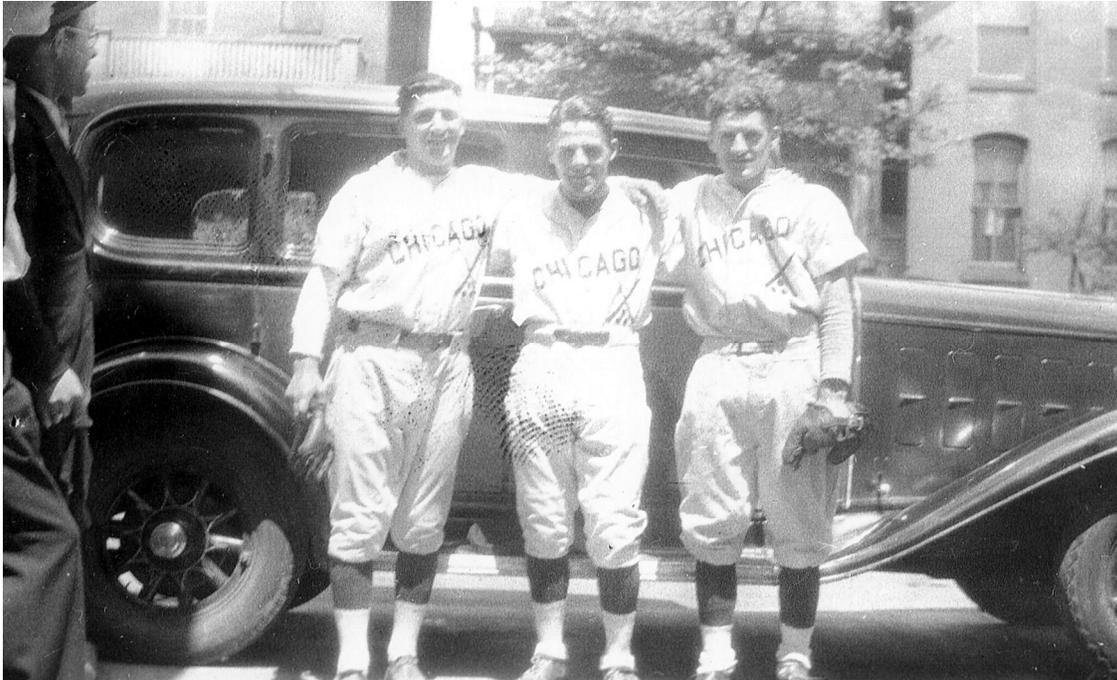
Frances, infant Charles, Michael Griffasi
Ravanusa, Sicily to Buffalo NY



Mariano Glieco grocery store, 475 Swan Street



A portion of Fanara-Caci family on Hudson Street



Chicago Street Ballplayers



Serving "Somewhere in New Guinea"

From "Somewhere in New Guinea" three Buffalo boys have sent back this photograph. Left to right are: Pvt. Dominic Ciavarella of 506 North Division St., Pvt. Michael Ranni of 366 Swan St. and Pfc. Thomas DiGaetano of 251 Myrtle Ave. Pvt. Ciavarella and DiGaetano holding captured Jap rifles while Pvt. Ranni has a U. S. carbine. The boys have been in New Guinea six months.

From the old East Side to New Guinea



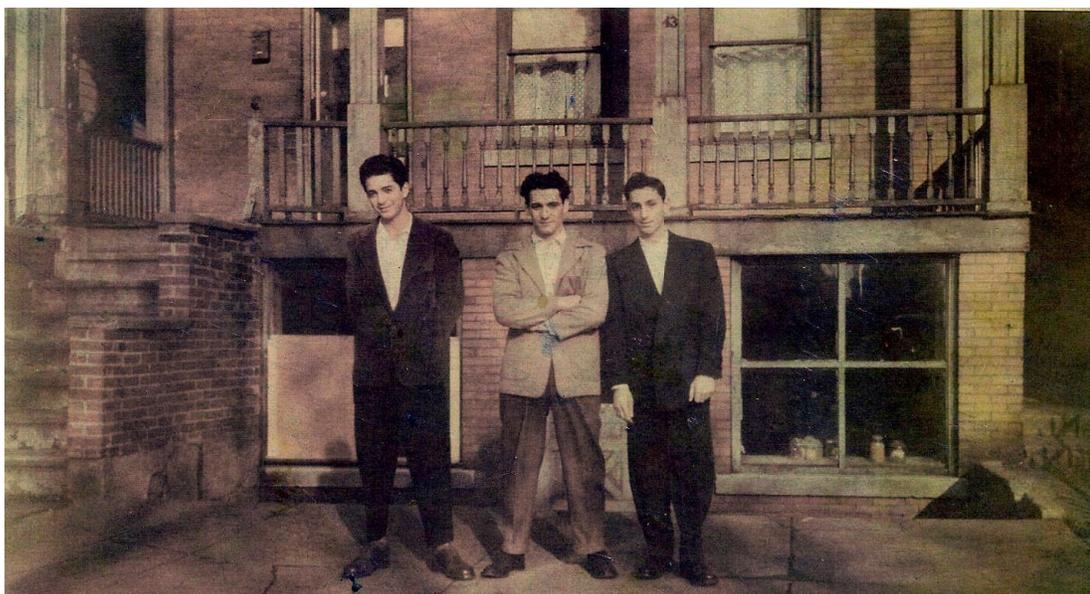
East Side Boy Scouts, late 30s



George Dispenza, Billy LaChiusa at Royal Cigar Co.
37 Busti Avenue



George Dispenza, 107 Wilkeson Street
November 1940 in background - Liberty Macaroni



George Dispenza, Frank "The Quaker" Fantuzzo, Freddy Fragella
Busti Avenue 1949



Sam Arena

ANCHOVIE and FRESH TOMATOES Over ANGEL HAIR PASTA

The time to make fresh tomato sauce is in late August, when tomatoes are best.

This old Italian recipe has been passed down through the years. It's quick and easy to make. Upon completion it's delicious. Canned whole plum tomatoes can be used if fresh tomatoes are not available.

Ingredients

- 1 can anchovies
- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ stick unsalted butter
- 2 or 3 ripe tomatoes
- ¼ cup capers
- 2 cloves fresh garlic
- 1 lb. angel hair pasta
- Crushed red pepper (optional)
- Black pepper

1. Dice tomatoes and sauté in pan with a little olive oil. When done, set aside.
2. Empty a can of anchovies with oil in pan. Add finely chopped garlic and capers. Sauté on low heat until anchovies dissolve.
3. Puree the tomatoes in a food processor and add to sauce. Season with black pepper and crushed red pepper if desired. If canned tomatoes are used set aside liquid from can and puree the whole tomatoes. Later, use liquid to thin out sauce.
4. Add pasta to a large sauce pan of boiling - salted water for about 8 minutes. (read directions on pasta box for boiling time.) Angel hair cooks rapidly, be sure to serve al dente, even a bit harder.
5. Do not drain pasta, remove from water with a pasta claw and drop into sauce. Stir the pasta to ensure it is coated with sauce. If using fresh tomatoes and sauce is too thick, add a little pasta water.

Add Romano or Parmigiano cheese to taste if desired

Try this recipe. You will love it. Keep it simple

Sam





SAL MAGGIORE

OBJECTION (*a short film by Sam Maggiore*)

INTERIOR - WESTWOOD COUNTRY CLUB -

NIGHT - DECEMBER 2011.

PEOPLE are dining

CAMERA PANS -

BAR - TOM MANCUSO - a Federal Law Judge and renowned columnist SAM MAGGIORE are in a heated discussion.

MAGGIORE: Objection!

MANCUSO: You're out of order!

MAGGIORE: No. You. You're out of order!! (DINERS approach) My wife does not write my Per Niente articles.

MANCUSO: We have a reliable informant.

MAGGIORE: Pete Tasca?? (laughing) I handle things. I'm smart, not like people say. Because I have trouble with commas and spelling doesn't mean I'm not a good writer!

MANCUSO: Dismissed! (Sam leaves amidst applause) Maggiore!

MAGGIORE: Yes?

MANCUSO: How did you know it was Tasca?

MAGGIORE: (laughing) I didn't! Happy New Year, Judge! (He cuts through the throng, sits with his lovely wife, Susan, an intellect, and retired English teacher)

To be continued

CURSES, CURES, CHARMS, ITALIAN STYLE

Many years ago when I was four or five and sick, I recall a lady chanting while rubbing my stomach, trying to ease the pain. I was a victim of malocchio" (evil eye). I thought of this after reading an article in Italian American magazine, which I now receive after a recommendation from my good friend, Bob Smaldino. The article, entitled "Evil Eye," was written by one Karen Haid. Who can forget another health remedy, the refreshing laxative that did the trick: One Two Three.

The Curses

Who can be blamed for wanting to bring a little "fortuna" their way or at least, keep "Sfortuna" (misfortune) at arm's length? Often the "sfortuna" is conveyed by a neighbor or a passerby, with the malocchio being one of the most popular forms. The malignant looks can be intentional or not, with consequences ranging from simple

headaches, vomiting, minor car trouble or feeling out of sorts to more serious issues regarding family, work or health. To determine whether a particular suffering was really triggered by malocchio, a straightforward experiment can be carried out. These tests have regional differences, but usually include an old woman from the village. An example would be to put three drops of oil in a bowl of water balanced on the victim's head while chanting and making the sign of the cross. If the oil floats, there hasn't been any "malocchio", but if it mixes with the water, sinister forces have been at work. The Cures

The Cures

To counteract hexes attributable to "malocchio", antidotal ceremonies can be performed. These neutralizing rituals are usually led by women with self-professed special powers, who chant and use spell-breaking gestures with talismans. A popular incantation from southern Italy begins with "occhio, malocchio, prezzemolo," (eye, evil eye, evil eye, parsley and fennel in this ancient rite. Superstitious behavior can be found across all strata of society. "Scaramanzia", the avoidance of bad luck, is practiced in many ways. A baser sort may spit, swear or make an anti-curse gesture such as rapidly sticking the point of his tongue out three times.

As the "malocchio" is often inspired by jealousy and envy, the rich and famous aren't immune to these practices and may also be seen muttering some sort of conciliatory formula when confronted with a demonic stare. A lady may touch her hair to ward off the "malocchio". For men, touching one's private part is a standard protective maneuver.

The Charms

Perhaps the most common "scongiuro" or charm to ward off evil is the hand gesture or horns, directing the index and pinky fingers toward the "malocchio" called "fare le corna". This scongiuro" or charms is often combined with others such as touching iron or carrying a "portafortuna buona" or good luck charm. One of the most popular charms is "Il corno", the horn, preferably red and made of coral. To function, the horn must be received as a gift.

I didn't want to give the impression of being superstitious, but I was forced to write this article with my toes crossed as I waited for someone to present me with a red horn.

I would like to thank you for your extraordinary work as the publisher of *Per Niente* magazine. Your highly informative articles have not only reflected the important contributions Buffalo's Italians have made to their city, but most importantly, *Per Niente* has made its readers aware of the significant impact Buffalo's Italian-Americans have made on the culture of our country. Congratulations, and I look forward to your next publication with great interest!

*Frank Collura
Music Director
Pennsylvania Chamber Symphony
Young Artists Debut Orchestra*

Thank you, Per Niente Club,

We are grateful for your generous gift upon our family.
God Bless and Happy Holidays

*The Wendel family
Wilson NY*

Editors note: please visit our work in progress web site @ www.perniente.org

To subscribe to Per Niente Magazine -
jdileo@roadrunner.com or 716-832-2653

Your winter issue of *Per Niente* is a knockout both in content and presentation. A great cover and its follow up of the pictures were beautiful. I love the thematic stories following through pages of nostalgia of the old and the new is just beautiful editing. The culture story of the possible Michelangelo reappearing in Buffalo, was an enthralling story, much as all those you have printed in the past. Personally, I don't think it is a Michelangelo...it lacks his great strength of underlying drawing and indeed a weak painted one. The photos of the color landscapes of Buffalo brings back many memories of the West Side. And always the simple great recipes of Arena's kitchen is presented without agito. I love to cook and will definitely try this eggplant recipe as presented.

You have produced another consistent blockbuster. Congratulations!

Saluti,

*Bernie D'Andrea
Hilton Head S.C.*

"It's Small World After All" came to mind when my friend Kate Soudant called recently. "I just read your story that appeared in the latest edition of the *Per Niente* magazine". She exclaimed excitedly. By chance on a recent bus tour she met Joe Di Leo, the publisher. Somehow during their conversation my name was mentioned, resulting in her acquiring that issue. What a coincidence that these two should meet and reinforce the belief that it is a small world after all!

*Sara Lepeirs
Granada Hills CA*

*Editors note: Sara often contributes articles to *Per Niente*. She is originally from Buffalo and recently celebrated her 95th birthday*

Years ago I received a copy of this letter. It was written in New York City in 1958 by Buffalo native-guitarist Nick Buonadonna and sent to Guy (Dan) Bucella, who, in Buonadonna's formative years was his devoted teacher-mentor — Joey Giambra

Hello Dan,

It's been a long time since I've seen you or had any contact with you. I'm here in New York working for Frank Sinatra and I have been doing well. I've been with Frank for the past six months.



Guy (Dan) Bucella

We are presently at the Copacabana and will leave Jan. 12 to go to Australia for two weeks then to Las Vegas. I'm fortunate being the only musician he took to NY with him. I suppose he thinks enough of my playing to do that.

I've been sitting here in my room at the Hotel President most of the time with only my thoughts and I begin to go back through the years. I meant to write you but being sort of an irresponsible guy I never got down to it.

When I left Buffalo for L.A. I was beginning to get into the swing of things but unfortunately we had a long time of bad luck with illnesses & such that I more or less gave up my guitar and took on a day job for five years. I finally had to make the break because I never was anywhere near happy being away from my guitar. So, for the past two years I've been studying frantically and finally I'm beginning to play well again. I quit my job and slowly got enough work to keep me at my guitar full time.

I don't know if I'll ever be a success enough to make it my life work but at the present I can say I'm mildly successful. I wanted to thank you, Dan, because any good work I ever received was solely due to my reading (including getting with Frank) Incidentally, I got the

call to replace the former guitarist who flubbed the parts and was called in to play the show. It was strictly sight-reading. I had no chance to look at the parts and played it perfectly. Since then I get the calls for Frank's work.

I remember now how you used to give me violin stocks every week to practice. And believe me I know that was the reason why I became a pretty good reader. Whatever reputation I have is because I can read well. Other jobs I received that were good, mostly was due to my reading. I've received jobs where name guitarists were turned down because I out-read them. Don't get me wrong they play the instrument better than I probably ever will but they lacked reading. I hope you don't think I'm patting myself on the back. I just want to show my appreciation for starting off right. I'm convinced you were solely the reason I got off on the right foot. I may never be what you would call a success but I really want to thank you for helping me get as far as I have even if ends here.

I hope everyone is well and happy. Please give my best to all and say hello to Guy for me. I may never even get to see you again but I want you to know I'm thinking about you, Dan. God bless you and keep you all safe and happy.

Your grateful ex-pupil,

*Nick (Bonney)
Buonadonna*



Nick Buonadonna



Maria Casucci, early 1940s
Siculiana, Sicily

65 years ago at the age of 7 ½, my mother and I ventured across the Atlantic from Italy to be reunited with my father who was working hard in the United States to make a better life for his family. Until this time, I had never seen him in person or spoken a word to him. Like many families during this time, life was very hard for us and contact between my mom and dad was far and few between.

Mom and I left our small town of Siculiana, Sicily and traveled on an Army boat for 14 days. We shared the tight quarters with other women and children who were also on their way to the United States to be reunited with their Husbands/ Fathers. I don't recall much of the boat trip on my own. My memories come from my mother's stories of how I was the one of the few who didn't get sea sick on the trip over, and how I was very helpful to everyone.

When we reached New York

City, we entered through the gates of Ellis Island where we were examined and immunized so we would not bring any diseases into the United States. We stayed at Ellis Island for a few days until we were cleared to enter and be reunited with our families. During our stay on Ellis Island, I would ask my mom what I should say and how should I act when I met my Dad. She would just say "look at the picture you have of him and you will know". When I met my dad for the first time, he didn't resemble the young man in the picture, but I knew it was him as my mom ran up to embrace him. I felt safe and comforted knowing that this was my dad.

Within days, the three of us were on a train to Buffalo, NY and landed in Dante Place, *aka The Hooks*. As I got out of a taxi on Maiden Lane, I saw many children

around my own age playing and I knew that I would be very happy living there. I didn't speak a word of English though, and I wasn't sure if any of the kids spoke Italian. As the days went by, I realized that Dante Place was like living in *Siculiana* because everyone was Italian and all of the adults spoke the language, except for the children who spoke only English.

I got lucky and found a child around my age who also spoke Italian and we became fast friends. He not only was my friend, but he became my interpreter as well until I was able to speak a few words in English. His name was Joe Di Leo.

When it was time to register for school, my dad enrolled me at St. Anthony's and the first few weeks he walked me to school. My dad wasn't able to pick me up because he was working so he allowed me to walk home with my



Maria attending school in Siculiana, Sicily



Maria, Mom and Dad on Maiden Lane

friend and interpreter, Joe, and a few other kids. Joe watched over me like a mother hen. He was very protective of me and felt the need to help me because I reminded him of his own mother and her journey to the US when she was about 7 years old. He understood how hard

it was for his mother then not knowing a word of English, so he decided to be my guide and helper in this new county.

We lived in Dante Place for about 3 years but had to move because our family was growing. My brother Joe was born in 1948 and my twin brothers John and Tony in 1949. It was time to move on. It was a sad day when I left Dante Place as I had made some wonderful friends. By the time we left, I was speaking English very well and my teachers were extremely pleased at how quickly I learned the English language.

We moved one more time before mom and dad were able to set down roots and buy a home of our own on the West Side. I enrolled at School 38 and was fortunate again to live in an area where there were a lot of kids my age. We soon became friends and have continued the friendship our entire lives.



Maria on Maiden Lane

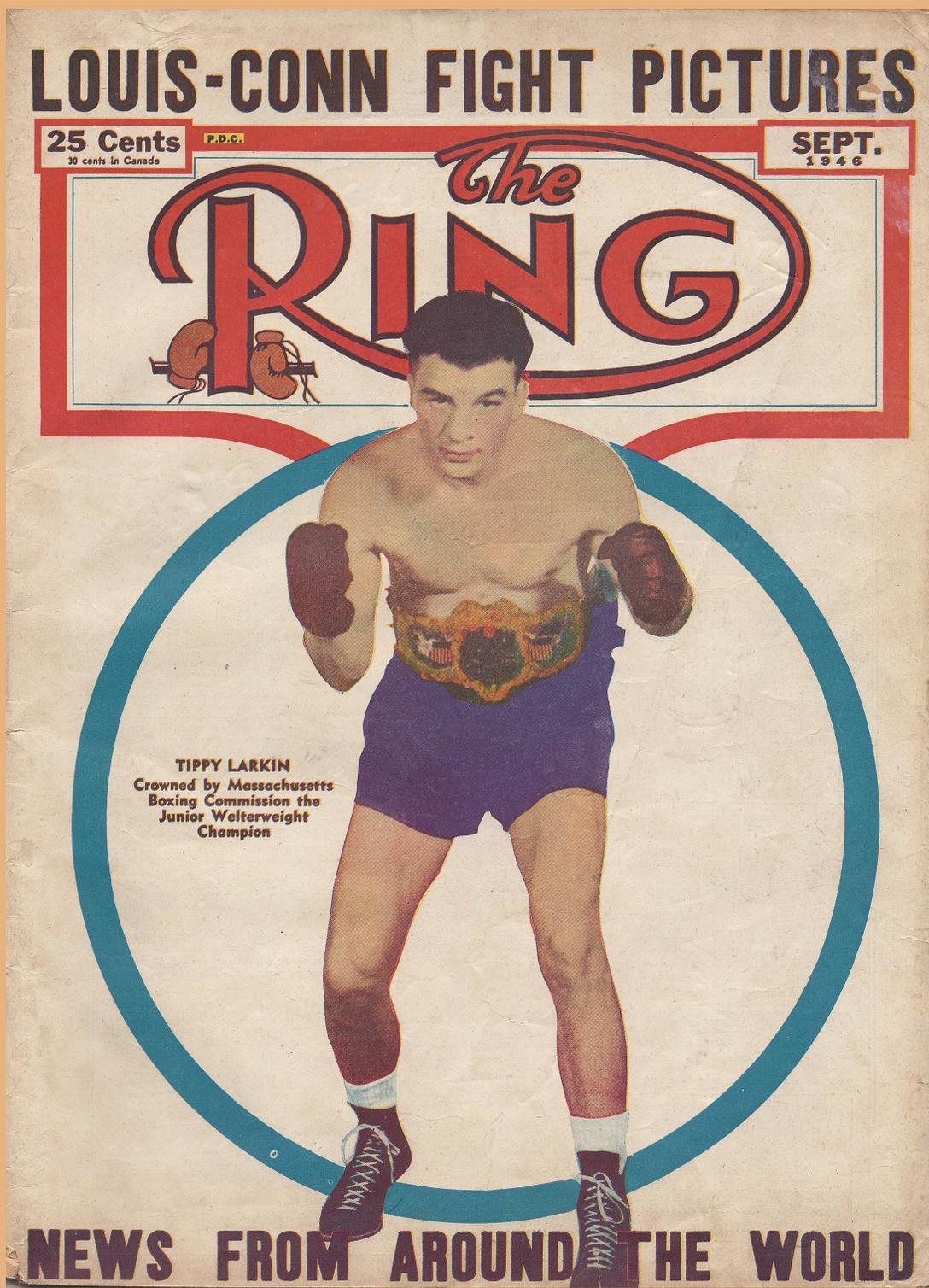
Many years passed and one day, my husband brought a gentleman to visit our home. He said he and this person went back to when they were children. Our visitor walked through the door and instantly I knew that this was my friend, Joe Di Leo. We started speaking Italian to each other and started laughing as we shared our childhood memories of Dante Place.

Even though we don't speak on a regular basis, my husband and I still keep in touch with Joe and all the others from our old neighborhood. From life changing events, to just catching up on what's new in each other's lives, we will always remain friends.

Maria Casucci .



Maria sitting behind her friend Joe Di Leo at St Anthony's School



Antonio Pilleteri aka Tippy Larkin was born on November 11, 1917 in Garfield, New Jersey. Larkin, a talented warrior moved well, boxed well and carried a good punch. During his career he lost only 15 of 153 bouts and scored 59 knockouts. He subsequently won the Junior Welterweight Championship of the World. Tippy Larkin died on January 1, 1992 in his home town and was inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame the same year.



Yankee Stadium, September 27, 1950. Announcer Johnny Addie holds up hand of Ezzard Charles after he successfully defended his world heavy-weight title against challenger Joe Louis.



Rocky Graziano and Johnny Addie before Charlie Fusari and Vince Foster fight
May 1953

Johnny Addie (Ring announcer, boxing. Born, New York, Aug. 12, 1902; died, New York, December 12, 1971.) Starting at the Fort Hamilton Arena in 1942, Addie became one of the better-known of the small club announcers, reinforcing the tradition of working in a tuxedo (now an industry norm) and, having learned sufficient Spanish, introducing Latin fighters in their native language. Born as one of eight Addonizio children on the Lower East Side, Addie achieved the height of his profession when he first worked at Madison Square Garden in 1948. He remained the regular voice of the Garden ring (and its Gillette-sponsored Friday Night Fights) until his finale on Oct. 28, 1971 (George Foreman vs. Luis Pires). He worked over 100 world championships, including several at Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds.

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Vincent Greco – on furlough, World War II, in front of home, 115 Busti Avenue



1943 Municipal Champions 125 Lb. Division.
 Front Row- Left to right - Michael Borusso-Charles Mancuso-Capt. Sebastian Galbo-Carmen Mancuso-Joseph Dominique.
 Back Row - Left to right - Carmello Pelano-James Bonadonna-Samuel Piccillo Coach Alfred Guarnieri-Benjamin Constantino-Thomas Giammaresi.

THE BUFFALO TIMES, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1939

Courtesy Club Members Ready for 31-Act Amateur Show Tonight



A three-hour 31-act amateur show will be presented by the Courtesy Club of Butler Mitchell Club at 8 p. m. tonight in the West Side Boys Club, 254 Virginia St. Performers, including dancers, singers, acrobats, and musicians are all under 15 years of age. Pretty Mildred Nigro, left, will do an intricate tap dance. Music, and plenty of it, will be supplied by the Butler

Mitchell Junior Orchestra. Members are: upper left, Vito Parisi; seated, front row, Benn Constantino and Carmelo Palano. Upper right, Joe Latola. Center, Vincent Marchese. Back row, center, left to right, Jim Tricoli, Tony Barone and Tom Guagliardo. Extreme right, Russell Russo, singer, who will appear in several numbers.

—Photos by Times Staff Cameramen

See this show - LIVE - Saturday, May 19th 2012

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"That Old Black Magic"
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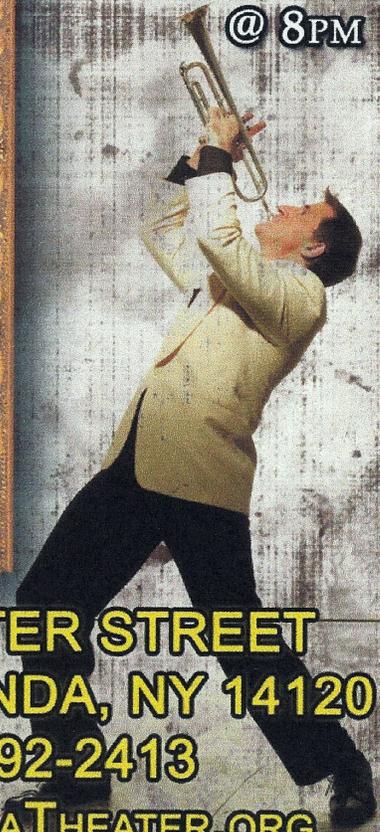


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Release date - tba



Clips - from above movie

Left: U.S. government internment of Italians in WWII. Right: The banker and the potential small business owner