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Enjoying a sunny day at Crystal Beach, circa 1920s is Santa Licata who immigrated from Montedoro, Sicily in 1906

The struggle of the millions of Europeans who emigrated to America was clearly for a better life. And for many, it was also for survival. Many ethnic groups sought to escape the horrors of World War II in parts of Europe that suffered from the tyranny of Hitler's Nazi Germany and the rise of communism.

This is a story of one such family. It's a true story. My wife's parents, Ferruccio & Silvana Ferneti, make up the main part of the story.

At the age of 74, in 1998, Ferruccio Ferneti told some of his story to a reporter in Bradenton, Florida. He used the term "*shandatosi*." What happened to him as a teenager may sound like something out of a World War II thriller. He was emphatic about the word *shandatosi*. "I was abandoned," he said. "A displaced person.....I didn't have a nation" He couldn't shake the memories of his past in Italy. He saw them on the nightly newscasts in the 90s of the mass exodus of Kosovo citizens from the Yugoslav army regulars and brutal Serbian para-militaries. "It was the same thing all over again," he said. People were running away from the horror of murderous squads killing and burning homes.

Ferruccio grew up in Verteneglio, a town about 50 miles from Trieste, Italy. In August 1943, at age 18 he was activated in the Italian army. He wore an Italian uniform for only 20 days. Benito Mussolini's armies were suffering from defeats in Africa, Greece and Italy at the hands of advancing Allied forces. Mussolini's Fascist Grand Council ousted him from power and the Italian



Ferruccio & Silvana at Trieste, 1951

people took care of his final fate. The army was in disarray and was told to go home.

Ferruccio was not home reunited with his family for very long when German troops moved in and roused people from their homes and towns. Many women and children were put on trucks and sent to labor camps. Some men were conscripted to the German army and others were sent to Yugoslavia to lay mines under the watchful eyes of German guards. That's what happened to Ferruccio for three months until Yugoslavian partisans

loyal to Croatian strongman Josip Broz Tito attacked their camp and forced the Italians to go with them. Their liberation had a steep price tagged to it. They were armed by the guerrillas and forced to fight the Germans. As the tide of the war was turning against the Germans, the guerillas found that their skirmishes were now with different factions fighting for control of Yugoslavia.

When he finally made it back home to Verteneglio he found the Allies had given that portion of Italy to communist Yugoslavia. At that point he left his home and family and rode a bike to Trieste rather than be forced to sign up as a communist. After the war, Ferruccio became a policeman in Trieste.

Silvana Percich Ferneti was born and raised in Paz, a small village in northeast Italy along the Croatian border. Like Ferruccio, she spoke very little of her experience during the war until very late in her life.

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When she was in her late teens the villagers received news that the Germans were coming to the towns and taking young people to work in labor camps. The day came when Paz was on the list. People were herded to the center of the village for selection. Silvana's father, Giulio, asked a young German soldier if his daughter could get a sweater before she was taken away. The soldier agreed and Giulio instructed Silvana to hide in a place where he knew the Germans had already searched. Her disappearance went unnoticed. All the young people and the village priest were taken and most never returned.

Silvana knew she could not stay in Paz. She left her home unable to tell her parents and crossed the mountains into Italy and Trieste where she would live with an aunt. There she washed and ironed clothes for others and worked as a seamstress. She could never return home after the war because the communists had taken over the border. Paz, like Verteneglio, became part of Croatia after the war.

One night, Silvana and a friend went to a policeman's dance. Ferruccio was also there. He asked her to dance which began their romance. They were married on November 22, 1947. Work and living conditions in Trieste were not good at that time. They decided to move to America when President Truman opened up immigration. In December 1951 with help from the Catholic Church, an American sponsor family and a job guarantee, they and their three year-old daughter, Adriana (my wife) boarded a freighter that entered New York Harbor on New Year's Day 1952. They were required to wait on the ship until Ellis Island reopened on January 2.

From there they boarded a train for Buffalo, met by their sponsor family and Ferruccio soon started his guaranteed job at the newly opened Ford Stamping Plant.

Silvana worked many jobs: house cleaning, seamstress. In 1954 their second daughter, Nellie, was born. She worked at Gioia Macaroni, did seamstress work at Berger's Department Store and at home for extra money.

Four years later Silvana and her husband sponsored her sister, brother-in-law and nephew, Amalia and Luigi Cigar and their seven year old son, Norman. They settled in Buffalo and Luigi went to work at the Ford Stamping Plant.

After only ten years of coming to America with nothing but the promise of a job, Ferruccio and Silvana saved enough to buy a new home in West Seneca.

In 1982, Ferruccio retired from Ford after thirty-years. In June 1984 he and Silvana moved to Bradenton, Florida. In 2002 they returned to the Buffalo area when the onset of Ferruccio's dementia made it difficult to live in Florida without family assistance. Ferruccio died in October 2004 two months short of his 80th birthday. Silvana passed away two years later in November 2006 at age 80.

Ferruccio Ferneti and Silvana Percich Ferneti and Luigi and Amalia Percich Cigar were the old fashion type of immigrants. They became citizens of the United States and were proud and loyal to their new country. They asked only for an opportunity to work, to save for everything they acquired and to make a better life for themselves and their children.

We have some regrets for not asking more questions over the years. They were happy to leave their past behind, but it is important for our generation and future generations to know and remember what they went through and the sacrifices they made.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS



First Voyage

In celebration of the discovery of the Americas for the Europeans, here are some short synopses of Columbus' trips.

The discovery was for the Europeans simply because there were people here for a very long time prior to their

arrival to these continents. Christopher Columbus made four trips to the Americas. The first took place in 1492. He left Spain with three ships in August of that year. He sailed to the Canary Islands; did necessary repairs, loaded his ships with fresh water, fruits and vegetables and sailed off into the unknown on September 6th. He arrived sometime around the 12th of October, landing at what they named Hispaniola, which is modern day Dominican Republic and Haiti. Here they built a fort—Fuerte de la Navidad. When he returned to Spain, crew members remained at the fort awaiting his return.

Second Voyage

Columbus set out on his second trip from Cadiz, Spain on September 25, 1493 with seventeen ships, 1,200 men and boys including sailors, soldiers, colonists, priests, government officials, gentlemen of the court and horses. The purpose of the trip was to establish colonies in the name of Spain, and to reunite with the crew members who had stayed at the fort.

Columbus also sought great riches in what he believed to be part of the Far East. On November 3rd the crew sighted another island which today is Dominica. Later, the discoverer of Florida, Juan Ponce de Leon, one of the passengers on this trip, became governor of the island. On November 27th they reached Hispaniola. None of the crew members that remained survived. He ordered his men to destroy the fort and conquer the na-

tives. He established the first colony in the new world, Santo Domingo and became the governor.

Third Voyage

Christopher returned to Cadiz on July 31st, 1496 and set sail again two years later on May 30th, 1498 for the New World. Six ships left Cadiz, making the usual stop at the Canary Islands, on this embarkation three ships sailed for Hispaniola and three, under the lead of Columbus, took a southerly route and thereby discovered the islands we know as Trinidad, Tobago, Grenada, and Margarita. He thought he spotted another island but in fact saw the shore of South America. He returned to Hispaniola, arriving on the 31st of August, and found the colonists in rebellion and in dire need of food stuffs. Information of the conditions reached Spain and upon receiving the news the monarchs sent representatives to investigate. The representatives arrested Columbus and sent him back to Spain in chains. In October of 1500 Columbus, appeared before the royal couple, Ferdinand and Isabella, and vindicated himself.

Fourth Voyage

On May 9th, 1502 Columbus set sail with four ships and 150 crewmen, one being his thirteen year-old son, Diego. They arrived in Hispaniola on June 29th and the colonist forbade him disembark for fear he might stir up trouble in the colony. Five days later he departed to look for a way to the East, what he discovered instead, was present day Central America. On January 6th, 1503 he anchored off the coast of Panama and sent a party ashore; they discovered gold in the area and built a trading post. The natives were not friendly and forced them to leave. Three ships left. The fourth was in such a dire condition that they had to abandon it.

The two other ships were in such a poor condition, that

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by June 25, 1503 the ships were no longer sailable and they hobbled to the shore of the island of Jamaica.

After landing, he procured canoes from the local Indians and sent sailors to Hispaniola, 160 miles away, for help. They safely made the trip, but out of spite, the royal governor delayed sending any assistance for a year. After his rescue, Columbus, disappointed at his failure to find a new route to the East, returned to Spain on November 7th, 1504. He settled with his family in Seville and awaited a royal summons from the king and queen. It never came.

THE FAMILY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

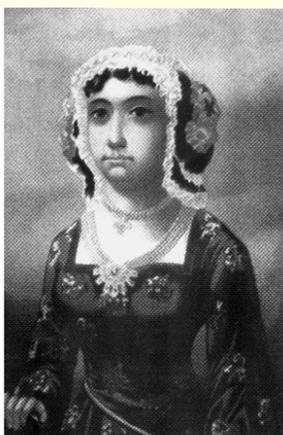
Christopher Columbus had two sons, Diego and Fernando; Diego (1480-1526) was born in Portugal. His mother, Felipa Perestrelas Moriz, died when he was four years old. Fernando (1488-1539) was born in Spain. His mother was Doña Beatriz Enriquez de Arana, a lady of a



Felipa Perestrelas Moriz,

noble family of Spain, whom Columbus loved very much but never married. They remained together into their later years.

Diego was a favorite of his father, and accompanied Christopher on his last voyage to the Americas in 1502



Beatriz Enriquez de Arana

Doña Beatriz de Arana,



The Nina

along with Fernando, who was fourteen at the time. In 1498 Queen Isabella appointed Diego as one of her pages.

Columbus, in his will (1505) left Diego an ample income, and by which royal grants augmented. Historians conjecture that other family members were included, since Christopher was to receive ten percent of the gold discovered from the diggings in Hispaniola. Columbus continued to add codicils to his will up until his death on May 20, 1506 at the age of 54.

Later, when Diego obtained confirmation of the privileges originally conceded to his father; that of Viceroy of the newly discovered lands, he sailed to Santo Domingo in 1509 as Admiral of the Indies and Governor of Hispaniola. Diego arrived to open opposition to his appointment. He replaced Juan Ponce de Leon, much to Juan's displeasure. Afterward, while looking for the island of Bimini, Juan discovered Florida. Despite the opposition, Diego remained performing his position well. He returned to Spain in 1520 and the king and queen favorably received him. After a short stay he returned to Santo Domingo, only to have to return to

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Spain two years later to answer trumped-up charges against him. He spent the rest of his life in legal suits, against the royal treasury and suits against him by other heirs.

Fernando went to Hispaniola with his brother and after a few months returned to Spain where he lived the rest of this life. He had a good income from his estate and became a writer. He wrote about his father's adventures and was a bibliographer and cosmographer, developing a library of 1,500 books. His writings are a significant source on the history of his father's travels.

Christopher had two brothers, Bartolomeo, his senior and Diego his junior. Both accompanied him on his journeys and both died in Santo Domingo. Bar-



tolomeo was very active in working with Christopher. He tried unsuccessfully to get the British Crown and France to take an interest in Christopher's quest for the East before the Spanish royalty assented. Diego was not as active, but accom-

panied Christopher on his second voyage and all three returned to Spain in chains. After exoneration of the charges brought against them, Diego became a priest and returned to Santo Domingo where he died in 1509.

These men were exceedingly brave. None of the trips Columbus made



Diego

were without strife. Some were exceedingly horrible. They contended with unpredictable weather conditions, worm-eaten boats, rotten food, illnesses, native discontent, mutinies, internecine violence and jealousies. The above demonstrate significant mettle of all of those involved. Yet, with problems on the sea, at home, and in and about the new land they continued their quest to find the East (Asia)



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Dear Members:

This is our thirteenth year of publishing *Per Niente Magazine*. What began as a random two-page newsletter in 2005 is now a full-fledged quarterly magazine.

The current issue with forty pages of articles and pictures will be mailed to approximately 600 members. Please know that *Per Niente Magazine* is an avenue for sharing memories, pictures and stories. It is what we do and what our readers enjoy. We are the last generation connected to the immigrants that braved the crossing of an ocean in less than sanitary conditions, with little food but hungrier to live as Americans.

Many of us born during the Great Depression grew up with grandparents or parents who mainly spoke Italian. We walked to and from school with friends. Our summers were spent on farms picking fruits and vegetables and/or playing sports on the street or in playgrounds and we remember the years of World War II. It was a time that cannot be replaced. A time when hucksters traversed the neighborhood singing the praises of fresh fish or vividly colored produce so wonderfully displayed on their wagons, carts or trucks.

We, all of us, have wonderful storied memories locked in our minds and precious photos stored somewhere. We're asking you to include those memories and photos in *Per Niente Magazine*. Who better than we can describe America's Great Generation, and sadly, our area as well? Though our ethnicity is diversifying, we must not let it dissipate.

To send a photo/article or short story, email jdileo@roadrunner.com or call me at 716-832-2653 or Joey Giambra at 716-829-9086. We will review the material and where necessary, adjustments will occur. (Photos sent to *Per Niente Magazine* will be returned)

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The Neighborhood

Before World War II, we lived in the ground-floor apartment of a three-story brownstone: 25 Vernon Avenue in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. It was in the middle of the block, halfway between Nostrand and Marcy Avenues.

My father had been born on that street. He often pointed to the flat across the street from where we lived and said, "I was born right there." I was born in Bushwick Hospital, a few blocks away.

When my father was growing up on Vernon Avenue, it was (he told me) mostly populated by Ashkenazi Jews who had made their way out of Manhattan's Lower East Side tenements. Neither he nor my mother would have used the word Ashkenazi because, I think, they had no awareness at all of Sephardic Jews, the ones who spoke Spanish. Both of my grandmothers spoke several European languages—German, Yiddish, Russian, Polish. But not Spanish.

By the time I was born (1936), the block was Jews and Italians. One block away, Myrtle Avenue, the parallel street with an El, was, with one exception, all black. The exception was the bookie parlor, run by Italians, where my father spent far too much time.

Beyond that was another street that was all Italian. Another nearby street was all Puerto Rican. My main

interest in Myrtle Avenue was the El: an elevated train that could for a nickel take you on an all-day ride through the city.

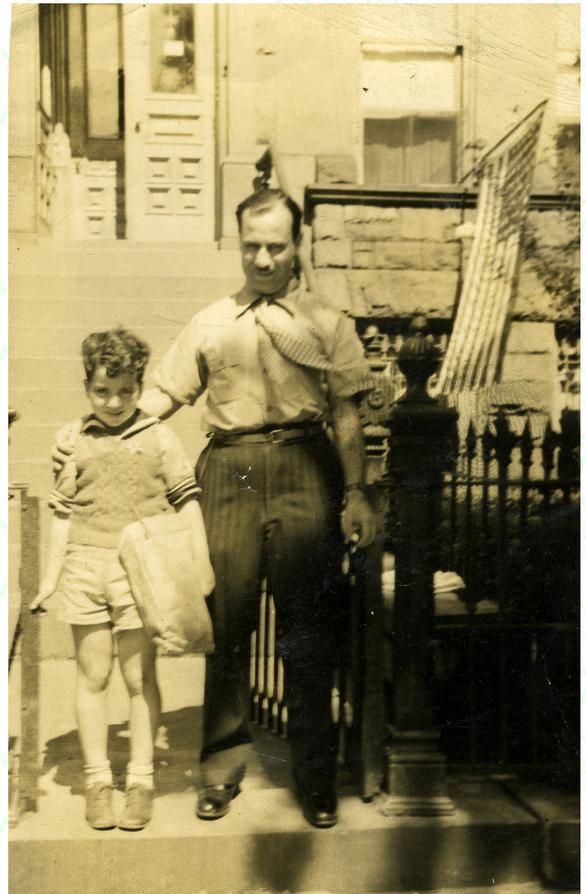
New York was like that in those years, and some parts of it still are: you go one block and you're in another language, smelling different food odors coming from the kitchen windows. Most of the els are gone, but you still can ride the subways forever, if you know how to avoid the exit that tosses you out into the street.

Dominick

There were three horse carts that came to the street regularly. One was a guy with vegetables and fruits. I didn't pay him any attention. Another was the iceman. We had a refrigerator, but my aunt Estelle had an icebox. I remember him with his ice tongs, bringing a cubic foot of ice wrapped in burlap to her apartment. He'd push it in the top compartment of her icebox, then leave, the tongs in his hand, the burlap over his shoulder. He didn't interest me either.

The third horse cart operated by a guy named Dominick. He sold Italian ices. My favorite was lemon, which was the color of old paper. He would scoop it into

a small paper cup. By the time you got to the bottom, it was melted, so it was a drink sweeter and tarter than any drink you'd have anywhere else. Dominick always gave me a sugar cube, which I would immediately feed to his horse. I used to know the horse's name, but that's gone now. It amazed me: that huge animal with those enormous teeth taking the sugar cube from my fingers with a moist, gentle touch. I'd see Dominick's horse and cart up the block and I'd sit on our stoop, nickel in hand, and wait for the cup with the lemon ice and the sugar cube.



Bruce with his Dad, Irv, circa 1940

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Gino's TV, Gino's fish

The first TV set in our building was owned by Gino, a fisherman on the fourth floor. I remember all of us—Gino's family and ours—sitting on the floor and on the bed watching *Roller Derby*, *Kulkla*, *Fran and Ollie*, *Milton Berle's show*, *Howdy Doody* and, of course, wrestling. A lot of wrestling. I don't know if that was because Gino liked wrestling or because there was a lot of wrestling on TV in those years, and we'd watch pretty much anything that was on.

When we all talked, we spoke English; Gino and his wife often spoke to one another in Italian. The first time my wife, Diane Christian, and I went to Italy I was surprised to find I understood a lot of things. For years I thought it was because I knew French, but now, writing this, I realize it was probably more because of those nights watching television in Gino's apartment.

My mother would often babysit for them in exchange for fish. We were as poor as everybody else in that building, so she babysat a lot and we ate a lot of fish. My mother was a lousy cook. Her basic technique was to cook whatever it was for a very long time. I still have a difficult time ordering fish in a restaurant, even though I know properly-cooked fish is nothing like what I had as a kid. I was 27 before I learned that

cooked vegetables did not have to be soft as mush.

The garbageman's son

One of my closest friends was Benny Scarantino, whose father was a New York garbageman. They didn't call them "sanitation workers" then. That term still brings to my mind someone with an alcohol-soaked rag wiping a surface to kill the bacteria, not someone dumping garbage into a huge noisy truck.

It was, for Benny and me, the coolest of occupations because Benny's father brought home all kinds of fascinating, useful things people had tossed out. Nowadays, there are people who cruise the streets on trash days looking for useful things. When Diane and I are getting rid of an old TV or piece of furniture, we always put it out the day before and it is gone before the city trucks come. But back then, hardly anyone had a car (passenger vehicle manufacture had been suspended during World War II) so the only people who cruised the streets on garbage and trash days were the garbagemen.

Benny's apartment—it was on Sanford Street, which was one block the other side of Nostrand and across Myrtle—was filled with an astonishing variety of mismatched things. The kitchen chairs were all different from one another, as were many of the dishes and picture frames. There were a lot of books: all

sizes, all subjects. The kids in Benny's family had a lot of toys, some of which worked and some of which didn't. One time Benny's father brought home a Colt .45 automatic, loaded and fully functional. In a neighborhood where zip-guns were the norm, that was High Society.

Benny and I used to take the trolley to Prospect Park (designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed Buffalo's parks and parkways) where we'd capture frogs, which we would assiduously dissect in an unused room in the basement of my apartment house. We were, at that point, preparing to be scientists. I don't know what happened to Benny Scarantino. Maybe he became a scientist; I didn't.

Benny's father also had a monkey wrench with a three-inch jaw. That was enormously important in our neighborhood in the summer because the two lugs that got the cap off a New York fire hydrant and turned the water on were about two inches. Ordinary household pliers wouldn't do it.

After the hydrant was turned on, one of the stronger guys would hold a small plank under the pressurized water coming out. The higher he pulled the plank, the higher the water would arc over the street, where we'd run around in bathing suits. There were few cars on New York City streets then, so there was plenty of room to do that. When we'd see a car

coming, we'd move to the sidewalk. It was summer in the city before air conditioning, so the car windows were always open. As the car passed by, the guy with the plank would hit the water stream, flooding the interior of the car. The drivers would yell and curse and we'd go back to running around in our man-made rain.

Every year, Benny's block had a huge San Gennaro feast. I was insanely jealous. Jews had no festivals like that. All my family had was Yom Kippur, which is as far from a fun festival as you can get.

School Daze

When we moved back to Vernon Avenue after the War, I went to P.S. 54. Most of the Italian kids went to parochial school. You could tell the boys who went to parochial school

because they often had red knuckles from the nuns' rulers. They got whacked with the rulers when they misbehaved or didn't do their homework.

I mentioned that to someone not long after Diane Christian and I got together a long time back. Diane said that was just a folktale; nuns didn't really do that. She had been educated by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Rochester and had become a member of that order herself. So she was one of those ladies in black outfits teaching school. She insisted she'd never hit anyone with a ruler nor seen anyone hit with a ruler. I believe her on both counts. She is a very gentle person. The Sisters of St. Joseph were a kind and gentle bunch.

But the nuns who taught the guys in my neighborhood were of a different order. Over the years, when we'd meet someone who'd grown up in New York about the same time as I, I'd ask, "Did you get your knuckles rapped?" So many said, "Yes," or, "I can still feel it," that Diane finally gave me that one.

New York schools then had a fast track for bright students. It was called "SP," which I assume meant special program. We were grouped together in classes that did more work than others at the same level. Over a three- or four-year period, we skipped two terms. I had skipped fourth grade, so that meant by the time I was a high school senior I was two years younger than everybody else. What had seemed cool when I

was in junior high school turned into a nightmare: the other guys were getting driver's licenses and I was still pedaling around on my Schwinn, and the girls were far too old for me. Schools handle that sort of thing much better now.

I skipped the term in which you learn about "who" and "whom," which I still sometimes get wrong. I'll write something and Diane will correct me on it. She con-



Bruce as a student in front P.S. 54, Brooklyn NY

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verted a “who” to “whom” in the next paragraph.

I started that program when I went into Junior High School 148. The one teacher I remember from that school, one of the two most important teachers I ever had, was Mrs. Ehrlich, whom I hated at the time. She was my English teacher. She made us keep ethics notebooks. Every day we had to write down three ethical issues we'd encountered or ethical choices we'd made during the day.

This was a class of bright, mostly Jewish and Italian street kids, and we had to write about ethics. There was a Woolworth store on the walk from my house to JHS 148 and every so often two or three of us would go in there and shoplift pencils. I certainly didn't need the pencils—my father sold them in his store. The shoplifting was just for the sport of it. Usually three of us would work as a team—two to steal the pencils, the third to be lookout, a role we called “laying chickee.”

I always thought that was an absurd name for a lookout and wondered if I remembered it wrong. Google just told me I remember correctly: “playing chickee” or “laying chickee” was to be a lookout. The phrase comes from “Chickee!” a 1930s New York street shout that translated, “Watch out! The cops are coming.”

I don't think I ever put the shoplifting of pencils in my ethics notebook. But it was from mean Mrs. Ehrlich that

the notion of ethics was jammed into my head. It never left. My parents were atheist Jews, so I had no religious education. I'm forever grateful to Mrs. Ehrlich.

The only other class in junior high I hated as much was typing, which my mother forced me to take. I was the only boy in the class. It was humiliating. The guys on the street made fun of me. Typing turned out to be as important in my life as Mrs. Ehrlich's ethics notebooks. I became a very good touch typist. I've written a lot of books, in part because I had that skill. I still have the Royal portable I got for my 13th birthday. I had it with me the whole time I was in the Marines. I took a lot of ribbing for it then, too. But being a fast typist kept me out of the brig once. That's another story.

Cosimo's pink pistol pockets

The hot book in 1947 was Irving Schulman's *The Amboy Dukes*, which was about Jewish street gangs in the Brownville section of Brooklyn. All the boys I knew had read it. There were no kid gangs in my neighborhood, but there were gang-wannabes, one of whom was named Cosimo.

He was enough older than I that we never talked or hung out. He used to lean on the brick wall on the Vernon Avenue side of my father's store with one foot on the wall behind him. He always had a cigarette in his hand.

After *The Amboy Dukes* made street gang culture fashionable, Cosimo started wearing one of the most

popular gang garments: pants with pegged cuffs and pistol pockets. That is, the cuff was several inches narrower than the calf, and the back pockets had flaps in the shape of a pistol, always in material of a different color. Cosimo's pants were light blue and his pistol pockets were pink. (Yeah: it was even silly at the time, but Cosimo loved those pants.)

He used to come into my father's store to use the toilet, then he'd go back to his position on the wall. One time, I guess he zipped up and left the toilet too fast because his faucet was still running. As he went out of the store, I saw a huge dark wet stain on the inside of one of his pants legs.

I immediately went onto the block and told everybody. For maybe thirty minutes kids—boys and girls—would stroll past Cosimo where he stood, one leg behind him on the wall, smoking, being cool. I don't know if he ever noticed what was going on. Maybe he thought the grins were in admiration of his light blue pants with the pink pistol pockets.

I said there was no kid gang in my neighborhood. I don't know about the adults. There was one man who lived across the street who my father referred to as “Joey, who is in the Black Hand.” It was pronounced almost like one word: *Joeywhoisinthe-BlackHand*.

I asked my father what the Black Hand was. “It's an Italian thing,” he said. He never said more about it. I

don't know if that was because he didn't know anything more or if it was because that was another one of the things you didn't talk to children about.

Opera

Next to my father's store was a glazier shop run by two Jewish brothers. One day they had a fight. Dozens of us circled around them watching them punch each other bloody. Nobody tried to break it up. In our neighborhood, you didn't break up fights; you watched them. (One time I got into a fight with the son of one of the neighborhood loan sharks. I was losing badly and I wished someone would break it up. Nobody did. But a lot of people watched, my father among them.) Finally, the two brothers got tired, and went back inside their store and worked together on a large piece of glass.

Another day, a guy came into my father's store and said he was really thirsty, could he have some water? My father gave him some, he said thanks, he went outside, took a few steps, and collapsed and died in front of the glazier shop. He was the first dead person I'd ever seen. I was probably 11. I took pictures with my father's camera and got on the subway to Manhattan. The Daily News was always advertising for spot pictures. They developed my roll, which was overexposed and out of focus, but gave me \$5. The photo editor

said, "Keep at it, kid." It was my first photograph sale.

The most important part of the block was the barbershop next to the glazier. I hated haircuts—my neck always itched afterwards. But I liked the music. The barber's name was Vito and, whenever I went in for a haircut, he always had opera on. Back then, the Met broadcast Saturday afternoons, which was the day my mother sent me there for haircuts.

The Met broadcasts were sponsored for decades by Texaco. I later learned that they did that because they had some illegal Nazi affiliation during World War II and they were trying to build a classier image. It worked.

Vito would sing as he cut, and, since I understood only a little Italian, he would tell me the plot of the opera, or what he thought was the plot of the opera. Years before I ever sat in the Met or any other opera house, I knew the stories—more or less—of just about every opera by Verdi and Puccini. I would, in later life, go to a performance of an opera I had never encountered and, part-way through, think, "I know this song." It was Vito.

Vito also gave me tickets to things. Back then, one of the ways shows advertised was by getting shop-owners to put posters in their windows. Vito often had posters from the Barnum and Bailey/Ringling Brothers Circus and from rodeos, both of which took place in Madison

Square Garden. Every time he put one of those posters in his window, he got two free tickets. He wasn't interested in circuses or bucking broncos, so I got the tickets. The circus, the rodeo, and the opera stories more than compensated for the itchy neck.

The lady in the second-floor window

My sister was born in 1948, when I was 12. I remember walking along the sidewalk with my mother when she was wheeling the baby carriage. People would pass by; people would be on stoops. She'd sometimes stop and talk; she'd sometimes say hello and keep on moving.

But as we approached one house on the block, she always covered my sister's face and sped up. I remember her saying, "Don't look up." I asked why. She said, "That woman on the second floor has malocchio, the evil eye." She pronounced it maloik, the way the Italians did.

I looked up. A woman was sitting by the second floor window, looking out at the street. I'd often seen her doing that. I asked, "What's the evil eye?"

"Maloik," she said again.

That was no help, so I asked the same question: "What's that?"

"I don't know," she'd say, "but it's not good."

My mother, as I said earlier, was a Jewish atheist, hardly at all supersti-

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

tious. The only holiday she and my father observed was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. For Jews of their generation, Yom Kippur transcended religion. It was as basic as throwing salt over your shoulder after you accidentally spilled some. They even fasted.

But she wasn't going to risk my sister being exposed to that woman with malocchio.

When we were both a lot older, not long before she died, I asked her what that was about. "I didn't believe in it," she said, "but that woman did, and you never know."

It wasn't just an old Italian lady in a second floor window who brought malocchio into my life. When I was in high school, leaving the house of a girl I was dating, I would frequently find a head of garlic hanging from my rear view mirror.

The first time, I thought the girl did it, as a gag. The second time, I asked. She shrugged. "It's my grandmother," she said. Her grandmother lived with her family. No one knew how old she was. She was a Sephardic Jew from Salonika, Greece. She spoke no English and referred to me as "The Americano." The girl pointed at my car. "She's protecting it from the Evil Eye," she said.

"What's that?" I said.



Bruce and young brother Moss with their dog Topsy, ca 1942

"I don't know," she said, "but my nana does."

Time and memory

The things I've just told you: some of them go back three-quarters of a century. Memory isn't passive. It's active. It reconfigures things, it puts some in Day-Glo and drops others into darkness. It combines and shifts days and people. (One of my books—*The Story is True: The Art and Meaning of Telling Stories*—is specifically about that creative skill we all share.) What I've written here came about because of a conversation I had with Joe Di Leo about growing up in a Jewish-Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn. Some of the things came to mind while I was writing. Some of them I've had in mind and have, when appropriate, told people for years. Are they true? Are they exact? I don't know. All I

know for sure is, these are things I remember.

Bruce Jackson has lived in Buffalo since 1967. He grew up in Brooklyn and served in the Marines. He is SUNY Distinguished Professor and UB's James Agee Professor of American Culture. He is a photographer, filmmaker and author or editor of more than 30 books, the most recent of which is *American Chartres: Buffalo's Waterfront Grain Elevators* (SUNY Press, 2016).

For his work on social issues, the French government honored him twice: first as chevalier in L'Ordre des arts et des lettres, and then as chevalier in L'ordre national du Mérite. With David Felder, SUNY Distinguished Professor in UB's Department of Music, he administers UB's Creative Arts Initiative.

One of the folk music LPs he recorded, edited and annotated received a Grammy nomination. Another is being produced off-Broadway by the Wooster Group in NYC in 2017.



Giuseppe Garibaldi

By 1870 a century of democratic revolutions had won independence from Austrian, English, French and Spanish Empires. The American revolutions created a dozen new nations; the French revolution toppled its monarchy; the Italian *risorgimento* blazed, cooled and flamed again for 50 years. Among those powering the Italian drive were Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini, warrior and philosopher – the "Sword and the Soul" of the revolution.

In 1882 after a half-century of fighting, Garibaldi died peacefully on his *Isle of Caprera* in the stone house he had built himself. It is difficult to imagine a life of greater adventure, leadership and accomplishments. One of the most acclaimed military leaders of the 19th century Garibaldi was asked, but declined, to consider leading President Lincoln's union army in the U.S. Civil War.

At times he claimed to be a Christian but most consistently was an outspoken atheist and crusader to eliminate autocrats like popes and kings. A merchant sea captain, he had sailed as far as China and trans-

ported his army on ships to invade Sicily. Garibaldi was a visionary and revolutionary who marshaled ordinary people to fight their oppressors and unify the peninsula. He won the important battles for the *rivoluzione*, was twice elected to the Italian parliament and, in quieter times, authored six books.

Garibaldi knew humbling defeats and soaring victories, was sentenced to death, wounded, pursued, jailed, excommunicated by popes and exiled by kings. He became a national hero in Brazil and Uruguay where his *camice rosa* uniform originated, lived 5 years in New York City and became a U. S. Citizen. He fought the French, Austrians, Pope and King Francis II of Sicily-Naples (the peninsula's largest kingdom). Garibaldi liberated southern Italy, marched toward Rome and joined Sardinia's king Vittorio Emanuele II, unifying the peninsula and creating the nation of Italy.

Garibaldi and Mazzini, allies since 1833, marched in history's flow of democratic revolutions. Mazzini, an enormously influential political philosopher,



Giuseppe Mazzini

writer and revolutionary leader was ahead of his times, urging a federation of Europe and fighting for a united Italy as a *democratic republic* based on universal education, labor reforms, fair distribution of wealth, constitutionally guaranteed right to vote, freedom of religion, speech and assembly and full emancipation of women. Garibaldi agreed, and they fought for the same goals.

But Vittorio Emanuele was a committed autocrat opposed to a democratic republic and wanting, instead, a United Kingdom of Italy with himself as king. While Garibaldi and Mazzini drove the revolution of the people, Vittorio Emanuele, helped earlier by Garibaldi, was conquering the north, extending his monarchy, *la casa savoia*.

Garibaldi marched northward; Vittorio Emanuele marched southward. They would meet near Rome and complete the unification of the Italian Peninsula –and

then Garibaldi made his historically astounding decision to abandon Mazzini's democratic republic and, instead, support Vittorio Emanuele's United Kingdom.

The western world's revolutionary drive had defeated kings and created democracies but Italy's *rivoluzione* had resulted in yet another monarchy, leaving it a half successful revolution –gaining independence and unification but failing to establish democracy. It was not until a constitutional referendum in 1946 that Italy abandoned its monarchy and became a democratic republic.

Garibaldi remains a revered hero and leader in creating the independent nation of Italy, but his capitulation to the king leaves us puzzled. Many now believe his decision was a significant event in “the colonization of southern Italy” by the northern autocrats. But that is a topic for another time.



Italian Risorgimento



Sal Maggiore

Autumn 2016

The falling leaves drift by my window, the falling leaves of red and gold. Since you went away, the days grow long, and soon I'll hear old winter's song . But I miss you most of all

my golfing, when autumn leaves start to fall.

Well, that is true but on two beautiful days: Thursday, November 17 and Friday November 18 Joe DiLeo and I hung in there and played – wearing shorts. Friday we were joined by Jack Gullo who was not impressed with my play.

On both days the Per Niente Publisher cleaned my clock with ease as I, *The Old Grey Mare ain't what he used to Be*. I recall when long days of putting up 2x4's or pouring concrete, wallpapering, painting, roofing but that never stopped me from running to play a round or two and being refreshed the next day. I say this because not only was I tired from working at home these last two weeks or thinking what I should be doing instead of golfing.

My wife, Sue was recovering from hip replacement and I was doing house-hold chores. (Twice I failed her inspection. Not bad) I never knew vacuuming occurred so often. Thank God for the dishwasher. I can't believe two people used so many

dishes. I haven't made a mistake yet in mixing whites and black loads. I do all right for breakfast (bowl of cereal) or sandwich for lunch. Dinner? Sue's sister's Joan and Rachel make something. Today I'll change the bed sheets, make sure the garbage is out, and do some food shopping.

I can't believe what women do every day in a household. Men are spoiled. Now I know now why Sue doses off by nine thirty while watching TV. She and all women should somehow be rewarded. I can't imagine how Sue did this after a day of teaching school. Now in her 8th day of post-surgery She is doing fine and carefully going up and down stairs with a cane and walker. Thankfully, a therapist visits every day.

I'm kind of glad the golf season is over. Honest.



November 18, 2016 - Joe and Sal squeezing out the last round of golf.



Linda Piazza-Laspisa-Maggio

Some time ago, on a trip to New York City to see my daughter, I visited Ellis Island, something I have been wanting to do for a long time. It was a profound experience.

Walking along the

halls, viewing exhibits, I thought I heard voices from the past. Somehow, I could feel the pain so many of the immigrants went through to get to the land of opportunity. I could not help imagining a young woman, slight of figure, hair pulled back in a bun and wearing a black shawl: This was my mother.

Hanging on to her for dear life were 2 children ages 5 and 9. All three traveled from their home in Sicily and arrived at Ellis Island, in 1920, after an arduous boat voyage of two weeks in steerage. Conditions were so poor that many did not survive. That was one hurdle my mother overcame. Passengers were tagged and put in one group so as to keep records straight which included the ship's Manifest. Arriving at Ellis Island my mother was frightened, exhausted confused and truly scared amid much chaos. Emigration was at its highest; people were everywhere, immigrants were numbering 5,000 a day.

What came next frightened and made the immigrants anxious; the medical exam. Was my mother's

heart beating faster for fear of deportation? I can almost bet it was. Chalk marks indicating any potential problems were written on the immigrant's labels by inspectors. For instance, "E" indicated a problem and in need of further examination. Not too many people were forced to return. Next came the legal inspector. I read that it took about 2 minutes to ask 29 questions. With immigrants arriving in such large numbers, inspectors hurried, some, not able to decipher the writing, did a number on Italian surnames. Thankfully, mine is not one of them.

Finally, the process ends and the immigrant is given a pass to board the Ellis Island Ferry to Manhattan. There, they would meet family and friends and if necessary, make train connections to different parts of the country. My mother's destination was Buffalo, New York.

Was she ready to see streets not "paved with gold?" She was not. Would it be a better life for her family? Eventually it would be. I thank God she made that trip but many times I say to myself....."How did she do it"





Al Gionfriddo

What the great American author Philip Roth wrote and described so vividly in his book, *The Great American Novel*, occurred on October 5, 1947 in game Six of the World Series between the New York Yan-

kees and the Brooklyn Dodgers in Yankee Stadium.

Outfielder Al Gionfriddo, a little-used reserve, made a racing, twisting catch in deep left-center to rob Joe DiMaggio of extra bases or a three-run homer. In doing so he saved the game for the Dodgers. Alas, that would be the last time the 25-year-old ever played in the majors. Yet more than 60 years later, his spectacular grab remains a potent memory.

Albert Francis Gionfriddo was the seventh of 13 children born to Sicilian immigrants Paolo Gionfriddo and Rosa Rametto on March 8, 1922, in Dysert, Pennsylvania near Pittsburgh. Though Paolo, a coal miner and Rosa conversed solely in Italian they wanted their children to mature as Americans and thanks to sports they did.

In high school Al excelled in baseball and football. As a running back, he was good enough to win a scholarship to St. Francis University in nearby Loretto, Pennsylvania. But baseball was his first love. In 1941 at age 19 before graduating from high school, he turned pro. A scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates observed Al's playing prowess in the area's American Legion state tournaments. This was a blessing for Al who had

been working in the coal mines along with his father. Baseball would save him from the mines, although his father felt that he should stay.

Al was assigned to the Oil City Oilers, a Pirate Class D farm team. Although he was only 5'6" and 160 pounds he batted .334 with 7 homers and 58 RBIs. He had another good season the following year batting .348 hitting 7 home runs and knocking in 82 runs while making the league's all-star team.

He served briefly in the U.S. Army during World War II. After his military stint he was promoted to Albany in the Class A Eastern League where he batted .329 and scored 130 runs. In 1947 Pittsburgh sent him to the Brooklyn Dodgers where he developed a friendship with Jackie Robinson. Al reminisced how in the locker room after any game Robinson waited for the other players to shower before taking his. One day he approached Robinson and said "Jackie, what are you waiting on? I'm not accepted any more than you are, but we're part of the team. Let's go." He also made sure that Robinson's locker was right next to his.

In 1947, the Dodgers won the National League Pennant and faced the New York Yankees in the World Series. Al's role in the series would be the same as during season; a bit player who would pinch hit, run or enter the game in later innings for defensive purposes. The Yankees won the series first two games. However, the Dodgers came back to win games 3 & 4. Game 5 went to the Yankees 2-1.

Game Six drew a crowd of 74,065 — a World Series record at the time. The Dodgers led the Yankees 8-5 going into the bottom of the sixth inning when Gionfriddo was brought in to replace Eddie Miksis in left field. The Yanks first batter lined out. Then Snuffy Stirnweiss walked, Tommy Henrich fouled out and Yogi Berra singled.

The stage was now set for Joe DiMaggio. Two outs and two men on base. Red Barber, calling the game on the Mutual radio network, set the scene for the moment that would last for the rest of Al Gionfriddo's life and beyond:

"Joe DiMaggio up, holding that club down at the end. Big fellow sets, Hatten pitches — a curveball, high outside for ball one. Sooo, the Dodgers are ahead, 8-5. And the crowd well knows that with one swing of his bat this fellow's capable of making it a brand-new game again. Outfield deep, around toward left, the infield over shifted. Here's the pitch, swung on — belted! It's a long one deep into left center — back goes Gionfriddo! Back- back-back-back-back-back. . .he makes a one-handed catch against the bullpen! Ohhh-hooo, Doctor!" The normally unflappable DiMaggio had already reached second base, and he kicked the dirt in anger.

Ironically that was the last Major League game of Al Gionfriddo's career. In 1948 the Dodgers sent him down to Montreal in the International League. He remained with Montreal for a few years then transferred to St. Paul for the '51 and '52 seasons. He continued playing ball in the minor leagues finishing his career in 1956 with the Visalia Cubs in the Class C California League by hitting (.354-9-73) retiring at the age of 35. Gionfriddo played just 4 years in the Majors with a .266 batting average. His 12 year Minor League lifetime average was .311.

After his playing days ended, Al remained in California. Working numerous jobs to support his

wife and children. Eventually he becoming an insurance salesman and was also in the restaurant business. He loved playing golf, his favorite pastime, and when younger had a single digit handicap.

On March 14, 2003, six days after his 81st birthday, while on the fifth green enjoying a round of golf he was stricken by a fatal heart attack.

Former Dodgers manager Tom Lasorda, Al's roommate when both were with Montreal, commented, "He was an outstanding ballplayer and friend. He wore the Dodger uniform proudly, and we're losing a great Dodger."

Al Gionfriddo will always be associated with his "thrill of a lifetime" feat from October 1947. "I've signed thousands of that picture," Al remarked. "You think, 'Geez, how in the world do these people remember?' They were there when they were teen-agers, I guess, and they tell their sons, their grandkids." His wife said one of Al's favorite lines was 'If all the people that said they were there that day actually were there, Yankee Stadium must have held a million.



Source: Society American Baseball Research, Rory Costello article

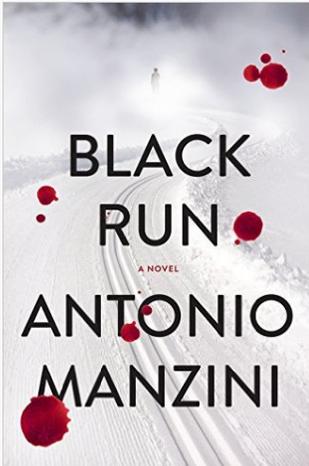


October 16, 1940. James Manzella, 324 Swan Street, waited to register for the Draft at School 6, South Division and Hickory Streets, from 4 am til 7 am.



July 1, 1941 Joseph Caico of 362 Busti Ave, signed his Selective Service Registration card after receiving instructions from Chief Clerk Daniel Sisti. Signing occurred in Buffalo Fire Department Headquarters, Court and Seventh Streets.

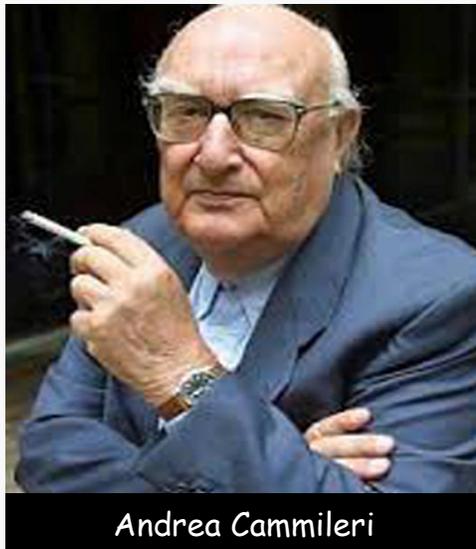
Courtesy Buffalo History Museum, used by permission



The Italian word for yellow is *giallo*. *Giallo* also refers to a particular kind of novel—the crime novel. Why are these books called *giallo*—*gialli* in the plural. Because in 1929 the publisher Mondadori issued a number of them in a cheap paperback edition with a yellow cover.

The genre has lost none of its steam and the Montalbano stories set in Sicily written by Andrea Camilleri have become a publishing phenomenon—exceeded only by

the phenomenon of the TV series. The episodes are frequently aired opposite the soccer and beats the soccer in the ratings. Camilleri, age 90, is still going



Andrea Camilleri

strong, writing and smoking 4 packs a day. In Italy he's a God. When was the last time a writer left the house and got mobbed in public?

If Camilleri has an heir it would be Antonio Manzini, a student at the University of Rome in the 80s when Camilleri was in residence, teaching theatre and Italian literature. Manzini started out as an actor, made the switch to directing and then another switch to writer and his first book, *Pista Nera* (Black Run), published in 2006 was a best seller.

Here I want to talk about the Manzini books and the person of the cop—*vicequestore* (chief detective) Rocco Schiavone. Rocco and Montalbano share one thing in common: a gift for solving homicide cases. Take any city in the world and if the police department can claim a homicide clearance rate of 50% they are superstars. But Montalbano and Rocco solve all their cases and boast a clearance rate of 100%.

Montalbano is more a Columbo type—not a fumbler but something of a softie who is very good at gaining your trust and the gradual coughing up of information. For any cop information is the key. Rocco has a different style. He's a city guy, the city is Rome and to call him hard boiled is like calling Hitler mean. Rocco's method is to begin politely enough but the exchange quickly degenerates into a discussion of your sister and how she makes her living followed by a quick blow to the nose drawing blood.

Rocco is smart, creative and violent. Also funny and relentless in pursuit of the one thing that truly gets the juices flowing—to put your low-life ass behind bars. Rocco was married but his wife is dead—murdered in a drive by. Rocco was the target but the bullets found his wife instead. The event changed him. He was a hard case before his wife's death, then became harder.

There are two sides to Rocco. He leads a double life. He is a *vicequestore* who dabbles in a bit of armed robbery on the side. He grew up in Rome, in the Trastevere district, and growing up along with him were Sebastiano, Furio, Brizio. It was a gang that did what gangs do—to pull jobs and break a few heads. At some point maturity beckoned and they were obliged to find jobs. Rocco became a cop. But they remained friends, virtually brothers and to mend their criminal ways was a thought they never got around to thinking.

The money is important because even a

vicequestore makes peanuts and Rocco is a sport, the elegant type who prefers not to deprive himself. He has a cool pad, wears the 900 euro suit, the 400 euro shoes, eats the 90 euro meal. Its called overhead.

Pista Nera (Black Run) is the first in the series of five *gialli* by Manzini featuring Rocco and his stalwart gangster crew . The setting is Aosta, in the north, way north. Rocco has always lived and worked in Rome, he despises cold weather, the snow that goes with it and any kind of snow related activity. But he's in exile. Something happened in Rome that is never made clear. The prevailing gossip points to a woman, the wife of a judge. In Italian they say: *per toccare una donna che non doveva toccare* (to touch a woman you shouldn't be touching)

But either way here he is, in Aosta, freezing his *coglioni* and doing his best to accommodate himself to the locals and their provincial ways. I wont get into the plot, a bizarre murder that requires a master detective to unravel but leave it for you to read on your own. Meanwhile here are 2 scenes to establish the tone.

Omar Borghetti is a ski instructor in Aosta and possible murder suspect. Rocco has invited him to drop in at the *Questura* for a chat. But Omar never shows and Rocco is obliged to track him down—playing cards in a bar. The following exchange occurs:

Omar: I heard you were looking for me. Why?

Rocco: Because I'm in love with you.

Omar (being cute) Is this about a parking ticket?

Rocco: *Faccia di merda!* You think they send a *vicequestore* to collect fines!

Omar: You talk tough behind that uniform.

Rocco: I'm not wearing the uniform. I'm wearing a 900 euro suit.



Rocco Schiavone

From here things deteriorate further until Rocco, to more precisely clarify the situation, delivers one of his patented blows to the bridge of the nose, to break the nose and now there is blood. Omar is staggered and a bit frightened. Rocco produces a handkerchief for the blood and the interview proceeds. Rocco returns to the office but first stops off at the lab to visit with Fumagalli, the pathologist, to test the handkerchief for DNA.

I loved that scene. Here is another:

Rocco in a bar having a coffee while listening in on a conversation between two women at the next table. They are mid-fifties, speaking of a man one of the woman has recently met and her friend says: he is hot, he loves you and, very important—he has money. And you know what my mother used to say.

No - what did she used to say?

She used to say: when your breasts no longer point at the stars but at your feet—its time to start buying more expensive shoes.

Any questions?



Once we settled on the dates of our vacation in Sicily (21 May through 4 June, 2016), the problem arose of how to broach the subject with our Sicilian cousins. If you have ever visited relatives in Sicily, you know that they want you to spend every

waking moment with them, sleep at their home, have at least four meals a day with them, and if possible, marry their daughter.

I love my cousins dearly, but we wanted to see more of Sicily, so we had to have a plan. Firstly, we planned to stay at a villa that was about two and a half hours away from our ancestral villages. Then, I didn't let them know we were coming until after we had booked our lodging, figuring they'd understand that we had to honor our contract. We called them just before we left home; let them know that we were booked at a villa, and that we would spend one afternoon and another whole day with them. And they were gracious and happy about that.

My wife, Angie, has a difficult time traveling.

She's uncomfortable in planes, or sleeping away from home, whether in a hotel or another's home, and she has dietary restrictions. The Sicilian's over-abundant food and their custom of having supper at 9 PM just don't cut it. She traveled with me, my sisters and my nieces on our trip to Belgium and Sicily in 2006, but it took a lot out of her. She had no problem when I went without her in 2009, but it wasn't the same for me, not having her there. She knows I could live there, and I know how difficult it is for her to travel. She would say to me, "Find a place that is private, on the sea, with a chef, and I'll go with you." Then, as I explained in a pre-

vious column, on reading Andrea Cammilleri's book 'Excursion to Tindari' I googled 'Tindari' (TEEN-duh-rih) and saw an ad suggesting 'Rent a Villa in Tindari'. Turns out that the travel service 'The Thinking Traveler' (www.TheThinkingTraveller.com/Villas) specializes in renting out private villas, on the sea, with cook service. For my 80th birthday, Angie gave me the gift of her presence at the Sicilian villa 'Buzza Alta' (BOOTS-uh AHL-tuh), a gift I'll treasure forever.

Accompanied by our nieces, Jackie and Shelly, my sister Connie's daughters, we flew out of Toronto to Rome and then to Palermo where the travel service had arranged for us to be picked up and transported to our villa. As in the other times I was in Sicily, I was struck



Angie, Shelly, Jackie & Angelo

by the blue, blue sky, the sunshine, and the magnificent mountains and rock formations of my volcanic island fatherland. We approached our villa with some trepidation, because Google Earth had shown us that to get to Buzza Alta, we would have to travel a dirt road under a railroad embankment, and that the railroad ran just behind the villa.

Visions beset us of 'My Cousin Vinny' and his travails with the '4 AM train', but they were unfounded. It was tricky going through the tunnel under the em-

bankment, but that only served to make our villa more private, and any trains we did hear were whisper-quiet.

Buzza Alta is on the north coast of Sicily, on the Tyrrhenian Sea in Messina province, roughly midway between the cities of Messina and Palermo. The nearest town of any size is Santo Stefano di Camastra, a renowned ceramics center only five or so kilometers distant. We were met at Buzza Alta by a young woman, Stefania Lumia, a transplanted Palermitana who moved to the nearby village of Caronia, the home of her fisherman husband, Giovanni Caroniti. Stefania introduced herself as the property manager and showed us around the place, including the neighboring tree of ‘chinzi’ (KEEN-zih), sweet black and white mulberries.

We had told the travel service that we would like a meal prepared for us on our first night at Buzza Alta, 21 May, and our last night, 3 June, as well as several nights in between. They sent us menu items to select from and said the cook would shop for fresh ingredients every day for that night’s meal.

The property manager, Stefania, like most young Sicilians, speaks Italian exclusively, and I speak the Sicilian language. But I understood her and she under-



Prickly-pear cactus everywhere

stood me. When I asked her in Sicilian “Unni è la cocca?” (“Where is the cook?”) she pointed to her chest and said “*Io sono la cuoca!*” (“I am the cook!”)



Tyrrhenian Sea, looking West



Stefania picking mulberries

Stefania showed us the way to the sea, while she got out her fresh groceries and began preparing our meal. The result was a sign of things to come: meals in which every course and item rivaled any five-star restaurant you care to name. Here are just a few of the delectable courses she served during our two-week stay. The seafood was freshly caught the same day by her husband.

"If one advances confidently in the direction of their dreams and endeavors to live the life which they have imagined, they will meet with a success of love and harmony."

My story is a biographical anecdote of my parents, two Italian immigrants who dreamt of disembarking from towns in northern Italy to find a happy, healthy life in America in the late 1800s. My mother, Philomena Collucci, an orphan, born in Avigliana in the province of Potenza sailed on the Duca D'Acosta in 1888.

My father, Pasquale Panaro born in Bella, Italy, also in Potenza migrated to America in 1895 on a ship named Scindia. My parents were strangers from the same area that crossed the ocean at different times in search of their individual dream. I'm certain their thoughts and words embodied the faith, hope and freedom that have made America the greatest country in the world.

Having landed at Ellis Island seven years apart, their residency had been planned for Papa Pasquale to live with an uncle and Mama Philomena would take residency with a cousin. Papa, searching for work was hired as a laborer at the Buffalo Botanical Gardens. Housing was found: a cold-water complex coined the Lunghino Apartment Building in a downtown waterfront area named Dante Place. It didn't take long for a relative to introduce Papa to Philomena, a charming young maiden and since it was to be a match marriage, a traditionally popular attribute for many immigrants, their nuptial took place in 1902. By then Papa had become a gardener at the Botanical Gardens and the increase in salary allowed him to venture for a property to call home.

Immigration to the U.S. heightened at a rapid pace in a pre-depression period when construction of small houses dotted neighborhood community's with front and rear houses on one lot. Situated a short distance from the Peace Bridge on Fargo Avenue near Hampshire

Street, were two-three bedroom clapboard houses: one in front at 558 Fargo Avenue and a rear duplicate structure at 558-1/2. Bingo! This was the dream for Papa. During his voyage he envisioned that his prayers for a home would be answered. He knew home is where the heart is. A house provides shelter. In a home, we weather little storms; it's more than wood, brick or mortar, it's a kitchen table, a garden, a backyard and a community of people who love us. The next priority was raising a family, so settling in America, a job, a home, and siblings, eventuated happiness for my parents. My mother gave birth to her twelfth child (me) on New Year's Eve December 31, 1930. I was born, Addolorata (Dolores,) my birth completed an aggregate of nine sisters and three brothers, accentuating an even dozen.

Raising a family of twelve siblings in a household required much patience and discipline. Seeing that nine girls and three boys (one who served in Iwo Jima) had to avail oneself, the use of one bathroom. There is a first time for everything and so many wonderful things happen during childhood and young adulthood: our first step, first day of school, first job, first kiss, growing up.



Dolores Panaro Tomasulo



Philomena and Pasquale Panaro

These were milestones that made lasting impressions that kept us forever young.

The difficult truths of the Great Depression didn't harden the American people. Folks responded with kindness, ingenuity and love that money can not buy. Our clothes were kept clean and hand-sewn on many occasions. With nine girls, close in age, fashion did not exist and hand-me downs were consistently customary. Mama's housekeeping was well attended too and Papa's homemade wine trellis delicately maintained. Let us recall that debts were sometimes forgiven and hearts and doors were open to the needy along with trust extended at times at Caito's or Scaduto's corner grocery stores.

Mama filled the kitchen with song, harmonizing each melody with a measure of love for the entire household of fourteen. Three of the oldest sisters: twins, Phyllis and Esther joined by Angeline (Ginger) became a singing trio and were fans of the Andrews Sisters. After endless singing and studying their harmonizing talents, they entered Uncle Bill's Amateur Hour, a popular, local talent show. They were selected #1 and received a new pair of shoes from Liberty shoe store and \$5.00 for each of them. As they grew older, their love for singing became more skilled. They replicated the famous Andrews Sisters so successfully they were hired and featured at the Glen Casino and McVan's, accompanied by popular MC's Lenny Page, and Tony Oddi, whose professions transpired in different eras. Beginning with New Year's Day (that happens to be the day after my birthday and continuing through next Christmas) the calendar was dotted with holidays and occasions steeped in family traditions. The beloved customs left us with treasured memories and had us counting the days until it was time to celebrate all over again.

The seasons were important in raising a family of 14. Papa and Mama Philomena's favorite seasons were Spring for picking cardoons and dandelions and planting tomatoes. Fall was the season to make wine. Papa achieved his expertise at creating a grapevine in the back yard growing wine-grapes, which he garnered in Bella, Italy. It wasn't long before he became the best wine taste-tester in the Fargo Avenue neighborhood. Mama? she canned vegetables: green beans, beets, zucchini, tomatoes, Swiss-chard and others purchased at Scaduto's or Caito's.

Papa Pasquale and Mama Philomena's family of twelve children ultimately resulted in thirty-four grandchildren. In America they acknowledged love, peace, and paid honor to the people who built, defended and cherished it. Papa was so proud that his nephew, Mike Panaro opened "Snowballs" Italian Ristorante in Hampshire & Grant Streets,

Currently, at age eighty-five my recollection and devotion to my family remains. I shall never forget the happiness while enjoying wonderful memories. The love of family and camaraderie exists with me (Aunt Dolores) meeting eight to ten of my nieces each month for lunch at various Western New York restaurants.



Long before the Woman's liberation movement, there was a legion of strong and independent women whose homeland and/or ancestry was in Licata, a small seaside village in Sicily, I call them the "Licatense Ladies"

Most notable for me were my grandmother, Assunta Bonsignore Montagna and my mom, Josephine Montagna Pierro. Grandma was a little lady with a tenacious spirit and loving heart. Born August 16, 1886 she migrated to the United States with her son, Joseph to join her husband, Vincenzo. They entered New York City on May 31, 1911 and made their way to "The Hooks" in Buffalo, New York.

Grandma and grandpa went on to have five more children, another Son, Angelo, and four daughters. Life in America was a challenge for grandma who never really learned the English language well. She spoke "Sicenglish". She never learned to read or write (not even in Sicilian) but when it came to making change for a purchase, no one could take advantage of her illiteracy.

Grandma's life was difficult. A hand to mouth existence. But the heartache she endured during the Spanish Flu epidemic was the most devastating. Within a two week period both her sons, a nephew and brother-in-law all died.

In the early years she worked as a seamstress to help support the family. Later in life she worked at Erie County Savings Bank as a charwoman. Scrubbing floors, cleaning bathrooms, dusting desks, emptying waste baskets. Sometimes grandma would take me with her to 'help' at work. I was allowed to empty the waste baskets but was strictly told *'no toucha notting ona da deska'*. Sacred territory! It was during those trips that I met Mr. William Flynn whose office was in the building. Mr. Flynn took a liking to grandma and called her by her work nickname "Susie." Mr. Flynn was always very gracious and respectful to grandma and when I was there he would take the time to engage me in conversation. Somehow Mr. Flynn found out my birth date and for many years, I would get a birthday card and Christmas card from him as did grandma. She felt so honored that such an 'important man' would remember us that way.

There were many special times that I shared with



Vincenzo and Assunta Montagna flanked by daughters Carmela and Nancy, kneeling: Josephine and Elaine.

grandma. Not only did I go to work with her, but we had many fun times together. Grandma loved Al Jolson, so she and I would go to the Erlanger Theatre to see Jolson movies. Some multiple times. We also went to the Niagara Theatre to see Italian movies with sub-titles. I don't remember being bored with the movies – but found them to be somewhat only interesting and very confusing. A very special occasion for grandma and me was when I asked her to be my sponsor at Confirmation. I took her name Assunta as my Confirmation name and she was so pleased and so proud. When Confirmation night came, we *confirmandi* and our sponsors had a reserved place in the front of the church. When grandma entered the church and proceeded to the front with me, one of the ushers told her to sit further back because the front was reserved. She immediately said "Oh no, I ama my Joyanna Spons." The usher understood Sicenglish and he knew our family, so he proceeded to escort grandma to take her seat.

Another favorite memory was grandma packing a lunch (including a bottle of grandpa's wine) and trekking

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to Cheektowaga on August 15 for the feast of the Assumption. We took the Genesee bus to the city line and walked the rest of the way to Our Lady Help of Christians Church on Union Road. We attended the outdoor Mass, had lunch on the church grounds and then made the journey to Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary Cemeteries to visit family graves. Some of those August excursions were hot, dusty and very long! Year to year the entourage consisted of different family members, I feel privileged to have been part of several of them.

Grandma had four daughters who were like the four seasons. As the seasons go so did their personalities. Most of the time they were very different and other times they melded. Maybe a stretch, but I can best compare them to *The Golden Girls* of TV fame. Aunt Nancy Croce Morale was a Betty White type. Very loveable and a little ditsy. Aunt Millie Erker, was a very serious and sensible Dorothy type. She went to Business School and eventually became a beloved kindergarten teacher at St. Frances School in Black Rock. Aunt Elaine was a 'Blanche' type. Certainly not promiscuous but very much into fashion and having a good time.

My Mom, Josephine was also more the 'Dorothy' type – strong, independent and opinionated. Mom met my Dad, an East Sider from Swan Street at a dance at one of the local halls. They were married when both were nineteen years old, young and in love and with no money. They had so little money their wedding reception breakfast was at Neisners Five & Dime on Main Street. Mom was always so proud that their picture was in the New York Times and ultimately the Buffalo Evening News. Mom was a great storyteller. She had a tremendous memory for detail and when she told a story you felt as if you had been there.

Marrying Dad brought a whole new dimension to

Mom's life. At home, life with grandma, grandpa and her sisters was rather staid and simple. But Dad's large, raucous Napolitano family was so much more fun and interesting. Dad came from a family of twelve children; five boys and seven girls. Mom loved the energy and camaraderie of the family gatherings. Mom always said that grandpa Pierro was so different from grandpa Montagna who was openly affectionate with grandma and very often took some of the kids out for walks in the neighborhood. Mom's father was much more reserved and rarely showed strong emotion or affection. Mom loved being a Pierrro and especially looked forward to the annual Family Picnics and weddings.



Mr. and Mrs. Michael Pierro of 372 Swan St. planned their wedding breakfast Saturday and decided to make it "coffee and _____." After they were married in the morning they brought the bridal party to the counter of a five-and-dime store.....photo by NY Times staff camera man.

Dad did a short stint in the Navy. Eventually getting a medical discharge because of his eyesight. Mom supported the War effort as everyone did. One of the things she always did was save rags for collection by the Buffalo Streets Department for the War Relief effort.

As was grandma's life, mom's was pretty much a hand to mouth existence with dad in and out of work. Early in their marriage mom decided to go to Beauty School and shortly after graduating she opened Josette' salon in a storefront at 31 Busti Avenue. We lived upstairs at the time. Mom was good at her craft but times were difficult and many of her customers would 'pay later'; when 'later' didn't come the Salon became history.

Dad and mom did not have a family car in their early years. When my mom went into labor for my brother Michael, it was a fire drill to get her to the hospital. Dad went to the tavern across the street to find someone with a car who could take them to Columbus Hospital to have the baby. Louis Dispenza offered to help. Well one of Mom's favorite stories is about the ride in Louie's car which had a huge hole in the floor.

(Continued on page 30)

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Scared to death but with no alternative they rushed to the hospital. Thankfully, a healthy, beautiful baby boy was delivered that cold night in January 70 years ago.

When my brother Michael was a year old, family finances required mom to get a job. She went to work at the Loblaw Bakery on Seventh Street. Mom worked different shifts so life became more challenging and hectic. grandma and grandpa lived downstairs, so grandma would pitch in with child care as much as possible. Mom worked very hard and became a staunch union member. She was active, vocal and involved. She would come home from union meetings and give us a blow by blow about what went on. At some point the Loblaw Bakery moved to Jefferson and Best Streets.

Year by year mom achieved more and more success eventually becoming "forelady." Mom's work ethic was incredible. She worked hard, took pride in the quality of her work and expected her 'teams' to do the same. But she would always brag about the fact that she was fair with her employees. I truly believe she was because she had a strong moral foundation and always reached out to help anyone she could. My brother Michael served in the Army Reserve and his Master Sergeant was an African American gentleman. When he heard Michael's name he asked if he was related to Josephine. Not knowing what to expect when he responded that it was his mom, he was relieved when the sergeant immediately said, "I loved that woman." He told my brother that mom was his boss at Loblaw's. He loved her because she treated everyone the same. He went on to say that she played no favorites and treated everyone with respect. If you worked well, you were in her good graces; if you were a slacker -she would set you straight. His words at the time: "She was women's lib before any one heard of women's lib."

Eventually in her career, mom decided to post for a job as "Warehouse Foreman" at a higher rate of pay. This was not accepted very well by some of the men in the company who also posted for the position. But due to her seniority, she won the position. Well, the men she supervised were directed not to make it easy for her. And one of her managers was vindictive and punitive .

At one point, she was required to move huge fifty-five gallon drums filled with liquids from a loading dock and move them into the warehouse. She struggled to find a way to get the job done. When she told dad, who was a truck driver about this, he said "use a forklift and tip the drums over and then roll them to where they should be stored." Then she could set the drums back up with the forklift. Job done!

When the Loblaw bakery closed, mom went to work at M. Wile. Again she grew in her career and became a forelady. Mom made many good friends with her employees at Loblaws and M. Wile, a testimony to her fairness, kindness, and competence.

The *Societa St. Angelo Di Licata* was a group near and dear to the hearts of grandma and mom. Members were men and women from the village of Licata in Sicily. My grandfather was an early member of the men's group. But ultimately the 'girls' became more involved in the women's group. Aunt Nancy Croce served as president for a time and mom as secretary. Another of mom's stories was about the time grandma went to the Pastor at St. Anthony's Church to ask him to put the St. Angelo statue in a 'place of honor' in the church. It was not a one time request. Eventually her persistence paid off. Especially at the annual Mass in May, St. Angelo held a very prominent place. Thanks to Ann Mule Wallens and Christopher Nogaro, the annual St. Angelo Mass and breakfast at St. Anthony's Church continues to this day with the St. Angelo statue displayed. Attendance is small but it's a loyal group. Mom was so pleased when a few years before her passing she and Mrs. Ida Muscarella were honored by the St. Angelo Di Licata Association as early founding members of the group.

For me and my female cousins, there is a sense of pride for our heritage and the example that our grandmother and mothers have been to us. To paraphrase Hellen Reddy: *We are women, we are wise, we are strong*. Some of that song's words were born of our own pain and in some cases we've paid a price, but certainly much of our determination and strength was handed down from those Licatense Ladies in our lives.

Anyone in the mood for some Mussel's ala Russell?



Ingredients

- 24 mussels (scrubbed clean)
- 1 1/2 bulbs roasted fennel
- 8 cloves garlic
- 6 cherry tomatoes (halved)
- 2 medium shallots (chopped)
- 8 oz. seafood stock
- 1 oz. brandy
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 oz. chopped parsley

Directions

Roast vegetables in oil at 350° for 35 minutes covered in foil. Once roasted, strain oil and put contents in saute` pan over medium heat. Add vegetables and brandy. When brandy cooks down add seafood stock and mussels, cover to allow heat to naturally open mussels, reduce heat to a low simmer.

Remove cover, add cream. When it simmers again you're done. Pour into bowl.



buon appetito tutti quanti



Davide Salvo

Immigration and Emigration are currently hot topics in many countries. Many areas of the world are experiencing political instability and this creates the conditions for mass migrations of people. Nothing is new, it has always been this way. In the Roman Empire, for example, in the 4th century AD, there were similar conditions. Groups of people living outside the Empire, whom the Romans called barbarians, were pushed by other nomadic tribes to migrate into the Empire. The Romans needed these peoples: they were enrolled in the army and they were granted land to cultivate. The process of “assimilation” was not always easy but eventually new political entities

emerged in Western Europe as the merging of Romans and Barbarians came to be called the Barbarian Kingdoms. More recently, in the late 1800s and early 1900s waves of Europeans arrived in the US. They assimilated into the American culture and maintained at the same time cultural ties with their homelands and a strong cultural identity. Today the bulk of Americans are the descendants of those immigrants. It strikes me how people in this country (at least in Buffalo) often identify themselves as Irish-Americans, Polish-Americans, Italian-Americans, etc. It seems they feel that the word “American” is not enough in describing precisely and comprehensively their identity.

Here I want to talk about emigration in Italy today. It is well-known that after its unification in 1861, Italy became a country of emigrants. Between 1861 and the 1930s and after WWII until the 1970s millions of Italians migrated and spread around all the continents: the USA, Canada, Venezuela, Argentina, Belgium, France, Eritrea, Libya, Australia, etc. In the 1980s, while the emigration rate diminished, the country began to experience considerable immigration flows from Northern and Central Africa (in particular Morocco, Senegal and Nigeria) and after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc from Eastern Europe (in particular Romania and Albania.) This changed the ethnic composition of the country. Since 2008 a new emigration wave of Italians has grown exponentially. Italy is today a country of emigrants and immigrants.

Who are the Italians leaving the country today? They are different from the people who moved to the USA in the late 1800s and in the 1900s. Today the emigrants are doctors, baristas, chefs, engineers,

carpenters and many other highly skilled professionals but the majority are academic researchers and scientists. They are part of the phenomenon called "*Fuga dei cervelli*" (brain drain. *Fuga* literally means flight.)

Do you know any of these "*cervelli in fuga*? No? Well I can introduce one to you: myself. Mine is the typical story of an Italian academic emigrant. I earned a PhD in a big university in Sicily and after a few years of struggling with the nepotism and lack of opportunities in Italian academia, I fled from a country where there is no hope for young people. In Italy you can be considered young until your old age. I decided to never come back to Italy except for holidays. (That happened once in 5 years!) I applied to the PhD program in Classics at SUNY at Buffalo, they accepted me and here I am now, living in Buffalo with some hope for a professional future unavailable in Italy.

I want to talk also about the latest trends in emigration from Italy. Traditionally, southern Italians have accounted for the majority of emigrants, due to economic factors such as high unemployment. Lately there has been a sharp rise in moves from northern Italy. Lombardy and Veneto are the regions with the most emigrants, followed by Sicily, Lazio, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna. Lombardy and Veneto are the wealthiest regions of Italy. So this shift seems surprising. However, increased employment opportunities and higher quality of life are becoming more popular reasons for moving abroad. Even in the wealthier regions, qualified Italians feel they could get a better life in a foreign country.

The most popular destination for the emigrants is Germany, followed by the UK and Switzerland. Over two thirds of expats stayed within Europe, with the majority of the rest opting for North America. The popularity of Germany explains the sharp raise of Italians who took classes of German in the numerous Institutes of German Culture across Italy.

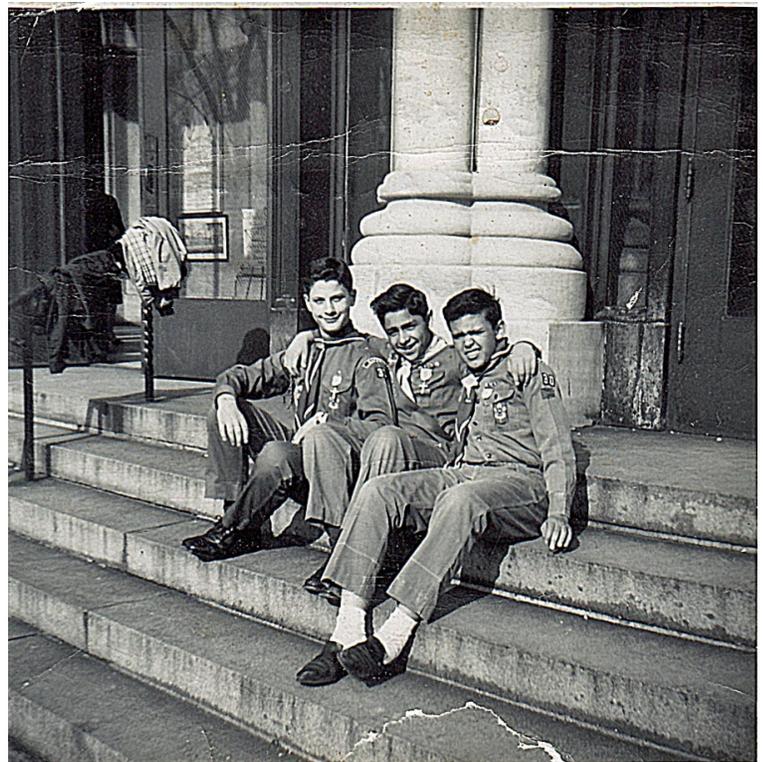
Here again, I am the typical Italian emigrant. Before coming to the US, I studied German for two years and I applied for fellowships in German Universities. A few days after I was notified by SUNY at Buffalo that I was accepted into the Classics program, I received another notification from Germany: I was accepted for a 1 year fellowship at the Universities of Munich and Kiel. For years I was unemployed and suddenly, in a matter of days, I had to make a choice between two offers. For an American scholar having a choice between two job offers might seem an ordinary thing but for an Italian it is a rare thing indeed! There are no choices in Italy, because there are no offers. I pondered the two offers for a few days and eventually I accepted the offer from SUNY Buffalo. It was a smart choice I do not regret. I came to Buffalo as an immigrant and the people welcomed me and made me feel at home. This is what made –and makes– America great: welcoming people from all over the world, no matter one's race, religion or education and giving them hope for a better future.



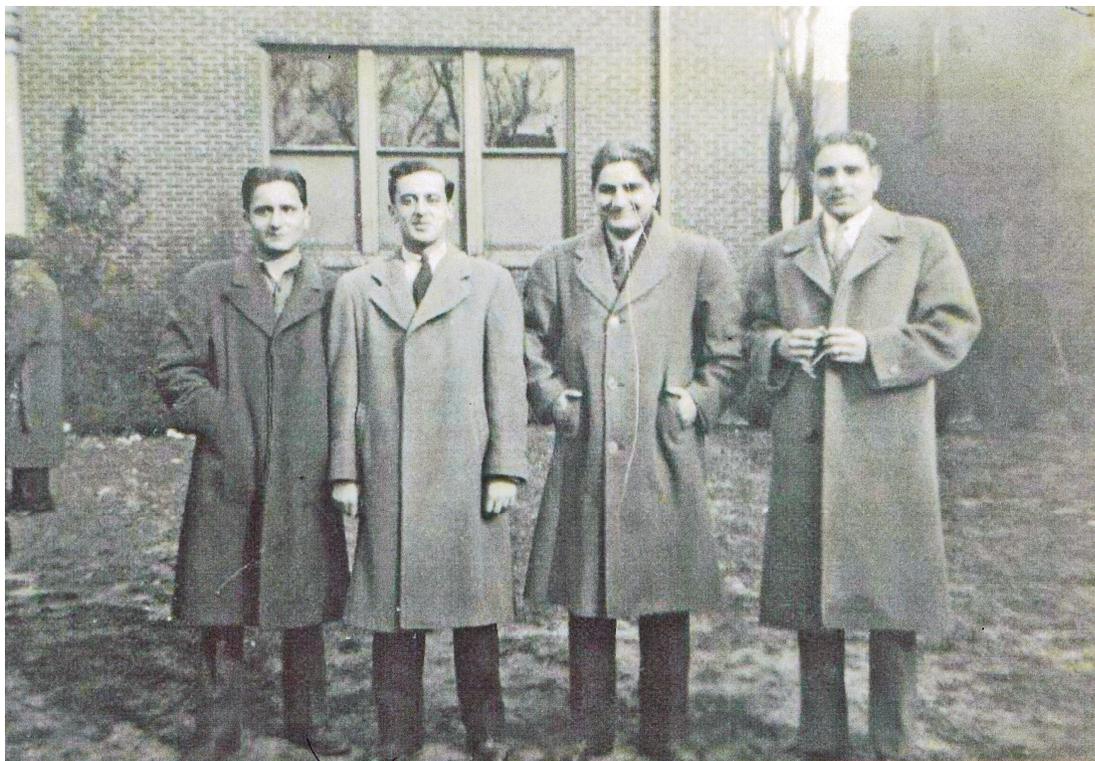
Class of 1931 eight grade graduates, Saint Lucy's School - Swan Street



German Immigrant, John Hicks, long time dishwasher at Andy's Cafe

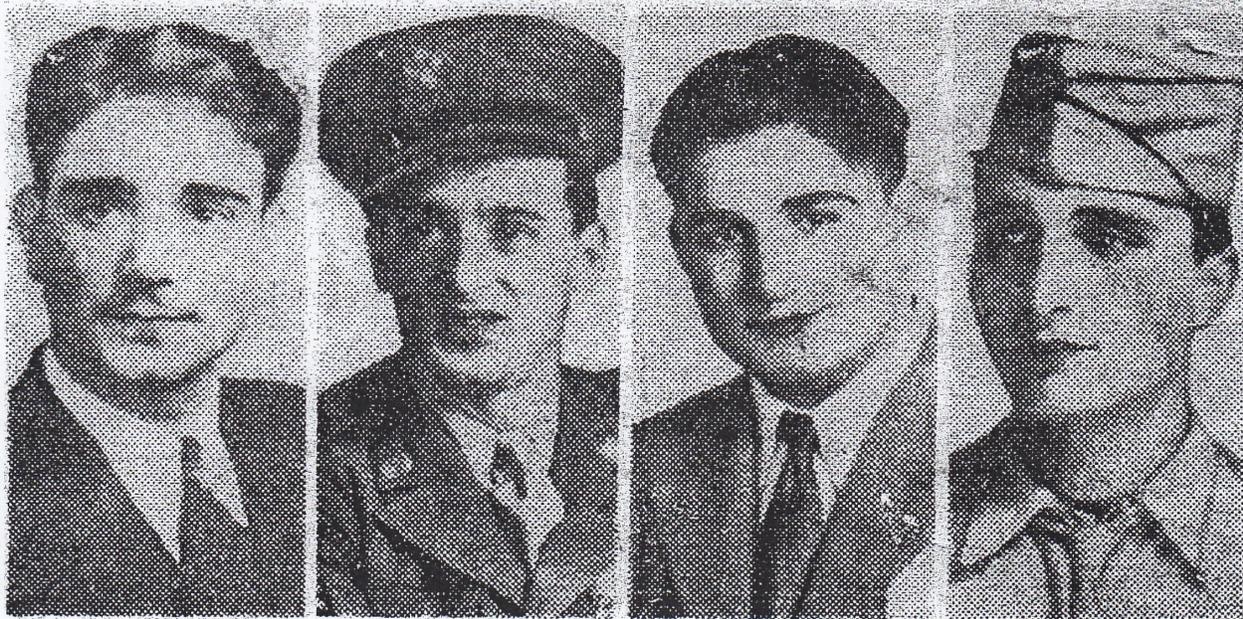


Gerry Carruba - Larry Amodeo - Vinny Chiarenza. 1961



James, Joseph, Martin, Anthony

3 of 4 Soldier Brothers on Furlough



Corp. Joseph Pfc. Martin A. Pvt. James Pvt. Anthony E.

Three of the four sons of Mrs. Ida Moscato of 300 Fourteenth St. are home on furlough—Corp. Joseph from Ft. Breckenridge, Ky.; Pfc. Martin A. from Camp Pendleton, Cal., and Pvt. James from Ft. Bragg, N. C. The other brother, Pvt. Anthony E., is stationed at Camp Crowder, Mo.

In 1891 *Dave's Dictionary*, a pamphlet written for the *Buffalo Daily Courier* by one known only as "Dave," appeared on the streets of Buffalo. Fifteen years later, in 1906 it was discovered in the stacks at the downtown Central Library. *Dave's Dictionary* details local places of interest, and describes several of Buffalo's ethnics in the year in which it was written.

In that authorless article we find these words under Italians: *There are a large number of them in Buffalo, largely laborers, rag-pickers and fruit vendors. They are industrious but dirty as a rule, and while they often present a miserable appearance and suffer privations it is not usually because they are so very poor but rather that they prefer to hoard their money. There are perhaps, some organ grinders among them and indeed musicians of a higher order.*

They are apt to form settlements by themselves and are to be found in the tenements at the foot of Main Street; on Genesee, near the Canal; and in and about the Terrace. They are commonly sober but when intoxicated are extremely quarrelsome and their localities are often the scene of a stabbing affray. As a rule the children of these people are turned out to earn a penny at an early age, and these little street waifs sell papers, black boots or beg, seeming to fear nothing and preferring a street life to any other.

Those so dismally described in the above dirge of an article most likely had bright, and cheery-musical sounding names; names like Bellanti, Ciatello, Colangelo, Scorsone, Giovino, Saladino, Vella, Lazzaro, Costanzo, D'Alba, Caci,

Di Gregorio, Morreale. Fanara, Galla, Grisanti, Giambra, Sinatra, DiFranco, Merlo, Baudo, Camilleri, Scamacca, Todaro, Ingrassia, Nola, Tronolone, Calabrese, Re, Paladino, Militello, Sperazzo, Toscano, Ciritto, DiLiberto, Noto, Campagna, Palma, DiLeo, DiGiacomo, Saia, Lojacono, Zendano, Zuppa, Pantano, Amico, and others too numerous to mention.

With quiet passion they came, unwanted, to the America of Buffalo, with infants, and youngsters. They persevered and taught their present and future offspring's a love of country, law, education, food, music, and a work ethic. Faith was at the core of their existence. When dockworkers began using steel hooks to shift cargo to and from lake going vessels, the Canal District became "The Hooks." Another version of the name's origin was that hooks were used to drag dead bodies out of murky waters. The ubiquitous hook strapped on a dockworkers belt meant status and employment.

In 1907, the Mayor, the City Fathers, and the police denied Italian laborers permission to parade on Main Street. A war of words ensued, but when the police invoked racial slurs, a bloody riot occurred with seemingly no remission.

In 1910 the Italians petitioned the Mayor of Buffalo to rename Canal Street, once the lurid nerve center of the Canal District, stating that its brutal legacy was harmful to Italian-Americans and their children. The Mayor agreed and Canal street was renamed Dante Place in honor of the poet, Dante Alighieri.

Tragically, in 1918, flu pandemic

from war torn France imported to New York, Boston, and Buffalo by those wounded in WW1, coupled with poor living conditions resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Hooks children. The German and French cemetery in Cheektowaga is where they rest. Those who survived, or who came later, were, according to some, never expected to have a destiny. They wore hand-me-down knickers, corduroy, gingham, and calico, and they learned street law.

For these immigrants who lived in a post medieval agrarian economy, the sweep of history, and technology, and the culture shock of a Roaring Twenties America was astounding.

It must be remembered that since time immemorial the island of Sicily and its people were enslaved to eternal disorder vested upon them by foreign invaders: Carthaginians, Vandals, Romans, Aragonese, Saracens, Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Angevins, Normans, Bourbons, Italians, and soldiers of the allied armies in World War II. The blood of a Sicilian is the blood of one of many races. Sicily's face is dark, blonde, pale-skinned, tawny, Celtic, Asian, African, and Arabic. Moslem armies ruled Sicily for almost three centuries. For the Sicilians the Hooks became a place where time, people and space were feared, sacred, and revered. Those within the family structure were friends, all strangers were suspect, and closely scrutinized.

A Sicilian proverb – "The man who plays alone never loses."

Out of necessity then, these new Buffalonians garnered their immense,

and natural entrepreneurial ability, their undying Sicilian vigor and aimed it at forging a strategy of personal, and family survival in a strange, new land. An early example of bold entrepreneurial skills is as follows: To sell newspapers on downtown streets, Hooks boys, lower West Siders like Joseph Panzarella, and Charles Martina, fought bloody turf wars with First Warders Bad Boy Tommy, Duffy Sean, and Mickey Brick Top.

Joseph Panzarella, an alumnus of P.S. #2, was one of the first Italian-Americans to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He served America with distinction in World War 1, and became a deputy New York State Attorney General. And, in 1926, Charles Martina became the first Italian-American elected to the New York State Assembly.

The years passed and as America wallowed in the phenomenon that was the Great Depression, the immigrants were privy to President Roosevelt's "New Deal," and, though unable to read they 'looked' at the funny papers. There was *Little Orphan Annie*, *Popeye*, *Dick Tracy*, and *Barney Google*. Songs like *Sunny Side of the Street*, *More Than you Know*, *Ten cents a Dance*, and *Body and Soul*, were played by Paul Whiteman, Ozzie Nelson, and Duke Ellington. None was more telling of daily life than Rudy Vallee's epic, *Brother Can You Spare a Dime*.

There was little work and scant money for food. Quite often, self-esteem plummeted, and duress was high. In tenement, in winter, redemption was citrus peels on a potbelly stove fired by

crates and coal that fell from passing trains. Material goods were iceboxes, beds, tables, chairs and flour for bread.

Tenement language was primarily Sicilian. American words from small wooden radios were memorized, savored, and accrued. In young hearts and minds they were verbal flares that seeped through intellectual darkness; flares that would light the way to timeless knowledge.

Roosevelt's "New Deal" spoke to the one-third of America's ill housed, ill clad and ill nourished. It meant, "The test of America's progress is not whether it adds to the abundance of those who have much; but whether America provides enough for those who have too little."

Would America with its diverse silent herds stabilize? Would a stampede of woe soon end? Roosevelt's words were heart rending, and warm, but it was still winter, it was cold, and Buffalo was an igloo on the lake. In the Hooks snow now began to light the dark. Boys, and girls using cardboard as sleds slid down mountains of snow while some descended icy hills. People trudged in snowy streets. Days became nights of no stars, black, and locked under a crescent moon. Time was frozen seeking heavy clothes and rubber shoes. Yesterday's ashes were spread on icy walks. Exterior tenement life was a wintry Hopper painting, a canvas of frozen loneliness: a stalled car, a blizzard, a boy, and a man of snow, all circled by icicles that seemed never to melt.

To escape the stigma of Welfare, men did whatever they could, whenever

they could. No job was menial. They rode trolleys to shovel snow at the airport, and in icy darkness from sewer drains, from rooftops, from railroad tracks, and at Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building. To their minds and hands the cold brought a numbing sensation, the other side of pain. They trolled to shovel at the Buffalo Zoo.

Lunch was an onion, and bread devoured in cold, misty stalls amid animal breath and loins all for the muted sounds of frosted coins brought home with a hatful of snow.

In tenement at Christmas a lighted evergreen stood in a pail of coal as an oven in which cookies baking heated the poorly-lit kitchen. Eggs and black olives were fried, bread was toasted, tripe boiled, minestra, and pasta fazool simmered on a stove whose burners emitted multi-colored flames; flames that illuminated rosaries, statues, statuettes, and flickering pictures of every known Saint in the heavens.

Sunday morning the smell and sound of meatballs in skillet permeated tenement streets. There was even cherry Jell-O, but only on Saturday night, and only in winter when it was frozen on an outdoor windowsill. Sunday breakfast was a meatball, crusty bread, sauce, and Jell-O. It hasn't tasted the same since and probably never will.

FULL DISCLOSURE – A portion of the above appeared in *La Terra Promessa*, the 2007 movie I wrote and directed and produced by Joe Di Leo and Michael Giallombardo.

1957

Garrow to Join Tide's Kubiszyn

By BILL COUGHJIN, JR.

Two outstanding basketball players who began their careers as grade school players at the Butler Mitchell Boys Club, will be reunited later this month when Fallon's Alex Garrow follows Jack Kubiszyn to the University of Alabama.

Garrow was notified over the weekend that he will be accepted



Jack Kubiszyn Alex Garrow

at the university. Kubiszyn, the sparkplug and scoring leader for the Crimson Tide, now is in his junior year.

The paths of these Fallon High School graduates crossed several years ago when both were being taught the fundamentals of basketball by Al Guarnieri at the Butler Mitchell Club.

When Kubiszyn decided to enter Fallon, Garrow was still in

grade school, but they played together at Virginia St. Butler Mitchell Club. When Garrow received his grammar school diploma, he enrolled at Fallon on the encouragement of Kubiszyn.

Mainly through the efforts of The Rev. Frank Curly, OMI, the Fallon athletic director, and Coach Mort O'Sullivan, Garrow became a polished player and a good student.

Garrow, a full-blooded Mohawk Indian who is called the "Chief" by his close friends, and Kubiszyn both gained Courier-Express All-Catholic honors for their outstanding play. Kubiszyn was All-Catholic in his senior year. Garrow was honored as a junior and senior.

In Kubiszyn's senior year, the Flyers became a respected team in the Catholic League.

After Kubiszyn graduated, Garrow took up the slack and was the king pin as the Flyers earned their first regular season title in his junior year, and the playoff championship last season.

Garrow, now 6-1, 175 pounds and 19 years old, played the role as Fallon's leading scorer and rebounder, and was the key man as coach O'Sullivan's charges worked a weave that is seldom seen in the Catholic League.

After graduation Garrow worked at construction, and attended night school at Technical to study drafting in order to better himself for the future. At the same time he was active in basketball.

While Garrow was working, Father Curley and Kubiszyn also were working. They talked to Alex and officials at Alabama in an effort to get the Chief accepted at the Southern school.

When Alabama played here against Canisius two weeks ago, Father Curly had a long conversation with Dr. Eugene Lambert, the Alabama coach. Dr. Lambert, without getting to see Garrow personally, informed Father Curly that "I'll take him on your recommendation."

1960



Charles Gorcheck Paul Feltman
Finalists in C-E Senior Boys table tennis

Paul Feltman and Charles Gorcheck survived a field of 128 in the senior boys division in the 21st annual Courier-Express Western New York Table Tennis Tournament last night at the Massachusetts Ave. Butler Mitchell Boys Club. They advanced to the final to be played tonight at B-M club.

Other finals tonight include Joseph Gusky vs. Cecil Brown, junior boys; Mary Joan Altenburg vs. Manya Wallenfels, ladies, and Morris Meyers vs. Melvin Scinta, men. The action will begin at 7:30.

Gorcheck, of the Town Boys' Club, scored a mild upset when he downed Joe LoTempio, 21-16, 21-18. LoTempio was the division's defending champion.

Feltman, representing Butler Mitchell, had no difficulty in the semifinal, defeating Joe Magro, 21-14, 21-15, but he had trouble in the quarterfinal against Paul Mingle. Mingle won the first game, 21-11, and then extended Feltman in the second, but lost, 26-24. He dropped the decider, 21-15.

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1959



Carmen Battaglia Joe Anzalone Ron Taylor Joe Padalino

Butler-Mitchell officials present certificates to foul shooters

Six Butler-Mitchell Boys Snare Foul Shoot Honors

Six Butler Mitchell Boys Club members have won shares of Northeast regional foul shooting championships in the national Boys Club competition.

The six are Joe Padalino of the Virginia St. Club, Joe Anzalone of the Massachusetts Ave. branch, Bill Alessi of Virginia, Dick Miranda, Jim Mastrodicasa and Joe Bossert of Massachusetts.

Padalino, a 12-year-old seventh grader at School 76, finished in a two-way tie for honors in the regional junior competition. This group includes boys 13 and under.

Padalino sank 54 of a possible 60, including a string of 10.

Anzalone, a former Lafayette High School varsity player, had an excellent 59-of-60 record, good for a four way tie in the

senior (17-20) division. He started out with 40 straight, missed one, and then dropped in the last 19.

Alessi, Miranda, Mastrodicasa and Bossert each had 58 of 60 which gave them shares of the five-way tie for first. Alessi attends School 1, Miranda goes to Lafayette, Mastrodicasa to Grover Cleveland and Bossert to Seneca. The latter two play for their school teams.

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Giuseppe Licata: 1930s - lunch on West Genesee Street