



Per Niente



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Judge Angelo Tona

Rice and Ketchup

by Joey Giambra

(Life in Brooklyn with
The Judge, the Actor
and the Felon)

In 1939, retired New York City Criminal Court Judge Angelo Tona lived on Efner Street in Buffalo, New York. He barely spoke English. "Me am Angelo," he said by way of introduction to Miss Shaw, his kindergarten teacher at P S 73.

Shortly thereafter Angelo's parents and their nine children moved to Seventh Street. Angelo became an altar boy at Holy Cross Church and dreamt of the priesthood. To pursue that dream he attended The Little Flower Seminary in Williamsville. But while ushering at Shea's Niagara Theater he discovered girls and the dream ended. Of this he informed the authorities. They applauded his integrity and he transferred to Holy Angels Collegiate Institute; soon to be Bishop Fallon high school.

After graduating he served in the U S Navy for eighteen months. He was injured and received a medical discharge. He came home, enrolled in Canisius College and bartended at Victor Hugo's and Club 31, watering holes for medical doctors and high profile lawyers. In that sphere of influence he acquired a love for Law. As such he applied to Fordham law School and was accepted. Though Fordham was in The Bronx Angelo lived modestly in Brooklyn and supported himself by tending bar at

the Bossert Hotel on Montague Street.

He graduated from Fordham School of Law, Evening Division in 1962 and worked as a claims examiner for Geico Insurance in Brooklyn night court. In the summer of 1962, while studying for the Bar, Angelo received a phone call from a kindergarten colleague who said he was in New York to further an acting career, one that began in Buffalo. He also said he had "very little money" and could he stay with Angelo for a "few days."

Angelo picked up his friend. The next day he gave him subway fare to NYC: an act Angelo repeated for days hoping the actor could find an agent.

The actor seized upon his friend's benevolence. Those "few days" became six months. The actor brought every starving New York thespian he met to Angelo's and collectively they ate him out of house and home.

After a tedious evening in Brooklyn night court for Geico a hungry Angelo entered his apartment building eager to devour a lone center-cut pork chop: the last morsel in his once abundant refrigerated food supply. Nearing his apartment the sound of Stan Getz playing Too Marvelous For Words and the smell of fried pork filled the air. He opened the door to see a young man, a stranger, fiendishly sucking on the bone of HIS pork chop while wearing one of HIS shirts. The actor explained that the man, a friend from Buffalo somehow knew that he was staying with Angelo. He said the man jumped bail in Buffalo and was sleeping on park benches

and had just showered for the first time in a week and could he stay with them for a few days. A stressed and ashen-faced Angelo composed himself, turned off the Hi Fi and in a precise form of English called Legalese he articulated to the actor - and the felon - the consequences of an aspiring lawyer harboring a fugitive from justice. He also said he was starving. The actor found some rice, boiled it, laced it with warm ketchup and served it to Angelo.

The next morning the remorseful actor called the bondsman from whom the felon absconded. Money was sent and the felon was on a bus to Buffalo.

Unable to support himself and his young family in Buffalo, the actor soon returned to take a civil service job that paid \$4,700.00 a year.

Angelo Tona was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1964. He worked for Geico until 1969 at which time he became an assistant to Eugene Gold, the Brooklyn Kings County District Attorney.

In 1975 New York State Special Prosecutor Charles (Joe) Hynes assigned Angelo to investigate New York State Medicaid fraud in Buffalo. By 1978 Angelo was statewide chief of Medicaid prosecutors. In 1982, as an assistant DA he headed the Rackets/Narcotics Bureau in the Queens County DA's office. On February 5, 1986 he was appointed by Mayor Ed Koch to be a Judge of the Criminal Court, City of New York and served honorably in that position until retiring on January 1, 1999.

The felon? On a cold November night in 1967 he fatally shot a Buffalo police officer on West Chippewa Street. He was convicted and sent to Attica State Prison.

In 1971 during the Attica riots, prisoners of a different culture who hated the felon for his oft-stated bigotry murdered him in heinous fashion.

Today, the Judge, now a gourmand, and the actor (who wrote this story) eat well, converse, and reminisce.



A young Angelo Tona making his First Communion.

Article below appeared on the Editorial Page of the February 12, 1972 Buffalo Evening News. It was accompanied by a five full page spread titled "The Italian Community"

Salute to the Italian Community

Among the diverse ethnic groups who built and enriched Buffalo, none has a prouder record than the Italian-American community whose struggles and accomplishments are recounted in special articles in today's News.

Italian roots in Western New York go back to the early 1800s when Paul Busti conceived the idea of laying out a town here. The real growth of the Italian community, however, came with the great waves of mass immigration starting in the 1880s and extending over several decades. Most settled on the West Side, although the majority of Erie County's 125,000-plus persons of Italian descent now live in other neighborhoods.

Most of the newcomers were poor country people, seeking economic opportunities denied them in their overcrowded native land. In common with other immigrant groups, they did not find streets paved with gold. They tasted their fill of tenement housing, menial jobs, prejudice and ethnic tension. But they struggled and persevered, and established mutual aid societies.

Gradually they and their descendants achieved personal fulfillment and upward mobility, spurred by strong family ties, an appreciation of the value

of education and a powerful hunger to become Americanized.

Today Buffalo's Italian-American community is an integral part of the total community fabric. Distinguished citizens of Italian background include at present the mayor of Buffalo, the sheriff of Erie County, an auxiliary bishop of the Catholic Diocese, several judges and the heads of major corporations including the president of the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce.

Looking back at their Old World heritage, Buffalo's Italian-American community can take pride in an ancient history at the very wellsprings of Western civilization, a heritage summed up in the familiar maxim, "All roads lead to Rome." Looking back at their achievements in the Buffalo area, they can take no less pride in their manifold contributions to community advancement and well-being.

This is part 3 of an article based on Jerry Grasso's memoirs as told to, and written by, Dick Verso. Parts 1 and 2 appeared in the past two issues of the Per Niente.

We were for the most part Italian, Roman Catholic and now Democrats - except for me - I was still one of the few Re-

publicans, which was brought home in my loss for Niagara District Councilman to Tom Santa Lucia. Along with FDR, Pope Pius, the New York Yankees, Notre Dame and Joe Louis, our world was pretty stable even after World War II came along. Until I went to high school, most of my friends were from the schools whose kids had catechism at Holy Cross, #1 (It was never School 1 or School #1 --- just #1), #3 and 76 (It was 76, not #76 like #1, #2 and #3). They weren't all Italian or Catholic but they all seemed to be on St. Josephs Day.

We were very patriotic, booing on cue at the movies when we saw "The Rising Sun" flag slowly rolling onto the screen or seeing the Japanese fighter pilot sneaking up in his Zero. We never really thought about fighting against the Italian army. We were fighting the Nazis and the Japs. Besides, outside of Mussolini and hinting that they were helping Rommel in North Africa, Hollywood never made movies about Italian soldiers. Either they couldn't come up with a script that worked up a good hate for Italians or they were afraid of waking up with a horse's head next to them.

We almost looked like the setting for a Jimmy Cagney movie with "Welfare clothes" and corduroy knickers. Some guys becoming priests, some becoming cops, some "going away to college" for a while and some actually going to college. We even had a guy who looked like Looey in the Bowery Boys - Gus the Greek, who had a candy store near the Marlowe Theater, across from the Butler-Mitchell Boys Club on Virginia. The way things disappeared in his store and eaten in the alley, it's a wonder that he made any money. That alley was also the scene of some pretty big crap games.

Our language was enriched with words that might sound bad in English like "va caca" but were merely earthy in Italian or those that didn't quite have English equivalents like "acito". Then there was "Meesca" which is like "Shoot" today, a socially acceptable way of expressing another word. Even the non-Italian kids picked up an extended vocabulary, also understanding which words were OK to say around adults, because they treated us all like their own kids - a whack on the back of the head if they heard a bad word.

The #1 neighborhood itself was basically between Pennsylvania, Prospect, Virginia and Lake Erie. Our teachers filled out report cards with names like Angelo, Carmello, Epifanio, Ignatius, Mario, Pasquale, Rocco, Rosaria, Rosario, Santina, Santino, Serafino, Vincenza, Vito.

God only knows how many Baptismal Certificates said Antonio (or Antonino), Nicolo and Calogero instead of Anthony, Nicholas and Charles, and how did Vincenzo, which became Vincent translate to Jim? Ben could have been Biagio or Blaise, and Russell was probably Rosario. School #1's class of '47 had 4 Angelos (and 2 Angelines) and 3 Dominics (and 1 Domenica). And how many girls do you hear named Carmella, Concetta or Crocefissa today?

Customarily, the first son was named after his paternal grandfather so in many families we had a lot of First Cousins with the same first name. If a guy named Antonio Rocco had 5 sons, there would be 5 kids in the next generation called Tony Rocco. That's why we had so many nicknames. It was even worse in Sicily because they pretty much stayed in the same town. If you're doing a genealogy of your family it's made even harder when the oldest boy died because then the next son born, maybe the 6th kid in the family, would be named after his grandfather. So if you're Antonio Rocco tracing the Rocco family in Sicily and run across Antonio, you'd think it could be you're grandfather - maybe.

A person doing his family history was once told that the only person who called people by their given name was the priest who baptized him. The Versos thought that they solved the dilemma of naming their first boy after his paternal grandfather or giving him an "American" name by naming

him Dominic and calling him Dick. It worked fine until he got to school. The teachers called you by the name on the record, except for E. Larry Gatti. I guess Mrs. Alessi thought that it might be easier for him later if he used his middle name, Lawrence, instead of Epifanio.

#1 closed down on the afternoons when we had Religious Instruction at Holy Cross Church and St. Josephs Day. There was no such thing as separation of church and state at #1. I remember Mr. Grine, Ambrose Grine, calling my classroom to have my teacher send me to the office for skipping Catechism. He pulled out a razor strap and gave me 15 whacks on each hand but I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of seeing me cry. Besides, he wasn't as bad as the nuns --- they used slats from the backs of folding chairs on us. I use to imagine them gathering around a broken chair like vultures getting big, new back-up sticks. We got even with Ambrose by pushing or verbally abusing his son when he came to visit. The kid got our grudging respect because he never told his old man.

Russ Falletta, Sam Mangione and Bob and Gary Doane got into real trouble for breaking into the school --- to go swimming. Joe Valenti was walking home from violin practice just as the cops were breaking up a crap game and taken to #10 for being involved. He had to play his violin for them at the Station House before they let him go home. I don't have any of my old Report Cards because I either burned or ripped them up. They flunked kids without batting an eyelash. There were a lot of brothers and sisters who weren't twins graduating in the same year. We figured out

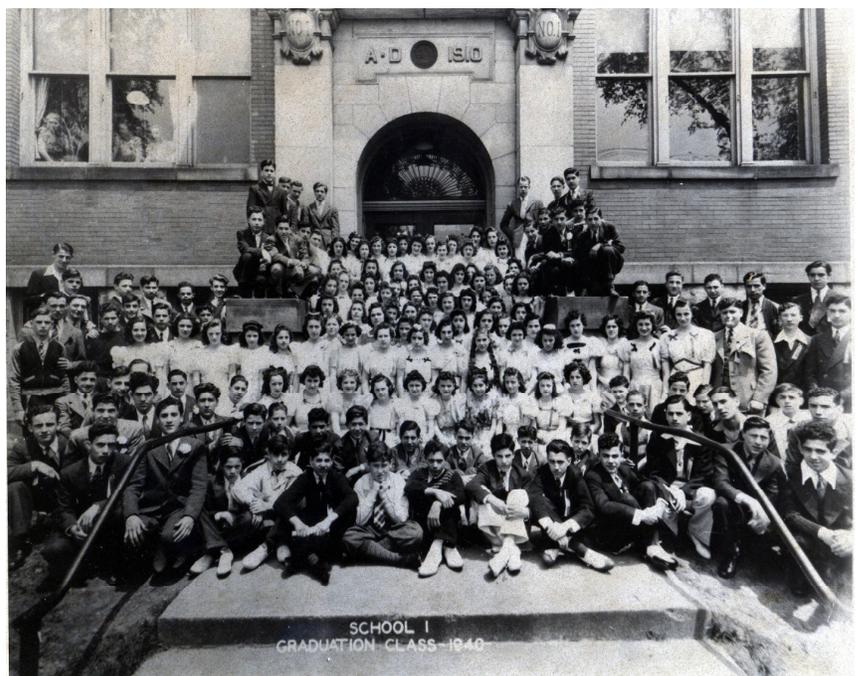
later that they were just evening out class sizes. If one class was a lot bigger than the following class, they just flunked a few kids. Obviously self-esteem wasn't much of a problem for them to consider at the time.

So many memories come back thinking about #1 --- Loading up at "the Old Man's" (Mr. Palame) for Monday afternoon assemblies with Joe Valenti playing his violin and RoseMarie Palmeri singing, 1930 movies, class plays and the floor littered with candy and gum wrappers when the lights came on. John Dascoli pitching for the softball team and taking his comb out of his pocket to fix his hair after every pitch. Being excused to attend The Eucharistic Congress at Civic Stadium and on every St. Joseph's Day when everyone was Catholic and brought notes from home guaranteeing invitations to St. Joseph's Day Tables. Syl Andolina losing a finger in a shop accident, Mrs. Stevenson, who was a cleaning lady there letting us come in to play basketball while she was working. Mr. Muto punishing me and Iggy Fasciana for fighting. He made us stand in the middle of the gym until he told us

that it was OK to move and then asking what we were doing there when he was leaving at 2:45.

Father Caligiuri standing on the corner of Niagara and Hudson to make sure that we went to Catechism and not hanging around the restaurants across Niagara Street. Summer swim classes at #1, which was one of the few schools in the city to have a pool. Imitating Errol Flynn by "sword-fighting" with sticks on 7th St. behind the A&P after school until a teacher came out and took our "swords" away so we "wouldn't poke out someone's eye". Worrying about getting sent to "Dippy High" (On Delaware Ave, where now stands the New Era Cap Co.) was enough kept us in line because we certainly didn't want our parents to know that we were causing any problems in school. Watching the traveling Yo-Yo contests as soon as school ended and wondering if the young demonstrators had skipped their own school. Trying to stop the building of the annex that took up part of the playground.

To be continued in next issue





SAL MAGGIORE

Maggiore's Corner

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Per Niente Autumn

The falling leaves pass by my window, the falling leaves of red and gold. What? Well once more a Per Niente year is coming to an end. Everyone from the Arenas, Spallinos, Arnonis, Palmeris, Schiavones are planning October as their take off date to orange juice country. Even the Tascas and yours truly are getting in the mood talking about going down later and meeting up with the Caccamis and Tom Stevens. The Schiappas are already there. Even our editor, Joe D, expects to visit. This gang will inhabit the east coast of Florida.

On the beautiful Gulf coast you can find Charley and Patti Tasca, Frank and Beverly LoTempio, Freddy and Emily George, Jimmy and Lou O'Connell. Len Pepe and maybe Frank Licata plan to visit there also. Nice country for the former Westsiders.

This year we had a fine Per Niente golf tournament planned by Len Pepe. Everyone received a bottle of wine along with other prizes. It good playing with Bob Smaldino, who was hurt and played on one leg. As usual, Sonny Caruana and Bob Docherty came in from out of town to play in the tournament. They made sure to tell us about their winning the club championship earlier this summer at Fort Lauderdale. The weather was excellent, the course in great shape and the steak dinner topped off the evening.

The "La Sera Sotto Le Stelle" (The Evening Under the Stars") dinner at DiTondo's was another big hit thanks to Joe DiLeo. No offense Joe, but how can you go wrong when you have good food from DiTondo's at a great price and the masterful Joe Giambra and his swinging band. Frankly I don't know how they manage their daily lives. Both Joes and Mike Giallombardo are working on producing a sequel to the movie "La Terra Promessa." The movie is sched-

uled for release late next year and will depict the Italian American community of Western New York from 1939 to the present. Joe D plays golf, cooks and watches his grandchildren. Joe Giambra plays in the band and bakes bread at 5 a.m. Once again dancing honors went to Bob Mangano and Carol (Tom) Navarro. Pro stuff. It was nice to see Tom and Kenny Fehringer and his lovely wife from Vegas. Frank Nicosia was there and reminded me how he bailed me, Paul Palladino and Ron Schiappa out of a jam. I was innocent.

Sam and Jeanie Arena hosted our yearly Per Niente cook-out in their yard. The feast was fit for a king and Sam cooked the steaks to perfection. Of course Joe Sebastian cut the clams like no one else could. Thanks Joe. Eggplant, stuffed peppers, home made pizza, plenty of drinks and dessert topped off the feast.



Len Pepe coordinating the annual golf outing

Sonny Critelli's son A. J. was in town from North Carolina and played some golf with us. Oh, to have our "yute". He hit the ball a mile, and is handsome to boot. Brother in law Gary Crosby left the Buffalo School Board to join First Niagara Bank and his wife, Joan, retired from teaching.

Good luck. Carl and Marie Caccamise are off to Sicily for a month as of this writing. The Arnonis, C. Tascas, Rae Cala, and the LoTempio's are off to Northern Italy this month. Freddy George is looking in to opening up a Tim Horton's. Good luck Fred. Before you can say "Silvio Berlusconi", the Xmas party will be here.

Ciao'



Jerry Colonna

Jerry was born Gerardo Colonna in Boston on September 17, 1904, of Italian immigrant parents. As a little boy he admired his grandfather's enormous moustache ("You could see it from the back!") so much that he often painted one on his upper lip with axle grease. As soon as he could manage it, he grew a "baffi" of his own. Jerry was extremely gifted musically, and he loved jazz, beginning as a drummer then finding his metier in the trombone.

"Moving to New York, he became a fixture in orchestras on major radio shows and in the top big bands. At one point he was named one of the five best trombonists in the country. In 1930 he married Florence Purcell, a pretty flapper he met on a blind date in New York who turned out to be a Boston girl. They would stay in love for the next 56 years, adopting a baby son, Robert, in 1941.

In the late 30's Jerry's career took an unexpected turn. Comedian Minerva Pious, who played Mrs. Nussbaum on the Fred Allen show, loved Jerry's off-stage antics (he had received so many warnings from CBS for his pranks that he was finally put on perpetual notice. But they never actually fired him - he was too good a trombonist). Pious decided that Fred Allen, a workaholic, needed a laugh, so she convinced him that Jerry was a brilliant operatic tenor and that Fred should give him an audition. When Jerry gave out with an ear-splitting "You're My Everything," Fred literally fell to the floor laughing and gave him a few guest spots on the show. These led to movie roles, and to the Kraft Music Hall, hosted by Bing Crosby. Bing took Minerva Pious' in-house joke to new lengths by announcing publicly that Giovanni Colonna, one of the greatest living baritones (!) would make his American radio debut on the show. After that broadcast, a number of classical music critics stopped talking to Bing altogether. The following summer, following an appearance at the Del Mar racetrack clubhouse, Jerry was approached by Bob Hope, and radio history was begun.

Jerry left the Bob Hope show as a regular around 1950, although he continued to join Bob for the Christmas shows and occasional TV specials.

He continued to record, and appeared in British Vaudeville and top Nevada night clubs until a partial paralytic stroke in 1966 left him virtually unable to perform, although Bob Hope generously found ways to work him into TV specials without his disability becoming obvious. In 1979 a heart attack sent him to the Motion Picture and Television Hospital, where he spent the final seven years of his life. Though unable to use his voice, he was fully alert and communicative, sometimes writing messages but usually expressing his thoughts with Italianate hand gestures and, of course, those astonishing eyes. His devoted Flo spent every day with him until he passed on in 1986. She would follow him eight years later, in the same hospital.

**Sam Arena**

CORN CHOWDER with KING CRAB

Did you ever notice something about corn on the cob? It seem that when buy one for each guest there is never enough and when you over buy no one eats them all. Well I am not tossing them out. It's easy enough to shuck the corn, put them in a press, seal the bag and freeze them. Now you can use them for this terrific fall recipe.

INGREDIENTS

4 green onions chopped finely including the green part
4 or 5 cups of corn kernels
1 cup of chopped celery
3 cups of King Crab about 4 large legs
2 cups chicken stock
2 strips of bacon
2 cloves of finely chopped garlic
½ cup of flat parsley
1 stick of salted butter
1 pt. of light cream
Salt and pepper



DIRECTIONS

- Sauté the bacon until very crisp.
- Save some bacon drippings. Sauté the onion and celery them.
- Add the garlic, corn kernels and chicken stock to the pot.
- Bring to a boil and simmer.
- Add cream, crab meat and butter, increase heat to an almost boil and serve when butter is melted.....optional: serve with or without oyster crackers. The chowder is hardy enough..

P.S. This recipe can be made canned cream corn and is as good. Maybe better.

Buon Appetito



Per Niente Member Bob Carnavale to enter WNY Baseball Hall of Fame.

Since the early 1960's, Bob Carnavale, from Buffalo's West Side, has spent five decades in the WNY sports scene playing baseball, basketball, and football. He also managed and coached local amateur sports.

Carnavale, a graduate of Lafayette High School in the mid 60's, won a scholarship to Syracuse University and played football with Larry Csonka and Floyd Little.

Bob became junior varsity coach Canisius High School in the mid 1990's, and was assistant coach of the Canisius football team before leaving in 2000 to become head baseball coach for the Park School.

Bob was humbled with the news of his selection. " I'm deeply touched to be joining these men and going into a class of people that I never would have expected years ago . You help someone through sports and later come to find they remember you. It's a moment I'll cherish."

Four Generations of Portales



Top Row: Grandson Jack Coco, Christopher Coco (Carl's Son in Law) and Richard Portale Jr
Bottom Row: Giancarlo, Carl, Sebastian and Richard Portale. (Sebastian is 95 years old. Lives unassisted, cooks his meals, drives his Cadillac, flies to New York five times a year, plays in pinochle tournaments 3 times a week, takes his companion out to lunch everyday, and watches the New York Yankees every night).

I guess this story begins in the year 1886 on a small farm in Mussomeli, Sicily where my grandfather Vincenzo Murano was born. As Vincenzo grew older he grew restless longing for adventure and escape from the mundane life on the farm. So at age 19 he left his brother Peter and his parents and sailed for America (where the streets were paved with gold) to seek his fortune. Unfortunately for him the streets were mostly mud. Young, with a strong back and a pick and shovel he worked tirelessly but without much reward. After two years and saving every cent he could he returned to Sicily. To his delight he discovered his neighbor Angela Coffaro who was now 15 and grown into a lovely, mature women. After a two year courtship they married.



Vincenzo Murano

Naturally Angela was curious to know all about Vincenzo's experience in America. Vincenzo told her of the abundances of America and left out the hardships that he endured.

The young couple yearned for a family, but Angela knew that children and a family would tie them to Sicily forever, and their dream of coming to America. Vincenzo sailed alone for America and made his way to Buffalo, New York where there was a family he could live with until he could establish himself and save enough money to send for Angela. Finally in 1912 he was joined by his young wife in Buffalo. They lived

in a small house on Busti Ave in a neighborhood that was almost 100% Sicilian.



Angela Murano

In 1914 their first child, Rosaria (Rose), was born. In 1916 Salvatrice (Sarah) came along. By 1920 two more girls were born, Vincenza (Jean) and Giuseppina (Joesphine), and this is where the real story begins.

The year was 1927, by this time the girls were getting older and the house at 134 Busti Ave was getting smaller. it was time for a move, but to move away from the familiar Sicilian neighborhood to an area that was basically "Americano" was not only daring but unheard of. In 1927 the economy was flourishing and Grandma Murano who was the decision maker and top sergeant found a house on Gelston St. Gelston was basically a non-Italian neighborhood, except for the Coniglios next door and the Broncatos next to them.

At that time Gelston St. was upscale compared to the lower west side or the hooks. Across the street was the Francis family and next to them the Sawyers. The neighbors on the right were the Diones and next to them the Van Gezens. So you see it was an all American neighborhood.

The house was a large double with

a smaller house in the rear. My grandparents and my four aunts lived in the rear house and the front flats were rented. My three brothers and I were raised in this house.

The house was purchased for \$2,950.00 . Life was sweet. No one saw the storm brewing. It came so fast. Grandpa Vincenzo lost his job; the tenants couldn't pay the rent. There was panic. People were losing their homes. Banks were foreclosing. The house on Gelston St. was in jeopardy. That's when the top sergeant (grandma Angela) made her move.

She had the answer. They were farmers in Italy and area farmers needed people to pick berries, tomatoes, beans, and other crops. They needed workers for canning factories, and field bosses. People had to eat. While the pay was meager, Grandma and the four girls made enough in the picking season to pay the taxes on the Gelston St house.

In the spring of 1930 she and her girls headed for the Catalano farm where they lived in shacks until September. If things got slow they would move



Vincenza Rosaria Salvatrice
Giuseppina

to the Mecca farm for the tomato season. After the picking season ended they worked in the canning factory on the Mecca property. They did this until 1935.

In 1931 they mortgaged the house for money to live on and by November of 1946 grandma discharged the mortgage and the house was free and clear again. The important years were the seven years (1928 to 1935) when grandma and her four daughters saved the house on Gelston St. They were my heroes.

Eventually everyone had a taste of Gelston street. In 1946 grandma moved to the front house with Aunt Josephine who was still single and nicknamed Tiny because she was less than 5 ft. tall. We moved from Seventh St. to the cottage in the back. My Aunt Sarah was already living above grandma when we moved in, but soon her family grew too large

and she and Uncle Joe bought their own house in Riverside. When she moved my aunt Vincenza (Jean) moved in. So you see we all had a taste, and while times were sometimes difficult, no one ever realized it.

They are all gone now, but memories survive and somehow they're all good, like my grandfathers recollection of his first trip to America, somehow the hard times are forgotten.

I have written this as a tribute to my grandma, Angela Murano and her daughters, Rose, Sarah, Jean and Tiny . My heros!!!!!!

Sam Arena

May No. 30270 Nov.

Vincenzo Murano and Angela Murano, his wife,

TO
Buffalo Savings Bank

Bond

AMOUNT \$ 3500.00

DATED June 9, 1931

LOCATION 149 Gelston St.

CLASS OF PROPERTY Dwelling

ADDRESS OF APPLICANT 134 Busti Ave.

PAID
NOV 18 1946
BUFFALO SAVINGS BANK

3500.- Nov 10 1931 - 73.40
JUN 9 1931
3500.- 4375.





Joe Carrieri
Yankee Bat Boy
1949-1955

Back in the 40s and 50s a batboy could stay with a team for awhile. My brother Ralph had been the Yankee batboy from 1946 to 1949 and the Yankee management, was open to us maintaining the family tradition. They contacted Brother Columbo, the principal at St. Jerome's Grammar School, about their willingness to offer me the position. He called the people at the Board of

Education to see if I could be let out early to make the 2:00 games.

Brother Columbo brought me into his office to give me the scoop. "Joe," he said, "I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that I called the Board of Education today and they told me that is was against the rules to let you leave school early, regardless of the reason. The good news is that I'm going to use experience to teach you a lesson. Rules are just guidelines, they can be bent when it's the right thing to do. I'll let you be a batboy as long as you meet two conditions. One, you've got to maintain your grades. Two, you've got to learn what makes the Yankees succeed and what makes Joe Di-

Maggio such a great player."

For the next seven years (1949-1955), I

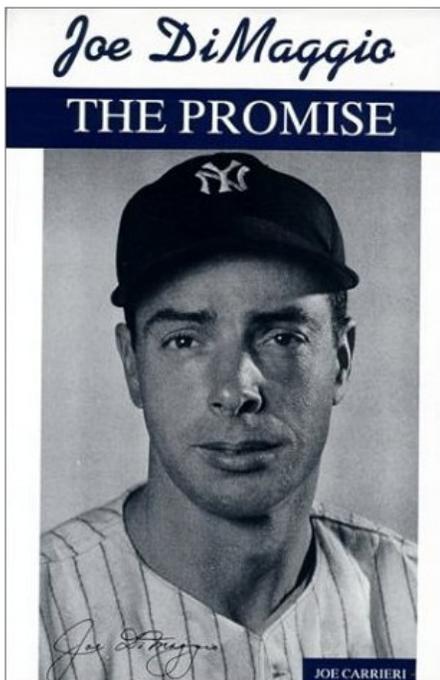
was the Yankee bat boy. I got to meet and hang around with all the great players, during the period when they established an unprecedented five consecutive World Series. I saw DiMaggio and Mantle overlap their major league careers and had a birds eye view of some of the greatest players and rivalries in the history of baseball.

I tried to stay true to the wishes of Brother Columbo. I worked hard in school and my grades actually went up, but I just couldn't get an interview with Joe. Every so often I'd bring over my pad and inquire if I could ask him some questions, but I'd always be politely rebuffed. "Not today kid" Joe would say or "I'm too tired, let's do it some other time." This went on for a couple of years, then in November of 1951, I got a call from Pete Sheehy, the clubhouse manager, that Joe DiMaggio was in the clubhouse and wanted to talk with me.

I dashed out of the house and ran the mile and a half to the stadium. Joe was sitting in the locker room drinking a coffee with Pete. He told me he was going to retire and that he wanted to keep his word and grant me my interview.

For those of us who believed that Joe was probably the greatest ball player ever to grace the game, the December retirement announcement was a deeply sad event. But for me, it was also tinged with the memory of our recent conversation and the knowledge that I'd learned part of the man's secret to success; to keep the love of the game close to your heart and whatever you do, remember there is always more to learn.

by Joe Carrieri



The promises speak of an era when your word was your bond. DiMaggio kept his promise to young Joe and that meant everything to him. DiMaggio did not disappoint his batboy. Joe DiMaggio promised Joe Carrieri a game bat in 1949 and kept his promise and gave young Joe a game bat. Fifty years later Joe Carrieri kept his promise to Joe DiMaggio and

did not write about DiMaggio's personal life. Joe D liked his privacy and Carrieri honored that wish of DiMaggio. This was an excellent book I had a great time reading it the only time I didn't like was when it was over. Joe Carrieri is a great author and tells you about one of the greatest baseball players alive

Unknown reader

AN AMERICAN PHENOMENON July 2009

Joe De Popolo

“To hell with the calendar. The day Frank Sinatra dies the twentieth century is over”. This extravagant praise from David Hajdu and Roy Hemming, two seasoned music critics was based on a view by countless Americans and most of the entertainment industry that Sinatra is “the most enduring figure of the World War II generation”.

The New Yorker magazine dubbed the young Sinatra as “an American phenomenon”. The very first book written about Frank Sinatra was written by E.J. Kahn Jr. and titled “The Voice” The Story of An American Phenomenon in 1946. This book, in mint condition, is among my vast collection of books on Frank Sinatra. The first vocalist of the 20th century to keep audiences spellbound with his balanced tone color, phrasing, diction, and the intonation that created an unrivaled soothing sound and swinging style.

The universally asked question to E.J. Kahn Jr. was “What’s this guy got that I ain’t got”. We sure were going to find out in the coming years. Frank Sinatra endeared a loyal fan base throughout the years in all the major cities and countries in the world.

On December 12, 1915, on a snowy night in a cold water tenement building on Monroe Street in Hoboken, New Jersey, Francis Albert Sinatra was born after a difficult delivery, to his parents Anthony Martin Sinatra, from Agrigento, Sicily and Natalie Catherine Garavente, from Genoa. Frank Sinatra was to become An American phenomenon, The Voice, Chairman of the Board, Ol’Blue Eyes and Grandpa, which he really enjoyed.

July 13, 2009 marked the 70th anniversary of Frank Sinatra’s first commercial recording on the Brunswick label with Harry James and his Orchestra, probably the most hunted collectible for a Sinatraphile. The song on side A of the 78 rpm record was “From the Bottom of My Heart”, and side B “Melancholy Mood”. Not only popular for his singing but everything that he does is of great concern to his fans, and to those that are still wondering “Who’s this guy”. Maybe for those who still wonder what Sinatra brought to the table probably have never seen Him at the Sands or Caesars Palace when he walks

on stage unannounced and most fans feel an electrical jolt, including myself, every time. Sinatra wants that excitement, just like he demanded Maître’d and Captain Service for his performances. The class and style started at the door of the Copa Room and of the Circus Maximus with the best dressed people in Vegas, compensating for the seat up front. This is the mystique and aura that begins the experience of a class act. Too bad all of the class has disappeared from the entertainment and dining experiences with his passing.

Sinatra, in an interview with Playboy in 1963 spoke of his quality, “Whatever else has been said about me personally is unimportant. When I sing, I believe, I’m honest. If you want to get an audience with you, there’s only one way. You have to reach out to them with total honesty and humility.”

Some tidbits from the 1940’s: In the 1946 -47 edition of the Who’s Who in America, Frank Sinatra was probably the most celebrated living American not to be listed. According to Walter Winchell, the noted newspaper columnist stated “Sinatra’s earnings during 1944 were greater than those of most other individuals in the world”.

Pete Hamill in his remembrance book “Why Sinatra Matters” said, “Sinatra is show business royalty----- A full blown American Legend”.

“Sinatra’s image has always been an important part of the singers appeal, says Billy Joel, but that is not what impressed me most, it was the voice that got to me”. Sammy Davis Jr. once said, “I wanted to be like him so bad.” Who didn’t.

He is the most generous man I’ve ever met. He is a legend to me; he is one who made all us Italians very proud. We love him and think he is the greatest. I have been with Frank on many occasions and he has an electrifying personality. I’ve never seen an entertainer like him. He makes the audience feel like he is singing to each of them personally. I am proud and honored to say I know Frank Sinatra. He is a brilliant, brilliant man.

Tommy Lasorda

“ I would like to be remembered as a man who had a wonderful time living life, a man who had good friends, fine family,--and I don’t think I could ask for anything more than that, actually”.

Francis Albert Sinatra



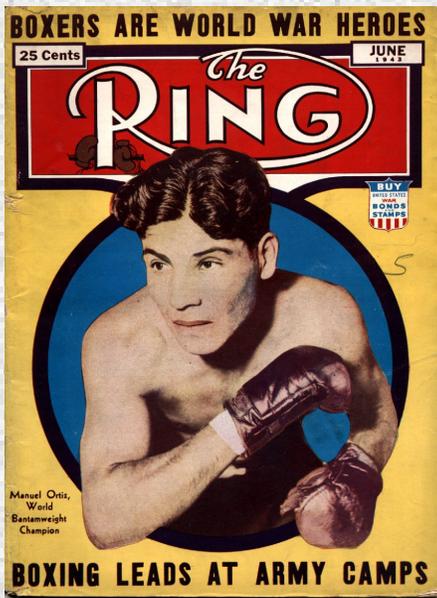
1929 picture of Sam Speciale behind counter of his store located at Jefferson and Eagle St. Above the store was Mineo's Gym, a favorite for local boxers.



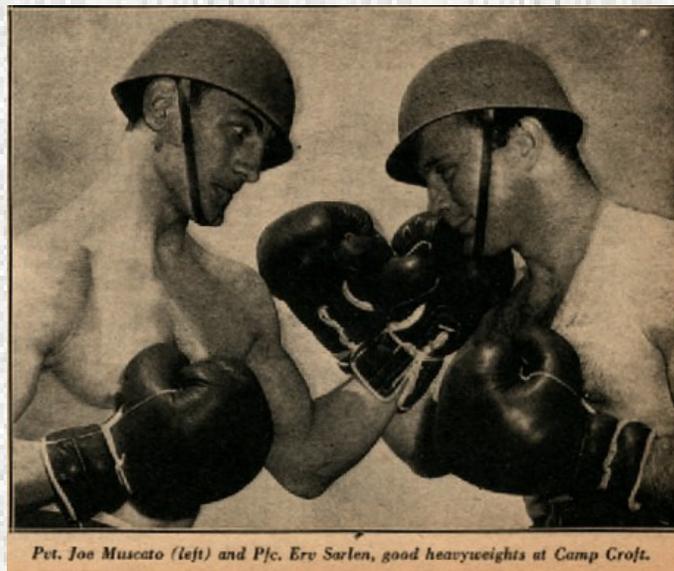
1920 picture of School # 2 second grade class



Picture taken at St Nicholas Arena in 1951. Noted fighter in picture are Rocky Marciano, Joe Louis, Rocky Graziano, Willie Pep, Tony Canzoneri and the great ring announcer Johnny Addie



The Ring Magazine, June 1943, featured Boxers in the military. Photo on right from this issue included picture of Buffalo's Joe Muscato.



Pvt. Joe Muscato (left) and Pfc. Erv Sarsen, good heavyweights at Camp Croft.



Adele Napierala

Courageous, hopeful, adventurous, faith in God, determination and wisdom... these are but a few of the attributes of my ancestors who dared to cross the Atlantic to seek a better life. It was not because they did not love their native Italy, but the poverty was overwhelming and America was the "promised land".

On my paternal side, it started with my grandfather, Cesidio Gagliardi, who came over repeatedly between

1903 and 1913, working in the USA and returning to Italy to see his family. He found work in Girard, OH and was able to send money to his wife and children, who were still living in Torre de Passeri in the Abruzzo region. According to my father, Antonio Gagliardi (Cesidio's second son), my grandfather would return to Italy every two to three years to see his family. (My grandmother would inevitably end up with another son each visit!) His intentions were to bring his entire family over to America, but that dream never was fulfilled. Cesidio passed away in 1916 at age 42 from complications due to surgery. Fortunately, his cousins and paisons in Lockport, NY, were with him when he died.

Because Cesidio died a naturalized citizen, his family was eligible to come to this country. Eventually they came, one at a time. Nicola, the eldest son, came over in 1920 and worked as a butcher in Lockport, NY. He saved enough money to send for his brother (my father), Antonio (Tony).

His stories of the long trek from Abruzzo to Naples were a source of fascinations for me, my sister Barbara, and my brother Anthony. He told stories of the hard conditions at sea, the storms, and even told of a man dying in the third class hold, who was cast anonymously out to sea. What our ancestors endured to better themselves and our families, we can only imagine.

Our favorite story occurs in the shipyard at Naples. The lines were long. Without a little help, Tony would never get through. He used his only resource: a few dozen eggs and bought his way through the port officials.

Thus, Tony set sail on the German ocean liner "Amerika" out of Naples in 1922. The ship's manifest states Antonio's destination as "407 Niagara Street, Lockport, NY, to live with his brother, Nicola". His only possessions were \$25 and the clothes he wore.

In Lockport Antonio was employed at "Simon Steel",

despite fierce anti-Italian discrimination. Signs reading "No Guineas Allowed" and "WOPs Need Not Apply!" were common in those days. My father received several beatings from local "Irish Boys", but despite this, he never harbored prejudiced feelings.

Tony worked hard and saved enough money to bring his brother Guarino (Angelo) Gagliardi over in 1924. Therefore, each brother saved to bring more family to America. Since there was a large contingent of Abruzzi families in the area, the brothers all soon relocated to the Lovejoy neighborhood on the east side of Buffalo. However, their mother (Grandma Gagliardi) still did not want to leave her home in Italy. It was only when the youngest brother, Ermanno (Uncle Erman), was to be conscripted into the Italian army that she agreed to emigrate to the U.S. in 1929. Memories of her are of a quiet little lady, dressed in black wearing a cobbler apron. Many evenings, she would walk down Gold Street to our home for coffee with out family. Grandma spoke only in Italian dialect. We understood her, but could not really converse easily with her, as we were discouraged from speaking Italian. She lived with Uncle Erman and his family until her death in April of 1966.

As the Gagliardi brothers all settled into Lovejoy, they all married girls from Abruzzi, which brings me to my maternal ancestry. My maternal grandfather, Angelo Castricone Sr. came to America by way of LeHarve, France on the ship "Niagara" in 1911. He and his very young 17 year old bride, Adelina Ottaviani (after whom I am named), settled in Lawrence, MA. There, their first child, my mother, Maria Carmina was born in 1913.

My grandmother, being very young and still not knowing the language, and pregnant with her second child, longed to return to her family in Popoli. My grandfather sent her home to be with her mother, Dominica Ottaviani nee Latanzio, intending to bring her back to the US after the birth of my aunt, Anna. World War I soon changed that plan. They were not able to return until 1918. My mother often told stories about herself and her younger sister dancing and singing Italian songs for the American soldiers on the ship back to America. As payment, the soldiers gave them chocolate bars, much to their delight.

Angelo Castricone and family eventually settled on South Division Street, where many of their compatriots lived. My mom and her siblings attended Buffalo School Number Six and St. Lucy's RC Church. They later moved into the East Lovejoy neighborhood, where Grandpa Castricone (Angelo) had a grocery store North Ogden and Ludington Street. One night in 1936, a handsome young Tony Gagliardi met Mary Castricone in that very grocery store.



Tony needed a pack of cigarettes and Mary was nice enough to open the store after hours, just for him. They were married on September 25, 1937.

Mom often related the struggles her father had as an entrepreneur. At different times, he owned a grocery, his own brand of soda pop, and finally Castricone Construction, which supported his family, including eleven children, for many years. There are still many sidewalks throughout the city of Buffalo bearing the Castricone Construction stamp. The construction business was very successful, and was eventually passed on to three of his sons: Anthony, Cesidio, and Alfred. It was said that Angelo Castricone Sr.'s word was all that was needed fill orders for concrete. His integrity was well known.

For the first eight years of my life, I lived at 90 North Ogden Street with my grandparents and all of my mother's brothers and sisters upstairs. I was spoiled with gifts and affection from my aunts Violet, Helen, Dora, and Stella. I remember being walked to kindergarten by my beloved uncle Junior (Angelo Castricone, Jr.). My grandma Castricone always had a crowded Sunday dinner table, which included not only family, but also many Buffalo area politicians and friends. My grandpa was a jovial man, with a signature stogie in his mouth, a big smile, and a bottle of his famous homemade wine for everyone. To this day, when I have a glass of Montepulciano d'Abruzzi red wine, it brings memories of him.

East Lovejoy was a haven for hard working immigrant Italians, mostly from Abruzzi, Calabria, and Naples. Every Sunday morning, the aroma of sauce permeated the neighborhood as people made their way home from St. Francis of Assisi on North Ogden Street. Msgr. Donato Valante, the pastor of St. Francis for many years, was also part of the Lovejoy legacy. Msgr. Valente married my parents, baptized me, my siblings, and even presided over my marriage to Tom Napierala in 1964.

The closeness of my family growing up was evident in the fact that at one point I had three grandparents, all aunts and uncles, and 38 cousins all within a ten-block radius of the Lovejoy neighborhood. That type of family closeness is rarely seen today, and I carry that with me. Our holidays were spent with family, with a delicious menu of homemade ravioli and sauce, roasted veal or chicken and tasty cannolis and pizzales, and the joy of laughing and being together.

Before ending this brief saga of the Gagliardi and Castricone families, I have a few observations I would like to share. The most obvious thing to me, growing up as a first-generation Italian-American, is that these beautiful people never complained. Each and every one that immigrated to

the US was grateful for the chance to make a life here, even if it was not a life of luxury. They had hope in their heart for success and a better future for their children. Many taught themselves to read and write the English language and they adopted this country as their own. Their patriotism was unparalleled, instilling this value into their children and grandchildren.

These immigrants also never forgot those they left behind in the "old country", either. I recall addressing letters to my dad's Zia Lucia in Torre De Passeri with two or five dollars enclosed. For a janitor at Westinghouse in the 1950's, this was a real sacrifice. My grandma Adelina did the same, sending money to her cousins back in Popoli. Their hard work, determination, and sacrifice did not go unrewarded. Their dream was to educate their children, and they have achieved that dream. Their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have become physicians, dentists, attorneys, medical technologists, research chemists, accountants, nurses, social workers, business entrepreneurs, and the list goes on.

All of us have embraced our Italian heritage in one way or another. It is part of the fabric of our being. Many of us have married other nationalities and have drawn our spouses into our savory culture. My husband Tom, of Polish descent, loves everything Italian... especially pasta (and me!). Our family had the wonderful opportunity to travel to the two ancestral hometowns in Abruzzo in 2006, with our children, sons-in-law, and five grandchildren. Our ties to the old country are still there, as we met cousins we had never seen before. They embraced us with open arms and genuine love, as a typical Italian family does. My only regret was that my wonderful parents were not alive to be there with us.

Thank you, mom and dad, for sharing your Italian heritage, your Catholic faith, and your endless love.

Adele

Per Niente members have asked me to expand on my comments about my May, 2009 trip to Sicily.

As I've often noted, although I would love to see some of the scenic wonders of northern Italy, I am drawn instead to Sicily, from whence my parents came and my ancestors were born, for generations, from time immemorial.

While there, I visited Taormina, a beautiful seaside remnant of the ancient Greek presence in Sicily. At one time, from 800 BC until about 240 BC, there were more Greeks in Sicily than there were in Greece itself, and it was called "Megara Hellas" by the Greeks and "Magna Graecia" by the Romans. Both names mean "Greater Greece". One relic of their presence is the Greek theater set on a hill above Taormina. From the seats of the theater, the town and majestic Mount Etna can be seen in the background behind the stage.



I spent a week in the town of Joe Di Leo's origins, Montedoro (Mountain of Gold), and while there, I visited three of his cousins. They acted as though they were my cousins, inviting me in and then inviting me back, to give me gifts, not just for Joe, but for myself!

In Montedoro, I visited a former sulfur mine where once carusi as young as seven years old did back-breaking labor, carrying baskets of sulfur up from the mines through dark, narrow labyrinths over a mile long. Once a *caruso*, always a *caruso*. When these boys were children, a *piconiere*, a pick-man from the mine, would pay their parents a *soccorso di morte* – a 'death benefit', and the boys were taken to the mine where they worked, ate and slept for the rest of their lives.

Later, in my parents' home town of Serradifalco (Mountain of the Hawk) I saw the town's memorial to its

coal miners, beside a plaque with a touching memorial by the poet A. Rizzo.

Omu della Minera (Man of the mine)

**You have dug with your hands
like a mole,
the earth that you have soaked
with sweat and blood.**

**The living will not forget
your buried lament,
your rage,
your death,
man of the mine.**

**Your sacrifice
is the hardest rock
in the pavement of civilization.**

Below the poem is this poignant message from the citizens of Serradifalco:

**"LA MINERA HA STUCCHATI
Li VoSTRi VITi
MA UNn LA VoSTRA RICoRDu"**

**"THE MINE HAS BROKEN
YOUR LIVES
BUT NOT OUR MEMORY
OF YOU"**





In Serradifalco, I was welcomed by first cousins on my mother's side as well as my father's side. The family of my cousin Carmela Coniglio Difrancesco cooked for us every noon and evening: fresh ziti with tomato sauce and a pinch of fennel; fresh linguini; *cunnighiu* (rabbit) a la cacciatore; fresh pizza, and home-made granita (lemon ice) for dessert. Actually, lemon ice for dessert is a departure from how they normally have it. In the morning, Sicilians like to slice a brioche and slather it with lemon ice. Sort of like having an ice cream sandwich for breakfast!

Much of what they served was from their campagna, a little farm in the country, a few minutes away. Many families have such 'summer places', and my cousins have olive trees which produce 120 litres of virgin olive oil each year. They also have *cucucciolli* (artichokes), *basilico*, and *fave*.

One day they picked fresh fave, took them home to shuck them, and served them as a side dish that evening.



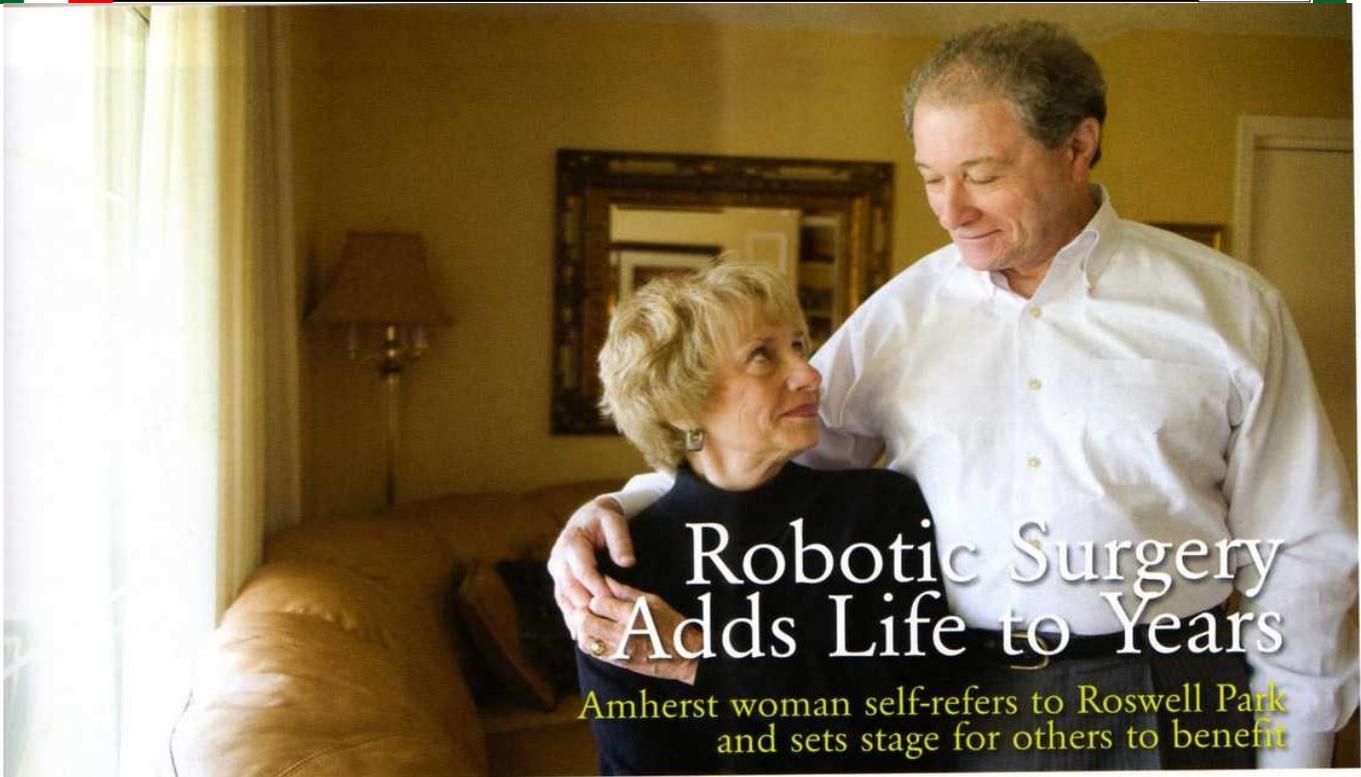
Everywhere you turn in Sicily, there are wildflowers – poppies, prickly pears, oleander and *ginestra* (wild broom). The winding roads have views of fields and fields of flowers, sometimes punctuated by a *picurau* (shepherd) and his flock.

For more information visit my website
<http://www.conigliofamily.com/SerradifalcoVisitIV.htm>



As much as I've seen in the land of my fathers, I want to see more. So, if I have the chance to go

abroad once more, you can be sure it will be to la Bedda Sicilia!



Robotic Surgery Adds Life to Years

Amherst woman self-refers to Roswell Park and sets stage for others to benefit

Nancy Gambino was alarmed when she began noticing blood in her urine about once every four months. She consulted her doctor and a community urologist, who told her initially that she had a urinary tract infection. But when she also began feeling persistent discomfort in her lower back, she went back. Further tests revealed several growths in her bladder, and immediate surgery was recommended.

"I then had seven surgeries to try to remove the tumors, plus six rounds of chemotherapy," says Mrs. Gambino. "It was both exhausting and frustrating, so I self-referred to Roswell Park for a second opinion."

Surgeons in RPCI's Urologic Oncology department diagnosed her cancer as deep and invasive, having spread into the muscle of the bladder. To keep it from spreading further, her bladder would have to be entirely removed. And time was of the essence: recent studies have shown that waiting more than 90 days to remove invasive bladder cancer can increase the risk of dying by more than 112%.

"When they said I would lose my bladder, I was devastated," recalls Mrs. Gambino. "But I thought, *If this will save my life...I have a lot of living to do.* I wanted to

keep going and see my grandkids grow up. I was healthy, and I had faith."

Mrs. Gambino was among the first patients to benefit from Roswell Park's pioneering use of minimally invasive robotic surgery for bladder removal. This approach reduced Ms. Gambino's blood loss by half over traditional open surgery, and post-surgery complications were greatly reduced. The robotic technique was also used to create a new bladder ("neobladder") for Mrs. Gambino, using part of her intestine and colon.

"I was at first fearful," says Mrs. Gambino, "and I knew it would take some time to get used to, but a co-worker who is a nurse, and my sister-in-law, both offered to help me through the transition. I was catheterized for only two months, and my neobladder has been working wonderfully over these three years."

Mrs. Gambino has resumed her active lifestyle, traveling abroad to Italy with her husband, Peter, who has been by her side at every single Roswell Park appointment.

"Roswell Park has given me my life back—at a quality I was used to," she adds. "Now, each six-month check-up to me is just like coming home."

HELP MORE PATIENTS THROUGH ROBOTIC SURGERY

RPCI has launched a new campaign to expand its ability to offer the benefits of robot-assisted surgery to more patients. The campaign also will help raise funds to meet the urgent national need for a best-in-class robotic surgical training facility. With your help, the collaborative WNY Robotic Surgical Center at Roswell Park will expand the use of robotic surgery to patients with cancers including:

- prostate
- bladder
- gynecological
- colorectal
- thoracic
- upper gastrointestinal

Help RPCI take advantage of a generous \$708,210 commitment from the John R. Oishei Foundation! Call **Linda Kahn** at **716-845-7606**, or visit **RoswellPark.org/Robotics** to make your secure gift or for more information, including video testimonials and audio podcasts.

Pete and Nancy Gambino are chartered members of the Per Niente Club