



Sal Maggiore

My parents, Giovanni Batista Maggiore and Rose Clementi, were born late in the nineteenth century in the city of Bagheria, near Palermo, the capital of Sicily. My father came to America through Ellis Island in 1920 at age twenty-five and

made his way to Utica, NY to work with relatives. After a brief stay he traveled to Albion, NY. There he met and married my beautiful mother, then a stunning sixteen year old from Brooklyn NY who worked in Albion at a canning factory with her brother, Sam, and my maternal Grandmother.

Soon, in Albion, my brother, Tom and two of my sisters, Mary and Angie were born. Construction work in Buffalo caused a move to Busti Avenue where I was born.

At age eight I lived at Prospect and Rhode Island Streets, and played on Vermont Street at the opposite corner near the 174th Armory whose castle-like shape I so dearly loved. I fantasized about the Knights of the Round Table and the exciting adventures occurring in and out.

Suddenly, one warm day in 1945, horns blared, church bells

rang, sirens blasted and people ran in the street. They hugged, kissed and danced. I couldn't imagine what had happened. Scared, I ran home to learn WW II had ended and that soon my brother, Tom, would return after three years of service in India, New Zealand and China. The days of air raid wardens yelling, through our upright Zenith console radio warning people to turn off our lights finally ended.



Tom Maggiore



The Maggiores: Jenny, Sal, Anna and Rose

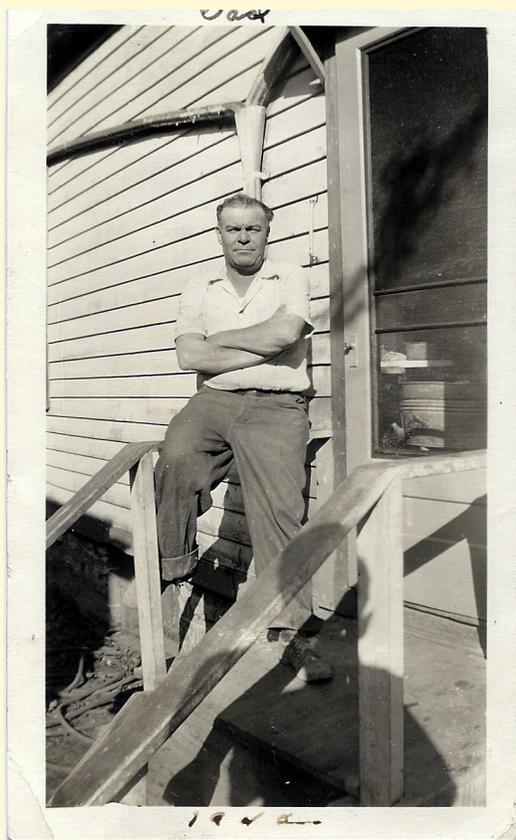
Our house on Prospect was really a cottage. I remember helping my father shovel coal from the street into the basement (I'm sure I was in the way.) Later, City fantail trucks: Ash and Garbage vehicles picked up the spent ashes.

Fifty years later I was working for the City in charge of replacing city sidewalks. One day while on Prospect and Rhode Island Street I stood, reminiscing and staring at a small house. Soon a woman came out to ask, "What are you doing here? What are you staring at? After showing her my City I D, I told her I once lived here. "No," she said, "We've been here for over fifty years and the people before us were the Maggiore family."

"Yes, I'm a Maggiore," I said. She stared in disbelief and blurted out, "All I remember is that you had so many living here. How did you do it?"

She was right. At one time we were nine. Dad, Mom, Grandma, Tommy, Mary, Angie, Jennie, Anna and me. My grandmother died in that house and was waked there in our living room. I have so many memories of her. She took me to the corner to Mr. Militello's grocery store and to Niagara and Rhode Island to the colorful soda fountain at Mirabella's Drug Store. Oh, what memories! Next to Mirabella's was the Niagara Hall where many Italian weddings were celebrated complete with wax paper wrapped capicola sandwiches, cold pizza and peanuts.

I also remember Pieri's Bar nearby. My brother and father took me there every Friday night for clams and twenty-cent crabs and to watch "the fights" on Pieri's 12 inch TV set. Next door was Mae Spagna



Giovanni Batista Maggiore
at 730 Prospect Ave early '40s

Gambino's Beauty Salon. Mae was a true pioneer beautician.

Down the street lived the future first Italian Mayor of Buffalo, Frank Sedita. From where we lived on Prospect, an alley separated our houses. Also on Niagara Street was Doctor Herman Mogavero who made house calls. God bless him. Now, my wife and I see his son, Herman, a prominent Dermatologist.

In those days I attended P.S. 49 at Vermont and Fargo. Who could forget those wooden floors and stairs? Our gymnasium was a pole with a make-shift basket for basketball. No playground area existed. I remember schooling with Joe Raco and Stanley Collesano until fourth grade. I also remember Sam "Yakim" Runfola and I'll never forget seeing a very strong fourteen-year Pat Sole fight a man

twice his size and beat him.

In fifth grade we returned to the corner of Rhode Island Street to the house in which I was born. I transferred to P.S. 77 on Rhode Island and Plymouth. Walking to school I'd pass the Senate Theatre and the Senate Grill. The theatre became my new home. I was there three times a week, each time a movie changed. Often in the darkened theatre I'd see a flash of light behind the screen. That meant the Battaglias who lived next door were sneaking in. The Senate Grill was run by the Zendano family. Damon Runyon would have had a field day with the likes of New Guinea Dan, George Raft, Dan O' Weed, Big Nick, Little Nick, Joe the Hog, Eddie and Danny Boone.

P.S.77 was great. We had a modern gym and a playground. There I was close with Sal Zendano and soon met lifelong friends: Sam Arnone, Pat Palmeri, the Gangis, Len Pepe, and Phil Scafiddi, who was influen-

tial in my attending Tech High. Older guys like Charlie Nigro Johnny Mecca, and Mike Lettieri were very popular. Joe Rubino's parents had a grocery store at the corner at Massachusetts and Plymouth. Richard Viola (movie guru) still lives across from the school. What a great neighborhood. Everyone knew Jimmy Cirrito, his sister, Jeanie, Louise Teresi (Arnone) and Carm Panone. I always resented Carm because she could hit a baseball farther than I and she was also a better swimmer.

When I was fourteen and not quite five foot tall in eighth grade, my family moved to 18th Street. The street was so narrow that in winter plows couldn't plow. There were no garages and very few parking spaces. It was a nightmare. The houses were so close your neighbors were almost in your lap hearing what you said and watching you have dinner.

At the Massachusetts playground I made new friends: Joe Peperone, Mike Foglia, Jim Randazzo and long life friends, Larry LaDuca, John and Don Ganci. We played sports till the wee hours every day. Kenny Fehringer lived on 18th Street and influenced me and next door neighbor, Dick LoGalbo to join the Marines ("Semper Paratus"). The Pieris lived on the corner. John became a big league attorney and brother Steve, earned distinction as a Vietnam veteran and as a city building inspector.

I grew up a little spoiled. My older sister Mary and my mother gave me anything I wanted. They did without to fulfill me. When I was approaching age eighteen, I convinced Mary, who, at the time worked at Westinghouse, to buy a family car. I, the big shot, drove this long beautiful Oldsmobile up and down the street. On my eighteenth birthday with eight dollars in my pocket, I decided to celebrate at

Fort Erie Race Track. My brother urged my mother to bet two dollars on a 2 and 7 daily double because it was the twenty-seventh day of the month and it was also my birthday.

Sixty years ago, two dollars was a lot of money for my mother who was living on social security. When I got to the track, I saw that the odds on two and seven were very long. I wanted my mother to win something. So, I didn't bet my birthday numbers but put my mother's two-dollars on the heavy favorite. I thought, doubling her money was better than nothing.

Well, 2 and 7 came in! Crossing the Peace Bridge I was so befuddled, as I, the big shot, had to explain why I didn't have my mother's winnings: \$900 in my pocket. All our neighbors were on our porch waiting for me as if I had won an Olympic gold medal.

My mother and my sister Mary were the only ones who truly understood or believe what happened. These are the warm and wonderful upper West Side neighborhood memories I so fondly remember.



Mary Maggiore posing on brother Sal's 1955 Oldsmobile