

# Per Niente

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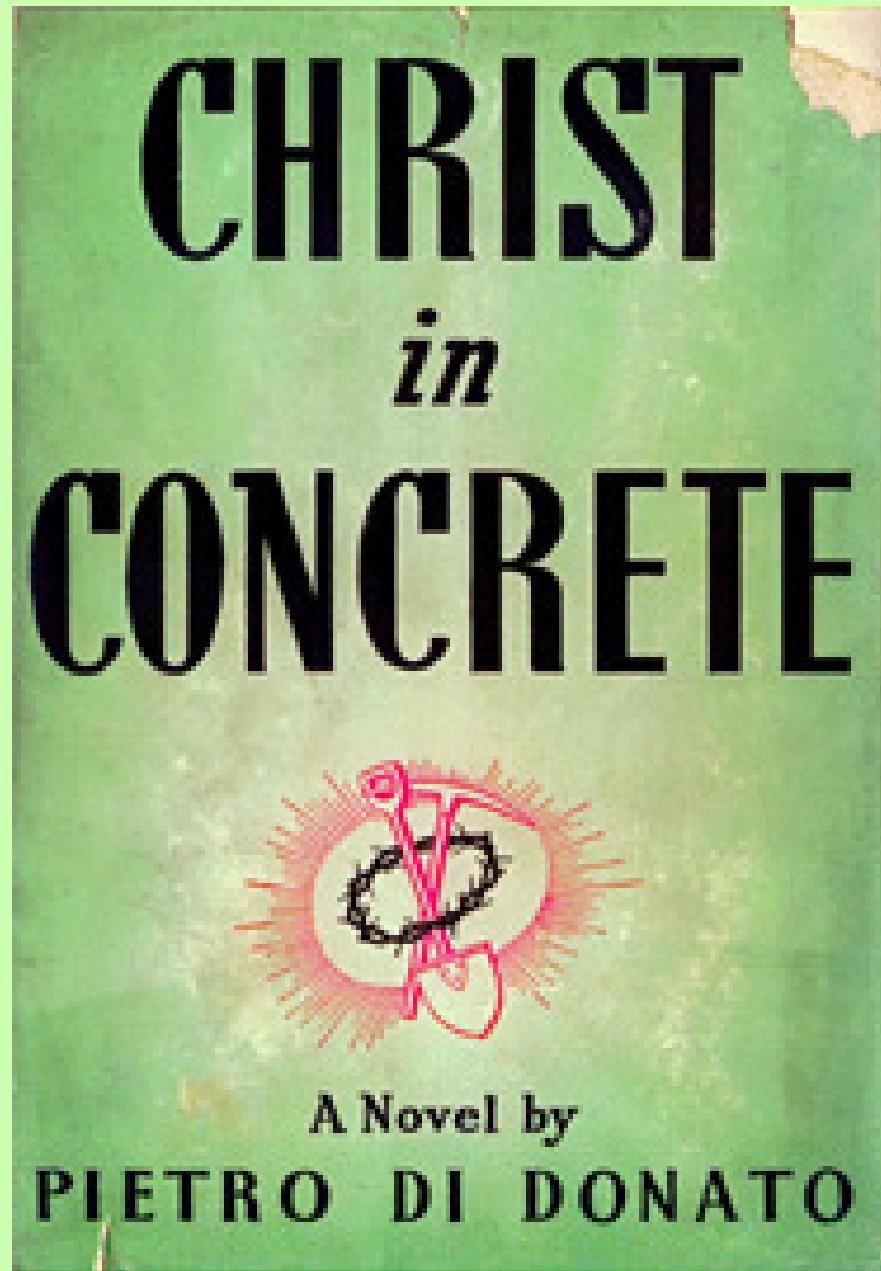
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Pietro Di Donato

Pietro Di Donato was born on April 3, 1911 in west Hoboken, New Jersey and died on January 19, 1992. His father

was Geremio Di Donato and his mother was Annunziata Chinquina and he was the eldest of their eight children. His parents emigrated from Abruzzi, Italy and just like *Christ in Concrete*, Di Donato lost his father in a construction accident on Good Friday in 1923. At twelve years old, Di Donato had to leave school in the seventh grade and started working in the same construction business that killed his father. His mother died a few years later and Di Donato had taken full responsibility for his siblings. However different from the book, Di Donato was able to take night courses at a city college and became a fan of French and Russian novelists, he even kept his union card when he left the masonry business.

*Christ in Concrete*, Di Donato's first publication was a short story that appeared in the March 1937 issue of Esquire magazine. It was such a popular piece, that it was republished. This short story became the first chapter of the book *Christ in Concrete*. The book was such a huge success that it beat out *The Grapes of Wrath* in the Book of the Month Club. In 1939 *Christ in Concrete* was published and was on the New York Times best seller list for several months.

Pietro Di Donato's work reflects the hard lives of Italian immigrants. He uses thick Italian dialect and nicknames to help create an authentic setting, while poetically intertwining Catholicism, "Holy Communion of freedom" into the storyline; "these great

child-hearted ones leave one another without words or ceremony, and as they ride and walk home, a great pride swells the breast...". The use of the Italian language is so strong sometimes, that the reader must slow down just to comprehend the texts' meaning; "He who works, eats. He who does not work eats, drinks and dances. Come, we who work with our hands can live a thousand centuries and yet will we have to work".

Di Donato's use of nicknames for his characters goes beyond labeling. It is common in Italian culture to use nicknames and in *Christ in Concrete* it is no exception. Nicknames are used in Italian culture to help distinguish family members from other close knit family members. There might be several Geremios, so a nickname would help differentiate between them. A common way to differentiate those names would be to attach "Big" or "Little" to the name. An example would be "ino" added to the end of a name such as Geremino to signify age relation. The book starts with a major nickname given to Geremio's work; "Job". Other nicknames are given to the characters such as "Old Nick", "The Lean", "Snoutnose", and "Barralmouth" and so on to help show a characters appearance and development. Even the main character Paul gets a nickname upon the start of his masonry



career, following the death of his father; "son of Master Geremio". Women in the book are also given nicknames, but much like throughout the book, they are narrowed down to non appearance nicknames or even "The wife of..." nicknames. The use of 'O' in front of a nickname titles the character "The", which elevates the character into his world.

Di Donato successfully pulls the reader into the Italian-American immigrant world, while his characters want to get out of it.

#### About the book: Bricklayers on the job.

The book starts with the main character's father dying at a masonry job. His death is clearly shown with a great amount of gruesome detail, "the floor vomited upward. Geremio clutched at the air and shrieked agonizingly" only to be followed by the determination of Paul to help support his mother and siblings. Paul tries to fulfill his father's dream of attaining "the American dream" through hard labor at the young age of twelve. Paul befriends his father's co-workers, only to learn that they are more experienced about life in more ways than one; "Paul was not Paul...he was apprentice-boyo,...half-pint jerk-off...titty-drinker".

Living conditions in NYC during the early twentieth century.

The reader follows Paul to work as a brick-layer, to life in the Tenement, "with only window ledge at bosom; the sight of many men stepping to wife and little ones, the rising-falling feet of husband-fathers on stairway, the opening and shutting of home doors, ...the wonderful fantasy of eventide, of plates and bread and soup and spoons' clatter" through his acquaintances at home and through his respect of his mother Annunziata. Paul experiences more death in



Late 1920s New York City Construction site

life from the death of his godfather Nazzone, who also dies on the job like Geremio. *Christ in Concrete* gives an Italian feast for the eyes "chicken soup...rich with eggs, fennel, artichoke roots, grated parmesan and noodles that melted...broiled fat eels garnished with garlic and parsley..." and soul and teaches how life was like in New York City in the early part of the twentieth century.; "Paul laid bricks like one running from danger, like one struggling for air, like one who fights and must not fail".

*Editors Note: A film based upon Christ in Concrete is being developed and will be directed by John Sayles.*

Article written and submitted by Alice LaBonte,  
Chandler, AZ





**Angelo Tona**

**June 24 1933 - April 13 2012**

Angelo Tona had eight siblings and as a child I knew them all. Angelo, who was four months older than me was my first friend and the brother I never had. In the 1930s we lived on wooden lamppost lit Efner Street in the teeming lower West Side where amidst the dialect of Sicily a lasting friendship of seventy-four years would begin.

At age four we fist fought each other on cobblestone at the behest of older boys who wagered pennies on who would win. In kindergarten at P S 73 in an effort to learn English we listened to our peers, those born to first generation Americans who spoke America's words in public and at home.

Due to the economics of the time Angelo and I were the only ones in kindergarten without rugs to lie on until Miss Shaw, a kind teacher brought in two rugs she conveniently said she found. In class, when told to stand and give our names, Angelo said, "me am Angelo," and I said what my mother told me to say: "me Americano."

In the late 1930s and early 40s The Tonas, led by the matriarch, Guisepina, spent many summers living

and picking fruits and vegetable on nearby farms. Angelo's father, Calogero, a non-picker worked at Buffalo Forge on William Street to which he walked to and fro for decades. However, on Saturday, his day off, he would arduously ride a bicycle twenty-three miles to deliver a bushel basket of food to his farm working family. After years of saving their collective earnings the Tonas purchased a home on asphalt paved Seventh Street.

Shortly thereafter Angelo became an altar boy at nearby 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 in saloons frequented by lawyers. In that sphere he acquired a love for Law, and upon graduating he applied to Fordham Law School and was accepted. Though Fordham was in The Bronx Angelo lived in Brooklyn and to support himself he tended bar at the Bossert Hotel on Montague Street. He graduated from Fordham Law, Evening Division in 1962 and worked as a claims examiner representing Geico Insurance in Brooklyn night court. While studying for the Bar, he received a phone call from me. I said I was in New York to further an acting career and I had "very little money and could I stay with him for a few days?"

He came to me. The next day the kindest man I've ever known gave me subway fare to NYC: an altruistic act he repeated daily hoping I'd find work. He also saw to it that I had a fifty-cents a day line of credit at Sally's Myrtle Avenue Deli and the Adami brothers, owners of a nearby hardware store were told to give me fifty-cents - once a day - when ever I asked for it.

I seized upon his benevolence. Those "few days" became six months. I brought every starving actor I met to Angelo's and some who became famous ate him out of house and home. After a depressing Geico night court

experience a hungry Angelo entered his apartment building eager to devour a lone pork chop: the last morsel in his once abundant refrigerated food supply. Upon entering his dwelling he savored the aroma of fried pork only to see a young man, a stranger, wearing one of HIS shirts and fiendishly eating HIS pork chop. I told Angelo that the man was a friend from back home who somehow knew my Brooklyn address. I said he was starving and had been sleeping on park benches and just now showered for the first time in weeks. I then told Angelo that the man jumped bail in Buffalo and could he stay with us for a while? Angelo, ashen-faced, composed himself and in precise Legalese articulated the consequences of an aspiring lawyer harboring a fugitive. He ended his tirade to say he was starving. I found some rice, boiled it, laced it with warm ketchup and that was his dinner.

The next morning a bondsman wired money and our visitor returned to Buffalo via the 8th Avenue Greyhound Bus Terminal. Fortunately, I was long gone by 1964 when Angelo was admitted to the Bar. Before becoming an assistant D A in Brooklyn's King's County, Angelo's youngest sister Lucy Barone and her West Seneca neighbor, Patricia Clayback, a bright, Canisius College student in her early thirties visited him. That introduction to the lovely Patricia, a widow with five young boys ignited a friendship that would endure beyond five decades.

In 1975 New York State Special Prosecutor Charles (Joe) Hynes assigned the late Tom Cleary and Angelo to investigate Medicaid fraud in Rochester and Buffalo respectively. Both successfully did so. In the interim Angelo and Tom brought many of their friends to my little restaurant on Allen Street. By 1978 Angelo was statewide chief of Medicaid prosecutors. In 1986 after a leadership role in the Queens County District Attorney's office, the Mayor of New York, Ed Koch, appointed Angelo to the bench in Criminal Court, a judgeship in which Angelo served honorably.

Upon retiring in 1999, Angelo returned to his one great love, Pat Clayback: an honorable woman worthy of his trust who tended to him as a sixth offspring. Through the years, Pat's sons, Donald, Mark, Gary, Michael, Brian, their families and Angelo encompassed her

life. Nonetheless, she astutely matriculated and ultimately became Associate Dean of Adult Admissions at Canisius College.

In recent years, Angelo, though burdened with health issues lived as a King with a peasant's taste amid the robust redolence of spareribs, onions and garlic that I fried for him in his mother's skillet. In Hamburg, on Saw Grass Court far beyond the reaches of Efner Street's cobble-stones but near the farms of yesteryear, Angelo was lovingly nurtured by Pat Clayback, who, after a recent physical setback of her own, I'm happy to say is convalescing positively.

Years ago I wrote Bread and Onions, a performance piece about the old neighborhood I've referenced. In it I said this about Angelo and his oldest brother, Carmen, his mentor. "Carmen Tona, an electronic genius much before his time had a little brother, who, when asked his name, "me am Angelo," he said while chewing on something that resembled Welfare spam. Pity. English he could not speak. He became a lawyer then a judge in New York City." And now, Me Am Angelo, the King who boasted he was humble and proud of it - is dead. Long live the King; the brother I never had. He was my first friend and Pat Clayback was his last.





The town where I was born in Italy is known for its banditos (bandits). The most famous bandit in all of Italy was Giuseppe Musolino from Santo Stefano in Aspromonte, a town surrounded by mountains in Calabria, Italy.

Musolino, whose story is an

Italian tragedy was born September, 1876 and died in January, 1956.

He worked as a woodcutter and enjoyed life. While relaxing at a tavern and playing a game where nuts were used for money, he had an argument with some men. At day's end the men departed enemies. One such man was Vincenzo Zoccali. That evening, Zoccali was shot while working in a barn and was injured. Near the shooting was Musolino's hat. Musolino was placed on trial for shooting Zoccali.

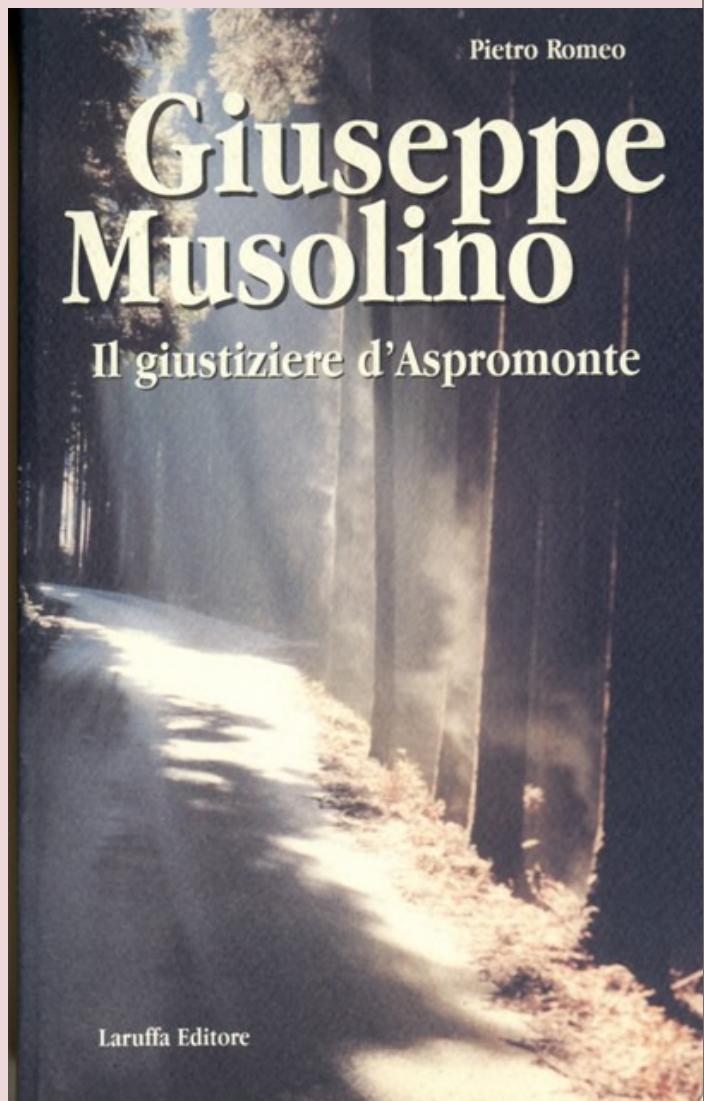
At the trial several men falsely testified against him. One was Giuseppe Trovia. Musolino was convicted and sentenced to 21 years in prison. At the trial Musolino stated he would seek revenge. This he did. After three years in prison he escaped. He went into the Santo Stefano hills and started on his path for revenge by killing two of the men who testified against him. Giuseppe Trovia was not one of them. He would also go out and seek revenge for others who had been falsely accused of a crime. All in all when he was through, he shot 18 men; killed 10 and injured 8. He

was caught in 1901 and placed on trial and was sentenced to prison for life.

In 1933 Giuseppe Trovia who had immigrated to the United States confessed that he falsely testified against Musolino, that he was innocent and he (Trovia) actually shot Vincenzo Zoccali. Musolino was freed from prison in 1946 and was placed in a mental hospital and died at age 79.

The thieves and bandits of Santo Stefano took pride as to how they looked and kept themselves well groomed even under the worst circumstances.

I was a young barber there and on many occasions I went to the hills to cut their hair and lather their





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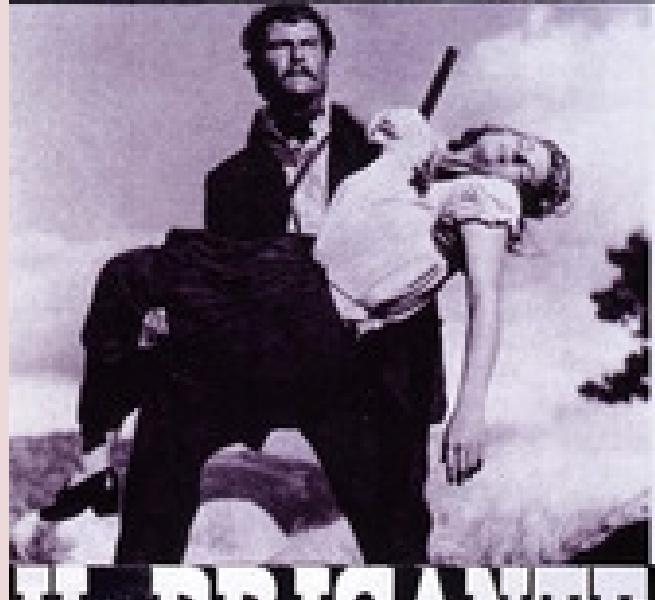
faces.

The procedure was quite simple. Someone would approach my parents to say they'd pick me up at 4 AM and not to worry. Then I was taken into the hills to those wanted by police, who, I might add, were appreciative. They said they felt better and looked better. And they did. Avoiding capture didn't mean they shouldn't look good.

On occasion they would give themselves up because the police had threatened to put their wives and children in jail. If a single person was wanted, the police threatened to lock up their parents. This happened many times. Most of these men stole, murdered, or injured someone. A great deal of their trouble started when someone insulted them to injured their pride. In poverty the only thing a person had was his or her dignity. One does not take this from them. I once picked some figs off the ground on a neighbor's land. He saw me. When I was in the town square with friends he insulted me with many curses. I went home for my father's pistol. I saw the neighbor in the fields and started shooting. This was his lucky day. I missed. He told my mother what I did. She knew the story and dismissed him by saying that I usually didn't miss and he should consider himself lucky that I was having a bad-gun-day. My pride was restored.

Though Santo Stefano is now peaceful, Musolino

# Amedeo Nazzari Silvana Mangano



# IL BRIGANTE MUSOLINO

has become a folk hero. His legendary life has been immortalized in movies and song. His gravesite and those of others have become tourist attractions.





The new church ladies of Holy Cross; that's what we call them. They are a group of women who have become a part of the fabric of their old parish. Some of them left and joined other churches closer to their homes, but return to their home parish on a regular basis. Others left the parish for a while and came back to make Holy Cross their main place of worship and still others never left at all. Some make the ride from their suburban homes once or twice or even three times a week.

When we were kids, there was a group of severe looking women, almost all dressed in black, at mass every morning and at every novena in the evening. These women decorated the altar and changed the altar linen, as well as the clothing on the many statues, such as the Infant of Prague. They never seemed to have much time for us kids, although some would give us a quick smile and tell us to be quiet in Italian and not to talk or laugh in church and to show respect both for the church and for our elders. There was one old lady who stood in the back of the church to make sure that we wiped our shoes as we entered if it was snowing or raining outside. She was scary.

These days, the modern church ladies are much more laid back. They work on altar decorations and flower arrangements, particularly at holiday time; they sing beautifully in the church choir under the direction of the talented Nancy Cannizzaro, who is also the organist and serves as the church secretary. Until a few months ago, Nancy lived in the same house where she and her twin sister Mary Cannizzaro Rizzo were born, 122 West Avenue. Now she drives in daily from Amherst.

They act as Eucharistic Ministers, distribute communion, counsel the children, write and sell cookbooks (which are a huge success), and, run baked good sales



Seated, Miss Nancy A. Cannizzaro, president of Holy Cross Ladies Society and her twin sister, Mrs. Joseph P. Rizzo, president of the Home School Association. Standing, Mrs. Michael J. Muscarella, vice-president of the Ladies Society, and Mrs. Vincent M. Andreana, vice-president of the H.S.A.

and spaghetti dinners throughout the year. Most years they prepare a fabulous St. Joseph's table, although that gets harder and harder as their numbers shrink and the table's popularity increases, as people in the church community and many others develop a fondness for the holiday and the goodies that are served.

Msgr. David Gallivan, the pastor at Holy Cross, says that he does not know what he would possibly do without the church ladies. "They work hard. They are fiercely loyal and loving. These women are living examples of the Christian message."

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Most of these women not only grew up in the parish, but also went to the elementary school, which has been closed since 1984. Many of them were classmates in the very first graduating class of Holy Cross Elementary School. They include Barbara Scanio (Vasi), a former American Airlines and AAA travel specialist and executive. This writer had a huge crush on her in seventh and eighth grades but, alas, she wouldn't give him a tumble. She doesn't come back as often as some of the others but she says it helps her remember her youth and some great times in her life when she does. Ann Rose Noto (Canazzi) and Rose Marie Verso, as well as Antonina Canazzi (Toni), Suzanne Gullo (Marranca) and Betty Cole (Polizzi) are among those who just can't cut the ties.

Ann Rose Noto was the office manager for a chemical company for most of her career. She comes back at least once or twice a week. "I do it because of the people . . . many of whom are old and dear friends. It feels right." Ann, whom her classmates knew as Anna Rose Canazzi, says there is no place like it. Most come to choir practice on Thursdays and many attend daily mass at 8:30. In part, these women love Holy Cross because, as the former Barbara Vasi told me, growing up at Holy Cross was a great period in their lives. They recall fondly being in class with Sister Mary Redempta, along with as many as 53 other classmates, where Sister ruled with an iron hand, as she would have to with a group that size. Can you imagine telling a modern teacher to work with a class that size? There would be a revolution.

Rose Marie Verso is one of the leaders of the pack. She is a retired school teacher who worked in the Kenmore schools, at Washington School and later at Lindbergh School, where she taught second and third grades for over 36 years. Rose Marie lives in Depew, New York, but she says that she cannot imagine not coming to Holy Cross. The "girls" as she calls them, are all friends. "They are my family" she says, many of whom grew up with her in the old Lakeview projects. She told me as she helped prepare the logistics for the next baked goods sale, "I've had so many good times in

this parish" and she smiled and talked about the shows they put on, including the memorable Miss Holy Cross Pageant.

Betty Polizzi Cole and Susanne Marranca Gullo were 1956 graduates of Holy Cross School and have been friends ever since. They attended Villa Maria High School together and both continue to live in the City of Buffalo. They never left Holy Cross. They are members of the Ladies Society and work at all the bake sales and spaghetti dinners.

From the Class of 1955 came Antonina Canazzi, "Toni," to one and all. She had a long and successful career, first at the University at Buffalo where she was an assistant to the OB/GYN chair at the medical school and presently is court clerk to Judge Jeff Voelkl in Williamsville Village Court. Toni is a Holy Cross lifer. As she puts it, "It makes me feel good to be here."

Mary Runfola, who lives in Kenmore, is the eldest member of the choir and still works at bake sales and other parish tasks. At 85 she is at Holy Cross every Sunday. Also in the choir is 80 year old Josephine Licata, who still lives in Buffalo, now on Baynes, and still worships at Holy Cross.

Connie Andrianna was at mass every Sunday until her death a few years ago. Her husband Vince, a retired barber, still serves as an usher. Parishioners say she made the world's best crispelli. They sold out all the time.

Mary Rizzo (Canizzaro), who is Nancy Canizzaro's twin, ran the very successful Holy Cross Head Start Program for 30 years and oversaw its growth to six separate locations. She is one of two trustees of the parish, along with Dan Figuroa. She and Nancy reminisced about their old homestead. They talked about the priests who have come and gone through the years. Some now serve elsewhere, some have passed away or retired and still others have left the ministry. They talked about the parties and music shows. They recall names too many to mention, but there is no mistaking the great affection they have for Frs. Rick Reina, Anthony Caliguri, Paul Bosse and particularly Dino Loren-

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zetti. Some of them still come to the spaghetti dinners or the community parties. Fr. Dino said, "These women have invested themselves in the fabric of the place. They are a big part of why Holy Cross is special."

The women are a little sad right now because Cassamina (call me Cassie) Bellonio will soon be moving with her sister to Hagerstown, Maryland, to be closer to family members since both are in failing health.

These women say "it's the people" which keep them coming back. It isn't just the people from the past, nor the special bond they have formed with one another over the years, although that's certainly a big part of it. But it's also seeing these new families, newly-arrived Africans and Latinos who come to mass as a family to worship and receive the sacraments. They have brought the same kind of vibrancy that the women remember filled their lives and the lives of their parents before them. They notice how hard these new parishioners work at preserving the old country customs and still position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities they could never have had if they had not been so fortunate as to come to the United States, to Buffalo, to Holy Cross.

As Father Dave Gallivan, the hard-working and dedicated pastor put it, "It's a win-win for us all."

The women talk often about Sister Mary Redemta, the Felician superior and principal of the school for five years. She was a real character and great teacher. As one of the group said "You couldn't get promoted until you showed you could spell, punctuate and diagram."

Mostly, however, they speak of the many priests who have come through the doors of Holy Cross through the years. They start with Msgr. Joseph Gambino, the founder and patriarch of the parish who always seemed to have snuff on his clothes and garlic on his breath. They laugh about Fr. Joseph Joseph, Fr. Charles Schoy, brothers Fr. Anthony and Fr. Angelo Caligiuri, and Fr. Paul Bosse, who is now at Blessed Sacrament, but still comes around now and then. Their respect and affection for these men is clear. Their fa-

vorites may be Fr. Rick Reina, now at Christ the King Seminary, and the charismatic Msgr. Dino Lorenzetti, who served as pastor at Holy Cross for seven years and is still ministering and preaching regularly at 90. Rose Marie Verso told me they admire how the present pastor, Msgr. David Gallivan, has been able to integrate Immaculate Conception Parish into Holy Cross and his great work with the Latinos and African parishioners who are strong factors in the vitality of the parish.

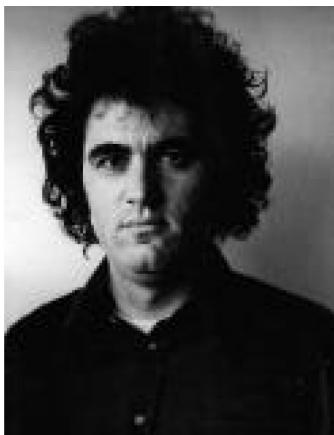
On Easter Sunday the old parish rocked. The big old church was full of people, families talking and socializing before and after mass (and sometimes during). The old church ladies may not have approved of all of this fun in church but Fr. Gallivan and the new church ladies love it!

The new church ladies are unique and special. They are different from the old church ladies, more sophisticated, more educated and have had careers and wonderful lives - but they are similar in their desire to do good, to help others, and most especially in their dedication to this grand old church.



"The Swinging Nun"

Sister Mary Redemta



Jack Spiegelman

1970s photo

Joe and I are age seventy plus and it's well known the time to learn a language is the early years. But there we were, engaged in a heroic attempt to defy the odds. We took classes, listened to tapes, watched Italian TV on

the internet. But you can study it and listen to it and watch it on TV until the day you drop dead and none of it helps - the speaking--to open the mouth--the whole point. So, to address this problem Joe and I get together once or twice a week to spritz the Italian. We do it at his house, usually around lunch so I can sponge a meal. Joe is a good cook (e un buon cuoco). On this day its chicken soup.

JOE: Com'e il brodo? Ti piace? (how is it the soup? It pleases you?)

ME: Si-e squisito (yes--its exquisite)

(Joe lobs over a Snickers--the bite size)

JOE: dopo il pasto e necessario disporre di un dolce (following the meal it is necessary to dispose of a sweet)

Down to work. We use a text--Oggi in Italia, acquired from the bookstore over at Buff State for \$187.00 plus tax. I don't have my life to live over but if I did I would go into the college textbook business.

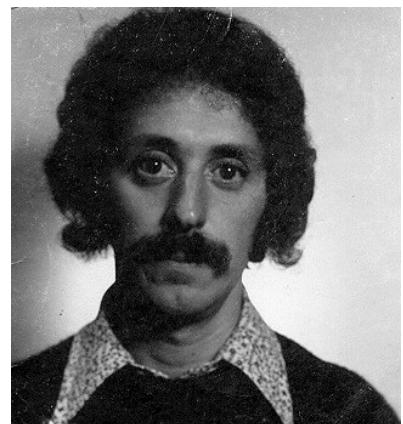
On this day its the reflexive verbs. We start with annoiarsi--to be bored.

Me: che cosa ti annoi? (what thing bores you?)

Joe: soltanto Florida. (only Florida)

Next word to discuss: divertirsi-- (to amuse yourself)

Joe: come ti diverti quando sei solo? (How do you amuse yourself when you are alone?)



Joe Di Leo

1970s photo

Me: Non sono mai soli. Ho una doppia personalita (I am never alone: I have a double personality)

JOE: parli con forza!. E piu chiaramente! Stai mormorando. La pronuncia e la chiave! (Speak with force! And more clearly! You're mumbling. Pronunciation is the key!)

ME: l'Italiano mi fa pazzo! (the Italian makes me crazy!) Next word to discuss is: arrabiarsi: (to be angry) Che cosa ti arrabiarti? (what thing makes you angry?)

Joe: la pasta troppo cotti (the spaghetti too much cooked)

Etc, etc. So it goes for 2 hours and sometimes 3. Its hard--(brutale)--but fun. We laugh and laugh.

JOE: to an Italian we must sound like two babies (bambini) three-years old.

ME: We should tape these conversations and upload to YouTube and in two days we would get three million hits--guaranteed!

JOE: Si, per certo (yes, it is certain).



Nick Elia in his grocery store - 38 Busti Avenue

I have told my family repeatedly that when I die I want to be cremated and my ashes spread over where my house was on Busti Avenue, although I don't think they will find that spot. The majority of the original families moved from the area in the early 1960s. For twenty years between the 1950s and the 1970s the empty houses were subjected to neglect and decay. They were eventually torn down to prepare for the future. In their place the city built pre-cast concrete structures which became the Shoreline Apartments.

Your introduction to the population of Busti Avenue was at the very capable hands of mid-wife, Dona Stella Pellegrino, mother of Angie Merlino. Dona Stella delivered my sister Nancy, my brother Carmen, me and probably 50% of the rest of the kids on the block. This was one of the happiest times of my life.

If you got cut or didn't feel like going "all the way" (four blocks) to Columbus Hospital on Niagara Street,

you went to Strozzi's Drug Store, Busti & Wilkenson. If you wanted fresh bread you went across the street to DiChristina's Bakery, 49 Busti. If you wanted the best cheese around, you went to Merlino's, 51 Busti, and by the way, Anthony still makes cheese and brings it to Guercio's on Grant Street on Wednesdays. If you wanted cigars and tobacco, again across the street to Billy La Chiusa's, 37 Busti. Did your roof leak? No worry, we had DelNuovo & Sons Roofing, 44 Busti. Shoes need resoling? Take a walk to 65 Busti and get them fixed. How about a night out on the town? Salemi's Club Rainbow was around the corner on Court Street. Better yet, their kitchen faced Busti and Millie or Ruth Allen would make you a big dish of French fries for a dime. On the opposite corner there was Sorrento's for crabs, clams, fresh corn and roasted lamb heads. Buffamonte (the other grocer) was on Busti and Geor-

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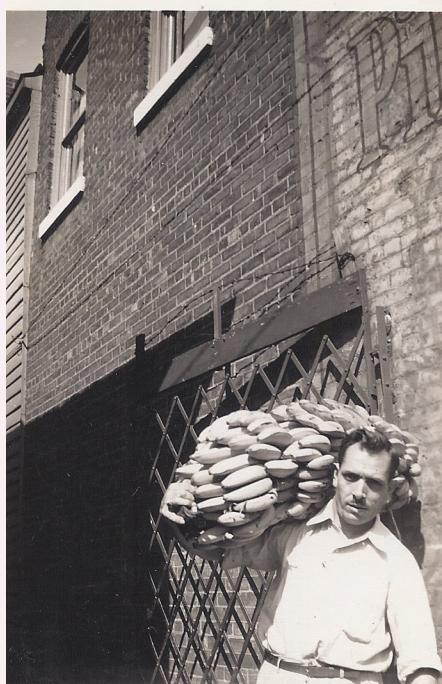
gia.....and if you overdid it with the nightclubbing (eating, drinking and smoking) your family sent you one block up to Greco Funeral Home. We had the best block in the world.

If you wanted fresh cold cuts, meat, groceries and produce, you went to Nick Elia's, 38 Busti. This is where our story begins.

My parents, Nicholas Elia and Carmela Sidoti were married in their hometown Roccella Valdemone in Sicily in 1918. Dad left Sicily for America in 1920 and landed in New Jersey to stay with relatives until he decided that he would permanently settle in Buffalo. He got a job with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which was an organization started by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and funded under his bill called The New Deal. The idea was to put millions of American back to work doing construction, plumbing, etc. With a meager but steady income he called for my mother. They lived in an apartment above the Black and Green, a saloon at Busti and Carolina. My sister Nancy and brother Carmen were born in that apartment.

In 1934 my parents opened a grocery store at 38 Busti Avenue. The phone number was Cleveland 9204 and five years later I was born. The store was never known as Elia's. It was always Nick Elia's. We had a four party line and there was always one person who listened in on all the conversations. Times were rough and thank God for two good men who believed in my parents and gave them credit for the goods they needed to get established.

The first gentleman was Joseph Ferola, a salesman



Nick Elia: Yes, we have bananas today

for Bravo Macaroni. Mr. Ferola's immediate supervisor was not thrilled with the credit arrangement but Mr. Ferola asked this man to give my dad a chance to prove himself and he did. My dad also considered this wonderful man a friend. Ironically, years later I attended Bishop Mc Mahon High School with his daughter Rosemary Ferola Puntoriero and we still see each other and are very good friends.

The second man was Tom Buscaglia, who owned a wholesale distribution center in the Clinton-Bailey area that supplied canned

goods to local stores. He too gave my parents the credit they needed. Mr. Buscaglia later ran Tops Market on Niagara and Maryland Streets and I worked there part-time. It was like old home week when dad came into Tops and they talked of old times.

My mother did not have an easy life. She got up at 4:30 in the morning and went to the Clinton-Bailey market with my dad to get fresh fruits and vegetables for the day. She worked until late at night repeatedly week after week. This was besides cooking every evening, washing clothes with the old wringer washer and hanging the clothes to dry in the basement. The store was always busy and they made a good living for us. I remember specifically the time my dad and sister Nancy went to Italy in 1951 and my mom took care of the store by herself. One Sunday a month she opened the store for one reason only. The captain of one of the large ships that docked behind the Montgomery Mallue Lumber Yard would come in and buy



Second from left: Carmelo, Nancy and Marie Elia, Sam Lagattuda, Joe Guagliardo

*(Continued from page 13)*

his supplies for the month. I saw my mother carry a side of beef on her back and slice it into various cuts for them. It was back-breaking work but she never complained.

I loved Sundays the best. We went to the 12 o'clock Mass at St. Anthony's and then came home and dipped fresh bread into sauce without my mother catching us. It was so good. God forbid you didn't go to church. Mom used to threaten us by saying she would tell Father Prevedello. That was enough to scare anyone. You could also forget about getting money to go to the Marlowe movie theatre. We would turn on the radio at one o'clock to Emelino Rico and sit around the table to have our pasta. Of course someone would always knock on the back door for a forgotten bottle of milk or a loaf of bread but that was okay.

My parents would never turn someone away if they

didn't have the cash to buy food. They had a system that was called "on the books." You took what you needed to feed your family and when you got the money you came in and paid what you could. My sister, brother and I worked in the store as soon as we came home from school. There were customers to take care of, shelves to dust, windows to clean and bottles to bring into the back shed. On Saturdays, my sister Nancy and I would clean the house and then work in the store.

I remember once begging my mom and dad to give me a break from the store because I wanted to pick strawberries at a farm with all my friends because they made it sound like fun. After a lot of arguing, my parents agreed to let me go. I was so excited. We got on the truck at 4:30 in the morning and the late John Baldi started telling the funniest stories. He kept us laughing all the way to the farm. Well, let me tell you, it was not fun. My father greeted me with "tell me how much fun you had." I

(Continued from page 14)

wanted to cry because every bone in my body hurt. I appreciated working in the store after that and I never went back to the farm.

In 1953, my dad had a serious operation and we didn't know if he was going to live. At the time, the doctors didn't know much about what ailed him so they performed a cover-up surgery for whatever it was that grew in his stomach. When they sold the business in 1954, because of dad's illness, the book with everyone's name and what they owed was still there but they just let it go.

My dad passed away in 1972 at the age of 72 and

my Mom passed in 1975 also at the age of 72. I miss them every minute of every day.

I will never forget the years on Busti Avenue. It was, and always will be my home. The friends I had then, I have now. We still see each other. You can't erase a beautiful memory. Home Is Where The Heart Is - that's Busti Avenue and Nick Elia's Grocery Store. Who says you can't go back?

*Marie Elia Licata*



The store — Christmas 1941



"There are a few from northern Italy who, for the most part, are faring very well, while there are many from southern Italy and from Sicily, some of whom are also doing well because they run small shops; but the vast majority live a meager life, particularly the Sicilians...Many don't have food and are not able to find work. After the atrocious events of New Orleans, Italians here go for a job and are sent away because they are Italians and are called '*Mafiosi*'. Even the day before yesterday a sturdy Sicilian came to me and, kneeling down begged in the name of God to help him, because he could not stand up any longer. He told me that there were five companions who could not leave the house because they were starving. He told me also that on the previous day they had one dollar and they gave it to somebody who had promised to take them to a job, but then he disappeared..."

*(From a letter by Fr. Antonio Gibelli,  
founder and pastor of  
St. Anthony's Church in Buffalo - 1892)*

When Salvatore Cardinal Pappalardo, Archbishop of Palermo, visited Buffalo he raised his hearers, mostly sons and daughters of Italian immigrants, to remain faithful to their Christian heritage. Especially did he stress the real values that never change. Among his audience were so many who remembered all this because their fathers and mothers who came to this beloved America around the turn of the century brought with them an enduring faith. They may have owned only the clothes on their backs but they were filled with the spirit and virtues that strengthened them and helped them bear the burden of a life of sacrifice. All this they handed down to their children.

To help the Italian immigrants of the 1880s and early 1900s keep alive their Christian faith, the Catholic Church, through Bishop Stephen Ryan, of the Diocese of Buffalo, gave them the spiritual care of the Rev. James Quigley, a zealous young priest. Father Quigley had knowledge of their language and a great understanding and love for his flock. He is considered the first pastor of what soon would become St. Anthony of Padua Parish. Later in life he recalled with pride and joy his ministry

among the increasing number of Italian immigrants who settled in the city's lower West Side, even after his elevation as Bishop of Buffalo and later to the important position as Archbishop of Chicago.

At first, the Italian Catholics worshipped in an auxiliary Chapel of St. Joseph's Cathedral on Franklin Street. But this was only a temporary arrangement. They were growing so rapidly that plans were made for a more permanent place of worship.

On November 18, 1888 a meeting was held and a committee was appointed to collect funds for a new church building. A plot of land at the corner of Court and Morgan (now South Elmwood) streets was acquired. To better dispose the faithful for this great undertaking, a mission was preached by the Rev. Felix Morelli of New York City.

Father Morelli was a member of the Society of St. Charles established in 1887 to take care of the spiritual needs of Italians who were emigrating at that time to all parts of the world. Founder of the order was the saintly

*(Continued on page 17)*

bishop of Piacennza, John B. Scalabrini.

So successful was the mission, that Bishop Ryan, Father Quigley and the people decided they would request the Scalabrini Father to assume the direction of the new parish about to be established. Father Morelli forwarded the request to Bishop Scalabrini and almost immediately two missionaries were sent to Buffalo to assist in forming the new parish family of St. Anthony. The Rev. Anthony Gibelli arrived in Buffalo on October 20, 1890. Under his and the lay committee's supervision, the work on the new church proceeded rapidly. The excavation for the new building was made during May, 1891. The parish was incorporated on June 29, and on August 2, Bishop Ryan blessed the cornerstone. Much of the work was done by the parishioners themselves.



Altar boys of St. Anthony's Church - 1940s

The new church was formally opened only a few months later on December 20, 1891. It was a two-story building, the upper part of which served as a church and the first floor as a school.

Because St. Anthony's was a national parish, it embraced the entire City of Buffalo and welcomed all Italians, some 7,000, to its membership at its founding.

In 1893 Father Gibelli was transferred to Cleveland. He was succeeded by the Rev. Ludovico Martinelli (1893-1901). During the pastorate of the Rev. Bernard Casassa (1901-1909) the growing parish undertook two major building projects: the erection of a rectory and the expansion of the original church so it could accommodate more worshippers.

Father Casassa also decided on the building of a school for the young people of the parish. But he died on May 12, 1909 and his plans were carried out by his successor, The Rev. Angelo Strazzoni.

The new school was dedicated on January 11, 1912 by Bishop Charles H. Colton. The Sisters of St. Joseph were placed in charge of the magnificent new school.

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Rev. Tarcisio Prevedello  
1940 -1952

1919.

His successors included Father Vanoli, 1919-25; Rev. Charles Rossi, 1925-27; Rev. Joseph Foriero, 1927-34; and the Rev. Charles Celotto, 1934-40. The Rev. Prevedello was assigned to the parish on September 13, 1940. This was the eve of the parish's Golden Anniversary. St. Anthony numbered 7,116 members, 1205 children and another 250 in high school. The parish enjoyed a vigorous social and spiritual life.

The founders and their descendants could well take pride in the fact that they, as newcomers to America, had contributed mightily to providing for the spiritual, educational, and social welfare of their fellow Italians.

These were indeed the golden years of St. An-

Now that the physical properties of the parish were completed, the pastor and parishioners dedicated their talents and resources to making parish life more meaningful. All kinds of spiritual, social and athletic activities centered around the parish complex of buildings. It really became the center for the Italian community. Father Strazzone left when he was appointed superior of his congregation in the United States in

thony's parish – 2500 families with nearly 600 children in its parish school. However, this peak of flourishing activity and of physical and spiritual life, faced some imminent and profound changes.

After seventy-five years of service to the community, St. Anthony's Parish faced a period of urban renewal. Its people lived in one of the oldest neighborhoods in city. Many of the homes were decaying, despite the diligent efforts of those who lived in them.

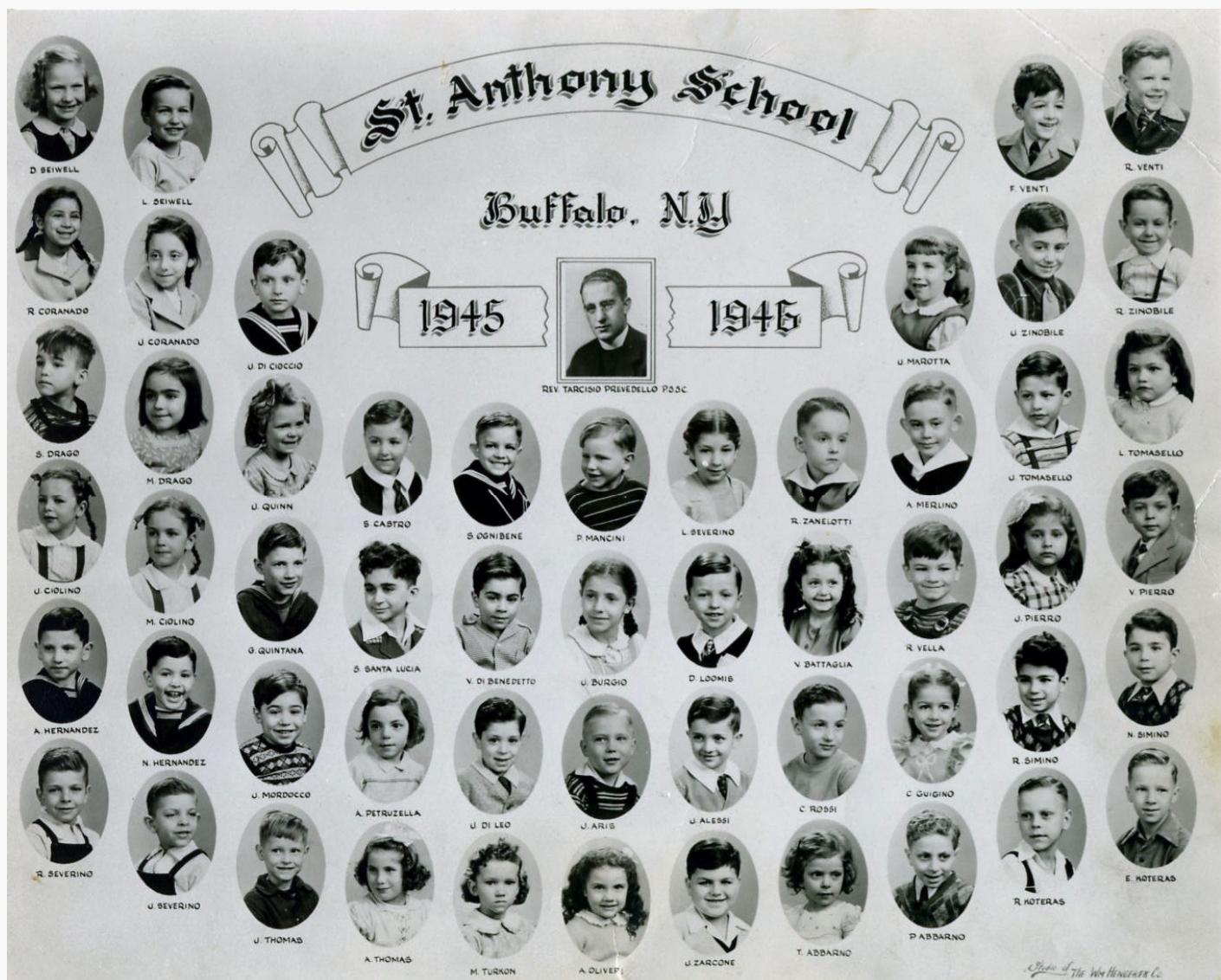


Brother Nino Setti  
1940 -1952

Much of the area served by St. Anthony's faced the wrecking crew. By 1967 only 200 families remained. Some of these still return on Sundays. Urban renewal in the area may still revive old St. Anthony's. The new pastor, Rev. Joseph Bellan, and his faithful parishioners have hope for a bright future. Only last month they broke ground for a new parish center building. May the spirit and the faith planted by their ancestors brings to fruition their hopes for a vibrant future, founded on eternal values.



St. Anthony's Parochial School





Bertola family altar in front of their home - 53 Busti Ave



Merlino residence - 51 Busti Ave



Angelo and Rosario Antonucci, second and third from left, with friends.



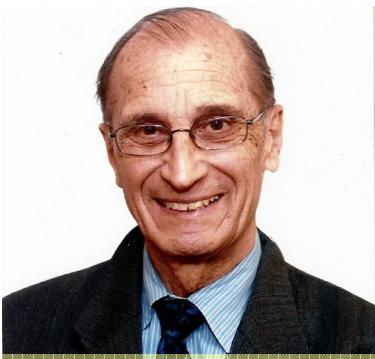
John Antonucci, his mom, Josephine and sister, Mary - Busti and Hudson, circa 1940



Sisters, Chris and Mary Antonucci - 50 Hudson Street, Lakeview Projects



The Antonucci Family; John, sisters Rosie, Chris, Mary and mom Josephine,  
Gugino Building, Busti and Hudson - 1939



Dr. Frank Giacobbe

Three different population groups inhabited Sicily in antiquity: the Siculi to the east and northeast, the Sicani to the south-west and the Elymians to the extreme west. The Greeks called the island Trinacria because of its triangular shape with Capo Faro promontory to the East, Capo Lilibeo to the West and Capo Passero to the South.

In the 8th century B.C. the occidental area was colonized by the Phoenicians or Carthaginians who founded Mozia near Marsala and Palermo. About the same time, the Greeks colonized the eastern part of Sicily. The city which had the greatest splendor was Siracusa, founded by the Corinthians. It is said that at one time, Siracusa had a power and wealth comparable to Athens.

Siracusa fought for its sovereignty and independence from Greece and undertook several battles against the Carthaginians who controlled the Western part of the island. The period of greatest fame for Siracusa was in the early part of the 5th century B.C. when the tyrant Gelone defeated the Carthaginians at Imera, the Etruscans at Cumae and Athens at Gela in the year 424 B.C. The Carthaginians continued to threaten Siracusa and at the end Rome was called for its defense and this provoked the 3 Punic Wars against Carthage. At the end of the 1st Punic War (241 B.C.), Sicily became the 1st Roman Province and at the end of the 3rd War (146 B.C.) Carthage was totally destroyed. Sicily's wealth was its grain and indeed the island was the granary of the Roman Empire. Because of this, the island attracted many wealthy Romans.

In the late 3rd century A.D., a retired rich Roman official built a huge villa with floor mosaics near the town

of Piazza Armerina, now a famous tourist attraction. With the fall of Rome in the 5th century A.D., Vandals ran through and pillaged Italy and Sicily, but in the year 535 A.D., the Emperor Justinian sent an expedition chiefed by Belisario, reconquered the island, and established Siracusa the capital city of Sicily under Byzantine rule.

During this period, Sicily suffered the 1st Moslem incursion in 652 A.D. only 20 years after the death of Mohammed. Many other Moslem incursions followed over 1 1/2 centuries against Byzantine Sicily. Finally, in June 827, the Moslem forces helped by a dissident Byzantine commander (Euphemius) defeated the Byzantine army of Mazara and established a foothold. In 831, Palermo falls to the Muslims and becomes their capital. Many battles and sieges follow and finally in 902 the Muslims take control of the entire island after 75 years of resistance.

Under the Muslim dominance, Sicily flourished and because of its wealth attracted many luminaries from the then known world. so that besides Sicilians and Muslims there were Greeks, Jews, Slavs, Arabs, Berbers, Turks, some Persians and black Africans. In its splendor, Sicily saw a number of poets, lawyers, doctors, mathematicians, architects and engineers. The latest group provided an excellent irrigation system that gave way to the production of lemons (an Arab import) in an area around Palermo that became known as "La concad'oro."

At about 1040, Sicily was governed by 3 emirates. Internal conflicts among them, saw the emir of Caltanissetta call the Normans in Southern Italy for help in the year 1060. The Normans under Roger Guiscard attacked Messina in 1060 and in a matter of 30 years, Sicily was reconquered by the Christians.

Roger Guiscard or Roger I, was tolerant of the

*(Continued on page 25)*

conquered Muslims and many of them joined his army. Under Roger I and Roger II, Sicily was a significant power in Europe and also controlled Southern Italy, and North Africa. Roger II was the most illustrious of the Norman rulers and to him is attributed the construction of the famous Palatine Chapel in Palermo and the cathedral of Cefalu'. After the death of Roger II follows a period of unrest until Costanza, only daughter of Roger II marries the German emperor

Henry VI, son of Federico Barbarossa.

Henry VI, descended in Italy, conquered Southern Italy and Sicily in 1194, the same year that his son Frederick II is born. Frederick II was only 3 ½ years old when his father died and he became king of Sicily under the tutelage of Pope Innocent III. By age 12, he was skilled in arms and horsemanship, and knew several languages.

At age 14, he was married to Constance of Aragon, 10 years older than him and the pope's choice. At age 17, he was elected emperor by the General council of Nuremberg. Frederick II had many interests: mathematics, physics, astronomy, philosophy., zoology, medicine, poetry and falconry. For this reason, he gained the attribute "stupor mundi" (marvel of the world). He composed poems in Sicilian dialect, and with the physicians of Palermo, he founded the 1st medical school in Salerno and here instituted the 1st department of Anatomy in Europe. Later, in 1224, he



founded the University of Naples. Under his ruling, an eminent mathematician Fibonacci, introduced the Arabic numerals to the West.

After the death of Frederick II in 1250, follows a period of unrest. With the defeat of Corradino, last of the Svevs, Sicily becomes governed by the Frenchmen for 16 years under Charles 1st of Anjou. The Sicilian

Vespers in 1282 launch a revolt against the French domination and the key word to identify and kill the Frenchmen was "Ciceri," a word the French could not pronounce correctly. Sicily then comes under the influence of the Spaniards with Peter III of Aragona.

Under the Spanish dominance, Sicily sees the introduction of the Inquisition and the persecution of the Jews along with severe taxation and corruption. Sicily then becomes for a few years a possession of the King of Sabaudia, later under the Austrian empire in 1718 to 1734 and finally in 1734 it was conquered by Charles of Borbonia at which time, with Naples, formed the kingdom of two Sicilies until 1860 when it became annexed by Garibaldi to Italy.

So, Sicily saw in its land, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, Saracens with Arabs and Berbers, Normans, Germans, French, Spaniards, and Austrians; many picture Sicilians as typical Mediterranean's, but it's not uncommon to see tall, blue-eyed and red-haired individuals so typical of Northern Europe.



Joe Savarino, Jimmy Savarino, Jim Capraro, Josephine Capraro Avino, Mary Capraro Oshirak, Paul Oshirak, Carmelo Savarino  
enjoying clams on Lower Terrace and West Genesee Streets



Religious celebrants on Busti Avenue





Danny Pentasuglio with grandson Andrew, daughter Marylou, and Grace

In her own words, "I was born under a counter."

Grace's earliest memories are of helping her parents at their grocery store, Marinaccio's, at South Division and Jefferson Avenue.

In a recent interview, Grace, a lively, bright, beautiful 86-year-old, explained that when she married, she went from being Grace Marinaccio, to Grace Pentasuglio. And she went from working at her parent's store to working behind the counter at the bakery owned by her father-in-law Giuseppe 'Joe' Pentasuglio. Since Danny's mother was Mary Grace, and he had a sister Grace, when Grace Marinaccio joined the family, she jokes, "It was full of Grace!"

In case the names Danny and Grace Pentasuglio aren't familiar to you, if you're a West-Sider, you may remember them by the names they were known by, because of their bakery's name. They were Danny and Grace Bluebird.

A sort of 'inside question' of my generation has always been "What was Grace Bluebird's real name?" None of my friends ever knew. In February I read about the passing of 86-year-old Danny, a World War II Navy veteran and an avid Buffalo Bills tailgater. From the article, I finally learned that the Bluebirds were named Pentasuglio! I recently called Grace to ask if I could interview her and she graciously (what else?) agreed. I met her at her West Seneca apartment, where her son Joe helped fill in some details of the family's history.

I thought that Grace might have an explanation for the name of the popular West Avenue bakery,

but it turns out that the original business, downtown, on Michigan Avenue, where once stood the Goodwill, already had the name Bluebird's Bakery when it was purchased in the 1920s by Giuseppe Pentasuglio. At that time, the store's business was baking bread and donuts that were distributed by the firm's five delivery trucks to retail outlets all over Buffalo.

In 1927, the business was moved to its well-remembered address at 854 West Avenue, where the family also lived in an upper flat. During the store's heyday, there were 125 other bakeries in Buffalo. But after it expanded its business to include retail sales, Bluebird's was the place in the Italian-American community for wedding cakes (with strawberry filling and Rich's whipped cream), Italian cookies, Italian sponge cake and other sweet delights.

Danny Pentasuglio took over the business after attending the Wilton School of Baking in Chicago. He was helped by son Joe and daughters Marylou and Sue. Grace ran the store and did the selling, always with a story and a smile for her customers. Her son Joe remembers baking that marvelous, thick pizza with the simple tomato, oregano, anchovy and grated cheese topping, in sixteen-by-twenty-four-inch trays. The oven, fourteen by twenty-four feet, was originally fueled by coal, then coke, then oil, and finally by natural gas.

The oven also turned out crusty Italian bread, French bread with sesame seeds, and double-kneaded pane scanato. Who doesn't remember getting a hot loaf of Bluebird's Italian bread, taking it home (if it got that far!) and fixing it with olive oil, salt and pepper? Young Joe made specialty breads and rolls for local restaurants. His sister Marylou was the cake artiste, baking custom wedding cakes that incorporated fountains, bridges and other elements, that Joe sometimes assembled on-site at wedding receptions.

The Pentasuglio family ran Bluebird's Bakery until 1990, when it was sold. Sadly, the new owners had neither Danny's skills nor Grace's charm, and the business closed in 1992. But we'll always remember Bluebird's.



Rachela Sacco holding granddaughter Judy Chiaromonte. Other granddaughters, left to right: Rachel Cala, Susan Maggiore, and Marie Palermo.

1946

Sedita Jr. In later years while serving as License Director of the City of Buffalo, Sam told a friend that he and his wife, Josephine, were planning a trip to New York City, a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary; a gift from their children. In New York they would dine, see a Broadway show or two, and shop.

At the time I represented a New York City Corporation that had a limo with a fulltime chauffeur. I asked the corporate chief if Charlie the chauffeur could be made available to transport Sam and Josephine around the City. Charlie was available so the request was quickly granted and the Saccos were squired about. Sam, ever grateful to Charlie offered him a sizeable sum of money. Charlie, refused, saying, "absolutely impossible to charge an important man like you."

Upon Sam's return home he had a Commissioner of Deeds certificate delicately framed as if it were the Medal of Honor and sent it to Charlie, cautioning him: "this certificate is only honorary because you don't live in Buffalo."

There came a time when I saw that certificate. It was glowingly framed and proudly displayed in Charlie's limo. That glow was surpassed by Charlie's relating the story.

I thought then, as I often have since, of Sam Sacco, his wife and especially his wonderful mother, Donna Rachela.

Donna Rachela Sacco, her husband, three sons: John, Sam and Charlie, and two daughters, Mary and "Meeno" occupied the lower flat at 331 Trenton Avenue, a home she owned for many years. Donna Rachella was a beloved and respected lady--magnanimous in spirit and giving. She came to America with her husband Giovanni and their two sons John and Salvatore (Sam) on the S.S. America sailing from Palermo.

In 1928, she rented the upper flat to a newly wed couple, Sebastiano and Anna Santa Lucia. Rachela's son, Sam helped Sebastiano construct a new bed. Anna, whose mother lived a distance away in Farnham, NY when owning a car was a dream, was assisted in household chores, her first pregnancy, and with her first born by her surrogate mother, Rachela.

Sam Sacco, in addition to constructing beds was a savvy political leader. In the early years of the Great Depression he was chairman of the then 27th ward. In later years he was a City Of Buffalo Commissioner of Deeds and was proud to bear the title.

Sam was ultimately Godfather to my sister Rose Santa Lucia Nowak, the wife of Congressman Henry Nowak. He was also Godfather to Judge Frank



Rochelle De Carlo, Rochelle Godios, Grandmother Rachela, Rachel Cala

1958



Trenton Ave - Al Pucci, Joe "Soup" Panaro, Charlie Rumfola, Joe Santoro, Louie Marinaccio



Busti Ave - Vinny Merlino, Sam Merlino, Tony LaBarba, Sam Zito, Harry Merlino, Tom Sperazza



The Zendanos



The El Morocco Guys

Lakeview and Jersey



Sam Arena

### Ingredients

Pizza dough ( store bought dough is fine)

- 1 large package of baby spinach
- 1 cup of hot pepper rings
- 2 lbs. of Italian sausage without casing
- 1 medium onion finely chopped
- 16 oz. of shredded mozzarella

## Sausage Bread

Sauté onion in good olive oil on low heat. Remove and set aside. Sauté sausage, set aside. Wilt spinach, remove from heat and let cool. Squeeze liquid from spinach and combine with onion and sausage. Season with salt and pepper.

### THE DOUGH

Divide dough in three pieces. Roll each portion to a thin consistency. Spread 1/3 of combined ingredients evenly on dough leaving a small margin on the edges. Gently roll the dough as firmly as possible pinching both ends closed. Brush top of dough with egg whites so as to seal. Toothpicks may be needed to keep rolls closed.

Continue procedure with remaining dough and ingredients.

BAKE AT 350 ° 35 TO 40 MINUTES UNTIL GOLDEN BROWN. LET COOL AND SLICE at 1 INCH INTERVALS

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

*Sam*





SAL MAGGIORE

## Was the Ride Too Long?

I'm in Buffalo writing in April as snow falls. When the Buffalo winter ended prematurely, my wife, Sue, and I left Florida. While there I golfed with Sam Arnone, Pete Spallino, Pat Palmeri and Sam

Arena. Due to the collective ailments of the two Sams, Pete, and mine; Palmeri was unbeatable.

Recently the Palmeri's visited voodoo land: Haiti, for the fourth time this year. When they left I thought I'd store some beach chairs in their shed. When I arrived a door inside the shed was ajar. I love a mystery. I opened the door and saw stairs leading to a cold, candlelit room with a canvas covered counter. I uncovered the canvas and saw needle-riddled dolls: likenesses of Palmeri's golfing partner, and even one of Spallino's wife, Rose Ann. Did he learn this in Haiti? Is this why we kept losing to him in golf? We were under his spell.

Nearby was a book, "Who Do You Do Voo Doo? or Getting Your Enemy." In it I read that by dipping the needles in garlic all voodoo spells are reversed. This I did. When the Palmeri's returned from Haiti we golfed with Pat. He couldn't win and blamed his clubs. Little did he know his secret was discovered.

Returning from Florida we planned to visit Quantico Va., and Parris Island, where I as a young Marine was stationed. From there we planned to visit the White House for the Easter Egg Hunt, and then onto Pelham, NY.

When we arrived at Parris Island not only was I aching but admission was denied. While driving in Virginia, Sue said, "There's a state trooper behind us." I said, "I'm not speeding." We were pulled over. I said, "officer, something wrong?" He said, "I see you're from New York?" Sue, interjected, "not New York City, but Buffalo." He said, "Buffalo? You better follow me." I responded, "what did I do?" He said, "you were speeding." Sue screamed. "He was not! Who do you think you are?" I said, "be quiet. You had to mention Buffalo. I'll handle this." She said, "okay, Clarence Darrow."

The trooper took us to a building in a small town that housed the court room and police station. We approached a bored desk sergeant who asked, "wadda ya got Bubba?"

"Speeders from Buffalo, N.Y." The sergeant beamed.

"That's three days for sure. The judge will sentence you after lunch next door: great southern fried chicken on us." I said, "well, we've got to eat." Sue said, "we're going to jail and you want to eat." After the great chicken we went to face the judge. We couldn't believe it! it was Tom Mancuso. We laughed. "See," I said, "it's a joke. Good Buffalo humor." In Per Niente Magazine I once wrote about the honorable Virginia Judge Tom Mancuso who cherishes his Buffalo roots.

A stoic Mancuso said, "what's the charge Bubba?" The trooper said, "speeding, your honor." Sue and I laughed. Mancuso banged his gavel, "Three days. Next." Sue, furious, said "this has gone far enough." With a twinkle in his eye, Mancuso said, "chambers."

We followed him to chambers. He disrobed to display his Buffalo Bills sweat shirt and gave us hugs and kisses. "How did I look out there? It's good to see people from Buffalo. How are you guys?" Sue said, "We're all right now, but you put a scare into us." To which he responded, "this is the only way I could see people I know. Why not call Frank LoTempio to defend you? Maybe Charlie Tasca can come too. We'll have a nice weekend." I said, "Tom you're joking, right?"

He said, "no, you're both retired. You have time. Besides, you're sentenced to three days." We had dinner with the Judge. The whole town stopped by to say hello. We were housed at a nice hotel, courtesy of the State.

In parting, Mancuso begged us to call Frank and Charlie. I called Charlie, who laughed, "I've heard that before. Sneak out of town in the middle of the night."

We did. Upon arriving in Buffalo Sue received beautiful flowers from Judge Tom Mancuso.





Birge wallpaper was rated as one of the finest companies in that industry when wallpapering was more fashionable than painting. The company was located on Niagara and Maryland Streets and almost everyone on the West-Side worked there at one time or another.

The “crap game” incident occurred during Birge’s hey day in the early 1950s in one of the two years that I worked there. At that time weekly paychecks were personally given to Birge employees early every Friday morning. One or two designated workers were allowed to take any employees checks and cash them at the M&T bank a block away at Niagara and Hudson Street. This privilege spared the employees the hassle of going to the bank at lunch time.

Every week on those paydays at lunchtime (12:00 – 12:30) I and numerous employees, including the plant foreman participated in the thirty-minute crap game. However, the game had to end when the 12:30 whistle blew. As such, who ever was rolling the dice at that time could not finish his roll because that would extend the lunch period; a situation that often occurred.

I was the second roller, picking up the dice at about 12:05. I rolled and rolled making number after number at which time the betting intensified with larger and larger amounts and I continued my winning streak. At approximately 12:25 I still held the dice and had won the paychecks of 30 or more employees most of whom were earning almost \$100.00 a week.

A fellow player said; “Joe give us a chance to get even” to which I responded, “OK”. I pushed all my winnings and my own money into the pot and said, “cover it all or any amount.” Then, stalling, hoping the lunch whistle would blow, I said “If that’s not enough here are

my car keys. I’ll add my car to the pot along with the money.” Someone said, “Boy, that kid’s got a lot of nerve.” That nickname, “Joe Nerves,” has stuck with me to this day.

The end came when I rolled the number 4. If you familiar with dice, the number 4 is hard to make. I rolled once more. I didn’t roll a 4 to win or a 7 to lose but at the same time the lunch whistle blew. I threw the dice out of a window, retrieved all my money, my car keys, and my winnings. The game was over. I gave Tony Alessi \$300.00 of the almost \$3,000.00 I won. He was one of the men who went to the bank to cash our checks. The money was to buy everyone on our floor (ten workers) a future lunch from Yogi’s, a nearby restaurant.

In the following days after my colossal win, Birge management received distress calls from wives about their husbands losing their paychecks playing dice there. Management reacted by banning the playing of dice on their property. Fellow employees involved in that memorable game were: Tony Alessi, “Mimi” Polito, Gus Monte, Tony Maggio, Curley Falletta, Joe Bono, George Schiavone, Mike Dalbo, and a certain guy who still owes me \$500.00 he borrowed upon going broke. Others who lost big were Mullins, the plant foreman, Rich Liberante, Duke Marschiello, Iggy Fasciana, Joe Raco and many others.

That was the day in which the crap games at Birge Wallpaper ended forever; maybe it was for the best.



Many thanks to both you and Tom Santa Lucia for including me in the Per Niente Club. The issues you sent me are real page-turners. I can't tell you how much I enjoy the articles that are submitted along with the photos.

Anne Yeager  
Williamsville NY

After reading a few of the Per Niente magazines at my brother's house I was overwhelmed with nostalgia. So many memories and so many long time friends. My husband Joe and I would like to subscribe to this great magazine. Rose Ann Spallino gave me your address. I grew up on Massachusetts Street and my husband on Dante Place and Niagara Street. I look forward to receiving the magazine and keep up the wonderful tradition.

Rosella Bonadonna  
Williamsville NY

Enclosed you will find my check which is for the subscription to Per Niente Magazine and a donation to the Christmas Fund. I appreciated very much the previous magazines and enjoyed them tremendously. I look forward to receiving and reading future copies. Keep me informed on forthcoming information.

Best regards  
Mike Amico  
Williamsville NY

Thank you for sharing the wonderful memories of my beloved St. Anthony's Church. I loved it,  
I grew up with Josephine Saia.  
I enjoy Per Niente so much, it's a great publication.

Jo Frances Cipolla  
East Amherst NY

Hi Everyone,

I just came across a fantastic magazine specifically for Italian-Americans in WNY. It is reminiscent of our growing up days, our old neighborhoods and everything that was part of our heritage way back when. There are beautifully written stories that will affect you one way or another. If you are interested in subscribing, you can do so by clicking on to their website: <http://www.perniente.org>. It is published quarterly and the subscription fee is only \$35 a year. They also do an awful lot of charity work with the money you send in. Give it a try and look at the site.

Marie Elia Licata  
Tonawanda NY

*Editors note: email sent by Marie Licata to her friends*

*Editors note: please visit our website*

*@ [www.perniente.org](http://www.perniente.org)*

To subscribe to Per Niente Magazine -  
[jdileo@roadrunner.com](mailto:jdileo@roadrunner.com) or 716-832-2653

**Special thank you to Ursula Mangano for her generous donation to the 2012 Christmas Fund.**

**Editor**



In the first-third of the twentieth century Italians who once lived together in various towns and villages in southern Italy and Sicily emigrated to urban America to live with their paisani. In so doing they created Mutual Aid Societies. In Buffalo, among others in 1926 was the Societa` Mutuo Soccorso Campobello di Licata pictured below at McKinley Monument.

In the front row, present is the only women: Carmela Ferranti. To her immediate left is her husband, Salvatore Tirrano.





Carmelo Pileri, Society President 1931-1955 and his brother Diego Pileri.

Identified by Carmelo's grandson, David Pileri.



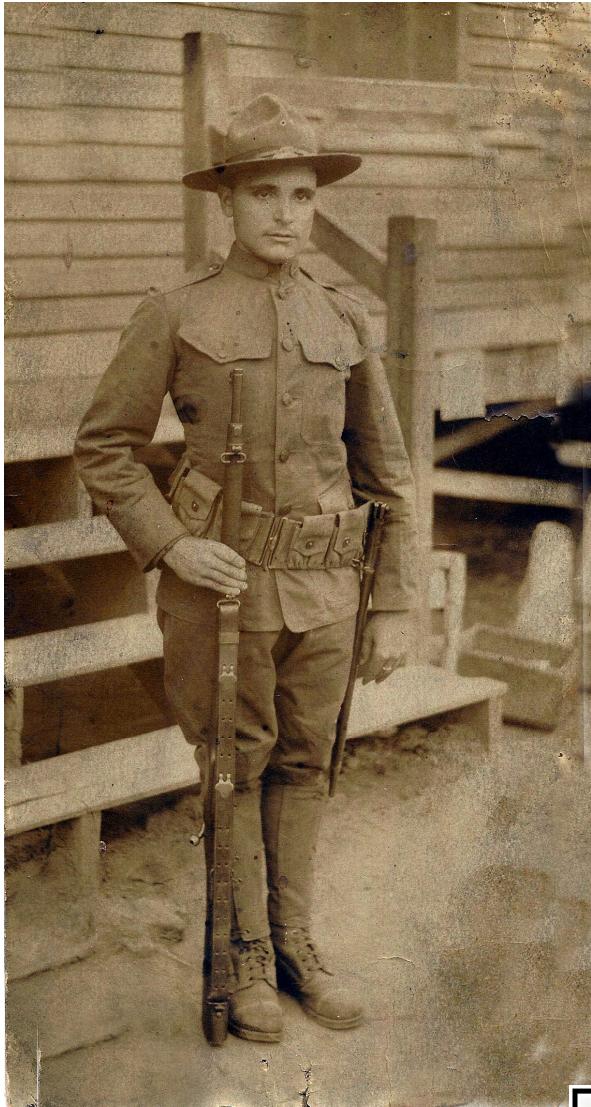
Carmela Ferranti and Salvatore Tiranno, Identified by their son, Phil.





P.S. # 2 Basketball Team 1915-1916

Holding ball, Salvatore Bongiovanni, top row right, Joe DiCarlo

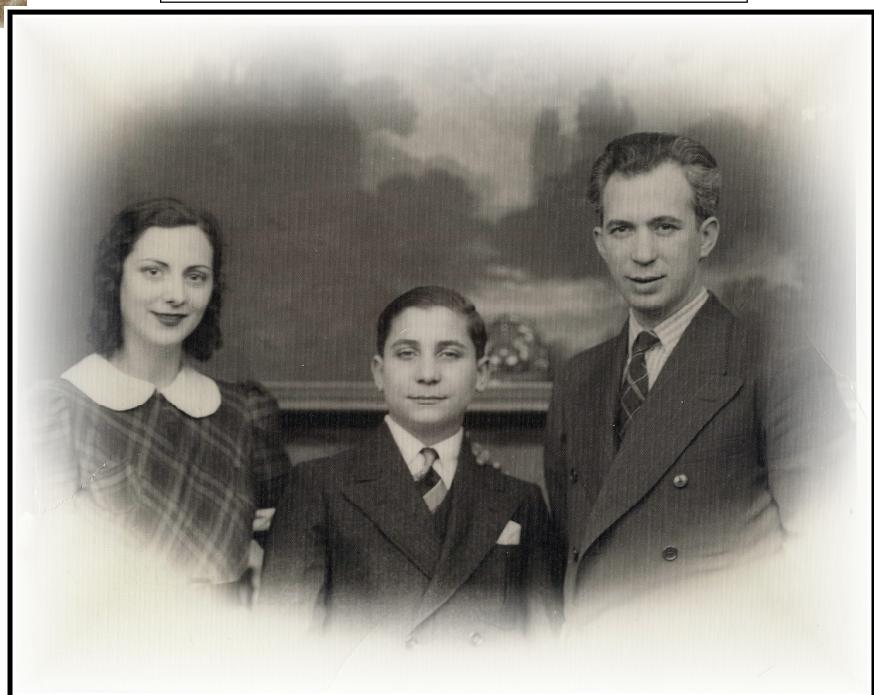


Victor Ricigliano 1st Infantry,  
Camp Gordon, Atlanta,  
Ga. 1918.



Donna Stella Pellegrino watching grandsons  
John, Anthony and Angelo Merlino  
51 Busti Avenue, early 1940s

Joe Rico, flanked by father  
Emelino and step-mother, the  
former Mary Pinieri,  
early 1940s





1920s -'30s

