

ROOTS AND RECOLLECTIONS OF
ANNA MARIA MASTROIANNI
(A most remarkable woman)

Once upon a time in the village of Vasto Girardi, located south of Rome in Italy, there lived a devout, happy family named Izzi. Antonio Izzi and Nunziata Bishotti (married women, by custom, never used their husband's last name). They had twin boys who died at birth, and four daughters, Lucia, Carmella, Teresa and Anna Maria. The girls were forbidden to marry before they were 25 years of age. Their father was a handsome man of many talents. He designed decorative items carved out of stone for homes and palazzos; played the bass fiddle in local bands for parades and festivities, and generally provided very well for his family. Then as the four sisters became of proper age

LUCIA married well to do Rafaele Colucci. He was a personable, multitalented man. Without benefit of a degree in dentistry he accommodated anybody or everybody who needed dental care; repaired watches; designed gold ornaments for the Madonna Della Grazia Church in his village; sang in the choir (he had a beautiful voice), and, among other things, invented what was possibly the first coffee maker. It was designed much like a steam engine, with a spigot for pouring at one end and a whistle that blew loudly when the coffee was ready. He delighted friends and relatives in his private "station casino" with this clever invention. No doubt it was the forerunner of our coffee makers today. They had no children. Unfortunately, Rafaele died of a venomous bee sting while in his garden. His widow, Lucia, subsequently married the Mayor of Caccavone (a small town near Vasto Girardi). They later moved to Rome.

TERESA married Vincenzo DiCapita. They had two children, Maria and Alessandro. His daughter, Maria, married Jim DeBartolo (uncle of Eddie DeBartolo, innovator and builder of super shopping plazas around the country). His son, Alessandro, a great artist in his field of endeavor, and his wife, Lucia, had several daughters. They live in Youngstown. His widow, although confined to a wheelchair for years, manages to crochet exquisite works of art, worthy of exhibition in any museum and, like Grandma Moses, she is over 90 years of age.

CARMELLA married into the DiAngelis family. Shortly thereafter they moved and made their home in Buenos Aires, South America. Their two children, a boy and girl, became celebrities in the field of entertainment.

ANNA MARIA married Pasquale Mastroianni (no known relationship to the famous film star, Marcello Mastroianni) of San Pietro Avellana. After the wedding and festivities in Vasto Girardi, they rode back to San Pietro on horseback, a distance of from 20 to 30 miles. The marriage celebration continued in San Pietro for the next four Sundays with plenty of good food, drinks and dancing. They became the parents of four children, Francesco Paulo; Domenico Antonio (who died at the age of 9 years), Angelina Adelina and Marianina.

(Pasquale's family -Chapter II)

CHAPTER II

Pasquale's father, Sabatino Mastroianni and his mother, Marianna Labate (it's not known if related to the Labate family of Youngstown and California), had five other children Rose, Giacinta, Fiora, Louisa and Guiseppa. (Guiseppa became Vincent Cioffi's mother). Sabatino was a gentleman farmer who owned vast amounts of land and other valuable holdings in San Pietro. The family was highly regarded and respected. When his son Pasquale brought his bride, Anna Maria home, he gave them part of his large house, which was also shared by another son, Fiore and his wife Genovina who had no children. Several years later Fiore bought his share of the house from his father. Pasquale's sister, Rose, married Domenico DiFlorio. They had three sons, Micael, Ernesto and Giovanni. His sister, Giacinta married a Morelli. They had three sons and two daughters. One of the sons, Leborio was the father of Bernadine, Ida, Nora, Marco and Darwin. Antoinette who married Pasquale Pesano had five children, Vincent, Alien, Fred, Eugene and Yolanda. Her husband celebrated his 103rd birthday while still helping his son run their "posh" restaurant in Cleveland, Ohio.

A MOVE TO AMERICA

Like most young men in his village, Pasquale Mastroianni could not find enough work to support his family. He then left for America and found work in the stone quarries of West Virginia where he joined his "paesanos." Neither he nor his family could have guessed that his planned temporary absence would last for ten long years.

ANNA MARIA FILLS THE VOID

In her husband's absence Anna Maria became head of the household. As if caring for her three small children, his aged mother and father, controlling the house, land and other properties, and assisting the village doctor with the delivery of babies, wasn't enough, she volunteered to hold day and night classes in her home to teach young boys to read and write, and young girls to read, write, sew, crochet and embroider, after she learned they could not afford an education. She was also inventive. For instance, in the winter she would place a piece of paper on the frosted windows, trace the snowflake design and transfer it on handkerchiefs and linens to be embroidered. The girls were especially delighted embroidering their sweethearts' initials on handkerchiefs. She was affectionately called "La Maestra."

All the villagers knew of her many kindnesses. Holidays and holy festivities found her home filled with friends and relatives at all hours. She was a devout Catholic and taught catechism in Sunday School. No holy day procession was complete without her presence, and when she sang with feeling "IL PIANTI DI MARIA", people wept. (Saint Anthony was her patron saint).

When Sabatino and Marianna passed on she became the sole heiress of their worldly belongings.

(Frank is summoned to America by his Father Chapter III)

CHAPTER III

When Frank Mastroianni (Francesco) was ten years of age, his father sent for him to work in America with him (there were no child labor laws at that time), as a water boy in the stone quarries of West Virginia. Years later they moved from West Virginia to Beaver Palls, Pa. With money he had saved, Frank opened a grocery store. While his father took care of the store, Frank worked days on the railroad and at night attended classes at school to further his education. He was bright and ambitious. When he wrote to his mother that he planned to stay in America and not return to Italy, she was heartbroken and said she did not want to be separated forever from her only son. She then sold her property and personal belongings at great sacrifice and sailed to this country with her two daughters. After a year in Beaver Palls they got news that a friend was selling his place of business in Youngstown, Ohio to return to Italy. Frank, a born opportunist, immediately bought the saloon that was for sale and reestablished his family in Youngstown. While his father ran the saloon, Frank was seeking new opportunities. He found it in a service agency (primarily for Italian people) to assist them with the language, financial and travel problems. His reputation for integrity and helpfulness spread far and wide. It was then he decided to also open a banking facility. He purchased a building at the corner of East Federal and Watt Streets and opened a bank called "The Union Bank." When fire destroyed the interior of the building, he quickly rebuilt it with elevators and additional offices. One of his well known tenants at that time was Dr. DiOrio.

ANNA MARIA CONTINUES TO WORK

Dr. Daniele, the family doctor, was greatly impressed with Anna Maria's intelligence and personality, her experience in Italy as a capable midwife, and her willingness to help others. He asked her to take over the duties of the retiring midwife, but her husband would not give his permission for this work saying she had enough to do as a housewife. However, she accepted over his objections, feeling strongly that she was needed. Before long she was on her own. No call was refused, and no distance too great. (She had no means of transportation and traveled by foot). The standard fee for delivering a baby was two dollars for a boy, and one dollar for a girl. Needless to say, the babies grew much faster than her bank account.

VINCENT CASCIATO JOINS THE FAMILY

Vincent was born and raised in the village of Pesco, Costanzo, Provincia Aquila, Abruzzi, Italy. His father John was called "Jannon" because of his big handsome ruggedness. His mother, Carmella, was a sweet loveable woman; his wonderful brother Richard was a bachelor, and he had two sisters.

When he met Angelina Mastroianni, a beautiful girl of 18, he asked her father's permission to marry her, but he refused because he had other plans and suitors in mind. When they defied his objections, he refused to attend the wedding, but other members of the family did. They had five children George and John of Arizona; Yolanda of Arkansas, and Elvira and Clotilda of California. (Note Angelina is still lovely at 95 years of age!)

(Dominic meets Marianina Mastroianni Chapter IV)

CHAPTER IV

DOMINIC ZITO "LIGHTS UP HER LIFE"

Dominic, one of three children, was born in Catanzaro, Provincia Reggio, Calabria. The children were orphans at an early age and brought up by an aunt. When older they left Italy for America. Dominic and his brother learned barbering and before long Dominic owned his own shop and was assisted by his brother. His sister, Peppina, married Calogero Romeo and they lived in Perthamboy, N.J. They became the parents of John, Dominic, Camille and Grace.

Dominic met Marianina when 24 years of age. She was a teenager of 17. When Dominic asked her father's permission to marry her, he refused (by now you are aware he always said "no" She had many admirers, among them another "Dominic" who wanted to marry her. This was settled amicably when the two men talked it over and decided that only one could be the winner. They were married in St. Anthony's Church in Brier Hill. An overly enthusiastic friend's gift was a display of fireworks - in bright daylight! After five happy years, Dominic died of an incurable illness. His charm, friendliness and charisma was a great loss. His young widow was left with the burden of caring for three small children, Carmella (Carol), Joseph and Pasqualina (Lee).

Marianina's second marriage was to Joseph Libery of Pittsburgh, Pa. He was an outstanding architect and builder, and well known for his designs and workmanship. A famous landmark in Pittsburgh, the William Penn Hotel, which he helped build, still stands as one of his outstanding accomplishments. Two children were born of this marriage, Peter of Florida (an accomplished artist in his own right), and Angelo who died while training in the Service.

When she again became a widow, she moved from Pittsburgh to Youngstown. Her mother, Anna Maria, became an important part of her life. While Marianina worked to support her family, her mother took charge of the children, prepared meals and still continued with her work of delivering babies. She never complained!

"ORSOLINA MEETS HER PRINCE"

Orsolina Federici was one of seven children from a wealthy Family of the town of Turci, Provincia Basilicata, Italy. When, unfortunately, the family fortune was lost, her parents Baron and Baroness Federici, sent their children, Alfredo, Andrew, Enrico, Adelina, Litizia and Orsolina to America to join their daughter Limbietta who was married and lived there. Their parents remained in Italy. Orsolina made her home with Limbietta who was, at times, cruel and strict with her younger sister. She was unhappy until Marianina, who became her close friend, introduced her to her brother, Frank Mastroianni, who up to that time was too busy for girl friends or romance. What happened next was incredible! They were married a week later for what could be recorded as the shortest courtship in the Book of Guinness! To top it off, the bride wore Marianina's wedding veil. The bride was only 15 years of age; the groom 25. Their children, Anne; Marie, Fred, Ida, Julie and Frank.

Her sister, Litizia, married Oreste Labate and they became the parents of Guido, Clyde and Eddie. Alfredo was Connie Frazzini's father.

CHAPTER V

OTHER REMEMBRANCES OP ANNA MARIA

She long remembered the time she was taken, for the first time in her life, to see a movie. It featured her favorite radio entertainers, AMOS AND ANDY. She had put on a great deal of weight and so as not to disturb her she was seated in the center of a long row of seats. People on either side exited so that she would not have to stand up.

When she was alone in the house and the 'phone rang (it was a stand up 'phone), she would pick it up, place it on her ample stomach and say "allo, 'allo, nobody home, goobye." She never said more, nor asked for a message.

Another time when she heard noises downstairs in the kitchen, she quickly jumped out of bed, the bed slid from under her, and she landed on the floor. Only her pride was hurt!

She was once voted the prettiest girl in her village; had never been ill; had never gone to a dentist, and still had good eyesight at the age of 82. It seems that her added weight proved to be too much for her once active, slender body. Her passing left many broken hearts. She was never forgotten.

Last But Not Least "THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW"

Most of you are probably not aware that one of the priceless stained glass windows gracing OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH, Via Mount Carmel, Youngstown, Ohio, was donated by Anna Maria with money she withdrew from her meager bank account. She paid the sum of Fifty Dollars (a lot of money in those days) for which she had worked hard delivering babies Two Dollars for a boy One Dollar for a girl!

About the window It was ordered from the Minneapolis Stained Glass Art Studio who, in turn, ordered from artisans in Germany. Today this work of art could not be purchased for many thousands of dollars, and even if Louis Comfort Tiffany were alive today, he could not duplicate it. The window was donated around the year 1910.

Now that you have your own copy of this beautiful, priceless window, remember her in your prayers, for surely she is praying for you. Ever loving, ever caring, ANNA MARIA!
*(NOTE: the cover to Carol's narrative was a copy of the stained glass window.
JVC)*

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