

DISCHARGED
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LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered

S. S. **FLORIDA** sailing from *Naples* December 9 1907

No. of List	NAME IN FULL		Age	Sex	Married to U.S. Citizen	Calling or Occupation	Able to Read	Nationality (Country of which citizen or subject)	Race or People	Last Permanent Residence		The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country, whence also came.	Final Destination	
	Family Name	Given Name								Yrs. Res.	Country		City or Town	State
1	<i>Pomph</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
2	<i>Adriano</i>	<i>Francesca</i>	16	female		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
3	<i>Romario</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	31	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
4	<i>Adriano</i>	<i>Francesca</i>	16	female		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
5	<i>Vincenzo</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
6	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
7	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
8	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
9	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
10	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
11	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
12	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
13	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
14	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
15	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
16	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
17	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
18	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
19	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
20	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
21	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
22	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
23	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
24	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
25	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
26	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
27	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
28	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
29	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>
30	<i>Antonio</i>	<i>Giuseppe</i>	18	male		laborer	✓	Italy	Italian South	Agropoli	Italy	<i>John Andrea</i>	<i>Chianano</i>	<i>Pa. De Nora</i>

My Italian American Family

Caagn

*Instead of showing occupation of tourists and aliens in transit, state in column 6 whether they are "enroute" or "in transit."
†"Race or People" is to be determined by the stock from which aliens sprang and the language they speak. List of races will be found on back of this sheet.

Written and Compiled by Tina Calabro



SALOON, CABIN, AND STEERAGE ALIENS MUST BE COMPLETELY MANIFESTED.

11

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered

S. S. America sailing from Naples 5 February 1912

No. on List	NAME IN FULL		Age	Sex	Single or Married	Calling or Occupation	Able to Read, Write	Nationality (Country of which citizen or subject)	Race or People	*Last Permanent Residence		The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came.		Final Destination	
	Family Name	Given Name								Yrs. Mos.	Country	City or Town	Country	City or Town	State
1	Lonello	Emilio	24	M	Single	ye		Italian		Italy	Naples	Italy	St. Louis		
2	Lonello	Anna Maria	32	F	Married	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
3	Tanni	Domenico	8	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
4	Procaccio	Francesco	22	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
5	Piccola	Giuseppina	25	F	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
6	Piccola	Donatella	2	F	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
7	Giannini	Antonio	15	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
8	Procaccio	Giuseppina	22	F	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
9	Vin	Salvo	17	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
10	Valente	Salvatore	23	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
11	D'Amico	Giuseppe	18	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
12	Merlino	Giuseppe	18	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
13	Marini	Vito	16	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
14	Alfano	Antonio	22	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
15	D'Orsi	Antonio	27	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
16	Merlino	Vito	18	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
17	Merlino	Antonio	17	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
18	Dell'Acqua	Antonio	22	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
19	Merlino	Antonio	20	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
20	Merlino	Antonio	18	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
21	Merlino	Antonio	17	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
22	Merlino	Antonio	16	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
23	Merlino	Antonio	15	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
24	Merlino	Antonio	14	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
25	Merlino	Antonio	13	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
26	Merlino	Antonio	12	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
27	Merlino	Antonio	11	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
28	Merlino	Antonio	10	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
29	Merlino	Antonio	9	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"
30	Merlino	Antonio	8	M	Single	no		"		"	"	"	"	"	"

* An intended residence of one year shall constitute permanent residence. The last country in which alien resided with the intention of remaining as long as one year shall be the last permanent residence regardless of length of actual residence therein.
† List of names will be found on back of this sheet.



*My
Italian American
Family*

Written and Compiled by Tina Calabro

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Several photographs in this book have been donated to the Italian American Collection at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. To access the originals, contact the History Center’s Italian American Program or the Detre Library & Archives to request a viewing.

In Loving Memory of



Pasquale “Patsy” Calabro
(1884-1959)

Agostina di Leonora Deviola
(1883-1943)



Michele “Mike” Matullo
(1895-1967)

Maria Caterina “Catherine” Coraggio
(1906-1991)



Bruno Joseph Calabro
(1922-1989)

Josephine Mary Matullo
(1923-2016)



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*“We all come from the past,
and children ought to know
what it was that went into
their making, to know that
life is a braided cord of
humanity stretching up from
time long gone, and that
it cannot be defined by the
span of a single journey from
diaper to shroud.”*

Russell Baker

INTRODUCTION

“Family is your passion,” my Italian cousin Clelia Iuliani declared during one of our many discussions about our shared history at her dining room table and on long walks in Foggia.

Her four words spoke to my heart and a life mission.

The gist of my grandparents’ immigration stories was passed down orally but not written down. Grandfather Pasquale may have come to America as a stowaway. Grandmother Agostina’s family in Italy gave her away as a servant to another family. Grandmother Catherine’s mother brought her at age five to be raised by her grandfather in Washington, Pennsylvania. Grandfather Mike met Grandmother Catherine when he was a boarder at a house near where she lived. They ran away to get married.

For years, I hung onto the bits and pieces and tried to gather more, recording as many interviews as I could. I also had a strong desire to meet the Italian families that my Italian American family came from. They comprised the *larger* part of our family. Unlike my four grandparents, these ancestors remained in Italy during the great wave of immigration to the U.S. between 1880 and 1930.

The thread of communication with our Italian relatives had thinned as certain family “communicators” at our end passed away—Aunt Jo Calabro Sowers in 1982 and Grandmother Catherine Coraggio in 1991. Aunt Jo traveled to Italy to meet the Calabro cousins in 1964. Grandmother Catherine corresponded by letter

with the Coraggio family throughout her life.

Starting in 1999, my family and I picked up those threads and followed them to Italy.

Over twenty years and eleven trips, several of us met our Italian cousins, visited the towns where our ancestors lived, and learned about the families from which our grandparents came. Facebook helped us find relatives the family had lost touch with and stay in touch about our current lives.

Clelia Iuliani, her husband Gianni Daniele (my mother's first cousin) and their sons Alberto and Luca opened the door to the Coraggio/Tisi branch of the family, with its roots in Savignano Irpino, Campania. Likewise, our cousin Isabella Abbatepaolo, her husband Emilio Giacomi, and their children Chiara and Lorenzo created the connection to the Calabro roots in Saline, Reggio Calabria. Isabella's grandfather Consolato and mine (Pasquale) were brothers.

God willing, additional trips to Italy will establish connections with the family of grandfather Mike Matullo of Torremaggiore, Foggia, and grandmother Agostina di Leonora Deviola of Sant'Elia, Reggio Calabria. Closer to home, a research visit to McDowell County, West Virginia, would help us connect with our Calabro grandparents' experience in a coal-mining enclave that was their first American home.

This family history brings together the story of my four immigrant grandparents—a story of remarkable courage and strength in a new world. It also tells the story of my American-born parents. Their story is a quintessential “second generation”

Italian American story, exquisite in its own way. My mother's personal archive of mementos and photos help tell their story.

The geographical center of my Italian American family is Washington, Pennsylvania, an industrial town forty miles southwest of Pittsburgh, where hundreds of Italian immigrants set down roots and raised families. According to census figures, Washington's population increased from 4,292 in 1880 to 24,545 in 1930 (a nearly six-fold increase) during the years of large-scale Italian immigration.

Since 2016, it has been an unexpected pleasure to record many immigrant stories of that period for the Italian Heritage Collection at the Hood Local History Center at Washington's Citizens Library. The collection, which my family helped found, includes oral histories, publications and other materials. It is a great satisfaction to now add my family story to the collection.

Family is indeed my passion. Many family voices help tell the story in the following pages. It is my hope that the story creates understanding of our ancestors' life and times, and brings joy and pride to current and future family members.

Tina Calabro
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
August 2023



The Story of My Paternal Grandparents

Pasquale “Patsy” Calabro

Born: November 25, 1885

Motta San Giovanni, Montebello Ionico,

Reggio Calabria

Died: December 22, 1959

Washington, Pennsylvania

Agostina di Leonora Deviola Calabro

Born: July 22, 1884

Sant’Elia, Montebello Ionico, Reggio Calabria

Died: May 6, 1943

Washington, Pennsylvania

*Pasquale and Agostina with children
Domenico “Dominick” (rear), Carmella “Mary,” and
Bruno, McDowell County, West Virginia, 1923.*

In 2014, I reached out to my Calabro cousins to ask what they remembered or heard about our grandmother, Agostina, who died in 1943, long before most of us were born, and her marriage to our grandfather, Pasquale, who died in 1959.

At the time of my asking, I was writing a personal essay about our not-well-known grandmother for *Western Pennsylvania History* magazine.* We older cousins had childhood memories of our grandfather but knew very little about Agostina, besides the general consensus that she had a hard life that led to an early death at age 58.

My cousins’ recollections helped me piece together a picture of our grandparents’ lives for that essay and for this family history. Admittedly, the story is incomplete. Our remembrances are filtered by the passage of time and the impossibility of truly understanding what it was like for them to forge a new life in the United States more than a century ago.

What we do know is that they took a great risk to cross the ocean to create a better life for themselves and their children. Life was hard in Italy; life was hard here, too. Pasquale and Agostina worked ceaselessly to make it possible for future generations to thrive. We owe a great debt to them.

Pasquale was the son of Bruno Calabro and Francesca Carmela Crea, and the only member of his family who emigrated to the United States. His brother and sisters were Concetta (b. 1881), Francesco (1883-1951), Antonio (b. 1888?), Maria (1892-1961), Consolato (1895-1944), Antonia, and Caterina.

* "Servant 'Up on the Hill': My Italian American Grandmother," *Western Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 98, Number 4, Winter 2015-2016, p. 32-43

<http://journals.psu.edu/wph/article/view/60214/60163>

Pasquale was born in Motta San Giovanni, a village in the municipality of Montebello Ionico in the province of Reggio Calabria. It is located about thirteen miles southeast of the city of Reggio Calabria. Around 1904, the family moved to Saline, about ten miles southeast of the city of Reggio Calabria.

Agostina was from Sant’Elia, about four miles northeast of Saline. Sant’Elia is a village in the municipality of Montebello Ionico, in the province of Reggio Calabria. She was very poor in her childhood and was given away by her family to be a servant to another family when she was eleven years old. We do not have information about her family of origin.

“I heard that the family she was a servant for was harsh. They tormented her to death. They didn’t treat her like family. She was a used woman from very young. She was a servant and that’s all she knew. Grandpap took her out of there. She didn’t have a full, good life. She was worn out before she started doing anything.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

We don’t have details about Pasquale’s life in Italy but heard that was a laborer, beginning at the age of seven. We heard that he helped build a tunnel to Austria.

Pasquale and Agostina married in 1909. They had two sons—Bruno (1911 or 1912) and Domenico “Dominick” (1913)—before Pasquale emigrated to America in 1913.

“It was a marriage of convenience. I don’t think it was love. I think it was that she needed somebody and he needed somebody.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“I heard that marrying was part of Grandpap’s strategy for getting to America. He thought it would be easier for a married man to be accepted and perhaps become a citizen quicker. So he went looking for a wife.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

In 1908, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake and subsequent tsunami destroyed the cities of Messina, Sicily, and Reggio Calabria, located on opposite sides of the Strait of Messina. More than 75,000 people died (25,000 in Reggio Calabria).

The disaster may have contributed to Pasquale and Agostina’s decision to emigrate. Pasquale set off for America in 1913, possibly as a stowaway on a ship he boarded in North Africa. We heard that he disembarked from the ship in Pensacola, Florida. Agostina remained in Saline (or possibly her hometown of Sant’Elia) with their two sons. Their son Bruno died in 1918 at age six, possibly from a ruptured appendix.

“I heard that he fell on a sharp rock that pierced his appendix. Our grandmother carried him to the hospital every day for a week until, finally, he died.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton



Mickey and Sue Steuernagel (daughters of Antoinette Calabro Steuernagel), Altamont Avenue, 1950s. The houses behind them were across the street from the Calabro home and grocery store.

Pasquale made his way to the coal mines in McDowell County, West Virginia, the heart of the bituminous coal industry that supported steel production in the Pittsburgh region to the north. According to the West Virginia Encyclopedia, McDowell County had 2,300 Italian immigrants in 1910, the most of any county in the state.

Pasquale's brother Consolato helped Agostina and son Domenico "Dominick," age six, embark on the S.S. *Cretic* from the Port of Naples, in December 1919. Mother and son arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 6, 1920. They then joined Pasquale in Welch, West Virginia (McDowell County). We don't have information about their mode of travel to West Virginia.

Agostina soon gave birth to three more children—Carmella "Mary" in December, 1920; Bruno in March, 1922; and Josephine in January, 1924.

Domenico Foca (1888-1932) and his wife Domenica Siclari (or Sicari) were friends of Pasquale and Agostina in McDowell County. Baptism certificates show that they were godparents of Carmella "Mary" (1920-1987) and Bruno (1922-1989). Domenico was from Brancaleone, Reggio Calabria, about thirty miles from Saline. The Calabros and Focas were like family. Siblings Bruno Calabro and Carmella "Mary" remained in touch with the Foca family throughout their lives.

As far as we know, Pasquale and Agostina had no other family in the U.S. Their daughter Josephine Calabro's 1926 baptism certificate indicates that Paul Crea was her godfather. Crea is the surname of Grandfather Pasquale's mother, but we don't know if Paul Crea was a relative.

In 1925, the family moved one hundred miles north to a wood frame house at 53 Altamont Avenue in Washington, Pennsylvania. At the ages of forty-three and forty-five, respectively, Agostina had two more children—Antoinette in 1926 and Armenio in 1928.

We don't know why the family moved to Washington. Another immigrant by the name of Carmelo Calabro (1892-1978) from Brancaleone, Reggio Calabria, lived in Washington around the same time, but we don't know if there is a relationship. Likewise, there are other Calabros in the Pittsburgh area and we do not know if we are related.

Altamont Avenue is located atop a hill in the west end known as Bellevue. We family members still refer to the Calabro homestead as "up on the hill."

Pasquale and Agostina operated the Calabro grocery on first floor of their house. The family lived upstairs. Later, Pasquale built a new red brick building for the store at 51 Altamont Avenue, adjacent to the house. Pasquale also built other houses on the hill. All are still standing.

According to Pasquale's obituary, he worked at the Tylerdale Mine of Hillman Coal and Coke Company in Washington County, Pennsylvania, and acquired an injury there in 1931. He may also have had lung disease.

The wood frame house at 53 Altamont Avenue was occupied by family members until the late 1960s. The house was then sold. It was torn down in the 1970s. We don't have a photo of the house.

“The house had three large picture windows in front and a fence around a cement porch. There were two bedrooms upstairs (one was an enclosed porch where the kids slept). It had a toilet in the basement, but no bathroom. It had a coal furnace. There was a large rosebush in front and a big tree, maybe a pear tree, to the right of the house, situated on the flat part of the property before it sloped downhill toward Bellevue Avenue. There was a cherry tree in back. We ate the cherries and we climbed the tree. Grandpap also had a garden.

There was a narrow alley on the right side of the house that led down to Bellevue Avenue. People used it as a throughway.”

***Mickey Steuernagel Hardester &
Sue Steuernagel Newton***

“There was a large tree stump with hatchet marks between the house and the store. I heard that was where our grandmother chopped the heads off chickens.”

Faith Skowronski Daniels



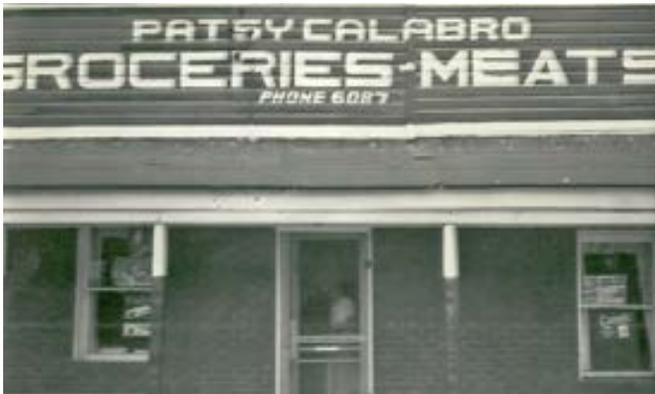
The stone marker for Altamont Avenue still stands.



Pasquale Calabro with daughter Carmella "Mary" Calabro Skowronski, 1950s.



Pasquale Calabro and daughter Josephine's Chevy, 1952.



The store served the neighborhood for nearly 40 years —from around 1930 to 1968.

The store is vivid in the memories of Pasquale and Agostina's grandchildren.

Inside the front entrance, to the left, was a large candy case with glass front. On top of the candy case was a wooden cash register. Next to the candy

case was a counter with a gumball machine and a note pad where neighbors' "tabs" were written down. Built into the front of the counter were shelves with Wonder Bread, Town Talk Bread and other packaged goods.

There was a freezer case on the right side of the store with ice cream in it, and two waist-high refrigerated red Coca-Cola "pop" cases with upright glass bottles inside and the opener for their metal caps incorporated into the case itself.

A long refrigerated meat case sat directly opposite the front entrance. Milk, butter and other items were also kept in the case. Behind the meat case was a rough-hewn butcher block on four legs, a large meat cleaver, a commercial slicer for lunchmeat and cheese, and a weight scale with a shiny white porcelain top.

A well-worn "accordion" door led from the store to a back room. The hum of refrigeration, the smell of processed meat and cheese, and the creak of footsteps on old wood floors permeated the store.

"I remember visiting Grandpap everyday with my mom while Aunt Jo worked at the store, especially when Grandpap was sick. My mom told me that he had a nickname for me and taught me to sing in Italian: 'It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring.'"

Faith Skowronski Daniels

“I remember tending the candy counter so Aunt Jo didn’t have to get up every time a kid came in with ten cents. Even today, I could probably name every type of candy in that wonderful old case. I also remember always asking Aunt Jo for a raw hot dog in casing from the meat case to eat on my way home next door.”

Faith Skowronski Daniels

“Behind the candy case, Aunt Jo kept things. When I was about seven, I saw two baby dolls in boxes back there. She didn’t mean for me to see those dolls, but I was so thrilled to see them. They were so beautiful. She gave me some big excuse about why they were there. But when Christmas came that year, she gave them to my sister Sue and me. That’s why they were back there.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

“I heard that, during the Depression, customers ran up large tabs and, as a result, the family struggled financially.”

Faith Skowronski Daniels

“I heard that Grandpap gave everyone credit if they needed it.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester



Calabro store, 1959. Carmella “Mary” Calabro Skowronski with children Gino and Faith in foreground.



Josephine Calabro Sowers, 1950s.



Carmella "Mary" Calabro Skowronski and Steve Skowronski with Sue Steuernagel, 1948.



Pasquale Calabro in front of store with granddaughters Mickey Steuernagel (l.) and Sue Steuernagel.



Cousins (left to right) Sue Steuernagel, Tina Calabro, Gino Skowronski, Mary Catherine "Cathi" Calabro, and Mickey Steuernagel, Easter, 1958.



Calabro store mid-1960s. Josephine Matullo Calabro awards savings bond to customer.



Cash register and butcher block from the store.

In the late 1940s or early 1950s, Pasquale converted the back room of the store to living quarters. The main room was a kitchen/dining room, a living room/bedroom was to the right, and a set of four steps on the left led to a bedroom and bathroom. Pasquale and his daughter Josephine (Aunt Jo) lived there until they moved to the house on Bellevue Avenue that he built in the 1950s.

Aunt Jo was the main family member who ran the store. In the mid-1960s, she moved to California for a time. While she was there, brother Armenio and his wife Tillie ran the store for a short period, as did brother Bruno and his wife Josephine.

The store closed in 1968 after Aunt Jo returned from California. She then converted the store into four additional rooms of living quarters. The building still stands as a single family house.



(Rear, l. to r.) Tillie Skowronski Calabro, Josephine Matullo Calabro (holding Tina Calabro), Grandfather Pasquale Calabro, Josephine Calabro Sowers, Carmella "Mary" Calabro Skowronski, (front) Armenio Calabro, Bruno Calabro (with son Pasquale), 1953.

“When Aunt Jo was not slicing lunchmeat orders or tending to customers, she would be sitting at the table in the kitchen doing crossword puzzles or reading a book, smoking a Pall Mall and maybe drinking a Pepsi from a glass bottle.

I remember the sink and stove on left front wall of the kitchen, a black-and-white television with ‘rabbit ears’ in the back left corner, and a couch at the right wall. From April to October, the dial on a portable radio was set for Pittsburgh Pirates baseball. Aunt Jo was a big fan.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“I worked in the store after school when I lived with Aunt Jo for a year when I was in high school. I did everything, but wasn’t allowed to use the slicer.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

“I remember that the back room smelled like smoke. Pasquale smoked cigars.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

When Pasquale died in 1959, Aunt Jo became the heir to his properties.

“Grandpap left Aunt Jo all the property because she took care of him. She deserved it. She gave up her whole life for him. Aunt Jo had a serious boyfriend when she was young and they wanted to get married, but Grandpap didn’t want her to leave. So she stayed to take care of her dad. His mindset was, that’s what daughters were supposed to do. Men didn’t take care of themselves. They needed a woman for that. He was alone, there was no woman. Aunt Jo had to be that woman. Parents had the last say.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

Aunt Jo married Ray Sowers in the 1970s, moved to his home in Amity, Pennsylvania, and died in 1982. She named her surviving brothers and sisters as heirs to the Calabro real estate in her will.



Armenio Calabro, Josephine Calabro Sowers, Pasquale Calabro, Bruno Calabro, 1940s.

Pasquale was a builder. In the 1940s and 1950s, he built and renovated buildings in partnership with his son Dominick, who financed them with profits from strip mining operations. Dominick was also a builder.

Pasquale built a red brick four-square house at 55 Altamont, which was purchased by daughter Carmella “Mary” and husband Steve Skowronski in 1950. Before the purchase, Pasquale lived in the house with daughter Josephine. Armenio and his wife Tillie also lived there briefly.

Pasquale converted the former Bellevue Elementary School on Altamont Avenue, a rectangular building where all the Calabro children attended school, into a duplex (35-37 Altamont Avenue) to rent. He built a small red brick house at the corner of Altamont and Bellevue to rent, and a buff-colored brick house at 119 Bellevue Avenue for himself and daughter Josephine. All of these buildings, though modest, are still standing.

We also heard that Pasquale also owned an undeveloped property on Summerlea Avenue, which was sold as an eminent domain transaction for the construction of Interstate 70.

“My father [Bruno] said his father was always building. He was always sending him off to gather rocks for foundations, a tedious task for a kid.”

Tina Calabro

“Grandpap found his building materials in all kinds of ways. He built the roof of the addition to the store with wooden orange crates.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“I remember helping Grandpap by carrying bricks.”

Wilfred “Billy” Steuernagel

“I remember him always with a pick and shovel.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

“I saw his workmanship. It was good.”

Robert Calabro



51 Altamont Avenue. The former Calabro store is now a single-family home.



Grandfather Pasquale with grandchildren Gino Skowronski and Sue Steuernagel.



55 Altamont Avenue. was the family home of Steve and Carmella "Mary" Skowronski.



37 Altamont Avenue. Pasquale and son Dominick converted the former Bellevue school building into a duplex.



Rear of 51 Altamont, 2015. The Calabro store was situated on the apex of the hill, with an expansive view of the town of Washington.



House located on the corner of Altamont and Bellevue avenues.



119 Bellevue Avenue. Pasquale built this house for himself and daughter Josephine.

Pasquale had another, more “behind the scenes” life. He ran a pool hall and gambling parlor beneath the Kroger on Chestnut Street. He also held poker games in the back room of the store. In two instances that were reported in the newspaper, he ran into trouble with the law—once for selling liquor during Prohibition and once for running a gambling parlor.

“He wasn’t a devoted husband. He had a few women. He did what he wanted to do, when he wanted to do it. He wasn’t abusive but he did what he wanted and left [Agostina] to take care of the kids. He cared about her, but not like a wife/husband thing. And he made sure that *she* was a good girl. It was sad. That poor woman didn’t have a chance in the world.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“There was no great love between them. He didn’t want to be home. He was always gone. [Agostina] knew her place and believed that that was what she was here for. She never complained or protested. With the kids, she was the head of all punishment.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

Pasquale had some involvement with local Mafia.

“There were lots of mafias everywhere at the time. West Virginia was loaded with Mafia and lots of them came from West Virginia to Washington.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

“[The Mafia] once came to kill him in Washington. They threw him in a car and took him somewhere. Then they realized he wasn’t the person they were looking for and they let him go. When that happened, he said he wanted out and he got out.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“I heard that when he first came over, he was in a Mafia in West Virginia. Maybe he had gotten involved in Italy. Maybe they helped him come over and he had to work for them. We know he didn’t come to America through regular channels, so what kind of pull did he have?”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

Neither Pasquale nor Agostina became American citizens. Neither spoke English well.

“My mom [Antoinette] taught Susie, Billy and me to say ‘Come sta?’ to Grandpap when we came into the store. He would always sit on a stool in the corner behind the left side of the meat case. He was tickled that we could ask him that, and he would answer, ‘Bene.’ He would laugh and laugh. But he refused to speak English. I remember that when we talked to him in English, he would understand. But he wouldn’t speak it. Aunt Jo translated Grandpap for other people. She spoke and understood Italian the best.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

“Grandpap always called me ‘Tuesday’ because he couldn’t pronounce ‘Susie.’ And he always played a trick on me on April Fools Day. He’d say, ‘You dropped something.’ ”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“He was a man you couldn’t understand. He was complex. He had no relationship with me as a daughter-in-law, but I heard he liked me. He spoke English only when he had to, like, ‘Are you hungry?’ ‘Yes.’ ”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Agostina had severe rheumatoid arthritis.

“Her health was not up to par. She was ill, ill and more ill. She had bad arthritis, got it very young. My mom [Antoinette] told me that she and Aunt Mary and Aunt Jo would knead bread dough for her because the arthritis in her hands was so bad.”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“My mother [Antoinette] said she rubbed her mother’s feet all the time. She felt sorry for her.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

In May 1943, Agostina died suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage in the house at 53 Altamont Avenue. Although she was only fifty-eight years old, she looked much older.



Wedding of Dominick Calabro and Margaret Bohus, 1935.



A rare photo of Agostina Calabro.

“I think she felt sorry for everybody. She was soft-hearted and loving. She was a very loving mother, but she had no control. The kids did what they wanted to do and she couldn’t do anything about it. Grandpap would just say, ‘You take care of it.’”

Sue Steuernagel Newton

“She might not have been a kingpin, but she was well-loved. I remember the outdoor ovens where she made bread. She cut the bread in two and topped it with butter. It was really good.

When I was five years old, I got a spanking from my parents because I tried to walk from our house in the west end to our grandparents’ house. I wanted to see my grandmother.

One time, [my brother] Donnie and I got stuck in an old refrigerator that was left outside. Our grandmother found us and saved our lives.

I was six years old when she died. I remember her casket in the front room of the house. She had a hard life. She was loyal, frail. She worked and worked and worked.”

Robert Calabro

“My father [Armenio] was fifteen when she died. He was in the house when it happened. He never talked about his growing up years. They didn’t have the best life.”

Michael Calabro

“Menio helped his mother a lot. She was feeble. He really had to help her.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

The family changed after Agostina's sudden death.

“Both of our grandparents’ personalities were subdued, but there always was lots of arguing and loud talking ‘up home’ as we called it. There was always a fight in the store. Who was getting money for dances? Whose hand was in the till? My family moved to Canonsburg in 1948. We lived seven miles away but it could have been seven hundred.”

Robert Calabro

“My mother [Antoinette] moved to Pittsburgh right after her mother died. She was seventeen. She felt she had to get out, just the way the family was. She got a job taking photographs in a nightclub. She and Aunt Mary argued for years about whether my mother stole her clothes when she left.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

Pasquale died in 1959 at age seventy-four at his house at 119 Bellevue Avenue.

“I was at his bedside with my father [Dominick]. He died peacefully.”

Robert Calabro

“Grandpap disowned my mother [Antoinette] because she was pregnant with Patricia and not married to the father of the baby. Grandpap walked away from her, walked into his bedroom and never spoke to her again. My mother cried. Everything changed. They didn't speak to each other in the two years before he died. We missed out on our grandfather during those two years.

He left her \$100 in his will. She bought a living room suite, the first one we ever had.”

Mickey Steuernagel Hardester

Agostina and son Bruno, May 1943. Bruno was home on leave from Camp Phillips, Kansas. While on the train back to the Army base, he got word that his mother had died and he immediately returned home. Some say that Agostina's distress that he would soon be deployed to fight in World War II precipitated her sudden death.



**Dominick and Margaret
Bohus Calabro's children:**

Dominick Calabro, Jr.
Robert Calabro
Peggy Jean Terling

**Steve and Carmella
"Mary" Calabro
Skowronski's children:**

Gino Skowronski
Faith Daniels

**Bruno and Josephine
Matullo Calabro's
children:**

Patsy Calabro
Tina Calabro
Cathi Lombardo
Cara Lytton

**Antoinette Calabro
Steuernagel's children:**

Sue Newton
Mickey Hardester
Wilfred Steuernagel
Patricia Cloud
John Steuernagel
Mary Jo Boyd
James Steuernagel
David Steuernagel
Kathie Schultz

**Armenio "Menio"
and Tillie Skowronski
Calabro's children**

Michael Calabro
Richard Calabro

*We Calabro cousins loved and
enjoyed our extended family.*

*Here are some special
memories.*



Calabro sisters Carmella "Mary," Josephine and Antoinette, Altamont Avenue, 1940s. The family lovingly referred to this photo as the "Gabor Sisters," who were popular entertainers of the time.



Recreating the pose, 1970s.



Josephine Calabro Sowers, who had no children of her own, doted on her nieces and nephews, and we adored her. Tina Calabro heaps love on her in this 1964 photo. "Aunt Jo was my 'other mother,'" says Faith Skowronski Daniels.



Sue Steuernagel's First Communion with Uncle Menio Calabro, outside Immaculate Conception Church, 1950s.



Carmella "Mary" Calabro Skowronski (l.) with Faith Skowronski Daniels (holding Andrew Daniels). Rear: Cathi Calabro Lombardo, Gino Skowronski, Tina Calabro, 1986.

Domenico "Dominick" Calabro died in 1968 from colon cancer.

Carmella "Mary" Calabro Skowronski died in 1987 from a ruptured aortic aneurysm.

Bruno Calabro died in 1989 from congestive heart failure.

Josephine Calabro Sowers died in 1982 from a heart attack.

Antoinette Calabro Steuernagel died in 1984 from congestive heart failure.

Armenio Calabro died in 1997 from complications of an aneurysm.

The Factor V Leiden mutation, a blood clotting disorder found in Causcasians, may be inherent in the Calabro and/or Deviola lineage.

Descendants are encouraged to be tested for it.



The Story of My Maternal Grandparents

Michele “Mike” Matullo

Born: Torremaggiore, Puglia, August 25, 1885

Died: Washington, Pennsylvania, June 22, 1967

Maria Caterina “Catherine” Coraggio

Born: Savignano Irpino, Avellino, Campania,
January 13, 1906

Died: Washington, Pennsylvania, March 6, 1991



Mike and Catherine Coraggio Matullo, 1946.

Maria Caterina “Catherine” Coraggio was born on January 13, 1906, in Savignano Irpino, Avellino, Campania. In February 1911, when Catherine was five years old, she arrived at Ellis Island with her parents Maria Sfosina Tisi (1882-1953) and Antonio Coraggio (1880-1945), brother Pasquale (age three), and sister Maria (age one). Ship records indicate that Antonio was detained for two days after arrival at Ellis Island. No reason is listed.

Upon arriving in Washington, Pennsylvania, they joined Maria Sfosina’s father, Lorenzo Tisi (1852-1927), and his second wife Battista Barbarotta (1859-1935) at 363 East Prospect Avenue in the south end of Washington. Maria Sfosina’s mother, Maria Sabetta, died in Savignano in 1886.

Lorenzo, Battista and their daughter Giovina (1888-1925) had emigrated to America on the S.S. *Florida* from Naples in December 1907, arriving at Ellis Island. Lorenzo’s brother Nicolo Tisi is listed on the ship manifest as “nearest relative.”

Lorenzo and Battista had lost two children before emigrating—Maria Susanna (1898-1904) and Michele (b. 1891).

Maria Sfosina was pregnant at the time of arrival in the U.S. She gave birth to son Lorenzo “Lawrence” in Washington, Pennsylvania, on March 10, 1911, less than a month after arrival. Lawrence would be the only Coraggio child born in America. Lawrence’s birth certificate indicates that his father, Antonio, was a glassworker in Washington. Therefore, Antonio must have gotten a job at Hazel-Atlas Glass Company, where Lorenzo Tisi worked.

Maria Sfosina and Antonio left their daughter Catherine with grandfather Lorenzo and his wife Battista in Washington before heading back to Italy with children Pasquale, Maria and Lorenzo. The intention was for the entire Coraggio family to return to Washington at a later time. Maria Sfosina and Antonio also wanted to leave three-year-old Pasquale in Washington, but Lorenzo and Battista declined, saying that a boy is more difficult to raise.

When the return trip to the U.S. was arranged for the Coraggio family's emigration, Antonio contracted conjunctivitis (pink eye) and was not allowed on the ship. Maria Sfosina may have returned to Washington in 1914 on her own, but we have not found any record of it. She and Antonio had three more children in Italy—Lucia (1915-2003), Enrico (1917-2008) and Seurita (1921-1999).

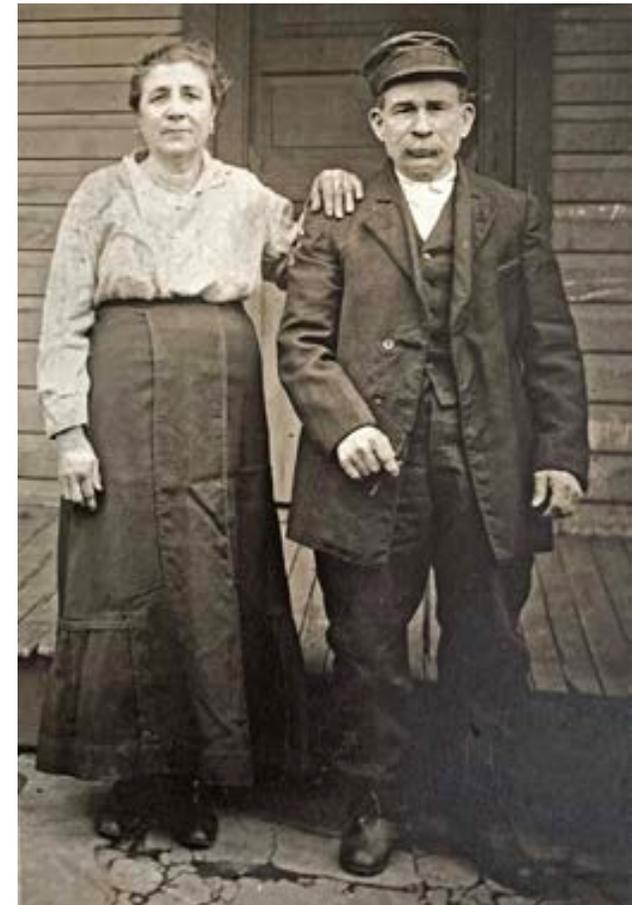
When we visited our cousins in Italy in 2005, they told us that Maria Sfosina had fourteen pregnancies, but only seven live births. Sfosina was strong and assertive, our cousins said. Antonio was more retiring.



Antonio Coraggio



Maria Sfosina Tisi



Lorenzo Tisi and Battista Barbarotta.

Catherine grew up in the Tisi household with her mother's half-sister Giovina and Giovina's husband Michele "Mike" Magnatto (1881-1938). It appears that Giovina and Mike were married in Italy.

Mike Magnatto (alternate spellings are Magnatta and Magnetta) was born in Bovino, Puglia, one of the Italian towns from which a number of Washington's Italians came.

“Giovina and Mike Magnosta met in Savignano during the feast of Saint Anne.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Giovina and Mike’s children were Louis (1909-1955), Lawrence (1910-1912), James (1912-2013), Mildred (1913-2007), Adeline (1915-2015), Clara (1916-1918), Alberta (1918-2010), Lawrence (1918-1988), and Clara (1920-1998). All the children spelled their last name "Magnosta."

By 1920, the extended Tisi-Magnosta family had moved to 84 Mill Street in the west end of Washington. The house number was later changed to 22 Mill Street. Members of the Magnosta family occupied the Mill Street home through 2021.



Photos of Catherine Coraggio as a child show her somber nature. Those who knew her recall her loneliness and longing for her parents.



Catherine Coraggio’s certificate for perfect handwriting. She attended Immaculate Conception School.

Catherine’s separation from her parents changed her life forever. Throughout her life, she mourned the absence of her parents and yearned for the younger siblings she never met. She corresponded with her parents through letters. Unfortunately, none of their letters remain.

Through those letters, Catherine followed the lives of her younger siblings and invited them to come to America. In 1925, her brother Lorenzo “Lawrence,” age fourteen, did just that. He moved to the Tisi/Magnosta house at 22 Mill Street and later joined Catherine and her husband Michele “Mike” Matullo at 46 Mill Street.

“My mother [Catherine] would get a letter from Italy and cry.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

“Sfosina was molto forte (“strong”). She and Antonio sold goods such as coffee and grain. They did whatever they could in hard times.”

Clelia Iuliani

Lawrence Coraggio remained in Washington for the rest of his life. In 1934, he married Lucy LaBella (1915-1998) who lived near the Tisis at 90 Mill Street. Sometime after 1950, Lawrence, an accomplished carpenter, built a house on Gabby Avenue in North Franklin Township. Lawrence and Lucy lost two children at birth (Lawrence in 1936 and Antoinette in 1944) and had no others.

Siblings Lawrence and Catherine Coraggio remained close throughout their lives. Both were especially close to Giovina and Mike’s son James “Jim.” Jim always called Catherine “Sis.”

Catherine had also been close to Giovina—technically her aunt, but perhaps more like a sister eighteen years her senior. In 1925, Giovina died from cancer at age thirty-six, leaving seven children.

“Giovina was a beautiful woman. She really loved my mother [Catherine]. Louise [Jim Magnosta's wife] was so much like Giovina. My mother got close to Louise.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro



Michele "Mike" and Giovina Tisi Magnosta.



1922 photo of Giovina and Michele "Mike" Magnosta with children Louis, James, Mildred, Adeline, Clara, and Alberta. At rear, wearing a hat, is Catherine Coraggio, who was seventeen years old. Giovina died three years later at the age of thirty-six.



*Lawrence and Lucy LaBella Coraggio
in the 1930s and 1940s.*



*Jim Magnetta and his wife Louise Brach Magnetta with
sons James and Michael.*

Mill Street was a "Little Italy" in the early 20th century. It was a narrow, secluded brick street with houses close together on one side. On the opposite side of the street were the elevated Baltimore and Ohio railroad tracks and a switch building. The sight and sound of passing trains were part of everyday life on Mill Street. A feed mill was at the lower end of the street. A noisy factory—Penn

Manufacturing—was behind the houses. Its whistle blew at 7:00 a.m.

Kids played in the street. In warm weather, neighbors strolled and visited each other's porches. At 9:00 p.m., everyone went back to their houses. There were no street lights.

"The train engineer always waved to us."

Josephine Matullo Calabro

"The trains made a hell of a lot of noise and would shake the hell out of the house."

Lawrence Coraggio

"We'd sit there and count the cars."

Lucy LaBella Coraggio

"Every Sunday morning, you could hear music. Mike Magnetta had a record player and he liked military marches, like 'Stars and Stripes Forever.' You could hear it clear up the street. He'd get up real early, like six o'clock in the morning."

Josephine Matullo Calabro

"All my friends were down on Mill Street. Everybody wanted to live on Mill Street."

Louise Brach Magnetta

"We did a lot of things on Mill Street that we wouldn't have done anywhere else."

Lucy LaBella Coraggio

“Sundays were special. After two o’clock it was time to dance on Grecos’ back porch.”

Lawrence Coraggio



Coal dust emanating from trains passing by made Mill Street gritty.

“We had to sweep the street. We washed the front of our house.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Catfish Creek ran behind the houses on Mill Street. Neighborhood kids played in it, jumping from stone to stone.

“I got pushed in the creek a lot of times by my cousin because I couldn’t talk English.”

“In wintertime, we would sled ride in the backyards to Catfish Creek and slide around on the ice, and also down past the mill on West Wheeling Street.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Mill Street was a “Little Italy.” This photo was taken at Antonio and Michelina Greco’s house, 60 Mill Street, in the 1940s. Mike Matullo is seated in front. Catherine Coraggio Matullo is standing, fourth adult from right. On Sundays and for celebrations, neighbors gathered on the large enclosed porch of the Greco house, which was called “The Lodge.” The Grecos’ grape arbor was also a gathering place.

In the 1940s, Catherine tried very hard to encourage her youngest sister Seurita (1925-1999) to leave Savignano and come to live with her family.

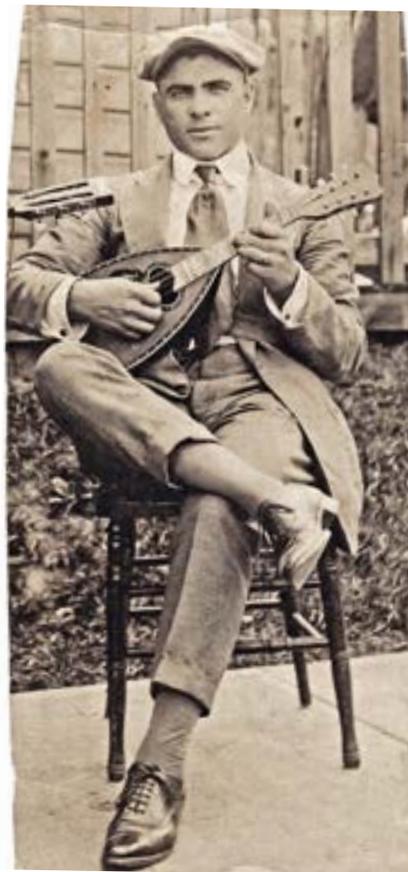
“My mother kept trying to get Seurita to come. When I was in high school, I thought I would come home one day and she would be there.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Catherine had experienced loss from an early age. As a child, she seems to have been serious and compliant. As an adult, she took control of her life and left little to chance. Her elopement at age sixteen with Michele “Mike” Matullo, ten years her senior, was the key to her future.

In 1914, Mike Matullo, age eighteen, boarded the S.S. *Canada* in Naples for his emigration journey to Ellis Island. On the passenger list, Pittsburgh is named as the final destination. “Luiz Paganelli” is listed as “Person in U.S” and “Uncle.” We don’t have information about him.

Mike’s 1917 draft registration during World War I lists his address as 25 Oregon Street and describes his stature as “short and stout.” The 1920 census indicates that Mike lived as a boarder in the house of Dominic and Concetta Lucero at 122 Mill Street. Like most male immigrants to Washington, his first job was as a laborer at a Hazel-Atlas glass plant.



Undated photo of young Mike Matullo.



During World War I, Mike Matullo served with the U.S. Army in France. The 1940 census lists Mike as “naturalized,” probably as a result of his having served in the U.S. Army.

Mike was the eldest son of Luigi Matullo and Maria Giuseppa DiPumpo of Torremaggiore, Puglia.



Maria Giuseppa DiPumpo and Luigi Matullo

“Giuseppa was a midwife. She helped the whole town.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Mike’s siblings were Atillio “Tullio” Matullo, Lucia Matullo, Sisina Matullo, Marionina Matullo, and Matteo Matullo.

Catherine met Mike at a house in Washington where he was a boarder. She knew the woman who owned the house and was hired to clean it.

“...my mother [Catherine] was working for this lady—I forget where, it was out East Prospect [Street], around there. My mother was just a young kid and she really liked this lady. So, my dad came and lived in the house, because they had boarders in there. And so my mother, she probably thought that this was her getaway, you know? So, they ran off. And then my grandfather [Lorenzo Tisi] took them up to the courthouse and made it legal. My mother wore a blue dress for her wedding. She had a huge hat, blue shoes and a beautiful dress.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro



Catherine and Mike Matullo 1922



Around 1926, Mike and Catherine moved from the Tisi house to their own house at 46 Mill Street (pictured here in 2015) with daughter Josephine and son Louis. Son Anthony and daughter Lucille were born in 1927 and 1931, respectively.

“We had two living rooms, one for company. Leather and wood furniture that we cleaned and polished every Saturday. We had a long kitchen, the whole length of the house, and the only indoor bathroom on the street.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

“One day, the girl next door, Pearl, was going to teach me to smoke when my mother went Uptown to shop. She had newspaper and corn silk. But my mother came back; she forgot something. I’m glad she came back because we could have set the house on fire. God was looking out for me.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Mike enjoyed domestic life. Daughter Josephine remembered her dad as a good cook who always had a big piece of cured Italian sausage hanging from the ceiling in the basement.

“I’d say, ‘Papa, I want a piece,’ and he’d go over and cut you a piece.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

“He always had chickens. He cut their heads off, and made soup. That was the best soup, especially if you ate the brains of the chicken. My dad said that’s the best part.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

“There was an Italian lady down the street who would ask me ‘What did you eat for supper?’ I told my dad about it, and he said, ‘The next time, you say "braciolo" [rolled steak with a savory filling].’ So I went skipping down the street. ‘Little Matullo, what did you eat?’ ‘Braciolo!’ She never asked me again what I ate.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

When neighbors gathered at the Grecos' large enclosed porch (neighbors referred to it as “The Lodge”), Mike would play the mandolin and sing.

“Mike used to sing all the time. He was happy all the time.”

Lawrence Coraggio

“He played the mandolin well and had a beautiful voice. When he played [the comical Sicilian song,] ‘Luna Mezzo Mare,’ he’d make up his own verses and say something crazy and we’d all laugh and he’d start laughing and couldn’t go on.”

Sister Carmella Greco, RSM

Through daughter Josephine’s eyes, Mike could do anything. When she was a teen, she asked her dad to cut her hair into a fashionable new style worn by movie stars of the time. It didn’t work out so well.

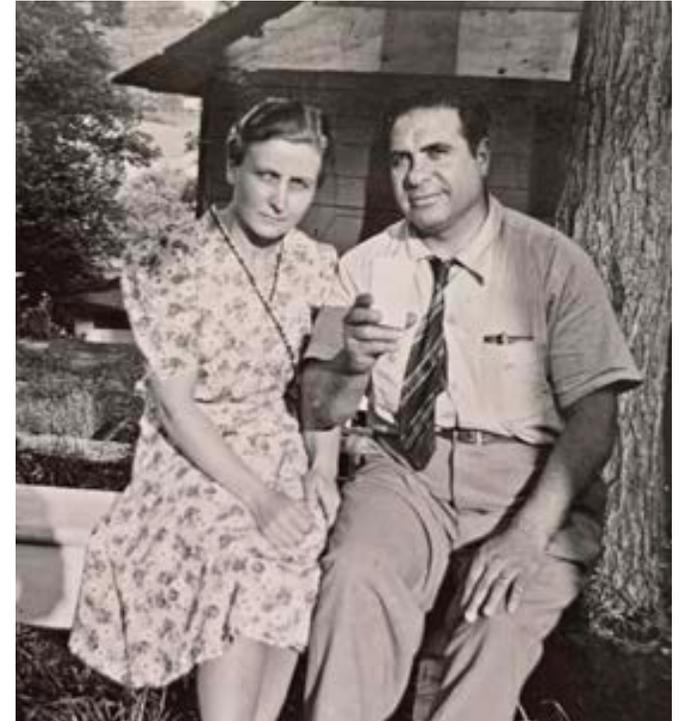
“The ‘wind-blown bob’ was the rage. So, he cut my hair, but I wasn’t satisfied. He cut my hair around the top of my ear. It was not the wind-blown bob!”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

“She was her daddy’s favorite.”

Bruno Joseph Calabro

Catherine and Mike’s personalities were very different. Catherine was serious and formal. Mike was warm-hearted and fun. These rare photos capture the warmth between them.



Josephine and her father.



Catherine ruled the roost. She was in her element as the center of family life and a force behind the scenes in Mike's success in the relatively new field of appliance sales. Mike was easygoing and personable, a natural salesman.



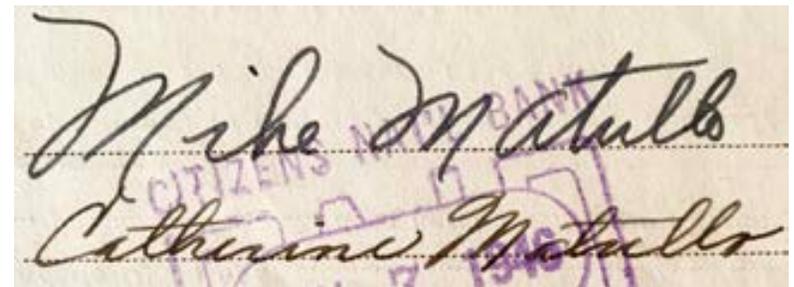
Catherine was the first in her family to graduate from high school. Having grown up in the U.S. since the age of five, she spoke English like a native. Finding the perfect words to express her thoughts and feelings was important to her. Mike spoke broken English.



Matullo family at home, 1510 N. Main Street.

Mike enjoyed cooking. Catherine was not known for her cooking (everything seemed a bit overcooked).

In many ways, their personalities and skills were complementary.





L. to r. Lawrence Coraggio, Bruno Calabro, Louis Matullo, Tony Matullo, Catherine Matullo, Louise Magnosta, Lucy Coraggio, Mike Matullo.

Catherine, who as an adult always strove to control her life, faced an unexpected setback in her thirties when she became blind in one eye. The cause was an untreated cataract.

“I remember I came home from school, and she was standing on the porch, and she was crying with Louise [Magnosta]. They didn’t tell me what she was crying about, but it was about cataracts; they were overgrown. She couldn’t see out of that eye. The doctor told her she was blind in that eye.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Mike started out as a door-to-door salesman for Eureka Vacuum Cleaner Company and was with the West Penn Appliance Company until 1937. His Italian background created a sense of trust within Washington’s large Italian American community as he introduced homemakers to the possibilities of new labor-saving appliances.

Mike and Catherine opened their first appliance store at 233 West Chestnut Street in bustling Downtown Washington in 1941. The store relocated to 149 North Main and later to its final location at 191 North Main, all with the name “Mike Matullo Appliance Company” in big letters across the front.



Matullo store, 233 West Chestnut Street.

In the early 1940s, the Matullo family moved away from the Italian village that was Mill Street to a two-story house at 1510 North Main Street with a more middle-class feel.



*Catherine in the kitchen,
1510 North Main Street.*



Grandchildren recall the highly varnished wooden cabinets in the kitchen and the aroma of coffee percolating on the stove.

“[My mother] wanted to get off Mill Street.
That’s why they moved to North Main.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

The Children of Mike and Catherine

Josephine, Louis, Anthony and Lucille followed their mother’s path of attending and graduating from Immaculate Conception School.



Josephine Matullo

Daughter Josephine
“Sippy” (1923-2016)
married her childhood
sweetheart Bruno Calabro

in 1946 and had four children. They lived with Mike and Catherine at 1510 North Main until 1948, when they moved to their own house on Farley Street about a mile or so away. Before marriage, Josephine kept books for the Matullo family business.



Louis Matullo

Son Louis “Louie” (1925-1980) married Lenore McMillan of Norwood, Ohio in 1955 and had two daughters, Catherine and Lois. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps in Guam, and repaired communication electronics in airplanes. He broke his back in a parachute line accident and was laid up for awhile, then returned to duty. He was skilled in repairing electronics, working for the Matullo family business and later in his own business. He was a ham radio operator and collected hundreds of jazz records. He was a can-do, resilient and always cheerful person.

“My dad lied about his age so he could enlist to help the war effort.”

Lois Matullo Pettit



Anthony Matullo

Anthony “Tony” (1927-1993) served in the U.S. Marines from 1945 to 1947, leaving as a corporal. He worked in the family business and later became a certified auctioneer. A few years after his father’s death in 1967, he closed Mike Matullo Appliance Company and concentrated on the auctioneer business. He never married and lived in the family home for most of his life. He had an undiagnosed mental health condition that intensified as he aged.



Lucille Matullo

As a young woman, Lucille (1931-1993) was a promising talent as a pianist and soprano but ultimately did not pursue performing. Up until her late thirties, she lived at home with her parents and worked in the family business until she married Vincent Cancelmi in 1966 and moved to a house on Laurel Avenue. She had an undiagnosed mental health condition that intensified as she aged.

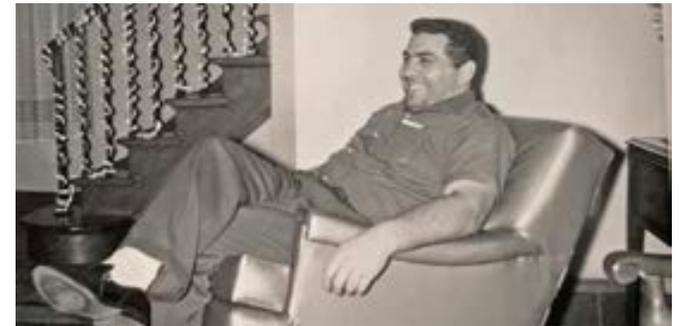
Every Sunday afternoon in the 1950s and 1960s, we grandchildren spent the afternoon at our Matullo grandparents' home at 1510 North Main Street.

Sunday visits at Ma Ma and Pap Pap's in the 1950s and 60s had a lot of sameness and ritual.

Ma Ma, Pap Pap, and Uncle Tony sat in their favorite chairs in the living room. Ma Ma had a sturdy wooden chair with a tan leather seat and back. Pap Pap's red leather chair was soft and comfy. Uncle Tony also had a red leather chair and sometimes sat in a tan leather rocker that swiveled. Whenever Uncle Tony got up from that special chair, the grandchildren would take advantage of his absence to take it on a spin until we were told to stop.

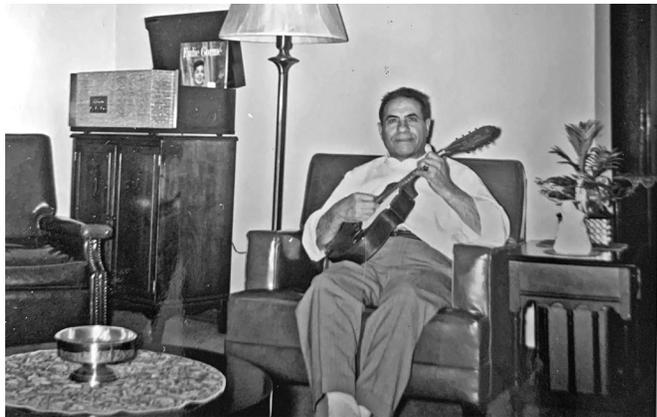


Three generations of Coraggio-Tisi women. Washington, Pennsylvania, 1988. Catherine Coraggio Matullo in center. Clockwise from left: Cathi Calabro Lombardo, Josephine Matullo Calabro (Catherine's daughter), Tina Calabro, and Cara Calabro Lytton.



The Matullo family was musical. Aunt Lucille played piano and sang during these Sunday visits. Her sheet music included contemporary musicals and Italian American standards. The highly polished upright piano sat in one corner of the

living room. “Mama,” an emotional song made popular by Italian American singer Connie Francis in the 1960s, was a favorite.



Pap Pap played his mandolin as he sat contentedly in his well-worn chair.

Uncle Tony also had a good singing voice. He self-recorded himself and Aunt Lucille on 78 RPM vinyl. Grandchildren Cathy Ruth Matullo Robertson and Lois Matullo Pettit inherited the Matullo musical talent as vocalists.



Lois Matullo Pettit and Cathy Matullo Robertson, 1977.

1510 North Main Street was a house for adults, not children. While Ma Ma, Uncle Tony and Aunt Lucille talked (often with some measure of anxiety about something), the grandchildren kept busy by reading Aunt Lucille’s small collection of books (kept on a shelf in a corner of the living room); listening to old records (only Uncle Tony was permitted to operate the record player), or covertly exploring the contents of the medicine cabinet in the upstairs bathroom with its old-fashioned powders, creams and pastes. The house had a somber mood and a stuffy smell.

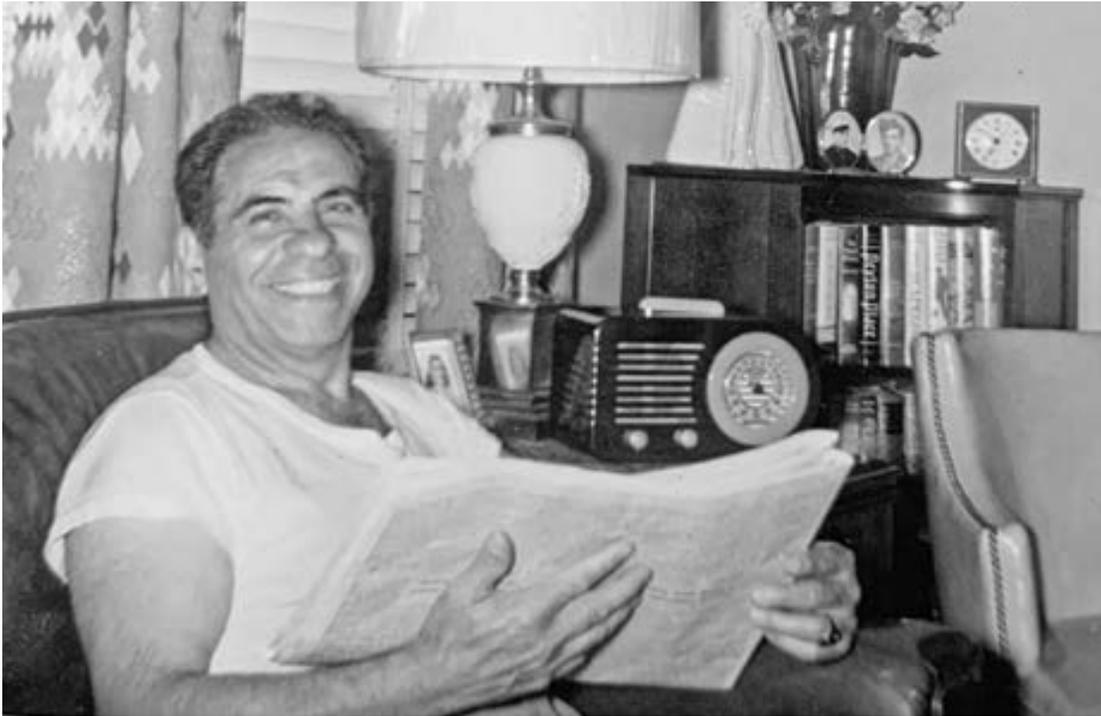
Pap Pap was sociable but never fluent in English and definitely not engaged in family debates and dilemmas. Ma Ma and Aunt Lucille (and Uncle Tony, to a lesser degree) did the talking. Although Italian was Ma Ma’s first language, her English was precise. She searched for the right word until she found it.

At an appointed time during the Sunday visits, Aunt Lucille would invite everyone into the dining room for what she always pronounced as “sangwiches.” Everyone then moved as a group to the table, again to appointed seats.

During the summers, a highlight of the visits was playing in the backyard, which had a hill just right for rolling and plenty of places to hide for “hide and seek.” Pap Pap was fun. He would join the kids outside, while the adults kept talking inside the house.

“My mother learned English and forgot the Italian language.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro



On June 22, 1967, Mike Matullo died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of seventy-one. He had seen his doctor just three days before, perhaps sensing the problem.

Mike's sudden death stunned the family to its core. Eldest daughter Josephine, always so close to her father and so similar to him in the transparency of their emotions, wailed loudly when he was pronounced dead at Washington Hospital.

For more than forty years, Mike's emotional openness had provided the balance to Catherine's strict control of hers. Without Mike as ballast, the dynamics of the family changed, and not in a good way.

After Mike's death, Catherine became more dependent on her adult children, especially Tony, who still lived at home but resisted taking orders from his mother. The store closed from lack of attention. The relationship between Catherine and Tony became increasingly combative.

In 1987, twenty years after his father's death, Tony had a heart attack that incapacitated him. He lived in a nursing home until his death in 1993.

Lucille Matullo Cancelmi also died in 1993. She had had life-long asthma.

Louis Matullo died in 1980 from lung cancer.

Josephine Matullo Calabro was the longest-lived of the siblings. She died in 2016 at the age of ninety-two from a stroke.

Catherine died in 1991 at the age of eighty-five from a heart attack.

THIS IS YOUR STATEMENT

PHONE 222-7240

S. CHARLES BADIALI, M.D.
ROBERT A. McPEAKE, M.D.
WILLIAM J. McMAHON, M.D.

828 JEFFERSON AVENUE
WASHINGTON, PA. 15301

Mike Matullo
1510 N. Main St.
Washington, Penna.

THIS ACCOUNT IS DUE. FAILURE TO SETTLE WITHIN SIXTY (60) DAYS WILL NECESSITATE TURNING THE ACCOUNT OVER TO THE WASHINGTON CREDIT BUREAU.

DATE	PROFESSIONAL SERVICE	FEE	PAID	BALANCE DUE
5-8-67	Balneo die			10.00
6-7-67	Office call	5.00		15.00
6-11-67	Paid		15.00	

"I remember Pap Pap being gentle and kind. I can still hear his broken English. He loved being around the family."

Lois Matullo Pettit

Mike Matullo's last visit to his doctor, three days before he died.



“Each dance and its music belong to a time and place. It can be borrowed elsewhere, or later in time, but it will never be in its moment again. When these little cultural blossoms are past, they become ethnic or nostalgic, but never quite fully present—manifesting the web of their original connections and meanings—again.”

Gary Snyder
The Practice of the Wild, 1990



The Story of My Parents

Bruno Joseph Calabro

Born: McDowell, West Virginia, March 20, 1922

Died: Milwaukee, Wisconsin, March 7, 1989

Josephine Mary Matullo

Born: Washington, Pennsylvania, June 18, 1923

Died: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 4, 2016



Bruno and Josephine’s love story has the grace of music, of dance—never to be fully brought to life in words. I will try my best here.

They were childhood sweethearts who rarely had a chance to speak to each other. That they would eventually marry seemed unlikely, given the protective ways of Josephine’s parents. But mutual attraction, openness to possibility, and determination prevailed. Fate also seemed to have its way.

Bruno was born on March 20, 1922, the fourth child of Italian immigrants Pasquale and Agostina

Deviola Calabro, and the second of their children to be born in the United States. Pasquale was a coal miner in McDowell County, West Virginia and had been in the United States since 1913. Agostina had arrived in the U.S. in 1920 with their son Domenico “Dominick,” age six. Their oldest son, also named Bruno, had died in Italy in 1918 at age six, possibly from a ruptured appendix. For Italians, it was common to name a new child after an older child who had died. The family moved to Altamont Avenue in the Bellevue neighborhood of Washington in 1925.

Bruno always said he wasn’t sure if he was actually born on March 19, which is the feast day of Saint Joseph. His mother was religious, and the Saint Joseph connection was important to her. Differing birth dates on his birth and baptism certificates reinforced the confusion.

Josephine was born on June 18, 1923, on Mill Street in Washington, the oldest of four children born to Italian immigrants Michele “Mike” and Catherine Coraggio Matullo.

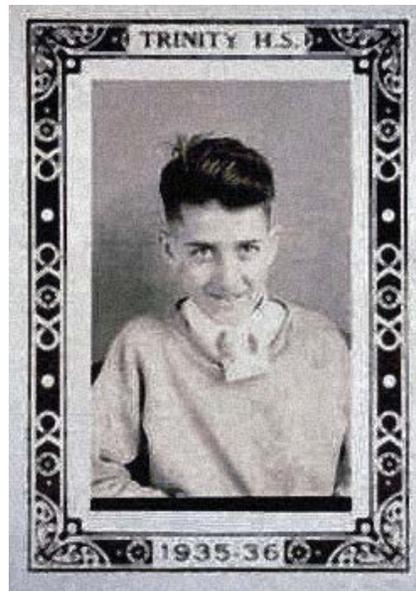
Bruno and Josephine were children of the Depression era. Bruno (childhood nickname “Peanuts”) lived in a weathered, wood frame house on the Altamont Avenue hilltop with his parents and five siblings. The family ran a neighborhood grocery, and was poor. Bruno dropped out of Trinity High School, he said, because he was ashamed to wear his older sister’s shoes. His teeth were so bad when he entered the Army that he had them all extracted.

Josephine (nicknamed “Sippy,” a diminutive of “Giuseppina”) lived with her three younger siblings several streets below the hilltop on Mill Street,

a “Little Italy” where houses faced an elevated railroad track that sent off soot when trains ran by. Josephine’s immigrant parents had gained a foothold in the business of appliance sales and made a comfortable living.

Bruno and Josephine attended different schools, reflecting the difference in their families’ means. Bruno went to Bellevue Elementary and Trinity High School; Josephine went to Immaculate Conception Catholic School. Both families were members of Immaculate Conception Catholic parish.

Josephine and Bruno started noticing each other when they were preteens. Bruno was a frequent visitor to Mill Street because of his friendship with the Lauther family who lived next door to Josephine.



Bruno, age twelve.



Josephine, age thirteen.

“I would see Bruno from my porch. I liked him.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Josephine knew that her strict parents would not allow her to speak to Bruno. Not only that, but her parents had once had a bad encounter with Bruno’s father, Pasquale, who had some involvement with the local Mafia.

“[Pasquale] had his own men in Washington. Two guys and him. When I was a young girl in the 1930s, they came to our door on Mill Street to shake down my father, who was doing good as an Italian guy selling appliances. They wanted him to pay protection. One of the guys cut my father’s wrist. [Pasquale] was just standing there,

smoking his cigar. They stopped when they noticed a badge on my father's chest. It was a Civil Defense badge, but they thought he was some kind of police. [Pasquale] told my dad, 'I'm gonna let you go,' and they never bothered him again after that. I didn't realize until much later that my mother didn't want me to marry Bruno because of that incident."

Josephine Matullo Calabro

As Bruno and Josephine moved through their teenage years, dating was out of the question. When Immaculate Conception School held its prom for the class of 1942, Josephine dreamed of going with Bruno, but her mother informed her that she would be accompanied by her younger brother Louis. Josephine hated that.



Bruno, front far left, with pals at Bellevue School.

Unbeknownst to her parents, Josephine had two short but memorable encounters with Bruno during their teen years. Mill Street was a popular place for sledding in the winter. Bruno and his friends made a sled for Josephine and brought it down to Mill Street. Josephine (encouraged by her own friends and out of the view of her mother) enjoyed time with Bruno. "He was fun," Josephine said.

"It [the sled] was named for me—'JoJo.' No one else got to ride on it."

Josephine Matullo Calabro

On another occasion, mutual friends schemed to get Josephine and Bruno together for a double date. When Josephine got into the friends' car, there (to her surprise) was Bruno. "My mother would have killed me if she knew," Josephine said.

Bruno dropped out of Trinity High School at age sixteen, worked at the family grocery and other jobs, then joined the Army in 1942, the same year that Josephine graduated from high school and went to work at her family's appliance store. Josephine hoped she would be the girl he came home to when he returned from the service.

But there was another girl in the neighborhood with eyes for Bruno—and intent on marrying him. In the fall of 1942, on the day of a parade in downtown Washington for those who were leaving for military service, that girl—Anita—made her way into the train station to see Bruno off. Josephine, standing outside the station with a girlfriend, was crestfallen. But her feelings lifted when she returned home and the phone rang. "It's

for you,” her mother said with a dour look as she handed Josephine the phone.

It was Bruno, calling from a pay phone at the train station in Pittsburgh. “Was that really you standing on Main Street?” he asked. He explained that he had had so much to drink during the celebration that he wasn’t sure he actually saw her in the crowd.

“Yes,” she replied.

“Write to me,” he implored.

And so she did. In fact, she wrote to Bruno every day, and he wrote frequently as well. “The letters were filled with ‘I love you, I love you,’ over and over,” Josephine recalled. “Sometimes, I didn’t have anything to write about so I’d write the lyrics of songs.”

Within several months of Bruno’s departure for basic training at Camp Phillips, Kansas, a gold engagement ring with a tiny diamond came in the mail. “I think there’s going to be a wedding,” the postman said with a smile when he delivered the package.

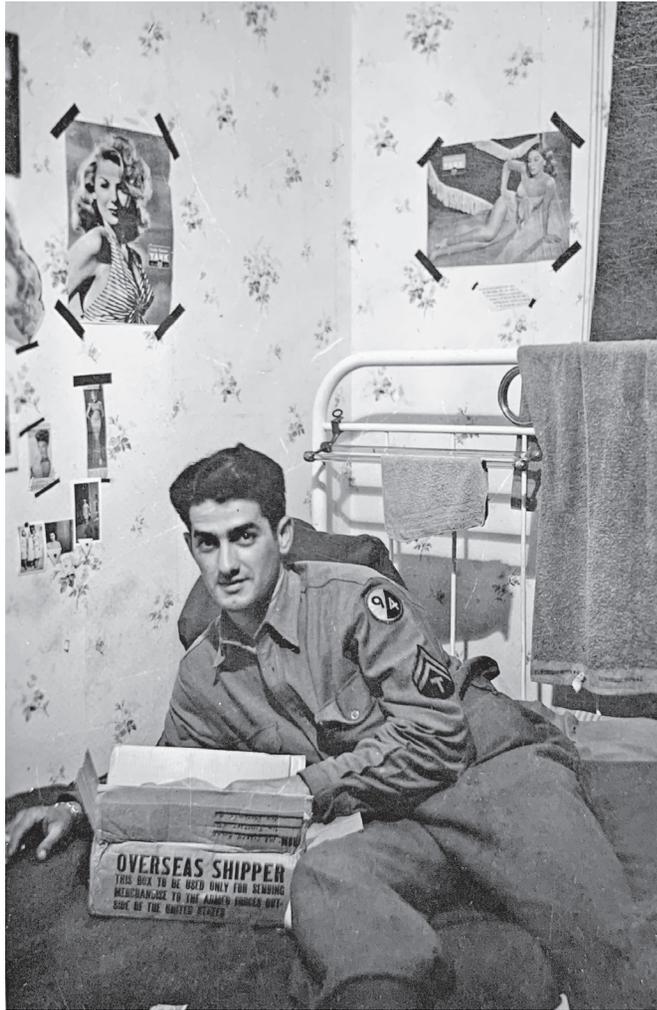
In the spring of 1943, Bruno came home on leave and spent time with Josephine, now his fiancée. On his way back to camp, he got word that his mother had had a cerebral hemorrhage and died. He quickly returned home for her funeral.

Bruno (home on leave) and Josephine, 1943.



darling I love you.
This is another picture
it isn't clear but
darling it was
taken near the mail
box, my life is
centered around that
mail box.
darling I love
you and miss
you so very much
I miss a kiss
I miss a hug
and lots more
besides darling. I
love you.

Note from Josephine to Bruno on the back of a photograph. She tells him that the picture is faded but was taken near the mailbox where she receives letters from him. “My life is centered around that mailbox,” she wrote.



Bruno and Josephine exchanged many photos in letters. After they married, they put all their saved letters into the coal furnace of their house on Farley Street and burned them. "We didn't want anyone to read them," Josephine said.



Bruno, home on leave, with his mother in May, 1943. She would die from a cerebral hemorrhage a few days later.

Bruno's Army portrait.



The U.S. entered World War II on December 8, 1941. Bruno registered for the draft on June 30, 1942, was inducted into the U.S. Army on November 30, 1942, and started his service on December 7, 1942. He served in the the 301st Infantry of the 94th Infantry Division.

He completed basic training at Camp Phillips, Kansas. He then completed the Radio Operators course in the Division Communications School at Fort Benning [now Fort Moore], Georgia, and was stationed at Camp McCain, Mississippi. He was a Radio Operator Intermediate Speed Specialist, promoted to Technician Fourth Grade, and also promoted to rank of Corporal.

B. J. Calabro Returns To Mississippi Camp
Private First Class Bruno J. Calabro, has returned to Camp McCain, Miss., after spending a 10-day furlough with his family, Altamont avenue, and his fiancée, Miss Josephine Matullo, North Main street extension.



Bruno was a radio operator.
Here's the Morse Code key in his handwriting.

Bruno was deployed to the European front on August 6, 1944. He left from New York Harbor with 23,000 troops on the *Queen Elizabeth*.

“We had to carry everything we owned —duffle bag, barracks bag, full-filled pack, rifle, overcoat. We were out on the street by platoon, standing out there for a couple hours. Hotter than the dickens. Then we rode a train until we got to the harbor. Then got on a ferry boat that took us over to the *Queen Elizabeth*.”

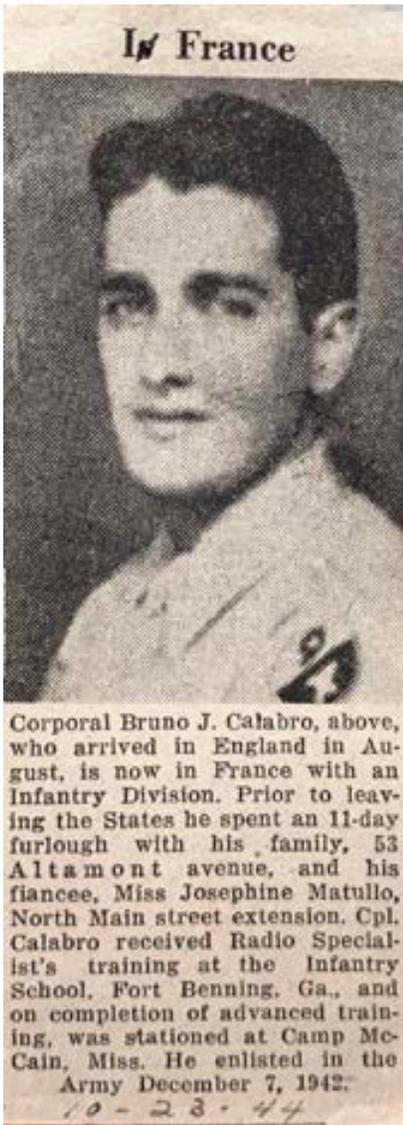
We went up about four stories then down to E deck, six stories down. We were underwater the whole way over. Cabin [meant] for two, there were fourteen of us. We had card games everywhere. We had a Corporals' room where you could smoke. We ate twice a day. We were on the ship five days. It would change course every seven minutes. We did not have a convoy for protection.”

Bruno Joseph Calabro

Over fifteen months, he served in Wales, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria.

“When we got off the boat, they put us on the railroad to Trowbridge, Wales, barracks. The fastest railroad ride I ever had in my life. Terrible looking barracks. Burlap sacks for mattress, full of straw. Three and a half weeks there. No hot water.”

Bruno Joseph Calabro



For three months beginning in September 1944, his unit did guard duty in Saint Laurent, France, near Utah Beach. Germans who had been run out of the Allied invasion of Normandy beaches on D-Day, June 6, 1944, were contained there.

“Once in a while, they captured some of our men and we captured some of theirs. We had exchanges.”

Bruno Joseph Calabro

The first big battle he participated in was on the Western Front on January 20, 1945, in France.

“We couldn’t keep up with General Patton. We had to walk.

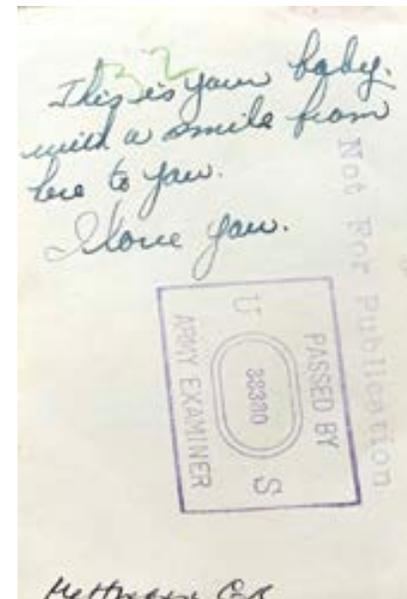
Then they sent us to the Black Forest. The war was winding down. They couldn’t hold Patton back. They wanted [Field Marshal Bernard] Montgomery from England to take over, to take Paris, take Berlin. But Patton was a smart fellow. He did it.

My last day on the line was March 24, 1945. The war was over on May 8, 1945, VE Day. Then we went into being the army of occupation. We were like the law.”

Bruno Joseph Calabro



Photo of Bruno in Germany.



Back of the photo

The battles and campaigns Bruno participated in are listed in War Department GO 33 40 WD 45, including Northern France, the Rhineland, the Ardennes, and Central Europe.

His decorations and citations were:

Good Conduct Medal

American Campaign Medal

European-African-Middle Eastern

Campaign medal with four Bronze Stars

for “meritorious ground combat against the armed enemy during World War II in the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater of Operations”

World War II Victory Medal

Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar and Honorable Service Lapel Button



A few weeks before Bruno died in 1989 at age sixty-six, he wrote the following for a 94th Division yearbook:

“I was just a 19-year-old boy when I enlisted in the Army in November of 1942. A real 98-pound weakling with the nickname of ‘Peanuts.’ The Army provided me with some good nourishment and when I was discharged in 1945, I was a 160-pound man, Needless to say, the Army did me good.

I met some real good guys, friends to this day. I hear from them during the holidays and, just recently, two of my Army buddies—Frank Fedorko and Jim Patton—called me on the phone. Lately, my health has been ‘kaput’ and their calls were better than any medicine.”

Bruno Joseph Calabro





Bruno reunited with hometown friends Jim Faiella and Ralph Ruscello somewhere in Europe. Notice their clasped hands.

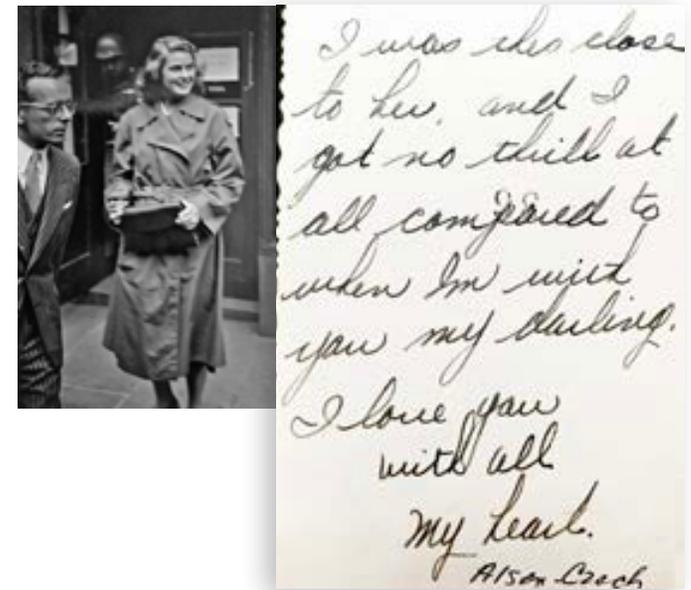


The 94th Infantry Division Memorial and Peace Monument is located in Saarland, Germany. Bruno and Josephine contributed to its 1994 rededication. Throughout her life, Josephine wore an American flag pin on her lapel.

Despite their engagement and fervent letters, Josephine worried that Bruno might not return to her after his tour of duty.

“I was so nervous, I couldn’t even work,” she said. “My mother thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown. She took me to a psychiatrist, Dr. Sheldon.”

Josephine recalled the visit: “The psychiatrist left the room to talk to my mother, then came back and asked me: ‘Are you afraid your boyfriend’s going to meet one of those Czechoslovakian babes?’ I said, ‘Nooooo.’ But I *was* worried. You could never tell.”



When Ingrid Bergman met the U.S. troops in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, Bruno wrote Josephine that he “got no thrill at all” compared to how he felt about Josephine.

*She needn't have worried.
On December 21, 1945,
Josephine was home with her
parents at their North Main
Street house when Bruno
surprised her with his arrival.
He was dressed in his Army
uniform and carried a huge
duffle bag.*

“It was just getting dark and I happened to look out the front door, and he was coming up the steps. I couldn't believe it. It was like a movie.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro

Bruno borrowed his older brother's car and they joyfully and freely “went everywhere,” Josephine said. Her mother took the lead in planning the wedding. “I told my mother that we were not ready to get married,” Josephine recalled. “Well, *I'm ready,*” her strong-willed mother replied.



And so, the couple married at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church on February 21, 1946, a mere two months after Bruno's Army discharge.



Wedding day, February 21, 1946.

Josephine's mother made the wedding dress with fabric purchased at Dunn's Dry Goods store (the lace cost \$11, Josephine recalled). The veil was made at a hat shop for \$6. The florist delivered her bouquet of calla lilies to the church. Wartime sugar and flour rationing was still in force, so the Matullos had to provide these supplies to Fleming's Bakery for the wedding cake.

Luanna Sonson, Josephine's high school friend, was maid of honor. Jim Faiella, Bruno's friend, was best man. Two hundred people attended the reception at the YWCA on West Maiden Street in Washington. The reception was alcohol-free. Josephine laughed as she recalled that wedding guests went to a bar across the street for drinks and then returned to the reception.

Bruno and Josephine spent their honeymoon at the Keystone Hotel in Pittsburgh. For a week, they enjoyed busy downtown Pittsburgh, filled with shops and theaters. Sorrento's Italian Restaurant was near the hotel. Josephine recalled that the waiter wouldn't serve her wine because she looked younger than her twenty-three years.





Bruno and Josephine lived with the Matullos for two years and saved money to buy their first house, a fixer-upper at 28 Farley Street on a half-acre lot in Washington. Son Pasquale “Patsy” was born in 1948, Agostina “Tina” in 1953, Mary Catherine “Cathi” in 1955, and Cara Michelle in 1961.

Bruno, 1951.



28 Farley Street- Before.



Josephine, 1951.



28 Farley Street- After.

Patsy Calabro, 1951.



Bruno and Josephine's wedding outfits and memorabilia are in the book Highlights from the Italian American Collection, Heinz History Center, 2020.



“Never saw a better picture!”

For real enjoyment in television, you want clear, sharp pictures on the screen—as free from distortion or interference as possible. And that’s just what you get in the new 1953 Sylvania TV with HALOLIGHT*. For example, Mrs. Josephine M. Calabro, of Washington, Penn., writes, “I’ve never before seen a better picture than we get on our beautiful new Sylvania TV with HALOLIGHT. It’s tops!” Insure the finest, clearest, most powerful television for your home. See the stunning new Sylvania models now on display at your nearest Sylvania Dealer. Sylvania Electric Products Inc., Radio and Television Division, Buffalo, N.Y.

*Sylvania Trademark

Mike Matullo Appliance Company gave Josephine an “in” to be featured in this 1953 ad published in Look magazine.

Bruno had not liked living with his in-laws for the first two years of his marriage to Josephine. He bristled when they shot down his ideas for starting a business. After dinner, he would excuse himself to the upstairs bedroom rather than continuing with conversation.

Later in their lives, he and Josephine often told stories about how sheltered Josephine was when they were first married. Bruno was determined to help her understand reality. One of their stories involved the outhouse at the Farley Street house. Bruno wanted to use their limited funds to build an inside bathroom. Josephine wanted to buy a new appliance from her parents’ store. Knowing that they did not have the funds for both, he went along with the purchase so Josephine would have to continue using the outhouse and understand that decisions had to be based on their means.

Bruno and Josephine created a home of security, closeness and happiness. But a new reality intervened.



Christmas, 1956.

In February 1957, daughter Cathi, age two, became gravely ill. She was taken by ambulance to Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh where she received emergency treatment and was diagnosed with Type I diabetes. She remained in the hospital while Bruno and Josephine learned to administer insulin and understand the condition. (At the time of this writing, Cathi is age sixty-eight and is thought to be one of the oldest people diagnosed with Type I diabetes in early childhood in the 1950s.)



Two months later, in April 1957, the family was somehow able to follow through on a long-planned move to a newly-built house on the outskirts of Washington at 503 Country Club Road, about three miles north of Farley Street.



Josephine with daughters Cathi and Tina, late 1950s. Youngest child Cara was born in 1961.

Bruno founded several businesses, including City Delivery (founded 1951) and Bruno's Laundry, located at 151 West Chestnut Street.

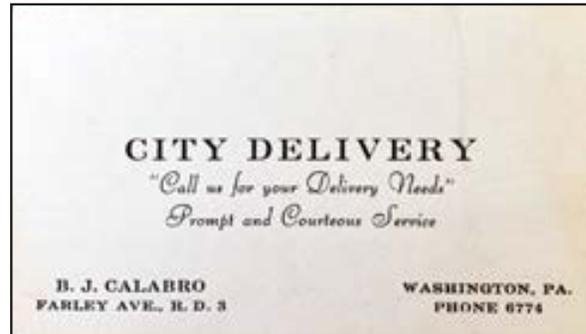
He retired as a manager for the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board in 1986. Josephine retired as a merchandise buyer from G. C. Murphy Company in 1984. She asked that she not be described in her obituary as a "homemaker," a term often used to describe women of her era. We honored her wish.

"Don't call me a homemaker. I was more than that. We had all the businesses together. So I don't consider myself a homemaker or a housewife. I was a business partner!"

Josephine Matullo Calabro



Mid-1960s.



Map of City Delivery service area



Cousins watching a parade in front of Bruno's Laundry, early 1960s. L. to r., Faith Skowronski Daniels, Gino Skowronski, Cathi Calabro Lombardo, Tina Calabro, Cathy Matullo Robertson.



Bruno's Laundry, located in the same block as Immaculate Conception Church and School, was a big part of the family's life until 1966 when the area was redeveloped and the business closed.



Mom did not enjoy driving. She didn't get a driver's license until she was thirty years old. One of the funny stories she told was about getting pulled over by a police officer on busy Route 19 because she was driving too slowly.

"I heard a siren and [Bruno] told me, 'Pull over.' And I started crying. The police officer looked at my license and said, 'Ma'am, you have every right to be on the road. You can go ahead now, but don't drive so slow.'"

Josephine Matullo Calabro

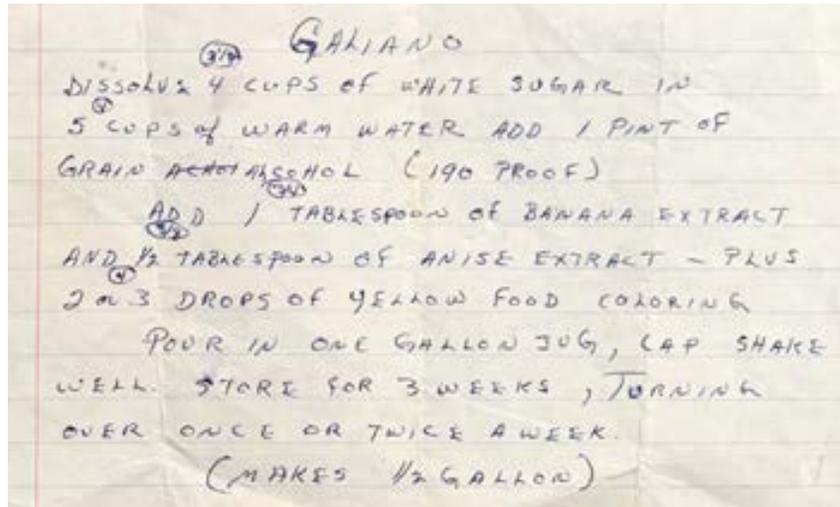


Josephine was a terrific cook.



We compiled Josephine's recipes in this book in 2010.

When Bruno was in his 50s, he got interested in making a Galliano-type liqueur. We always seemed to have the tall, distinctive bottle in the cabinet under the kitchen sink.



Bruno's Galliano recipe

Mom prayed every day. She kept a well-worn packet of prayer cards wrapped in a rubber band.

She was a member of the Christian Mothers at Miraculous Medal Catholic Church for fifty years. "Make me a good mother" was one of her prayers.

Bruno was not a worrier nor particularly religious. He had a natural sense of optimism and joie de vivre, which he encouraged in Josephine.

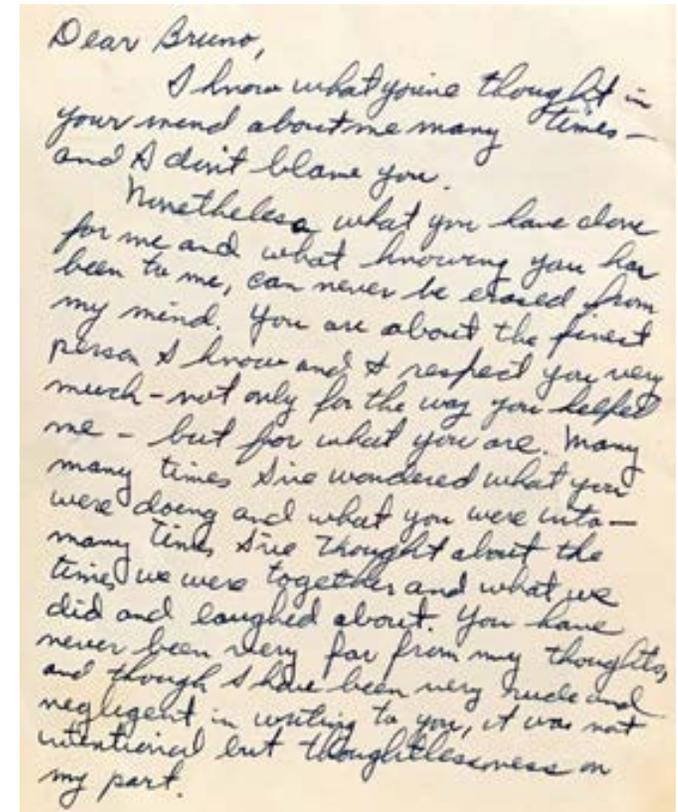
When Bruno was diagnosed with congestive heart failure in 1979 and was told that his life expectancy was ten years, he took the lead on driving the two of them to Florida for vacations every year, sometimes somewhat spontaneously. Dad once said that he could be very happy simply selling hot dogs on a corner in Florida.



"Every time I was having a good time, he'd say: 'You're really living, Josie.' "

Josephine Matullo Calabro

People enjoyed interacting with Bruno and Josephine. They were kind and generous.



Note to Bruno from an Army buddy.



Carmella Greco (who took the name Sister Scholastica when she became a nun) was Josephine's neighbor and best friend from childhood.

Bruno did not graduate from high school. He always said that he dropped out of Trinity High School because he was self-conscious about wearing his sister's shoes. In 1969 at the age of forty-six, he decided to get his Certificate of High School Equivalency (GED). He said, jokingly, that he wanted to graduate before daughter Tina in 1970.



In 1989, Bruno died of congestive heart failure at age sixty-six. He also had Type 2 diabetes. Ten years before he died, his doctor told him that his condition would get progressively worse and that he had about ten years to live.

He and Josie made the most of those ten years. They bought a minivan so they could travel to Florida with more ease. Bruno, of course, did all the driving.

Bruno's illness was ever-present in their travels. In Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Josephine wrote in a journal: "Bruno got pains in chest and had to take four nitroglycerin."

In addition to standard medical care, Bruno and Josephine looked to other ways to extend his life—lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, reducing stress), vitamins and supplements. "Laughter improves the immune system," Josephine wrote in her journal. "100 laughs a day."

The illness progressed as expected. They faced it together. Bruno's weight dropped. There were hospitalizations. Caregiving became difficult.

"[The doctors]weren't lying. My legs hurt. I'm breathing hard."

Bruno Joseph Calabro

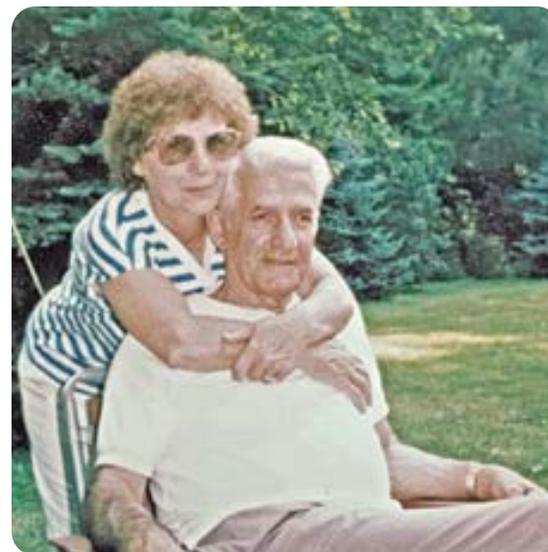
"I cook ahead because Bruno is on 1500 calories a day. He takes a lot of medication. I have to keep up so he doesn't run out. There is always work, work, work. You can't get away from it. Winter is coming and we both can't stand even the thought."

Josephine Matullo Calabro

(in her journal)



1970s



1980s



In 1988, Bruno and Josephine read a magazine article about Milwaukee cardio-thoracic surgeon Dr. W. Dudley Johnson, known as “the surgeon of last hope.” After reviewing Bruno’s records, Dr. Johnson wrote that “the surgery would be very high risk with no more than a 50-50 chance of success.”

“Mr. Calabro and his family wish to proceed with any possible interventional therapy that may offer a chance of hope for a better life. I do not believe he will do well with any intervention, in view of his horrible congestive cardiomyopathy and generally poor baseline medical condition. They are well aware of the high risk with any intervention.”

*Mark J. Geller, M.D.
Letter to Dr. W. Dudley Johnson
December 27, 1988*

The surgery was scheduled for March 7, 1989. The flight to Milwaukee was the first time Bruno and Josephine had been on an airplane. Daughter Cara and son Patsy accompanied them. Bruno was extremely weak when they arrived at the hospital. Staff said they were surprised that he had not been life-flighted.

Bruno died during the surgery. He had tried everything.

“A pioneering heart surgeon, Johnson’s operating table was called the ‘court of last resort’ for patients from around the world who came to him in the hope that he could mend what no other surgeon could . . . He respected every part of a patient’s journey.”

*From obituary for Dr. W. Dudley Johnson,
Milwaukee Sentinel, Oct. 27, 2016*

It ain’t over till it’s over.

Yogi Berra
American baseball legend



Early on, Josephine worried about losing Bruno—first, when he left for the Army, and then when he was in Europe during the war. In the end, it was illness that separated them.

Josephine had been a widow for twenty-seven years when she had a severe stroke at the age of ninety-two.

In 1989 and 2016, respectively, when Bruno and Josephine passed away, the funeral parlors where they were laid out were packed with visitors and the sound of conversation was deafening. The memorial book for Bruno's funeral records the names of 125 people who sent tributes, including seventy-seven flower arrangements. The sight and aroma of flowers in the many rooms was overwhelming. Tributes to Josephine, twenty-seven years later, were just as numerous.

Everyone who knew Josephine and Bruno—from their youthful attraction to their older age—witnessed a wonder: two people who were made for each other.

“I still get excited when I see your mother,” Bruno said one day, as they approached half a century of knowing each other.

The mere suggestion that Josephine as a widow might have remarried was as foreign a concept as it could be. There could be no other man for her. Among the papers Josephine kept was a handwritten reflection about their marriage. She wrote:

“We were always in love. We couldn't be any closer.”

Bruno and Josephine taught their children how to live. Their life together had distinct chapters and they were an open book with its many stories. When Josephine became a widow at age sixty-five, a chapter ended. She grieved the loss of her one true love, but also began an unexpected new chapter that brought her into the center of family life in new ways.

We had fun with our mom. She made us laugh, daily. We had the pleasure of traveling with her, including several trips to Italy to meet the relatives her mother had been separated from so many years before. She formed a close bond with her cousins in Italy. They quickly fell in love.



Josephine in her eighties



Josephine had an eye for beauty. She always wanted a gazebo in her yard. In the 1990s, her family made sure she got it.

Both Bruno and Josephine were born to parents whose separation from their families of origin engendered a fierce need to create family here. At the Calabro family home on Country Club Road, there were many comings and goings in the semicircular gravel driveway out front. In Bruno and Josephine's younger years, they welcomed a steady stream of relatives. As time moved on, in came their adult children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Throughout the years, whenever anyone left the house, it was Bruno and Josephine's ritual to remain in the doorway and watch them drive away, never moving until they were on their way, never closing the door until they were out of sight.

Their caring gaze still rests gently upon all the people they loved, following us on our various journeys.

Reminding us to be fully present with each other and to keep the doors open.

Savignano Irpino, Campania, Italy



Bringing It All Together:

Connecting with the Family in Italy
After a Century of Separation

“Pilgrimages seem to be almost instinctive, or at least derived from behavior now so ingrained in our species that it’s difficult to distinguish between genetic and social origins . . .

Through such ramblings, we find out who we are.”

John Janovy, Jr.
Vermilion Sea, 1992

Meeting the Coraggio-Tisi Relatives

The quest to reunite with family in Italy began in 1999. It spanned twenty years and eleven trips, and was a life-changing experience.

We started with the family of grandmother Catherine Coraggio Matullo, the eldest child of Antonio Coraggio and Maria Sfosina Tisi. Catherine was born in Savignano Irpino, Campania, but was raised by her grandparents in Washington, Pennsylvania, from the age of five. Except for her brother Lawrence, who emigrated to Washington in 1925 at the age of seventeen, Catherine had never met her younger siblings—Pasquale, Maria, Lucia, Enrico and Seurita—before she died in 1991.

By the time we began our effort to meet the Coraggio-Tisi family in Italy, Catherine’s siblings Pasquale and Maria had already died, Pasquale in 1979 and Maria in 1993. Siblings Lucia, Enrico and Seurita were still alive, but because it would take us until 2005 to meet the family in person, we lost the chance to meet Seurita and Lucia. Seurita died in 1999 and Lucia in 2003. We were fortunate to meet Enrico, the last of the siblings, in 2005. He died in 2008.



Catherine Coraggio’s Parents
Antonio Coraggio and
Maria Sfosina Tisi.

Antonio & Maria Sfosina's Children

Maria Caterina "Catherine" Coraggio Matullo
(1906-1991)

Pasquale Coraggio
(1907-1979)

Maria Coraggio Cristofaro
(1910-1993)

Lorenzo "Lawrence" Coraggio
(1911-1996)

Lucia Coraggio Daniele
(1915-2003)

Enrico Coraggio
(1917-2008)

Seurita Coraggio
(1921-1999)



Catherine



Lucia



Pasquale



Enrico



Maria



Seurita



Lawrence

Thanks to Alberto Daniele, Lucia Coraggio's husband, we had a strong link to the Coraggio-Tisi family. Alberto had been a loyal letter writer to Catherine until her death in 1991. Alberto and Lucia lived in Savignano Irpino, Campania, the Coraggio-Tisi hometown where all of the Coraggio siblings were born. Alberto and Lucia's only child, Gianni Daniele, and his wife Clelia Iuliani, live in Foggia, about thirty miles east of Savignano Irpino. They also were also a strong link to the extended family.

First Attempt to Meet the Coraggio-Tisi Cousins, March 1999

Four of us—Josephine Matullo Calabro (Catherine's daughter) and Catherine's granddaughters Tina Calabro, Cara Calabro Lytton and Cathy Matullo Robertson—signed up for a guided tour of Italy that would get us within 150 miles of Savignano Irpino and Foggia. We hoped we could connect with our relatives on the phone and perhaps find a way to meet in person.

With the help of a desk clerk in a hotel near Naples acting as interpreter, we phoned the family but found out that it would not be possible to meet in person. Catherine's sister Seurita had recently died, our cousin Gianni Daniele told us. As the call came to a disappointing end, Josephine said warmly, "I love you."



Our first trip to Italy in 1999 included an unsuccessful attempt to meet the family. L. to r. Tina Calabro, Cara Calabro Lytton, Josephine Matullo Calabro, and Cathy Matullo Robertson, Verona, Italy.



Second Attempt to Meet Cousins April-May 2002

Tina Calabro signed up for a month-long “Inclusion in Italy” course through Syracuse University’s Center on Disability and Inclusion. She traveled to Caserta, which is within thirty miles of Savignano Irpino, but was not able to meet the family in person. Catherine Coraggio Matullo’s sister Lucia was ill at this time (she would die a year later). Her husband Alberto—the letter writer—had died in 2000. On the phone, their son, Gianni Daniele, asked Tina to write to him to make a plan to meet at another time. Through email, they began planning a visit in 2005 that would be completely devoted to meeting the family.

Dear Tina,

It is with great pleasure that I received your news and the promise of your coming to Foggia together with your mother. Naturally, you will be accommodated by us and we will take you to see Savignano and my parents and aunt at the cemetery, because unfortunately they are all deceased.

Also, my wife and my sons will be glad to meet you and to be together with you. It will truly be the best chance to bridge the distance that seems insuperable. In expectation of our meeting, I embrace you and your mother Josephine and will see you soon.

*Email from Gianni Daniele,
February 9, 2005
(translated from Italian)*

We Finally Meet! March 2005



Catherine’s daughter Josephine Matullo Calabro, granddaughter Tina Calabro, and great-grandson Paul Steidl (Tina’s son, age fifteen) flew to Rome, then took a three-hour train ride to the city of Foggia, where Gianni Daniele and his wife Clelia Iuliani live.

Gianni, Clelia, and their son Luca Daniele were waiting on the train platform when Josephine, Tina and Paul arrived. The moment was profoundly emotional. Nearly one hundred years after five-year-old Catherine Coraggio arrived in Washington, Pennsylvania, to be raised by her

grandparents, her descendants were finally able to embrace members of her long-lost family.

We packed into a car, drove to the Danieles’ apartment in Foggia, and joyfully got to know one another over the next four days.



First evening in Foggia, 2005. L. to r., Antonietta Coraggio, Tina Calabro, Gianni Daniele, Clelia Iuliani, Josephine Matullo Calabro, Luca Daniele, Caterina Coraggio.

The city of Foggia is the capital of the province of Foggia in the Puglia region. Foggia was almost completely destroyed in 1943 during WWII. Sixteen hundred people died. The city was rebuilt in the 1950s and 1960s. Gianni and Clelia have lived in Foggia for most of their adult lives. Both are retired: Gianni was a postal clerk and Clelia a history teacher. Their younger son, Luca Daniele, an attorney, also lives in Foggia. Their elder son, Alberto, who lives in Rome, is a psychologist. We would meet Alberto during a later visit.

Both brothers, Alberto and Luca, are fluent in English and often served as translators during our visits. The rest of us tried hard to express ourselves to each other, cobbling together our knowledge of each other's language, gestures, and on-the-spot translations with dictionary and Google Translate. Over the years, digital tools and social media would keep improving our effort to fully communicate with each other.

Our Italian cousins knew a lot about Catherine, just as Catherine had known a lot about her family in Italy. Over the years, many photos and letters were exchanged. To the family in Italy, Catherine seemed fortunate to have the opportunities that came with growing up in the U.S. For Catherine, the longing for her parents and sibling family never subsided.

We talked about Gianni's late parents, Lucia (Catherine's sister) and Alberto. Lucia made dresses and sang in the church in Savignano. Alberto played and taught clarinet.

We met Antonietta Coraggio (daughter of Catherine's brother Pasquale) and Caterina Coraggio (daughter of Catherine's uncle Rafaele Coraggio). We were struck by how much Antonietta's kind face and gentle personality resembled Catherine's.

Antonietta had worked as a seamstress before retirement. We heard that she rode a bicycle from Rome to Savignano (about 175 miles) during World War II and walked back. Her father, Pasquale, had been a shoemaker and played the mandolin.

Caterina Coraggio, who was retired from a career as a retail clothier, was fashionable and outgoing. We enjoyed spending time with Antonietta and Caterina over this and future visits.



Josephine Matullo Calabro, center, with cousins Caterina Coraggio, left, and Antonietta Coraggio.

During this same visit, we met Catherine's nieces, Anna and Sfosina (daughters of Maria Coraggio), and a host of their family members who live in the nearby town of Stornara, Foggia.



Descendants of Maria Coraggio gather with cousins at the Daniele apartment in Foggia, 2005.

Tina Calabro brought a handwritten family tree with the hope of filling in missing pieces.

While working on the family tree, we discovered another branch of the Coraggio family. Caterina Coraggio had a wedding photo that was sent to her father (Rafaele Coraggio) from a cousin in Milwaukee in 1955. We immediately did an online search for the phone number of a probable descendant in Milwaukee and called: "Hello, we are your cousins calling from Italy." By luck, we reached a very surprised family member on the first try and made plans for further conversation.



L. to r., Tina Calabro, Caterina Coraggio and Clelia Iuliani work on the Coraggio-Tisi family tree, 2005.



Milwaukee wedding, 1955.



Tina Calabro met the Milwaukee Coraggios for the first time in November 2005. Bottom row, l. to r. Tina Calabro, Dennis Moran, Jane Coraggio, Carol Coraggio. Top row, l. to r. James Coraggio, Christy Coraggio Moran, Tony Coraggio, Guy Coraggio.

On the last day of our visit with Gianni and Clelia, we drove to the village of Savignano Irpino, the family hometown. We visited the cemetery and the family home, which Gianni and Clelia have restored and expanded. They spend time at the house each summer.

Savignano Irpino is situated on two levels. The low level (Scalo) is where the train passes through. The higher level, with a church and piazza, is residential.



The lower level (Scalo) of Savignano Irpino.



The upper level of Savignano Irpino is residential.





The home of Antonio Coraggio and Maria Sfosina Tisi. Savignano, 2019. The home has been lovingly restored by the family of their grandson Gianni Daniele. A section cut out of the stucco reveals the original stonework.



Gravestone of Antonio Coraggio and Maria Sfosina Tisi Savignano Irpino, 2005.



Savignano Irpino, 2005
L. to r., Antonietta Coraggio, Josephine Matullo Calabro, Caterina Coraggio, Gianni Daniele, Tina Calabro, Clelia Iuliani, Luca Daniele.



Savignano Irpino, 2006
Josephine Matullo Calabro meets her mother Catherine's youngest brother, Enrico Coraggio. At the time of meeting, he was the last living sibling. He died in 2008.



Savignano Irpino, 2005
Cousins Antonietta Coraggio, Josephine Matullo Calabro, and Caterina Coraggio on a walk.



Rome, 2019

Luisa Rungi, Alberto Daniele and daughter Vanessa Daniele.



Foggia, 2017 L. to r., Clelia Iuliani, Gianni Daniele, Luca Daniele, and his life partner Francesca Del Medico. In 2023, dear Francesca passed away after a six-month treatment for cancer.

Over many visits, we developed a close relationship with Gianni and Clelia, and their sons Alberto Daniele and Luca Daniele.

“Clelia and Gianni showed us real hospitality and made us feel comfortable.”

Josephine Matullo Calabro
(travel journal, 2006)

Following the initial meeting in 2005, we American cousins (names in parentheses) visited Gianni and Clelia and other members of the Coraggio-Tisi family eight more times:

2006 Foggia and Savignano

(Tina Calabro, Josephine Matullo Calabro, Cathy Matullo Robertson)

2007 Foggia

(Tina Calabro, Josephine Matullo Calabro)

2009 Rome and Prato

(Tina Calabro, Josephine Matullo Calabro)

2012 Foggia

(Tina Calabro, Rachel Lytton)

2014 Rome

(Tina Calabro)

2015 Foggia

(Tina Calabro)

2017 Rome

(Tina Calabro, Aaron Lytton, Paul Steidl)

2019 Rome

(Tina Calabro, Aaron Lytton, Cara Calabro Lytton)

In 2009, we traveled with Clelia and Gianni to the city of Prato in Tuscany to visit Antonietta Coraggio, her son Vittorio Capri and his family, and her brothers Egidio, Guido and Giulio. Prato is a clothing manufacturing town near Florence. Several members of Antonietta's family have worked there.



Prato, 2009

Josephine Matullo Calabro (center) with cousins, l. to r. Egidio Coraggio, Massimiliano Capri, Guido Coraggio, and Giulio Coraggio.



Prato, 2009

Vittorio Capri (Antonietta Coraggio's son) with cousin Josephine Matullo Calabro.

Visits with our Coraggio-Tisi cousins reinforced family connections of the past and created long-lasting bonds.



2009
Clelia Iuliani showers affection on Josephine Matullo Calabro.



Tina Calabro, left, and Clelia Iuliani discovered that they shared many interests—history, politics, education, literature, art—and became close friends.



Gianni and Clelia took us on many road trips. Along the way, Gianni would break out in song. Josephine Matullo Calabro, often in the front passenger seat, would hum along with her cousin, recalling the music of her Italian-born family.

Road Trips:

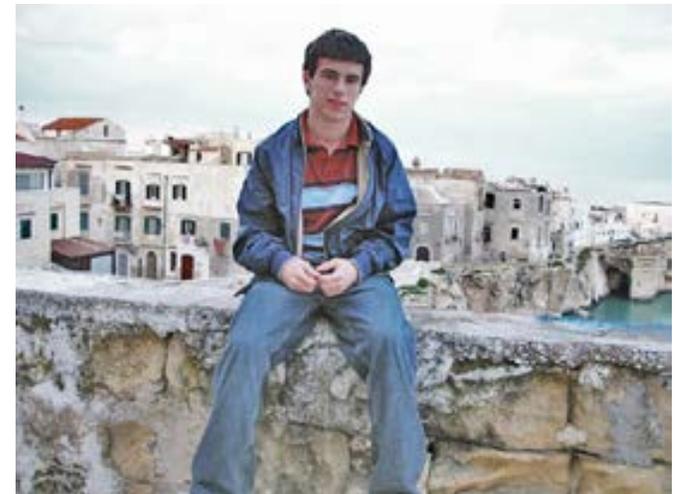
2005 San Giovanni Rotondo, Monte Sant'Angelo, Gargano, Torremaggiore, and Savignano

2006 Ostuni, Alberobello, Torremaggiore, and Savignano

2007 Trani

2012 Matera and the cave dwellings of the Sassi

Our trips to Italy created memorable experiences for younger family members.



Gargano, Puglia, 2005

Tina Calabro's son

Paul Steidl, age fifteen.



Matera, Basilicata, 2012
*Cara Calabro Lytton's daughter
Rachel Lytton, age twenty-one.*



Rome, 2017
*Cara Calabro Lytton's son
Aaron Lytton, age nineteen.*



Rome, 2017
*Paul Steidl with fiancée
Patricia Samartzis.*



Rome, 2009.

Reflection

My mother Josephine Matullo Calabro was seventy-six years old when she took her first trip to Italy in 1999, and eighty-six years old when she took her fifth and last trip in 2009. She passed away seven years later, in 2016.

She was a reluctant traveler, but was amenable to letting others lead the way. Despite the many challenges of international travel—the flights, the trains, the taxis, and all the rushing about—she always said she was glad she went.

She was keenly aware of the sadness her mother Catherine felt about being separated at the age of five from her Italian parents and siblings, and how she yearned to know them. We traveled to Italy in honor of Catherine’s love, strength and resilience.

And we had the time of our lives.

Mom and I had wonderful mother-daughter times. Our visits always began in Rome at Residenza Madri Pie, an elementary school-turned-hotel run by Catholic nuns, located a block away from Saint Peter’s Basilica, which served as our literal and spiritual home base. A devout Catholic, Mom was fulfilled by attending Mass there.

When Mom decided in 2009 that she didn’t feel up to traveling to Italy anymore, I continued on for another decade. Every step brought up memories of the precious time with my mother. When this special part of our life ended, I wrote this poem:

In Rome, Without My Mother

The owner of the café on Via Fornaci sends his regards.
He remembers you were a fan of the American breakfast.

A big painted cone of gelato stands on the corner near the hotel.
It lacks you beside it, enjoying your treat like a child.

The steps inside the Coliseum are even more worn and dangerous.
A young Japanese couple asks me to take their photo.

You are not at my shoulder as I count the taxi fare.
Or when the grizzled driver eyes me in the rearview mirror.

I walk by the gentle Tiber.
My arm is not entwined with yours.

In cathedrals, I light candles for the people you pray for.
My coins land loudly in the collection boxes.

The train station is still surly.
I find the track going south.

Across from me, a routine traveler and his newspaper.
Out the window, the sun-dried hills of our Italian family.

Tina Calabro



Foggia, 2007

Josephine Matullo Calabro celebrates la dolce vita—comically, because she did not drink wine.



Rome, 2006

Josephine Matullo Calabro throws a coin in Rome's Trevi Fountain with the traditional wish to return to Italy. She did.

Visiting Torremaggiore, Foggia, Province of Puglia

While visiting Coraggio cousins in Foggia, we visited the village of Torremaggiore, the hometown of grandfather Mike Matullo. It's located about fifteen miles from Foggia.

We have not yet met our Matullo relatives in Italy, but we hope to in the future. Mike emigrated to Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1914 at the age of eighteen, leaving behind his parents and siblings.



The Parents

Maria Giuseppa DiPumpo and Luigi Matullo

The Children

Michele "Mike" Matullo (1895-1967)

Atilio "Tullio" Matullo (1899-1958)

Lucia Matullo (1913-2003)

Marionina Matullo

Matteo Matullo

Sisina Matullo



Atilio Matullo (1899-1958).



Marionina Matullo (1913-2003).



Matteo Matullo.



Mike Matullo (1895-1967).



Meeting Our Calabro Cousins

After emigrating to the U.S. from Saline Joniche, Reggio Calabria, in 1909, Grandfather Pasquale Calabro maintained some communication with his family in Italy. Grandmother Agostina Deviola Calabro, who was born in Sant'Elia, Reggio Calabria, and joined her husband Pasquale in McDowell County, West Virginia, in 1920, likely did not have any further communication with her family. That's not surprising since, as a child, she had been given away by her birth family to work as a servant for another family.

Pasquale and Agostina's daughter, Josephine Calabro Sowers (1924-1982), beloved "Aunt Jo" to many nieces and nephews, took steps to maintain the connection to the family in Italy. Significantly, she did two important things that helped the family connect to its Italian roots.

The first was to ensure that every family had a copy of the one and only photo of Pasquale and Agostina as young immigrant parents.



Pasquale and Agostina with children Domenico "Dominick" (rear), Carmella "Mary," and Bruno. McDowell County, West Virginia, 1923.

Her second important action was to travel to the village of Saline Joniche in 1964 to meet the Italian relatives. Her trip was a big deal in those days. Aunt Jo—who was forty years old, single, and had never been in an airplane—traveled with Mary Pelan, a friend who wanted to meet her relatives in Yugoslavia. No doubt, their travel agenda was complicated, but they seemed to have no trouble pulling it off.

Children of

Bruno Calabro (Abt. 1852-1915)
Francesca Carmela Crea (1855-1944)

Concetta (b. 1881)

Francesco (1883-1951)

Pasquale (1885-1959)

Antonio (b. 1888?)

Maria (1892-1961)

Consolato (1895-1944)

Antonia

Caterina

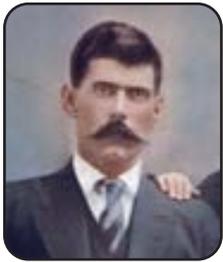
All were born in Motta San Giovanni.
The family later moved to Saline Joniche,
about twenty miles away, probably around
1904-1906.



Francesco Calabro and wife Maria Verduci.



Gravestone of Maria Calabro and husband Domenico Triveri.



Pasquale Calabro.



Consolato Calabro and wife Filamena Sgro with three of their four children—Carmela, Domenica and Celestino.

This 1952 letter is the only remaining piece of Grandfather Pasquale's correspondence with his family in Italy. The letter informs him of the death of his older brother Francesco.

(Translation)

Saline Joniche, October 10, 1952

Dear beloved uncle and cousins all,
Myself and my mother are writing to you late to tell you about the death of my father. Dear uncle and cousins, we have lost our adored father after a year of struggle and sacrifice. It was his destiny. Before he died, he recommended, my dear uncle and cousins, to ask you for news. I would like to keep correspondence with you. I am the daughter of your dead brother.

Receive many embraces from me and my mom to all of your family, from your dear niece. Please write me and I will answer you. Kisses to all.

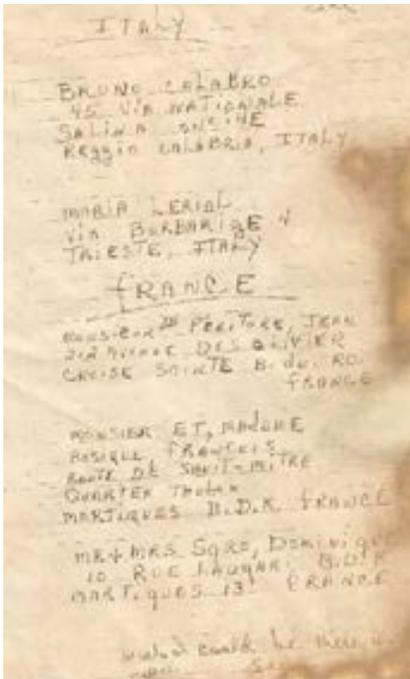
Francesca Calabro



Aunt Jo saved a large envelope of photos and memorabilia from her 1964 trip. Half a century later, the contents of that envelope—long safeguarded by her niece Faith Skowronski Daniels —would help us to locate our Italian Calabro cousins.

Our quest started in 2013 with Facebook. Cousins Faith Skowronski Daniels, Dana Calabro-Caruso and Tina Calabro reached out to possible Calabro cousins with photos from Aunt Jo’s 1964 trip.

We found each other immediately!



A list of Calabro family addresses in Italy and France from Aunt Jo’s envelope of memorabilia from her 1964 trip.



Aunt Jo, center, with cousin Bruno Calabro and his wife Ifigenia Iraca, 1964. Bruno and Ifigenia hosted Aunt Jo and her traveling partner Mary Pelan.

“My father always joyfully welcomed relatives who came from far away.”

Maria Carmela Calabro

Daughter of Bruno Calabro (1912-1971)
via Facebook 2014



Giovanna “Joan” Calabro, Ifigenia Iraca (holding child), Alba “Lilla” Calabro, Francesco Iraca, Bruno Calabro, Saline Joniche, 1964. The family home was located at 41 Via Nazionale, where some cousins still have apartments.



Giuseppe "Peppe" Calabro, Maria Rosaria Iraca, Giuseppa "Pina" Calabro, Maria Verduci, Angelina Iraca, Esterina Calabro, Francesca Calabro, 1964.



Bruno Calabro, son of Francesco Calabro and Maria Verduci, was a builder. The building under construction is located in the city of Reggio Calabria.



Maria Verduci, wife of Francesco Calabro, 1964.



Note the frequency of the name "Bruno" in the Calabro family, both in Italy and the United States, for descendants of Bruno Calabro (Abt. 1852-1915) and Francesca Carmela Crea (1855-1944).



Francesca Calabro, daughter of Francesco Calabro and Maria Verduci, 1964.



Sisters Giovanna "Joan" and Silvana Calabro with their mother (center) Ifigenia Iraca, 1964.

We and our Italian cousins shared photos and started to get to know one another on a Facebook group named "Calabro-Crea Descendants."



Bruno Calabro and Ifigenia Iraca.



Francesca Calabro and Giovanni Iraga.

The next step was to meet our cousins in person.

In May 2014, Isabella Abbatepaolo (granddaughter of Consolato Calabro) and her family invited Tina Calabro to meet them in Rome. During this first visit in Rome and two subsequent trips to meet relatives in Reggio Calabria, Isabella and her family devoted much time and energy to coordinating everything. They made the reunion of American and Italian cousins possible.



Rome, 2014

Isabella Abbatepaolo, her husband Emilio Giacomi, and their children introduced Tina Calabro to uncles Celestino Calabro and Valentino Calabro in Rome.

L. to r. Chiara Giacomi, Uncle Valentino Calabro, Lorenzo Giacomi, Tina Calabro, Isabella Abbatepaolo, Emilio Giacomi, Uncle Celestino Calabro, Columba Fantuzzi (Celestino's wife). Uncle Celestino passed away in 2017.

“Wonderful evening with Tina who is a special person, sweet and kind and makes you feel good instantly. I feel like I’ve known her forever, but it’s the first time I met her. We talked about our family, grandparents, uncles, cousins and great grandparents, putting together stories and memories. Uncle Celestino also told about grandma Francesca Crea, who was tall, brown and with blue eyes, very affectionate to all her grandchildren and it seemed to me that she was there with us and smiling benevolently.”

Isabella Abbatepaolo’s post to “Calabro-Crea Descendants” Facebook group, May, 2014.



Cousins Isabella Abbatepaolo, left, and Tina Calabro discovered their common interest in the family history.

In October 2015, Tina Calabro traveled with Isabella Abbatepaolo to Reggio Calabria and Saline Joniche to meet more than thirty cousins.



Saline Joniche, the Calabro hometown, is a village located about thirty miles southeast of the city of Reggio Calabria in the “toe” of the Italian peninsula. The Strait of Messina—about ½ mile wide—separates the city of Reggio Calabria from Sicily.

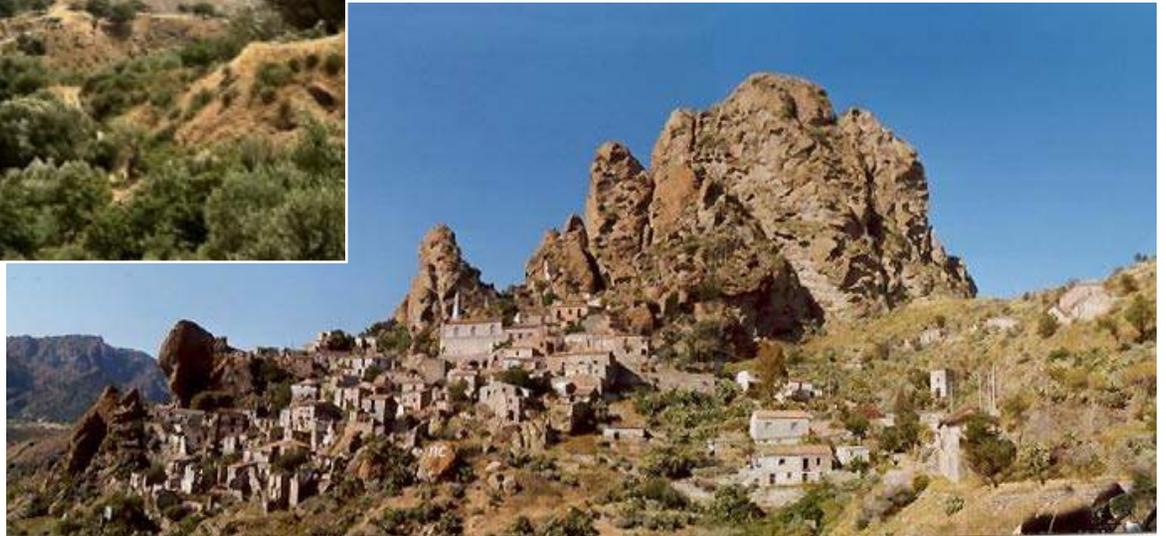


The beautiful beach of Saline Joniche



The Aspromonte mountain range runs through Reggio Calabria.

Pentedattilo ("five fingers") is a famous rock formation located in Montebello, about twelve miles from Saline Joniche.



Sant'Elia Church



Cousins Isabella Abbatepaolo and Francesco Foti drove Tina Calabro to the village of Sant'Elia to see where her grandmother and namesake Agostina Deviola Calabro was born. This is the church in Sant'Elia where Agostina was probably baptized.



Imagine meeting more than thirty cousins in a single day in the hometown of one's ancestral family. It was incredible. A few of the cousins Tina Calabro met that day were children or young adults when Aunt Jo visited in 1964. They remembered her visit.



Sisters Maria Carmela "Memma" Calabro (l.) and Alba "Lilla" Calabro, daughters of Bruno Calabro, Saline Joniche, 2015.

Photo from Aunt Jo's envelope of memorabilia from her 1964 trip. Memma is pictured here as a high school student studying accounting.





Giuseppe "Peppe" Calabro (son of Bruno Calabro), and his wife Immacolata Cotroneo, Saline Joniche, 2015. Peppe was about thirteen years old when Aunt Jo visited in 1964. Dear Peppe died unexpectedly in 2020 at age 69.



Maria Rosario Iraca (daughter of Francesca Calabro) and husband Demetrio "Mimmo" Cotrupi, Saline Joniche, 2015, and Maria Rosario in 1964.



Silvana Calabro (daughter of Bruno Calabro) and her husband Mario Mandelli, Saline Joniche, 2015. Silvana was about nineteen years old when Aunt Jo visited in 1964.



Maria Rosario Iraca's daughter Ida Cotrupi, Saline Joniche, 2015.



Ida's sister Valentina Cotrupi at the gravestone of their grandmother Francesca Calabro.



Angelina Iraca (daughter of Francesca Calabro) and her daughter Stefania Benedetto, Saline Joniche, 2015, and Angelina in 1964.



Siblings l. to r. Giuseppe "Peppe" Calabro, Maria Carmela "Memma" Calabro, Alba "Lilla" Calabro, Silvana Calabro, Saline Joniche, 2015.

Missing are sister Giuseppa "Pina" Calabro who lives in Milan, and sister Giovanna "Joan" Calabro, who passed away in 2002.



Brothers Giuseppe "Peppe" Iraca (left) and Francesco "Franco" Iraca (sons of Francesca Calabro) study the family tree created by their cousin Rocco Simone, Saline Joniche, 2015.

"Finding each other as if the years had not passed is such a great joy.

It is priceless."

Isabella Abbatepaolo

Here are some of the younger generations of the family who Tina Calabro met for the first time in Saline Joniche in October 2015.



Cinzia Foti (daughter of Giovanna "Joan" Calabro) and her husband Carmelo Pugliese.

Francesco Foti (son of Giovanna "Joan" Calabro) and his girlfriend Olga.



Eugenio Benedetto (son of Angelina Iraca), his wife Palma Foti, their son Antonio, and their daughter Alessia.

The little boy on the tricycle is Eugenio in 1964, when Aunt Jo visited.



Francesco "Franco" Caccamo, son of Maria Carmela "Memma" Calabro.



Bruno Calabro, his wife Maria Chirico, and their son Giuseppe.



Rocco Simone (Alba "Lilla" Calabro's son) and his wife Teresa D'Agui.

Following the two initial visits with our Calabro cousins in 2014 and 2015 was another trip to Reggio Calabria and Saline Joniche in 2019. Isabella Abbatepaolo and her husband Emilio Giacomi kindly accompanied Tina Calabro, Cara Calabro Lytton, and Cara's son Aaron Lytton there. One of the highlights of the trip was visiting Motta San Giovanni, the town where Grandfather Pasquale and all his siblings were born.

All of our visits with our Calabro cousins created lasting friendships and treasured memories.

We learned that the name "Calabro" has an accent mark over the "o." Thus, the true pronunciation puts the stress on the last syllable cal-a-BRO. Our American family pronounces with the stress on the middle syllable ca-LA-bro.

We realized the presence of the dazzling sea in our Calabro ancestors' lives. We wondered if our grandparents Pasquale and Agostina missed a spiritual connection to the sea as Pasquale toiled in West Virginia coal mines and Agostina kept house.

Most of all we enjoyed the hospitality, emotional openness, and generosity of all our Calabro cousins. We hoped they saw those qualities in us as well.

Our family Facebook group
"Calabro-Crea Descendants"
continues to enable us to deepen
our connection across the miles.



Rachel Lytton, daughter of Cara Calabro Lytton, takes in the view of the ancient cave dwellings of Sassi di Matera (literally, "stones of Matera"), Basilicata, on her 2012 trip to meet Italian cousins in Italy.

Acknowledgments

This book was a collaborative effort. I am grateful to my Italian American relatives and those in Italy who generously shared their hospitality, memories and photos over the years. This book would not be possible without your contributions.

Throughout the book, I have tried to present names, dates and other facts accurately. I am grateful to the cousins who helped with this important task, including Robert Calabro, Faith Skowronski Daniels, Christina Magnetta Handyside, Mickey Steuernagel Hardester, Steven Leighton, Cathi Calabro Lombardo, Cara Calabro Lytton, Mike Magnetta, Sue Steuernagel Newton, Lois Matullo Pettit, Cathy Matullo Robertson, and Rich Wise.

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On the Calabro-Crea side of the family, special thanks to Dana Calabro-Caruso and Faith Skowronski Daniels who launched the Facebook effort to find our Italian cousins. Dana, Faith and many other cousins in Italy and the U.S. keep the conversations lively on the “Calabro-Crea Descendants” Facebook group.

Special thanks to the Italian cousins who have coordinated several visits from American cousins over the years: Gianni Daniele and his wife Clelia Iuliani (Coraggio-Tisi family), and Isabella Abbatepaolo and her husband Emilio Giacomi (Calabro-Crea family).

Finally, “un grande abbraccio” to my husband David Steidl, who devoted untold hours to the photography, design and layout of the book and tried to make it as beautiful as it could be.

To all of you, my heartfelt gratitude.

Tina Calabro

August 2023

My Italian American Family



This family history honors the lives of my Italian immigrant grandparents, my parents, and our extended family in the United States and Italy. I hope it creates understanding of our ancestors' lives and times, and brings joy and pride to current and future family members.

Tina Calabro

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