

MARCELLA MORTERA ANGUILLARA

MY LIFE



MY LIFE

BY

MARCELLA ESTERINA REGINA MORTERA ANGUILLARA

Ne di Venere ne di Marte non si sposa, non si parte, non si da principio all' arte. Am I writing my memories in Italian? This would be much easier for me, but more difficult for my grandchildren. The proverb in Italian means -- Never marry, travel, or start a work of art on Thursday or Friday. Today is Friday, but I do not want to write a best-seller, only to let my grandchildren know their relatives in Italy and what our family went through when we came to America.

I was born in Rome, Italy, November 8, 1907- My parents, Clorinda Sonnino and Gino Mortera Levi, were very young when they got married and very much in love. After seven months I came into this world. My mother got very sick with a hemorrhage after my birth and the obstetrician who was assisting threw me into the corner and said, "let's try to save the mother." But, my grandfather was a doctor too, and I was his first grandchild; so he took me in his arms, and after washing me, wrapped cotton around my little body to keep me warm...and here I am

During the first five years of my life I was more than happy. I had everything one could imagine and lots of love and attention. However, in 1912, my mother died of a heart attack and my life changed. My father and I went to live with my mother's family; my grandparents, Ester and David Sonnino, one great uncle, Moses, his wife, Enrichetta, and four uncles, Beniamino, Aldo, Gino, and Arturo. One was just a little older than I. This young uncle, Arturo, became my companion for playing and later helped me in my studies. The family had a dog, lup, and he became my second playmate.

My father's sister, Adriana, had seven children and many afternoons I went to the park with them or visited in their house. I was starting to adjust to my new life when, in 1915, my father was called into the army. The first World War had started and all the young men were called to serve. He was thirty-three years old at the time.

My father served for one year in the combat line, but after the Italian defeat of Caporetto, he was sent to Asmara in Eritrea as a Colonel Lieutenant. During the crossing his boat was sunk. He could not swim so he remained in the boat. First he sank, but after awhile he came floating to the surface on top of a big case of oranges. Waiting for rescuers, many of the men were eaten by sharks, but fortunately my father reached Alexandria, Egypt, safely

My grandfather, David, was also called into the army, but not for combat duty. He was sent to Naples, Italy, as a doctor, but he contracted pneumonia and died. At the end of the war, my father went to work in Turkey and I saw him only during sporadic visits until he came to live in Rome when I was sixteen. During all those years my grandmother and uncles were very nice to me, but they were very strict with discipline because they felt a great responsibility towards my father.

Every summer we went to the Adriatic Sea for two months. In winter we went to the theater, movies, and travelled to North Italy and Switzerland.

When I started high school, I was sent to a private American Institute, Crandon, where I stayed from morning until six o'clock at night. I studied English and French almost every day. I learned the English spelling, but when I came to America, it was difficult for me to speak.

When my father came back to Rome, my grandmother had died and I was then living with one of my married uncles, Beniamino and his wife, Giulia. My father and I went to live by ourselves and my Aunt Giulia gave us the maid who had been in the household for many years. I confess, that I could not cook and appreciated having a person with us who could take good care of the chores of the house.

My father, maybe wanting me to forget all the years that he had been away, tried to give me everything possible and impossible! I went dancing with him as my chaperon. I had many friends and we played tennis and went skiing. I never thought of marriage, because compared to my father, nobody could be like him. Every year in the summer we went to the seashore, but one year I went with one of my great aunts to Quisisana on the Tirrean Sea. We stayed in a beautiful hotel and most of the people were from Naples. I had never had any contact with Neopolitans and I never knew how full of fun they were. In the morning we all went by cars to the Scraio, a natural waterfall, so cold that when you were going into the sea afterwards, you thought you were in a hot bath. In the afternoons after changing we were served dinner on a beautiful terrace facing the sea and Vesuvius. We always finished our day dancing.

On one of the excursions with the Italian Alpine Club, I met Alberto Anquillara. He was from Rome and our two families knew each other. He was working in an agency of Banco Commerciale near Rome. We had fun skiing together and when he came back to Rome, he called me. We went out a few times for coffee in the afternoon.

When Alberto proposed I was a little dubious because he loved to make fun of people and I was not sure I was really ready to get married. However, I loved the idea of having children and

that blessing my father could not buy for me. I kept seeing Alberto and after two years of engagement, we got married. We had a month honeymoon in Italy and France, and then we went back to Rome where our life continued to be very happy.

We lived with my father and he was always a great help to us. Alberto had one brother, Franco, and four sisters, Elda, Fernanda, Irma, and Nella. Being the eldest, he remembered the young ones crying and making noise when he was studying, so he was not so keen to have children too soon. However, after one year of marriage, we had a beautiful baby boy, Umberto. All the months when I was expecting I had a picture of a blond baby next to our bed and Alberto was insisting we could not have a blond baby. Alberto was dark skinned and handsome, but Umberto was born blond and fair. Later in life he became darker. Three years later our son, Gino, came but we could not enjoy his arrival. Alberto had lost his job at the bank because he was of the Jewish religion. Already in Germany Hitler had started antisemitism and when Mussolini became his partner, he made the same restrictions in Italy.

One year before Alberto had the possibility to be sent to South America from the bank in Rome where he was employed. I was so sure that nobody could send us away from Rome, that I persuaded him not to accept this position and he agreed. When he lost his job, he asked if he could have the position in South America, but they replied, "One year ago we would have sent a good employee to one of our branches overseas, now we cannot." Alberto started studying Spanish, trying to find a visa for one of the South American countries. Every week some of the places closed their embassies and leaving Italy became almost impossible.

During this time all the Italians were very sorry for us. People we did not know were coming to our door asking what they could do for us. We never felt that our Catholic friends were sharing the attitude of the government. We were Italians like all of them and they tried to help us in any way possible. Our brother-in-law, one day met an Italo-American from New Jersey and he introduced Alberto. He was so astonished at how the government had treated some Italian citizens, that he went to the American Consul and made an affidavit for Alberto. Alberto could only leave the country as a student but he had the possibility of becoming in the regular quota and calling his family. He started to prepare his papers and when everything was ready, we heard that no young men could leave Italy for America. He then took passage on a French ship and from there he sailed for America. I was still sure that after staying for a short time, he could come back and remember this year as a bad dream. This did not happen. The children and I left our apartment in Rome with my father and we went to a small farm house in the country, Manzianna, which my father owned.

In America Alberto tried to find a job and learn English, but the laws did not permit him to work because he was not in the regular quota. The Italian government permitted him to bring very little money so he was living in a very small and cold room and eating once a day at the 5 & 10 cent store where the food was cheap.

After many months in America Alberto went to Cuba with the help of the Jewish Community and he came back to America in the regular quota. He went to many places where a job was promised but he could not find one for a long time. One of his first jobs was in milk supply working at nights. It was so cold out that he would stay inside the frigidaire where the milk was kept. He would do his homework for school and drink some cream.

The man who had made him the affidavit remained his good friend and gave him many bookkeeping jobs from the saloons that he owned. Many times Alberto sent an affidavit for me and the children, but the American Consul felt Alberto could not support a family because he was making so little money.

All the Italian newspapers were reporting about the beginning of war and I was really fearful that I could never reach America with the children to join Alberto. I had all our belongings in fifty boxes ready and waiting for the visa to America. One day I decided to go to Naples with our two boys hoping to soften the Consul; but after reading how much my husband was making in salary, we were denied a visa.

I was upset and crying leaving the Consul's office because it was getting impossible for me and the children to leave Italy. A young girl working there came up to me and tried to comfort me. I told her that I had fifty boxes ready to leave and I had permission to bring \$550. She asked whether I told this to the Consul. I told her no and she therefore, went inside the Consul's office and after a few minutes came back smiling holding the signed paper. I was free to leave with our two sons but not with my father. I had never travelled alone, but I could not pass up sailing across the ocean to be reunited with my husband. I called my father in Rome telling him the good news, but he was hesitant to tell me that all the Italian ships had stopped sailing.

The children and I went back to Rome and the following morning I went to an American company to see whether I could sail with one of their ships. The room was full of priests and American people going back home and I asked myself what chance did I have of leaving? A few months before I went with my father to the same office because he felt that putting us on an American ship would be safer so we submitted my name. Therefore, on this day when my turn came, I said my name and the girl looked in the book and said, "I am sorry, but I had confirmed you in a cabin in first class and I hope you can accept." I left the

office still believing I was dreaming. I went to a special office to get permission to leave Italy. I found two of my friends coming out of the office very disappointed. They could have permission in one week's time but the ship was leaving in three days.

Before Alberto left Rome he had given me the name of his friend in that office. I went to him and I received permission right away. Meanwhile the ship had left Naples with my fifty boxes, but I went with my father, my children and some relatives to Genoa where the boys and I boarded the ship for America. Once on board I thanked God for letting me leave Italy and I sent a special thanks to my deceased mother because I was sure she helped in this terrible moment for me. Our ship was so crowded that we had many turns for eating and I had a difficult time understanding the long menu with so many strange words. My little Gino did not like the food and Umberto after eating was ready to give back everything. I always had a big bag with me and I put many fruits inside that I could carry back to our cabin to give to the children. Once I read spaghetti on the menu and ordered it, but the waiter brought me one glass of tomato juice, which I never tasted before, and I had to drink everything to find a few spaghetti. During the crossing we had to go near our launch for a test in case a submarine collided with us. I was holding my two little ones when a gentleman came near and asked if he could hold the hand of one of the boys. I look at him and I was amazed to see he was Ramon Novarro, the movie star. I always liked him and I had his picture in back of Alberto's picture, but in that moment I could not enjoy meeting him. After eight long days we arrived in New York. I saw Alberto and all my bad experiences vanished. It had been a long wait, but finally we were together.

We went to Trenton, New Jersey, where we were to live. I had expected all American buildings to be high and big, but where we went the houses were so small and each was painted in a different color. We stayed for the first few months with the Giovanetti family who had made the affidavit for Alberto. They had a daughter, Joan, a little older than our Umberto, but talking a different language made it very hard to communicate. They gave us a room in the attic and our fifty boxes went into storage.

At the beginning I really did not know what to do. The wife of the friend was doing everything for us. If I tried to help, I was not too good. I always put on my rubber gloves to wash dishes or vegetables and I could not do the kitchen floor on my knees, but I did learn and fast!

A few months after we arrived Gino was run down by a car. Fortunately, the driver was driving slowly but Gino was taken to the hospital and remained two days. When he came home, the doctor told us not to force him to talk because he had a very

slight concussion. We were very frightened, but fortunately he soon was fine and maybe that fall made him more intelligent! Alberto was very understanding of our loneliness and coming home from his job in the mornings he always played with the children and he stayed very close to me. He was feeling for the first time that he was our provider and we were his only family.

The first apartment we had was one room and a kitchen where the children slept on a sofa bed. It was on top of a saloon and I was always afraid of the drunkards. In that apartment we had the first fire. I was alone with the children, and smelling smoke, I dressed them and taking my jewels and a few dollars, we left the apartment. Fortunately, it was only smoke, but I kept my bearings and very soon we could go back into our place. I was not so calm the second time we had a fire next door. Opening my eyes in the middle of the night I saw flames. Alberto was home so I woke him and completely lost my calm. We had a flight of wooden stairs to leave the apartment and I was afraid that they would start burning. Alberto brought us to a safe place and came back into the apartment to save a bunch of coats that a factory had sent me to sew the linings of the sleeves.

The first year in Trenton, New Jersey, I tried to get used to the different way of living. One day a neighbor knocked at the door and asked if I could use an icebox. I knew we could not afford to buy anything except food, so I thanked her and explained we could not afford it. She said she was not asking for any money. She had seen my milk and butter on the windowsill and realized we could use it. Somebody else gave us a secondhand washing machine that I used for many years.

In America I learned a great lesson. These people that helped us were not very rich, but they found the way to help us.

We changed many apartments which were always on top of saloons because they were the cheapest, but each time they were a little better.

After working at home for a factory for one year, we put the children in a nursery near the house and the school, and I went to work at the factory. We did not have to pay for the nursery and the children got lunch and plenty of care. I started to get used to the different life and Alberto started a better job. In the beginning he was making \$7 a week and we were using only \$6 because \$1 was going into the bank. I was not so happy about that decision, but when time passed I realized it was very smart. We never had to ask for a loan. We never had to pay with credit cardsthe "American" way.

We found a larger place to live and we put in some of the things we brought from Italy. Every piece had a name and a story and part of our past came back to us. Many pieces of sterling silver and our beautiful paintings were sold thinking we could never have any use for them. Slowly we improved our position.

Alberto worked at night for years and during the day he slept leaving me with too many hours by myself. I missed Italy, my father, and my friends. I was always listening to the Italian radio station and hearing all the one hundred year old stories. One day I decided to go to the Italian radio station and ask them if they needed an announcer. They put me in a very small room and tried out my voice. It was very good and I had many possibilities to become their new announcer. I went back to the factory and I told the people working in my section that very soon they would hear my voice on the radio. A few days later I went back to the station and they almost gave me the job. One of the people asked if I was a citizen and unfortunately, I was not. I had not lived in America for five years and that is the time you must need to apply for citizenship. I was supposed to read the news in the morning but the Italians at this time were against America in the war, so my dream was shattered.

After living five years in Trenton we moved to Jersey City, New Jersey. Albert had a good position as an accountant for a Jewish friend. He started his new job and we remained in Trenton until we found a place to live. I left the children one day with a family friend and went to look for a house in Jersey City. All the houses were so small and dirty and I could not decide to take one. When I returned home I found Bert with a very high temperature. He had the mumps which I also caught. I was very sick for a few days but I tried everyday to get up and prepare the meals for the family. I never allowed the children to light the stove because I was afraid of fire. I would sit down near the stove and prepare the meal. One day Alberto called and said he found a house that I would like. I went to Jersey City and I could not believe my eyes. The house was two and one half stories in a very nice section of the city, near parks, school, and shopping, and I really liked it. We bought the house and rented out the first floor and the attic leaving us the second floor to live in.

The children went to school and had made some friends and I started to appreciate America. The news from Italy was very sporadic and when Rome was bombed, we had only a few lines from the Red Cross telling us our family was well. Once we received a telegram saying Franco was safe. Franco was my brother-in-law, but the mail was read by some authority and they called Alberto thinking the Franco that had sent us the telegram was Dictator Franco of Spain.

Finally the war ended, we were citizens, and I then tried to get my father to America.

I became a member of the International Institute and for the Christmas holidays all the members were invited to a social. Different people spoke of Christmas in their native country. One lady went up to the podium and spoke of the Italian celebrations and spoke in such good Italian that when she was finished, I

introduced myself and congratulated her on her Italian. In Jersey City I did not know anyone of Italian decent and I really missed my countrymen, so I asked her if I could belong to some Italian club. I became a member of the Dante Alighiere Club and for many years I enjoyed their friendship.

Once my children were sick and I asked my tenant, a nurse, if she knew any doctors that could speak Italian and she gave me a name. Dr. Joseph Sottilaro came and ultimately became our family doctor and friend. His wife, Laura, was from Rome and she became my best friend. For the holidays we were always together most of the time in their home and all talking Italian. We really forgot we were so far from Italy.

A few years after the end of World War II my father came to live with us in Jersey City. When we went to the boat to meet him, we saw this old man walking with a cane and the stewardess holding his arm. I had left a young man and found a very old person. We were overjoyed to see him. He held me tightly and we went home where the children were anxious to see their Nonno. We had so many things to talk about. He told us how everyone all lived in fear, changed their names and lived away from their houses.

The Italian government had all the names and addresses of the Jewish families living in Rome. They were trying to find these people and send them to concentration camps. They came to our old address but the porter said we left for America and our names were crossed off the list.

Nonno, Gino, my father, did not know how to speak English so he enrolled in night school. However, we still spoke Italian at home all the time. My father had a hobby of carving wood and mending porcelain. He started to do this repair work for private persons. He liked to be occupied and have a few dollars in his pocket. When he started to do work for stores, it was more difficult. The pieces were supposed to be mended perfectly for resale. My father needed an interpreter and I never said so many lies in my life. The storekeepers thought he was an expert in porcelain and many times they asked him too many questions of what period a special piece was from. They liked his work and he did this for a few years.

Finally he went to work in the same company where Alberto was working. This was a large gas station with a luncheonette, a clothing store, and rooms where truck drivers coming from the South could sleep for the night and wait for a new load to bring back. He worked at nights for a few months where he was supposed to make the bunk beds. He had never worked nights before and he was not able to sleep during the day. He was trying to help me in different chores and also go shopping for me. He loved the supermarket where he put in a cart what he needed and then would give a big bill to the checker without knowing what was the exact

price. His English improved and he worked in different departments at the gas station until we went back to Italy. When Alberto got sick, my father was the only one working. In the winter his boss would pick him up in the morning and bring him home at night.

After 10 years in America we went back to Italy for a visit and were so happy to see our family and friends. My brother-in-law, Franco, had married by this time. His clothing store was taken by the Fascists during the war, but was now given back to him. He found it empty and in ruins, but with the help of his wife, Iole, built back a beautiful place. When we arrived in Rome, we found in our room a suit, coat, shoes and a beautiful robe on Alberto's side of the bed; on my side was a dress, a reindeer coat, a pair of suede shoes and a silk housecoat.

We had so much to talk about and I was really thankful to Albert for having brought me and the children out of so many tragedies. Before going back to Italy to visit, I had the idea of writing all our vicissitudes of our first years of American life, but after learning what our family went through in Italy, I thought our difficulties were of not great importance. We enjoyed our stay, but we were happy to go back home. We had left the children with my father in Jersey City, and it was time we came back to our duty.

In Jersey City I did not go to work. I loved to be home, to try to make a place for my husband and a happy house for the children. When they were coming back home from school, Gino always had something to tell me about his friends and his schooling. He always had the facility to learn but both of the boys were good pupils. Bert played all the sports and many times he and his friends destroyed the flowers in my yard when they were playing. However, I was happy they were home, near me. The only time I worried was when they were playing football. Under everybody was my little Gino. He didn't play with friends of his own, but was always with his big brother, Bert.

The years were passing, my husband and father working together, our children in school with good friends, and I had many friends. One morning Alberto brought home a little dog a few months old. He was blond and so soft. That day I went to meet the children at school and I brought the dog with me. They could not believe it was ours. They were very happy and the puppy was a good playmate for them. That little dog became a big one and once she had beautiful puppies of her own. Gino and Bert put the puppies in a basket and sold them for a dollar each. We had our dog, Queenie, for 15 years. We were so sorry when we had to put her to sleep. I promised myself I would never have another dog! When Gino was in college he once drove me to a kennel and we came home with the most beautiful little dog. It was a miniature retriever. He had short brown fur like a horse. He had his own mind and never did what he was supposed to do. If

he remained too long alone at home, he would make a hole under the sofa or a chair. We kept our dog, Duke, until we moved back to Italy in 1968, leaving him with the new owner of the house.

The year Bert finished high school, he was the only one in his graduating class to be accepted at Columbia University. During that summer my brother-in-law, Franco, came to visit from Italy and we went to the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania for a few weeks. Bert met a family of Jehova Witnesses there and his life changed. During the first few years back in Trenton, sometimes I was worried about giving our children some religious teaching. In Italy we were not very observant, but we knew we were Jews. However, in America we found more antisemitism than in Italy and Alberto thought that it was better not give them any religion and have them choose their own when they grew up. We certainly taught them the love of God and family and we thought we did the right thing.

Once a woman came to our door asking me if I wanted to read the Bible with her. I could understand very little English and I tried to tell her that, but she was very persuasive and she started coming once a week. Sometimes the children, coming from school would sit near by and listen. I found great joy reading the Bible and when I read that I did not have to go to church or synagogue for praying to God, I was happy and contented. For Bert it was different. Maybe he needed more and learning what this woman was telling, he decided to become a Jehova Witness. When he finished high school, he wanted to become a missionary. He did not attend Columbia University but instead went to Ghilea, where young people are prepared to go around the world and preach the words of God. We were broken-hearted, especially Alberto, who was dreaming to have our children with a doctoral degree like him. After six months in Ghilea, Bert was sent to Liberia, Africa, and nobody could change his mind. He was there for three years. In his letters he seemed very happy and satisfied with his work. I begged him to come back and he finally came, but I promised Bert we would pay for his passage back to Africa. My husband was against it, but I promised Bert we would pay for his plane ticket. During his visit he met a girl, Frances, of the same belief. She promised once they were married, she would go back to Africa with him, but she changed her mind and they remained in America.

When Bert left for Africa, Gino had moments of indecision. He missed his brother a lot and he did not want to prepare for college. Fortunately, one of his teachers knew he had great possibilities and she succeeded in changing his mind. He switched from a technical high school to a regular school. He finished high school with very good marks and was accepted at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey. He graduated in mechanical engineering and then took his Masters degree at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg, Virginia, in applied mathematics. He went on to win a National Defense

Fellowship and also a Fullbright Scholarship in mathematics to the University of Rome for one year. He got married in 1960 to Brenda and they lived in Virginia for one year then Rome, Italy, with the Fullbright Fellowship. They came back to New Jersey for a few years until Gino took a job for General Motors in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He now has his own company since 1979 called Anguil Environmental Systems, Inc. He and Brenda went on to have five children; Kimberly born in Rome, Italy, Jeffrey, Deborah, Christopher, and Marcella (Marci) all of whom I love more than myself.

The years passed. We went back to Italy a few time and my brother-in-law, Franco, came to see us once in America. Our children came to visit us often with their families, sharing many good times.

One terrible day Alberto got sick; a man who had never been sick had a brain embolism. He was in intensive care for a few weeks and when he tried to leave the bed, he realized he had lost his sense of balance. He came home in an ambulance and stayed in bed for awhile. He started exercises with a therapist and he recuperated his movements partially. He could not work anymore, but he never lost his sense of humor and maybe he became more understanding. He wished to go back to live in Italy. The children had their work and families and could not always be with us. We sold our house in Jersey City, gave away our dog, Duke, and went back to Italy with my father in 1968.

We stayed with Franco on Via Salaria until we found a lovely apartment with many rooms and a lovely terrace. My father lived with us. Franco came every morning to take Alberto for a drive and stay with him until lunchtime. Alberto was better but never fully recuperated.

After two years he wished to see the children and grandchildren again and we came back to America to visit. They were all so excited to see us and we had a few happy days . Unfortunately, Alberto got sick again and he was put into St. Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee for awhile, then we went to visit in New Jersey but he remained ill. The doctors advised us to go back to Italy and we left America. Upon landing in Rome, Alberto got up from his place and went to the front of the plane. He sat in the first seat saying he was very tired. The attendants gave him oxygen, but it was too late. He died without saying a word. The shock was terrible, but I was happy we went to America to visit the family to see them so well and also to make peace with our son, Bert. My father had already left the plane and he heard from the loudspeaker to come to the infirmary with Franco and his son, Claudio. They were at the airport to greet us with a new car. They were shocked to hear the news.

I went home and all the relatives came to see me, but the house was empty and my life had no more meaning. However, having

my father with me, made me realize that I still had a reason to live. We became more attached if that were possible. The children wrote advising me to come back to America. I could not make a decision so quickly, especially since Bert was living in a small town in New Jersey far from a city and I was not able to drive. He was also living with his second wife, Tanya, whom I did not know well. Gino and Brenda were far from New Jersey living in Wisconsin where I did not know anybody. During the summers I went to see the children and I enjoyed being with them, but I was afraid to come to live there permanently. During my visits all their friends were kind to me but I realized that if I went to live in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, I had to have my own friends and that made me uncertain.

The year my granddaughter, Debbie, finished high school her parents had a party for her friends and their families. I met one of the parents, Don Cohen, and I told him how I was undecided to come to live in Wisconsin where I knew nobody, except my family. A few days later Don called to invite me to come to his home to meet his mother-in-law, Edith Klein. I went with Gino and Brenda to their house and met her. We liked each other immediately. We went out a few times during that summer and when I went back to Italy we corresponded. During that winter in Italy I was robbed of many valuable things in my apartment. I was out for two hours to a concert and when I got home I found my place completely ransacked. I was afraid to be alone in the apartment and at night I went from one window to the next to see if everything was closed and locked. These events made me decide to leave Rome and return to America. My father had passed away in his sleep a few years before at the age of 93, so therefore, I really wanted to be near my children and grandchildren. I called my son, Gino, and told him to find an apartment for me in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, near him and Brenda and I started to assemble my things for the big move. This time I brought my furniture, crystal, china, paintings, and carpets across the ocean for the third time.

At first I lived with Gino and Brenda while I was waiting for my belongings to arrive from Italy. My apartment was at 623 East Henry Clay Street. I loved my new place and I was happy to be near my family. The children were very affectionate and Brenda was more than a daughter-in-law. I really felt I made the right decision. I made a few new friends in the building where I lived and I joined the Women's Club which was across the street from my apartment. I began doing volunteer work at St. Mary's Hospital and I became active at the Women's Club. My first friend, Edith, who made me realize that I could still have a life of my own, came once a week with her car and we did some things together. She had a little shop where she kept donated clothing and she distributed these to the needy. She made me believe that I help her once in awhile when I made lists of the donated items.

My days in America are always busy and I am really satisfied

about my decision. On Sundays I often have the family over for dinner and I like having them around me. Brenda is very close to me. She makes me feel loved and not a burden. When I go to their house, it is always a pleasure to see how close they are to one another. In the summer I try to go back to Italy for a month's vacation and stay with my cousins, Ava and Ada. I still have many relatives and friends there and I hope I can still go a few more times.

When I return from my vacations in Italy, I usually stop at my son, Bert's, home in Perkasio, Pennsylvania, and pass two lovely weeks with them. He is with his third wife, Cathy, but I really think that this time they will be together for always. He has two children. The older one, Gino, is by his first wife, Frances. Gino lived for many years alone in New York. He wanted to be a dancer, but he realized it was a very demanding career, so now he is a photographer. Recently he went to Hollywood, California, with a promise of a good job and I wish him so much luck and success. Bert's second child, Nicole, is with her mother, Tanya, in California. She will finish high school this year, 1987, and I hope she will find her happiness in life.

What to say of my grandchildren in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin? They are all good students. The oldest, Kimberly, will be an architect. She graduated from the University of Michigan in Fine Arts and is working on her master's degree in Architecture from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. The second child, Jeffrey, is working with his father in the family business. He graduated from Indiana University in Business Administration. The third, Deborah, finished Indiana University with a degree in Sports Science. The last two, Christopher and Marcella are still in high school, often on the honor roll. It is a grandmother that talks, but I say only the truth! In September of 1987, Jeffrey got married and now we have one addition in our family. Kandace is a sweet girl from Kentucky who Jeff met in college. I wish them a very long happy life.

After coming back from my vacation in Italy this year, 1987, I had a wonderful surprise party for my 80th birthday. Brenda found all my friends and she prepared a beautiful buffet with plenty of food and a cake with 80 lighted candles. Everybody was kind to me, brought lovely presents and we all had a wonderful time.

Tomorrow is the day before Christmas, 1987, and I will go to Gino's house for two days. We will be all together and Friday morning, Christmas Day, we will open the wrapped gifts and sip coffee. The fireplace will be lit and the warmth in our heart will be shared among us.

Thank you God for letting me be part of this lovely family. THE
END.....until I write again of the coming years.

Love, MARCELLA (NONNA)



