

LA FAMIGLIA

& THEIR BLIND ADVOCATE



DOMINIC SPOSETO WITH SHERRY SPOSETO-JAKEY

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& Their Blind Advocate
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to The Family.

Acknowledgments

The young man who assisted Dom with the preparation of this material is Michael Taylor, the youngest son of 11 children.

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Dominic J. Sposeto
Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

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Prologue

In the spring of 1963 in San José, California, I received a phone call from an elderly gentleman with a heavy Italian accent. He introduced himself as a long-time friend of my grandmother and her family. He said, “You know, she used to live here in San José at one time. I see you’re running for Congress. I would like to invite you to my home for lunch so that I might speak with you about the Italians of our area.”

At that time I was 29 years old and was asked to run for a congressional seat as a Democrat in the Eleventh District of California, which was primarily Santa Clara County.

On an appointed day, my investigator and I went to an Italian neighborhood in San José, to a property on about a half acre with a modest home, garden and fruit trees. This is where the man lived who invited me to his home for lunch. An elderly woman came to the door and invited us in. My investigator later described the home as very warm and comfortable, with many crocheted pieces on the sofas and tables, a large painting of the Sacred Heart, a statue of a saint holding a plate with eyes on the plate, who would later be conveyed to me as Santa Lucia, a patron saint of southern Italy and also a patron saint of the blind. In the dining room a table was beautifully set with crystal and china on a crocheted tablecloth.

These were two of the most memorable people I have ever met. This couple was in their early 90s and the husband was one of the

most influential Italian leaders in the country. He said, “First we will eat, then, Dominic, I would like to talk to you alone.”

We sat down to a typically well-prepared Italian meal: antipasto with olives, Italian peppers, salami and cheeses and a pitcher of homemade wine that he called his “dago-red.” The wife also prepared one of my favorite Italian pasta dishes made with lentils called *pasta lenticchia*.

After we completed our meal he asked me to accompany him to the backyard, where he escorted me through his garden, selecting items that he gave me to take home, including tomatoes, squash and garlic. He was particularly proud of his herb garden. This was a man who was described to me as tall, handsome in his old age with a handlebar moustache and who loved to gesture with his hands.

He led me to some comfortable chairs on his patio and told me how close he was to my grandmother and her father, Angelo. They were instrumental in bringing many Italian families to this country. In the mid- and late-1800s, southern Italy was very poor. This included Naples, Calabria and Sicily. Angelo, who first visited the United States in the late 1800s, was impressed with the work opportunity available to those who had experience as laborers of all types. Angelo, who was a tailor, brought many of the Italian families to New York City to assist in the garment industry and to seek employment as laborers, selling produce and working in the fishing industry.

Necessarily, the Italians found themselves living in the same community where many families would live together in crowded quarters. “Dominic, the important thing to us Italians is our church, our family, our food and drink, our music and our games. We work very hard and look forward to a good meal with wine and playing our Italian card games and bacciball. As this community developed, one of our first priorities was to have an Italian priest available to us.” This community became known as Little Italy. “Many of the law enforcement officials required us to pay for the privilege of making small quantities of wine and openly participating in our penny ante card games. We became very upset with the idea of having to pay

for these privileges and decided that some of the stronger men in our families would receive money for watching over the growth of our Italian community and its many new businesses. This was okay with the local officials, so long as they received their cut. These payoffs were negotiated and all seemed to go well for awhile. Many of these established Italian communities in the larger eastern cities all experienced similar payoff requests from public officials. These payoffs became expected. When it became necessary for us to organize, we relied on the Italian organizations that we formed in southern Italy, with their laws and traditions. These organizations, referred to by some as the Mafia, were necessary to protect the families in southern Italy who were being robbed and the women ravaged by sailors of the Mediterranean.”

He went on to say, “These secret organizations, requiring an oath of silence and loyalty, were a constructive method of protecting our families, and because they were not a formal part of the government, a breach of these vows was punished by the leadership and sometimes with the offender’s life. Because it became necessary to rely on men with strong personality and leadership abilities, families would select their leaders and assistants. Initially, this organizational structure was very helpful and constructive in keeping the Italian communities safe from the exploitation of public officials and others who would seriously discriminate against these Italians.

“And then there was Prohibition. As the consumption of wine was a very important part of the Italian lifestyle, the Italian communities would organize and secretly make available wine, beer and whiskey during this period and would import from Canada and the Caribbean in such a way as to seldom be detected. This is where the problems began because this activity became very lucrative and opened the door to providing alcohol to others outside the Italian community.

“Because our lifestyle also included a love of gaming activities, the gambling establishments became locations for drinking alcohol and became popular all over the country. The Italians were instrumental in regularly providing alcohol to these establishments that frequently

included gambling and sometimes insisted on becoming the sole provider of such, using threats of violence where necessary to maintain their exclusivity.

“This is when many of the families became greedy, power-hungry and very protective of their local community activities. Jealousy and power-seeking resulted in many gangland killings. Because of this, several families became very powerful on the East Coast and instilled fear into many. Gradually they would control liquor distribution, bars, restaurants and private gaming facilities. This continued after Prohibition and these families would become more influential and powerful in their underworld activities, controlling many businesses, unions, the shipping industry, drugs and prostitution throughout the country.

“Dominic, what I want to tell you is very important. Most of the southern Italian families did not approve of this criminal element and those who came to northern California, many prominent families, worked hard to develop their businesses, which included the fishing industry, produce and wines, construction and some nightclubs, bars and restaurants. Through our own local organizations in northern California, we pretty much agreed that we did not want this criminal element in our area. On the wharf in San Francisco there were predominantly Italian fishermen who worked hard to develop one of San Francisco’s finest attractions. One such family was the DiMaggios. Joe, who would become a national baseball hero and the pride of the Italians, went to New York and treated all of his fans with great kindness and generosity, especially the many Italian families in the area. For many years the DiMaggio family had a restaurant displaying their son’s baseball memorabilia at the wharf in San Francisco. Several other prominent families, along with the DiMaggio family, would excel in the areas of fishing, farming, wine-making, produce and banking. By mutual agreement we tried very hard to keep the organized crime away from our area of California, and were for the most part successful.

“Many notorious southern Italian families came to northern

California, and because of their past history, would change their names in order to operate a legitimate business. We are proud of our success and although nothing is ever perfect, we have pretty much kept the organized criminals out of our area.

“Dominic, I am over ninety years old and have seen a great deal. I can’t tell you how easy it is to become involved with material success. I would ask you to keep your faith, to remember that just a handful of southern Italian families were criminals. Most of us work very hard and our success is the product of that work. The Giannini family started the Bank of Italy in our area and was very generous and liberal in lending to Italian families who would start their businesses. This bank would later become the Bank of America. Many families became very successful in produce distribution and wine making in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys, and many had successful bars and restaurants, very few affected by the criminal element.

“When your dad, Angelo, came to northern California, a strip of nightclubs and gambling facilities began to develop where he lived, between Albany and El Cerrito in the San Francisco bay area. Within a one mile area, several prominent nightclubs began to develop, featuring popular Italian performers such as Jimmy Durante, The Vagabonds, Louis Prima and others. In fact, Sally Rand, a popular burlesque queen and dancer opened her own entertainment facility in this area and this was the beginning of a growth of activities that displeased many of us Italians, including the local politicians. With insistence by many, law enforcement would close down many of the illegal gambling operations and soon the development of this area ceased, as many of the clubs would gradually go out of business. I know your father was interested in a nightclub in this area in the early forties, and thank God your mother and grandmother discouraged him, and instead he became successful in the construction business.

“What I’m telling you, is to be very careful. Because the children of some of these prominent Italian families have come to our area, bringing drugs and their criminal activities, some whom I’ve noticed you represented. Do not let them entice you into activities that could

result in your destruction. I have always lived a simple life, and have been a leader of many Italian families in our area because they have respected my simplicity, my strength, my spirituality and my sincere love of our Italian culture. I know how easy it is when you start to become successful to cater to some bad habits and negatively affect yourself and your family.

“Before you go, I want to give you a statue of one of my favorite saints, a patron of southern Italy and for you, a patron of the blind, our beloved Saint Lucy.”

I greatly treasured this gift and was very moved by his act of generosity. In the few years before his passing I had many opportunities to visit with his family and share more of his life experiences, all of which would have a profound affect on my life. His simplicity, devotion and love of the Italian culture remain with me to this day. I sincerely believe that this gentleman wanted me to become aware of the Mafia influence in my own family. It was at this time that I started to make inquiry of my parents and other members of the family, and would learn a great deal about our families' relationships.

Dominic J. Sposeto

Lineage

Miniscarchi,
Domenico
Attorney
General,
Southern Italy
Born 1814

Iaquinta,
Francesco

Miniscarchi
Esposito,
Pasquale
Born 1834

Valenti,
Angelo
Born 1859

Iaquinta,
Giovanni

Esposito
Sposeto,
Domenico
Born 1877

Valenti
Venticinque
Francesca
Vittoria
Born 1882

Iaquinta,
Francesco
Born 1887

Sposeto
Angelo
Born 1912

Iaquinta
Jaquinta,
Mary
Born 1912

Dominic John Sposeto
Attorney
Born 1934

LA FAMIGLIA

& THEIR BLIND ADVOCATE



PART ONE

LA FAMIGLIA 1814-1941



Domenico Esposito, 1917, Des Moines, Iowa

My family history became important to me when I began my campaign for Congress in Santa Clara County in 1963. For the first time, I would truly understand my family's involvement in what was described as the Mafia.

As I was growing up there was reluctance on the part of my parents to discuss their involvement, other than to tell superficial stories about my grandfather, who was shot and killed in the streets

of Des Moines, Iowa. Because of the serious discrimination against Italians, particularly Sicilians, who were considered the lower class of the Italian race, my parents and grandparents seemed ashamed of their ethnic background. This was quite typical of many of the poorer ethnic groups who immigrated to the United States, especially the Irish and Jews. They would seldom encourage their children to speak in any language but English while continuing conversations amongst themselves in their foreign language. My parents fit this pattern of behavior and were almost ashamed of their Sicilian heritage. To her death my mother insisted she was Calabrese, not Sicilian.

Growing up I was not affected by Mafia influence because I was unaware of any underworld connections, yet very aware of my Italian culture through my relationship with Granny. We were very close. She very much wanted to accept the American culture and forget her background. I don't ever remember her discussing the Mafia as such, but instead would say "these friends of my father would do this and that."

Because of my newly-found interest in the family history, I began to examine government records, to talk to my parents, aunts, uncles and other relatives about our family's history and the following narrative is the result of these efforts. It was necessary to examine public records, government files, shipping records and have personal discussions with many members of the family, who could and did provide valuable information.

Through the years I have been able to learn many more facts than even family could provide. Thanks to modern inventions such as the internet, I have been able to trace some of the comings and goings from the late nineteenth century right up to the present time. There are still many gaps, but some things were meant to remain a mystery.

CHAPTER One

Domenico Miniscarchi, Procúratore Generale

San Mauro Marchesato, Italy lies between Crotona and Catanzaro in the Region of Calabria, which lies at the toe of Italy. In this same area around Capo Alfieri is a Neolithic site located on a small headland on the eastern coast of Calabria. Excavations at the site were conducted in 1987 and 1990. The work is part of a broad study of the landscape of the territory of the Classical Greek colonial city of Kroton, from which the town derives its name. The area in question has been dated to the fifth millennium BC.

From this location sprang the first known patriarch of the Miniscarchi family. Domenico Miniscarchi was born in San Mauro Marchesato about 1814. He was purported to have been *Procúratore Generale* (Attorney General) of Southern Italy. He would have been considered of the bourgeois class because of his wealth and social status.

Domenico was a prosperous gentleman, having inherited the family estates and honed a career in Sicilian politics as an attorney. He married an equally qualified young lady by the name of Seraphina Rosa Corina. A son, Pasquale, was born in 1834. It

is very possible Pasquale was not the first son. Usually first sons were urged to marry at a reasonably young age. Second siblings often married much later in life or not at all. There were few incentives for second or subsequent sons to marry because of the inheritance laws. The first son inherited the estates, and the other male siblings were left to fend for themselves.

Domenico ruled his family in all matters and when he discovered Pasquale, who was 40 at the time, dallying with a young servant girl, he raised his fist to him and demanded that he cease the liaison. Pasquale, however, stood his ground. He told his father that he loved this woman named Carina (Caroline) Cinbeai and he intended to marry her.

At Pasquale's announcement, Domenico flew into a rage and demanded that Pasquale either give up the girl or remove himself from the estate and the family forever. Pasquale left his family.

CHAPTER TWO

Expositus

A legal proceeding took place and thence Pasquale was required to bear the name Esposito, meaning “to place outside,” or, as some would have it, “exposed,” or “shown” from the Latin word *expositus*. This name was frequently given to orphans and foundlings. Naples is perhaps the capital of the origin of the name Esposito because of the very large orphanage in its vicinity. Esposito is as common as Smith in America. The reason for the high number of illegitimate children and foundlings goes back to the inheritance laws.

Pasquale was devastated by this decision. To the Italian, loss of family is tantamount to death. Now Pasquale would forever be deemed an orphan. He could never hold his head high and be proud as he had in the past. A new existence now lay ahead of him.

Pasquale and Caroline (as she was called) were soon married and she bore him three children. They remained in San Mauro, since there seemed to be more opportunities for employment. It was tough times for Caroline and Pasquale. No longer a member of the aristocracy, Pasquale would need to learn a trade. Caroline

had skills in the domestic arts and could help with the family income. Pasquale, however, previously had not done much manual labor. He was well educated, but that did not put food on the table. Nevertheless, he learned to use his hands as well as his head. He was also very fit for a forty-year-old man. To make matters worse, times were changing in Southern Italy. The poor were poorer and the rich were richer. There was the Mafia, however. Perhaps Pasquale was able to seek help and protection from them.

In these days the Mafia was a benevolent group, taking care of the Sicilian people. The origin of the word Mafia is a mystery. It may be derived from an Arabic word for refuge or safety, although there are those who are sure it is a Sicilian adjective implying courage, strength, agility, quickness, endurance, and intelligence. The Valentis always believed it was an acronym for *Morte Alla Franciese Italia Annella*, which meant “Death to the French is Italy’s Cry.”

It is no surprise that there is so much conflicting opinion on the origin of the word, possibly because of the Sicilian language itself, which is, incidentally, a language, not a dialect as some would claim. It is a beautiful language with soft melodic tones in a blend of Greek, Latin, Arogonese, Arabic, Longobardic (the oldest written German dialect from the 7th century), and Norman-French blends. The language is also similar to Calabrian, sharing certain elements with the Maltese.

The original Mafia was a secret society formed to unite the Sicilians, who had fled to the hills in order to escape from Arab and French invaders. It originated during times of turbulence, when the Two Sicilys (Naples to Calabria and the Isle of Sicily) were ruled by bureaucracies that inflicted injustices on the underprivileged. In 1250, Charles of Anjou and his French allies invaded the island of Sicily and established a new aristocracy so despised that it led to the popular uprising called the Sicilian Vespers. Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Vesperi Siciliani* is based on the

Sicilian uprising in which the Norman invaders were overthrown. The Mafia was, perhaps at this time, resurrected from its ancient roots in these areas by rich landowners who armed the peasants in order to protect their property from bandits. This would be the Mafia that Pasquale would be involved with.

The Sicilian Mafia soon grew larger, more powerful, and more criminally oriented. Those members who came down from the hillsides began to get involved in politics, thus adding to their power. Many migrated to America and started gangs and other secret societies, such as the Black Hand, which, in truth, is not Mafia at all, but a blackmailing organization. By 1924 the Italian Mafia had become powerful enough to attract the attention of Mussolini. He intended to rid Italy of this secret society. This led to more migration of the members from Italy and Sicily, and thus a rise in its members in America.

Regardless of the bad blood between Pasquale and his father, he maintained the family tradition of naming his first-born son for his paternal grandfather. Domenico Esposito was born May 12, 1877; Francesco Esposito was born November 6, 1886; Rosa Lucia Esposito was born about 1889. If Pasquale continued the naming tradition, Caroline's father would have been Francesco. Rosa, of course, would be named for Pasquale's mother. At the time of Domenico Esposito's birth Pasquale was 43 years old and Caroline was 29 years old, a difference of 14 years.

The tradition of naming Italian children is a very strong custom and is seldom dishonored. The first male traditionally is named for the paternal grandfather; the second male for the maternal grandfather. As with the males, the first daughter is named for the paternal grandmother and the second for the maternal grandmother. Subsequent children are often named for a favorite relative, such as an aunt or uncle, or a deceased relative may be honored.

Pasquale rarely looked back on his former life, but he did yearn for the return of respectability. He had fallen into the depths of degradation by alienating his father and becoming involved with

an element in the form of the Mafia, which sometimes walked in the shadow of crime.

Family tradition tells us that when Pasquale's son, Domenico, was very young, Pasquale would say to him, "Domenico, you are a very smart boy. Do not neglect your studies. You can be a great man like your grandfather. Perhaps some day you will be an attorney too."

Domenico would reply, "But, Papa, where will I get the money to go to school?" This was a problem. Even with Caroline contributing to the family income, there was never anything extra. So much of young Domenico's education was provided by his father by home-schooling, but Pasquale was not able to teach his son about law. This would require attending a university, and there simply was no money for this.

As Domenico Esposito began to mature, he began to think about his future and the ambitions his father had for him. Thanks to his father, he was literate. In looking around and analyzing his possibilities, he was more and more convinced his life would be no better than his father's.

One day Domenico saw an announcement from the government offering young men passage to America. He decided to look into this possibility. Since he was still a child, he would need his father's permission to embark on this venture. He returned home and decided to face his father straight on. "Papa," he began. Pasquale was barely listening to his young son, being engrossed in some project of his own. "Papa, I have had a revelation," Domenico blurted out.

"What is it, figlio mio?" queried Pasquale. Domenico went on to relate what he had learned of the government offering to pay passage to America. "No!" shouted Pasquale. "You are far too young to be on your own in a strange land."

Domenico was very disheartened. Through his affiliations with the local Mafia where he earned a little money by running errands, he heard fantastic tales of America. For many months

Domenico tried in vain to persuade his father that allowing him to emigrate from Italy would be a step in the right direction for the family. Always the answer was the same. “No, you are too young.” By the time Domenico was about sixteen years old, he began to develop a good argument. “Papa,” he said. “If I am allowed to go to America, I will find work. There is promise of great opportunity in this new country. I could then send for you and Mama and Rosa and Francesco.”

Pasquale’s reserve was beginning to flag. Perhaps his son had the right idea. This could be the answer to so many prayers. A new life in a new world could offer the family many opportunities. “I will think about it,” he said.

This was the first time Domenico had heard anything really positive from his father about leaving Italy. He knew now that it was only a matter of time before he would convince his father that this would be a good thing for the family. In the meantime, Domenico met Angelo Valenti, a tailor by trade and member of the Mafia in Sicily and America. Signor Valenti had a great deal of influence in America and could lead Domenico to a good job. Domenico convinced his father to meet Signor Valenti, and after this meeting the two gentlemen reached an agreement. Angelo would be pleased to have Domenico accompany him on his next trip to America where he would personally see that he had a place to stay and gainful employment. At long last Pasquale gave his permission for Domenico to seek his fortune in America.

CHAPTER Three

Il Sarto

The history of Messina, Sicily dates to before the ancient Greeks. As a Greek colony founded in the 8th century BC, it was called Zancle (meaning sickle). Throughout history, even into modern times, Messina has been plagued with many disasters, including earthquakes and ravaging wars. The first Punic War was started in Messina with mercenaries from Campania. Rome rescued them and was able to keep the Arabs from her shores until the ninth century. It was the Norman kings who later liberated Messina.

Because of its location on the Mediterranean, the area became an important stopping off point for Crusaders traveling to the Holy Land. Messina was fortified by Richard the Lionhearted.

In 1302 in Sicily, the French were challenged by the Aragonese, part of the same dynasty which sponsored Christopher Columbus on his trips to establish alternate trade routes. They dominated until 1734. After the Aragonese, Sicily passed into the hands of the Austrians for a brief period, and later in 1734 to the Bourbons of Spain. The Bourbon throne was actually located in Naples. The Bourbon king Ferdinand's wife, Maria Carolina, sister of Marie

Antoinette, built *La Favorita*, a magnificent refuge in which Maria Carolina chose to hide from the subjects she so loathed.

The architecture of Messina has been influenced by a combination of Modern, Norman, Arabic, Greek, Spanish and the Baroque styles. Taormina is the home of Greek ruins. It is a major attraction today. It includes a Greek amphitheater, and a Roman aqueduct. The beaches have become a major attraction because of their outstanding beauty.

Even though the Arabic dominance introduced sweets to Messina, it was not widely accepted. The exceptions would be dishes like *gelato* (ice cream) and *cannoli* (a pasta shell filled with sweetened ricotta cheese). The people prefer seafood, with swordfish, shellfish and cuttlefish being favorites. Eggplant was brought to Sicily from Asia by the Arabs and has become a mainstay for the cuisine of this country. Other favorites are lamb dishes and vegetables with pasta in many different sauces. The peasant foods of Sicily have become our modern gourmet fare.

In 1860 Giuseppe Garibaldi began his conquest of the kingdom of the Two Sicilys. After conquering the island of Sicily, Garibaldi went on to the mainland and conquered Naples. Garibaldi was so revered by the people, he was proclaimed king. Garibaldi, however, was not prepared to retire in such a manner and, so, relinquished his title to Victor Emmanuel, who was proclaimed king in 1861.

The Valenti family lived in the beautiful historic city of Messina. Shortly before the unification of Italy, Angelo was born around 1859 and his wife, Giuseppina, was born approximately 1860. Angelo Valenti was about six feet tall and very thin and wiry. He was a pleasant man and never raised his voice, though the aura he emitted indicated great strength and power. His occupation was *sarto* (tailor). Giuseppina, however, was very petite and demure.

Shortly after their marriage Giuseppina became pregnant. This first child was a girl, and a very fretful one at that. Angelo

was very disappointed not to have a son. As a result he paid little attention to his daughter. (The name of this child has never been ascertained in modern times.)

Giuseppina again became pregnant a little more than a year later. This time Angelo was very pleased. He had a son and he named him Salvatore, according to the tradition of naming the first-born son for the paternal grandfather.

In the spring of 1882 Giuseppina discovered she was pregnant for a third time. This new baby would be born in December, a very holy month. On the eve of Christmas day, she began to experience the all too familiar symptoms of impending birth. Her labor this time, though, was to be long and arduous. She labored far into the night and into the early dawn hours. Just before daybreak on Christmas day, Francesca Vittoria Valenti was born. She was a small baby, but very strong considering her weight. Her father could attest to the spirit of her lungs, for she could be heard by the entire neighborhood when she was awake.

Despite the long delivery process and the noise this little one made, she was a delight in just about every other way. She was a beautiful baby and was sure to be a beautiful young lady as she grew. Her papa seemed to enjoy her more than he did his first daughter, even though he would have preferred another son. He would often carry her, dancing around the room and singing Sicilian folk songs. This delighted her.

After the unification of Italy, the economy fell into a deplorable condition. With very little industry to support the population, the treasury was overburdened. At the same time the industrial revolution in America was getting into full swing and manufacturers were crying out for labor. The Italian government, seeking a way out of their economic troubles, decided they could ease the pressure on the treasury by encouraging people to emigrate. Some were assisted with their passage.

Regardless of the extreme poverty in this area of the world, Angelo was able to provide his family with a few more luxuries

than most. He was a well known tailor in the area and sold many of his garments to some of his wealthier clients on the mainland of Italy. In addition to this he held a high position in the local Mafia and was well respected. One afternoon he was conversing with the Don. “Angelo,” the Don said, “You speak English very well don’t you.”

Angelo replied, “I get around a little.”

The Don then said, “How would you feel about making a trip to America?”

Angelo was startled by this suggestion, but contemplated the possibilities. He responded, “How would I get the money to make such a trip?”

“Well,” said the Don, “the government is thinking of subsidizing passage to America in order to help some of the truly poor emigrate from Sicily. I believe we could do a great deal for our people by scoping out opportunities in America.”

Angelo was beginning to get an idea that could revolutionize America as well as Sicily. He said, “I will need to take my family with me on this journey. Do you think that would be possible?” The Don had not considered this, but now it seemed the right thing to do. This would soften the feeling of a foreigner interfering in America’s business. “What the government does not provide, I will help you with,” replied the Don.

That evening he related this new turn of events to Giuseppina. She seemed doubtful. “But the children are so young, and traveling across a huge ocean could make them very sick,” she said.

Angelo responded, “These babies are very strong. They will enjoy the adventure. Besides, we don’t want to raise a bunch of *effeminati* (sissies), do we?” Giuseppina could not argue with him. Angelo always seemed to have an answer for everything, and somehow it always seemed right. She did worry about their first-born. Their older daughter just was not like the other two. Even Francesca was talking better than her older sister. By now Angelo and Giuseppina accepted her as just being a little slower

than others her age. She would catch up.

In March of 1887 the Valentis set out for the new world. It took a little more than two weeks to cross the Atlantic, and their accommodations were miserable. Money was very tight, so they were compelled to travel by steerage, which was just about the worst way to travel by ship. Surprisingly, none of the children were sick, but Giuseppina had some troubles at first. Upon landing at Ellis Island, they took their first look at the New York skyline. This first view would be emblazoned on their hearts and minds forever. With a city such as this, what kind of wonders would they discover and what opportunities awaited them?

They found temporary housing near other Sicilian families who had braved the journey. After settling in, Angelo began to explore possibilities. He discovered a large Jewish settlement in the heart of a small garment industry. Being a tailor this intrigued him. After questioning some of the people, he became convinced that this was truly a land of opportunity. He also learned that in nearby Pennsylvania and farther south to West Virginia there were mining jobs. The coal mining industry was crying for strong men to work the mines.

He left his wife for the brief journey it took to go to Pennsylvania. Here he met and bargained with the mining companies in the area of Carbondale, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. They were eager for more workers and, when Angelo suggested he could bring many strong and healthy men to the area, the mining bosses expressed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm.

Armed with his new found knowledge, he continued his journey into West Virginia and ended up in a small village called Boomer. Here they were even more eager to make use of Angelo's suggestions. They offered to pay him a substantial amount of money for each immigrant he brought to them. In addition, they would furnish some housing.

Going back to Pennsylvania, Angelo related his experience in West Virginia to the powers that be. At first they were reluctant to

even consider paying some foreigner to bring workers to them, but Angelo was a very convincing man. He explained that his family was established in America and living in New York. Eventually, all the mining companies agreed to pay a certain amount for each worker.

Angelo returned to New York with a pocketful of money as a good faith token from the mining companies. Giuseppina was astounded at this. It was now that he approached the garment industry employers with the same offer. They were even more eager to offer payment to receive workers. Again, Angelo collected earnest money.

A few weeks later the Valentis were able to book passage back to Sicily. They continued to use steerage as their means of travel because they wished to conserve as much cash as possible in order to establish their new business.

Because of the hardship of traveling back and forth, Angelo and Giuseppina decided to leave baby Francesca with the Venticinque family, who was related to the Valentis through Giuseppina. This family provided the necessary nurturing Francesca needed, and was very supportive of her in all that she endeavored.

During her time in Sicily Francesca studied music and dance and was really quite talented. As a young girl she had hoped to have a career on the stage, perhaps in the north where the arts were beginning to flourish. However, it was not to be. History had a larger and more important role for her to play.

Angelo and his wife, Giuseppina (Josephine) made many trips back and forth between America and Sicily to find jobs for numerous Sicilian and southern Italian immigrant families, which created communities known as “Little Italy” in New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Des Moines and, subsequently, many other cities. Many of these trips were subsidized by the Italian government.

Angelo had phenomenal influence and was able to travel under many aliases. It was easy to travel incognito in these early times.

Paperwork was not necessarily required and few of these people had proof of who they were, relying mainly on someone to vouch for them in America. Those who came to America without papers were given the designation WOP, meaning “without papers.” This applied to other nationalities, besides Italians, but the majority who received this designation was Italians or Sicilians. If paperwork was needed, it was easy enough to forge.

Angelo was highly regarded by everyone. There is no question that he and his family were very much connected with the American and Sicilian Mafias. He returned to America in 1890, listing his occupation as tailor. He brought many friends and family members who were also in the garment industry.

The garment industry developed in New York in the late 19th century and early 20th century. It was dominated by male Jewish workers as well as other Eastern and Southern European immigrants. In 1910 an agreement known as “Protocol of Peace” was signed between the employers’ organization representing large garment firms and the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union. This followed two major strikes in the industry.

Angelo was also working on getting an agreement from the railroads in order to provide labor there. They were not as eager as the coal and garment industries. It seems they were able to lure young Irish men who were often very large and strong. As a bonus, they spoke English, or a slight variation of it. Angelo kept this in mind for the future.

Angelo was very eager to embark on this new venture. Upon his return to Sicily, he related his experiences in America to the Don, who was quite surprised at Angelo’s success. They formulated a plan together wherein they would receive money from both the Italian government and American businesses. Angelo would be allowed to keep money for his expenses and the proceeds would be split evenly between the Mafia Don and Angelo’s family. This would not be a get-rich-quick situation, but it would put more on the table of the Valenti family than many other Sicilian families.

By 1890 Angelo had established a residence in America. He sent for his family, but Giuseppina only brought the older daughter and their son, Salvatore to America. Francesca would be staying with the Venticinques, in Messina. They promised to see that she was educated and received singing and dancing lessons, since she showed so much promise and talent in those areas. The Valentis decided not to maintain any permanent housing in Sicily because they had enough family still in the area who would be happy to give them temporary housing during their brief visits in Sicily.

Francesca was very happy staying with her new family, the Venticinques. She was a great deal of help to the lady of the house, especially in the kitchen. Francesca showed a talent for mixing herbs and vegetables and other concoctions. She became the main cook of the household at a very young age. She also had many opportunities to showcase her talents for singing. She sang in the church choir and often was soloist. The Venticinques were very proud of her, and so were her parents when they heard of her accomplishments.

On one of Angelo's journeys back to Sicily, he took a boat ride across to the mainland. Here he began recruiting young Southern Italians for the garment industry and coal mining industry. On one such trip he met young Domenico Esposito. Domenico was most anxious to immigrate to America, but his father would not allow it. He related this fact to Signor Valenti, who was very sympathetic to his problem. Angelo suggested a meeting with Domenico's father. This accomplished, Domenico's problem was solved and Angelo had a new recruit.

CHAPTER FOUR

Immigranti

At last Domenico Esposito immigrated to America in 1894 at age 17. Upon arrival he went to work in the coal mines. He kept in constant contact with his family, and often regaled his younger brother, Francesco, with the many tales of America. He told Francesco of the many opportunities and wonders there were in this great country.

Francesco wanted very badly to join his brother in America, but he could not gain his father's permission to leave Italy. In addition, he was without funds to pay for his passage to America. Francesco was very stubborn and knew he would do well once he got to America. He began to hang around the docks and was able to pick up odd jobs, all the while scoping out which ships would be easy to stow away on. Eventually, he made a decision. He stowed away on a large ship going to New York and mid-way across the Atlantic he was discovered. He pleaded not to be thrown overboard. At this the captain laughed. "We don't do that to young boys. You will earn your passage by working for me." That was okay with Francesco. He eagerly worked his way across the Atlantic doing many odd jobs, including cleaning the

captain's quarters. Francesco was 12 years old.

When Francesco landed at Ellis Island, he was considered a WOP because of his lack of papers. His brother Domenico met him and took him to Boomer, West Virginia where he obtained a job working in the coal mines, but he did not like the work. Later Francesco, an Irish boy, a Polish boy and other foreigners went to work for the railroad as water boys. While working as a water boy, Francesco met a man west of the Mississippi River who taught him English. He soon left the railroad and went to night school to learn to read and write. This was in the northwest, probably Wyoming. He became a cowhand for about one year, and then went back to the railroad to work and help build tracks as far as Salt Lake City. He did this for several years. Later he and one of his friends went to Denver to work in a gold mine near Cripple Creek.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Distant Relationship

In 1898 Angelo Valenti sent for his daughter, Francesca, who was 15 years old. She was reluctant to leave Messina, but knew disobedience to her father's summons was completely inadvisable. She seldom saw her father. He was constantly traveling between America and Sicily and Italy. She was quite content to spend her life with the Venticinques, since they seemed to show more interest in her than her own parents. As she left Messina, she shed genuine tears of loss of this family that had shown her so much affection and attention. She traveled under the name Francesca Venticinque, perhaps because she was a minor and only had paperwork under this name, or perhaps she was disgruntled with the Valentis, particularly her father.

Upon her arrival in America, Angelo introduced his daughter to Domenico Esposito. It may have been for this reason he wanted Francesca in America in the first place. Angelo noticed the way Domenico looked at his daughter. This both pleased and irritated him. He would be a good husband for Francesca, but she was still much too young, being barely 16 years old. "Perhaps in a year or so," he thought.

Once Francesca settled in America, she joined the work force in the garment industry where both she and her mother were seamstresses. The work was tedious and boring, and Francesca longed to return to Messina where her life had been so full of sunshine. Angelo would not hear of this. It was then he decided to follow through on his idea for a husband for his Francesca.

Angelo Valenti and Domenico Esposito had become very good friends and business partners. Both were now active members of the American Mafia. They were almost single-handedly instrumental in bringing southern Italian families to work the coal mines in Boomer, West Virginia. This community of Italians was known as the “Taly-Boomers” (short for Italians in Boomer).

Angelo startled Domenico one day with the suggestion that he should find a suitable wife and settle down. Domenico was not too interested at this time. He was very popular with many women, and he liked his lifestyle. Angelo then suggested his daughter Francesca as a wife. Domenico was astounded. Never in his wildest dreams would he have believed he could be the husband of such a beautiful young woman, not to mention the son-in-law of such a prominent man. The idea interested him, indeed. With such a fine young woman as his companion, it would be easy enough to give up his many lady friends. After pondering this possibility, Domenico agreed to whatever terms Angelo would set forth.

Francesca was very beautiful. She was a typical young Italian woman with dark hair and dark eyes, and about five feet two inches tall. She weighed about 110 pounds. She had a beautiful singing voice and was a lively dancer. She could be heard singing lovely Sicilian songs as she went about her daily chores. Domenico was a very nice looking man, about five foot nine inches, round face, curly hair, bushy mustache and weighed about 180 pounds. He was very friendly and was fast becoming a leader in the Italian community.

Upon learning of this arrangement, Francesca grew very angry. She had resented being brought to America in the first place. Now

her father was taking over her life, a life that he had nothing to do with for so many years. How dare he push this man on her.

Despite her protests and tantrums, arrangements were made and Domenico and Francesca were married sometime between 1899 and 1902. Most likely this marriage took place prior to 1901, because, by her own words, Francesca was late in conceiving, causing a great deal of anxiety for her husband and parents.

Shortly after their marriage, Domenico changed his name from Domenico Esposito to Dominic Sposeto. Perhaps he did not like the stigma of “bastard” that his surname inferred, for there was much pride in this young man. Changing it to Sposeto would imply he was married and would carry no stigma at all. Some time after his brother arrived in America, he also took the name Sposeto, changing Francesco to Frank. The brothers were anxious to become Americanized, as were many foreign immigrants.

Eventually, Francesca and Dominic settled into married life. Francesca resigned herself to this new life, even though she had no say in the matter. She was sure to do all the necessary things of a new bride. She was already an excellent cook, so Dominic could never really complain about the food. Her housekeeping capabilities were also very good. She was always very hospitable to guests, of which there were many. Her new husband had many associates who would often call on him. Sometimes they would just play cards; other times it was business. Francesca really didn't mind this at all, and their guests seemed to admire her for her graciousness.

During this time, because of illness, Angelo Valenti requested that Dominic and Francesca continue his work bringing immigrants to America. They made several crossings. As time went by, Francesca and Dominic gained the respect of many of the Italian men, both in Italy and America.

There were times when Francesca would remain in Italy with her in-laws, Pasquale and Caroline Esposito. They were very pleasant people, but also very poor. There was often not enough food for everyone. She wrote her husband of this situation, and he

must have remembered his promise to his father many years before. He decided to send enough money for his wife and new son as well as his parents and sister to secure passage to America.

In 1905 Dominic's mother, father and sister arrived in America. Dominic had been true to his word. Francesca and two-year old Pasquale, their first-born son, had accompanied them on this trip. Pasquale the elder was 71 years old and in poor health. When they arrived, the immigration authorities would not allow Pasquale and Caroline to stay in America. It was determined that Caroline had tuberculosis. Rosa would not leave her parents, so all three returned to Italy. On the trip home, Rosa became ill and died. It is unknown why she died. Perhaps she, too, had tuberculosis. She was only 16 years old.

In 1906 while living in Philadelphia, Francesca gave birth to a second son. This son she named Francesco. This was considered a very shocking thing to do, because of the tradition of naming the second son for the maternal grandfather. Francesca was still angry with her father.

In 1907 Albert, the third son was born. Again Francesca did not name him after her father. Anger and bitterness still chewed at her heart.

Except for Pasquale Esposito (the younger), the rest of the children were born under the name Sposeto. There are no birth certificates for these children because they were all born at home. Probably a mid-wife or close female friend or relative helped with the deliveries.

Dominic and Frances, as she was called now, were making several trips back to Italy in order to continue bringing immigrant families to America. In 1909 Frances remained behind in Italy with the three children. It was two years before Dominic was established enough to bring her back, although he did return a couple times to be with his family, and to bring more immigrants to America.

Frances again was staying with her in-laws in Italy. She was pregnant for the fourth time and did not wish to give birth in

Italy. Dominic did not seem interested in having her rejoin him in America. On his previous visit in the late summer of 1910, she begged him to bring her and the children with him back to America. He had one excuse after another not to bring her back, but promised he would send for her soon. She wrote him several times, but he always had an excuse why he could not send for her. Frances threatened to leave the children in Italy and join her husband in America. In desperation she sold many of the household linens and wrote her mother about her destitution. At long last Josephine and Angelo intervened on behalf of their daughter and grandchildren. Dominic then wrote Frances that he had been out of work, but had just found another position and promised to send for her very soon. Dominic would need to show respect for his father-in-law as well as his young family.

In November 1911 in New York, Frances and her three sons returned from Sicily. Upon landing in America the children were excited to see a fruit vendor. They begged their mother for fruit as they had not seen anything like this in Italy. She approached the vendor and offered the money she had for the fruit. He refused to take the money because it was Italian, but he gave the fruit to the boys anyway. This was a good-hearted Italian who probably was remembering when he arrived in America. The children were 8, 5 and 4 years old.

From New York, Frances and the children took the train to Philadelphia where their father had established a home for them. Frances' brother Sam (Salvatore) met them in Philadelphia when they got off the train. After getting off in Philadelphia, Sam had to run after the train to retrieve the middle brother, Frank, as he had failed to get off with the rest of the family.

In Italy food was scarce and in order to feed Albert, Frances kept him on breast milk until they arrived in America. When Dominic discovered this he shamed his son for wanting the breast after a big meal. This was so traumatizing for Albert that he was never able to drink milk again.

CHAPTER SIX

Briscola, an Italian Card Game

The roar of the gun rang loud in his ears, as he soon realized the worst of his fears. A bullet struck tender flesh on his neck, and he slowly lost consciousness hitting the deck. Another stood facing the enemies' rage with gun aimed at both he altered the page. Both were too slow with nowhere to hide. One died outdoors, the other inside.

While they were living in Philadelphia in 1911, there was an instance when Dominic and his father-in-law Angelo Valenti were playing an Italian card game called *Briscola* with two other gentlemen. *Briscola* is somewhat like bridge or pinochle in that it is a trick taking game. The deck consists of 40 cards and the game is often played with Italian *Tarocchi* (Tarot) cards. The suits are *denari* (coins), *coppe* (cups), *bastoni* (batons) and *spade* (swords). In a standard American poker deck, one would remove the Jokers, eights, nines and tens. The game may be played by two, three, four or six people. The game often invites cheating

by signaling to one's partner. The standard signals for cheating are: Jack, shrug one shoulder; Queen, show the tip of the tongue; King, glance upward; three, distort the mouth to one side; ace, stretch the lips over the teeth.

A dispute arose during the game and one of the men shot Dominic through the neck. This was a very serious injury, and the family feared he would die. After many months of convalescing, he survived. Angelo had immediately shot and killed the other two men. He was not charged with a crime because it was learned that the other men fired first. Both these men were armed and had their guns drawn.

The family remained in Philadelphia until after little Angelo was born. By now Frances' hostilities to her father had subsided, perhaps because of the shooting incident, and her father's heroic deed of avenging her husband's near-fatal injury. Finally, he had a grandson named after him. The Sposetos then moved to Des Moines, Iowa in 1912. The family, through Angelo Valenti, purchased a farm that year in Des Moines and Dominic farmed and sold produce at the local market.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The 'Taly's are Coming

Frank Sposeto returned to Boomer, West Virginia in 1910 after several years of working odd jobs out west. He was able to rent a room in a rooming house in Boomer where he met Victoria Iaquina who had just arrived from Italy and was 21 years of age. She was working for her sister, Catarena (Catherine), in the boarding house she ran. One morning Victoria went to Frank's room to let him know his breakfast was ready, but he was still in bed. That was the first time they met. Victoria's supposed-to-be husband (who was still in Italy) was Sicilian and very hot-headed. She could not stand him. After this, the relatives got together and decided that Victoria and Frank made a good couple and should get married. They were married some time later, and after two days of celebration they left by train for Denver, Colorado. Frank went back to work at a gold mine which was 80 miles south of Denver.

Don Francesco Condelese, of Calabria, married Maria Teresa. They had a daughter Mary who married Giovanni Iaquina, who lived to be 85 years old. Mary lived to be 82 years old. The Iaquinas had nine children. Two of their daughters, Isabella and

Saraphena, died at an early age. Rosa was the first child born in 1874. The next child was a son, Francesco, born about 1885 in Rocca Bernardo, Calabria, Italy, followed by Giamatista (Jim) born about 1887. Victoria was born Vittoria Iaquina on May 25, 1889, in San Giovanni Fiore, Calabria. Another brother, Salvatore (or Sam) was born in 1892. Two other sisters were Catarena and Teresa. (See Descendants' Tables)

Francesco, Giamatista, Vittoria, Salvatore and Catarena all came to America and settled in Boomer, West Virginia. It is possible Rosa also came, but it is not known where she lived. Teresa remained in Italy, became a nun and died at the age of 80.

The town of Boomer lies on the north side of the Kanawha River. The town was established in the late 1700s. The men were imported from Italy by Angelo Valenti and his son-in-law Dominic Sposeto for the purpose of working in the coal mines of West Virginia.

Coal was one of man's earliest sources of heat and light. The Chinese were known to have dug it more than 3,000 years ago. The first recorded discovery of coal in America was by French explorers on the Illinois River in 1679, and the earliest recorded commercial mining occurred near Richmond, Virginia, in 1750. In the nineteenth century, coal grew rapidly in importance, and for a hundred years it was our most important energy fuel.

West Virginia is probably the most diversified geographic entity in the world. First were the Mound-Builders who flourished until around the year 1000 AD, followed by the Woodland Indians, with one of the tribes being the Shawnee, who were hunter-gatherers. The Europeans began to arrive in the 1600s beginning primarily with the English, followed by the Irish and Scot-Irish, Germans, Eastern Jewish, Swiss, Belgian, African-American, and finally the Italians.

The Italians were by far the largest group of immigrants to grace the lands of West Virginia in the early 1900s. By 1915 over half the work force in the coal mines were Italians. Many of these

Italians were desperately poor and had come to a land of much greater opportunity.

In 1903 the Boomer Coal and Coke operations had been purchased by a syndicate from the Hocking Valley of Ohio. They operated mines in the upper Kanawha County and at Longacre. The three mines in Boomer were among the most productive in the area. It was Boomer Coal and Coke that began a campaign of attracting Italian immigrants.

Italians had been trickling into towns up and down the New River Valley for many years. The arrival of new coal miners always attracted the attention of the locals. The steamboat would come on Sunday and the kids in town would stand on the river bank and watch the “‘Talys” get off in “The Hollows.” These men would be carrying everything they owned.

The above information can be found in the book *Transnational West Virginia*, edited by Ken Fones-Wolf and Ronald L. Lewis. In it is a chapter called “Here Come the Boomer ‘Talys.”

In 1908, 2000 miners walked off the job due to reduction in their pay. A week later, Governor William O. Dawson helped settle the strike by compromise in which the union was granted a payroll deduction of union dues in exchange for paying miners on the basis of the long ton (2,240 pounds) rather than 2,000 pounds. The peace was short-lived. In late May, a strike was called which lasted about a week. Agreements were reached for most of the mines.

However, the Boomer Italians still refused to return to work. At this point the Italians produced an amazing supply of rifles which they had been accumulating for some time. They organized themselves and when four hundred or so of the white and black Boomer miners attempted to return to their various work places, the Italians prevented them by a great show of force at each location. It is believed that Angelo Valenti was somehow involved in this action. Eventually the Long Ton Strike was settled and the miners went back to the 2,000 pound ton as the basis for pay.

CHAPTER Eight

Pastoral Life on the Farm

Des Moines, Iowa had its modern beginning as a Fort located where the Des Moines River and the Raccoon River merge. No one is really sure where the name Des Moines comes from, but it could be from the Indian word *moingona* which means river of the mounds. The French referred to the river as *La Riviere des Moines*. The city was incorporated in 1857 and later designated the capitol of the State of Iowa. During the 1900s permanent roads, health laws and women's suffrage were the big topics of the day.

The real growth of the criminal element of the Mafia probably began with the anticipation of prohibition in the early 1900s where moonshine and illegal production of alcoholic beverages was prevalent. There were a lot of states that were "dry" before national prohibition. Iowa was the Corn Belt of America, and there was nothing better than corn and grain to make whisky and beer. There were many prominent Italians in an already existing Italian community in Des Moines when the Sposetos and Valentis arrived. The Midwestern Italians were very territorial and did not like outsiders coming in.

The reason the Valentis and Sposetos made their move to Iowa in the first place was because of the corn fields. It was believed by these two families that Prohibition was only a few years away. Once established in their lands, Dominic would grow the corn and Angelo would build the nightclubs. They began their bootlegging business and imported their product across state lines to Michigan and Illinois. This was a very lucrative plan.

Frank and Victoria's first child, Caroline, was born in Denver, Colorado on November 28, 1911. She weighed 14 pounds at birth, which was a very big baby. Victoria had to be told she was pregnant. She didn't know she was having labor pains when her time came. She had a very long and painful delivery.

When Caroline was two and a half months old they moved to Des Moines and lived in a shanty in an area known as "The Bottoms." Some time before they married, Frank had been in Des Moines and ran a grocery store on S.E. Sixth on the south side of town. Frank was looking for work and met Mr. Loffredo, who had gardens. Gardens were actually vegetable farms. He offered them work in exchange for a small salary and room and board. Frank and Victoria both worked for him and lived on the third floor of his house. Victoria became pregnant again. This time she was a little more knowledgeable about her condition.

Later Frank was able to purchase 10 acres through a grant from a Mr. Butler, who owned a lot of land in the Des Moines area. This land was on S.E. Virginia Avenue where the family home was built. Originally, a two-room house was bought from a coal mine nearby and then transferred to the ten acre lot. Besides Caroline, Frank and Victoria had nine other children (see descendant charts). The house eventually grew into an 11 room brick house where all but four of the children were born.

Frank and Victoria convinced Jim Iaquina (Victoria's brother), who was still in Boomer, to move to Des Moines with his wife and two children (Catherine and Rosa). They came and lived with the Sposetos for one year until Jim had enough money to purchase 10

acres and build his own home, which was not too far away. When Jim and his family moved out of the Sposeto home, another one of Victoria's brothers, Sam, who was still single, came and lived with them.

Frank became a truck gardener. He grew most of the food his family ate and sold the rest around town. He would get up early in the day and drive his horse drawn cart around the south side of Des Moines, which was now a thriving Italian community, selling his produce to families and small grocers. As the years went by, he gave up on the cart and bought a truck. He grew a great deal of corn on his farm, much of it used for illegal whiskey. The corn fields served another purpose as well. They were used for burying illegal booze for some local tavern owners in Des Moines. Five more children were born to Frank and Victoria while living on the farm in Des Moines.

Most people on the south side worked on railroads, digging sewers, working on roads, and building buildings. All were laborers. Practically all were Catholic and were very friendly and helpful to each other.

Des Moines had a large contingent of Italians with which Frank affiliated himself, but neither Angelo nor Dominic cared to affiliate with these Italians. In 1912 Angelo and Dominic had strong associations with the families of Philadelphia, Detroit, and other eastern families.

The Valentis owned a lot of property in Des Moines, including the 10½ acres next door to Frank Sposeto, which were eventually given to Angelo's daughter and her husband.

After their move to Des Moines, Frances worked in the fields every chance she got. She canned and preserved everything the family grew. You could find anything Italian in the basement, including wine and beer. Anyone who came to the house was welcome to sit down and eat. In fact, it was a must. She was a wonderful cook and could make any food a gourmet extravaganza.

This was not a typical farm family. Like Frank Sposeto, they grew all their own vegetables and enough to take to market; and also like Frank, a sizeable area was reserved for corn. The children were not aware of what this was for, but it must be certain both Frances and Victoria knew about the bootlegging business their husbands were engaged in.

While living on the Southside at 210 South Union (the Italian District), little Albert was looking through a grill watching a card game on New Year's Eve 1914. He heard his father tell the two men that they better have a good time as, tomorrow they would have to go back to jail. As Dominic was very influential, he was able to get these two men released from jail for the holiday after promising the authorities he would bring them back on New Year's Day. They stood up and said they would not go back. This escalated into a knife fight. Dominic finally got his knife against one man's throat, when another man grabbed his arm and prevented him from cutting his throat. The next day these men were returned to prison.

Eventually, with the help of three of his sons, Dominic completed the building of a home on their acreage. The house was square. The back door led into the kitchen. Just off the back porch was a big oak tree and under it a table where on summer nights the family would eat their dinner. Pete (the horse) would come up behind the kids and push them with his nose until they would give him some bread. When Dominic told him to get back to the pasture he would turn and leave. The reason Pete was running loose was because Dominic could not afford to fence the pasture area. The family dog, a German shepherd named Jack, would not let the horse or cow stray from the pasture area. He did allow the horse to come to the table, but not the cow. Jack was a very smart dog.

The property line was fenced when Dominic acquired the place and no one could enter the property unless Dominic told Jack it was all right. Many times people would walk along outside the

fence and Jack would follow them all the way. He didn't bark much, but people knew better than to cross the fence. Jack would pull the children's little wagon and sled in the winter, wrestle with the kids and never let out a growl. Someone fed him broken glass in some meat and it killed him. The children all cried over losing Jack and it was quite awhile before they got over it. They finally got another shepherd, but he was nothing like Jack.

One of Dominic's strictest rules was that all animals were to be fed and taken care of before the family could sit down to dinner. The first thing Dominic bought was Pete, the horse, then the chickens, then the cow and last he bought one sow. He had bred it, and the night she had her first litter, Dominic kept excitedly running back and forth between the barn and the house telling Frances how many piglets the sow was having. The count was 13 and they all lived, which made everyone very happy. There wasn't a runt in the litter, which was surprising. Usually in a litter that size there will be one or two that don't develop.

One warm spring day Frank and Albert were running around the front room playing and accidentally broke the lamp. When Frances got home from the store she was really angry. Frowning, she said, "Just wait till your father comes home!" This prompted the boys to enter into a conspiracy. Their little brother Angelo, who was three years old at the time, was brought into this conspiracy. Albert said to Angelo, "Angie, go to mother and tell her just like this, 'Ma, I broke the lamp.'" So, off he went to his mother and said, "Ma, Albert bwoke the lamp." When he came back to the living room, Frank said, "No, no, say it just like this, 'Ma, I broke the lamp.'" Off he went again to his mother and he said, "Ma, Fwank bwoke the lamp." Frances said, "Ah, go away." Angelo finally realized what his brothers were trying to do, and all he could say was, "Uh, oh."

Dominic, like so many of his fellow countrymen, was proud of his heritage, despite his early poverty. He was fond of his father, who had so wanted Dominic to become educated. Like his

father, he had high hopes for his own sons. Albert seemed to hold the most promise. He was a good student and genuinely liked school. He would often speak to Albert about bettering himself. He truly desired that Albert become a lawyer. This new world gave ample opportunity for anything to happen.

Dominic had a horse and buggy which the family was very proud of. He had it decorated very nicely. Sometimes he would go as far as 15 to 20 miles in a day. He and the children would then stay overnight and sleep on pads on the floor, which the boys liked a lot.

Some time around 1916 or 1917 Dominic and his son Pat (Pasquale) were invited to a meeting of the Des Moines Sicilians. The Des Moines Sicilians did not like the idea of Dominic taking his whiskey to Detroit. They offered him a partnership. His attitude was “the hell with you.” He was told to join or else. He and Pat walked out of the meeting.

Dominic was a stubborn man and would not allow himself to be bullied by petty people. Besides, he was making good money his way. He continued doing business with his Detroit connections for two or three more years, until fate stepped in and changed the course of the Sposeto family.

CHAPTER **Nine**

Death Stalks Little Italy

Dominic and his family were up very early on July 22, 1919 in order to prepare to go to market. The day was going to be very warm. Frances cooked their breakfast and made sure they had food for later in the day. Dominic and the boys finished getting the wagons loaded and set off to market.

Dominic was feeling very edgy this morning. Several months before this, he had received an anonymous threat on his life. Since that time he had taken the precaution of hiring Ralph Stanton, a neighbor, to ride shotgun with him. Today, however, he was exceptionally anxious. Nonetheless, he got everything ready for market. Patrick, age 15, Frank age 13 and Albert age 12 would be accompanying Dominic and Ralph in the other wagon. Angelo, age 7, would remain home with his mother. Once the wagons were loaded, they all set out for town at about 3:45 A.M., picking up Ralph on the way. As they were riding along, Ralph Stanton observed that Dominic seemed uneasy. He glanced around on numerous occasions, saying that he was expecting trouble.

At about 4:00 A.M. on South East Seventh Street and Hartford Avenue, shots rang out in the early dawn. A light-haired young

man was within fifty feet of Dominic when he took aim and fired. Then he walked to within a yard of Dominic who had slumped over the wagon shaft. "Take that you s.o.b.," he exclaimed, and shot Dominic again between the eyes. He then turned the rifle on Patrick. Patrick ducked and made sure his younger brothers were safe. The gunman then fled into the woods. It is believed the two older boys instructed Albert to run back to the house to tell their mother what happened.

According to police investigation, Ralph Stanton did not even remember generalities of the appearance of the assassin. He only knew that he jumped from ambush and fired twice at Dominic and once at one of the boys. He stated, "When the first shot was fired, I turned to my left and noticed a man. My nerves were shattered and I could not talk for a few minutes after the shooting." He continued, "I did not get a look at the man's face because I was so excited. It came so quick." Stanton went on to say he spoke like an American, and after killing Dominic, turned on his heel and walked away through the underbrush. Dominic's sons told police they did not see anyone at the side of the road or in the woods, either before or after the shooting. They were visibly shaken. All these witnesses were reluctant to make any statements at this time for fear of losing their own lives.

The next day the newspapers reported that Dominic's entire family had disappeared, including Dominic's brother, Frank, and his family. Despite a thorough search by police of the nearby Italian Colony, not a trace of them was found. It was believed that the family went into hiding, fearing that an attempt would be made on their lives by the man or men who killed Dominic. Dominic's family had close connections in Des Moines as well as Detroit and may have gone to one of these places to be with family or friends.

Frank took his family to Sherman, New York, south of Lake Erie. He rented a farm in this area from a neighbor he knew in Des Moines and began to work it. He bought a small herd of dairy

cattle that provided income from their milk. The farm also had fifty acres of woods, and every February they would pull syrup from the maple trees and sell the syrup in town.

It was speculated that Frances knew who the murderer was, but dared not tell, through fear that she and her sons would meet the same fate as Dominic. She especially feared for her son Pat, who was fifteen years old and already beginning to be active in Italian politics. The newspapers were sure the killer would never be found. It was at this time she made up her mind there would be no more bootlegging for her family.

Four detectives who were assigned to the case worked all day the day of the shooting and throughout the night but made little headway. The authorities believed Dominic was the victim of vendetta vengeance. They believed there was an Italian feud of some sort behind the affair and that their best chance of obtaining the murderer was in the discovery of some clue.

In an effort to probe further into this channel, they made several trips to the Italian colony, but obtained practically no information. On every query about the murder, the answer in broken English invariably was a shrug and, "I don't know and I don't understand."

Two days after the incident it was speculated the murder was for vengeance by the Mafia, a vendetta oath sworn by the friend of a dead comrade who had a grievance against Dominic, or the murder was merely the retribution exacted by a wronged husband. The three theories were being followed by the detectives in their search for the slayer. According to the police, all three theories had foundation.

For months Dominic had known that he was a doomed man, according to information given Chief of Police Ab Day by an Italian member of the police force, who was convinced that the Mafia or Black Hand, whose strength was felt from Sicily to America, accomplished Dominic's death. People living in the Italian colony on the south side dared not talk of the murder,

according to the Italian policeman. Even he requested that his name be withheld through fear that the dire vengeance of the Mafia might fall on him. The rumor was that Dominic was involved in several killings in the east a few years ago, for which the Mafia decided he must pay with his life. This was probably in reference to the time Dominic was shot in the neck in Philadelphia.

According to an anonymous report, some time prior to the murder, Dominic received a letter. It purportedly read, "Make your peace with God. Your time has come." Dominic became wary. He knew that death lurked near him. "The Mafia always sends a letter," the Italian officer told Chief Day. "Then a man is sent to do the deed. He is simply an agent and may not know his victim. But he comes to some member of the Mafia in the city where the penalty is to be exacted. He is unknown even to the Mafia member. He says, 'Point out Sposeto to me. I have come to kill him,' and shortly death follows. The agent never wears the same clothes after the murder. He changes and slips away. Even now the man who killed Sposeto must be out of the city and no one will know who he was."

There was some speculation that a relative of Frank Oliverio, who was murdered at an earlier date, might have been involved in the assassination. This, however, was never substantiated.

The second theory was that Dominic was shot by the friend of a dead comrade with a grievance. Early in the spring of 1917, Joe Orenzo was shot twice through the abdomen in the railroad yards on the south side. He lived through it. Italians say that he suspected Dominic of the shooting and swore to kill him. For three weeks he loitered in the vicinity of the Sposetos' home. With him was a light-haired young Italian named Barotta. The two lived in a shack on the south bank of the Raccoon River near the Great Western railroad yard. Orenzo was killed on May 14, 1919 by Sergeant Carroll of the National Guard, who was doing guard duty along the tracks, and who claimed Orenzo had been sniping at soldiers on the post. Orenzo engaged in a running duel with the National

Guardsmen when they sought him out. He was killed by a bullet through the heart. Barotta disappeared some time after that. It is said he swore to carry out his friend's oath to kill Dominic. The man who killed Dominic was supposedly light-haired and young. But he purportedly spoke good English according to witness statements, and Barotta spoke with a pronounced accent. Ironically, Barotta was the third to be murdered in Little Italy.

The third theory was that Dominic was killed by a wronged husband. Chief of Detectives James MacDonald placed much stock in this suspicion. He said, "The Black Hand works with stealth." The slayer in this case killed openly. He was seen to walk along the road with his rifle over his shoulder. Rumor reached Detective MacDonald that Dominic had been paying attention to the wife of a soldier. The slayer wore a soldier's canvas cap and a one-piece khaki suit. This would seem to follow what the Italian police officer said about the killer changing his clothes.

According to police the case was one of the most puzzling that had confronted police for years. Italians on the south side nod their heads significantly and say with a shrug, "The murderer will never be caught."

Later that day, Albert L. Guissinger, a suspect in the killing, was arrested. Perhaps he was the so-called wronged husband. He was released, however, by Chief MacDonald after failure of witnesses to identify him as the man who shot and killed Dominic. At that, MacDonald declared he was working on a clue that might result in the early arrest of two Italians.

Detectives still clung to the theory that Dominic was a marked man and the victim of vendetta vengeance. They had received information from several Italians that Dominic had enemies both in Des Moines and in several cities in the east. Prominent Des Moines Italians told MacDonald that Dominic was regarded as a dangerous man and was sought by agents of the Mafia and other secret societies.

On July 25, 1919 police received a phone call from a woman

who was a neighbor of Dominic Sposeto, that a mysterious man with a flashlight was loitering about the home of the Sposetos. Detectives John Brophy, Joe Mellibaugh and other police officers made a hurried trip to the Sposeto home, but failed to find any trace of the man after scouring the neighborhood. They were told that the man was dressed in khaki union overalls and carried a flashlight. He was seen to throw his light towards the windows and then look about to see if anyone was watching him. The woman became frightened and notified police. Night Chief of Detectives Brophy said that he believed the woman was probably frightened by a shadow of a strange object. To be sure, this conclusion would not have been satisfactory for the poor frightened woman. Perhaps this prowler was seeking young Patrick Sposeto in order to finish a job only half done.

The coroner's inquest into the death of Dominic Sposeto failed to reveal any evidence that might lead to the arrest of the killer. The jury's verdict stated that Dominic came to his death by a gun wound by the hands of an unknown man. Coroner Guy Clift, who conducted the inquest, told the jury that he had found a box containing rifle shells near a clump of weeds where the assassin had lain in ambush. A bottle of water and footprints showed that the slayer had fled south. Two men who telephoned the police that they had some information on the Sposeto case failed to appear at the inquest. Police believe the parties were trying to lead them on another false clue.

Dominic's funeral was not well attended. His entire family had disappeared prior to his burial, including his brother and his family. Unlike most Italian funerals, only a handful of people witnessed his funeral and burial.

CHAPTER Ten

The Suspect

On August 17, shortly after they came out of hiding, while they were with their mother, the boys saw someone they recognized. Patrick called to his mother that he had just seen the murderer of his father across the street. Frances expressed doubt, but said she wished to wait before notifying the detectives.

The following day she was walking on the east side when she saw the same man. Officer Groff, who was walking his beat, was approached by Frances who pointed this man out as the man who murdered her husband. Without further incident, the Italian was arrested.

The newspaper reported that on August 18, 1919 police captured the man believed to be the murderer of Dominic. Salvatore Arcuro, aged 20, was captured on the east side of town and placed under a double grilling by Chief of Detectives James MacDonald. Although he firmly denied any guilt, officers declared that they hoped to have the last clues gathered in by night, ready to offer a complete solution to the case.

Four persons positively identified the young Italian as the slayer of Dominic. N. W. MacIntosh, 819 Hartford Avenue, who

chased the murderer for nearly two blocks, told MacDonald that he could not be mistaken in the identity.

Arcuro was put in several different poses for MacIntosh in order that he could obtain several views of him. MacIntosh remained adamant about Arcuro's identification.

Ralph Stanton, overcoming his previous fears, also swore that Arcuro was the assassin. Two of Dominic's sons were at the Detective Bureau and declared that the man MacDonald had in custody was the murderer of their father.

Arcuro told the detectives that he had come from Perry on July 24, two days after the murder. He claimed he did not work the night prior to the death of Dominic. MacDonald, however, was sure that if he could prove that Arcuro was in Des Moines on the night of July 21, he would positively have the case cleared up. When searched at police headquarters, Arcuro had a revolver and a seven-inch dagger. He was rooming at 313 South East Sixth Street; Dominic lived at South East Eighteenth Street and Glenwood Drive. The murder was near South East Fourteenth and Davis Avenue. Based on this information, there was ample opportunity for Arcuro to have carried out this terrible deed.

Taking the stand in his own defense, Salvatore "Sam" Arcuro told of his stay in Des Moines that led to his arrest. Because his command of the English language was inadequate, an interpreter was necessary. Police Sergeant George Scarpino put the questions and answers into Italian and English.

The accused man testified he had been working in the round house at Perry, and had come to Des Moines the evening of July 19 to see about a job at the freight house. After getting the job, he visited friends on South East Sixth Street and did not leave Des Moines until about 11:30 the night before the murder. With a friend, he took the Inter-Urban to Perry, arriving about 1 A.M., a trip of approximately one and one-half hours. He was allegedly seen there at 7:30 A.M. by A.L. Cromwell, Arcuro's landlord, three and one-half hours after the murder.

During the morning session, testimony was heard from Detectives T. Jay Hubbard and Tom Blake, Coroner Guy Clift, Mrs. Florence Clift, and Robert Palmer. It was expected the case would go to jury that day, following the final arguments by the attorneys, Earl Mills and J. D. Wallingford.

After four hours of deliberation by the jury in District Court, Salvatore Arcuro, a railroad laborer at Perry, Iowa was found not guilty of the murder of Dominic Sposeto, Italian gardener. According to the newspaper, neither Ralph Stanton nor any of the boys could positively identify Arcuro. The boys became confused and told different stories from those given at the coroner's inquest. Apparently, Stanton and the Sposeto boys had lost confidence when it came time for them to take the stand to testify. The defense produced witnesses who swore that the accused man was in Perry about 7:30 A.M., July 22, three and one-half hours after the murder. Arcuro's testimony was that he left Des Moines at 11:30 P.M. the night before the murder and arrived in Perry at 1 A.M., July 21. It is possible he could have committed the murder and returned to Perry in time for his landlord to vouch for him. The trial lasted four days.

Some believed that there were payoffs in order to get this verdict. There is no proof of this, but at the very least the entire investigation was badly bungled. It could be that the Italians were so looked down upon that no one was really interested in finding justice for them. At the scene, detectives found a box containing rifle shells near a clump of weeds where the assassin had lain in ambush. A bottle of water and footprints showed that the slayer had fled south. Surely fingerprints could have been obtained from the water bottle and ammunition box. Also, by his own testimony, Arcuro could certainly have been in Des Moines the evening of July 21 and still have been seen in Perry the following morning by his landlord. This testimony was a change from the original story of not being in Des Moines until July 24.

CHAPTER Eleven

Retaliation

It was some time after this verdict that Pat is thought to have taken revenge on the judge in the case by blowing up his house. It was two years later that threats were received by two local judges from purported Black Handers. Angelo Valenti is believed to have been responsible for the elimination of 4 or 5 people. At a much later date he made an alliance with the Des Moines gang. They were to leave Frances and her family alone, and he would leave and never bother them again.

The murder of Dominic was the second of a series of killings in "Little Italy." Just a few months before, Frank Oliverio was gunned down at the south end of Fifth Street. After Sposeto, came Dominic "Nic" Barrotta, age 24 years. He was shot to death shortly before midnight while on his way home. The shooting took place in front of 200 Hillside Avenue, a half block from the man's home. Barrotta was a nephew of Peter Leo, special policeman of Donald McRae Park. John Roff of 200 Hillside Avenue heard the shot and ran from his house. He saw Barrotta stagger and called to him to come into the house. Barrotta started around the house and fell dead as he reached the door. The man

had been shot through the heart with a sawed-off shotgun. The murderer evidently was near his victim, as the load of the gun had not spread.

Police advanced the theories that Barrotta was either shot by a Black Hand or a holdup man. Night Chief of Police Frank Harty, Detective Charles Nichols and Officers Alber and Chambers investigated the case and scoured the neighborhood for suspicious persons. According to the man's uncle, Peter Leo, the man had not received any Black Hand threats nor had he any trouble recently. The day before, Barrotta had attended a party at a friend's home. It was not known where he had been earlier that evening. Barrotta had in his possession a gold watch and \$97. An automatic pistol was clutched in his hand when he fell. No shots had been fired from his gun.

On April 1, 1921 the Des Moines Register ran an article entitled "Murder Suspect is Released By Police." It seems that young Pat Sposeto, age 17, was arrested the previous Tuesday in connection with the murder of Dominic Barrotta. He was released on Sunday morning because of the inability to secure evidence against him. According to the police he had other charges filed against him, mainly that of owning and operating a still. He was at liberty under bond of \$400, awaiting trial the following week on the latter charge.

The fourth victim of the Black Hand was Angelo Ferrari, a leader of the Italian colony. He was murdered in February 1922. Police were only able to say that all "Little Italy" knew the name of the man who killed Angelo Ferrari and that a fifth man would die within the coming year or two at most. Police claimed to also know the name of this next victim, though they were powerless to prevent it, because even his own friends and family were afraid to reveal the names of their enemies. This was the Italian way.

Angelo Ferrari and his wife had just returned from the wedding of a cousin when the unseen assassins shot him in his own garage. His funeral services were held March 1, 1922. His funeral was

emotionally charged with hysterical scenes from various members of his family. In some Italian and Sicilian families, this would be a typical funeral. This was how they honored their dead. It was the custom at Italian funerals for the women to come to the church with their hair unbound and streaming over their shoulders. Unlike Dominic Sposeto's funeral, there was a great deal of tradition at this funeral.

Angelo Ferrari's brother, Albert, stood over his casket, raising his arms aloft and in a voice broken with passion, cried, "Oh, Angelo, as God is my judge, I shall wreak vengeance on your murderers. They murdered you in cold blood. They were afraid of you. They were not men, the two that killed you, they were dogs. I shall seek them to my dying day and kill them. They were afraid to kill you in the open. They feared you - the skulking dogs. Angelo, Angelo, oh tell me who killed you. Tell me, my brother, tell me who your enemies were, oh dear brother. Oh God in Heaven, tell me who got my brother. Oh dear God, give me some sign by which I shall know his murderers." Turning to the huge assemblage in the church, he cried, "Why don't you tell me who killed my brother? You know. Why don't you speak? You ran them from this part of town before. You know who they are. You know their hearts are black. Oh friends, tell me, who are the murderers, so that I may take vengeance for my brother. I am not afraid to die. My life means nothing since my brother has been murdered. Tell me who did this and I shall seek them out."

Then, turning back to the bier, the brother collapsed and had to be aided from the flower-strewn casket.

One by one at the close of the ceremony, friends and relatives of the dead Italian passed by the flower-covered bier. Many broke down and were carried from the church. It was one of the most pathetic scenes ever witnessed in the city of Des Moines.

As the mother of Mrs. Ferrari came to the casket, she attempted to wrest the cover from the top, screaming at the top of her voice for the dead Angelo. Friends of the woman struggled with her for

five minutes before they were able to drag her from the coffin.

Marie Ferrari, wife of the slain man, also broke down, as did his sister, Mrs. Mike Talarico. After Mass had been said the two women broke out anew.

Mrs. Talarico began beating her head on the bench in front of her and tearing her hair, muttering brokenly in Italian as she did so. It was with difficulty that she was finally removed from the church.

Typically, killings would follow parties or other gala events. The police believed the Italian killers seemed to delight in murdering their victims immediately after a “jollification” of some sort. This was either from a grim sense of the dramatic, or the crazing influence of “dago red.”

Now the community was waiting for the fifth murder to take place. There was great unease in the Italian district for quite some time.

CHAPTER Twelve

Frances' Grief

Upon the death of her husband, Frances became hysterical. After her flight from Des Moines, she became ill and was bed-bound for some time. She could do nothing. Her son Albert cooked for the family and all she could do was pat him on the head when he did a good job. After the murder of his son-in-law, Angelo Valenti and his wife and son Sam came to town. When Frances finally got well, the family moved back to Des Moines to the south side into a house next door to Angelo and Josephine. During his stay in Des Moines Angelo signed over all his property, which was considerable, to his daughter Frances Sposeto.

Research into this matter shows that in 1920, Frances Sposeto, a widow, owned property at 621 S. E. First Street. The property next door at 623 S. E. First Street was owned by Louis Valenti, believed to be one of Angelo's aliases. The others living in this house were Charles, Sam and Josephine Valenti. A Dominic Valenti is shown owning property in Fort Des Moines, a location of one of the nightclubs that was later turned over to Frances and her son Angelo.

Frances and her family were having a rough time at this point.

That winter young Frank would walk along the railroad tracks with his wagon picking up coal that dropped off the boxcars. One day he couldn't find enough for the night, so he hopped up on the box-car and threw some down. He was caught and was sent to reform school for stealing. Frank was not retarded, but he was a very slow thinker. He was truly one of the world's innocents. He had a heart as big as the world and would do anything for anyone he liked. He would fight a wildcat if he had to. He was very strong and could whip his older brother Pat. The family went to court, but because the family was fatherless, the judge felt it was in the best interest of all to put poor Frank away. Frank spent two years in reform school. It is estimated he was there from 1919 to 1921, all this for just a handful of coal.

On November 20, 1920 Josephine Valenti died of pneumonia. In the spring of 1921 Frances and her family moved back to the farm. With the death of Josephine, and Angelo and Sam having gone underground, this left only Frances and three of her boys. At this point she officially became the matriarch of the family.

It was in March of 1921 that Barotta was murdered and Pat was investigated and eventually exonerated of this crime. However, he still needed to answer to the bootlegging charges. It is possible Pat also went to reform school, or he may have just left the area until things were not so volatile. With Frank still in reform school, that left Albert and Angelo to work the farm. Angelo was only 9 years old, so was of little help. All summer Albert would peddle what little they could raise and wait until the other farmers would sell what they could. When they were ready to go home, Albert would buy what they had left very cheap. He would then go to the south side and sell it to large Italian families for a reasonable amount. The people would watch for Albert and would run out to see what he had to sell.

That summer a friend of Angelo Valenti's came to the farm and asked Albert if he could identify the men who shot his father. Albert confirmed that he could. Albert was taken up on the wagon

and driven to a park where an Italian picnic was in progress. They walked around until Albert saw one of the men and pointed him out. He took Albert back to the wagon and got a gun from under the seat. Albert waited for the man to return and then was driven home. No one from the picnic could identify the man who shot the victim. This was the fifth death in "Little Italy."

CHAPTER Thirteen

Bootlegging and Prohibition

In the United States, prohibition became so popular in the early 1900s that, in 1920 a prohibition amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment, the 18th Amendment, caused the use of alcoholic beverages to decline sharply. However, many people ignored the national ban and drank illegal beverages supplied by networks of bootleggers. The closed bars became speakeasies. The 18th Amendment was abolished in 1933. It is the only amendment to the U.S. Constitution that has ever been repealed. Canada, Finland, and Norway also outlawed intoxicating beverages during the early 1900s.

During the early 1920s the Sposeto family was becoming destitute. Without an adult male, it was becoming more and more difficult to make ends meet. It was not uncommon for Frances and her sons to invade their neighbors' fields and steal tomatoes, corn, potatoes, etc. just to put food on the table. As mentioned before, Frances was able to create delicious and nourishing food from practically nothing. Nothing was wasted. Tops of radishes, for instance, became a nutritious treat as well as any other green parts of vegetables, such as beets, that are usually thrown away or tossed

into a compost bin. Even vegetables that were going bad could be salvaged to a certain extent. Frances was creative as well as frugal, and she carried these habits with her throughout her life.

During these mean times, a man and woman named Bill and Norma came to Frances and offered to pay \$25.00 per month for two rooms and the use of the basement. Frances thought this was odd since they could have rented an entire house for this much money. About a week later the family began to notice a strange odor throughout the house. Frances went into the basement and found the couple making corn whiskey. This really upset her, no doubt because she associated this with the death of her husband. She demanded that they remove themselves immediately. Even their offering more money didn't convince her to allow them to stay. Frances spoke very little English, so Bill turned to Albert and offered to take him in as a partner. He said a lot of money could be made. Later, Albert went to his mother and spent some time trying to convince her this was a good idea. He explained the money they could earn would pay off the farm. Albert did not know Frances owned the property outright. Nevertheless, she finally relented and Albert entered into a partnership with the couple. This was to be a short lived endeavor. The couple had originally rented the rooms in February and moved out in August taking all the equipment with them.

Now that Bill and Norma were gone, Albert knew he would be on his own. He also knew he would need two stills. The first time you cook it, the whiskey that comes out has too much fusel oil in it. In order to lose this, the whiskey must be re-stilled. This is the difference between corn whiskey and moonshine. Moonshine goes through only one cooking. The big still was used for the first cook and the smaller for the second cook.

After Bill left, Albert went to a coppersmith and told him to make two stills, one a hundred gallons and the other two hundred fifty gallons. The coppersmith made the hundred gallon one perfect, but on the bigger one he made a mistake and made a five

hundred gallon still. At first Albert told him he couldn't use one that big, but he begged him to take it because he had a lot of money tied up in it. Albert reluctantly agreed. So, Albert at a very young age became involved in producing corn whiskey for sale and the operation became very successful and helped support his mother and brothers.

Once everything was set up, the family moved to a house on the south side. Albert made whiskey on the farm for about four months. Since the wells in Iowa tended to run dry, he had placed his stills in the creek and used the creek water as a cooling system. One day as the first still was cooking and Albert was reading a comic book, something told Albert to be alert. He looked up and there were two policemen coming up on his left and three more on his right. Albert kicked off his wading boots and started running. Shots were fired in his direction, but because of the heavy foliage, it was not possible to hit him. According to Albert, the police took the big still into town and displayed it as the biggest still ever captured. They even had a picture of it on the front page of the newspaper.

About three weeks later the police came to the house on the south side some time after midnight. They came upstairs where Albert slept and told him to get up and get dressed. He asked them what they wanted and they said, "You know what we want. Get dressed." As Albert was dressing, the policemen were having a conversation just outside the door. The first policeman said, "Are you going to make anyone believe it?"

The second one said, "Maybe we can make him talk."

The first one then replied, "Hell, you're not going to get a word out of that kid."

The other said, "Maybe the District Attorney can make him talk in court."

The first one said, "If we ever got him into court, they would laugh us right out of the courtroom." They took another look at Albert and told him to go back to bed. They left without charging him with anything.

CHAPTER Fourteen

Justice Winks

On January 8, 1924 headlines in the Des Moines Tribune read, “Arcuro Victim of Black Hand, Police Believe.” Arcuro had been accused of the murder of Dominic Sposeto in 1919 and was subsequently acquitted. He was living at 102 Fulton Street in Des Moines, Iowa. Detectives were seeking his roommate, Frank Bevilaqua, another Italian. They hoped to learn whether any threats had been made against Arcuro just prior to his death. Whether or not Arcuro’s connection with the murder of Dominic Sposeto may have been the cause of his own death, was a question now being probed by detectives. James MacDonald, acting Chief of Detectives said, “The murder of Sam Arcuro can be linked up with about five other Italian Black Hand murders that occurred during the two or three years prior to this time. You can trace them all back to the same origin in a Black Hand gang that has been operating here in Des Moines.” Detectives believed that Arcuro’s murder was closely connected with a similar killing in the Italian colony some years before this. This was the sixth in the series of murders in Little Italy.

Fourteen bullet holes were found in the body of the murdered

man. Most of the wounds were in the upper part of the body, which would indicate the shooters were very accurate in the way they handled their weapons. Arcuro was ambushed by two men as he was driving south on Fifth Street shortly after 9:30 P.M. Opening fire with shotguns, the killers riddled the car, but did not succeed in killing Arcuro until after a hot gun battle had ensued.

Arcuro was armed with an automatic pistol with which he allegedly was a "sure shot," and was believed to have driven his enemies from behind the embankment where the gun battle opened to a spot behind box cars on the other side of the street. Arcuro's body, riddled with buckshot, was found by T. M. Proctor and E. D. Fleming after the two gunmen had fled. M. N. Funk, manager of the Schultz Bakery Company on West Fifth Street, was the first to notice the gun battle in progress two blocks away from the bakery. He told police that he heard several shots but did not investigate to learn the cause.

Emergency squads of police sped to the scene of the murder following the report of the shooting. A knife and empty shot gun shells were found on the curb near Arcuro's car.

Another earlier theory held by police was that Arcuro had been arrested in connection with alleged liquor transactions and had been ambushed by bootleggers with whom he had disagreed. A score of liquor resorts on the south side of town were searched by police, but without success.

Coroner Guy Clift launched an investigation immediately after being called to the scene of the murder. The body was taken to Caldwell's funeral home. Arcuro's widow is said to have left the city on a trip to Missouri shortly before his murder. Is it possible she had received advance notice of the pending death of her husband?

Despite the fact Arcuro was found not guilty of murdering Dominic Sposeto in 1919, two and a half years later he did receive a sentence of death at the hands of unknown persons. Perhaps this was Sicilian justice.

CHAPTER Fifteen

The Wedding

On January 24, 1921 Frances married for the second time. Her new husband was named Giuseppe (Joe) Benvenuto. He claimed to be distantly related to the family and began courting Frances. She wasn't aware at the time, but this man had played a part in the killing of her first husband, Dominic.

The boys didn't seem to think much of him. Of course, Pat was not around at this time, and Frank, though out of reform school, had joined the Army. Albert and Angelo were the only two at home. Albert was particularly offended by Joe Benvenuto. One day Joe informed Albert that he was now head of the house and if Albert didn't like it, he could leave. This did not set well with Albert. He began to harbor more ill feelings toward Joe Benvenuto.

In the meantime, Frances and Joe opened a restaurant on Sixth and Elm called Ma's Place, serving not only food, but whiskey by the bottle. The restaurant was in a good location as it was close to town. By now Albert had quit making whiskey and was back in school.

After Frances and Joe's wedding, the Aaron Schminkey

family rented the farm. One day young Angelo went out to the farm and when he returned he mentioned to his brother, Albert, that there was a good looking girl living there. A few days later Albert decided to see for himself. As he was nearing the farm he saw some girls tumbling down a small slope. When they saw him they jumped up and started running. Albert thought they must be crazy. When he got to the house, sure enough he saw this girl named Jessie. She was different from the girls at school. She was a year and eight months younger than Albert and very different from him. He was loud and boisterous and she was quiet and very shy. The first time he took her to a movie at the Majestic Theater, she didn't know what to do and was so shy she walked behind Albert. She was born and raised on a farm and had never been to a movie. After the movie he took her for a strawberry sundae which she enjoyed immensely. They began to spend a lot of time together. Often when they were standing on the porch she would be barefoot and would stand on the top of Albert's shoes.

The summer of 1923 Pat came home. He supposedly had been in Colorado. While there he did odd jobs such as shine shoes, sell newspapers, and other small jobs. Almost as soon as he came home, he had a terrible argument with Joe and left again. Pat was upset about the way Joe treated his mother at the restaurant and didn't like the fact he made her sell liquor. Pat went to Detroit. It is an absolute fact that, although Frances was often extremely strict with her boys, she was a tigress when it came to protecting them. Therefore, she was glad Pat was leaving because of his belligerent nature, which was bound to get him into trouble.

Frank was still in the Army and had become one of the best welterweight boxers in the country. According to his brother, Albert, he fought under the name Patsy Cline, and his picture was featured on the cover of *Who's Who in Boxing*.

That summer of 1923 Albert had an argument with his mother over what Joe said to him about being head of the family, as well as a few other things that were nagging at him. Frances had a

vicious temper and threw a butcher knife at Albert. Fortunately, he sensed she was throwing something and ducked. The knife flew past his head and stuck in the door with a loud twang. Without even saying goodbye to Jessie or anyone else, Albert started to hitch-hike to New York. He had several cousins on his mother's side living in Auburn, New York he planned to visit.

Part of the trip he was riding the blinds on a mail train. At Evio, Pennsylvania a railroad cop pulled him off the train and took him to a shack in the yard. He asked Albert where he was going and when Albert replied to Auburn, New York to visit his cousins, the cop said, "Don't you know it's against the law to ride mail trains?"

Albert said, "Yes, but I want to get there."

The cop then asked if he had eaten and when Albert said he had, the cop said, "You damn liar. Come with me." He took Albert to a nearby restaurant where he knew the waitress and told Albert to order anything he wanted. He merely asked for a couple of eggs. The cop looked at him and said, "Couple eggs, hell, give him a steak and a couple eggs!" When Al had finished his meal the cop handed him two dollars and told him to stay off the train and showed him the highway. Albert walked out of town, but couldn't get a ride, so he went down to the tracks and caught the next train.

When he arrived in Auburn he went immediately to the grocery store where his aunt worked. His mother had told him her sister was not very bright and was a slow thinker. After he told her who he was, she still didn't show any warmth toward him. She finally asked if he had eaten. He told her he had not, so she gave him a bologna sandwich, which he couldn't eat. She told him her children would be along soon. By this time he was sorry he ever came. This woman was the exact opposite of Albert's mother, who was always generous and hospitable. Before long her married daughter, Frances, came in and took Albert to her house. When Tony, her husband, came home they had a big dinner and

afterwards they took Albert to meet some of his other relatives. A couple days later he got a job at a gas station washing cars. He stayed in Auburn about a month when he began to feel homesick. He missed Jessie a great deal as well as the rest of his family. He began the end of his journey much like the beginning; he started to hitchhike home.

One night in December, after Albert had returned to Des Moines, he and Jessie were standing on the back porch saying goodnight. As usual she was barefoot and standing on top of Albert's feet. After kissing her, he boldly asked her if she would marry him, and before he could even finish asking, she was nodding her head yes. That New Year's Eve they ran away together and were married in Marysville, Kansas before a Justice of the Peace. Albert had just turned 17 years old and Jessie was still only 15 years old. The marriage lasted until Albert's death in 1981.

When Pat left his mother's hearth in 1923 he was 20 years old. He began running whiskey between Chicago and Detroit. He later returned to Iowa where he became involved with the lovely Evelyn Schminkey, sister of Jessie. They were married and established their home in Detroit, Michigan.

CHAPTER Sixteen

Vendetta

One day a couple of the big boys out of Detroit called on Frances telling her she would never see her husband, Joe, again. Apparently they found out that Benvenuto was implicated in Dominic's murder. According to reports Benvenuto was executed gangland style and his body stuffed into a gunny sack and thrown into the Detroit River. Giuseppe Benvenuto was the seventh Mafia victim.

Once again Frances found herself a widow. Frances was forbidden to mourn his death and even was told not to wear black. Benvenuto was considered a traitor. Frances complied with these suggestions and carried on as though she had never been married to Joe. But this was not to be her last marriage. She would marry two more times. Her last husband took rat poison and died, or at least that was what Frances told everyone.

Some time in 1925, it is believed that the Don summoned Angelo Valenti and his son Sam to return to Sicily because of mounting political problems. They were never heard from again. Unfortunately for Angelo and Sam, this would have been the worst possible time to return to Sicily, particularly with ties to

the Mafia and possibly the Black Hand. Mussolini was in power. This became a time of persecution of those members of such secret societies. In order to determine *capi* (heads), suspected members were tortured and sometimes murdered in order to obtain information. It is possible Angelo and Sam fell into one or both of these categories.

Despite her seemingly bad luck Frances seemed to have with husbands, on October 6, 1927, Frances married for a third time. Her new husband was a very well respected gentleman in Des Moines named Domenico Cichello. They continued operating the restaurant called Ma's Place. His family still resides in the Des Moines area. Domenico died May 31, 1943 in Oakland, California and is buried in Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines.

CHAPTER Seventeen

Detroit

Detroit's bloodiest year ended in 1920 after a conflict claimed the lives of more than 100 men. The battle is known as the Gianolla/Vitale war. From the spoils of war arose a new underworld boss named Salvatore "Sam" Catalonotte. During his reign, peace prevailed until after he died in February 1930. This is the Mafia it is believed the Valenti and Esposito families were connected with.

Some time between 1928 and 1930 young Frank Sposeto was charged with a heinous crime and incarcerated in a state institution for the criminally insane in the State of Michigan. No one seems to remember what crime he was charged with. There are ugly rumors surrounding his conviction, but nothing can actually be proved, nor would it benefit anyone today.

Frances was very upset about this turn of events. She knew Frank was innocent, but she could do nothing. She prayed he would be safe from harm while in this terrible institution.

On May 30, 1930 he was found hanging in his cell. The coroner judged this to be a suicide. His body was returned to Iowa where his mother resided, and he is buried in St. Ambrose

Cemetery (now known as Woodlawn Cemetery) under his true name, Frank Sposeto. While in prison he went by the name Frank Sposetti. No one knows why.

How Frances mourned this boy. Her heart was completely broken. It was difficult enough to lose her first husband, but to lose her son was too much for her to bear. She could barely carry on. Both Pat and Albert were married and living in Detroit, but her youngest son, Angelo, remained with her in Des Moines. He consoled her as much as he could, but to little avail. She simply needed to let her grief run its course. The memory of Frank would always be very special to her.

In about 1930 Albert and Jessie moved to Detroit where they stayed briefly with Pat and Evelyn, who were by now established residents of Detroit. At this time Albert and Jessie had three children, Frances, Dominic and Patricia.

Pat was quite the gentleman about town. He was known to dress in a flashy manner and wore many diamonds, perhaps in emulation of the late Diamond Joe Esposito, a Mafia lord in the Chicago area who was known to wear a belt of diamonds spelling out his name. There was actually no relationship between Joe Esposito and the Sposeto family formerly known as Esposito.

Evelyn had two children from a previous marriage - Robert Gardner, a son, and Margaret Gardener, a daughter. Her first husband had been killed while serving in the Armed Forces. She and Pat had five children of their own; namely, Charlotte (who's twin died at birth), Frances, Dominick, Patrick and Samuel. Evelyn was a very hard working woman. She worked nearly all her life as a waitress in one restaurant or another.

Albert and Jessie returned to Iowa with their family where they stayed on the farm for a few more years.

CHAPTER Eighteen

Bal-Koni Kab-a-Ra

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Angelo Sposeto was running the three nightclubs (or speakeasies) in the Des Moines area that his father-in-law, Angelo, had established. These three nightclubs were advertised in the 1941 City Directory as Bal-Koni Kab-a-Ra, “Specializing in Steaks, Chicken and Serving the Best Italian Spaghetti in Town, Dancing Nightly;” Avon Lake outside Des Moines, a resort setting restaurant and bar; and a bar and restaurant near Fort Des Moines Military Base. These were the properties originally owned by the Valenti family and eventually signed over to Frances, who in turn signed them over to her son Angelo. Frances was still running her restaurant called Ma’s Place in the Italian district outside the city limits of Des Moines.

Frank and Victoria returned to Des Moines in the late 1920s. Frank resumed his life as a farmer, growing vegetables for the family and selling the excess in town. By this time Frank and Victoria had ten children; all happy and healthy (see descendants’ tables).

Young Angelo met Mary Jaquinta during this period while she was working for a dentist in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. They seemed to

have a great deal in common since they both lost their fathers at an early age. Of course, Mary also lost her mother soon after her father was killed.

CHAPTER Nineteen

The Coalminer's Daughter

Francesco Iaquinta was a tall, handsome man who at one time had been a guard in the King's service in Italy. In the spring of 1908 he married Isabella (or Zobella) Loria who was born in the small mountain top village of Caccuri, located in the province of Calabria. Isabella had four sisters: Teresa, Maria, Giovanina, and Serafina. She also had a brother named Giovanni. The province of Calabria, which occupies the toe of Italy, is generally mountainous with the populace scratching a difficult living from the terraced hillsides, not unlike the West Virginia area where the Iaquintas settled.

Many years later the two daughters of Francesco and Isabella, Mary and Kathryn, took a trip to the commune of Caccuri, a province of Crotona, in order to settle a house that they had some title to. The village had little sanitary facilities, with chickens and other livestock roaming around the streets. The ladies were appalled by the conditions here and did not wish to stay any longer than necessary.

Francesco Iaquinta immigrated to America in 1905 when he was 18 years old. Isabella Loria immigrated in 1907 at age 18. After their marriage, they settled into the Italian community of

Boomer, where they had relatives and friends. Owned by the mining company, the village consisted of a company store, where one could purchase goods on credit or with company scrip. There was also a post office, a small theater and a school house.

Francesco took a job as a coal miner and he and Isabella were assigned one of the 45 homes that the company owned. These homes were a single story box-like structure containing two bedrooms, a large kitchen with a brick oven, and a living area. To the rear of the house was a large garden, at the bottom of which stood the outhouse.

All the Italian families lived in an area of town known as "The Hollows." Once Francesco and Isabella became established, Francesco was promoted to a supervisory position and Isabella enjoyed a prominent position in the community. On November 8, 1912 Mary was born. Kathryn followed on January 6, 1914 and three years later on August 8, 1917 John took his first look at the world.

Each week in this Italian community the people would get together. Pigs and chickens would be slaughtered and sausage would be made; some of the townspeople would bake bread and others would make pasta; still others would cure olives. From left-over pizza dough or bread dough, *fritti* would be made. These were sugared breadsticks which the children looked forward to each week. In those days and in this area there was no refrigeration or ice to keep food from spoiling. Consequently, many of the foods would need to be cured. Olives would be dried and cured; sausage would be dried, smoked, or cured in other ways. Their simple peasant food would some day become the delicacies we all love. These were memorable days for the Iaquina children. It was like a festival every week. There was singing and dancing and much merriment among the people. All the families shared, and at holidays special dishes were prepared. This was communal living at its best.

In 1924 there was an explosion at the mine and Francesco

Iaquinta was killed. The record of this event is unclear for there were a couple of mine explosions around this time. Yukon had an explosion March 28, 1924, killing 24 people. Benwood Mine located in Wheeling had an explosion a month later on April 28, 1924, killing 112 people. At least three men from this explosion remained unidentified. One could have been Francesco, for his name does not appear on any of the fatality lists.

Not long after this Isabella became very ill. She knew she would die soon. When Mary was 12 years old, Isabella summoned her and made her promise to take care of the other children and not allow them to be separated. She instructed her to contact their Uncle Sam Iaquinta in Iowa for help. He seemed to be in the best position to take care of the children. She wanted the children out of the area because of her fear that little Johnny would end up working the coal mines like his father. There were far too many fatalities in this occupation.

Isabella died a year after her husband. Some say she died of a broken heart, but most probably she died of kidney disease or tuberculosis, which ran rampant throughout the Italian communities.

After the deaths of Francesco and Isabella Iaquinta, Mary, Kathryn and John went to live with Francesco's brother Sam and his wife Mary in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Sam and Mary had dropped their Catholic affiliations and become fundamentalist Protestants. It was at this time that the name Iaquinta became Jaquinta. Both Sam and his brother Jim preferred to distance themselves from the other Italians in the area, particularly the Sposeto family because of the newspaper headlines about killings and Mafia and Black Hand problems.

Mary, Kathryn and John were required to do most of the chores, including cooking, cleaning and other laborious tasks. Young John was given chores that even a man would find difficult. These young children grew up having a very strong work ethic. They never complained about having work to do, nor did they even so

much as resent their past with their aunt and uncle.

As soon as Mary could, she found a job. She saved every penny she could and was able to get her brother, Johnny, into the YMCA. Her goal was to earn enough money to support the three of them, Johnny, Katy and herself, and to be able to move out of her aunt and uncle's house.

In the meantime, she had met Angelo Sposeto. He was not particularly welcome at the Jaquinta home, but Mary was satisfied with their relationship and was convinced that Angelo was not involved with the criminal element. Angelo in turn was very entranced with Mary. She was strong and capable and a stunning young woman. He knew she would be good for him.

On October 3, 1931 Angelo Sposeto and Mary Jaquinta were married. Mary was eighteen and Angelo was nineteen. They set up their home in Des Moines and Mary made sure both her sister, Katy, and brother, Johnny, moved in with them. Katy remained with the Sposetos until she decided to become a WAAC. Johnny stayed with them until he met the love of his life and married. While living in Des Moines, Johnny worked for his brother-in-law in the three nightclubs that he owned.

Angelo and Mary's first child was born July 19, 1934 and they named him Dominic John; Isabel Mary followed on March 24, 1936; Frances Ann was number three, born July 21, 1937 and Frank Albert was born April 28, 1939.

When their oldest son, Dominic (now called Mickey), was about two or three years old, Angelo walked into the bar and found him sitting on the floor with a pair of scissors cutting the faces out of twenty dollar bills. Mickey was very proud of his accomplishment. Angelo was not pleased.

Not long after this the "revenueurs" came around asking questions. Of course, no one knew anything, except, you guessed it, Mickey. He was probably two or three years old. Just as the revenueurs were about to leave, Mickey asked, "Are you looking for whicky? I'll show you where it is." Somehow the family

convinced the revenuers that he was just playing and talking baby-talk. Maybe he was referring to his dog.

Mary recalled another time while doing some work around the club and chatting with her mother-in-law, Frances, a couple of strange men entered the club and began a conversation with Frances in Italian. They were concerned Mary might understand what they were saying, but Frances assured them Mary spoke only English. This was not quite true, for Mary understood the entire conversation and was truly frightened and intimidated by what was being discussed. Nevertheless, she continued to work around the club and pretended to not understand anything. It was at this time she began to have serious misgivings about continuing to live in this area. She wished Angelo was in some other kind of business.

At one point Mary drove a cargo of their bootlegged whiskey to Detroit. She was scared to death she would be stopped by authorities and what would she do? Admit her guilt? Go to jail? Wouldn't you know she was stopped at the border, but she was such an innocent looking young woman, the authorities allowed her to pass without questioning her cargo contents. They merely waved her through. Mary breathed a sigh of relief and promised herself she would do all in her power to get her husband out of this murky business.

Mary's sister Katy spent a great deal of time with the children while Mary was minding the business. It was probably Aunt Katy who initiated the name "Goo-Goo" for young Mickey. This name stuck with him through his baby-hood and reverted back to Mickey as he got older. Aunt Katy was still unmarried at the time and loved being with the children. Katy soon went off and joined the WAACs where she had a brief career.

Sometime in the late 1930s Frances decided to sell the restaurant and she and Domenico Cichello left for California where they settled in San José where Frances had many friends. Pat and his family eventually moved to California where he set up his plumbing business. Pat owned several homes in the foothills of Oakland where his family would be raised. Albert soon followed his brother

to California where they maintained temporary residence in one of the homes Pat owned. They had two more children, Rose Marie and Dolores. Albert became a cement contractor. California seemed to agree with this family. Their fortunes were on the rise and trouble seemed to be in their past.

This was the end of an era for the Sposetos, Valentis and Iaquintas. There was a war going on and the situation in Des Moines, Iowa had taken a large toll on the family. Both Angelo's mother and wife were concerned that Angelo would fall into the hands of the wrong people, or worse, end up like his father.

Angelo lost all three of his nightclubs to fire. It was believed this was the responsibility of some of the local Italians. The old feud had remained to haunt the sons of Dominic. Despite being only seven years old when his father was murdered, Angelo still received threats from his father's enemies. By the time the third nightclub was burned down, Angelo gave up hope of ever being able to run a business in Des Moines, and Mary wanted him out of the bar business and away from Mafia influence. Optimistically speaking, this presented a prime time to make this move.

Through all of this, Angelo would reflect that life had been much kinder to him and his family than it had to the previous generation. He had missed having a father, and he was determined he would be around to raise his own children. He was very close to being 40 years old and knew that the odds of living beyond the 42 years his father lived were not with him at this point. In his heart he knew his wife and mother were right. The opportunities in Des Moines for Angelo were wearing very thin. He contacted his two brothers in California and made arrangements to move within the next month or two. Mary was very happy with this decision. Life was bound to be better for them in a new situation away from old temptations and troubles.

PART TWO

THE GOLDEN STATE 1941-1961



Photo by Arthur Odell

Back row: Phil Harris, Jr., Frank Albert Sposeto, Mary Iaquinta-Sposeto, Angelo Charles Sposeto, and Dominic John Sposeto.

Front Row: Isabel Mary Sposeto, Francesca Venticinque-Valenti Sposeto (Granny), Frances Ann Sposeto and Kathryn Loria Sposeto.

I remember leaving Des Moines for California. We were quite an entourage, with my parents in the lead car with two of us kids and Uncle Johnny following with the other two kids. It was a long and tedious journey, but very interesting and, I thought, very beautiful. I have no idea what route we took to get to California, but I remember mountains, deserts, lakes, and finally a glimpse of San Francisco Bay. We arrived in the spring of 1941.

CHAPTER Twenty

Eureka! We Found It

The San Francisco Bay Area is famous for many things, foremost is its earthquakes. One cannot think of San Francisco without recalling the devastating earthquake of 1906 and the subsequent burning of the city. It was rebuilt, of course, but there remain many scars from this earthquake and the many that followed. The people who live here are unafraid and, frankly somewhat jaded to minor tremors.

The cuisine of the area is multi-faceted. Chinese restaurants abound as well as Italian, Mexican, German, French, East Indian, etc. Bay area people have a varied diet when it comes to food. Seafood is abundant, with seafood restaurants within arms reach of most. In the early days, ethnic food was inexpensive and authentic. Now it is considered gourmet.

I remember thinking when we first arrived in California how good it was that Uncle Pat and Aunt Evelyn took us into their home. There was always that willingness on the part of all members of the family to help one another and share whatever they had at any time there was need. Uncle Pat had a thriving plumbing business and had become well established in the community. Uncle Pat and

Aunt Evelyn allowed us to use one of the houses they had invested in for the short time it took us to find our own housing. We were there about a month when we moved into our first home in Albany, California.

In the meantime, Dad learned the concrete business from his brother, Uncle Al, who also enjoyed a good reputation in this new state. Dad eventually purchased a business in Albany, California called Albany Block and Cement, where he experimented with designer concrete that he called “Marblecrete,” which was concrete that had a marble-like veneer. These were used for stepping stones and building blocks. One of his first projects using this material was to build a swimming pool. Eventually he earned enough money from his business to buy another home for his growing family in El Cerrito, California. Despite his lack of education, Dad was very creative. Armed with this talent and great determination, he was able to make a good life for all of us.

Mama’s brother, Uncle Johnny, worked many years for Dad. He was second in command and much admired and respected by his boss, my Dad, as well as the men who worked under him. He was always fair and had a kind word for everyone. While still living with my parents, he met Blanch Margaret Perry. After a brief courtship, they were married. Uncle Johnny and Aunt Jackie (as we called her) had two children, a son, John, and daughter, Marie (see descendants’ tables).

Aunt Jackie was a fun person to be around. She was born and raised in Hawaii and retained her island persona despite being “Sposetoized.” Sometimes at parties and other social gatherings she would entertain the family by dancing the hula. She was very outspoken, and if she had something to say, she would not hesitate to say it. When I got married, she tried to tell my new bride what a playboy I was. My bride didn’t care.

Aunt Katy, in the meantime, was still in the military. She would come home frequently when she had leave time. After her time in the military, she came home and lived with us and worked for Dad

in the office. Dad hired a man named Ralph Fleming as a carpenter, and Aunt Katy and Ralph became involved and subsequently married. Initially they lived in Richmond, California, but later bought a home in Hayward, California.

As we were growing up there was a strong sense of family and a wonderful spirit of sharing. I remember family get-togethers on holidays and Sundays to share meals. We kids and all the cousins would either play games or take in a movie on a Sunday afternoon. This was a regular event. We all enjoyed our time together. It was a regular event for the families to visit each other on the major holidays, particularly Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. As we grew older, many of the cousins went their way and visitations were primarily confined to Christmas, some birthdays and, of course weddings and showers.

The fondest memories were of those early times when everyone was struggling to establish their homes and raise their children. There was warmth in this sharing that can only be described as fond family memories. As our family grew and the cousins married and had their own children, there was less and less communication. It is sad that today families have lost this wonderful art of communal engagement.

Over the years Mama volunteered for the American Red Cross. During World War II she often drove injured U. S. military men to doctor appointments and sometimes took them sight-seeing in San Francisco. After the war she drove many visiting dignitaries and celebrities around San Francisco to see the many tourist sights. She was a devoted mother and grandmother. Her culinary skills were beyond even Granny Frances' abilities. The one thing she could not do, and she was notorious for this, was bake! Even packaged cake mixes would turn out awful. Any baking to be done would, therefore, be done by other family members. Most holiday meals were spent at our house, with a gathering of uncles, aunts, cousins and a few friends.

On Christmas Eve, Dad would sit in his big chair next to the

Christmas tree and play Santa Claus. He always had one or two youngsters who would hand him the packages in a random manner. His last gift would be for Mama. He would hide it somewhere deep within the tree. After all the packages were opened, he would allow Mama to search the tree. They made a big deal of this. Usually it was a small gift, such as a diamond necklace, earrings, bracelet, etc. Probably the biggest thrill was when he bought her a full-length mink coat. He sent her on a wild hunt all over the house to find it, and when she found it she cried.

Dad was extremely gifted. His education may have been only through grammar school, but he was brilliant. After patenting his Marblecrete cement, he began to find many uses for it. His biggest endeavor was to open three car washes in Oakland using these colorful stones. Later, my law partner, Mitch Madsen and I, incorporated the three car washes, which ultimately would be called Rainbow Carwash. These were beautiful architecturally designed carwashes. The largest of the three carwashes was located on the corner of MacArthur and Broadway in Oakland, California and used the Marblecrete stone to create a unique indoor water feature called "Dancing Waters." The exterior also had rainbow arches constructed of Marblecrete.

Also attached to the carwash was a restaurant and sports bar, one of the first of its kind in northern California. The bar was leased to offensive lineman Gene Upshaw of the Oakland Raiders. Upshaw was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1987. He is currently executive director of the NFL Players Association. Gene and his brother, Marv, operated the sports bar for several years and drew many northern California athletes from all sports.

On one occasion, Mama was substituting as cashier at the carwash when a gentleman confronted her and stated he would like a car wash. Mama said, "That will be \$2.50." The young man said, "But I'm Reggie Jackson from the Oakland A's." She responded in a humorous manner, "In that case, Mr. Jackson, it will be \$4.50."

Dad always made it a point to hire ex-convicts to work at the

carwash, and many of them would move into his construction business, while others remained in his employ until his death in 1975. One of Angelo's projects was to work with prisoners and he affiliated himself with the California State Prison System for that purpose. On one occasion when a young man had just come out of prison for armed robbery and reported for work, Dad handed him a bag of money containing about \$5,000. He asked that he deposit it in the local bank. The man could not believe this was happening, and after a little while returned with a deposit slip. This was a ploy Dad frequently used and he always found that if you trusted the man, the man would be trustworthy himself.

Dad also kept a small sum of money available so that the men could borrow from and repay without interest. Many of the men used this when in need and made a point of re-paying as soon as possible. The generosity of Dad had been passed on from Granny Frances, who always said, "I have never refused any man or woman in need who came to me."

At this time there were three other children in our family besides me. We were big on nicknames. Isabel (Tootsie) was more of the quiet studious type. Frances (Topsy) was a little more gregarious and often joined my brother and me in one mischief or another. Frank (Chuggy) was a little toughie. All four of us were born in Des Moines, Iowa. The last child, my sister, Kathryn Loria (Pidgey) was born on August 1, 1942 in Albany, California. Mama was so disheartened and disappointed by the looks of this child, for she was about the ugliest baby ever born to anyone. She was red and hairy and just seemed hopelessly ugly. Mama prayed she would outgrow her ugliness. Her prayers must have been very powerful because this young lady grew up to be astonishingly beautiful. She became a model for awhile, danced in the Las Vegas shows, and was a Playboy Bunny for a short time.

It seems I just could not stay out of trouble. One day Dad came home from work and confronted me while holding both hands behind his back. He said in a sing-songy kind of way, "Son, I have

a surprise for you.” I was excited. I said, “Is it a choo-choo train?” Dad could hardly suppress his laughter, and with great effort he regained control and in a stern manner withdrew from behind his back my little jacket and said, “No, son. I found your ‘lost’ jacket at school where you left it!”

When Pidgey was about two or three years old, she became fair game for the rest of us kids. One day we were playing cowboys and Indians and were just about to burn her at the stake when Mama came to her rescue.

By this time we had moved to a larger home in El Cerrito, California, not far from Albany. Life was always interesting on Shevlin Drive. We grew up in this house and still have many fond memories of this home.

As a family, we were well enough off to be able to hire a live-in maid. She was a middle-aged black woman who was quite superstitious. Part of her duties in the household was to see that we were fed and cared for when Mama was away from home. Even though we loved her, we often took advantage of her. One evening when she was alone with us, she began to hear strange noises. We appeared to be frightened and told her we thought we saw a ghost outside one of the bedroom windows. We begged her to go upstairs and check to see if someone was in the house. When she opened the door to one of our rooms, a “ghost” flew out at her. Of course, we had simply rigged an old sheet up so that when the door opened it fluttered about the room. This so startled this poor woman that she soon gave up her job with our family.

Dad and Mama required all of us to attend Catechism and Mass on a regular basis. I attended parochial grammar school and high school. I became an altar boy when I was about eight years old, and was developing serious devotion as a result of the influence from my parents, and, more particularly, my grandmother with whom I spent considerable time. The priest, for whom I served, was a very strict Irishman who would keep me after mass to teach me how to recite the prayers properly in Latin. Each morning I rode my bike

for approximately five miles to be there for early Mass at 6 A.M. The priest was a good man and I believed I was appreciated and liked.

During the eighth grade I had many very close friends, one of which was John Lawrence. I recall an instance in eighth grade when John invited me to his house for what he called, “an adventure,” where the two of us walked up and down the creek for several hours collecting bugs. “Not much fun,” I thought. However, our friendship continued and several years later John received his Ph.D. in entomology. Later he taught at Harvard and became one of the world’s foremost beetle experts. He is now living in Australia. I recall John’s many bug collections and thought, “What a helluva way to have fun - collecting bugs!” But I went with him many times on these “bug adventures” as well as socially partying and dating the same girls (at different times). These were wonderful memories of a great friendship.

John’s cousin, Donald Puppione, another classmate, received his Ph.D. in biophysics. He was a professor at UCLA until his retirement in 1993. At the present time he is doing research in the area of comparative fat metabolism. Don spent most of his young life in the seminary, studying for the priesthood, and missed all of the “bug adventures.”

Another classmate, John Lum, the only Asian in the midst of mostly Irish and Italian children, was extremely popular because of his contacts with the “world of firecrackers.” John Lum graduated with a Ph.D. in Education and remains a great friend of mine to this day.

When I graduated from the 8th grade at Sacred Heart School in Oakland, California, I had a strong desire to enter the seminary and, with five of my classmates, including Donald Puppione and our local priest, we visited both the minor and major seminaries in San Mateo County, California. Because I was dating and had friendships with many girls, it was recommended that I not enter the seminary. Nevertheless my faith and devoutness sustained me

my entire life. Through different periods of my life I attended daily Mass.

By the time I was about thirteen years old, my sisters, Tootsie and Topsy and I, began to have difficulty with our vision. After visiting several eye specialists, we were tested and given glasses, but the glasses would only help for a short time. In addition to poor eyesight, we all seemed to have an aversion to bright light. At one time we were diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, which is a degenerative disease.

Mama took all three of us to the best specialists in Northern California, many of whom were very interested in this unique eye condition. They speculated on a number of reasons and diagnoses, but could make no definite prognosis. I was very grateful for the doctors at Green Eye Hospital in San Francisco despite the fact that they advised that blindness was inevitable and that there was nothing they could do to either prevent or treat this visual condition. Our condition was not a typical type of retinal problem, and for that reason very little is known from a historical standpoint. The doctors could only state with some certainty that it was a congenital problem. This was obvious since we three older kids were similarly affected. It was speculated that our condition might have been related somehow to the kidney condition suffered by some relatives on the maternal side.

Tootsie and Topsy seemed to degenerate faster and at an earlier age than I did. Both the girls were relying on readers to get through their high school studies. I was having a lot of trouble accepting my condition. Though not totally blind, all of our vision was poor enough to qualify as legally blind. Oddly, neither Chuggy nor Pidgey was afflicted with this disease.

Tootsie was an extremely beautiful girl and very popular. Because we were so close in age, we had a great deal of fun together and often socialized. Dad and Mama preferred that we do our entertaining at home. The home in El Cerrito had a large downstairs recreation room with a wine cellar, bar, juke box, slot machines,

pool table, and was a great place for us to have fun. There were many great parties through high school and the kids really enjoyed coming to our home where they were always made welcome. I dated many of my sister's friends and she would subsequently date and eventually marry two of my friends (at separate times, of course).

Because Topsy was younger, she and I were not as close as Tootsie and I were. Topsy was a very cute young girl, with big expressive brown eyes and a personality to match. She was short – about five feet tall or less. In a way, she was a lot like Granny Frances probably was when she was a young girl. Topsy always had a string of friends and was very popular in school. She loved to sing and dance, again like our grandmother. Her two best friends were Liz Flack and Sherry Kelly. The three of them were practically inseparable in their junior year of high school. It was sad for her friends when Mama and Dad decided to take her out of public school and enroll her in a Catholic all-girl school. To make matters worse, our family sold our home in El Cerrito and bought a triplex in Oakland. This was Topsy's senior year, so she decided to make the most of it and just get through graduation.

My brother, Chuggy, as a young boy, was always an outstanding athlete, and very well coordinated. He was a high school All-American in football and was recruited by Notre Dame. Because he suffered with dyslexia (an affliction not recognized at that time), it was difficult for him to meet the entrance requirements for Notre Dame, so he went into the Armed Forces where he played football for the Berlin Bombers during his entire stay in the army. He was an outstanding football player and could have been recruited for the pros, except that Dad was very ill. Eventually, Chuggy took over the family business with our cousin, Pat Sposeto, one of the sons of Uncle Pat. They stayed together for many years until Chuggy and his son, Dominic, opened a new construction business under the name Vanguard Construction, which is now a very successful business.

My sister Kathryn was a very gifted young woman. Among her many talents, she was an exceptional pool player and was known to “run” the table at least twice. She was a real rebel and on one occasion I was with her when she stopped at a place where bikers hung out, put her quarter on the table to play these guys, and cleaned them all out. In order to keep their goodwill, she bought everyone a round of drinks and left. She was also a budding artist. She dabbled in oils and sketches, but never really did anything with this talent.

While attending St. Mary’s High School in Berkeley, California, I met a young man who would become my lifelong friend. Andy Grant was not like other boys. He was tough, but not in a way that was mean. If someone was being obscene, he would not hesitate to confront him and just simply say, “You don’t have to take the Lord’s name in vain!” Andy Grant became a Franciscan Brother, well loved and admired by all. He is now known as Brother Joachim. Some of his fame is outside his holiness, such as the giant Brother Joe Cookies he makes for retreatants.

At this time I had my own car and was able to drive. One day I drove my sister Tootsie to the drugstore where she needed to purchase some items. I waited in the car and soon became annoyed because she was taking so long. I got out of the car and saw (or thought I saw) my sister bending over the magazine rack, browsing through the periodicals. I gave her a quick smack on the butt and said, “Come on, Toots, let’s go!” This poor young lady stood up, screamed, and ran out of the store. In the meantime Tootsie came ambling along with her purchases, completely oblivious to what had just occurred.

It wasn’t long after this event that one of my buddies and I were coming back from some adventure. I was driving and was coming down Marin Drive in Berkeley, which is an exceptionally steep drive. At the bottom is a large fountain in the middle of the street. Unfortunately, the brakes gave out and we crashed into the fountain. We were both taken to the hospital, and on the way there

I kept asking if there was blood on my blue suede shoes (a big fashion at that time, thanks to Elvis Presley and his hit song “Don’t Step on my Blue Suede Shoes”). I had almost bitten through my tongue and blood was gushing everywhere. I recovered from this accident, but never really drove a car again.

In my freshman year at St Mary’s while trying out for the football team I befriended the son of the famous band leader and movie star, Phil Harris, who was married to Alice Faye. Phil, Jr. was a boarder at St. Mary’s high school. He attended several parties at our home and became attracted to Tootsie, whom he would subsequently marry. Prior to their marriage and during his junior and senior years at St. Mary’s, Phil lived at our home and his parents paid for his board and room.

Before Phil, Jr. would be allowed to board with us, Phil and Alice paid the family a visit. Upon arriving at our home, Mama was busy washing the windows in the house. Alice immediately offered to help her, and together they completed the task. Mama was always impressed with this act and decided Alice Faye was just a regular person after all. That week-end the Harrises and the Sposetos went out on the town. They ended up at the Mark Hopkins Venetian Room where they had dinner and danced.

Granny Frances Sposeto was the only living grandparent we had. Most of her life she lived alone. She married a couple more times after Joe Benvenuto, but she remained very independent. Eventually, most of the Sposeto family moved to California, including Frances. Uncle Pat and Uncle Al each had five children (see descendant charts). Granny, as Frances was affectionately called, lived in San José, California in the late 1930s where she had many Italian friends through both her first husband, Dominic, and father, Angelo. San José would later be a notorious location for many Mafia families.

As a youngster, I spent more time with Granny than any of the other grandchildren. I spent several days with her in San José and later in Oakland. She always had her own apartment and, after

she moved to Oakland, did janitorial work at the Fox Oakland building where I would sometimes accompany her when she made her rounds, assisting her in cleaning offices. Oakland was not as scary in those days, but Granny knew to be cautious. She always carried a loaded pistol in her pocket, and she would not hesitate to use it if necessary.

Granny was liked by those who knew her, and respected for her honesty and integrity. She spoke little English and when I stayed with her, we would read her primer books together and play various Italian card games. She would tell stories of her early days in Sicily where she had personally witnessed many miracles as a result of her faith and the faith of others. She told stories of miraculous things that happened to her and things she experienced in Sicily. She spoke of a church that had the remains of a saint who died in chains. On the feast of that saint, while kneeling in the church, she experienced the rattling of the chains. She had tremendous devotion to that saint. Her stories and love of The Lord had a profound effect on me as I was growing up.

She told me how poorly the Sicilian and southern Italians were treated in Italy. In the mid- and late-1800s Southern Italy, which had historically been the most prominent area, had now become a class of people discriminated against because of their multi-ethnic influence, their poverty, and because primarily northern Italy was becoming very industrialized and the cultural center for the arts, as well as the location of the Vatican. For these reasons there was considerable poverty in southern Italy, and America had a great deal to offer in the way of employment.

She often spoke of the poverty in Sicily and the willingness of the people to share with one another their meager goods. She told of the religious holidays and the many meals that were customary at Christmas, Easter, Epiphany, Good Friday and, particularly, the feast of Saint Francis. She made seven trips back and forth to Sicily during her marriage to Domenico.

CHAPTER Twenty-One

Blindness and Becoming “Delighted”

While still in high school, my eyesight was really beginning to fail me. Until this time I was able to play sports such as football, basketball and baseball. My doctor advised me that I would eventually lose my sight altogether, but he could not tell me when. His best advice was to prepare myself for this event. He did warn me to be careful of any trauma to the head because this might result in immediate loss of sight.

As fate would have it, I did have an accident. I fell off a three-meter diving board when I was eighteen or nineteen years old. When it was obvious I was falling I threw my body out far enough to just graze the gutter of the pool, but the impact was enough to knock me unconscious. Thereafter my eyesight grew progressively worse.

Of all the great mentors in my life, the most inspiring and helpful person was Mama. She always said I was special and that I was destined to be great. She knew this because I was born with a blue veil covering my face, which seemed to her to be an omen. This phenomenon though rare, is not a dangerous thing. Doctors merely clip the “veil” away. When I was first blinded, I

came home to cry on her shoulder. I had lost my girl friend, could no longer participate in swimming and coaching, and I was fast approaching blindness. I was extremely depressed. I attempted to work for Dad in the concrete business, but after a few days of this, I told Mama, "That shovel just doesn't fit my hand."

Mama would not tolerate my self-pity. She said, "Son, you have to prepare yourself for life as a blind person. Hanging around here and whining is something I can't tolerate." Because of Mama's volunteer activities, she was aware that the road to usefulness would be a hard one. During her volunteer days she saw veterans who had multiple handicaps with lost limbs and blindness being very common afflictions. They were adjusting and she knew I could too, if I made the effort. She said, "Why don't you enroll yourself in the Orientation Center for the Blind. I don't want you hanging around the house with this attitude."

She was just as tough on my sisters, if not tougher. When one of them would say, "I'm blind and I can't," she would counter with, "Oh yes you can. Get over here and do this chore now!" There was never any mistaking her words and no pleading was allowed. If they stumbled, she expected them to pick themselves up and keep going.

This is a perfect example of "tough love," which made all three of us very strong and independent in our lives. Mama no doubt was the main mentor of all of her children, especially me.

On the other hand, Granny would say in her soft Sicilian tongue, "Better to be dead than blind." She meant no disrespect, but she saw no hope for any of us, remembering the fate of the many handicapped of Sicily, most of whom would become beggars. Yet, she remained a strong influence on my life because of her saintliness.

Eventually I had to swallow my pride and do something about learning to get around with my poor eyesight. At Mama's urging I became a student at the Orientation Center for the Blind on Broadway in Oakland. This was a facility to assist newly blinded

in learning Braille and mobility skills. It was an old facility where the elderly blind had permanent residence alongside the new students. This was a horribly frustrating experience for me and I had a very difficult time adjusting to blind orientation.

While staying there, I would go out almost every night. I had a number of good friends, including girlfriends, who were sighted and they would pick me up. Both the director Alan Jenkins and his assistant Kenneth Jernigan confronted me about my attitude. The thrust of their remarks was that I simply was not suited for orientation since I had too many sighted friends and I was still doing my regular swim workouts. It was really obvious to me I was not winning a popularity contest; I was housed next to a 90-year-old man everyone called La-La Charlie because he would shuffle down the hall and sing La-La-La-La. This was no place for a young and restless person such as me to be. I was beginning to fear ending up like La-La Charlie.

Despite these injustices I learned how to travel by cane and to read Braille just enough to be able to play cards. I met others who were in the same boat and developed friendships. One evening when we were walking to the local coffee shop one of the students stopped suddenly and refused to go any further. When urged to catch up, the poor fellow said, "I can't. There's a big ditch or something here. My cane doesn't even hit the bottom." It turned out he had placed his cane directly into a grate at the curb and was terrified to move even so much as an inch.

Ken Jernigan, who was a wrestler and weight lifter and in very good shape, one day challenged me to a wrestling match and rope-jumping contest. Jernigan had the record for rope-jumping and was an outstanding wrestler. I had never wrestled competitively nor had I done much rope-jumping. Jernigan offered a steak dinner to any of the students who could beat him in rope-jumping or wrestling. It was obvious this challenge was aimed directly at me. I accepted the challenge to wrestle him and quickly had Jernigan pinned for the win. Jernigan then challenged me to a

jump rope contest. Again I prevailed. Jernigan owed me two steak dinners and this made him very unhappy. This seemed to deepen the rift between us.

Eventually I was expelled from the Orientation Center, and I became very depressed. I was at a loss as to what to do with my life. Behind the Orientation Center was the broom shop, where the blind were employed to make brooms. It was operated by some veterans from the Korean War who had all been blinded, primarily by napalm. I became acquainted with some of the young men and they promised to teach me to make brooms. This would be one step away from being a street beggar. I lasted exactly two days and, after screwing up their machines, cutting my hands, and strewing broom bristles all over the place, I was the first person they ever fired from the broom shop. This was the lowest period of my young life.

As I left the broom shop I walked to a nearby bus stop. I was sitting on the bench with my head lowered and was weeping, when a counselor at the Orientation Center happened upon this scene. Seeing how distressed I was, he offered to help me by taking me to see his friend, Professor Jacobus tenBroek, at the University of California. Through desperation, I accepted this proposition and ended up staying with the Professor and his wife for a couple of weeks. At this period of my life, I considered this brilliant professor to be my personal guardian angel.

One of the things Dr. tenBroek instilled in me was that blindness should not throw me into despair. On the contrary, I should accept the various gaffs in my life in good cheer. Once while giving a speech, Dr. TenBroek related his philosophy, thusly, "If a person who loses his clothes is considered denuded, wouldn't it stand to reason then that if a person has lost his sight, he would be considered delighted?" Dr. TenBroek helped me to understand that blindness should not deter my success in anything I endeavored to do. I tried always to apply Dr. tenBroek's philosophies and, indeed, did accomplish many of my goals.

Dr. Jacobus tenBroek was chairman of the Department of Speech at the University of California, Berkeley and a renowned Constitutional law attorney. When Dr. tenBroek was seven years old he lost the sight of one eye as a result of an accident with a bow and arrow. His other eye began to deteriorate and by the time he was fourteen years old he was totally blind. Some time after this, his family moved to California so Jacobus could attend the California School for the Blind. He soon became active in the local organization for the blind, and by 1934 he had joined the California Council of the Blind, later to be known as the National Federation of the Blind of California.

Six years later, Dr. tenBroek established the National Federation of the Blind. During this same time, he received his doctorate in jurisprudence from the University of California and completed a year as a Brandeis Research Fellow at Harvard Law School. In 1942 he began his teaching career at the University of California, Berkeley. His accomplishments were never-ending and he became the mentor of many young blind persons, including me when I was only nineteen or twenty years old. He died at age fifty-six in 1968 of cancer. His successor to the National Federation of the Blind of California was Kenneth Jernigan.

Dr. tenBroek asked me to take several tests and after a few months of communication and friendship, he said he thought I had an aptitude for law and thought I would do very well. I, however, had neither the interest nor the background in pre-law or political science; nor was I much interested in becoming a lawyer at this time.

Shortly after meeting Dr. tenBroek, I was introduced to Dr. Perry, another blind professor, who was a professor of mathematics at the University of California. I stayed with him for a week and learned mental mathematics, as well as other memory techniques which would be of great assistance to me for the rest of my life. Dr. Perry taught me techniques on how to listen and interpret. These were skills necessary for success as a blind professional.

These were the days of mentoring. Many professors at Cal Berkeley would take it upon themselves to mentor someone who showed exceptional promise, or, as in my case, not using all capabilities to my best advantage. I was fortunate to have been mentored by two of the most brilliant men I would ever meet.

In the meantime, I took a one-year course at the California School of Physical Therapy in San Francisco while living at the YMCA in San Francisco. I was allowed to transfer these credits to the University of California, thanks to the help of Dr. tenBroek. My college courses were primarily physical education courses. It was my intention to work with aquatics, to own my own swimming pools, and to coach and swim professionally. I had the idea that I would work with handicapped children in water therapy, massage and exercise techniques. It was my desire to coach and work in hydro-therapy, offering it to those in need. This was a new concept and the Jacuzzi Company was just beginning the development of their jet-water therapy, which would become very helpful in the treatment of the orthopedically handicapped and later became a luxury item for the world.

I was always very interested in swimming and began competing at age twelve. I received my lifeguard certificate at age sixteen and during the summers I would lifeguard at summer camps, resorts, and city pools. I became a swimming instructor at age seventeen and operated my own swim classes at the local parish pool that Dad had built in El Cerrito called the Catacombs Club. I began to develop an outstanding reputation as a swimming instructor and at one point went to Los Angeles to learn techniques from a famous instructor of infants. She was world-renowned for her water babies, teaching them to swim before they could walk. I studied under her for several months and later instructed my own two sons to swim before they could walk.

I maintained this strong interest in swimming and began to work out at Crystal Plunge in San Francisco. Eventually I caught the eye of Charlie Sava, coach of the U.S. women's swim team. Initially

I trained with Charlie in competitive swimming. After entering several competitions, it was learned that I could not compete as an amateur because I had accepted money for life-guarding and swimming instruction, thus making me a professional. After this, I became interested in distance swimming, so the thrust of my swimming was endurance-related.

Charlie Sava coached quite a number of famous women including Ann Curtis, Barbara Stark, and Lynn Vidale. Also among his pupils was Marion Olsen Kane, one of the most successful coaches of synchronized swimming. In order for Sava's swimmers to compete, they did all their travel by cross-country automobile trips for lack of funds to fly the team from place-to-place.

While being coached by Charlie Sava, I made numerous swims from San Francisco to Marin County. This was in preparation for a swim at Tahoe. Part of my training included ice baths to ready myself for the cold waters of Tahoe. In order to qualify for this swim, I would need to swim the 11-mile width of Lake Tahoe. A Cuban competitor and I were the two finalists who qualified. I was sponsored by the Associated Clubs of Lake Tahoe and had the honor of being a guest dealer at Harrah's Club. The young Cuban was sponsored by the San Francisco Examiner.

When the big day arrived, I was accompanied by Dad and Mama in the boat. They kept me supplied with Hershey Bars and lots of encouragement. My body was greased down with petroleum jelly. I dove into the icy waters of Tahoe and swam several hours before they found it necessary to pull me out. The water was 49 degrees and my entire body was numb. The Cuban failed even before I did. A few years later a 16-year-old girl swam the 22-mile length and followed this feat the next year by swimming the length back and forth. This was the era of Florence Chadwick who swam the English Channel. It seems the boys were being outclassed in the distance and cold.

After completing the course in physical therapy and obtaining

my degree, I went to work for Jack LaLanne as a massage therapist. Mr. LaLanne has an interesting history. He was purportedly addicted to sugar as a child, which caused him to become very violent. He set his parents' house on fire and attacked his brother with an ax. He was in very poor health and very weak. The family doctor suggested he be removed from school to rest and regain his strength. His mother offered strong maternal support for him and accompanied him to a lecture by Paul C. Bragg, a nutritionist. After analyzing LaLanne's regimen, he told him he was a human garbage can. This was the beginning of LaLanne's recovery period. He turned his life around with a strict diet and exercise. By the time he was 18, he was running a home bakery selling healthy breads, and operating a home gym where he trained policemen and firemen in exercise and weight lifting. His reputation as a physical fitness guru eventually led to his 20-year stint as the host of TV's "Jack LaLanne Show," demonstrating exercises aimed principally at homemakers, using items found around the home. Even though he is now 90 years old, LaLanne still maintains his excellent health.

Among my other employers were the Catacombs Club in El Cerrito, Richmond Plunge, Albany Pool, City of Berkeley and City of Oakland. By 1954 I was making very good money working at all these different swimming pools, despite my failing eyesight. In 1954 the doctors advised me that I would lose the remainder of my sight within the next year and would be rendered totally blind or, perhaps, have some light perception. At this time I was Aquatics Instructor for the cities of Oakland and Berkeley and was also life guarding at Lake Anza. Eventually I expressed some interest in the legal profession. Dr. tenBroek was overjoyed with this news. He then suggested I take a correspondence course in law in order to get a head start. This was advice well given and eventually I started studying through LaSalle Correspondence School.

CHAPTER Twenty-Two

Midsummer Romance

One day in the summer of 1954 Tootsie, Topsy, and a couple of their friends went to Lake Anza for a day of fun and games. Normally there was an entry fee, but I was the lifeguard at this facility, and all the girls were allowed in free and were having a great time. I showed up to see how the girls were doing and just hung out for awhile. Eventually the girls decided to go their on way, but I convinced Sherry, one of Topsy's friends, to take a walk around the lake with me. I immediately found her to be very attractive. This was at a time when I was aware that I would become blind within a short period of time. We just had a casual conversation. It was getting late and the sun was dipping a little. The wind came up and Sherry got chilled. I was chivalrous and offered my jacket, which Sherry gratefully accepted. All-in-all this was a pleasant outing. Perhaps this was a harbinger of something to come.

We met a couple more times, but nothing really came of our meetings until my sister, Topsy, disappeared. During the summer of 1955 Topsy became engaged. Sherry was to be her maid of honor. Plans were going very well, and then Topsy got cold feet and simply disappeared. A week or so later I called Sherry to ask if she had seen

my sister. Even her fiancé did not know where she was. Since Sherry was her best friend, it was assumed she would know her whereabouts. Sherry insisted she knew nothing. Eventually Topsy returned home and married her fiancé, Paul.

After a couple weeks I asked Sherry out on a date. We went dancing at a little night club in Oakland where I introduced her to her first martini, which she absolutely could not drink. On the second date we went to see a movie in Berkeley where my friend John Lawrence worked. This was an “art theater,” and the movies we saw were “The Tales of Hoffman” and “The Red Shoes.” We continued to date for several weeks, and then in August we eloped to Reno, Nevada. Sherry’s mother was so upset when she called her in the wee hours of the morning to announce the marriage, all she could think to ask was, “Who did you marry?” When Sherry told her she married me, she breathed a sigh of relief and said, “Thank God!” Later that month, we were married in St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Berkeley, California. I was twenty-one years old and Sherry was seventeen. How grateful I was for the opportunity of having a companion at this time to be with me, to comfort me and to share my goals. Although Sherry was very young at the time, she had a maturity and willingness to encourage me, regardless of the circumstances, blind or otherwise. When I told her that blindness was inevitable, she was not surprised. She said, “We can work together to achieve whatever goals you want.”

As newlyweds we set up housekeeping on Grove Street (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Street) in Berkeley. Life was not too easy for us in these early days. Sherry worked for a salary that is too embarrassing to mention, it was so small. I was Director of Aquatics for the City of Berkeley. This supplemented the income somewhat, but the best contribution at this time was “blind aid,” a sum of money paid by the state of California for those with impaired sight.

As part of my job with the City of Berkeley, I held an aquatic show at the Berkeley Y swimming pool. Without even so much as a rehearsal, we staged a little magic act. Sherry was a little uneasy about the whole thing, but she was game. She was required to tie

me up with a very thick rope and throw me into the deep end of the pool. She was wearing a black slinky bathing suit and sort of strutted around like a model. I struggled a few seconds and before long I rose to the top completely free of the ropes. The audience went wild.

After a few months living in this apartment, we decided it was time to find another location. One weekend, with the help of Topsy and her now husband Paul Napolitano (the original fiancé and father of her child), we moved out. As we were driving away, the landlord came out shouting and cursing at us and attempting to hit the car with a stick. We were all laughing as we sped away never to return to this scene.

We found another apartment, closer to Sherry's new job in Oakland. She had transferred from the Richmond office to the Oakland office of Pacific Finance. This was within walking distance of both our jobs and just down the street from Uncle Al and Aunt Jessie. Spud and Spuddie were our landlords and very nice people. They allowed us to redecorate the apartment any way we wanted. We painted the kitchen white and dyed the carpet red!

We visited Uncle Al and Aunt Jessie on a regular basis. Uncle Al was a great story teller and he would relate tales of his childhood and tell us about things that happened to his family during their stay in Des Moines. He always got a sad tone to his voice when talking of his father, Dominic. His father desperately wanted him to become a lawyer. Perhaps, if circumstances had been different, Albert would have made his father proud and become an attorney. The untimely death of Dominic made life very hard for his surviving family.

Uncle Al always had a card trick or a mathematical trick of some sort to teach us. Now and then Sherry would walk over to their house and borrow Aunt Jessie's ironing board. She also let Sherry in on the secrets to making great spaghetti sauce. Eventually, Sherry learned to cook. She asked several of my female relatives how they made their sauce, and got different answers from all of them, so she decided to take the best of each and make it her own sauce. This worked out very well.

Other than visiting family and a few friends, our main entertainment consisted of a movie now and then. We got hooked on science fiction films, and every time a new one came out, we could be seen skipping arm in arm up the street to one of the theaters. Now and then we would go dancing at one of the ballrooms in Oakland. Sometimes we would go with friends or family. We always enjoyed this form of recreation. Sherry always told me I danced like a boxer. Maybe this was because I was an amateur boxer for a brief period of my life.

Once in a great while we were able to afford dinner out, but not at very expensive restaurants. One of our favorite places was the Ground Cow on Broadway in Oakland. They made the best hamburgers in the world. We usually topped off our meal with apple pie ala mode and a strong cup of coffee. Another place we enjoyed was the Hofbrau, which was very near our apartment. It too was affordable. We weren't too keen on fast food places, with one exception – Caspers Hot Dogs. They served the best foot-long hot dogs in the universe.

For the most part we walked to our destinations or, if the distance was too far, we would take the bus. Eventually we bought our first car. It was a 1949 Studebaker. We paid \$10 down and was expected to make payments to the car dealership. After a couple weeks with this car, things started breaking. When the starter broke off and we were required to use a knife to start the car, this was the last straw. Sherry managed to drive it back to the dealership. She handed the keys to the proprietor and told him he could keep this piece of junk. When he threatened to sue her, she turned on him and said, "Go ahead. I'm only 17 years old and you cheated me. How will that look in court?" The lawsuit never materialized.

Our next car was a 1951 Chevrolet. This was a wonderful car. After we paid it off, we had it painted bright red with a shiny black top and twin baby spotlights on either side of the car. We loved this car and took it on many little trips around northern California.

CHAPTER Twenty-Three

The Famous and Infamous

Some time after our marriage, Dr. tenBroek introduced me to a two-fisted criminal lawyer named Leo Sullivan, who was in his declining years. A native of Eau Clair, Wisconsin, he studied law while working in the shipyards in San Francisco and was admitted to practice law in 1921. Leo was known for his rapier wit and searing cross-examinations. He became quite famous as a criminal lawyer, defending murderers, gamblers and bootleggers on both sides of the bay. Leo was one of the finest criminal lawyers in the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Area and was written up by Mel Belli, a prominent San Francisco attorney, as a lawyer who received the largest fee in a criminal case and who was a superb cross-examiner.

Leo was working on an appeal in the case of *People vs. Burton Abbott*, a notorious kidnap-murder case in Alameda County. Mr. Abbott was convicted of first degree murder and kidnapping and sentenced to be executed. Leo needed someone to drive him around and to do research on this case. I thought this would be a great opportunity to see a master at work and to learn some techniques from him.

Leo instructed me that, unlike most criminal lawyers who gauged success on acquittals, his standard for success was to get the very best dispositions for his clients and, if a trial would result in a conviction, he would not consider this an unfavorable result if he had done his very best. Leo insisted on knowing all the facts and stated how important it was to be truthful with the attorney. He made it very clear to his clients that the fact that the client was guilty, did not affect his ability to represent the client. In fact, in most cases, it made it possible for him to achieve the best defense. Number one was to obtain the truth from the client regarding all the facts relevant to the case. Number two was to evaluate all the facts and determine whether or not there are any defenses, technical constitutional issues or lack of evidence to prove guilt. Number three was, if the case of the prosecution is weak, or there is a constitutional objection to the admission of evidence, Leo would advise the client that despite the guilt, he would exhaust all remedies to secure either a dismissal or acquittal without resorting to perjury. I observed many cases where the client was guilty for one reason or another. Either the evidence was insufficient to convict, it was as a result of good investigation, or just good cross-examination which would often result in an acquittal with the client never having taken the stand. Many cases were resolved prior to trial by motions to dismiss for lack of probable cause or unconstitutional grounds.

If, after completely evaluating the case and finding that there was no adequate defense, and there appeared to be no objections on constitutional grounds, Leo would then advise the client that he would make every effort to discuss, with the prosecution, a plea bargain, or, in the case of mental illness or substance abuse, the possibility of a disposition on those grounds.

One of Leo's techniques in questioning witnesses was to not follow a sequential pattern, but to shift his questions from issue to issue in such a manner as to surprise the witness with a question that required an important response. He, therefore, never wrote

down lists of questions to ask, but rather devised a method of approaching the response he wanted in an indirect fashion.

I prided myself in adopting Leo's techniques and gradually realized that my blindness was, in fact, a substantial asset in interviewing clients and examining jurors and witnesses.

One evening while doing some research on the Abbott case, we were having trouble locating a particular volume in the library. A very nice Japanese gentleman offered to help us. This turned out to be an unexpected opportunity. Joe Morozumi became another great mentor for me. He tutored me in the study of law and eventually Joe and his wife Chang became our closest friends.

Mr. Abbott's appeal was unsuccessful and in 1957 he was executed at San Quentin Prison. It was hard for us to believe he was really guilty, based on the information we uncovered. In addition, this was very swift justice for the state of California. There were actually a couple other suspects that certain evidence pointed to who could easily have committed the crime and disposed of the little girl's body.

Leo would often call "the kids," as he referred to us, whenever he needed a ride somewhere. We always obliged. Sometimes he needed to get somewhere to interview a potential client or to gather evidence or, as was often the case, to collect money. He had a very bad heart and at least once a week he needed to go to the emergency room and be put on oxygen. During this time of his life he was practically a chain smoker. This was very scary, but Leo just took it in his stride. There were those who believed he was faking these "heart attacks," but this was nonsense. We saw how he suffered and often wondered if we would get him to the hospital in time.

On August 28, 1956, our first wedding anniversary, Leo contacted us and asked to be driven to a place in west Oakland. Sherry was not too keen on this, since it was our first anniversary and this was a very scary part of town. Nevertheless, we said okay and took Leo to his rendezvous. We waited in the car for

about 45 minutes and Sherry was getting madder and madder. When Leo finally emerged, he was smiling and said, “Okay, let’s go to The City!” Sherry begged him to let us off the hook because it was our anniversary. He said, “I know. I’m taking you two out on the town.”

That night he took us to the Sinaloa Club for dinner and the floor show, Ann’s 440 Club just to meet Ann, and a couple other places we never would have dreamed of going to. This was a memorable evening and all was forgiven.

While driving back across the bay that evening, it became apparent Leo had imbibed a little more than he should have. He regaled us with his courtroom tales and his history of just going down to the jail house and lining up the whores who had just been busted. He told of representing the Tongs of San Francisco, who kept him on a retainer for many years. His tales of representing the Chinese of San Francisco never failed to entertain.

One of Leo’s more remarkable exploits came late in 1948 when Oakland police raided an alleged Chinese lottery establishment, seizing three tons of marked and unmarked tickets. In strangled tones, Mr. Sullivan informed the court a terrible mistake had been made. The establishment, he said, was the headquarters for recruiting a Chinese expeditionary force to send to China to fight on behalf of beleaguered Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. The tickets, Mr. Sullivan declaimed, were no more than draft cards. Since there was no one in court who could prove they were not draft cards, Mr. Sullivan’s 25 clients strolled out of the courtroom scot-free.

It seemed as though Leo knew everyone on earth. He could not walk down the streets of San Francisco or Oakland without someone greeting him as an old friend.

The two years working with Leo and later having the advantage of his presence at some of my trials, proved to be the greatest asset of my early career, and later helped me develop into a very competent criminal lawyer.

Along the way, we met several other famous people. Among them was Robert Treuhft, another well-known attorney about town. Of course, his wife became the more famous of the two. She was Jessica (Decca) Mitford Treuhft. Bob and Decca had one son, named Ben. Decca had a daughter from her first marriage. Ben was as headstrong and notorious as his mother and father put together. In 1994 he began a project called “Send a Piana to Havana.” He got into trouble for that project, but continued his effort any way.

Then there was jaunty Benjamin Marlowe who always wore a bow tie and a boutonniere in his lapel. One evening after a particularly grueling evening of research at the local law library, we found ourselves socializing with Ben, Bob, and Leo. We chatted for about a half hour out in front of the courthouse when Ben suddenly looked at his watch and declared, “Oh, my God. My wife is going to kill me if I don’t get home now!” So the fearless little Benjamin Marlowe was afraid of something after all.

Of all these famous attorneys, Leo stands out as probably one of the most memorable persons I ever met.

CHAPTER Twenty-Four

Granny

In 1957 we moved in with Granny. She was recovering from surgery and needed a lot of help. Sherry learned to cook many Sicilian delicacies from this woman. She also learned the names of herbs in Italian and a few not so nice Italian words to be used against those who displeased her, even me. Sherry often helped Granny with her reading. Granny had a first or second grade primer that she was trying very hard to master.

Granny would often reminisce about the old days in Sicily and later when she first arrived in America. She often spoke of the hardships she and her sons experienced after the death of her husband, Dominic, and how they managed to survive. She was very proud of her sons for the help they gave her throughout this trying period of their lives.

After her recovery, Granny moved around the corner to an old Victorian house owned by Dad. We continued to look in on her and made sure her needs were met. One day she was walking down the stairs and she lost her footing and fell. She broke her hip in the process and was hospitalized. When someone breaks a hip, it is not unusual for the human body to begin to deteriorate. Death soon follows. This happened in Granny's case.

Francesca Vittoria Venticinque Sposeto died May 12, 1957. No one

knows why she never took her father's name, Valenti, but she always insisted her maiden name was Venticinque. The entire Sposeto clan showed up for the Rosary which was held at Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland. The younger members of the family were in the front rows, seated more or less together. Tootsie, Topsy and Sherry were in the second row behind some of our cousins. An old priest came to lead the Rosary and as he knelt, it became obvious he had a very bad case of gas. There was little or no reaction to this phenomenon, but about the fourth time he audibly passed gas, there was a little snicker from somewhere. That set some of the young people off. Sherry began to shake so hard from suppressing her giggles that she had to feign crying, thus excusing herself and going outside. She was soon followed by the rest. They were all laughing so hard, because they could just imagine Granny saying, "Son of a bitch once, son of a bitch twice..." then throwing a pot or pan at the back of the priest's head.

I took my legal studies very seriously. That winter I arranged to take the College Equivalency Examination since I had not finished my undergraduate studies at Cal Berkeley. This was prerequisite to entering law school. Sherry helped me study and read this exam for me. The way it worked was Sherry would read the questions and I would dictate my answers or choose a true or false or a, b, c, etc., answer. I passed with flying colors.

Once this was accomplished I submitted several applications to law schools including Boalt Hall at Cal Berkeley, Stanford University, and Santa Clara University. I received acceptance letters from both Stanford and Santa Clara Universities. Tuition was approximately the same at both Universities, so it was a matter of what was the more appealing. It was large prestigious campus versus small prestigious campus. Santa Clara University won out. I selected Santa Clara because at that time classes were small and relaxed and a friendly environment prevailed. Cal and Stanford were very cold. My class at Santa Clara Law School consisted of about 35 male members. By my third year for the first time in Santa Clara University history, two women were enrolled in the law school.

CHAPTER Twenty-Five

Law School

Santa Clara County, California was one of the original 27 counties in California in 1850. It is located at the southern end of San Francisco Bay and extends to Gilroy in the south. From 1849 to 1852 San José was the state capital. Since the mid-twentieth century, much of this beautiful fertile valley has been covered with concrete. Once known as the Valley of Hearts Desire, it is now known as Silicon Valley.

Santa Clara was a charming little city. Franklin Street was the main street and was about 9 or 10 blocks long starting at El Camino Real on the east side and ending on Bellamy Street on the west side. Traveling from east to west one would encounter the University of Santa Clara on the left. There was a small but very clean theater a short distance west of the university, a wonderful Italian delicatessen, Pereira's Clothing Store which carried a very nice line of ladies' clothing, and Wilson's Jewel Bakery across the street. Two or three little taverns dotted the scene, some serving meals at lunch time. Bill's Smoke Shop was a "mom and pop" operation and a favorite for picking up small items when one did not wish to make a trip to the super market. A barber shop was

next to Bill's Smoke Shop and up the street to the west was Bank of America. Across from the bank was a Safeway and next to that was a hair salon. At the end of Franklin on the left was a service station and across from that on the right was an A and W Root Beer stand. Along the west side of Bellamy was a stone wall that surrounded the Carmelite Convent where nuns were cloistered.

Today most of this is gone. The university has expanded to several more blocks and the Carmelites are still there. The rest of the downtown area has been demolished to make room for urban renewal. It is still a nice little city, but not nearly as charming as the old days.

At the end of that summer we loaded up the old Chevy and headed out of Oakland down to the peninsula and Santa Clara, where palm trees swayed and everybody had an orchard in their backyards. We found a brand new apartment on Jackson Street in Santa Clara. This was in reasonable walking distance both to the University and to the bus stop where Sherry would board the bus every morning to go to her job at Bank of America downtown San José. Besides holding down a full-time job, Sherry also was my reader. She never got enough sleep in those days. There were times when she would have to beg off for the evening.

Just prior to entering law school, I was almost completely blind and had limited light perception. I eventually received monetary assistance for being blind and a University scholarship which included an allowance from the state allowing me to hire readers to assist with law school.

I was extremely frightened about beginning my studies, and felt that I would have a difficult time studying law in a classroom environment. Even though I had successfully completed a correspondence law degree, this was a superficial introduction to the law. It did give me some background to pass the entrance exams successfully. I was told there would be no dispensations, and that my sighted guide and I would have to do all the legal research, take exams and prepare briefs the same as all other students. I did not

know Braille sufficiently to take notes, but knew a little to label files and material and, more particularly, to play cards.

Just prior to beginning my classes, I went into the Mission Chapel and prayed for about three hours. Emerging from this experience, I felt renewed and confident to begin my studies.

With the small grant I received, I was able to hire part-time readers. I used several undergraduates from Santa Clara University who would prove to be very competent. Dick Bernacchi was probably one of the most brilliant students Santa Clara ever had. He took the two-part CPA exam and passed both events with flying colors with just one try, a thing that was unheard of at this time. After his undergraduate year he went to law school. He now practices law in southern California. Ed Lee was another student who later became a lawyer and, like Bernacchi, is practicing law in Southern California.

I developed some very close friendships in law school. Sal Liccardo, it turned out, was the nephew of Marino Liccardo (aka Lee Cardo), who was Sherry's violin teacher in the East Bay. Sal established a very lucrative practice in Santa Clara County. Then there was Jim Quinlan. He was just a lovable, clumsy character. He loved playing cribbage, and many nights we would play till dawn. Unfortunately, Jim developed cancer and died before he could really establish a career. Chuck Shea became a favorite friend. He was a Stanford undergraduate and outstanding football player for Stanford University. He has since retired and has a large ranch in Oregon. As a sideline he has become very interested in Bonsai gardening and has entered his achievements in competitions.

Of all the young men that we met, though, Mitch Madsen became a very special friend. Both Mitch and Chuck were outstanding basketball players and played for a San José team (Sam's Automotive), San José's most outstanding basketball team. I would go with them regularly to their games and they would take me to the San Francisco Warriors basketball games in San Francisco and later in Oakland. I became friends with Franklin Meuli who was

owner of the San Francisco Warriors and frequently he would allow me to sit on the bench with the Warrior team. I was also a regular half-time guest of Bill King's, one of the greatest basketball and football announcers of all time. I organized a Warrior's fan club and enjoyed very much attending and following their championship games with the great Wilt Chamberlain, Rick Barry, Nate Thurman and others. It was a thrill to sit on the bench with these guys and observe firsthand the workings of a professional basketball team.

The first time Sherry met Mitch was at a law school Christmas party. Mitch was sitting at the bar drinking and just ignoring everyone. I was busy regaling someone with stories and decided to introduce Sherry to Mitch, who seemed to be having a miserable time. At first Sherry was uncomfortable, but it wasn't long before they were able to converse with each other, and actually enjoyed their conversation. Mitch became a lifelong friend and business partner.

Since the classes at Santa Clara University were small, the guys were very willing to help me in every way they could. When I was called on to give a brief on a case, the guys would help stimulate my memory by saying, "Hey, Dom, that's the carrot case," or, "That's the dog case," or if it was a Judge Owens question, "That's the Dobbin case." I used a large reel-to-reel recorder to record lectures. With all the help of the faculty and students, I was able successfully to complete my first year of law school.

Santa Clara Law School had an excellent reputation and was one of the few institutions to have 100% of their students pass the State Bar on their first attempt. The standards of the school had declined in the few years prior to my admission. Dean McKinney had been at the helm several years, but his health was declining. Prior to hiring a new dean, Professor George Strong, who was Assistant Dean of the Law School, became acting Dean. Dean Strong was a very meticulous gentleman. No one really quite knew how to take him. His wit was thoroughly dipped in wry, slathered with irony, and dotted with sarcasm. A brilliant man, he had been a student of

Santa Clara Law School during the 100% bar passage. He also had been one of the top students at Santa Clara University.

That second year of law school, a Harvard professor was hired, in addition to a new Dean, in an attempt to improve the standards of the school. At the beginning of his first class, the Harvard professor spent 40 minutes explaining how he was going to improve the standards of the law school. He said everyone was to write down his new standards and policy for improving the academic standards of the school and keep them in their binders.

He noticed me, sitting in the front row chewing on an unlit cigar, and not knowing I was blind, said, “Mr. Sposeto, what’s wrong with you? Why aren’t you taking any notes?” I replied rather absently, “I’m sorry sir, I neither read nor write.” He screeched, “My God, I knew things were bad, but this beats it all!” He then asked, “What kind of smartass are you?” and at this point he asked me to step out into the hall. The class broke out in laughter but no one mentioned that I was blind, including me. As I fumbled my way to the door to the hallway, the professor asked, “What the hell’s the matter with you. Are you drunk or something?” I then confessed that I was blind. At this the tough old guy said, “That’s no excuse. You should learn Braille.” I didn’t want to mention I had been kicked out of the Orientation Center, so I just said, “Yes, sir,” and returned to my seat.

Although my method of study as a blind person was unorthodox because I did not use Braille, I really developed a skill for listening and was very grateful to my mentors Dr. Perry and Dr. tenBroek for their instruction in the use of memory devices.

Our social life was not very exciting. We had so little money to be able to afford much more than dinner at a pizza parlor or a movie at the local theater. We did attend all the law school socials such as the annual Christmas party and one or two other functions.

During my third year of law school we lived in an apartment complex with a pool. We socialized a lot with our neighbors and had some great parties. Summers were spent out by the pool. There

were a number of Santa Clara University students living there, including one or two other law school students.

During the summers, I was employed as an aquatics instructor for the Easter Seal camp in the hills of Saratoga, California. By now I was completely blind and was the first blind aquatics instructor ever to accept such a position. The Easter Seal Society was willing to give me an opportunity because of my past experiences in aquatics. Also, I had a number of assistants from the colleges in the area who would do the in-water work with the orthopedically handicapped children. In previous years there was a reluctance to let these children swim in the deep water or use the diving board and many would come to camp year after year without learning to swim. With the help of my staff, almost all of the children would learn to swim in a few days and enjoy diving. At the end of their stay, they presented a water show for the parents where the children performed their newly learned skills, including diving and synchronized swimming. Working with these youngsters made me realize that life could have been a lot worse.

I graduated from Santa Clara University School of Law in June 1961. Governor Pat Brown was the guest speaker at the ceremony. After graduation, a special dinner was being hosted by the University of Santa Clara for the graduating law school students. The evening of the banquet, I was out with Mitch, Chuck and Bill Brown. We were in the parking lot of Moonlight Shopping Center in Santa Clara, and the guys convinced me to get behind the wheel of the car. One of them guided the wheel and sort of ducked down in order to be inconspicuous. Up ahead was the dean of the law school. I “drove” up to him, rolled down the window and asked for directions to where the banquet was being held. The dean nearly dropped his teeth. He said, “Sposeto, are you driving?” I responded, “Yes, sir.” The guys in unison broke into hysterical laughter and explained to the dean the joke they were playing.

PART THREE

THE BLIND ADVOCATE 1961-PRESENT



Dominic Sposeto and his guide dog Schooner

CHAPTER Twenty-Six

After Law School

The summer after law school I took a bar review course in San Francisco, and when I returned Sherry and I decided we would look into adopting a child. We went to a first meeting of potential adoptive parents. The procedure was complicated and not without risk, but we were prepared to go forward with this idea. We had been married for six years and were very disappointed not to have had a pregnancy during that time. This was probably the tensest time of our lives. There was the impending bar exam, Sherry still working at Lockheed, and doing a lot of the reading for me, and our finances were not the best. Well-meaning family members would often tell her that once I passed the bar, we would be relaxed enough so that pregnancy would soon follow. She was very frustrated about this.

One warm day in July after a conversation with Father Frugoli, a priest at Santa Clara University, he gave her a bottle of holy water and told her that it might have miraculous results. Sherry took him at his literal word and that night went home and douched with the holy water.

In September, Sherry began to experience some discomfort

and nausea. She made an appointment with a local doctor and he examined her thoroughly and just shook his head. She was sure she had some incurable ailment, for he seemed so serious. "When was your last period," the doctor asked. Sherry couldn't remember; she never marked her calendar because her periods were so erratic. "Well," he said, "you seem to be a little constipated. Take a mild laxative. This should help. Oh, and by the way," he added "I think you may be a momma."

The shock spread over her in great waves. Her eyes teared up and all she could muster was, "Really?" It was true. During the most trying time of our years together, Sherry became pregnant. She was sure it was the holy water.

When I learned that we were to have our first child, I was concerned about handling the baby as a blind person, especially with regard to safety. I was generally nervous about the coming birth. I read material written by blind mothers on caring for an infant, how to hold the child when bathing, how to diaper, how to hold while feeding, etc. I incorporated my own methods of diapering and bathing the children, but was not very good at pinning on diapers.

I failed to pass the bar on my first try. This was, of course very disappointing, but did not deter me from pursuing my goal. Sherry became my reader again. This time there was great determination to pass the bar. Gone was the arrogance either of us felt. With the help of my pregnant wife the following March 1962 I re-took the Bar exam.

This was a three-day exam, and just prior to taking the exam, we went to Chinatown to buy some fortune cookies. When we came out of the fortune cookie factory we discovered we had a flat tire. Not having a spare, I removed the flat tire and we set off down the hill to the nearest service station to have the tire repaired. As I was rolling the tire along, it got away from me. Down the hill it sped, causing absolute havoc in the busy streets of Chinatown. Every dialect of Chinese was in use at that moment

and there was no mistaking they were all upset. Sherry just took me by the arm and ignored everyone, pretending it wasn't our tire. We continued down the street and right there in the service station the tire had come to rest. With all the class we could muster, we picked up the tire and asked the garage man if he could fix it. He did and I laboriously rolled it back up the hill to the car. As I was replacing the tire, a crowd had gathered. They oohed and aahed at the wonder that a blind man could do such a feat. Sherry was miffed because I could have used some help and she was in no condition to be my helper.

The bar exam was held in a college auditorium with many tables set up on the main floor for the students to take the exam. Sherry and I were ushered into a side entrance to the auditorium stage where we were provided a table with a typewriter and two chairs. This was a very small, stuffy area that would not have accommodated another person, but we were not too unhappy to find some privacy since Sherry would be reading the questions aloud to me and I would be responding aloud with the answers.

About the second day of the bar exam, Sherry let out a slight moan. This startled me because she was about two weeks from her due date. It turned out there was nothing really wrong, she just needed to stretch a little before continuing, but it did cause some alarm.

That summer we received word that I had passed the bar! By then our infant son, Michael had been born almost two weeks to the day after the end of the bar exam. He came into the world March 29, 1962, a hale and hearty lad.

Joe and Change Morozumi were present when I was sworn in before the Supreme Court of California, located in San Francisco, California. During this swearing in process, little Michael needed a diaper change and when a break was called, with the help of Chang, his diaper was changed right there in the courtroom of the Supreme Court of the State of California.

CHAPTER Twenty-Seven

Legal Aid and Public Defenders' Office

Just before taking the bar exam, I took on the job of organizing and opening a Legal Aid and Public Defender Office. This was a very successful endeavor. For five years I operated as Chief Counsel and became an instructor for third year law students from Stanford and Santa Clara Universities. These students regularly attended the law clinic and received class credit for their participation. As their instructor, I annually hosted a Legal Aid banquet where I awarded certificates for outstanding students.

The opportunity of dealing with a volume of cases in the Legal Aid and Public Defender Office was a great asset for me to develop a style of my own. I incorporated many of Leo Sullivan's techniques and as a result I enjoyed great success as a blind person in the courtroom. I learned that it was extremely important to introduce myself as a blind person to those I met and thereafter direct my complete attention to the problems or issues at hand. I learned it was important to put the client at ease and not dwell on the issue of my blindness or create an impression of helplessness. Once this technique was learned, the client would often remark, "I forgot you were blind." I always considered this a compliment.

Eventually the two entities were split, with the Public Defenders' Office becoming a part of the State of California and County of Santa Clara legal system. The Legal Aid Society of Santa Clara County now employs a host of people and services thousands of needy people every year.

Upon graduating from law school and passing the bar exam, I made a special novena of nine daily masses and promised God that I would never decline a client who was without funds. And to this day I have kept my promise. I was, however, selective about those who might take advantage of my generosity, as opposed to being truly a needy client who had no other source of representation, and in my opinion was sincere. I had been taken advantage of a few times, but all that was in the process of growing and learning the skillful ways of some clients, especially those who knew I was compassionate and would assist those in need.

One time, a lady in need who was charged with running a house of prostitution, came to me. She said she had four children and had to resort to this business to support her kids because she was not eligible for welfare and was without funds. After representing her and conveying this sad story to the prosecutor, the prosecutor advised me that she owned two new Cadillacs and a second home in Reno. This was one of many instances in the process of my growth.

Early in 1963 I was asked to run for Congress against a very strong Republican candidate in the San José, California area. This was shortly before I was called to the house of an elderly Italian gentleman who had been a friend of my grandmother and her father. This gentleman befriended me and was a primary motivator for me to consider my family heritage and the effect this had on my life as a young lawyer. I was at a crossroads. I would need to choose the path of my gangster ancestors or listen to the voices of my saintly ancestors. This old gentleman was another one of my angels.

Dealing with the organized criminal element was now something entirely different from the Mafia of old. It was obvious

that an underworld that grew from what were good intentions to an unpopular criminal organization could easily have caused me to become involved in an unsavory group. This change in the Mafia came about during the time of my ancestors, from Domenico Miniscarchi to my father, Angelo Sposeto.

I very much respected the advice of this elderly man who enlightened me about the original intent of the Mafia and what it had now become. How easy it could have been to become involved under the guise of Italian honor and pride. Mama and Granny were instrumental in removing Dad from this element. Mama also impressed upon me the importance of not becoming obligated in any way to clients I represented or members of this underworld organization.

My campaign was very vigorous with support from Democrats on both the state and federal level. The fundraising began with a country-western hoedown at Napredak Hall, one of the areas well-established entertainment venues. There was a large turnout with many politicians and local contributors including a bay area premiere country-western band leader and radio personality, Cottonseed Clark.

Unfortunately, I had forgotten I had agreed not to run for political office while in the employ of the Legal Aid and Public Defender's Office. I was soon reminded of this by my employer and was forced to give up my political aspirations.

In the meantime, Sherry was preparing bankruptcies for those who could not afford an attorney. All this was with the blessing of the local Bankruptcy Referee. The Bankruptcy Court Clerks actually referred people who were in need to her. This helped with the finances, but it was spoiled when another woman who was also given permission to do bankruptcies, decided to advertise. This was an unethical practice at this time. Because of this offense, neither Sherry nor anyone else who was not an attorney was able to do bankruptcies for the indigent.

Mitch Madsen and I formed a partnership in 1963, with Mitch

handling civil matters and me handling criminal matters. We were blessed with the opportunity to share office space with one of Santa Clara County's finest lawyers, August Azzarello. He was in the process of phasing out his practice and welcomed these two young bucks to perhaps carry out his tradition. The large old-fashioned secretarial desk that Gus gave to me remains in the family and is in constant use to this day.

On April 30, 1963 Sherry gave birth to our second son, Anthony. He was exceptionally small, but perfect in every aspect. He did everything early, especially talk. He began to put sentences together when he was less than a year old and has not stopped yet!

One of my main concerns for my children was water safety, as we had a pool on the premises. I worked with both the boys in the water so that they could function by my showing them how to get to the ladder in the deep end of the pool. I first helped them overcome their fear of the water and instructed them with a method of learning to hold their breath under water, as they did not have the strength to hold their heads out of the water. Eventually, they could jump into the deep water and find their way to the ladder, which was my primary concern. This was their first introduction to swimming and both boys would become excellent swimmers.

For the next two years, I worked on establishing my law practice, while Sherry strove to be a good mother. It was difficult for both of us. I had the pressure of earning enough money to pay the bills and take care of my growing family. Sherry was sleepless in Santa Clara. Having two sons a year apart was difficult. Infancy brought its own problems while the one-year-old had his unique troubles. Pushing teeth through tender gums was one of them. If one was not awake the other was. This was harder than having twins. Eventually things equaled out and became much easier. As they grew older, the boys became great companions. Finally, I was enjoying a great deal of success in my law practice and Sherry was taking great joy in the raising of our two boys.

CHAPTER Twenty-Eight

Unstrung No More

From the early days of our marriage, Sherry had pretty much put away the violin in deference to other priorities. She literally sacrificed her musical career. This was a huge sacrifice, as she was truly a young prodigy, a gifted violinist who played and soloed with symphonies as a young girl. She hoped to resume her music some day. It is impossible to say how grateful I was that she worked so hard in her regular employment, but frequently would come home to read text material and help me with studies. I am certain that without her love and companionship I could not have succeeded with my objectives of becoming a lawyer.

In 1965 she decided talking baby talk all day long was not healthy for anyone, so she started to practice. The moment she put bow to string both boys burst into soul-searing sobs. They thought something awful was happening to their mother. After this ordeal she decided to practice while they were sleeping.

A couple weeks later, Sherry called the office of Amici Della Musica (a local professional chamber orchestra) for a possible audition. This was an orchestra that was sponsored by Santa Clara University. It was a professional orchestra and their concerts

were very well attended. Several weeks went by and nothing happened. Deciding not to pursue this further, she then contacted Jack O'Neill, conductor of the Los Gatos-Saratoga Symphony. He responded immediately. She auditioned and did so poorly she was assigned the back stand of the second violins. It must have been a case of too much rust between the bow and strings. It was probably well she had never received that call from the Amici, for the conductor absconded with all the money from the concerts and donations from various business owners as well as all the music and scores. This amounted to a great deal of money.

Being a member of the Los Gatos-Saratoga Symphony was a grand opportunity for Sherry to meet new people. One of the first persons she met was Carol O'Reilly, who was destined to be one of her best friends. It was Carol who convinced Sherry to sign up for a chamber music workshop in Arcata, California. That summer they flew there together and were roommates for the week. It was a lot of fun, but neither of them had any really great assignments.

A year went by and Sherry decided to audition again. This time she was auditioning for a better seat. She played one of the Beethoven Romances and was immediately assigned to the second stand of the first violins. That summer Sherry and Carol attended the chamber music workshop at Arcata for the second year in a row. This time they both got better assignments. They continued to attend workshops together as roommates for many years. The last one was the summer of 1972 at California State University at Chico, California. Carol had breast cancer that spread so fast, there was no way anyone could save her. Despite very aggressive treatment, she died October 15, 1972.

Sherry continued to attend the chamber music workshops for many years and over the years she developed many lifelong friends. Early on the boys got used to hearing her play, and since she played so much better, they tolerated her practicing. There was a period where Sherry was involved in playing the annual

Nutcracker Ballet by Tchaikovsky. She always made it a point to take the two boys and seat them in either the first or second row. They were always good and nearly always fell asleep before the first act was over. Once she took them to a concert in Los Gatos and after it was over asked, "If you could play any of the instruments in the orchestra, which would it be?" Michael pondered this and eventually said he would like one of the shiny brass instruments. When he was a bit older, he came home from school one day with a shiny brass trumpet. This lasted about two weeks. Mike thought it would be easy to learn because it only had three little valves. He soon lost interest, however, when he discovered the variety of combinations there were with these little valves.

Tony, however, said, "I want to play the stick!"

"The stick?" his mother asked.

"You know, like the man on the box with the stick," he replied. He was only about three years old when this conversation took place. Eventually he learned to play two sticks. The Sposetos had bred a drummer!

CHAPTER Twenty-Nine

Swimming and Life in the Fast Lane

I maintained my job with Legal Aid until 1965. In addition to my Legal Aid practice, I maintained separately a private practice with emphasis on criminal law.

In the meantime I continued my interest in swimming. I had been introduced a few years earlier to George Haines, an instructor at Santa Clara High School and the swim coach for the Santa Clara Swim Club. In the late 1960s or early 1970s I became the corporate attorney for the swim club. This was the premier swim club of the world. They held the most American and world records, placing as many as 20 Olympians on the 1972 Olympic team. Mark Spitz, who swam with Haines during his high school years in Santa Clara and just prior to the 1972 Olympics, was asked to leave the Santa Clara Swim Club because he refused to compete in a national meet as requested by his coach. Instead, he insisted on going to a swim meet in Israel. It was at the 1972 Olympics where he won seven gold medals, swimming for a Sacramento swim club. His parents were living in Santa Clara at the time and the entire family moved to Sacramento.

George was probably the best swimming coach in the world. He

was head coach of Santa Clara Swim Club for 25 years before taking the job of head coach at UCLA. Among his national, American and world record holders were Chris Von Saltza, Don Schollander, Donna de Varona, Steve Clark, and Claudia Kolb. George suffered a stroke in 2000 and has been a resident of a skilled nursing facility near the Sacramento area ever since. His family is in constant contact with him and his wife is at his side every day for several hours. In 2002 the city of Santa Clara re-named the Santa Clara International Swim Center in honor of George Haines.

At one point I was involved in the entertainment business, establishing the Omega Booking Agency. Cow Town and Troll-a-Go-Go were the two country-western establishments in town. The owners of these establishments became my clients and they would book major country entertainers including Red Foley, Loretta Lynn, Wanda Jackson, Charlie Pride, Hank Williams, Jr. and many others. I was a frequent customer at these hang-outs. I also had the pleasure of booking many entertainers. One such person was a young man named Johnny, who had been an inmate for most of his life, and had an outstanding voice. Sherry and I took him into our home and assisted him in re-establishing himself. He won many vocal contests and, as a result, was offered the opportunity of singing with a fellow black country singer, Charlie Pride, a popular recording artist. Johnny was extremely excited about the opportunity to sing with Charlie Pride at Cow Town.

On the afternoon prior to his performance he saw displayed in a window, an outfit which was very appealing to him. Unfortunately, he gave in to his criminal propensities and went into the store and was caught stealing this outfit for the evening's event. I represented him, of course, but since he was caught red-handed, I felt it was in Johnny's best interest to plea bargain for a jail sentence. This accomplished, he spent about six months in the county jail before being released. He continued his singing career, but time-after-time he would yield to the temptation to steal things.

At a later time, Johnny had been convicted of a federal crime

and was sentenced to spend some time in a federal prison. The night before he was to be incarcerated, we took him out to dinner and to several night clubs in San Francisco. Next day as we were about to enter the Federal Building, Johnny handed Sherry a large plastic bag containing a white powdery substance. He instructed her to keep it for him until he got out of prison.

Sherry crammed the bag into her purse and entered the building with Johnny and I. Before they went upstairs, Sherry excused herself to use the bathroom. While in there, she dumped the entire bag of powder down the toilet and flushed it several times to make sure there was no residue left.

As we were riding up the elevator, Johnny asked if she understood to save the bag for him. She said, "I understand you just handed me some sort of contraband." Johnny asked if she was all right with this. She said, "I am now. I just flushed away your fortune!" Johnny's dark skin took on a grayish pallor as he realized the fortune that just went down the toilet.

Over the years there were many rumors about his whereabouts and activities, but we may never know what became of him and what other adventures he pursued, for he has not been heard from in years.

I was spending a great deal of my time outside the home. If I wasn't in court, I was at a bar or entertainment venue of one sort or another. There was little or no time left to spend with my young family. Despite Sherry's musical talent, her presence was not needed or welcomed for this part of my career. She deeply resented this, but carried on with her own interests. On one occasion an attorney from San Francisco asked if I would like to put on a concert at the Santa Clara Roller Rink. He wished to bring down the three groups he referred to as The San Francisco Sound: Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane and one other well-known band. I was to book the show and the attorney offered me the opportunity to become a partner for an investment of \$10,000. I booked the show and found it entirely different from the country-

western music I so loved. After hearing the groups, I rejected the offer because I found it to be too noisy and most of the musicians were “out of it.” One of the young ladies who sang that evening said she had just acquired a song from a writer who would let her sing and record the song. I thought the song had no future and felt she would never be a successful performer, mainly because of her raspy, irritating voice. Her name was Janis Joplin and the song was “Me and Bobby McGee” written by Kris Kristofferson.

I had affiliations with the nightclub “The Purple Onion” and with Enrico Banducci and his nightclub “the hungry i.” I was able to get bookings for a number of talented musicians who would go on to make names for themselves. Others drifted off into obscurity never to be heard from again. The Omegas was one such group, a duo, which formed when they were both residents of a small town in Oregon. Gary and Larry had a great deal of potential, but completely lacked sophistication. Eventually one of them joined the Army and became a member of the Singing Sergeants. It is not known what happened to the other.

Also about this time, we purchased a small bar/nightclub in San José, California called the Amber Room. That first night, the bartender was discovered dipping into the till. He was fired on the spot and Carl, a good friend, took over temporary duties. Two prostitutes were noted making the rounds of the customers. About this time the police came and were escorting the “ladies” out of the bar, when Mama and her sister, Aunt Katy, arrived. Mama was horrified. This was *déjà vu* all over again. She was suddenly afraid her son would be making some of the same mistakes his father made in the early days of their marriage, though prostitutes were never hauled out of his nightclubs. Though she enjoyed the wonderful music in the club, this could not make up for the ugliness that seemed to engulf this place. “Get rid of this place,” she said. And just as she said this, Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) officers paid them a visit and threatened to close them down because it was believed there were minors in the bar. At the same time a fight broke out at

one end of the bar. Some time later some friends on the Narcotics and Vice squad advised me that this bar was a regular hangout for drug dealers, addicts and prostitutes. Through all this another young black singer carried on his act at this bar. Art Lassiter was a rhythm and blues singer and was unflappable. Nothing could distract him from his appointed rounds. He sang as though his life depended on it. He eventually ended up in Hawaii and became quite popular there.

After enduring the headaches of being a bar owner, and at the insistence of my mother, aunt and wife, I decided I did not need these problems and immediately sold the bar. This was perhaps another turning point for me, though I continued to introduce entertainers to the various venues in the area.

Eventually, at the insistence of my wife, I gave up the entertainment and night club business, and settled down to practicing law and spending more time with the family.

Some time in the late 1960s, I attended a retreat at San Damiano Retreat House in Danville, California where after many years I ran into Brother Joachim, the former Andy Grant. Brother Joe saw that I was enjoying success in my business but neglecting my faith. I discussed with him how grateful I was in law school for the many benefits I received. I attended Mass regularly, and after acquiring money and success, I no longer attended daily Mass. Instead I got caught up in unhealthy, materialistic environments. Temptation just seemed to keep knocking on my door, and I would answer. Brother Joe suggested I come regularly to the retreat house. I began to attend retreats at least once a month and brought many of my lawyer friends. We eventually organized retreats for alcohol and narcotic addicts.

Brother Joe was a great friend and another angel that I would heavily rely on over the years. Brother Joe was so Franciscan. I was taking him to dinner one evening at Paolo's restaurant, a very up-scale Italian restaurant that catered to the wealthy Italians in the San José area. In fact, one of the more frequent patrons of the restaurant

was Joe DiMaggio, who lived in San Francisco. As Brother Joe and I exited the vehicle, we were approached by a man wielding a knife, intending to rob us. I was ready to hand over my wallet, but Brother Joe simply said, “Aw, you must be down on your luck, fella.” The man was in such shock he nearly dropped the knife. Brother Joe continued, “Won’t you let me buy your knife? I’ll give you \$50.” The robber meekly nodded his head yes and I proffered the man \$50 and Brother Joe took the knife. To this day Brother Joe still has the knife.

We then entered the restaurant. This restaurant prepared many of the dishes Mama and Granny prepared, which were considered peasant dishes. Mama found it difficult to pay fifteen dollars for a plate of *lenticchia* (pasta made with lentils), or *pasta aglia olia con sardini* (pasta with garlic, olive oil and sardine sauce) for the same price. I told Brother of the many exotic dishes that were prepared as appetizers and entrees. Brother bragged that the Franciscan way was to eat anything set before him. When Luciano, the head waiter, came to take our orders, I ordered an appetizer of *escargot* for Brother. These were specially prepared snails served in their shells with a garlic butter sauce. When the plate was set before him, Brother asked Luciano if this was a joke or if he was actually expected to eat these snails. Luciano laughed and said, “Yes, sir, you will find them very tasty. Just remove the meat from the shell and I am sure you will enjoy them. They are a real delicacy.” The waiter later told me that he watched Brother eat each of them in a very stoic manner. Later Brother asked Luciano if he could please have the shells to take home. They were wrapped up and given to Brother at the end of the meal. I assumed he wanted them for his garden.

A few weeks later I visited the retreat house. In the morning I went into the kitchen to greet Brother Joe and join him for breakfast. Brother said, “Dominic, I have a special breakfast for you.” He set before me a plate with those same snail shells, except they were stuffed with scrambled eggs. I ate every bite, leaving the shells for Brother’s next victim.

CHAPTER Thirty

Traveling

For Sherry's fortieth birthday, I took her to Italy where we toured the violin world capital of Cremona.

We met a group of students who volunteered to take us around to meet the various violin makers and see a working studio. One such person was a young Asian girl named Miss Toy. Her instruments were not very good, but they were interesting. Sherry often reflected that she was sorry she never bought a Toy violin. Later we went to Ravenna to meet with Antonio Cavalazzi, a local violin maker. Sherry had purchased one of his violins from a friend in San José and decided she would investigate whether he had others for sale. The Cavalazzi family was very gracious and served us coffee and biscottis. Signor Cavalazzi spoke no English, but his daughter was fairly fluent in English, so acted as interpreter. Sherry tried several of his instruments and decided on one that she particularly liked. It was a close match for her own which Signor Cavalazzi made in 1969. This was a precursor to that instrument made in 1968. She later sold it to a good friend who has since enjoyed the wonderful sound this instrument makes.

We were frequent travelers to Mexico and Hawaii. Often

my partner, Mitch, would accompany us. One memorable trip was to Mexico where we stayed in a resort near Baja de Kino, a very small community that was split between Viejo (old) and Nuevo (new) de Kino. Viejo was the old section where the native Mexicans lived. The church was also there. While there the three of us attended Mass at the tiny village church where Mitch discovered an old high school teacher from Bellarmine was the village priest. That evening the four of us went into Nuevo de Kino for dinner and cocktails.

This trip eventually took us to Guadalajara where we enjoyed one of the finest meals ever in a restaurant called Copa de Leche. Afterward, we walked a short distance to Mariachi Plaza where the Mariachi bands were entertaining the folks. Sherry spotted a Mexican gentleman playing what looked to be a rather nice violin. She asked to try it and he allowed her to play a few notes. Soon a crowd was gathering. It was unheard of that a woman would play in a Mariachi band, but this was okay in this instance since the entire band was sure Sherry was a gypsy. Besides, the band probably earned more money on this night than they would have in a month.

Later we traveled south to Manzanillo, a quiet little Mexican village located on the Sea of Cortez. We stayed in a small hotel which was located next to a condominium that had a pool with a bar in the middle. While there, we partook of the facilities and made the acquaintance of an older couple who invited us to their condo for cocktails. We spent the evening getting to know each other and drinking Coco-Loco's which turned out to be more potent than expected. Later in life Mitch would honeymoon in Manzanillo with his wife.

CHAPTER Thirty-One

A Home of Our Own

Throughout our married life, we had been living in apartments or a rented house until after the children were born. While living in Santa Clara, Sherry heard of a house that was going up for sale in Campbell and went to look at it. It had four large bedrooms, a tiled entry way, two full bathrooms, an enormous living room, and an equally enormous family room, both with fireplaces. The backyard was low-maintenance with a swimming pool and large patio area. The house was situated on a corner lot with a cul-de-sac to one side and dead-end streets on the other two ends. Behind the house was open space, and beyond that the backyard neighbor.

The party who was selling it had just been divorced and could no longer afford to live there. When I saw the house, I was immediately prepared to make an offer. The offer was accepted and we were now owners of our very first home.

We soon discovered a few other attorneys in the neighborhood who were quick to enlighten us on the common name of the neighborhood based on two of the streets. One street was Bent Way and the other Peter Drive.

The neighbor behind us raised racing pigeons. Both Mike and

Tony were fascinated by these birds as they would fly over the pool and back yard of our home. One day Sherry was in the backyard cleaning up and noticed the boys were very busy doing something in one of the side yards.

As she went to investigate she noticed pigeon feathers sticking up everywhere. "What are you two doing?" she asked. They both spoke up excitedly saying they were planting pigeons. This prompted a little educational chat about the birds and bees, primarily birds. It seems they were guided by their mother's own obsession of putting little seeds in the ground and thought this would work for pigeons also.

We only lived on Cameo Drive a little more than a year when we decided to move into a brand new home in the Willow Glen area. This was a very elegant house. While we lived in Willow Glen there were many parties at our home, often impromptu. Casual entertainment was the mode of the day. Kids were always welcome along with parents. It would not be unusual for the Sheas and their three children, the Brown's and their two children and, of course, Ray and Joanne who lived next door, to join us on a warm summer evening and enjoy a meal and actually provide their own entertainment. Chuck and Carolyn were great folk singers. Chuck would strum a guitar and they would sing lovely duets. Bill, who later would become first a Municipal Court Judge and then a Superior Court Judge, played the ukulele and would sing some raucous song along with it. His wife Lou was always very tolerant. Joanne often joined the singing. She had the voice of an angel as well as the disposition.

In 1970 my Aunt Victoria Sposeto of Des Moines, Iowa came to California to visit us. She made the rounds of the relatives, and eventually came to our house for a brief stay. She insisted on cooking for us. Sherry spent the early part of the day helping her shop for ingredients, and Aunt Victoria spent the rest of the day cooking her famous spaghetti sauce. It was fortunate Sherry knew those Italian words for the herbs Aunt Victoria sought. She told Sherry her children always begged her to cook for them when she visited them. This was indeed an honor bestowed on our family.

She told many stories while she was visiting. One of her stories, which was confirmed and elaborated on by her grandson Dominic, was about her husband Frank, whose driving suffered as he grew older. He was still driving his pick-up truck around town to sell his produce. He was frequently stopped by the local police and given tickets. These were mostly for failing to stop at stop signs or not signaling turns. He drove too slowly to get a speeding ticket. When he appeared in court to appeal his tickets, it was found that he did not have a driver's license. In his own Italian confrontational manner, he proudly stated that he had been driving for nearly 40 years without a license and did not think he needed to get one now. He was put in jail for two days for refusing to obtain a driver's license. Having sufficiently scared his family, he was forced to take a driving test and get his license.

Once he had his license, he continued to drive in his own manner. More stop signs and traffic lights created greater opportunities for tickets. Again refusing to pay his traffic fines, he was brought back to court. His license was revoked and he was told to no longer drive in Des Moines. This obviously did not stop him; so once again, he was arrested and brought before the judge. He pleaded with the judge that he needed to support his family and he couldn't do that if he couldn't bring his produce to his customers. The judge put Frank in jail for six months, but allowed him to be released during the day to work his farm. He would be allowed to take his produce to market only if someone else drove his truck.

Fortunately, Frank had several grandsons who were able to drive his truck for him. His daughter, Isabel's, sons, Joe and Frank, and his son, Dominic's, son Mickey took turns driving for him. They would pick him up every morning at the Des Moines jail and return him to the jail every evening.

One August night, Victoria collapsed and died in her kitchen. She was found by Frank the next morning. Without his wife, Frank lost all interest in the farm and life in general. He died in October that same year.

Frank and Victoria's children were really not interested in living

on the farm. The exception was Caroline, who moved into the top floor of the Sposeto farm house with her three children. Frank left parcels of his land to all his children. Some of the children, those who lived out of town, wanted to develop their land. Much of the farm was divided up into a residential home development. Three of Frank's children, Catherine, Dominic, and Isabel built homes on the property. The development was, and continues to be called, Sposeto Heights.

Frank and Victoria's first son, Patrick, moved to New York where he became a puppeteer. He changed his name to Paul Ashley. Later, he moved to California and did a television show featuring some of his puppets, the most famous being Rootie Kazooti.

This is a good time to talk about Uncle Ralph and Aunt Katie, who had moved to Hayward, California in 1952. First of all, everyone needs an "Auntie Mame," and in Aunt Katy we nieces and nephews had just that. Her fondness for us never wavered. She was devoted, but still was a reasonable disciplinarian. She often showered us with exorbitant gifts and took us many places just to "show us." She could always be relied upon to show sympathy when needed, disapproval when appropriate, and always kindness. She was a joy for all and a friend to many. Aunt Katy was a World War II WAAC. After the war she met Ralph Fleming while working for Dad in the office. Ralph was a carpenter that Dad had hired. He was a combat veteran of World War II and a war hero. He landed on Normandy Beach on D-Day, and he recalls with great pain and sadness the deaths of so many young American men. He was one of the lucky ones. He and Katy married and had one daughter, Linda Diane.

When Uncle Ralph retired, Aunt Katy assigned him chores. He was very good at completing them. He was a very fussy man. Things had to be perfectly clean and life well-organized. He complained that the kitchen floors seemed to need some attention. Aunt Katy handed him a broom and mop and said, "It's your job now." Later he complained about the lack of variety in their menus. Aunt Katy said, "Watch it Ralph, you're about to inherit another job."

Uncle Ralph was a very competent carpenter. One might even

go so far as to say he was a master craftsman. He completed many remodeling projects for us over the years. One of his favorite sayings was, “Where there’s a Will, there’s a William.” This seemed to get him through many trials or tribulations. His only weakness seemed to be his forgetfulness. Sherry learned to keep an eye on him and take note of where he left things. It was his hammer that he usually lost. To this day when Mike or Tony can’t find something they misplaced, their mother calls them Uncle Ralph.

Aunt Katy was an extremely active woman all her life. In her later years she would go on long hikes for weeks at a time. When she was in her eighties, she informed everyone she was going to slow down. She would no longer be taking month-long journeys. Instead, she would cut her trips down to just two weeks at a time.

Aunt Katy was eighty-nine years old when she died. Her great spirit lives with the family, for she was able to instill a great sense of determination in all who came in contact with her. She was a special angel for all of us.

Uncle Ralph is still alive and looking forward to his 92nd birthday in 2005. His daughter, Linda, has moved back home and takes very good care of him.

Our home on Carmel Drive was home until Mike became quite proficient at swimming and practice was more than once a day. The family decided to move to Santa Clara to be closer to the swim club. Tony had taken up golf about the time Mike started swimming at Santa Clara Swim Club.

Golfing didn’t seem to suit Tony, so he tried gymnastics, and he did very well at his only gymnastics competition. He later decided to go for competitive swimming. He did very well, considering he got a late start compared to his peers. His first love, however, was playing the drums. He took lessons from a man named Forest Elledge, who had been a drummer with the Johnny Carson Show’s orchestra. Normally Mr. Elledge would not undertake to teach such a young child. Tony was seven. He made an exception and never regretted it.

CHAPTER Thirty-Two

Madsen, Sposeto and Parker

In the late 1960s, Harry Parker, a Santa Clara County prosecutor and graduate of the University of San Francisco was in charge of the criminal calendar. He and I had many opportunities to settle and negotiate cases. He was a tough prosecutor and, on one occasion, we were in the middle of a trial where my client was charged with sales of narcotics. Mr. Parker had prepared a very elaborate set of plans, which he exhibited to the jury, on the stakeout of the defendant and the subsequent route she used in her narcotics transactions. As was typical in my law practice, I would try to get the very best disposition possible for my client. In this case I discussed with Mr. Parker the possibility of pleading my client to possession. My client was a female who was only incidentally involved in these narcotics transactions, but involved nevertheless. When Mr. Parker would present these elaborately prepared diagrams on the board, I would politely ask him to take my finger and describe the diagram in every particularity.

I did this more to annoy him than to really become oriented with the diagram. After several such incidents, and becoming aware of Mr. Parker's annoyance, I again asked him, "Mr. Parker,

would you please take my finger?”

As I presented it to him he said under his breath, “You s.o.b.,” and twisted my finger.

I yelled out, “OUCH! Your honor, counsel just twisted my finger!” The judge and jury burst into laughter.

Court was recessed and Mr. Parker then offered my client possession, and a plea was entered at that time. He said to me, “You s.o.b you’ll do anything to win!”

I invited Mr. Parker out to dinner that evening and we wound up in Reno, Nevada, where we spent the evening watching shows and gambling. In any case, Harry and I had a great evening and I eventually brought him into the law firm as a partner. The law firm was to be known for many years as Madsen, Sposeto and Parker. Harry was an extremely gifted trial lawyer and a great asset to the firm.

One of my serious compulsions was gambling. I had clients who owned an airplane in San José and I would frequently join them on trips to Reno, Tahoe, and Las Vegas. There came a time when I found it necessary to attend Gamblers Anonymous. I then wrote a letter to all the clubs where I had credit, advising them that I was a compulsive gambler and to withdraw my credit.

As is the case with many professional persons, some get caught up in success, power and ego. This becomes overwhelming and it is easy to forget the goodness of the Lord, as in my case, after considerable monetary success and several high-profile cases. I was spending too much time in the bars and music world and not devoting enough time to my family. I was able to bounce back on many occasions, thanks to my Christian beliefs, which enabled me to start again with a firm purpose of amendment. I would reflect on the two paths taken by my ancestors, gangster versus saint. I needed to convince myself to take the right road.

Through law school at the University of Santa Clara, Vic Vertner, a two fist ed young hard working law student who was very streetwise, became my law clerk and subsequently joined the

firm, where he took over the representation of the Hell's Angels. He befriended many of those original Angels. He had considerable experience prior to passing the bar as he assisted me in trials as my guide, researcher, and investigator. Upon his passing the bar examination, I scheduled three preliminary hearings on his first appearance in court, one of which was a homicide case. He handled all three extremely well. I sat in the back row with pride as I watched him handle these cases with considerable success. He remains one of the preeminent criminal lawyers in Santa Clara County today.

Mitch married late in life. He was in his early forties when he met Edie, a very lovely Korean lady. Edie brought to the marriage a little girl, Teri, from her first marriage. Teri was the master of the Rubik Cube. She could take it apart and put it back together within minutes. She was only about six years old. Shortly after their marriage, Mitch adopted her as his own and it wasn't long before Edie became pregnant with Mark. Mitch was a devoted father to both of these children and when he learned he had leukemia, he attempted to shelter his family from this knowledge. Eventually it became necessary to inform all of them of his disease. Nevertheless, he continued his law practice, though on a much more limited basis.

As with so many lawyers during this time, everyone seemed to have a drinking problem except me, unless you could say I could not hold my liquor very well. One particular attorney was notorious for being under the influence. One day while out to lunch with some friends at the old Farrell's on First and St. John Street the attorney disappeared. No one could find him. Calls were made to all his known haunts with no results. At about 2:30 a call to the court where he was in the middle of a murder trial was received from a local casket maker. It seems the attorney had been about to go back to court when he spotted a casket in the window that looked especially comfortable. He crawled into the box and fell asleep. When the proprietor noticed him, he was

shocked, thinking someone had placed a body in one of his new caskets. Then he noticed the soft snoring coming from the casket and hurried to wake the gentleman. The attorney was startled and asked the casket owner to please call the court and tell them he was on his way. The court was none too pleased. The judge dismissed the case for the afternoon and had no sympathy for this situation. The attorney was fined a substantial amount.

A prosecutor that I had tried many cases with was very sensitive and would easily get flustered during his arguments. I had a habit during the course of his arguments in the presence of juries of reaching over to the center of the counsel table where there was a tray with a pitcher of water and glasses. The glasses were always upright and I made a big issue of taking the pitcher, then the glass, and slowly pouring water during the course of my opponent's argument, distracting him and having the full attention of the jury on this activity. This prosecutor would frequently come up to me and say, "Look, showoff, you're doing that on purpose!" I advised him that I was just thirsty. On one occasion he got back at me, when prior to his argument and without my knowledge, he reached over and turned the glass upside down. As I proceeded during the course of the prosecutor's argument to take the pitcher and the glass, without first feeling the rim as is customary for blind people, I began to pour water over the top of the glass, myself and the table. The prosecutor said in a rather slithery way, "Oh, Mr. Sposeto let me help you." As he came to my aid he quietly whispered to me, "Serves you right, asshole." These prosecutors were all good friends and these are things that would just come about during the course of our courtroom antics.

I was frequently approached by blind law students asking if they could attend trials and if I would mind discussing my techniques as a blind lawyer. I was happy to oblige. My situation was somewhat unique, as most of these young men were very proficient in Braille and were not as dependent on someone taking notes for them. But they nevertheless gained some experience in trial technique.

CHAPTER Thirty-Three

The Caseload

I was gaining the reputation for being very proficient in the courtroom. Even Leo Sullivan and Dr. tenBroek came to watch me try cases. They were both very proud of me.

Dr. tenBroek was very proud of my appointment as head of Legal Aid and Public Defender Office. I was asked to make several appearances with Dr. tenBroek on panels that he chaired for the law school at University of California and for classes on Continuing Education of the Bar. I was pleased to prepare material and appear on these panels at the request of Dr. tenBroek in the areas of legal aid practice and poverty law. My close relationship with Dr. tenBroek was extremely rewarding and intellectually stimulating. In 1963, when I chose to run for Congress, Dr. tenBroek agreed to act as my campaign manager. Dr. tenBroek was a strong advocate of civil rights and was one of the most prominent leaders of the blind in the world. I treasured this friendship.

Leo Sullivan offered advice on how to select a jury. This advice turned out to be one of the better things for me. I became quite proficient at jury selection. I never used my blindness in the courtroom for sympathy or anything else. Once a jury was seated

I introduced myself, explained I was blind, folded up my cane and laid it on the front of the counsel table, never to be used again unless I was entering or departing the courtroom. It was always there as a reminder, but never used in any way.

I had a number of humorous incidents as a blind attorney. One of my earliest cases involved my sister Isabel, who was to appear at her uncontested divorce hearing. These were the days when divorces required testimony from a witness. For a witness Isabel chose our sister Frances. Mama brought all three blind children to the court house that day. This was her first opportunity to see her son in court. When the case was called, I explained that not only was I blind, but the plaintiff, Isabel, was also blind, and so was the witness, Frances. After the matter was called, the bailiff assisted all three of us, locating Isabel and me at counsel table, and Frances in the witness chair. This took a great deal of juggling on the bailiff's part. At the conclusion of the case, the judge asked me, "Counselor, I've been on the bench many years and this is a first for me. Do you mind if I refer to this matter as 'A Hearing of the Three Blind Mice?'"

In Santa Clara County, one judge would frequently be assigned to preside over the criminal calendar for a year or more. Such was the case of one of my favorite judges, a graduate of the University of Santa Clara and a clemency secretary for the State of California. He had a fabulous rapport with most of the lawyers, a great Irish wit, and enjoyed picking on out-of-town lawyers, especially high profile lawyers. On one occasion, a prominent San Francisco lawyer came to San José with a picture of Uncle Sam on his tie, a pig tail to the middle of his back, and shoes that were worn out to the point where the soles were loosened and the lawyer would make a 'flapping' sound with them as he approached the podium. The judge asked counsel to approach the bench and asked if he could contribute to his purchasing a new pair of shoes. He said, "I would greatly appreciate that, your Honor!" and flapped his way back from the bench.

During the course of a trial before this judge, who had a horrible habit of mumbling, and after 20 years of appearing before him, I kept

asking him to please repeat what he had just said. He finally asked me to approach the bench and said, "Look, Sposeto, I put up with you being blind for 20 years. If you go deaf, that's the end of ya!" This same judge at another time, called me to the bench and said, "Dominic, you look very handsome, but if I were you, I'd go home and change your shoes. You have one black and one brown." I had always purchased the same shoes in black and brown, and after this embarrassing incident, I made certain that the shoes were entirely different so I could distinguish them by touch.

One morning I was before the presiding judge's court waiting for my client's case to be called for arraignment. On a Master Calendar there are frequently 40 or 50 in-custody inmates waiting to be arraigned. Sometimes they bring them into the courtroom in batches. Such was the case on this day. The judge called the case of an obvious black activist who immediately charged that the Public Defender was incompetent to handle his case and he felt discriminated against. I was sitting in the front row and barely paying attention to the conversation in the court. The Public Defender, who was Hispanic and extremely competent, objected to this accusation and after about five minutes or so of listening to arguments, the judge relented and said, "Okay, Mr. X, I will appoint Mr. Sposeto to defend you."

As I rose to acknowledge the appointment, the black activist became extremely agitated and shouted, "What the f---! That blind man? That be real discrimination. What you tryin' to do to me - punish me?"

The inmate sitting next to him tugged at his sleeve and whispered, "You outta your mind? That's the best criminal lawyer in this county."

After pondering this for a moment, the activist sat down and said with some humility, "Okay, I accepts this appointment."

Over the years, I had tremendous success as a trial criminal lawyer, trying cases all over the United States.

In 1965, in South Carolina I tried one of the largest drug cases in the United States. I was joined by several San Francisco lawyers,

among whom was J. Tony Serra, a young promising San Francisco lawyer. Tony, Father Richard (a Catholic priest) and I traveled to South Carolina together. We were met at the airport by an attorney who had been hired as co-counsel. The poor attorney was in shock when we introduced ourselves. We made strange travel partners; Richard in his priestly garb, I wearing my dark glasses and carrying a white cane and Tony with his long pony tail and hippy garb, just didn't seem to fit the image of courtly décor.

On one occasion I was to appear on a drunk driving charge with my client. The evening before, I was in Reno, and stayed up most of the night gambling. The next morning I drove with my client to the courthouse near Sacramento where the client was to appear on the drunk driving arraignment. For some reason I was without a cane and was slightly disheveled. As I approached the bailiff and informed him I was there on the Jones matter, he directed me to sit down in the jury box and wait for the court to call the matter. In the meantime Mr. Jones, who was directly behind me when we entered the court room, observed on the documents that there was another warrant for his arrest. He then quietly left the courthouse. After approximately an hour I asked the bailiff when they intended to call the matter and he said, "Look buddy, we have a warrant for your arrest. You'll have to remain here until we book you after court." I asked him what I was being arrested for and he said, "We have another drunk driving in addition to the one you're being arraigned on today." I then advised him that I was blind and that I was the attorney appearing for my client, Mr. Jones. At this the bailiff became quite flustered and managed to stammer out a meek apology saying, "I didn't know you were blind, you looked disheveled and possibly intoxicated. That's why I grabbed you by the arm and sat you down in the jury box with the rest of the in-custody prisoners." Mr. Jones had by now conveniently left the courthouse. When the judge and district attorney heard all this, they became very upset and suggested that they would help me find a way home. Needless to say, I was extremely upset, though my client would later apologize and pay for

my inconvenience. I took a cab back to my office which eventually cost the client \$500, an amount he could well afford.

One late evening about 11 P.M. I found myself back in my office alone. I had just finished a trial and decided to dictate the results while things were still fresh in my memory. I heard someone enter and as this person approached my office he started yelling and screaming something that I could not understand. I shouted back at him to be quiet and wait until I had finished dictating then I would talk to him. The man continued yelling for awhile and finally went into the waiting room and sat down. After I concluded dictating I said, "Alright, sir, come in." As I customarily did, I stood up and explained I was blind, and what could I do for him. The man stood up and started laughing, walked over to me and said, "That's the damndest thing I've seen in my entire life." At this point he let me feel that he had been holding a .45 pistol while standing at the door and yelling and asking for money. The pistol had been aimed straight at me. I ended up giving the man \$100 and taking the pistol. I referred him to a friend who had work for him. The man had just been released from prison and was very despondent. He was grateful for what I had done and remembered me each year at Christmas with a bottle of wine or champagne. I saw him about ten years after this incident and he was doing very well, working as a new car salesman.

Another time I was standing outside my office when one of my clients was walking down the street. The client was black and looked a little seedy. We chatted awhile and I asked if he would mind going across the street and getting me some pipe tobacco as I was nearly out. He was pleased to do this for me. When he came back he handed the plain paper bag to me and I gave him the money for the cost of the tobacco. As fate would have it, there was a cop on the beat who was new. He immediately detained my client and me and demanded the bag. I replied, "No problem, I won't even require a warrant." When the cop opened the bag, he was so embarrassed, he meekly said, "I thought you were doing a drug deal. You have to admit it did look suspicious." I then explained I was blind and that I was an attorney

and this was my client simply running an errand for me.

While making an appearance in a small town I found myself in a temporary courtroom that was in a gymnasium.

The door was in the center of the building. The judge was to my left approximately 15 feet. As one came in the door, directly in front was a speaker and to the right was another speaker. I walked directly ahead facing the speaker in front. When my case was called the judge was to my left and I was talking to the speaker in front of me saying, "Your Honor, I am here representing Mr. Smith." The judge then advised me, "Counsel, I am over here!" I apologized, and said I was very sorry, and turned my back on the judge, directing myself toward the other speaker to my right. I again did not have my cane with me and the judge asked the bailiff to please go get that man as he appeared to be under the influence of something. When he learned that I was blind he was very apologetic. He said, "Counsel, you should always carry that cane." Thereafter I tried to make it a point to have my cane with me at all times.

In another case in Alameda County I was pleading a very young and shy girl to a count of solicitation for prostitution. She had six counts and I was able to work out a disposition for her to plead to one count and go into a half-way house for prostitutes. This was her first offense. The courtroom was very crowded and there was a seat available for her in the front row facing the judge.

I stood to her left. When the case was called I indicated to the judge the disposition and the judge began to ask the young lady questions. She got very upset and began to cry. He said, "Counsel, please go outside and talk to your client and explain to her what is happening." I spent a half hour explaining to her what was going on and that it was very important for her to respond, "guilty," when the judge asked her how she pled to the count of prostitution. She said she understood and returned to her seat. I was again standing to her left and was not aware that she had left her seat to go to the restroom and another young lady came and sat in her seat. When the client's case was called I reached over and grabbed this person who

had occupied the seat and whispered to her, “Now look, remember to say ‘guilty’ when asked about the prostitution charge.” The woman pulled herself away and muffled a cry as she ran from the courtroom. The judge and courtroom became hysterical and explained to me I was addressing the wrong woman. The case was finally resolved upon the client’s return to her seat, but it was somewhat humiliating for me.

On one occasion I was called to the Oakland County Jail to interview one of my Hell’s Angels clients who was involved in a murder while protecting the Rolling Stones near Livermore, California at an outdoor concert where the Stones had hired the Hell’s Angels as security. It was on a weekend afternoon that I was called to the jail in Alameda. I was let into my client’s cell wearing jeans and a sweatshirt. While interviewing the client, the shift changed and it took me two hours to convince the new bailiffs that I was, in fact, an attorney and not an inmate. I received no help from the other inmates. When I said I was an attorney, they said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah. Why don’t ya sit down and shut up!” Because of other trial commitments I could not, however, continue the representation of this client.

One of my notorious female clients was a woman who seemed to be supplying all of northern California with drugs. She really hated being in jail. The first time they arrested her, she managed to escape. How she did this, no one was really sure. She told me what she had done and I convinced her to voluntarily turn herself in. She went to court with my partner Vic Vertnor and me. As we were waiting for her case to be called, she leaned over and told us she would see us later. Figuring she was going to the ladies’ room, we thought nothing of this. When her case was finally called, I stood and said, “Your honor, my client was just here. I think she may have gone to the restroom.”

The judge said, “Very well, Counselor. We’ll pass this matter for the time being.” Several minutes lapsed and finally the judge asked, “Are you sure your client is in the building?” I was at a loss and apologized for inconveniencing the court. I promised to have the

restrooms searched. All this was to no avail. The client had simply vanished.

Several months later she was re-captured. Since she had such a reputation for being an escape artist, all precautions were taken. One night while in her cell, she scratched her wrists enough to cause some bleeding. She was rushed to the hospital where she was treated for her wounds and sent to Agnew State Hospital for the Insane. There she had an easy route out. The security was very lax. She simply walked out.

This woman was never captured, but she made it a point in her travels whether it was to Hawaii, the Bahamas, or Europe to send a taunting postcard to the District Attorney who had been prosecuting her case. This infuriated him, but there was nothing he could do.

My cases were not all funny. In fact, many were heartbreakingly sad and some were downright scary.

One winter morning, Sherry drove me to Redwood City for a routine court appearance. This was about one week before Christmas. My case was called and the two young men I represented were read the charges in open court. With them was a young girl who looked absolutely pitiful. She was wearing a shapeless muumuu and rubber thongs. Her hair was a mess and she looked extremely sad. I entered pleas for my two clients. The judge then addressed the young woman. She was there with no representation. At that moment the judge did what he felt was the best for all. He appointed me to represent her for the purpose of arraignment only. I was successful in getting her bail reduced to \$50. She shrugged and sadly said, "It doesn't matter. I got no money and no family." After court Sherry and I briefly discussed this between us. It was mutually agreed that we would bail her out and take her home for the holidays.

This is how Hippie Judy came into our lives. She was the saddest little thing we had ever met. Her mother had given her up for adoption when she was an infant. It was her grandmother who adopted her. It seems that the grandmother was rather Victorian in attitude and really could not stand Judy. On her eighteenth birthday Judy was turned out

of the family home to make her own way. She was living in Oakland at that time. She crossed the bay to Redwood City and found shelter with a couple who were experimenting with drugs. They convinced Judy to try some speed. She did and she liked it. The next thing Judy knew she was on her way to Los Angeles. For about a year she was held against her will by a black man who became her pimp. He taught her the tricks of the trade and by keeping her on drugs, Judy had little or no resistance. Eventually someone in the organization took pity on her and bought a plane ticket for her to go back to the bay area. It was at this time she got involved with the two men the time all three were arrested. Her charge eventually was reduced to being in a house where drugs were used. She was given summary probation and released to our custody. She stayed with us for several months and always honored the rule of the house - no drugs! What she did on her free time, however, was another matter.

Eventually she became a voluntary inmate at one of the drug rehabilitation centers where she met her husband-to-be. This marriage never was meant to work. During her marriage, Judy became involved with another man and soon learned she was pregnant. She divorced her husband and decided to raise her child alone. Shawn was born on the 4th of July and always thought all the fireworks were for him. He had some minor mental disabilities due to the drugs and alcohol Judy had been ingesting for so long. A few years later Judy moved to Washington state and continued to have problems. This time her problem was alcohol. The last time she talked to Sherry, she had been hospitalized with a severe heart condition. She expressed concern for her son, Shawn. He was, in her opinion, a binge drinker. A few months later, Shawn notified Sherry that his mother had passed away. He asked for some money and Sherry willingly sent him \$100 hoping he would be able to find work and make a useful life for himself. He was not heard from again.

In the handling of several thousand criminal cases, I always prided myself in getting the best possible result for my client, which meant in 90 percent of the cases, a suitable plea bargain. As the reality of

my practice, 99 percent of the clients had some degree of guilt. In many situations where criminals were very sophisticated and it meant arguing technicalities resulting in their dismissal, it was frustrating but necessary to defend the civil rights of these hardened sophisticated criminals. I had much difficulty with this and it was a real source of frustration. In some cases, serious criminals were released on these technicalities. If the client would insist on a jury trial and I knew he was guilty, but also knew that the evidence was weak, I would have to argue and cross-examine witnesses with knowledge of my client's guilt, but, nevertheless, use compelling cross-examination to obtain acquittals without the defendant ever taking the stand or in any way committing perjury. In one instance, a man who had been charged with several rapes was a makeup artist, and witnesses could not positively identify him or their testimony was weak. Knowing that my client would not take the stand and that I had the obligation to exploit the weakness of the witness, I would do so, and when this rapist was acquitted, the officer told me it wouldn't be long before this guy kills someone. A year later I learned that in the southern part of the state he had, in fact, raped and murdered. This is one of the most difficult tasks for a criminal lawyer and many times can distort his personality and character. Nevertheless, this is his legal responsibility and one can be disbarred for not exhausting every legal remedy on behalf of the client.

One of the real feathers in my cap came in establishing two alcohol and narcotic rehabilitation houses in Santa Clara County. I met a young woman named Beth, a former addict. She was housing two or three addicts and attempting to help them kick their habits. Beth admitted to me that she had been stealing milk from the doorsteps of her neighbors in order to feed her charges. It was then that I felt I could be of help to her. At one of the banquets I held for outstanding law students, I introduced her as a guest speaker. She spoke very eloquently of the crying need for rehabilitation and swore she had achieved excellent results in many cases. At this same banquet was State Senator Alfred Alquist. He was very helpful in getting funding

for Beth's project. Mitch and Sherry helped by preparing and filing incorporation papers establishing their non-profit status. Mitch became president of the organization and Sherry was treasurer for a couple of years. All of us were on the board of directors of Pathway. They started by renting a residential facility, accommodating a few addicts and later receiving public funds and grants to enlarge the facility. It became one of the first of its kind in northern California.

Eventually, Beth had a parting of the ways with the board of directors and left to form another organization. This one she called Chrysalis. Again, I helped her establish this group. It was successful, but nothing like Pathway. Beth still had problems from her past drug use. Though she was no longer using drugs, her need for material gains seemed to outweigh her need to aid her community. She became a real estate agent. She practiced her trade for two or three years. During this era there were headlines in the newspaper about a so-called "tippy-toe" bandit. Someone was entering homes that were up for sale and stealing valuable property. Eventually Beth was caught. She never asked me to represent her, perhaps because she was embarrassed.

In the many child molestation cases that I had, which were very difficult, I would insist that the client tell me the truth, as I did not desire to examine a molested child before the court. I always prided myself on being able to get the truth from my client. In some instances, after hearing the truth, I would refuse to represent the client, or if the case were strong, I would negotiate a disposition. I frequently used the lie detector as a ploy for stubborn clients who would not admit their guilt by advising them that they could take a lie detector for their benefit. It would be confidential and not available to the prosecutor. If they refused, in most instances I would refuse to represent them. In one hot high profile case where a local celebrity was charged with molesting a five-year old stepchild, he insisted he was innocent and indicated he would take the lie detector, which I seldom actually used. This was really a ploy to test their truthfulness and was usually very effective. At the preliminary hearing the young

child was brought to the courtroom for testimony and I asked the prosecutor, prior to examining the child, if I could talk to the child in the presence of the prosecutor and a female police officer. After speaking with the child I was absolutely convinced of the guilt of my client, and took him aside to indicate my feelings. The client broke down and admitted his guilt and a disposition was negotiated.

Again, these cases were very difficult for me, although there were a few times when a stepmother would accuse a man of molesting a child when in fact he had not. One client who was charged with fondling a stepchild, was later acquitted because the mother, in the course of her interrogation of the child, asked if she had ever been touched by the stepfather, who admitted that he had bathed the child and in the course of his bathing had touched the genital area without any intent to stimulate or harm the child. After the acquittal, the children were taken from the mother because of her serious psychological condition.

Another time, I was appointed to represent a woman who was charged in a horrible situation where she and another man had sexual relations with her children. This was one of the most difficult cases I had ever handled. She was a woman raised in the Catholic faith, and was so bitter toward her parents and the Church that she decided to join a Satanic Church in San Francisco where she met a fellow Satanist who participated with her in sexual orgies with her children, ranging in age from 3 to 15.

When I went to the jail to meet her for the first time, it was an experience I would never forget. She described how she hated the Catholic Church, how the Church seriously affected her life and how her parents were very prudish and strict about sexuality, to the point that she believed she had to commit a sacrilege to be free of these feelings of hatred and bitterness toward her parents and the Church.

It was apparent to me that she was obviously damaged psychologically. During the course of the conversation, when I asked her to explain what happened, she began to speak in a high pitched, unnatural voice, using extremely foul language. This was

a very peculiar situation which I had never experienced in my many years of practice. I was skeptical about demonic possession in this case, but was aware it existed.

I sought the help of a well-known Jesuit priest at Santa Clara University who said, “This is a very solemn event and will need the approval of the Bishop.” Having in mind that I might plead her not guilty by reason of insanity, I discussed with this priest the circumstances of my interview with this client. He said it was very rare but this sounded like it could be demonic possession. Prior to having her examined by doctors, I asked if the priest would come with me to speak with her. He agreed and he spoke with her in my presence. He returned to visit with her alone on four other occasions, where he later explained that he believed her to be possessed and that he would, in fact, perform an exorcism. Nevertheless, I entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity, but the psychiatrists found that she was in fact sane and must stand trial. They did, however, believe she had a case of multiple personalities, but this would not constitute the legal meaning of insanity.

Later in my discussions with the priest, who visited with her on a regular basis, he indicated that it was his belief he had exorcised the demons. Now, I had the obligation to confront the judge with this highly unusual defense, obviously with the idea of working out some sort of reasonable disposition. When I went into the chambers with the prosecutor to discuss the possibility of my client’s possession, the judge told me I was absolutely out of my mind, but I did manage to convince him to speak with the priest. He said he would discuss the matter with the priest, out of my presence and that of the prosecutor. He said, “I want you to know I’m not going to be swayed by any such mumbo-jumbo as ‘the devil made me do it.’” Even though the defendant had been found sane and capable of standing trial, the psychiatrist did indicate she had serious psychological problems. The prosecutor and the judge were not buying the demonic possession defense but did allow for a mitigated sentence and a plea bargain, which resulted in a period of incarceration and medical treatment

for this client. Her male companion, on the other hand, was sent to prison for several years. This was one of the most unique cases I had ever handled and I truly believed that this woman may have experienced demonic possession.

Oddly, Sherry had sensed something unholy about this couple. She insisted there was a smell of evil about them. In relating this to me, I tried to convince her that you can't smell evil. Part of my fee had been a very extravagant motor home. Sherry nearly threw up when she entered it. Even though the vehicle appeared to be spotlessly clean, the odor was overwhelming to her. No one else seemed to experience this sensation, including me, and I have a very keen sense of smell. Soon after receiving this vehicle, it was driven to a local dealership and sold for half its value. Was Sherry, who was usually rather impish, an angel in disguise?

During a rape case the judge, who was from out of town and was not aware of my experience, said, "There are several photographs in this case and some very large blown-up photographs. I don't see how, as a blind person, you will deal with them." I indicated to the judge that I had tried many cases and was familiar with handling photographs and other evidence and material of a visual nature. The judge was very reluctant, but let me proceed anyway. The case was about a secretary who had been raped on a Saturday afternoon. She went to her secretarial chair to phone the police after the incident and managed to deposit a small amount of blood on the chair. The prosecutor had blown up a large picture of the chair with the blood evidence to show the jury that there had been penetration. I used that photograph to prove there was not, in fact, penetration, and that, if the experts would have examined the blood they would not have found semen. The judge and prosecutor were convinced and the defendant was allowed to plead to an attempted rape.

While trying a case in Lake Tahoe, Nevada a client had left her purse at the craps table where she had been playing craps with her boyfriend. The purse was turned in at the desk and when inspected, was found to have a substantial amount of narcotics. When she

returned to retrieve her purse, she was arrested and charged with possession. Appearing in the Nevada court for her trial, the judge told me at the outset that there were too many California people bringing their drugs up from the Bay Area and he was going to be very strict. He informed me he would give the maximum sentence to anyone found guilty in his courtroom. He said he had had it with California lawyers who were coming to his jurisdiction. I advised this judge that I felt he was very prejudicial and that he should voluntarily recuse (step down) himself and allow another judge to try the matter. He told me he would do no such thing and that the case would proceed to trial. When he would call me into chambers from time to time, I would tell him that I would not discuss anything except on the record. He appeared very hostile to me and my clients, who were very “hippie-looking.” I was able to obtain an acquittal based on the fact the purse had been out of my client’s control. I was able to suggest that one little doubt for the jury’s finding of a not guilty verdict. The judge commented afterward that he could not understand how this jury could come to such a conclusion. The casino which had found the drugs offered the clients and me a free room and dinner and apologized for bringing the case to trial. My law partner and I returned to the casino for a complimentary dinner and when we went to the room where my clients were staying, we found them partying under the influence of marijuana and other drugs. They were celebrating their victory over narcotics charges by indulging in those very same narcotics. My partner and I were thoroughly disgusted and left town.

I tried several murder cases; one was in Oakland wherein a blind black woman (affectionately called Grandma) shot her best friend who she said she believed was a burglar breaking into her house. There had been a party earlier at the blind woman’s gentleman friend’s home. Unfortunately, Grandma became a little perturbed when her best friend seemed to be flirting with her gentleman friend. Being miffed, she left the party and returned home. She was there only a few minutes when she heard the door open and slam. Asking

who was there, she got no response. Not wishing to take a chance, she took her gun from her pocket and fired and with one shot killed the woman instantly.

The District Attorney had her charged with murder. When the matter was set for trial and the prosecution put their case on, my client took the stand. Prior to completing her testimony, the prosecutor and I met with the judge to work out a possible disposition wherein Grandma would spend several months in a mental facility to evaluate her for mental competence. The matter was subsequently dismissed and Grandma was released after spending less than six months in the mental facility.

Between 1972 and 1974 a group referred to as Zebra Killers because the radio channel used by police to investigate the case was channel Z, were systematically stalking and killing whites based completely on the color of their skin. Writer Clark Howard wrote a book called *Zebra* in 1979. It is, perhaps, the definitive book about these killings, though it is not for the squeamish. He explains the unrelenting hatred that inspired the killers. Most of the attacks were done by five members of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam. They took the name "Death Angels." These people believed that whites were created by a black scientist named Yacub who wanted to rule over a race of inferiors. "Death Angels" believed they were killing "grafted snakes," "blue-eyed devils" and "white mother f-----s." The attacks were vicious and sadistic. Brutality and lack of remorse marked these attacks. One female victim was sexually molested, hacked with a machete, and finally decapitated. Her husband survived the attack, but not before his face was almost totally destroyed. Women, children, young people and old people were marked for death. The only requirement for attack was that they be white.

The police eventually began to refer to their case as Operation Zebra. Even though they set up sting operations, the killings continued. The police were convinced someone on the inside was tipping off the killers. This was never proven. The black community became angry. Many felt uncomfortable with the police hanging around. The blacks

at that time blamed unemployment and oppression for the attacks. According to James Lubinska's article for FrontPageMagazine.com, dated August 30, 2001 entitled "Remembering the Zebra Killings," Black Panther Bobby Seale declared, "Every black man in the Bay area is in danger of losing his life." The Reverend Cecil Williams claimed that the entire black community was "under a police state that could erupt into a racial war." None of the blacks interviewed for Howard's book expressed sympathy for the victims. Both blacks and whites were living in fear.

Eventually the police were able to crack the case. It is unknown to this day if all the killers were found.

Indeed, not all victims were found. More than 70 murders occurred in the San Francisco bay area.

One of my clients was connected with these "Zebra Killings." My client was charged with multiple murders in San José, shooting several people as they were leaving a bowling alley. The client had in his possession printed activist material in which the organization of Zebra Killers sanctioned arbitrarily the killing of whites without cause or provocation, as in the case of my client. My client was the younger brother of one of the San Francisco "Death Angels" and was merely interested in gaining enough points to be able to join these "Death Angels." Once he became a "Death Angel," he would have had black wings affixed to his photograph to be put on display with other members. In discussions with my client it was obvious he was experiencing several psychological problems. He repeatedly referred to himself as "they" or "he." Although he was found mentally competent to stand trial after a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity, the Santa Clara County Prosecutor subsequently allowed the defendant to plead to a first degree murder, dropping the special circumstances feature. He was the only member of this organization who was afforded this opportunity, and this case was used on behalf of other organization members charged with the murders to show that it was arbitrary for the prosecutor in one case to drop the special circumstance charges. This argument did not succeed. The truth is,

my client was very marginal and, although found competent to stand trial, he was seriously ill and remains in prison to date as do the other members of these so-called “Death Angels.” It should be noted that the death penalty had been abolished during this period, later to be reinstated, but too late for the likes of Zebra Killers and the notorious Charles Manson and his followers.

I had successful results in many major felony cases, including several homicides. I was called upon to try cases in seventeen different states, including submitting several cases to the U.S Supreme Court. It should be noted here that the Supreme Court rarely grants oral arguments. I argued a case before the California Supreme Court where I appealed a decision by the lower court where they allowed police officers to break into a fraternity house of San José State University after knocking on the door without announcing who they were, breaking in and finding drugs in the rooms of several of the students. After argument, the Supreme Court unanimously decided that the officers were required to knock and announce their presence. This remains a well-established precept in the law to this day.

I was a regular attorney for the Hell’s Angels, Gypsy Jokers, Black Panthers, and several underworld families in the San José area. I would travel to the borders of Arizona, Texas and California to try many drug cases, having considerable success with cases being dismissed for illegal search and seizure of evidence. Through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s I handled more than 2,000 criminal matters, 33 homicides and several death penalty cases.

CHAPTER Thirty-Four

Angelo and Mary Call it Quits

In 1969 I was invited to Washington D.C. by the then Congressman Don Edwards to be sworn in before the United States Supreme Court. This was a very exciting thing for me. I felt honored to be able to do this at such a young age. Sherry and I flew to New York where we enjoyed a bit of sight-seeing before setting off for Washington DC. A couple days later we took the train to Washington and the following day we were met there by Dad and Mama. We toured Washington seeing many of the nation's historical sites. At this time Dad was drinking heavily. He and Mama were having domestic problems and the trip was somewhat strained for both Sherry and me. It was difficult not to interfere.

A few months later I was traveling with an associate to Washington D.C. on a criminal matter. Mama had advised me that Dad was in Hot Springs, Arkansas at a resort and suggested I stop by if I could. I decided to make a side trip to Arkansas after my business was completed in Washington D.C. and surprise Dad. Upon my arrival I went to the desk at the resort where Dad was staying, introduced myself and the clerk said he would call

and announce my presence. He then handed the phone to me. Unexpectedly, a woman answered the phone and said, “This is Mrs. Sposeto. Can I help you?” I was slightly unnerved at first, but recovered quickly and said, “Yes. This is your son. I’m down in the lobby.” Fuming, I slammed down the phone, spun around and left the hotel and returned immediately to California.

About a year later Dad and Mama were divorced. Dad remarried a very young woman whom he had met in Hot Springs, Arkansas where he would go to take the baths.

Marilyn was about my age, perhaps a bit younger. The family did not take to her very well, considering her a gold-digger and home-wrecker. Nevertheless, we were all able to be civil to her. We realized Dad was very ill. He had leukemia and was getting worse each month. He was in and out of the hospital. Marilyn was good for two things. She took care of Angelo and she played games with him, which he loved. It is to her credit that she stood by him at this very trying time. Dad died January 18, 1975.

After his death the estate was probated. Marilyn fully expected to take her inheritance from Angelo, but soon discovered the only thing owned together was the home she lived in. She had expected to receive the business, all the motor vehicles and any other assets that may have been sitting around, including other real estate holdings. It turned out that Dad had never released Mama from their joint-tenancy of all properties and assets. Mama inherited everything. This was surely poetic justice. Nevertheless, through the goodness of her own heart, Mama allowed Marilyn to take the Cadillac as her own and willingly signed over ownership. That was the last anyone saw of Marilyn.

CHAPTER Thirty-Five

The Law Firm Downsizes

Eventually I decided the law firm was getting to be too big for me. For this reason I set out to re-locate my practice. I offered to bring Mitch with me, but he declined at that time. The ideal location was found directly across the street from the Santa Clara Municipal Court. This was an old 1940s style duplex-like structure that had actually always been commercial property. I was able to rent half the structure and set up my practice immediately. I hired Susie, a former secretary with the old law firm. Susie came to work for Mitch and I during the early days of our practice, soon after her sister, Jean, was hired. This would have been about 1963. Jean taught Susie the ropes and kept after her to do everything right. To be sure, Jean was a hard task master, but Susie became one of the best secretaries around. Of course, that says a lot for Jean, who was about as good as they get. Susie was somewhat naïve. One day when I came back from court she gave me a message that I had a call from the “Sam” Damiano Franciscan Retreat House in Danville. I asked her who it was that called. She said, “I don’t know. I guess it was Mr. Sam Damiano.” Since that day Susie has become much wiser.

At this time Sherry also came on board. The boys were in junior high school and could fend for themselves for a few minutes without her presence at home. Nonetheless, if she were not home the moment they walked in the door, they demanded to know where she was and why she wasn't home when they got there.

Later Mitch decided to join me at this location after all. Susie became his secretary and I hired a young woman named Bobbie. Bobbie worked out for awhile, but it was soon discovered she was embezzling one client's money that was supposed to have been collected on a debt. Despite her pleasant personality and demeanor with the clients, it was necessary to let her go. She was sent packing in a matter of minutes.

I continued to maintain my religious beliefs and eventually started a youth ministry program aimed at high school students. The class was open to anyone who showed an interest in religion, not just Catholics. It became a very popular group that was the envy of the area. Many of the members were Olympians and world-class swimmers. Some of the members of this youth group included Keena Rothhammer, an Olympic gold medalist and world record holder at age sixteen and one of the few women to ever win the Sullivan Amateur Athlete of the Year award; John Nabor, Olympic gold medalist and world record holder and student at the University of California; and Michael and Joseph Bottom, NCAA, American and later world record holders in swimming. Four of the Bottom children were members of this youth group. There were approximately 30 total members. They met regularly at St. Clare's parish church, near the campus of Santa Clara University.

During this period, competitive swimming girls were required to wear swimsuits with modesty skirts. This was fine until the East German Women's Swim Team began to wear skirtless swimsuits made of some sort of light fabric that appeared to be almost painted on them. There wasn't much the United States could do

about the East Germans, but they certainly prevented American women from using such garments. Keena Rothhammer's mother decided to test the issue. Keena was slated to be the next gold medalist in the upcoming Olympics. Mrs. Rothhammer bought some lycra material and sewed a swimsuit for Keena. She was disqualified at the first swim meet and actually told to go put on a different swimsuit. This was based on the rules supplied by the American Athletic Union. She refused this command. I took up her cause and sued the American Athletic Union and prevailed.

In 1980 my son Michael and I went to the Olympic Trials where George and Wanda Bottom were in attendance, as their two boys Michael and Joseph were competing for a spot on the 1980 Olympic Team in the 100 butterfly swimming event. Joe was a world record holder in the event, and he and his brother competed in the finals, wherein two of the finalists would make the 1980 Olympic team. Michael was accused of "psyching" his brother out on the starting blocks, causing Joe to false start.

Michael went on to beat his brother and earned a spot on the team. The false start technique of Michael's became quite controversial.

That evening, both my son and I experienced both the joy and defeat of the Bottom brothers. Their father, George Bottom, was very ill at that time and was pleased that he had the opportunity to see Michael make the 1980 Olympic Team. Previously, the older boy, Joseph, made the 1976 Olympic Team and George and Wanda went to Montreal to see him compete. The 1980 Olympics were boycotted by the United States, so all Michael got was the opportunity to shake hands with President Jimmy Carter.

We were very close to the Bottoms, and when George died in 1982, Sherry and I attended the funeral and had tremendous compassion for the Bottom family.

CHAPTER Thirty-Six

Dissolution and Death of a Matriarch

In the early 1980s, Sherry and I were experiencing domestic strife. Our marriage had been volatile for many years. We came to a mutual agreement that a separation was necessary and possibly a divorce. Both the boys were raised and in the Armed Services by this time. After working with this problem for some time it became obvious that the divorce was necessary, and this was another low time in my life. In discussing the matter with a priest who was a canon lawyer, he advised me that an annulment was possible based on the fact that at the time of our marriage we did not make a mature and responsible decision, and that my motivation was primarily one of passion rather than a proper attitude toward the important sacrament of my belief as a Catholic. I considered my actions at this time to be selfish and childish and this appeared to be sufficient grounds for annulment. A settlement was amicably reached and we went our separate ways. A divorce followed and eventually the marriage was annulled in the Church and approved by Rome.

Brother Joachim was my closest friend and spiritual advisor. I attended many retreats at the San Damiano retreat house in

Danville, particularly when I was having a difficult time adjusting to my many compulsions. About this same time Brother Joe was reassigned to San Antonio Mission near King City, California where I continued to visit with him at the mission. The many whose lives he had influenced, requested permission from the Franciscan Provincial to allow Brother to give retreats for these men and their wives. Brother thus began giving regular retreats at retreat houses in San Mateo, San Damiano and San Antonio Mission. There are many men whose lives have been affected by this Brother. Of all the religious that I have known throughout my many years, Brother Joe is the most committed to his spirituality and truly lives the life of a saint. He is joyful and his mere presence radiates love and peacefulness. He and I have continued our friendship and he often visits me at my home, sharing the holidays these past many years. I was also very close to both the mother and the father of Brother Joe. Even today Brother remains a great inspiration and source of strength to many.

After my separation from Sherry, I went to the retreat house and spent many days reflecting on the turns of events that had so changed my life. Brother Joe invited me to attend a special retreat for religious at the Santa Barbara Mission.

I was the only lay person in attendance and very much enjoyed the study of Franciscan spirituality. I was prepared to make a commitment to the Franciscans to work with them on a full time basis with their charities in San Francisco and San José. I even considered becoming a secular Franciscan.

Toward the end of the 30 day period, one of the nuns invited me to walk on the beach with her and discuss whether or not I wanted immediately to become involved with this Franciscan project. She felt that I was jumping too quickly into something that I might later regret. The last few days of the retreat I spent a great deal of time with the nun and decided to inform the Franciscans that I would wait on this decision.

I became very fond of this nun and over a period of several

months we developed a relationship. She was considering leaving the religious life and wanted to work with me on some spiritual projects. Through the guidance of my confessor and other confidants, it became clear that I had to discontinue this relationship. I tried to explain to her that I was not emotionally capable of entering a relationship at that time. Although we loved and respected each other, we mutually agreed to separate.

In the meantime I had become involved with Wanda Bottom, whose husband had died in 1982 of cancer. He had valiantly battled the disease for four years. We attended a retreat at San Damiano together, and began to date and subsequently married in 1983 in a civil ceremony. After my marriage to Sherry was annulled, Wanda and I married in the Catholic Church. At that time Wanda was living in Danville, California where the two of us lived for a short period of time prior to moving to Pajaro Dunes, a resort community on Monterey Bay where Wanda and her husband had a home in this beach community. We lived at Pajaro Dunes for the next ten years while I continued the practice of law in the area and became active with Catholic charities, subsequently becoming chairman of the Pajaro Valley Catholic Charities. I began representing and counseling several religious in difficulties, something I had done my entire law practice.

While living in Pajaro Dunes we purchased several buildings and modified them for professional offices.

These were old Victorians that we modified. In one of the buildings, I established a law practice with two associates and continued my criminal practice, representing on one occasion a notorious member of the underworld who was in the Witness Protection Program. I had a difficult time dealing with my client because he was not happy about the restrictions imposed upon him. He flew to the east coast to testify against several individuals from organized crime. At the time, someone was interested in authoring a book about his life story and his relationship with the Witness Protection Program. I did not agree with this idea and I advised

that this was for a later time. My representation was confined to working with the client and the Witness Protection Program people, and with the client's many problems and disagreements with that service.

In the 1970s Mama was required to go on dialysis as a result of her kidney condition. She had suffered many years with her condition and was fully expecting this time to come. She adjusted to this disability with strength and courage, continuing all of her activities, including traveling and continuing her volunteer work. Her home was still the meeting place for family gatherings, although she was preparing her sons and daughters and their spouses for eventually taking over the holiday meals and get-togethers. She refused to allow her illness and suffering to affect her lifestyle.

Eventually, there came a point when she just couldn't go on with the treatments. After several years of surgeries, physical debilitation, and the burden of dialysis, she announced to the family she was going to discontinue her treatments. She knew this meant death. Just before the holidays of 1988, she discontinued dialysis. As her disease progressed, her children and grandchildren surrounded her with love and attention to the end. Mama was the last matriarch of the family. She died January 3, 1989 of kidney failure. She had been my first angel. She left a very strong and everlasting legacy for her descendants.

Wanda and I remained in the Monterey area until the early 1990s, returning to Santa Clara County for a short period of time, where we continued the development of properties in Contra Costa County. We purchased two homes in the Moss Beach area, 20 miles south of San Francisco. These were oceanfront homes that we remodeled and sold.

We then moved to the Napa valley, where we remodeled several homes before moving to Sonoma in 1995. I established a law practice in Sonoma and organized the Sonoma Law Center. In Sonoma we remodeled and sold several homes, including

building two new homes, one of which won a city award for its architectural design, a 1915 style craftsman home, complete with authentic woodwork, tile and fixtures.

One of my longtime ambitions was to develop an aquatics center that could be used for therapy and swim instruction. In 2000, Wanda and I were fortunate enough to purchase a natural hot springs, which was a historical landmark, in Sonoma. This was known as Agua Caliente Hot Springs. It was commercially operated for over 100 years and, prior to that, utilized by the Indians in the area. This facility was an acre and a half of pools and buildings that required demolition. On the site we built an outdoor 50 meter pool, an indoor pool and an outdoor spa, all designed for swim instruction, therapy and aerobics. The facility was subsequently leased to a group of physical therapists who are successfully operating the aquatics center, and as the fulfillment of our dream after much hard work and dealing with the many requirements the county imposed on us.

I still continue to offer legal services for those in need, and have not charged a fee for my services for the past several years, except for clients that have been on retainer, one of which is a Scottish family, who are nomadic and whom I have represented for the past 35 years.

They move from town to town doing work where they can find it; roofing, paving, painting, many times getting in trouble for their work. They are a very religious group who never marry outside their clan, and as happens with these kinds of family situations, there is bickering between the various families. They would rent a hotel for the holidays where all the families could meet and introduce the various children to one another. The family that I represented through three generations was very religious and kind and I spent considerable time assisting them with legitimate businesses and encouraging them to integrate into society. I still represent them to this day.

Sadly, in 1996 my youngest sister, Kathryn became very ill

with Hepatitis C. She spent several months in and out of the hospital. Just before Thanksgiving 1996 she entered the hospital for the last time. She had hoped to receive a transplant, but this never materialized for her. She died December 6, 1996, leaving three sons. She was fifty-six years old. Her cremated remains were entombed with Mama in Hayward, California.

I have had several guide dogs over the years; the last three of which were Dane, a golden retriever, Java a chocolate lab, and Schooner a yellow lab. It's interesting that the last three dogs, D, J and S, were my initials in order. I never used a dog in the courtroom or in my travels, but I've enjoyed walking with a dog in the evenings, going back and forth to church and other activities in my community. It has given me a different kind of independence. Our present home is directly across the street from the Catholic Church in Sonoma. There is an enclosed pool in our backyard where I can exercise daily. Wanda and I continue to negotiate more real estate projects. Wanda is 74 years old and I am 70 years old. Though still very active, it seems that it's about time to retire and slow down somewhat. It has taken me all my life to sort out the direction I would eventually take. I pray that good has triumphed over evil after all.

CHAPTER Thirty-Seven

Influences

I had many members of my family to emulate. At times it was difficult to weed out the bad from the good, but it seems that every generation had its plus side. Beginning with my grandmother, Francesca, it is to her I owe the faith that was instilled in me at an early age. From Mama, I learned wisdom, compassion and courage. She had a consistency that will stay with me forever. From Dad, I learned honesty, integrity and a zest for living. From there I go to aunts and uncles. In particular, Uncle Al instilled intellect mixed with fun and games, while Uncle Pat gave me will power by example. Aunt Katy, Uncle Ralph and Uncle John taught me work ethic and generosity. To all these people I will always be grateful. Without those qualities that I inherited from them, I could not have gone on to take advantage of the wonderful mentoring I had from Drs. tenBroek and Perry, Leo Sullivan, Joe Morozumi, Charlie Sava, Jack LaLanne, and my many readers and friends through my law school years and beyond. Brother Joe and all the clergy I was involved with are always close to my heart for giving me the courage to continue a generous and loving life. I emphatically have stated on many occasions that I would never

have made it through law school and the practice of law without Sherry's efforts, encouragement, and devotion. I am particularly grateful for her loving concern and care for the family.

Sherry has expressed her gratitude to me for sharing my family with her, and for remaining her friend over the years. There were many lessons for her to learn from my mother, grandmother, father, and all the other relatives. These were never just "in-laws," but rather an extended family to her. She still considers this family intrinsically hers, even after all these years. They will always remain close to her heart.

Life has been exciting and always interesting. There have been some bad times, but the good times totally out-weigh the bad. Over the years many lives have been touched in a very positive and sensitive manner. As other members of this family take up the torch, it is with great anticipation that the influence of the previous five generations will make its mark. Already this influence can be seen in my sons. They work hard, they play hard, and they are good moral young men. This is a remarkable family with a legacy that should be felt for many generations.

Epilogue

After the divorce Sherry married Lauren Jakey, a music professor at California State University, San José who was also a prominent violinist in the area. Lauren conducted several orchestras including the California Youth Symphony and the Nova Vista Symphony, a community orchestra. He also conducted the San José State Orchestra. He was concert master of most of the area's professional orchestras, including San José Symphony and Santa Clara Philharmonic. He was soloist with many of these orchestras, and was the first violinist in the San José String Quartet, which, in addition to regular public performances, performed once a week as a live music appreciation class at San José State. Sherry later joined this group when the second violinist was not available.

Lauren was a graduate of Oberlin Music Conservatory, where he earned his bachelor's degree in music performance. He later attended Peabody where he earned his master's degree. After his stint in the Army he obtained his doctorate degree from Indiana University. While at Indiana University he studied under renowned violin teacher Josef Gingold. Lauren taught briefly at Iowa State University and later came to San José State where he attained tenure.

Lauren became ill in August 1990 shortly after their return from Europe with the youth orchestra. In January 1991 Lauren passed away after a brief battle with cancer. Sherry's heart was

broken, and never married again.

Sherry had established her paralegal business in Los Gatos in 1988. At first she worked from her home and later rented space in downtown Los Gatos. In 1993 she decided to move her paralegal practice from Los Gatos to a less pricey area, such as Santa Clara. She contacted Mitch Madsen, knowing how very ill he was at this time, and suggested they share office space somewhere agreeable to both of them. Mitch was delighted. She would help him close his practice and he would no longer feel the pressure of having to pay high rents and secretarial fees in order to accomplish this. Within two years, Mitch was able to close down his practice altogether and remain home for his last days with his family.

When he finally entered the hospital for the last time, the one thing he was concerned about was his son's education. He had hoped to send him to Bellarmine High School, a very exclusive Catholic boy's college prep school. This was Mitch's alma mater and it would have meant a great deal to him to have Mark attend there also. Mark applied several months before his father's hospitalization, but it would still be many months before he would know for sure if he had been accepted. Through several very close friends of Mitch, including Dom, they were able to contact the president of the high school, a Jesuit priest, and ask that he let Mitch know if Mark would be accepted. The priest paid a personal visit to Mitch to let him know that Mark had been accepted, but the priest advised Mitch not to let Mark know this. This pleased Mitch very much. Mark, in the meantime, had to endure the several months wait before knowing his fate. Mitch died in 1996, leaving a wonderful legacy of love with his family and friends. Mark went on to graduate from the University of California, Berkeley. He is a successful businessman at this time.

In 1998 Sherry retired from her business as a paralegal and relocated to Reno, Nevada where she established herself as a respected musician in the community. She is currently

concertmaster of the Reno Pops Orchestra and a member of the Royal Sage String Quartet, a professional group. She also participates in the Foundation Orchestra and performs at various club venues in the Reno area. She performs all over northern Nevada, and especially in the many assisted living facilities in the Reno area. It gives her great pleasure to be able to share her gifts with those who are bed-bound or home-bound.

Dom and Sherry's son Tony also relocated to the Reno area where he purchased 40 acres and built his dream house. Tony is a combat veteran. He was deployed to Grenada during that crisis. He is in the process of planting a forest on desert soil, and has become quite the gardener. Sherry likes to refer to him as Mr. MacGregor because he is always chasing rabbits, chipmunks, antelope and even a stray cow or two out of his garden. In the past year he has killed five rattle snakes. One was in his garage overnight sleeping not more than five feet away from his dog, Pearl (who is actually a wolf). Tony startled it when he came home from work. He heard the rattle and saw the snake was coiled, so he gingerly exited his car from the other side. He roused his dog and carefully guided her into the house where he retrieved his "snake gun." This snake was the granddaddy of them all. He had nine rattles, so was up there in age. It took 15 head-shots to finally kill it. He's learned how to cure snake skins and has quite a collection at this writing. He still plays his drums. At this point there probably are few drummers in Nevada who have attained the musicianship that Tony has. When he retires, he plans to play the clubs just for the fun of it and for a little walkin' around money. Aside from this, Tony is an employee at an international package delivery company. He is also the head union steward at his company. He is very active politically and will, no doubt, run for local office at some point in his life. Upper management often wonders where he gets his knowledge of the law. If they only knew how helpful his parents have been in guiding him in the knowledge of how the law works. He remains single, but is ready

to settle down when the right lady comes along.

Dom and Sherry's son Michael lives in Santa Cruz California with his wife, Lis, and their two feral cats. She's a lovely red haired Irish colleen. They are playmates, lovers, friends, and mentors to each other. They travel to Ireland to visit some of Lis' family as often as possible. Michael has the equivalent of a master's degree for his maritime activities. He is Captain of the pilot boat he works on and enjoys fishing when there is down time. He almost never fails to bring home a fresh salmon. His favorite activity is surfing, which he does as often as possible. Mike and his wife are known for their parties. Mike is a fantastic cook and almost always serves smoked salmon (which he smokes himself) as well as other gourmet foods, such as the wonderful Sicilian delicacies he grew up with. He visits his mother at least once a year, and she visits him whenever she can. Health matters have kept her from going every year, but they at least stay in touch as much as possible.

Dom graduated from law school in 1961, passed the California State Bar Examination in 1962 and was admitted to the Bar of the United States Supreme Court in 1969. He established the Legal Aid Society and Public Defenders Office in 1962. He was in Who's Who in American Law, Second edition and Marquis Who's Who, 1979; Who's Who in American Law, Eighth edition, 1994-1995, and Marquis Who's Who 1994; Who's Who in the West, 16th edition, 1978-1979 and Marquis Who's Who, 1978; Who's Who in the West, 17th edition, 1980-1981 and Marquis Who's Who, 1980.

Wanda has five children from her first marriage to George Bottom. Joseph Bottom was an Olympic swimmer with world records in the 100 meter butterfly and 50 meter freestyle. He graduated from University of Southern California and is a financial consultant and entrepreneur living in Chico, California. He has five children from a previous marriage and has recently remarried.

Michael Bottom was a 1980 Olympics qualifier. He graduated from the University of Southern California and has recently married. He is the head coach of men's swimming at the University of California. He has coached many medalists in the past several Olympics, including the gold and silver medalists in the 50 meter freestyle event at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece. Mike has no children.

Lyn Bottom Hay is a successful homemaker. She raised two of her husband's children and presently divides her time between Seattle and Sonoma. She and her husband are very active in social activities and participate in many charitable events. Her husband, W. C. Hay, became involved in the coffee business with Hills Brothers of San Francisco as an executive and then with Nestle, where his emphasis was on coffee. They travel the world to the various coffee producing areas. He was recently offered a job as Senior Vice President of Starbucks Coffee.

Lori Bottom Tanzer received a swimming scholarship to Cal Poly and graduated as a Home Economics major. She is married to David Tanzer, an entrepreneur in the computer business. They have one child and presently reside in Vermont. They enjoy sailing, flying and particularly ballooning. David is both a balloon and airplane pilot. Lori has written several books on the operation of computerized sewing machines.

David Bottom graduated from Stanford University. He was captain of the Stanford swim team during both his junior and senior years. David would have made the 1984 Olympic team, but he came down with mononucleosis. There was considerable publicity about this third son making the Olympic team. David married Crystal Sanchez, a medical doctor, pediatric oncologist and specialist in children's cancer. She is a graduate of Duke University. They live in Ashville, North Carolina with their two children. David developed a brain tumor, and thanks to his wife's connections at Duke University, he was seen there, operated on and treated for the past several years. At this time he is doing

very well.

Wanda and her family was the subject of television short films called *On the Road to the Olympics*, relating the story of her swimming family.

Dom and Wanda travel a great deal. They have been to most parts of the world, including Egypt, Australia, Tahiti, China and other exotic places. They go to Hawaii almost every year.

For more than 40 years as a criminal lawyer Dom has shared in the darkness with many. He has lived in darkness for most of his life, but is grateful to have shared in the lives of his family and friends who have guided him into the light of the world and helped him to realize the extent that one could unselfishly share in the lives of others.

Kinship of Dominic John Sposeto

Name	Birth date	Relationship to Dominic Sposeto
Black, Grace E.	07 Nov 1893	Grandmother of wife
Bottom, Wanda	25 Feb 1931	Wife
Campbell, Alice Isabel	26 Oct 1889	Grandmother of wife
Carina, Seraphina Rosa	Unknown	2nd great-grandmother
Cinbeia, Caroline (Carina)	1848	Great-grandmother
Condelesa, Don Francisco	Unknown	2nd great-grandfather
Maria Teresa	Unknown	2nd great-grandmother
Condelesa, Mary	Unknown	Great-grandmother
Conn, Barbara	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Conn, Joe	Unknown	Husband of the grandaunt
Conn, John	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Conn, Leonard	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Conn, Louis	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Conn, Mary	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Conn, Michael	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Cortese, Mary	Unknown	Wife of the granduncle
Edson, Calvin	01 Feb 1914	Uncle of the wife
Edson, Elmer Timothy	03 Oct 1886	Grandfather of the wife
Edson, Melvin	25 Sep 1921	Uncle of the wife

Edson, Thelma May	18 Oct 1915	Mother-in-law
Esposito, Pasquale Miniscarchi	1834	Great-grandfather
Esposito, Rosa Lucia	Abt. 1889	Grandaunt
Fleming, Linda Diane	03 Feb 1948	1st cousin
Fleming, Ralph Raymond	Abt. 1913	Husband of the aunt
Iaquinta, Antonio	Unknown	Great-granduncle
Iaquinta, Bernardo	Unknown	Great-granduncle
Iaquinta, Catherine	Unknown	Grandaunt
Iaquinta, Catherine	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Francesco	1885	Grandfather
Iaquinta, Francesco	Unknown	2nd great-grandfather
Iaquinta, Frank	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Giamatista	1887	Granduncle
Iaquinta, Giovanni	Unknown	Great-grandfather
Iaquinta, Isabella	Unknown	Grandaunt
Iaquinta, Janet	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Joe	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, John	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, John	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Rosa	1874	Grandaunt
Iaquinta, Rosa	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Rosa Maria	Unknown	Great-grandaunt
Iaquinta, Salvatore	1892	Granduncle
Iaquinta, Salvatore	Unknown	Great-granduncle
Iaquinta, Sam	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Saraphena	Unknown	Grandaunt
Iaquinta, Seraphina	Unknown	Great-grandaunt
Iaquinta, Teresa	Unknown	Grandaunt
Iaquinta, Teresa	Unknown	1st cousin once removed
Iaquinta, Vittoria	25 May 1889	Grandaunt, Wife of the granduncle
Iaquinta, X	Unknown	3rd great-grandfather
Iaquinta, Frank Louis	13 Jan 1948	1st cousin
Iaquinta, John Charles Iaquinta	08 Aug 1917	Uncle
Iaquinta, Kathryn Iaquinta	06 Jan 1914	Aunt

Dominic Sposeto with Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

Jaquinta, Marie Ann	01 Aug 1945	1st cousin
Jaquinta, Mary Jaquinta	08 Nov 1912	Mother
Josephine	1860	Great-grandmother
Kelly, Charles Erin	1891	Grandfather of the wife
Kelly, George Nelson	12 Aug 1914	Father-in-law
Kelly, Linda Sue	04 Apr 1949	Sister-in-law
Kelly, Sherry Ann	29 May 1938	Wife
Kelly, Tommy Eugene	13 Oct 1943	Brother-in-law
Kelly, X the	Unknown	Great-grandfather of wife
Longo, Mary	Unknown	Wife of the granduncle
Loria, Giovanina	Unknown	Grandaunt
Loria, Giovanni	Unknown	Granduncle
Loria, Isabella	1889	Grandmother
Loria, Maria	Unknown	Grandaunt
Loria, Serafina	Unknown	Grandaunt
Loria, Teresa	Unknown	Grandaunt
Miniscarchi, Domenico	1814	2nd great-grandfather
Nolan, Elisabeth Ann	15 Nov 1958	Daughter-in-law
Perry, Blanch Margaret	Unknown	Wife of the uncle
Schminkey, Evelyn Blanch	23 Nov 1905	Wife of the uncle
Schminkey, Jessica Lavelle	07 Aug 1909	Wife of the uncle
Sposeto, Unknown Esposito	19 Feb 1936	1st cousin
Sposeto, Albert	01 Jan 1907	Uncle
Sposeto, Angelina	25 Jun 1922	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Angelo	11 Mar 1912	Father
Sposeto, Anthony Charles	30 Apr 1963	Son
Sposeto, Caroline	1912	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Catherine	27 Sep 1926	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Charlotte		
Frances Esposito	19 Feb 1936	1st cousin
Sposeto, Dolores Ann	09 May 1934	1st cousin
Sposeto, Domenico Esposito	12 May 1877	Grandfather
Sposeto, Dominic	13 Sep 1930	1st cousin
Sposeto, Dominic John	19 Jul 1934	Self
Sposeto, Dominick	28 Nov 1917	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Dominick		
Frank Esposito	19 Sep 1939	1st cousin
Sposeto, Frances Ann	21 Jul 1937	Sister

Sposeto, Frances Lena Esposito	18 Apr 1937	1st cousin
Sposeto, Frances Margaret	30 Dec 1925	1st cousin
Sposeto, Francesco Esposito	06 Nov 1886	Granduncle Husband of grandaunt
Sposeto, Frank	1906	Uncle
Sposeto, Frank Albert	28 Apr 1939	Brother
Sposeto, Isabel Mary	24 Mar 1936	Sister
Sposeto, Isabella	04 Jan 1921	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, John	01 Nov 1913	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Kathryn Loria	01 Aug 1942	Sister
Sposeto, Mary	28 May 1919	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Michael Francis	29 Mar 1962	Son
Sposeto, Pasquale Esposito	01 Oct 1903	Uncle
Sposeto, Patricia Jean	06 Oct 1929	1st cousin
Sposeto, Patrick	28 May 1912	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Patrick Anthony Esposito	27 Jun 1940	1st cousin
Sposeto, Rosa	17 Apr 1916	1st cousin once removed
Sposeto, Rose Marie	24 Mar 1933	1st cousin
Sposeto, Samual	15 Nov 1941	1st cousin
Sposeto, Teresa	23 Sep 1923	1st cousin once removed
Valenti, Angelo	1859	Great-grandfather
Valenti, Angelo	Unknown	3rd great-grandfather
Valenti, Francesca Victoria Venticinque	25 Dec 1882	Grandmother
Valenti, Salvatore	Unknown	Granduncle
Valenti, Salvatore	Unknown	2nd great-grandfather
Valenti, Unknown	Unknown	Grandaunt

Kinship of Dominic Miniscarchi

Name	Birth date	Relationship of Domenico Miniscarchi
Bottom, Wanda	25 Feb 1931	Wife of 2nd great-grandson
Carina, Seraphina Rosa	Unknown	Wife
Cinbeia, Caroline (Carina)	Unknown	Daughter-in-law
Esposito, Pasquale Miniscarchi	1834	Son
Esposito, Rosa Lucia	Abt. 1889	Granddaughter
Iaquinta, Victoria	25 May 1889	Wife of the grandson
Jaquinta, Mary Iaquinta	08 Nov 1912	Wife of great-grandson
Kelly, Sherry Ann	29 May 1938	Wife of 2nd great-grandson
Miniscarchi, Domenico	1814	Self
Napolitano, Angelo		3rd great-grandson
Napolitano, Janet		3rd great-granddaughter
Napolitano, Linda Marie		3rd great-granddaughter
Napolitano, Paul		Husband of the 2nd great-granddaughter
Nolan, Elisabeth Ann	15 Nov 1958	Wife of the 3rd great-grandson
Schminkey, Evelyn	23 Nov 1905	Wife of the great-grandson
Schminkey, Jessica Lavelle	07 Aug 1909	Wife of the great-grandson
Sposeto, Albert	01 Jan 1907	Great-grandson
Sposeto, Angelina	25 Jun 1922	Great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Angelo	11 Mar 1912	Great-grandson
Sposeto, Anthony Charles	30 Apr 1963	3rd great-grandson
Sposeto, Caroline	1912	Great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Catherine	27 Sep 1926	Great-granddaughter

Sposeto, Charlotte Frances Esposito	19 Feb 1936	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Dolores Ann	09 May 1934	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Domenico Esposito	12 May 1877	Grandson
Sposeto, Dominic	13 Sep 1930	2nd great-grandson
Sposeto, Dominic John	19 Jul 1934	2nd great-grandson
Sposeto, Dominick	28 Nov 1917	Great-grandson
Sposeto, Dominick Frank Esposito	19 Sep 1939	2nd great-grandson
Sposeto, Frances Ann	21 Jul 1937	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Frances Lena Esposito	18 Apr 1937	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Frances Margaret	30 Dec 1925	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Francesco Esposito	06 Nov 1886	Grandson
Sposeto, Frank	1906	Great-grandson
Sposeto, Frank Albert	28 Apr 1939	2nd great-grandson
Sposeto, Isabel Mary	24 Mar 1936	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Isabella	04 Jan 1921	Great-granddaughter
Sposeto, John	01 Nov 1913	Great-grandson
Sposeto, Kathryn Loria	01 Aug 1944	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Mary	28 May 1919	Great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Michael Francis	29 Mar 1962	3rd great-grandson
Sposeto, Pasquale Esposito	01 Oct 1903	Great-grandson
Sposeto, Patricia Jean	06 Oct 1929	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Patrick	28 May 1912	Great-grandson
Anthony Esposito	27 Jun 1940	2nd great-grandson
Sposeto, Rosa	17 Apr 1916	Great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Rose Marie	24 Mar 1933	2nd great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Samual Esposito	15 Nov 1941	2nd great-grandson
Sposeto, Teresa	23 Sep 1923	Great-granddaughter
Sposeto, Unknown Esposito	19 Feb 1936	2nd great-granddaughter
Valenti, Francesca Victoria Venticinque	25 Dec 1882	Wife of the grandson

Descendants of Dominic Miniscarchi

Generation No. 1

1. DOMENICO¹ MINISCARCHI was born 1814 in San Mauro, Marchesato, Calabria, Italy, and died in Italy. He married SERAPHINA ROSA CARINA Bet. 1830 - 1834 in Italy. She was born in Italy, and died in Italy.

Notes for DOMENICO MINISCARCHI:

Domenico was the alleged Attorney General of Italy.

Child of DOMENICO MINISCARCHI and SERAPHINA CARINA is:

2. i. PASQUALE MINISCARCHI² ESPOSITO, b. 1834, San Mauro Marchesato, Calabria, Italy.

Generation No. 2

2. PASQUALE MINISCARCHI² ESPOSITO (*DOMENICO*¹ *MINISCARCHI*) was born 1834 in San Mauro Marchesato, Calabria, Italy. He married CAROLINE (CARINA) CINBEIA in Italy. She died around 1905 or soon after.

Notes for PASQUALE MINISCARCHI ESPOSITO:

Pasquale was disinherited as a result of having a relationship and marrying the maid, Carina and bearing a child with her. A legal proceeding took place and he was required to take the name "Esposito," meaning "not of this place" or "exposed."

Children of PASQUALE ESPOSITO and CAROLINE CINBEIA are:

3. i. DOMENICO ESPOSITO³ SPOSETO, b. 12 May 1877, San Mauro Marchesato, Calabria, Italy; d. 22 Jul 1919, Des Moines, Iowa.

4. ii. FRANCESCO ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 06 Nov 1886, Cosenza, Italy; d. 30 Oct 1973, Des Moines, Iowa.
 iii. ROSA LUCIA ESPOSITO, b. Abt. 1889; d. 1905.

Notes for ROSA LUCIA ESPOSITO:

Upon arrival in America in 1905, Rosina's parents were turned away because her mother had tuberculosis. Rosina did not want to leave her parents and so returned to Italy with them. Enroute she died of unknown causes. She was 16 years old.

Generation No. 3

3. DOMENICO ESPOSITO³ SPOSETO (*PASQUALE MINISCARCHI ESPOSITO, DOMENICO¹ MINISCARCHI*) was born 12 May 1877 in San Mauro Marchesato, Calabria, Italy, and died 22 Jul 1919 in Des Moines, Iowa. He married FRANCESCA VITTORIA VENTICINQUE VALENTI 1889-1902 in New York, daughter of ANGELO VALENTI and JOSEPHINE. She was born 25 Dec 1882 in Messina, Catania, Sicily, and died 12 May 1957 in Oakland, Alameda, California.

Notes for DOMENICO ESPOSITO SPOSETO:

Domenico came to America in 1894 at age 17 years. He worked in the coal mines (in Pennsylvania and possibly in Boomer, West Virginia).

In 1911 Dominic was involved in a card game with his father-in-law and two other gentlemen. An argument ensued and Dominic was shot in the neck. Angelo then shot the other two men and killed them. Dominic survived. Angelo was acquitted of any wrong-doing because it was established the other two fired first.

In Des Moines, Iowa on July 22, 1919, Dominic was shot and killed. The suspects were subsequently found innocent of any crime and released. Angelo, however, took it upon himself to avenge his son-in-law's death. It was after this that it is believed he fled back to Italy.

Buried in St. Ambrose Cemetery

More About DOMENICO ESPOSITO SPOSETO:

Burial: 24 Jul 1919, Des Moines, Iowa

Notes for FRANCESCA VICTORIA VENTICINQUE VALENTI:

When Frances was a young girl in Sicily she studied singing and dancing. She was quite talented and entertained thoughts of a career on the stage.

Buried in St. Ambrose Cemetery

Dominic Sposeto with Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

More About FRANCESCA VICTORIA VENTICINQUE VALENTI:
Burial: Des Moines, Iowa

Children of DOMENICO SPOSETO and FRANCESCA VALENTI are:

5. i. PASQUALE ESPOSITO⁴ SPOSETO, b. 01 Oct 1903; d. 20 Apr 1980, Clear Lake Park, California.
- ii. FRANK SPOSETO, b. 1906, Pennsylvania; d. 1930, Michigan.

Notes for FRANK SPOSETO:

Frank spent some time in Ionia State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. He died there when he was 24 years old. During his lifetime he boxed professionally. He may have boxed under the name Patsy Cline, a popular lightweight boxer in the '20's. He was also in the Army. The institution he was at was in Berlin, Iona, Michigan. In the 1930 census his occupation was listed as "ward worker."

6. iii. ALBERT SPOSETO, b. 01 Jan 1907, Des Moines, Iowa; d. Feb 1981, Oakland, Alameda, California.
7. iv. ANGELO SPOSETO, b. 11 Mar 1912, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; d. 18 Jan 1975, Walnut Creek, Contra Costa, California.

4. FRANCESCO ESPOSITO³ SPOSETO (*PASQUALE MINISCARCHI ESPOSITO, DOMENICO¹ MINISCARCHI*) was born 06 Nov 1886 in Cosenza, Italy, and died 30 Oct 1973 in Des Moines, Iowa. He married VITTORIA IAQUINTA 18 Feb 1911 in Boomer, West Virginia, daughter of GIOVANNI IAQUINTA and MARY CONDELESA. She was born 25 May 1889 in San Giovanni Fiore, Calabria, Italy, and died 23 Aug 1973 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Notes for VICTORIA IAQUINTA:

Some names of aunts and uncles Victoria remembered are Maria, Philamina, Isabella, Catarina, Luigi, Giamatista. Victoria supposedly had a husband in Italy whom she termed a "Sicilian and very hot headed." She could not stand him. The relatives got together and decided Victoria and Francesco made a good couple and should marry. Her first child was born in 1911 and weighed 14 pounds at birth. Victoria had to be told she was pregnant. She didn't know she was having labor pains when that time came. She had a very long delivery.

Marriage Notes for FRANCESCO SPOSETO and VICTORIA IAQUINTA:
They were married in Eglisia Immaculata Concepcionis by Father Collins.

Children of FRANCESCO SPOSETO and VICTORIA IAQUINTA are:

- i. CAROLINE⁴ SPOSETO, b. 1912; d. 02 Sep 1997.

Notes for CAROLINE SPOSETO:

Caroline weighed 14 pounds when she was born.

- ii. PATRICK SPOSETO, b. 28 May 1912; d. 03 Sep 1984.

Notes for PATRICK SPOSETO:

Patrick was a puppeteer. He did the puppets for the children's TV show "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie." He may have been born in 1913.

- iii. JOHN SPOSETO, b. 01 Nov 1913.

Notes for JOHN SPOSETO:

His date of birth could have been October 31 and year may have been 1914.

- iv. ROSA SPOSETO, b. 17 Apr 1916.
- v. DOMINICK SPOSETO, b. 28 Nov 1917.
- vi. MARY SPOSETO, b. 28 May 1919.
- vii. ISABELLA SPOSETO, b. 04 Jan 1921.
- viii. ANGELINA SPOSETO, b. 25 Jun 1922.
- ix. TERESSA SPOSETO, b. 23 Sep 1923.
- x. CATHERINE SPOSETO, b. 27 Sep 1926.

Generation No. 4

5. PASQUALE ESPOSITO⁴ SPOSETO (*DOMENICO ESPOSITO*³, *PASQUALE MINISCARCHI*² ESPOSITO, *DOMENICO*¹ *MINISCARCHI*) was born 01 Oct 1903 in Iowa, and died 20 Apr 1980 in Clear Lake Park, California. He married EVELYN SCHMINKEY Unknown. She was born 23 Nov 1905 in Iowa, and died 31 Oct 2000 in California. He later married Helen.

Notes for PASQUALE ESPOSITO SPOSETO:

Family lore tells us that during his time in Iowa he blew up a judge's house. He was known to wear many diamonds - cuff links, tie pins, rings, etc.

Children of PASQUALE SPOSETO and EVELYN SCHMINKEY are:

- i. CHARLOTTE FRANCES ESPOSITO⁵ SPOSETO, b. 19 Feb 1936.
- ii. UNKNOWN ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 19 Feb 1936; d. 19 Feb 1936.
- iii. FRANCES LENA ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 18 Apr 1937.
- iv. DOMINICK FRANK ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 19 Sep 1939.
- v. PATRICK ANTHONY ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 27 Jun 1940.
- vi. SAMUAL ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 15 Nov 1941.

6. ALBERT⁴ SPOSETO (*DOMENICO ESPOSITO*³, *PASQUALE MINISCARCHI*² *ESPOSITO*, *DOMENICO*¹ *MINISCARCHI*) was born 01 Jan 1907 in Des Moines, Iowa, and died 19 Feb 1981 in Oakland, Alameda, California. He married JESSICA LAVELLE SCHMINKEY 31 Dec 1923 in Marysville, Kansas, daughter of AARON SCHMINKEY and UNKNOWN. She was born 07 Aug 1909 in Des Moines, Iowa, and died 28 Nov 1994 in Oakland, Alameda, California.

Notes for ALBERT SPOSETO:

During the early part of prohibition Albert became involved in producing corn whiskey for sale and the operation became very successful. It helped support his mother and brothers. Albert died of lung cancer.

He is listed in the 1930 census two times - once while living with his brother and a week later living just with his family.

Children of ALBERT SPOSETO and JESSICA SCHMINKEY are:

- i. FRANCES MARGARET⁵ SPOSETO, b. 30 Dec 1925, Des Moines, Iowa.
- ii. PATRICIA JEAN SPOSETO, b. 06 Oct 1929, Des Moines, Iowa.
- iii. DOMINIC SPOSETO, b. 13 Sep 1930, Detroit, Michigan; d. Jul 1985, Holly, Oakland, Michigan.
- iv. ROSE MARIE SPOSETO, b. 24 Mar 1933, Des Moines, Iowa.
- v. DOLORES ANN SPOSETO, b. 09 May 1934, Des Moines, Iowa.

7. ANGELO⁴ SPOSETO (*DOMENICO ESPOSITO*³, *PASQUALE MINISCARCHI*² *ESPOSITO*, *DOMENICO*¹ *MINISCARCHI*) was born 11 Mar 1912 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and died 18 Jan 1975 in Walnut Creek, Contra Costa, California. He married MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA 03 Oct 1931 in Iowa, daughter of FRANCESCO IAQUINTA and ISABELLA LORIA. She was born 08 Nov 1912 in Boomer, West Virginia, and died 03 Jan 1989 in Hayward, California.

Notes for ANGELO SPOSETO:

While living in Des Moines, Angelo owned and operated three nightclubs. They all burned down, after which he moved his family to California.

Notes for MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Mary and her two siblings were orphaned at a young age. Mary was only 12 years old. They were taken in by their Uncle Sam and Aunt Mary Jaquinta and lived in Des Moines with them.

More About MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Burial: Hayward, California

Children of ANGELO SPOSETO and MARY JAQUINTA are:

8.
 - i. DOMINIC JOHN⁵ SPOSETO, b. 19 Jul 1934, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - ii. ISABEL MARY SPOSETO, b. 24 Mar 1936, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - iii. FRANCES ANN SPOSETO, b. 21 Jul 1937, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - iv. FRANK ALBERT SPOSETO, b. 28 Apr 1939, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - v. KATHRYN LORIA SPOSETO, b. 01 Aug 1942, Albany, California; d. 06 Dec 1996, San Francisco, California.

Generation No. 5

8. DOMINIC JOHN⁵ SPOSETO (*ANGELO⁴, DOMENICO ESPOSITO³, PASQUALE MINISCARCHI² ESPOSITO, DOMENICO¹ MINISCARCHI*) was born 19 Jul 1934 in Des Moines, Iowa. He married (1) SHERRY ANN KELLY 28 Aug 1955 in Berkeley, California, daughter of GEORGE NELSON KELLY and THELMA MAY EDSON. She was born 29 May 1938 in Silver City, Grant, New Mexico. He married (2) WANDA BOTTOM.

Notes for DOMINIC JOHN SPOSETO:

Dominic slowly lost his eyesight, but this did not deter him from successfully studying law and establishing a very lucrative law practice in San Jose, California

Notes for SHERRY ANN KELLY:

Sherry began the study of the violin at age 10. By age 15 she was concertmistress of the Richmond Symphony. As an adult she continued to play in various groups including orchestras, chamber groups and solo. She has had a successful career as a professional musician.

Dominic Sposeto with Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

Children of DOMINIC SPOSETO and SHERRY KELLY are:

- i. MICHAEL FRANCIS⁶ SPOSETO, b. 29 Mar 1962, San Jose, California; m. ELISABETH ANN NOLAN, 13 May 1995, Santa Cruz, California; b. 15 Nov 1958, Ontario, Canada.
- ii. ANTHONY CHARLES SPOSETO, b. 30 Apr 1963, San Jose, California.

Descendants of Angelo Valenti

Generation No. 1

1. ANGELO³ VALENTI (*SALVATORE², ANGELO¹*) was born 1859 in Sicily, and died Unknown. He married JOSEPHINE Unknown. She was born 1860 in Sicily, and died 29 Nov 1920 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Notes for ANGELO VALENTI:

Angelo and Josephine made many trips from Sicily to America to find jobs for Sicilian and southern Italian immigrant families. Many communities known as “Little Italy’s” were created, for instance, New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Des Moines and many other cities. Angelo and his son-in-law Domenico Esposito were instrumental in bringing southern Italian families to Boomer, West Virginia, establishing a coal-mining community. After 1925 Angelo returned to Italy never to be heard from again.

Notes for JOSEPHINE:

Buried in St. Ambrose Cemetery. Died of Lobar Pneumonia.

More About JOSEPHINE:

Burial: 01 Dec 1920, Des Moines, Iowa

Children of ANGELO VALENTI and JOSEPHINE are:

2.
 - i. UNKNOWN FEMALE VALENTI, b. Unknown.
 - ii. SALVATORE VALENTI, b. Italy; d. Unknown.

Notes for SALVATORE VALENTI:

He was known as Sam.

iii. FRANCESCA VITTORIA VENTICINQUE⁴ VALENTI, b. 25 Dec 1882, Messina, Catania, Sicily; d. 12 May 1957, Oakland, Alameda, California.

Generation No. 2

2. FRANCESCA VITTORIA VENTICINQUE⁴ VALENTI (*ANGELO*³, *SALVATORE*², *ANGELO*¹) was born 25 Dec 1882 in Messina, Catania, Sicily, and died 12 May 1957 in Oakland, Alameda, California. She married DOMENICO ESPOSITO SPOSETO 1902 in New York, son of PASQUALE ESPOSITO and CAROLINE CINBEIA. He was born 12 May 1877 in San Mauro Marchesato, Calabria, Italy, and died 22 Jul 1919 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Notes for FRANCESCA VICTORIA VENTICINQUE VALENTI:

When Frances was a young girl in Sicily she studied singing and dancing. She was quite talented and entertained thoughts of a career on the stage.

Buried in St. Ambrose Cemetery

More About FRANCESCA VITTORIA VENTICINQUE VALENTI:

Burial: Des Moines, Iowa

Notes for DOMENICO ESPOSITO SPOSETO:

Domenico came to America in 1894 at age 17 years. He worked in the coal mines (possibly in Boomer, West Virginia).

Buried in St. Ambrose Cemetery

More About DOMENICO ESPOSITO SPOSETO:

Burial: 24 Jul 1919, Des Moines, Iowa

Children of FRANCESCA VALENTI and DOMENICO SPOSETO are:

3.
 - i. PASQUALE⁵ ESPOSITO, b. 01 Oct 1903, Iowa; d. 20 Apr 1980, Clear Lake Park, California.
 - ii. FRANK SPOSETO, b. 1906, Pennsylvania; d. 1930, Michigan.

Notes for FRANK SPOSETO:

Frank spent some time in Ionia State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. He died there when he was 24 years old.

During his lifetime he boxed professionally. He may have boxed under the name Patsy Cline, a popular lightweight boxer in the '20's. He was also in the Army. The institution he was at was in Berlin, Iona, Michigan. In the 1930 census his occupation was listed as "ward worker."

4. iii. ALBERT SPOSETO, b. 01 Jan 1907, Des Moines, Iowa; d. Feb 1981, Oakland, Alameda, California.
5. iv. ANGELO SPOSETO, b. 11 Mar 1912, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; d. 18 Jan 1975, Walnut Creek, Contra Costa, California.

Generation No. 3

3. PASQUALE ESPOSITO⁴ SPOSETO (*DOMENICO ESPOSITO*³, *PASQUALE MINISCARCHI*² *ESPOSITO*, *DOMENICO*¹ *MINISCARCHI*) was born 01 Oct 1903 in Iowa, and died 20 Apr 1980 in Clear Lake Park, California. He married EVELYN SCHMINKEY Unknown. She was born 23 Nov 1905 in Iowa, and died 31 Oct 2000 in California. He later married Helen.

Notes for EVELYN SCHMINKEY:

She was married to Mr. Gardner who was killed while serving his country. There were two children of this union: Robert Gardner and Margaret Gardner.

Notes for PASQUALE ESPOSITO SPOSETO:

Family lore tells us that during his time in Iowa he blew up a judge's house. He was known to wear many diamonds - cuff links, tie pins, rings, etc.

Children of PASQUALE SPOSETO and EVELYN SCHMINKEY are:

- i. CHARLOTTE FRANCES ESPOSITO⁵ SPOSETO, b. 19 Feb 1936.
- ii. UNKNOWN ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 19 Feb 1936; d. 19 Feb 1936.
- iii. FRANCES LENA ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 18 Apr 1937.
- iv. DOMINICK FRANK ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 19 Sep 1939.
- v. PATRICK ANTHONY ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 27 Jun 1940.
- vi. SAMUAL ESPOSITO SPOSETO, b. 15 Nov 1941.

4. ALBERT⁴ SPOSETO (*DOMENICO ESPOSITO*³, *PASQUALE MINISCARCHI*² *ESPOSITO*, *DOMENICO*¹ *MINISCARCHI*) was born 01 Jan 1907 in Des Moines, Iowa, and died 19 Feb 1981 in Oakland, Alameda, California. He married JESSICA LAVELLE SCHMINKEY 31 Dec 1923 in

Dominic Sposeto with Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

Marysville, Kansas, daughter of AARON SCHMINKEY and UNKNOWN. She was born 07 Aug 1909 in Des Moines, Iowa, and died 28 Nov 1994 in Oakland, Alameda, California.

Notes for ALBERT SPOSETO:

During the early part of prohibition Albert became involved in producing corn whiskey for sale and the operation became very successful. It helped support his mother and brothers. Albert died of lung cancer.

He is listed in the 1930 census two times - once while living with his brother and a week later living just with his family.

Children of ALBERT SPOSETO and JESSICA SCHMINKEY are:

- i. FRANCES MARGARET⁵ SPOSETO, b. 30 Dec 1925, Des Moines, Iowa.
- ii. PATRICIA JEAN SPOSETO, b. 06 Oct 1929, Des Moines, Iowa.
- iii. DOMINIC SPOSETO, b. 13 Sep 1930, Detroit, Michigan; d. Jul 1985, Holly, Oakland, Michigan.
- iv. ROSE MARIE SPOSETO, b. 24 Mar 1933, Des Moines, Iowa.
- v. DOLORES ANN SPOSETO, b. 09 May 1934, Des Moines, Iowa.

5. ANGELO⁵ SPOSETO (*FRANCESCA VICTORIA VENTICINQUE⁴ VALENTI, ANGELO³, SALVATORE², ANGELO¹*) was born 11 Mar 1912 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and died 18 Jan 1975 in Walnut Creek, Contra Costa, California. He married MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA 03 Oct 1931 in Iowa, daughter of FRANCESCO IAQUINTA and ISABELLA LORIA. She was born 08 Nov 1912 in Boomer, West Virginia, and died 03 Jan 1989 in Hayward, California.

Notes for ANGELO SPOSETO:

While living in Des Moines, Angelo owned and operated several nightclubs. All three were burned down. He then moved his family to California.

Notes for MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Mary and her two siblings were orphaned at a young age. Mary was only 12 years old. They were taken in by their Uncle Sam and Aunt Mary Jaquinta and lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa with them.

More About MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Burial: Hayward, California

Children of ANGELO SPOSETO and MARY JAQUINTA are:

6.
 - i. DOMINIC JOHN⁶ SPOSETO, b. 19 Jul 1934, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - ii. ISABEL MARY SPOSETO, b. 24 Mar 1936, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - iii. FRANCES ANN SPOSETO, b. 21 Jul 1937, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - iv. FRANK ALBERT SPOSETO, b. 28 Apr 1939, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - v. KATHRYN LORIA SPOSETO, b. 01 Aug 1942, Albany, California; d. 06 Dec 1996, San Francisco, California.

Generation No. 4

6. DOMINIC JOHN⁶ SPOSETO (*ANGELO⁵, FRANCESCA VICTORIA VENTICINQUE⁴ VALENTI, ANGELO³, SALVATORE², ANGELO¹*) was born 19 Jul 1934 in Des Moines, Iowa. He married (1) SHERRY ANN KELLY 28 Aug 1955 in Berkeley, California, daughter of GEORGE KELLY and THELMA EDSON. She was born 29 May 1938 in Silver City, Grant, New Mexico. He married (2) WANDA BOTTOM.

Notes for DOMINIC JOHN SPOSETO:

Dominic slowly lost his eyesight, but this did not deter him from successfully studying law and establishing a very lucrative law practice in San Jose, California

Notes for SHERRY ANN KELLY:

Sherry began the study of the violin at age 10. By age 15 she was concertmistress of the Richmond Symphony. As an adult she continued to play in various groups including orchestras, chamber groups and solo. She has had a successful career as a professional musician.

Children of DOMINIC SPOSETO and SHERRY KELLY are:

- i. MICHAEL FRANCIS⁷ SPOSETO, b. 29 Mar 1962, San Jose, California; m. ELISABETH ANN NOLAN, 13 May 1995, Santa Cruz, California; b. 15 Nov 1958, Ontario, Canada.
- ii. ANTHONY CHARLES SPOSETO, b. 30 Apr 1963, San Jose, California.

Descendants of Francesco Iaquina

Generation No. 1

1. FRANCESCO² IAQUINTA (*X*¹) was born Unknown in Italy, and died Unknown. He married ROSA Unknown. She was born in Italy, and died in Italy.

Children of FRANCESCO IAQUINTA and ROSA are:

2.
 - i. GIOVANNI³ IAQUINTA, b. Unknown, Italy; d. Unknown.
 - ii. ANTONIO IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
 - iii. SALVATORE IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
 - iv. BERNARDO IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
 - v. SERAPHINA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
 - vi. ROSA MARIA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Generation No. 2

2. GIOVANNI³ IAQUINTA (*FRANCESCO*², *X*¹) was born Unknown in Italy, and died Unknown. He married MARY CONDELESA Unknown, daughter of DON CONDELESA and MARIA TERESA. She was born Unknown in Italy, and died Unknown.

Notes for GIOVANNI IAQUINTA:

He died at age 85

Notes for MARY CONDELESA:

The family name may have been Candalaza and later Conn. She died at age 82.

Children of GIOVANNI IAQUINTA and MARY CONDELESA are:

- i. ROSA⁴ IAQUINTA, b. 1874; d. 1968.

Notes for ROSA IAQUINTA:

Rosa married and had four daughters and three boys. The boys died from infancy to six years of age.

3. ii. FRANCESCO IAQUINTA, b. 1885, Rocca Bernardo, Calabria, Italy; d. 1924, Boomer, West Virginia.
4. iii. GIAMATISTA IAQUINTA, b. 1887.
5. iv. VICTORIA IAQUINTA, b. 25 May 1889, San Giovanni Fiore, Calabria, Italy; d. 23 Aug 1973, Des Moines, Iowa.
6. v. SALVATORE IAQUINTA, b. 1892; d. 1970.
7. vi. CATHERINE IAQUINTA, b. Unknown; d. Unknown.
- vii. ISABELLA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for ISABELLA IAQUINTA:

She died at age 22 months.

- viii. SARAPHENA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for SARAPHENA IAQUINTA:

She died at 2 years.

- ix. TERESA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for TERESA IAQUINTA:

Died at about age 80. She was a nun.

Generation No. 3

3. FRANCESCO⁴ IAQUINTA (*GIOVANNI^F, FRANCESCO², X¹*) was born 1885 in Rocca Bernardo, Calabria, Italy, and died 1924 in Boomer, West Virginia. He married ISABELLA LORIA 1908 in Caccuri, Calabria, Italy. She was born 1889 in Caccuri, Calabria, Italy, and died 1924 in Boomer, West Virginia.

Notes for FRANCESCO IAQUINTA:

In 1924 there was an explosion at the mine. Francesco was killed.

The Italians of Boomer were referred to as the Taly-Boomers.

Notes for ISABELLA LORIA:

Isabella died soon after her husband. Some say she died of a broken heart, but most probably she died of kidney disease. Glomerular Nephritis has been handed down to the female side of the family.

Dominic Sposeto with Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

Marriage Notes for FRANCESCO IAQUINTA and ISABELLA LORIA:
Married in the spring.

Children of FRANCESCO IAQUINTA and ISABELLA LORIA are:

8. i. MARY IAQUINTA⁵ JAQUINTA, b. 08 Nov 1912, Boomer, West Virginia; d. 03 Jan 1989, Hayward, California.
9. ii. KATHRYN IAQUINTA JAQUINTA, b. 06 Jan 1914, Des Moines, Iowa; d. 17 Apr 2003, Hayward, California.
10. iii. JOHN IAQUINTA JAQUINTA, b. 08 Aug 1917, Boomer, West Virginia; d. 14 May 1988, Oakland, Alameda, California.

4. GIAMATISTA⁴ IAQUINTA (*GIOVANNI*³, *FRANCESCO*², *X*¹) was born 1887. He married MARY CORTESE Unknown. She was born Unknown.

Notes for GIAMATISTA IAQUINTA:

He was also known as James or Jim. Died at age 83

Children of GIAMATISTA IAQUINTA and MARY CORTESE are:

- i. CATHERINE⁵ IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
- ii. JOHN IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
- iii. ROSA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
- iv. FRANK IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for FRANK IAQUINTA:

Frank was killed in Italy on Anzio Beach during World War II.

- v. TERESA IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.
- vi. SAM IAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

5. VITTORIA IAQUINTA (*GIOVANNI*³, *FRANCESCO*², *X*¹) was born 25 May 1889 in San Giovanni Fiore, Calabria, Italy, and died 23 Aug 1973 in Des Moines, Iowa. She married FRANCESCO ESPOSITO SPOSETO 18 Feb 1911 in Boomer, West Virginia, son of PASQUALE ESPOSITO and CAROLINE CINBEIA. He was born 06 Nov 1886 in Cosenza, Italy, and died 30 Oct 1973 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Marriage Notes for VICTORIA IAQUINTA and FRANCESCO SPOSETO:
The were married in Eglisia Immaculata Concepcionis by Father Collins.

Children of VICTORIA IAQUINTA and FRANCESCO SPOSETO are:

- i. CAROLINE⁵ SPOSETO, b. 1912; d. 02 Sep 1997.

Notes for CAROLINE SPOSETO:

Caroline weighed 14 pounds when she was born.

- ii. PATRICK SPOSETO, b. 28 May 1912; d. 03 Sep 1984.

Notes for PATRICK SPOSETO:

Patrick was a puppeteer. He did the puppets for the children's TV show "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie." He may have been born in 1913.

- iii. JOHN SPOSETO, b. 01 Nov 1913.

Notes for JOHN SPOSETO:

His date of birth could have been October 31 and year may have been 1914.

- iv. ROSA SPOSETO, b. 17 Apr 1916.

Notes for ROSA SPOSETO:

Rose was an art major.

- v. DOMINICK SPOSETO, b. 28 Nov 1917.
- vi. MARY SPOSETO, b. 28 May 1919.
- vii. ISABELLA SPOSETO, b. 04 Jan 1921.
- viii. ANGELINA SPOSETO, b. 25 Jun 1922.
- ix. TERESSA SPOSETO, b. 23 Sep 1923.
- x. CATHERINE SPOSETO, b. 27 Sep 1926.

6. SALVATORE⁴ IAQUINTA JAQUINTA (*GIOVANNI³, FRANCESCO², X¹*) was born 1892, and died 1970. He married MARY LONGO Unknown. She was born Unknown, and died Unknown.

Notes for SALVATORE IAQUINTA:

Also called Sam. Died at age 78

Children of SALVATORE IAQUINTA JAQUINTA and MARY LONGO are:

- i. JOHN⁵ JAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for JOHN JAQUINTA:

He married and had one child

- ii. JOE JAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for JOE JAQUINTA:

He married and had one child

- iii. JANET JAQUINTA, b. Unknown.

Notes for JANET JAQUINTA:

She married, but it is unknown if she had children.

7. CATHERINE⁴ IAQUINTA (*GIOVANNI*³, *FRANCESCO*², *X*¹) was born Unknown, and died Unknown. She married JOE CONN Unknown. He was born Unknown, and died Unknown.

Notes for CATHERINE IAQUINTA:

Died at age 76

Notes for JOE CONN:

Joe Conn is probably the same as Giovanni Condelese.

Children of CATHERINE IAQUINTA and JOE CONN are:

- i. JOHN⁵ CONN, b. Unknown.
Notes for JOHN CONN:
John died during World War II.
- ii. LOUIS CONN, b. Unknown.
Notes for LOUIS CONN:
Married and had one son
- iii. MARY CONN, b. Unknown.
Notes for MARY CONN:
Married and adopted a son
- iv. MICHAEL CONN, b. Unknown.
Notes for MICHAEL CONN:
Married and had three children
- v. BARABARA CONN, b. Unknown.
Notes for BARABARA CONN:
Married and had no children.
- vi. LEONARD CONN, b. Unknown.

Generation No. 4

8. MARY IAQUINTA⁵ JAQUINTA (*FRANCESCO*⁴ *IAQUINTA*, *GIOVANNI*³, *FRANCESCO*², *X*¹) was born 08 Nov 1912 in Boomer, West

Virginia, and died 03 Jan 1989 in Hayward, California. She married ANGELO SPOSETO 03 Oct 1931 in Iowa, son of DOMENICO SPOSETO and FRANCESCA VALENTI. He was born 11 Mar 1912 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and died 18 Jan 1975 in Walnut Creek, Contra Costa, California.

Notes for MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Mary and her two siblings were orphaned at a young age. Mary was only 12 years old. They were taken in by their uncle Sam and aunt Mary Jaquinta and lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa with them.

More About MARY IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Burial: Hayward, California

Notes for ANGELO SPOSETO:

While living in Des Moines, Angelo owned and operated several nightclubs. They were all burned down.

Children of MARY JAQUINTA and ANGELO SPOSETO are:

11.
 - i. DOMINIC JOHN⁶ SPOSETO, b. 19 Jul 1934, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - ii. ISABEL MARY SPOSETO, b. 24 Mar 1936, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - iii. FRANCES ANN SPOSETO, b. 21 Jul 1937, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - iv. FRANK ALBERT SPOSETO, b. 28 Apr 1939, Des Moines, Iowa.
 - v. KATHRYN LORIA SPOSETO, b. 01 Aug 1942, Albany, California; d. 06 Dec 1996, San Francisco, California.

9. KATHRYN IAQUINTA⁵ JAQUINTA (*FRANCESCO⁴ IAQUINTA, GIOVANNI³, FRANCESCO², X¹*) was born 06 Jan 1914 in Des Moines, Iowa, and died 17 Apr 2003 in Hayward, California. She married RALPH RAYMOND FLEMING in the 1940's. He was born about 1913.

More About KATHRYN IAQUINTA JAQUINTA:

Burial: Hayward, California

Child of KATHRYN JAQUINTA and RALPH FLEMING is:

- i. LINDA DIANE⁶ FLEMING, b. February 3, 1948.

10. JOHN CHARLES IAQUINTA⁵ JAQUINTA (*FRANCESCO⁴ IAQUINTA, GIOVANNI³, FRANCESCO², X¹*) was born 08 Aug 1917 in Boomer, West Virginia, and died 14 May 1988 in Oakland, Alameda, California. He married BLANCH MARGARET PERRY Unknown. She was born 19 Feb 1923 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Children of JOHN JAQUINTA and BLANCH PERRY are:

- i. FRANK LOUIS⁶ JAQUINTA, b. 13 Jan 1948, Oakland, Alameda, California; m. ANNA JANETTE FLEMING; b. Alameda, California.
- ii. MARIE ANN JAQUINTA, b. 01 Aug 1945, Oakland, Alameda, California; m. JOHN MAURO REVELLI; b. 02 May 1940, Hartford, Connecticut.

Generation No. 5

11. DOMINIC JOHN⁶ SPOSETO (*MARY IAQUINTA⁵ JAQUINTA, FRANCESCO⁴ IAQUINTA, GIOVANNI³, FRANCESCO², X¹*) was born 19 Jul 1934 in Des Moines, Iowa. He married (1) SHERRY ANN KELLY 28 Aug 1955 in Berkeley, California, daughter of GEORGE KELLY and THELMA EDSON. She was born 29 May 1938 in Silver City, Grant, New Mexico. He married (2) WANDA BOTTOM.

Notes for DOMINIC JOHN SPOSETO:

Dominic slowly lost his eyesight, but this did not deter him from successfully studying law and establishing a very lucrative law practice in San Jose, California

Notes for SHERRY ANN KELLY:

Sherry began the study of the violin at age 10. By age 15 she was concertmistress of the Richmond Symphony. As an adult she continued to play in various groups including orchestras, chamber groups and solo. She has had a successful career as a professional musician.

Children of DOMINIC SPOSETO and SHERRY KELLY are:

- i. MICHAEL FRANCIS⁷ SPOSETO, b. 29 Mar 1962, San Jose, California; m. ELISABETH ANN NOLAN, 13 May 1995, Santa Cruz, California; b. 15 Nov 1958, Ontario, Canada.
- ii. ANTHONY CHARLES SPOSETO, b. 30 Apr 1963, San Jose, California.

Descendants of Patrick Kelly

Generation No. 1

1. PATRICK² KELLY (*EDWARD*¹) was born 07 May 1810 in Ireland, and died Aug 1880 in Ireland. He married ISABELLA REILLY Bet. 1829 - 1843 in Ireland. She was born 01 Sep 1816 in Ireland, and died Aug 1880 in Ireland.

Child of PATRICK KELLY and ISABELLA REILLY is:

2. i. X³ KELLY, b. 26 Apr 1849, Irish Free State; d. Bet. 1870 - 1939, Unknown.

Generation No. 2

2. X³ KELLY (*PATRICK*², *EDWARD*¹) was born 26 Apr 1849 in Irish Free State, and died Bet. 1870 - 1939 in Unknown. He married MARY COLLINS Bet. 1866 - 1899 in Ireland. She was born Bet. 1845 - 1870 in Irish Free State, and died Bet. 1870 - 1949 in Unknown.

Children of X KELLY and MARY COLLINS are:

3. i. CHARLES ERIN⁴ KELLY, b. Abt. 1891, Maine; d. Unknown, Unknown.
- ii. CLIFTON B. KELLY, b. Abt. 1893.

Generation No. 3

3. CHARLES ERIN⁴ KELLY (*X*³, *PATRICK*², *EDWARD*¹) was born Abt. 1891 in Maine, and died Unknown in Unknown. He married GRACE E. BLACK, daughter of WILLIAM BLACK and MAGGIE. She was born 07 Nov 1893 in Oklahoma Territory, and died 13 Aug 1964 in San Pablo, California.

Notes for CHARLES ERIN KELLY:

Dominic Sposeto with Sherry Sposeto-Jakey

I found Charles E. Kelly and Clifton B. Kelly were living in Maine according to the 1910 census. They are called the stepsons of William and Rena D. Smith. It's possible they were adopted. Charles was a telegraph operator at this time and Clifton was a clerk in a drug store.

More About GRACE E. BLACK:

Burial: Benicia, California

Child of CHARLES KELLY and GRACE BLACK is:

4. i. GEORGE NELSON⁵ KELLY, b. 12 Aug 1914, Fairview, Oklahoma; d. 15 Aug 1976, Richmond, California.

Generation No. 4

4. GEORGE NELSON⁵ KELLY (*CHARLES ERIN⁴, X³, PATRICK², EDWARD¹*) was born 12 Aug 1914 in Fairview, Oklahoma, and died 15 Aug 1976 in Richmond, California. He married THELMA MAY EDSON, daughter of ELMER EDSON and ALICE CAMPBELL. She was born 18 Oct 1915 in Chattanooga, Oklahoma, and died 23 Jun 1992 in San Jose, California.

Children of GEORGE KELLY and THELMA EDSON are:

5. i. SHERRY ANN⁶ KELLY, b. 29 May 1938, Silver City, New Mexico.
6. ii. TOMMY EUGENE KELLY, SR., b. 13 Oct 1943, Silver City, New Mexico; d. 30 May 2000, Martinez, California.
7. iii. LINDA SUE KELLY, b. 04 Apr 1949, Richmond, California.

Generation No. 5

5. SHERRY ANN⁶ KELLY (*GEORGE NELSON⁵, CHARLES ERIN⁴, X³, PATRICK², EDWARD¹*) was born 29 May 1938 in Silver City, New Mexico. She married (1) DOMINIC JOHN SPOSETO 28 Aug 1955 in Berkeley, California, son of ANGELO SPOSETO and MARY JAQUINTA. He was born 19 Jul 1934 in Des Moines, Iowa. She married (2) LAUREN RAY JAKEY, son of HOWARD JAKEY and MARIE HORNIBROOK. He was born 10 Jul 1937 in Yakima, Washington, and died 14 Jan 1991 in Santa Clara, California.

More About LAUREN RAY JAKEY:

Burial: Los Gatos, California

Children of SHERRY KELLY and DOMINIC SPOSETO are:

- i. MICHAEL FRANCIS⁷ SPOSETO, b. 29 Mar 1962, San Jose, California;
m. ELISABETH ANN NOLAN, 13 May 1995, Santa Cruz, California;
b. 15 Nov 1958, Ontario, Canada.
- ii. ANTHONY CHARLES SPOSETO, b. 30 Apr 1963, San Jose, California.

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