

This trip is dedicated to Ernestina (Palumbo) my mothers sister who was born in Giuliano Taino province of Chieti, Italy, February 18, 1905 20 years older than my mother Rosalinda. She was more of a mother to my mom and a grandmother to me. When Ernestine was recuperating at my parents house Thanksgiving 1978 from gallbladder surgery (uncle Nick died exactly one year before) I asked aunt Ernie to tell me the family history. I must have thought she was very old. She was the oldest still alive in the family who was born in Italy. At first I tried to write down all the things, but I couldn't keep up and instead turned on a little tape recorder my father, luckily had. I put the tape and the notes away. The years passed. January 1995 Arthur Flacco, my first cousin, released his family history and recollections. Not everything coincided with aunt Ernie's stories which I then went through for the first time in 17 years. Then Angelo had a party for her 90th birthday. That Easter in 1995 we invited aunt Ernie to our house for dinner with my mom and my brother and sister's families. How much fun we had listening to Ernie on our deck laughing with her. I went to visit her February 19, 2002 the day after her 96th birthday I spent one and a half hours talking and listening. The night before my visit, I dreamt of all my beloved deceased Palumbo aunts and uncles, especially uncle Edward and aunt Adeline. I told Ernie about my dream. She died February 23, 2001. How hard that was for me. Losing her. I pulled out all the information she gave to me to help me remember her. Then I found nearly all of the Palumbo's entries into Ellis Island. At aunt Ernestine's funeral luncheon, Angelo gave me the name and addresses of his first cousins on his father side who are still in Giuliano Teatino. He had visited them in 1999. Joyce was going on a choir trip to Italy. This is why I asked Angelo for his cousins names. Joyce, my Mom, Mark and his family went to Giuliano the summer of 2001. I could not go because of a work conflict. I also did not feel ready to go. I started taking Italian lessons at Gloucester County College, September 2001 in anticipation of a trip in the summer of 2002 with our family. Joyce asked me to go with her out of the blue in October 2001 for a trip in January 2002.

Here I am writing this down in Chieti Italy January 27, 2002 at Ana Maria's in Quadra folio. Many thanks to Claudette who encouraged me to go. She must have understood how much I needed to come. I needed to come to see the hills that Ernie played on with uncle Nick as a child. Tomorrow I will get to see and smell and touch those hills where **my people** (a phrase from aunt Ernestine) came from. Every day, how I miss Claudette. How I appreciate the care she gives to us when I'm home and away. Thanks so much to Joyce for arranging the entire trip.

Just before leaving on the trip, I started the process of moving and selling my father's house. A difficult process for everyone especially my dad. His neighbor behind him expressed an interest in buying the house the day Mark and I were moving my dad's belongings. We exchanged phone numbers. In two days following the move we got to know each other during our negotiations to sell the house. Basim Khalil is a gentleman 43 years old from Palestine with six daughters and one son. He used to be a school teacher of Arabic language, but came to the US to make a better living I presume. He travels frequently back to Palestine to visit his family. He works very hard. Funny I should meet a man much like my grandfather Palumbo who came to the US to make a living working on the railroad while starting up his shoemaking business. He also returned back to Giuliano Teatino several times. His trip took at least 12 days not 12 hours. He did not have international phone cards to call his family whenever he wanted. I can only imagine how long it took to receive a reply to a letter he would've sent to my grandmom Filomena.

Wednesday, January 23, my birthday. I drove Steve and Regina to school then returned home to a tender farewell from Claudette. I needed a haircut. Stopped at Dad's for paperwork to sign an agreement of sale for his house. Then home to pack. I set off the house alarm putting away

the snowblower. The police came. Claudette returned with hoagies! Joyce came. Steven and Regina arrived home with Claudette and we said our goodbyes and off we went.

Lisa called me at noon to say happy birthday and have a great trip. Teresa called me on my cell phone on her way to school and on my way to the lawyer's office.

The plane was very empty. After eating dinner and studying a little Italian, I stretched out and slept much of the rest of the flight.

January 24, Thursday. Georgio(the driver from the hotel) met us at the airport and drove us to the hotel Bolivar. A beautiful little hotel tucked off of via National on an unnamed side street. We had a little breakfast in their beautiful rooftop room. We walked to Trevi fountain. It was raining lightly. Thank God, we remembered umbrellas. Heading towards the Spanish steps, we followed a young man who gave us directions into a building, which was a church. People were praying during the anniversary of the conversion of a Jewish banker after Mary appeared to him. More rain to the Spanish steps. Very empty and dark. To a small cafeteria. Taxi to the Musei Capitolini. More rain. Ancient and Renaissance work in the museum. Huge bronze equestrian statue. We walked back towards Hotel past Victor Emmanuel. Police directed us to a bancomat. €250 right out of our bank account. How cool!. Back to the hotel then out to Piazza Navona. A late dinner of gnocchi and arrosta vitello. We stepped into a church where ayouth group was preparing for Toronto 2002. How exciting to see Teresa's Italian counterparts. Gelateria and then to the hotel and much needed rest.

January 25 Friday.

To the Tabaccheria for bus ticket then to Saint Peter's at around 9:30. It was very empty. Sunny , cool and clean. Saint Peter's pulls me in and up. Nice little free tour by English lady trying to get business for the Vatican museum tour. Very long walk to the Vatican museum. Nothing much interesting until we arrive in the Sistine Chapel. The ceiling is alive. What did Michelangelo want me to see. I was very unimpressed with the first view from the altar. The subjects were alive from almost any other perspective. We were the last to leave. Subway to the Colosseum. Joyce slept on the grass and I caught the last English tour at 3 PM. Then to the Museo Borghese. A little sandwich. Watched the waiters and waitresses. Bernini's Pluto work looks alive. We walked back to the Spanish steps, then dinner. The owner was Abruzzese. Fell asleep sitting up in bed. I slept from 930 at night to 9 o'clock in the morning.

Saturday January 26.

Took a taxi to Termini. Avis Rent-A-Car. I needed help to put the car in reverse. It was a miracle to get out of Rome. First went to L'Aquila. The market was just closing in the Square. Every day, except Sunday, all things to buy. clothing food. There was a pancetta sandwich just like uncle Nick's roast pork. We stopped at a cathedral. It was empty and cold. I prayed to Mary for the family who I miss.

Teramo was next. I inquired for a room at Hotel Grand Sasso. View of the mountains. Incredible passeggiata. Many people. Long walk. Had to find a restaurant. Italians talk and walk and don't eat except on the run. No fat Italians. (*Joyce had a lively conversation with the Hotel clerk about the card game sette e mezzo.*)

Sunday, January 27

To Civitella Del Tronto. Short ride. Beautiful valley below. Snow capped mountains. Fortress on the hill. Went into church during mass. Beautiful Duomo. I was very moved during a baptism ceremony during the mass. Maybe because I could understand much of the ceremony since I had heard it many times before. The same prayers were evident. I could remember and reexperience the baptisms of our children. I felt so strongly how much I missed them. How

special their baptisms were. I can still hear the priest, Ricevete la Lucia da Cristo when he handed the candle to the family. After the mass, we asked, a young female helper.

During the mass I was rehearsing in my head how to say to the priest how moved I was. Also to ask, is there a way to look up baptismal records. Joyce asked a female helper after the mass. It turned out she was a novice from Germany, who could speak Italian, German, and English. She was kind and soft spoken and the real blonde. (Could not have been an Italian.) She asked the priest who said a book was being prepared, but it was not yet ready. I was hoping to find grandpa Gesuini DeLaurentis's baptism. She gave us information on her order and a beautiful prayer card. Their order calls Mary and Jesus co-redeemers. We walked the hill next to the fortress. The fortress was closed until 230. We drove to the Adriatic and stopped at a deserted beach town and had a piece of pizza (we were starved). Then we headed to Chieti. Another hilltop city. We got to Ana Maria's by dark. Had dinner of pasta and firm yellow tomatoes. Followed by a variation of grandpa DeLaurentis's chicken.

January 28, Monday.

Today we went to Giuliano Teatino. Rolling Hills, the tops of covered with little towns. The sides of all the hills are covered with vineyards. Men in wool hats and women in scarves and wool sweaters. People pruning the vines, vine trimmings wrapped in bundles. All the land is farmed or lived on. No landscaping here.

Went straight to Vecchio. Spoke with Viola. Elvira is in the hospital. This is why she didn't answer our recent phone calls. Viola has been a widow for 34 years. Two daughters one lost to living with a man in a nearby town. The other daughter is returning home for lunch as she does every day. Viola invited us into her house and offered us the sweet bitter drink from a tiny bottle. I took video of much of her conversation with Joyce.

Then Joyce had a short conversation with Carmine who lives next-door. Parked at your Elvira's house. No one answered the door. Walked to Cataldo's house. As we walked towards the door, Joyce asked an older man if this was Cataldo's house. He said yes, only. He let us walk up the steps slightly, then announced. I'm Cataldo. Joyce introduced herself and all remembered her visit. Cataldo invited us in.

We talked family relations. Grazia brought out original photos of grandma and grandpa's 60th anniversary and a picture of Lynn Andreacola when she was young. Cataldo gave the tour while Concetta and Grazia cooked. We went to grandma and grandpa's house. A young lady was fixing it up. It is the house of her father-in-law. I don't remember the last name, but it was not Nanni. She showed where the little shoe store was, and the old part of the house. The old part of the house is on the right looking from the street. The addition on the left was added in 1970. Uncle Nick and aunt Ernie came to visit in 1971. Aunt Ernie had said she saw two of the Carlo Nanni's sons fixing it up when she was there.

Most incredibly, uncle Nick's father's house was just 100 feet from Filomena and Ciriaco's house. Aunt Ernie didn't need to go far to find uncle Nick to play with.

Cataldo worked in Argentina for seven years. For three years Concetta went to stay with him and they left Luigi home with Grazia for three years. Worked importing and as a butcher. He still imports wine to the USA. He gave us his card. We had slow food as Luigi said for pranzo di mezzo giorno. Clams and spaghetti primo piatto followed by pork chop cooked over open fire. Contorno, a salad from the yard. White wine made by Cataldo also grappa made by Cataldo from the wine.

Joyce and Cataldo would alternately speak in Italian or Spanish. Cataldo preferred Spanish I presume because Joyce's complete fluency in Spanish.

At lunch, Luigi joined us. Now we were speaking in Italian, English and Spanish. Luigi is an internist at a clinic in Chieti. A reserve and polite man married to a doctor. She is Abruzzese, from somewhere between Teramo and Pescara.

Per dolce fresh fruit, tangerines and apples. Excellent food! Special Abruzzo cake made with ground almonds, lemon, and covered with a thin layer of chocolate. Coffee, of course. Very surprised to see oranges and lemons growing on the south side of the house. The south side

faces the valley. They have the best exposure for growing. The recent snow killed the cabbage. A very unusual warm and sunny day. Cataldo at 79 is very much my mom's age, but I see him much more like my grandfather. Very much soft spoken and gentlemanly. Always engaged in the conversation. Concetta less active in the conversation, but no less attentive.

Looking from the front steps of Cataldo's house directly to the left is the house that uncle Nick (Nichola Andreacola) grew up in with his father, Angelo Santo. Their house is separated from my grandma and grandpa's house by one other new house that is two houses further towards Vecchio. (The Rucciuti's home)

Gracia married Luigi Andreacola. Their daughter Concetta married Cataldo Flacco. Their son Luigi is an internist with an office in Chieti. Concetta is Elvira Ricciuti's cousin.

January 29, 2002

Day in Chieti. Very foggy! Couldn't see past Ana Maria's yard. Café latte and toast as usual but with sweet potato preserves. We tried Parking next to our church like last night, but it was very crowded. We got stuck in a spot and had to back out. We parked in a Parcheggio under the bus stop. Bought fruit in market. Fish vendors. To Di Muzio's to buy an apron for Mark. Would take four days to make a tablecloth. They will soon have an Internet site.

We met Luigi at 12 noon as planned. He gave us a two hour guided tour of Chieti. His grandfather "abducted" Grazia when she was 14 and they walked all the way to Chieti from Giuliana to get married. His grandfather died at the age of 34 after getting malaria after the war. Grazia is now 80 and Concetta is around 65. Grazia never remarried. During World War II, the bishop of Chieti managed to make a deal with the German general to allow Chieti be an open city which meant no fighting would occur in the city. Luigi's mother and grandmother left Giuliano and stayed in Chieti for 15 months. The malaria was brought to Italy during the war. We saw numerous Roman ruins. We went to see Elvira at the private clinic. She looked well and gave us a warm welcome. She had Joyce's letter on her table. She asked us to give her "saluti" to Mom and the family. She said call Angelo when you get home. She is arrabbiato (very mad) because she hadn't heard from him. (Angelo is her first cousin). Luigi said Elvira has hepatitis C and had interfere on treatment two years ago for chronic not cirrhotic hepatitis.

€100,000 for an apartment in Chieti with a small family. We saw a football (soccer) stadium under which was found a Roman theater now under excavation. They have built buildings there for an archaeological museum. They moved the soccer field to Chieti Scalo(lower Chieti). (just as well no parking available).

We stopped at a bar and had the lunch special that Luigi bought us. He did not eat. He says he does most of his eating at night. We were served a little tiny pizzas, cream puff shaped stuffed bread with tuna, warm, fluffy dough filled with cheese and peanuts with a very dry tasting drink made of pineapple and a Spumante type of wine. This was not slow food. We parted with Luigi and we both got a cheek press like his father gave us the day before (pressed our cheeks together). He said come again. Let him know beforehand and he would take time off to spend even more time. I believe he meant it.

We went to the archaeological museum. We needed to rest there. We saw many pre-Roman stuff most pulled out of gravesites (necropolis).

Cataldo's father came to the US three times. Before he could return to the US with the family, he died.

January 30, 2002.

I went to bed, excited about the thought of returning to Giuliano Teatino to look for the tombstone of Rosalinda D'Aurizio, great grandma, and hopefully our great grandpa. Aunt Ernestine was annoyed at herself because she couldn't remember his first name. I was also excited to give Cataldo and Concetta a little present we had bought them in Chieti, a biscotti

cookie jar. I even left the shutters open to our window so we could wake up early to have more time. We woke up again to very dense fog. Since it was difficult to find Giuliano in the good weather, we decided not to go back that day. I worried that the fog might be this bad all the way back to Rome. More than anything else in the world, I wanted to return to my family. So instead, we left the gift at Luigi's office. We left a little thank you note and a copy of pictures Mark had taken of the Flacco's, Ricciuti's and DeLaurentis in June 2001.

Before leaving in this nasty fog, I thought "well even if we get into a car accident on the way back to Rome today, we'll make it to the airport by 1 PM tomorrow to make it home."

We then headed to Scanno, a town just off of the autostrada on the way back to Rome. How happy I was to see the fog clear. I assume it was what Claudette's dad called the marine layer they would get in La Jolla, near San Diego, California.

As we passed the first little mountain in the interior, the skies turned blue and the sun came out. A very beautiful ride it was. The road up to Scanno was along the side of hills that formed the valley it lies in. We drove through a town with streets so small that only a car and one person could make it through.

Scanno, another beautiful old Abruzzo city built in a narrow Valley.

We were told that we could buy filigree jewelry in this town. I had high hopes finding something Claudette and the girls might like. I had been unsuccessful up to that point to find or think of anything to buy and time was running short. The shops closed at 1 PM and reopen at 4 PM. It was 12:45 PM so we quickly happened into a jewelry store. The jewelry! The prices! The owner of the store made and designed the jewelry we bought, an older Abruzzese man who lamented that no younger people were stepping up to take over the art period.

He suggested we take the ski lift up to the top of the mountain. Joyce had never been on a ski lift before so she had a nice new experience. It was an old slow, two seat lift. Going up our back was to the town and the valley below. What a surprise at the top. Beautiful snow covered mountain going down then up again. One ski lift ride for Joyce was enough. What wonderful memories came rushing back of all our fun ski trips to Colorado. How I wished we were all together up on that mountain. The trails looked like a mix of blue and black diamonds.

There was a little restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating. The sun was so bright we were hot. They served typical Abruzzo food. I had polenta with sausage and tomato on top. It tasted so good and I was so hungry. I ate too fast. Joyce had braciola which we thought would be one of the rollup jobs like we make, but it was just a thin flat piece of meat. We shared. There was lots of polenta. My mom used to make it occasionally. Joyce remembers that we had it mainly when my dad was laid off from work. Then we shared an antipasta Rico. I had all those Abruzzo goodies my grandparents ate. Salami, prosciutto, sharp cheese, omelette pieces made with cheese and scallions. Toasted bread with olive oil.

A ski school was there. More young there than anywhere else I saw in Italy.

What a wonderful view of the city and Valley on the way down the ski lift. I was brave enough to pull out the camera and shoot some pictures. It was easier than having to hold ski poles and gloves as well.

The drive to Rome would've been much prettier without the smog. Extensive grayish brown throughout the west side of the mountains. It improved somewhat toward Rome. We actually made it to the Termini station in Rome without referring to a map. I was proud to know how to say "is this diesel" when we stopped for gas.

We used one tank of gas for 600 km. Back to the hotel Bolivar by Cab. We went to the Forum which was lit up at night. We had gelato. Joyce loved the rum raisin so much she ordered a second which we shared. At breakfast, I thought how excited I was to be going home to my family. The people I love and missed. To where I belonged. Only 12 more hours I had to wait. I thought of grandpa Palumbo, who was separated by the same distance from the people he loved and missed and belong to and how he would be weeks traveling to see his people.

Flying over France, I thought of my father and all the brave young Americans who 'gave their last measure of devotion' to free Europe of Hitler's evil to plow it back into the ground back down to the devil only to wait to reappear again. Would my father want to return to France and Germany to see the land he helped free?

