

In This Issue: Interview with Mary Jane Ferretti; Lunch at Piccolo Eatery!

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Lancaster Italian Cultural Society

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LANCASTER  
ITALIAN  
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SOCIETY



# L'Osservatore Lancastriano

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Lancaster Italian Cultural Society

This org. was formed to promote/share an appreciation/awareness of the Italian culture/heritage

Get well wishes to John Viscardi!  
Birthday wishes to Ann Byrne

### LICS Summer Picnic

Sunday September 12, 2021, 11-5 PM

Hempfield Firehouse Pavilion

19 Main St., Landisville, PA 17538

**Menu:** Chicken Caprese, Smoked Italian Sausage with peppers & onions, Amorosa hoagie rolls, dinner rolls, Vegetarian Stuffed Shells from Two Cousins, Tossed salad with ranch & Italian dressing, pasta salad, fruit salad, assorted cookie and brownie tray, ice cream, iced tea, lemonade & coffee.

50/50 - Bocce - Games - Bingo

Members - \$15

Member's Children under 12 - \$5

Member's Guests - \$25

Reservations: Rosemary LaFata - 717- 569-5200

*Please sign-up as soon as possible!*

We need a Bingo Caller,  
please call Rosemary, if you can help.

**“Ferragosto” - 1. una festività che ricorre nel mese di Agosto. In precedenza, festeggiata il primo di Agosto, fu poi cambiata per il quindici, quando la Chiesa celebra la ricorrenza dell' Assunzione di Maria Vergine al Cielo (festa dell' Assunta). 2. un breve periodo di vacanza alla metà di Agosto.**



**“Ferragosto” - 1.** a holiday that occurs in the month of August. Previously, celebrated on the first of August, it was then changed for the fifteenth, when the Church celebrates the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven (feast of the Assumption); **2.** a short holiday period in the middle of August.

According to *Italy Magazine*, “Celebrated on August 15, Ferragosto may well be considered the height of the Italian summer; many Italians still take their summer vacation around this time, with the cities emptying and the beaches filling up.

Ferragosto, which coincides with the Catholic feast of the Assumption of Mary, is a holiday that goes back to Roman emperor Augustus’ times. Several festivals took place during the month of August to celebrate the harvest; in 18 BC, Augustus introduced the ‘Feriae Augusti’ to connect them all and provide a longer period of rest after the harvest, a time of intense agricultural labor.

During the ‘Augustali’ celebrations, horse races were organized across the Roman Empire; such ancient traditions remain almost unchanged today, just think of Siena’s Palio dell’Assunta, taking place on August 16.

The tradition has continued to this day and, among beach games, water balloons, bonfires and dancing, Ferragosto has become a true celebration of summer. A key moment of the day is the traditional Ferragosto lunch, usually a barbecue or picnic with family and friends. Since Ferragosto is also a Catholic feast, established in the 5th century A.D., the day is a national holiday in Italy.”

**Four Ladies in Search of Lunch by Marian Caroselli**

One could ask if it were just food or was it a search for camaraderie and diversion after months of quarantine that got Nella Seward, Mary Cae Williams, Kathy Spencer and Marian Caroselli to make the somewhat “longish” drive to Lititz a few weeks ago for lunch.

As retired women who enjoy “doing lunch” we had heard about Piccolo Eatery, a small 18 seat restaurant nestled among the quaint establishments of this historic town. If the food didn't satisfy, we knew there were still many options to make the trip worthwhile.

We had heard that Antonino “Nino” Elia had opened this tiny eatery after having run a well-known 150 seat restaurant in Harrisburg. People often wonder whether those who found success with a small business have the ability to scale up. We were about to see what happens when someone scales down.

Our visit did not disappoint. We arrived early to ensure a seat and rather quickly found a table for four and marveled at the variety of dishes offered—both hot and cold sandwiches--pollo, maiale, manzo e vegetariano—as well as egg dishes, antipasti, soups, salads and flatbread pizzas. A large caprese and a variety of sandwiches, with half taken home to enjoy later, not only satisfied but ensured that we would be return customers. We had no room for dessert but enjoyed a complimentary espresso from Nino, who graciously shared information about his career. He is a chef, culinary educator and historian of the Italian cuisine specializing in southern Italian and Sicilian cuisine. In addition, he cohosts culinary adventures to Sicily with Allison Scola from Experience Sicily.

While the menu suggests that Piccolo Eatery is open only for lunch, their FaceBook page mentions that they cater and also offer occasional reservation only dinners featuring the creativity of Chef Nino.

My hesitation in sharing all of this with you is that the next time we arrive for lunch, we will find all of the tables full!

Where have you eaten or what have you discovered after your months in isolation? Consider submitting a short review for the LICS newsletter.

Members, please submit your dining experiences at local Italian-American Restaurants. Include what dishes are your favorites and any insider tips or information to make the dining experience molto bene for our members. [LICSnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:LICSnewsletter@gmail.com)

**My morning with Mary Jane by Mary Cae Williams**

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting with Mary Jane Ferretti one of our Society members who is in her 90s. It was such a pleasure to listen to her memories of growing up in Lancaster's “West End.”

I asked Mary Jane to tell me a little about when her family came to America and from what part/s of Italy they came. She explained that her mother's family was from Calabria and her father's family was from Abruzzo. In her early years, Mary Jane and her parents lived with her grandfather, Pasquale Morelli, in Steelton. Mary Jane's father worked in the steel mill there.

Mary Jane explained that in those days each nationality group had a church of its own. St. Anne's was the Italian church and the nuns there were Italian, too. They spoke and understood Italian and they worked to teach the children English. One of the “gifts” they gave the children was to Anglicize their names. Maria Gina became Mary Jane thanks to this practice.

When Mary Jane was about 8 years old, her father's doctor told him to get out of the steel mills if he wanted to preserve his health.

At that time, Mary Jane's paternal grandparents lived in Lancaster at 319 W. Lemon St., but the house was actually owned by her father. Mary Jane's father went to work for Armstrong. She and her family moved to Jackson St. in a house, which was part of a group of houses built for the Armstrong workers.

Tragically, during their time on Jackson St., Mary Jane's grandmother was killed by a fall from the balcony at the Lemon St. house. Her parents sold the house on Jackson St. and moved into 319 W. Lemon St. Her grandfather moved to New Jersey to live with one of his other children.

Mary Jane lived in this house until she was a grown woman. The corner of W. Lemon and N. Concord Streets became a kind of social center for the

Italian-American children growing up in the neighborhood. There was a shoemaker named Voci whose shop was on that corner. On the Lemon St. side there lived the Clements (actually Di Clementi before the "change,") Segros, Rodas, Caterbones, Ferrettis and Franz's. On the Concord St. side lived the O'Neills (Ianelli before the "change,") Bagnolis, Arcudis, Paperos, Centinis, DeAngelis, and Galies. At some point Mr. Mangini bought the shoemaker's building and began to bake bread and pizza there. This is the current location of Espino's, serving pizza and other delicious foods, to this day.

When Mary Jane was growing up her mother bought many of the foods she needed to keep their kitchen an Italian one from either "Gussie's," on the corner of W. Lemon St. and N. Charlotte St. or Dinisio's located on Water St. between Lemon and James Streets. Gus was Greek, but he knew how to serve his Italian-American neighbors. He sold his store to his nephew and his wife who renamed the store Mandros, their family name. As Mandros Imported Food this is still one of the best places in Lancaster to buy a wide range of imported foods from all over, and especially Greece and Italy.

At Dinisio's, Mary Jane remembers that the pasta secca (dried pasta) was kept in large boxes lining the walls of the store. Customers would ask for a pound or half pound and the shopkeeper would weigh out the right amount to be taken home. Dried pasta might have been served several times a week, but Sundays were reserved for fresh, homemade pasta. This was before the crank-style pasta machine familiar today. Mary Jane's mother used a chitarra to cut her hand rolled sheets of pasta into ribbons for their meals.

Mary Jane then began to reminisce about growing up in the neighborhood she dubbed "Little Italy." She explained that there were two groups of boys known locally as the Alley Gangs. The older, teenaged boys were called the Big Alley Gang and the younger boys, Mary Jane's age group, were called the Little Alley Gang. These kids often hung out on that corner where Mr. Voci made shoes and then Mr. Mangini baked bread and pizza. Some

boys from other neighborhoods "migrated" to this corner to join the Little Alley Gang from Mulberry, W. James and Queen Streets. Among them were the Puglieses and Pete DeLaurentis.

The Clements had three daughters, Marie (Toots,) Loretta, and Franny. Loretta was Mary Jane's best friend and they were together nearly all the time. Toots had learned to play the accordion from Tony Mariani. Of an evening on the front porch, Toots would play the accordion and Mary Jane, Loretta, and Franny would sing along. They took their numbers from The Hit Parade song sheets that they could get their hands on for free each week. Mary Jane remembers that, if they weren't singing, "the Americans" in the neighborhood would call out, "Aren't you going to sing, today?"

Not all of Mary Jane's memories of growing up on W. Lemon St. were so idyllic. She remembers being called names such as "WOP" and "Dago" and "spaghetti eater." Once when a classmate called her "spaghetti eater" she shot back at him, "I'd rather be a spaghetti eater than a sauerkraut eater like you." As I laughed about this, I felt that Mary Jane had been born with all the spunk and vigor that it would take to get into her 90s with so much humor, gusto, and basic joy in living.

If I am very lucky, I think I will be able to visit Mary Jane again and pick up the story of the Little Alley Gang, the other Italian-Americans from different neighborhoods, that Mary Jane became acquainted with as an adult, and the unfolding story of her experiences as a Twentieth Century, Italian-American in Lancaster, PA.

I would also love an opportunity to hear the stories of some of our other "seasoned" Society members and to share them in our newsletters and bollettini. If you would like to share your story with all of us, please contact me at [LICSnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:LICSnewsletter@gmail.com) and I will contact you for a chat. And you do not have to be in your 90s to "apply." It would just be so wonderful to share these stories with our friends and companions. We represent such a rich history of experience that it would be a true gift to share it with a wider audience.

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<https://www.wine.com/list/wine/red-wine/nerello-mascalese/7155-124-410>

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