

Notes by Michael DeCiantis about himself, his boyhood
in Natick, Rhode Island, and the life of that community.

(Written in 1974-5)

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Following page 42 is another section in which the Judge describes Sora, Italy, the place where he was born.

These two pages are followed by a conversation in which DeCiantis talks about his adoptive parents, Sofia and Luigi DeCiantis. He then tells about learning that he had been adopted and his desire to find out about his natural parents. In 1952 he returned to Italy for the first time since he had left as a child in search of his origins.

He talks about his father, Carlo Bruni, and his half brothers and half sister.

Next he discusses his search for his mother's identity. He describes the village where she lived and some of the people he met.

Note:

In these pages Judge DeCiantis reviews some of the ground that was included in the taped interviews and fills in background about the places and people who became part of his life.

I came to America with my mother and sister on the ship, Canopic. The Canopic, a vessel owned by the General Italian Line, sailed from Naples and took 14 days to reach the United States. This was in 1907.

I am left with various impressions of this voyage, when I was seven.

One of my most vivid recollections is of the sleeping quarters on board. A vast number of immigrants, mostly from Naples, were quartered in steerage, i. e., below deck. In this huge, windowless, room were tier upon tier of bunks. Men, women, and children, all slept together. Young as I was, the lack of privacy left a strong impression on me.

The whole atmosphere was repulsive

to me. It was my first experience of this kind.

This sensitivity was further disclosed in later years. In my profession as a lawyer, one of my first cases involved the invasion of privacy. It was this early experience that subconsciously impelled me to vigorously defend this right for others.

The most surprising incident that occurred was that the Captain of the ship took a liking to me and invited me to eat with him at the Captain's table; ~~and~~ this became a daily event until the ship docked.

I do not know why the invitation was extended to me. I've always had the feeling that it was my red hair.

This friendship gave me the freedom of roaming all over the ship. ~~This~~ somewhat

relieved^{12/25} my resentment, or disgust, at being confined to the steerage quarters.

I was not the only one that profited in this. It led to my mother and sister being allowed to work in the ship's kitchen as helpers. This *also* meant better meals for them ~~also~~.

Indirectly, my influence with the Captain made the ship's voyage pleasant for my family, and freed them from standing in line for food.

Each night I stood at the ship's railing watching the sunset. I had a child's fascination for the setting sun. The marvelous colors against the ocean ...red, orange, blues, greens, and purple...as it sank on the horizon. I had a fixation that this nightly ritual had something to do with approaching land, and each morning

I would dash to the rail to see if, in fact, land was in sight. Day after day, I was disappointed, but nevertheless, I held firm in this belief. Each night when the sun went down, I believed the same thing. I was persistent and always optimistic.

Although my descriptions of the sunsets may suggest a quiet crossing, we encountered storms and rough seas. I remember colored canvasses being pulled up, that covered the upper deck. Below deck it was suffocating. Many were seasick, and it amazed me to see people so very sick, and then have such a quick recovery as soon as the weather subsided. As a child, I observed and recorded in my mind what to me was amazing.

As I have said there were many people from Naples on the ship, as that was its origin.

They say many things about Neopolitans, but I must say they were a jolly, fun-loving people. Throughout the trip, they entertained with songs and dancing. Many had guitars, and there was music all of the time. To me, this seemed to be one continuous party.

Finally, the ship reached Ellis Island where we disembarked. For the first time, I saw the Statue of Liberty. It was so magnificent; it overwhelmed me. It did not signify freedom to me, or anything like that, but at that time it stood out as the biggest statue I had ever seen. Later, when I realized that it was the symbol of liberty, it became more magnificent in my mind.

Liberty to me has always been the most important thing in life. I have found in my experiences that it is the most precious right of man.

On Ellis Island, the ship's agent separated us into groups as to our destination. We were assigned numbers; mine was 25. I have no detailed memory of this except for a perfect stranger, a woman, giving me a banana. Something I had never seen before.

Each group of immigrants had a guide who took them to the train. We proceeded to Natick, by train, where my father was waiting at the station.

My father was a barber. He worked in the Apponaug Print Works; ~~and~~ on Saturdays and Sundays, he did barbering from the house. One of the things I hated was that I had to lather every man who came in for a shave. This went on for years and years. I don't mind telling you that I detested it for many obvious reasons.

We sold the customers beer for five cents a bottle. The beer was delivered to the house--two kegs each week. I'll never forget the delivery man, Nick Tartaglione. He must have weighed 450 pounds. He would carry two kegs to the cellar, one in each hand. I hated to see him come because I had the job of washing all the bottles. I remember it took 72 bottles to a keg. I would wash the bottles

in three stages--hot, soapy water, hot, clean water and cold water. Then, I would siphone beer from the keg with a rubber hose and fill the bottles. Every bottle was capped with a porcelain top.

S: Do you remember what brought your parents to the United States?

JUDGE: I didn't even realize that my father had already come to this country. I presume it was because I was so young.

My father came to the United States for the same reason everyone else came. Everyone thought America was the promised land--a chance to make more money, educate your family, and have a better way of life.

At night, when we sat around and talked, I remember my father saying with pride.

"Look at the money I'm making. I'm making \$17 a week at the Apponaug Print Works." Looking back, that was a great deal of money for those days.

Q: How did your mother adjust?

My mother was a hard worker. As was the custom with the newly arrived immigrants she took in boarders. These boarders, all men, were new arrivals from Italy who came to establish themselves before sending for their families.

Her work was at home, caring for the eleven boarders *who slept dormitory fashion in the attic of our small house.* She needed assistance from my sister and myself. There was always work to be done, drawing water from the well, washing floors, washing clothes and ironing.

My mother cooked for all of the eleven boarders on a coal and wood burning stove. Each boarder paid \$2 a week for lodging. I remember going to the grocery store with eleven books to purchase groceries for each boarder; and nine times out of ten, no two would order the same thing. The result was that my mother ended up cooking eight to eleven different meals every night.

One would order spaghetti, another minestrone soup and so on. They all paid for their own food. The books were each one's individual charge that they had at the grocery store. I don't know how my poor mother did it all! To give you an idea of how much washing and scrubbing was done, my mother used so much "good will" soap that there were enough wrappers for me to exchange for a wagon. I remember riding down the steep Natick Hill in my wagon, being shaken up by all the rough spots, only to go back and do it all over again until I exhausted myself.

The lifeline of the villagers was the company store. Here the workers could purchase all of their basic needs--dry goods, and food, shoes,

overalls, boots, wash tubs, pails, everything you could think of, even to Sunday clothes. In retrospect, the duplication of the Sunday clothes in church was evidence that they all came from the same place. It reminds me now of the Katzanjammer twins, comic strip characters that were very popular with every kid in the neighborhood. The purchase at the company store,, as far as dry goods were concerned, applied to everyone. However, various privately owned stores supplied most of the food in the village.

The people who rented company-owned homes had their rent deducted from their wages along with their store bill. My own family rented a privately owned home, so that our dealings were limited to the company store.

Natick was a cosmopolitan village. The Irish and the French and the Yankees predominated. Then came the Italians, the Swedish, the Germans and a few Syrians. Peculiarly enough, each had his own section of the village.

The way of life was pleasant.

I lived on Baker Street. Ethnic lines were not drawn at all. My friends growing up encompassed all nationalities. There was a closeness and a warmth among all of the people and they would help each other out in times of need or illness. Of course, there were always some little jealousies; but on the whole, the people were happy.

At that time, as I remember it, there were only two churches, Saint Joseph's, the Catholic Church, which still stands, and the Protestant Church

(Baptist) on Natick Hill and that still stands. The Swedish people attended the Lutheran Church in Pontiac and later built their own church in Natick.

S: Where did you go to school?

Was it an English speaking school?

JUDGE: When I arrived here, I couldn't speak English, so I enrolled in the Italian School. My parents wanted me to know both Italian and English. Later, I entered the third grade in the regular public school (Baker Street Grammar School). My teacher was Miss Nichols. The Italian school concentrated solely on ~~the~~ learning ~~of~~ English. This concentration deprived me from learning childhood rhymes, stories and games that would be part of a public school education in those first grades. I've always felt that these rhymes and

stories told in childhood played an important part in developing imagination.

By the way, I forgot to tell you that while I lived in Natick, my mother gave birth to four children, all of whom died within a year of their birth. Because of this, I had to stay out of school many times to help her. This got me in trouble with the truant officer, who chased me so many times that he eventually threatened me with reform school. I ducked him successfully, never ^{even} realizing ~~even~~ what reform school meant. Around this time, we moved to Riverpoint and in this way, I got rid of him.

This experience gave me insight in considering the meaning of truancy and the threat of punishment. I strongly believe that incarceration is

not the answer for truancy. When I played truant I remember
~~that~~ the truant officer had certain days ~~that~~ he visited my
section of town. Those days I was well prepared to avoid
him. Other times he would come unexpectedly; only through
sheer watching and fear did I keep an eye out for him. The
minute he came into sight I fled to the railroad tracks
where I would head north on the old Pawtuxet Valley line.

Once I reached the bridge I left
the tracks and continued my walk along the banks of the
Pawtuxet River.

While on the tracks I counted
the ties. As soon as I hit the river banks I began making
speeches out loud. These speeches had always the same
theme, a defense of my position. I would agree that I
had a right to stay out of school, and that the truant
officer had no business curtailing my freedom.

Hadn't I worked hard for my mother? Was I to have no
pleasure? No freedom? What difference did it make if
I were not in school!

The concluding argument was that
he did not understand what I and my family were up against.

He, in fact, I would conclude, did
not have any realization of the life of our immigrant family;
how hard my mother had to work and how much she needed my
help.

In boy fashion, I settled the
whole case. I was right and he was wrong.

The company houses were six-room duplex houses. The foundation was made of large stones. The flooring in the basement was dirt. There was no heat, no electricity or running water. Each house had a two or four holer outhouse.

We had a common well which supplied water to a number of families. The well contained a bucket, tied to a rope with a ratchet attached to the handle, which had to be turned by hand. It pulled up the bucket which had a cast iron clip. When the bucket was full of water, it would catch on the wire that would *tip the bucket* cause the water to empty into a v-shaped wood conduit, *then* into a pail which was under it. If you wanted more than one pail of water, the ratchet would be released and the pail would go down "lick-i-tysplit." It had to be guided by a handle which worked as a brake to *adjust* ~~guide~~ the speed.

Ordinarily, the well was ^{situated} ~~always~~ about fifty to sixty
^{so that}
feet away from the house ~~and~~ carrying two pails back
and forth from the house was quite a job.

~~The houses were not heated.~~
~~There was no heat in the house.~~

We bought wood which we piled in the cellar. Every
^{it was a chore} night ~~you had~~ to bring up a ~~load or~~ an armful ^{of wood} for the
^{fire in the}
next day to start the Glenwood range, which was used
for cooking and heating.

People went to work at seven
^{In winter}
o'clock in the morning. ¹ We all lived in the kitchen
because the house was ^{so} cold. We undressed in the kitchen
at night before going to bed and then ran upstairs. The
following morning we would get dressed in the kitchen
because of the warmth from the stove.

We walked to school; we walked to church; we walked to work--we walked everywhere.

We had no ice boxes or refrigeration. Perishables were left at the back door of the entry to keep cool. In the summertime we bought ice and put it in a wooden icebox.

It was the custom of the immigrants to save enough money to buy a pig and in the fall, it would be slaughtered. Out of that ^{they} ~~you~~ would make salt port, sausage, chops and the remaining ribs would be salted and ~~would be~~ strung up in the cellar, hanging from the ceiling, or put in a container. The hind area and legs supplied the hams and the butts. The feet were pickled. This was the ^{entire} meat supply for the winter.

With the exception of a few trolley cars and trains, the only other ~~way of~~ transportation was by horse and wagon. Lack of transportation confined people to their neighborhood. ^{For} This was ~~the~~ reason ^{they} ~~that we~~ made ^{their} ~~our~~ own fun.

People made their own social life in Natick. One of the key events occurring twice a week was the nightly band rehearsals which took place in a hall on Baker Street. Everyone who loved music would go to hear the band.

When a player struck the wrong note, the conductor would bang his baton to stop the playing. This is when the fun began. "I heard that, it was Tony," one man would say. Somebody was "off tune." "No, that was Joe. Tony is the best trombone player in the band." On and on it went. Everybody got into the

act--playing resumed. A whole piece was played without a mistake. Then you heard the crowd: "Ah, that was good," as if they were in some way responsible. Without their participation the band couldn't go on!

When the bandmaster would compliment the band with a rare "Bravo" the crowd basked in the reflected glory and went home completely satisfied.

We had no electricity. We had to use a kerosene lamps. What I used to get my "goat" was ~~that I had~~ the job ^{I had} of cleaning the lamps. The ^{glass} chimney ~~(the glass lamp)~~ would get black and it would be so black ^{it had to be washed} that you'd have to wash ~~it~~ after every time it was used.

~~That was one of my jobs.~~

To entertain themselves
~~For social entertainment, for~~

children
~~example, the kids~~ would play marbles, peggy, spin the

top, sliding down hills. We would come down Natick^{hill} on
a double runner. We would travel a long distance on a
double runner from the top of the hill. For fishing we
made our own poles. The Pawtuxet River was our swimming
hole.

Societies would parade from one
village to another, whenever there was some sort of
entertainment in that town. The events would end with
lawn parties and fireworks displays.

Some of the people in Natick
formed an amateur theater group and put on plays at
St. John's Hall. All of the theatrical enterprises took
place there because ^{it was the only} ~~the~~ hall ~~was~~ equipped with a stage.

I remember one play very
vividly, because I was chosen to be what actually amounted
to being a live prop. The Play was ^{JO MARENARIELLO} ~~O-Mariouello~~ ^{based on} a Neo-

politan song. At one point during the performance the

stage was cleared and a rowboat was placed in the center.

The wheels were attached to the boat so that it could be

moved easily and were very carefully concealed. A man

'O MARENARIELLO

came out and sang "~~O-*Marionello*~~." To enliven this solo I

was placed directly in front of the boat, dressed in short

pants and a sailor's blouse. I had to sway back and forth

in rhythm with the song. Behind me, the boat was pulled

by two ropes worked by two men concealed behind the cur-

tains. The ropes, however, remained in full view. As

I swayed, the boat swayed. The two men working the ropes

felt they had accomplished a great feat to keep time with

the music.

Weeks of planning went into

these performances. They would put on about six shows

a year. Everyone looked forward to the next performance.

They were fully discussed at home, in the mills, and in the various stores around the town with great pride.

The actors felt their important role in providing such pleasure to the community.

About 1913 we moved to

Riverpoint when my father got a new job at the Royal

Mills. I was very unhappy about moving, so much so that

I cried for days. I did not want to move because it meant

leaving my friends. But most of all it meant leaving my

job on the butcher cart. One of the most interesting

things that happened to me was working on the butcher

cart. Italian food was not to be had throughout the

towns, in any company store, and Natick was really the

center section of the Italian people. It had two grocery

stores, one run by David Senerchia and another by a man named Modestino Petrarca. Both catered to the Italian tastes.

Outside of Natick there were other sections where the Italians had settled--Pontiac, Riverpoint, then known as Lower Riverpoint, and Quidnick, which is a village in Coventry. The supply of food was furnished by the two stores which had set up a system of carting the food three times a week to the various villages. They had a cart which was big enough to carry all kinds of food--vegetables and meats--everything that a housewife needed for the family meals. My job was a labor of love because I loved to drive the horse; that to me was something out of this world! It took approximately three hours to make the rounds. In this way, all the Italians were able to obtain their native food.

We moved to Lower Riverpoint to 59 Providence Street. In those days it was known as Main Street. It wasn't long before I made new friends and, as is the way with a child, forgot about Natick. When I left Natick, I was in the fifth grade and attended the school in Riverpoint, located on Harris Avenue which was approximately a mile and a half from my house. I walked it four days.

Riverpoint, in and of itself, had a variety of industry. It had a cotton mill, which was known as the Royal Mills, a foundry which was known as the Brayton Foundry, and also lace and silk mills. The heart of the village was Clyde Square, and to describe it better one must consider that there were a great many villages which were clustered around the Pawtuxet River

for that reason it is known as the Pawtuxet Valley. The dividing line between Clyde and Riverpoint was at Clyde Square, so-called. The other villages were Lippitt, Phenix, Arctic, Crompton and Centreville. Riverpoint was predominately Yankee. The entire main street was really their settlement. The Irish were ~~mostly~~ ^{mostly} located in Lippitt and Clyde. Lippitt was the heart of the Irish settlement.

Clyde Printworks, which is located in Clyde, was where many of the people in that locality worked. There was also the B. B. & R. Knight Company. Later, the Italians were settled more at Lower Riverpoint, and most of them worked in the Valley Queen Mill and the Royal Mills. The Portuguese soon came in, and they settled in Lippitt. Clyde Square was the transfer point to other places by the trolley car. The trolley car ran from Crompton to Hope, but it also went

through Arctic and Riverpoint. The transfer point at Clyde even went to Apponaug and Rocky Point, and later to Providence. It was the ~~hub~~ of what is now known as West Warwick.

Trolley cars always facinated me.

I loved to watch the motorman at the controls and listen to the conductor make his own special whistle---a signal for the motorman that all was clear, and to start or stop the car for the passengers.

While most of the trolley car conductors and motormen were arrogant, irritable and cross, I knew two of the friendliest men on the Old ^{Crompton} Compton-Hope Line; Lou Foley was the motorman and his conductor was "Puggy" Bicknell.

I'll never forget "Puggy" Bicknell when we were kids; and his one-man stage show.

He used to charge one penny to see his show. The show lasted about five minutes. "Puggy" held these in the middle of a four-seater outhouse on a rainy day. All gathered around and in would come "Puggy" dressed as a tramp and holding a stick, hobo style. He would mount a chopping block and say, "Give me a chair. I have a stone in my shoe." He then sat down on the stump, took off his shoe, peeled off his sock *and* removed a pebble. That was the end of the show.

Then one night when I got my usual free ride on the last run from Crompton to the car barn at Clyde, I got up my nerve and asked Lou if I could run the trolley car. To my surprise, he acquiesced right in the middle of the Centreville Bridge. He gave me some brief instructions. I took his place. He released the air brakes, and I was on my way in full charge. All went well until we

reached Arctic, then the steep incline began. With my eyes straight ahead, thrilled at running the car, I did not notice that it began to gather speed. Soon the old car trembled and swayed, bearing down the tracks at top speed. It was going "hell bent for election." I was so scared, I didn't know what to do. Lou behind me was yelling to deaf ears and reaching for the controls. Finally, with a jolt that landed my head in the window sash, the car came to an abrupt halt. Lou had managed to seize the brakes. "Puggy" at the rear of the car could have cared less. Maybe he was thinking about the days when he was the star of his own show.

Clyde had a clothing store that everyone went to, operated by John Flannagan and Company.

The building was built around 1800. ~~It was finished in~~ ^{completed}

~~1872~~. There was a hotel called the Imperial Hotel, containing approximately thirty to thirty-five rooms, and run by one

Buxton Mc Mahon. Another building which was built and owned by the Flannagan Brothers was the Palms, which is still standing, and contained office space and a drugstore that had a variety of foods. The Post Office was just above Clyde Square, and at one time it was claimed that Clyde Square was the center of Rhode Island. The telephone building was built at the corner of Main Street and Pike Street.

During my time, there was a moving picture house known as "Thornton's Theater," operated by John and Owen Thornton. It was the only theater in the town of West Warwick. Warwick did not have any theater, and people from all over Warwick came to Riverpoint to see the movies and other entertainments. It was a moving picture house that was known throughout

Rhode Island. With the exception of a movie house ^{open} in the summer at Rocky Point, Thornton's Theater was the only one in that part of the state. There were ~~man~~ stock companies, vaudevilles of every type and many dramas that played there.

It was later used by the townspeople ^{to put on} ~~for~~ their own entertainment. They had minstrel shows, ~~and~~ their own plays, or whatever performances they wished to put on. It entertained the greater part of the portion of Warwick and

Eastern Coventry. ^{JP} It was a prosperous community. The economic condition changed and forced the printworks to shut down. In the "Twenties," B. B. & R. Knight left the State because of a strike and moved down South; and conditions became very bad; the ^{depression} ~~depression~~ arrived, the theaters closed down, and finally, the Flannagan Building and Imperial Hotel were torn down.

In the Pawtuxet Valley, there were many churches of various denominations. In Riverpoint was the Advent Church, and it is claimed that Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Crompton was the first church in Rhode Island; but there are many Saint Mary's Churches in other parts of the State where the claim is also made. I believe Newport has a Saint Mary's Church, and the people of Newport claimed that it was the first Catholic church. The same thing is true of Pawtucket and Providence.

We had one black family in Riverpoint. Their name was Taylor. Edward Taylor was a Civil War veteran, a former slave. He had one son, who was considered to be the best color mixer in the dye house. He lived on Greene Street, about "a stone's throw" from where I live now. He was one of the best liked men in the town.

There were three Civil War veterans that faithfully met at the Post Office to wait for the five o'clock mail to arrive and be sorted. They seemed to appear *like clockwork* at four-thirty in the afternoon. Two came from Pike Street; Col. Burdick and Del Green. The third was Houlihan who was a first-class trouble maker. He taunted Del Green every day they met. He always *managed* ~~arranged~~ to turn the conversation into a real heated argument. This was his fun; you could see it in his eyes. Del faithfully rose to the bait each time. Then there would be a span of a few days when Del didn't show up. He couldn't take it. But not Houlihan. When Del did not show up, Houlihan was very unhappy because he had no one to pick on. Col. Burdick, who was a very quiet and sedate man, was not a likely candidate.

I shall never forget that Houlihan's favorite ribbing was to imply that Del Green never was in a

battle. This burned up Del so much that he would stay away for two or three days. Then he would appear, coming along Pike Street; the minute Houlihan saw him, it would brighten his day.

Everything went along friendly and smoothly, but only for a day or two. Then Houlihan would start all over again. Of course, he never meant what he said, knowing full well Del had been in battle. This routine went on for as long as I can remember.

Once in a while, down would come Ned Taylor, a former slave, who had fought in the Civil War, He was a color bearer. For some reason, when he was around, there was no taunting or pestering from Houlihan. I've always thought that these three men showed him such great respect because he had carried the flag. Ned was loved by everyone in the town.

The property of the people was protected by volunteer fire fighters and in each section there would be a fireshed which was only big enough to hold a hose reel. This was referred to as a hose house. Later, of course, fire districts were established, ^{as} ~~and~~ the taxpayers paid and developed better fire protection. In the old days, the hose reel was used by the people and by the volunteers; ~~and~~ the volunteers consisted of men who lived ~~very~~ close to the hose houses.

Riverpoint also had an athletic field which was known as Pastime Park where all types of athletic games were played. One of the events in the town was the Feast of the Holy Ghost, which was put on by the Portuguese People. They paraded throughout the Town, ending up with a noisy display of fireworks ^{at midnight} until recent days when the people began to kick about it and they were stopped.

from high school

I graduated in 1915. ~~I then went~~

While in

~~to the~~ high school, I took a commercial course--bookkeeping. *etc.*

I was about as good a student as "nothing," I guess.

As far as the boys and girls, in school, were concerned, their talent was one of the things that I

have never forgotten. Never will I forget the Harris Avenue

School, *is here* ~~because~~ there were boys and girls of every class

and denomination. Bob Wood was a boy soprano. I was

supposed to be a tenor. Jesse Mattias was an alto, and

Pat Kenyon, who loved to sing, couldn't sing at all; each

time he chimed in, everybody went out of tune. *I remember* ~~We had~~

one ~~a~~ show that was put on by the Harris Avenue pupils. The

name of the show *was* ~~is~~ "Cinderella in Flowerland." ~~It~~

~~was~~ an operetta. We had some help from other students

in the schools *from* in Phenix and Arctic. It was put

on in the Majestic Theater in Arctic. The purpose was

to raise money ^{in order} to purchase a piano for the school. I sang
a solo, "Sympathy," while four couples danced the "Hesitation
Waltz," in the background. I remember the night that the
show was to be put on. I walked from Lower Riverpoint to
Arctic. I was so scared, I drank four or five glasses of
wine. That must have given me the needed courage, because
I stood on the stage with all those people watching, began to
sing, and got through it all right. Bob Wood sang a solo. I
can't remember the name of the song, but I know now that it
started out "Float on, float on;" it had to do with soap bubbles.
Bob told me when I was talking to him lately, that his father
went to the trouble to go to Providence ^{and} to have three or
four toy balloons filled with hydrogen, so they would
float off into the gallery when released from the stage
while he was singing. By the time it came for them to
be released, the hydrogen had leaked out of the

balloons, so they just dropped into the footlights. This was in 1914, and everybody began to howl and laugh at the incident.

Another fund-raiser that we had ^{held} was at the skating rink, which is now occupied by the Pawtuxet Valley Water Company. It was an exhibit of "chromos." These were copies of old masters on loan from companies that staged such displays for a percentage fee. We put this on to raise money towards the purchase of a phonograph for the school.

I also remember an affair that was put on by all of the schools in the town. It was for the purpose of entertaining the parents and their friends. I sang a solo that I never lived down. It was, "I Hear You Calling Me." Everytime I went down to the corner to join "the boys," they'd see me coming and one of them

would holler, "I hear you calling me; and the refrain would be, "Miss Cummisky." She was my teacher ^{who} accompanied me on the piano. To this day, I can hear this taunt.

Jimmy Thornton, who finally became the Racing Commissioner, sang a duet, "The Harbor Lights are Burning;" and Fred Roper, who was the minister's son, and a real "Peck's Bad Boy" who gave me a cauliflower ear that I still have, played the violin solo. What took the cake was when Bob Wood sang, "I Love My Teacher and My Teacher Loves Me, Too." That was his downfall; for every time that he went by "the boys around the corner," they used to follow him and say, "I love my teacher and my teacher loves me, too." Bob ~~also~~ remembers this *teasing* vividly, as I remember, "I Hear You Calling Me."

This is the way Bob's song went:

"GEOGRAPHY"

I love the Old Red Schoolhouse
I love my teacher, too
I did not love my lessons
As a good boy ought to do

My 'rithmetic was awful
My spelling was as bad
But in geography I was
A very clever lad

CHORUS

Geography, geography
Here's a little lesson in geography
Now you can tell a strait
By its peculiar shape
But a "straight" without the joker
Always beats two pair in poker

Geography, geography
I mean the "straights" you find in history
There's straight nose, straight hair
Bering strait and strait Bear
They're the straits in my geography.

Sora is located southeast of Rome. Originally, it was inhabited by the Volscis. The Volscis were an ancient tribe who were the most dangerous enemies of the Roman Republic, but finally the region was conquered by the Romans. The Volscis were described as free and independent people, and they are the same today. As a matter of fact, the main street of Sora is "Corso Volsci". Sora is a good-sized commercial and industrial town. It is the center of the Latium Region. It's industry consists of paper mills, furniture and processing of wool. The countryside abounds with vegetable gardens. It is divided up into seven parishes. The most ancient is the Church of Saint Domenico, built in the Nineteenth Century, A.D. It is interesting to note that it was built on the land belonging to one of Cicero's villas.

Sora was destroyed in 1915 by an earthquake, with the exception of one section, which is known as "Old Sora."

That section consists of many small sections that

have narrow and winding roads. Its location can

be described as being about thirty-five miles

southeast of Monte Cassino and six miles from Arpino.

This was Cicero's birthplace.

The Church of Monte Cassino

is the mother church of the Benedictine Order.

Santa Maria is the cathedral of

Sora, and the ~~residence of the~~ Bishop's residence.

The life and attitude of the

people is one of being carefree but coupled with

pleasure and hard work. The climate is temperate.

S: Do you want to tell us
about your mother? What was her name?

JUDGE: As far as I was concerned,
Sofia DeCiantis was my mother, and Luigi DeCiantis
was my father. My sister was Vincenza DeCiantis,
who is still living and whose married name is Felice.

But when I was about fourteen
years of age, I knew that they were not my parents.
I found out in several ways. First, in a childhood
dispute. My sister Vincenza said: "You are not my
brother; you are the mayor's son." My mother in
exasperation would say: "Eh! Zaiira." Outsiders
would remark about my fair complexion and red hair.
Finally, I found out more from Mrs. Nicolina Alonzi,
who was my wet nurse. I met Mrs. Alonzi, who had
come to the United States, sometime in my teens. She
told me she nursed me as an infant ^{in Italy} and she gave
me enough information for me to conclude that Luigi
and Sofia DeCiantis were not my parents.

All of these things were a confirmation of feelings I had experienced during my formative years. Family resemblances were completely lacking. Outsiders often remarked about my red hair and the fact that I looked different from the rest of my family.

My ways, my tastes were uncommon to them. My actions were many times observed closely by my mother who was very fearful that I would learn that she was not my mother. This equally held true for my father.

It was about 1952 when I finally went to Italy. I waited a long time, mostly because I did not want to hurt my parents who loved me and were very good to me.

My father Luigi died in 1938, and my mother died six months later. After their death, I was busy building up my law practice; then World War II came along. For a long time after, conditions were not conducive to travel.

When conditions were favorable to travel, the urge which was foremost in my mind was realized. I began to look into and research my background.

I found out that my father was Carlo Bruni, a lawyer, who had been mayor of the City of Sora for some years. He had four children, one of whom died in infancy. The others were Bruna, Renato, a civil engineer, and Manfredo, also a lawyer. I was the son of Carlo Bruni and Zaiira Morganti.

Shortly after I became a lawyer,
I did make an attempt to contact my father Carlo Bruni.
I wrote him a letter informing him that I, also,
was a lawyer and intended to enter politics as
he did. I received no answer. But when I was in
Sora, I met a personal friend of his whom I had known
by reputation and personally when I was a small boy
living in Sora. He knew him well. This person knew
what had happened. He told me that my father was very
solicitous about my progress and happiness in America.
Guilty conscience, I guess.

When I went to see Renato,
during our conversation relating to education and so
forth, he asked me where I went to college. I told
him that I had not gone to college. I went to a law
school only two years and was admitted (to the law
school) as a special student; that I really studied
law in an office. He said, "Just like father."
He did not attend college. He studied law in a

lawyer's office with an elderly gentleman who took a liking to him. He told me that my father had been mayor of the town for quite a few years. I knew that because I remembered being in his house.

Renato and Manfredo both attended the University of Rome. Renato lives in Rome and Manfredo is still in Sora. He chooses to stay in Sora because he loves to be in a courtroom. The last time I went to Sora, I went with him to court at Monte Cassino.

I have not seen my half sister, Bruna; but I have corresponded with her more than with Renato and Manfredo. Manfredo is a bachelor. I intend to see

Bruna this spring. I have a record of her voice that she sent me. She was married, ^{to a physician} now widowed, and lives in Viterbo, a region about fifty kilometers outside of Rome. Through our correspondence, I have come to really love her.

The first time I went to Sora,
I went to the cemetery where my father was buried.
He has a vault for the family. The inscription on his
tombstone is Carlo Bruni, 1869-1935; Bianca Bruni,
1903-1912, a young child; Laura Bruni, his wife,
1877-1947.

I never knew anything about
my mother Zaiira. The second time that I went to
Italy, I made up my mind that I was going to find out
where my mother was buried. The first time I went
back, I went to my maternal uncle's home, and I
stayed about five days with him. He was remarried
and had two sons. One is a priest and the other is
a physical education instructor in a school. When
I saw him, he was 79 years old. I asked him where
my mother was buried and he said that she had died
at Posta Fibreno. It was quite difficult to get

any real information from him, but from the conversation that I had with my cousins, the priest and the teacher, I found out that he had never mentioned one thing about my existence; and I concluded that they had completely rejected my mother and that was the reason she was at Posta Fibreno.

I finally went to Fibreno. I went directly to the Town Clerk and I asked him if he had a record of my mother's death. I gave him the name and he told me that he had known her and that she lived at Porta Degli Angli^e. He produced the record and the record showed that she was born _____ and died _____. She was the daughter of _____ of _____. She died when she was fifty years old.

In our conversation, he asked me who I was and where I came from; and I told him

proceeded to what was a square. This was actually the village from where winding roads led to their center. It was about one o'clock, I remember very distinctly; the stillness of the square overcame me because you could talk and could be heard all over the place. There were six or seven women all sitting on a bench; I judged that there wasn't any one there less than 75 years old. One woman was 88. I know because I asked. I asked where Zaiira Morganti lived; one of them said, "She lived right up there," pointing to a corner of a house on the square. Then she said, "That's where she used to sit all the time. She never went out." She was a seamstress but she died when she was young. She was a very lonesome woman.

I kept asking questions and one of them asked, "Are you anything to her?" I didn't say much--made believe I didn't hear her. She said, "She had red hair. You got red hair and you look

like her right around the cheekbones." I immediately shut off the conversation and I went on to something else and within a few minutes I left.

I then went to Verili to follow through on the information I had received. The town clerk's office was closed and one of the attendants promised to send me my mother's birth record, and he did. The information confirmed what was recorded in my mother's death record. I inquired about the Morganti's. The result of my inquiry convinced me that the majority of the Morganti's were druggists. When I went back to my uncle's house, I did not say anything to my cousins. I went to Rome and spent my time with Renato.