



# I'M RUNNING OFF TO JOIN THE CIRCUS

Casper Bellino made good on a threat, or promise, that many a young boy makes to his parents. He not only went off to join the circus, he made a career of being a concessionaire, a member in good standing of the Showman's League of America

"To run off and join the circus" became a lexicon of Americana, evoking images of a counter culture that existed on the fringe of society yet operating, on full display, as the center of attention. The traveling shows, carnivals, and circuses were cloaked with mystery, their cast and crews perceived artful vagabonds. The shows were filled with spectacle to delight the audience, but some found the behind-the-scenes operations to be as intriguing and risqué, if not more so.

The slang term for someone who works in the traveling amusement industry is carnie. Depending on who is saying it, it may or may not be derogatory. There is cause to look askance at some of the rank and file but it would be inappropriate to paint every hired hand with the same brush. Lifelong outdoor amusement entrepreneurs preferred to be called showmen.

It should go without saying that Casper had his fair share of peccadillos. They were prerequisites for the job as well as a survival mechanism. This somewhat crude exterior is basically all the locals had time to see during the show's week-long engagement. The transient nature of the industry did not cultivate long relationships, even amongst the workers.

The personal history of a carnie would only chronicle the most recent weeks of life on the road. A choice by many but a side effect of the occupation for others. Casper Bellino was a showman. A look at his life negates the harsh perception the general population applies to traveling carnival workers. His life as a youth was no different than his peers growing up in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ. His choice to hit the road was not one of desperation but of passion.

Gasparo, born in 1925, was one of six children born to Salvatore and Angela Bellino. Salvatore was a veteran of WWI. He lived at 23 South 7th Street, in the Italian enclave of the big city, struggling to make ends meet. The great depression was looming and Casper and his siblings, Frank, Pauline, Vito, Jimmy and Jean helped out anyway they could. Casper remembered working in the fields while still in grade school #3. On Sundays he would serve as an altar boy at St. Anthony's church. Casper remembers his poverty objectively, not with disdain. He never considered that he was doing without. He embraced what he had. He reflected, "There was no such thing as a dining room or living room; everything was a bedroom. To call it crowded was unacceptable."

Casper saw school as a hinderance to an opportunity to work. The job that he had his sights set on was with the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show that stacked its tents in Elizabeth annually. The show would capture any teenage boy's fancy. The after hour activities became legend, including a real shootout between real Indians and real Cowboys from the show. It was a bit over-the-top even by Peterstown's standards of bad behavior.

The wide-eyed Bellino rationalized that if he left home to work, his parents would have one less mouth to feed; so he was helping. He left school at the age of 14 and latched onto a carr avan going to Saratoga, NY. In short order, a priest with the Salvation Army sent him back home.

Casper returned and graduated Edison Tech High School. Shortly thereafter he was drafted into the army at the age of 18. Due to his high school training he was placed in the Calvary Armored Division. Though he wasn't in the infantry, Casper was sent to the front in a 2.5-ton 6x6 Cargo Truck. He crossed the Channel with General Montgomery during the Normandy Beach invasion, with an estimated 10,000 casualties.

Back home, after the war Casper had some decisions to make. For some reason, maybe it was his experience in the war, but he was not interested in going down the conventional career paths that were laid down. He had an above average intellect and possessed an even sharper wit. A nine to five gig was not going to cut it, especially having had a taste with the Wild West Show. For him the decision was easy. The road was beckoning and it offered everything he wanted, excitement, a challenge and unrestricted freedom.

Casper went off and never looked back. He went off to see the world, well at least North America. The

circuit took him all over the United States and throughout Canada, plus stops in Cuba, Barbados and Jamaica. Bellino traveled with several groups, working every aspect of the operations from being a "talker," getting patrons into side shows, to running state fairs in his later years. His favorite times were with the Royal American Shows. He dabbled in all aspects of the show but was mainly an entrepreneur who owned and operated the "Nickle Digger" concession.

The carnival was a different world, complete with its own language. Casper would admit that "carnies had some unusual habits and there were many lamsters" that he worked with. "Lamster" is carnie speak for fugitive. Bellino was a Showman, a cut above.

Casper passed away September 15, 2009 at the age of 83 years old. He retired from a career that delivered excitement to make up for its lack of glamour. Casper loved thrill.

(left, seated l-r) The Bellino family just before Casper flew the coop in 1939, Angelina, Vito, Casper, Pauline, Frank, Vincenzo (Jimmy) and Salvatore. Casper's sister Jean was yet to be born.



(above) Casper served in the Army in World War II in the European-African Theater.



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**President's Message**



Our dear friend, Al Rugani, passed away recently and his loss will be deeply felt by so many people. Al dedicated his life in service to St. Anthony's church, school and parish. I can't think of anyone who has done more for so long. As clergy and lay workers came and gone through the years Al stayed consistent in his dedication. There are few people who live their lives totally with the well beings of others in mind. Al was one of them. Everything he did was behind the scenes yet what he did for the church was important to its existence. He performed the administrative duties that were vital to the success of the church's many programs. Personally, we can learn a lot from Al, I know I have. His patients was unbelievable. He never showed anger and turned disappointments into positives. His love of family, friends and neighbors reflected his love of God. He lived his faith to the fullest, as was taught by Jesus. The greatest tribute we can give to the memory of Al Rugani is to live by his example, even if it's for a minute. It won't be easy but trying is good too. Thank you and God bless.

*John Sacco*  
 John Sacco, President  
 Sons of Peterstown Sports Club

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**Letters to the Editor**



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Dear Joe

I cannot express how beautiful the article turned out. My mother-in-law is so excited over it and we are really extremely pleased. We have received many phone calls, I even received a note from a friend of mine that lives in TX, that's how far your paper has reached! I just want to say again thank you so much for everything you've done, you've made mom a star and she's enjoying it, after all 100 is very very special.

Carmella Tavormina  
 Iselin, NJ

Dear Joe & Tina

I truly appreciate the wonderful article about Dimensions Hair Salon. I would like to thank Joe for writing the article and Tina for taking the photographs. Thanks for the time and effort in showing that you cared, it meant a lot to me. I wish you all the best.

Love,  
 Karen (Izzetta) Kotas  
 Mountainside, NJ

Dear Joe,

Receiving an issue of "Around About Peterstown" is like getting a letter from home. It's always filled with pictures and stories that rekindle beautiful memories of growing up in our hometown. God bless you and your beautiful family and keep up the great job you're doing.

Sincerely,  
 Carmella Spino Helminski  
 Clark, NJ

joerenna@joerenna.com

Joe Triola, a Peterstown boy, just finished doing work on our driveway here in Boca Raton, FL. He gave us your website. My husband and I are also from Elizabeth. I'm from the Elmora section and my husband's from "up the hill" (Kipling Road section). My brother, Arthur Pearl, married Maryellen Spirito a couple a years ago. Small world, eh?

elizabethrose64@aol.com  
 Boca Raton, FL

p.s. If you see Nancy from DeCosmo's Italian Ice de cosmo's, say hey to Nancy from Nancy. what a hoot!!!!

Seasons Greetings to all out readers.

May you have a merry Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year. May all our brave men and women in the armed forces return safely home to their loved ones. Let us remember them in our prayers and thank them for their sacrifice.

Joe & Tina Renna  
 Publishers of Around About Peterstown

Hi Joe,

I came across a copy of your newspaper and was so happy to see some of the people my grandmother and father knew from Peterstown. I remember Mrs. Tavormina and was excited to read her story.

My dad was Joe Fortunato and he lived at 233 John Street. My fathers family is all from the Peterstown area. My grandmother's maiden name was Scaturro. She and my grandfather came from Ribera a long time ago.

I have been trying to track down any of my relatives in Sicily for about a year now but I really don't know how to go about it. I don't get to see my brothers too often as they live further away now. But we do keep in touch with e-mails and phone calls.

Thank you again for your wonderful paper. I sure do miss going to Peterstown to visit my grandmother and my great grandparents and cousins who lived there.

Do you remember my dad and his family?

Thank you again,  
 Maryann Fortunato  
 Piscataway, NJ



Hi Maryann,

I do remember your family. One of my good friends is your cousin Manny Fortunato. Manny's father Joe was your father's first cousin. Manny said he just connected with some of your family via face book. Your brother John was my art teacher in Roselle Catholic back in '77.

Thanks, for writing,  
 Joe

Note: I connected Maryann, who is not on Facebook, yet, with Manny and the cousins are planning to get together.



(left) Maryanne's cousin Manny sent this photo of his sister Diane's birthday from 1959. Maryann Fortunato is the girl on the bottom left. Next to her is cousin Arlene Maid Dejesus and Manny's sisters Diane Fortunato Donlin and Sandi Fortunato Freeman, and his cousin Frank Cocuzza. Behind them is his grandfather Joe Crisari, his Mom Billie Crisari Fortunato, Grandmother Fina Crisari, and Grandmother Angela Renda Fortunato.

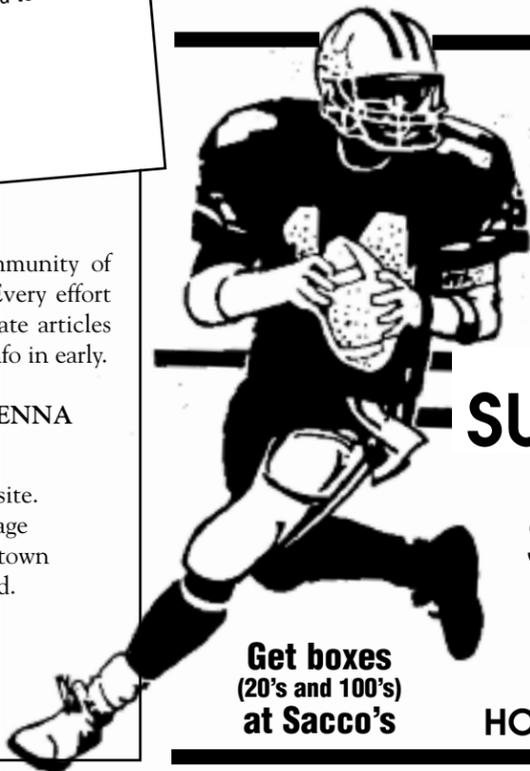
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# Editor's Opinion

everybody has one - this is mine - by Joe Renna

It is easy to share stories about growing up in Peterstown but it is difficult to describe the feeling that makes it so special. I recently had an experience that was reminiscent of those by-gone days and it restored my faith in that old value system.

The rules were passed down generationally, and though they were not written they were clear as day, "fare la cosa giusta" or, in English, "do the right thing." It was applied to every decision I made. If I wasn't sure then I would tap my elders to set me straight. It was like The Golden Rule on steroids and predated the mantra "What would Jesus Do?"

What made the experience special is that doing the right thing was embedded in our culture along with the food, art, science and religion of our Italian roots. There wasn't a moral dilemma; we did what was right, period. The combination of feelings that is so hard to describe includes a sense of trust, a comfort in the expectation that everyone would do the right thing. As strange as it may seem, even the corruption was perpetrated for the greater good of the community and not for personal gain.

As I ventured out into the world, professionally and socially, I realized how special the community was. I've grown weary of how people behave, uncaring, selfish, and with no moral compass. It seems that everyone is watching out for number one, first and foremost. Don't get me wrong, there were plenty of scoundrels that hailed from The Burg but they were ostracized for being so.

At first I felt angry at people trying to take advantage of me, but soon realized that it wasn't directed at me personally. I learned quickly just how cut-throat people are and am now very guarded.

I hate being this way. I've replaced my anger with grief over seeing the culture in which I grew up dissipate. I've grown to feel sympathetic for these people because I don't think they consciously choose their behavior. Just as it was second nature to do the right thing growing up, they have been raised to be self-centered to a point where comfort and money are the most important things in life.

(right) My account of the service I received from Woodbridge Transmission Specialists's owner Sal Cangelosi. His honesty and work ethic reminded me of the values I grew up with in Peterstown. I would highly recommend using him. He rekindled my faith that though many things have changed, all is not lost. (below) Sal's business cards.

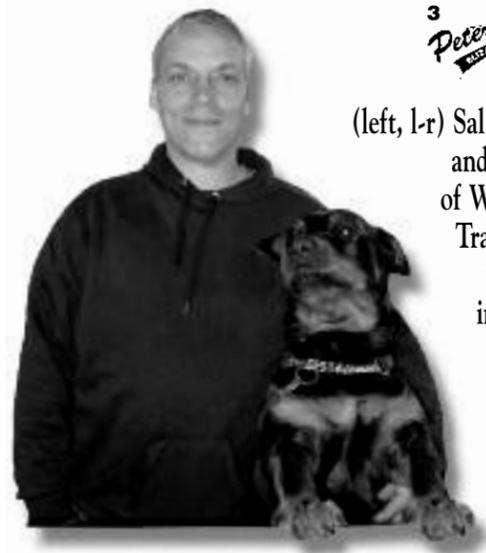
Society in America has steadily shed the traditions and values that the immigrant population embraced. The practice of people living in ethnic clusters for generations has been replaced with transient individuality. The disconnection has everyone fending for themselves without a solid, trustworthy community around them.

I can't help but think that the Bernie Madoff scheme is the ultimate byproduct of society's mixed up priorities. He stole over \$65 billion dollars from unsuspecting friends, neighbors, acquaintances, businesses and even charitable organizations.

The trust in him was obviously misguided, but I have to wonder on what basis was he given the trust in the first place. Some blame must be shouldered by the victims. Their motivation was a big payday and they were blinded by the prospect of the promised wealth. There were indicators that the Madoff Scheme was too good to be true but those warnings were ignored.

Madoff traded on the prevailing what's-in-it-for-me mentality of the day, the same mentality that fuels everything from office politics to youth sports.

Am I cynical? You bet. But I can still find comfort in Peterstown. The stalwarts of the neighborhood who still live and do business there offer sanctuary from the cold. I can visit day or night and get a dose of how things once were and how they ought to be. 🐾



(left, l-r) Sal Cangelosi and Dutchess of Woodbridge Transmission Specialists in Colonia, NJ.

## THANKS FOR DOING THE RIGHT THING, SAL

My car transmission was not going into reverse. After asking my local garage in Cranford for a referral they gave me the name of the service they used but stopped short of recommending them. The conventional modus operandi for transmission work is to replace the thing with a rebuilt. It would cost two to three thousand dollars and that's that. Another neighbor in the business echoed the opinion that no one does repairs any more.

I was prepared to trade the 2001 Subaru in for another car so I drove to Springfield for an estimate first. As predicted, they said the transmission was totally shot and they can replace it for \$2,500. Luckily I was able to still drive forward and drove to Car Stop on St. George's Avenue in Linden and started to look over my options.

I broke for lunch and visited Jim DeSalvo at Cleveland Tire in Peterstown. I told him of my car problem and he referred me to Woodbridge Transmission Specialists on St. George Avenue in Colonia. Mechanic Pete Pallucci concurred with the recommendation. I didn't need anymore than that, so off I went.

I knew that Jim or Pete wouldn't steer me wrong. For them to recommend this place I knew that its owner, Sal Cangelosi, could be trusted. The customer has little leverage in questioning a transmission specialist. Luckily I was able to drive my car from the first estimate otherwise who would ever reject the estimate and have to tow their car someplace else for a second opinion?

I told sell Sal who had referred me and he treated me like he knew me my whole life. It was just him and an assistant working on a fleet of cars. He also operates a towing service from the garage and the driver was there between calls. Sal explained every step he would take in diagnosing my problem. Way more information than I needed or could understand. He spent a few days troubleshooting and then showed me a cylinder that went bad. He said the part cost \$125.50 and asked if I want him to do the job. I gave him the green light, he finished the job and I paid him for the part and labor.

This is some old-school customer service that should be rewarded. Thanks Sal for being a stand-up guy. 🐾



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# LAPLACA FAMILY HOLDS REUNION

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ADVERTISER	PAGE
All City Cleaning Service	14
All Jersey Realty, Inc.	14
Alliance Plumbing & Heating	12
American Plumbing Supply	14
Bayada Nurses	5
Bayway World of Liquor	8
Bella Gina's Italian Deli & Restaurant	9
Best Dental Group	5
Bob & Richies Sunoco	12
Budget Printing	12
Candelino Kitchens	12
Car Stop	7
Chiusano Plumbing	14
Cianfano's Italian Restaurant and Bar	10
City Tavern Restaurant	10
Cleveland Auto & Tire	12
Colton's Pharmacy	4
Corsentino Home for Funerals	5
Custom Hair Design	5
DiBella Financial Group	4
DiCosmo's Italian Deli & Catering	10
Dimensions A Total Salon	5
Dr. Nicholas Cicchetti, D.M.D.	5
Dr. Nicholas Palmieri, Chiropractic Sports Medicine	5
Dr. Frank Paternostro, D.M.D.	5
Drew Memorial Company	5
Elizabeth Yellow Cab	12
Ferrera Affairs	5
Galluzzo Construction	14
Gourmet Deli	10
Hollywood Carpet	14
Il Gabianno, An American Bistro	9
Jacobson's Distribution Co.	11
Jersey Uniforms	12
Joanne's Luncheonette	10
Joe Percario General Contracting	13
John's Caffe	10
Magic Fountain	10
Massimo's Italian Deli	8
Michelino's Pizzeria	8
NJ Point Reduction	12
Organigaya Cafe	11
Petrucelli Funeral Home	5
Pinho's Bakery	10
Prestige Homes Sales	15
Richard Lucas Chevrolet Subaru	6
Rocco Auto Service	12
Sacco's Meat Market	10
Santillo's Brick Oven Pizza	11
Spirito's Restaurant	9
Tango Insurance	4
Tequila's Grill	10
Tomasso Brothers	14
Tommy's Pizza	11
Valentina's Hot Dogs and Grill	10
Valentina's Italian Restaurant	9
Villani Bus Company	11

About 125 descendants of Rose and Joe LaPlaca attended a family reunion on Sunday at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Linden. The family – with deep roots in Elizabeth, particularly Peterstown – gathers every other year to celebrate their heritage. The Laplacas now number in the hundreds, with some living as far away as Russia and California.

Of Rose's and Joe's 18 grandchildren, 11 were able to attend as well as most of that third generation's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The gala event featured plenty of food and drink, games for children, and music.

Rose and Joe settled in North Elizabeth after living in Newark a short while. Of their nine children, two lived in Peterstown. John and his wife, Lucy (nee Soraco) and their two children, Joe and Rose, lived on Palmer Street numerous years. Ala, his wife, Mary (nee Tito) and their two daughters, Rose and Diane, resided on South Street until the late 1990's.

Their eldest son, Frank, his wife, Frances (nee Monaco), lived in Lyndhurst with their children, Rose, Marian and Joe. Son, Jim, his wife, Mary (nee DePalma) and daughters, Rose and Theresa lived in the family home on Fanny Street in Elizabeth as did their daughters, Marian and Marie, her husband, Tom Calavano and their children, Sarah and Tom prior to moving to Jackson Avenue near Julia Street. Joe, his wife, Anna (nee Monaco) and their children, Joe and

Rose, as well as Tony and Vera (nee Vella) and children, Joe, Dan and Marie, lived in Elizabeth. The youngest son, Sam and his wife, Frances (nee Corea) lived in Kerry Head before moving to Cranford with their sons, Joe and Tom.

While it is not known how many voyages either Joe or Rose made from Collesano – a province of Palermo in Sicily – research shows he arrived on Ellis Island on April 16, 1902 on the S.S. Marco Minghetti. The only reporting of Rose's and her five eldest sons' travels is found on a manifest from the S.S. Duca di Genova showing an arrival date of March 15, 1911. However, she must have made at least one earlier trip since two of the sons were born in the United States – one in 1905 and another in 1907.



(above, l-r) Joe and Rose LaPlaca



(above, l-r) Joe and Rose's nine children: Sam, Ala, Joe, Marie, John, Frank, Jim, Marian, and Tony.

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# GIRLS NIGHT OUT



(above, l-r) On December 18, girlfriends from Peterstown got together for a Christmas dinner at Villa Borhese located in Fords, NJ. Helen Cullen Cortese, Eileen Feminella, Linda Colletti, Tina Renna, Donna Garry, Joan Loffa Piccarelli, Karen Sciscione, Debra Sangiuliano and Cheryl Feller.

# WELCOME HOME JOE

Every year for the last five years Air Force Col. Joe Brennan, a surgeon, travels from his home in Boerne TX to Washington, DC to speak at a military medical conference. And each year his childhood friends from Elizabeth, NJ drive down to spend a few days with him. His friends were more pleased than usual to see their old pal because he had just returned safely from a six month tour in Afghanistan. The guys kid with Joe but the reality is that they know they owe their frivolous lives to soldiers like Joe who dedicated his life to the service of his country, almost thirty years in.



(above, l-r) Joe Renna, Pete Brennan, Kevin MacNamara, Col. Joe Brennan, Vito Bellino, Paul LaFace, and Joe Adona wearing their pakols, a wool hat commonly worn by people in Afghanistan, brought back as gifts by Joe B.

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## OLGA HOSTS BUSINESS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

On December 3, Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy hosted a breakfast for all the business people in the area. The purpose of the breakfast was to introduce the new Academy and to seek out possible sponsors for this wonderful school. The idea for the breakfast came from the members of the Academy's advisory board and had the support of the Home School Association.

Many merchants responded and were given not only a lovely breakfast prepared by the Home School Association of the school but were also treated to some holiday entertainment by the school children. The food for the breakfast was donated by local merchant John Sacco. Everyone who came left with such a wonderful, warm feeling.

It is their hope that the breakfast would entice many

members of the community to get involved in this school venture and to support it in any way they can.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was merged from Blessed Sacrament, St. Anthony's and St. Mary's and is one of the three remaining Catholic schools in the area.

Its presence in the Peterstown community helps to keep the Catholic identity alive and well. Those who may be interested in helping are encouraged us to visit and become a part of the school family.

Currently there are 215 children enrolled and there is room for more children with scholarship/financial aid available.

The phone number for Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy is 908 352-7419 and its principal is Deacon Joe Caporaso. 📞

(below) Third Grade students performing for the Elizabeth business merchants.

(above, l-r) Ada Melendez, Investors Savings Bank, Lorraine Cunningham, Advisory Board Chair, Mayor Chris Bollwage, and Eileen Leahey, PSE&G and sixth grade students of Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy Cristina Gomes, Charles Lawson, Madison Holmes.



(left, l-r) Guests Tony Zengaro, City Comptroller for Elizabeth and Advisory Board Member; Michael LoBrace, owner of Michelino's Pizzeria & Restaurant and Donald Gonclaves of the Elizabeth Board of Education.

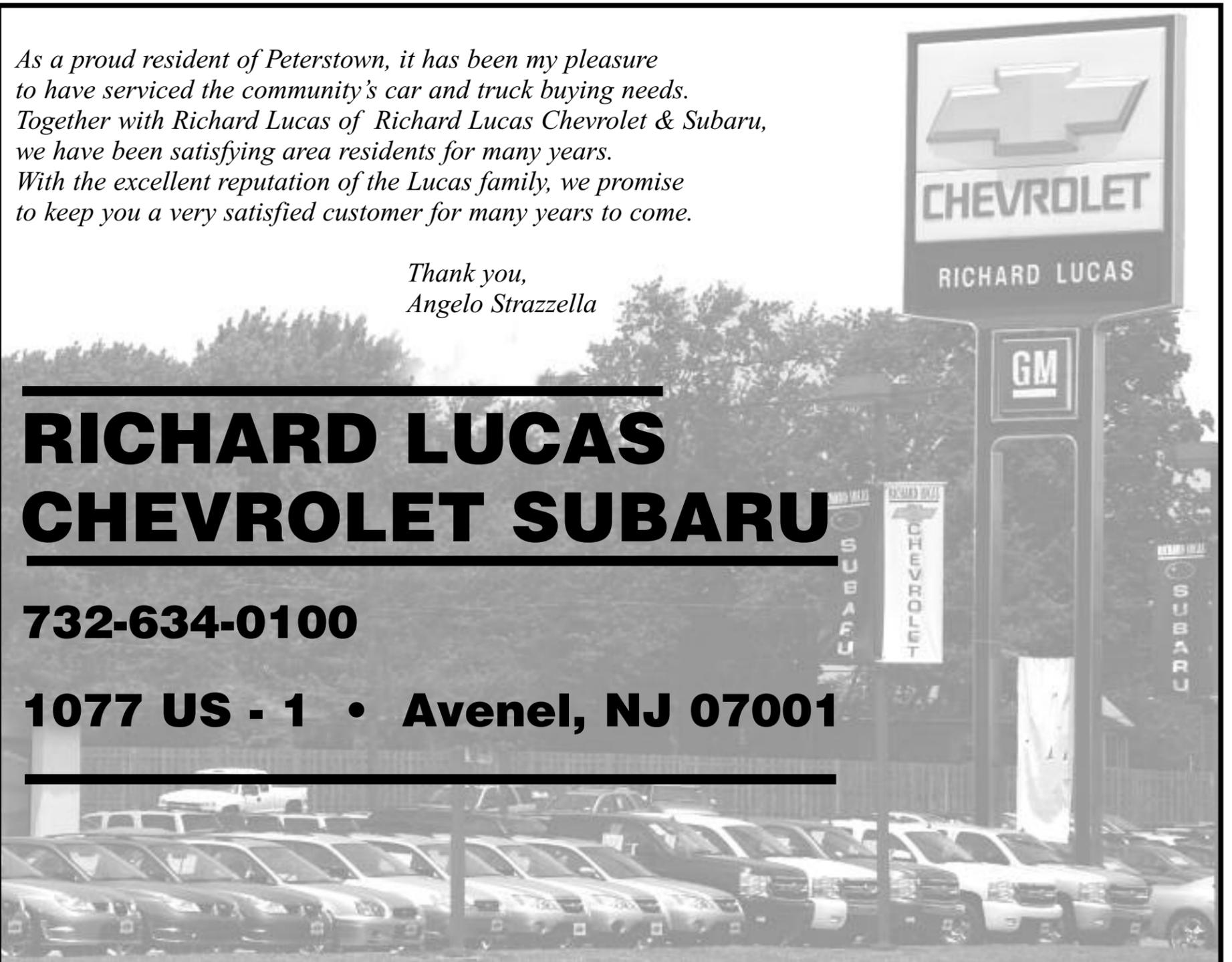
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# TINA SHINES A NEW SPOTLIGHT ON GOVERNMENT

Tina Renna has expanded her methods of exposing waste and corruption in Union County government with a monthly television show on public access T.V. 35 in Cranford, and a new supplemental website, [unioncountycitizensforum.com](http://unioncountycitizensforum.com).

It is customary for town councils to read a list of resolutions and ordinances that will be voted on in a meeting. The County of Union does not read their agenda, so the public viewing the meeting at home just see the freeholders voting, usually unanimously and without any comment, on millions of dollars of expenditures. The Citizen's Forum show consists of Tina reading the monthly resolutions pertaining to the expenditure of tax dollars and other information, as it exists in public records, is given if necessary and available.

The format is admittedly very dry and tedious. The show is void of any opinion and/or commentary but serves as an important resource for the taxpayer. Viewers are encouraged to view the show on the website where they can see "Regular Meeting Reviews," a podcast where Tina is joined by fellow watchdogs John Bury of Kenilworth and Bruce Paterson of Garwood to give their report on what is happening at the Freeholder meetings that they attend regularly.

For the past four years, Tina has been an advocate for Union County taxpayers, which, according to Forbes, has the second largest property tax rate in the country, behind Passaic County, NJ. She started her mission pursuing public records which the county was denying access to in violation of the Open Public Records Act.

Tina started the Union County Watchdog Assoc., a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, that has since been obtaining public records and posting them on the group's website, [unioncountywatchdog.org](http://unioncountywatchdog.org), to give citizens free access. The site also includes tools for visitors to do

.....  
**Not for Nothing But...**

It is difficult to make  
 back room deals when  
 the door is off the hinges.

.....

(right) Tina Renna on the set in the studio of T.V. 35 of Cranford.



their own research including meeting minutes, resolution lists, ordinances and the county check registry. Tina and her colleagues blog about county business on another site called [countywatchers.com](http://countywatchers.com).

In January 2007, Tina began adding video of freeholder meetings to her site and with technology developed by Veotag made them searchable by typing into a search engine.

Citizens aren't allowed to ask questions or make comments at agenda meetings. During regular meetings citizens have 5 minutes, which is strictly enforced, to comment on agenda items and ask questions which the freeholders may or may not answer. "Freeholders now spend over one and a quarter million dollars a day, with millions of dollars being allocated at any given meeting, 5-minutes usually doesn't even begin to cover what needs to be addressed" stated host Tina Renna.

The idea for a citizen's forum came this summer after

the New Jersey American Civil Liberties Union took action in Union County threatening the freeholders with a First Amendment lawsuit if they didn't apologize to the public for squelching free speech during a recent meeting.

The county apologized and Renna admits that although the main culprit in the incident didn't apologize personally (instead Freeholder Daniel Sullivan thanked his mother for coming out in support of him that evening), freeholder meetings have gotten a little less antagonistic because of the ACLU's attention. But information is still sparse and the germ of an idea for citizens to have their own forum was planted and became the next initiative for Renna to bring information to the public.

An open government exposes waste and corruption. Corrupt politicians fear an informed public. Being true to form, county council attempted to cancel future airings of the show. ☹

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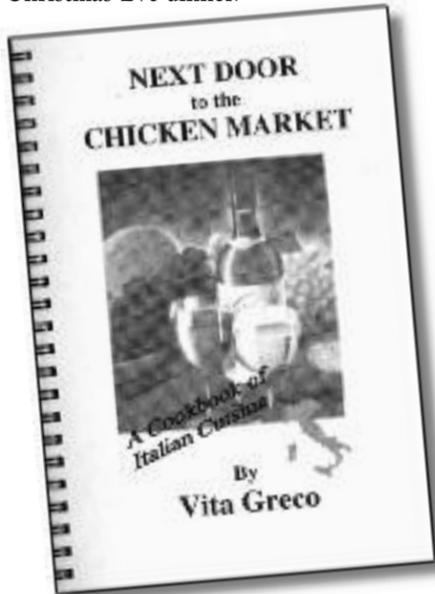
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(above, l-r) Tony Greco with daughter Barbara, wife Vita and oldest granddaughter Marisa enjoying their 2008 Christmas Eve dinner.



(above) Vita's popular cookbook "Next Door to the Chicken Market". Vita can be reached by email at vitagreco@aol.com or she can be visited on her web page Hometown.aol.com/vitagreco/myhomepage/profile.html.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM VITA GRECO & FAMILY

Vita Greco, nee Vita Gallicchio, began a tradition of hosting Christmas Eve dinner for her family after getting married in 1966. In 2008 her guest list topped 175 family and friends in her Linden, NJ home.

Vita started with a menu containing seven fish dishes, which is customary in the Italian culture, Vita's mother Vita (Marcone) was from Sicily and her father Robert was from Vallata, Italy. Vita now offers over 40 assorted appetizers, entrees and deserts. All of which she has a hand in preparing.

Each year Vita sends out almost 200 invitations to her friends and the friends of her children, Anthony, Michael and Barbara the list grows every year as the family's circle of friends expands. All comers are welcome as friends of friends.

In 2002 Vita wrote a cook book about her Christmas Eve celebration which referenced both her Sicilian and Neapolitan influences. The book is now in its fourth printing.

Success for the book came from an appearance that Vita had on Sara Moulton's "Cooking Live" show on the Food Network. It was a one hour show that went so well that she was invited back to do another.

The book has an enjoyable chapter about her life in Jersey and her Italian roots, followed by over 105 recipes categorized under the following headings: Appetizers, Soups, Salads, Chicken/Fish/and Meats, Macaroni and Crepes, Vegetables and Potatoes, Breads, Pizzas/Sandwiches and Specials, Desserts, Sauces and Gravies, Beverages and Wine, and Wines of Italy.

The book is for sale for \$20 plus \$4.95 shipping and handling. Checks can be written payable to Vita Greco and orders can be sent to Mamag Publishing, 14 Melrose Terr., Linden, NJ 07036.

Vita's Holiday spread includes the following:

- Clams Oreganata
- Mussels in White Wine, butter, & Garlic
- Cherry Peppers stuffed w/ Provolone & Prosciutto
- Baccalaru w/ Vinegar Peppers
- Shrimp w/ Lemon & Garlic
- Stuffed Calamari
- Escarole & Romaine Salad
- Bruschetta
- Assorted Olives, Cheeses, & Crackers
- Breaded Cauliflower
- Broccoli Rob
- Italian Hot Peppers
- Eggplant Parmigiana
- Sicilian Rice Balls
- Aglio Olio w/ Toasted Breadcrumbs
- Chicken Marsala
- Pasta Chi Sardi
- Sausage w/ Peppers & Onions
- Broccoli & Cavitelle
- Chicken Cacciatore
- Lasagne
- Chicken Cutlets
- Manicotti
- Meatballs & Gravy
- Farfalle w/ Pignole, Prosciutto, & Spinach
- Peppers stuffed w/ Sausage & Rice
- Mozzarella Garlic Bread
- Zucchini Bread
- Focaccia Bread
- Italian Bread & Rolls
- Biscotti
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# Recipes

From Next Door to the Chicken Market, A cookbook of Italian cuisine by Vita Greco

<sup>9</sup>  
*Peterstown*  
MASSACHUSETTS  
Dec 09

## Vita Greco's Gravy

### INGREDIENTS For the Meat:

Olive oil for browning  
1 pound mixed chopped meat (veal, pork and beef)  
1 small package pork neck bones  
1 pound Italian sausage  
1 small lamb shank

### INGREDIENTS, For the Meatballs:

1 pound mixed chopped meat (veal, pork and beef)  
2 large eggs  
Generous amount fresh Italian parsley, chopped  
Black pepper to taste  
¼ cup grated Locatelli Romano cheese  
½ cup bread crumbs  
4 garlic cloves, sliced  
Olive oil for browning

### INGREDIENTS, For the Gravy:

3 to 4 garlic cloves, sliced  
Olive oil for sautéing  
1 small can tomato paste  
2 large cans Tutto Rosso crushed tomatoes  
Black pepper to taste  
Salt to taste  
A few pinches of sugar  
Generous amount fresh Italian parsley, chopped  
Generous amount fresh or dried sweet basil  
A few pinches grated Locatelli Romano cheese  
1 small can tomato sauce  
1 small can water

### PREPARATION:

1. Prepare the meats: In a large skillet, brown all the meats in the olive oil. There is no need to cook the meats all the way through. Remember to pierce the sausage before cooking to allow fats and water to be released. Set meats aside.
2. Prepare meatballs: Combine all ingredients except the olive oil in a large bowl. Form the meatballs with your hands (there should be about 12). Fry in the olive oil over medium heat until browned, but not cooked all the way through. Set aside.
3. Prepare the gravy: Sauté garlic in the olive oil in the same skillet used to sauté the meats. Add tomato paste and cook for a few minutes. In a large sauce pot, combine the remaining ingredients except the meats and simmer. When the mixture begins to bubble, add all the meats and the meatballs. Stir about every 14 minutes, being sure to scrape the bottom of the pot to prevent burning and sticking. If the gravy seems too thick, add a little water at a time. Simmer for about 3 hours, keeping the lid of the pot slightly askew to prevent condensation of the gravy.

Yields 1-6 servings

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

Per 6-ounce serving:  
260 calories; 150 calories from fat; 19g protein; 9g carbs;  
3g sugar; 16g total fat; 5g saturated fat; 90 mg  
cholesterol; 1g dietary fiber; 330 mg sodium; 6% Daily  
Values calcium; 10% Daily Values iron.

(left) Vita's Sauce won the grand prize in The Star Ledger's "Got Sauce?" competition and in-turn an appearance with Sara Moulton on the Food Network's "Cooking Live" where she made her sauce, eggplant parmesan and manicotti.

## Anchovies & Linguini with Garlic & Oil (Agghiu Ogghiu/Aglio Olio)

### INGREDIENTS:

1 Tin of anchovies and capers  
4 Cloves of garlic  
1 Lb. of Linguini  
¼ Cup olive oil  
2-1/2 Cups of water  
Pepperoncini, cut in half with stems and discarded  
Scallions, cut in small pieces  
1 Cup of plain bread crumbs  
Fresh parsley  
Toasted bread crumb topping

### PREPARATION:

- 1) Sauté garlic in olive oil.
- 2) Mix in anchovies, capers, oil from the anchovy tin and water. Simmer till anchovies are melted down.
- 3) When done, add pepperoncini and cut up scallions. Add parsley. The amount of pepperoncini and scallions you use depends on your taste.
- 4) Cook linguini according to package directions.
- 5) When ready, mix all together, and top individual portions with toasted bread crumbs.



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(right)  
Joseph J. Santillo  
1957 - 2009

## JOE SANTILLO, JUST 52

Joseph J. "Grass" Santillo, 52, of Linden, N.J., passed away at home after a long battle with cancer on Tuesday, December 15, 2009.

Born and raised in Elizabeth, Joseph was employed by the Elizabeth Board of Education in the transportation department.

He served in the U.S. Navy from 1975 to 1978. He played and enjoyed following sports.

Joseph is survived by his beloved wife, Gina (nee Troiani) Santillo; his daughter, Natalie; son, Joseph Santillo; his mother, Mrs. Theresa (nee Collichio) Shade; his sister, Mrs. Patricia Conforti and her husband, Gene; step-sons, Troy Van Hise and wife, Keri, and James Van Hise; his sisters-in-law, Mrs. Charlene Mass and her husband, Gary, and Mrs. Eileen Schwartz and her husband, Steve, and many special aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his father, Frank Santillo; his brother, Frank Santillo, and step-fater, George Shade.

Gina and family wish to express their deepest gratitude to the nurses and staff of Center For Hope.

In lieu of flowers, they asked that contributions be made to Center For Hope, 1900 Raritan Rd., Scotch Plains, N.J. 07076.

## GASPERO (CASPER) BELLINO, A.K.A. YOSH

Casper Bellino, 83, of Elizabeth died on September 11, 2009, at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home, Edison. He was an amusement concessionaire for a variety of amusement parks, retiring many years ago. He served in the Army in World War II in the European-African Theater and participated in the Normandy invasion. He was a member of the Miami Showmen's

Club, Miami, Fla. He was predeceased by his parents, Salvatore and Angelina Bellino, and is survived by a brother, Vito J. Bellino; a sister, Jean Bellino, and many nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, kindly make donations to the N.J. Veterans Memorial Home, 132 Evergreen Road, Edison, N.J. 08818.



(above, l-r) Casper Bellino with his family, sister Jean, nephew Joe, Casper, niece Geri, brother Vito, nephew Vito and niece Angela.

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# MEMORIAL PLANNED FOR AL SANTILLO JANUARY 22 AT ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH

Alfred V. Santillo, "Shapes" 87, of Boynton Beach, Florida passed away on November 10, 2009.

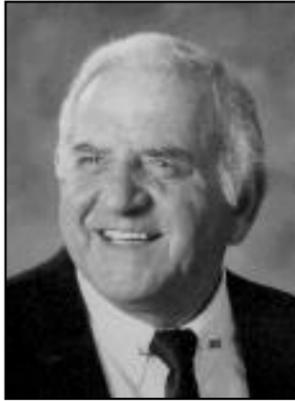
Al was born September 2, 1922, to Louis and Adelene Santillo in Elizabeth, NJ. He lived in the Boynton Beach area since 1993. Al was the second-generation proprietor of Santillo's Bakery on South Broad St. He was well known for his genuine Italian brick oven bread and pizza now operated by his son Al.

Al served his country in the U.S. Navy during World War II on the USS Douglas L. Howard and was interred with military honors November 16, 2009, at the South Florida VA National Cemetery in Lake Worth Florida.

Alfred was fun loving and passionate about people, food, dancing, traveling and pictures of family and friends. He and his joy for life will be missed.

Alfred was predeceased by the devoted mother of his children, Dolores; brothers, Joseph and Salvatore; and sisters, Helen, Sophia, Angelina and Marietta. He was a loving father to Elaine Cittandino, Denise Santillo, Noreen Specht, Alfred Santillo, Jr., Alison Lodato, Adelene Sant Foster, Marlane Santillo and Vincent Santillo. He is also survived by 14 wonderful grandchildren and five lovely great-grandchildren.

Family and Friends are kindly invited to attend a memorial mass celebrating his life on Friday, January 22nd, at 5:30 pm in St. Anthony's church on 3rd Avenue in Elizabeth, NJ.



(above) Alfred Santillo, in the 1960s in his bakery located at 639 South Broad Street in Elizabeth.



## ORGANIGAYA CAFÉ

Elizabeth, NJ native Paul Alirangaus and his wife Loretta are inviting one and all to the "Organigaya Grand Opening" on Saturday, December 19 at 9:00am and all day at 478 Somerset St North Plainfield, NJ.

Organigaya Café offers an alternative source of food, that is free of chemicals, pesticides, genetically modified organisms, irradiation and other potentially harmful ingredients and whose focus is on locally produced and sustainable farm products.

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(above, l-r) Deirdre MacNamara questions what her motivation is for being married to Joe Renna in a scene from the movie *Boyz of Summer* from director Anthony DiFonzo. This scene was shot in the Ferrara building on the corner of Fourth Avenue and South Street. Check out the product placement for the Peterstown shirt.

(right, l-r) Kate DiFonzo styles Robyn Barry who played the bride opposite her real life husband Kevin in a wedding scene filmed in the VFW Hall in Garwood, NJ.



## EXTRAS! EXTRAS! BOYZ OF SUMMER IS A WRAP

Director Anthony DiFonzo along with his crew finished off their production of *The Boyz of Summer* with a Hollywood style wedding scene. With over 50 actors, 20 cast members, a live band Devil's Advocate, family, friends, and equipment spread throughout the hall, the VFW in Garwood was the place to be as *The Boyz of Summer* wrapped up their final scene.

Anthony and his crew could be seen throughout the summer months in Elizabeth filming from cars, on rooftops, and on street corners. After months of intense shooting the crew waited to film the wedding for their last scene. The cast and crew set up for the scene for weeks and then shot for 17 hours. All this filming will

be edited into one critical scene lasting about 7 minutes of movie time.

Anthony appreciated most seeing his students from Theodore Roosevelt School #17 past and present come out and be part of the action. This movie has been his dream and he wants to reinforce the message that anything is possible to his students. Anthony prides himself in giving back to Elizabeth and his filmmaking is just another way to reach out to the community he loves.

Big thanks to the Ferrara Family, the Renna Family, the Pribish Family, Michelino's Restaurant, Lina Di Fonzo, Frank Di Fonzo and Kate Di Fonzo.

All made in Elizabeth! 🍷



(above) Flower girls played by Carly Lucas, Isabelle Barry, and Paige Barry.



(above) Tiffany Ann Festa shaking things up on location at Michelino's Restaurant in Elizabeth where a bar scene was shot.

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## ELIZABETH RESIDENTS, STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS ATTENDED THE WEDDING SCENE

Anthony and Kate DiFonzo are both educators in the Elizabeth public school system. Many extras in the wedding scene were their students, past and present, along with thier fellow educators. 📸



(above)  
**Students**  
 Leandro Zanetti (crew)  
 Rachel Pribish (crew)  
 Nadia Lopez  
 Nicole Hurtades  
 Maria Calderon  
 Teshaina Abernathy

Liam Abernathy Brown  
 Jasmin Merced  
 Niko Finnikin  
 Eduardo Hidalgo  
 Nadia Lopez  
 Nicole Camacho  
 Sandra Hidalgo  
 Carla Sousa

Some, but not all, Elizabeth residents who played extras in the wedding scene:

Lina Di Fonzo  
 Frank Di Fonzo  
 Rita Gooding  
 Rosalba Calderon  
 Dionne Abernathy  
 Elizabeth Vasquez  
 Carlos Calderon

Miguel Calderon  
 Giuseppina Gallicchio  
 Tamiko Hamilton  
 Carolyn Hamilton  
 Vivian Hidalgo  
 Tommy MacNamara  
 Don Mace.

**Educators**  
 Public Schools  
 Kate Di Fonzo  
 Jim Leonard  
 Theresa Leonard  
 Aurora Guas  
 Antigua Santos  
 Nicholas Carmazino  
 Rossy Calderon  
 Nancy Ynchaustegui  
 Shadi Shihadeh  
 Irene Mendonca



(above) Nick Renna was stand in stunt man for his brother Joe, stepping in when the script called for Joe to fall down a flight of stairs, jump out of a moving car or take a pie in the face.

(right) Extras Joe Azzarello and Beth Moore watch crew member Rachel Pribish prep the wedding set by lighting centerpiece candles.



(below, r-l) Anthony's mom Lina DiFonzo and Peterstown neighbor Giuseppina Gallicchio sat in as wedding guests . . . on the bride's side.



.....

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.....

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(above, l-r) Nick and Lucy wedded September 1966.

(above, l-r) Lucy and Nick were married 42 years up to the time of her passing.



(left) The Covino family.

# WIFE, MOTHER, NONNA, FRIEND, LIGHT: LUCIA

Memories of Lucia Covino May 24, 1929 - Dec. 4, 2008, submitted by daughter Rose Marie.

Lucia Covino was born in Avellino, Italy. She came to New Jersey in 1966, after marrying Mr. Nicola Covino, a widower with five sons, the oldest being 18. While many might be startled or panicked by the reality of trying to meld with moody, temperamental teenagers, Lucia was triumphant. Her will, her grace and her resiliency proved to be the winning traits. In addition, she and Nick had two more kids to add to the bunch which includes: John and wife, Denise, of Iselin; Michael and wife, Cecilia, of Bloomsbury; Joseph, of Elizabeth; Rose Marie and husband, Dominick, of Elizabeth; and Nino and wife, Sheri, of Fords. Her love was also found in her grandchildren Johnny, Jackie, Maria, Michael, Dominick, Dana, Joey and Gianna, and her great grandchildren Gabriella and Nicholina.

Like her name suggests, Lucy was a bright light to many. ('Lucia' comes from the Latin root word for 'light'). She brought great focus, great laughter, sharp wit and clever commentaries into the lives of her family, her friends, and the many people she encountered daily on her peregrinations throughout Elizabeth. Those who rode the bus with her on favorite monthly Atlantic City adventures can attest to her radiance and energy. She was quiet about winning though, so not to let on to her husband who accompanied her.

Lucy's gifts went beyond just her social charms. She was a talented craftswoman, and often took the smallest of moments to begin or continue work on a new crocheting project. She provided warmth,

metaphorically and actually, to making scarves, blankets, sweaters and shawls for her family and friends.

Any visitors who entered the Covino household immediately felt at home. Any "drop-ins" would always find an extra place setting waiting for them. Her son-in-law, Dominick, even recalls while he was dating Rose, that Lucia was "feeding" Dom a bowl of homemade raviolis, pizza and her scrofula's before going out to dinner. Her fingers were thick, but nimble, and could quite possibly have rolled more homemade cavatelli in five minutes than a Barilla factory. She had a love, and a passion, for cooking, for hosting, and she ruled her kitchen with the wooden spoon.

Lucy's passions didn't stop at the hearth, though. While many Italians talk about having a green thumb, Lucia's was, quite possibly, the greenest. Her garden was bountiful, and her flowers were as vibrant and colorful as her personality.

She ran a tight ship every August when she canned tomatoes for her own sauce. Everyone laughed while working because she always had a story and a joke to share. At weddings, she looked dazzling and pretty, and could always be found in the center of the Tarantella circle.

She found great joy in the smallest of treasures, and yet always knew that the greatest of treasures is found at home. She was a gracious woman who was tough and strong. She is missed by all.

This month it will be one year, and her vibrancy and spirit is still as potent as when we would sit across the table from Lucy and she told us about her adventures, her bargains, her recipes and her garden. We miss and love you so much, and you are in our actions, our thoughts and our lives every moment, every day. 🍷

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# VINCENT AND JANET GIULIANO PRAISE GRANDDAUGHTER STEFANIE <sup>15</sup> *Peterstown* DECEMBER 15 **Dec 09**

Stefanie Giuliano Abhar was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar this November. Stefanie, whose grandparents, Vincent and Janet Giuliano, and parents, Guy and Joann (Griffin) Giuliano, are Peterstown natives, graduated from Boston College Law School and was an undergraduate student at Boston College, earning her degree in history and graduating summa cum laude in only three years in 2006. Stefanie accepted a permanent position as an associate with international law firm Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky, and Popeo, headquartered in Boston.

Aside from her academic success, Stefanie has found time to find success and happiness in her personal life. This October, Stefanie celebrated her one-year wedding anniversary with her husband, Zabi, whom she married on October 12, 2008 in a beautiful outdoor ceremony in Mindowaskin Park in Westfield. Stefanie looks forward to many years of happiness both with her husband and family and in her legal career. 🐾

(right, r-l) Vincent and Janet with family celebrating Stefanie's graduation from Boston College Law School on May 22, 2009.



(below) The entire Giuliano clan at Stefanie and Zabi's wedding, October 12, 2008







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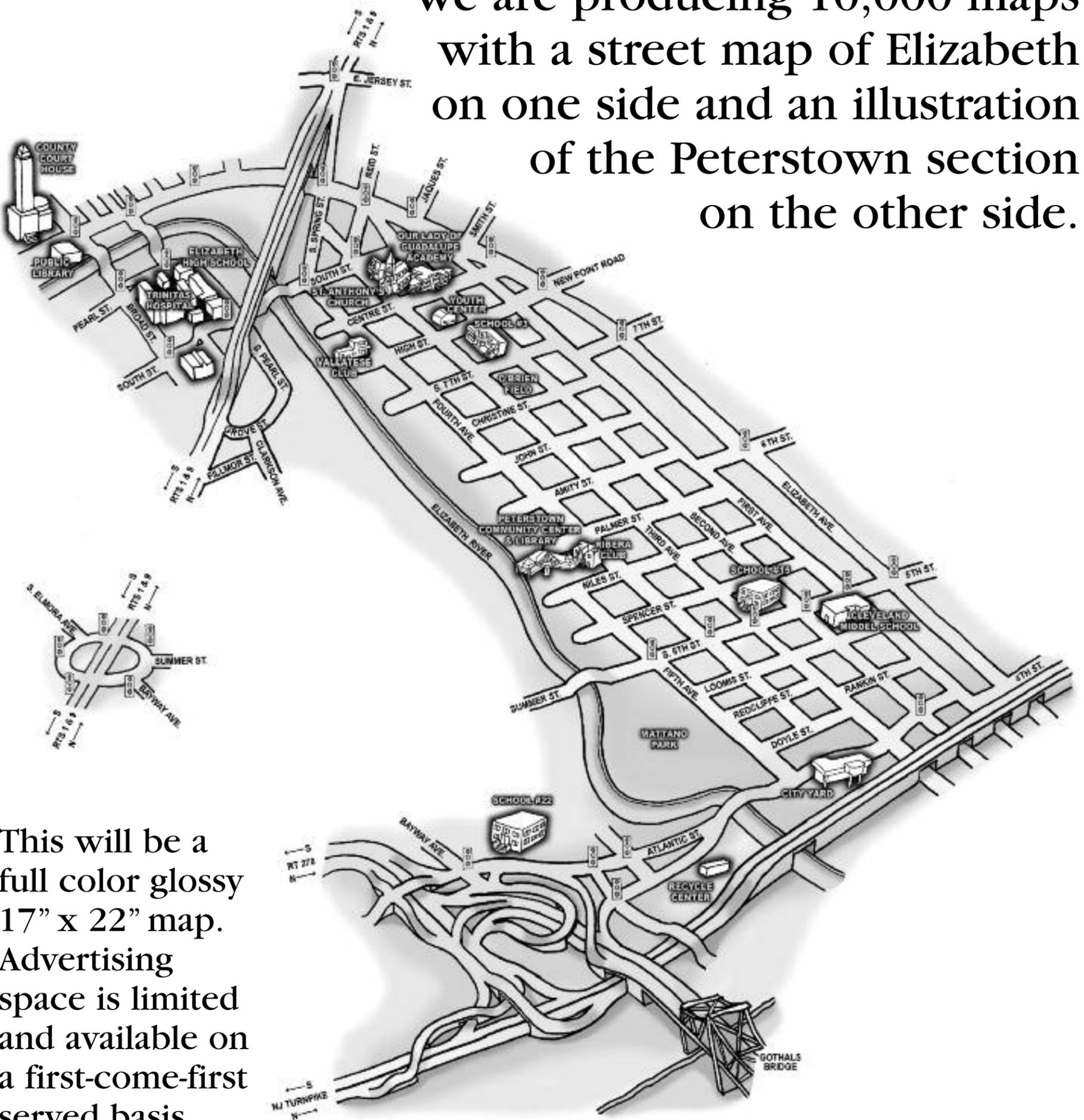


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