



## ORIGINS OF THE ST. ROCCO FEAST

Peterstown's annual festival honoring St. Rocco, which ended in 1988, grew to be the largest in Union County. It was so spectacular that, after 20 years, it still elicits vivid memories in those who attended. The Feast had very humble roots. It originated in 1930 through the hard work and devotion of Vincenzo Gogliardo.

Vincenzo inaugurated the annual festival in front of his home on 532 Fourth Avenue in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ. The event moved to Spencer Street and grew into a three-day celebration. The affair was always conducted on the weekend following the Feast Day of St. Rocco on August 16. Gogliardo settled in Peterstown in 1924. Born in 1870, he was originally from the Italian town of Savoia DiLucania. The anniversary of St. Rocco's birth has always been remembered with a festival there and Vincenzo brought the tradition with him to America.

St. Rocco was born of French nobility in 1340A.D. He showed a great devotion to God and the Blessed Mother in his youth and was left an orphan at an early age. After living with his uncle, St. Rocco distributed his wealth and took a vow of poverty before heading to Rome. At this time Italy was suffering through a plague. It was noted at the time that St. Rocco was attributed with curing many afflicted people through prayer and by blessing them. His life took a turn toward despair when he contracted the disease himself and was banished from the city to live in a cave. Near death and with an open sore on his leg he sustained life with the help of the dog of a nearby nobleman who would bring St. Rocco food. The nobleman eventually found the Saint and nourished him back to health in his castle.

St. Rocco traveled through Italy for a few years before returning to his hometown in France. Unrecognizable in his present state, St. Rocco was jailed and accused of being a spy. Upon his dying, his cell was illuminated by a blue light radiating from his body and a spiritual voice was also heard proclaiming St. Rocco would be immortalized in heaven. It wasn't until his captors discovered a birthmark in the shape of a cross on his chest that they realized his true identity. With his dying breath he revealed to the governor that he was his nephew. Many miracles were attributed to St. Rocco even after his death. His body lays in a glass tomb in the Church of San Rocco in Venice, Italy.

There are many structures throughout Italy that memorialize St. Rocco. The most spectacular is that of the church, built in the sixteenth century, which sits at the highest point of Savoia DiLucania, a village built on a rock overlooking the River Sele.

St. Rocco is revered as the protector against the plague and all contagious diseases. His image is depicted with the sore on his leg exposed and with the life saving dog by his side. Gogliardo built a chapel in his home with a shrine of St. Rocco visible from the street. The statue is still perched in the groundfloor window overlooking Fourth Avenue.

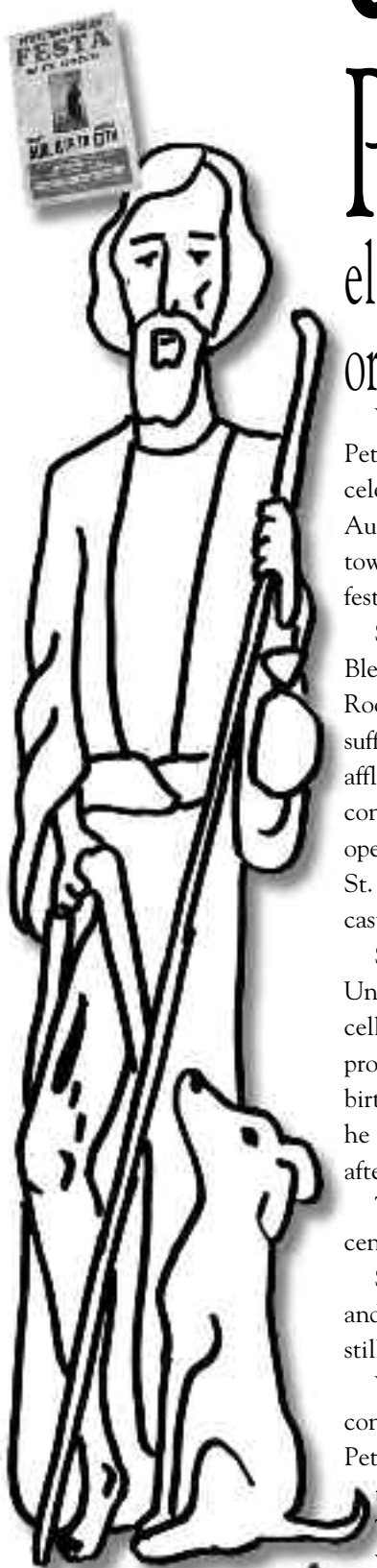
Vincenzo's devotion to the Saint energized him to host the feast and raise funds in St. Rocco's honor. He would walk on his quest to gather contributions from businesses and organizations. It was not uncommon for him to walk thirty to forty miles in a day, starting from his home in Peterstown and going as far as Newark, NJ, or New Providence and beyond. Vincenzo organized a procession where the statue would be carried through the streets of Peterstown so donations can be pinned to a sash. An Italian band led the march followed by children and townfolk. The money he raised would be donated to St. Elizabeth Hospital Chapel.

Vincenzo passed away in 1956. After fifteen years plans to resurrect the feast began by a newly formed organization called the American Italian Cultural Society of Union County. After two years of being held in Warinanco Park in Roselle, NJ, the feast was moved back home to Peterstown, to O'Brian Field, better known as the School 3 playground. It was expanded to ten days, with food vendors lining both sides of South Seventh Street, Second and Third Avenues. Amusement rides claimed the ball field and a stage sat up the hill in left field.

The St. Rocco's Feast was a source of pride for the Italian American community. It showcased the richness of the culture while entertaining thousands.

It has been 20 years since the Feast went dormant again but it still resonates in the hearts and minds of everyone who passed through. It is one of those experiences that the older generation laments that their children are missing out on.

(left) Family and friends of Vincenzo Gogliardo help move the statue of St. Rocco through the streets of Peterstown: Granddaughters Blanch (Gogliardo) McLaughlin, Tessie Gerro, Rose (DeMaio) Moyle and Annmarie Carberry, great granddaughter.



(above) Shrine erected in 1945 by Vincent Gallo in the front of his Fourth Avenue home.





*everybody has one - this is mine - by Joe Renna*

This is really the phenomena of those of us who are second generation Americans. Our parents had many

It helps to have a spouse whose core values are the same. The choice for my wife Tina to be a stay-at-home mom was without hesitation. I love her for that. She does draw a few lines though. Even though she does every other chore in the house, I have to clean up after the dog. 🐾🐾

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Richard is also currently the executive producer for The Steve Wilkos Show, a Springer Show spin-off. 



(above) Richard Dominick with his daughters Maggie and Molly, Vincenzo's great-great grandchildren.

Jerry Oriscello, Frank Malta and Mike Minitelli are spearheading a 45 year grammar school class reunion and are looking for classmates. If you are one, please call Mike at 908-687-5213 or Frank at 908-355-1176.



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# OLD TIMERS CLUB IS SIMPLY THAT

Most social clubs can distinguish themselves by a particular attribute or purpose. For the old Timers Democratic Club it is difficult to define what criteria is used for membership. Its history is a bit vague and open to interpretation. Many of the original members have passed away but there is a core of men who still frequent the clubhouse on 553 Third Avenue in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ.

Members can loosely trace the club's lineage back to the Original Mantano's, a club that started in the early 1900's that used to meet a few blocks away, on Third Avenue near Cleveland Auto and Tire Center. Some say the ties are tighter with the Rocky Stango's Club, which splintered from the Original Mantanos and met on

South 5th Street in the 1960's. The Old Timers have been on Third Avenue about 20 years. The clubhouse walls are filled with the decades worth of photos from the archives of both older clubs. The charter for the Original Mantano Club is stowed away somewhere.

For the most part the octogenarians who meet to play cards and watch sports on the television have little interest in the formalities which got them together. Basically they have done what comes natural in a community where friends for over 80 years still hang out together. It has been that way for their parents and grand parents.

Typical Peterstown. 📞

(below, l-r) Lou Moro fans his cards as Rip Marino deals to Alfonso DiCosmo.



(left, l-r) Pat Collichio, Joe Dispirito, Sam Renna, Lefty Labrutto, Lucky John, Mike DiCosmo, Mike Crincoli, Jimmy Gogliardo, \_\_\_\_\_, Rocky DiCosmo and Joe Tomatoes at NJ Boxing Hall of Fame inductions in 1988.



(above) Out on the town at at the Villaroma on Lidgewood Avenue in Linden, NJ with owners Frank and Tom Beninato, seated at left and right.



(above) Freinds of the Old Timers included one time Elizabeth Mayor, Nick LaCorte, third from right, and FBI agent Carmine Bellino standing in at top.

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# CEREMONIES RENEW MEMORIES OF 9/11 VICTIMS

The Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ is just ten miles from ground zero. The world trade center towers were in view when traveling north on Rts. 1 & 9 or the Turnpike. They were an inviting landmark when going into the city. The tragedy of 9/11 touched everyone’s life. It had to be especially tougher for anyone living in the metropolitan area. Not that sorrow was not felt by every American across the country but the physical attachment to New York and personal relationships to people who worked in the centers are an every day reminder of the loss suffered by people who live close by.

# FLAG OF HONOR HANGS IN SACCO’S

The Flag of Honor contains the names of all those that perished in the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, United flights 175 and 93 and American flights 11 and 77. The flag has special significance to John Sacco who owns a butcher shop in Peterstown, because it includes the name of his cousin Martino Giovinazzo.

Martino, who lived in Staten Island, was working as an electrician for a subcontractor to the Port Authority. He was one floor above the level of impact when the first plan hit the towers.

John received the flag from his nephew Joey Aguillo who is a fireman in Naples Florida. Joey was visiting friends who were firemen in New York. He came across the flag while visiting ground zero and thought that it

As the seventh anniversary approaches municipalities are planning memorial services. So many towns in the vicinity of the attack experienced the loss of residents. The shock is still felt by neighbors and friends. Memorial services have become annual events that show support for mourners and reassurance to all that American ideals of freedom and our way of life has not been altered.

Immortalizing those killed in the terrorist attacks of 9/11 reenforces the fact that the real threat of terrorism is to innocent people and ensure that it is not forgotten. No matter how the war is presented in the media this reality must not be ignored.

was a tribute to those who died that his Uncle John would appreciate. John hung it in the window of his shop.



(above, right) John Sacco finds his cousins name among the list of those killed on 9/11.  
(right) Martin(o) Giovinazzo appears in white letters on the red strip of the flag.



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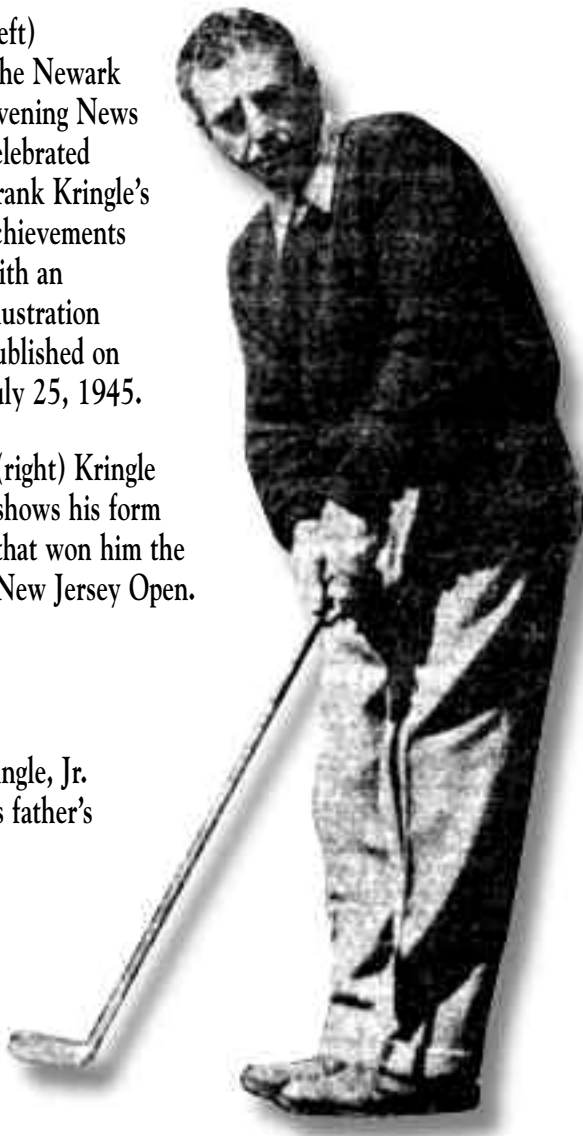
(above, l-r) Fran Kringle replaced his father Frank as club pro for the Crestview Country Club.



(left) The Newark Evening News celebrated Frank Kringle's achievements with an illustration published on July 25, 1945.



(left) Fran Kringle, Jr. followed in his father's golf cleats.



(right) Kringle shows his form that won him the New Jersey Open.

# FRANK KRINGLE WAS ONCE STATE'S GOLF CHAMP

Golf legends are very seldom associated with Elizabeth, NJ, especially in the 1920's when the country club sport was reserved for people of certain financial means and a certain sort of breeding. It was in this environment that Frank Crincoli started playing the game and, against the odds, and against the grain, became state champion.

Frank's achievements alone are legendary but what makes them most fascinating was that he was self-taught. Frank was one of six children of Mike and Louise Crincoli, immigrants from Valata Italy, living on Palmer Street in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth. Frank started out working as a plumber out of the union hall.

Frank's intro to golf was working as a caddie at the Suburban Country Club in Union, NJ. Frank would tell the story of while carrying clubs for hire as a small boy someone gave him a rusty old 2 iron. He would swing that club every chance he had while waiting for his next job. After hours he would sneak out on the course to play. He even putted with the club. Throughout his career, the 2 iron would be his "pay off club".

Frank, professionally known as Frank Kringle, made his way into the professional ranks by pure determination. He was known for his insatiable desire to practice. He practiced enough to get the attention of local pros. Amazingly he never played as an amateur and used the professional tournaments to find his way.

He was hired as an assistant to Ben Parola at Sunnyfield Golf Club in Linden, NJ and succeeded him in 1929. He was the pro at Sunnyfield for almost 20 years.

For a while Frank Kringle defined New Jersey Golf. He won the state Pro-Pro title twice and the Pro-Amateur Championship once. In 1945 Frank won the New Jersey Open Championship at Crestmont County Club, from a field of 64 golfers. Frank credited his old 2 iron as the key to his winning the open.

The event capped an amazing year of golf that grossed Frank \$2,000 in prize money, making him the number one pro golfer in North Jersey for the season. He finished third behind Sam Snead at the Richmond Open after leading the field for 27 holes. He also tied Denny Shule in the Tropical Open but lost in a playoff.

Frank Kringle played most of his golf against the leading pros in the country before the PGA came into existence. His proudest moment was also in 1945, when he qualified for the national PGA championship, one of only two New Jerseyans to do so.

After Sunnyfield folded, Frank spent two years as a playing pro in New Jersey's Glen Ridge Country Club before taking the position as pro for the Oxford Country Club in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. Along the way Frank won the Connecticut PGA crown.

He spent 11 years as pro at the country club, which was, renamed Crestview. It was with great emotion that Frank announced that his son Frank Kringle, Jr., better known as Fran, would replace him as pro at Crestview. With his father being the first, Fran would be the second professional in the 21-year history of the club. Fran, who was 29 at the time, was his dad's assistant for eight years. Fran is currently the pro at Blandford Country Club in Blandford Mass.

Frank played in many small tournaments, mostly pro-am, serious but very enjoyable. His accomplishments are well remembered by anyone who played with him. He hit a nine hole 30 once at Oxford. One of his chief rivals, Henry Bontempo once shot a 64 at Springfield County Club only to lose to Frank's 63.

Frank shot his age on several occasions. Most noteworthy was at the age of 68, when he shot a 68 to win the Western Mass. PGA Chapter championship at Greenfield. Amazingly, he also shot a 73 at the age of 75.

Mainly, Frank's legacy will be that of an instructor. He invented gadgets for teaching golf. He also quite progressively studied film and photos to devise his theories on the gold swing. He was known up and down the east coast and no one ever had a bad word to say about him.

Frank was a humble guy. He would go out of his way to help anyone he could, from free lessons to the shirt off his back. He was a fine dresser and a consummate club professional. He passed away in 1994 at the age of 91. It was the end of an era for many old pros.

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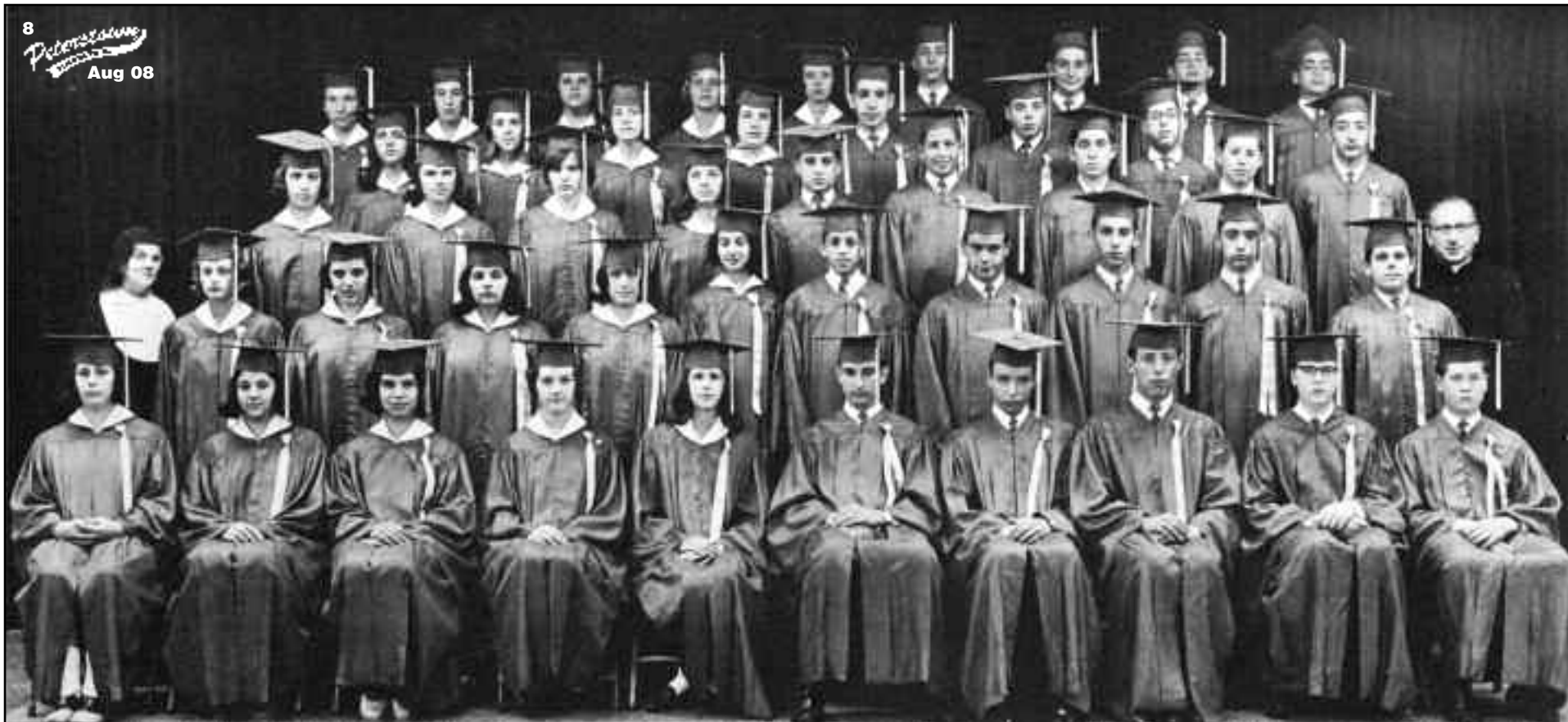
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## ST. ANTHONY'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL CLASS OF '65 WANTS TO REUNITE

A baker's dozen of grammar school classmates met at Costa's Restaurant in Roselle Park to discuss the task of getting the entire class together for a reunion. Since the committee is about one third of the class already, reaching out to the rest should be a cinch.

Specifics for the reunion have yet to be determined but the search stage has begun.

Members of the class can make things easy by calling Debbie Steele at 908-245-6801 or email her at dharris@comcast.net and leaving contact information.

(above) St. A's Class of '65 looking smart in their caps and gowns.

(below) Reminiscent of the school dances the boys and girls stayed on separate sides of the room.



(above, l-r) Identified by maiden names; Debbie Steele, Maria Disporto, Rosemary Bruno, Rosemarie DeRose, Patty Altobelli, and Lorraine Renna.



(above, l-r) Vinny Malta, Frank Balboa, Vinny Tavormina, Frank Navarro, Joe Gambino, John Lenahan, and Sam Naimo.

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# FROM THE 6 DEGREES OF SEPARATION FILE

by Joe Renna

I've received letters from around the country containing stories of people form the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ meeting each other. It may be that they are related to someone from Peterstown or know someone who is.

In any case, an argument can be made that everyone knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone who is from the Burg. The six degree of separation rule.

There is a different application of the rule when it comes to people who had family that lived in Peterstown, and that is that there may be a six degree of separation that the two maybe related. This happened to me one Friday morning at Sacco's Meat Market. John Sacco makes a special potato and egg sandwich on Fridays thats made even more special with hot peppers on it. Sorry, I digressed.

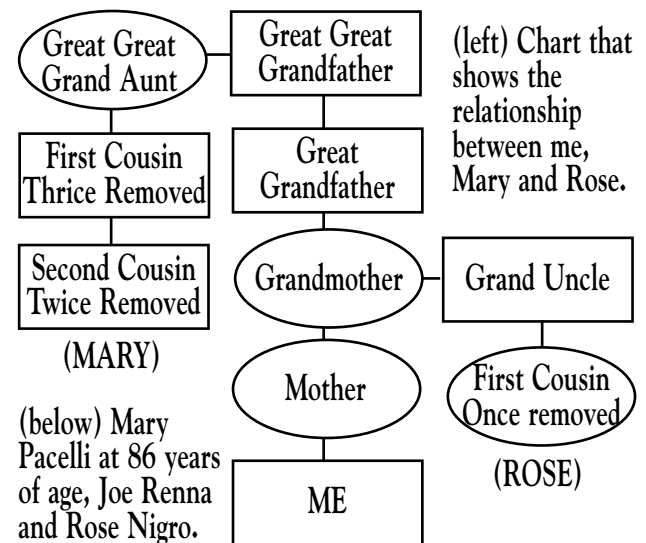
Anyway, while I'm enjoying my breakfast, a cousin of mine, Rose Nigro, walks in. Actually she is my mother's first cousin through marriage. Her maiden name was

Gallo. Rose was shopping that early Friday morning with Mary Parcelli. Mary lives in Scotch Plains and Rose lives in neighboring Colonia. Rose and Mary have been in close contact for many years. Rose introduced Mary as her cousin and said she is my cousin too. I then braced myself to absorb the explanation of how this is so I can go back to my Aunt Nancy and tell her who I met.

It goes that Rose was married to Michael Nigro now deceased. He was the son of Vito Nigro who was the sister-in-law of Maria Libera Nigro, my maternal grandmother. That makes Rose my first cousin once removed. My grandmother's father, Giuseppe Nufrio was first cousins to Lorenzo Strazzello. His mother and Giuseppe's father were brother and sister.

Lorenzo was Mary's father. Mary's mother was Josephine Gallo, commonly known as "Pepina". Pepina and Nunzio were brother and sister, which made Rose and Mary first cousins on the Gallo side of their families. Technically Mary is my second cousin twice removed, on the Nigro side of my family. It was nice to finally meet her. 🐾

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# FOND MEMORIES OF FRANK MERLO

The cover story about Frank Merlo in the June 08 issue of Around About Peterstown inspired many family members to share memories of Frank. Life for the Merlos at 316 and 318 John Street was always lively. Michael Merlo, the patriarch of the family operated a fish store from the first floor of the building and the family lived in the rest of the house.

According to Frank's niece, Josephine (Merlo)

(left, t-b, l-r) Row 1: Tony Merlo, Frank Merlo, Row 2: Jim Casano, Tony DiLeo, Joe DiLeo, Catherine Furst, Anne DiLeo, Sophie Barone, Loretta Frank. Row 3: Vince Barone, Jacqueline Merlo, Helen Merlo, Sophie Merlo, Congetta Barone, Rosalie Merlo. Row 4: Bessie Furst, Kathy Furst, Joe Furst. Everyone in the cover photo of June 08 we identified by Joe Dileo.

DePetrus, the level of activity around the house was high and only heightened when Frank came home to visit with theater folk from New York City.

It was a treat for the family but even a bigger treat for the guests. There was nothing better than Frank's mother Sophia's cooking. Even more, Tennessee Williams would also bring along his shirts that had to be washed and ironed, claiming that only Sophia did a better job than any laundry in the city.

It was obvious that Frank's family gets so much pleasure reminiscing, but they also are proud of what Frank has accomplished. His nephew, Joe DeLeo, explained how Frank left Jefferson High School early at the age of 16 and forged his mother's name in order to fight in World War II. Frank received a Purple Heart when he got wounded in hand-to-hand combat at Guadalcanal. He was also awarded the Air Medal.

Jacqueline (Merlo) Demaio described Frank's funeral as a spectacular event. Josephine said, "It was an event made for the movies." There were stars from both stage and screen. Her most vivid memory was that of Marlon Brando arriving on a motorcycle dressed in all black. The eulogy delivered by Tennessee was extremely heartfelt.



(above l-r) What looks like three backup singers behind Mike Barone, Miss Gulch talks to Anne Delio, Joe DiLeo and Manny Corlino.



(above l-r) Parents of Josephine DePetrus, Sophie and husband Tony Merlo, Frank's brother, and his sister Anna DiLeo.

(right) Frank's Mother Rosalie.

(far right) Marine Corps First Division Pharmacist's Mate First Class Frank Merlo.



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# HE WAS A MAN OF HONOR

11  
Tribune  
Aug 08

Eulogy for Frank Merlo written and delivered by Tennessee Williams, September 24, 1963, St. Ignatius of Loyola Church, New York City



He had a clearly defined code of behavior which nothing in life or death could make him alter. His character was as strongly and distinctively cut as the Sicilian features of his face. A friend of Frank Merlo's would have to learn his nature as one learns certain inalterable, empirical truths such as 'I have to turn this way and then that way and then back this way again to get home from such and such a locality'. The way would not change. It could not be changed. And when you had learned it, you knew that it was right. In some persons such an inalterable character might be irritating. In the case of Frank it was, on the contrary, a source of unfailing reassurance as a beacon of light in a harbor.

He had no on-stage part in the theatre, he didn't act for it or write for it. But for more than fifteen years he was a vital part of it. He loved people in the theatre and he knew their names, first and last names, and a star meant no more to him than a player who had just a

walk-on. He knew the first and last names of the men on the light-board, the stage-manager, the prop-men, and the stage door-man.

He had a unique capacity for knowing and liking people, and all he demanded of them for his understanding and liking was a decent honesty in them, and he had a unique gift for drawing out of them the best that they had to give.

Being above all honest, he had a phenomenal instinct for that quality in others. And he had a personal warmth and sweetness that could evoke those sometimes timid qualities in all whom he knew and accepted.

There was something about Frank Merlo that would not accept the un-true, that immediately and instinctively rejected whatever was contrary to his practically infallible sense of truth in people. He was a man to whom you would go for the interpretation of whatever was obscure to you in the quality of anyone you knew, because he knew them better than you did.

He was a giving person, always giving of himself and whatever he owned. The generosity of his heart, and its gift for understanding, made him superior to us in a way he probably never knew.

He had the kind of pride which is nobility and it was

never broken once by the illness that had ended his living, visible presence. Those of us who knew him during his nine months' approach to life's end, all wonder how it was possible for any man living, who loved and understood living as amazingly well as Frank did could retain, as he went to his death, such a never-breaking vitality.

The afternoon of the day when he died, visitors to his hospital room found him sitting up in a chair. He would return to his bed for a few moments, and then go back to the chair, but he said nothing of pain or fear, he only said, "I feel restless."

One time on a two-motor plane flying over high mountains, one of the plane's engines suddenly failed. His companion, as the plane lost altitude steadily over the mountain range on its way back to its point of departure, found it necessary to wash down two pills with the contents of a pocket flask of whiskey in order to endure the apparently imminent prospect of crashing in flames. But Frank sat quietly reading his book, after saying casually, "Oh, I've flown back over the South Pacific, after a bombing mission, on a four-motor bomber with only one of two motors working a lot of times, and made it home safe. Drink? No, I don't want a drink. There's nothing to worry about."

And it was the proudly unafraid face of his companion that kept Frank's friend from giving in to his panic, not the medications and the liquor, but that seemingly casual reassurance and that seemingly calm concentration on the book that he held before his beautifully, strongly cut face.

As an epigraph to the poem of Frank's life and death, his plane companion, over mountains and oceans, can think of none more suitable than Stephen Spenders' line: "I think continually of the truly great." ✱✱

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# ST. ROCCO PROCESSION THROUGH THE

*Different scenes from different years that the procession*



(above) Jenny (Charimella) Saunders, AnnMarie Carberry, Rose DeMaio.



(left) Marie DeMaio leads a column of neighbors through the Streets of Peterstown during the St. Rocco procession.

(right) Priests from St. Anthony's, in this instance Father Joe Maffei in 1980, blessed spectators along the way.



(left) A salute to the flag signaled the patriotic start of the parade. - 1979



(below, l-r) Rows of neighbors stretching three blocks long followed the statue in procession: Josie Bisco, Nancy Caprino, Mary Magaletta, Rose Decarlo, Rose Colicchio, Lily Evangelista, Angela Campanelli and Minnie Riccio. - 1975

(above) Angelic girls in their communion dresses marched from At. Anthony's Church.



# THE STREETS OF PETERSTOWN

originated in 1930 to 1986.



(above) Banner of organizers, American Italian Cultural Society of Union County in 1975.



(left) Float from 1975.



(above) Along with choosing a beauty pageant queen, each year the American Italian Cultural Society of Union County would chose a senior Queen. In 1981 the honors went to Lily Evangelista who rode shotgun with Dominic Caggiano.

All photos were taken by Joe Renna from the corner of Fourth Avenue and Niles Street, as the procession passed Vincent Gogliardo's home, the place that the St. Rocco's feast originated.

(right ) Published photo by Harvey Bilker from the Star-Ledger of 1984 Beauty Pagent Queen Maria Messina.



(left) Before the Pageant Queens rode in shiny convertibles they rode on the float as in 1979.

(below) Steve Caruso is the diver in this 1980 photo. In the background is the consummate banner bearer Johnny "Sho-Sho".



(above) Al Triola(#66) and his brother Tom (#24) walk with the queen in 1975.

## FUN, GAMES AND FOOD BACK AT THE PLAYGROUND

The St. Rocco procession ended in the school 3 Playground where the statue would be enshrined for ten days while a feast played out, nightly.

(right) The Nigro family, served pizza fritos from their booth at the feast. They are a traditional snack from their home town of Vallata Italy, kind of like a flattened zeppola but with out all the grease. - 1975

(below) To John Sacco every one at the Feast was a friend or neighbor and he would only serve the best quality of meat from his stand. - 1975

(below, right, l-r) The seafood concession was run by Vinny, John and Manny Riggi with help from cousins Pat Colicchio and Joe Nigro. - 1975

(right) A poster from the last year of the Feast, 1986, hangs in John Sacco's Peterstown Butcher Shop on Third Avenue. It is signed by friends as a farewell to his booth and the many years of fun the Feast supplied.







(left, r-l) Vincenzo and Margaret Gogliardo

(below, l-r) Marie and Sal DeMaio.



(above, l-r) Blanch Gogliardo, John's daughter holds her niece Rose DeMaio, next to the statue of St. Rocco.



(below, l-r) The DiMaio family in 1929, Margaret, Mary, Jimmy, Sal, Marie and Ross.



(above) Revamped St. Rocco Shrine at 532 Fourth Avenue.



(above) Marie DeMaio is flanked by her sons Sal Jr., Jimmy, Anthony and Ross, more popularly known as Duke, at Anthony's wedding in 1963.



(above) The DeMaio siblings in 1995, Jimmy, Rose, Margaret, Carmella, Duke and Anthony. Sal, Jr. and Mary were deceased at the time the photo was taken.

## MARIE DEMAIO WATCHES OVER GOGLIARDO HOMESTEAD

Vincent Gogliardo met his wife Margaret in the Little Italy section of New York City. They moved to 532 Fourth Avenue in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ in 1924 and raised five children, John, Marie, Joseph, Patrick and Rocco. Marie married Sal DeMaio and

continued to live in the Fourth Avenue home, raising eight children of their own, Margaret, Marie, Rosario (Ross), Vincent (Jimmy), Carmella, Rose, Sal Jr. and Anthony.

Sal worked for the Union County Parks Department. Though Sal passed away in 1941 at the young age of 38, he left a wonderful legacy. The DeMaio family was an intricate part of life in Peterstown. Marie and Sal had twenty-three grandchildren and over 30 great-grandchildren, and counting. Marie did an outstanding job raising the family through the hardship of losing her husband. She was actually pregnant with Anthony when Sal died.

Marie and her siblings were involved in keeping their fathers devotion to St. Rocco by helping him organize an annual street procession and festival.

Marie died in 1992 but the homestead is still in the family. Her son, Anthony, who is a construction contractor, had beautifully renovated the home in a few years prior to her death. He added space for his sister Margaret who moved in and cared for their mom. Anthony kept intact the St Rocco Shrine that his grandfather built in 1945 which is visible through a window from the sidewalk. 📸

(below, l-r) Rahway, NJ resident Margaret Dominick gets her hair done regularly by her nephew Arthur, Ross's son, at his Rahway hair salon Head Trip.



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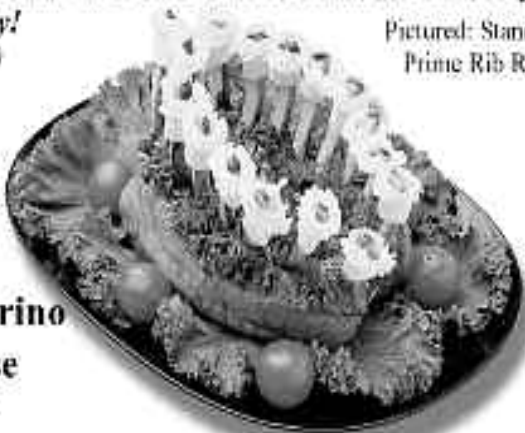
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CODE PLACER  
BY MICHEAL ANELLO

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**SOLUTION TO JUNE 08 PUZZLE**  
Mike Anello's creation Code Placer was debuted in the June Issue of Around About Peterstown. 🎉  
  
The unscrambled letters appearing in the shaded squares spell out:  
“Sons of Peterstown”

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By Gail Gerson-Witte New York Daily News

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(above) Carmeklo Marabella shows off his towering cucuzza he grew in his Colonia, NJ Garden.

# Recipes

Submitted by Jim Fodera, Treasurer of The Ribera Italian American Club of Elizabeth, NJ.

Jim Fodera answered the question that is inevitably asked when a photo of a cucuzza appears, “What do you do with that?” Jim gives a sicilian version of a stew that uses the elongated Italian squash. Folks from other towns put their own bent on the recipes, but they pretty much end up the same consistency. Jim offered two other recipes that can be made simply from what is grown in a home garden. These dishes make great appetizers.

NOTE: Quantities and proportions may be whatever the cook wishes depending on personal preference and how many people are being fed. Just add a good loaf of bread and they can become a meal.

## Minestra di Cucuzza

**INGREDIENTS:**

- Cucuzza (diced)
- Potatoes (diced)
- Tomato Paste
- Eggs
- Salt and Pepper for taste

Serve all three dishes with a good loaf of bread.

**PREPARATION:**

- 1) Put cucuzza and potatoes in a pot with a little water to cover them and heat until potatoes are cooked.
- 2) Add tomato paste and cook until stew thickens.
- 3) Add eggs and heat for another 15 minutes untill eggs are cooked.
- 4) Stir in salt and pepper for taste.

## Eggplant & Garlic

**INGREDIENTS:**

- Eggplant (cut in 1/4” thick slices)
- Garlic (minced)
- Parsley (chopped)
- Olive Oil
- Salt and Pepper for taste

**PREPARATION:**

- 1) Cook garlic in sauspau with olive oil and stir in parsley.
- 2) Grill eggplant slices.
- 3) Place eggplant in dish and spread garlic on top.
- 4) Add salt and pepper to taste.

## Tomato with Mozzarella

**INGREDIENTS:**

- Tomatos (sliced)
- Fresh Mozzarella Cheese (sliced)
- Basil (chopped)
- Olive Oil
- Salt and Pepper for taste

**PREPARATION:**

- 1) Lay tomato slices in serving dish topped with mozzarella slices.
- 2) Stir basil, olive oil, salt and pepper together and sprinkle over tomatos.

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# CROSS STREET GANG

Cross Street in Elizabeth, NJ is the next street over from Elizabeth Avenue, just north of the border of the Peterstown section of town, behind the Royal Theater. The one block long street tapped into the area called Union Square. A Firehouse anchored one corner and Harmonia Bank stood at the point. The social club, The Union Pleasure Circle, sat in the middle of the block. The tight knit group of neighbors still attempt to keep in touch.

Al Vardalis moved to Cross Street in 1936 at the age of nine. He wrote about Cross Street in “My Life, My Story”, a memoir that he penned in 2001 and dedicated to his children. The story included a detailed account of growing up in Elizabeth along with his time growing up in Kenilworth, through his military service and career in law enforcement in Westfield.

There are many references that Al makes that cross over to Peterstown, people he mentions, the stores, and schools. The open-air produce market in Peterstown rubbed up to Union Square. Al’s mother’s sister, Anna Jannucci and husband Louie, owned Jannucci’s Meat Market next door to the Royal Theater on the 800 block of Elizabeth Avenue. Colton’s Drug Store and Dietrich’s bakery were nearby. Al attended St. Anthony’s Church and served as an alter boy.

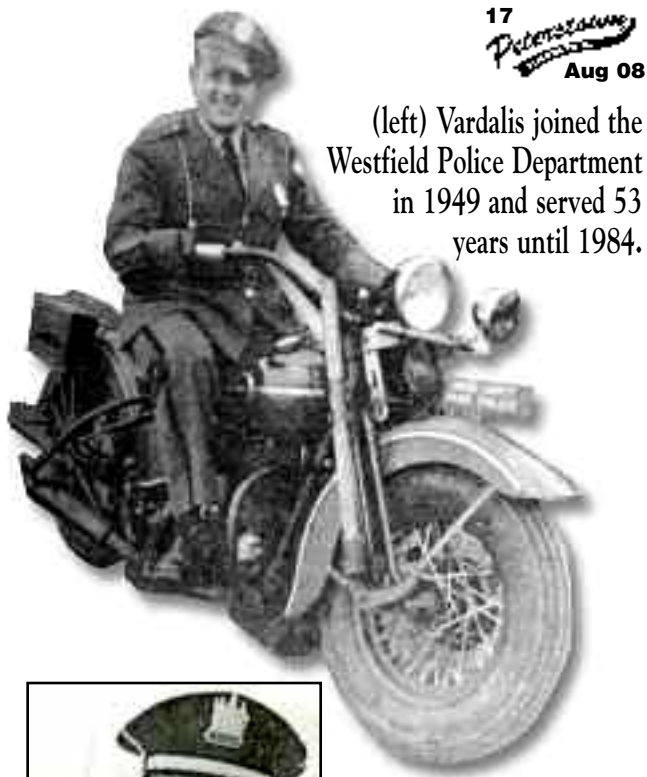
Tony Conte was one of Al’s teachers and his brother Lenny was one of his best friends and still maintains

contact with him in Punta Gorda, Florida. Al Vardalis was born in Kenilworth, his father was born in Athens, Greece and his mother was born near Naples, Italy. His parents met during World War II when his mother was employed by a Kenilworth factory that manufactured ammunition and his father was in the U.S. Army assigned to plant security. After the war Al’s father became a Kenilworth Police officer. He became ill and died at the early age of 39.

Al’s story goes into deep detail about his life in Kenilworth. He shares great stories of friendships, especially one with Johnny Benitati. The reader can sense that Al left something special in Kenilworth but he went on to find something just as special on Cross Street in Elizabeth.

Over the years Al and his friends who grew up around Cross Street organized a get-togethers, the first meeting was in 1976 at the Ramada Inn in Clark, NJ. There hasn’t been a meeting lately but the spirit of the gang still exists.

Attendees of the first meeting of the Cross Street gang in 1976: Jim and Paul Mariano, Anne Sarullo, Mary (Cordi) Buontempo, Frances (Paene) Marino, Joseph Petrillo, Angelo Cordi, Jay DeCarlo, Steve, Paul and Dom Arcure, Al Beck, Steve Siracusa, Al Vardalis.



(left) Vardalis joined the Westfield Police Department in 1949 and served 53 years until 1984.



(above) Al was Captain of WPD in 1980.



(right) Al in the U.S. Navy during WWII in 1945 at 17 years old.

(left) In 1980 Al and his wife Fran met President George Bush, Sr. and First Lady Barbara. Al met many dignitaries working as a confidential assistant to New Jersey assemblyman Chuck Hardwick.

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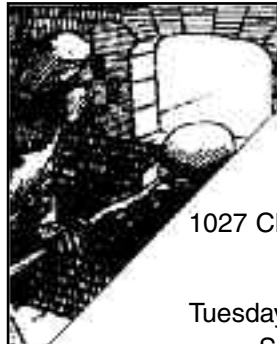
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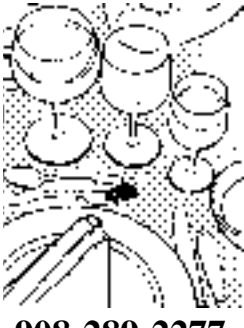
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I was born on March 1, 1927 in the small town of Kenilworth, New Jersey. My mother, Alice, was born near Naples, Italy and my father, Alfred was born in Athens, Greece. They met each other during World War I when my mother was employed at a Kenilworth factory that manufactured ammunition, and my father was in the U. S. Army assigned to that plant for security. I had a brother, Ernest, who was five years older than me.

After World War I ended, and in 1921, my father and mother married. They settled in Kenilworth and my father became a police officer in that borough. He subsequently became chief of police and had an interesting career in law enforcement. Unfortunately, he became ill and died in 1933 at the age of 39.

My mother was a widow left with two young boys. I was five years old and my brother Ernie was ten when my father died. My mother was unable to work because we were too young, and it was very difficult for her to make ends meet on a police pension of \$83.00 a month. In 1937, as we were in the midst of the Great Depression, my mother found it impossible to make payments on our home, and the mortgage company found it necessary to foreclose, forcing us to move out of the house. My mother's sister, my Aunt Anna Jannucci, owned several homes on Cross Street in Elizabeth, New Jersey and offered to rent one to us very reasonably.

While Ernie and I found it very upsetting to move to the "city" we knew it had to be done. We adjusted to city life quickly.

Growing up in Elizabeth was quite an experience for a young boy like myself who was raised in a small town. I was then about twelve or thirteen years old. Much of our spare time was spent going to Elizabeth Avenue with friends, and trying to identify the year and make of the cars riding by. That's how we occupied most of our time after school. We got pretty good at it, and to this day I

## EXCEPT FROM “MY LIFE, MY STORY”

By Al Vardalis

remember the make and year of many of the cars when I see those antiques today! Especially the 1929 and 1930 Model A Ford which had an engine noise that could be distinguished from any other car on the road!

Our three-room apartment was on the first floor of a two-family house. It was a cold-water flat and had a stove in the kitchen used for both cooking and heating. Any hot water used for cooking or bathing had to be heated on the coal stove. It certainly was cold there in the wintertime! We used to love putting orange or tangerine peels on the hot stove as they gave off a nice smell when they burned. In a year or so, we moved up the street to another house that was a little better. It, too, was a two-family house and we lived on the first floor. The Arcure's lived on the second floor.

Paul Arcure and I became very good friends. Angelo Cordi lived next door and we also became good friends. Nunzio Mariano lived around the corner on Elizabeth Avenue and Al Beck lived a block away on Martin Street. The Travis family lived next door.

There seemed to be more opportunity to do foolish things in the city, like hitching on the back of trucks as they stopped at a traffic light on Route 1 running through Elizabeth. We would ride on the back of the truck until the driver became aware that we were there then we jumped off and hitched another ride on a truck returning to Elizabeth. We also hitched rides on freight trains as they stopped in the freight yard along East Grand Street and sometimes rode them to Philadelphia or towns south. Then we would hitch another train to return to Elizabeth. If my mother ever found out about those rides I would have been in real trouble with her!

My brother Ernie owned a motorcycle when we lived on Cross Street, and when he went into the Army Air Corps during World War II, he left the motorcycle to my cousin Charlie Vitale. Charlie taught me how to ride it,

even though I was too young to get a driver's license. This experience would serve me well in later life.

I also belonged to St. Anthony's Church in Peterstown section of Elizabeth and became an altar boy. I would get up around 6 a.m. on certain mornings, walk about six blocks to the church and serve mass with the priest. At the end of the mass, I would then walk to elementary school on Jacques Street. I also received my Confirmation at St. Anthony's Church when I was fourteen years old. My cousin Charlie Vitale sponsored me as my Godfather. I can remember the pocket watch he gave me at Confirmation time. It was my first watch and I treasured it.

In 1942, when I was 14 years old, Al Beck, Joe Triano and myself took our .22 rifles to the Meadows, near Division Street where Wakefern Shoprite is presently located, and adjacent to Newark Airport. It was all open country then, and game animals such as rabbits were abundant. While tracking a rabbit, Al Beck shot at it and missed, somehow hitting me instead. The bullet entered my left side and lodged near my hip bone. Joe Triano took the guns home and Al took me to Alexian Brothers Hospital on East Jersey Street. The attending physician in the emergency room pushed a wire into the bullet hole to determine how deep it penetrated. When I asked him if he could remove the bullet right then and there so that my mother would not find out about it, he told me that it was a job for surgery. I then passed out and woke up in a hospital bed. I guess the shock finally set in. Of course the doctor called the police who came to the hospital to interview me. I told the detective that I did not know who shot me. Whether he believed me or not, nothing further was done about it. Al went to my house and told my mother that I had been shot, and that I was in the Alexian Brothers Hospital. When she and my brother Ernie came into the hospital ward, I could

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(Al Vardalis story continued)

see that she had been crying and was very upset. When she saw that I was all right, and that I was sitting up eating ice cream, she looked so relieved! I got a real scolding from her but I could tell she was happy that I was alive! It wasn't until about 35 years later that she found out that Al Beck was the one that shot me.

The section of the city where I lived was in the area covered by Cleveland Junior High School, but as that school was overly crowded at the time, I was sent to Lafayette Junior High School. It was much further away from my house and quite a long walk. There were no busses to take us and it was several miles away. Well, we didn't mind the walk. There was a viaduct that crossed over Route 1 near the Holy Rosary Church and we used to walk across the ledge on the viaduct, balancing ourselves while the cars below traveled on the heavily-traveled road beneath. My mother never knew about that one!

Some of the friends I met at Lafayette were Joe Postizzi, who later became the municipal court judge in Clark, New Jersey. Another was Don Newcombe who became a star pitcher for the old Brooklyn Dodgers

baseball team. Sal Serago, another friend, became a police officer in Elizabeth. Junior high school was enjoyable and I made many friends. I was graduated in 1941 and then went to Thomas Jefferson High School in September of 1941. World War II began that December and it would drastically change our lives. The class of 1941 was the first class to enter and leave during wartime (1941-1944). Lenny Conte, a classmate and good friend, would remain a close friend in the years to come. Jefferson was an all-boys high school and we were very anxious to enter the military service, even though the casualty lists were long. As I was only seventeen years old, I needed my mother's consent to volunteer for the military. She would not give her consent and insisted that I finish high school first, and only then would consider giving her consent for me to enter the navy.

When I approached my eighteenth birthday on March 1st, my mother had no choice and gave me her consent to list in the navy, reporting to Sampson Navel Training Center in New York. My long-time friend Johnny Beninati, from Kenilworth, was also at Sampson at the same time. 🇺🇸



(above) Al next to a 1935 Ford across the street from The Union Pleasure Circle.



Angelo Conti driving with Al in the front seat and Steve Acure and Peter Sirillo in the rumble seat.



(l-r) Al and Paul Acure in front of 847 Cross Street.

(left, r-l) Nunzio Mariano with an unidentified friend.

(far left) Some of the Cross Street Gang in the backyard of 860 Cross Street.



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(above) The Ribera Italian American Club's new Cultural Center located down the end of Palmer Street.

## RIBERA CLUB CELEBRATES 85th YEAR WITH GRAND OPENING OF CULTURAL CENTER

On September 21, 2008 the Ribera Italian American Club will be cutting the ribbon officially opening the doors of its new cultural center. The beautiful two-story building was built at 412-416 Palmer Street, next to the Peterstown Community Center in Elizabeth, NJ.

The cultural center houses the organizations new clubhouse along with a game room, a cafe and a meeting hall that can be used for social events. There is also an outdoor patio with a brick oven. The clubhouse used to be located at 620 Third Avenue, on the corner of John Street.

The 4,000 square foot center was self-contracted by the club; designed and built through the construction

expertise of members, in particular, Steve Bongiovi and Enzo Logiudice and architect Jimmy Guerra.

2008 also marks the 85th Anniversary of the Ribera Club, which was formed in 1923 by Italian immigrants from the town of Ribera, located on the Island of Sicily.

For the past few years the site has been the location of the clubs annual community picnic. The club also plans to use some space for classrooms to preserve Italian culture to future generations through language and history classes. The Ribera Club already raises money for scholarships each year through an annual dinner dance.

The entire Peterstown community is invited to attend the grand opening festivities.



(above) Ribera Club members circa 1960.

(Below) Current Ribera Club officials; Secretary Jack Miceli, President Peter Agliata, Vice President Jack Marabella, and Treasurer Jim Fodera.



(above) Ground breaking ceremony for the Ribera Club Cultural Center took place during the club's annual community picnic on September 11, 2005. Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage doing the honors.



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(above, l-r) Owners and cousins Vinny Pace and Jim Palermo with associate Chico Milanes.



(left, l-r) Vinny's sons Mike and Simone do some heavy lifting working at the Garden Center. At some point you can see their brother, Vinny, helping out. Jim's children also work around the yard and in the office.



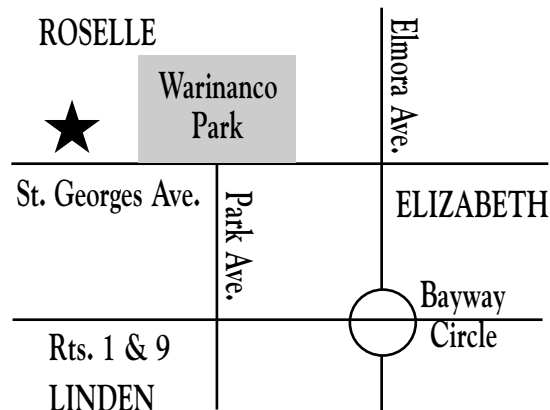
(above) Elvi Rodriguez of Elvis Landscaping in Elizabeth watches as Palermo loads his pickup with Red Mulch.

many years, it was the home of While-U-Wait, a company specializing in car radio and sound systems. While-U-Wait was owned by Vinny DeGeorgio and Joe LaRocca, life long friends of the new owners also hailing from the Peterstown section of Elizabeth.

In a way, the business is a family affair. Palermo and Pace are cousins. Jim being the son of Samone Palermo who started his excavating business, PJS Contracting, in 1958. Vinny is the son of Samone Pace who started his trucking company in 1958 also. Prior to that both Samones, who were first cousins, were partners in a business from 1955. Vinny continues to run his fathers Trucking Company.

Jim is the grandson of Leonardo Palermo who was the brother of Margaret (Palermo) Pace, Vinny's grandmother. The Palermo family arrived from Ribera Italy and settled in Peterstown.

After one month in business, the Supply Center has shown that the owners were correct in their needs assessment. They have filled a niche for a steady stream of landscaping companies large and small, along with individuals with smaller needs. 🌱



(above) ★ marks the local of Union County Landscape and Garden Center at 1455 St. Georges Avenue, Roselle, NJ.

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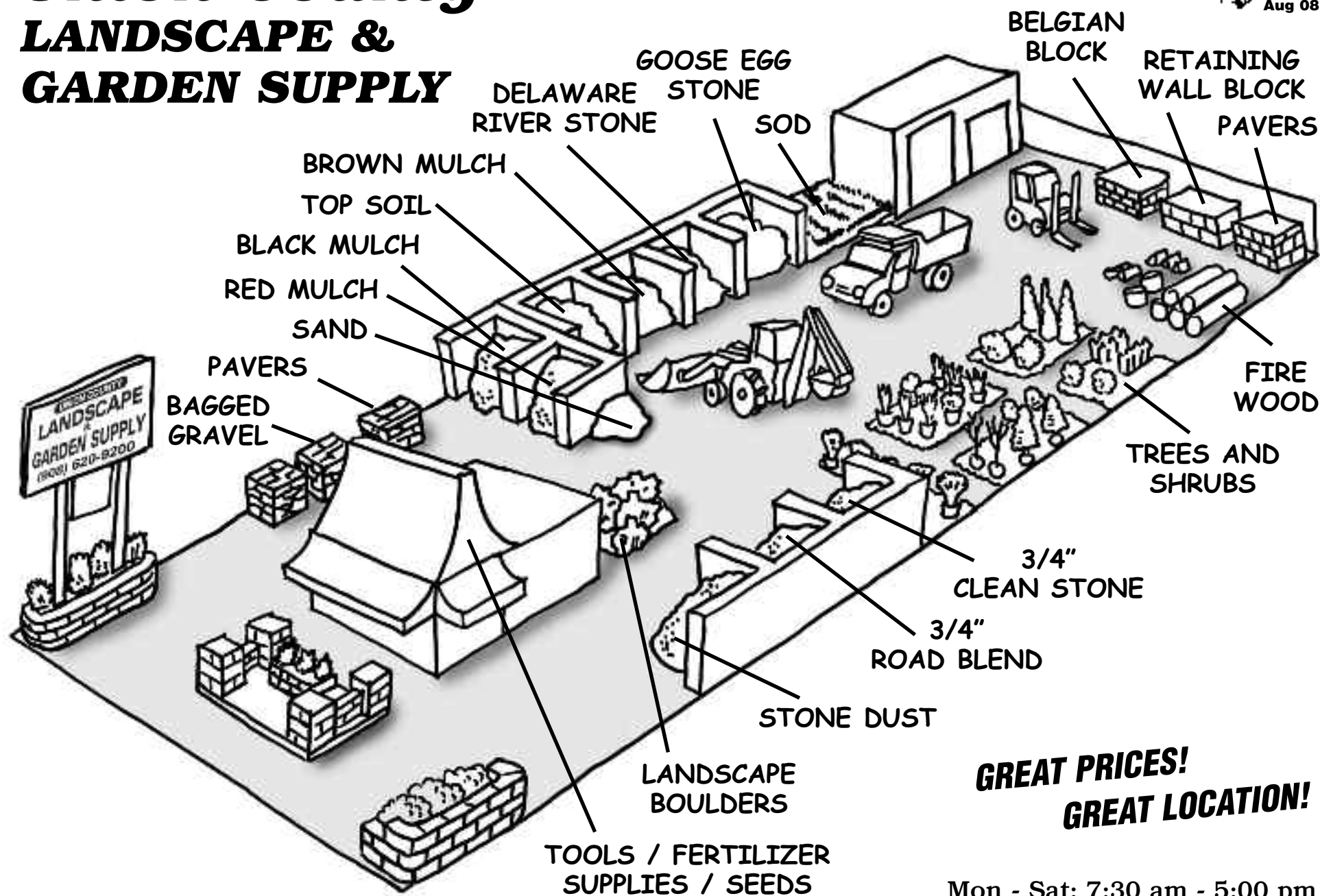


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**An Expressive Appeal**

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**Intriguing Colonial!**

Come feel the hospitality of this enticing 3-bedroom residence on a quiet, tree-lined street near public transportation- schools. Airy interior, secluded den, office. Two-car garage. Nicely-kept. Call for more details 908-245-9301



**Union \$395,000**  
**A Fine Comfort Choice!**

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**Roselle \$260,000**  
**Attractive Ranch!**

Enjoy a warm welcome in this 3BR/2BA residence near public transportation. This promising home features formal dining room, finished basement. High ceilings, storm windows. Patio. Well-maintained. Call for more details 908-245-9301



**Roselle \$259,000**  
**Colonial Awaiting Fix-up Work**

Settle with ease in this noteworthy 5BR/2BA two-story near public transportation. Ideal offerings include two-car garage, breakfast room and dual cooling. Security system. Walk-out basement. Call for more details 908-245-9301



**Franklin \$249,000**  
**Relaxed Townhome Life**

You must not miss this friendly 3BR/2+BA charmer in ideal condition. Fine residence offering ceramic tile baths, extra-large closets and track lighting. Gas fireplace. Garage. Light & airy plan. Call for more details 908-245-9301



**Plainfield \$269,900**  
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## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & PSYCHIATRY

Trinitas Hospital's Behavioral Health services

are among the most comprehensive in the state. Trinitas provides a full range of inpatient and outpatient psychiatric care for seniors, adults, adolescents and children. Pictured are staff members of the Dually Diagnosed Inpatient Unit, which is unique in New Jersey. For more information call (908) 994-7452.



## CANCER CARE

Since opening in September 2005, the \$28 million Comprehensive Cancer

Center remains the only place in New Jersey that provides patients with the state-of-the-art Trilogy linear accelerator. Trinitas Hospital recently unveiled the state's newest inpatient Cancer Care Unit, complete with 23 private patient rooms, specialized staff and equipment, and patient amenities such as plasma screen televisions. For more information call (908) 994-8000.



## CARDIOLOGY

Trinitas maintains a full-service cardiac facility for the intensive care of

patients with heart disease. Patients in need of elective angioplasty services can now undergo this procedure at Trinitas. The hospital has provided emergency angioplasty surgery for several years with superior outcomes. For more information call (908) 994-5695.



## MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

Our spacious 20-bed Mother/Baby postpartum unit features private rooms

and showers, and modern Labor/Delivery/Recovery rooms. A Level II Intermediate Care Nursery, presence of a 24 hour in-house neonatologist and obstetrician, and a 24 hour midwife are hallmarks of our care. Our Pediatric Unit offers 11 beds, centralized monitoring and 24 hour in-house physician coverage. For information, call Maternal Health (908) 994-5294 and (908) 994-5760 for Pediatrics.



## RENAL CARE

Home to the End Stage Renal Program for Eastern Union County, Trinitas is

committed to patients experiencing kidney failure. Recently, the Hospital was recognized as having among the best clinical outcomes out of the 1,600 hospitals and dialysis centers in the Premier network. For more information call (908) 994-5127.



## SENIORS SERVICES

Trinitas Hospital's commitment to seniors takes many forms, including the establishment of the Acute Care for the Elderly (ACE) nursing unit, The Brother Bonaventure Extended

Care and Rehab Center and the Seniors First Program that offers free valet parking at the Hospital, discounts in the gift shop and cafeteria, and special events. For more information call 1-888-8TRINITAS. For the Brother Bonaventure Extended Care and Rehab Center call (908) 994-7050.



## SCHOOL OF NURSING

The Trinitas School of Nursing, affiliated with Union County College, has been supplying the community with highly qualified nurses since 1891. This innovative program also

boasts one of the state's highest success rates among its graduates who take the NCLEX registered nurse licensing exam and a faculty that is first in the U.S. to be 100% certified in Nursing Education. For more information call (908) 659-5200.



## SLEEP DISORDERS

Accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, the Sleep Disorders Center

provides monitored, fully-attended diagnostic sleep studies designed to rule out physical, non-stress related symptoms that may prevent restful sleep. A team of trained sleep specialists supervise each study in a spacious new facility. For more information call (908) 994-8694.



## WOMEN'S SERVICES

Innovative diagnostic services include digital mammography, breast biopsy, bone density screening and ultra-sound. Women can visit the hospital

for these latest modalities as well as cosmetic and reconstructive surgery and innovative surgical care for female incontinence. For more information, call the Women's Imaging Center (908) 994-5984, or for other services, (908) 994-5138.



## WOUND HEALING & HYPERBARIC MEDICINE

The Trinitas Hospital Center for Wound Healing and

Hyperbaric Medicine is one of the best in the nation. Specially trained certified nurses and physicians treat those with chronic, hard to heal wounds. A variety of proven clinical treatments and coordinated care assures excellent outcomes. If you or someone you know suffers from a wound that won't heal, please call the Center for more information at (908) 994-5480.