



OF COURSE SHE'S A JOURNALIST

Tina Renna has been exposing corruption in Union County Government since 2005. Recently, the political machine in power used the county's top law enforcement official, Prosecutor Ted Romankow, to try to curtail her work by forcing her to reveal her sources. He failed and the case set a precedent protecting bloggers as journalists.

The Union County Watchdog Association is comprised of open government activists who advocate for transparency and accountability in hopes to eliminate waste, corruption and incompetence in government. The group investigates the county by obtaining public records, asking questions at Freeholder meetings and talking to sources inside the county. Tina, along with her colleagues John Bury and Jim Buettner, analyze what they find and report about it on their blog countywatchers.com.

In the past the group has sent their findings of malfeasance to law enforcement only to find that, instead of pursuing criminal charges the perpetrators were protected. For instance, after the County Watchers showed evidence that there was possibly tens of thousands of dollars of cash missing from the county 2010 Musicfest event, Romankow was forced by the State Attorney General to investigate. He wrote a scathing report and stated that the event was mismanaged, implementing County Manager George Devanney, Senator Raymond Lesniak's nephew, but stopped short of conducting a criminal investigation. Devanney was allowed to retire days before the report was released and Romankow and his first assistant went on to attend Devanney's retirement party.

Another example of the politically connected being protected happened in 2012. The County Watchers issued a report about county chain saws that were taken from county property and pawned off. The suspect in this case was identified as Patrick Scanlon Jr., step-son of Freeholder Deborah Scanlon. Patrick, who was on probation, left the county payroll after the County Watchers published their findings, and was put on the Township of Union's payroll the following month. After a year-long investigation, the Union County police closed the case without seeking any criminal charges.

A lot of the wrongdoing that Tina uncovers is found by implementing old fashioned investigative reporting skills. She seeks the truth in public records and is shunned and even verbally abused by county officials during public meetings who often refuse to answer her questions. In some cases sources close to the county tip her off to improprieties. This is extremely frustrating to the powers that be. So, when Tina reported that she had the names of sixteen county employees who took home generators for personal use during Super Storm Sandy, the county circled their wagons.

The first line of defense was to accuse her of lying, in which Tina responded by posting a photo of a county generator sitting on the front lawn of a home owned by a county police officer, on busy Kenilworth Boulevard. That post resulted in the prosecutor trying to find out what else Tina knew. She was not going to give up her sources and so Romankow had her served with a subpoena to appear before a grand jury.

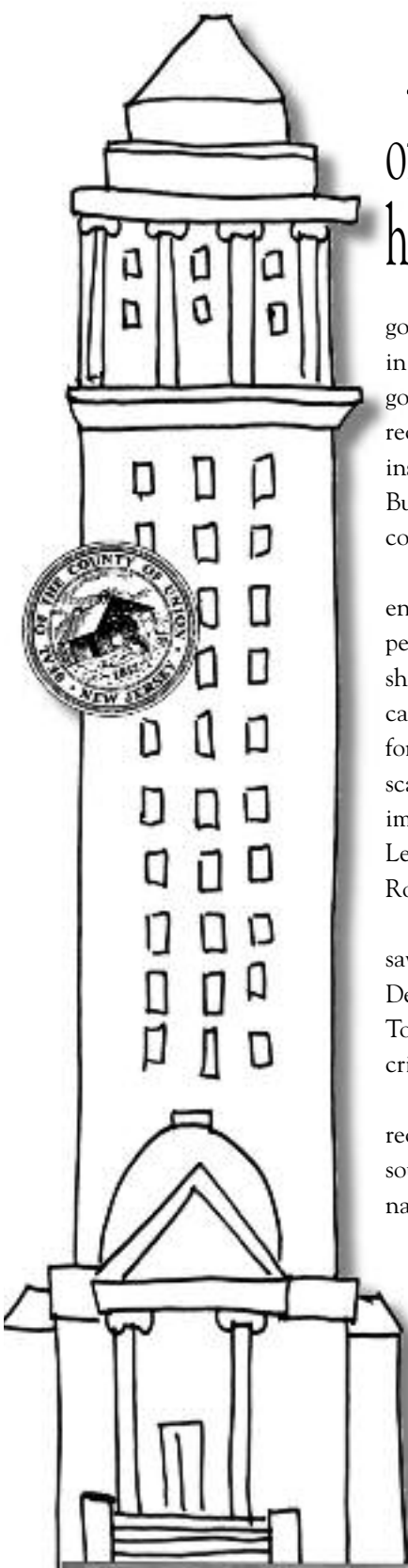
This desperate move was met with outrage from the journalist community. As a journalist, Tina claimed she was protected by the New Jersey Shield Law and could not be forced to divulge her information obtained during the news gathering process. A journalist cannot be forced to become an arm of law enforcement. Romankow claimed that she was not a journalist, only a blogger.

Bruce Rosen, a leading First Amendment rights attorney in New Jersey, took up Tina's case and motioned to quash the subpoena. Romankow refused to back down and pressed his case in court before Judge Karen Cassidy over a four day hearing. Tina had to withstand a barrage of questioning that ranged from accusational to insulting. Some lines of questioning had little to do with the issue at all. It was clearly meant to punish her for her critical writings about the county machine. From the audience the questions sounded like they were designed to fluster and intimidate. A group of four and as many as nine detectives from the prosecutor's office sat in courtroom throughout the four day span. One had to wonder why they weren't out chasing criminals. The unflappable watchdog was not going to trip up or be tricked, instead, the attorney for the state had to compose himself several times while his train of thought was being derailed by Tina's responses. He was visibly twitching.

Union County Superior Court Judge Karen Cassidy sided with Tina and is now being praised for her written opinion by media organizations and free speech advocates nationwide. Tina is the first blogger in New Jersey history to be deemed protected by the New Jersey Newsperson's Shield Law, and an important precedent has been set which may protect and inspire other citizen journalists to watchdog their government. 🐕

(left) Tina Renna on the set of her Public Access Cable TV Show Union County Citizen's Forum. Just one of the things she does to raise awareness about Union County government.

Disclosure: I wrote this with a bit of passion because I'm married to Tina and she inspires me. I love her and admire her so much.



(above) One of the county owned generators powering a private home during the town-wide blackout in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy.



Apr 13

Around About Peterstown is published by Joe Renna. Twelve thousand newspapers are printed and distributed bi-monthly, free throughout the County of Union and parts unknown and by subscription across the country.

Although great care has been taken to ensure the information contained within is accurate, *Around About Peterstown* assumes no liability for errors or omissions.

Around About Peterstown welcomes the comments and concerns of its readers put into writing and sent to:

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President's Message



The Christening of my grandson brought my family together on April 21st and it feels so great to be all together, especially on a such a happy occasion. It's times like these that I really think of

my mom and dad.
Time is flying by so fast and I laugh to think that we are now our parents. I feel like my father felt when he christened his first grandchild.

The world and this country is in a bit of turmoil and though we are safe at home there are young soldiers in harms way protecting us. My family was able to enjoy a beautiful get together while many families are broken apart by war. Let's not forget that while we enjoy our blessings at home.

Enza is hosting her annual fundraiser at Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy on Saturday, June 1 from 4 - 8. Tickets are \$20 in advance \$25 at the door. It is honor of her brother Cpl Luigi "Louie" Marcianti Jr who was killed while serving in Iraq. It benefits the Achilles International assisting wounded vets. Please show generous support to this worthy charity.

God bless,
John Sacco, President
Sons of Peterstown Sports Club

PRESS RELEASES

Press Releases that benefit the community of Peterstown are offered free of charge. Every effort will be made to accommodate appropriate articles when time and space allows. Send any info in early.

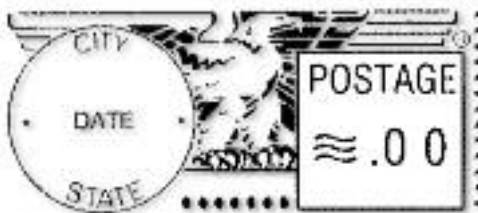
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Letters to the Editor



LETTER POLICY

Around About Peterstown welcomes Letters to the Editor at our postal, fax or e-mail addresses.

Letters must include sender's name, address and phone number (only name and town will be printed).

Letters should be typed. Letters appear as space permits. We reserve the right not to print a letter without notifying sender.

Dear Joe,

Thank you for highlighting the Fascella family cook book in the February 2013 issue of your newspaper. We were delighted to see your description of our family along with their recipes.

The Fascella women were truly exceptional, hardworking Italian women who remained fine examples to their family and friends. They are still missed.

The cook book started as a way of passing our recipes onto the next generation but turned into a book of memorabilia for many in the area. We eventually printed 1,500 copies which are all gone. We still get requests for copies.

Our Tanks Again,
Mary Loria Tournour
Monroe, NJ

p.s. We always enjoy the Peterstown news. You are doing a fine job. Your grandmother would be proud.

SELLING HOT CHOCOLATE FOR A CAUSE

By Maria Meza

Our Lady of Guadalupe's Early Act Club members came together and decided to raise money to help those affected by hurricane Sandy. We decided to sell hot chocolate in the morning to those students who came in early. We sold a cup of hot chocolate for a dollar and sometimes we even had cookies to go with them. The colder the morning was, the more hot chocolates we sold. The hot chocolate was sold for almost a month. We decided to stop on Fat Tuesday before Lent started. In total we raised \$150 dollars. On Tuesday 12 of March, Maria Meza, President of the Early Act Club and Brandon Thornton, also a member of the Early Act handed the check of \$150 to Christine C. Hodde, she is the Community Executive Director of the American Red Cross.



(above) The Earlyact Club President Maria Meza and member Brandun Thornton made the presentation to Christine Hodde, Executive Director of the American Red Cross New Jersey Crossroads Chapter.

GIVING BACK TO MY OL' SCHOOL



(above, l-r) Three Peterstown natives and St. Anthony grammar school graduates returned to their high school alma mater, Roselle Catholic, to speak to current students about career opportunities in their respective fields. Joe Renna, class of '78 spoke about the publishing industry, Frank Malta, class of '66, spoke of careers in education, and Urologist Jim Rotolo class of '76, lectured about the medical field.

Dear Joe,

On behalf of the Roselle Catholic family and the Sophomore and Junior classes, I want to sincerely thank you for your willingness to share your experience and generously giving up your time for Career Day held on March 13, 2013. This event would not be possible without, you our alumni, returning to the halls of RC.

Your contribution to the future success of the students of the Class of 2014 and Class of 2015 should not be underestimated. As a result of your presentation, students' horizons regarding their future possibilities have been broadened, their interests piqued and their questions answered. Although you will probably never know about the lives you changed, rest assured that many students' thinking was influenced and that will inevitably guide the future choices they make. Thank you for contributing to the education mission of Roselle Catholic in this way.

Please know that the administration, faculty and staff at Roselle Catholic clearly understand what an invaluable resource it is to have alumni concerned about the next generation of RC grads. our willingness to contribute to their education and career aspirations is greatly appreciated.

With Gratitude,
Robert Stickles,
Principal, Roselle catholic High School
Roselle, NJ

Joe,

Thank you so much for the wonderful article and pictures about my Mom, Carmela Lepore, celebrating her 103rd birthday.

As always, she and our family were very proud to be mentioned in *Around About Peterstown*, our home town newspaper.

Thanks, again.
Kathy Claxton
Morristown, NJ

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everybody has one - this is mine - by Joe Renna

Lost in all the hoopla surrounding Tina being served a subpoena to appear before a grand jury is the original topic of her blog titled “Generatorgate – An exciting opportunity to shine a light on our corrupted system of law and order”. The title was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

During the same time that Tina posted her article, the Star-Ledger reported about four similar situations around the state. Two Ewing police officers were disciplined, a Westwood School chief, and a Sussex County sheriff's officer resigned their positions. It appears that misuse of county property is not only allowed in Union County but the prosecutor will go after anyone who dares to report on it.

Ironically Romankow still maintains that Tina is lying and she has no names but that didn't stop him from harassing her through the court system. That is some fine investigating on his part. How could he possibly know anything unless he conducts an investigation? Then his own freeholders contradict him by admitting to knowing

Personally I don't understand the reaction from Romankow. Union County is one of only two counties that have both a sheriff and police department. Lots of law enforcement to conduct a thorough investigation. Unless, it was these departments where the brunt of the abuse occurred and a coverup was necessary. The prosecutor wouldn't want these names surfacing after he released a whitewashed report.

The most upsetting thing is that the county employees trust Tina more than they do Romankow. They opt to call her with tips of wrong doing because they fear repercussions from the county administration if they were to contact the Prosecutor. Last I checked Union County is located within America. Sometimes it is hard to tell. 🇺🇸

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Tina Renna qualifies

as a journalist more

than Ted Romankow

does as a prosecutor

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The best indication that Tina is effective in exposing corruption is the all-out assault mounted by the machine to shut her down. The biggest tribute is in the form of a website called www.watchdogsgonewild.com which states in small print at the very bottom: “Paid for by the Union County Democratic Committee.”

The website actually helps Tina's cause as does the campaign to post about her on anonymous message boards. Though the county's public information department has a million dollar budget, I don't think they know how the internet works. The residual effects of every post directed at Tina actually boosts her website's profile. No one ever accused the political hacks in the county of being smart.

I'm so proud of Tina and all she has accomplished. I am especially proud of how strong and brave she is in the face of a tyrannical political machine running Union County government. She comes back stronger after each attack. She is a true American patriot. I imagine she would have fought the revolution alongside our forefathers.

My advice to anyone who wants to state a fact or express an opinion is to sign your name to what you write if you want it to have any affect in support of your agenda. Roar like a Lion instead of purring like a pussy. 🐾



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Advertising starts at \$60 for a business card size ad, up to \$600 for a full page. Anyone interested in placing an ad can contact Tina Renna at (908) 709-0530.

Table with 2 columns: ADVERTISER and PAGE. Lists various local businesses and their corresponding page numbers in the index.

ADVERTISING IN THIS AND OTHER RENNA MEDIA NEWSPAPERS

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ST. ANTHONY'S CLASS OF '65 MEET TO GREET VISITING CLASSMATE

Graduation classes usually have reunions to commemorate a milestone anniversary, but this was never the case for St. Anthony's Class of 1965. It should be also noted that these are grammar school classmates. It is hard enough for some high school classmates to have a reunion let alone grade school classes. But this is not any grammar school. This is St. Anthony's rooted in the heart of the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, New Jersey. These meet-ups are an indication of how closely knit the community was and still is.

Although they graduated 48 years ago the classmates are in constant contact or at least can find each other when need be. The catalyst for impromptu get togethers is usually word that a classmate who has moved out of state will be returning to Jersey to visit. In this case it

was Vinny Malta who was coming up from Atlanta, Georgia to visit family.

When classmate Debbie Steele found out, she started making calls and sending emails. In no time it was confirmed that whoever was available would meet at Costa's Restaurant in Roselle Park for dinner on April 3, 2013. Fourteen classmates, along with two spouses, attended to continue conversations that are decades old.

Like most of the folks who hail from Peterstown, friendships are life-long, and for the most part generational, spanning back to grandparents and ahead to grandchildren. A casual dinner for fifteen because a friend is flying in to visit is no big deal and to each other, these classmates are more than friends, they are like family.



(above, standing l-r) Alphonso Ciliberto, Neil Zampella traveled from Pennsilvania, John Marcantonio, Lorraine Renna, Val Imbriaco, Patty Altobelli, Camille Minitelli, Rosemary Bruno, Rose Casano nee Pantina in back, Maria Disporto, Debbie Pantaleo, Pete Casano in back, Rusty Harris with wife Debbie Steele, and Jimmy Corr. (seated) Vinny Malta visiting from Atanta, Georgia.

Advertisement for Elizabeth Yellow Cab, featuring a taxi image and contact information. Text includes: '24 Hours 7 Days a Week', 'Door to Door Service', 'Local and Long distance', 'Transportation to Airports', 'Commercial Centers, Night Clubs, Casinos, Etc.', 'Clean Late Model Cars', and phone numbers (908) 354-4444 and (908) 354-0350.

Advertisement for DiBella Financial Group, listing services like tax preparation, mortgages, and annuities. Contact information includes phone number (908) 686-7370 and address 515 Springfield Road, Kenilworth, NJ 07033. It also states 'NO APPLICATION FEE!' on mortgage loans.

Large advertisement for Elizabeth Hearing Aid Center. It promotes a 'Community Seminar & Complimentary Luncheon' at Vinhus Restaurant & Lounge on Thursday, May 9th at 10:30 a.m. The ad features an image of a cruise ship and mentions a 'FREE Cruise!' giveaway. It includes contact information for the center and lists several professionals involved in the presentation.

THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH
SCHOOL CLASS OF '53'
HOLDS 60 YEAR REUNION

Every five years the Thomas Jefferson H.S. Class of 1953 holds a class reunion. Their latest was held on April 18, 2013, at the Central park banquet Hall in Roselle, NJ. Of the 247 graduates 39 attended the re-union commemorating 60 years since graduation.

Five came from out of state, Zoltan Olah travelled the furthest from Houston Texas. Gerry Grabcheski and Dick Kochanski are from Florida, Jack McCarthy is from Missouri and Perry DePinho hopped up from Delaware.



(above, standing, l-r) Joe Percario, Ed Prokopik, Don Schiessl, Dr. Bill Silverman, and Jack McCarthy.
(seated, l-r) Richard Cooper and Zoltan Olah.



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(above and right)
Photos of Carlo Corsentina
and Nicholas Netta from their
High School yearbook,
both of whom still live
in the Peterstown Section
of Elizabeth, NJ.



NICHOLAS NETTA
"Nick"
Ambition: Success
Hobby: Sports
Sophomore Basketball Champs '51;
German Club '51, '52.



(above, l-r) Joe Percario, Carl Corsentine share a big laugh with Ed Prokopik and Jack McCarthy



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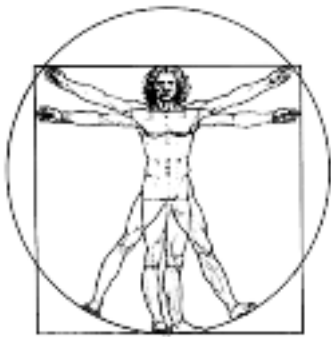
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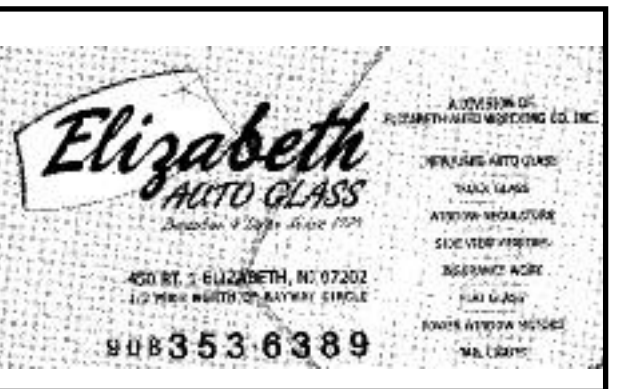
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On September 20, 2007 I lost my brother Cpl Luigi "Louie" Marcianite Jr while he was serving in Iraq. Not a day goes by that I don't think of him. I wanted to ensure that his sacrifice was never forgotten and I vowed that I would dedicate the rest of my life to serving the wounded veteran community. I was able to connect with the Achilles Freedom Team of Wounded Veterans soon after and witness how much this rehabilitation program has helped our nations heroes.

Team S.O.S. was developed to honor our fallen while supporting the wounded veteran community. Each year we come together as friends and families who have lost loves ones in service to our country. We are moms, dads, brothers, sisters, children, spouses, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. We are strong and we are resilient!

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING:

If you are interested in walking, running, wheeling or cheering for us from the sidelines on June 30th at the Hope & Possibility 5M contact me via email: etmarciant@gmail.com!

To learn more about Achilles please visit them at: www.achillesinternational.org. If you would like to learn more about my brother Louie visit his website at: www.louieslife.org.

As always this is a team effort and I could never do any of this without you. I thank you all for your love of the Achilles Freedom Team and your ongoing friendship and support. Please don't hesitate to email or call with any questions!

Lots of Love,
Enza Marcianite
Director, Community Relations
(908)451-7658
www.achillesinternational.org

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ON SUNDAY, JUNE 30TH IN CENTRAL PARK NYC!!

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Please visit <http://www.nyrr.org/races-and-events/2013/achilles-hope-possibility-5m> to register for the event. If you are interested in participating on Team S.O.S. please call and let me know.

We have set up an online donation site on Firstgiving which again if you would kindly share on FB or with friends and family it is always appreciated:

www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/enzamarciant/2013-hopeandpossibility

I thank you as always for your friendship and support. I hope you will consider joining the amazing Achilles athletes once again for a heartwarming and inspirational event! All proceeds will support the mission of the Achilles Freedom Team of Wounded Veterans.

Enza Marcianite
Director, Community Relations
(908)451-7658
www.achillesinternational.org

TRANSPORTATION:

The Villani Bus Company is generously donating their services for drop off/pick up the day of the Achilles Hope & Possibility 5M in Central Park on June 30. The Elizabeth Police Department will be providing us with breakfast the morning of the race and a police escort. If you are interested in taking the bus please let me know ASAP so I can reserve you a spot. They fill up quickly so if you know that you are definitely participating send me an email: etmarciant@gmail.com

SHIRTS:

If you are participating on Team S.O.S. I must know by May 5th so I can place our t-shirt order. Please send me name and shirt size.

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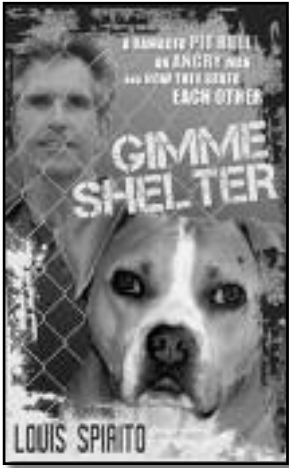
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(right)
Lou and Eugenie Spirito during a visit to the family restaurant back home in Elizabeth, NJ.



(left)
Book cover to Lou’s novel GIMME SHELTER (ISBN: 978-1482330687) is available in digital and paperback aversions from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and independent booksellers.

PLEASE NOTE:

In an effort to help dogs like Tanner, Mr. Spirito is proud to donate 10% of all profits from the sale of this book to animal rescue groups that support the health and preservation of strays and castaways, that find Forever Homes for their beloved four-legged clients.

Whenever possible, he plans to include rescue groups and animal adoptions in his book signings and author events. 🐾

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LOU SPIRITO PENS A NOVEL BOTH FUN AND POIGNANT

Lou Spirito describes his novel “Gimme Shelter” as a mash up of The Sopranos and Marley & Me. It is a story about a volatile, chronically ticked-off writer who struggles to help an abused, timid, big-hearted shelter dog. The book is light hearted but delivers a big message, addressing issues of rescue dogs and anger management.

Lou is unabashed and open about his personal life. His feelings and experiences are both interesting and compelling, things that readers crave for from writers. This is evident even in the following description of the book that is posted on amazon.com:

When the last of their aged 4-legged animal “kids” passes away, Lou Spirito and his wife go looking for a rescue dog. Although he insists that he’s open to any dog in need, Lou secretly longs for a dog like Rebel, the rollicking Irish Setter that shared his world when he was a struggling actor living the vida loca of sex, drugs, & disco in the wonderland of New York City.

He longs for a jaunty dog to transport him back to the carefree days before mortgages, life insurance and missed opportunities...so the last thing on his wish list is a frightened, muscle-bound, scarred, and carsick Pit Bull.

A LITTLE OF LOU’S BIO

Lou’s grandfather, Antonio Spirito, founded Spirito's Restaurant in Elizabeth, NJ in 1932. Lou’s dad, Louis, was one of Antonio’s three sons who took over after Antonio retired. Louis was the chef and customers could always see him pacing behind the stove, yelling at someone (or everyone) to get the food before it grew cold. Lou’s mother, Florence, was a waitress at Spirito's during WW II, when the men were in the service. Lou’s brother, Antonio (Tony), worked with their dad until his dad's death. Lou never worked at Spirito's, unless you count the times his dad would conscript him to work the register. Lou wrote a book, Gimme Shelter, which touches on some aspects of growing up in such a dynamic household.

Lou graduated from Saint Mary’s High School in 1969, where he played basketball. He attended Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, and then earned a graduate degree in English Literature from Fordham University. After grad school he moved to NYC to pursue an acting career. It's where he founded an off-off Broadway theatre company and started writing. In 1991, Lou left Manhattan and moved to Malibu, California.

In contrast to his fun-loving predecessor, Tanner is an emotional Geiger counter. He cowers at strange objects, flinches at loud noises, and vomits whenever he is stressed – which is most of the time. And why shouldn’t he? His immature new owner, Lou, is a raging bull!

Having honed anger to an art form over his lifetime, Lou constantly storms and curses at the slightest provocation--misplaced keys, computer glitches, even mayo on a turkey sandwich (don’t ask).

Unlike Marley and John Grogan, Lou’s is a case of “good” dog vs. “bad” owner. For this odd couple to flourish, one of them will have to change. And fast. Thankfully for the writer, the dog wins out. It isn't easy. It isn't always pretty. But it will touch your heart.

The book offers humorous and touching observations about the joys and pitfalls of dog ownership, along with a host of helpful information about selecting, training and caring for dogs. It will also appeal to anyone looking for a non-confrontational way to broach the subject of anger management to a hotheaded friend, mate or family member. And there’s a market for both. 🐾

Lou has two sisters, Honey, who's a Lieutenant in the Hudson County NJ Prosecutor's Office, and Mary, who is married and lives in Toms River. Honey still lives in Elizabeth, on South Street, in the family home, a two family house which she shares with their bother Tony and his family.

Lou presently lives in Malibu with his wife, Eugenie, the love of his life, and their rescue Pit Bull, Tanner.

In their down time, Lou and his wife travel to Italy where they were married and where they have dual U.S.-Italian citizenship.

Lou Spirito is a self-proclaimed lifelong dog lover and recovering 'angry guy'. Both aspects of his life are the basis of his novel Gimme Shelter. 🐾

WRITING CHOPS

Louis Spirito has written for magazines and newspapers including The New York Times, Good Housekeeping, Men’s Fitness, Black Belt and Bride’s Magazine (the last two in the same month). As a screenwriter, he’s sold material to Universal Studios, Alliance-Atlantis, Triumph Pictures and Daniel Blatt Productions. His work has been honored by WorldFest Houston, The Nuyorican Poets Café, Writer’s Digest, and the Nicholl Fellowship Competition. His first stage play, ‘All That He Could Be’, is currently being considered for production by the Fountain Theatre (LA). GIMME SHELTER is his first book of non-fiction.

When he's not scribbling, Lou is busy teaching Okinawan GoJu Ryu karate and working with juvenile offenders at one of the local Los Angeles County Probation Camps. 🐾

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A GLIMPSE OF GROWING UP IN THE BURG

As a kid, Lou Spirito thought it was comical when his father and uncles would argue. To him it was a live version of watching the Three Stooges. He thought the behavior was normal and every home and business operated that way. He shares some stories of that upbringing with his reader in a chapter called Going Home.

In his book Gimme Shelter, Lou doesn't make light of the volatility of the situation, but uses the stories of how that environment shaped him. From the outside it may have seemed out of control but to Lou it was more like a controlled chaos where the end justified the means and ranting and raving was the official language of diplomacy.

He clearly sees the contrast between himself now and his younger days. As a martial arts instructor his understanding and practice of emotional, mental and physical control is a complete 180° difference than how he was taught. His old instincts surface once in a while, sometimes without him even realizing it.

What balanced the craziness is the feeling of love that the brothers must have had for each other. They were three extreme personalities working a family business with all the trust and cooperation that is inherent in running a business. The responsibilities were divided between the kitchen, bar and dining room, but the personalities would converge when it came to common issues like bookkeeping, especially bookkeeping.

The restaurant, still owned by some members of the Spirito family, is located on the corner of Third Avenue and High Street in the Peterstown section of Elizabeth, NJ. It has not changed in form or function, though the atmosphere is much more subdued than it was forty years ago.

Anyone who frequented Spirito's Restaurant when the brothers were running things would have their memories tickled. Younger readers will have to be assured that the stories portrayed in the book actually happened, no need to suspend disbelief.

Not for Nothing But...

in Lou Spitito's home,
ranting and raving
was the official
language of diplomacy



(above) Original Spirito's Restaurant, Broad Street Elizabeth.

(right, l-r) Lou Sr. and Florence Spirito
with Mary and Joe LaBracio.



(above) Louis Spirito (2nd from left) with friends in Peterstown.



(above) Gemma and Antonio Spirito with children
(l to r) Frank, Tess, Lou, Mike and Sal.



(above, l-r) Honey Spirito, Eugenie and Louis Spirito,
with Sally Pantina under the iconic sign above the
awning of Spirito's Restaurant.



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(above, l-r) Joe and Barbara Melillo



(above) Joe and Barbara Melillo on their wedding day February 24, 1951.

Joe and Barbara Melillo met at Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Oklahoma, at a USO function, in December, 1949. He left her hometown of Enid, in January of 1951, returning home to New Jersey. He said he would call her. On February 2nd he called and asked her to come to New Jersey and marry him. On February 24th they were married at St Francis Church, in Newark New Jersey. Sixteen days later, he left for Anchorage Alaska, where he was stationed for the next 13 months. 🍷

COOKING THE MELILLO WAY

Excerpt from cookbook written by Michele Melillo

I always wanted to open an Italian deli, and work side by side with my dad. We talked about it, I tried being persuasive, I begged, but dad always said “it’s entirely too much work”. That was always the line he would give me. Unfortunately, dad passed away in 1998, and the dreams of a daughter/dad deli diminished. Oh, I never put it out of my mind, but how could my heart be in it without my dad. On the way home from work in February of 2001, while passing the old Heitzman’s Bakery on Brownsboro Road, in Louisville, KY I noticed a man in the window, hanging a “for lease” sign. I slowed down, circled the block, and pulled into the parking lot. I walked in, and can remember being very nervous about what I was doing. I could see so much potential beyond the brown bakery walls and linoleum floor, and I knew it would take a small army to renovate it to be what I wanted it to

be. Fortunately, I had that small army in my family and friends. I told Mr. Seay that I wanted to rent the building and put in an Italian deli. “What experience do you have in the restaurant business”? he asked me. “Not a bit”, I replied, and he looked at me like I was from another planet. “What makes you think you can do this”? My answer was simply “because I’m a damn good cook, and it’s my dream”. We talked for an hour and a half, and two days later, the lease was signed. Melillo’s Italian Deli opened on May 29, 2001. Four years later, we relocated to East Market Street in what is now the NuLu district of the city. On New Year’s Eve, 2008, we closed our doors. Dreams do come true, and I met some wonderful people through my years in the restaurant business. I wouldn’t have changed any of it; my only wish would be that I had started at a younger age, with my dad. 🍷

FAMILY IS CREDITED

Michele shares antidotes about her family and couples them with recipes that were inspired by different relatives. She dedicated her book to her parents, who taught her the importance of family, the value of her beliefs, the magnitude of her faith, and the significance of her dreams, while loving unconditionally, through it all. 🍷



(above) Michele sits between daughters (l-r) Ashley Chesman and Jennifer Marshall.



(above, l-r) Ashley, Frankie Vallie and Michele. When Frankie Vallie and the Four Seasons came to town, we kept the restaurant open late for his band and guests. We served 12 people family style, drank over a case of wine, and enjoyed their company. Frankie and my dad grew up together in Newark and used to hang out under the street lights and sing together.

MICHELE’S PETERSTOWN COUSINS



(above) The Melillo family got together in 2012 to celebrate Michele’s Uncle Lou’s 80th Birthday.



(r-l) Michele and Gina.



(left) Michele’s Peterstown cousins, Uncle Lou’s children.

(l-r) Lou and Billy.



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Recipes

Submitted by Michele Melillo, author of *Cooking the Melillo Way*

STUFFED CUBANELLE PEPPERS

INGREDIENTS:

- Ingredients:
- 2 cups water
 - 1 cup Arborio rice
 - 5 tablespoons olive oil
 - 1 pound bulk Italian sausage
 - 1 cups marinara, on page
 - 2 cups shredded mozzarella
 - 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - 5 cubanelle peppers, halved lengthwise and seeded
 - 8 tablespoons Romano cheese, grated

PREPARATION:

- 1. In a small pot, combine water, rice and granulated garlic
 - 2. Bring to boil, stir, and reduce heat to medium low
 - 3. Cover and simmer until rice has absorbed all water, about 20-25 minutes
 - 4. Wash peppers, and dry with a paper towel
 - 5. Pour olive oil into heavy skillet, turn heat to medium high, and cook sausage until browned and no longer pink
 - 6 Drain excess fat and stir in marinara, salt and pepper, and 4 tablespoons Romano cheese
 - 7. Bring to simmer and keep warm
 - 8. Add cooked rice to meat mixture and combine thoroughly
 - 9. Lay peppers in 9x13 baking dish
 - 10 Stuff each full, rounding the tops
 - 11. Top each with marinara and Romano cheese
 - 12. Bake for 40-45 minutes until hot and bubbly with oven temperature at 350°
 - 13. Top with mozzarella cheese and broil until browned
- Serve these with a loaf of crusty bread, and a salad. You're sure to please the palate and the crowd!

SAUSAGE AND DRIED CHERRY STUFFING

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 cups stuffing mix, dried, cubed
- 1 pound bulk Italian sausage
- 1 stick butter
- 2 onions, chopped
- 4 ribs celery, chopped
- 1 ½ cups chicken broth
- 1 cup dried cherries
- ½ teaspoon granulated garlic
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

PREPARATION:

- 1. Put stuffing mix in large bowl
- 2. Sauté sausage in skillet until thoroughly cooked
- 3. Drain and add to stuffing mix
- 4. In same skillet, add butter, onion and celery
- 5. Sauté until softened, add to stuffing bowl, add cherries
- 6. Toss until all ingredients are mixed well
- 7. Add chicken broth to moisten bread mixture. You do not want it soaking wet
- 8. Roll dressing into desired size balls; I roll mine the size of a baseball
- 9. Place on sprayed cookie sheet 2 inches apart
- 10. Cover with foil and bake for 25-30 minutes with oven temperature at 350°
- 11. Uncover and bake until browned, about another 10 minutes



(left) Melillo's Italian Deli which opened in 2001 and was located on Brownsboro Road in Louisville, KY before moving to the East Market Street area, where Michele opened Melillo's Italian Restaurant. The recipes in her book, "Cooking the Melillo Way", are many that were served during her nine years in the restaurant business. Michele's advice is to "Have fun preparing them! Put on some Italian music, pour yourself a glass of wine, and relax ... cooking is not a task ... it's a joy!"



(above) Sausage and Dried Cherry Stuffing which Michelle rolls into balls.



(above) Michele and University of Louisville Basketball Coach Rick Pitino Melillo's Italian Deli. Michele delivered many meals to Pitino's home.

I started rolling my dressing into balls a few years back because my family likes the crunchy topping of the dressing that was baked in a casserole. Rolling them into balls, allows them to bake crispy so everyone is happy. They have been a hit ever since. It's the one dish that I'm always asked to prepare for Thanksgiving dinner. I got the idea of adding dried cherries from Coach Petino. Melillo's prepared his Thanksgiving dinner in 2003, and when he placed his order, he requested them in his dressing. I've used them ever since. They make the dressing moist, and add just enough sweetness to surprise your taste buds. 🍷

MICHELE PUTS HER HEART IN EVERY PINCH OF SALT

Growing up the only girl with three brothers, I learned at an early age how to do things that would be invaluable to me as an adult. Oh, I didn't think so at the time, but I seemed to be the one who had to help with all of the things that moms or maids did; help with the dinner prep, set the table, clean off the table, dry the dishes, sweep the floor, all while taking up one or two hours of my very important young life.

I never dreamed those things would have an effect on the person I am today, and I think all of it might have been the very finest gift mom and dad ever gave me. I learned technique, those basic cooking terms and skills that I will never ever change, no matter what the TV chefs say. I learned to put my heart into every pinch of salt, and my soul into every skillet or pan I put a fire under. I learned to not be afraid to be inspired, to take a chance with a different ingredient, and to be creatively original. I watched my grandmothers, aunts, parents, and anyone else who didn't mind that I sat in their kitchen, out of the way, taking notes, while learning their secrets and shortcuts. Simply, I learned how to cook the Melillo way!

When I closed the restaurant, I never imagined that customers would come up to me five years later, telling me how much they missed my food, and the fun times we had there. Many of you have asked for my recipes and I have included many of those from the Melillo menu in this book. I hope you enjoy re-creating the memories you loved about coming into the restaurant, as much as I enjoyed putting it all together for you. 🍷



(above) Michele's book is available to purchase on line at www.lulu.com.

Search for Michele Mellilo Cooking the Mellilo Way.

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(below) The cover and pages from the May 2013 issue of Inside New Jersey in which Kristina (Spirito) Veit was one of winners of the publications Hottest Beach Body contest.



(above) Kristina is on the right on both pages.

TRIATHLONS KEEP KRESTINA IN BEACH SHAPE

Kristina Spirito has been training for triathlons for the past five years thanks to her aunt Joanne who is married to her Uncle Steve Caruso, her mother's brother. In August of 2012 Kristina completed an Iron Man race in Louisville Kentucky which was the culmination of a lot of training.

The race consisted of a 2.4 mile swim, a one hundred and twelve mile bike ride, and 26.2 mile run afterwards. She has 17 hours to complete it and she finished in 16 hours and 15 minutes.

It was an amazing accomplishment and the experience really helps her in her day to day life. She says, "Whenever I think I'm having a bad day, I think about my race and know that it can't be that bad. And I know I can get through it since I went through such a difficult physical endeavor."

Kristina also completed the New Jersey Marathon and the Philadelphia Marathon in 2012. It is no wonder that she was selected as one of the Hottest Beach Bodies winners by Inside Jersey magazine.



(above) Kristina, in center, with her mom, Katherine (nee Caruso) on the left and her sister Margaret Chapman on the right at the wedding to Bill Veit on Decemebr 15, 2013



(above) Kristina dances with her dad, Tony, at her wedding.



(above) Kristina's Uncle Louis Spirito with wife Eugenie, Kristina and husband Billy Veit, and Aunt Honey Spirito.

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(above) 24 week Little Miracle Carmine Vella

JOIN THE MARCH FOR BABIES FAMILY TEAM TO BENEFIT MARCH OF DIMES

Submitted by Kim Vella

For the 5th year in a row our family is forming a March for Babies Family Team to help the March of Dimes work towards the day when all babies are born healthy. We had huge success so far raising over \$10,000 total for them March for Babies. That for the past 4 years we received an award for being a Top Walker for Union County. And it's all because we had your support. We appreciate anything you can do to help us help other babies like Carmine have a surviving chance.

We formed our team in honor of our son Carmine who was born at 24 weeks gestation (16 weeks early), after my water broke at 23 weeks 5 days. I will never forget the minutes before he was born the doctors came in to tell us what to expect. They told us that premature birth is the leading cause of death for newborns. And babies who do survive face the risk of serious lifelong health problems including learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, blindness, hearing loss, and other chronic conditions including asthma. After hearing that, all we could do was pray that our little boy would be okay.

After a great deal of prayer Carmine turned into a miracle.

He was born weighing 1 pound 8 ounces, and was 12 inches long. He stayed in the NICU for 101 long days. Each day was not easy. We had our ups and downs but Carmine stayed strong through it all. He was a little fighter. Here is a quick recap of his stay: When he was born his eyes were still fused and his skin was transparent. He was on the ventilator for 28 days and then graduated to CPAP for another 27 days. He had 10 blood transfusions and needed assistance maintaining his own body temperature for 57 days. It wasn't until he was 28 days old that I could finally hold him for the first time.

As we found out – it can happen to anyone, anytime, often without warning. It's a traumatic experience that no baby and no family should ever have to experience.

By sharing our story, we hope to remind everyone of the urgency of the mission of the March of Dimes and inspire our friends and family to join our team.

Ours is not the only story of frightening, touch-and-go days in neonatal intensive care with Carmine. Premature birth touches half a million babies and their families every year. Babies born too soon are more likely to die or have disabilities. Birth defects pose another serious threat – taking the lives of many babies and cause lifelong disabilities for thousands more. So it's important for us to help the March of Dimes help moms have full-term pregnancies and healthy babies.


We are doing just that by participating in March for Babies as a Family Team on April 28th in New Brunswick for a 4.5 mile walk. No one is working harder than the March of Dimes to understand the causes of prematurity and birth defects. March for Babies offers hope by raising funds for lifesaving research, education and innovative programs that offer hope for preventions and solutions for babies born too soon or with birth defects.

Won't you join our Family Team at this wonderful event? Call me for further details at 908.403.8693 (Kim's cell)

If you can't join us, please consider sponsoring our team with your donation. Just log on to my personal webpage <http://www.marchforbabies.org/Carmine24>. Our team name is Carmine24.

Every dollar makes a difference!

Very truly yours,

Kim, Pat, Carmine and Dante Vella 



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**NEWS FROM UNICO
HOLDS ITALIAN CINEMA
MATINEE AND WELCOMES
TWO NEW MEMBERS**

By Salvatore Coppa

On March 3, 2013 the cafeteria at Our Lady of Guadalupe was transformed into a movie theater as members of the Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO gathered for an afternoon at the “Italian Cinema Matinee.” With the aroma of freshly popped pop corn filling the air and the cafeteria darkened, the ambiance was set as the audience enjoyed the misadventures of the lovable Johnny Stecchino. And as with any Italian gathering food was on hand...this time in the form of pizza from Santillo’s.

The Elizabeth Chapter would like to thank event coordinator and Chapter Secretary, Andrew Marcantonio for planning and executing the show. We would also like thank Domenico Caruso of Caruso’s Cotton Candy for donating the pop corn and his time preparing the tasty snack which was a big hit. Truly a fun afternoon was had by all.

The Elizabeth Chapter of UNICO would also like to welcome our two newest members; Paul Addessa and Carmine Giannetta both of Elizabeth were sworn into the chapter in January. We look forward to working with Paul and Carmine in UNICO’s continued commitment to helping the community. 🍷

**ROTARY CLUB HANDS
OUT DICTIONARIES**

The Elizabeth Rotary club is giving 2,136 dictionaries to every 3rd grader in Elizabeth and Hillside. This is the sixth Dictionary Project the club has conducted and they are well received by students, teachers and school administrators. 📖

(right, r-l) Ken Richuso of the Rotary Club of Elizabeth accepts a Thank You card from Christopher Columbus School #15 class 3-106.

(below) Students from Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy celebrate receipt of their dictionaries.





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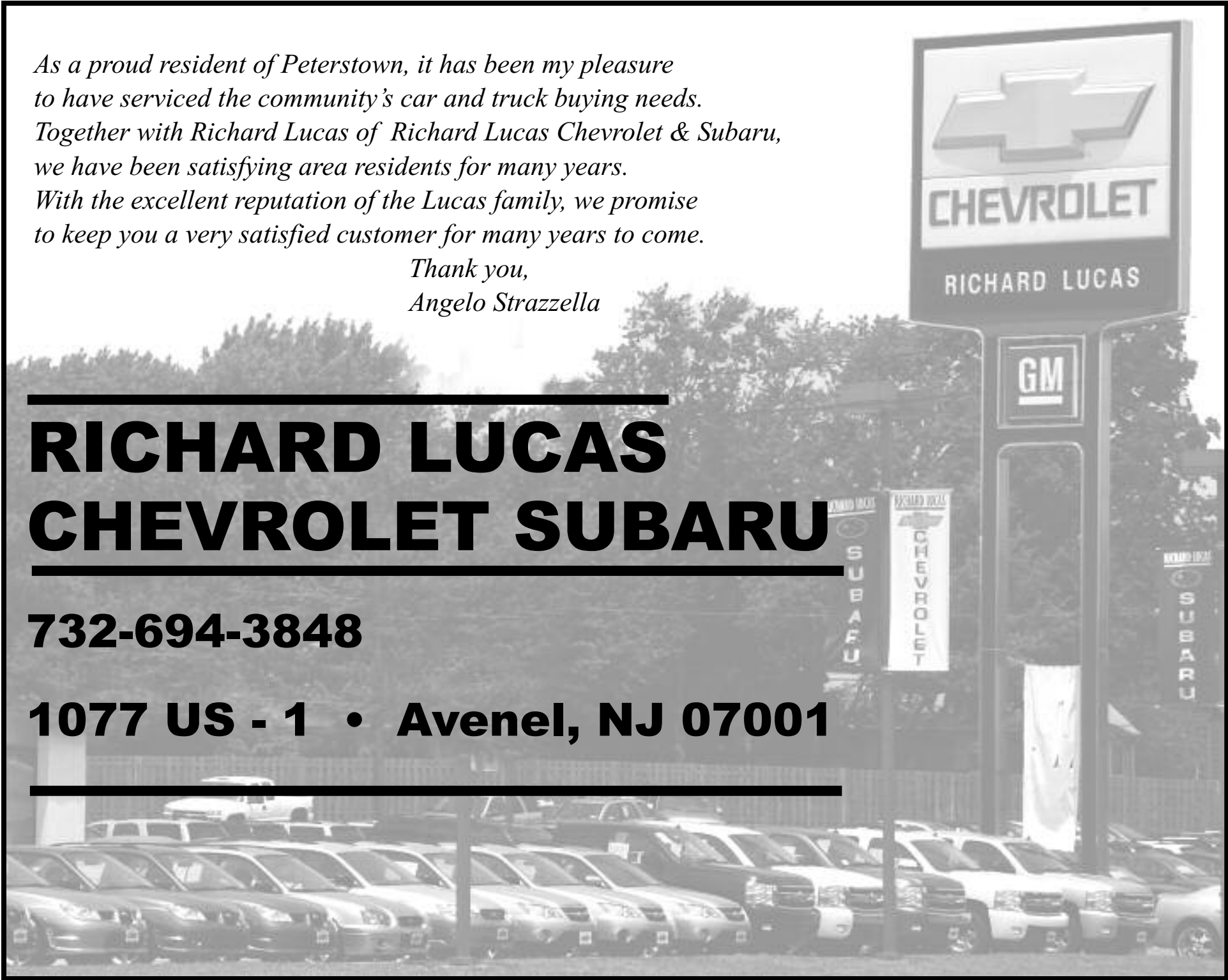
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