

Black

Life of Mary Martino

On April 25, 1903, Michelina (Alove) Nero and Angelo Nero were blessed with the arrival of their second child, a girl. The happy family, including Grandpa Guiseppi and Grandma Filomena Alove, lived at that time in a double house on Main Street, and which has since been moved to Depot Street. In its place now stands the St. Tobias Annex which, when built, was the original Martino's Market, referred to as "the little store" by family members.

The little girl born on this day 80 years ago was christened Mary Jean by her godparents, Mr. and Mrs. Nick Jindy, at St. Tobias, by Father Bernard Lynch.

Mary's early years were spent at this home. The school she attended for eight years was on the corner of Main Street and Seventh Avenue. The two buildings that stood on that site were moved in the 1920's to make way for a new school, and the original buildings became the Bedner apartments.

When she was twelve, her father built a new home on Corbett Street. Her mother did not like living so far from Main Street and insisted on moving off "the farm." After only a couple years, her father sold the house to Basil DeNardo and bought the house on Main Street next door to the double house they had originally lived in. Both these houses are occupied today; the one on Corbett Street by Tom Bugey and his family, and the one on Main Street by Vic DeSantis and his family.

Mary's parents were very strict with her. Going to school and church, and occasionally to a neighborhood grocery, were the only opportunities she had to leave the house. She was not permitted to go to any school activities or to go on sleigh rides or to participate in any games the other neighborhood kids were playing.

At an early age her mother taught her to do drawn work and to crochet. A neighbor, Grandma Moore, taught her and a friend, Maggie Alove, to do tatting. They both practiced diligently to learn not to make knots, but when her friend Maggie mastered the art first, she worked all the harder and longer to learn too. She would

work at her tatting while sitting behind the kitchen stove, and if any of you have ever seen her fingers fly while working with a shuttle, you would understand why a friend of the family who didn't know what she was doing, saw her sitting in a corner and thought she was retarded.

It was during WWI when Joe Martino was serving his country in France that his sister, Mrs. Concettina DeSantis, thought it was about time he thought about getting married on his return. In a letter to him while overseas, her daughters enclosed a snapshot of a beautiful young woman, Mary Nero.

When he returned, he lived in Indiana and worked at the Indiana Macaroni Company for his brother Carlo. The letters that were sent to Mary in Brockway from him were actually written by his cousin Tom Muscatell and sent to the DeSantis family and delivered from there by a friend, Pat Ross.

Mary saw Joe only three times before their wedding. The most memorable one was the time he came with other family members, including his sister Belle and her husband, Gasper Tronzo, Carlo, and Tony DeSantis, to ask her parents if he could marry her. Her father said, "Don't ask me; ask her." She didn't answer; she ran upstairs.

Letters with plans of elopement came from Indiana by way of the grapevine. Christine and Josephine DeSantis aided in the plan. When Mary was to go to the post office on a particular day to send a money order for the house payment for her parents, Joe would arrive in Brockway, and they would elope to Cumberland, Maryland. The laws in Maryland then were not as strict as in Pennsylvania, and eloping across the border was common. The plan worked! As nervous as she was, however, she managed to send the money order and to give the receipt to one of the DeSantis sisters who worked at a nearby drugstore.

Joe arrived from Indiana in the company car, a Ford Runabout, on September 26, 1919, and pulled up in front of the hotel where the usual group of men were standing and exchanging the news of the day. Mary was seen getting into the car, and the news

spread quickly to her parents. She was without luggage, as she didn't dare leave the house carrying a bag to arouse suspicion. Her father's comment on hearing the news was, "Good, now I won't have to buy her any more shoes." Her mother, on the other hand, cried. She didn't particularly like Joe Martino.

The Ford Runabout got as far as Johnstown when it broke down, and it couldn't be fixed immediately so that they had to go to a nearby hotel for the night. The groom-to-be requested two rooms, and the bride-to-be was so nervous she sat up all night. In the morning they took the train to Cumberland, got married, and returned to Johnstown. Back to the same hotel. The next day the car was fixed, and they were on their way to Indiana.

Transportation and communication in 1919 weren't what they are today. They were better! At 9:00 the following Monday morning, Fr. Smelko, of St. Tobias, was knocking on her door. Her heart pounded. He had come by train to impress upon them the importance of being married in the church and requested they come to Brockway in a couple weeks, as soon as the banns could be announced, to have their marriage blessed. Shortly thereafter, they were married in the church with Elsie DeNardo and Tony Nero as witnesses. All was forgiven at home, and her parents threw a big party, including a band.

Living in the same household in Indiana, along with the newlyweds, were Carlo Martino, his two small daughters, Emma and Josephine, Grandpa Martino, John Muscatell, Fred Ingaldi, and Joe's sister Mary who had been keeping house for them. After helping the new bride of sixteen get adjusted to the never-ending parade of people for meals and ^{to} take care of the house, she left three weeks later to help Aunt Belle for a month. Never having done much cooking or baking at home, Mary was now on her own, and at one time she was so rattled she put a whole box of salt into the bread dough she was mixing.

The lived together for about seven months when the newlyweds moved into a new home across the street. It wasn't long after that that Carlo sold his share of the macaroni factory to his partner and brother-in-law John Rezzola. All the Martinos

were out of jobs and moved in with them. Carlo bought a pool room in Indiana, and while he was gone on a visit to Italy, Joe and Fred ran it. However, upon his return, he sold it, and they did only odd jobs until moving back to Brockway in 1922.

Back in Brockway, Mary and Joe moved in with her parents. Her brother Tony got married, and he and his wife Ella also lived at home. Grandpa Martino and John Muscatell went to live at Carlo's home. Carlo started the macaroni factory in Brockway, and they all had jobs again. For those of us who don't remember the macaroni factory, it was destroyed by fire in 1942.

It was during the Prohibition Era in the 1920's when Carlo became acquainted with a family from Salamanca, New York, that used SPECIAL bottles Brockway Glass produced. It was Joe's job to transport them to Salamanca as a favor. Once when the family was visiting in Brockway, their young daughter met Mary and decided she wanted her to be her sponsor for Confirmation. She wanted to refuse, but thought it better not to, and spent many a restless hour thinking about the upcoming event. The day arrived, and the young girl was Confirmed. Then back to the house for dinner, celebrating, and picture taking. All the quote "family" quote was there, and needless to say, our guest of honor was ill at ease especially to having her picture taken with members of the family, and she posed quite reluctantly.

They moved from her parent's home into the small side of the Hugh Youngdahl house on Main Street, and this is where they were living when their baby Bobby was born. A few years later they moved to the larger side of the same house, and this is where their second son was born--a cute little curly haired boy Donny. In the meantime Joh Muscatell and Grandpa Martino had moved in with them again. During the succeeding years, John got married and went to housekeeping, and Grandpa Martino passed away, and the family was without guests for a short time.

In 1936 they bought the brick house which has been home to our guest of honor ever since. Mary's Father having passed away, her Mother moved in with them in 1944 and remained with them until her death in 1949.

Mary was always cooking, baking, cleaning, or doing fanciwork, but never too busy to get involved in community activities. She joined the American Legion Auxiliary many years ago and helped to prepare and serve many an Armistice Day dinner. She also served as President. She also helped the Rosary Society and the Italian Lodge with their benefits of card parties and spaghetti dinners. She has been an active member of the Woman's Club since before Don was born, and when the family started the market, she became a part of its operation and joined the Business and Professional Woman's Club.

The boys grew up. Bob joined the Marines (against his mother's wishes) and then completed his education at Penn State. Don finished high school and worked at the Clay Plant until the idea of a small grocery store became a reality early in 1950. Both boys married, and the family grew over the years to include eight grandchildren.

A major event in her life took place in 1975 when she took her one and only airplane trip. She had often wished that she could visit Greg and Vicki and her first great-grandchild Anmari in Colorado, and the opportunity presented itself when Greg was to take a short business trip, and Vicki would be home alone with Anmari. Arrangements were made for her trip, and she spent a lot of wakeful hours worrying about it. Her No. 1 worry was what to do if she became ill while she was so far from home. Everybody assured her that they had excellent medical facilities in Colorado. She appreciated the attention the airline stewardesses gave her and the complimentary drinks they offered. She accepted the small unopened bottles of liquor and brought them back to her grandchildren. Her stay in Colorado lasted ten enjoyable days.

"Nanni Mary" as she is called by her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, seldom complains about how she feels, yet she has undergone numerous operations and setbacks; her most recent one a little over three years ago when she was discharged from the DuBois Hospital and admitted to the extended care facility in St. Marys. She showed us what she was made of a few months later when she insisted she was well enough to come home, and discharged herself--and come home she did!

Not only does she have eight grandchildren, she has four great-grandchildren. You don't have to ask her if she adores her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, just stop in anytime and see her collection of snapshots and pictures. She is ready for company any time.

Her hands are never idle; she continues to make afghans and quilts and receives much pleasure giving them away. Recently she picked up an unfinished piece of tatting from fifty years ago and completed it. Her eyesight may be failing, but she still manages to cook, crochet, and do many kind favors for her family and friends. She is one great independent woman that we all love.