

Sunday, September 23rd

I woke up bright and early Sunday, excited with the thoughts of what this day had in store for me. My two buddies were also up bright and early this day because they had to catch their flight back to Africa. We parted company wishing each other good luck. I hailed a cab to the airport.

Sitting in the terminal I began to wonder about my father. During his lifetime in America, he had hoped to return to Sicily, to his family. I thought that instead of me making this long trip, it should have been my father's long trip home. My thoughts were interrupted by the calling of my flight over the loud speakers. I rushed out to the gate and there sat the plane that was going to take me to Sicily, to fulfill my father's dream. The airplane was an American DC-3 with a few Italian modifications. The gate opened and we were allowed to board. Then the doors were closed and locked. The engines started around 8am and within minutes we were at the end of the runway, poised for takeoff. After we were airborne, we circled Rome and picked up a southern heading. It wasn't long before we were asked to fasten our safety belts, which is about the time we were over Naples. There is a very large seaport in Naples, ships lined the coast and they extended outward towards the open sea. The city of Naples looked like any large American city from the air. In the distance stood the great volcano Mount Vesuvius with its peak above the clouds. It only took us about one hour to land in Naples. Our stopover in Naples was about twenty minutes, just long enough to board more passengers and let a few off.

Airborne again with Palermo Sicily as our next stop, we were heading out over the Mediterranean Sea. The weather was cloudy with a possibility of rough turbulence over Sicily. I began to keep a vigil for the island. At long last I sighted it, the island where my father and mother were born. It's hard to believe looking down at an island so far from the mainland of Italy, that my parents were born and raised there. Sicily was as mountainous as my father had described. There was a great deal of turbulence and we were rocking, rolling and dipping fiercely, and so was my stomach. The pilot brought the plane down through the turbulence and the weather was finally calm, for which I was very thankful. The pilot made a very smooth landing and we taxied to the Palermo air terminal. I had about twenty minutes for a layover, one which I enjoyed very much. I was able to talk with many people and they wanted to know what type of uniform I was wearing, what America is like and if all Americans are rich. I answered their questions very carefully, trying not to make a bad impression. Whatever answer I provided, would be repeated

many times over.

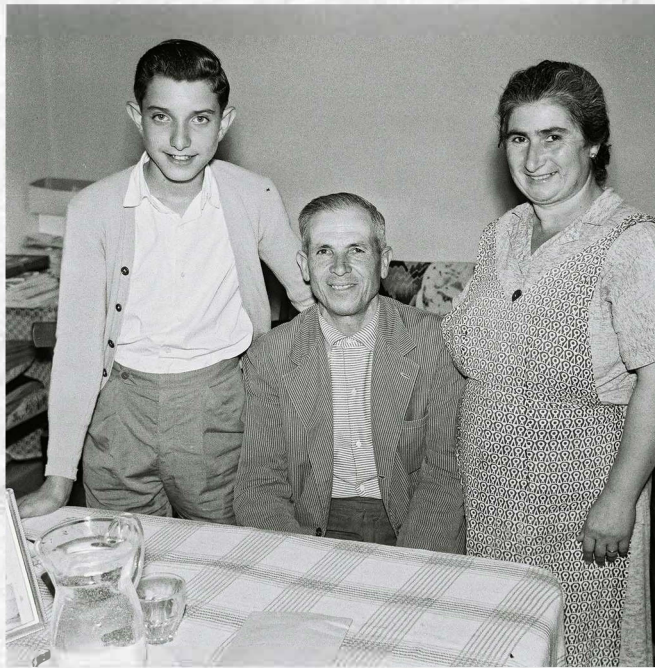
When all the passengers for Trapani had boarded, we taxied to the runway. This was the final leg of flights to my parents birth place. Down the runway we roared, the plane lifted with great pride, and I was on my way. The mountains were all around us, we had to fly between them to Trapani. We made our landing but it was not easy. The runway was made of wire mesh. In WWII it was called Chinisia (or Kinisia) airport. In the post-war period the airport was used to replace the Trapani-Milo airport (from 1949) and for civilian purposes from 1955 until 1961, when the activities were moved to the Trapani-Birgi airport. The terminal was a small framed building. I walked into the terminal and a gentleman carried my luggage to a small taxi. He knew at site that I was an American but could also tell that my parents were from Sicily. He complemented me on my fine Sicilian dialect.

I told the taxi driver that I wanted to be taken to Marsala, which was only about a thirty minute drive. I handed him the return address that my grandmother had torn from an envelope she had received from her nephew Andrew Figlioli and gave to me two years ago. In town, he stopped in front of a large building, went up a flight of stairs and knocked on the door. A woman answered, Andrew's wife Caterina De Vita. I could hear him asking the woman her name. He then told her that I was a relative from America. I was greeted with open arms, hugs and kisses. I asked them if they knew my father's brothers and sisters and where they lived. To my surprise, they didn't know. Andrew, who was a duty officer and nephew of my grandmother Angela Marino Lombardo, did assure me that the next morning he would check the courthouse records and locate the names and addresses. Andrews parents were Maria Venera Marino (sister to Angela Marino Lombardo) and Melchiorre Figlioli.

That Sunday night they fed me very well. There was over a pound of spaghetti cooked just for me. Of course I didn't eat all of it, I couldn't, but I tried. They believe in eating well. After supper, my cousins took me to see a movie - "Ali Ba Ba" in Italian. I didn't understand all of it but it was fun. I guess I slept like a baby that night.



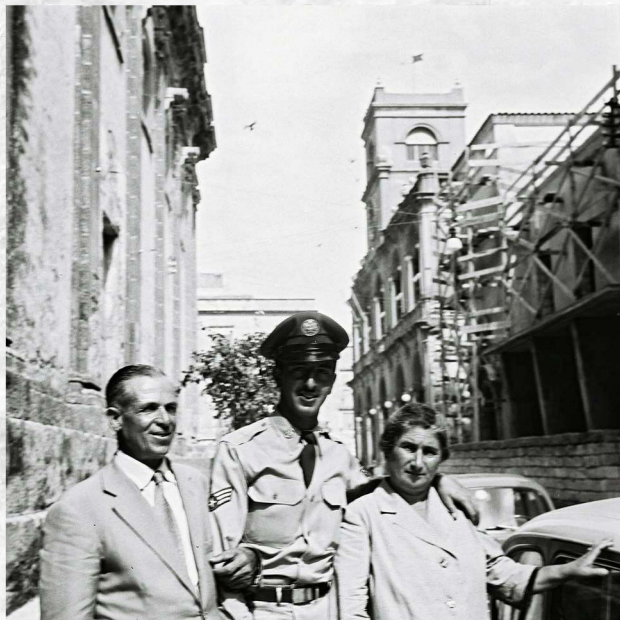
Postcard dated October 1956 Linee Aeree Italian Airlines Douglas DC3.



Andrew Figlioli (center) nephew to Angelina Marino Lombardo, his son Salvatore on left and wife Caterina De Vita Figlioli in their apartment at Via S. Giovanni Bosco 10, Marsala

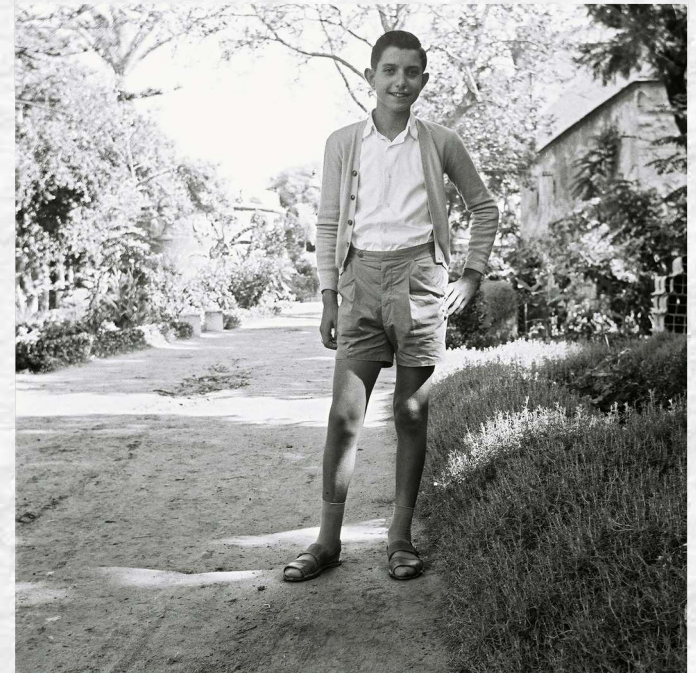


Andrew Figlioli, Salvatore, and Caterina De Vita



Andrew, Peter and Caterina.

NOTE: Salvatore took Pete on a tour of Marsala, including this park.





A park in Marsala



WWII Memorial in Marsala



Looking out to the Mediterranean from Marsala



Looking out to the Mediterranean from Marsala



Chiesa di San Matteo in Marsala - neighborhood church where Angelina Marino and Giovanni Lombardo were born



Peter Pulizzi is standing center, Andrew Figlioli standing right and his wife Caterina De Vita on left. Their son Salvatore sitting in middle.



This photo was in the home of our cousin Giusi Piccione in Sicily. She said that the entire family has never forgotten Peter's visit.

Figlioli dance hall and home on the right of image and the church Peter talks about is across the street and down just a bit.



Via S Giovanni Basco #10 center of photo where Adrew Figlioli and family lived. Ground level would have been the dance hall and their apartment was above. Pete tells the story that Andrew brought him to the lower level or perhaps basement where they had a bathroom but in order to flush, you had to put a bucket of water in the toilet.

