

Monday, September 24th

That very next morning, Monday, my cousin took me to the courthouse. I provided them with all the information I had on my grandparents Pietro and Vitina Patti Pulizzi, my father and his family and they found the records. In those records were the date and year my father left Sicily and we were given the addresses of two of my uncles. We were sure to be able to find the rest of the family from my two uncles. The rest of that morning, my cousin (first name not known) Marino (Andrew's son), walked me around Marsala. I sure was getting tired of walking.

Later, back at my cousins home, he returned from lunch and told me he had a friend with a motor scooter and volunteered to take us out to the country and search for my relatives. We ate real quick and with all three of us on the one scooter, we took off for the country. We rode for quite a while when they decided to ask for directions, I believe the town was called Strasatti. The place we stopped was a small store, and it was really the only thing around, the rest was open fields. The lady inside did not know my uncles by name but did recognize a picture that I had of one of my uncles. The lady referred to the Pulizzi' as "Long Necks". When she learned who I was, she hugged and kissed me. The lady had known my mother (Rosaria "Sarah" Lombardo) as a little girl because they had attended school together in that very same building we were now in. She told us we had a bit to go on the same street and then needed to make a right to head towards Petrosino. This store was about a half mile or so from where we needed to turn.

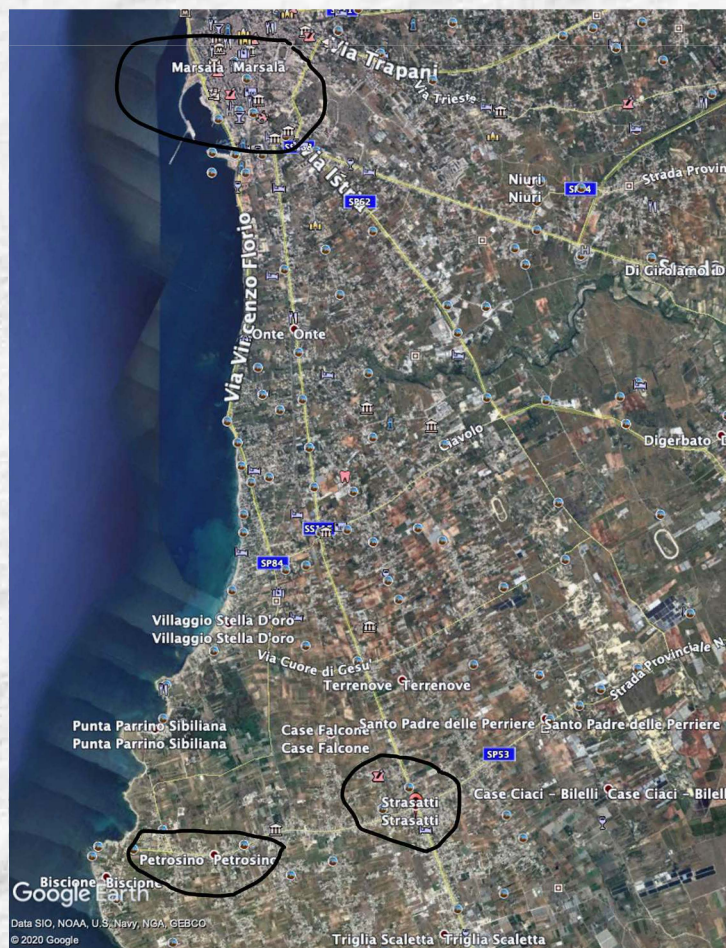
With this new information, we were able to locate the home of my Uncle Paul (Paolo Pulizzi), one of my dad's brothers. When we pulled up to the house, my cousin told my Aunt Maria to kiss me first, and after she did, he told her who I was, the son of Bernardo Pulizzi. What joy was expressed! Never in my life had I experienced people so emotional. My uncle wasn't home at the time but my aunt said that she would run into the fields and call for him. She told us to stop back when we headed back into Marsala.

We reached the hillside where we were told that we could find my relatives. I asked someone where the Pulizzi's lived and he pointed up the hill. When we got there my cousin asked for the Pulizzi's and all of a sudden it seemed as though the hillside was loaded with Pulizzi's. Women came out of the houses from all around. My cousin told one of my aunts, actually my Aunt Caterina Pulizzi Asaro, to kiss me first and then he told her who I was. That was all it took. Once more, there were tears of overwhelming joy, laughter, hugs and kisses. I wish I could honestly put into words what I was experiencing in my heart. All my life I had only known my relatives on my mom's side of the family and my step-mom's (Lucy Fiduccia) side of the family. Now I was enveloped by so many more, and they were

all related to me. I was speechless. None of the men were home at that time, just like my Uncle Paul. They had all left the day before to go work in the fields, picking grapes - it was their busy season. Word was going to be sent out to them to return home.

Towards the end of the day, my cousin Andrew took me to the house that my maternal grandmother, Angelina Marino Lombardo and her husband still owned. It's the house where my mother Rosaria (Sarah) was born. I did take a photograph of this home to show my family stateside but have lost it. We returned to Marsala that evening but only after promising to spend the next day with everyone.

This screen capture from Google Earth shows the route from Marsala to Strasatti to Petrosino. All three locations are circled in black.



Strasatti: Coming from Marsala, Pete, Andrew and Andrews friend would have made a right turn at this light/intersection to go to Petrosino. Pete recalls this was all fields and the grocery store they stopped at for directions was a half mile or so before they turned right at this intersection. That grocery store used to be a school house according to lady that worked at the store. She remembered going to school their with Pete's mom Rosaria.

Tuesday, September 25th

That morning my cousin John (Giovanni Sciacca), son of my father's sister Giovanna Pulizzi Sciacca, also 23, came into town to pick me up on his scooter. I sat on the seat directly behind him. We went to his house first. There I met my Aunt Giovanna my younger cousin Pietro, and several more relatives. My cousin John plays the clarinet, as I did in high school, and his younger brother Pietro plays the drums. They entertained me with many Italian songs. After eating and talking we headed to the hillside where, unbeknownst to me, a feast was waiting.

Upon arrival, I met four of my dad's brothers, my Uncles Giuseppe, Mariano, Michele and Paolo, my many cousins and two of my aunts were also there. I'd bet there were over 40 family members wanting to know me. I was pulled from one place to another. Everyone had something to say to me. Almost everyone had the same question for me: Why did I not come back to Sicily to find a wife? Many also had messages that they wanted me to relay to my dad back in the states along with all the photos I took. They also made me promise to send everyone copies of the pictures I took, which I would guess there were over eighty the entire trip.

When it was time to eat again, we all had a big dish of pasta, and I mean BIG. We were all talking and my Uncle Mariano had tears in his eyes. I know that he was wishing my father could have been there, so was I. Everyone was asking if my father ever planned to come home to see them one more time. They all love him so much. They want me to come back as well but this time with my father, my wife and son Michael. Everyone loved looking at the pictures of my family that I had in my billfold. They made a big fuss over Mike. At one point, my cousin Rose Pulizzi Coppola took out one of her breasts to feed her baby daughter Giuseppa. Evidently my jaw must have dropped and my eyes focused where they should not have because everyone noticed and started to laugh. One of my uncles said that "an American boy must not be used to seeing something like this". And they laughed some more.

I saw the house and the room where my father was born, where my Uncle Michele is now living. I made sure to get a photograph of this home and the room as well. Unfortunately, this photo is also missing from my collection.

That evening I had to say my goodbyes, which was the saddest part of this incredible journey. Almost all of them walked me to the bus stop that night. My uncles Paolo, Michele, and Giuseppe, two cousins and my aunt Maria, Paolo's wife, kept me company to Marsala. They wouldn't let me pay for anything. Earlier that day, I had run out of film so my Uncle Michele went and purchased a roll for me and insisted on paying for it. We all said goodbye that night. To say there were no tears, would be a lie. They gave me a big box of dried figs and twelve bottles of wine.

SIDE NOTE: Back on base, as of September 30th, I still have nine bottles. I hand carried that wine from Marsala, through many custom checks, and safely back to base. It is my goal to get them to Rockford for my father and others to enjoy.

I spent my last night in Sicily at my cousins home in Marsala. Andrew and his family gave me a small ring and a cross on a chain to bring home to Mike as well as something for my wife. I had also picked up a few things in Rome for Irene. Before retiring that evening, I thought about everything that had occurred on this adventure, one I will never forget. I thanked God over and over again for letting my father and mother come to America. Most of my relatives still live as they did when my mother and father left Sicily, about 46 years ago. They had dirt floors, no indoor plumbing. As poor as they seemed to me, they are loving, happy people, surrounded by a large loving family.

THE PULIZZI FAMILY, PETROSINO, SICILY IN THE ORIGINAL FAMILY HOME  
NOW CATERINA AND FRANCESCO ASARO' HOME

