

Early Life

I grew up in a working class second and third generation Italian neighborhood in East New York, Brooklyn. We were surrounded with several other ethnic neighborhoods, so we were exposed to many different cultures and food, with African Americans next door in Bedford Stuyvesant, Germans, Irish, etc. nearby. The neighborhood was very stratified. My father's generation consisted of hard working Italian manual laborers and members of the Mafia. This was the era of Frank Gotti and Quack Quack Ruggiero. My father was a baker working for one of my maternal grandmother's brother Caesar Ceparano. As a bonus we got fresh Italian bread delivered daily. My father worked nights, so I didn't get to see him very much during the daytime. Out of the blue, he got sick one day and died shortly thereafter when I was 9 years old. My mother worked in a local factory as a piece-work seamstress for many years. When my father died, my family opened a dry cleaning store, where she also did alterations. In 1965, the year of the New York blackout, we began studying for a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED), which she successfully earned. Following that, she worked as a secretary in the World Trade Center bossing around her boss, as if she were his mother! She developed Alzheimer's disease and died January 19, 1999.

My grandparents are shown in Fig. 2. My paternal grandparents spoke Italian exclusively and were born in Sicily. My maternal grandparents were born in America and spoke both Italian and English. My parent's marriage was an unusual union of Sicilians and Neapolitans, however, I didn't appear to cause cultural conflicts.



Figure 1. My parent's wedding photo, Michael and Antoinette D'Antonio

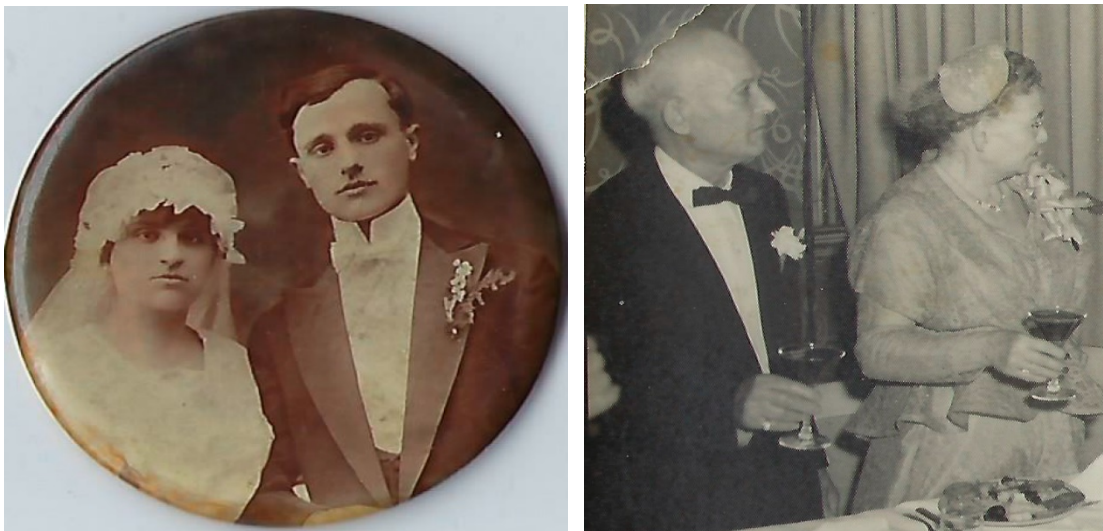


Figure 2. Left: Maternal grandparent, Louisa and Peter Manzo; Right: Paternal grandparents, Peter and Anna D'Antonio

It's apparent from the names of my parents and grandparents, that Peter and Michael were a fan favorite. I named my first son Peter and my second son Michael to carry on the tradition.

We lived in a three story house at 2409 Dean Street, Fig. 3, with a basement that I used as my childhood laboratory for all sorts of experiments in various areas of interest. Dean street had several memorable buildings, including the homes of most of my friends. On the corner of Dean and Pacific

streets was Pep's Bar and Restaurant, the local hang for my parent's generation. Next to it was a large pickle factory and then a house that was empty for most of my childhood, we called the Haunted House. It became our club house and we spent countless hours exploring its rooms and "scary" cellar.

My family lived on the upper level, the middle story was the bedroom level for my

grandparents and the lower level consisted of the kitchen, bathroom and living room. We also had a backyard, with a pigeon coop that my father used to house homing pigeons, as well as a coop on the roof of the house. I accompanied him to several pigeon shows where he would look for new homing pigeons to race. He would drive his Tippler pigeons to distant locations, like Philadelphia, and clock their time of arrival back to the coop on the roof, where pigeon hawks would often circle overhead. Following my father's passing, my mother and I moved down to live with my grandparents and added our bedrooms to the middle level. From my bedroom, I had a view of the backyard, where I converted the pigeon coop into a clubhouse. My uncle Louie, aunt Rose and cousins Louis and Beatrice moved for a nearby tenement to the upper level. Several photos of my younger years are shown in Fig. 4.

I was blessed with a strong, but loving matriarchal family of several aunts on my mother's and father's side, both grandmothers, aunts by marriage and cousins, as well as more gently uncles and grandfathers.



Birthplace



Figure 3. My birthplace, 2409 Dean Street, Brooklyn, NY, as it looked in 2018.

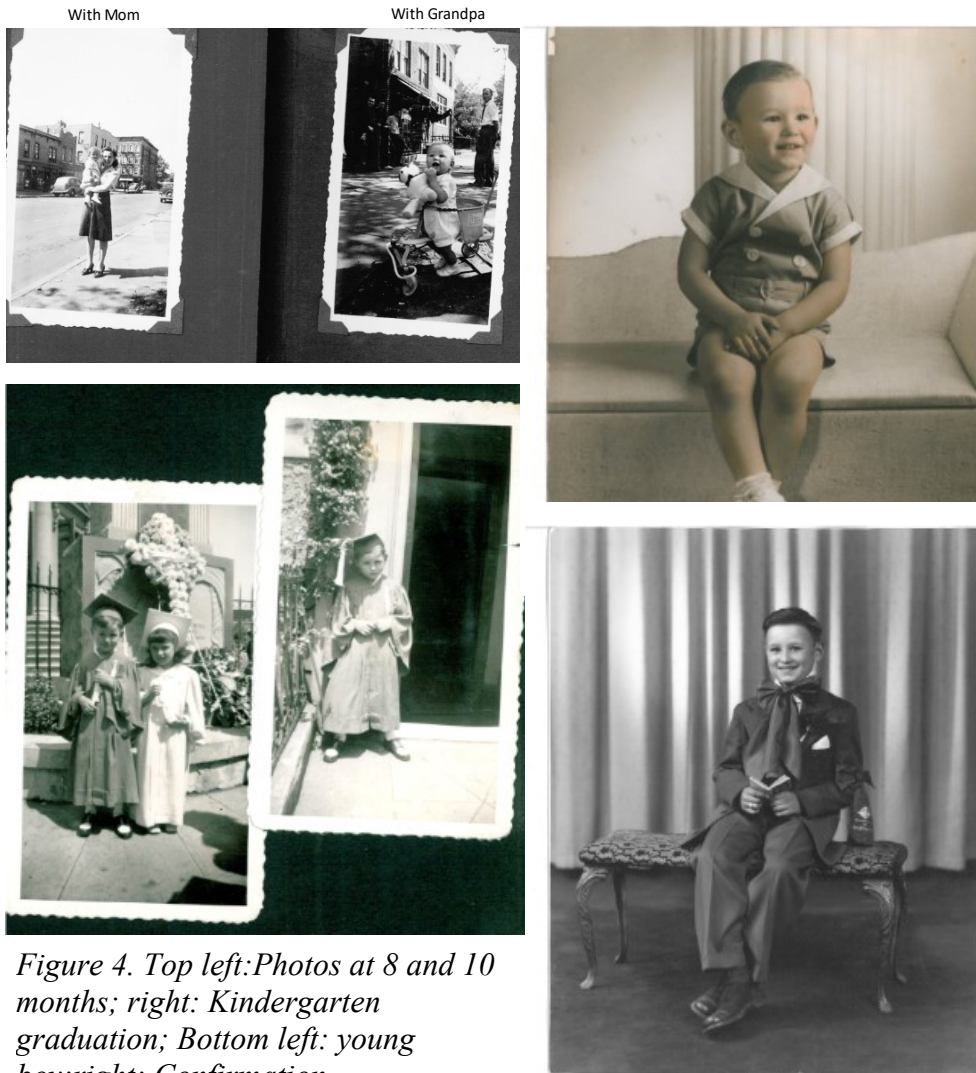


Figure 4. Top left: Photos at 8 and 10 months; right: Kindergarten graduation; Bottom left: young boy; right: Confirmation

I attended Our Lady of Loreto grammar school, Fig. 5, attached to the Catholic church which was around the corner from my home. This made it convenient to have home cooked lunches prepared by my grandmother, while we watched soap operas, primarily As the World Turns.

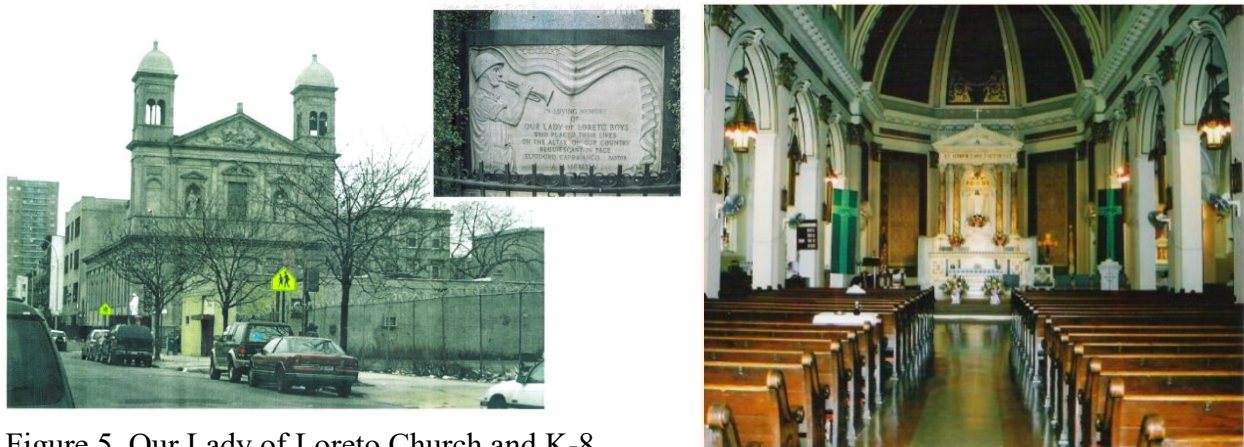


Figure 5. Our Lady of Loreto Church and K-8 school; Right: Church interior



Figure 6. Four photos of my years at Our Lady of Loreto grammar school 1947-1955

Fig. 6 shows several photos from my grammar school years 1947-1955, All throughout my childhood I was blessed with very close friends and a loving family. We played all the typical New York street games like stickball, kick-the-can-running-bases, ring-a-levio, stoop ball, Johnny on a pony, touch football, etc. from morning until we were called in for supper! Summers seemed endless during grammar school years. In Fig. 7, we see a photo of some of my friends in a bowling league, which was very popular at that time. Another activity that consumed my childhood years and increased my number of close friends was being a French horn player in a roughly 40 member church and American Legion sponsored marching drum and bugle corps. We practiced music every Tuesday evening in the school assembly hall and outdoors in favorable weather to practice our marching maneuvers, that we used during state and special drum and bugle corps competitions. Outdoors we practiced locally at Callahan-Kelly park and Randall’s Island in Manhattan.

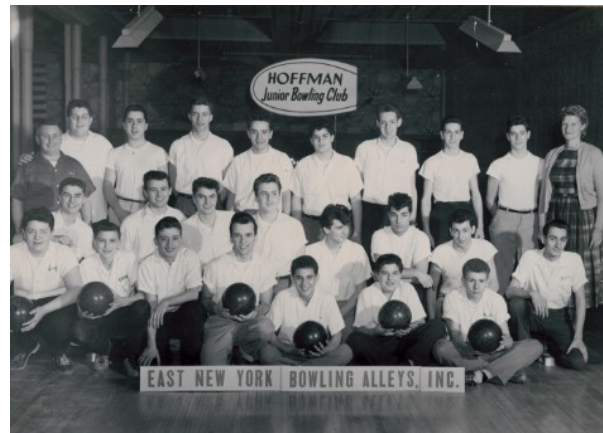


Figure 7. Photo of the members of the Junior Bowling Club at the East New York Bowling Alley.

Several recordings and photos, Fig. 8, are preserved from the Loreto Knights.

Our Lady of Loreto Drum and Bugle Corps 1962 recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0p3BwU32zM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOaDBaSbbeQ>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAhf_VXXpTk 1960 Recording was from the Dream Contest
Roosevelt Field, NJ

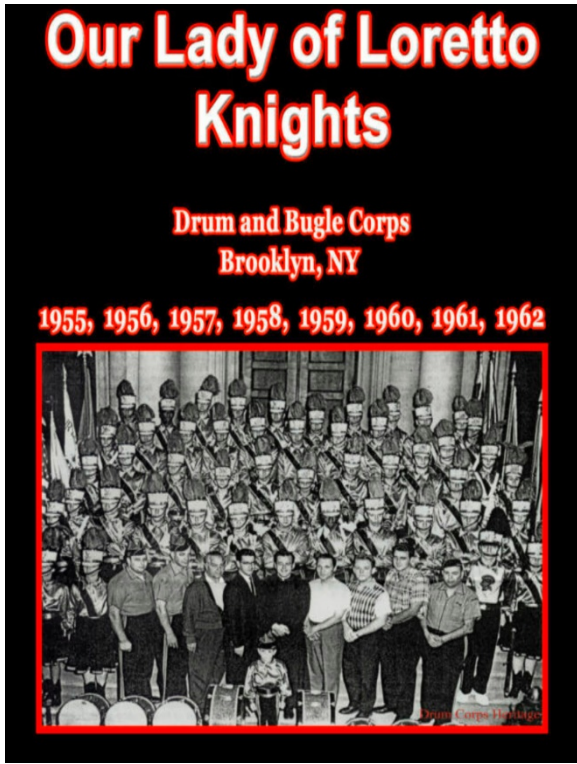


Figure 8. Photos of the Loreto Knights Drum and Bugle Corps



Photos of High School, College and Graduate School are shown in Fig. 9. In 1955, I attended Bishop Loughlin HS in downtown Brooklyn, which I traveled to and from on the A Train. At that time, there was significant racial unrest, and we had several bomb threats for which we would have to evacuate to the school yard. Train rides home through ghetto neighborhood stops after school were dangerous. High school years were filled with rebelling from the Christian Brother teachers, lifting weights, becoming aware of how to make music, and imbibing the new music of Rock and Roll. My mother Antoinette and her brother Camillo (Sonny) were very talented singers, and I grew up listening to and learning the beautiful and well-crafted music of the 1940's. My favorites were always the group harmony of the Pied Pipers, Mills Brothers, Modernaires, Ink Spots and later groups like the Four Freshmen and Hi Los. Sonny was also a guitar player and I learned music theory and chord structure, which he shared from his guitar lessons. While I loved early rock and roll as the music of my childhood, it was very simplistic musically with essentially four chords, in music notation I, VI, II or IV, V. The a cappella Doo Whop style of the 1950s evolved from these harmony groups I loved, so I embraced it and formed a Doo Whop group called the Dialtones, since most groups had a "tones" suffix, with friends Otto Maracello, Joseph Galiano, Joe Scarlotta and Sally Cervone. We performed locally and recorded a 78 rpm record at one of the Manhattan recording studios, with songs called "Bette" on one side and "What have you done" on the other. Since you never heard of us, we obviously left it all in the basement of my Dean Street home, where we drove my mother crazy repeating sections over and over and over. While there were the usual female relationships, the most significant an on and off and on again relationship with my neighborhood girlfriend Linda DeSantis.

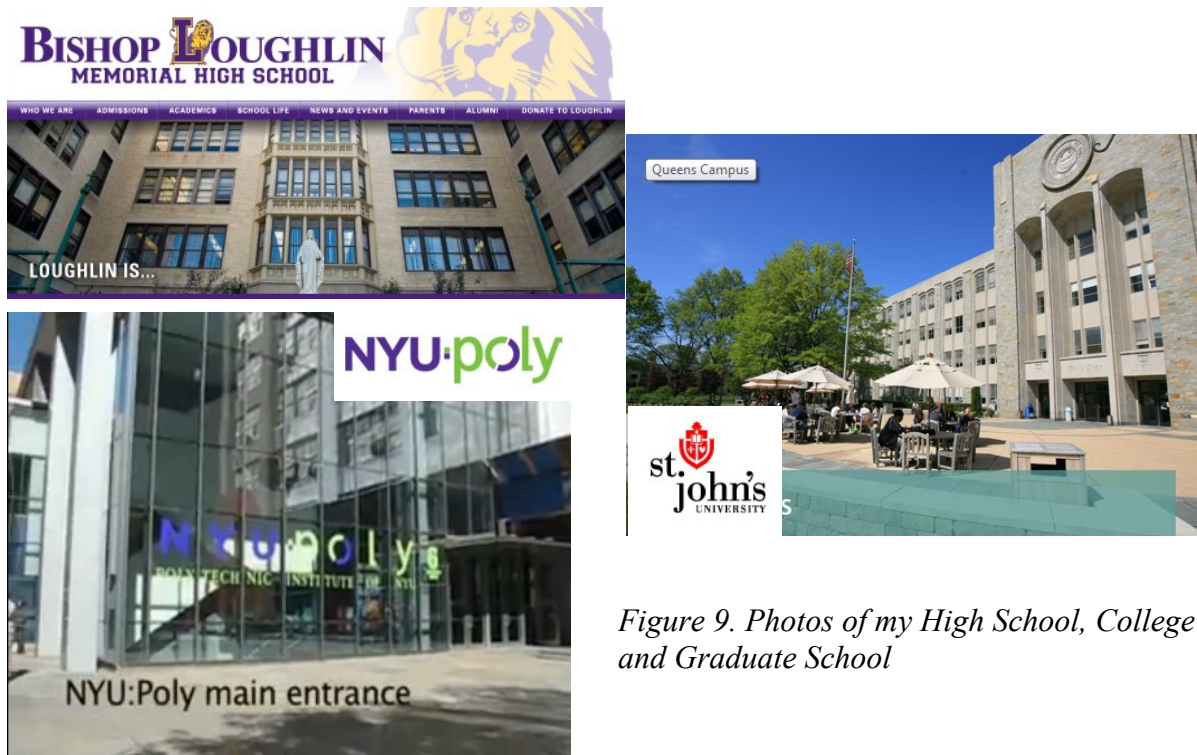


Figure 9. Photos of my High School, College and Graduate School

Following graduation, I attended St. John's University. I spent one year in the downtown Brooklyn location, followed by three years in the Hillcrest Queens Campus. I was an average student in High School and was distracted with neighborhood social club activities at 707 1/2 Pacific Street in my first year at St. John's. Social clubs were unused storefronts converted into hang outs where my parent's generation would play cards, argue about sports, gamble, lord knows what else. My generation would

use these clubs as dens of iniquity!- enough said. In 1959, I was infatuated with Jazz and listening to Symphony Sid on the radio. College friends and I frequently visited Birdland and the Metropole in Manhattan on weekends where the leading bands including, Stan Kenton, Maynard Ferguson, Philly Joe Jones, Buddy Rich, etc. performed. If you think rock music is loud, imagine listening to Maynard Ferguson's big band in an intimate club!

Also, during these years, my friends and I used to rent summer cottages in Long Beach, one of the many beach towns on the southern shore of Long Island. I put together a band with Sally Capone on drums, Sally Spampinato on rhythm guitar, Johnny Contino on bass. and me on lead guitar and vocals and played in the back room of the Beach House, the favorite bar on the beach. The front room featured a popular cover band called the Jades, who were our idols! I remember fondly a summer in 1964, the year the Beatles released *Hard Day's Night*, *And I Love Her*, etc.

Despite my lack of interest and attention this first year, I received an A in Chemistry and decided this was my "calling". As a result, I studied 24/7 for the remaining three years at the Queen's campus, where I was one of the students at the top of the class. With a new-found passion for learning, I enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the prestigious Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and graduated with a Ph. D. in Infrared Spectroscopy in 1967.

While at Brooklyn Poly, I minored in X-ray Crystallography and was recommended by Dr. Ben Post, one of my professors and a leading Crystallographer, for a position at the Naval Research Laboratory, in Washington, DC, Fig. 10, working for an eventual Nobel Laureate Dr. Jerome Karle. As studied as I was, I was shockingly unready for the intellectual level of my coworkers, Drs. Karle, and his wife Isabella. These were the smartest and nicest people I had ever met. While this research was very difficult and challenging, it prepared me for my next career in what seemed to be a completely unrelated field of Acoustics.



Figure 10. Naval Research Laboratory, founded by Thomas Edison, on the banks of the Potomac River.