

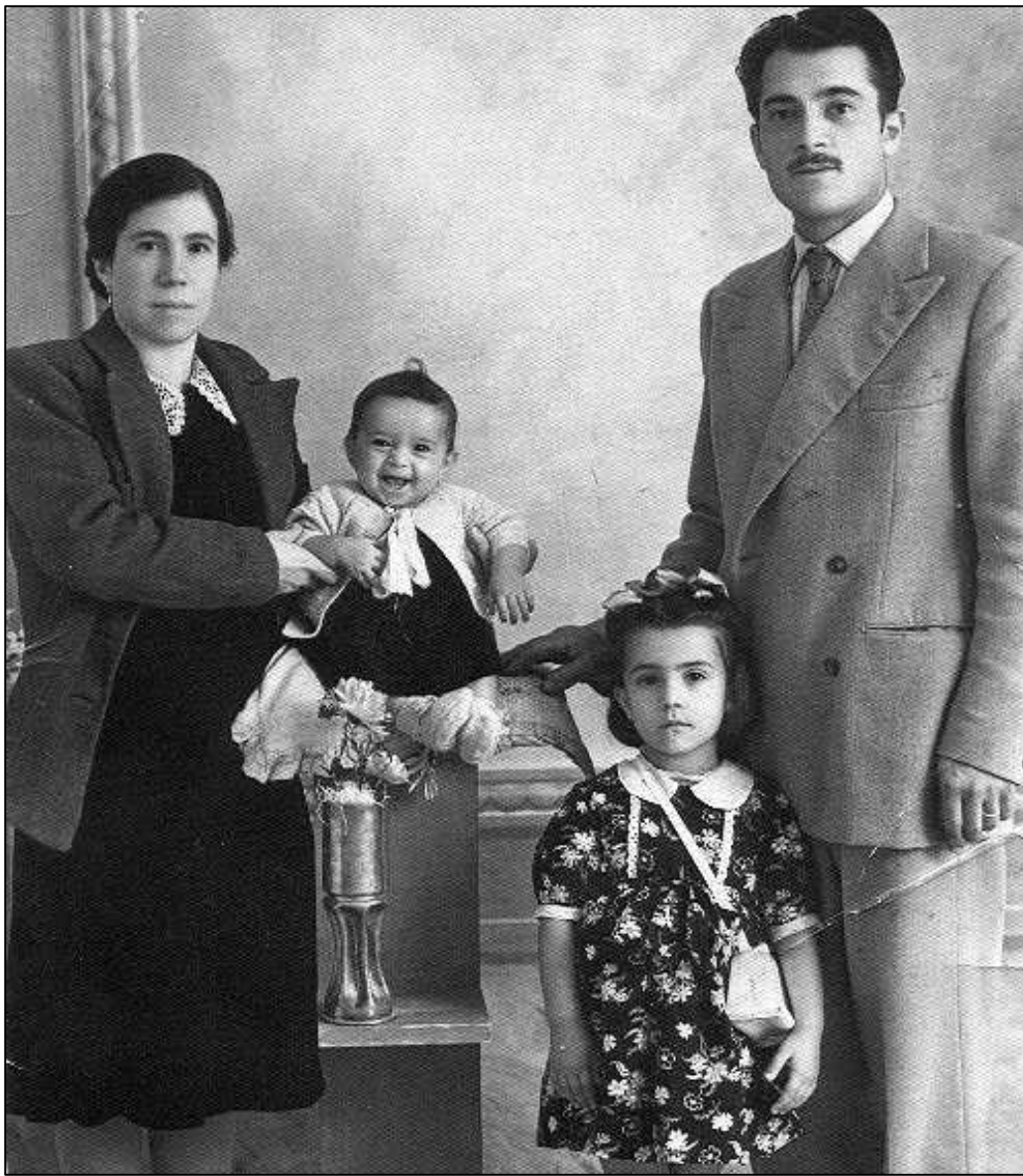
Memories of our journey to Canada



La Vulcania - 1958 - emergency drill with our lifejackets

*Buon Compleanno
Cecilia,
per i tuoi 70 anni!*

Antonietta, Michelina & Johnny



1950 – Maria 26 / Ferruccio 29 / Cecilia 4 / Antonietta 3 months

Duronia was and still is a magical little village in our memories. Cecilia was twelve years old when we came to Canada, so she was able to form solid friendships in Duronia, which she still has to this day.

In our minds, life in Duronia was always filled with positive and happy experiences.

Our parents' deep and unconditional love for us was felt everyday of our life in Duronia. Their total presence and the love of our extended family made growing up in our small village very memorable, magical and something we will cherish forever.

“It takes a village to raise a child”

This saying was definitely a fact in Duronía until the day we left. Here, we were free to roam around town on our own without fear or supervision of any kind.

From early morning until late at night our days were filled with adventures. Meeting familiar faces, long walks around town and dropping in unannounced on our many friends and families was our daily routine.

All was great except for one little old lady with a slight limp by the name of “*Margarita*” that Cecilia was terrified of. Margarita lived a few houses away from us, but Cecilia would under no circumstance pass by her house. To avoid seeing Margarita, she would go to great lengths. She would walk around the whole town the opposite direction, not to pass in front of her house in case she would be sitting on her doorsteps.



In the first picture Cecilia is posing proudly with her sewing teacher. She is showing the tablecloth and napkins she worked on during the year. This tablecloth was never used. Cecilia displayed it a few times at our yearly Duronía party only to be folded again in it's original folds to be treasured until another viewing.

The next picture was our yearly summer day camp, where we spent our days playing games at the “*campo sportivo*”.



1958 – Maria 34 / Ferruccio 37 / Michelina 5 / Cecilia 12 / Antonietta 8



Duronia seemed pretty big and comfortable to three girls who were not exactly prepared for an enormously long trip on a huge boat to a place called "*l'America*".

However, observing mother and father making all the preparations got us quite excited and looking forward to our trip.

Mother was forever sewing us pretty dresses and father was going on shopping trips a lot more often bringing back boxes of shoes that he would put in a big trunk along with presents for our Zio Antonio, his family and Mammuccia Filomena.





We loved our new house in Duronia. Mother and father bought the house from Zia Virgilia. The house was on the main street across from the war memorial statue "*Il Monumente*" in the center of town.

Father had a shoe shop across the street from our house. When people would come into town they would often have their shoes repaired or buy new ones.

Most times, after their purchases, they would also come across the street to our house to have an espresso and biscotti or if it was lunchtime they would stay and have lunch with us.



For our snack in the afternoons, mother would always prepare something delicious for us. A big slice of fresh bread with jam or olive oil with sugar. On the days that the markets came to town mother would bring us to buy the best looking fruits, chocolates and torrone.



The town of Duronio was not big enough for business, so father would go to neighboring towns on a weekly basis to sell shoes. On his return, he would bring us back all kinds of goodies like chocolates, candies and cookies. The best he always saved for last. His face would light up with pride as he sat us down and gave each of us a brand new pair of shoes.

On the day before our departure, family and friends dropped in to say goodbye. By night time the house was full of friends and family. It seemed like the whole town had come to bid us farewell.

Leaving Duronio in the middle of the night and boarding the biggest ship we had ever seen "*La Vulcania*" was like a dream.

Mother and father were sea sick the whole way, so they stayed in their cabin most of the time. The three of us were left on our own to explore the ship, and that we did.

After 8 long days on the ship, we were all tired, confused and cold. We finally arrived at Halifax on March 15 in the middle of a snowstorm and then boarded a train to Montreal where Zio Antonio was waiting for us.

He brought us to his house on Clark St. where Mammuccia Filomena was waiting for us along with Zia Lucia and Filomena our cousin who was the same age as Michelina.



Montreal street in 1958 (painting by John Little)

On Clark Street, we went through a very difficult time of adjustment. Father took any odd job he could and mother found work in a factory as a seamstress. Cecilia and Antonietta started school at Luke Callaghan, where they were put back a grade because of the language barrier. Not yet old enough for school, Michelina was left to fend for herself.

This is not what mother and father had envisioned back in Duronia. Father kept his suitcase packed by his bed, convinced that this had been a mistake and would find a way to go back to Italy. He worked very hard and even taught himself to lay bricks so he could work as a bricklayer to earn a better pay.



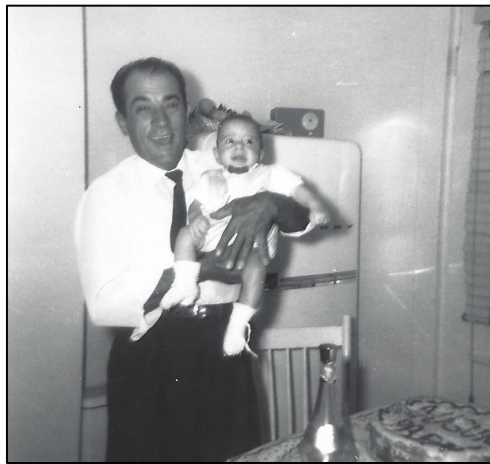
1964 – Ferruccio Berardo, Antonio Di Placido & Antonio D'Amico



After a few years father had saved enough money to put a down payment on a big house on De Castelnau. We were all very excited to have our own room and best of all our school was across the street.



1962 was a very special year. Our brother, Johnny, was born! So much excitement! He was the cutest baby ever!



1027 Mistral

In 1964 mother and father bought a lot on Mistral and a year later decided to build our house.

With all this happening so fast, the pressure on father was starting to show.

In 1965 Cecile graduated from high school and our house on Mistral was ready to move in. Before the big move, mother and father made plans to have Cecile's graduation party with a few of her closest friends and our family. Cecilia was 19, Antonietta 15, Michelina 12 and Johnny was 3. Not your typical graduation party but everyone had a good time.



Pius X Class of '65 – 40th year reunion

Mammuccia decided to live with Zio Antonio and his family who lived close by on Boyer. She would visit almost everyday so when we came back from school, she would always make something special for us. Her specialty were potato balls and *scr'pelle*. No matter how much we try to copy these fabulous specialties, we can never duplicate them. We think it was all the love for us that she put into making them that made them so good!



A full time job working in a factory and taking care of a house and four kids was quite difficult for mother.

Nevertheless, on the weekends, she would still find time to make us all the clothes we wanted. We would help her cut the patterns and the fabric while she would do the cooking and then she would go downstairs and spend a couple of hours sewing.

She was an extremely gifted seamstress. So much so that she was promoted to sample maker. This meant that the work was more interesting and satisfying and not as monotonous as doing piece work.

Where mother excelled the most was definitely in her cooking. Everything she made was always super delicious. There were never any recipes to follow. The only rule was that everything had to be fresh and no shortcuts. Observing and cooking with her was the best way to learn her secrets. The downside of helping her in the kitchen was the cleaning up. This was something she hated to do. This job was usually left for us girls and for father later on when we all left the house. He would always complain that she used too many pots and pans. In addition to preparing meals for the family, mother would also make something special for Cecilia. You see, Cecilia had a sensitive stomach so mother would always prepare something different for her. "*Riso con il latte*" was her favorite.



For a couple of years they also made cheese. They loved making it and were very successful at it. The ricotta was to die for. The only problem was that the raw milk was difficult to come by, so they stopped making it.

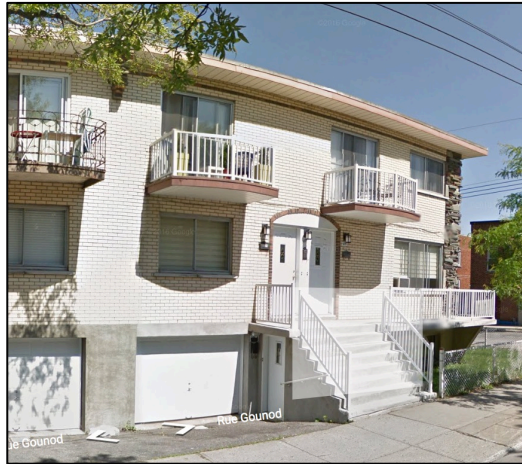
In our teen years father became very strict and overprotective. Because of this, family life became very difficult. He put a lot of pressure on himself. Working long hours, he would come home extremely tired. There was no patience left in him and no free time to spend with us as a family. Sometimes, even at the dinner table we barely spoke for fear that he would lose his temper. This behavior was so unlike what we were used to when we were younger.

Father could not put aside the hard life he had back in Italy. With his father leaving the family when he was eight years old, his mother was left with four young children to raise by herself in a one room basement. They were so poor that food was locked up most of the time to make sure it would last the week.

To make matters worst, his sister got pregnant out of wedlock, which was probably the worst thing that could happen to a family in those days. The shame that the family went through never went away. Because of the hurt and fear father experienced during this difficult time in his life, he made it his responsibility to protect the family from this ever happening again.

Respect and honor were very important to him so he became very strict with us. He showed little patience for mistakes and would always be critical and expect more from us. This was especially true for Johnny who was expected to follow in his footsteps.

As we left the house one by one, the stress of watching over us ended and he became the same loving and playful father as when we were small.



1971 – rue Gounod



1976 – rue Gounod



1979 – rue Irving in Dollard

Father played a big role in building our first homes. He gave so much of himself during these times for which we were all extremely grateful. Mother and father were always there for us, helping us through our struggles raising a family and building our lives. The respect and love we now have for each other is deeply rooted in all of us and will grow to hold us together forever.



Cecile and Nunzio married in 1967 and moved to Montreal North in a two house complex that father built.

Wildwood 1968



Soon after Cecilia got married, we all went on our first family vacation to Wildwood.

This was the only vacation our family went to during our whole time together. Seven people in the Chevrolet driving at night for eight hours was a total nightmare.

Once we got to Wildwood and settled in a nice apartment, we forgot about the ordeal we went through and really enjoyed ourselves.

After spending time on the beach mother would leave a little earlier than everyone else and would go to the apartment to prepare the most delicious meals for us. We can still remember the wonderful smell of roasted meat and potatoes.

We had a really good time on this vacation, the most fun we had in years. We were a family again, away from all the stress and the monotonous routine we were so accustomed to.



When Mammuccia decided to come and live with us on Mistral, we couldn't be happier. We loved her so much. She would always defend us and no matter what the problem was, she would always take our side. Johnny was really fond of her and loved spending time with her.

Johnny remembers proudly walking with his three sisters on one occasion on Jarry Street and a car honked at us. He was so surprised, he did not understand why the car was honking and the boys were whistling at us.

Micheline & Michel got married in 1971 and moved upstairs on Gounod.

Antoinette & Renzo got married in 1973 and moved upstairs on Mistral.

Also in 1973, Cecile gave birth to Nadia a few days after Antoinette's wedding.

With the girls gone, Johnny remained alone with mother and father from the age of 11 years old.



The story does not end here because mother is still alive at 92 and father passed away of Alzheimer's at 91.

Life in Canada was just as difficult as the life they had in Italy. However, through the hardships and the struggles, life slowly became brighter. Most of all the joy of having seven beautiful grandchildren and two precious great-grandchildren.



Lea's wedding – August 18 2007

Through the years we have always been a united family. Celebrating our weddings, birthdays, christenings, Christmas, Easter and every holiday you can think of. We were together through the birth of our children. We encouraged each other and always supported our plans for the future.

We gave each other support during sickness, health and through terrible tragedies, worst of all losing our beloved Lea. A tragedy that changed all of us, one that will never be forgotten. We will always hold Lea in our hearts, in a special place she so richly deserves for loving all of us equally and unconditionally.

Throughout the years, we always counted on each other to never back away and always be there when we needed each other the most. We never picked a fight, and we all respected each other even if we had different ideas about how to live our lives.

Dearest Cecilia, 70 years is a long time, there are so many stories, so many memories, and so many lessons that can take a lifetime to learn.

We know in our hearts that mother and father loved us very much. Everything they did was for their children. We were blessed to have our parents around for so long, learning to love and cherish our families through their example. Their advice was always to love one another and hold on to each other because family is the most important thing we have in life. Also, to forgive each other for our differences because in the end everything you are mad about today will disappear tomorrow.

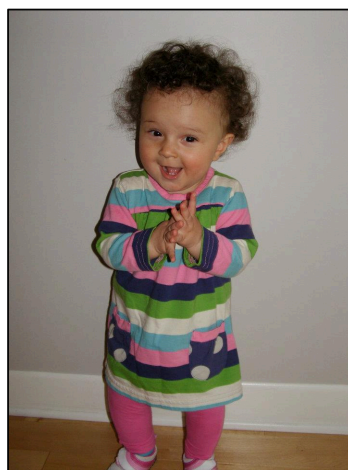
We have kept up with the love and support for all the years we have been together and mother and father's advice still holds true today.

These three little girls and one little boy full of love and ambition to do well, have learned a lot through the years. To love and respect everyone around them and most of all hold on to their children and support them in all their struggles and time of need.

These are the lessons we received from our parents and these are the lessons we hope to pass on to our children.

One after another our precious babies came into this world, Nadia, Michelle, Lea, Marco, Julia, Lisa and Sabrina. After a little time lapse, Naliya and Josué joined our family.

They will each have their own unique lives to live and will have their own life story to add on to ours.





We thank God that along with some sad days
come the happiest.

Naliya & Josué
are definitely the highlights of your life,
Cecilia!

Be the best nonna
and enjoy every minute!

How very proud we are today to wish you Cecilia,
our older sister, a very Happy 70th Birthday!

These are our memories, we have so many good ones.

Hold all these memories close to your heart and you
will be happy to turn 70 with pride.

Love you always,

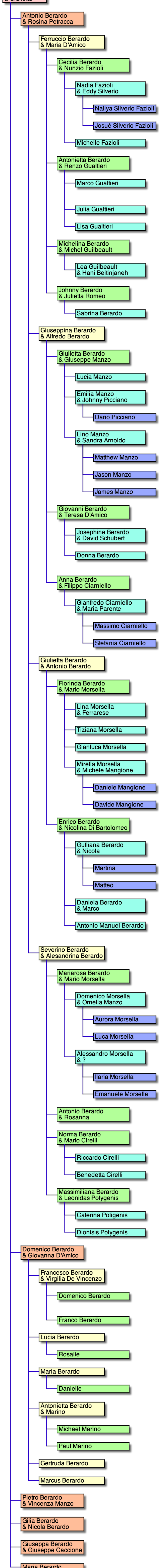
Antonietta,

Michelina

& Johnny.



Berardo Family Tree



D'Amico Family Tree

