

## The Laspina Family

When you ask my father and mother how they met, my mother will say “he bombed my house in Pisa and then he asked me to dance.” So now, 70 years after World War II, they are living happily ever after south of here in Tulare, California, in a home my father built. Daddy will be 98 years old next month and Mom turned 90 last January. My father was born in San Francisco near Mission Dolores in Noe Valley after his parents, Anna and Salvatore came over from Sicily by boat from Piedemonte Eteneo, which is a little village at the foot of Mt Etna. Nana’s Mother was born Rosa Barone and her Father was Giuseppe Cardile. His mother was born Maria Amolotica. Papa’s mother was born Venera Currenti and she married Giovani Laspina. Meanwhile, back in Rome, Mom’s mother, Lina Leda Iacopi married Alfredo Bernabei. Mom’s grandmother was Fortunata Ruggiani and she was married to Pilade Iacopi. The family moved from Rome to Pisa, where my mother was born.

During the depression, my Nana and Papa owned 7 flats in San Francisco’s Italian district and Nana started looking for grape vineyards in Napa, but the vineyard prices there were too high. So their friends in Visalia and Tulare found vineyards owned by Bank of Italy’s Frank Gianinni and his son-in-law Fred Lagomarsino and worked out a trade. My grandparents’ mortgage balance on the 7 San Francisco flats was \$3,000 and they traded the flats for the grape vineyards, 320 acres.

My Mom was at a dance in Pisa, dancing with a British soldier. Turns out, the soldier’s mistake was to ask my Dad to translate for him because he didn’t speak Italian and my Mom didn’t speak English. So my Dad asked my Mom to dance in Italian and supposedly both soldiers wanted her to marry them at the end of the war. Dad won.

It took my father over 18 months to get through all the red tape and paperwork - they were married at St. Aloysius Church in Tulare when she arrived. We have 16mm movies of my Mom nodding politely at the wedding guests until an Italian-speaking one came into view and then she looked so happy to be able to speak to someone. She learned English and then went to night school and became a US citizen, but still has a very Italian accent.

My Dad became a contractor after the war and took a tractor to some of the grape vineyards and subdivided 100 lots and built custom homes. My father built our house, Nana’s house across the street and his sister Irene’s house next door to us, so we grew up with our aunts, uncles, grandmother and cousins all living in the 3 hoses together. My Dad sent for my grandmother in Pisa and she came to live with us until she died. Since she never learned English, all of us kids spoke Italian in the house until we started school, where at St. Aloysius the nice nuns required only English, so I’ve forgotten most of my Italian.

I’ll end with one of my favorite Nana stories: she was the best cook in Tulare and the priests always came over for the holiday meals - Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving. However, Nana didn’t read or write English so if you wanted her recipes you had to watch her cook. One day my cousin Cheryl and I walked across the street to Nana’s to learn how to make her fabulous ravioli from scratch - she told us to go across the street to her house the next day at 4:00. When we got there, she had her hands on her hips and started scolding us - we were 12 hours late - she said “I made-a my ravioli at 4:00 this morning - where were you?”

Betty (Laspina) Hollars



FILIPPOO and ROSA LASPINA in Piedimonte Etneo, Sicily

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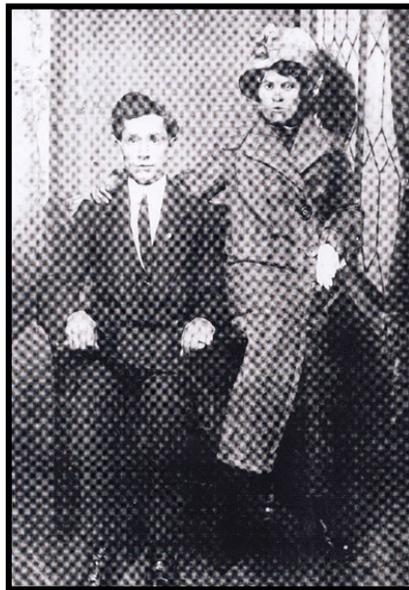


SALVATORE (SAM) AND VENERA (ANNA) LASPINA in San Francisco

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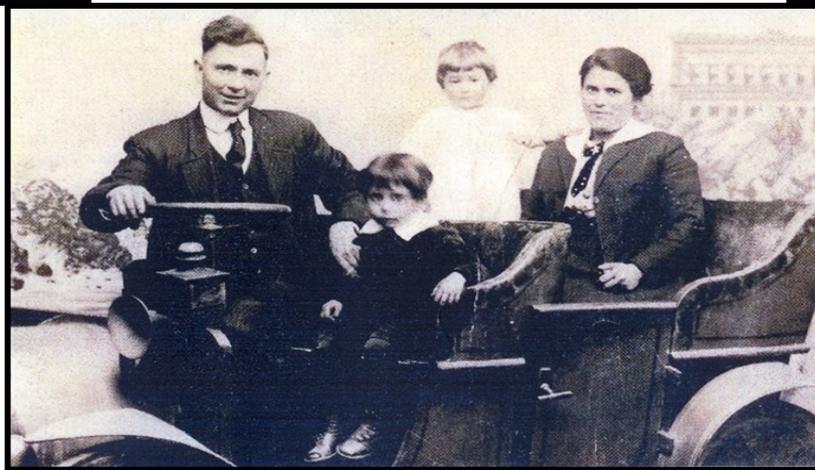
GIOVANNI and ROSA (BARONE) CARDILE ( Maternal great grand parents) in Sicily



SALVATORE (SAM) AND VENERA (ANNA) LASPINA in San Francisco



JOHN LASPINA and his cousin JOHN PREVITERA in San Francisco



SALVATORE and ANNA LASPINA with two children John and Joseph



1944 - World War II in Italy, 347th FIGHTER SQUADRON. 350th FIGHTER GROUP. 12th Air Force.



My parents JOHN AND LICIA (BERNEBEI) LASPINA in Tulare,



1945 World War II - SERGEANT JOHN LASPINA, in Pisa, Italy playing the accordion in the barracks.