

Mary Arancio Manuguerra

1948

RETIRED SCHOOL OFFICE ATTENDANCE CLERK

AS TOLD BY MARY ARANCIO MANUGUERRA

Mary Arancio Manuguerra was born on June 20, 1948, to Diego and Francesca (Chicchina) Arancio and grew up in the fishing community of Monterey, California. Both of her parents were born in Isola di Marettimo, Sicily. Diego emigrated to Monterey in 1918 for what was then considered to be the biggest fishing opportunity in the industry across the ocean. He went back to Marettimo--one of the Aegadian Islands in the Mediterranean Sea west of Sicily--many times and married Francesca, the love of his life, in 1929. Diego continued to make a living in the U.S., while Francesca remained in Marettimo, and Mary's two older siblings were both born there--Peter in 1930 (deceased 2015) and Vitina in 1935 (deceased 2020).



In 1946 when Diego's fishing business had enabled him to provide a home for the family, Francesca and the two children were reunited with him in Monterey. The family couldn't come sooner because of the war in Europe; they were only able to come to America after the end of World War II. Shortly after, Diego and Peter built the *Vitina A* in 1947. They were a fishing family who fished everywhere, including Monterey, San Pedro, Port Hueneme, San Francisco and Alaskan waters.

Mary grew up on what is known as Spaghetti Hill, the area above Fisherman's Wharf and near Cannery Row. She first lived on Van Buren Street until she was seven, and then her family moved to Monroe Street. Mary grew up in a way that

might certainly present a challenge for the youth of today. “We respected our parents. We knew what we could do and obeyed our parents,” Mary says. Her parents were mellow; but if her mother got mad, a shoe would be flying or a wooden spoon would be applied to a certain tender area of the body.

Mary knew you didn't go down to lower Alvarado Street because of the bars, pool rooms and soldiers. Lower Alvarado was from Franklin Street at the Wells Fargo Bank towards the Portola Plaza. There was Toy Town, the Dollar Store and Art N Zelle, and you only went down there with a parent or an older adult or entered from Calle Principal. That area was all cleaned up during Urban Renewal.

On Saturdays Mary walked downtown and went to the State Theatre. She had 25 cents, which paid for the show with extra money left over to buy candy at Carmelkorn, which was next door to Abinante Music or Hellams Tobacco Shop.

Mary went to public school through seventh grade--kindergarten through sixth at Thomas O. Larkin School and seventh grade at Walter Colton Junior High School. When she was at Walter Colton, students were on a split schedule, so Mary went to school in the morning until 11:30 a.m. The shortened-day schedule was necessary because the school was overcrowded with “war babies.” When Fremont Junior High School was built in Seaside, full-day classes resumed. In eighth grade Mary went to San Carlos School and continued her education at Junipero Memorial High School, graduating in 1966.

Mary went to work at Coast Counties Land Title Company in the plant department after she graduated from high school. The plant department received the records and plot information for the properties being transferred. She also worked for Pacific Bell Telephone Company as an order writer, then transferred to the billing department, where she was the cashier. When the Italians came in to pay their bills every month, Mary was a welcome and reassuring sight, because she could help them with any problems they had. They loved that there was an Italian who understood them. For Mary, it was a very fulfilling job.

Mary met Ventura Manuguerra, who was in the same fishing industry as her family, and they started dating in 1966. They were young and in love and were married on January 11, 1969, at the San Carlos Cathedral. Ventura worked on the *Vitina A* for 30 years, from 1967 to 1997. In 1993 Mary and Ventura purchased their own boat, the *Mary M*, in Naknek, Alaska. Ventura fished in Monterey, San Francisco, Port Hueneme and Alaskan waters for 45 years.

Mary and Ventura have three children--Cristina, Francesca and Joseph. When Cristina was born in 1971, Mary continued to work at Pacific Bell. When Francesca was born in 1974, Mary stayed home. Joseph was born in 1981, and Mary continued to be a stay-at-home mom until 1986. She then became employed by the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD), so that she would be on the same schedule as her children, working full time at Foothill School for 16 years and four years at Monterey High School as an attendance clerk. After Ventura retired from fishing in October 2008, Mary retired on December 31, 2008.

Mary's love for volunteering began when she started volunteering at her children's schools, and it has flourished over the years. For over 16 years she has volunteered and helped coordinate events for the Italian Catholic Federation (ICF), including the Lenten dinners; the AT&T; the US Open; the Bronco World Series, and the Foothill School PTA.

Community spirit is Mary's heritage. In fact, Mary's mother had a St. Joseph altar in her home and was part of the original group of ladies who participated in a ten-day



novena in honor of St. Joseph, the patron saint of Isola di Marettimo and of many families throughout the world. On the tenth day there was a Mass and festivities that many attended at her home on Spaghetti Hill.

Mary's granddaughter Michaela Francesca Singh was the Blessed Virgin Mary for the St. Joseph festivities. There are 3 children that represent the Holy Family.



***Cumbarta & Pignollo* cookies.**

Mary has continued this honor to St. Joseph together with Beatrice Bonanno. For the past 38 years their committee has held a special event after the Italian Mass officiated by Father Peter Crivello accompanied by singer Erasmo Aiello and pianist Elaine Miller. This group of hardworking women makes the traditional

pignollo and *cumbarta* (sweet Italian desserts). The *pignollo* is made from a cookie dough that is cut into small balls and deep fried. After a week they are put into a mixture of melted sugar, honey, cinnamon, orange peel, and almonds. Coated by the sugar mixture, they are then made into clusters. The *cumbarta* is toasted sesame seeds that are put into the sugar mixture and then rolled out and cut into strips. These Italian desserts are made for everyone to enjoy after the Mass, which is followed by a dinner dance. This event would not be possible without the help of her co-chair Bea Bonnano, the ICF and many people from the community. Through the past 38 years, the St. Joseph group has donated to the San Carlos Cathedral, Loaves & Fishes, St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army and a nun in Trapani.

Mary and Ventura's three beloved children all live locally. Cristina lives in Monterey and works as a caregiver. Francesca Singh (Michael) lives in Toro Park, works as a massage therapist and assists her husband at Singh Real Estate. They have three children-- Korissa Mussumeci (Vincent); Sabella Mary Singh, and Michaela Francesca Singh. Joseph Manuguerra specializes in hospitality work at the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa.



The Manuguerra Family.

When Mary is not volunteering, she is either traveling or with her granddaughters. She enjoys volunteering at their school whenever she can and being involved in their social activities. She is their biggest cheerleader at all of their soccer, softball, volleyball and basketball games and track meets.



Family trip to Europe, on a cruise in Mykonos, Greece.

Mary is a natural leader with many friends. She meets a group of them daily for a morning walk on the bike path and cherishes all her social activities with them.

Mary and Ventura are fortunate to have good health, which allows them to go on cruises, which they love, and enjoy vacations with their *compadres* and *commares*. In celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary they went to Europe with all of their family in the summer of 2019. It was a trip filled with many new adventures and special memories because they had the opportunity to visit their ancestral homes in Marettimo.



50th Wedding Anniversary, a renewal of vows.



50th Anniversary Dinner.

Ventura was born in Marettimo, and he enjoyed seeing his many cousins and friends he grew up with. Ventura came to America in 1956 together with his father, Giuseppe Manuguerra, his mother, Cristina, his brother, Giuseppe and his twin sister, Anna. He was born on October 15, 1943, and Anna was born two days later on October 17, 1943. They were born on the island of Marettimo because during World War II his mother couldn't travel to the hospital in Trapani on the mainland to have the twins.

Mary and Ventura both cherish and care about their local community, and they will continue to follow their passion for volunteering and contributing to civic events. Love prevails in the Manuguerra household!



Italian Heritage Honoree Dinner, 2020.

ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY HONOREE 2020