

[Granite Worker]

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(Vermont)

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WRITER Mary Tomasi

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Vermont

Mary Tomasi

63 Barre Street

Montpelier, Vermont

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Text of Interview

Q. It must have taken courage for a boy of sixteen to leave home - father, mother, brothers, sisters, and cross the ocean to a strange country. Did you have relatives here?

A. Sure it take courage, but what can I do? We live in a small village an' there is no work. Only the farm work, an' my father an' two brothers can take care of that, so I decide to come to America where there is more work an' more money. None of my family was over here, only the very good fren' of the family, Aldo who is what you call promise' to marry my sister. He write that in another year he have enough to sen' for her. He say he make the money fast by cut' the stone, so after my sister she read the letter to my father an' mother, I tease them to let me go, an' so I come an' here I am. The next year my sister come, so I live with them two, three year. An' I see how very happy those two are, just like my father an' mother in the ol' country, so I look aroun' an' I see this Lucia who bring the dinner to the shed every day to her brother Paolo. She is dark an' her eyes they laugh all the time. One day I make it the business not to go home to the dinner. I take it with me, an' when 2 twelve o'clock come, I sit near the brother of Lucia, an' wait for her to come.

Q. That's how you met your wife. Picked her out and then planned the meeting. You made it easy for yourself.

A. Easy? Who say it is easy to marry Lucia? I wait an' pretty soon she come up the hill with a basket on her arm, an' she say to the brother, "Paolo, today I make polenta for you, if you eat quick it is still hot." I tell them I have not taste' good polenta since I leave the ol' country, but Paolo, he is already busy with the teeth to eat it, an' he say nothing an' Lucia she is already walk' away down the hill an' she sing. Then I try to be very extra nice to this Paolo so one day he will invite me to the house. I make him a present of a stonecut' apron, an' when I see his red chalk for to mark stone is low, I say, "Here, Paolo, take four, five. I have a big box." But the presents do not take me to his house. Then I listen to the men talk, an' they say Paolo is a very jealous brother, an' he is afraid to lose his good home

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if his Lucia marry. Six or seven I know want to marry Lucia that year. So many men they come to America to make money, but the girls from Italy they are few here then, an' so the men they have to sen' money to the ol' country an' pay for them to come across. An' when Lucia she is already here, an' so pretty, it is only a fool who bother to spend money like that.

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Q. You've made me curious. Did you finally meet her? Is Lucia your wife?

A. You wait. You tell me to talk all I want, an' say what I want, an' talk so long as I want, so you wait.... No, that day I do not meet Lucia, nor the nex', or the nex'. An' one day I see her stop an' talk to a man who is here some four year before me an' who is build himself a house an' is look' for a wife. I feel very bad an' almost I give up, but not quite. Maybe you laugh when I tell you I decide to pray to Santa Lucia who is what you call the name saint of this Lucia. An' what do you think happen? One col' day, an' slippery, who do you think slip an' fall right in front of my sister' house but this Lucia! I run out to help her but already her brother is help' her, so I say quick to my sister, "Go out an' tell her to come in, some excuse, any excuse,- to dry her clothes, to have the coffee, anything..." An' so Lucia come in the house. She an' my sister, they come good frens, then Lucia an' me come good frens, an' then more than frens, an' then we get married.

Q. It sounds like a book.

A. It is life. If you put life in two covers, what a big book that would be, an' so many strange stories you would not believe they are true.

Q. Were you married by a priest?

A. Yes, by Father McKenna. Funny, no, for an Irish priest to marry two who are very much Italian? The men who work 4 with me in the granite, they make us a big dinner after. Half was cook Scotch way, an' half Italian way, an' some American way,- so everybody is

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happy. An' Lucia, I remember just how she look. She wear a grey dress tight at the waist an' with lots of lace at the neck, an' her hair is pull' back plain, but just the same it is all little brown curls around her face.

Q. Did she carry flowers?

A. Sure she carry flowers! What is a wedding without flowers and wine? She carry a bouquet of white flowers, I don't, know the name,- they make me think of the lace on her dress, they are so small an' delicate. Her cousin who come from the ol' country with her made her the dress, an' she give her the bouquet. In our village in Italy it was the custom for the one who make the dress to give the bouquet.

Q. Did you have a honeymoon?

A. No. No honeymoon. Viaggio di nozze we call it. In our village in the ol' country we do not have a honeymoon unless we are very rich. When Lucia an' I are married I have a little money, but Lucia hear a few days before that her young brother in the ol' country is hurt by a tree an' mus' go to the hospital, so we make the sacrifice an' sen' the money to him. Anyway, we have a good time here, we need no honeymoon.

Q. Was the wedding much the same as it would have been in Italy?

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A. Well, it mean the same. We want to be married, that is all we care. But it is a little different. In the ol' country we celebrate more; all our frens celebrate. The frens of the man who is to marry shoot guns in the air, sometimes two, three days before the wedding, an' all the countryside know there is go' to be a wedding. Mostly the people do not like to be married in their own village church. Mostly they are married in the bigger church in town a few miles away. They stay there all day an' they have a big supper for the wedding party

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in a restaurant. An' they have fine music with accordians an' violins, an' after the supper everybody is invite' to dance an' celebrate.