

Mamma Lena, A Rare Italian Rose

BY RAY SUTTON



PHOTOGRAPHY ANJAN HALL

*"The story of Mamma Lena
is the history of
ethnic radio in Sydney"*

Mamma Lena lives in Bankstown. The railway line is opposite her neat white house. The drive is quarry-tiled and the front lawn is dominated by a large white fountain topped by a cherub. There are rosebushes, too. Opulent, deep reds and a bush of large pink cabbage roses. "The pink ones were planted by my daughter," she says.

Rosalba, her daughter, is a businesswoman in Singapore and

her name, roughly translated, means "rose of the morning".

There is a painting of a rose over the mantle in the living-room. "Yes. I love roses," Mamma Lena says, "and violets."

She is small and fair, not at all the voluble, excitable momma. She wears a blue-striped top with fawn

pants, and Dino, her husband, who greets me at the door, wears fawn pants, a brown shirt with a gold chain and a crucifix. He wears a square ring with a diamond "D" on his ring finger.

I have come for Sunday lunch. We start with *fusilli* in a meat sauce. "We call it *fusilli* because it is shaped like a screw," she tells me. Then there is the main course. We have two meats, chicken and beef. Mamma Lena is critical of the beef