

Tribute to Mamma Lena



APIA Club, Leichhardt - Sunday 10th July 1994

A Tribute to Mamma Lena

Today we celebrate the eightieth birthday of a remarkable lady who has been a comfort, a friend and supporter to thousands of Italians in their time of need. Mamma Lena a unique lady is known to all Italians in Australia, there would not be one Italo-Australian that has not been touched by her many kind and good deeds. Mamma Lena has made more contributions to the Italo-Australian community than most could imagine. Songs have been written and sung about her, poems and books have been written about her, documentaries have been produced and numerous



Mamma Lena with husband Dino, son Roberto and daughter Rosalba.

plaques have been presented to her. Mamma Lena's dedicated work has been acknowledged not only by the Italo-Australian community, but also by the Italian and Australian media, the Italian and Australian Governments as well as prominent dignitaries such as Mr Menzies, Mr Fraser, Mr Whitlam, Mr John Laws, Mr Askin plus many more too numerous to list.

Mamma Lena in 1967 was awarded "The Cross of the Knighthood" as Italy recognised her valuable work for migrants and Australia thus awarding her with its second highest honour, Mamma Lena is also the first Italo-Australian

woman ever to be made a Member of the British Empire (M.B.E.) and recently, June 1994, she was presented with a gold medal by CO.AS. IT. Comitato Assistenza Italiano - Fundraising Committee in recognition for the contributions to date, as well as the present contributions she continues to make to the Italo-Australian community.

Mamma Lena was born Lena Morelli in Azzone di Scalve (Bergamo) on the 9th July, 1914. Both her parents died when she was a child. She ended her studies at the Ca' Foscari - The University of Venice.

In 1940 she married Dino Gustin, they had three children Alberto, Rosalba and Roberto. Dino was away at the war and Mamma Lena had to raise the children on her own and deal with the sudden death of their dearest first born Alberto aged 4 years old.

In 1956 Dino, Mamma Lena and Family migrated to Australia. Upon arrival they found a lack of services to assist newly arrived as well as established migrants to cope with the traumas of change in life styles in their new environment. After only six months in Australia Dino and Mamma Lena set out to do something about this sad situation.

Mamma Lena started writing in the "La Fiamma" Newspaper taking out 3 pages she set about responding to readers on their problems, informed them of various activities and advised them on various social problems, cooking, sewing tips and other interesting topics; Mamma Lena did this for approximately 8 years.

Mamma Lena started her Italian radio programme together with Dino as producer on 2SM, 2CH, 2KY, then 2SER. Now they were able to reach into the homes of the Italians in Australia and was possible to advise them of services available, give them news of their homeland and entertain them with music, competitions and organising many events and annual balls for the Italian community.

Her programme also promoted many Italian businesses and personalities. Mamma Lena's radio programs were what all Italians would look

forward to daily. Letters poured in from the listeners to confide their anguish, desperation, their pining for the motherland, their loneliness and depressions. They would plead for her advice on general matters to the more personal ones. The Italo-Australians depended on her for every aspect of support. From then onwards she was considered a mother to all Italo-Australians an icon, hence the endearing title "MAMMA LENA".

In 1978 Mamma Lena was made a member of the National Women's Advisory Council for a period of 2 years, attending meetings which took her all over Australia.

As Italians were still migrating to Australia, Mamma Lena visited immigration camps where she would deliver parcels, find accommodation and employment for them. For more established migrants she would personally accompany them to various government offices and doctors. They would go by taxi more often than not, at her own expense. She encouraged them to learn English, knowing that most families worked day and night, she would send those who wanted to learn English learning kits and information on where they were able to study English through correspondence.

To the new generation of Australians with Italian background Mamma Lena has also contributed and continues doing so through her promotion for the teaching of Italian in our school system. In 1992 Mamma Lena set up a petition with many thousand of signatures to lobby the Federal Government to have Italian as a priority language in our schools. Mamma Lena also taught Italian for 2 years through the Evening College at Ashfield.

Mamma Lena's dedication to the Sorella Radio Childcare Centre has been phenomenal. Through her hard fought efforts her dream of establishing a multicultural child care centre was established 1984. Through growing needs there is a necessity to expand the existing facilities to accommodate the growing number of families requesting its services.

To list all of Mamma Lena's achievements in a few lines is impossible however you can read the full history of Mamma Lena's achievements in the book titled "70 Years of Life in Two Countries: Italy and Australia" by Dino Gustin. The book, released in 1988, can be found in most libraries.

Mamma Lena our celebrations for you on your 80th birthday is a small token to show you how we the Italo-Australian Community feel about you our friend, our companion and our "MAMMA LENA".

Dear Mamma Lena with great pride we wish you a very Happy 80th Birthday and a big "THANK YOU" for all the work you have done and continue to do for the Italians who have made Australia their home.

From all of your Italo Australian Friends.

ROSE CANTALI

on behalf of the "Celebrations" Committee:
Norma and Fred Maretta, Angela Canturi,
Teresa Moezza, Marisa El Gabali,
Irene Laverdicocca, Ivana Smanlotto,
Maria Maso, Silvana Vidoni.



The "Celebrations" Committee.

Paul J. Keating

Prime Minister

It is a great pleasure to add my voice to all those who are gathering today tribute to you, Mamma Lena, on the celebration of your 80th birthday. Turning 80 is a significant achievement for a person, but it is a special occasion indeed when it is the birthday of one who has done as much as you have to foster the welfare and cultural life of your community.

This commemorative booklet records the details of your work for the Italian community almost from the moment of your arrival in Australia in 1956. It traces your contributions to a host of causes through *La Fiamma*, *Sorella Radio*, the *Associazione Nazionale Famiglie degli Emigranti* and other organisations. It is a record of which you yourself, and members of the community, may all feel just proud.

Through your work, Mamma Lena, you have helped not only in a very practical sense, but even more importantly through your columns and broadcasts, you have helped change the perceptions of government and other authorities as to what it means to be an immigrant, and of the expectations and needs that new settlers bring with them. You have helped form our nation into the vibrant multicultural society that it is today.

I am happy to see that both the Australian and Italian governments have formally recognised your tireless work for the Italian community in Australia by conferring respectively the rank of MBE and the *Croce di Cavaliere*. On a more personal note, I would like to add my own congratulations.

Your friends will honour your achievements today, and I hope that this gathering will demonstrate the gratitude and thanks of all members of the community for your dedication to their welfare over so many years.

Grazie e tantissimi auguri.

P.J. Keating

John Fahey

Premier of New South Wales

Dear Mrs Gustin

I understand that you will be celebrating your 80th Birthday at a luncheon to be held at the Apia Club, which co-incidentally is

celebrating its 34th birthday, on Sunday 10th July, 1994.

May I congratulate you on achieving this milestone in your life and join with your friends and colleagues in wishing you all the very best on this important occasion. You have worked tirelessly for the Italian community since your arrival in this country in 1956 and the many accolades you have received over the years is an acknowledgement of that hard work.

As you are joined by family, friends and colleagues I send my best wishes for a most enjoyable celebration.

Yours sincerely

John Fahey
Premier

Michael Photios

New South Wales Minister for
Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs

It is indeed a great pleasure to extend warm wishes and congratulations to "Mamma Lena" Gustin on her 80th birthday.

Like many Italians "Mamma Lena" has chosen Australia to be her home and has given everything she has to being an Australian who is proud of her cultural heritage.

Mamma Lena you have certainly set a fine example for the rest of the Italian and Australian community, I wish you continued health and happiness.

My birthday wishes also extend to the Apia Club on the celebration of it's birthday. For 34 years the Apia Club has served as a significant organisation for members of the Italian community and I am confident your good work will continue.

Michael Photios

James Samios

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Arts
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister
for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs

Dear Mr Cantali

Thank you for your kind invitation to Premier Fahey to join you and the Australian community at the Luncheon/Dance to honour Mamma Lena on the occasion of her 80th birthday at the Apia Club on Sunday, 10 July 1994.

The Premier regrets that he is unable to attend the celebration but has arranged that his congratulatory message for Mamma Lena be sent to her through you. Premier Fahey has also requested me to represent him on the occasion.

I look forward to meeting with you, Mamma Lena and the Australian-Italian community at the Apia Club on the day.

Yours sincerely,

James Samios

Paul Zammit

Member for Strathfield
Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Treasurer
Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister
for Aboriginal Affairs

Dear Mamma Lena

My wife Rita joins me in congratulating you on your 80th Birthday and wishing you continued good health.

Cari Lena e Dino, siete davvero due persone eccezionali. Avete vissuto e continuate a vivere la vostra vita per gli altri.

*Vi ringraziamo,
Rita e Paolo Zammit*

Yours sincerely

Paul Zammit

Michael Cantali

Councillor, Concord Municipal Council
Commissioner, Ethnic Affairs Commission

Cara Mamma Lena,

Thank you for the support you have given the Italo-Australian community over almost four decades. Through your work and caring, our community is well regarded and an integral part of Australian society. Deservedly our community has bestowed on you the most loving of all titles, that of "Mamma".

Mamma Lena, in good health may we share with you many more birthdays.

Desidero formulare i più sinceri auguri di buon compleanno e di ringraziare Mamma Lena, a nome mio e di tutta la comunità italo-australiana, per l'infaticabile lavoro da lei svolto per la causa degli italiani in Australia.

Michael Cantali

A Double Celebration

Today we celebrate the 80th Birthday party for a very well known and much loved member of the Italo-Australian community "Mamma Lena" (Lena Gustin).

I am sure you are all well aware of her achievements, however just as a reminder I would like to give you some insight into the life of this very popular lady.

Mamma Lena commenced her work for Italian immigrants as a journalist and radio announcer in 1956 on the Ethnic Programmes of radio stations such as 2SM, 2CH, 2KY and 2SER, a career which spanned a total 29 years. During this time, she was in many instances, the only source of information for many non English speaking people and in many cases provided much more than just "news reading".

An active member of the Italo-Australian community and The National Women's Auxiliary Council in Canberra among many other things, Mamma Lena was also awarded an MBE by the Queen in 1968 and a Knighthood by the Italian Government for her endless efforts with the Italo-Australian community. Not one to let age get in her way, Mamma Lena continues to help and participate in the community to this day. She is also an Honorary Member of our Club, and what would Wednesday's Bingo be without "Mamma Lena".

Mamma Lena had a dream, since 1963, to one day help build a "Child Care Centre", and this dream was fulfilled on the 29th April 1984 with the opening of the "Sorella Radio Child Care Centre" in Fairfield, N.S.W. which caters to the needs of the very young community members.

Coincidentally, the 9th July (yesterday) was also the 34th



9th July 1960: Minister for Immigration Hon. Alexander Downer reads the inscription on the Foundation Stone of the Apia Club.

Anniversary of the "laying of the first stone" in 1960, at the Apia Club, by the then Minister for Immigration the Hon. Alexander Downer.

We are honoured and pleased that here today, assisting with our celebrations, is our very special Guest of Honour, Mr Alexander Downer, the Leader of the Opposition and the son of the Alexander Downer who, as I just mentioned, was here thirty-four years ago, also as a very special Guest of Honour. Since then our club has come a long way and today boasts over 5000 members.

TONY BONICIOLLI

Secretary/Manager, Apia Club

EMILIO TRAVEL SERVICES

in collaborazione con la compagnia di bandiera **ALITALIA** ha sempre fornito il proprio appoggio in maniera tangibile all'APIA Club.

Oggi ci associamo alla celebrazione di due importanti anniversari:

**i 34 anni dell'APIA Club e
l'80° compleanno di Mamma Lena.
Tanti, tanti auguri!!!**



Raccomandiamo a tutti di volare e far volare **ALITALIA** prenotando tramite "L'AGENZIA DI FIDUCIA DEGLI ITALIANI":

EMILIO TRAVEL SERVICES

ANGOLO HOLDEN STREET E LIVERPOOL ROAD,
ASHFIELD, NSW 2131
Telefono: (02) 799 9444
Dir.: GINA LABBOZZETTA

NOSTRO UFFICIO IN ITALIA: **ALIFRANCO TRAVEL** (Dir.: NICOLA LABBOZZETTA)
GALLERIA CAMMINITI, CORSO GARIBALDI, REGGIO CALABRIA - TEL.: (0965) 89 0019

Programme

12.30 noon Opening

Welcome

Introduction
to the guests of Honour

Dancing with the
ANTHONY VADALÀ BAND

Variety Show with
RICKY GIULIANO
GRACE RIZZO
TONY MAZELL
and Guest Artist **PETER CIANI**

Lunch

Menu

Italian Antipasto

(Donated by Joe's Meat Markets, Ashfield)

Gourmet "Tasmanian" Cheese

(Donated by G. Spada and L. Cozza)

Cannelloni "Paesana"

Roasted Veal with vegetables

"Alpino" Italian Gelato

(Donated by Vince Tropeano, Marrickville)

"Italia" Celebration Cake

(Donated by Giovanni Scardinale, Fairfield)

Italian Spumante

(Donated by Filippo Navarra, Conca d'Oro, Riverwood)

Official Speeches

Dancing and surprises

Draw of a rich Lottery

Closing (6.00 p.m.)



*A rare picture of Mamma Lena
taken when she was 20 years old.*



PETER CIANI



RICKY GIULIANO



GRACE RIZZO



TONY MAZELL



ANTHONY VADALÀ

NICK SCALI FURNITURE

Nick Scali and Staff
Wish
Mamma Lena
a Very Happy Birthday

242 PARRAMATTA ROAD, AUBURN
TELEPHONE: 748 4262

*Best Wishes
to
Mamma Lena
on her 80th Birthday*

from
TONY BONANNO
Managing Director

of
A.M. R Motors

mazda

Unrivalled quality Pure pleasure



370-380 PARRAMATTA ROAD,
PETERSHAM, NSW 2049
Tel.: (02) 569 2844, Fax: (02) 560 4339

We thank the following firms and individuals who have demonstrated their appreciation and love to Mamma Lena and have contributed to the success of the day:

ALITALIA
 EMILIO TRAVEL SERVICES
 PETER CIANI
 RICKY GIULIANO
 GRACE RIZZO
 TONY MAZELL
 ANTHONY VADALÀ
 NICOLA CERRONE
 STEFANO DESIGNER JEWELLERS
 THE APIA CLUB
 LA FIAMMA
 IL GLOBO
 IL MONDO
 NICK SCALI
 TONY BONANNO
 NAT ZANARDO (who donated the flags)
 DANIELE VELCICH
 JOE ROSA
 LAMPORAMA
 GIOVANNI SPADA
 THOMAS COOK Cambio Valute
 JASMINE RASONI
 LUCIANO COSSA
 ITALO MAZZOLA
 FRED & NORMA MARETTA
 VINCE CAMMARERI
 F. MENDUNI
 VENTOLINI: "CASANOVA Restaurant"
 GIOVANNI SCARDINALE, Fairfield
 BRUNO TURCHINI
 ENZA FALANGA
 JOE BIANCHI
 F. SCALI: "FRASCATI Restaurant"
 STEFAN HAIR FASHION
 ELISA FLORIST of Bankstown
 F. MARCHETTA: "EOLIAN HOUSE"
 F. NAVARRA: "CONCA D'ORO"
 MARGHERITA CURTIS
 S. SCAGLIETTI
 "ASS. LOMBARDI NEL MONDO"
 FAMIGLIA PIEMONTESE
 JOLLY STUDIO
 EURO PHOTO (Franco Baldi)
 N. CRINITI & P. CIRCELLI
 C. SCHILLIRÒ: "TELEITALIA"
 MICHELE CANTALI
 BRUNO TAVA INTERNATIONAL
 A. & A. CASSANTI: Haberfield Bakery
 (who donated the Italian bread)

Special Thanks to the "Celebrations"
 Committee Members:

ROSE CANTALI, MARISA EL GABALI,
 NORMA and FRED MARETTA,
 IRENE LAVERMICOCCA,
 IVANA SMANIOTTO,
 ANGELA CANTURI,
 TERESA and SABATO MONZO,
 MARIA MASO, SILVANA VIDONI,
 DINO GUSTIN, TONY BONICIOLLI

GUESSING COMPETITION – M–M–A L–N–

PRIZES:

- 1st** 1 RETURN TICKET to ITALY flying **ALITALIA**
 Donated by **ALITALIA & EMILIO TRAVEL SERVICES - ASHFIELD**
- 2nd** 18K GOLD BRACELET - Value: \$1,000.00
 Donated by **STEFANO DESIGNER JEWELLER**, 120 Rawson St.,
 Greenacre, Tel.: 790 6496 - 80 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Tel.: 231 1799
- 3rd** PAINTING (ITALIAN MASTER) - Value \$800.00
 Donated by **NICK SCALI**, 242 Parramatta Road, Auburn, Tel.: 748 4262
- 4th** 1 TABLE LAMP - Value: \$360.00
 Donated by **LAMPORAMA**, 274 Norton Street, Leichhardt
- 5th** 1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION (including installation) to **TELEITALIA**
 Donated by **TELEITALIA**, Sydney, Free call 1800 651 692
- 6th** 300.000 (Italian Lire). Donated by **THOMAS COOK** Cambio Valute,
 Westfield Shopping Centre, Burwood, Tel.: 744 3666 (Jasmine Rasoni)
- 7th** 1 AIR RETURN TICKET SYDNEY/GOLD COAST
 Donated by **V. CAMMARERI TRAVEL AGENCY**,
 120 Norton Street, Leichhardt, Tel.: 550 0400
- 8th** COFFEE TABLE - Value \$200.00. Donated by **ALMA FURNITURE**
 (Fred Marella), Cnr. William & Hubert Sts, Leichhardt, Tel.: 564 1017
- 9th** IL PORCELLINO (miniature replica) - Value: \$150.00
 Donated by **F. MENDUNI GARDEN ARTISTRY**, Summer Hill
- 10th** LUNCH OR DINNER FOR TWO - Value: \$100.00
 Donated by **CASANOVA RESTAURANT**,
 115 Sussex Street, City, Tel.: 299 2285

Tickets: \$1.00 each **GOOD LUCK TO ALL !!!**

LUCKY DOOR PRIZES

- BASKET OF BEAUTY PRODUCTS - Value: \$200.00
 Donated by **STEFAN HAIR FASHION**
- BASKET OF HAIR CARE PRODUCTS - Value: \$50.00
 Donated by **STEFAN HAIR FASHION**
- LUNCH OR DINNER FOR TWO - Value: \$100.00
 Donated by **FRASCATI ITALIAN RESTAURANT**,
 2 Catherine Street, Leichhardt
- 1 CASES OF ITALIAN WINE, Donated by **F. Marchetta**,
EOLIAN HOUSE, 31 Gordon Street, Petersham
- 1 CASES OF ITALIAN WINE, Donated by **F. Marchetta**,
EOLIAN HOUSE, 31 Gordon Street, Petersham
- 1 "QUICK SNAP FLASH" CAMERA,
 Donated by **PHOTO PLAZA** of Bankstown
- ARTISTIC OBJECT, Donated by **BRUNO TAVA INTERNATIONAL**

Alitalia

Stefano
 DESIGNER JEWELLER



Teleitalia



Stefano



STEFANO DESIGNER JEWELLER
DESIGNERS - MANUFACTURERS - IMPORTERS
DIAMOND MERCHANTS

Shop 12, 80 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, N.S.W. 2000. Phone: (02) 231 1799, Fax: (02) 232 8335
Shop 5-6, 120 Rawson Road, Greenacre, N.S.W. 2190. Phone: (02) 790 6496, Fax: (02) 709 5406