



Jean Geraci
ROBS History Project
August 22, 2003 85

When occasionally requested to provide her legal name on any important document, Jean customarily gives her signature using the first name, Angela. Her maternal grandmother and her mother initially discussed between themselves what she would be called. Her mother didn't like the name Angelina, so she became Angela Ann. How they ultimately twisted it around she didn't know but the result was that her name became Gina and has remained Gina all of her life. Most friends and family know her by the name she embraced and that is Jean. It was during the summer of 2003 that she agreed to sit with us and be interviewed on August 22nd. She'd retired in 1995 and had already begun to experience what her retirement held in store.

First, we asked her about her family. She said she was married to Jim and had a family of three married sons Nicholas, Lewis, Jim, who were married to Clare, Jamie and Regina. She told us that she had seven grandchildren who were driving her "broke". ... wink, wink. They all reside here on Long Island, and she sees them whenever she can come back to visit, since Jean & Jim are now living year round in Florida which today she calls home, preferring winters in Florida to the ones in New York which she was more than happy to leave in New York.

Her grandchildren are her pride and joy. Nicholas is the oldest, and from the age of about thirteen or fourteen, he had always wanted a career in Special Education. He worked first with a woman by the name of Fran Forman. He worked during the summers with the Town of Islip. He graduated from high school and went on to college, pursuing Special Ed. Then he came to Brentwood becoming a Special Education Teacher and working with Howard Brodsky. They didn't quite see eye to eye, so he said to himself, if I can't do what I want to do in

Special Education that I love then I'll go into Guidance. He took more credits, went further with his education and became Coordinator of Guidance in Brentwood. He now has two children.

Louis went on to College where he decided he wanted to become a Chef until he realized being a Chef is a seven day, twenty-four hour a day job and wound up working for the Town of Islip instead. He's been with them now for over twenty years and cannot wait to retire and move to Florida, because he just loves it down there. He's got about five or six years to go before he retires. He has two children

Jimmy is the youngest. He has three children and lives in Bayport. James also went to the Brentwood School District. He's now teaching and just this year became tenured. He's based in the Freshman Center, and he loves teaching. The grandkids go from seven years to nineteen years. They're a handful, because their grandmother comes from the "old school". You do what I say *not* what you want. It's what I want. Do you have a few strong willed kids among all the grandkids there? Well, in the opinion of their parents they do, but when grandma comes over they either do what grandma says or they do what grandma says. *"I'm sure they turn around and do what they want when I'm not looking, but while I'm there they're all respectful and they're all loving."* There are two nineteen year olds, a fifteen and sixteen year old, Jacob is going to be nine and the girls are twins and going to be seven.

Do any of the kids take after their parents or show evidence of having specific family inclinations, talents or traits that you can see? *"It changes. I've heard them wanting to do what their parents do when they were small but as they grew up – like Joanna, she always wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps. She happens to be in charge of physical therapy at Stony Brook Hospital and Joanna always wanted to do that. She was going to do that work. But then she found out you have to have some sort of a medical background, and you have to know what a cadaver is. You have to look into it and find out where a lot of things are and all she did was to shake her head and say, Oh, Oh! That's not for me. But that goes all the way down to my youngest grandson who wants to be a paleontologist. That's what he tells me ever since he was knee high to a shinbone. That's okay. Well maybe he can be a doctor?"* *"Oh, no! I don't want to cut up people. I don't want to*

do that". Maybe he's better off with what he'll find in the ground already. There's no money in it, but he's happy, and if he's happy, we're happy".

Grandma was born seventy years ago in Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY, Erie Basin. When I said, "Jean, it's very different today", she replied with, "It's not there". We were talking about this only the other night. My brother and my sister and I happened to be together and he said, 'You know, maybe we can go back', and I said, 'No. Not unless you want to cry, because I did. I went all the way back, and I stood on the corner where the school was...and the house where my aunt lived, that block is gone. The house where I lived and my grandfather lived, that's all gone, so I just stood there and I cried. You could look from there and you could see the East River. There's nothing. But then he told me that's being sold right now. He said that's prime land. And I said, 'For what?' It's ridiculous! But that's what they're doing. Its' prime land right now, but I cried when I saw all that."

From there as I grew up and as one of the first families, we moved to what they called "the Projects". "I lived in the projects and thought that was the greatest place for any child to grow up in, because in one building with twenty-four families you had every race, creed religion and you lived with everybody never knowing that anyone was different. You just did favors for them. It was during the war when my brother was born. I was in the third grade when we moved there." "I guess I was about seven years old. That was the forties and it was great." "We kept it clean. We kept it neat. We washed the hallways. We had to clean the stairs. We did not go on the grass. We had a place to play. This is what we did. We had block parties. I can still smell the different foods. You name it, whether it was Spanish, Italian, Polish, Jewish food. You name it we had it. The food was delicious. You lived together. It was great. We had a community. We were a family. We had it all. We had a pool. It was beautiful. You couldn't get into too much trouble because everybody knew you, and everybody knew your family. Every adult we respected. We were all naive. We had our friends, and we had our quarrels; we had things like that. Did you have freedom of movement as a child? "Yes, as long as I was in that neighborhood. Once I started high school I was able to go to Manhattan on the Subway. I had to take a bus to the school I attended, Bay Ridge High School. That made a difference. I had to travel there. When I was in the Projects the only place I could go was to my grandfather's house. That was a nice walk, because mom and dad had to work. We'd go to grandpa's, and he'd be there at the window watching us come around, and we'd wave and make sure we

got there on time or we knew it. Once I grew up and I was able to, because I watched my brothers and my sister, as mom and dad had to go to work. That's one reason you live in the projects, because there's not that much money. So like I said everybody was a family, everybody watched out for each other".

What eventually happened to those people who moved out to the suburbs in Long Island? Did they lose all that? *"Not really. They took a lot of their experience with them. Your history changes you both for good and bad. You don't forget what happens to you. After the Projects I had to go through school, I got married. When I first got married I still lived in Ridgewood, Queens with my husband, two children, and I just didn't like living in a tenement. That really got me."*

Her dad had been saving money and in the fifties was able to buy what they called a small candy store. It had a soda fountain and a candy counter and eventually they started making sandwiches. Jean was still in Ridgewood when she graduated from Bay Ridge High. Her father had never been in the military and walked with a very pronounced limp. It was because he always had it that she thought all fathers came that way. She found out he had gotten it as a child by slipping on a banana peel. He was born in 1905, so she figured it had to have been within his first ten years of life that it happened. That was when they shipped him out to St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson where they put him in a cast to see if it would mend. It mended all right but not in the right way, with the result that the limp stayed with him the rest of his life.

"I had many wonderful childhood memories growing up as a child in Red Hook. I remember my mother coming home with my baby brother. I picked him up and almost dropped him, because she came in unexpectedly and scared me. I was holding him but almost dropped him. If I had known then what I know now I probably would have. (Only kidding!) No, because I could never pick him up today. I was with him only yesterday. Seriously, I love him dearly".

We asked Jean to tell us a little something about her mother. She said her maiden name was Callese, and she'd been born in Italy on the Isle of Ischia a short way from Capri in the Adriatic Sea just west of Naples. Jean had met every one of her grandparents. Her maternal grandfather she described this way. *"He was a dream". "He could have been anybody's grandpa. He was very lenient."* She used that word to describe all of her family on her mother's side. By contrast, they

were all strict on her father's side. Her mother's father had been in the Italian Navy, he traveled a lot – and he got in a lot of trouble but Jean was never allowed to listen to any of the stories because that was all men talk and all she could do was surmise what they were talking about. But he was her grandfather and she chose not to believe any of that. Her maternal grandmother was sickly with arthritis. She knows she went back to Italy with her mother and her uncle Paul for “the waters” which on their island were supposed to be ‘healing’. They were there until it was time for Jean's mother to go to school because she must have been five or six years old so that she could attend school here because she had to make sure she learned English so she could teach grandma and grandpa English. Oh, yeah, this was the language of this country and this is what they did. Jean said, *“Maybe that should be something we do today, but I can only argue about it and I got in trouble in school many times for that”*, guess that's beside the point.

“My mother worked a lot. She had to go out to go to work. I know she did homework. We used to do beaded bags in order to make money. I wish I had some of them today. My mother and father worked all their lives. However, my dad made a point of taking us all away for at least one week every summer and we would go up to the Catskills, and it was so relaxing. It was a family place. When you were in the Projects and living with a large group like that, just to go out to the country was fantastic. Occasionally, we'd go with other family members but most times it was just we by ourselves. ”

When she talked about her father Jean had said, *“He was strict, but he was also loving.”* His side of the family could never show their emotions, but as he got older then he did, and now she was saying, - *“What a waste! That was something we should have done a long time ago. But that was him.”* That was his family. His parents were like that, whereas my mother's parents were constantly hugging, kissing, arguing, fighting and just having a ball. They didn't do that on my father's side. He was brought up that way and that was how he was. But I have to say even with all the strictness, I have to say as I grew up and I couldn't do certain things, now I kind a say, thanks Dad because I see how it is now. I was pretty strict with my boys. They're a little more lenient. I see it every once in a while. I see it with the girls, the teenagers. Now they know what I was talking about.”

After her father sold their Candy Store in Brooklyn he bought a house in Brooklyn on forty-ninth St. & 4th Ave in Sunset Park. She met her husband Jim when she was still in the store. He came originally from that area. When they

moved he had to travel back and forth if he wanted to see her. That's what he did.

As we continued talking about family, Jean told us her mother's family consisted of three boys and two girls. Including herself, there was five all told. Her father's family – for as many times as he told her, she thought there were children *"coming out of the woodwork"* she only remembers there being three siblings. There were at least thirteen children from the unions in that family. Her grandparents were all born in Italy, but all those families lived in this country. Her father's side all came from Naples, but she believed most if not all of the children were born here. Her father was the oldest, and he was born here. Jean was the oldest member of her generation of family. When asked if she thought that somehow had contributed to her becoming the person she is today, she quickly replied with, a "Yes" and then acknowledged she found it difficult to talk about. *"I'm tired of giving orders"*, she replied. She said she's done it and while her husband Jim tells her continually, *"You're not their mother"*, I still *"watch out for my brothers and sister – and I do it."* Such as it was became her lifetime habit. What had her brother's taught her? What had she received from them? *"Love. Respect. That's all I ever wanted,"* she said. We asked, "What was the most difficult thing you were ever asked to do?" *"Besides this interview,"* she enquired? She thought it might have been her decision to move to Florida. Her brother Thomas is living in Florida. He's been there for quite a while but is the only family member she has living in close proximity beside her husband Jim's sister who is down there too. We do have people down there she said, and in addition we have made many new friends. We wait for the rest of the family to come down and Carmela, Shirley and Audrey, maybe we'll all get together this fall.

We asked if there had been any other significant adults in her life that had contributed to her becoming the person she is today by means of their mentoring or nurturing influence or by means of something they taught her or exemplified for her? She thought she took a little bit from her two aunts one from her mother's side and one from her father's side; different things they may have taught her or said to her, but she couldn't think of anyone else right then.

Jean had always longed to travel. She had a burning thirst to satisfy her wanderlust and her curiosity for travel and for people, places and things. Then

when she was leaving high school her dad shared his own view of life with her when he told her there was no such thing as college for a girl at that time. College was for boys. It was not for girls. In response she had told him at school she received a flyer about a job opportunity she was interested in exploring. Someone had come down to her school and conducted testing. She told him she aced the Italian, she aced the English, everything was fine, she had the weight, she had the height, she wanted to become a Stewardess. She thought to herself, "I can travel!" He looked at the paper and he said, "And do you know what kind of girls Stewardess's are?", and he ripped it up. And she went to work. And she's been working since she was thirteen years old. "But", she said, "that's' not the point." *"With that I had typing and Secretarial Skills. My first job was working for stockbrokers, and I was in what they called a pool. I didn't like that. I went for an interview and I got a job with a law firm and that I fell in love with. As soon as I was all ready to go to Court and become a Court Stenographer, I got pregnant and Nick came along, so I didn't do that. "If I could do it all over again I'd go into Law, because I thought it was a fantastic field. Well, the owner of the Law firm called me in one day, and said they had hired a new receptionist. I thought it was because I'd been fired, but it was only because he wanted me to learn the machine and take all my steno pads with me and he was going to take me to the Court and I was so happy then I had to go back and tell him I was in a family way." But I stayed till just before Nick was born."* Lois came about two years after that. Jimmy came along six years later. *He must have been about four or five years old and we had the house in Brentwood, this was 1966. We moved here in 1962. Things were getting a little tight. My husband worked for an insurance company in the city and the house that we bought we were not entirely sure we were going to be able to keep it. I said well, I'm going to go to work. So my sister happened to live right behind me and she watched my son when I went for an interview with Mr. Mauro. The first person in the District I met was Virginia D'Atre. She had me speak with Mr. Mauro. After that interview he sent me over to North Junior High School. When I arrived there I discovered they needed to hire a Clerk for the Library and that is where I met Helen Grey. Helen taught me all about a library. She said, 'I'm going to teach you but we are not going to stay here because you and I are going over to East Junior High School. It will be completed in time for the opening of the next school year.'* I got this job in Feb of 1966. Sept of 1966 we were in East Junior High School. I had to work all that summer, because all the books were coming in, and that's how I started with the District, and it was Part Time, Full Time, all the time." Mr. Mrowka was Principal at North Junior High

School. George Pitman was Principal of East Junior High School with Tom Marcello and Ed Murphy the 2 Assistant Principals. *"I was in the Library for about a year or so when Tom Marcello asked me if I'd like to come down to the front office. So I said okay and began working downstairs in the Front Office. George Pitman left shortly. There was a lot of garbage going on that I refused to listen to and continued to do my job. Steve Howland came in. Joe Silva came in and Marty Efron and I worked with all of them. I loved being in the building. I loved all the teachers. I loved the children. The bad part of it when I started was that I wanted to take some of them home, but you're not allowed to do that. But it was great. I didn't like when they spoke, or I should say, used foul language. I made it known that I don't like it. When I worked with Joe Silva as Dean of Discipline, they would leave me alone with the kids, and I had quite a few of them in there. We would have nice conversations, and I would tell them what is right and wrong and everything, and I would have to say that Brentwood taught me a lot. I never realized that not everybody has dinner at 5 or 5:30 with the whole family around the table. Not everybody has a mother, a father, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Some have a lot of uncles. This bothered the blazes out of me, so I tried to teach them some of my morals and values, give them a little bit of family, and they looked at me like I had two heads. And sometimes – one thing, there was one particular girl, tiny little thing, she was being disciplined for whatever reason, I don't recall, but she started foul mouthing and I didn't go for it. I just grabbed her and I pushed her in the seat and I said to her 'You are in trouble' and she said to me, "You touch me".... and she got up, she got out and left the building. I tried to get her, Tom Marcello was still there, and he tried to get her but little Debbie ran out of the building, and I'd say within ten or fifteen minutes she's coming back with her sister. Her sister is, I'd say, a head and a half taller than I am, and that much wider and she came in (God Bless Tom,) he says "you're on your own now Jean" Thanks a lot! She comes in and says, 'You touch my sister'? I said, 'I did push her back in her seat,' Yeah! She says, 'Why'? "Didn't Debby tell you?" She said, 'Tell me why?' I said, 'Debbie, Tell her what you said to me' "Debbie didn't say anything, and I said, 'I can't say it because I don't use that language. I've never used it and I have no intention of using it. You ask Debbie". She said, 'eh, mm, eh, a', and all I saw was a hand go out and hit Debbie and I thought, Thank You. There are good people. She never cursed in front of me again. That was one.*

"We had a teacher that had a foul mouth, and I kept telling him, some day I'm going to put soap in your mouth, and he turned around and thought it was

funny. He kept it up, and he kept it up until one day he was in the office, and they had that liquid soap in a squeeze container in the bathroom, and I just got myself a handful of it, and he said it again, and I put my hand in his mouth. Gary Mintz never cursed in front of me again. But that was Gary.

“East Junior High – there’s a story. God! The names I can remember. When I left East Junior High, I came back from vacation and it was in the summer, and Steve Howland came in and said, ‘Jean from now on you’re going to do attendance along with your regular job.’ I turned around, and I said, I’m in this office as a regular Secretary, I’m a front office girl, I do Dean of Discipline work, you want me to do attendance? He says, ‘Yeah!’. Ginnie Glinka was in charge of attendance at that time. He said, ‘She’s moving on and going somewhere else.’ So I said, Ginnie had a full time job as Secretary of Attendance. I said with that full time job and my full time job, and the other little things you’ve thrown on me, don’t you think that’s a bit much? He said, ‘You can do it’. I said No! He said, ‘You have no choice.’ Don’t tell me I have no choice. It just so happened that there was a posting from Human Resources. They needed a girl up at the Administration Building. I applied. Down deep I never expected it. Down deep I never wanted it. I was happy and very content where I was. I knew what I had to do, and I knew how to deal with everybody. Mr. Howland knew that I’d sent the paper up. All he told me was, ‘I just got a call from Mr. DiPietro,’ ‘You’ll never get that job.’ Why? ‘Well, he said, he wanted to know about you.’ Okay! What did you tell him? ‘What could I tell him? What could you expect? You’re Italian.’ The next thing I knew I got a call from Mr. DiPietro - I was hired. I went in and I said, Thank you Steve. That was the best thing you could have said. I went up and I was hired for George Mann. I was George Mann’s Secretary at that time. I can’t say how many years it was, because he wasn’t there that long... about a year or so. There were about three or four of them that were part of the cutbacks. Dave Holt was still there. I worked with Dave Holt. I think it was about that time that Les Black and Mike Fascullo came to that building. Mr. DiPietro called me up, and he told me I would be working with Les Black, and I can’t remember what year it was. Les Black was upstairs, and I was downstairs. This was in the old Administration Building. I had an intermediary that was Mike Fascullo who sat right in front of me and Dave Holt. But even there we all worked for each other. Everybody knew what everybody else was doing. It wasn’t until we went into the new building and got onto the Third Floor that everybody got his or her own job, and I didn’t like it. I thought everybody should know what everybody else was doing. I’m not talking

about taking over a job, but when anybody is out you can help. If you wanted to answer a question for somebody that came in, you should have some knowledge, but I miss that school building.”

The unexpected manner of Mr.DiPietro’s sudden departure from the District represented the end of a seminal chapter in the life of this school district. The trauma of his premature death reverberated through his family and throughout each and every level of the district representing a dividing line separating all that had come before from what was or might have been – after.

Even as a thirteen year old youngster, Jean had been a big girl, and she and her cousin whose name was also Jean were both thinking of finding work when somebody told them they could get this job in Manhattan, right around the corner from “*Little Italy*” in a *Pop-corn factory*. It produced round discs of caramel popcorn that came out of a machine on a conveyor belt where five at a time they’d be snatched up by Jean and her cousin and stacked into a box that they would then insert into another small machine that wrapped and sealed them in clear cellophane. You were supposed to have working papers by the time you were sixteen, but they didn’t get caught and successfully did this work for an entire summer, taking a subway to and from Manhattan by themselves. This was her first paying job.

She can do whatever she is expected to do, and her work history proves that. Neither a lark nor an owl will she become since she can be who ever she must simply to get the job done. She’s capable of considerable flexibility and has an amazing work ethic that lets her succeed at whatever she puts her mind to. While she is not one used to being sick, just the year before she had found herself hospitalized and suffering with pneumonia when northern winters finally caught up with her. She said “*That’s it*” and when her physicians in New York and Florida both recommended she avoid going back to visit during Long Island’s frigid months, Jean readily agreed.

At this juncture our conversation returned once again to 1962 when she and her family first moved to Brentwood. By that time their apartment in Brooklyn had become too cramped for their growing family. They would come out to the Island every weekend looking for a place, because they really wanted to find a house they could call home. Her parents were living in Lindenhurst and they

would come out every weekend for almost two years to see them. Meanwhile, they were keeping their eyes open for different houses. They finally found something that they might be able to swing, and it was in Brentwood. It was located on Blacker St. right off Islip Avenue. They had no idea it was off Islip Ave when they first saw it because she and her Aunt had taken a ride out to see the house. Jean fell in love with it, and Jean said I'm going to surprise my husband. She put \$5.00 down on the house and went home. He came out that Saturday and she said, *"I just bought a house"* and started crying. And he said "What, for \$5.00"? Let's go see it. We did and he loved it. The agent pulled out a map and told us to pick out a lot. We did, then we went outside and he pointed and said Blacker Street will be over there somewhere in that corner. And all we could see were trees and trees and more trees. She remembers passing an airfield and seeing the farmer who had a small plane and had owned the land before it was sold to the developer. Little did she know it was only about three blocks from LILCO's location. They settled in on Blacker St. and remained there for at least twenty years.

Jean had spoken earlier about her introduction to the Brentwood School District when she accepted a position working in the Library and working with kids. She loved everything about the job. All three of her boys went to Brentwood Elementary schools. Two went on to St. John's and Jimmy went to Brentwood High School. When she was assigned to the Administration Building she wound up *"with another family and the friends that we made there –about thirteen in all –it was really like a family. We used to have the greatest coffee breaks talking about things that we can't talk about right now."*

Each time she made a move in her career she made a conscious choice to avoid any involvement or participation in anything having anything to do with organizational or professional identity. As she moved from her association with Mr. DiPietro, Mr. Mauro, to Mr. Black, they had positions that were secretive. You worked for that person and that was it. You couldn't possibly have worked for anybody else. There would have been a huge conflict of interest. She mentioned earlier *"the three monkeys."* *"As a child at my grandfather's house there were three little plaster cast monkeys, and I played with them. When I retired – I didn't want to retire, but when I left that position I left my three little monkeys on the desk. And that was when I told Kathy, my replacement, "This job is yours, "As long as you always follow the rules of the three monkeys to "See no evil, hear no evil,*

“speak no evil”, you can be here forever.” With things like that, you can’t afford to get involved with things on the outside. You can know about them, be aware of them but, you can’t be involved with them, at least she didn’t think you should be involved. She was made a Confidential Secretary when she worked with the Superintendent of Schools but she was still a Secretary with CSEA.

The members of her extended Brentwood family included Carmela, Adrian, Eileen, Mary, Alice, Audrey, Ginny, Shirley, Angie, Carmela’s mom- their matriarch, all of whom did a lot of things together, and some of them still do. *“There are sisters and there are sisters.”* she said. Some moved far away and lost contact because of the distance, Carm’s mom passed away, but Ginny was still working, Angie was still working there, Alice is and Mary moved away.

Why had Jean retired? Her husband became seriously ill in May of 1995. He found out he had prostate cancer, and they made an appointment to speak with a surgeon in Bay Shore, but they didn’t like what he said, so they both walked out. Now what? They turned to their Brentwood family. They spoke first with her daughter-in-law to get the name of someone at Stony Brook. She next asked Nick to contact Claudia, because she knew that Tony (Felicio) had undergone the same operation, but Les (Black), leaned over Jeans shoulder and said “Hang up!” He told them to hang up and call this number. Les had been in the hospital previous to that and gave her the name of a doctor that was highly recommended, and they called and made an appointment to see him, and he answered all their questions. He was fantastic. Her husband Jim was comfortable with him, and he did the surgery and everything was fine. That was when she went in to speak with Les who she’d promised when she took the job to stay for five years. He turned around and knew exactly what she was going to say. He said, *“I understand.”* Jean said, *“I’d like to be home with him.”* She retired in September. *“I apologized for not being able to keep my promise to him”*. Her Jim had always wanted to go to Florida, and so they went to Florida moving to Ocala in the middle of the state. She called it “beautiful horse country”. Cold weather lasts but a month down there, otherwise the days are beautiful. Jean enjoys painting, crocheting, reading and is looking forward to traveling again if possible, as long as Jim’s new health issues are not an obstacle and defer their dreams.

As we approached our closing moments I asked Jean what she missed most about her Brentwood experience. She answered this way: *“The people, ... the*

people ... I've been up here now for a month and a half, and my son right now is in Aruba and I got a phone call from him. He wanted to know about the kids and everything else, and he turns around and says, 'Oh, and by the way mom, Jim Deutch says hello, and I said 'Jim Deutch?' He says 'Yeah'. He was sitting beside me at the table last night'. 'I didn't know that Jim and my son knew each other, or how they got around. He says to say hello.'"

I was at the Forum Diner in Bay Shore about a week ago and I'm sitting there when someone turns around and says, 'Mrs. Geraci'? And I go, 'Yeah', and I look at her and I recognize her face but I'm sorry, I don't recognize her face. I'm trying to pinpoint it, when she says, 'East Junior High' which means it had to be in the sixties, when she says, 'You haven't changed a bit', I just got up and kissed her. That was the greatest conversation, but I do, I miss the people. I miss the people. I miss the friends. That's what I miss."

Could anyone else think of anything at all that was omitted. Almost inaudibly a quiet voice in the background from Carmela suggested that Jean tell us of the time her father had been disciplined by a Saint of the Catholic Church. The camera moved in for a close-up as she then related the account of her father as a boy boasting of a time he'd been disciplined by his nun teacher. Some of us may remember how back in those earlier days it was not unheard of for a teacher to administer sanctioned tough love either with an open hand or a wooden ruler.

Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini was one of the most active missionaries in the history of the Church. She was the first U.S. citizen of Italian-American heritage to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church as a saint on July 7, 1946 by Pope Pius XII. The youngest of thirteen children born in Lombardy, Italy when Francesca Saverio Cabrini was thirteen, she heard a traveling missionary speak about the Chinese mission, which sparked her dream of being a missionary. She founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in an abandoned Franciscan monastery. She took her past experience as a lesson in how not to run an order and soon earned a reputation for being as full of love for the sisters as she was zeal for the mission. She hoped her sisters would be sent to China. Instead, Pope Leo XII asked her to serve the Italian immigrants in New York. She opened schools, orphanages, and hospitals across the American continents, all while maintaining a peaceful interior life. *"We must pray without tiring, for the salvation of mankind does not depend upon material success ... but upon Jesus alone,"* she said. As we

parted ways I was struck with this thought - All Catholics are taught to believe that every human soul, be they saint or sinner, is one with the source of He who is the sum total of all **LIGHT** and **LOVE** - Christ Jesus, the alpha and omega.