

# THE MALTESE PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA



**E-NEWSLETTER**

Issue 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019



**John Pass (Giovanni Pace), a native of Cospicua, Malta, co-forged, with John Stow, of the “Liberty Bell” in 1753, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, operated an iron works in Mount Holly, New Jersey by 1746.**

**Louis Shickluna (Luigi Scicluna), a native of Senglea, Malta, the earliest known Maltese immigrant to what is now Canada, first arrived in Quebec, Lower Canada (now Quebec) in 1826 and found work helping to build ships. In 1835, he built his first boat, a schooner, at Youngstown, New York, and by June 1838 had taken over the shipyard in St. Catharines, Upper Canada (now Ontario).**



## EDITORIAL COMMENT

I've been receiving two free, electronic Maltese newsletters from Australia, namely *The Journal of Maltese Living in Malta and Abroad* and *The Voice of the Maltese*, for several years and wondered why there wasn't something similar representing the Maltese communities in Canada and in the United States or all of North America for that matter.

I've been editor of the bi-monthly newsletter for The Maltese Canadian Club of London, in Ontario, Canada, for more than eight years and, with the dissolution of the Club this past December, decided to attempt to edit a free, electronic newsletter which would serve the

## CONTENTS

3. Gleanings from the Sunday Bulletin
4. Convention of 1945
5. The Situation of the Maltese in Canada on the Eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
8. The Early Years of Judge Rosemarie Aquilina's Family in Michigan
10. The Failed Attempt to Settle the Maltese in Grenada
11. Charles E. Puglisevich: A Maltese Immigrant's Success in the Oil Industry Worldwide
12. Fr Aurelio Ciantar and Fr Eugene Fiteni: Two Augustinian Friars in the United States
13. George Bonavia
16. Francis and Joseph Cutaiar: Two Maltese Immigrants to the United States in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century
18. Early Maltese Emigrants to the Canadian Prairies
20. Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area Project
21. Four New Members from Canada and the United States Join the Council for the Maltese Living Abroad
21. The Maltese of Powell River, British Columbia
22. Joe Calleja
24. The Founding of the Maltese Social Club in Guelph

Maltese communities of all North America.

While most of the Maltese who immigrated this continent ended up in the United States and Canada, it is hoped that the newsletter will also encompass those who went to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. With this in mind, a brief account is given here of a failed attempt on the island of Grenada in the Caribbean (page 9).

It is hoped that such a newsletter as this will serve as sort of a "clearing house" for news pertaining to Maltese organizations throughout all of North America. The notices for *Leġen Malti*, the Maltese-Canadian Museum Archives and Visitors Centre and St. Paul the Apostle Church are meant to be steps in that direction.

With this in mind, one can envision, for example, a person in Toronto seeing that an event within the Maltese community in San Francisco will be taking place while he or she is in the latter city and might decide to take part in it.

Just having names, addresses, telephone numbers and hours of opening of the Maltese clubs scattered throughout the continent would be useful.

I invite the various associations to forward such information and encourage those connected with such organizations to submit a write-up on the same.

You are encouraged to send me articles, either new, such as that by Mark Caruana on Fathers Aurelio Ciantar and Eugene Fiteni (pages 12-13) or previously published, such as Richard Cumbo's on the Maltese of Powell River, British Columbia (page 21).

Also welcomed are items which will assist on-going projects, such as Charlie Vella's piece on the Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area Project (page 20), or aid others in tracing their Maltese roots, such as the article by Gabrielle Cutair Caldwell and myself on the Cutaiar brothers (pages 16-17).

What I envision is a newsletter which showcases the Maltese pre-

sence in North America, both now (pages 8-9) and in the past (pages 18-19).

As the Catholic faith has been one of the central features of Maltese culture, and as there is presently but one Maltese national parish in all North America, I have asked Fr. Manuel Parnis if I might use extracts from the Sunday bulletin of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Toronto as a regular feature in this newsletter (page 3).

Unlike some of the newsletters, journals and newspapers I have consulted, I would like to see this newsletter contain articles written in English only as virtually all the readership is fluent in this language and, dare I say, less than half would be in Maltese.

Likewise, in this day and age, with virtually everyone having access to the Internet, I don't believe there is a need for news about Malta or other places in the world with a large Maltese presence, such as Australia, in this publication.

For the present, I envision this newsletter appearing bi-monthly and being at least 20 pages in length.

Your feedback and opinions, which could then be shared with the readers, are welcomed (page 20). These, in turn could help to shape subsequent issues.

Between now and the next issue, I hope some will join with me in forming some sort of advisory group or board of directors for this newsletter. This in turn may lead the newsletter in a different direction from what is presently envisioned.

My intent was to get this newsletter up and running and then worry about how it will be managed and the direction it would take down the road.

For the present, I'm very grateful for the encouragement received from many, largely who used to receive the club newsletter I previously edited.

My heartfelt thanks goes to those who agreed to submit articles for this first issue, in some case on very short notice.

Dan Brock

## GLEANINGS FROM THE SUNDAY BULLETIN



*Fr. Manuel Parnis, MSSP is pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, Toronto, the only Maltese national parish in North America. These “gleanings” are extracts from his commentaries on the Sunday readings which are published in the Parish’s Sunday Bulletin.*

### Stepping Stones vs. Stumbling Blocks

Modern life has brought us closer to one another than ever before. We influence one another in all sorts of ways. God wants us to be stepping stones for one another. Unfortunately, sometimes we are stumbling blocks to one another. Here are some examples of the way we can be a scandal, that is, a stumbling block, to another person.

You are a scandal to me when you are unkind or unjust in the way you treat me. You make me small. You damage my self-confidence. You are a scandal to me when you fail to understand my weakness, mistakes, and sins, and write me off as a result of them. When you condemn me, you make me feel that I am evil. You are a scandal to me when you humiliate me because I do not live up to your expectations. You hurt my pride and damage my self-image. You are a scandal to me when you keep me down, or hold me back. When you grab the limelight, I am forced to retreat to the shadows and made to feel inferior. You are a scandal to me when you exclude me or ignore me. You make me feel a stranger and an outsider. When you tear down my ideals, and destroy my dreams. When you turn me into a slave so that you can live like a lord. You impoverish me so as to enrich yourself.

You can also be a stepping stone to me, when you support me in moments of weakness and doubt. You are a stepping stone to me when you give me a belief in myself, when you boost my self-confidence. You are a stepping stone to me when I am feeling inadequate, and you help me to discover the special talents God has given me. You are a stepping stone to me when you make demands on me, are challenging to me, not to hurt me, but to help me to grow and to develop my potential. You are a stepping stone to me when you accept me though others reject me. You are a stepping stone to me when you refuse to join the mob and throw the stone of accusation and judgement at me when I sin. You are a stepping stone to me when you forgive me. You liberate me from my past and I am free to move

forward again. You are a stepping stone to me when you understand me and listen to me.

### It Is not Good for a Human Being to be Alone

In the beginning of life, when we were infants, we needed others if we were to survive. And at the end of life, we will again need others so that we can survive. The Bible says, “it is not good for a human being to be alone.” Sometimes it is a good and necessary thing for us to be alone-but not as a permanent condition. Human beings are social animals. Of ourselves we are incomplete. Humanity can never be acquired in solitude. We need others.

In marriage God answered the human need for friendship, companionship, closeness and warmth-all those things we long for, but find so difficult. These needs can also be met by belonging to a community. And those who have a close relationship with God are never alone. When people get married, they bring to it, not only their strengths, but also their weaknesses.

### Happiness and Joy

In thinking of others, we are enjoying happiness in our hearts for all that we do with so much love. The secret of happiness consists in being faithful to one’s commitments and responsibilities while at the same time enjoying life. It is easy to be happy when we are doing what we want. But to find happiness in what we have to do, not simply in what we want to do, this is a blessing from God. Happiness is not a shallow self-satisfaction. There can be no happiness for us as long as the things we do are different from the things we believe. And there can be no happiness without love. A sadness falls upon us when we say No to Love. Something else so important to think about is that we must not equate joy with pleasure. Pleasure is of the body; joy is of the spirit. You can quickly become tired of pleasures, but you never grow tired of joys. In the end, only God can fulfil our dreams, and happiness is the best sign of his presence. The presence of God is the cause of our joy. Isaiah told the people to “Shout for joy.” What is the cause of that joy? Because ‘God is in your midst.’ And Paul said to the Philippians, ‘I want you to be happy.’ Why? Because ‘the Lord is very near.’ The joy that this world cannot give is the joy that comes from a sense of God and his love for us. For all Christians that they may put the Lord at the centre of their lives, and seek to imitate him in their concern for others. Joy is love bubbling over into life. It can coexist with pain. Joy is the flag we fly when Christ, the Prince of Peace, has taken up residence in our hearts.

\*\*\*

*The two Maltese national churches which once existed in the United States were St. Paul of the Shipwreck Church in Detroit and St. Paul of the Shipwreck Church in San Francisco. The former no longer exists and the latter now serves a predominately African American, Hispanic and Filipino congregation.*

### CONVENTION OF 1945\*

The first Convention of the Grand Council of Maltese Associations of North America opened with a bang in Toronto on September 7, 1945.

Fourteen Maltese organizations from the United States and Canada were formally represented and showed a great spirit of unity never before witnessed in any part of the Western Hemisphere. The three sessions of the first Maltese Convention were very orderly and with most wholesome results. Thanks to the great organizer and chairman Mr. A.G. Cutayar of Toronto.

The three Maltese Veteran Posts from Detroit added much color to the church celebrations. In the High Mass for the fallen heroes of Malta, Fr. O'Neill was very eloquent in his sermon, a tribute to all in Malta. The Ladies auxiliaries were the pride of the Detroit pilgrimage and were viewed with much admiration by the overflowing crowd attending the 8<sup>th</sup> September Mass.

The Banquet for returning servicemen was indeed a successful venture. Some 250 participated in the welcome dinner, many were turned away.

The stately personality of Mr. John B. Spiterey of Detroit attracted the full attention of the gathering. Mr. Joseph Edward Doublet reminded his listeners that the task of the Maltese of North America has just begun and that we must do honor to our forefather and Malta.

Mr. Cutajar bravely balanced his emotions and concluded his talk by saying: "We must not let those who yet are to come to these shores, suffer. With your co-operation we can be prepared to receive them all and give them a good start."

The first convention ended with a very successful dance that same evening. The heat was frightful. It did not, however, stop the belles of Toronto, among whom Miss Gracie Borg, Miss Carmela Zahra, Miss Katie Borg, Miss Rita Scicluna and the Misses Carol and Pat Borg were very prominent. A young Maltese peach of Brantford, whose name escaped our reporter's pad, did some strenuous jiving.

We were told in a whisper, that many Detroit bachelors had left many dates open for future Toronto commitments. Oh yes, we almost forgot to mention the slick rug cutting of some of the debonair Detroit gentlemen. Joe Fasi and Em. Vella were keenly observed by all. They can shake a mean leg.

The visitors were entertained in groups. Our group was guest at the Varsity Arena on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, where Sir Ernest McMillan conducted the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. We enjoyed everything there except the heat, which of course could not be attributed to Sir Ernest. The Tanis of Kennelworth were our hosts, and so were the Peraltas, the Sciclunas of North Toronto,

the Giordmaines, the Cutayars, and Mr. Charles LaFerle of the Canadian Red Cross.

Speakers at the Convention included many able community leaders among whom we mention Capt. Charles Carwan, Past Commander Dom Meilak, Mr. Frank Micallef, Commander Albert Felice, Mr. Paul Portelli, Commander J. Cini, Adjutant Seychell, Commander Joseph Fasi, Mr. John B. Spiterey, Mr. Joseph C. Cauchi, Mr. Joseph Edward Doublet and many others. A roaring time is anticipated next September in New York where the second convention will take place.

The Maltese press representatives and delegates of the different organizations held caucus meetings and small parties in their hotel rooms between sessions and presented a picture of true unity at every session.

The president of the Council divulged that he intended to ask Malta to send a group of Maltese musicians selected from every band club in Malta, for exhibition purposes in Toronto, New York and Detroit.

Mr. A.G. Cutayar was made a very happy man by the spectacular achievement, the fruits of his untiring efforts. Mr. John N. Giordmaine, the famous Maltese "Merry Magician" was overflowing with joy and Miss Carol Borg, the secretary of the Maltese Society of Toronto, who is also known as the "Sweetheart of the Community," was at hand in most every place and cleverly entertained the guests of individual groups. She too was a true picture of cheer.

Messieurs E. Borg, J. Zammit and P. Sapiano, who are the backbone of the Toronto Maltese Community, and who were entrusted with the hard work of making arrangements for the welcome, were very pleased and could not do enough for the guests.

The Maltese Communities of the United States wish to take this opportunity to thank Toronto for the wonderful welcome accorded them and for the real good time shown them during their convention stay in that metropolis.

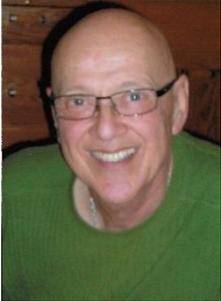
Toronto has given birth to a parent Maltese union, whose strength shall be decided only by the faith and sincere effort of the existing organizations.

We are sure that the announcement of this new body shall fill every Maltese heart with joy; and we take this opportunity to wish the Council a long, strong, happy, healthy and wealthy life.

*\*This is a slightly amended version of the article which appeared on pages 3-4 of the Maltese Forum, Autumn – Winter 1981 and which, in turn was reprinted from the Maltese Journal, vol. XI, no. 9 (Sept. 1945). According to the late Charles A. Caruana, Joseph Edward Doublet was the organizer of the 1945 Convention and a couple more were held in succeeding years. There was an attempt to hold a similar convention in Guelph, Ontario, in June 1981, but it was cancelled owing to a lack of participants.*

## THE SITUATION OF THE MALTESE IN CANADA ON THE EVE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Richard S. Cumbo\*



***Richard has been a pioneer in Maltese Canadian research. Much of the fruits of his efforts has been housed and preserved in various archives in both Canada and Malta.***

The number of people of Maltese origin living in Canada is estimated at about 30,000 (1996 Canadian Census). If the children of Maltese immigrants are also included, the number would reach about 50,000. The majority of immigrants who came to Canada from the Maltese islands arrived after the Second World War. Most of these live in the Province of Ontario, totaling about 25,000. It has always been difficult to obtain an accurate number of Maltese-Canadians living in Canada. One of the reasons is that in the early days when Malta was a colony of Britain, Maltese were considered British subjects and registered as such.

The first documented Maltese to arrive in Canada was Louis Shickluna (Sciicluna), "native of Malta," who in 1838 came to St. Catharines, Ontario, and established a large and prominent shipyard on the Welland Canal. Louis Shickluna was born in Senglea, Malta in 1808 and at the age of 16 left his birthplace. A carpenter by trade he was employed in the construction of ships at Youngstown, New York in 1835. Between 1838 and 1880 he directed the construction of more than 140 vessels primarily for use on the Great Lakes. Shickluna died in 1880 and his son Joseph continued to operate the shipyard at St. Catharines until 1892. In 1980 the Ontario Heritage Foundation erected a plaque near the site of his shipyard in honour of this great Maltese-Canadian.

The present situation of the Maltese-Canadian community specifically in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in comparison to how it was back in the 1960s and 1970s, may not look bright. There is, however, hope. Later I will explain what I mean by this.

I will primarily focus my talk on the Maltese-Canadians of Toronto, and the area known as the Junction, because this is where the largest and oldest community exists. This not meant to demean the other vibrant communities in the Province of Ontario or for that matter the rest of Canada. Throughout Ontario which as a population of approximately 15 million (the population of Canada is just less than 30 million) many

small concentrations of Maltese may be found. Some of these are substantial, such as in Mississauga, London, Windsor, Ottawa, Port Colborne, Hamilton, Guelph, Whitby and Brantford. These cities are all in the Province of Ontario where, as mentioned earlier, the majority of Canada's Maltese population lives. The Maltese make up one-tenth of one per cent of the population of Canada.

On the east coast of Canada, namely the Maritime Provinces (which have colder winters) there are individual families, but they are not, however, in a concentrated area. The Maltese-Canadians of the Maritime Provinces are served by an Honorary Consul of Malta Charles E. Puglisevich. Recently through his initiative early Maltese migrants (as well as all immigrants arriving in Canada through Halifax) are to be duly noted by the Federal Government of Canada in a museum to be called Pier 21.

Canada's west coast presents a different picture altogether. In the Province of British Columbia, which has a more temperate climate, a substantial number of Maltese-Canadian families can be found living in Vancouver and its suburbs. During the 1980s an organization was formed and called the Canadian Maltese Association of British Columbia. This organization survived for a number of years. Now, however, it appears to have floundered. Other pockets of Maltese-Canadians can be found in northern British Columbia namely at Powell River.

Usually employment opportunities to join other family members or the economic situation of an area and other factors often helped emigrants in deciding where to immigrate. Canada, unlike Australia, New Zealand and other "warm" countries, does not have a year-round moderate climate. then again weather patterns in Canada vary from coast to coast. The most favourable weather is found on the west coast. Arriving at one end of Canada and then having to travel across the country, however, was probably a deterrent to many Maltese migrants. Arriving on the economically poor east coast and with its harsh winters was not a favourite with many migrants. As with most other immigrants to Canada, Ontario and Quebec were the two favoured destinations for new Maltese immigrants. Toronto, with an old and established Maltese community, was the most popular selection for Maltese migrants to Canada.

The early Maltese in Toronto, who numbered about 200 in 1916 and 400 by August of 1917, were settled mainly in two areas in the city. One community could be found living in the vicinity of St. Patrick's Shrine Church and the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in downtown Toronto. The other community was (and still is) in the then still developing area known as West Toronto (The Junction). The Junction provided lower cost housing and many job opportunities. St. Cecilia's Church served the spiritual needs of the Junction

Maltese. Both communities had a similar problem in that they required a priest who understood Maltese especially for confessions.

During the turn of the century many Maltese priests (mainly belonging to various religious orders) travelled the Province serving their flocks. When the opportunity was available some would visit the Maltese communities, but not, however, on a regular or permanent basis. (The names of all the early Maltese priests are noted in a more extensive history of the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto.)

A priest who seemed to understand the need of a permanent Maltese speaking priest was a Capuchin Friar—Fr. Fortunatus Mizzi. Fr. Fortunatus (1880-1945) was born in Valletta, a son of Dr. Fortunatus Mizzi and brother of Dr. Enrico Mizzi former Prime Minister of Malta. Fr. Fortunatus came to Canada in 1906 and lived in Ottawa where he founded the Italian Church of St. Anthony of Padova. In 1916 Fr. Fortunatus, at the request of the Archbishop of Toronto Neil McNeil, submitted a detailed report of the plight of the Maltese living in Toronto.

Probably inspired by one of the visiting priests, a group of Maltese men of the downtown community decided to form an organization with one of its main goals being the founding of a Maltese church and the preservation and retention of the Maltese culture, especially its language. The organization founded was the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto; it was established on September of 1922. Eight years later, after many petitions to the Archbishop, discussion with the Junction Maltese and with both communities involved, this goal was achieved. St. Paul the Apostle Church was built and its first pastor was the Augustinian Friar Father Alphonse Cauchi (1880-1943). Since 1922 the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto has played an important role, especially from 1922 to the mid-eighties in the community. In 1997 it celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the honoured guest was the Prime Minister of Malta Dr. Alfred Sant.

During the 1950s and until the 1970s the Maltese-Canadian population in the Junction was at its peak. St. Paul the Apostle Maltese National Church under the auspices of the Franciscan Fathers was the heart of the community. In March 1999 the administration of the parish was transferred to the Missionary Society of St. Paul (MSSP). St. Paul's Franciscans had served the community with dedication for nearly 50 years.

The Junction community could boast that it had the largest concentration of Maltese living in one geographical area, outside Malta. With the large influx of migrants during the 1950s the community prospered and grew. A new and larger St. Paul's Church was required as well as a new convent and auditorium. Maltese businesses flourished along the Dundas Street West strip and more Maltese organizations were

formed. By the mid-1980s nine Maltese-Canadian clubs had been founded as well as a Maltese-Canadian Federation. The community was being served by Maltese periodicals, a Maltese radio program and two Maltese cable television shows. Maltese language classes were being given through the Maltese Heritage Program. In 1972 a Malta Trade Commission Office was opened in the Junction.

In recognition of the Maltese-Canadian contribution to the area, the City of Toronto established a parkette in the Junction and named it Malta Park. This was achieved through the dedication and collaboration of organizations and the community working together.

Now going back to an earlier statement I made that the present situation of Toronto's Maltese community "may not look bright. There is, however, hope."

During the 1980s, many Maltese families began moving out of the Junction to Toronto's suburbs. Their economic situation had improved and therefore they become more flexible in their housing needs. Maltese-Canadians have always had the reputation of being family oriented. Many, after just a few years in Canada were able to purchase their own homes. This was achieved through a good work ethic. Because of the Canadian recession, however, some returned to Malta. With improved conditions in Malta fewer immigrants were coming to Toronto and even at present the number of Maltese migrants annually coming to Toronto can be counted on both hands.

The number of clubs in the Junction has decreased from nine to four: the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto (1922), Melita Soccer Club (1963), Malta Band club (1971) and the Gozo Club (1974). The Maltese-Canadian Federation (1974) still functions in the community. A number of Maltese businesses have closed or moved out of the area. The Malta Trade Commission Office, which received the status of Consul General of Malta in 1986, moved to a more central and prestigious location in 1994. In the mid-1990s the Malta Band Club moved out of the Junction to the City of Mississauga. The Gozo Club is presently deciding whether to rent or buy in the Junction or elsewhere. The Junction area in the last 30 years has gone through a depressed state. Many of the centuries-old buildings require renovating, parking is not readily available along much of the business strip and various other ethno-cultural groups have integrated into the area because of lower housing costs.

The Maltese population of the Junction has greatly decreased and this has had an adverse effect on St. Paul's Church. It is, however, because of the location of the church and the few Maltese businesses and organizations which have remained in the area that the Maltese Canadians still consider the Junction as their community.

Another noticeable change is that the number of

Maltese-Canadian students taking Maltese lessons has dropped from a peak of over 100 down to about 50 or 60.

Although the picture may not look bright, hope, however, is ever present. The four Maltese clubs which have survived appear stronger and more cohesive than heretofore. Whereas in the past when there were many organizations often competing with each other, the present organizations try to cooperate and assist one another. The Church and its priests of the Missionary Society of St. Paul have an outreach program in order to visit the various communities in the Province as well as Maltese organizations. In 1995 the Maltese-Canadian Professional and Business Association was founded with one of its objectives being the promoting and developing of closer stronger, professional and economic business relationships between Malta and Canada. In the mid-1990s, two Maltese-based banks—Bank of Valletta and Mid-Med Bank now HSBC Bank Malta p.l.c.—opened branches in the Junction as well as elsewhere.

In regards to Maltese media, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is now served with one half hour C.F.M.T. cable television show—*Leĥen Malti* and, since 1987, a monthly newspaper—*L-Aħbar*. The television program has both male and female volunteers, whereas the other organizations are more male dominated. The television program and newspaper provide the community with current events from both Malta and the local community, primarily in Maltese but sometimes in English. Some organizations have their own members' publications. These publications are important because they not only inform their membership of events within their organizations but cover other items of interest as well.

Articles relating to the community or about Maltese-Canadians also appear in various, non-Maltese owned, community-based newspapers throughout the GTA. Most notable of these are: the *Bloor West Villager*, the *Guardian*, *Mississauga News*, *North York Times* and the *Catholic Register*.

For many decades George Bonavia's Malta Service Bureau, located in Ottawa, has provided a program heard in Malta with news from the Maltese Canadian communities.

Therefore, although the original Maltese-Canadian community in the Junction has diminished in stature, an effort is still being made to keep it vibrant and active. The specific area in the Junction where many Maltese lived was designated as Malta Village a few years ago. The Maltese try to visit the area to attend Mass at St. Paul's and sample some of the Maltese pastry at one of the bakeries left in the area. Two clubs, the Maltese-Canadian Society of Toronto and the Melita Soccer Club, still call the Junction their home. The Melita

Soccer Club, instead of moving out of the area, spent a great sum of money renovating its premises.

Across Canada, and especially in Ontario, there are small concentrations of Maltese families forming communities. Where a substantial number is found, usually a Maltese organization is formed. These organizations try to foster and encourage the promotion and retention of Malta's rich culture, especially its history and language.

The future of the Maltese communities lies within the communities themselves. Since there are very few new Maltese immigrants coming to Canada the population is not expected to suddenly increase. Volunteers working in the various communities are aging and an effort has to be made to interest younger individuals to become more community-minded. This, however, is proving to be an uphill struggle.

One asset that we Maltese have is a very rich and colourful culture and a unique language. These are excellent tools to use in further educating our youth. The effort has to come from us. If we are truly proud of our heritage, we are the ones who must plant the seeds so that future Maltese-Canadians can benefit from sharing their ancestral background within the Multicultural Mosaic which is Canada.

*\*This is a slightly amended version of a paper I presented at the Convention of Leaders of Associations of Maltese Abroad and of Maltese Origin in Valletta, Malta on Tuesday, January 25, 2000. It was subsequently published in Proceedings and Report, 2000, 35-39.*

### LEHEN MALTI

(Maltese Voice)

Omni 1 TV

Toronto, Ontario

Saturdays 8:30 a.m.

Tuesdays 3: 30 a.m. & 11.30 a.m.

Thursdays 8:30 a.m.

Maltese-Canadian Museum Archives  
and Visitors Centre

St. Paul the Apostle Church Complex

3224 Dundas St. W.,

Toronto, ON, M6P 2A3

1-416-767-7054

*"George Bonavia's book on the Maltese of Canada [1980] is the first cohesive survey of the subject and offers a firm base for further research." (Reprinted from a brief review of George Bonavia's Maltese in Canada.)*

## THE EARLY YEARS OF JUDGE ROSEMARIE AQUILINA'S FAMILY IN MICHIGAN

Dan Brock\*



*Dan is a student of the history of London, Ontario and area, and of Maltese migration to Canada and the United States.*

Judge Rosemarie E. Aquilina of East Lansing, MI became an instant American folk hero, on Wednesday, January 24, 2018, when, in a half-hour statement she sentenced Larry Nassar to up to 175 years in prison for sexual assault. Almost immediately, the media went viral regarding her statement and sentencing.



**Judge Rosemarie E. Aquilina**

In her address, Judge Aquilina made mention of the fact that her father was Maltese. Much was learned about both Judge Aquilina and her father, Dr. Joseph Aquilina, in the days following. As this, for the most part, is readily available on-line, there is no real need for me to repeat much of this. What I would mainly like to do in this article is to look at the Aquilina family as immigrants to the United States, a topic which heretofore has not been really discussed in the media.

The story starts with Nicholas Aquilina of Qrendi, Malta. He was born in Siggiewi, the son of Joseph Aquilina and his wife, Nicholina (née Farrugia). Joseph Aquilina's line has been traced, by David Lanfranco of Lanfranco Genealogy Services in Malta and Charles Said-Vassallo of the website Maltagenealogy.com, directly back in Siggiewi to Capitano Filippo Aquilina and his second wife Maddalena, who lived during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Both Joseph and his son Nicholas, known as Nick, were tailors and moved to Qrendi where there was less competition in their trade. They each did well as tailors

in Qrendi and their handiwork can still be seen, in the red tapestries during the festas, in the parish church there and in other churches throughout the Island.

In Qrendi, Nicholas met and, in 1933, married Mary Rose, a daughter of Carmelo Ellul and his first cousin Antonia Ellul. To them were born five children: Joseph, Theresa, Nicholas, Charles and Benjamin. All managed to live through the horrors of the Second World War.



**Passport Application Photo of Nicholas "Nick" Aquilina, Age 36**

(Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta)

Following the War, Nick decided he could better and more easily provide for his family by immigrating to the United States. He had a friend from Qrendi, Paul Catania, known as "Il-Plawni", who was going to San Francisco. Nick originally planned to go there with Paul, but was dissuaded by townsfolk who convinced him that part of California was about to fall into the Pacific Ocean and the rest would end up pushed up against Hawaii!

Both Nick and Paul took leave of their families on May 1, 1950, and sailed on board the *Brasil*. On arriving in New York Harbor, they parted ways—Paul for San Francisco and Nick for Dearborn, Michigan, where he would live temporarily with Mike Cassar, "a shirt tail relative."

Once settled, Nick planned to bring out his family. Then, on Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, North Korea invaded South Korea. The United States responded by pushing a resolution through the UN Security Council calling for military assistance. With the United States involved in war on the Korean Peninsula, Nick feared that if his eldest son, Joseph, came out he would be drafted into the American Armed Forces and could be killed. Thus, on December 27<sup>th</sup> of the same year, Nick set sail on the *Saturnia*, from New York Harbor, bound for Naples where he would board a smaller ship for his return to Malta.

Nick again set sail for New York Harbor, on February 12, 1952, this time on the *Argentina*. Meanwhile, in August, his son Joseph had applied for a passport and, on November 20, 1952, embarked on the *Nea Hellas* in the Grand Harbour. The ship arrived in New York Harbor on December 5<sup>th</sup>. The next day Joseph was with his father, who was then living on Abbott Street in Detroit.

Joseph, known as Joe, who was 17 years old at the time, was both very intelligent and industrious and had been well-educated back in Malta. As well as Maltese and English, he was conversant in Arabic, French, Italian and Latin. He got a job at the Ford Motor Company, where his father worked the day shift. After working the midnight to 8 a.m. shift, Joe would head for his 9:30 a.m. class at Wayne State University. The following year, he and another student were finding their chemistry experiments “being sabotaged” by other students who were jealous of their academic success and they decided to temporarily drop out of university and enlist in the American Army. They were accepted on October 11, 1954. Joseph Nicholas Aquilina, on November 18<sup>th</sup> of the same year, became a naturalized American citizen, through the US Army, while stationed in Frankfurt, West Germany.

**Passport Application Photo  
of**

**Joseph Aquilina, Age 16**

(Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta.)



Meanwhile, in early 1953, Joseph’s mother, Mary Rose, had arrived, via the *Nea Hellas*, with her youngest child Benjamin. The daughter, Theresa, remained back in Malta looking after her two middle brothers, Nicholas and Charles. As Mary Rose and Benjamin were only on a temporary visa, they ended up returning to Malta, in June 1954, sailing on the *Roma* to Naples.



**Passport Application Photo  
of**

**Mary Rose Aquilina (nee  
Ellul), Age 33**

(Courtesy of the National Archives of Malta.)

When they returned to the United States by way of Southampton, on board the *Queen Elizabeth*, in early December 1955, to take up permanent residence, they were accompanied by the second youngest son, 15-year-old Charles. By this time the family was living on Livernois Avenue in Detroit.

It was not until 1966 that the second eldest son,

Nicholas, left a good position at the Dock Yards in Malta for an even better one at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit.

Meanwhile, the American Army didn’t know quite what to do with Joe Aquilina. He had been under suspicion for his knowledge of nuclear bombs which the authorities were surprised to learn he was openly taught in high school back in Malta! All this was then top secret in the United States. He was sent to France, but the French too were suspicious owing to his fluency in the language. Therefore, he was sent to Germany.

Although dyslexic, Joe began learning German by sitting with high school girls in a café. They taught him German and he taught them English. Being from Qrendi, he had the best and most natural accent of a Hanoverian resident and was told that nobody pronounced German better than he did. While in the Army, he also learned Spanish.

Like most Maltese of his generation, Joe has always been a deeply religious person. Twice, while in the US Army he had good reason to believe that the hand of God was protecting him.

An alert call was made, on August 11, 1955, to determine how much time would be needed to evacuate the troops from the United States Seventh Army, headquartered at Stuttgart, if the Soviets invaded the country. As the Americans were going on alert, Joe was reading an article on Gina Lollobrigida in an Italian language magazine and, having gone to sleep under a jeep, overslept. Consequently, he missed his plane in this training exercise.

Confused and not knowing what to do he was startled by the amazement his fellow soldiers. It was as if he had “won a \$100,000,000 lottery.” It was then that he learned that two of the nine C-119s flying on the training mission from Stuttgart-Echterdingen airport had collided shortly after takeoff. Joe would have been on one of those planes in which all 66 passengers and crew members were killed in this then the worst air crash in Germany.

Joe was given a month’s leave to help him recuperate from what today would be called post-traumatic stress. One of the places he visited during his leave was his homeland to assist his mother in obtaining a visa to return to the United States. On his way back to Germany, he was bumped by a captain on the flight from Paris to Frankfurt and later learned that that plane had crashed and the captain who had taken his seat was killed.

Joe had dreamt of taking the “Orient Express,” meeting the girl of his dreams and marrying her. The following year, 1956, he made \$100 bets with several of his fellow soldiers that he would accomplish this.

While on the “Orient Express” from Paris to West Germany, at midnight, August 31, 1956, he saw such a girl. She was very pretty, with fair skin, auburn hair and

blue-green eyes. He struck up a conversation with her. She was well-educated, spoke English perfectly, was a German citizen, born in the Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia) and like, Joe, had a sister who had become a nun. (Joe's sister, Teresa, had remained in Malta and was now Sr. Ferdinand. Later, while in Australia, she became Sr. Teresa.) As it turned out, Joe was married, to this "angel" he had met on the train, exactly one year later. By this time, he had obtained his discharge from the Army and, through the G.I. Bill (of Rights), which would pay for all his schooling, had enrolled at the prestigious University of Munich Medical School.

The first of Joe and Johanna's four children—Rosemarie and Joseph were born, in Munich, in 1958 and 1959 respectively. As Joe was not a German citizen his children could not be declared German citizens and, as he was an American citizen, but did not then have 10 years' physical presence in the United States (including credit for his military service), his children could not claim American citizenship and were in fact stateless, as Joe was not about to go back to his original status as a British subject.

This puts me in mind of one my late mother's favourite heart-wrenching, short stories which she had read while in parochial school in Buffalo, New York, namely Edward Everett Hale's *The Man without a Country*.

In any case, Joe brought his family to the United States by air, from Brussels, Belgium, on August 7, 1959. They lived with Joe's parents, downstairs in the house his mother had purchased. The upstairs had been converted into two apartments which Mary Rose rented out. Later, she purchased six more rental units on the same street.

Joe continued his medical studies, and in 1963 obtained his MD, *cum laude*, and was elected valedictorian by his fellow graduates at the University of Munich. After finishing his internship and specialty training Dr. Aquilina completed all the required examinations and became a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and was certified by the American Board of Urology. Meanwhile, his and Johanna's two younger children were born: Thomas in 1964 and Helen in 1966.

Dr. Aquilina served as a Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery at the Saginaw Campus of the Michigan State University Medical School. His practice was limited to adult and pediatric urology and microsurgery. After 35 years of practice he retired in 2005.

By a combination of talent, hard work and the grace of God, Dr. Aquilina became one of most successful first-generation, Maltese immigrants in the United States. This has continued on to the next generation. Rosemarie is a 30<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judge, Joseph and Thomas are both very successful doctors and Helen is Attorney Referee for Ingham County Friend of the Court

at the same court house as her sister.

I found my research on the migration of the Aquilina family from Qrendi, Malta to Detroit, Michigan to be a fascinating study. The years which follow my account surpass even the central characters found in some of the American author Horatio Ager's novels.

*\*This is substantially the article which appeared in The Sunday Times of Malta, April 1, 2018, pages 54-55, which in turn was a slight revision of the one which appeared in The Maltese Canadian Club of London Newsletter, vol. 38, no. 6 (March/April 2018), pages 6-8.*

## **THE FAILED ATTEMPT TO SETTLE THE MALTESE IN GRENADA**

**Dan Brock**

One hundred and seventy Maltese disembarked on the Caribbean island of Grenada, on December 31, 1839, to work on the sugarcane plantations. Earlier in the year, more than 100 Maltese men and their families had set foot on Guiana in South America for the same reason. Presumably, those who arrived in Grenada, landed on the same terms, that is, they were given free passage and were to work for a landlord for five years, after which they could decide whether to return to Malta or be given a plot of land. They would work nine hours a day, five days a week, be supplied with accommodation and food and earn \$4 (about \$90 Canadian today) a month.

Soon, like those who had gone to Guiana, the Maltese found they could earn more money by selling their food allowance to the local inhabitants, the result being they found themselves with an insufficient amount for themselves. To their complaints about their dislike of the taste of Caribbean food, they now said they were not being given enough of it. On learning what the Maltese were doing, the landlords immediately stopped all the rations they were giving. Some of the Maltese were then reduced to begging, others to outright stealing. As in Guiana, some succumbed to malaria.

Consequently, the project of employing Maltese to work on the sugarcane plantations "was abandoned as dismal failure." by 1841.

There were several reasons for the failure of this experiment. Many of those selected to go to Grenada were not fit labourers. None had any experience at all of working on sugarcane plantations under very different climatic conditions than what they had heretofore experienced. As the late Fr. Lawrence Attard stated: "Little did the migrants realise the shock they were letting themselves into when they volunteered to work in the Caribbean."\*

*\*See Fr. Lawrence Attard, Beyond Our Shores: A Panorama of Maltese Migration (2007), pages 54-55*

**CHARLES E. PUGLISEVICH:  
A MALTESE IMMIGRANT'S SUCCESS  
IN THE OIL INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE**

**Richard S. Cumbo\***

Carmel Emanuel Puglisevich or Charlie, as he is known worldwide, at 53 has the energy and stamina of someone half his age. The average year finds him travelling approximately 240 000 km (150,000 miles). He visits Malta eight or ten times a year, as well as his normal trips to China, Australia, the Far East, Africa and other parts of the globe. He never gets tired of travelling, as he enjoys meeting people and making new friends and contacts.

Charlie is President and Chief Executive Officer of Puglisevich Management and Services Ltd, with head offices in St John's Newfoundland. He is also involved in several companies which are responsible for the employment of some 300 people on oil rigs around the world.



**Charles E. Puglisevich,  
about 1988**

Charlie was born on January 4, 1935, at Msida, Malta, and was educated at Stella Maris College and St. Albert the Great College in Malta.

From humble beginnings as a warehouse clerk for NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) in Malta, he has risen to be one of the most successful examples of Maltese entrepreneurs in Canada.

Charlie started his career in Canada in 1960 as a night hotel desk clerk. This initial job was not providing sufficient income so he turned to tending bar. With his pleasant and outgoing manner Charlie was a natural at bartending and worked in this profession for over four years. At the same time, he graduated with distinction in Hotel Management from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute.

It was in 1965 that Charlies took a factory job to get off working the night shift. After three happy years and coincidentally three beautiful children, he returned to his native Malta to start his own business.

While in Malta, Charlie became involved in politics in 1971 and ran unsuccessfully for office with the Labour Party. The associations that he formed and the experience he gained, however, have been extremely helpful to him ever since.

The attraction and fascination of the oil industry was

too much for Charlie and in 1971 he took a job in Malta working in the "oil patch." In 1974, he was invited by the Maltese government and some foreign investors to set up a supply service base in Malta. This company was the Mediterranean Oilfield Services Co. Ltd, which in a very short time flourished and became one of the leading supply bases in the Mediterranean.

In late 1978, Charlie, together with his family returned to Canada to take advantage of the offshore oil activities in the Maritimes. He chose Newfoundland as his base of operations and from that time he has never looked back. From his offices in St. John's Charlie and his executives conduct day to day operations in real estate, worldwide labour and catering contracting services, ship/rig engine repair shops, equipment rentals and other activities with which the Puglisevich Group of Companies is associated.

Charlie and his wife Margaret are well known for their philanthropic activities worldwide.

He was appointed Honorary Consul for the Maritime Provinces in 1984 and was elevated, in 1986, to Honorary Consul General with jurisdiction over 50% of the territory of Canada. This consular appointment which was officially recognized by the Canadian government, created a new challenge for Charlie.

As the official representative of the Maltese government in Atlantic Canada, Charlie and his staff are kept busy promoting trade, tourism culture and goodwill for the Republic of Malta.

His memberships include The Institute of Materials Handling of Great Britain, International Material Management Society, Newfoundland Institute of Management Training, St. John's Board of Trade, St. John's Oilfield Technical Society and the Institute of Professional Managers of Great Britain.

He is also Honorary President of the following organizations in Malta: St George's Band Club, Cospicua; Msida St. Joseph Football Club; Regatta Club, Cospicua and Domus Pius IX, Cospicua.

Charlie's hobbies include fishing, hunting and classical music.

Truly an amazing success story, his is a success story that came about as a result of a Maltese immigrant who had the drive and the will to rise above his humble beginnings.

*\*This article with minor changes is that which originally appeared in L-Aħbar, Toronto, Nru 12 (April 1988), page 15. Charles E. Puglisevich, died in Newfoundland, Canada, on August 14, 2003.*

**Fr. Manuel Parnis, MSSP  
St. Paul the Apostle Church,  
3224 Dundas St. W. Toronto, ON M6P 2A3  
1-416-767-7054**

**FR AURELIO CIANTAR AND FR EUGENE FITENI: TWO AUGUSTINIAN FRIARS IN THE UNITED STATES**

**Mark Caruana\***



***Mark is a migration researcher based in Sydney, Australia. He has compiled a Malta passport database and has done several oral history interviews with early Maltese pioneers.***

Aurelio M. Ciantar was born in Vittoriosa (Birgu) on August 15, 1893, to Paul Ciantar and Mary Gatt. He entered the Augustinian Order at the age of 19, and was ordained to the priesthood on May 29, 1920.

Fr Aurelio arrived in the United States in late December 1920 to minister to the Maltese immigrants at St. Augustine Church in Detroit. With the establishment of the weekly newspaper, *L'Ecce Malti fl'America* (The Maltese Echo in America), he became a distinguished contributor and did what he could to heal the rift within the Maltese community at the time.

**Fr. Aurelio Ciantar, OSA,**  
(Passport Application,  
dated November 22, 1920,  
National Archives of Malta)



In 1923, however, he was assigned to St Mary's Church, in Lawrence, MA. Being fluent in Italian, as well as in English and Maltese, Fr Aurelio was then sent to the ethnic Italian parish of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, in South Philadelphia, PA, where he served as assistant to its administrator, the church being an extension of the parent church of Our Mother of Good Counsel (Buon Consiglio) also an ethnic Italian church, run by the Augustinians in South Philadelphia.

From October 1927, Fr Aurelio was one of the "Italian" Augustinians from Philadelphia taking turns in ministering to the Italians in the Diocese of Trenton, NJ. With the approval of his religious superior and Bishop John Mahon of Trenton, Fr Aurelio was appointed pastor, in July 1928, of Our

Lady of Pompeii Parish in East Vineland, NJ, and was given Fr Eugene Fiteni, OSA as his assistant.

Fr Eugene, the son of Salvator Fiteni, had been born in Cospicua (Bormla) on September 17, 1884. He became an Augustinian novice in 1900 and was ordained a priest on December 18, 1909. Like Fr Aurelio, he was fluent in Italian as well as in English and Maltese and had been a naturalised American citizen.

In September 1920, Fr Eugene arrived in the United States to take up his posting at Our Mother of Good Counsel Church, in South Philadelphia. Here Fr Eugene served until 1927.

It was probably during this time that he, like several other Maltese-speaking priests in the United States, showed "a genuine interest, concern, and care for the Maltese immigrants in Toronto and towns those to it" by visiting this part of Ontario, Canada.

While stationed at Our Mother of Good Counsel, Fr Eugene was also secretary to the Vice Province's Commissary Provincial and archivist of the Vice-Province. He then served as administrator of St Nicholas of Tolentine Parish, for nine months, until he had to resign because of ill health in July 1928. This had led, the following month, to his being assigned as assistant to Fr Aurelio.

In October 1929, the two priests supervised the construction of a church in Mizpah, NJ, a few miles east of East Vineland, which, at the suggestion of Bishop McMahon, was named after his patron saint, St. John the Evangelist.

At this time, one of the mission churches the two priests served was St. Mary's, also in East Vineland, which formerly had parish status. A lot of pressure was put on Fr Aurelio by the St. Mary's congregation, humiliated in having had its church reduced to the status of a mission, for him to live in the rectory in St. Mary's rather than that of Our Lady of Pompeii which was in much better condition as the people wanted their own pastor living in their midst.

Fr Aurelio expressed his willingness to comply with their wishes if they took steps to make the rectory livable. The people reacted very favourably, because through the efforts of such leaders as Rose Cresci, Dan Conway and David Raffo, to mention only a few, they managed to raise the sum of \$6,000. Fr Aurelio then went ahead with the task of repairing and enlarging the rectory and surrounding it with beautiful trees.

Having been named pastor of St. Mary's, Fr Aurelio left Pompeii, on March 8, 1930, to take up residence in his new parish. At the same time, Fr Eugene succeeded Fr Aurelio as pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii. He was to hold this position for 18 years, the most time here of any pastor before or after him.

Fr Eugene found himself in the middle of the Great Depression of the early '30s and had to struggle to meet his obligations. He did his best, however, in keeping the church property in repair.

With the help of the parishioners and interested friends, Fr Eugene erected the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, in 1938, and then invited people from all over to make a pilgrimage here. His efforts proved to be very fruitful, because since then thousands of devout souls have made the annual pilgrimage to this shrine. The many visitors have also provided much-needed financial help to the parish. Fr Eugene worked assiduously, between 1945 and 1947, on the Replica of Mount Calvary and this also has helped to attract many devout Christians to the church.

Meanwhile, Fr Aurelio was transferred as pastor from St. Mary's in East Vineland to Our Lady of Pompeii Parish, in Dobbs Ferry, NY, in 1938. During this time, he was also a counselor of the Vice Province, as well as prior and treasurer of the local Augustinian community.

Not long after, however, his Provincial in Malta, Fr Lorenzo Agius, OSA, asked him to return to Malta and then assigned him as rector of the Basilica of St Augustine in Hippo (now Annaba), Algeria. Fr Aurelio arrived there in February 1939 but, after a few months, requested and received permission to return to the United States and to his pastoral ministry there.

**Fr. Eugene Fiteni, OSA**  
(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70393291/eugene-fiteni>)



Fr. Eugene was transferred from Our Lady of Pompeii in East Vineland, back to his former Saint Nicholas of Tolentine Parish, in Philadelphia, on April 1, 1948, where he remained till the following April. His next move was to our Lady of Pompeii church in Dobbs Ferry, NY, where he was the bursar for 10 years. His last few years were spent in semi-retirement.

Fr Eugene suffered a fatal heart attack, on February 28, 1966, and died in Roosevelt Hospital, New York City, at the age of 81. His body was transferred to East Vineland, NJ, where his funeral was celebrated in Our Lady of Pompeii Church. He was buried in the Augustinian Section of St Mary's Parish Cemetery in East Vineland.

Meanwhile, Fr. Aurelio, always young at heart and dedicated to pastoral ministry, remained active in parish ministry until 1978, when just as he was to celebrate his

85<sup>th</sup> birthday, he suffered a heart attack. He recovered some of his strength, but was transferred from the hospital to Cabrini Nursing Home. He succumbed to cancer and died on December 23, 1980, at the age of 87.

His funeral Mass was celebrated in Dobbs Ferry, NY, after which his remains were also interred in St Mary's Parish Cemetery, East Vineland.

Other scanned photographs and memorabilia of Fathers Aurelio and Eugene would be welcomed and may be sent to [dbrock40@worldline.ca](mailto:dbrock40@worldline.ca).

*\*This article is largely based on my study of passport applications, ships' passenger lists, Fr Lawrence E. Attard's The Great Exodus (1989), and various web sites such as Historical Notes on Our Lady of Pompeii Church Vinland, NY, The Augustinians and Find A Grave.*

## GEORGE BONAVIA

C. Caruana



**Karmenu/Carmelo A. "Charles" Caruana (1914-1985) was publisher and editor of the *Maltese Forum* (formerly *Forum Melitense*), Toronto, ON, from 1969 until his death in February 1985**

There are quite a few individuals of Maltese origin on the North American Continent who have selflessly sacrificed their "ALL" for the good of the commonweal. In truth people such as these should be made known to our two Maltese communities in North America, for they are luminaries dispelling darkness, and examples deserving imitation.

George Bonavia belongs to this elite.

It would be a futile attempt on my part to assess, adequately, this man's unique personality. The only way I might shed some light on his character would be by delving, my human limitation permitting, as deeply as possible into the various positions he has held as Civil Servant with the Canadian Government, and, especially, into his multifarious extra-curricular activities.

George Bonavia landed in Halifax in June, 1948, with a group of Maltese emigrants. He wasted no time, and immediately started to write for newspapers in Malta. Between 1948 and 1957 his *L-Itrra mill-Kanada* (Letter from Canada) appeared weekly in the Maltese daily newspaper *Il-Berqa*.

He left Halifax that same year and went to settle in Windsor, Ontario, where he worked for the Ford Motor Company on the assembly line until 1953, when he

became a Canadian Citizen. He joined the Public Service, first as a Customs Officer, and then as an Immigration Officer on the Windsor-Detroit border.

George began publishing *The Malta News*, in 1954, which for many years was the only Maltese newspaper in Canada and the United States. It was about this time, that Mr. Bonavia started the first Maltese radio in North America from a radio station in Leamington, Ont. This was part of an overall programme called "Citizens All." He, afterwards, began broadcasting from Windsor, specifically for Maltese on both sides of the border.

I met George Bonavia in Windsor in the mid-fifties. We had already become steadfast friends through sustained correspondence, but we had never ever met face to face. I joined him in one of his weekly broadcasts, and was allotted all the time I needed to address his large Maltese audience.

George, who by then had already been recognized as the leader of the Maltese community in Windsor, and looked upon as the symbol of its brotherhood in unity, felt it very rewarding that, besides the Maltese themselves, English-speaking Canadians and other ethnic entities kept him in the highest esteem, and publicly admitted that it was an honour for them to associate with him, and through him with the Maltese community.

To preserve unity, understanding and co-operation among the Maltese in the Windsor-Detroit area had always been a persisting obsession with George Bonavia.

Besides making use of the media to achieve this noble goal, he mixed freely with his compatriots and other components on both shores of the Detroit River. His innate conviction was, and still is, a conviction shared by truly patriotic Maltese in receiving countries, that unless united our Maltese identity is doomed. As editor of *The Malta News* he tried different venues to promote Maltese unity, and went so far as to found the Malta Always Linked Together Association (M.A.L.T.A.).

Through M.A.L.T.A., he organized the annual Maltese picnic to Boblo Island. There, on this enchanting little Canadian island on the Detroit River, both Canadian and American Maltese got together in droves, reminiscing, meeting old friends, making new ones, and enthusiastically gathering together around the Maltese flag, which George proudly displayed for the occasion.

Boblo had thus become the focal point of Canadian-American-Maltese unity. It was there that every year, Mr. Bonavia would announce the Maltese of the year, and would present him or her with the diploma for meritorious achievements. The Boblo citation, on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1963, was, as far as I was concerned, unexpectedly presented to me by the M.A.L.T.A. founder. The testimonial read: "In appreciation to Carmel Caruana, B.A. (Lond) Representative of the Malta Catholic Action Emigrants' Commission to

Canada. – It gives me great pleasure in presenting you with this token of appreciation for your outstanding help to our Maltese National paper, *The Malta News*. We admire your unselfish efforts to be of service to Maltese immigrants. In the name of all Maltese here, we salute you, and say the we are all proud of such a worthy son of Malta. George Bonavia, Editor and Publisher: Malta News."

It is only by resorting to more examples from my own personal experience that I dare to peek even more deeply into what appears to be an uncomplicated personality but which in reality, is more complex than one would expect.

In 1960, Malta was celebrating the Nineteenth Centenary of St. Paul's Shipwreck on its shores (A.D. 60-1960). As head of the Canadian Centre of the Maltese Emigrants' Commission I very much wanted to publish a souvenir booklet in commemoration of that unique event.

Unhesitatingly, I turned to George Bonavia for the help I needed. And George, an expert in journalism, instantly gave me a helping hand. He compiled all the material I had collected; had the souvenir booklet printed; and personally, delivered the finished work at the Centre in Toronto.

Were it not for this dedicated man, the remembrance of the greatest event in Maltese history might have gone unnoticed on the North American Continent, and the message to all Maltese in Canada by the then minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Ellen Fairclough which she had personally written for that auspicious occasion, on my request, might have never reached those for whom it was intended.

For posterity's historical records, and as a gesture of undying gratitude to George Bonavia, I am reproducing that centennial message: "Canada. – Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: I am happy to send you a message of greetings on the occasion of the 19<sup>th</sup> Centenary of St. Paul's Shipwreck on Malta. The history of the Maltese people is a long and glorious one and its gallantry, as exemplified by the award of the George Cross to the whole nation during the war, has few equals.

"Since the war many of you have come to Canada. Your traditional perseverance and courage have served you well in establishing yourselves in your new homeland. It is through the consistent co-operation of all groups that we are achieving full national stature. In this regard, the Maltese are making a valuable contribution to the development of the Canadian nation. By helping to build a Canada in which your children will grow strong and free, I know that you will become just as proud of your Canadian citizenship as you so rightly are of your Maltese heritage. Ellen Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration."

Back again to the Windsor era: Besides his many

activities among Maltese, already enumerated, George organized Canadian displays and various other cultural and social programmes in co-operation with the Windsor Public Library and other societies. He was also instrumental in getting the Citizenship Council of Greater Windsor set up in 1962. In recognition and appreciation of his stupendous work among our Maltese communities and other ethnic and Canadian-born people, the Sovereign Order of St. John of St. John of Jerusalem \*Knights of Malta\* promoted him to the rank of Knight Commander.

When the time came for George Bonavia to leave Windsor and take a higher position in the Immigration Department, he had no other alternative but to fold up, regretfully *The Malta News*, which we all still nostalgically miss, and think of its demise with a sense of personal loss. He was posted in Rome, Italy, with the Canadian Embassy until 1968, when he returned to Ottawa. He is at present working at the Department's headquarters, and since 1973, he has been the editor of *Ethnic Kaleidoscope Canada*.

Mr. "Bonavia's recent publications are *Ottawa Ethnic Groups Directory* (1971), *Maltese Organizations in Canada: Directory, 1972* and *Maltese Directory: Canada, United States* (1974). For some time, now, he has also been co-operating with the National Ethnic Archives of the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa, collecting and preserving material related to activities and achievements of Maltese-Canadians. In this connection, he himself has donated newspaper clippings and other documents which he had collected in the last 25 years, to the National Archives. He has also co-operated with the National Library Biblioservice to acquire books in the Maltese language.

George Bonavia is also very active in the Ottawa Citizenship Council, and was its President in 1971. And yet, all his professional duties and extra-curricular endeavours do not seem quite enough to satisfy the ebullient, insatiable energy of our compatriot, so much so that he has managed to find time to write three books in Maltese: *Il-Kanada, art ta' tama u rizq* (Canada, Land of Hope and Prosperity) (1951), *Haddiema fil-Kanada* (Workers in Canada) (1961) and *Canada – From an Unknown Country to a Great Nation*, the last two published in a series of weekly articles.

George Bonavia's ever productive life would be more incomplete, if I failed to mention that for several years, he had his own weekly radio programme, International Rendezvous, on the CBC network, a half hour of news, commentaries and music from many lands, directed to the many ethnic groups in Canada. Moreover, in co-operation with CBC International, he prepared a programme for Malta Radio, "With George Bonavia in Canada." He is now engaged in another programme, "From Canada to Malta," which includes news from the Maltese communities in Canada, and informative items

about Canada and Canadian events. It is on this programme, regularly heard in Malta, that, recently, George Bonavia paid a glowing tribute to *Forum Melitense*.

This "profile" cannot be brought to a close without mentioning Bonavia's share as a Maltese-Canadian patriot at the time, when, under the Pearson administration, Canadians had been invited to forward ideas or make suggestions with regard to the selection of an appropriate new official flag for Canada, in replacement of the British Merchant Navy flag bearing the coat of arms of Canada.

George Bonavia's draft for a new Canadian flag consisted of a gold maple leaf on green, the gold maple leaf representing Canada's wealth in natural resources, achievements in medicine, scientific development and inventions, and the productivity of its hard-working people; the green background meaning that Canada is the land of hope and opportunity for its own people of all races and religions, and for the world at large.

Bonavia's new Canadian flag never won the contest, but it certainly demonstrated the reality of Canada. For a Maltese to come out with such a stupendous idea deserves recognition by his compatriots. The new Canadian flag approved by Parliament in 1964 is "of Red Maple Leaf and bars on white".

We Maltese are elatedly happy with the red and white in Canada's official flag, for these colours remind us of Malta's bi-colour, dating as far back as 1090, thus making the Maltese flag the most ancient ensign anywhere in the world.

All George Bonavia's activities have won him the reputation of being a great booster of Canada and his native Island of Malta. Bonavia is dedicated to promoting harmony and understanding among Maltese in Canada, as well as among the many ethnic groups and English-speaking Canadians that comprise the Canadian Nation.

Being a proud Canadian does not mean in any way that the love George Bonavia nurtures for the land of his birth is lessened.

"To be a good Canadian," he once said, "you have to be a good Maltese!"



In 1980, George Bonavia (1920-2007) authored *Maltese in Canada* in the Immigrant Studies Series commissioned by the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State.

*\*This article with minor changes is that which originally appeared in Forum Melitense (Autumn 1977), 16-18. For additional information on George Bonavia consult "George Bonavia – M3P" on line.*

**FRANCIS AND JOSEPH CUTAIAR:  
TWO MALTESE IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED  
STATES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**Dan Brock and Gabrielle Cutair Caldwell\***



*Gabrielle lives in Cecil Co., MD. She has previously worked for the State's Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Office and holds a Real Estate license. Currently a stay-at-home mom, her hobbies include music, photography and travel*

Gabrielle Cutair Caldwell had started research on the Cutaiar branch of her family some 5½ years ago. Earlier, she had received a folder from her father, Francis Lee Cutair III, who had discovered that the Cutaiar family was of Maltese origin. Heretofore, it was believed the family was French. It was Gabrielle's grandfather, Francis Lee Cutaiar, Jr. and one of his brothers, who dropped the second "a" in their surname, while in the military, and were henceforth surnamed Cutair.

With help from her mother, who had taken a genealogy course, decades earlier, Gabrielle was able to trace her Cutaiar ancestors back to her 4<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather, Francis John Cutaiar, who first appears in the 1828 city of New York Directory as a barber. It was also learned that he had married the former Amalia G. Luzenberg of Alsace, France. The couple's daughter, Amelia, was born in New York City in 1828.

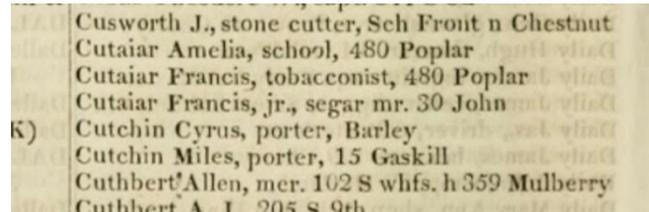
Francis' wife, born in 1810, was a daughter of Joseph Gottfried Luzenberg. Family tradition has it that she was a grandniece of Jean-Baptiste Bessières, one of the few marshals of Napoleon Bonaparte to be called his friend.

As for Francis himself, the same family tradition holds that he was "a great gentleman of learning and was remarkably versed in the languages ancient and modern. He spoke and wrote with grammatical accuracy, no less than 14, including Latin. The last attainment may be accounted for from the fact that he was educated for the priesthood. He subsequently abandoned clerical designs and for many years "engaged in extensive mercantile transactions."

The family moved to Philadelphia sometime after 1828. There, Francis is listed as a hairdresser in 1831 and, in 1835, a dentist. Back in the day, a hair dresser was what we would call a barber and one of the sidelines was pulling teeth. He was a tobacconist, by 1840, and probably rolled his own cigars as well as sold cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, etc. at his shop.

While in Philadelphia, the Culaiars had a son, Francis R., born in 1832, and at least six more children. The eldest, the aforementioned Amelia became a teacher in Philadelphia.

As for Francis Cutaiar, Jr., he had received "an excellent education" and had "learned the tobacco manufacturing business. In 1851, he moved to Baltimore, Maryland, and began operating a cigar store. Two years later, he married Louisa Love. By the time of the 1860 census, Francis was back in Philadelphia with his family, probably to attend to family matters, and was listed as cigar maker.



**From Page 96 of an  
Undated City of Philadelphia Directory**

The elder Francis had died in "The City of Brotherly Love" on January 25, 1861. His death notice listed his age as 62.

As for Francis, Jr. he returned to Baltimore in 1862 where he continued in the tobacco trade. Meanwhile, his first wife is believed have died in 1863, and two years later, Francis married Mary Scott. In 1869, he was appointed tobacco inspector by Maryland's Governor, Thomas Swann and was later deputy-inspector under Governor William Pinkney Whyte.

From the 1850s, Francis appears to have been co-owner of a restaurant and resort in Ferry Bar, Baltimore.



**Co-Owner of a Restaurant and Resort  
in Ferry Bar, Baltimore**

Francis died in Baltimore on November 11, 1903. His newspaper death notices requested that it be copied in several out-of-town newspapers, including those of New Orleans and Cincinnati. Gabrielle, his 3<sup>rd</sup> great-granddaughter knew about the Luzenberg connection in New Orleans, but what family connection was there in Cincinnati.

Research revealed a Joseph Cutaiar or Cutair who was born in Malta about 1803 and lived in Cincinnati. On June 12, 1839 he married Helena Stephens. Two of

his children were named Amelia and Francis and he too was a tobacconist. This was more than just a coincidence! Was he a brother, or at least a cousin, of the elder Francis Cutaiar?

While Joseph died in Cincinnati on October 15, 1885, he still had family in that city 18 years later. One, was his son Anthony who, like his older brother, Joseph S. Cutaiar, was a boot and shoe merchant.



### From Page 278 of an Undated City of Cincinnati Directory

Gabrielle sent a query to the *Times of Malta*, in November 2016, seeking information on her 4<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather, Francis John Cutaiar. Her letter to the editor appeared in the November 28<sup>th</sup> issue, but elicited no response.

In March 2017, Gabrielle began searching for her Cutaiar ancestors on the Malta Genealogy website, the work of Charles Said-Vassallo of Australia.

Not finding Cutaiar or the more common Cutajar under the sur-names, she contacted Charles by email and provided information on Francis John Cutaiar, including his presumed year of birth of 1799 or 1800, based on his age written on his death notice, as already noted.

At first Charles was coming up empty and contacted his friend, Mark Caruana, also of Australia for ideas. Mark's initial findings proved to be false leads. He emailed Dan Brock the same day, March 25<sup>th</sup>, and asked: "Could you throw some light on this request from a genealogist friend of mine?"

Dan went online, found some data on Francis John Cutaiar, read the online queries of a "G.M. Caldwell" and sent an email to both Mark and Ms. Caldwell. Still later, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, Charles emailed Mark to say, "I have him from Birkirkara."

Charles had data on the Cutajar/Cutaiar family from the 1500s in his on line "The Noble Family of Vella" genealogical file.

Access to archives.maltadiocese.org and the sacramental records for such parishes as Senglea, Cospicua and Birkirkara had led him to Francis John Cutajar who was baptised Joannes Paulo Francesco Cutajar on March 26, 1795—not in 1799 or 1800 as had been assumed—at St. Helen's Church in B'Kara. He had been named "Francesco" after his paternal grandfather, Francesco Cutajar.

As Francis John was actually more than 18 years older than his wife, he had consistently depicted himself as five years younger than he actually was and this led to Charles' temporary difficulty in tracing him in Malta.

Francis John's parents were Ignazio Cutajar and Paola Xicluna who had married in 1794 in B'Kara. Through Ignazio, Charles had traced the Cutajar line directly back to Matteo Mario Cutajar who, in 1596, in Mдина, had married Margherita de Vella.

Margherita had an interesting background as she was the illegitimate daughter of Giorgio Vella, a priest, and Muna, a slave from Cairo, Egypt.

Ignazio and Paula Cutajar had several children, in addition to Francis John. One of them turned out to be Joseph Cutaiar of Cincinnati who was born and baptised Giuseppe Rosa Elena on January 19, 1802. At least he didn't shave off any years from his age when he married!

Charles, who had been in correspondence with Dan Brock earlier on other Maltese families, informed Dan of his findings, on March 26<sup>th</sup>, of his "Vella" file.

Dan then accessed on line the sacramental records of St. Helen's Parish, B'Kara gathered some more information on Francis John Cutaiar and his family and shared the exciting news with Gabrielle.

Within a day or two, through the international work of sleuths on two continents, the mystery haunting Gabrielle for some four years on the Maltese origins of her Cutaiar ancestors had been solved!

Gabrielle has now taken the Cutaiar family a couple generations further back than Matteo Mario Cutajar and has added to succeeding generations. This, in turn, has led to her discovering distant cousins, two living in Malta and one in Australia. And, of course, this has kindled in her a desire to visit the land of her Cutaiar ancestors.

A year ago, Dan Brock has learned that a "Francesco Cutaiar" disembarked at the port in Philadelphia in 1833. This could be none other than Francis John Cutaiar! It would appear that he was returning home from a visit to Malta. It is also surmised that, while in his homeland, he encouraged Joseph, to join him.

The younger brother probably came out to Philadelphia shortly after this, stayed with his brother's family for a few years while he learned the tobacconist trade and then sought greener pastures in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he met and married Helena Stephens in 1839.

One cannot leave this account of Francis John Cutaiar, his son Francis, Jr. and his brother Joseph without commenting on their steadfast attachment to their Catholic faith. This was despite the fact that they were not only an ethnic, but a religious, minority and no doubt faced religious bigotry at times in the United States.

*\*This article is a slightly revised copy of that which appeared in The Maltese Canadian Club of London Newsletter, vol. 38, no. 5 (January/February 2018), 15-16.)*

## EARLY MALTESE EMIGRANTS TO THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

**John D. Crawford, Victoria, BC, Canada\***

The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a tremendous growth in the population of the Canadian prairies. This area was first opened up to large scale settlement by the building of railways linking the east and west coasts of Canada. The railway provided a means of transporting grain from the prairies to ports where it could be shipped abroad and made farming on the prairies a commercial proposition. This opening of the west resulted in massive immigration with over 1,000,000 arriving in Canada in the years 1912, 1913 and 1914, many of them bound for the farmlands of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Some of these immigrants had come from Malta.

In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War the magnet for the majority of the Maltese immigrants to Canada was Toronto, Ontario, which remains the home of the most significant Maltese-Canadian community. Other short-lived Maltese communities appeared at Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia, and Calgary, Alberta, but perhaps the most interesting in western Canada was to be found at Winnipeg, Manitoba, whose population at the time was growing at a faster rate than any other city in Canada.

Many of the Maltese arriving at Winnipeg were educated men, unable to obtain suitable employment in Malta, and willing to take their chances in a new land. Having a good education meant that they could apply for grants from the Bugeja and Pappaffy Emigration Funds, set up by two Maltese philanthropists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The annual reports of these funds for the time indicate that they helped numerous men to reach Winnipeg, although many other Maltese reached the city without financial help.

The first acknowledged arrival of a Maltese immigrant in Winnipeg was a Hugh Rizzo, who reached the city in 1911 but by 1913 there was a community of more than 300 Maltese in the area. The source of much of the information about the size of the community comes from a report of the creation of a Maltese Protective Association in the city, a report substantiated by other evidence.

This report listed among its officers H.W. Parnis England as its Chairman, M.V. Laferia as Treasurer and Francis J. Tonkin as Secretary. The list of those attending the inaugural meeting of the Association includes a wide variety of the best-known Maltese surnames. The list provides not only names but occupations, and a surprising number of the men had secured positions of responsibility. These positions included appointments as school teachers and with railway companies, banks and the post office.



**Group of Maltese at the Winnipeg Railway Station, August 8, 1913**  
**Henry William Parnis England is seated, fourth from left, with hands crossed.**  
**Others in the photo include Carmelo J. Salinos, Joseph R. Peralta and Victor Laferia.**

(Copy of photo once owed by Mrs. M.L. Saliba, Zebbug, Malta)



**(l to r) Francis J. Tonkin, Alfred V. Curmi and Emmanuele Laferla, Winnipeg, c. 1913**

(Photo once in possession of F. Joseph Tonkin, Jr, Winnipeg)

Most of the Maltese in Winnipeg would be occupied establishing themselves in their new country, but they made time to welcome new arrivals from Malta. One group they met in 1913 and helped on their way across Canada, being a group of some 50 men led by Dr. Charles Mattei and bound for British Columbia. Letters from the Winnipeg Maltese to newspapers in Malta at the time were all very encouraging and suggest that the Maltese there were making a success of their new lives. Events, however, were to change this situation dramatically.

The outbreak of the First World War in the late summer of 1914 had a tremendous impact on the Maltese community in Winnipeg. The majority of the men there were young, unmarried and still relatively unsettled in their new country. These circumstances encouraged a great proportion of them to enlist in the Canadian forces. Of these volunteers, several were to be killed or wounded in action, and when the War ended many others determined to return to Malta rather than Canada.

Among the Winnipeg Maltese who served in the Canadian Army, two obtained commissions. One, Lieutenant Luigi Ingloft, had left a civil service position in Canada to enlist. Another, Alfred Curmi, had been gassed at Ypres, together with his friend Charles Laferla, and had then been commissioned in the Canadian Army Pay Corps, eventually reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Two of the Winnipeg Maltese who were still resident in the area after the War

left their mark in the community. One of these, Carmelo J. Salinos, became a school principal and magistrate, and the other Francis J. Tonkin originally from Rabat, Gozo, built up a thriving religious statuary business in Winnipeg with a branch in Edmonton, Alberta. These last two, however, were the exceptions, as most of the men who had celebrated the birth of the Maltese Protective Association in Winnipeg never returned to that city and only the memories of their presence remain.

It is worth considering the change in climate experienced by these early arrivals to Western Canada. Coming as they did from a land in which snow was unknown. The idea of a 20-week long winter when temperatures would drop to below -50 degrees (Celsius or Fahrenheit) is quite breathtaking. Yet these men seem to have made a successful beginning to their life in Canada.

Most of the Maltese who went to Canada at this time, however, were unable to establish themselves. Over 2,000 Maltese went to Canada in the few years preceding and following the First World War, yet the Canadian Census of 1921 records only about 200 Maltese as still living in Canada.

Perhaps it was in the nature of Maltese immigrants at the time to perceive emigration as being only a short-term proposition. It may also be that the cold Canadian winters played their part in discouraging the Maltese and it will remain a historical question mark as to whether the establishment of Maltese communities in Winnipeg and in other western Canadian centres was a casualty of the Great War, when the world was turned upside down.

*\* This article is a slightly modified copy of that was found in an unnamed and undated newspaper clipping. There seems to be some evidence in the text itself that it may have appeared in an English language, Maltese journal.*

**Editor's note:** Hugh Rizzo of Stella Maris Parish, Sliema, age 18, came out to Winnipeg with his father, Carmelo Rizzo, age 42, on the Cleveland, via New York City, in April 1911. Among the 17 other individuals issued passports in Malta for Winnipeg that year were Victor Laferla, age 18, and Joseph R. Peralta, also of Stella Maris, who were partly funded by the Committee of the Vincenzo Bugeja Emigration Fund and who disembarked from the Friedrich der Grosse, at New York in June. Alfred Vincent Curmi of Sliema, age 20, and Luigi or Louis Ingloft of Cospicua, age 24, were issued passports in 1912. Emmanuele Laferla, married and an older brother of Victor Laferla, was almost 21 years old when the Canada sailed into New York Harbor in July 1913. On the same ship was Carmel J. Salinos, age 26, also of Valletta. As for Francis J. Tonkin, who was born in Rabat (Victoria), Gozo in 1889, he died in Winnipeg in 1975. His son, F. Joseph Tonkin died there in 2007 at the age of 70. Both were interred in St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery. William Henry Parnis England had been a merchant in Sliema before migrating to Canada in 1913. He returned to Malta in September 1914.

## MALTESE IMMIGRATION TO THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA PROJECT

Dr. Charles J. Vella, PhD



**Charlie produced the database on Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area and devised The Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area Project website.**

My name is Charlie Vella. I was born in Naxxar, Malta. My family ancestry is Maltese back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. My family immigrated to San Francisco, CA in 1950. Unfortunately, I failed to learn to speak Maltese, despite it being my native language. I grew up in the Bayview district of San Francisco which, in the 1950s, was the Maltese area of the city, centering around St. Paul of the Shipwreck Church, pastored by Franciscan priests.

I ended up becoming a Franciscan seminarian for 10 years but left after one year of theology. I received my PhD in Psychology from UC Berkeley, and worked at Kaiser Hospital, Dept. of Psychiatry for 34 years, and founded and directed the Neuropsychology Service. I retired as a neuropsychologist in 2009. I married Marilyn Uran in 1972. We have two daughters, Dr. Lea Vella, PhD and Dr. Maya Vella, MD.

I have been an avid genealogist for 35 years. I have been a docent at the California Academy of Science since 2009. I am currently a public lecturer on the topics of the human brain functioning and human evolution.

In January 1930, The Maltese-American Social Club of San Francisco was founded. My father Angelo was a regular member of this club for more than 50 years. In 2015, the Maltese Historical Society was founded, with Mona Vella-Nicholas being selected as its first President. I was selected as Secretary.

One of the ideas initially discussed by this society was the eventual publication of a history of Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area. A genealogical datasheet was developed and sent out to interested individuals (67 Maltese individuals have volunteered their family information). In addition, I started a database of these genealogies. I also began collecting public genealogical data available on the internet, starting with all US Census data from 1790 to 1940 inclusive on Maltese individuals who immigrated to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Eventually I created a website of this data: The Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area

Project: <http://www.charlesjvellaphd.com/Maltese%20Immigration/index.htm>

The following is the main page of the website:

### **Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area Project©**

The Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area Project is a genealogical research site dedicated to the Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area in the United States. It is an attempt to gather and distribute information on the descendants of all Maltese immigrants to the Bay Area that is found in the US Censuses from 1850 to 1940, as well as other sources.

The MI Project database currently contains information on 7087 individuals. If you are a Maltese immigrant or a descendant of a Maltese immigrant, please consider contributing your ancestry or descendancy to this project. Any data submitted to the MI Project will be cited to the contributor in any future publication and the contributor will be noted on the website. If you need help with your Maltese research, please contact me: [charlesvella@comcast.net](mailto:charlesvella@comcast.net)

Send any Maltese descendancy data you want to contribute to the MI Project (We can use Gedcom, TMG, FTM, PAF, Word/WordPerfect/Dos Text formats) to the above email address. We use The Master Genealogist V. 9 as our genealogy program. Please use the following citation if you use data from this site: "Maltese Immigration to the San Francisco Bay Area Project, compiled by Charles J. Vella, PhD"; Copyright © 2019 by Charles J. Vella, PhD.

The website includes a Master Index, a Surname Index, A Master Place Index, and an image library.

### **OPINIONS**

"....Thank you once again for your effort to keep the Maltese Organisations united..."

Fr Philip" (Mons. Philip Calleja, Valletta, Malta)

### **THE MALTESE-CANADIAN SOCIAL CLUB – ST. THOMAS\***

This club was established in St. Thomas, Ontario in 1973.

Its purpose was "to keep the Maltese community together and to be of assistance to each other."

The Club organized dances, bus trips and summer picnics and participated in International Week, with other ethnic groups held in St. Thomas in the summer.

At the time of its dissolution in 1979 it appeared to have had 45 members. Saviour Magri was the treasurer at the time.

*\*This information was gleaned from George Bonavia's Maltese in Canada (1980), 26, 34-35 and Maltese Forum, (Winter 1980), 8.*

#### **FOUR NEW MEMBERS FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES JOIN THE COUNCIL FOR THE MALTESE LIVING ABROAD**

Four Maltese community representatives from Canada—Sue Schembri and Brandon Azzopardi—and the United States—Claudia Caruana and Angelo Grima—were invited to become members of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad (CMLA) late last year.



**The New Council Pose for a Formal Photograph  
with the Hon. Carmelo Abela**

(courtesy of Claudia Caruana)

These North Americans, plus eight other new members of the Council from Australia, Europe, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East as well as three continuing members, participated in the Ninth Annual Meeting of the organization November 21-22, 2018. The Council meets yearly in Malta. Members serve three-year terms and can have no more than two terms.

The Council for Maltese Living Abroad was established by Act XX of 2011. This was put into place following the Emigration Conventions that were organized in 1969, 2000 and 2010 that recommended the establishment of a Council composed of representatives of Maltese communities and others with the aim of promoting the rights and interests of

Maltese living abroad.

This Council, also provides the opportunity for councilors, not only to meet once a year, but to put forward proposals all year round and to present grievances and issues related to the people they represent.

Chairing the Council is The Hon. Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion (*ex-officio*).

In addition to the Canadians and Americans, Council members include Australians Edwige Borg, Emanuel Camilleri, Marie-Louise Previtera, Mario M. Sammut, Shane Delia and Stephen Gatt. Alexander Grima represents Europe, Anita Grillo, the Middle East Antonella Berry-Brincat the UK, Denis Muniglia, France and North Africa, and Josephine Ann Cutajar, Malta.

Raymond C. Xerri is the director of the Directorate for Maltese Living Abroad; Council secretary is Joseph A. Xerri.

#### **THE MALTESE OF POWELL RIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Richard Cumbo\***

Maltese families have lived in Powell River and the surrounding area for about 40 years.

Powell River is located about 75 miles (120 kms) up the coast from Vancouver, BC. Because of its location, however, one must take a ferry to reach the community. The main industries in this thriving community of 20,000 are pulp and paper manufacturing, fishing, tourism and small business.

Presently there are about 100 Maltese-Canadian families who have made this scenic and temperate area their home. They are all proud Canadians, and most have not forgotten their background of a rich and colourful history and culture.

The first Maltese woman to arrive in Powell River was Mrs. Nellie Giordano, who arrived in the early 1950s, Nellie and her late husband Angelo raised seven children. She is still quite active in the community.

The Powell River Maltese have come from various towns and villages in Malta and its sister island of Gozo. Many have become successful business owners.

One of the most popular recreational facilities in this community is the Shingle Mill, a former shingle mill that has been transformed into a restaurant and pub complex. It is operated by David Enterprises, owned by David and Victor Formosa.

One of the few Maltese convents of nuns in Canada is found in Powell River. The Missionary Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth (M.S.J.N.) arrived on this area on October 4, 1961, after a written request by the pastor of Assumption Church in Powell River.

This order originated in Malta during the early part the

twentieth century through the impetus of its foundress Giuseppina Curmi with assistance from Monsignor Joseph De Piro. A decree officially recognizing the Order was issued by the Congregation of the Religious on April 6, 1934. among its many establishments, the M.S.J.N. operate a large institute in Zejtun, Malta.

The Sisters of Power River teach at Assumption Catholic School which they opened only three days after the first six sisters arrived; the principal is Sister Petronella.

Their convent is called Mater Ecclesiae, more popularly known as the Maltese Convent. Presently, it is home to six Maltese sisters. At times the convent, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean, has housed a larger number. The lives of these good sisters are dedicated to the educational and spiritual needs of the community. Their students are from various ethno-cultural backgrounds.

Community life for the Maltese is active. Among those who spoke highly of the Powell River Maltese is Gina Adduomo (née Tanti). Gina, who is of Italian descent, visited Malta seven times and she has learned to understand and speak some Maltese.

Like the thousands of other Maltese immigrants who left their tiny homeland in the Mediterranean Sea, the Maltese of Powell River have adapted well to their new homeland.

*\*This article originally appeared in L-Aħbar, Toronto, Ontario, Nov. 24, 1988, 3 and has been somewhat implemented by Sister Claire Sapien, M.S.J.M., "Missionary Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth, <https://rcav.org/missionary-sisters-of-jesus-of-nazareth-msjn/> accessed Dec. 12, 2018.*

### **KNIGHTS OF MALTA SOCCER TEAM\***

The Sons of Malta Social Club of New York is to be congratulated for giving the Maltese Community of New York a brand-new soccer team, "The Knights of Malta S.C.," composed of all Maltese players.

The new team is strongly determined to prove its sportive talent to the utmost in its initial competition in the Italian-American soccer League; its aim is that of keeping high the prestige of Malta in the sporting field.

Every member of the Maltese Community of Metropolitan New York should take pride in and support "The Knights of Malta Soccer Team" 100%. All those who wish to help may mail their donation to the Sons of Malta Social Club, Inc., 166 East 28<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, N.Y. 10016. The donors will receive a regular program and their names will be inscribed on a plaque in the Club.

The result of all Soccer games of the Italian-American League will be published weekly in "Il-Progresso" as well as broadcast on the Italian radio.

We sincerely wish the "Knights of Malta Soccer Team:

the best of luck.

*\*Reprinted from the Committee for Maltese Unity Inc, of New York newsletter, December 1974, 2.*

### **JOE CALLEJA**

#### **C. Caruana**

Joe was born at the industrial and prosperous town of Paola, known as *Raħal Ġdid*, i.e. The New Town, on September 23, 1919.

He married Pauline, nee Ascolese, whose brother was the pastor of the parish church in Gudja.

Joe started his education in Maltese and continued his tertiary learning at universities in the U.S.A. where he immigrated in July 1947. He attended courses in health sanitation, sociology, journalism, leadership, public speaking, real estate, language, creative writing, industrial advertising, American law, business administration, social welfare and counselling. He has a doctorate in humanities and social sciences and a number of diplomas, including social welfare, counselling and missiology.



Joseph Calleja came out on the *Marine* Shark in July 1947, accompanied by his presumed mother, Mary Josephine Calleja, to join a presumed uncle, Alfred Calleja, in Detroit.

He is a life fellow of the Royal Economic Society (U.K.) and a fellow of the American Institute of Management and Pitman's Certified Teacher (U.K.), a life member of the Institute of Journalists (U.K) and a member of the Society of Health (U.K.); American Public Health Association; National Association of Counsellors (Malta) and the Maltese Academy.

He held administrative executive positions both in Malta and in the United States, and was faculty member of the "Corktown College," Detroit, Michigan, established by the Most Holy Trinity Church under the auspices of the Department of Parochial Schools and the City of Detroit Department of Education. He lectures to prospective emigrants at the Malta Emigrants' Commission Training Centre, and has given several talks on life in the U.S. to civic groups and major seminarians and on radio and TV.

He was active in consular and diplomatic fields as a Consul General of Costa Rica; he also carried liaison work between the British, United States and Maltese

governments. He was appointed representative of the Malta Emigrants' Commission, in 1962, in the U.S.A. He held the rank of Special Ambassador and Personal Representative of the president to the United States to Malta (with exequatur) when the Island was given its independence from Britain, in 1964. He was U.S.A Council Charter Second Vice President, in 1967, in Malta.

Joe Calleja is an accredited foreign correspondent and a prolific writer.

He filed hundreds of news stories for the U.S.A. as a foreign correspondent to a number of Malta based newspapers and Rediffusion (now Xandir Malta). He was editor of *Malta* (U.S.), *Corktown College Clippings* (U.S.), *Il-Holqa* (The Link) and *Il-Filantropista* (The Philanthropist) and associate editor of *Malta News* (Windsor, Canada).

He launched the *Librerija Maltija* (Maltese Library), in Detroit, in 1947, and founded, produced and directed the *Maltese Radio Program*, in 1955, heard over WJLB (now WMZK), Detroit, and is presently directing the Malta Press Service.

He has some 16 books published. He wrote the lyrics of "*Innu ta' L-Emigranti Maltin*," in 1948. It was set to music by the Maltese composer Chev. Carmelo Pace and recorded on discs by the Malta government.

For a number of years, Joe Calleja produced *Ittra Mill-Amerka* (Letter from America), *Magazzin ta' L-Emigranti* (Migrants' Magazine) and *Serenati Maltin* (Maltese Serenades) for Malta Rediffusion and Malta Television.

He was also the translator in Malta of the Vatican News Agency, *Agenzia Fides* (1940-945).

He served and is still serving as Public Relations Officer/Director to the Malta Emigrants' Commission; Malta Blood Bank, Royal Society of Health (Malta) the Parish Council in Paola; Tuberculosis and Health Drive (Corktown, Detroit) and is Chairman of the Community Relations Citizens Advisory Committee; Total Action Against Poverty (Detroit) and others.

Joe's innate "forte" lies, however, in the fields of personalized concern for others—the human social care of a personal, humanitarian service to others, particularly the less fortunate.

When still in his teens, his mother's house in Malta was a Mecca for those needing all sorts of assistance, be it letter-writing (for migrants' relatives), financial assistance and employment and even rehabilitation of a former civil prisoner, an apostolate he is at present performing at the Civil Prison at Paola as a volunteer social and counselling officer.

Joe Calleja devoted much of his time in helping the community, particularly the Maltese immigrants, during his 19 years in Detroit. He instituted both the People's Secretariat and the Malta Information Center in 1947, and later The Maltese Friendship League, a militant

Catholic action movement. Gathering at times numbered some 1,000, and former Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams of Michigan had on one occasion addressed one the League's meetings.

Joe had helped many Maltese immigrants establish themselves in the States. He helped them in their personal and inter-family problems and fostered Maltese traditions, culture and folklore, as well as other interests."

"Joe is the nearest thing I have seen to a fully-fledged Maltese Ambassador, for, as the unofficial representative of the Maltese Government, Church and Press, he has long been accepted by the authorities, British consular representatives in the city (Detroit) and even by Government Departments in Malta.

It is a common occurrence for Joe to be consulted by one of the three bodies on anything concerning the Island of Malta or Maltese people in the States. The hardest but most rewarding of his many tasks is that of bringing members of families together. He also helps to trace some long lost relative. This kind of work is naturally confidential and the results, therefore, hardly hit the headlines." (*Sunday Times of Malta*, Sept. 1961)

Being aware that a number of Maltese immigrants could not write or read Maltese, he organized Maltese language evening courses at "Corktown College," in order that they might start corresponding with their relatives in Malta.

He was very active in Maltese organizations: president-founder of the Maltese Friendship League; executive secretary of the Maltese American Benevolent Society of Detroit; honorary member of the Executive Committee of The Maltese American League and secretary general of the Council of Maltese American Organizations Michigan, which he had promoted in 1964.

He was chairman for the Maltese in Egypt Relief Fund (U.S.A.-Canada); a member of the Holy Redeemer Parish Committee Kennedy Memorial Grove Fund, U.S.A. (1964) and of the Archdiocesan Development Fund (Detroit); a promoter of Mission Malta, and other projects through which of tons of medical supplies, books, clothing and other necessities were shipped to Malta on behalf of the needy.

Civic organizations also sought his expertise. He was a member of the People Health Foundation, National Headquarters in Washington, D.C., in 1960; the Mayor's Community Relations Citizens Advisory Committee (Detroit), in 1965 and the Malta representative of the International Blood Bank Mission, Inc., Florida, in 1967.

He is the honorary life president of the Maltese American Association in Malta which he co-promoted in 1974 and honorary president of the Saint John Ambulance Brigade, Paola-Tarxien District, Pope John XXIII Prize in 1968 and the Dr. Joseph-Mrs. Calleja

Literary Competition Trophy.

He also founded the Commendatore Joseph Calleja – USA – Malta Trust.

Joe was a member of the Pastoral Directory in 1967 and the Malta Emigrants' Commission's (M.E.C.'s) International Year for Human Rights in 1968 and was the executive secretary of the Maltese Migrants' Convention (M.M.C.) organized in 1969 by the Malta Emigrants' Commission. Joe was an official delegate of the M.E.C. of the Catholic Committee of Inter-European Migration (C.C.I.E.M.) held in Malta in June 1975.

He was appointed on the General Advisory Board on the International Who's Who in Community Service (U.K.) on October 30, 1973.

Joe is listed in several Who's Who publications, such as *Malta Who's Who*, *World Who's Who in Commerce and Industry*, *Who's Who in the Midwest*, publishers of *Who's Who in America*, *The American Catholic Who's Who*, *National Dictionary - Malta*, Dictionary of International Biography (U.K.), *International Who's Who – in Community Service* (U.K.), etc.

In a nutshell, all I have tried to say in this profile, which, owing to my obvious limitations, is very imperfect indeed, has well been said by a Malta University professor in November 1976: "Joseph Calleja has always been a man with ideas and initiative sufficiently strong for him to carry them out....He is a man of principle with strong character."

*\*This article with minor changes is that which originally appeared in Forum Melitense (Winter 1977-1978), 13-14.-18.*

*Editor's note: A biographical sketch of Karmenu/Carmelo A. "Charles" Caruana is to be found in Fr. Lawrence E. Attard's Profiles in Maltese Migration (2003), 169-178.*

### THE FOUNDING OF THE MALTESE CANADIAN SOCIAL CLUB IN GUELPH\*

The Maltese in Guelph, Ontario, as in other communities, had always wanted to organize a Maltese Canadian Club, but because they were small in number, had always accepted to travel to other communities to take part in Maltese events.

Until the beginning of the 1970s, there were only a few Maltese families living here in Guelph. In the beinging of 1976 four men—Frank Fenech, John Pavia, Vic Cassar and Tony Mifsud—got together and talked about organizing a Maltese club for this area. The founders started right away phoning the Maltese people that they knew to see if they were in agreement with the idea. The people were all very enthusiastic and soon these four men were busy phoning all the Maltese people they could fiind in the phone book. Some 60 families were phoned and most were very interested. It

was an unusual way to start a club, but the organizers, with the help of their wives and friends set a date for the first get toger and then the decision was up to the people.

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1976 the Maltese under the name of The Maltese Canadian Social club was formed. They met at the Lawn Bowling Club in Guelph and a very good turn out of 44 familes attended.

The First Executive Committee was then formed. They were:

President	Frank Fenech
Vice President	John Pavia
Treasurer	Tony Mifsud
Secretary	Vic Cassar

The Board of Directors were:

Huck O'Connell	(Guelph)
Henry Mallia	(Cambridge)
Tony Zahra	(Kitchener)
Joe Pavia Jr.	(Guelph)

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1976, the Charter Dance was held at the Steelworkers Hall in Guelph with Mayor Norm Jary and Maltese Commissioner John Pisani on hand to officially inaugerate the Club by unveiling the emblem of the Club.

The emblem was made by Frank Fenech and consisted of a shield divided into two parts, one red with a Maltese cross, the other part ihite with a red maple leaf, with the inscription in black on a gold background, "Maltese Canadian Social Club."



For this occasion they had a busload of Maltese from various clubs in Toronto. They presented the Club with a plaque.

Letters of congratulations were received from the first President of Malta, Anthony Mamo and the Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff.

*\*Adapted from the booklet, Maltese Canadian Social Club Guelph Inc. 1976 – 1980.*