



CASA FIN

Giuseppe and Patricia Fin's 50th Wedding Anniversary – Rita Fin's Speech - 23rd November 2008

Welcome and apologies. Of all invited only 2 could not attend - John and Giustina DeBellis. John had major heart surgery just over a week ago and is recovering well.

Intro – re “potted” family history

Dad was born in Noventa Vicentina, Italy in 1930 the 11th of 12 children and when he was still a baby the Fin family moved to Runzi, in the province of Rovigo. Mum was born in Double Bay Private Hospital in 1935, the first born of 3, and after short stays in Woollahra and Glebe Point, by the age of 2 was residing in South Avenue, not far from the church where they ended up getting married some 23 years after her birth. Leichhardt, of course, after about 1946 became known as “Little Italy”.

Dad came to Australia at the end of 1956, with a grand total of 2 pounds in his pocket, and resided with his sister, our Zia Maria and Zio Lino for the first few months. He had a job stacking loaves of bread into baskets for deliveries to suburbia and then went to work for Guido & Co. as a packer of orders for continental groceries, wine and spirits.

After that he was driving a truck for San Remo Pasta and made deliveries all over Sydney. Then in mid 1958, Lino decided they would open a *fruit shop* in Mortdale, so Dad went halves and invested all his savings. Anyhow, their English was not very good and their knowledge of the business was even more limited, but thanks to some good advice and help from Benni Conti and his brother, they struggled through until Mum and Dad got married in November, 1958. When Mum came on the scene they ran the show together. I can imagine she would have used the phrase that we heard hundreds of times over the years “Well, just get on with it!”and they did, and it became a successful business.

But before we move on from there, this is the story of how they met: Mum was the organist at St. Fiacres, Leichhardt and by 1957 it was the main church where Italian Migrants gathered to worship, under the guidance of the Capuchin Fathers from America and Italy, Chaplains to Italian migrants on the invitation of Cardinal Gilroy.

One night at about Easter time in 1957, two young Italians turned up to choir practice for the English Choir, run by Father Adalbert. They were given advice by



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the organist (Mum) to come back the following Friday, as the Italian Choir, run by Padre Silvio would be more suited to them, being obvious to her that they were both just "fresh off the boat" as it were. Then, the same very tall, THIN young chap also joined the San Francesco Association, and beginning a tradition of service to the Italian Community, which is still true of him today, promptly got himself elected Secretary in no time. By then Padre Alessandro was chaplain and also ran the Choir. So from Easter until about mid-August, Mum and Dad eyed each other off until one evening, Dad followed Mum down the lane at St. Fiacres (where we all drove up to park today) and wanted to engage in polite conversation. So from there, things started to progress, with a few hitches, until a year later - Easter 1958, when the other stray young man who had turned up to the wrong choir, got married. Mum and Dad were of course invited to the wedding as an "item", thus leading to the notion that some day soon, they might do something similar. The road was not 100% smooth, with a few racial tensions thrown into the melting pot between family and friends and the Italian connections telling Dad that if he married an Australian girl, he would have to don an apron and do the washing up, while his wife went out to the pub with her friends.

Anyhow, finally - after many deep and meaningful discussions - the big event took place on Sunday 23rd November, 1958, a very small affair, celebrated by the then Apostolic Delegate Monsignor Romolo Carboni, and with the Italian Choir in full force, and half a dozen Capuchins in attendance (at Lilyfield Church). On the following Tuesday, they took over the Mortdale shop and lived in the little wooden shack at the rear of the shop next door, because the fruit shop was a lock up premises. Business picked up steadily and I arrived in Feb. 1960. They then sold the Mortdale shop and bought another shop in Lyons Road, Drummoyne. Loreta came along in 1961, followed in rapid succession by Anna in 1962, that was the year they sold the shop and according to Mum "In two minutes flat". They bought 20 Badminton Road Croydon with that money.

Dad then drove delivery trucks, after a very short stint selling encyclopedias, and along came Isabella in 1963. In 1964, they decided to go to Italy on board the Galileo to take all four kids to visit their grandparents in Runzi. The journey took one month each way and they stayed for 6 months. Upon their return Dad then resumed truck driving, then taxi driving, a short stint of selling furniture and then became a salesman for Fazzini and Co. where he learnt the building game. He went on to work for Sabemo for a couple of years as paymaster and then started his own company Safix P/L, which had a very successful run for 16 years, until the advent of the computer age, when they decided to (quoting Mum) "pack it in" and knock off work to concentrate on voluntary work with Co. As. It., etc.



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Along the way during that period, they were still busy having more kids and Silvana, (1966) Daniela, (1969) Sandro (1971) and Mario (1973) arrived along the way to complete the family.

Today, by their 50th Wedding Anniversary, November 23rd 2008, they have 8 children, 17 Grandchildren and the first great-grandchild is due in May next year.

We have shared much happy family "festas" along the way and a lot of them with many of you that are here celebrating with us today – all the baptisms, communions, confirmations, weddings, birthdays and luckily not too many funerals. Then there are the Christmases, Easters, Mothers and Fathers days... the list goes on.

The only time the Aussie prediction of Dad having to wear an apron has come true has been at the many BBQ's where Dad always cooks way too much meat and then tries to force an extra 5 sausages and 2 or 3 extra steaks on everybody's plate! We have poured much champagne and consumed many kilos of wog cake together (today being no exception). We have sung the "12 days of Chrizma" until our voices became hoarse, we have heard the delightful squeals of the grandchildren running through the corridors of someone's house playing hide and seek while the adults sit at the table consuming the typical 5 or 6 course Italian meal that takes 6 hours to consume! And I have totally lost count of how many times, at the end of each one of these huge family events, Dad his chimed in with a spectacular "Ho mangiato troppo"!

Thank you for joining us to celebrate this special event today. Could you please charge your glasses as we make a toast after 50 years of marriage to " i sposi"

1958 – pop 9 mill 800 thousand