



Mum and Dad's 50th Wedding Anniversary - Loreta's Speech November 23rd, 2008

When I was putting together the vast collection of pictures and memorabilia that went into the power point presentation which we are enjoying today, it brought back many, many memories of my childhood. Was it this idyllic, peaceful utopia, filled with harmony and tranquility? **Not on your life.** It was a war zone. Each school day, it was every man for himself...or HERself! Finding a matching pair of socks was impossible and if you planned to wear your favourite shirt on the weekend, you could bet your life that someone else had nicked it. You had to get up at 4.30 to be first into the bathroom and if you were unlucky enough to go last, you risked your life sliding around on flooded tiles. Yep, it was carnage!



So, your most powerful weapon having all those housemates was your sense of and I think all 8 of us would agree that the of emails that have flown through cyberspace to this mammoth event have triggered many memories. Let me share a few with you.



against humour hundreds leading up hilarious

The first memory I had was that of sneaking into Dad's room while they were out and pinching something that I had no business pinching. Back then, it was probably a piece of the Block of Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate with a glass and a half of full-cream milk...which Mum used to hide and seemed to be able to make last for about a week and a half between 10 of us. This time, while they were in Italy earlier this year, it was to pinch their wedding album and to discover many other exceptionally embarrassing pics of just about everyone in this room. Teamwork is always essential in a big family. So Daniela smuggled them back a few months later.



So. back to our childhood. For a while there, it seemed like every time you turned around, there was a new addition to the Fin clan. Rita was 6 months old when mum got pregnant again and I crashed her party as the only child. I barely made it to 3 months before Anna caused mum to have to dash between selling carrots in the "fruit and veg" shop and throwing up...well - carrots in the bathroom. Anna managed to score the limelight for a record 9 months before Isabella came into the world, a few weeks late, but when she was good and ready.



this baby how reluctant one is to room. I recall that in

After that, it seems that they found out what was causing explosion and put a stop to it for a while. Perhaps it was the trip to Italy in 1964.....we all know get up to hanky panky when your olds are in the next the Casa Vecchia (The Old House) in Runzi, you could see through the floor to downstairs, so maybe the walls were not much better.

Anyway, the first half of the family one of the priests who married



had begun to fulfil the prophecy made by them. He declared at the wedding - on this



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day, 50 years ago: “May you have a long and happy life together and have 6 girls and 6 boys!” Now, Men of the Cloth should not be allowed to make such predictions because there’s a damned good chance that God is listening to them. It’s all very well for someone who’s never going to get married, to wish chaos and bedlam on two unsuspecting newlyweds.

Well, the red Holden was still able to transport the family by the time Silvana came along, nearly 3 years later. This was thanks to the fact that there were no seatbelts back then. So, in 1968, when the travel limitations of owning a fruit shop were long gone, we were able to take our first big road trip with the family.....to Sunny holiday, with the Maronese Family and Christine Surian is Every day, we went to the beach and stayed there for brand of “sun protection” was a blend of Olive Oil.....extra of course, milk.... and lord knows what else.



Queensland. Now this the stuff of legends! hours. Dad’s special Virgin,

It had a sun protection factor of about minus 30!

Anyway, we all had great tans. The 8 millimetre films that were taken on this trip are hilarious. I understand they have been transformed to DVD, but my stealth mission to Mum and Dad’s earlier this year failed to uncover such a DVD. So, what you see is this: Breakfast – the Maras clowning around in the kitchen of their apartment at the Ocean Air Flats at Kirra Beach.....and the Fins saying Grace. Dinners: the Maras totally destroying their apartment, Zio Ernie and Zia Emilia playing up to the cameras with hilarious antics.....



and the Fins saying grace before dinner. At bedtime in the Maras’ apartment, it was mayhem....while the Fins said their bedtime prayers. You see, I figure it this way, when you’re in a red Holden, with 7 people and no seatbelts, driving all the way to Queensland, SOMEBODY needs to be praying. The highlight of these films was of course the “Silent Movie” that we made on Kirra Beach. It starred Zio Ernie as the villain, Zia Emilia looking very

fetching as the Damsel in **Distress** and Dad as the Hero in a rather **distressed** pair of swimmers. The “extras” were all of us kids and we served no real purpose, except to help Zio Ernie and Dad, who masterminded the construction of the most impressive sandcastle I have ever seen. Mum’s cinematography was worthy of an academy award. I wish we had it to show you.

So, being the 5 Star Catholic Family that we the 6th came to Australia, the Fins were there call a “Pope Crawl”. We went to every single street parade, mass and Holy Event for what weeks. I think Dad was actually praying for a son. was NO chance of that, because of course he should have priest said SIX girls. So no amount of Holy Fathers could negate the deal already done with the Almighty all those years earlier.



were, naturally, when Pope Paul with bells on!! We did what I now



airport arrival, seemed like However, there known that the



So along came Daniela. Now, there was a good reason why Zio Luigi and Zia Stefania called her “terremoto” (which means Earthquake). She got into everything, she drew on the newly painted walls in the downstairs rumpus room with crayons....and this was not a little “squiggle”, like Silvana’s Imaginary Friend that she drew on her bedroom wall.....this was serious PRO HART stuff. AND THEN she emptied the entire contents of a box of laundry powder into the machine and turned it on..... and this was all in one day. Yes, you may well laugh.....we certainly did..... but for some reason, Mum could not see the humour in this at all. By this time, she was quite pregnant with Sandro and had just walked from Arncliffe to Kogarah Hospital and back. She had had an altercation with a matron who was not impressed that she had not booked in earlier with a doctor. Mum informed this pushy hag that she didn’t need a doctor to tell her that she was 7 months pregnant after having had 6 kids already. She stormed back home and when she got there, she was furious. She said she could hear the kids screaming from the other end of Dowling Street.



The artwork was larger than life and the laundry was.....well, let me tell you, backsides were red for some time after that. Strangely, it seemed that Dad DID see the humour and I distinctly recall him inviting a door-to-door salesman, who was selling paintings, inside to witness that he did not in fact need ANY paintings, as he already had his daughter’s wonderful artistic creations all over the rumpus room wall!

Now, you would think that nothing puts fear into a child like hearing the words” **wait til your father gets home**”. But that was NOTHING to us, because mum had **THIS**. **THIS** multi- purpose kitchen utensil was far worse. It was used to stir the pasta, to serve the risotto AND...it was also a “weapon of mass destruction”. Or, should I say, a weapon of “**ass**” destruction. So, one day, we had a sibling meeting, as we often did, and decided that the simple solution was to HIDE the wooden spoon. Great idea.....if she can’t find it, she can’t use it! **GENIUS! So I did the deed.**



For a whole week, mum threatened us with “who took that wooden spoon?.....”when I find out who took that wooden spoon”..... Naturally, she was concerned that she had nothing to stir the pasta with. Now, we had a very strict pact amongst the first four of us. Rule Number One: NO DOBBING. To this day, I don’t know who caved in and broke the pact, but let me tell you....a week’s worth of wooden spoon with a crack up the middle of it is NO LAUGHING MATTER. Whoever it was that dobbed, I forgave you long ago, because - like the block of Cadbury’s Dairy Milk Chocolate - it was shared amongst us for the next week and a half.



Ok, whilst we are talking about sharing, can someone please explain to me WHAT possesses parents to dress their 6 daughters in the same clothes? Those Sound of Music Curtains have a LOT



to answer for! When I think about it, of course with Zia Maria being an excellent dressmaker and Mansours having a sale on red fabric with polka dots and yellow fabric with little flowers, it does make some sense. AND, they probably



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thought it looked adorable. But people, please allow me to define “adorable”. Adorable is Silvana aged 6 and Daniela aged 3, wearing red polka dot playsuits and the dresses that we had dubbed “the Yellow Surprises”. There is **NOTHING** adorable about Rita aged 13 and Loreta aged 12 in red polka dot playsuits and “Yellow Surprises”.... **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING**. But Rita and I thought we had it sorted: when we took our long shopping excursions - by foot, as mum didn’t drive - to Rockdale or Hurstville, Rita and I would gradually drop back, maintaining a safe distance between us and the “adorables”. However, this inspired plan was flawed, as we would come across groups of old dears waiting at bus



stops who said: “oh look...there are two more of them!” And let’s not even discuss the blue surprise, the green surprise or the brown surprise. These were hand-me-downs from Sandra and Sonia, which I’m sure were “haute couture” when THEY wore them, but by the time WE inherited them... eight years later.....we thought they were “haute manure”. And can **SOMEBODY PLEASE** explain my appalling sequence of **REALLY UGLY** spectacles?

By the way, Mario was well and truly here by the time we inherited Sandra and Sonia’s Mini skirts.....right about the time the MAXI skirt came into fashion, of course. Mario was sent by The Good Lord to stop Sandro from going insane with 6 older sisters. “At least the boys escaped the curse of the yellow surprises”, I hear you say. Ah yes, indeed they did.....but their fate was much worse.

THEY got to wear the matching Lederhosen, otherwise “Johnny Grabbers”, for their torturous tendency to severely say “cramp a young boy’s style”. Imagine Mario’s thrill up pair was found - probably a conspiracy by Sandro, Isolina - for him to wear on his Buck’s Night.



known aswell....let’s when a grown Julio and

By this stage, we had migrated from the Holden to a and finally, the pale blue Kombi Van. I recall once we had visited Zia Maria and as we all waved goodbye and jumped into the Kombi Van, Dad drove off down the street. After a couple of kilometres, he commenced the “roll call”.

station wagon

ONE.....HERE.....TWO.....HERE.....THREE.....HERE.... FOUR.....

FOUR.....MANAGERA STRONCANONICA. And back we went to pick up the missing Isabella, who felt very loved, I’m sure. This van broke down with alarming regularity and ALWAYS on some deserted road, in 40 degree heat. But Dad was a fixer. He always managed to get things fixed. I must tell you the story of dad and the electric clock. I guess it was mid 70s. It looked like the clock that drove Bill Murray insane in Groundhog Day, although it didn’t play “I’ve got you babe”. Anyway, one day, it stopped working. Dad said that in fact it was NOT broken; it just needed to be fixed. For the next four hours, he proceeded to



take the clock apart, and put it back together about 6 times. Finally, when he had all 400 or so parts neatly assembled on the kitchen table, he declared. “Yes, dis clock is browken”.



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Now let's talk about mum and her aversion to nicknames. She always said she never liked being called Pat and preferred Patricia. She also said that she chose our names very carefully, so that the Aussie tradition of giving nicknames would never happen. That's what **SHE** thought. Over the years, this family has had the most bazaar nicknames, which bear NO resemblance to the owner's actual name. Just to name a few: Beaut, Gayooge, Dali, Mrat, Ging, Boonie, Zarn, Bok, Big Diig, Cleli, Bagiga, Trog, Bowsie, Wiggle, Jiggle, Twiggles, Baggio, Mc Diig.....and the list goes on. Sorry mum. Let me just break the "No Dobbing" rule for a sec and inform you that your eldest and your youngest are to blame for most of these.

And speaking of names. Dad is a SHOCKER with names. When we were kids, he would go through the whole 8 names before eventually giving up and saying: "Yoo ova der....whateva yoo name is, come ova ir". THEN, when the poor terrified boyfriends started coming along, they were ALL called "TOM". It didn't matter HOW many times you told him, the poor boy's name was always "TOM". That is, of course, until he actually GOT a son-in-law called "TOMMIE", who is now always called "CHRIIS". ALL of our school friends were called "CAROLINA" or "ISOLINA", no matter what their name was or how many times he met them. Now, we have a REAL "ISOLINA" in the family and all is well with the world.



There are so many other stories, but that's probably enough for now. I'm so glad that we are blessed with the ability to have a good laugh about things. A keen sense of humour is so much cheaper than therapy and I'm pleased to say that the next generation has inherited this great asset too. Sandro and Mario were like big brothers to Claire, Nick, Bec and Miguel. Oskar, Freja, Vanessa Samantha and Veronica play and laugh all the time. They are not just cousins, they are best buddies and they have an absolute blast when they're together.



Mum and Dad, you have achieved so together, but by far, your greatest ME.....together with your other 7 grandchildren! But, of course, as we who don't know, I'm going to be a makes you both BIS-NONNI and it looks like there's going to be ANOTHER bloody Taurus in the family. This little one will no doubt be buddies with Emma and Ella.....and life goes on. Bring on the next generation of Fins and may they have as many memories to look back on and laugh at as we have had.



many great things in your 50 years achievement is of course..... children and your 17 wonderful know, it won't end there. For those of you Nonna. Now, if I have to be a Nonna, that makes you both BIS-NONNI and it looks like there's going to be ANOTHER bloody Taurus in the family. This little one will no doubt be buddies with Emma and Ella.....and life goes on.

Now, everyone's parents pass on words of wisdom and advice to their children. Please let me finish today by sharing with you the best ... and WORST pieces of advice given to us by our parents. The BEST one came from dad. It is one that has now been passed on to ALL of the Grandchildren and we have ALL benefited by it, even if we were sick of hearing it. I'm sure I only have to start it and they'll all join in! It is, of course



"YOO GOT TO



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.....TAIK YOO RISPNASABILITIS”.

And now, for the WORST, which was given by mum and passed down by HER mother before her. Whenever we had a big event on, we would go to her and ask: “What will I wear?” Her reply would invariably be: “You can wear your pants on your head for all I care”. Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask YOU to be the judge. Was this not the WOST piece of advice ever given? (Produce size 24 white cottontail undies purchased from Best and Less the day before, put on head and leave the stage.)

FINe (the end)

