

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

As an Italian-American viewing the movie, "The Godfather" I was able to identify, with only one scene.

The aging Don Corleone is sitting amid the ripening tomatoes in his home garden soaking up the sun with his toddler grandson. The child, soon tired of doing nothing, prods the old man into a gentle game of hide and seek among the staked up vines. (It is in this innocent play that Corleone, a creature of violence, sustains the fatal heart seizure, an occurrence script writers obviously intended to be highly symbolic).

The picture of the man and child in close pastoral harmony is, one I've seen a hundred times over in real life. The rest of the film — mayhem ad infinitum — which even if based on fact could only involve a tiny fraction of Italian-Americans in this country, was incredible fiction.

Yet, how many people who saw the film must have believed that that life style was and is the norm for most Americans whose names end in vowels?

Certainly the news and entertainment media which has found such sensational portrayals of certain peoples far more lucrative than the truth have done little to dispel the notion.

And it is particularly ironic that two Italian-Americans, novelist Mario Puzo, and film director, Francis Ford Coppola, have done the most to perpetuate the myth.

In a movie that helped in some part to set the record straight WHEC-TV recently showed a six-part series on Italian Americans in the Rochester area.

Conceived by news director Jim Riley and affectionately and deftly executed by veteran newsman Warren Doremus, who must be counted an Italian-American by virtue of geography if not nationality (he's a long-time East Rochester resident) the series sought to show the evolution of the Italian-American from early 20th Century to the present.

To depict the story of those early immigrants who found discrimination, hard times and poverty in this new land of supposed wealth as well as the personal success stories now being written by those immigrants' grandchildren, Doremus relied on some wonderfully evocative stills dug up in the files of the Rochester Public Library as well as extensive forays with a camera crew.

To help trace the course of Italian-American history in Rochester a number of interviews with prominent members of the community were utilized: Notably, Luigi Valenza who came here in 1915 to rise to prosperous insurance executive and patriarch of the Italian community, and Joseph Ferrari, head of the Monroe County Legislature who pointed out that discrimination is still felt in some quarters.

The universal charm of Italian food which has been wholeheartedly adopted by Americans in all walks of life was explored in excursions to local import food stores festooned with waxy, golden provolone cheeses, and to popular restaurants and grills.

The influence of their Catholic heritage on Italian-Americans, most of whom remain faithful to the Church, was briefly touched on during a visit to the Church of the

Annunciation where the pastor, Msgr. Albert Simonetti still celebrates Mass in Italian on occasion.

Special tailoring skills these immigrants brought with them from the old country were highlighted in a visit to local clothing manufacturers where many Italian-Americans found a niche and made a living, if not a fortune.

The Italian colony is gone now with its residents dispersed throughout the county, but pockets remain where the old traditions and customs are kept. One such pocket is East Rochester where an extended Quinzi family gathered for the camera to tap a keg of homemade wine in the basement and eat heartily of pasta, insalata, fruit and chicken and talk of family unity, a segment which made my mouth water and conjured up all kinds of nostalgic memories.

If there was any fault to be found it was that the three-minute-plus segment at the end of each news show merely whetted the appetite for more information. I would have particularly liked to hear Ferrari talk further about present day prejudice, where it exists, and why.



New Seton Officers

New officers have been elected to oversee the Seton Branches, which raised \$46,506 for St. Mary's Hospital during 1975. Beginning two-year terms are, seated, Mrs. Raymond Porter, general chairman; Mrs. John Schroth, first vice-chairman; Mrs. Anthony Palermo, advisor. Standing: Mrs. Joseph Adams, treasurer; Mrs. Robert Blake, project advisor; Mrs. Richard Maurer, advisor; Mrs. William Whelehan, telephone committee; Mrs. Joseph Beyel, recording secretary and publicity. Officers not pictured are Mrs. Robert Campbell, second vice-chairman, and Mrs. Frederick Loder, corresponding secretary.



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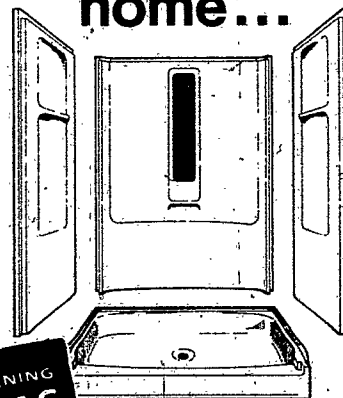
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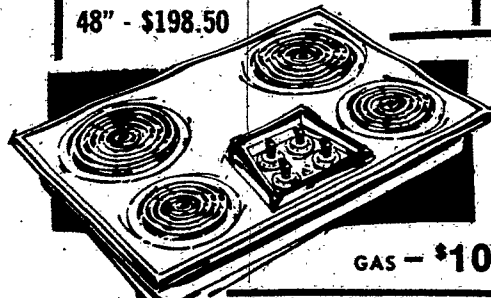
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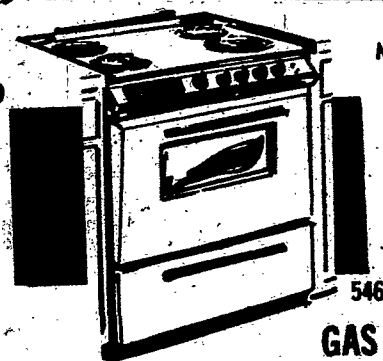
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