

'Angel' of Clyde marks 100 years

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Her nickname may be Tiny, but her legacy in her family is anything but small.

Many of Tinella Montemorano's 26 grandchildren, 53 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren, along with other friends and family members, gathered around her last month to celebrate her 100th birthday, which was Aug. 21. Some traveled from as far away as Brooklyn, while many others live within a mile of Montemorano's Clyde home.

Montemorano was born in Clyde in 1903 and grew up in St. John the Evangelist Parish. Her father, Santo D. Salerno, was the first Italian immigrant to settle in Clyde.

While age has made it difficult for Montemorano to physically attend Mass in recent years, she faithfully watches Mass on television every Sunday. She also remains involved in St. John's Rosary Society, and sometimes members hold the living rosary at her house. Montemorano also spends time every day praying the rosary for

families in need.

"I don't keep track," she said when asked how many rosaries she prays each day. "I pray for that family, this family, that family."

She married Michael A. Montemorano on Aug. 25, 1923, at the age of 20. Since her husband was an immigrant, Montemorano gave up her citizenship after they married and had to be naturalized, according to her grandson, Michael Montemorano.

"That was during the '20s, and I think they tried to make it hard for women," he said. "She still belly-aches about it."

The Montemoranos eventually opened a gravel business, which is still family owned and operated. Tinella Montemorano took care of the bookwork and let the men in the pit know what kind of order a customer needed.

Tinella Montemorano also worked hard outside the family business. Cooking and gardening were two of her favorite hobbies, and she kept a large garden full of berries, corn, and fruit and nut trees. Her home is near the former West Shore New



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

Tinella Montemorano, shown in her Clyde home Aug. 30, celebrated her 100th birthday on Aug. 21.

York Central Railroad, and during the Depression her generosity was popular with hobos.

"I think they had it marked, because every time the train went by we had people here. She never turned anyone away," Michael Montemorano said.

Tinella Montemorano's husband died in 1972, but she has continued to live in her house and pray for and take care of others, even finding time for fun along the way. In 1978, at the age of 75, she took a trip to the Holy Land.

"I got on a camel, and I had to have a stepladder to get on it," she recalled.

Since Santo D. Salerno settled in Clyde, Tinella Montemorano and her family have been closely tied to the community, in more ways than one. According to Agnes McKinney, Tinella Montemorano's daughter, there was a time when the Montemoranos were related to nearly half of the village's residents. There were so many relatives in the area that at one point, McKinney's sister



had to ask her mother before she dated someone to make sure they weren't related.

"There are so many (family members) you have to have a road map," Michael Montemorano joked.

Tinella Montemorano's progeny say she has a special meaning to them, and they visit her often to bring her meals or to just sit down to chat. Many believe their matriarch's first name, which means "guardian angel" in Italian, accurately describes her.

McKinney says her mother sometimes asks why, after witnessing the passing of so many family members and friends, she is still here. "You're here to pray for all of us," McKinney will answer. "He's not ready for you yet."

"Jesus is everywhere, right? Well, in the meantime, she's here holding down Clyde until he gets back," Michael Montemorano said.

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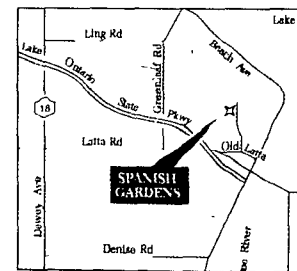
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