

DOMINIC AVELLANI

Hail and Farewell

by Renato Avellani

Dominic Avellani ... how to sum up his life: Someone who spoke 4 languages? Someone who has been all over the world, from Egypt to China and from Cuba to Panama? Someone who was congratulated in person by Lenny Zakim, Bob Dole, and Ted Kennedy? Someone who was married to my mom for 36 years? Why did I name my first son after him? As a father, he has taught me so much.



Let's start with his early years. He always loved Tione degli Abruzzi. He remembered the farming, the gathering of scrap metal to buy a loaf of bread and a piece of chocolate, and la trebbia, a fantastic machine that would separate grain from their stalks and husks. He remembered the long journey from Italy (by ship, not by airplane). He remembered arriving in the North End, living in a small apartment, and being surprised that everyone spoke Italian there like in Tione. These experiences taught him humility and to appreciate the little things in life.

When he was a senior in high school, his guidance counselor asked him at the end of the school year where he was going to college. No one asked him before and it was too late to apply to local schools. It angered him that his counselor didn't consult him earlier, but he was still able to apply to a school in Iowa, Parson's College, where he studied Spanish and History. After college in Iowa, he went to Mexico to continue his studies. There, he met my mom and they went together to Boston where he began to teach in the Boston Public Schools.

He never forgot that bad experience in high school with his guidance counselor. It made him want to become a guidance counselor to help others finish high school and to apply for colleges and vocational schools on time, so he soon became a bilingual guidance counselor. When students would visit him, they would often come with parents who did not speak English well, were not U.S. Citizens, or did not have a high school diploma. In 1972, these experiences gave him the idea of opening his own Center for Adults in the North End above the post office so he could help these

adult immigrants.

After retiring from the Boston Public Schools after 30 years, he continued the education center, later in East Boston. The wake was in East Boston and the funeral was in the North End because he wanted the members of these two communities that he helped, over 50,000 people, to be able to see him one last time. I thank those who

came; family, friends, and students. He dedicated his life to the service of the immigrant and the high school teenager. Many times he did not get a thank you but he felt that helping these people was his calling. Honorable Judge Joseph Ferrino, a friend of my father's, recently said that my dad did what the Public Schools of Boston would not do, he fulfilled that need.

Was work my father's life? No, he made time for my family. My sister, Cathy, remembers him always coming home after his day job to eat dinner with us and take us to the Healey School nearby to play some ball or ride our bikes. He took us to church every Sunday and then out to a restaurant, as a family. We would winter ski together, hike together, and go to movies together. He made time for me to play Little League, for my sister to play soccer, and he always did his best to come to important events in our lives.

He was a real American, teaching us to honor our country, remember our past, to be proud of our family, to be proud Roman Catholics, and to be positive. I believe this self-esteem boost really helped me in school. He taught us responsibility, to be self-reliant, and to not be afraid to get our hands dirty.

He would explain history in a way that made it real and he would always speak of the good the Roman Empire, Christopher Columbus, and the United States have done for the world. He was a true optimist, and he never limited your potential. We definitely need more people like him in the world, people that can bring others together and to improve themselves. I truly believe he is now in a better place. In closing, I would like to say to my father in Roman Latin, "ave atque vale," which means "hail and farewell."