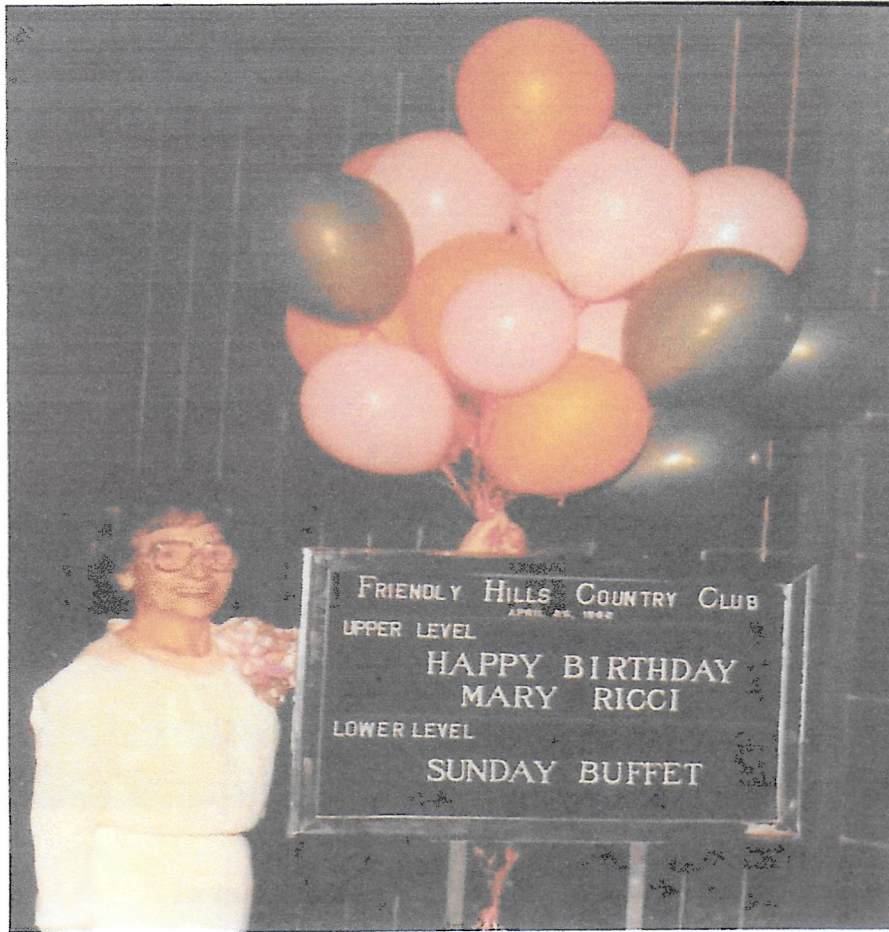




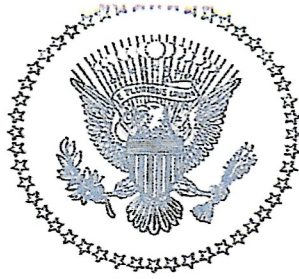
Mary Durante & Joseph Sarni

November 1923



75th!



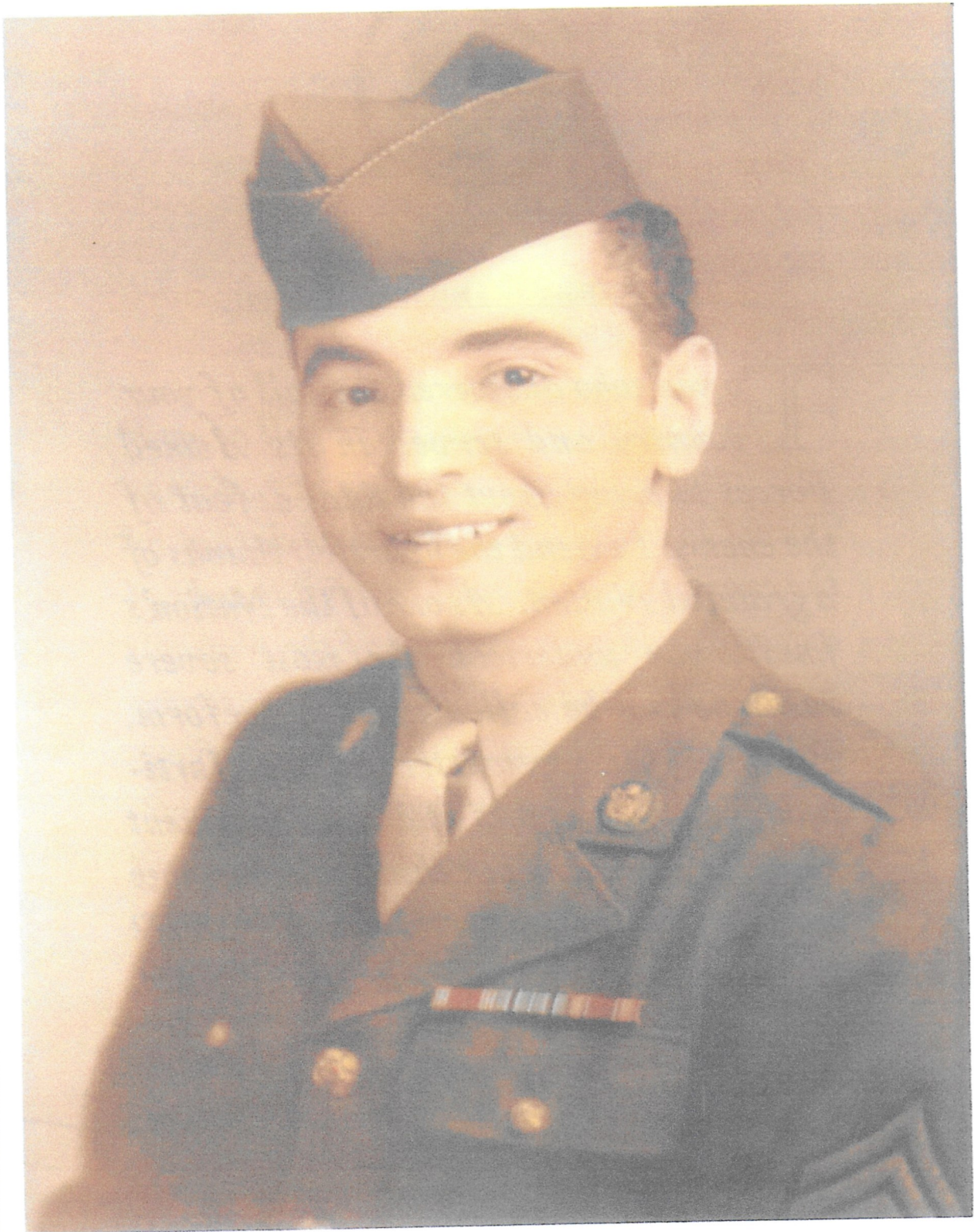


STAFF SERGEANT MICHAEL A SARNI

To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation's finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace.

Harry Truman

THE WHITE HOUSE



Michael Alfonso Sarni



Michael Sarni (son of Michael Alfonso Sarni)
1998



Mary Felice Sarni John Joseph Schmidt II

July 31, 1948



Sally Ann Priest

Gary Richard Schmidt

May 12, 1973



Debra Shawn Egelston

Joseph John Schmidt III

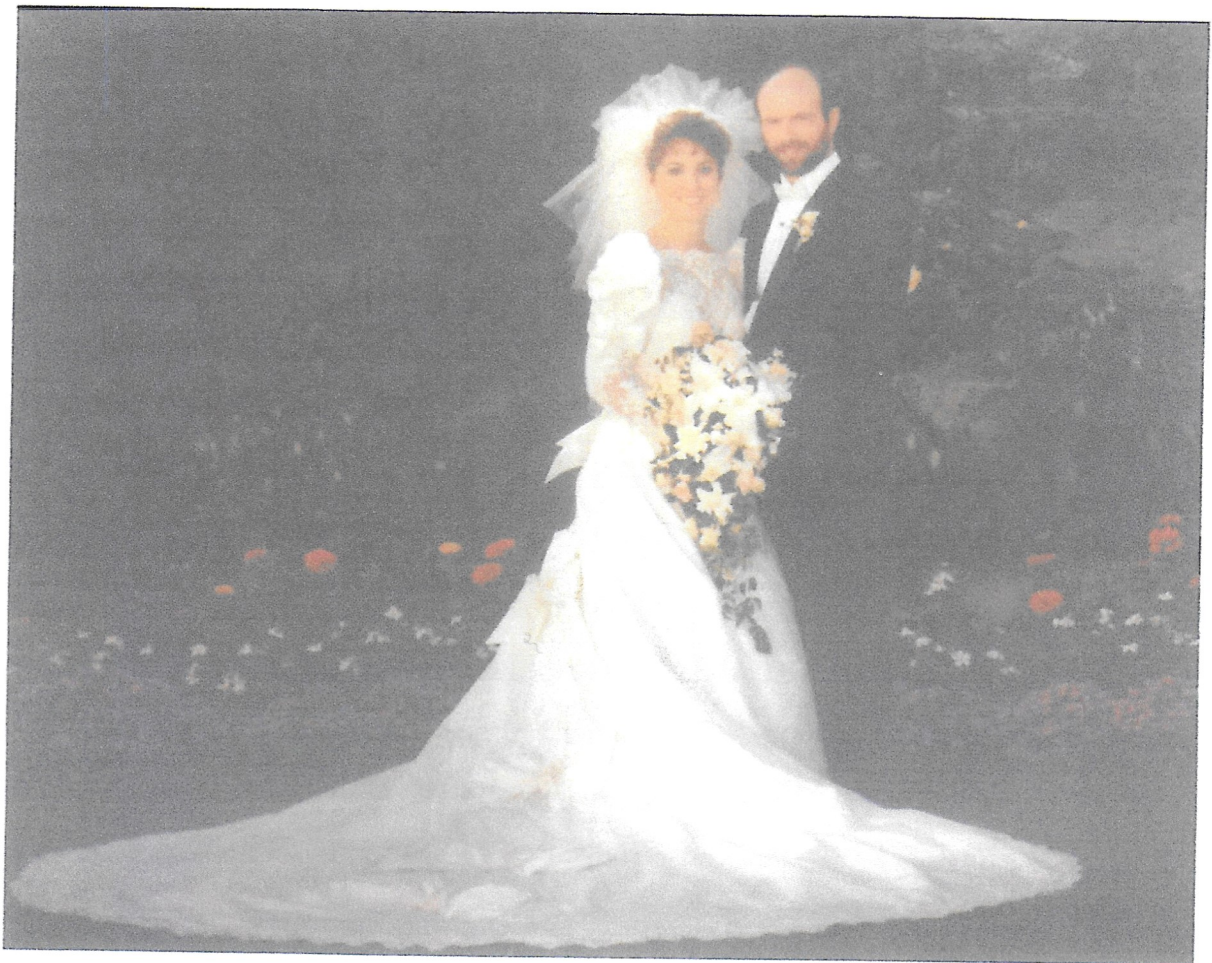
May 22, 1982

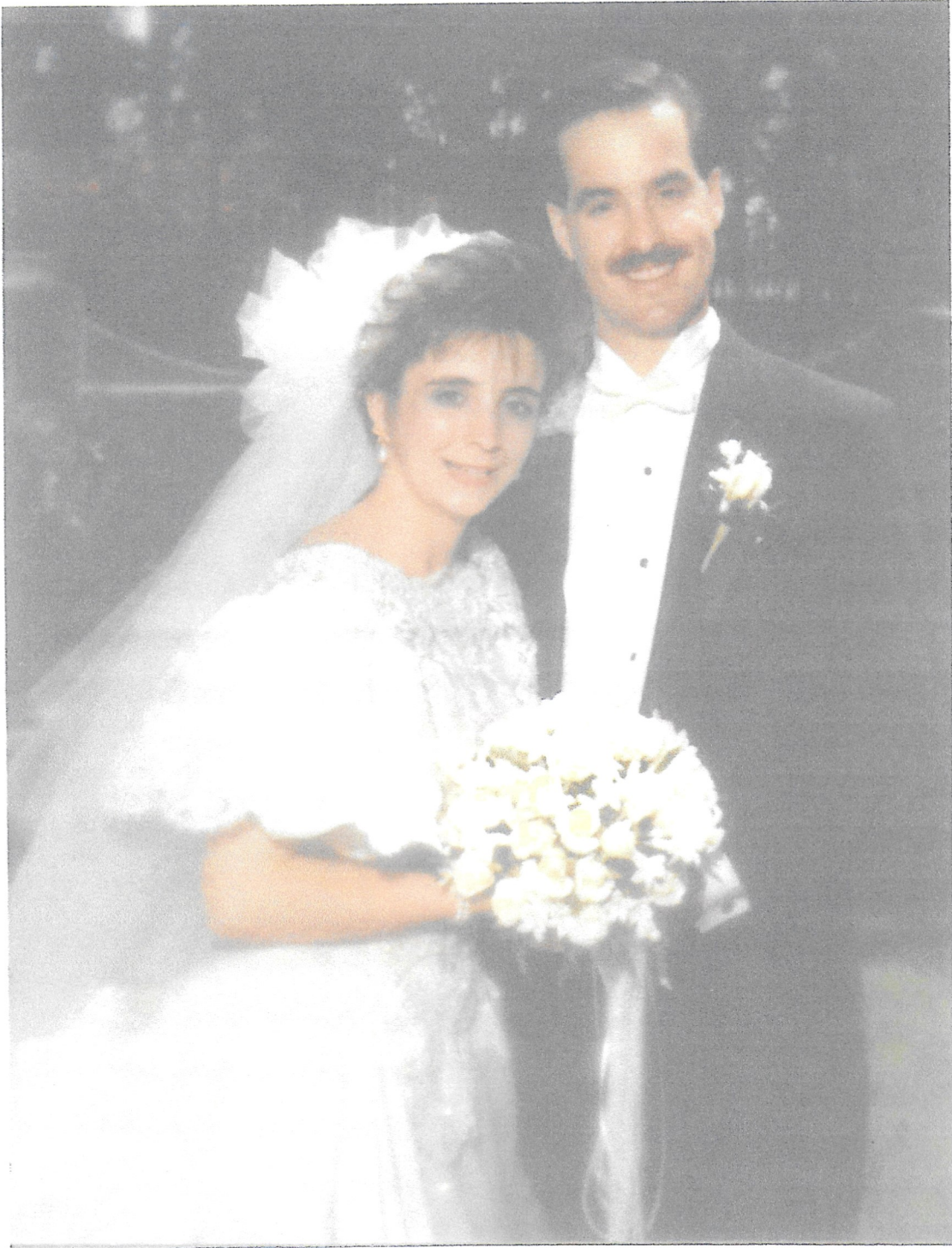


Cathy Susan Schmidt

Wayne Patrick Tate

August 6, 1988

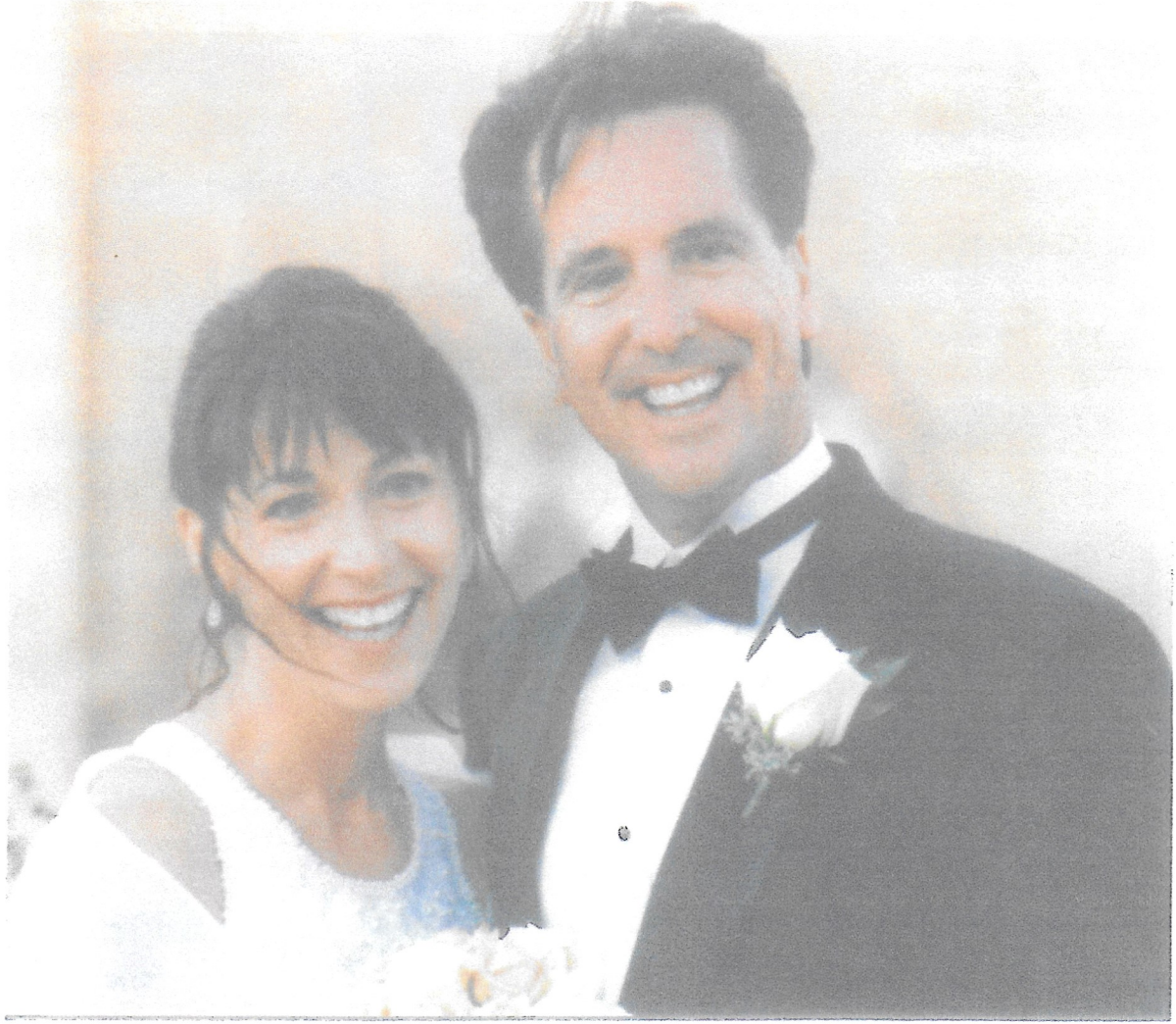




Cheryl Ann Miller

Jeffrey Michael Schmidt

July 29, 1989



Patti Porzig

Steven Joseph Schmidt

October 17, 1998



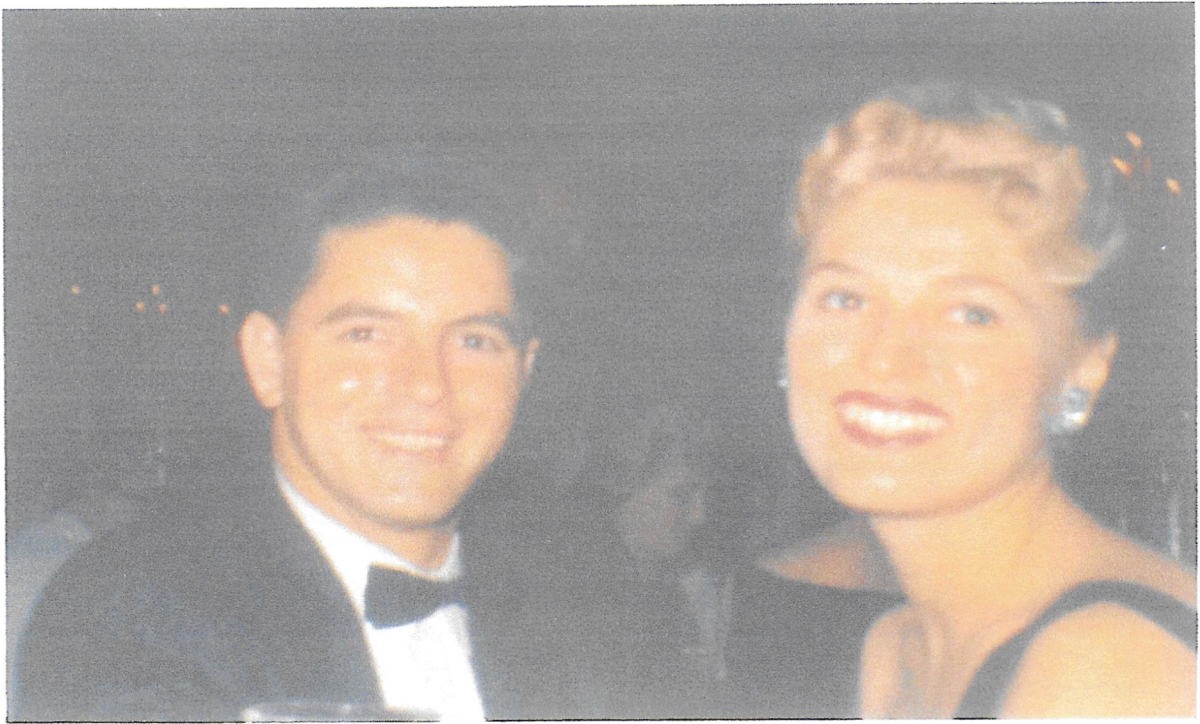
Mary Felice Sarni & Joseph Schmidt II Exchange Vows on their 50th Wedding Anniversary



25th Wedding Anniversary 1973



50th Wedding Anniversary 1998



Rocco Sarni & Yvonne Cotti

1960



Michael Sarni

Mary Schmidt

Rocky Sarni

July 1973



Rocky & Yvonne Sarni Family 1970
Michael Mark & John 1997





Michael Sarni & Candice King



Kimberly Haerens & John Sarni
January 25, 1997

The Family of Giuseppe Sarni

Our Family History

By Jeff Schmidt
December 2002 (rev 11-04)

Italian Genealogy

The Sarni Lineage

The Sarno/Sarni names derive from the Oscan and Samnite peoples living at the mouth of the Sarnius River in the fertile Sarno Valley in Central Italy. This is a short 30 km Southeast of Naples Italy, near Mount Vesuvius. It is possible that our forbearers left the Sarno valley to escape the growth of the Napoli area or perhaps due to the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79 that wiped out the famous city of Pompei. If not for these reasons, perhaps they left simply looking for more land and better economic possibilities.

The earliest direct lineage we can find is traced to the mid 1700's to Morra De Sanctis, a mountainous region 75 km East of Napoli, Italy. Our earliest known family member from this area is Tommaso Sarni, born in approximately 1752. He married Vincenza Del Mastro around 1773 and they produced two known children, Rocco Sarni (1777-1859) and Antonio Sarni (1779-1810). Rocco lived to be 82, highly unusual during that period. Rocco Sarni married Rachele di Pietro (1784-1846) sometime around the turn of the 19th century. They produced five children from 1810 through 1824. Rachele gave birth to her last child, Angelo Maria Sarni, in 1824. At the time of Angelo's birth she was 40 years old...thank goodness this last child was born, so late in her child bearing years, as he preserved our lineage!

Angelo (1824-1900) married Maria Battista Vittoria Nigro (1833-?) and produced five children from 1847-1863. The last child born, Michele Grazia Sarni (1863-1905) was our great Grandfather. He married Maria Felice Cozza (1861-1905) and they produced eight children including our Grandfather Giuseppe (1896-1955). After living his first 17 years in Morra where he worked the family farm following a few years of formal schooling, Giuseppe (Joseph) immigrated to the United States in 1913 to meet up with his oldest brother Francesco who immigrated to the US several years earlier, in May 1906.

Like many immigrants at the time, young Joseph was looking for a "better life" in America

The Family of Giuseppe Sarni

which we speculate he heard about from letters received from others who had come to the States before him. In the fall of 1913, as WWI loomed, he left from the port of Napoli, traveling with his elder sister, Maddalena on a vessel called the Venezia. They arrived on Ellis Island on Sept 16, 1913. Joseph was 17 years old and his sister was 20. Upon departing Ellis Island, Grandpa Sarni immediately traveled to Philadelphia where he met up with Francesco. While living in Philadelphia, he earned a living as a tailor. After several years in Philadelphia, Joseph moved to Chicago where other friends and family lived and where he hoped to find additional employment opportunities. After about 10 years in America, Joseph had saved up some money and decided to return to Morra. Besides returning to visit his family, he was hopeful he could find a bride to marry and return to America with him. Shortly after he returned to Morra in the fall of 1923, he met a beautiful young lady named Maria Durante. As was the custom in those days, he asked Maria's father, Alfonso, if he could have his daughter's hand in marriage and once he agreed, it was a done deal. Grandma had no vote in the matter. At the young age of 17, Maria Durante was married to Giuseppe Sarni on November 13, 1923. Within a few days, Grandma packed her bags and said goodbye to her family, friends and home town and left with her new husband, who she barely knew, for the "promise" of America.

The newlyweds took a train to Paris to honeymoon for a few days and left for the United States in early December, 1923. After eight long days on a cold and battered French vessel, Grandma and Grandpa Sarni arrived on Ellis Island shortly before Christmas 1923, and continued their journey to Philadelphia to visit family and friends living there. Shortly afterwards, they continued to Chicago where Grandpa had established residency before his trip back to Italy. Less than a year after arriving in America, Grandma and Grandpa gave birth to Uncle Mike on August 23, 1924. Mom came along two years later (June 5, 1926). Uncle Rocky was born 3 ½ years after Mom on November 5, 1929.

Shortly after Uncle Rocky's birth, the nation plunged into the great depression. Grandpa worked several jobs in order to provide for his family. He was too proud to rely on "bread lines" and governmental assistance for food so he did whatever he could to earn enough money to feed the family. Years ago, Uncle Mike told me how he worked before and after school to help the family.

the “Grand Dame of the Sea” it collided off the NY coast and sunk. This terrible event was captured on live TV and broadcast around the world. It was one of the big news events of the mid 1950’s. Grandma often remarked how lucky she was to have sailed on this “modern day marvel” before it sunk.

Prior to her trip, Grandma wrote to her family in Italy and told them to look for a “woman wearing a red dress” when they met the ship at the port of Naples. After all, it had been 30 years since she left and the family wasn’t sure they’d recognize each other. Apparently it all worked out. When Grandma arrived back in Morra, her mother didn’t recognize her. By this time, Great Grandma was quite elderly and her memory was fading. During her visit, Great Grandmother often referred to Grandma as the “beautiful American woman” not realizing she was, in fact, her daughter who had left 30 years earlier as a 17 year old girl. It must have been extremely difficult for Grandma to say good-bye for the second time, knowing she would never see her mother alive again.

During most of the early 20th century, Italy and the U.S. were political enemies. Imagine how Grandma and Grandpa felt during WWII as American troops attacked Italy knowing their family might be bombed by American warplanes. When Grandma returned to Italy she found out that US troops had not bombed or attacked any areas near her home nor were they treated as “enemies” but instead often greeted by the rural farmers who fed and welcomed them. In fact, it was a closely kept secret that great Grandma often fed US troops as they passed through the Morra area. Mom tells me that she hid food in her lose fitting dress. Had her behavior become known by Italian authorities, she would have suffered grave consequences. During this period, many Italians lived in fear of Mussolini and his political party and saw the American’s as “liberators” from the dictatorial regime.

The Durante Lineage

On Grandma’s side of the family, our great, great Grandparents have been identified and their birth dates are estimated around 1850. Their names were Bridgita Pugliese and Angelo Carino (who gave birth to Grandmother’s mother, Columba Carino, in 1878), and Rocco Vincenzo Durante and Anna Maria Mignone (who gave birth to my Grandmother’s dad, Alfonso Durante, in 1875). On November 9th, 1899, Columba Carino and Alfonso Durante were married in Morra De Sanctis.

The Family of Giuseppe Sarni

From 3AM to 7AM he delivered milk and from 3PM to 7PM he worked in an ice cream factory. The 1930's were a challenging time for this young family. And things didn't get easier.

In 1930 Grandpa's brother, Francesco passed away. In 1936, his wife Rosi died in a house fire. Their four children (Dominic, 12; John, 9; Antonett, 8; and Jenny, 2) were orphaned. Grandma and Grandpa welcomed these children into their home and overnight the family of 5 became a family of 9. Each of the children worked odd and end jobs to help provide for the family during this incredibly difficult time.

By the early 40's the family's economic picture had improved. Unfortunately, WWII was looming. By 1944, Dominic, Mike and Johnny were all enlisted in the armed forces; Dominic did a tour overseas Mike and Johnny served in the States. Fortunately, unlike many others during this period, the Sarni family didn't suffer any casualties in the War.

In late 1946, Grandpa left Chicago for Los Angeles. His brother, Rocco, had moved to California a few years earlier and had told the family in Chicago about all California ...mild weather, job opportunities, and landscapes that reminded him of his homeland in Italy. Grandpa went to work as a tailor in downtown LA. After he settled in and found a home, Grandpa summoned the family to California. In early 1947, Grandma sold the house on Troy St. and packed up the family to head west. Dominic, Johnny, and Antonett stayed in Chicago while the others came to California with Grandma. Sadly, Grandpa was only able to enjoy the beauty of California for a short few years...In 1955, he died of a massive heart attack eight years after leaving Chicago.

Grandma didn't return to Morra until 1953, 30 years after she left. Her life and her homeland had changed a vast amount during those years and she looked forward to her trip home for many months. Her journey took her via train to Chicago where she visited Dominic and Johnny. She then traveled to Philadelphia where she visited her two brothers, Alphonso and Generose, and their families. After a short stay in Philadelphia, Grandma traveled to New York to board the famous ocean liner, Andrea Doria. At the time, this was one of the most modern and luxurious ocean liners in the world. It had just begun service earlier that year and was touted for its comfort (with uncommon features like air conditioning, swimming pools, numerous bars and restaurants, etc.) as well as its speed (23 knots) and safety systems, including radar. Two years after Grandma sailed on

Columba and Alfonso gave birth to 11 children. Their names were Anita, Generose, Maria, Gerardo, Vincencia, Rocco, Assunta, Incoronata, and Luigina. Our Grandmother, Mary, was born on May 6, 1906. Besides these children, a set of twin girls were still born, leaving 9 children for my great Grandparents to raise. As of this writing (November, 2004) only Luigina is still living. Incoronata ("Zia"), our great Aunt who was a special part of the family, lived with us in the States starting in 1968, shortly before we moved to Hacienda Heights. She returned to Italy in 1976 to be with her critically ill brother, Rocco. She never returned to the States and lived the rest of her years in Morra where she passed away in 1998. Fortunately we were able to visit twice Zia in Italy before her passing. Those were tearful reunions...memories I will never forget.

Morra De Sanctis

The area surrounding Morra was likely first inhabited in 600-800 BC. Population grew as the Longobards conquered areas in central Italy in the 6th and 7th centuries AD. Morra itself was likely established during this period and was originally owned by Gastaldo di Conza and called Morra Irpino, as an ancient Samnite Irpini village. Later, it became a fiefdom of Prince Morra and his descendants, who governed from the 12th century until 1806. In 1937, Morra Irpino was renamed Morra de Sanctis in honor of a famous author, Francesco De Sanctis.

Life in Morra during the late 19th century and early 20th century was difficult. The town, perched 863 meters high in the coastal mountains, is very rural. Sitting atop the highest point in the area, the village has a commanding view of the surrounding areas. Neighboring villages could not be co-dependant as the nearest community was perhaps 7 kilometers away and transportation options were limited to foot, horse or mule. Winters were bitterly cold and homes were crudely constructed. The steep, icy, snowbound roads often made travel difficult, if not impossible, and few people left or entered the village during the winters.

Most food was grown by the villagers and traded among the families and diets changed by season. During the winter, families primarily lived off of canned or dried foods. From spring to fall (and during dry and mild winter periods), a weekly traveling market brought various products: clothing, tools, household items, etc. as well as food staples and seasonal produce and meat to

The Family of Giuseppe Sarni

supplement the locally produced goods. For the most part, electricity didn't exist until well into the 20th century and running water and basic plumbing was very limited and most folks had to pump water from a well. Imagine pumping water from a well in a blistering snowstorm! Cooking and heat was produced by wood burning stoves. Transportation was by animal and very few motor powered vehicles existed even into the 1950's.

Despite these tough living conditions, the town was very tight knit and families looked out for each other. Grandma once told me that Morra "was a beautiful little town...where church was very important." She spoke of the "warm friendly people" who often gathered to celebrate with large feasts "with food, music and good times."

Children attended school through 6th grade during Grandma's era. At that point, most children worked to support their family. Our family owned a restaurant as their "business" and each of Grandma's brothers and sisters worked in supporting the operation. The "restaurant" was quite small, maybe seating 18 people at 4 or 5 tables. It was technically called an "osteria" and named "Columba" after great Grandmother. According to Grandma, during the 1920's a diner could get a multi-course meal for less than 50 cents. Nearly everything served in the restaurant was grown or produced by the family: wheat was ground into flour for bread and pasta, olives were pressed to make oil, tomatoes were grown during the summer and canned to use during the cold months, and grapes were grown to make wine. In addition, the family raised chickens, ducks, rabbits, and grew other produce such as eggplant, peppers, beans, endives, mustard greens, squash, and numerous fruit such as peaches, cherries, apricots, and figs. Beef, pork, lamb, fish and dried spices were among the few things the family bought.

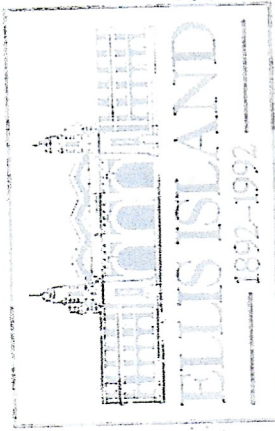
We estimate the Osteria began operations in the mid to late 1800's. It continued to operate for around 100 years until "Zia" Incoronata became ill and her sister Luigina could no longer run the operation by herself. Osteria Columba closed for good in 1996, a sudden and sad ending to a business that supported our family for over a century.

When Mom first visited Morra in August 1969 (at age 43) she was amazed to find the difficult living conditions that her family endured. I remember Mom saying how difficult life was in the village and how lucky we were to have so many comforts they did not have. She learned during

her visit that despite the difficult living conditions, the townspeople were very happy and the community was very tightly knit, as it had been for many generations. There were less than a thousand families living in Morra during the 1960's and there existed a thick sense of mutual dependency. Families spent much time together (after all, few people came and went) assisting each other with daily toils, celebrating the good times and offering support and comfort during the difficult times. Even today, Morra retains much of its community character from the societal and behavioral standards of much earlier times.

On November 23, 1980, tragedy struck Morra and the nearby surrounding towns and villages. A major earthquake violently shook the area and caused widespread death and destruction. Nearly 3000 people died and more than 9000 were injured. Our family lost a 5 year old girl, Concentina Araeno in the quake. The earthquake struck during her 5th birthday party, and trapped several family members in their home. With the help of others, all of the family members except Tina were able to escape. Tina cried for her mother while rescuers tried to free her. Sadly, her cries weakened as the family frantically dug to free her. She passed away before she could be reached. During our trips to Morra in the 1990's, we visited the site where Tina was buried in the collapsed building. Family members who took us there had a very difficult time controlling their emotions when they approached the area. Each of the visits to those ruins has been quite solemn.

The earthquake practically destroyed Morra and changed it forever. Shortly after the earthquake, the Italian government told the residents that due to the extreme damage the village would need to be evacuated and abandoned and offered to relocate residents to nearby areas. This was flatly rejected by the residents who were not going to give up the village that they and their ancestors called home for centuries. Only by the fervent protest of hundreds of residents did the government relent and agree to allow them to stay and rebuild. When we first visited Morra in 1992, twelve years had elapsed since the tragedy and most of the village was still in ruins. In 2000, our most recent trip to Morra, the town was still rebuilding and it was projected to take many more years before the damage could be fully repaired.



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Official Certificate of Registration

in

THE AMERICAN IMMIGRANT WALL OF HONOR

to officially certify that

Joseph and Mary Sarni

came to the United States of America from

Italy

joining those courageous men and women who came to this country in search of personal freedom, economic opportunity and a future of hope for their families.

Lee A. Licocca
The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island
Foundation, Inc.

