

Life
with Antoinette

As told to Deanna Brown
By Mary Sullivan

Version 2.0

Life With Antoinette

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Antoinette and Dominic's Courtship

In 1898, Dominic came from Italy to find work in the United States at the age of 18. He rented a room from Antoinette's mother, Mary Rose, in Newark, NJ. He became very fond of Antoinette but Antoinette did not like him because she noticed he had large feet and he was 13 years older. In her opinion he was an old man. But he pursued her for 10 years and finally she agreed to marry him at the age of 15. He was 28. Her first son was born when she was 17 (Anthony). She had nine children, raised a brother and a sister and took care of an uncle. What a big family to raise and she did it!

Dominic's Background (1883 - 1946)

Dominic came to America after serving in the Italian army Calvary as a Palace Guard. When he came from Italy the only picture he brought was himself in a uniform wearing his metal hat on. (Antoinette gave this photo to a photographer but he claims he lost the photo.) He did not attend school but his brother was sent to school. Because he was denied an education, he vowed that all his children would receive a college education. Antoinette taught him to write his name. He could neither read nor write. But he sent his children to college. He worked for public service and was a foreman. Dominic developed osteoporosis and it crippled him. Dominic developed stomach problems and could not walk. Dominic refused to go to the hospital and stayed in bed for one year. He died in his home at the age of 63.

Antoinette's Wedding Day

Antoinette was married in 1908. She wanted a horse and carriage. On her wedding day, a horse and carriage were sent but the curtains were black which were used for burials. She refused to go in the carriage to church, so the groom suggested that she walk to church since it was only two blocks. She refused. So her husband-to-be had to go to the undertaker where carriages were rented to have the black curtains removed and replaced with white curtains. Antoinette and her husband-to-be went to church in a white curtain drawn carriage.

The Birth of Twins

In 1912, Antoinette was pregnant with her second child. A local neighbor was called when she was ready for delivery and a baby boy, Michael, was born on January 12, 1912. The midwife put him on the bed and tried to help him because he was choking when Antoinette felt a terrific pain. The lady who helped with the delivery told her to sit on the pail. Mary, the twin fell in the pail. Whenever Mary made a mistake, her mom would say "that is what happens when you are born in a pail."

Antoinette's Children

Anthony (1908 - 1992)

(84 Years)

Anthony was born in 1908 and was the first born son. Dominic wanted him to become a Doctor but Anthony could not stand blood. He went to business school and became a Certified Public Accountant. Whenever Dominic was not around, Anthony tried to take over the position of father. However, Antoinette discounted this tradition and ignored his attempts at assuming this role.

Anthony married Marie and had two sons, Anthony and Lawrence. Anthony went into the motel business and opened a Motel in Seaside Heights. In 1965 he bought a motel in Wildwood Crest called Holiday Motel. His wife and his two sons still run the motel today. His son Larry lives in East Hanover, NJ and is currently mayor of the town. Anthony's son Tony is a General Manager for General Motors and lives in Lebanon, NJ.

Mary (1912 - 2002)

Mary was born in 1912 and is currently an active senior citizen. She graduated from St. Vincent's Academy (High School) and St. Elizabeth's College in Convent Station (college). Dominic believed in sending his boys and girls to private school. Then St. Elizabeth's tuition was \$2000. Mary had a BA degree and became a Chemistry Teacher for juniors and seniors in High School. She married Martin Sullivan in 1938, an Irishman who worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Mary and Martin had one daughter Myra. As the first daughter, she played the role of second mother and did the cooking and laundry (ironing sheets). Her brothers and sisters frequently would say to Mary you are not my mother, only my sister. Mary was a business partner for the Cape May house "Central Cottage" at 509 Columbia Avenue.

Michael (1912 - 1912)

Michael was born in 1912 as the twin of Mary. Sadly Michael died at birth because of mucus in his throat. He choked to death.

Johnny (1914 - 1985)

Johnny was born in 1914. He wanted nothing to do with school. Johnny had a wonderful personality and was very outgoing. He loved people and could entertain children for hours. At the age of 13 he was in an automobile accident and had a fractured skull. He taught himself how to play the piano and organ. He could tell stories and sing songs day and night. Johnny married four times. His first wife, Edna, and Johnny were married by the justice of the peace. His second wife was a nurse. He remarried Edna. He finally had a proper wedding ceremony when he married his fourth wife, Verona. In 1956 he moved to California and died there in 1985 when he fell out of a tree cutting a branch and died instantly. John was always known as "the Good Samaritan." When Johnny died Antoinette said "that a loss of a child is worse than the loss of a husband."

Josephine (1916 - 1992)

(76 Years)

Josephine was born in 1916. She went to St. Elizabeth's for one year but did not want to continue her education. Her dad told her then she had to go to work. Josephine worked for Woolworth and was in charge of bookkeeping. She married Joseph Brown and had three daughters, Anna Marie, Eileen and Bernice. They settled in Flemington and her husband built their house. She died in 1992. Her husband is still living in their house and loves to fish.

Philomena (1918 - 1994)

Philomena was born in 1918. She graduated from NJ State College and Pratt Institute as a teacher in home economic's. She married Frederick Brown and had five children. Philomena had her own children in fourth grade as their teacher. At night, when she went to bingo, her children would steal answers to their homework from her teacher guide books until finally one day they were caught. Frederick was a machinist and inspector for the State of NJ.

They settled in Lincoln Park and in 1976 moved to Pennsylvania where they are currently still living. Their oldest daughter, Dolores, lives in upstate New York, and has five sons. Gregory, their only son, is currently a Captain in the Navy and lives with his wife Alice, a qualified nurse, in Virginia Beach with their two sons. Deanna lives in Cape May and is running Antoinette's guest house. Judy lives with her husband John and three children in Philomena's original house

where the family grew up. Judy is working in the computer field and her husband John owns his own construction and landscaping business in North Jersey. Lydia and her husband Art live in Sussex counties on a lake with their son Jeffrey.

Lawrence (1922 - 1927)

Lawrence was born in 1922. He loved his Dad and sometimes played the role of a second father to the other children. He always tried to protect his sisters and would be heard sayings "don't you touch my sisters." Although his sisters were much older, as a 5-year-old boy he acted like a man. His mom and dad were very proud of him. At the age of five he was killed instantly crossing the street in Newark. Lawrence was on his way to see a newborn 1st cousin. The death of Lawrence hit the family very hard. The man who hit him said "he ran in front of the car". Antoinette went to church every morning following the death of her son.

Lucille (1924 - 2010)

Lucille was born in 1924. In 8th grade she decided to become a nun and went to the Italian Order of Nuns in Morristown and stayed a year. When Lucille left home, Dominic cried because he did not want her to become a nun. Within a year she decided to leave the convent and returned home. She continued her education and became a telephone operator for Bell Telephone. She retired in 1980 and still does part time work for the company. She married Carl Fuss in 1945 and they had two children, Celeste and Donald. In 1994, Carl died, one year before their 50 wedding anniversary. They settled in Trenton where Lucille lived till her death. She was very active with the senior citizens and organizes many of their events. She was also a partner of Central Cottage with Mary and Antoinette.

Michael (1926 - 1926)

Michael was the last child born to Dominic and Antoinette. However, he died at birth.

A Good Man is Hard to Find

Dominic was in charge of laying track for the trolley cars. When the automobile was invented he became responsible for removing the track 30 years later. The company paid him very well and his salary was \$85-90 per week. The average salary in those days was \$10-12 per week. He was well respected and admired. In the winter months during December and January, he was paid a salary each week. The boss would come to his house and hand him a check and remind him. "Dominic, don't forget that on February 1st we expect you to return to work, so here is your check for this week. They feared that he would find another job elsewhere because he was a great employee!

Dominic was in charge of 90 men. Every evening, Antoinette would read the names of all his workers and Dominic would indicate who was absent and who was present. He would not allow them to be late and would not let them work one minute overtime. Dominic was very good to his workers. He was also in charge of watchmen to prevent accidents during the building of the roads.

How to Make Homemade Spaghetti

Antoinette's daughter, Mary, was told to make spaghetti since she had watched her mother many times. This dinner would be the Sunday dinner. Dominic instructed the baker to bring the best "semolina" flour. So Mary decided to make the spaghetti as she was told. But she noticed tiny red specs in the flour as she was mixing the dough. Mary said that must be the semolina because she did not know what semolina was. The spaghetti was made and cooked for Sunday dinner and Mary's father said "that they were good". So Mary asked the question, "Dad, is semolina red?" Dominic asked to see a sample. Upon noticing the flour he said "you didn't make spaghetti with this flour". And Mary answered yes. "Semolina is not red". The red specs were "red ants".

A Sausage Cure

Antoinette would make about 60 pounds of pork sausage every winter. She would stuff the casings after chopping and seasoning by hand. After all was done she would hang it on a dowel outside to dry. One day a beggar came to the door and asked for a cup of coffee and he kept looking at the sausage that was drying on the porch. Antoinette was sure he would come back during the night and steal some of the sausage. So when she went to bed that night she worried whether her sausage would be stolen.

Philomena had a sore toe and told her sister Mary that her toe was hurting. Mary asked Antoinette who was asleep what to put on Phil's toe since it hurt badly. Antoinette had made sausage that day and hung it out on the porch to dry to be preserved. Antoinette said to put sausage on the sore toe, but Antoinette was half dozing and evidently did not understand the question. Mary did what she was told and cut a piece of sausage and wrapped it around her sister's toe. The next morning she asked her sister how her toe felt, and her reply was "fine". Mary told Antoinette that she didn't know that sausage was a remedy for sore toes? Antoinette replied "I didn't either".

A Fishy Tale

Dominic did not eat fish and neither did the children. They all hated fish! Antoinette knew that fish had a lot of nutrition in it. So on Fridays she made fish cakes and called them "potato cakes". No one suspected that they were eating fish. She would also give them bean soup and salad. For years this was a Friday practice. One day Dominic thought he smelt fish and said to Antoinette "I don't eat fish". Antoinette replied "you've been eating fish every Friday for 25 years". She fooled them until that day Dominic caught her in the kitchen.

Dinner Practices

After dinner each evening it was a common practice to say the rosary. Dominic would sit in a chair and all the children would kneel down around him and say the rosary. The children were delighted when visitors came to the house because this practice was dispensed for the evening.

The children were never allowed to join at the dinner table when company came. They were told to stay in their room. When the company left they would all go to the kitchen and drink what was left in the wine and soda glasses and finish up was not eaten on the dinner plates. They had the leftovers. What a treat to the children.

Dinner Family Invitations

Whenever the family was invited out to a friend's house for dinner, Dominic insisted that the children stay at home. Antoinette and Dominic would always go alone. One day a friend insisted that the children come along for the special event. So Dominic and Antoinette took all the children who were small at the time and put them all on a trolley. This trolley was headed for Jersey City. At one of the trolley stops Philomena, one of the children, decided to get off the train. When Antoinette turned around she noticed that Philomena was missing. She told the trolley conductor to stop the train. When the train stopped the entire family got off the train to find Philomena. From that moment on Dominic said "Never again!". When they found Philomena, Dominic took off his belt and spanked her in front of the entire family to teach them all a lesson what could happen to them if they misbehaved.

Antoinette in Court

Antoinette spoke English and tried to help her neighbors who did not speak English but only Italian. A friend asked if she would help her to get more aid because her husband had died and left seven children. Antoinette said that she would go to court to get more aid. She told the woman to bring all the children with her. The judge heard the story of her plight and she was denied more aides. So Antoinette replied "your honor, the children are here, so you can raise them, she cannot". PS She was awarded \$100 more a month in 1918. A great settlement.

Family Bathing

In the early 1900's most homes did not have bathroom facilities. Antoinette would fill the wash tub and the youngest child would take the bath first. After that child was done, the next youngest child would take a bath in the same water till they were all done. Water was a precious commodity in those days.

New Bathroom

Dominic decided to put in a new bathroom. Prior to this his family had to shower outside. He installed the tub and the toilet and measured everything. When he put the toilet seat on, the bathroom door wouldn't close. Instead of moving the toilet back he decided the simplest way was to put a notch in the door. He cut out a section of the door so that the door would close. What a sight to see this hole in the bathroom door.

Sleeping at Antoinette's

The four daughters slept in one room in a double bed, two at the head of the bed and two at the foot. Every week they would change positions. Antoinette's uncle had a private room. The boys slept on a studio in another room. Antoinette and Dominic had their own room. As the family grew, cots were used for sleeping but the boys and girls were always separated.

Family Chores

As babies were born every two years, more and more diapers were a necessity. To share the task of keeping the diapers clean, the older children had to take turns scrubbing dirty diapers on the scrub board. There were mounds every day. After school each day, the boys and girls would alternate and learn to work together on this fun chore. There was no such thing as a washing machine in those days. The boys would also chop wood and bring in coal for the fire during the winter months.

Handling a Misbehaving Son

A teacher made an ethnic remark (called him a "WOP") to Anthony, Antoinette's oldest son. He did not like the remark and answered the teacher. She sent him down to the office. Antoinette had to appear because at that time bad boys were sent away. The principal and the teacher and Antoinette met to discuss the event. The teacher said to Antoinette "I am sending your son to reform school". Antoinette answered my son will not go to reform school. You insulted his Italian heritage". She removed Anthony from school and sent him to another school. At graduation the principal told the audience that Anthony had a good shepherd. Otherwise Anthony would have been lost.

Johnny Leaving Home for a Year

Johnny left home at 13 and Antoinette did not know where he went. She decided to make a novena to the Blessed Mother which last nine days. On the ninth day she came home from work and on her way home she passed the church where she was to go for the ninth meeting and she said "I am not coming tonight because I haven't heard from my son." When she arrived home Dominic said to her "your son is coming home". The traveler's aide called and said that they would like to see them concerning Johnny, their son. She made the novena and thanked Our Lady for Johnny's return. They went to meet Johnny at the station. When he got off the train Dominic said he would give him a spanking. However when he left home he was 5 feet tall and when he got off the train he was 6 feet two. Johnny came home a man and Dad hugged him instead!!!

Sewing three Brides Maids Gowns for 50 Cents

She sewed for neighbors and friends and charged very little because she enjoyed helping others. But one time she had a sorry experience. She made 3 Georgette Brides Maids dresses for a wedding and she told the mother of the bridesmaids that she could pay her for whatever she thought they were worth. The woman came and gave her the money and left. The payment was 50 cents. Antoinette, from that moment on, refused to sew for anyone. She was truly hurt.

Secret Dating

Dominic was very protective of his daughters when it came to dating men. He wanted to insure that they got the finest men available to marry his daughters. When his two daughters, Philomena and Josephine starting dating the Browns, Frederick and Joseph, this had to be kept a secret from their father. So every time they went out on a date, they kept it a secret from their father. Each night when they went to bed four sisters would sleep in the same bed. Dominic had a habit of counting his children at home by going into the bedrooms and counting figures in bed. So when these two daughters would go out they would stuff two pillows under the sheet covers. When Dominic did his nightly count, they were both accounted for. However, he locked the front door at night. How do they get back in from their dates? There would be a noise outside to alert mom that they were home from their date. She would tell her husband that she had to let the cat in at night and would go down stairs and let her two daughters in from their dates. Finally both daughters married the Brown boys and soon left home. This eliminated the need to let the cat in at night.

Making the Lord's Prayer

Antoinette saw a pattern for the Lord's Prayer in a local paper and decided that she would send

for the directions and make it and put it in a frame in the living room. She started the Lord's prayer and after two or three rows she noticed it was too large. She purchased a smaller needle and started again and it was still too large. She bought thinner thread and started again and it was still too large. She proceeded until she decided that it would be the right size. But it was not a simple task. She noticed that she had to be very careful that each letter of a word was correctly in place.

After several attempts she gave up because it was not coming small enough. Frequently she had too many spelling errors in the words. One day, her granddaughter Deanna, asked her how she was doing and she told her things were not going well and it was very complicated. She had already worked on it for a year and only had done 25 rows. She ripped it out more than she crocheted the work.

Deanna, after some careful thinking, decided to make her a workbook. She photocopied the pattern 200 times and put it into a binder. Then she underlined each row - every page represented the next row and she highlighted the right row. All Antoinette had to do was crochet the row and then flip the page to the next row. What a God Send. She was able to do the next 175 rows in six months and finally finished her masterpiece. Near the very top, Deanna asked if she wanted to enter her work in a fair. Antoinette replied yes. Deanna said "Grandma, it would be more valuable if you put your name and date on it. Why don't you just add 28 more rows?" At that point, Antoinette from her wheelchair said "Go to Hell!". Needless to say, Deanna did her own counted cross stitch at the bottom of the piece and identified the crafter of the piece. Antoinette decided that since her granddaughter found a solution to her finishing this work that rather than put it on the wall she would give it to her granddaughter. They argued over the saying at the bottom and the only word Antoinette added to the saying was "dear" granddaughter.

Antoinette told everyone that she enjoyed every minute of making the Lord's Prayer. When it was finished, we framed and brought it to the Bloomsburg Fair. We entered it in 1985 and while on exhibition she noticed a gentleman scanning it very carefully and asked him what was wrong? He replied "I noticed that you have every word spelled correctly" and she answered "I went to the 3rd grade and I know how to spell". She won the blue ribbon, to her delight, at the age of 94 and ½ in a wheelchair. Six months later Antoinette died and left her masterpiece in March of 1986.

When Antoinette's guest house opened in May of 1991, the family decided to hang proudly her masterpiece, the Lord's Prayer. Since the house opened for tours on January 1, 1994, hundreds of people have passed by and admired her beautiful work. She is living proof that a senior can be productive at any age.

Does Her Spirit Live on?

Does the **Spirit of Antoinette** live on at 717 Washington Street, Cape May, NJ?

In late 1993, Deanna decided to try living in Cape May and by January 1994, she knew that she fell in love with the town and wanted to live there all year round. She put her house up for sale in north jersey. On March 8, 1995, her house was sold and she is now a full time resident of Cape May.

Since 1991, unusual things have happened at 717 Washington Street that leads Deanna to believe that the **Spirit of Antoinette** lives on. You be the judge.

Fallen Trees

In the fall of 1991 during a bad storm the tree next store to Antoinette on Washington Street fell. The tree was more than 100 years and missed the house by an inch. When this happened Judi and John were sitting on the front porch and witnessed the whole event. They couldn't believe how close the tree came to demolishing the front porch. The remains of the tree fell again the next day and once again missed the house by inches. The City couldn't believe how fortunate we were in no damage. Was Antoinette protecting her front porch?

The Masterpiece Falls

In late 1991, when Deanna and Judi and John first bought the house, they decided to hang the Lord's Prayer in the main entrance of the house. One weekend when Judi and John were there, they found the Lord's Prayer fallen from the wall and just sitting on the rug. It did not damage any furniture or lamps in the area. However, when a 40 by 60-inch piece of art falls, damage is expected. Aunt Josephine came by and told them that if a picture falls from a wall it is a sign that there will be a death in the family. Shortly thereafter, the family lost two of Antoinette's children that year. We will miss them dearly but they have joined their mother in a heavenly place

Pains Disappear

In 1992, Aunt Mary decided it was time to give up Antoinette's bed and donate it to 717 Washington Street. Although Antoinette never lived at 717 Washington Street there is some truth "that she slept there". We decided to put her twin bed in apartment 1. One day, in passing, Deanna told a family who was rented Apartment 1 about Antoinette's bed. The next day the 6-year-old daughter insisted that she needed to talk to me. She told me that her aunt went to sleep that night in her bed with all sorts of aches and pains. When she woke up that next morning, she told me that her aunt "was cured". For the next week the family members were all fighting over who got to sleep in Antoinette's bed. Does her spirit cure people here?

Putting Antoinette Back Together Again

In 1992, Deanna found a wood carver who taught teenage boys how to put their hands to good use. Most of the children in this school came from battered families. She asked that they make two hand carvings. One was a Cape May horse and buggy and the second was a sign which could hang over the front entrance which had her name displayed. When the hand carvings arrived, we decided to have the sign painted to match the house colors. Bob, our tenant, was excellent at painting. He took the letters off carefully and painted all the letters and the remaining parts of the sign. He moved before he finished putting the sign back together again. One day Deanna met a man who did wood carving. He agreed to put her letters back on the sign. When he delivered the sign it looked beautiful and he refused to accept any money for doing this work. He also told her that he was a retired Coast Guard minister for more than 50 years. Can you image him hand nailing/gluing her 12 letters back together again? What are the chances of a retired minister doing that?

Antoinette Becomes Marketing Agent

On August 24th, 1994, on a beautiful sunny day, two nuns arrive at the door steps of 717 Washington Street. Deanna answers the door and finds out that these nuns came from her college, Caldwell College, in north jersey. Sister Vivien Jennings, the dean of the college, insisted that they visit Antoinette's during their day visit to Cape May. They only stayed for a five minutes but informed Deanna that the Lord's Prayer was finished on August 24th, 9 years ago. They knew this by the inscription at the bottom of her masterpiece. They left and she went back to her daily chores but was delighted to meet these two visitors. In December, when her college newsletter, Echoes, arrived she glanced through it quickly and found a silhouette of a Victorian lampshade that looked very familiar. At the top to the page she noticed that they had spotlighted two alumni and she was one of them. She was delighted to see this in the college newsletter and felt this was wonderful publicity for the business. Deanna immediately contacted Sister Marie McNamee, the director of Alumni Affairs and thanked her for the nice article. How did this happen? She thought I knew all about. Deanna concluded that when these two nuns came to Cape May they took back an article that appeared in a local paper about her work. They went back to the college and submitted this as a newsworthy event. Deanna's theory is that Antoinette's spirit needed a change of job assignment and has become her new Marketing Agent.

If you think you have an interesting story about Antoinette and related family/friends events, we would be delighted to add this to our storybook. Please fill in the form below and it will be considered for the next edition. Thanks for sharing with us some more interesting stories.

Story Title

Author: _____ Phone No:

Address:

Please send to Deanna Brown, Antoinette's, 717 Washington St. Cape May, NJ 08204