

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
LUISA AND AMERICO BRUNI



DATE: 2015

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

Louisa & Americo Bruni

---

JANUARY 1, 2015

THIS INTERVIEW IS BEING CONDUCTED  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

Interviewed and Recorded by:

Anne DeCicco, 2015

Transcribed by: Carol Effinger, 2015

Luisa & America Bruni  
Interviewed by Anne DeCicco  
for Historical Society of Hammonton, N.J.  
2015

Q: How did it come about... you were born in Italy. Tell me your story.

A: (Luisa) I was born in Italy December 1, 1933. Of course I went to school there. three years I was with the nuns because when I went to high school it was far from home and I didn't have enough time to do the homework. I would go by bus. My sister and I went to high school together and we stayed with the nuns during school time, of course, my parents had to board you know.

Q: Did you sleep there?

A: Oh yeah. Oh eat and sleep there. We used to go home on the weekend and my parents used to come and bring us clean clothes and something we would like to eat you know from home. We had very good parents. They were very good. We had a good life I have to say because my father had a job, steady job, plus we had the farm and we had a family working the farm. Whatever they made they went half and half with my parents. Plus my father had a few pieces of ground around the house, close to the house. He used to get people to work to do the planting. We used to raise grain, wheat. But we had a good life. My husband's family had a good ... work hard because they had two farms. One had a family working their farm and then the other farm they used to work on. We had everything. We used to sell wine, grain because we had too much. Then sixteen years later my little sister came. When I got married she was only four and a half years old.

Q: What was the name of the town?

A: It is really difficult. It is a little town of Capaluca. \_\_\_\_\_. The townhouse .... it used to be Susa..... Capaluca was a fraction of Susa.....providence of .....Markay.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: My husband. We were only a couple miles ( 3 miles away from each other). I used to walk by his house to go to school, to go to church you know. So then when he received a letter from the American consulate ...that he was an American citizen through his father because his father was in America three different times and he fought the war for the American people .. American government I should say. They sent him into France so he had citizenship. Then the last time he went back to Italy I think it was 1927. He had planned to come back here and take his family but then his parents got sick. They were crippled, they had .. they were very sick. So his parents were left behind. So they decided to stay there.... my mother in law. My husband became an American citizen through his father. He came here in 1951 and of course he went to Nanicoke, Pa. which is about three miles from Wilkes Barre. He had an uncle there. He used to work in coal mines too. So my husband went to work in the mines ... strippings... outside for five years.

Q: He worked in the mines for five years?

A: He used to strippings outside, not inside, in the mountains. He used to dig the coal from an open space. Then his uncle had adopted a son. He cousin had a pizzeria up there, a restaurant. Then he had too many friends and he decided to sell it and he moved, him and his wife and they had a little girl. They moved to Vineland. They had relatives in Vineland too Alamente, Redolfi was not related to my husband but was related to his uncle's wife . So then he was adopted by uncle Roonie. He was four years old when he came into this country. His father had died. The mother was seven months pregnant. So when she came to America because she had a sister here ... Mrs. Redolfi was her sister. So then they saw each other with Uncle Bruni, Luigi Bruni and they got married. So Luigi adopted Danny. Then together they had another son, Peter and he is still living. He is in Pennsylvania. But Danny was adopted but he was a very nice guy, very intelligent. One time he had six pizzerias inside Jersey. All Bruni's and they were well known. They had a good reputation. My husband , his cousin used to

come and visit his parents in Nanicoke. My husband used to live next door to his parents. It would be my husband's uncle and aunt. So he said come down and open a pizzeria. So he went to learn up there in Danny Bruni's restaurant that he sold. In the meantime I have to go back. When my husband got the letter from the American Consulate that he was and American Citizen he said I would like to try. His father said you have to take your sister too. She wanted to come. She was an American Citizen also. But the older brother who was four years older than my husband ... he could not come because he fought the war against the Americans. So he was eliminated. So my husband in 1951 in June came here with his sister. I mean he came to Nanicoke. They had \$20.00 among them, \$10.00 each. That is how it started. His sister liked it here. She got jobs in cigar factory with Denny (his cousin's wife was working there). She made a lot of friends but unfortunately she started to get sick and she was sickly so when I came over my husband's father came with me. He stayed a month and he took his daughter back to Italy. She never got well and then she died. She was a very good person. I said she has got to be up there really because she was a very good person. So anyway that's how we started. Denny was in the pizzeria and he used to visit his parents and he used to tell my husband get out of the mine strippers because pretty soon it is going to shut down and go there and make pizza. I talked to the guy that bought my place. So that ... my husband started there. He didn't like it. He started making holes in the pizza. He said, "no it's not for me". He was used to hard work, you know and but then Denny said "oh come on Americo try again, be patient. You will learn. So which he did. He went back and he learned how to make pizza up there and then he said come down to New Jersey and open up a pizzeria in Hammonton.

Q: How did he think to come to Hammonton?

A: Well because Denny was in Vineland. He said this way it is close to Vineland and he was a very nice guy and he tried to help my husband you know really. He appreciated it. Fortunately it was very successful. He had several businesses. One time he had a business, Fuller Brush. He used to go house to house. My husband worked six months for him too. Anyway that is how we started. We started the pizzeria here in 1956.

Q: And you were located across the street from the present location?

A: Yes.

Q: Unfortunately Denny went through a lot of trouble, divorce, re marry, divorce. Then he got together with a young girl who was a nurse. They lived together eight years then he married her. He married in September and he died Christmas day. He was very sick. He had cancer. We miss him. He was my husband's age, same age. I think he was sixty-two when he died, young.

Q: I know it must have been a struggle at the beginning when you first opened the pizzeria.

A: Struggle, we worked so hard because we didn't have money. We borrowed \$2,000. from my aunt because when my son was born..... Well I came here in 1954 because my husband came back to Italy .....see when he first left in 1951 we had just started going together. Now he got this letter from the American Consulate that he could go to America. He said to me "if you don't want me to go, I won't go." I said "I don't want to be responsible for your future. You want to go, go". My parents said "well when he gets there he is going to forget all about you." Well he didn't. He said "I will come back in a couple of years and we will get married". Before the two years were up he came back. He came back in April. We got married May 31, 1953 but unfortunately I could not come with him. The Italian Consulate and the American Consulate whatever said if you go back you send for her. It will be easier. Which it wasn't. It took fourteen months for me to come. So I came over in 1954 and 1955, November 1955 our son was born on Thanksgiving Day. The same day my aunt and uncle ... their son was twelve years old came to America... the same day that my son was born. He had a busy day. He did not sleep all night. He was with me in the hospital.

Q: Where did you have your baby?

A: In General Hospital in Wilkes Barre. Wilkes Barre General Hospital. Went to the hospital the night before six o'clock. He was born the following day at quarter of eleven in the morning. So then my uncle and aunt and cousin came from Italy one of the second cousins from Nanicoke got married the same day so he had to go to the wedding without sleeping all night. He had a busy day. So I guess in 1956 we moved here and we opened the pizzeria the other side of the street. We were there two years and I went to work. First I went to work on Front St. for John Jacobs. He had the raincoats shop. I worked there three months. I didn't like it. I used to cry all the time. I

never worked before. He was a nice man but he used to holler at the other ladies and me. I wasn't used to this.

He was mad. He didn't want me to go to work. My son was just over a year old but I said that we need the money because we borrowed money from my aunt. It took us a year to give back the \$2,000. , you know. At the beginning the business was slow. So then I quit John Jacobs shop on a Friday. On a Monday I started working at Kessler because Mrs. Mento came for pizza. Her and her husband, Sam Mento and his wife. She was carrying Johnny, pretty lady. She said.....I was telling her that I quit working at John Jacobs. She said do you want a job. She said in Kessler they are looking for workers. So right away Sam Gibase came to my house and said .. on the weekend...on Saturday. He said I have a job for you. You can start on Monday. So my husband was mad. No, don't go to work. Jimmy's small. We had moved in the other place then. I said "I want to work. I want to meet people. I always liked to be around people. So they put me to close the pockets in the lining of the jacket. But I had a good job, the machine. The foreman was from Vineland Albert \_\_\_\_\_. I remember, nice man.

Unfortunately then I started , I got in a little bit of trouble-- by giving birth. I had to have surgery inside because it didn't heal. So I had to go to the hospital for four days. The business improved on the other side and so I had to quit working. So that place was empty for some time. Mr. Angello the taxi man bought it and he said either rent it or sell it. So a friend of ours from Buena went there to talk to him like if he wanted to buy. He wanted to rent for four years. After the four years he wanted to buy the place. So that was the agreement. So when he agreed then this friend of ours told him who it was for. He said it is not for me. It is for the Bruni's across the street. Oh he said I would love to sell it to them. They are nice people, poor Mr. Angello. That is how we got started over there. We rented for four years and after four years they gave us a credit for the rent and we \$1,000. we gave them a year for taxes. They gave us a credit and in four years.... then I was working at Kessler. At noon, lunch time we had gone to the lawyer to sign the paper. Then I went back to work. The tears were coming down my face. I couldn't even see were I was going with the machine. Because I was so worried because how are we going to pay for this, you know. Then I had to quit because of a little problem, a health problem and a little too much work for me so I had to quit. But

when I quit they told me "We feel so bad." By that time John Petruzzi was the manager there. He said are you having another baby? Why are you quitting? I said no, no. Just because it is too much. He said I'm going to miss you because you have been such a good worker, got along with everybody. I said yeah I enjoyed it. Everybody was so nice to me. He said anytime you want to come back we are going to miss you.

Q: Did you ever meet Mr. Kessler?

A: Yes. I did.

Q: What kind of a person was he?

A: He was a nice man. The son and the son-in-law I remember very well but the old man I think I saw him once or twice. But the son and the son-in-law, yes I remember them very well. To me it was a very nice experience. I never worked before. I went to school until I was sixteen then I went to learn how to sew. My husband's cousin was a dress maker. They lived down the street from me so I went to learn there for a couple of years, then I got married.

Q: Do you have any big memories at the pizza place? Something that stands out? Anything happen?

A: Well a lot of little things. We used to get people from 50, 60 miles away you know. Not just the local people. People from Philadelphia. People that used to go to Atlantic City. One of the good memories, Senator James Cafero from Cape May. He used to go to see the games. He used to ... he had three boys with him plus friends ....boys friends and they used to come and get pizza before they went to the game and after they came back from the game. Very good. I still get Christmas cards from them. We still until this day we get Christmas cards and they give us phone number and address .. they say if you are around this area, please call us. So we have fond memories of you they write on the Christmas card. Very, very nice. We met a lot of nice people through the years, from Hammonton and from out of town too. There was a guy that had a store in Ocean City for the summer used to come from Virginia. He used to come and get pizza and take the pizza with him too and people from Camden used to get pizza and take it with them to Camden. Anyway this guy from Virginia, that had the store down the shore one time he left his sport jacket in our place. I said "oh my god now I don't know his name, nothing and didn't look in his pocket, nothing so I said he is going to call. He did call a

few days later and he said Mrs. Bruni I left a jacket in your store. He said did you see it? I said yes I put it in the back. He said there is \$60.00 in there, supposed to be. I said wait a minute, hold on, I'll go check because I didn't look in the pockets, you know. Yes there is \$60.00 in there. Oh, he said you keep it for me and in a couple weeks I will be back. I will go to the store and I'll pick it up. He did. When he came back he brought us a straw hat, one each my husband. I still have it in the closet. The straw hats, there are two, nice hats. He was so grateful. I said I won't look in the pockets. One time somebody dropped 10 cents. You know it rolled under the radiator. We looked, we couldn't find it. When my husband found it when he swept the floor, when he mopped the floor here the 10 cents came out. We gave back the 10 cents to the person and you know another. \_\_\_\_\_ he was a state trooper from Hammonton. He lost he dropped a \$20. bill. But I didn't know it was him that dropped the money. When I found the \$20. there I said "oh my god who could it be. I tried to remember who was the last couple people. So I called him. I said you were one of the last persons here I said did you drop the \$20.00. He said let me check Mrs. Bruni. He checked his wallet. He said yes it was me. I said here is the \$20.00 whenever you come back. I gave him back the \$20.00.

Q: If you want people to remember you how do you want people to remember you?

A: One time I found \$5.00 in the Acme when we had the Acme. I gave it to the manager. That manager said I don't know who it belongs to. I said listen, you keep it. He said I'll keep it for a week for somebody to come. Well nobody came after it and he said, when he saw me the next time he said "Mrs. Bruni I have to give back the \$5.00 because he said nobody came to claim it and I said but I don't want it because it is not mine. He said here is the \$5.00. I kept it for a year and nobody heard. I gave it to the church. I said bless the soul ..... Well I would like to be remembered if I die tomorrow as an honest person. I never got anything from nobody. We came here with nothing and we started with nothing. We met a lot of nice people. I would say we got little gifts, yes but you know, money no. His uncle and cousins they were very nice but you know they were very support his aunt was like a second mother to me when I was carrying Jimmy, I was so sick, so very sick. That is the reason that we only have one because my husband said no more because we don't want to go through what we went through.

But lot so many I would like to be remembered that I met so many nice people in this town and out of the town too. Very nice. I like America for that reason. It is a nice country and it is beautiful, beautiful country. I miss my family a lot. Here we were fortunate, first of all to have a good husband, very hard working man and honest. I have to say honest man and secondly there are so many nice people that we meet, very nice.

Interviewed by Anne DeCicco 2015

Transcribed by Carol Effinger July, 2015

## Americo Bruni



Americo Bruni, 94, of Hammonton died on Thursday, June 4, 2020 with his loving wife of 67 years and his son James by his side.

Born in Sassoferrato, Italy, he resided in Hammonton since 1956. He began working on a farm at an early age, moved on to mining, before settling in Hammonton and opening Bruni's Pizza in November 1956. Mr. Bruni was a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association and the North American Hunting Club. He belonged to the Hammonton Senior Citizens and Deborah Hospital Foundation. Mr. Bruni was an usher at St. Martin de Porres Church and at St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Parish. He was an avid hunter and loved gardening.

He is predeceased by his parents, Giuseppe and Elisa Bruni; his sister, Palmira Bruni and his brother, Elio Bruni. Surviving are his wife, Anna Luisa Bruni (nee Micheletti); his son, James "Jim" Bruni of New York; his sisters-in-law, Eufemia Armezzani, Manila Chiatante (John); three nephews, many cousins and friends.

Funeral services and entombment in Greenmount Cemetery were held Monday, June 8, 2020. Memorial donations may be made to St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Parish, 226 French St., Hammonton, NJ 08037 or to Deborah Hospital Foundation, P.O. Box 820 Browns Mills, NJ 08015.

Arrangements made by Carnesale Funeral Home.