

Through my mothers eyes

Business



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Janice Butler, my mother, was born on July 24th, 1962 in Arlington Heights Illinois. Her parents are Edward and Virginia Chiappetta. I did not know much about my grandfathers' life while he was younger. His parents were born in Italy.

They cant to America together while they were teenagers, and started a new life. He and his 6 siblings were the first generation of Chiappettas to be born in America. How was your childhood like living with my very Italian Grandfather? Papa was a really good dad to live with. He was really fair but he was always really hard on us. He had very very high expectations and always expected us to work hard. But he was very very loving and he was really fun too.

So he was an awesome dad. Did he have a short temper? Please explain. No probably the only thing that would make him mad is if we were disrespectful. That was huge. So we wouldn't roll our eyes if they asked us to do something. If they asked us to do something we needed to do it right away.

We couldn't say "later later later". He considered that to be disrespectful. If we were disrespectful that bothered him. If we didn't help out and contribute to the house hold that always made him mad too. And then he always expected us to work hard. If we did something we were expected to do it well and do it well the first time and not have to redo it.

So I was probably around 12 or 13. We had a big freezer in the basement because there were a lot of us in the house so my mom would always buy a lot of stuff on sale. So whenever someone would go to the basement either papa or grandma would remind them to shut the freezer door. I went down in

the basement one day and got some ice cream and when I came upstairs papa asked me if I shut the door and I said yeah. And of course I didn't really check to see if I did.

And the next morning he woke me up at like, 5am because when he went downstairs the freezer door was open and all the meat was spoiling. So grandma was at the stove, making all the meat because they didn't want to have to throw it away. And papa started yelling at me and I got so scared that I fainted. I was scared out of my mind because I knew he was really mad at me. After I fainted then they didn't yell at me anymore so I got out of being in trouble.

And he felt really bad because as he was yelling I just collapsed. What were some traditions he had? Holidays were huge. So you know papa always loved to cook at Christmas time. He loved to cook at Easter time. He decorated our house crazy.

At Christmas time literally he had one hundred statues out on the lawn of a nativity scene. And he made a penguin thing out of a fan. So he took a fan and turned it upside down and then hammered in penguins that stood up so that when he turned the fan on it looked like the little penguins were skating in an ice skating rink. He had a Santa with reindeer that were up on our roof. His house was featured in a book about the best Christmas decorations in Chicago and the house was on TV. Cars would stop and people would get out of their cars to look at it.

Holidays were huge traditions with him. Another tradition, which I thought was really cool, was that we were never allowed to come into the house or

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leave the house without kissing them hello and goodbye. It was a really nice tradition. (Papas house near Christmas time) What were some foods that he would make? Well you know at Easter he would make calzone and frittata. He was always good at flipping the frittata.

So now every year, even though papas gone, all the nieces and nephews and all the aunts and uncles get together and we all test our skill at flipping the frittata. Papa used to make hundreds of them. He liked making shrimp scampi. Pretty much anything Italian he could make and make really well. He didn't like anything canned and he hated casseroles.

We never ate a meal with a bunch of stuff mixed together. It always had to be a salad with fresh vegetables, meat and a potato. What was the first generation of his family to come to America? No. His dad and mom came from part of southern Italy called Calabria. I think they came over when they were teenagers, from what I remember hearing. And the papa was born here.

He was one of seven kids. He was the youngest of seven. All of my aunts and uncles were born here. (Lower region of Italy) Did his parents have a hard time adjusting to the American Lifestyle? No it didn't seem like it. Your great grandpa sounds like he was a really cool man. From everything that I've heard no.

I mean, I'm sure there were some struggles but none that were very major. They had an easy time getting go America and finding someplace to live. Once they found a place to live they were ready to start a family here. Did he

have a hard time adjusting to the American lifestyle? No. He grew up here. He grew up around Taylor Street in a really Italian neighborhood.

He went to Our Lady of Pompeii, which is a very Italian church. From what I've heard I don't think my grandpa had a hard time adjusting either. From what papa has said, no Italian was allowed to be spoken in the home. His parents believed that since they were here in America now, so we only speak English. He didn't really grow up with a lot of Italian being spoken because they felt that now that they were Americans, they only wanted their children to speak English. How did having a lot of siblings affect your family? I think when you grow up with a lot of siblings you learn how to share and how to negotiate more because there is a lot of you living in one house.

You can't always get your way. You learn how to work a little better in a group, because you have to. I think, in our family, being apart of a big family, because you always had to do stuff at the house. We didn't have to do as much because there are five of us. Like, every week you had a chore. And because there were a lot of us maybe this week you had to clean the kitchen while Aunt Jill cleaned the family room and Aunt JoEllen cleaned the living room.

We were able to spread stuff out. Everybody did stuff together. We all made dinner together. Everybody cleaned up together. Everybody but, you had a chore every single time. So you had a chore to get dinner ready, you had a chore to clean dinner up.

You also had a household chore on the weekend. So it kind of helped. We had a lot of fun together. I mean, we fought a lot like kids do. But we also laughed a lot.

Are you close to all your siblings? Oh man. I am closer to some than others. I am very very close to two of my sisters. And then Uncle Mike I am pretty close to. But he's a boy so he doesn't really like spending a lot of time talking on the phone. I would consider myself close to Uncle Mike.

And then you know the story with Aunt Judy. Aunt Judy isn't really close to anybody. So she is just unique that way. Did he have a hard time finding a job? I don't think so. He was in the service after high school.

Then when he came back he was a carpenter by trade and he was always a really hard worker. He owned a construction company. He was always a well sought after man and he always did very well. Were his parents strict? Yes. Very.

It was a typical Italian household. There were seven kids, five boys and two girls. Papa said his dad was always very stern just like papa was with us. He said they were strict but fair. Everybody had to do chores around the house. Everybody had to be respectful.

From all of the stories I heard, my grandpa was very strict about respect too. It was great learning more about my families' history. I really liked knowing more about how my papa grew up and what it was like living with him. I really thought it was interesting about how my papa and his family was very

Italian. I love the Italian culture so learning more about it was really fun for me.