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# MY ROOTS



**Ernestina Walters**

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except Michael Ann Mullen's top photograph  
on the last page.

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# MY ROOTS

for my children, my grandchildren  
and generations to come

By  
**ERNESTINA WALTERS**

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

### Why I think Reading and Writing Classes are good for you

My name is Ernestina Walters. I am of Italian nationality. I am 54 years old. I live in Halifax and my job is a confectioner at Rowntree Mackintosh, Queens Road, Halifax.

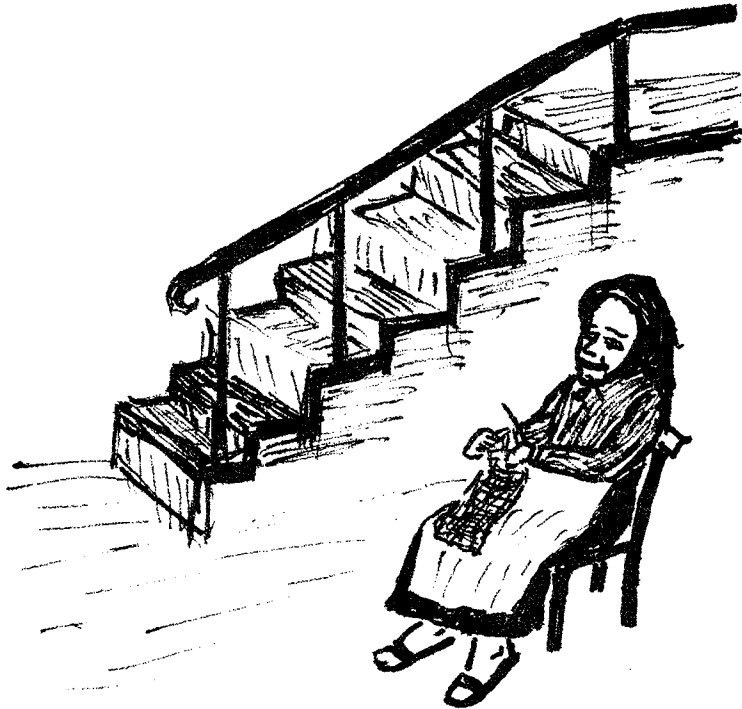
In my spare time once a week I decide to start English classes at Horton House because my English writing was very poor. With the help of my teacher, I am doing better. I do love it.

Every Tuesday afternoon I started writing my true stories of my life, my roots for my grand-children because I think that when a person like me comes from abroad it is nice to let the children and my grand-children know my past and about my younger days. I could not write this before because I had family responsibilities.

Now I am by myself and it is never too late. At Horton House the teachers are very nice. I would advise everyone in my position to come along.

### Important dates in my life

- 1925 – My sister Cesira born.
- 1927 – 2 October Ernestina born.
- 1930 – 30 May my brother Valentino born.
- 1931 – October Cesira starts school.
- 1933 – October Ernestina starts school.
- 1934 – First time I enjoyed May Day parade.
- 1936 – October Valentino starts school.
- 1936 – May my first communion and confirmation.
- 1936 – In September hair caught fire.
- 1937 – First time I went to Festival of Avellino.
- 1937 – I was pronounced “La piccola Italiana”.
- 1938 – I was elected girl organiser for church.
- 1941 – Left school.
- 1942 – In January I went to Orvieto in Roma.
- 1942 – March 8th. My brother Angelo born.
- 1944 – April 19th. Five Italian soldiers been shot.
- 1945 – Run many time under tunnel. Escape from bomb and German soldier to save my life.
- 1947 – My father came for me. Back home, at village life.
- 1948 – October Angelo started school.
- 1948 – My sister was married and I had the responsibility to help my family.
- 1948 – I started to teach 2 girls dressmaking.
- 1949 – In December I see advert in paper to come to England for work.
- 1950 – I came to England March 19th.



## 1. My first memory of my great grandma

I was a very young child I remember. I could have been aged four or five years old. One day my Grandma Serafina she took me to my great grandma. She was eighty. I remember like a dream.

My great grandma, she was wearing a long black skirt, and left in my memory the dark coloured green scarf, shiny and silky, tied under her chin. But my great grandma, under her skin, was always of good heart. This old lady, however, was a charming character.

In her house there was 2 rooms. In one bedroom there was not much furniture. I remember in one corner there was a wash basin with towel. In the kitchen the fireplace was made of stone, and the fire burnt with wood. Under the fire she was cooking some onions. She said to me, "Baby, you like some onion?" I said, "Yes, Mamma Granzia".

There she come with the onion on a plate, poured over some salt and oil, and I enjoyed eating it. That was a lovely day I could never forget.



*My village*

## 2. My first house I remember

My parents' house was a rented house. There were three rooms, two bedrooms and kitchen. In one bedroom there was two beds. One bed for me and my sister, we share, and one bed for my brother Valentino but my brother, he was a poor sleeper. In the middle of the night he come in our bed. When my mother come in our room she found us three in one bed. I was the one complaining all the time because Valentino he come in our bed. I run into his bed and he run back after me, pulling my hair.

I was happy when it was Saturday so I could sleep at my Grandmother's. For me this was a treat, and Sunday night back home. I remember my Grandma taking me everywhere. At age six, I remember my parents, they bought their first house. That was a bit of a long way from my Grandma's house. I was heartbroken because I could not sleep Saturday with my Grandma.

My parents' new house was lovely but that for me was not so good. My father, he understand I was missing my Grandma. She was my father's mother.

Finally I settled down at the new house. I started school and I was happy. After school I used to help my mother with housework or help my father with gardening. I remember my father he had the garden lovely. Every fruit he wanted to have

in, and the flowers they was beautiful. He was very jealous of his garden. I remember there was a cage with chickens and one with rabbits. And at the bottom of the garden was a hut with a little pig.

In the house there were two bedrooms and kitchen. The toilet was outside. Every Saturday before tea time my sister and me and Valentino started having our bath in front of the fire. I remember the bath was tin. But once the bath had a small hole. My mother was getting the bath ready for Valentino. Meantime he was in the bath. Water was getting less. He didn't realise the kitchen floor was getting wet.

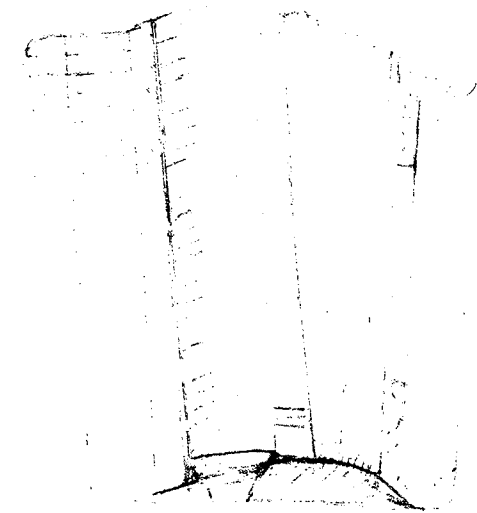
He shout to my mother, "I want more water." My mother shout back, "Get on with it. You don't need any more water."

Valentino, when he looked, the kitchen floor was all wet. He got dressed and he went to play out.

My mother she decide to go and see Valentino, if he'd finished having his bath. When she seen the floor and Valentino had disappeared she couldn't believe it. That night we had a good laugh. But for my father it was more work. He started making a new bath with wood, because we couldn't buy a tin one. Money was tight at that time.

In our house my favourite room was the kitchen. There was a long table with two long benches that my father made himself. He loved doing jobs himself. At the weekend my father, he

was always engaged playing music. At the village there was only my father and my Uncle Michele with accordians. When there was any wedding or celebration people called them. I soon ran after my father because I loved music and dance, and I admit it, I was my father's pet.



### 3. My school days

I started school 1933, age of six. My birthday was October 2. My first day at school was October 16. I was so happy to start school. My schooldays were very happy. At classes we were twenty five girls. My school was five minutes from where I was living, at a village called Montemiletto.

School started at 8.30 a.m. Each morning we had to stand in line and show that our hands and faces were clean before we started lessons. My first teacher was a nun. Her name was Sister Donina. First thing she called all the names and we said prayers. After prayers we started lessons, Italian, Arithmetic and Geography. At 12.30 I went home for dinner. After washing, leaving everything clean for my mother, back to school at 1.30 to 4 p.m. The afternoon teacher, her name was Signorina Nina. The lessons were Cookery, P.T., Country Dancing, Writing and Reading. History was very easy to me, like most lessons.

Our teacher, once a year she organised some holiday at the sea side if a parent would like to send their children, because in our village there is not a place for the children to learn swimming. The place was called Vacanze in Colonne to Fontana Rosa.

My mother said to me, "You like to go?"



*My school that I loved; the middle windows, my classroom*



I said, "Yes", because there was very little money to pay, so I went. Soon I had to start swimming. I was very nervous. My teacher said to me, "You, lannillo, get in water". So I put my feet in the water and I was feeling sick. That was the end of my swimming lesson.

One day my teacher she humiliated me in front of the rest of the class. She said to me, "Tomorrow I would like to see your mother". Next day my mother went to see her. The swimming teacher said I'd never be good at swimming. I still think that was the truth.

My school time, they were lovely days. Now I am in England and still in contact with four of my friends. One is in Australia. We write to each other every five or six weeks. Three more girls are in England. Alma lives in Rotherham, Antoinette in Shipley, Violanta, my cousin, in Birmingham. We visit very often and we talk about our school days and the teachers.

When I started my third year I remember my hair on fire. One school morning my mother said to my sister to comb my hair, before going to school, making sure I was clean and combed. It was the first time my sister she was taking care of me, because that morning my mother had lots of running up and down for my Grandmother, she was very ill. My sister tried the best but my hair was still not combed like my mother wanted so what was the next thing my sister did to make sure my hair was O.K. She walk into the kitchen and bring in to my mother's bedroom one paraffin lamp and she poured it over my hair not realising the lamp was lit.

My head was on fire. I ran out in the street of the village screaming and crying. One man he saw me on fire, he smothered my head. The fire was out but the man he got burnt on his chest.

I was away from school nearly six months because my skin was sore, and the top of my ear was burnt away. I remember my mother made for me a black velvet hat for when I started school again. And I remember during six months off school I had a tremendous lot of visitors, teachers and school friends and people of the village and relatives.

I remember my sister was very afraid to come and see me. The first time she came into the bedroom she was very scared. My mother said to her "Go near your sister. She wants to kiss you". So she came to me. That was a lovely moment for me and for her because my sister was so afraid she went away to my grandmother's for four weeks. After that day we were never separated. We were all the time together. I loved my sister. I never wanted to see her upset.

Back at school it was a lovely day, but being at classes I was very shy with my black hat. Every one school friend, they was very good to me. They gave me a nice welcome. My hair on fire, I turned it into a joke. With my black hat I was telling school friends and people in the village what happened, in the middle of the night a mouse was biting on part of my ear. They all laughed, but they knew it was a joke. They were very kind and cared for me. Back to school was all my happiness.

Back in my third year my teacher was a man teacher. His name Don Patrizio Abate. The class was mixed boys and girls. He was a very good teacher. I learn a lot, History, Sport. He encouraged me to be involved with many sports, gave me more confidence.

My school days have left in me lots of memories. My parents, they were so happy to see me happy. One day my father said to me if I was good at school all the family would go to the Festival of Avellino. I was so happy and excited by what my parents said. I tried every day to be good at school. At the end of term my mother came to ask my teacher how my behaviour was. My teacher said that they had no trouble with me but there was lots with my sister. She never liked school.

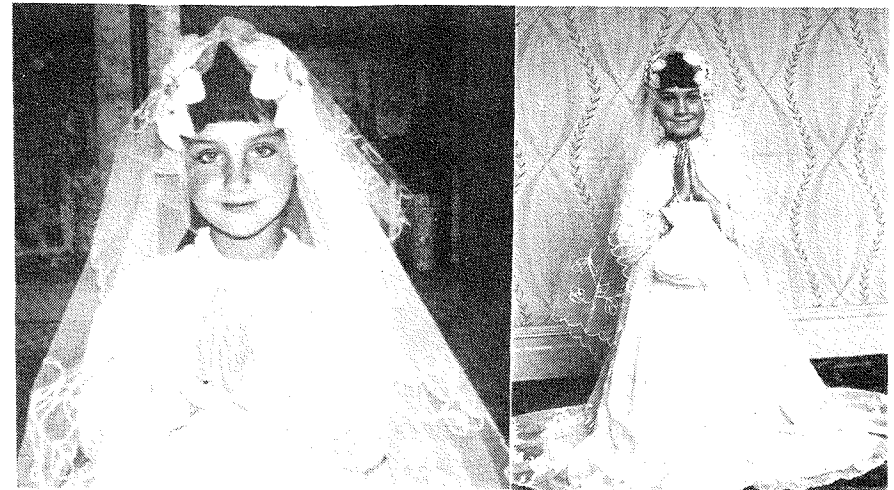


On August 15 my parents kept their promise. All of the family went to Avellino to the Festival. Every one of us were so pleased. My sister said to me "Try to be good at school next year so we come again".

My best time in the year was the 1st May. There was May Day. All classes and a parade in the centre of the village. I was the one to carry the Italian flag. My name for the day was 'La Piccola Italiana'.

On the first Sunday in May 1936 me and my sister we made our first Communion and Confirmation. That was a lovely day I will never forget, with my white dress and white veil, it was like a wedding day.

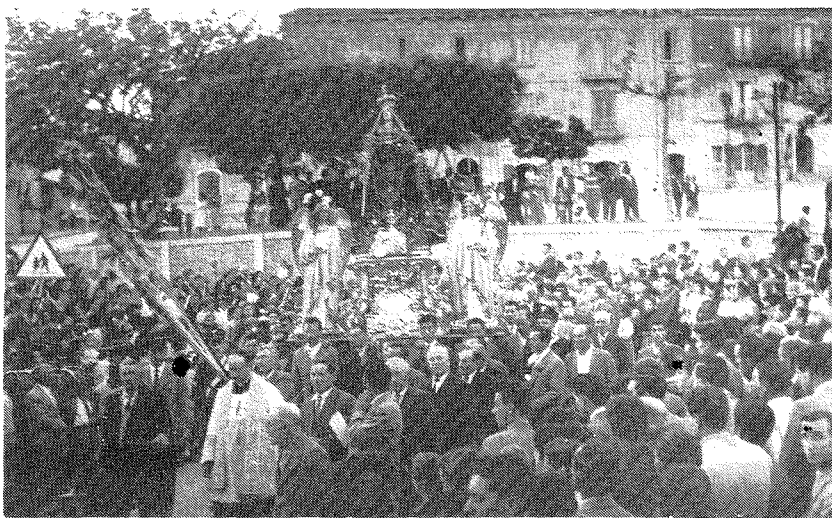
Every year when May comes round it brings back my memory. One May, 1938 I was elected girls' organiser for the church for



*My two daughters' first communion, just like me and my sister.*

May day. I loved doing it. I was proud of myself and my family, they was too. My uniform I wore was a black skirt and a white blouse. I wore a black and white tie, white socks and black shoes. I was very smart with my black hat and shiny belt.

At Christmas time, about three weeks before, me and some friends were very excited and every night at 6 p.m. I was off at church getting organised. I was very happy doing that. My name was top of the list. My father every night he come to see me. My father's picture is still in my mind. He was so proud of me. He never stopped talking at home about the good work I was doing at church.



*May Day in my village.*

On Christmas day me and my sister and my brother Valentino, at dinner time, before we started eating, each one of us made new promises for next new year.

## 4. Christmas time – My school holidays

Me and my sister helped my mother in the kitchen. In Italy, if the house is suitable they rear a baby pig. Every year my mother bought a baby pig when it was time for killing. The best time was in December, Christmas time.

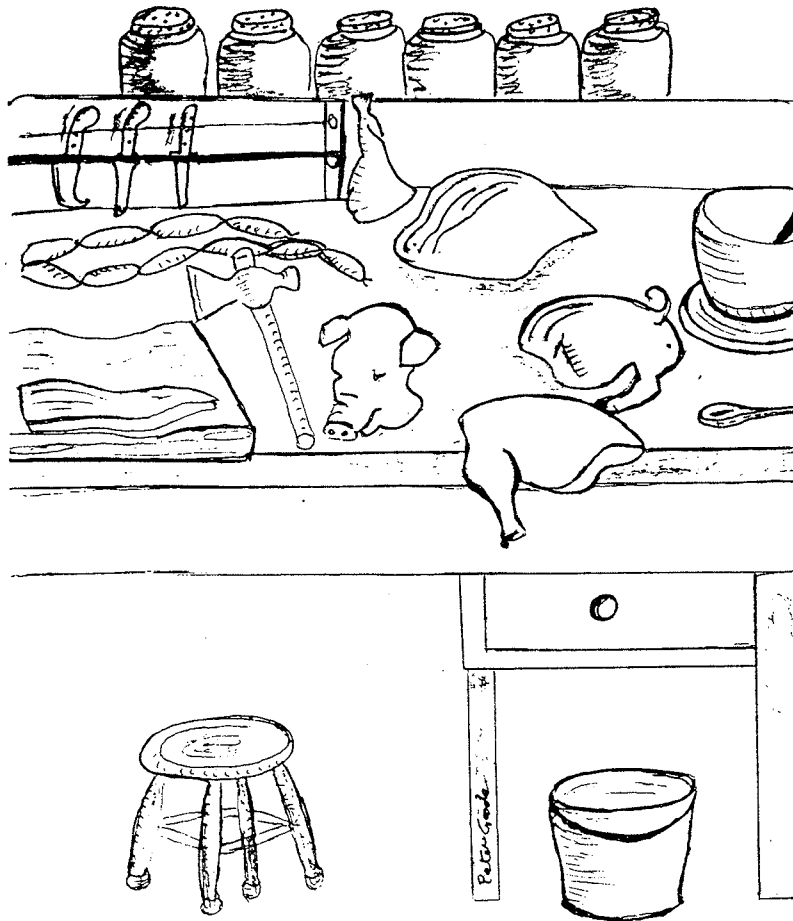
I remember at the village there was one man qualified for killing and cutting the pig in half. It was left one week, maybe, to cool.

After one week this man came to cut the pig in different pieces – some for bacon and some for making sausage. I remember my father made a little stool for me and my sister because we could not reach the table to help.

My mother and our neighbour, we were round the table. My mother cut the meat into little pieces and put salt and pepper with it and me and my sister pushed the meat into some intestines. Every three inches we tied it in knots. I was enjoying doing that.

I remember I said to my mother “I’ve done it”. I thought I was finished.

My mother said to me “You’ve not finished. Get me that dish with the liver”.



I did not like to touch the liver and I said to my mother, "Oh no, I don't like that". Well, what I got for saying that, I got one big smack across my mouth and I was put on a hard job.

My sister, she was doing the best job, sitting down. I was standing up, cutting in small pieces the liver and lungs and kidney. We put in some cheese, eggs, pepper, salt, a bay leaf and mixed, rolled the mixture like dumplings and fried them in hot oil. When they were cool we put them in a jar with oil and saved them for all year round. My father hung up the sausage and belly pork bacon to dry down in the cellar over the wood fire, and afterwards keeping the window open, and everything was O.K. for the year round.

When I was younger all I wanted to do was to be helpful in any way specially for old people. I remember nearly every day calling at one old lady's for some shopping after school. That was on Wednesday and some other days after school I visited the nuns at the convent in the village. The nuns ran a baby nursery and I was very happy to help them and at the same time the nuns, they was very pleased to see me any time.

My mother never stopped me doing things like that but when it came time to see any boys, then I was in trouble.

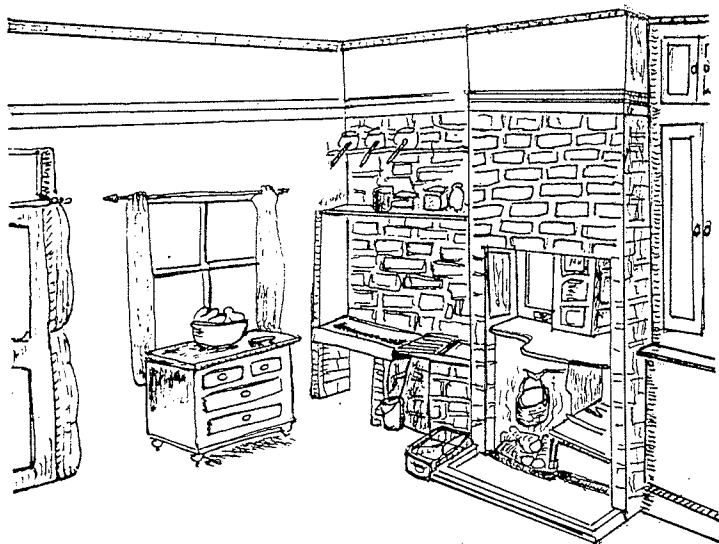
Sometimes my school holiday I spent with my auntie, my mother's sister. All the family loved seeing me anytime. I was happy there because one of my cousins was studying for a teacher's certificate. I was very contented, so I could learn more lessons because my dream was to be like him.

## 5. My housework before school

Once a week, before school, me and my sister we helped my mother make some bread. Every morning we made our bed and left our bedroom clean, but my brother Valentino, he never wanted to get up in the morning. He didn't like going to school. My sister and me, we had a hard job every morning to get my brother out of bed to make his bed, if not my mother she gave us the belt. Me and my sister, we were very scared of my mother.

Before we went to bed every night my mother gave us the orders for the following morning before school. When it was morning I had to peel some potatoes, getting ready for tea time. That was my job because my sister she did not like peeling.

Most times my mother left home at 6 a.m. for the open stall in the market.



## 6. My school days in the thirties – about punishment

I remember two punishments left in my memory. At school there was lots of different punishments, some easy and some they made you cry.

One of my punishments was to be locked inside the Headmaster's office for three hours because the day before I had a fight with one girl in my sister's class. She had picked on my sister. My sister could not fight for herself. She was always taking trouble home. So I was waiting for her after school at the bottom of the road and I grabbed her hair and ear. I made some damage to her left ear. Next day I was punished for that.

My second punishment was, I had a fight with a girl in my class. Every Monday we had lessons in writing and this girl she always copied my writing by looking over my shoulder. I warned her many times but she still did it. I was fed up with it so after school I met her and we had a fight. I remember my hand was full of hair. Next day she reported me to our teacher, and I was punished in front of the class. I had to stand in the corner behind the blackboard with my hands behind my head for thirty minutes.

Many times I was punished with a leather belt.

In my opinion: the punishment is not very good for children but nice talk helps the child better. The boys' punishment was to kneel on some dry beans, sometimes for one hour.



## 7. When I was a young girl

I was very much in love with books and pens. It was my dream to go to school for a long time so I could have some qualifications. Unfortunately my parents could not afford to keep me on at school and I started to go to learn to be a dressmaker part time.

At the same time I still loved my books. I was sleeping with my sister in the same bed. In the middle of the night, she was asleep, and I had some books under our bedclothes. I was having a little read with a small torch. I was enjoying it and in the next few minutes there was my mother's voice, she started to tell me off, to get to sleep, but next morning I was in trouble. Only my father he understand my feelings. He never said anything because when he was a young boy he had just the same dream I wanted.

It seems I follow my father's footsteps in his wish for books and pens.

Nothing has been lucky for me. My life has been very disappointing, and there's never, ever been more happy days like when I was at school.

No more shiny desk in front of me!

## 8. Money – it couldn't be squeezed for me

I left school in 1941, in July. Now about six months before, the teachers, they always give out the list of those leaving school. My name was on the list to leave school in July. Most of the children were very happy to leave. They were smiling, something like sunshine were coming in over them, their heads. There was something brilliant to them.

But for me, it was just like a cloud, a black cloud, coming rain, rain every day for the next six months because I knew my mother really couldn't let me stay. But for me it was like rain every day and when it got about three week before, I was so upset it made me poorly.

My mother and father, they knew what it was. They couldn't afford to keep me at school. I could see that everything was very tight in the house because my father were poorly for a long time. There were not much money coming in and I understand but still I wanted my own way. I wanted to stay at school. But there was no way I could stay.

The teachers say to my mother she say, "Well, I try for an application form to get some grant, and if you can manage a little bit".



My mother she say, "Well, I doubt it. We could try". Anyway the teacher she try but there were not enough grant for what my mother would have to pay for the rest, the books and everything.

And there was another thing. My mother she didn't like to keep me on at school because the school I was going to go to was about three and a half miles away from our village and to travel every day, specially the girl, were not very nice in them days. The village were old fashioned. So my mother she say, "Well, if you were a boy maybe I could do it. If a girl, there is no point the girl having a lot of study because once they get married what can they do? As long as they could sign their own names for the wedding day when they get married in registry office, they sign the paper, that's more important for the girl".

I can't blame my mother because really 75%, all of them in my mother's position, they were of the same opinion. They were thinking just the same. But they were thinking the boy needed more qualifications because they have to support the family.

My brother, Valentino, he never liked to go to school. He always run away. He was very poor at school. In fact he were very naughty to the teacher. And my mother, she was so worried about my brother, them days, my mother paid, once a week, for a private teacher. Money came out for my brother because he were a man and he had to support his wife and his family when he grow up. I was a girl, money it couldn't be squeezed for me.

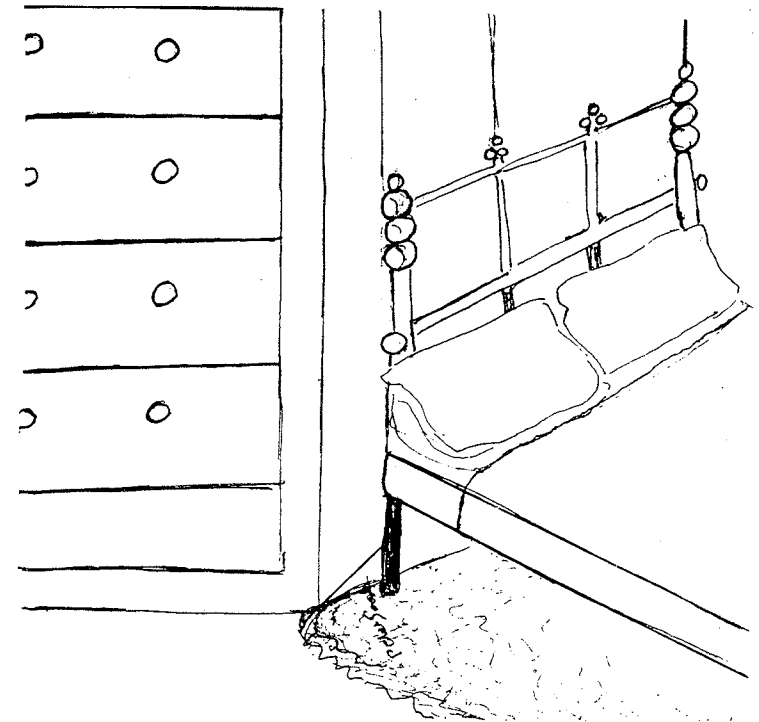


I think a few different points in my family. Sometimes I was a bit bitter. I said to my mum "You got money for him because he didn't learn much in ordinary school", so she put once a week to private school, private teacher, and it was quite a bit of money then. My brother, he did very well with that teacher, better than when he was in a normal school because in there

he was on his own. In a normal school he was running away all the time, fighting all the time and being naughty with the teacher. But money come out for my brother, but not for me.

For me, it was every day heartbreak. Every day I could never forget my day, my last day, when I walked away from that school gate. That day I could never forget. But now, my mother she say, "I wish I could have kept you in school. I wish I could have understood more your feelings then." The only one who understood my feelings was my father. But he were poor all his life and he couldn't do anything for me. So when I walked out of that gate, all the children were laughing and giggling and I were in tears. I shall never forget.

For that day I had to start domestic life what they used to do in the village. My mother, she were a bit upset to see me very quiet. Every time I were going in the village square I were staring at my school, which I still am now when I go over. And my mother she thought the best thing to do was to give my uniform away. My uniform was black overall, white collar, pink ribbon. I couldn't look at my uniform. I would cry all the time. I were pulling the drawer out all the time and I thought I might go back to school again. I kept my school uniform for a few months. She give the uniform away because she couldn't stand any longer seeing me touching it all the time and taking it out of the drawer and showing it to all my friends. My mother she caught me one day when I was showing one of the girls. She say, "What are you doing with your uniform?"



She said, "Oh, I don't know. My mam she just gave it away".

And I say, "Oh, no. Mine's still in the drawer, right nice", and I went into the drawer and fetched it out and they started laughing.

They said, "What are you keeping that for?"

I said, "I don't know, I just like to keep it". Anyway my mother she just walked in the house and she felt a bit silly really to see them kids. They were laughing at me, I were keeping my uniform. So my mother gave it away.

## 9. My life turned in some strange ways

Village life, for young people, there was nothing to do.

I learned dressmaking but that was not what I wanted. At night, 6 p.m., my mother let me and my sister go to church, and I saw an advert at the church door. There was a convent near Roma called Orvieto for young people.

For me it was near my dream. I thought to tell some of my friends that were in the position that I was. We went to see the local priest for all the information. There were a few of us, we got the result. Because it was the war time it took a little bit longer. We could only go for two years by the time we had done everything. We went in February 1942. Four weeks later brother Angelo was born. There were four of us.

We got there and for the first few days everything seemed O.K. In the second week everyone got something to do in domestic work. I was the lucky one to have twenty two children to look after in the orphanage. I had to serve breakfast, dinner and tea and look after them. I did this for six months, believe it or not! That was very hard work.

After that I had no more luck. It was war time and the children had been sent away to different places. They were more safe. So they gave me another job. I was not pleased, at 6 a.m. in the morning to get up, get washed, go in for prayers, 7.30 go

for work, cleaning and feeding about fifty chickens. At 9.30 I had breakfast. That for twenty minutes then up to 12 o'clock I had to clean nine toilets. After dinner I and six girls had to wash up, after though, from 3 p.m. to 5.30 was lesson for reading and writing.

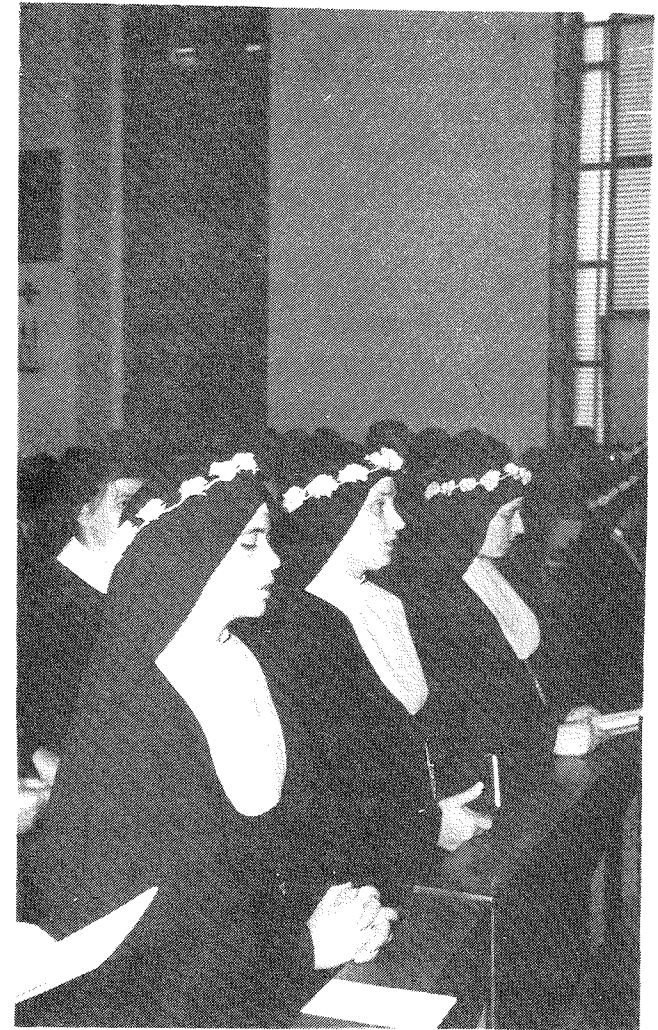
After this it was teatime, and same again going for prayers and then it was bedtime, at 9.30 p.m.

Next day, same again. That was going on for three years and then I had a change. No more chickens to feed but two mornings there was laundry work, three mornings ironing work. In the laundry room it was like ice cold. I and four girls washed the clothes by hand and after they asked us to do some work in the gardens.

My life was very near to being a nun. But there was something inside me not to be a nun. I love God. I am religious but if I had decided to be a nun it would have been a wrong decision, because it was not inside my heart. The times was very bad because it was war time. I remember one day Mother Superior she send all the girls to shelter under the tunnel because there was fire everywhere. Bombs scattered everywhere. It was some time, forty eight hours, before we could see day light and have some food and drink.

This was happening two or three times a week for a long time.

My life turned in some strange ways. I never thought it could have been that way.



## 10. My sad day – 19th April 1944

That day, at the convent where I was in Orvieto, near Roma, the Mother Superior came to us girls and some nuns to tell us that next day in the town square an execution would take place. Five Italian soldiers would be shot because of breaking the law. They had been hiding in the forest for two weeks.

The convent was very near the town square. From the top of the building you could see down. Mother Superior explained that five soldiers would be shot at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 20th April 1944. That was the last news on the radio. At 10.45 a.m. she turned the radio on again and she came to tell us that the five soldiers were being brought to the town square. There was five coffins, one for each soldier. I remember so well that Wednesday morning. After breakfast we girls and the nuns started our prayers. Mother Superior gave orders that five girls and one nun should be at each window so that we could look down at the town square, waiting for the soldiers to be shot, and at the same time we had to pray for them. I remember I was one of the small ones and I could not reach to look down the square. Sister Barbara told me to kneel on the window sill and I did, that was O.K. for me. But six of us were with our heads on top of each others.

At 11.30 a.m. a bell was rung. Everyone in the square cried and screamed. Next thing there was the voice of the German Commander. He said "Fire!" After, a scream, again a scream

and a cry. Me and the next girls and Sister Barbara were taking turns to look down the square with binoculars. I will never forget what I saw with my own eyes. There were 5 coffins, each one was shot dead. Each family was standing by the coffins screaming and crying. The priest blessed the bodies. The crowd screamed. The Germans with no heart danced and laughed. From that day to this day I never forget the five young men who were shot, aged about twenty five to thirty with families.

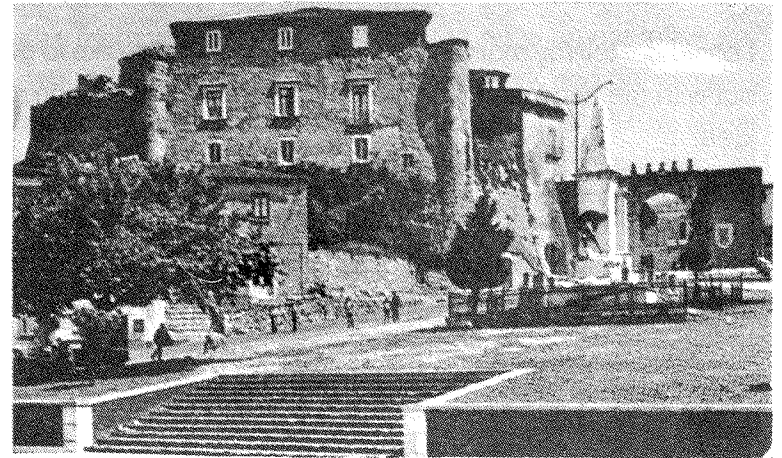
Nearly everyday the German soldiers came knocking at the convent door asking for young girls. When the bell was rung only Mother Superior answered the door. All of us girls ran under tunnels hiding. Sometimes it was a few minutes, sometimes for some hours before we could come up. Mother Superior cared very much for us girls and I remember that day she said to us, "Now girls, do not let the boys touch your underwear. You understand my meaning". We were laughing and we said, "Yes, Mother Superior". She started to tell us some jokes so we could forget what was happening. That morning, because I was a teenager at that time, I did not give it much thought. With my life going on I feel more now.

That was happening then and I felt I wanted to write about it.

## 11. An old fashioned idea

For a few years it was the same. Life at the convent, every day was hard for my age was teenage, because it was not what I went for. From the end of 1942 to 1947 I could not get in touch with my family.

One day our Mother Superior she called me to the office. There was my father. When I saw my father I started crying and he was crying, to see each other again. We folded each other in our arms and my father and Mother Superior they was talking all about the years. I did not know nothing about my family. Finally my father he made the decision to take me back home.



*Back to my village*

At end 1947 back at home again. I was very happy to see my mother and my sister and my 2 brothers. My brother Angelo was a few years old. He did not know me. He was very strange to talk to me at first. With time he was O.K.

More disasters when I saw the village, because of the war and more disasters for my family. First the war caused lots of pain and my father's health suffered. He could not work any more.

In 1948 my sister got married. I started my life again, worked at dressmaking and helped my mother with the staff at market on Friday.

At the same time I had two girls to teach dressmaking. There were lots of responsibility for my age. When I see some girls dressed nicely every day different clothes! I had three dresses, one for weekend and two for the rest of the week.

I could not tell my mother about any boy who would like to go out with me because at the village there was an old-fashioned idea.

I went to my sister, she was living in the same village, and told her my feelings about one boy who liked me and I liked him. My sister she explained to my mother and my father. No way, my mother she would not see him, she did not want to accept him. My father was very happy to meet the boys.

In the end I did still see him when I and my sister went to church on Sunday morning, and Sunday night that was my

best time to see him. My sister she was more happy than I was. Sometimes during the week I did see him and that's what it was, just wave at one another and nothing more. That was like brother and sister. Because I was at school with him from the age of 7.

My mother never liked him because the boy's father had a bad name about the women and the boy himself did not look very strong with his health. But I had a special feeling for him and he was the same about me. Sometimes we met at my sister's house and that was a little kiss on the face. When I went back home I was very scared of my mother in case I give away the truth. This was going on for a few years. I say before in my writing, in the village they was very old fashioned.

I was working very hard as dressmaker. Six days a week, sometimes on Sunday. I wanted to earn some extra money to help my father. He was suffering with pain in his stomach. He was recommended by the doctor to have an operation that cost some money. With all my hard work and my mother's hard work we still could not have much money for my father. My two brothers they were young, my sister was married. Every day I was thinking maybe one day I am lucky to deal with some books and pens in my hand, but this has never happened to me – even now.



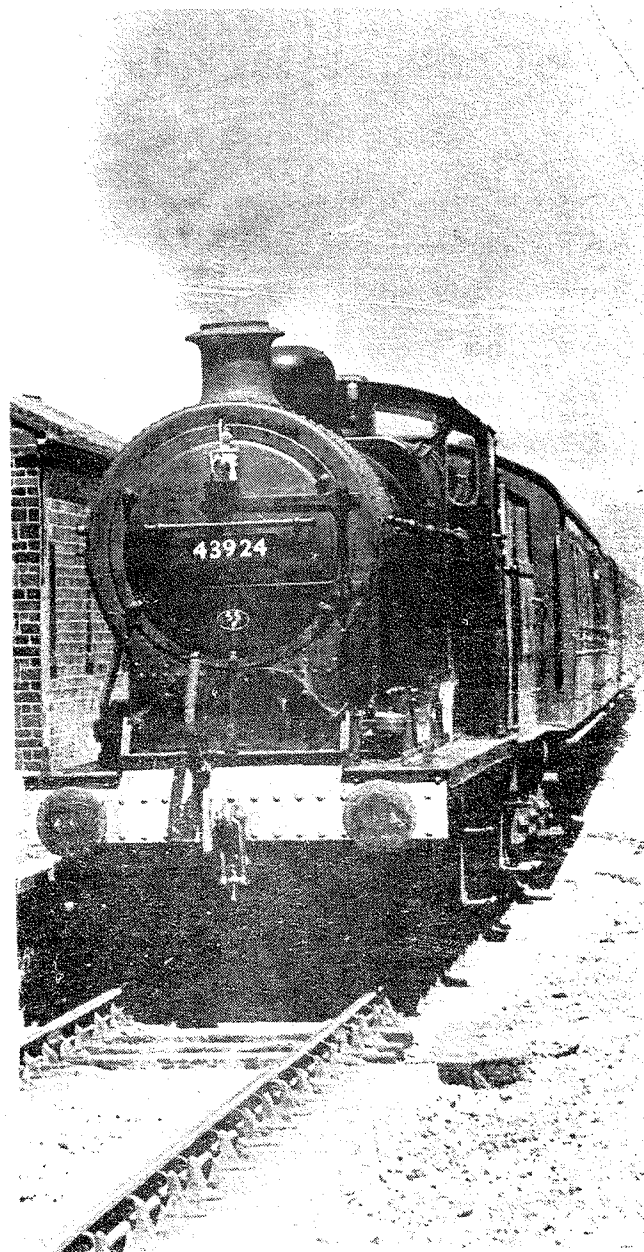
*My little nephew.*

## 12. No Christmas Day in 1949

In December 12th 1949, the only one grandchild for my parent, the only one son for my sister, he's dying at age 2½. He was like treasure in our family. Christmas day for us all was like another day.

I felt so empty. There was no baby round the house. My parents they consoled my sister and my brother in law. It was no good, we all were heartbroken. I could not face my sister's house any more, without a baby, and I decide the best way was for me to start a fresh life but my little nephew he's always been in my heart and he's staying in my heart for the rest of my life.





*Leaving for a new life in England.*

## 13. My Heart Cried

In December 1949 I see an advert in the paper to come to England for work, dressmaking on contract for two years. I kept the paper for two to three weeks and I thought over it every night when I was in bed. I could not sleep for thinking, I could not make my mind up. What was the best thing to do. Shall I tell my family or not? Finally I made my decision. I told my sister. She broke down and cried. She said to me, "Please, no".

So we decided to tell our parents. My father broke down and cried. My mother said to me, "You are over twenty one years old. I cannot stop you going to England but if you are going to England, what is in your mind. Is it about your boyfriend? It is better you forget him and if he comes to England later or you write to him I shall never forgive you! And you forget your mother!".

I said to my mother, "It is not for him I want to go. I want to go for two years so I can earn money quicker, and I will come back after two years". I said to my sister, "What shall I do?" My sister she said to me, "If you feel you want to go it's your life to make easy and better for you". So I went ahead doing every paper I needed. The paper was all done for 19th March 1950 on Wednesday and I never forget that day was Saint Joseph Day.

My father he went to Mass in morning, 8.30 a.m. and he had Confession and Communion for me. He kept that tradition every year up to 1976 and 1977 January 26 when my father died.

I left my family and my home and my country, 11 o'clock, Wednesday March 19th, tears from all of us in the family. Walk out the door of the house my heart begin to cry, walk through the village to go to Avellino railway station, my heart cried more, more. My eyes staring at my village for the last time. With me on the station my father he come.

From my village we were four girls. Finally the train come and every parent hold the daughter. My father cried and cried. He kissed me and he blessed me with the crucifix in his hand. He said to me, "God bless you and take care of yourself, and do not forget us. Write soon". The train it started to move and I wave to my father with tears running down my face, and my father's face was the same.

That morning I left everyone I loved and I left my l'Italia.

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## My life in England

My life in England, married 2nd February 1952. First baby 26th January 1953. Second daughter, 21st September 1958. Twenty three years of marriage then left on my own. I carry on with my work and make life the best I can with my family and friends.

On my sixtieth birthday, when I retire, October 1987, I will be joining my two daughters and four grandchildren in Sydney, Australia, to live there.

Thanks to God for my good life and the good health he give me.

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The Horton House students and students committee and Life Story Group would like to thank the Yorkshire Arts Association for giving the basic education students an opportunity to publish their life stories as it is not a chance that a lot of students have had. This book gives an insight into a different way of life.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Tina for letting us become part of her life story by involving us in making her book 'My Roots', with the help of John Glynn at the Gatehouse Project.

Calderdale Students Committee



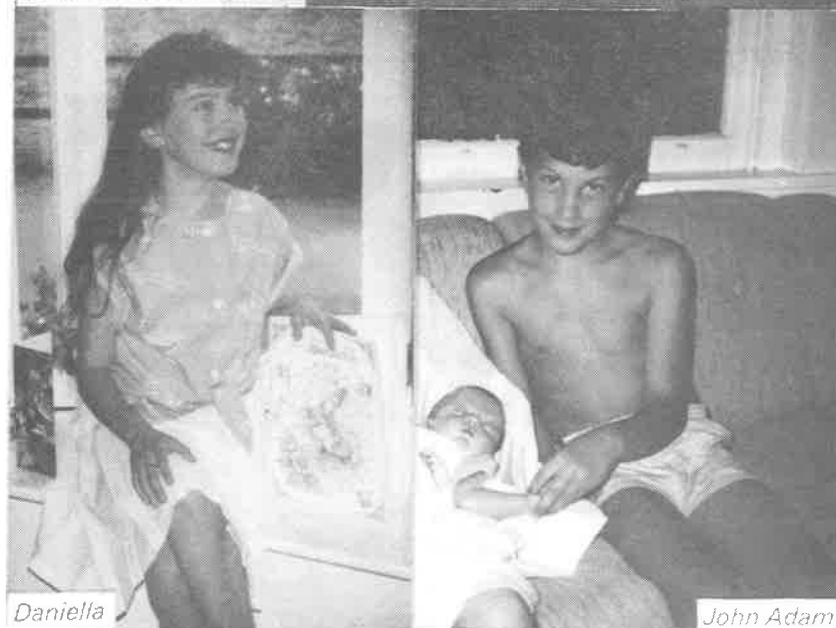
*Doloris, Keith and baby Kieran outside their house in Sydney, Australia.*



*Carmela and family off to Australia 19th March 1986.*

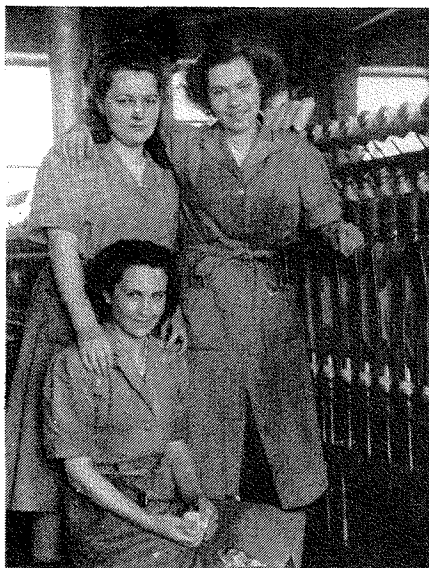


*Kerrie Ann, one year old.*



*Daniella*

*John Adam*



*First job in England.*



*Second job in England.*

**for my children**

**grandchildren**

**and generations**

**to come**