



My Grandfather
Joseph M. LaRose
Hazleton, PA

Sean M. Donahue
Hazleton, PA

My Grandmother
Marie LaRose
Hazleton, PA

Mr. Sean M. Donahue
625 Cleveland Street, Hazleton, Pennsylvania 18201
(717)-454-5367

PROSPERITY ON PURPOSE

22 March 1995

To Joseph LaRose (Grand-Pop)

Eulogy for Marie LaRose: 7 February 1919 to 19 March 1995

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free...". These are the words engraved on the Statue of Liberty at Liberty Island. Shortly after the turn of the century Michael and Carmella Bellettiere, a young couple born in Italy, accepted this invitation by immigrating to the United States and settling in Hazleton Pennsylvania.

On 7 February 1919, the Bellettieres gave birth to their daughter Marie, whose life we have celebrated today. The Hazleton that Marie was born in was very different than the one we know today. The streets were dirt, their house was lit with oil lamps, and their toilet was a hole in the back yard called an outhouse. Clean socks and underwear every day was an anomaly. To keep her children warm on winter nights Marie's mother would heat bricks in the fire and place them at the foot of their bed. They would go to sleep fully dressed and cover themselves with carpets. By morning a glass of water sitting on a bureau would freeze to solid block of ice. The Bellettieres were prosperous, with a chicken coup in their back yard, but they could not afford a goat like their many neighbors. Every year Marie, her siblings, and the neighbors children were responsible for raising a pig and every year the children would cry as their pig was brought to slaughter.

Soon the family had electricity and in 1925, Marie began her formal education at Arthur Street School. After school she would work around the house and sometimes play with her friends in the dirt street out front. At 8:45PM, every night the curfew would sound at City Hall. At 9:00, Marie and her friends would peek out the window as Officer Steven Harvilla rode by on his horse, making sure the children were inside.

By 1929, the world was hit with the Great Depression. The Bellettieres, along with most Americans, were granted relief from the government; \$6.00 for food and \$2.00 for clothing. In return for this wage the men labored on projects designed to build a better America. By approximately 1933, an indoor toilet replaced the outhouse in their back yard and their street was paved.

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Federal Law required children to attend school until 10th grade. In 1935, Marie and her friends were forced to quit school. They went to work in garment factories to help support their families. Oppressed by poverty, Marie's father became increasingly abusive. By 1940, Joseph LaRose, a young boy who lived across the street, sought desperately to assuage Marie's suffering and secretly proposed. A few days later they were married. Only the Priest, Best Man, Maid of Honor, and the couple attended. That moment was the conception of an unconditional love and loyalty aspired to by so few and achieved by even fewer. After the wedding they spent a day in Wilkes-Barre for their honeymoon.


Soon World War II was underway and the men were either called off to war or the industrial complex that supported it. In 1942, Marie moved with her husband to Middle Town Pennsylvania where he worked as a Civil Servant. While there they gave birth to their first daughter and back home Marie's mother died. After the war they returned to Hazleton and purchased their own home. The city grew and the people got rid of their goats and chickens. They had two more daughters and Marie returned to work in the garment factories.

Her sacrifices paid off. By 1975, two of her beautiful daughters were married, with families of their own and the third had gone off to college. Her grandchildren attended parochial school and her grandsons were alter boys. From Marie's perspective she was on top of the world.

By 1995, Marie's grandchildren had children and she was a great-grandmother. When Marie's life began the thought of living long enough to meet your great-grandchildren was a dream beyond the grasp of even the wealthiest families.

Today, it is easy to view the final years of Marie's life in the context of our own and conclude that she led an average uneventful life. But when we compare the high points of our childhood (bicycles, video games, our first car) to the high points of Marie's childhood (sewage, electricity, and clean cloths) we are humbled. She saw the rise and fall of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the invention of nuclear war, and much more. She led a long successful life during the most eventful century in history. Together with her husband, Marie LaRose worked hard and was successful in providing a higher quality of life for her children; A quality of life that survives today and that we are grateful to her for.

Thank You Grand-Mom.


Sean Donahue
Grandson