

CHAPTER TEN

COMMUNITY SERVICE

AND MEMBERSHIPS



ANGELO MONTRONE
PRESIDENT OF HYDE PARK BASEBALL LEAGUE

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Frequently Used Names in Chapter 10

Montrone Lineage

Code used in book	Birth Name	RELATIONSHIP
Albert (G2 - M)	Albert Montrone	P. Montrone's paternal uncle
Angelo (G2 - M)	Angelo Henry Montrone	P. Montrone's father
Tony (G3 - M)	Anthony Mario Montrone	P. Montrone's brother
Antonio (G1 - M)	Antonio Giuseppe Montrone	P. Montrone's paternal grandfather
Beatrice (G2 - M)	Bice Mary Giancini	P. Montrone's mother
Dominick (G2 - M)	Domenico Stanislaus Giancini	P. Montrone's maternal uncle
Helen (G2 - M)	Helen Montrone Mastro	P. Montrone's paternal aunt
Paul (G3 - M)	Paul Michael Montrone	Sandra's husband
Victor (G2 - M)	Victor Montrone	P. Montrone's paternal uncle

Frequently Used Names in Chapter 10

Gaudenzi Lineage

Code used in book	Birth Name	RELATIONSHIP
Francesco (G1 - G)	Francesco Ubaldo D. Gaudenzi	S. Montrone's paternal grandfather
Frank (G2 - G)	Frank Thomas Gaudenzi	S. Montrone's paternal uncle
Jerome (G2 - G)	Jerome Francis Gaudenzi	S. Montrone's father
Mary (G2 - G)	Mary M. (?) Cavagnaro	S. Montrone's paternal grandmother
Olga (G2 - G)	Olga Ann Emiliani	S. Montrone's mother
Sandra (G3 - G)	Sandra Rosalie Gaudenzi	Paul's wife

Chapter 10:

Helping Hands – Community Service and Memberships

Whether promoting Americanization or celebrating Italian heritage, Italian Americans have a long history of helping each other. Since Italy, for the most part, did not offer public relief, Italian immigrants in the United States did not embrace the idea of welfare – or especially begging – which was demeaning. At the same time, American workplaces generally did not provide benefits in case of injury. To meet their own needs, Italian Americans instead joined groups designed to provide financial and social assistance: mutual aid societies, fraternal orders, and trade unions.

Mutual Aid and Fraternal Groups

During the height of immigration, mutual aid societies emerged, with members paying monthly fees so that the society would support the member or the beneficiaries in

times of need; essentially, the aid societies served as insurance. Often these smaller local societies merged with national fraternal orders, especially toward the middle of the twentieth century.

The fraternal orders tended to focus on social interactions such as gatherings of those of Italian descent to learn American ways or to appreciate Italian culture. They also promoted types of civic participation that brought the Italian Americans in closer contact with their non-Italian neighbors. These neighbors were usually coworkers who often sought the same rights Italian Americans wanted on the job. Originally criticized for not joining unions, in actuality, the Italian Americans were selective and joined the unions most likely to have bargaining power. In joining these groups, Italian Americans not only served their own interests but found a place within the communities around them.

Italian immigrants to Scranton established many fraternal societies. By 1910, Scranton hosted 598 such groups. An estimated 12 percent of these were unions, and 22 percent were large federations.¹ One of these was the Italian Catholic Society, formed in 1898 to provide benefits in case of sickness or death. According to a history of the Hyde Park neighborhood (home of the Montrone family) that was written in the 1950s, the still-active Italian mutual aid societies included St. Rocco's, Riccotti Garibaldi, Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi, the Victor Alfieri Literary Society (founded in 1911 "to help Italian men meet fellow immigrants, to help each other find jobs and to adjust to American ways"), and the more recent Columbus Club.²

While it was typical for small, local mutual aid societies to restrict membership to certain *paesani*, the larger, national groups had fewer restrictions on membership and on those receiving aid.

UNICO was founded on the principle of “service to the community before and above fraternity. . . Its sole purpose was to unite all Italian Americans and motivate them to become more civic minded.” While evoking the word “unique,” UNICO is an acronym for “Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Charity, and Opportunity.” The Scranton chapter, now the largest in the country, was established in 1955;³

Another mutual aid society, Order Sons of Italy (OSIA), grew out of its 1905 New York City beginnings to become “the largest and oldest national organization for men and women of Italian heritage in the United States.” OSIA’s original purpose was to help immigrants become citizens and assimilate as well as providing insurance benefits and education opportunities. Although today’s order still donates to educational programs among other things, its aim has focused more on promoting Italian culture.⁴

The early generations of the Montrone and Gaudenzi families were very active in many civic organizations in the

U.S., both tied to Italian Americans, their broader community and the nation, and their descendants have continued to strive to help others through many organizations. Antonio (G1 - M) belonged to the Victor Alfieri Literary Society and the Columbus Club in Scranton. His daughter Helen (G2 – M) only knew that “he used to go up to Victor’s a lot with the men and have a drink and play cards. . . You know, he liked participating in different activities.”⁵

According to Tony (G3 - M), the Victor Alfieri Literary Society played an important part in the lives of the Montrone and Giancini families. Angelo (G2 - M) served a term as president, and his brothers, Albert (G2 – M) and Victor (G2 – M) and brother-in-law Dominick (G2 - M), all served as officers during different periods and Dominick, the last surviving male of his generation, remained active until shortly before his death. The Victor Alfieri Hall, which was on the second floor of a commercial building on Main Ave in

west Scranton, served as the venue for many of the family celebrations for both the Montrone and Giancini families⁶.

The father of the Gaudenzi brothers, Francesco (G1 - G), was affiliated with a different organization: the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in the Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA). Francesco joined the Nuova Giuseppe Mazzini Lodge of Scranton on November 30, 1916. In August 1950, his wife, Mary (G2 - G), as beneficiary, received from the Lodge what amounted to a life insurance payment of \$400 one month after his death.⁷

UNICO counted Sandra's (G3 - G) parents, Jerome (G2 - G) and Olga (G2 - G), as very active members.⁸ Jerome's brother Frank (G2 - G) said, "He [Jerome] belonged to quite a few clubs. . . Helped people out. He was in quite a few organizations. . . was on different boards. . . He was Sergeant at Arms with UNICO [for many years]." Frank himself "was on at least thirteen different boards in Lackawanna County."⁹

About the various social groups and clubs, Paul (G3 - M) observed:

We must keep in mind that humans feel safest in their own “tribes.” It’s called tribalism. Yes, exclusion may create unfair results in some instances, but that is the way it is. We are dealing with human beings. If you are respected, accept it and move on. Humans will be humans.¹⁰

Over time, however, doors that might have once been shut to the Italian Americans began to open.

Non-Italian Fraternal Orders

There were many other non-Italian fraternal orders available to join during the mid-twentieth century. For example, Angelo was in the Elks Club, while his wife Beatrice (G2 - M) belonged to the Women’s Civic League (a service organization of Lackawanna County).

Tony observed that as women began to assume a greater role in the political society during the 1930's, the Women's Civic League of Lackawanna County was formed to allow Italian women, both immigrants and first-generation daughters, to get more involved in the public issues that affected their growing families, especially the education of their children. Although loosely affiliated with the national organization of civic leagues, the Lackawanna County chapter's requirement that members be of Italian descent made it different from the many other affiliates. Beatrice served two terms as President of the organization during its most active period in the 1950s and 1960s.

Until they went to college, none of the Montrone sons were exempt from attending the League's annual summer picnic at Nay Aug Park. As the membership began to wane in the 1970s, Beatrice, looking at the changes that were occurring around her and within her own family, led a charge to change the membership rules to include others who had relationships to people of Italian descent, especially spouses

of the member's male children. The proposed change became very controversial within the League and was never enacted, and the League ultimately passed from existence¹¹.

Beatrice was also in the UNICO Ladies group.”¹² Her son Paul summed up, “She was active with her many clubs. She was active at the school where we went. She was that type of person.”¹³

Employee Unions

However, it was the trade union for which Angelo was best known. His youngest son Tony explained:

My father was a great role model. He was. There's a museum here in Scranton called the Anthracite Heritage Museum—because Scranton was the heart of the anthracite coal industry—which I'd never been to. It was built after I left. It's been open now for, I think, close to twenty years. Lisa and I have come up here, but we're always involved in family stuff when we're here. So we never had time. So Friday, we actually went to see it. We were looking at the exhibit. There's an exhibit for the

ILGWU, which is the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. And one of the pieces they had in the exhibit was the charter that founded the Scranton Local 109 of the ILGWU. There were six individuals who formed the union in Scranton, and to my surprise my father was one of the names on the charter. I knew from stories that he'd done some union organizing, but I never knew to this extent.

That was something he was proud of doing . . . working with the Italian immigrants in the thirties, improving their life's conditions, getting them better wages, better living conditions. And that was sort of the thing he always instilled in me . . .that you should really do whatever you can to help people.¹⁴

Paul also spoke of his father's union credentials.

He went to work in the Royal Miss dress factory. He was a union member and he was a cutter. He was such an aggressive union organizer that the owners promoted him and made him a manager. When I grew up, he was already a manager there. So in my business career

whenever I am receiving a hard time from a Union, and people question my credibility, I produce this document showing my father as a founder of Local 109 of the ILGWU. It also comes in handy when I meet with Democratic politicians.

When he died, my father left me a picture of David Dubinsky, who was the national head of the ILGWU. And there he is with a cigar. My father smoked a cigar. Of course, you had to smoke cigars in order to be anybody in that league.¹⁵

Charities and Civic Groups

About fifteen years before retiring, Frank “used to handle programs for seniors and summer programs for the kids,” according to his wife, Jean.

He had three counties and about seventeen hundred kids. And he knew every one of them. And he made sure they worked. It wasn’t one of those, “I got this job with the county, I’ll just sit around and collect my check.” It was funny. One of the kid’s fathers was an umpire with the NFL. So his son had a job, and he was really goofing off.

So Frank had him fired. Then they straightened things out. But he wanted them to know that you didn't get something for nothing. They were only teenagers. Usually in their junior/senior year in high school.

Moving on to the next generation, Sandra has participated in many non-profit organizations. She is best known for her work in hospice care as a founder and President of Seacoast Hospice in New Hampshire, and with teaching children at church and school in the Hampton Falls area. Sandra put it simply, “I want to help people.¹⁶ I don't think in terms of giving back, but in terms of what we can project and what we can do to make a difference. That to me is what's important.”¹⁷

For his part, Paul gravitated toward political and civic volunteer activities, without much connection to his Italian heritage. He observed:

I guess I got the civic gene from my father who was very active behind the scenes in Scranton politics – though he

never ran for office. I have served on commissions in my hometown of Hampton Falls, summer town of Wolfeboro, the state of New Hampshire and the U.S. government in Washington, D.C. I have also been very active in other entities that deal with government such as the Business Roundtable, New England Healthcare Institute, the Healthcare Leadership Council, the Foundation for the National Institute of Health, the New England Helicopter Council, The Live Free or Die Alliance, and Citizens Count.

Paul explains the drive for community service in the Montrone and Gaudenzi families:

The family traditions and values embedded in the Montrone and Gaudenzi families for multiple generations include giving back. Whether it be in charitable, community or political activism, to always do our part to help shape our communities in line with the founding principles of our country. This is an expression of deep appreciation to both our American and our Italian immigrant ancestors for providing us with the opportunity to live in this great nation.¹⁸

¹ Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz and Ziad Munson, “A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* 94.4 (Sept. 2000): 535, Table 3, online at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2585829>.

² Carl R. Healey, “History of Hyde Park: 1852-1952,” *Hyde Park Centennial: Hyde Park Borough, Scranton Pennsylvania 1852-1952, Sept. 28 – Oct. 4*, available at the website Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives, at <http://content.lackawannadigitalarchives.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Centennial/id/2039/rec/1>; Website of the Victor Alfieri Literary Society, online at <http://victoralfierisociety.com/>.

³ Website of UNICO, online at <http://www.unicoscranton.org>.

⁴ Website of Order Sons of Italy in America, online at <http://www.osia.org>.

⁵ Helen (Montrone) Mastro, daughter of Antonio Montrone, interview by Brian O’Connell, 25 July 1995, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

⁶ Comments from Tony Montrone, 27 August 2018

⁷ Frank Gaudenzi, no. 5281, online databases *Pennsylvania, Order Sons of Italy in America, Enrollment and Death Benefit Records, 1910-1968* and *Pennsylvania, Order Sons of Italy in America, Mortuary Fund Claims, 1917-1978*, available at Ancestry.com.

⁸ Geraldine (Gaudenzi) Colizzi, interview by Mary Tedesco, 12 February 2014, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

⁹ Frank Thomas Gaudenzi, brother of Jerome Gaudenzi, interview by Brian O’Connell, transcribed 5 August 1996, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

¹⁰ As related by Paul M. Montrone 26 November 2021

¹¹ Comments from Tony Montrone, 27 August 2018

¹² Sylvia (Ware) Montrone, *Bea’s History*, written as Beatrice (Giancini) Montrone’s introduction for the Elmcroft Staff.

¹³ Paul Montrone, interview by Rhonda R. McClure, 30 January 2014, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

¹⁴ Tony Montrone, interview by Rhonda McClure, 24 July 2011, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

¹⁵ Paul Montrone, interview by Rhonda R. McClure, 30 January 2014, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

¹⁶ Paul and Sandra (Gaudenzi) Montrone, interview by Rhonda R. McClure, 23 March 2013, transcript held by Paul Montrone.

¹⁷ MarywoodU, “2013 Presidential Medalist: Sandra and Paul Montrone,” video (19 Dec. 2013), online at [youtube.com/watch?v=AFVKJZRACsc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFVKJZRACsc).

¹⁸ As related by Paul M. Montrone 6 June 2018