

## **Nonno Umberto Papini**

Nonno Umberto Papini was a silent but strong and hard-working husband, father, and grandfather. Those who had the honor of knowing him would tell you how true that was. On behalf of our family, I would like to thank you for sharing this service with us and share some of the memories that my dad, uncles, cousins, and I have of our Nonno Papini. Nonno was born in 1922 in Toscana and was the youngest of 5 children. He came from a hard-working family and, as a young man, studied the trade of machinist. Umberto served in World War II for the Italian Army and often told my cousins, brother, and I many stories of his time in the military, including how he escaped from the German soldiers.

The love of his life was our Nonna, Lina. In 1946, after the war, his mother was concerned for the safety of her daughter living in Taranta. So, Nonno travelled to Taranta to make sure his sister had survived the war. While in Taranta, he met our Nonna and it was love at first sight. Though Nonna was shy and not allowed to be alone with young men, Nonno persisted and finally they agreed that they would need to get married if they wanted to be together. Nonno asked Nonna's father for her hand in marriage then asked Nonna. Luckily, she said yes and a short time later, they were married and settled in Taranta.

I remember once hearing a story about how Nonno left his young wife and two small children in the winter to help his family in Toscana to pick chestnuts on their family farm. A terrible snowstorm hit most of Northern and Central Italy that year. Nonno was so concerned for his young family back in Abruzzi that he rushed home. Unfortunately, the trains were stopped in Rome and he had to hitchhike the rest of the way. When he arrived, Nonna couldn't believe it and asked why he came home. He said his only thought was the safety of his wife and children. If only we could all have that kind of love and loyalty for our families, the world would be a better place.

Nonno loved his family very much and had four wonderful boys. In 1947, my dad Carlo was born. Shortly after, my Uncle Luc was born then Uncle Nick came. In 1956 Nonno moves his young family to the US so they could live a better life. Finally, in 1962 they had their final baby, Uncle Dino.

He played the accordion and the guitar, both self-taught. He made wine, hunted and loved animals – he always had pets while we were growing up. He had a bunch of kitties and loved them dearly. I remember him making homemade food for the kitties – pasta, egg, and vegetables. He said was raising them in the Italian tradition, just like his own kids. I sometimes wonder if, in our family, our love of music, wine and animals is a reflection of Nonno Papini. I think so.

He was very industrious and ingenious. In Italy, he started a marble-crushing factory and sold the products to the tile manufacturers who made tiles and other stoneware. In the United States, he also worked as a machine mechanic and pipefitter at Lockheed Shipyards. My dad told me about how he wanted to apply for that job, but did not speak English. So, he took my dad, who helped him fill out the application and gave it to the manager at the desk. The manager reviewed the application and decided that he wanted to hire Nonno but had to get approval from a senior manager. The senior manager was concerned that Nonno didn't speak English, but the first manager told him "I'm not hiring him to talk, I'm hiring him because of his skills." He was a hard worker who never complained and strove to do the best job he could because it was the right thing to do. It was a skill he taught my dad and uncles, who in turn, taught us kids.

At Lockheed Shipyards, Nonno invented a tool that helped bevel pipes more accurately and faster so they could be properly and strongly welded together. He developed it at home and brought it to work. The managers were so impressed with his work that he was given an award and promoted to a lead. His idea also received a patent and was used by all the other pipefitters at Lockheed. That is an impressive honor for a person who could not read or speak English very well!

Finally, like many Italians, Nonno went to work at a pasta company until his retirement at 60. After retirement, he and Nonna bought a vacation home in Soap Lake where we all spent many summers. They also traveled to Italy several more times, vacationed in Mexico and Hawaii, and spent time with their grandchildren and great grandchildren.

One of Nonno's greatest joys was seeing his four sons become successful and raise their own families. He loved his grandchildren – and got to see three great-grandchildren. Throughout his life, Nonno wanted to make sure his family lacked for nothing. He cared and helped each one of his sons, in different ways. My dad told me a story about Nonno getting stung by several bees and needed to be hospitalized because he was deathly allergic. It was while Uncle Nick was in college at UPS. While in the hospital, he told my dad to make sure Uncle Nick has resources to finish his school should anything happen to him and to take care of Nonna. He always made sure that all his boys had the tools to be successful both professionally and as fathers. It is evident in how we grandchildren were raised.

Nonno Papini had a heavy Italian accent and a good sense of humor, even in the very end. What I remember most about him are all the funny things he used to say. In the 1980's, when they had the "buckle up for safety" radio ads, Nonno always used to say "bacala for safety" when we got in the car. For those who don't understand Italian, bacala is a type of salted cod fish.

Toward the end, Nonno always remained in good spirits; quiet but strong like always. Recently, I started taking Italian lessons and was talking to Nonno while he was in the care facility. He made me laugh when I was telling him, in Italian, what I learned and he was telling me "very good" in English. My dad asked him why he didn't respond in Italian, and in a loud, strong voice he responded "molto bene!"

In the last few days of his life, we went to go see him often. Though he was weakened, he still stayed very positive always thanking us for coming to seeing him by saying "Thank you for coming." And, when we would tell him "I love you" he would always reply "Me too." I will never forget holding his hand in the hospital. Even though he was unable to walk and very weak, he gripped my hand so strongly and wouldn't let go. He was communicating with us that all would be okay. Even in the end, he was a silent but strong man. All of us will miss you, Nonno. You were a good man and role model and we all love you very much. Please watch over us.