

As a graduate of Rutgers University and owner of *DiVersions Travel Adventures, LLC*, a Boutique Travel Firm offering Consulting and Escorted Small Group Experiential Excursions to Italy, I was asked to speak at the Italian Department's Italian Night. I was to share how my Italian degree has served in my career path and how Italian majors and minors might explore non-traditional career options. In preparing my remarks, I was reminded of how the Rutgers Italian Department, and the University as a whole, has had significant influence on my life and career and those of my extended family.

A bit of family history...I am a first generation Italo-Americana, *anzi*, Siculo-Americana, the last of five children of Maria Previte and Luigi Marchetta. My father emigrated from his beloved San Pier Niceto, Sicily with his mother Francesca Basile, his sister Agata (Terrizzi), and brother Giuseppe. After traveling 10 difficult days crossing the Atlantic, they arrived in New York Harbor. Here they were re-united with my paternal grandfather, Antonio Marchetta, who had previously departed Sicily to seek economic and educational opportunities for his family. He had settled, like many of his *paesani* in New Brunswick. This reunion took place after nine long years of separation.

They arrived June 24, 1929, just months before the October 29th Stock Market Crash which accelerated into the Great Depression. Clearly not what they had anticipated, but this, among other adversities, did not thwart their drive to successfully establish themselves in their new country and assimilate while preserving their heritage, and to prosper. They purchased their first home in the United States in New Brunswick. Our family inhabited the four apartments of a multi-family building housing my parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle and all the family. A total of twelve first cousins were born and welcomed into that home. Many other relatives and *paesani* were also welcomed there for a meal, support, or vibrant conversation.

This strong sense of family and community was the beginning of our Italian Education and taught us what was expected of us. Primarily the following:

- Love and Respect of Family & Community
- Strength of Character
- Deep Sense of Pride of Ancestry
- Persistent Work Ethic
- A Balanced Life
- Importance of Education

The importance of education was paramount and something that we were reminded of uncompromisingly. In the eyes of our parents the completion of a formal education was a luxury that history and circumstances had not afforded them. It was a given that the Marchetta/Terrizzi children were expected to minimally earn a college degree so that they could have a voice and positive societal impact in this new land. Countless and constant sacrifices were made in order to achieve this.

My father, a shoemaker like his father and owner of Marchetta Leather Company, a leather wholesaler to the trade, had the equivalent of a fifth grade formal education. Yet he was one of the most well read and intelligent people I've known. Books and newspapers would be piled around our home. He would listen to the radio and watch multiple news programs televised daily. Our family meals would often times turn into heated debates over politics or current events and then return to (relative) calm post meal. Here is where we first practiced our voice, here is where we understood that ignorance and complacency does not generate impact. Giuseppe and Agata were equally motivated towards learning, self-taught and striving to provide the opportunity of an education to their children. What prospect and privilege it was to have such an outstanding public university in Rutgers in our hometown!

And so....we, the Marchetta/Terrizzi family children, first generation Italian-Americans, children of immigrants, would ALL earn College Degrees, as well as Masters, Doctorates, Medical and Law degrees. And later, following in this tradition, all of the 27 grandchildren of Luigi, Agata and Giuseppe would also go to College, and earn degrees. Many would continue on to Postgraduate, Medical, Law and Professional Degrees.

Our family has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with Rutgers University, the first degree being earned in Italian in 1961. Rutgers would graduate a significant number of Marchetta/Terrizzi family members, as well as their spouses and other close relatives, many in Honors Programs. At present count Rutgers has bestowed at least 30 Bachelors, five Masters, Law and Doctorate degrees, Fulbright Scholarships, etc. upon Marchetta/Terrizzi family members and relatives and counting. There are presently two others completing their degrees at Rutgers. One Marchetta cousin was one of the first women ever accepted into Rutgers College and one of the first women to receive a Rutgers degree in Engineering. Other Curricula have included Italian, Biology, Psychology, Medicine, Public Health, Speech Pathology, History, Law, Geography, Urban Planning, Bioenvironmental Engineering, Political Science, Sociology, German, Art History, Marketing, Communications, etc. Seven of us have enjoyed the incomparable and life-changing experience of Rutgers Study Abroad, six of which were full year programs, and two of us have continued on professionally in directly related careers.

In adherence to one of our family's precepts, Love and Respect of Community, we continue to offer our time, energy, and financial support to Rutgers University. We have initiated and developed a Memorial Scholarship for Study Abroad in Italy, served as University Senators and in Student Government, Founding Members of Alumni Associations and Federations. We are members of a Dean's Advisory Committee, an Alumnus of the Scholars Program and Founding Member/Chairwoman of the Institute for Women's Leadership. One of us was named "Alumni of the Year" of the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and a current student was at the forefront of creating a new Student Club, S.E.E.D.: Students for Environmental and Energy Development.

We have been Professionals at Rutgers serving as Program Directors at the Graduate School of Management, UMDNJ Mental Health Clinicians and currently as the Executive Director of Health Systems and Health Integration for Rutgers Biomedical & Health Sciences. In addition we have served as Guest Lecturers for classes and professional programs, are consistent donors to the University's Foundation and have spearheaded Letter-Writing Campaigns and Crowd-funding initiatives in support of various University Programs.

Our family is genuinely grateful to Rutgers University and all that it has provided us. It has been foundational in our preparation to serve in myriad professions and to contribute to our communities as Physicians, Attorneys, University Professors, Entrepreneurs, Scientists, Corporate Executives, and in Public Office. In fact, in recognition of our Family's continual commitment to Education and Service to Community we were nominated by the late Rutgers University Dean of Italian Studies, Professor Remigio Pane, and awarded the *NJ Italian American Heritage Commission "La Famiglia" Award* during the Christopher Columbus Quincentennial Celebration in 1992. During that time, The General Assembly of the State of New Jersey also honored our family with an *Assembly Resolution* in recognition of our immigrant family's achievements. I don't believe any of us will ever forget how deeply proud and grateful my parents, aunts and uncle were that evening while being presented with such an honor surrounded by their family. Only they could fully understand the sacrifices made and fortitude required to achieve such a tribute. Truly, a great moment in our Marchetta Family history.

A note:

**Through DiVersions Travel I am able to offer others a taste of our family's native land and Italy's natural beauty, history, art, architecture, cultural traditions, food and wine and the most wonderfully hospitable people in the world. I work with individuals who are as passionate about what they do as I. Coupling my familial Italian Education with the great experiences and formal education my Rutgers degrees have afforded me, I am fortunate to be able to understand the culture, read, write and speak the Italian language on a daily basis. Thank you to Rutgers University and my extended Italian tribe for providing the foundation necessary to fulfill this dream.*

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