

# Boccabella Family Trip to Abruzzo

July 19-26, 2008



## Saturday, July 19

We all met up at the Miami airport for the flight over to Rome (except Robyn who traveled from New York). After the rush through security and a long walk across the airport, we finally had time for a quick celebratory drink before boarding the plane.

## Sunday, July 20

We arrived Sunday morning and met up with Robyn in baggage claim. One of our guides, Michael, took us to the 15 passenger bus (The "Boccabella Express") that we had hired for our use during our trip.

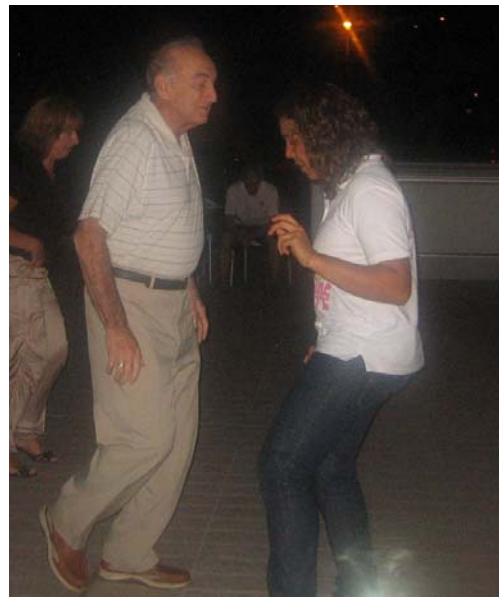
The 3.5 hour ride from Rome to Abruzzo was a little longer than we expected because the most direct route was closed due to road work. We travelled through some beautiful country and Michael was there to describe points of interest along the way. We got to the hotel in Roseta Degli Abruzzi, had lunch, and lounged around



the hotel pool and beach for the rest of the day. Most of us also took long naps to

recover from the flight. We ate dinner at the hotel, and

later that evening, there was a children's dance party at the pool. Madison joined the fun as the youngest child in attendance. Dad also got up and showed off his moves dancing with one of the hosts.



Monday, July 21

On Monday, we started by travelling to the town of Santa Lucia where the Di Sante family lived. We even



got to go into the small church where Francesco and Filomena (Dad's grandparents) were married. Luckily, Luciana, our other guide, had visited earlier in the week and learned where the key was kept, so we could go in and look around.



We then travelled to Morro D'Oro which was the closest town to where Francesco and Filomena lived after getting married. Dad and Luciana went to city hall to try and obtain copies of city records but were initially unable to get through the red

tape of the local government. Finally, Dad showed his retired Washington Metropolitan Police Badge and within minutes they produced an official copy of Marino's (Francesco and Filomena's first child) birth certificate. Dad began "dusting off" his badge for almost daily use from that point forward! We were also able to see the WWI monument that memorialized Nicola Di Sante – Filomena's brother.



After lunch we went to the beautiful home of Adamo di Taddeo, a cousin of Dad's. Dad's grandmother Filomena and Adamo's grandmother Lucia were sisters. The home they live in was the same one that the Di Sante siblings Lucia, Nicholas, Filomena, Angela, Carolina, and Guila grew up in. It was sold from Filomena to Lucia when Filomena came to the US. Although it has been expanded over the years, Adamo was able to show us a picture of how it looked decades ago before it was expanded. A few years ago, Adamo converted the old stable to a modern kitchen and living room, still preserving the original stone ceilings – it was absolutely stunning.





We also met Adamo's wife and daughter Paola and shared family photos with each other. It was amazing to see how many of the same group photos we each had. Adamo is a wine merchant, so he arranged a private wine tasting for us, and he toured us through his warehouse that sits on his property right next to the house. The views from his home were truly incredible.



We then went to a bar for drinks and antipasto before going on to another restaurant for a typical Italian lunch (more antipasto, a pasta course, a meat course, and dessert).

Between the 3-4 course lunches and the 5-6 course dinners, I think we all gained a lot of weight on this trip....

### Tuesday, July 22



We started the day by travelling to Notaresco, the birthplace of Francesco Boccabella. It is high up in the mountains with a 360-degree view of surrounding vineyards and olive tree farms. After touring the town, we went to city hall for a meeting with the mayor. The meeting was arranged with the help of the mayor's close personal friend and our cousin, Camillo Boccabella (grandson of Francesco's brother Camillo).

The mayor formally received Dad as a returning son of Notaresco and presented us with

books and CDs about the town and some local wine produced in the region. After the reception, we travelled with the Mayor to Camillo's home to meet his wife Secondina, daughters Pina and Maria Grazia, and Aunt Lucia – Dominic's 1<sup>st</sup> cousin. Camillo showed us the field where



Francesco's earthen home with a thatch roof once stood. The views from this plot of land were the most spectacular we saw the entire trip. Farther up the hill, we were shown the shrine of St. Raphael which once stood on Francesco's land but was moved to a more central location so the public could enjoy it during the Saint's annual feast day.

After visiting with Camillo's family, we had a very nice lunch in a Notaresco restaurant that is located in a 13<sup>th</sup>-century wine cellar that still had the original, spectacular arched ceilings.



After lunch, we travelled to Santa Lucia to visit with the family of Francesco Di Gregoria – son of Guilia – another of Filomena's sisters. Although Francesco is bedridden, we had a nice visit with his wife Maria at the 100-year-old house that Guilia moved to when she got married. Maria had an amazing collection of photographs that Michael was able to scan into his computer.



### Wednesday, July 23

We decided to start off later today to give everyone some time to spend at the pool and the beach. Robyn and I rented bikes from the hotel and rode down to the Roseto Pier and Amusement park. Luciana brought us Porchetta (roast pork) sandwiches and wine her family made so we could have a nice picnic by the pool before travelling to Gran Sasso National Park.

Gran Sasso is one of the 3 national parks in Abruzzo with high altitude alpine plains and a totally different climate from what we had experienced in the towns closer to the Adriatic.



Inside the park we stopped at the Campo Imperatore hotel built in the 1930s: Mussolini was held as a prisoner here for 2 weeks in 1943 before Hitler rescued him.



Dad, Peggy, Robyn, and Bill went through the museum tour while Steve and I played foosball. We also travelled to a village that looked straight out of a fairy tale – Santo Stefano di Sessanio. It was absolutely amazing medieval town that now contains shops, restaurants, and a luxury hotel.

That evening we went to a seafood restaurant. Although the food was very good, many in the group couldn't get over the more exotic whole fish included in the dishes like Mantis Shrimp and Angler Fish. It was an authentic Roseto seafood dinner, but I think the family was glad to move on to the more conservative gelato dessert we had every day.



#### Thursday, July 24

When we visited Camillo Boccabella's family on Tuesday, they invited us to return on Thursday to visit the hotel which they run and also to come back to the house for a traditional Italian lunch. On the way to the hotel, we stopped at San Clemente, a church built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Parts of the floor were made of glass,

allowing us to see the original Roman ruins the church was built on top of – very beautiful.

Hotel Gobbi was also very nice; we toured the restaurant and wine cellar being built under the hotel in the former stables. One of







the highlights of our trip was the lunch that Camillo's family prepared for us. We can't thank them enough for the hospitality they showed us during our visit. The lunch they served including homemade pasta, soup and crepes in addition to chicken, turkey, lamb, and pork that they had raised. This 4-hour lunch was one of

the most amazing meals we had ever experienced. After lunch, we had dessert on the patio enjoying the spectacular views of the mountains, olive groves, vineyards and the Adriatic.



### Friday, July 25

On Friday, we left Abruzzo to travel back to Rome. We attended 5pm mass at the Vatican (St. Peter's Basilica), and then we walked around the square and surrounding areas. We then relaxed on the rooftop patio at our hotel before having our final dinner in Italy.

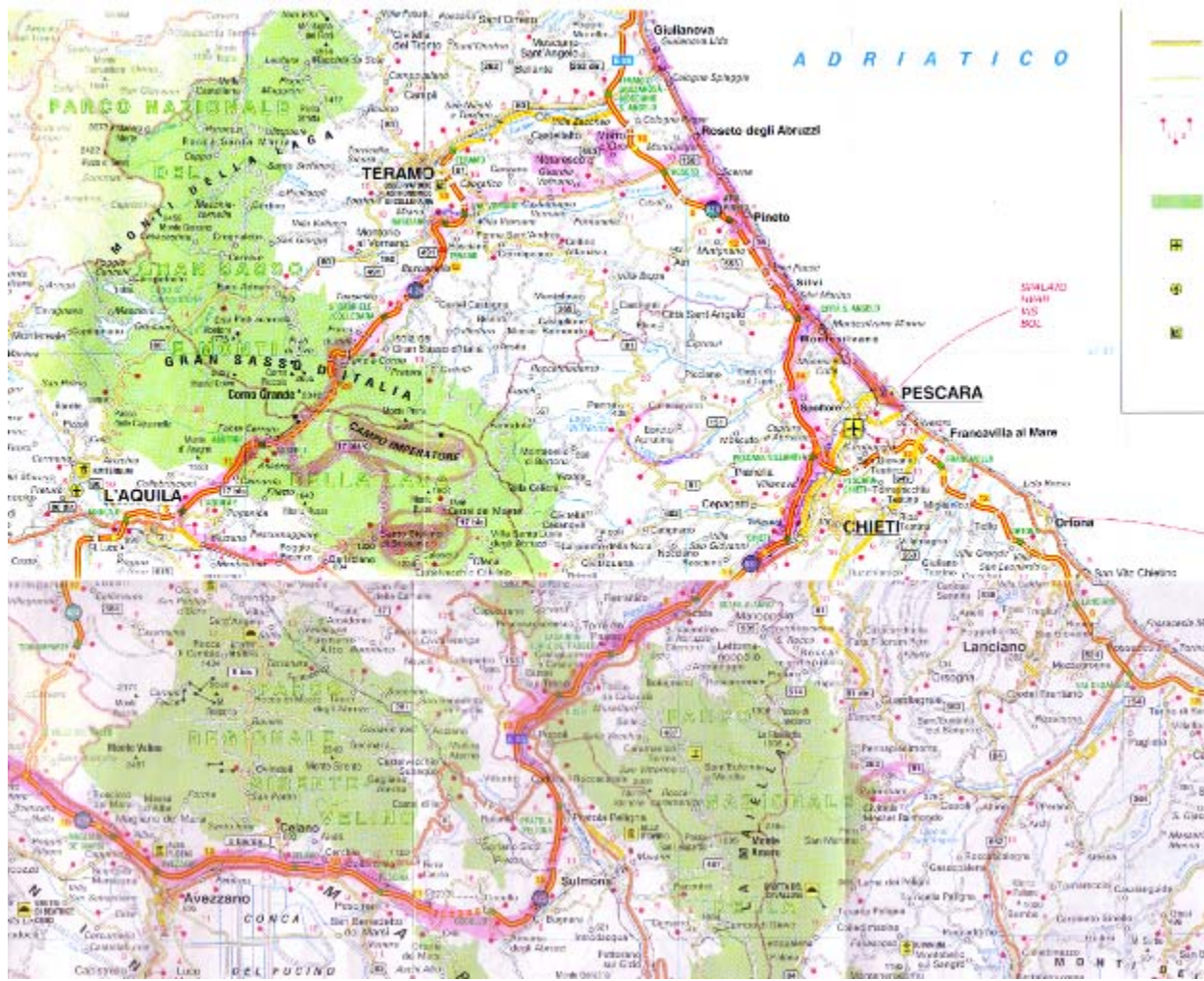
### Saturday, July 26

We left for the airport this morning at 6:45am, and I am typing this on the 10-hour flight to Miami. We all had an incredible time with memories that will last a lifetime. We only wish we had more time to spend enjoying this beautiful land and its outgoing and friendly people.



## ABRUZZO MAP

(The pink highlighting indicates the towns we visited and the route we travelled)



### Our Guides, Luciana Masci and Michael Howard

Once we had decided to travel to Abruzzo, we quickly realized that we would need a guide and translator since very little English is spoken in the region and we wanted to see as much as possible in the short time we had. I was able to locate a tour company called Absolutely Abruzzo run by a husband and wife team that lives half the year in Australia and the remainder in Abruzzo. Michael is an accomplished opera singer having performed worldwide over the last 25 years. Several times during the trip he treated our group to our own private Italian opera concert. He has an incredible voice and we purchased several CDs of his music. Before we arrived, Luciana and Michael were able to locate and contact our relatives in the area, pre-arrange visits, and research the villages and churches connected to our family.

I highly recommend Luciana and Michael for anyone wishing to have a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Abruzzo.

### Contact Information:

Italy Office: + 39 0871 895 705

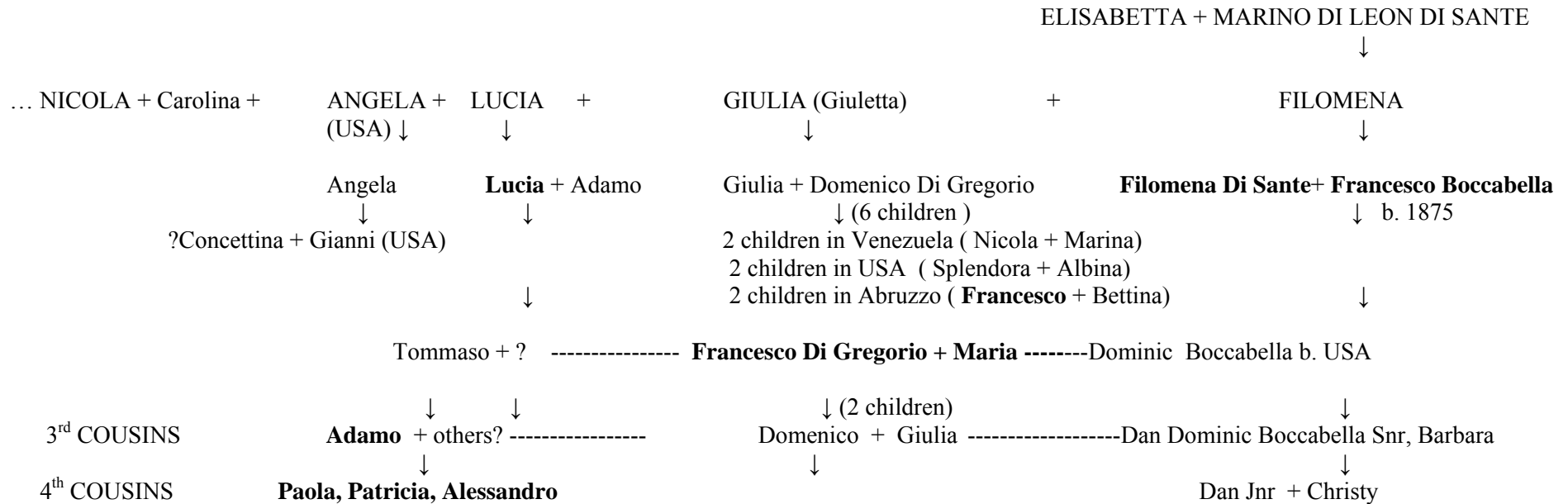
Australia Office: +61 7 3102 4384

<http://www.absolutelyabruzzo.com>

## FAMILY TREES

(the highlighted names indicate those we met on our trip)

### DI SANTE



### BOCCABELLA

CAMILLO- brother of Francesco

↓  
GIUSEPPE

↓  
**CAMILLO BOCCABELLA** (friend of **Mayor Valter** in Notaresco.- 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin to Dan Boccabella)- **Secondina** -wife

↓  
**Pina + Maria Grazia** daughters