

She was very young--17 when she married-- and when she came to America in 1924, she was 21. My parents were fortunate to board with friends in Westfield, Louis and Concetta Di



Francesco. My mother would speak lovingly of Mrs. D and how she had helped her when she came to this country. Mr. D was my father's best friend and the wealthiest of the Italians. He would provide my father with work during the Depression--my father was always being thankful for that.

She could speak English when forced to, especially when we were children, but as we got older she would revert to her dialect. She wanted to be involved with us and sometimes would attend PTA meetings, which were held in the afternoons after school. She would tell me that the American women knew how to make great coffee.

She wanted us to do well in school. She was very proud of us when we brought home good grades. We had no one to help us and had to depend on the schools to provide the encouragement to succeed.

She was a woman of exceptional character. She did not gossip, did not socialize much with neighbors, read the newspapers--in Italia, and as best she could in English; wrote letters to her family in Italy; loved to grow flowers and do needlework. She did not waste time; she was always actively doing something.

In her fifties, she developed asthma. It left her physically weakened many times--especially during the winter. At that time there were no miracle drugs to help her, although my father did try to find the best doctors for her. They bought property in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and my father built a home there. When I was in high school, my parents spent the winters there to improve her health. It was too difficult to maintain a second home, so later they sold the house and did not return to Florida.

She was always a very important part of my life. When I married and lived nearby, I would visit her as often as possible; when I moved away, I called her several times a week to talk with her. When she became widowed, she chose to live with me and my family.