

Personal Journey: I went to Naples looking for my father and found myself

by **Gloria Barone, FOR THE INQUIRER**, Posted: October 13, 2017

<http://www.philly.com/philly/living/travel/personal-journey-i-went-to-naples-looking-for-my-father-and-found-myself-20171013.html>



GLORIA BARONE

My father came from Naples, Italy and was killed by the Mafia when I was 7. But for 54 years, I've played along with a family charade, pretending my father was a kindly Brooklyn cabdriver by a different name — until this summer. In August, as I set out with my husband on a Mediterranean cruise, I was determined to find out more.

To be clear, there was Pete Barone, the Brooklyn taxi driver with no ties to organized crime, who married my mother, and whose last name I bear. There also was Marco Morelli, the Brooklyn mobster, the man my mother left Pete for, who fathered me. We lived with Marco until two days after my seventh birthday, when the October trees began turning into stick figures and Marco vanished. The Gallo-Profaci Mafia war was on, and

my father was part of the Larry and Joey Gallo mob. Many mobsters disappeared during the early 1960s, my father among them.

In the years that followed, I learned who Marco was, and that I was named after Pete to protect me. My four aunts, thick as thieves, never spoke of Marco, not even after my mother died. They told me only what a great guy my father was, and they called him "Pete."

When we arrived at the Naples dock, we were greeted by our guide, Massimo, who was taking us for a walking tour of ancient Pompeii. As our bus made its way to Pompeii, I stared at the yellow balconies of Naples for signs of people who looked like me. I saw only dark, bare-chested men trying to escape the scorching summer heat. I waited for the end of the tour to talk with Massimo. Massimo was alone as he waited for stragglers to return to the bus. This was my chance.

"Massimo, do you know any Morellis?" Massimo lit up. "Yes! Are you a Morelli?" I smiled widely and said, 'Si!' " Massimo beamed, "You're one of us!" Then Massimo told me the Morelli name is so common in Naples it's like Smith in America. At that point, I realized I will never find a Morelli related to me, not unless I quit my job and spend the next year contacting every Morelli in Naples. How foolish to think I could find my Morelli roots in a one-day stop in Naples.

But there was more to discover in Naples. I thought about how I never asked my aunts a question, never showed them the photo I keep of my father. While my aunts spent more than 50 years shielding me from the truth, I spent my life pretending to them that I didn't know who my father was so that I wouldn't upset them. They did it for love; I did it for loyalty. I don't know if we were wrong or right. I know only that we're family, and I'm one of them.

Posted: October 13, 2017 - 12:00 PM

Gloria Barone, FOR THE INQUIRER