

Diary of a Chersin in War 1943-1945

In the summer of 1942 those born in 1924 received an invitation to the Circle Francesco Patrizio – after work – from Cherso, for the draft, to be called to service in the Royal Italian Navy. After the draft they sorted us into three categories, one of which was that of Idrofonista (submarine communications). Then in January of 1943 the first were called, in monthly brackets, for the Military Navy. On August 19 I received the call to present myself in Fiume, at the of Port of Capitaneria, where I met a group of the same age. As usual, the group then left for Pola, which was the military base of the Navy.

While we waited for the departure, I heard them call my name. After having some document delivered to me they had me leave immediately for Marina of Carrara. The Colonial Marina of Carrara had become the new Naval Barracks after the Depot CREM of La Spezia had been destroyed by aerial bombardments.

The school of the of Idrofonista (submarine communications) was in fact La Spezia. All of the group left from Fiume, on the train, but arrived at San Pietro of the Carso. The group continued to the station of Pola, while I alone I continued for Marina of Carrara.

Just as I arrived at the destination, the first thing they did was cut my hair, and they told me to wait until the arrival of my documents from Pola, to then do the oath. In the meantime I was always in civilian clothes and stayed within the grounds of the Navy Barracks. In these conditions I remained until the 8 of September, the day of the Armistice.

Everyone awaited the reports on the radio to know the latest news. In the meantime the Germans, armed, had surrounded us so no one could escape. Meanwhile on the mountains of the neighborhood itself there was fighting, because the on the mountain the division Giulia did not want to surrender itself. Groups of German soldiers patrolled the railroad station, surrounding and capturing every branch of soldier and added them to us. In short we became a center for collection of every type of military personnel.

After two days they gathered us into an assembly. A German official that spoke good Italian made a speech, saying: Italy has capitulated, you are free to go home, on the road not one hair on your heads will be harmed. You must continue to cooperate with the German forces. At intervals they let us go out as groups from the main entrance.

As soon as I arrived at the railroad station, while I waited for the train for Trieste, I had seen the Germans that captured all of the soldiers. In the meantime that I waited for the train, I hid myself on the dead cars at the station. And from that day onward, that it was my salvation. From the dead cars. Spying, I saw the German put in line the captured soldiers, then I knew that were directed for Germany.

Full of fear and starving, I arrived at Trieste, and I stayed overnight. The following morning I directed myself towards the railroad Station of Campo Marzio, hoping to take the train for Pola, stop at Pisino, and then continue on to Albona. The loudspeakers of

the station transmitted the news that the train for Pola was stopped at Pisino because the Yugoslavian Partisans had derailed the train. I found a young group of Istrians with the same problem, and we decided the only option was to take the road on foot. When we were at about ten kilometers from Trieste, a German motorized column of army vehicles surprised us, heading toward Pola.

While we were walking on the road, the people of the villages offered us food: bread, polenta, milk and minestrone. Then, as we approached Pisino, we saw a group of Italian sailors that escaped from the train that was derailed at Pisino. At Pola the Germans had taken from the barracks all of the sailors and had loaded them on the train going to Germany. But they were freed in the station of Pisino, and all were hurrying toward Trieste.

Entering Pisino for the first time I saw the Slavic rebels with the Red Star (Partisans). They told us: "Try to leave here as soon as you can, because in this valley there are the Germans that escorted the train. If we see them, we will begin to shoot".

As we left the station the station, we were walking towards the hill when on our right, stretched out under the grape vines, we saw the Germans that held their fingers over their mouths, for us to be silent. God forbid if in that moment they were seen by the Yugoslavs. What would have happened to us? As we arrived on the hill we were bombarded with questions: "Have you seen the Germans?" And we replied: "No, we did not see them!"

They let us continue towards Albona, where I wanted to rest and continue the next day. But just as we arrived at Albona we heard shooting. As expected, that motorized column of Germans that had gone toward Pola, had liberated the Germans from the station of Pisino, and had arrived at Albona. The only thing left for me to do was to take the road towards Portoa – Albona, where I knew the families Scopaz and Faraguana. When they saw me, they hurriedly told me: "Here we have a man from Lovrana with a rowboat. Jump on board and he will bring you to the island." We started to row ourselves and, as we left Istria, we saw Albona in war, with explosions and rockets that lit the dark sky. Once we arrived in the port of Dragosetti, the rowboat left. I couldn't take it anymore, and I went to sleep in an old boat. The next day I left Dragosetti; then I started walking towards Cherso, and this way, after having traveled through all of Istria, always on foot I traveled through half the island. Just above Cherso I took the shortcut of Smergo that brings you to the cemetery. Before passing the Town Hall I met the committee in charge under Tito, who already occupied the island, Gasparo Purich, Giuseppe Rodinis and other that told me: "You have arrived? Tomorrow morning present yourself to begin doing guard duty." The following morning I presented myself and met all of the survivors who had returned from the war that was now finished. The guard was watching all of the strategic points of the city. One of our friends, when the rowboat with the fish arrived, should have taken orders from the women in line for the fish, but instead would to buy a kilo of good fish and to bring it to the Carolina's restaurant. When the meal was ready we left everything and would go to eat and to drink. Then cheerfully we came down to the Square singing a Croatian song that Mark Bunicic taught us – "Vizenic": Los

Harvasca ni propala docle zivi smo / visoca if bude ostala from iu ljubimo. The soldiers titini told us not to sing that, and we answered: “Why not? This is your Yugoslavian song!”

Every morning I would present myself to the service of guard. However, being ignorant and perhaps curious, I went to sit on the steps facing Town Hall and I saw on the balcony the heads of the committee for the raising of the flag. While they got up they sang it in chorus the actual song that was taught to us when we were young.

On this I was an eye witness every day. Then I had realized that that it was not a Yugoslavian song, but rather the Croatian hymn from the times of Nedic and Radic, the two heads of the Croatian nationalist movement, long before Pavelic. The Titini (Tito forces) would not allow us to sing the song because it was against the ideas of Tito.

Then I realized that our champions of the moment were chronically ignorant, like the rest of us, they did not know anything of the communist line and Yugoslavian ideas of Tito. Being put themselves into the service of Tito, they were then deported to the Germans, that then were allied with the Croatia Ustascia, the enemy of Tito.

Our heads of the committee in those days did the flag-raising with the red star singing the battle song against the red star! Of this I am an eye witness.

For those of us who were young those were days of continued torment, because they insisted that we enlist with Tito. But very few or none of us enlisted voluntarily. One day a bulletin was issued to all the young soldiers returned from the war to present themselves in Town Hall. After a short lecture, they insisted that we sign the voluntary registration form for the army of Tito. They wouldn't let us leave before having signed. I answered that I would return tomorrow. Instead, I and a few friends hid in a stable. Every day my father brought us food and kept us informed of what was happening. One day he arrived crying. He told me: “They came to our home and told me: “We know that your son is here! Where is he hiding? If he doesn't come forward, we will take you instead!”

Seeing that things were getting worse, and since they said that being sailors, we would stay on the coastline, we came out from hiding. On October 21, 1943, they formed the first group, compelled us to leave from the port of Smergo, and, past the sea, to Segna, Otaciac, and then onward through the forest, where they separated us scattering us within the third Company of the eighth Division, in the Kordun. Then I had understood that we were sent there for punishment, into the worse Division in Yugoslavia. This was all because we had not registered ourselves voluntarily.

Kordun was located in Croatia, past the mountains of the Lica, inhabited by Serbians and Croatians, where in certain villages the houses alternate for nationality and religion. The friction between the two parts was burning and chronic, with a history of extremists.

Once we arrived at our goal (in the middle of the forest), my companion of Class (department) was Nicolo Tentor, it was raining, and the first thing we had to do was break some branches to make a hut. I cried. Nicolo had a different disposition than mine, and after a short time had put on the cap with the red star and sang with the rest of the soldiers, who were mostly illiterate. I said to him: "But you do not see where we are?" He answered me "What do you care?" And I: "Lucky you!" That is what I never I had accepted. I was young, inexperienced and rather contrary with those people that hated us for being Italian.

In 1941, when Yugoslavia was occupied by the allied forces of Italy and Germany, the Croats organized themselves in order not to depend on the Serbian King, proclaiming the Croatian state. The volunteers formed the army "Ustacia", meaning "of the awakened Croatian".

The word of Pavelic was: "We will free from the Serbians the ethnic Croatian territory, and then we will have Croatia alone for the Catholic Croats." From there the carnage had begun. This began five offensives of search and destroy against the Kordun and the region around it.

The offensives were permanent and left from Zagreb, Karlovac and Ogulin. I was placed in three of five counteroffensives, saw horrors that I could not describe. My life in the forest was like this: The rain would wet us and the sun would dry us, our clothing was torn, and we would never undress. After I had worn out the shoes I brought from home, I remained barefoot, and for the remainder of the winter I walked in that manner among stones and thorns, not on roads.

In February I had the first frostbite on my legs; they were swollen and had become a dark blue color. I had been transported to a house, where there were already other unfortunate soldiers lying on the straw. Just by staying in a warm place, without any help, I was cured. One day, while we went through a river, I had slid to the bottom, wetting myself in the freezing water, and remained wet. I had a bad case of dysentery that I endured for a long time. I lost a lot of weight and it was impossible for me to sit on anything hard. I had to stay on my feet, or lay on the ground.

In a valley, we had a gathering to listen to someone speak. Looking around I saw someone that I knew, I saw Alceo Manzolini. As soon as I was able, I approached him. When I spoke to him, he responded in Croatian. He did not recognize me! Shortly after our meeting they told me that he had died.

I found myself in the Third Brigade of the Eighth Division, which in that time had enlarged the front and had been renamed Kordun – Plaski. Plaski was an area between the Lica and the Kordun, in the neighborhoods of Ogulin. They had advanced the Blue Division – Plava – of the Ustacia, named for the color of the division, formed from young Ustacia of the area. With the Commander, who was from the zone, they had sworn revenge against the Third Brigade Titina (Tito's army), because they had taken the name of their sector (Plaski). And I found myself in the middle!

Just as we would arrive in the zone, the Blue Division arrived also, and every day there were fights. From both parts there were fanatic guerillas full of the national hereditary hatred. The political ideals did not enter into it at all, just the hatred of race and religion.

But the date most memorable for me was the first of November 1944. We had arrived at Plaski with darkness; the Ustascia were already there. I had knelt behind a wall, heard an explosion, saw a blaze, and I passed out. A grenade of mortar had hit me on the left side. As soon as I came to, I felt the warm blood running down my body. My first thought was: Today is November first, All Saints Day, tomorrow will be the Day of the Dead, a date I will never forget. I did not know the gravity of my wounds, no was close to me in the general confusion. I got myself up, my legs were still healthy. Turning myself around I return back, because I knew the area like the palm of the hand. I walked about a kilometer, with my blood gurgling. As soon as I arrived, the doctor, who was a Jew: Miller, stretched me out on the floor, and knelt alongside me. Since I had lost a lot of blood my temperature was up to the stars, and I was covered with a red crust. I saw the doctor take pliers and a knife and remove all the shrapnel that he was able to. Working over me, he spoke to me. It told him that I was an Istrian, and he answered me: "Impossible, because all the Istrians who are injured cry". I confess, with everything that he did to me, I did not feel pain, because the sufferings I had passed had been even more painful.

After the initial doctor visit, a cart of oxen carried me to the hospital, which consisted of two barracks in the forest. The mortar explosion had broken the eardrum of my left ear, and a splinter of shrapnel had gone through my left arm, and another splinter had gone through my neck, and two splinters were still lodged in my right arm, and many others that I still carry with me always. On the left arm the grenade had made a tear.

After fifty days in the hospital (two barracks) they changed my bandages only four times because, after having been washed in the river, the bandages were reused from patient to patient. Medicines or gauze did not exist. My recovery had happened thanks to my strong blood, and perhaps I was sustained from the Faith; not so for those in the adjacent beds, who every day were lacking more and more. After the hospital, they carried me to a house in the village, in convalescence. I still could not move my arms or my neck.

My friend, Gino Surdich, who found himself in the zone, had heard what I have happened and visited me, looking to encourage me. I did not want to remain like this. Alone I had begun every day my rehabilitation, and even if some wound opened that had already closed and began again to bleed again, that did not stop me in my purpose. Soon I was able to move my limbs. After that I was rather cured, though still not able to hold a shotgun, so they delivered me to the medical station, where all were like me, to help the doctor! One day, while we found ourselves in a house, everyone told the story of their wounds. I said to the Doctor: do you remember the Istrian one? When you were taking out the shrapnel from his thorax, you told him that the Istrians all cry if they are injured! I am that one! He told me: "Take off your shirt!" From that day he praised as being the strongest injured person that he had ever seen.

My sufferings were inexpressible. We from the medical unit, Pronto Soccorso (First Aid), helped. During the fight we would go get the injured and drag them back. Many died in this service.

Before the end of the war I got sick with typhus fever, always being in sheds in the forest and never seeing medicine. I was protected by the Divine Grace and for that I am grateful. I said to myself: "If I manage to arrive healthy and safe back home for a leave, I do not see myself returning here!" But I never went home. I wondered: "For whom am I risking my life? And with whom?"

Finally in July of 1945, three months after the war in the rest of the world had ended, I had the desired leave to return home. Having arrived at Cherso, at the Craglietto shipyard, they had recovered a sunken boat from the Italian Navy that had been sunk in front San Martino of Cherso. After the recovery it was docked at Craglietto for the restoration. The engine was ruined and had to be overhauled. The work was being done by Gildo, the husband of Etta Marchian "Finco". I immediately offered to help him on this job, if, when the last day of my leave had arrived, I would ignore it, continuing to work on the site. This is how I became a deserter. Just after these intense activities, when the boat had been put into service, I had embarked on the boat as a mechanic in order not to remain Cherso, and not to be found as a deserter. Since the boat had a powerful engine, it worked as a tugboat. At that time the coal came transported by sea, to Fiume and ultimately to the interior of Yugoslavia. For this service they used the Burci (worn boats in the Venetian lagoon) but these boats did not have engines. Our job was to use the tugboat to lead the boats loaded with coal to Fiume, and then return the empty boats to the channel of Arsia. This work we did several times.

One day, finding myself at Fiume, I saw arriving on the boat from Cherso, Aldo Policeck. Upon meeting me, he told me: "Here we are, all the injured of the war". He had in his possession a letter, and told me: "You were wounded and so you too will come with us".

Every evening we found ourselves in the tavern. I was sitting next to Aldo and I told him that I wanted to see what it was written in that letter. He answered me that he can't show it to me, because it was sealed. He would not give it to me, but I continued with the same sentence, until finally I convinced him. We went to a corner of the room and he, with a pencil, gently opened the letter, where were we were all listed. However, at the bottom was my name with the note that I had come home on leave and had not returned. I had suspected it and it was confirmed.

I thanked Aldo, saying: "You did not see me, goodbye Aldo, tomorrow I leave for Arsia". Imagine if I presented myself! What consequences would happen to me being a deserter?

Since the seas of Quamero and Quarnerolo (the seas on either side of Cherso) were still full of mines, they had founded a service to pilot the boats. Therefore, the ships that arrived at Fiume would be driven by pilots through a free route in the middle of the

mines. Such service was done by the pilots – retired ship captains who had traveled all over the world. Our ship pilot was assigned to the service of Promontore, an area at the base of the Istrian Peninsula. One base of pilots was at Fiume, another base was on board the ships to Fiume. Our service was along Promontore. The ships would be piloted from international waters near Promontore to the city of Fiume. We would go to pick up the pilots from the ships or bring them on board the ships. Since our boat was inadequate for such service, in the site of Lussinpiccolo a new pilot boat was built and supplied for this purpose. I was sent to get it, and I passed into service to Promontore with this larger boat, that had the station of the radio-telegraph and a booth for every pilot. Since I was the mechanic, and the radio-telegraph station was fed from batteries that were in the department engine, I had to recharge the batteries every day. Being unaware that the batteries send out some poisonous chemical gas, I breathed them every day until I fell, as if dead. I was brought in emergency to the hospital at Pola, where I remained recovering for forty days. Brought home for convalescence I asked for dismissal because I had been sick. The request was granted and I was dismissed freeing myself of this nightmare.

In '43, when I had arrived at Navy of Carrara, my brother found himself in the Military Navy of base to La Spezia, thirty kilometers away. With the Armistice, we had taken the same direction towards home. He, at the moment more unlucky than myself, in reality was lucky to be stopped two times by the Germans, and to arrive at home delayed, after I had already been taken away. Arriving at home in the dark, no one saw him, and he stayed hidden and was saved from risking his life in the Kordun by the arrival of the Germans, on November 13, 1943.

When my brother decided to leave Cherso and go to Italy, my first desire was to follow him. But how? I thought about the sufferings I passed with the wounds, to the shrapnel still in my body. I said myself: Would I finally be able to face the world? To make myself a life? And worse came to worse, who would I ask for help? I hesitated feeling myself still disabled.

But when they opened the option for returning Italian citizenship, feeling physically well, I did not hesitate, knowing I would meet other adversities. I was the only "partigiano" injured for Yugoslavia, that had asked for the option for Italian citizenship! I did not trust them to go myself in person to pick up the form for the citizenship option, since I knew a man who was employed in Town Hall, I asked him to bring me home two forms for Italian citizenship, for me and for my sister.

After filling out the forms, I gave them to that man to return them to Town Hall. That same evening, when we were at table, someone from Town Hall came to say to me: "Medarich wants you immediately in Town Hall". The spoon fell from my hands; he had the task of accompanying me immediately.

In front of the room of the former mayor's office, he opened the door, saying to me: "You go inside". Behind the writing desk Medarich sat, and told me: "I understand that you chose the option". I told him: "Yes!" He indicated to me the door that goes into the

meeting room, and said: "Go inside!" I opened the door, and I stopped myself. The meeting room was crowded with people; with a look I saw them all. It was all of the Committee, with all the members of the Communist Party of Cherso.

Then Giovanni "Balota" got up and told me "Come in", and signaled me to sit in the only empty chair, close to the entry door. They started to scream at me: they wanted me to scream back, lose my temper, and explode. They used all the infamous words possible, repeating every so often: "I wish I had a gun to put you a bullet through your temple and have it come out from the other side".

But I had had a saving grace. While Balota developed his case, all of the guards were over near me. Near me was Etta Coglijevina, who began to write on the typewriter and as she wrote she read what she wrote out loud. I heard her say my date of birth. Then I said to myself: "Be silent, this is your trial" and that is what I did. When Balota had nothing left in his bag, he stopped for an instant and then returned to the assembly, but had not succeeded in his purpose and someone in the room had made him a gesture with his hand, then he told me: "You go!" As soon as I closed the doors behind me, I lifted my arms to the sky, exclaiming: "Thank You". I was saved. But from then on I had to walk on a tightrope.

In that time a group of my friends escaped on a boat to Italy. Among these was Bruno Sussich, which was the mechanic at the bus garage in Cherso, and so the job was vacant. I had replaced him. The director was Giovanin Duncovich. Working with me there they were two younger men (one was Nini Tentor). We did everything possible one to make the busses work with one thousand problems. Based on the mileage of the busses, we would receive a tessere card. With the tessere card we would receive gasoline, oil for the engine, and other things. The oil was meager and often was lacking. One day I say to Giovanin: "We have the tessere card for 150 kilos of oil, but the cooperative than furnishes it is out of it and I do not have one drop to put into the engine." Having an understanding with Giovanin, who was a serious person, we stopped the line. Arriving like a meteor came an agent from Lussino from O.Z.N.A. (the secret police - Organ Zasiste Naroda Armije translated as "department for protection of the people" - security agency of Communist Yugoslavia). First he interrogated Giovanni and then myself. As a director, Giovanin had a shorter lecture than myself, as a mechanic. After lecturing me, he shouted to me: "The bus should leave!" He finished with three names: Maribor, Lipoglaw, Goli Otoc, the three well-known prisons. And one of these was destined for me. From that day on the bus left, but since it didn't have oil, the engine seized up and the bearings melted. Since in the winter the bus did not run, we were working at the oil factory, to grind the olives. I found there a little relief. In the engine department I found a big drum, where for years when the oil which was changed from the engine had been stored, it held the worn oil. I began to use this oil for the busses, knowing that the good oil floats, but the old oil sinks to the bottom.

Since the busses were American made, the replacement parts had to arrive from America. These trucks were left by the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), and had been transformed into busses.

Whenever I received a tessere card for a small item and I went to Fiume to the autocenter to pick up the item waiting for me, they never had it in stock.

One day, while I was working, a gentleman appeared at the door. From his clothing and from his manners, I judged him to be a person of distinction. But who was he? I was afraid of everyone. The following day he returned and came to me, and began to ask me questions. I did not know what to answer because I was afraid. But he knew that I had chosen the option for Italian citizenship and that I waited for the decree to be able to leave the country. He asked me who was in charge, and I answered him that the director took care of everything. He told me that he wanted to meet him, and I went to get Giovanin. On third day he came again, and wanted us three to speak together. The three of us went to a room where we could speak privately. He understood that he could trust us. He told us that he was an expert in construction. Under Pavelic he had been in charge of construction in a sector of the city of Zagreb. But when Tito had taken over Zagreb, they took his sector and took his automobile, and he was put in prison, where had spent eleven months. All of his friends had met the same end. After having been in prison, however, they were all returned to their former jobs, because the Serbians did not have people capable of replacing them. He concluded: "Tito had come to Zagreb, but we command the city". I thought: "And a fifth column (the underground organization)". He spoke very freely, while I trembled. Then he told us: "They stole my automobile; I want to put together a Fiat - Balilla. If you will supply me this car (Giovanin had in his garage the body of a Balilla) and you send me the parts for the Balilla, I will supply the necessary parts for your busses. Since a friend of mine is director of the autocenter of Croatia, all that is needed between us is a telephone call".

From that day on I did not go to the autocenter in Fiume, but rather to the garages in Opatia, in search of parts for the Balilla. This way we got the necessary parts for the busses.

Speaking with that gentleman I said: "See, that bus parked, it is an Italian Fiat with a broken gear and we cannot put it on the road. For us it had been precious". He asked me: "Do you have the parts of the broken gear?" I said: "Yes!" And he: "Another friend of mine is in charge of all the mechanics of Zagreb, he will give you a new one. You send me only the pieces for the Balilla! Remember, Tito is in Zagreb but we direct". While he spoke frankly, I trembled. The fifth column was working!

Finally I felt free, because I had received the Decree of option for Italian citizenship. However, the gentleman had come again to meet me, and made me an offer: "You are going to Italy? Do you want to work with us? You just need to send us the things that we will ask of you. Then you do not need to find a job in Italy because you will be paid by us." I looked at him and I pointed out to him the Point of Mulin: "Do you see that red light, on that Point? When I pass that, I will not turn back towards Yugoslavia!" With that we parted, and never saw each other again.

On October 4, 1951, with our Italian citizenship confirmation decree and with a one-way Visa, I and my sister left for Trieste. My sister was engaged in Trieste and soon was married. I had a girl there, and we had known each other for some time. They advised me not to go to the refugee camp, but to stay in Trieste and try to get systemized.

After asking questions, I received the Dismissal from the Italian Military Navy, because until then I was still legally in the Navy!

From the Ministry of Defense I received the pension of the Military Wounded. I registered with the organization of the Italian Partigiani that fought abroad. The President was the Doctor Colombis and the secretary was Matteo Sabini. From them I received a lot of good help. I met and got to know some good people: Doctor Zadro delFufficio Anagrafe, the Captain Nicolo Stefani, and Doctor Colombis. I thought this would end my troubles.

Instead one more surprise awaited me. The gentleman P. B., who was the representative for Cherso on the National Committee of Liberation of Istria with a seat in Trieste, overturned my situation with accusations against me of fighting with Tito. Every benefit was denied me. Later, Aldo Policeck found himself in the same condition, but he was more fortunate than me, because he had an uncle Benussi on the same Committee, as representing Albona. The uncle did not allow Aldo to go until he was freed from the accusations.

He had convened an extraordinary meeting with all of the parts of the committee. With Aldo at the center, everyone was able to ask questions, which Aldo had no difficulty satisfying because the accusations were unfounded. This way Aldo was able to continue onto Jesolo, where he made his residency.

But I did not have an uncle Benussi! I asked for a deposition written by the priests of Cherso, don Giuseppe Crivellari and don Mario Haglich, who did not hesitate to write a letter on my behalf. However, this was not sufficient: I had to go to all the families from Cherso living in Trieste to ask them to sign the letter written by the priests. But this was not enough and still I was opposed for four years.

I was never able to get work papers for Trieste because of the gentleman P.B. from the National Committee of Liberation of Istria. In the meantime the immigration to the U.S. had opened and I decided to emigrate.

In 1954 I was married to the Chersina Rina Duda. In 1955 we left for Astoria - New York where we still reside. We had two children: Robert and Louise, and after they were married, they enriched us with five grandchildren.

Therefore, now we all live in this adopted land, and we are happy. We sometimes make a trip to Europe, because in Trieste I have a sister and a niece. We returned to Cherso to visit in the cemetery those who had left us. On the pilgrimage to San Salvador we thank the Madonna and we meet friends who are becoming more and more rare.

Last year we all returned to Trieste together with the children and the grandchildren, reunited in the church of San Vincenzo d' Paoli, where fifty years ago we were married ourselves.

This way, all together, we showed our progress in America because, although we left in two, we are returning in eleven.

Recently, because of some back pain, I went to the chiropractor. While I sat of front of the writing desk, I saw the doctor was agitated looking at the x-ray films. He told me: "The x-ray machine is new, but these films are full of spots and points!" I answered him: "Don't worry doctor, those are all shrapnel splinters of metal, souvenirs of the war!" "Splinters??" "Yes, actually splinters from a grenade of mortar!"