ITALO MAZZOLA

IL BENEFATTORE SILENZIOSO **THE QUIET BENEFACTOR**

This memoir was commissioned by Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra in honour of Italo Mazzola, AM

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Jim Buultjens, Chief Executive Officer, Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra

Cover photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Migration Heritage Project and the Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land upon which this story has been documented, recorded and explored.

Italo Mazzola, AM, Government House NSW, following the Order of Australia Medal Ceremony, 2012.
Front cover photography courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio. Inside and back cover photography courtesy of Rob Tuckwell.

multicultural
aged care illawarra

MIGRATION HERITAGE PROJECT

ABOUT THE MIGRATION HERITAGE PROJECT

The Migration Heritage Project began in 2001 when a wide range of cultural groups, museums and historical societies in the Illawarra were invited to a public meeting to discuss the idea for a Museum of Migration to showcase the history of migrants in the Illawarra. Following this meeting a Migration Museum Working Party was formed which evolved to become the Migration Heritage Project (MHP), an incorporated entity with elected officials, a constitution and formal membership.

The strategy of the MHP is to define what is migrant heritage, to record the history of places, objects and the people who have migrated to Wollongong and Illawarra, endeavor to protect the heritage of the migrant community and to promote the value, importance and contributions that all migrants have made to the development, prosperity and growth to the City of Wollongong.

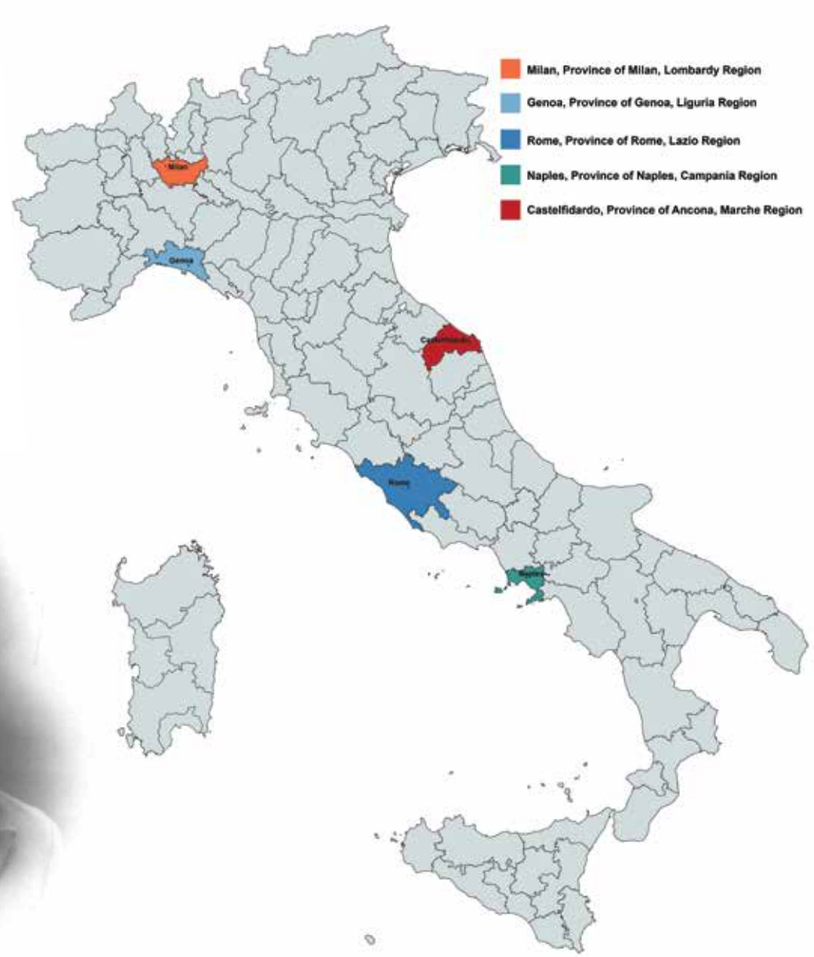
To achieve our purpose, the MHP engage migrant communities in the Illawarra in workshops and exhibitions to foster greater understanding of the need to record and preserve stories and objects lest they be lost forever.

The MHP is an independent group, not aligned to any government or business interests, with support from the wider community. The members of the MHP bring together a wide range of skills and experiences to research and develop the history of migrants to the region.

The Migration Heritage Project is a not-for-profit, volunteer, community group and registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission.

To learn more about the Migration Heritage Project or to become a member or if you wish to donate, please visit our website www.mhpillawarra.com.au

Photograph of Italo Mazzola in his Application for Assisted Passage to Australia dated 15 September 1955. (Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: A2478, Mazzola I)



Map of Italy showing the Marche Region.
(Map created with mapchart.net)

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, Italo Mazzola resembled the benevolent, wealthy aristocrats of times gone by. A benefactor who gifted and sponsored people, events and the construction of buildings, tributes and services for the betterment of the local and global community. However, unlike many, Italo did not seek accolades nor public recognition for his generosity. Italo Mazzola was a reserved and private figure who preferred to stand in the shadows rather than seek the limelight.

Italo's decision to migrate to Australia followed a dare from his friends as they walked through the piazza in Castelfidardo. He rose to the challenge and packed his bags. A proud and resolute character, Italo used the opportunity of assisted passage to come to Australia to make his life his own. He was a man of ambition and drive with an inventory of ideas always fermenting in his mind.

Italo Mazzola was born on 9 September 1930 in Castelfidardo Italy, and passed away on 23 October 2015 in Wollongong, Australia. He was 85 years of age. His funeral was held at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Bruce Road, Warrawong on Thursday, 5 November 2015. After the funeral, he travelled back to his place of birth to be reunited with other family members in the Mazzola crypt.

On his departure, Italo left behind a great legacy of community service and generosity that will last many more lifetimes over.

The final resting place of Italo Mazzola, AM, in the Mazzola family crypt in Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy alongside both his sisters and one of his brothers. Note Order of Australia and Premier's Award Citations on display. (Photograph courtesy of Luca Ferrari)

Italo standing in front of the Archibald Memorial Fountain, Hyde Park, Sydney, NSW.
(Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Mazzola House at Via Giacomo Matteotti, No 67, Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy. (photography Google Earth)

BACK IN ITALY

FAMILY, HOME, HOME LIFE, SCHOOL, TOWN HISTORY, WORK

Italo Mazzola was born on 9 September 1930 in Castelfidardo, province of Ancona, in the Marche Region of Central Italy. The son of Sante Mazzola and Felice Concetta Luigia Attili, Italo was the youngest of five children. He had two brothers, Guido Nazzareno and Mario and two sisters, Maria Pia and Maria Luisa. Italo lost his mother when he was 14 and his father when he was 22. Mario was the only sibling to marry. The family home was in Via Giacomo Matteotti.

CASTELFIDARDO

Castelfidardo is a town in the province of Ancona in the Marche Region of central eastern Italy. The town is considered the home of the piano accordion having first started manufacturing them over 200 years ago. While Castelfidardo was a significant producer of piano accordions in the late 19th Century, over the years, with changes in musical tastes, the industry has waxed and waned and many manufactures have diversified in order to survive. Castelfidardo however, has maintained its status as a supplier of high quality musical instruments. In addition to having a museum dedicated to the piano accordion, the town hosts an International Accordion Prize (PIF) event annually.

While his family did not consider themselves to be wealthy, they did pour any savings they made into buying agricultural land in and around the town. In addition, from 1953 to 1957, his brother Nazzareno owned a small factory that manufactured parts for piano accordions where Italo also worked for a short period of time.

LEARNING A TRADE AND WORK IN CASTELFIDARDO, ITALY

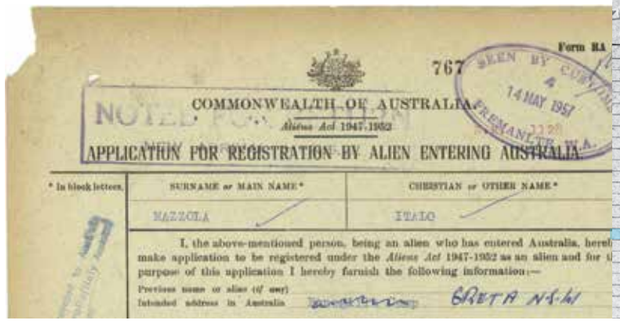
After completing elementary school, Italo undertook 'le scuole di avviamento professionale', a form of public upper secondary school which prepared students for professional or technical studies. While Italo enjoyed more schooling than most of his contemporaries at the time, he started his adult life working in the small factories and workshops in the town, learning to build piano accordions as well as working to make light fittings in the Galman factory.

Of interest are the immigration papers completed for Italo Mazzola in 1955 which indicate that Italo learnt his trade in the Industria del Legno (wood industry) in the fisarmoniche (piano accordion) manufacturing businesses in Castelfidardo. It doesn't appear as though Italo completed any formal technical education but probable that he would have completed on-the-job training.

The papers also state that from 1947 Italo, aged 17, worked for Invicta in Castelfidardo as a macchinista di falegnameria (sawyer and wood machinist). He left Invicta and worked for Harmony S.P., also in Castelfidardo in the same occupation and industry only to return eight months later to Invicta. Italo remained working at Invicta until 20 June 1955. Italo's friends in Castelfidardo stated that while Italo knew the workings of a piano accordion, he couldn't play a note.

Piano accordion factory in Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Piano accordion constructed in Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy. Built by M and N Mazzola, relatives of Italo. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)



Form 8A

767

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Aliens Act 1947-1952

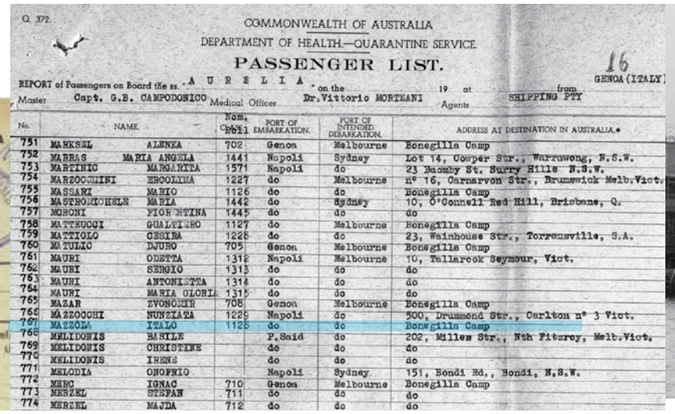
APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION BY ALIEN ENTERING AUSTRALIA

* In block letters.	SURNAME or MAIN NAME *	CHRISTIAN or OTHER NAME *
	MAZZOLA	ITALO

I, the above-mentioned person, being an alien who has entered Australia, hereb
make application to be registered under the *Aliens Act* 1947-1952 as an alien and for t
purpose of this application I hereby furnish the following information:—

Previous name or alien (*if any*)

Intended address in Australia GRETA N.S.W.



Q. 372.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

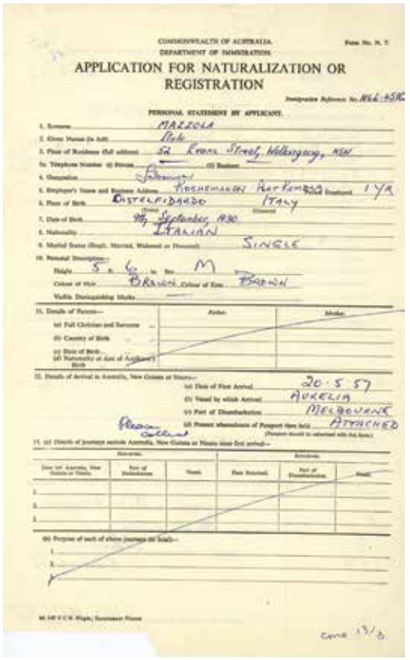
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—QUARANTINE SERVICE.

PASSENGER LIST. 16

REPORT of Passengers on Board the ss. A U R E L I A on the 19 at from GENOA (ITALY)

Master Capt. G.B. CAMPODONICO Medical Officer Dr.Vittorio MORTEANI Agents SHIPPING PTY

No.	NAME		Nom. Cert.	PORT OF EMBARKATION.	PORT OF INTENDED DISEMBARKATION.	ADDRESS AT DESTINATION IN AUSTRALIA.*
751	MARKSEL	ALENKA	702	Genoa	Melbourne	Bonegilla Camp
752	MARRAS	MARIA ANGELA	1441	Napoli	Sydney	Lot 14, Cooper Str., Warrawong, N.S.W.
753	MARTINIC	MARGARITA	1571	Napoli	do	23 Bromby St, Surry Hills N.S.W.
754	MARZOCCHINI	ENGOLINA	1227	do	Melbourne	n° 16, Carnarvon Str., Brunswick Melb.Viet.
755	MASSANZ	MARIO	1126	do	do	Bonegilla Camp
756	MASTROMICHELE	MARIA	1442	do	Sydney	10, O'Connell Red Hill, Brisbane, Q.
757	MORONI	VION NEDINA	1445	do	do	do
758	MATTEUCCI	GUALTIERO	1127	do	Melbourne	Bonegilla Camp
759	MATTIOLO	CESIRA	1228	do	do	23, Weinhouse Str., Torrensville, S.A.
760	MATULIC	DJURO	705	Genoa	Melbourne	Bonegilla Camp
761	MAURI	ORESTA	1312	Napoli	Melbourne	10, Tallarook Seymour, Viot.
762	MAURI	SERGIO	1313	do	do	do
763	MAURI	ANTONIETTA	1314	do	do	do
764	MAURI	MARIA GLORIA	1315	do	do	do
765	MAZAR	ZVONOMIR	708	Genoa	Melbourne	Bonegilla Camp
766	MAZZOCCHI	NUNZIATA	1229	Napoli	do	500, Drummond Str., Carlton n° 3 Viot.
767	MAZZOLA	ITALO	1128	do	do	Bonegilla Camp
768	MELIDONIS	BASILE		P.Said	do	202, Miller Str., Nth Fitzroy, Melb.Viot.
769	MELIDONIS	CHRISTINE		do	do	do
770	MELIDONIS	IRENE		do	do	do
771	MELODIA	ONOFRIO		Napoli	Sydney	151, Bondi Rd., Bondi, N.S.W.
772	MERI	IGNAC	710	Genoa	Melbourne	Bonegilla Camp
773	MERZEL	STEFAN	711	do	do	do
774	MERZEL	MAJDA	712	do	do	do



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. Form No. N. 7.

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION.

APPLICATION FOR NATURALIZATION OR REGISTRATION

Immigration Reference No. M62-9582

PERSONAL STATEMENT BY APPLICANT.

1. Surname MAZZOLA
2. Given Names (in full) Italo
3. Place of Residence (full address) 52 Evans Street, Willoughby, NSW
4. Occupation Joinery
5. Employer's Name and Business Address ROSENHAUSEN Northbridge
6. Place of Birth CASTELFIDARDO Province ITALY
7. Date of Birth 5th September, 1930
8. Nationality ITALIAN
9. Marital Status (Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced) SINGLE
10. Personal Description:
Height 5 ft. 6 in. to be M
Colour of Hair BROWN Colour of Eyes BROWN
Visible Distinguishing Marks

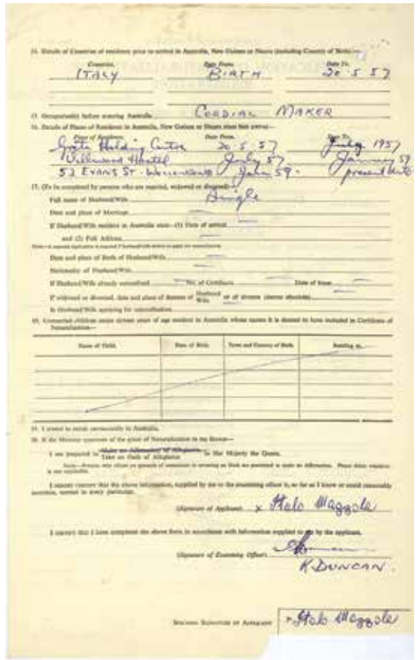
15. Details of Parents—

	Father.	Mother.
(a) Full Christian and Surname		
(b) Country of Birth		
(c) Date of Birth. (If Naturalized) or Arrival in Australia		

12. Details of Arrival in Australia, New Guinea or Nauru—
(a) Date of First Arrival 20-5-57
(b) Vessel by which Arrived AURELIA
(c) Port of Disembarkation MELBOURNE
(d) Present whereabouts of Passport then held ATTACHED

(e) Purpose of each of above journeys (if any)—
1.
2.
3.

Come 13/3



11. Details of Countries of residence prior to arrival in Australia, New Guinea or Nauru (including Country of Birth)—

Country.	Date From.	Date To.
Italy	Birth	20-5-57

(2) Occupation(s) before entering Australia CARDIAL MAKER

14. Details of Places of Residence in Australia, New Guinea or Nauru since last arrival—

Place of Residence.	Date From.	
C/- Red Cross Centre	20-5-57	July 1957
Villawood Hostel	July 57	January 58
52 Evans St. Willoughby	July 58	April 1959

15. (To be completed by persons who are married, widowed or divorced)—
Full name of Husband/Wife Single
Date and place of Marriage
If Husband/Wife resident in Australia state—(1) Date of arrival
and (2) Full Address
Date and place of Birth of Husband/Wife
Nationality of Husband/Wife
If Husband/Wife already naturalized No. of Certificate Date of Issue
If widowed or divorced, date and place of decease of Husband/Wife or of divorce (decree absolute)
If Husband/Wife applying for naturalization—

16. Unmarried children under sixteen years of age resident in Australia whose names it is desired to have included in Certificate of Naturalization—

Name of Child.	Date of Birth.	Town and Country of Birth.	Residing in—

17. I desire to retain nationality in Australia.

18. If the Minister approves of the grant of Naturalization to my Status—

I am prepared to take an Oath of Allegiance to His Majesty the Queen.
Strike out Oath of Allegiance

I hereby declare that the above information, supplied by me to the examining officer is, so far as I know or could reasonably ascertain, correct in every particular.

(Signature of Applicant) x Italo Mazzola

I hereby that I have completed the above form in accordance with information supplied to me by the applicant.

(Signature of Examining Officer) K DUNCAN.

Witness Signature of Applicant x Italo Mazzola

Mod. No. IV. 1 — Modulo da compilarsi in due copie da unire alla domanda. — Foto N.
Form IV.1 — Da compilarsi in duplice — Foto scritta globale — Sel. No.

DOMANDA PER UN PASSAGGIO ASSISTITO PER L'AUSTRALIA A NORMA DELL'ACCORDO ITALO-AUSTRALIANO SULLE MIGRAZIONI ASSISTITE

Application for an assisted passage to Australia under the Migration Agreement between Italy and Australia

3449

MAZZOLA ITALO fu SANTE
Cognome — Nome — nome del padre

via Matteotti n°67 CASTELFIDARDO ANCONA
residenza attuale — luogo di nascita — provincia

Professione abituale: Industria del legno — Macchinista di falegnameria
Professional category — trade

qualifica (se disponibile) — qualifica di lavoro richiesta
qualifica (if available) — qualification required

Nazionalità: Italiana
Nationality

Luogo di nascita: Castelfidardo - Ancona
Place of birth

Data di nascita: 30 settembre 1930
Date of birth

Stato civile: celibe
Civil status

	Nome Name	Grado Rel.	Data di nascita Date of birth	Luogo di nascita Place of birth
Moglie Wife	------			
Figli Children	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
	4.			
	5.			

Firma

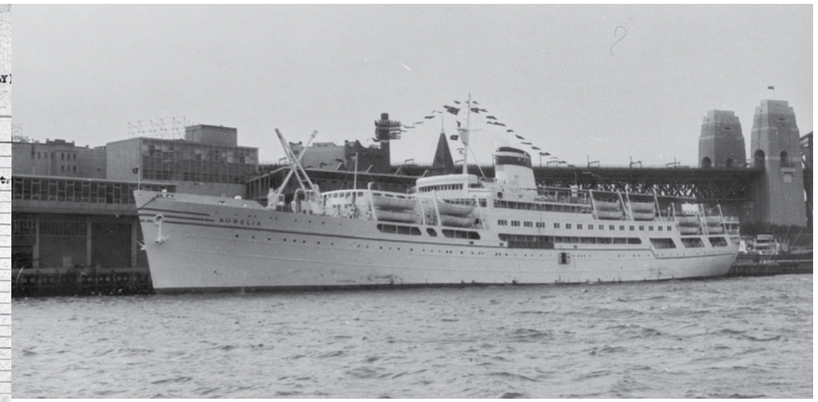
From top left clockwise:

Extract from Application for Assisted Passage to Australia Records showing Bonegilla Camp changed to Greta NSW.
Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: A2478, Mazzola I

Passenger List Record for MS Aurelia:
Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: K269, Incoming passenger list to Fremantle "Aurelia" arrived 14 May 1957

Application for Assisted Passage to Australia, Page 1, dated 15 September 1955.
Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: A2478, Mazzola I

Application for Naturalization.
Source: National Archives of Australia, NAA: SP1122/1, N1962/45962, Mazzola, Italo



MS Aurelia
(Image supplied by Sydney Heritage Fleet)

MIGRATION

APPLYING FOR ASSISTED PASSAGE TO AUSTRALIA, JOURNEY TO AUSTRALIA, ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA

In Italy on 15 September 1955, Italo Mazzola signed application form number 3449 for an assisted passage to Australia under the Migration Agreement between Italy and Australia. He was 25 years of age, single, 162cm tall and weighing 59kg. Italo recounted that when he was walking through the piazza with some friends he saw an immigration poster and stated quite boldly that he was going to emigrate to Australia. His friends chided him that he would not last two months. Italo bet them he would.

Obtaining assisted passage to Australia was an undertaking of two years with the Commonwealth of Australia pursuant to the Italian/Australian Assisted Migration Agreement of 29 March 1951. As part of this agreement, the Australian Government would not guarantee employment but would render every assistance in finding employment.

Italo Mazzola left Italy from Naples on board the Aurelia in May 1957, almost two years after applying for assisted passage. On her voyage, the Aurelia's first port of call in Australia was Fremantle in Western Australia and Italo's point of disembarkation was indicated as Melbourne where he was assigned for settlement in the Bonegilla Migrant Reception and Training Centre, located 12 kilometres from Wodonga in North East Victoria. However, for whatever reason, Italo did not go to Bonegilla but was instead sent into the Greta Migrant Camp located between Cessnock and Maitland in the Upper Hunter Region in New South Wales. Italo stayed in Greta until July 1957.

From Greta, Italo was sent to Villawood Hostel. Villawood is part of the Greater Western Sydney region in New South Wales. The Villawood Migrant Hostel was also known as the Villawood Workers Hostel and was initially built as a temporary solution to overcome a shortage of accommodation. Today it is known as the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. Italo left Villawood Migrant Hostel in January 1959.

Villawood Migrant Hostel 5 July 1965, Source: R. Martin, Sydney Morning Herald.
(Photograph courtesy of Fairfax Syndication)

52 Evans Street Wollongong, NSW, renovated house in centre, where Italo Mazzolo lived from 1959 to approximately 1966. Houses on either side indicative of style of houses in late 1950s. (Photograph courtesy of the Migration Heritage Project, January 2019)

A CITIZEN OF AUSTRALIA AND WOLLONGONG

FIRST ACCOMMODATION, WORK, BUYING PROPERTY, BUSINESS, FURTHER EDUCATION

After leaving Villawood, Italo took up residence at 52 Evans Street Wollongong in January 1959, a house he shared with at least one other couple. It was two and a half years after he had arrived in Australia and he was almost 29 years of age and unmarried.

Italo worked as a labourer in these early years, including working at Australian Iron and Steel in the coke ovens at Port Kembla (now Bluescope). From 1961 Italo was also employed as a labourer by PH Koshemakin & Co Pty Ltd. Koshemakin was a contractor whose office around this time was located in Harris Street, Port Kembla.

On 13 September 1962, Italo became a naturalized citizen of Australia, five years after arriving in Australia and three years after settling in Wollongong. The Lord Mayor of the City of Greater Wollongong who presided over the naturalization ceremony was Albert Squires. Italo was 32 years old. He did not become naturalized on his own however, as the couple who also resided at the Evans Street address became naturalized the same day as Italo.

As part of the naturalization process at the time, Italo had to renounce his Italian citizenship and surrender any Italian passports. However, many years later, when the citizenship regulations changed, Italo successfully applied to have his Italian citizenship re-instated and become a dual citizen of Italy and Australia.

Italo remained at the Evans Street address for about seven years, he subsequently lived in Northcliffe Drive Warrawong until 1967 at which point he moved into

Italo with his sister Maria Pia (centre) and friend.
(Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

72 Addison Avenue Lake Illawarra. Location of Italo Mazzola's Delicatessen and Liquor Store business and additional property purchased to the right. (photograph Google Earth)

the property he had purchased in Addison Avenue Lake Illawarra. This property at 72-74 Addison Street Lake Illawarra was a commercial premises downstairs with a flat above, in which Italo lived. It was here that Italo set up the first delicatessen in Lake Illawarra. Italo had borrowed money to purchase the shop but due to his success, managed to repay the loan within a year.

Italo worked extremely hard at building up his business. Friends recall Italo travelling on his bike from Lake Illawarra to Davis and Penney in Fairy Meadow to purchase stock for his shop, then ride back. This was an almost daily occurrence. In the early days, Davis and Penney's main function was to supply corner shops across the Illawarra.

As his business grew, Italo asked both his sisters Maria Pia and Maria Luisa to come to Wollongong to help him in the shop. Only Maria Pia decided to migrate to Australia in 1970 and became a naturalised Australian citizen while Maria Luisa chose to remain in Italy to continue to help their brother Nazzareno. Maria Luisa endured much hardship throughout her life and suffered a heart breaking ending. When their brother Nazzareno passed away in 1988, Maria Luisa courageously decided to come to Australia to live with her brother and sister. Tragically Maria Luisa became seriously unwell on the flight from Italy and died just prior to landing in Sydney.

Maria Pia however embraced life in Australia and worked alongside Italo in the shop. She was on the till and had an eagle eye, particularly if schoolchildren were to stop on the way to or from the nearby school. Maria Pia became Italo's business partner and worked with Italo in his enterprises as well as acting as his protector. She was a great support for Italo throughout his working life and in turn, Italo was a provider for Maria Pia. Although it was not always smooth sailing and in spite of heated arguments, they both acknowledged they were as stubborn as each other.

In 1975 Italo submitted plans to the Shellharbour Council for an extension to the shop and residence. He added an upstairs flat, a commercial supermarket and basement storage. The extensions were necessary to operate a Liquor Store. Italo continued to work hard, often sleeping on a camp bed in the store in order to stay open 7 days for extended hours. The basement also allowed him to stockpile beer allowing him to exploit the brewery strikes of the day by having sufficient stock to supply local pubs at an inflated price. Italo was a shrewd and astute business man.

In 1982 Italo sold the business to Anita and (the late) Franco Sanese. It was at this time that his sister Maria Pia suggested that Italo should do more with his

58 Windang Road Primbee, NSW, last home owned by Italo Mazzola. (Photograph courtesy of MMJ Real Estate South, Windang, NSW)

life and urged him to study. Italo enrolled at the University of Wollongong and was conferred a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) on 11 May 1989. Whereupon Italo took to teaching Italian for a period of time joining IATI (Illawarra Association of Teachers of Italian) as a committee member. However, every once and a while, Italo would return to the shop to help out and give Anita and Frank a break. He was quite happy to serve at the counter, never wanting anything in return.

With his business acumen, Italo had also purchased land at Primbee and in 1986 Italo and Maria Pia moved into an extensive 5-bedroom house with indoor pool. It was here that Italo was able to pursue his passion of gardening and grow vegetables and orchids, which he obsessed over. He also had a large snooker table in the home but no snooker balls were ever in play as the table was covered with documents, papers, books and a dictionary. The snooker room was his office and he would spend many hours at his computer scrutinising spreadsheets and meeting minutes.

He loved music and playing cards as well as eating out at the Fraternity Club and later becoming fond of the North Wollongong Pavilion as well. He was often out but always being driven and accompanied when he could no longer drive himself. When he was happy he used to sing a little ditty known only to his closest friends and whenever anyone asked how he was going Italo would respond, "quasi bene" (almost well) and if asked his age he would always say 22 because it was the same number in reverse. He did not like to celebrate birthdays.

The home at 58 Windang Road Primbee was to be Italo and Maria Pia's final family home in Australia.

Italo with concert artists Mario Stefano Pietrodarchi (piano accordionist who accompanies Andrea Bocelli) and Luca Lucini (guitarist) at Holy Spirit College, 2014. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Illawarra Association of Teachers of Italian Executive Committee, October 1993 -November 1994. Tertiary Rep. Prof. G. Rando, Co.As.It. Rep. B. Doro, Vice President V. Cleary, Secondary Rep. R. Tortorella, Primary Rep. L Gottardi, President Prof. B. Moloney, Treasurer A. Gaudiosi, Public Officer I. Mazzola and Secretary M. Timpano. (Photograph courtesy of Luca Ferrari)

Mr Gian Mario Spacca, President of the region of Le Marche officially congratulating Italo Mazzola on the award of his Order of Australia Medal. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Appointment by the Governor General of Australia, Quentin Bryce, to Italo Mazzola as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia, dated 11 June 2012. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

PHILANTROPHY, COMMUNITY, HONOURS & AWARDS

Like most migrants of his generation Italo came to Australia with very little and worked hard to get ahead. However, unlike most people, Italo was lucky to receive a financial windfall early in his years in Australia. Italo's friends stated that given his fortune, he felt very strongly that he wanted this money to be used to help and support others. This windfall proved to be the foundation for his future philanthropy.

In one of the interviews conducted for this memoir, Italo was described as a person who always defined himself as a 'migrant'. While he embraced and loved being Australian, the sense of being 'an outsider' prevailed. This is one of the key reasons he worked on projects that helped migrant communities.

Italo receiving his Mamma Lena Award Certificate and Medal from The Hon. Angela D'Amore and Joe Buda on 20 October 2009. (Photograph courtesy of La Fiamma, dated 29 October 2009, p.16)

Italo at the Marche Region food stall with volunteers for Tutti in Piazza, Wollongong Mall, for Italian Week. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo and Alberto Mecuri with Sergio Martes Italian General Consul and Honorary Vice Consul Luca Ferrari of Wollongong at Wollongong Mall for Tutti in Piazza, Italian Week celebrations. Maria Stella Vescio in costume. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

FEDERATION OF MARCHIGIANI

Italo was very proud of his Italian heritage and in particular his birthplace of Le Marche. Italo had a burning need to show Australians all the beauty and richness of the Italian culture. One of the first organisations he joined and became president of was the Wollongong Association of Marchigiani. From that position Italo was instrumental in creating the Marchigiani Federation of New South Wales. Most impressively, Italo held an honorary position of official representative for the region of Le Marche for Australia. In this capacity, Italo travelled back to Italy many times bringing with him new ideas to promote Le Marche and sponsoring exhibitions, musicians and other cultural acts to Wollongong and Australia.

One of Italo's proudest moments in promoting Italy was during the Lions International Convention held in Sydney in 2010. The then president of the Italian Lions section was from Le Marche and was a friend of Italo's. The convention held a Parade of Nations and Italo took it upon himself to organise the Italian parade. It involved a lot of detailed organising and Italo managed to have almost every region represented with authentic costumes, including medieval costumes and piano accordions from Le Marche and a Sicilian "carretto". Italo sponsored many of the overseas performers, including flag throwers (sbandieratori) from the famous 'La Compagnia Alfieri e Musici L'Araba Fenice' from Corinaldo Ancona. The parade was a huge success and Italy won first prize thanks to Italo's work.

Bust of Raffaello and Rossini donated to the Marco Polo Nursing Home
(Photographs courtesy of Turo Chiodo)

As an ardent supporter of the piano accordion heritage of Castelfidardo and over the years Italo sponsored many musicians to learn to play the accordion, including offering bursaries to a number of students from Holy Spirit College. He also sponsored a number of players to attend a festival in Adelaide that was promoting Le Marche and the accordion.

For Italo it was all about education, culture and development. All the activities he supported had to have a cultural foundation. For example, Italo funded a reproduction of the bust of Raffaello (an Italian painter and architect of the High Renaissance) and the bust of Rossini (an Italian musical composer), in commemoration of the 150 years of the Italian Unification, now in the foyer of the Marco Polo Aged Care Organisation.

ITALIAN WEEK

Italo was an avid contributor to the annual Italian week in Wollongong and would cover the costs for many displays and exhibitors. In 2010 Italo sponsored the performers and exhibits from the Lions Convention to come to Wollongong, making it one of the most eventful Italian weeks on record.

Italian Week Parade for Tutti in Piazza, Wollongong Mall, with participants wearing medieval costumes. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo with the Sbandieratori Dell'Araba Fenice di Corinaldo (Marche) (flag wavers). (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo with his sister Maria Pia and sponsored Japanese student studying at University of Wollongong residing with them in Italo's home. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo with the members of the Liberal Party including Senator Fierravanti-Wells, Tony Abbott and Mario and Maria Stella Vescio. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

DANTE ALIGHIERI SOCIETY OF WOLLONGONG

To further his mission to promote Italian language and culture, Italo became one of the founders of the Dante Alighieri Society of Wollongong. Dante Alighieri Societies are constituted all around the world and strive to promote the Italian language and culture. The local chapter grew out of the foreign languages department at the University of Wollongong as a way of extending students appreciation of the language and culture.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EMIGRANT FAMILIES

Italo was involved in the ANFE (Associazione Nazionale Famiglie degli Emigrati) an Italian association that promoted and supported the diffusion of Italian culture, language and heritage across the world.

WOLLONGONG ALUMNI CAMPUS CHAPTER

Italo was also involved with the University of Wollongong Alumni Campus Chapter. The hardworking volunteers operate the Alumni Bookshop to raise money for scholarships and prizes for University of Wollongong students. Italo was an enthusiastic supporter of the Chapter promoting scholarships for students.

LIBERAL PARTY AND THE ITALIAN SPECIAL BRANCH

Italo's other great passion was politics reflected in his long association and activism within the Liberal Party and the Italian Special Branch of which he was a member for over 30 years, serving as its President from 2008 to 2013. During that time, he also took on other positions and duties resulting in much travel within New South Wales and delegations to numerous bodies.

Italo would on occasion be asked to represent Australian Senators, such was the occasion in a letter dated 26 April 1988 to Dino Gustin from Senator Michael Baume advising him that Italo Mazzola would be representing him at a function.

In another letter dated 14 November 1990 to the Honourable M. Goldsmith at Parliament House in Sydney, Italo on behalf of the Italian Special Branch of the Liberal Party, wrote of the indignation felt about the proposal by the Federal Government to relegating the teaching of the Italian language to a low priority role.

Senator Fierravanti-Wells was a long standing friend of Italo's and mentioned him in her maiden speech at Parliament House on 14 June 2005. Senator Fierravanti-Wells gave thanks to Italo Mazzola and the New South Wales Italian Special Branch. She described Italo as a loyal and trusting friend and great supporter of the Liberal party. After Italo's death in 2015, Senator Fierravanti-Wells paid a final tribute to Italo in the Senate.

A COMMITTED CATHOLIC

LA MADONNA DI LORETO

Italo was a man of faith and a committed Christian. Of particular note is that Italo was a devoted follower of 'La Madonna di Loreto' from Ancona in Le Marche. Such was his devotion that Italo went to great lengths to have a statue of the Madonna made and brought to Wollongong where it was placed in St Francis Xavier Cathedral. Unfortunately, the Madonna was damaged during renovations and a new home was found for her at the Holy Innocents Catholic Church in Croydon NSW. Italo was a regular supporter of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong through contributions to numerous parishes.

POPE JOHN PAUL STATUE

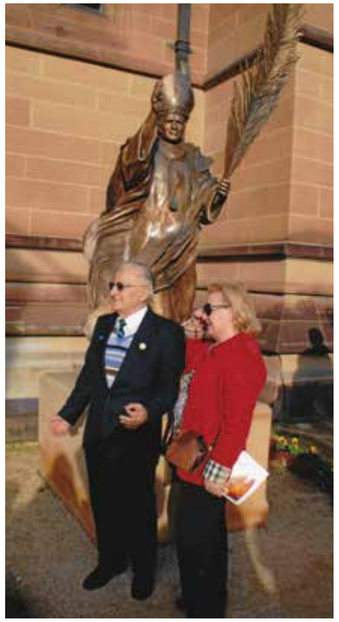
On Saturday, 19 April 2008, the dedication of a statue erected in the memory of Pope John Paul the Great by the sculptor Fiorenzo Bacci was held at St Mary's Cathedral in College Street in Sydney, NSW. The statue was a donation from the Italian-Australian Community of Sydney led by Italo Mazzola. Such was his contribution that the inscription on the front of the monument names only one donor, Italo Mazzola, who continued to make regular contributions for the statue's maintenance.

DAME MISSIONARIE DELLA CONSOLATA

The Dame Missionarie della Consolata is an international missionary congregation founded in Turin in 1910 working in Africa, America, Asia and Europe. Through Italo's fund raising efforts they were able to help people living in small villages in Kenya by constructing a school and installing more than 300 kilometres of water points, one fountain every 20 kilometres. This was in addition to regular child sponsorships.

Italo at the dedication ceremony of the Statue of Pope John Paul the Great, St Mary's Cathedral, College Street, Sydney, NSW. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

The replica statue of the Madonna di Loretonow located at Holy Innocents' Parish, Croydon, NSW. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stello Vescio)



Italo with Teresa Restifa at the dedication ceremony of the Statue of Pope John Paul the Great, St Mary's Cathedral, College Street, Sydney, NSW. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo Mazzola, President of the Federation of the Marchigiani of NSW with Italian Vito D'Ambrosio, President of the Marche Region (centre) and Alberto Mercuri, President of the Wollongong Marchigiani and Nicoletta Favi, Secretary of the Federation of the Marchigiani of NSW with other representatives of the Marche region. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

ACCOLADES

Italo was always insistent that he did not seek recognition for his work and generosity, however, many members of the community suggested that Italo be nominated for a wide range of awards in particular an Italian award of Cavaliere, an order of merit of the Italian Republic. However, Italo was adamant that he did not want under any circumstance to be nominated. In spite of this, Italo was made a member of the Order of Australia and received many other commendations including the NSW Premier's Award for Seniors Week.

THE HEART OF MAMMA LENA AWARD FROM THE MAMMA LENA & DINO GUSTIN FOUNDATION

For more than 40 years Mamma Lena and Dino Gustin provided assistance and compassion for Italian migrants to Australia. The Mamma Lena & Dino Gustin Foundation was established in 2001 in order to provide a lasting legacy for Mamma Lena in recognition of the role that both she and Dino played in the Italian community and also the broader Australian community since 1956.

The Heart of Mamma Lena Award is a medal and certificate awarded to people in Australia and overseas for their work and dedication in changing people's lives for the better.

In 2009 Italo Mazzola was a recipient of this award in recognition for his tireless work assisting the Italian Community in Wollongong. He received his award at a presentation at Parliament House in Sydney on 20 October 2009.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL

In the Queen's Birthday Honours List of June 2012, Italo Mazzola was awarded Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. Fifty-five years after leaving Italy for a new country and after many years of achievements and good works in Australia, recognition was bestowed upon him that allowed him to have the post nominal initials after his name, Italo Mazzola, AM.

Despite protesting about awards, Italo was extremely honoured by his AM, he took it with him to Italy where he was officially congratulated by Gian Mario Spacca the president of the region of Le Marche and his councillors. Italo's AM award was displayed outside his tomb after his interment.

NSW Premiers Award presented to Italo Mazzola. (Photograph courtesy of Migration Heritage Project with permission from Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

'Life passes but good deeds remain – Mamma Lena'

This quote from Lena Gustin certainly epitomises the essence of Italo Mazzola

Italo with Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO, Governor of NSW, at his Order of Australia Medal Ceremony at Government House NSW, 2012. (Photograph courtesy of Rob Tuckwell Photography)

Honour Board at St Vincent's Haematology, Blood and Marrow Transplant Unit, acknowledging the contribution of Italo Mazzola as Life Governor. (Photograph courtesy of Loretta Jagucanskas, St Vincent's Curran Foundation).

DONATIONS

HAEMATOLOGY AND BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT WARD AT ST VINCENT'S HOSPITAL SYDNEY

Just a few months before his death, the St Curran's Foundation was surprised to open an envelope containing a cheque and a portion of a newsletter with a red circle denoting what the money was to be earmarked for. This was the first they knew of the donation and of the man. Italo chose to support the construction of the new Haematology, Blood and Marrow Transplant (HBMT) Ward. Upon meeting Italo, the St Curran's Foundation came to appreciate that Italo had a number of things he wanted to do before he died. His health was declining and providing immediate help with a sizeable donation was a way of continuing the Mission of the Sisters of Charity in caring for the sick and needy. Not only was this in keeping with his deep Catholic faith, but also an example of his most generous support of worthy causes and contributing to community needs.

The new HBMT ward was opened in August 2018 and comprises 20 single rooms, designed specifically for patients who have undergone bone marrow or stem cell transplants. This $7.2 million project was entirely funded by philanthropic support. One of the 20 patient rooms was named after Italo Mazzola, in recognition and appreciation of his significant contribution to improve the health outcomes of the cancer patients. His name is also listed on the honour board displayed outside the ward. Italo did not live to see the completion of the building.

FRANCISCAN FRIARS INDIA

As part of his arrangements to dispose of his assets before he passed away, Italo nominated the Franciscan Friars as a beneficiary. Italo was moved and captivated by a conversation he had with a Friar who was visiting Father Testa in Warrawong. The Franciscan Friar described the work the order was doing with children with HIV in India. As a result of that conversation, they too became beneficiaries of his generosity.

Marco Polo Board and Staff.
(Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Signage at the entrance to Marco Polo Unanderra Care Services,Waples Road, Unanderra, NSW, February 2019. (Photograph courtesy of Zivko Simonovski for the Migration Heritage Project)

Italo on one of his many visits to the aged care facilities. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

AGED CARE HOMES FOR THE MIGRANT POPULATION OF THE ILLAWARRA

THE MARCO POLO RETIREMENT VILLAGE UNANDERRA

Perhaps one of the greatest legacies of Italo Mazzola was his drive and contribution to build an Italian Nursing Home in Wollongong – Marco Polo.

In the early 1980s, a number of Illawarra's Italian community were concerned about the limited availability of quality aged care for the region's migrant community. A committee was formed to investigate what could be done to meet the needs of the frail elderly in the community. Italo was a foundation board member and rallied to raise funds required to proceed with construction of a nursing home for the Italian community. During the planning phases, the Marco Polo committee discovered that the Uniting Church were also keen to build a nursing home in the same area, herein a partnership was born. In a joint venture with the Uniting Church Farmborough Grove Retirement Village Board the Marco Polo and Unanderra Nursing Home Board was formed and in December 1988 the 80 bed Unanderra Nursing Home was opened.

In the ensuing years, the joint venture successfully managed to construct and expand aged care services for the community. Despite the success of the joint venture, in order to expand even further, a decision was made in 2008 to dissolve the partnership. Marco Polo assumed the sole management of the original nursing home and Cordeaux Lodge and began operating as Marco Polo Aged Care Services, built primarily for the Italian community by the Italian community through their many fundraising activities.

Italo remained a passionate advocate for the residents at Marco Polo, often visiting, sharing meals and listening to the residents. It was his way of keeping in contact with a project that he was most proud of. Sadly, Italo himself was to be admitted to Marco Polo in the last few days of his life.

Italo with Turo Chiodo and other members of the original Marco Polo and Unanderra Nursng Home Board. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Italo Mazzola with the Hon. Sharon Bird, MP. Turning of the first sod of soil at Marco Polo Aged Care Services at Unanderra. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Italo Mazzola with the Hon. Sharon Bird, MP and others in attendance at the consecration of the grounds for the building at Marco Polo Aged Care Services, Unanderra. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

The new Italo Wing at Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra, 1 Eyre Place, Warrawong, NSW. (Photograph courtesy of the Migration Heritage Project)

Illawarra Multicultural Village, 1 Eyre Place Warrawong, NSW. (Photograph courtesy of the Migration Heritage Project)

MULTICULTURAL AGED CARE ILLAWARRA

Italo did not limit his drive for providing aged care services for older migrants to the Italian community. In fact, Italo was on the working party formed in 1985 for the Multicultural Village and became a foundation board member of Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra in November 1988. He remained a member of the board until 2012 when he retired due to ill health.

One of his favourite pastimes at the Village was calling bingo. Italo came in every Friday and called the bingo until his declining health prevented him from continuing. For many years Italo would also bring in the celebration cake every Easter and Christmas and hand it to the then General Manager. No one on the board knew he generously supplied the cakes.

Upon his death in October 2015, Italo bequeathed the residuals of his estate to Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra. This was an unexpected and surprising bequest that allowed for the construction of an additional wing to house a 10 bed memory support unit and function centre which opened in October 2018. The Board had no hesitation in calling this the "Italo" wing and the "Italo Function Centre". The dedication was in recognition of his contribution in the establishment, running and support of Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra. The fact that Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra were not aware of Italo's intention to make them one of the beneficiaries of his will, is in keeping with the quiet and unassuming generosity of the man.

Multicultural Village sign at the entrance to the main office at 1 Eyre Place Warrawong, NSW. (Photograph courtesy of the Migration Heritage Project)

Fund raising event for MACI 1990 - 1991 Albert Paplauskas, Maria Szajewski, Ria Jansen, John Kawecki, Maria Kladis, Loudes Wilman, Pastor Neville Kriewaldt, Italo Mazzola and at front Anthony Jansen.

Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra Board Members, Annual General Meeting, 2011, (L-R) Dragan Ban, Kerry Kyriakoudes, Glenda Pearce, Dr Don Scruby, Arthur Mandicos, Mendo Trajcevski, Italo Mazzola, Frank Bresolin, Colleen Mandicos. (Photograph courtesy of Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra)

THE PERSONAL SIDE OF ITALO MAZZOLA

Italo came across to many as a very formal man. This was reflected in his attire as well as his composure. His language was clipped and efficient. In Italian culture, when people are unknown to each other, they will use formal address until one or the other grants permission to speak in the less formal. Despite all the years Italo and Anita Sanese knew each other, Italo always spoke in the formal "Lei" even after being invited to use the informal "tu". Senator Fierravanti-Wells also stated that despite the many years as friends, he would refer to her as "Senator".

Italo also undertook his activities seriously and responsibly. He was a very diligent board member and always prepared for meetings. He had a good understanding of management and finances and whenever he attended an event or conference in an official capacity, Italo would come back with his notes all typed up, providing them to other board members and speaking to them, such was his diligence to duty.

While his interests were diverse, he was conservative, had strong political views and was a committed Catholic. However, he never allowed his views or beliefs to stand in his way of assisting, helping or being involved in any shape or form.

However, it wasn't all smooth sailing. Italo was an earnest man who had very firm ideas about the way things should be done. At times this led to some discord and disappointment.

Italo was not a miser but he was careful with his money and a wise investor. He drove an old Falcon for many years until his friends convinced him to buy a BMW later in life.

But what of his personal life? Italo was an extremely private, modest and reserved man and didn't let many people into his fold. He preferred to busy himself with the many causes and community activities in which he believed. Much of his social life centred around the organisations and communities he supported with his time and his generosity.

Italo never married and many speculate that it was because he lost the "love of his life", a "beautiful lady from Sydney", when he had been in Australia only a few years. Over the years there were a number of matchmaking efforts made by various friends, but none flourished. Italo maintained close ties with his family in Italy and his nephew Giovanni came to both Maria Pia and Italo's funeral.

Towards the end of his life Italo forged strong bonds and close friendships with a small number of people who had earned his trust. Luca Ferrari, the Honorary Italian Vice Consul in Wollongong was a confidante while Mario and Stella Vescio embraced Italo and Maria Pia as family members and cared for both of them to their last days. Italo and Maria Pia were brought into the fold of a caring and loving family and were able to share many Christmas, Easter and other family celebrations with them.

Italo with Maria Pia and Sofia Vescio. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo at Mario and Maria Stella's wedding. Italo walked Maria Stella down the aisle. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

Italo with a pasta smile at the spaghettata with Mario, Maria Stella and Sofia Vescio. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

As time passed Italo became more frail, dealing with a number of serious medical conditions. But he was tenacious and was actively seeking treatment that might have cured him of his ailments. Being told that he was too weak to endure more treatment was a bitter blow to him and he essentially lost the battle. A little more than a month before his death he had been at his sister Maria Pia's side as she passed away and this also took a toll on his health and well-being. They had been together in Wollongong as brother and sister, as business partners and as mutual supports for over 45 years.

There were no stipulations in his will with the exception that he was to be buried in Italy and that the Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra would take care of his last transactions.

We are witness to a man who lived his life with honourable intentions, wanting no recognition but just wanting to help his fellow human beings. A man with genuine intent. One of life's real gentleman.

When asking people how they would describe Italo the follow responses were repeated time and again: generous with his time and money, very formal in appearance and in the way he carried himself and spoke, always very well groomed, a man who looked at how he could use his money, but do so in a quiet and unassuming manner, a gentleman, humble and caring, very old school, a very private person, a committed Catholic, he did not flaunt his wealth, never really spoke about himself much, did not allow people to get too close to him, always a sense of formality about him, a meticulous man, he was more conciliatory than confrontational in nature, willing to listen to all views and go along with the majority, but prepared to ask questions, he had

a strong belief system but didn't impose this upon others, showed great compassion for people, was not judgemental, he was in his own reserved way friendly, extremely trustworthy, an honourable man, he was of above average intelligence, he understood business very well, astute businessman, a pithy and curt speaker, reserved, very efficient, very considered, conservative values, trusted, community minded, his manner was respectful to everyone no matter their station in life, bi-cultural, bi-lingual, lived in two countries, always listened to all sides but would offer his opinion, didn't matter if he financed an operation he was respectful and respected people's views, wasn't a self-promoter, formal, would not readily call anyone by their first name but rather formal or by their title despite the long association or age difference, someone you could rely and depend on in the community, politics was in his blood, an independent thinker, not frivolous, considered responses even if he didn't agree, purposeful, no personal attacks, politically conservative, always had a plan, always planning, always had a backup plan, had an incredible mind, intelligent, savvy, entrepreneurial, self-made, hated accolades and awards, stubborn. VALE ITALO MAZZOLA, AM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLAIMER

The compilation of this memoir involved the researching of official archival material from the National Archives of Australia, Trove, Government Gazettes, newspaper articles, Illawarra Family History Group and the Wollongong Local Studies Library. The researchers and writers have attempted to verify and check all events, dates, statements and attributions and apologise for any errors or omissions.

With no immediate family in Wollongong the sharing of stories and memories from several people allowed a more personal view of Italo Mazzola that could not be drawn from documents and for this assistance the following people are gratefully acknowledged:

Senator the Hon **Concetta Fierravanti-Wells**, Senator for NSW
Luca Ferrari, Honorary Italian Vice Consul Wollongong
Colleen Mandicos, Director and Chairperson of Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra
Aldo Belmonti, Pro-Loco, International Accordion Museum, Castelfidardo, Italy
Loretta Jagucanskas, St Vincent's Curran Foundation
Maria Stella Trombetta (in Vescio)
Turo Chiodo, **Anita Sanese**, **Mario Vescio**
Sarah King, Admissions Officer, Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra (MACI)
We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mr **Giovanni Mazzola**, nephew of Italo Mazzola.

Italo and his passion la fisarmonica (piano accordion) in Wollongong Mall during Tutti in Piazza, Italian Week celebrations. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Italo with friends and colleagues at the Lions International Gala Dinner. (Photograph courtesy of the Pro-Loco Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy)

Board members dell' Associazione dei Marchigianni Wollongong
Left to right; Nicoletta Favi, Maria Stella Vescio, Mario and Sofia Vescio, Augusto Favi, Aldo & Flora Mori, Attilio Mori and Italo
(Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

The Italian Parade contingent at the Lions International Convention Parade of Nations, Sydney, 2010. (Photograph courtesy of Mario and Maria Stella Vescio)

ITALO MAZZOLA

IL BENEFATTORE SILENZIOSO THE QUIET BENEFACTOR

'Life passes but good deeds remain – Mamma Lena'

Quote from Lena Gustin certainly epitomises the essence of Italo Mazzola