

## Theft of a Dream

I guess the best thing to do is to start at the beginning. My Grandparents, Lorenzo and Anna Mongiello, came to America from Naples, Italy in the early 1900's. A few of my older uncles were born in Italy. They, like most other immigrants hoping to fulfill their dreams in America, had to go through Ellis Island to be cleared to enter America and they did. My grandfather's dream was to open a tin can manufacturing company. He actually designed and built the machinery to produce the first tapered metal can in the entire United States. This machinery was never patented, so eventually other can companies began to produce this "tapered can" for their customers.

Lorenzo and Anna lived in a modest tenement apartment in Manhattan. My Grandfather opened his business there as well. He, along with his older sons, ran the company aptly named Lorenzo Mongiello Can Co. They had more children and as the children grew, they one by one became involved in my Grandfather's business. At some point, the tenement grew too small for his family, so he purchased a house in Brooklyn and also relocated his business there. Always looking out for what was best for his family. My father, Angelo Mongiello, was the youngest one in the family. He too went to work with his father. In fact, when a piece of machinery broke down my father would fix it and get it running again. But my Grandfather never really wanted his children to have to work as hard as he did. After all, the can company was his dream, not his children's. So while three of my father's brothers stayed at the can company, his eldest brother, Anthony, went to school to become an Optometrist. Idealizing his older brother as he did, my father became interested in what he, my uncle, was doing. So much so that he decided to become an Optometrist himself. He graduated school and was all set to go into practice with his brother Anthony when my grandfather became ill. Now, although my father was the youngest one in the family, my grandfather asked him to run the can company until he was well again. My father loved his father so much that he sacrificed his own dreams to fulfill his father's.

There were three problems arising from this situation. *One*, taking on this new responsibility. *Two*, being the youngest one in the family and being asked to run the can company. He had older brothers who were as capable as he, but his father had asked him to do it. I know for certain that this didn't sit

right with his brothers, my uncles. And, *three*, my Grandfather never got well. He died in the hospital.

My father stayed for many years at the can company. He worked long hours late into the night. He also had to contend with his brothers being upset with the fact that their father placed in charge, the youngest one in the family to run the can company, instead of one of them. My father used to tell us about how he would fall asleep in a living room chair and my grandmother would put him in bed. He should have been ashamed to have her do that, after all, he was 19 years old. That's right, he was all of 19 when this took place in his life. He would never let his father's faith in him waiver. My father met my mother, Anna Amalfitano, fell in love and got married.

Among the clients of my grandfather's was a man by the name of Albert Pollio. He was the founder of Polly-O Dairy Products, now owned by Kraft. My Grandfather used to make ricotta cans for him, tapered ricotta cans. One day, long after my grandfather passed away, my father went to Mr. Pollio's plant where they used to make mozzarella cheese. My father was amazed that they made it literally by hand. The men used to cook the curd in boiling hot water and stretch it out on large wooden paddles. Then they would break off pieces of this curd, that once cooked in this manner, became Mozzarella and then dipped their hands into the boiling hot water to mold it, again by hand, into the familiar round shape we still see it in today.

One day, he thought of a way to stop these men from burning their hands. He designed one machine in which to cook the cheese and another in which to mold it. My father realized that the can company wasn't what he wanted to do all his life and finally set out on this new dream of his own. He wanted to design and manufacture machinery for the Italian cheese industry. In the book entitled "The History of Italian Cheese in America" published in the early 1950's, my father, Angelo Mongiello, is listed as making THE FIRST machine made mozzarella in the entire United States. When these machines were put together they would first and foremost stop the men from burning their hands and secondly produce more cheese than 20 men could. My father automated the Italian cheese industry. Never wavering from the natural cheese making process, in an article written by him in the industries trade paper "The Cheese Reporter" as well as a speech given by him at "The Marshall Laboratories, Cheese Seminar", held annually in Madison Wisconsin entitled "White Gold", my father became instrumental in bringing the industry back to quality first, profits second, which ultimately resulted in the "Real Seal". The dairy industries assurance to the public that their products are made with the utmost standards in quality. Anyone making any

machine to produce mozzarella that came after my father's was simply , either a copy of his machine or a piece of junk that didn't do the job. Almost every contender and quite a few smaller factories in the mozzarella cheese industry used my father's equipment.

My father had some of these machines patented nationally and internationally but that didn't stop some very unscrupulous people from copying them. But my father was not a vengeful man . He was never in it for the money; he was genuinely interested in helping people. So he put his faith in God and went on about his own business. He had hundreds, possibly a thousand or so ideas that could be patented, but the cost of patenting a product runs into thousands of dollars. Not only did my father bring the idea of the cheese stick to Pollio, he designed the art work and packaging for their, Pollio's, "Family Pack". My father thought up the idea of putting cheese inside a hot dog. Oscar Mayer called it "Frank n stuff". My father brought it to them too! Without a formal education, with nothing more than common sense, my father was a design engineer that today is still unmatched in his field!

So, my father, realizing that the can company wasn't for him, left and opened up a small machine shop in Brooklyn. He called it American Pioneer Corporation. My parents had five children. We lived in the house my father was raised in. And, as we got older, we each went to work with him. In 1978, our mother had a stroke and passed away very unexpectedly. We were devastated. Life went on, but certainly not in the same way. My mother used to sing. She had the voice of a nightingale. She would sing us to sleep at night. A really wonderful way to fall asleep.

Throughout our lives, even as young children, my father would challenge us to come up with things, thoughts, ideas. I remember him asking us once, "What things in the universe are perpetual". We would have to think about it for the day and when he came home at night we would discuss it. We pondered gravity, vacuums, weightlessness and all sorts of things both scientific and mechanical. He always kept us thinking. These things had nothing to do with the cheese industry and everything to do with life. How does this work? Why does this, do that? So it's no real wonder that things like "Stuffin' The Crust" happened. For instance, my brother Angelo Jr. is accredited with having designed, developed and patented a shark protection device for scuba divers, as well as it's practical application for the military, regarding aircraft pilots downed over the ocean as well as sailors of sunken ships. There are also a dozen other ideas in the works at present from the

other members of the family that are applicable to a variety of other industries in today's market.

There is one more idea my father came up with that I almost forgot about, and I don't know how I could have forgotten. I was the second child to be born in my family. When I was born I had an abdominal rupture . What I mean to say is, I was here and my intestines and stomach, though still attached were there, if you get my meaning. The nurse in the delivery room baptized me because they didn't think I was going to make it. The surgeon who looked at me didn't give me much hope either. Well, they just put everything back inside me and closed me up. This surgeon wanted to place a nylon screen over the opening and graft skin onto it. Not a very promising future for me. Anyway, as luck would have it, the doctor died in a car accident. When he closed me up he put a stitch through my intestine . They would feed me but nothing would pass the stitch. I was losing weight, so they fed me through an IV on my ankle. I still have the scar. It was, my father, not the other doctors that noticed one stitch out of place. When they cut the stitch open and they fed me, I went. So now with the new surgeon, my father found they were able to fix me up the right way. You see my father told the surgeon to fatten me up and then starve me and then take all the extra skin and muscle tissue and fold it over and sew me up double breasted style and here I am 42 years later and none the worse for wear. He was quite a man, my father, and I am a living testament to that.

Anyway, one evening my brother Anthony, my dad and myself were sitting around my brother Anthony's apartment. We decided to make a pizza for dinner. We bought some raw dough from a pizzeria and started fooling around with it. Wham, stuffed crust pizza was born. So Anthony, my Dad, and myself started playing around with all different kinds of stuffings. We stuffed those crusts with everything from mozzarella cheese to apple pie fillings and just about anything else we could think of. After about a week, we decided to patent it. Half of the members of our family thought we were crazy and the other half didn't know what to think. We called up our Uncle Angelo Marino. He's really our cousin but much older than we were so out of respect we called him Uncle Angelo. I guess it's an Italian thing. Uncle Angelo was an attorney, but not a patent attorney, so he referred us to the law firm of Penny and Edmonds. We took our idea to them and I think the lawyer we spoke to thought we were kind of nuts as well. The one thing he did say was "Hey, look at the guy who invented Velcro". So we applied for our patent. I feel as though my Dad took a lot of pleasure in this whole process because, as I mentioned before, he was an inventor. The fact that he and two

of his sons, came up with this new pizza idea, made him feel proud. I can still hear him. He used to say when something was wrong, "the fish stinks from the head"; but when things went right he would say, "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree". I just thank God that the apple didn't fall far from the tree, many more times than, the fish stinking from it's head. He was the epitome of the steel fist in the velvet glove.

Anyway we got our patent and man were we happy. It's a pretty wild feeling seeing your name on something like that. It's the government of the United States saying to you, hey good job. We're glad your an American, with your own ideas and dreams. Now, go and see just how those streets are paved with gold. So my brother and I went to all the local pizzerias in Brooklyn to see if anyone wanted to license this wonderful money making, people pleasing idea from us. Well, we were turned down left and right by just about every pizzeria we went to. I think that what hurt most was the disappointment my Dad would feel in our failing. But he said "Rome wasn't built in a day!". Yeah, he had a million of 'em. So we thought let's not think small, let's think big! So we sent our idea to Pizza Hut and Little Ceasars way back in 1987. Guess what they said? NO THANKS !!! We were so sure that this was a good idea that we did some marketing research and in 1991 we sent it back to Pizza Hut telling them this product would increase their sales by 10 to 20 percent. They said no thank you again !!

My father retired and we, his children all went to find our own niches in life. My brother, Angelo Jr., is in the trucking business. I'm a New York City fireman. John is an electron microscope technician. JoAnn is a hair stylist, wife and mother. Anthony is, as his father was, the youngest of the family and also "that apple that fell closest to the proverbial tree". He is in the mozzarella cheese business. He owns and operates his little piece of heaven known as "Formaggio Italian Cheese Specialties". There he manufactures fresh mozzarella cheese. My father was extremely pleased to see his son in that business. Anthony actually uses some of my father's oldest equipment and guess what. It still does the work of 20 men without him burning his hands.

My Dad passed away on October 17 ,1994, one day before Anthony's 30th birthday. Happy birthday Anthony. It was a very tough time for the entire family. It was totally unexpected. An aneurysm on his aorta had burst. He admitted himself into Victory Memorial Hospital but they were not able to perform that type of surgery. We had him transferred to Miamonadies Hospital but while in route he went into shock. The people at Miamonadies were great; they did every thing they could . They stopped the bleeding from



his aorta. When they brought my Dad out of that surgery, his left leg was cold. The doctor said if it doesn't get warm soon it means that there is no blood getting to it and they would have to amputate it. Now we all knew our father would rather be dead than have a leg gone. So those Great Folks at Miamonadies, and I really mean that, took him back into surgery and repaired the collapsed veins in his leg. When he came back from that surgery his leg was warm but his kidney's had failed. We, his children, knew that to him, this was worse than him loosing a leg. We honestly felt that he would have been angry at us if he lived knowing that he would have to be on dialysis for the rest of his life. So we started talking about being tested to see which one of us was most compatible with him to give him a kidney. As I mentioned before there are five of us. Angelo Jr. 45, Lawrence, that's me 42, John 39, JoAnn 35 and Anthony 31. At the time, JoAnn lived in Florida so we called her and she immediately flew up. So there we were in the hospital going through this, doing the best we knew how. We, all of us, actually slept in the hallway outside the I.C.U., night after night, until that night when the doctor said it was beginning to look better. That's the one night we went to our perspective homes. I remember it so clearly because I was the last one to leave. I looked into my father's eyes and said "I'll see you tomorrow". He passed away that night.

To continue on, it's now the beginning of 1995. My brother Anthony calls me at the fire house. He says to me "Lar did you see it?". Not knowing what the heck he was talking about I said, "see what?". "The Pizza Hut commercial", he said. "No", I said. He goes on to tell me, it's a stuffed crust pizza. Now, I must have been in shock because it didn't penetrate. I said, "what?". He said, now screaming "A STUFFED CRUST PIZZA". I said "Get the F--- out of here". He said "yeah, a stuffed crust pizza". I said, "Anthony, don't play games like this". He said "I'm not, it's true". All I could think of was holy cow, what do we do now Dad? We saw the commercials on TV and heard them on the radio. Donald Trump and his ex-wife singing the praises of "our stuffed crust pizza" the very same one we sent to Pizza Hut. There was something drastically wrong here. We were all sick to our stomachs. How could they do this. We sent it to them and told them everything they were now telling the public. The only difference was that we told them it would increase their sales by 10 to 20 percent but it in fact increased their sales by 22%. And for Pizza Hut that amounted to, now read this carefully, ONE BILLION FIVE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS IN THE FIRST YEAR OF PRODUCTION. As stated by the CEO of Pepsi Co. which owns Pizza Hut.

We got together and figured we had to do something. So, we called upon a friend of my father's, Mr. Paul J. Sutton. Mr. Sutton was actually my father's patent attorney, as well as a good friend . We sat down with him and decided our next move. We would serve Pizza Hut with a law suit for what we figured their damages would be based on 5%, times an average of pizzas sold in the U.S. in their 8,700 stores for the remaining life of "OUR PATENT". That figure is approximately one billion four hundred million dollars. Now, we are at the cross roads knowing full well that the next logical step in the evolution of this pizza is to freeze it and put it in super markets across the US. It, like it's stolen counterpart, is still a great idea! Our great idea!!

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