

The living legend of Mamma Bertolucci

By Laura Paull
Special to The Examiner

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO — The legend of Mamma began in 1928, when Joe Bertolucci, a San Francisco nightclub owner, went "south" with his new Italian bride to take over the management of his cousin's hotel.

"Marry me, and you'll never work a day in your life," Bertolucci had promised her.

"I've been working ever since," Mamma Tise Bertolucci, the now 87-year-old proprietress of South San Francisco's Cucina Toscana restaurant, laughs without a trace of bitterness.

Among her regular customers, all of whom call her Mamma, are the family doctor, the local used-car baron, the poultry supplier, the neighborhood baker, Bay Area politicians, superstars, and even competing restaurateurs.

Many "grew up on the restaurant floor" and their parents, even grandparents, enjoyed Mamma's hearty north Italian food back when Bertolucci's was the Liberty Hotel, a room and board establishment catering to the blue-collar trade.

Hard work came naturally to Mamma, who was born in Lunca and rolled cigars in a government factory before emigrating with her mother and sister to San Francisco.

She brought what she knew to the marital partnership: how to cook, how to work, how to love.

Mamma's workday began at 4:30 a.m. with visits to produce and fish markets in San Francisco and Half Moon Bay. She returned by noon to join her husband in the kitchen. She tended her herb garden in back of the restaurant, and served in the dining room until late at night.

In the 1920s and '30s, South City was a working-class town populated mostly by Italian immigrants employed in the stockyards and steel mills.

Mamma appeased their gargantuan appetites with the hearty dishes of her native Tuscany: huge steaming bowls of minestrone, aromatic salami and anchovies, healthy portions of fresh vegetables, chicken toscana, veal piccata, and every variety of fresh pasta. Her cannelloni became legendary.

Their boarding house-restaurant was a humble place with a wooden floor and a few tables. Long hours and family solidarity allowed them to thrive unaffected by vicissitudes of the economy.

"Everyone in my family is — nice. All nice people. No — and is — a meaningful star," Mamma says.

As her children, Larry and Lola, grew, they learned to help out after school and have since become co-managers. Their schoolmates are among those who were fed by Mamma as



Mamma Bertolucci in the restaurant kitchen with helpers, from left, manager Vince Diodato, Augie Agostino and Albert Weaver

Tom Duncan

children and are still coming back for more.

But the real draw of the establishment was not to be found on the menu. It was — and is — the simple warmth and concern with which Mamma attends her clients, as though each one were a member of her family.

It is the way she packs "a little something" to send home with a recent widower. The sad, kindly eyes that absorb the troubles of others. The grandmotherly attention to creature comforts.

Joe Bertolucci passed away years ago. Today, with grown children and a

staff of 55 to help her manage the restaurant, Mamma is still the ever-present matriarch, passing from table to table, welcoming newcomers, refilling coffee cups.

Mamma's embrace extends beyond her clientele to her staff and the community at large. Charly for her is an intimate act, involving great quantities of chicken and ravioli sent directly from her kitchen to the aged, the sick and the needy.

"She lives for the happiness she feels when people enjoy her food and are nourished by it," says daughter Lola. "This restaurant is a labor of love."

Inevitably, Bertolucci's was discovered by the wealthy and glamorous. Autographed photos from Hollywood stars, sports giants, politicians, and even astronauts line the hallways.

"To Mamma" they all say. "We love you."

Mamma gets up at 6 now instead of 4:30, and the produce merchants bring their goods to her. The decor is new and rather Florentine, but the spirit of Bertolucci remains the same.

The same table is reserved daily for the family doctor. The same ingredients are bought for the same, still unwritten recipe.

The legend of Mamma is precious to many people, because it bears witness to a time when hard work bore fruit and generosity was repaid in kind, when fortunes could be made legally, and not only children, but grandchildren stuck around to make their lives in their home town.

Mamma has made South San Francisco her home, and it is because of her that many other people make it theirs.

On the recent occasion of her 87th birthday, Mamma picked up her phone to ask "a few friends" to stop by for dinner. Ninety people showed up

to pay her tribute.

"Eighty-seven years old and still cooking," Mamma's many children marveled aloud. "There are only two great Italian mamas on this continent," pronounced Pat Johnson, former President of J.C. Penney and one of Mamma's best friends. "Mamma Leone on the East Coast, and Mamma Bertolucci on the West."

With a testimony like that, who can blame Mamma for having scrawled her name in the wet cement of a new sidewalk in front of her restaurant? Sometimes it takes time for a star to be born.

'John Muir' is back in California

By Michael Winks
Special to The Examiner

SAN MATEO — One-man shows have brought to life historical figures such as Harry Truman, Mark Twain and Clarence Darrow, giving the playgoer an insight generally available only to select groups of students.

Lee Stetson, a veteran actor of the stage and screen, recently brought famed environmentalist John Muir to life at a benefit for the Coyote Point Museum and the Yosemite Natural History Association.

"(The museum) really is a fine center for environmental study," said Stetson, a balding, grizzled figure who looks as if he has spent years away from civilization.

Nothing is more important now than educating people on their responsibility toward preserving the planet, Stetson emphasized.

"In John Muir's day, he encouraged people to get into the wilderness and thus create a constituency for wilderness protection," he said.

Stetson wrote the one-man show entitled "Conversations with a Tramp." It is set in 1913 as Muir waits to hear what President Woodrow Wilson has decided to do with the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Forest.

Although Stetson performed the piece in San Mateo only once, he has presented the show at Yosemite National Park for the last two years. Visitors of the park can still catch his show Wednesdays through Saturdays from May to October.

The idea for the piece came when Stetson read a biography of Muir while the actor was working in stage and television in four years ago in Los Angeles, where he appeared on many TV pilots and several episodes of "Hawaii Five-O."

Having written several plays, Stetson worked for two years on his piece while making a living as an actor and eventually arranged to perform it in Yosemite.

A wilderness lover, Stetson described the move from Los Angeles to Yosemite as "a glorious transition."

"I had always sought peace and



Actor Lee Stetson portrays pioneer environmentalist John Muir in his one-man show

Dale Dani

History of bordellos tough to research

By Jane Thrall
Special to The Examiner

REDWOOD CITY — Say "prostitution in the old west" and you'll probably conjure up a stereotypical image in the mind of anyone listening.

That image is a composite of the scenes you've seen in Western movies. It will probably be of a "parlor house" run by a madam in a low-cut, red velvet dress.

She runs a house in which up to a dozen young ladies lead what the history books refer to as a "sporting life." While the male patrons wait at a downstairs bar, sipping whiskey, they listen to a player piano.

This image is only partly true, according to recent inquiries into the lives that prostitutes led years ago. It seems certain now that the parlor houses existed no more often than the infamous "cribs," such as those in San Francisco during the 19th century. There, hundreds of women worked in cramped conditions for little better wages than their floor-scrubbing sisters made.

San Mateo County may not fit everyone's model of a rough-and-tumble town of the Old West, even if its history goes back just as far as that of Tombstone.

But there is evidence that, like just about everywhere else in the country, prostitution took place here.

Talk to an elder member of the community who is in a candid mood and you may hear that this restaurant (which has apartments up above it) or that hotel was a bordello at one time.

The time may have been during the last century, or during the Prohibition Era, when the Coastside (among other places here) was becoming infamous for run-running.

In either event, tracking down prostitution here, or at other locations in California, can be more a matter of hearsay than of documented fact.

First, few people alive today remember what prostitution was like in California before the men and women of the Progressive Era came up with the Red Light Abatement Act in 1917.

Stories circulate about the parlor houses and cribs of San Francisco, which were alleged to be as splendid as they were infamous. But the storytellers are long gone.

Second, before 1961 if a woman was arrested in this state (probably during an election year) for prostitution, she was charged with vagrancy. It wasn't until then that the law recognized prostitution.

Finding solid evidence of dates and locations when and where prostitution took place becomes all the more a matter of rumor. That's because police records didn't specifically address the charge until after the parlor houses and bordellos closed.

The memories of the eldest among us are about the only thing left to provide a link to those times and places. From those stories, it seems that few Peninsula communities have been immune, just as those communities have become sleeper over the years.

After the Red Light Abatement Act in 1917, for example, the women who worked in the parlor houses in cities such as San Francisco probably moved into new sections of town . . . and engaged in new forms of prostitution," according to Ruth Rosen, author of "The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1890-1918."

San Mateo County at that time was fairly rural; only during the 1920s did most of the cities and towns along the Peninsula incorporate, and so come under the jurisdiction of the sheriff's office.

Unless a bar or hotel went out of its way to make itself notorious, its activities were left alone, as indicated by a search made of roughly 30 years of turn-of-the-century San Mateo newspapers.

But there were some hot spots. Comments have been made about the Mission Boulevard area of Daly City, about a warehouse there, which once operated across the street from City Hall in South San Francisco, about a hotel at the Five Points area in

—Please see HISTORY, 4

—Please see ACTOR, 2

Peninsula beat

Stanton Samuelson

Growth potential

More affordable housing and a hotel with enough space for large meetings would greatly improve the potential for economic growth here, business leaders say.

In a survey aimed at determining Redwood City's weaknesses and strengths, they were asked to rate 25 essential categories on a scale of 1 to 2 (poor; 2 to 2.5 (average) and 2.5 to 3 (excellent).

The housing situation came in at 1.66, and hotel space got a 1.82 rating. "There are two motels in the area — only one of which is in Redwood City — but they lack sufficient space for large meetings," said Larry Buckmaster, executive vice president of the Redwood City/San Mateo County Chamber of Commerce, which conducted the business study, the first in the community's history.

Buckmaster expressed belief that a major hotel would be built, probably in the Redwood Shores area, within the next few years.

Construction now under way in Redwood Shores and on Woodside Road, he continued, would help ease the housing shortage.

Those polled indicated that the cost of housing was a factor in the 1.66 rating they attached to the availability

and cost of unskilled labor.

On the plus side, respondents gave high marks to city government (2.65), services (2.53), with fire protection getting the highest rating (2.76), followed by police service (2.67).

Jay A. Clark, chamber president, said the 2.06 rating for education reflects a state-wide concern, adding, "The crisis in funding and the transition to a more back-to-basics curricula has created tremendous turmoil and concern in every community."

Besides the numerical ratings, those surveyed were asked to identify special areas of concern that they believed were especially detrimental to Redwood City's growth.

The four major targeted areas were: cost of unskilled labor, the cost of materials, zoning restrictions and the cost of shipping. Business people also were asked to

identify ways that the chamber could best help preserve their ability to continue to do business in the area.

Their replies tended to concentrate on "promotion of downtown retail stores with adequate parking, proper zoning of business instead of a scattered approach, and by promoting more high technology."

Among respondent comments on their questionnaires were "chamber too consumer oriented"; "housing too expensive for laborer to live in area"; "downtown area with proper planning and coordination could be booming."

"Of the 55 businesses in the community contacted for the study, 21 responded," Buckmaster said. Firms ranged in size from those with only two or three employees to several thousand.

Tom Hall Federal Beat: Bay Area



Time for options

THE FOUR-YEAR TERM of Joseph Russionello, Northern California's U.S. Attorney, will expire Nov. 17 and the prosecutor says "it's time to look at options."

That's why he is said to be a candidate to become the Treasury Department's assistant secretary for enforcement of operations.

The Washington position, which President Reagan will fill by appointment, isn't vacant yet. But its current occupant, John Walker, has been nominated as a U.S. District Court judge for the Southern District of New York. The appointment required Senate confirmation.

Russionello, 44, a Jersey City native and one-time FBI agent, says, "Until someone talks seriously about it, I haven't given it much thought, because this is a great job I have now."

The Washington job involves oversight of the Treasury Department's Customs, Secret Service and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms operations.

"With the new push on money laundering and on getting the banking system in the United States squared away, there are significant challenges there to make the job appealing," Russionello says.

What's the reaction of his wife, Moira, to his being considered for the job? "My wife will go wherever I go. We're sort of footloose and fancy free, not having any children."

As to speculation that he's seeking the job to get administrative

experience that could make him a candidate for director of the FBI would the current director, William Webster, step out, Russionello chuckles.

"No, no. I'm flattered, however, that anyone would think that."

The most prevalent rumor is that should Webster, a former federal judge, leave the FBI, Stephen Trotter, assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal division, would be a strong candidate.

Want to buy a home in Mammoth Lakes?

A single-family residence there that the General Services Administration acquired through a Customs seizure and forfeiture, is on the block.

The house has five bedrooms, 1 1/2 baths and a spa. It is on a 1,990-square-foot lot at 37023 Knob Hill Lane.

Sealed bids will be opened at 10:30 a.m. on July 16 at the GSA Business Service Center, 525 Market St. Phone 974-9000. The sale is cash only.

George A. Ray, chief deputy clerk of Northern California's U.S. District Court in San Francisco, was one of 22 men and women from U.S. courts who recently stood in the U.S. Supreme Court and were admitted as fellows of the Institute for Court Management.

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger presented Ray and the others with their certificates.

The ceremony followed completion of the Court Executive Development Program, a multiyear program of five seminars.

Arthur T. Hambrick, district manager of the Golden Gate District Postal Service, will serve as the 1985 Combined Federal Campaign chairman, according to William C. Buhl, chairman of the Bay Area Federal Executive Board.

Internal Revenue Service Regional Commissioner Thomas P. Coleman will serve as vice chairman.



The Miramar Hotel as it appeared in the 1920s, when run-runners made Coastside a legend

HISTORY

—From Page 1

Redwood City and about other bars and hotels.

But evidence of prostitution on the Coastside, revealed by historian June Morrall, is among the best yet for pinning down actual locations and dates. She said one such site was the old Miramar Hotel, along the beach in Miramar. Still standing, it looks a lot like it did during Prohibition, when federal agents and run-runners made the Coastside a legend.

The downstairs is now a restaurant and bar, and the upstairs has been converted to living quarters that are rented out.

One resident said it has been converted to allow for a large living room and several smaller spaces, but at least one of the six original rooms used by the women is still intact, having a sink in one corner.

Up the coast is the Princeton Inn, known as the Princeton Hotel during Prohibition. Now a restaurant, in earlier times it was known as a raucous place against which then District Attorney Swart filed action in 1922 for violation of the Red Light Abatement Act.

Such prostitution was casual, said Morrall, and purveyed by transient women. The establishments probably featured fewer than 10 women apiece. These instances fit in with what was at that time probably a county-wide standard: The prostitutes of the era practiced their trade in connection with a roadhouse or hotel, rather than out of a parlor house. The proprietors of the roadhouses were likely to

have received kickbacks for any referral services.

Prostitution in earlier days, when men came to San Mateo County alone to earn their fortunes, was looked upon as a necessary evil. Some share that sentiment today, while counterparts of the Progressive Era remain who would abolish the practice outright.

In San Mateo County, as in other parts of the country, women chose to

enter into prostitution for the same reasons they do today. Glamour isn't the basic economics is.

"The vast majority of women," wrote Rosen of her turn-of-the-century subjects, "entered prostitution more or less voluntarily, viewing the trade as an 'easier' and more lucrative means of survival than other kinds of jobs open to them."

Whether the stereotype holds, it

seems certain that more time will pass before changes are made regarding our views of "the oldest profession."

A New Service from Bank of America... Need a Loan? Get It By Phone!



Simply Call Our Toll-Free Number To Apply!

Here's a fast, new way from Bank of America to get the cash you need right now! Yes, now you can apply by phone for a home equity, auto, manufactured housing, R.V., aircraft, pleasure boat loan, or CustomLine™ Credit. We'll take your application by phone, and then call you back within one business day with a preliminary credit decision. When your loan is approved, you can arrange to pick up your check at a convenient Bank of America branch.

Think of it! Now you can apply by phone to get the money you need to buy a car or R.V., do home improvements, make an investment...even take the vacation of your dreams.

Getting a loan by phone is convenient — and easy! You don't have to spend unnecessary time at a bank branch.

HERE'S HOW TO APPLY FOR A LOAN BY PHONE:

- Before you call, make sure you have the following information at hand:
 - Social Security number
 - Employer's name and address
 - Your monthly take-home pay
 - If married, please have the above information available for your spouse.

- Then call our special toll-free number 1-800-551-3333 anytime Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. You'll talk to an experienced officer who will take your application by phone. A Financial Services Officer will evaluate your application and call you back with a preliminary credit decision within one business day.
- When your loan is approved, we'll make an appointment for you at a convenient Bank of America branch. You'll go there to sign your application and loan documents and to arrange to pick up your check!

Loans by phone from Bank of America. One more example of leadership in serving people.

*All loans are subject to the bank's credit criteria. Checks for certain types of loans may be paid into account or directly to the dealer.

Call toll-free
1-800-551-3333
(Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)



Bank of America BANK OF AMERICA NT&SA

Peninsula Hospital
Health Education Resource Center

STOP SMOKING IN 5 DAYS. No ifs, ands or butts!



You know you should stop smoking. But how? Every time you've quit, you've started up again in a few weeks.

Now there's Smoke Stoppers. A unique five-week program that teaches you how to quit once and for all.

How effective is Smoke Stoppers? The success rate after one year is an astonishing 65-70%. Other programs claim success rates of 30%.

It isn't easy to quit. But to make it a little easier, we're offering the first session free. Come to Peninsula Hospital's Health Education Resource Center, 1600 Trousdale Drive, Burlingame.

Dates and times are listed.

For additional information, call Community Education, 872-5600.

FREE INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS

Choose either:

Evening Sessions:
Tuesday, July 16 6:30-7:30 p.m.
or
Thursday, July 18 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Instructor:
Carol Blake, M.A.
Certified Smoke Stoppers Instructor

Location:
Peninsula Hospital's
Health Education Resource Center
1600 Trousdale Drive, Burlingame

