

1999

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Roger J. Miner '56

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Recommended Citation

Miner '56, Roger J., "Eulogy: John S. Carapella" (1999). *Memorials and Eulogies*. 10.
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EULOGY -- JOHN S. CARAPELLA

June 3, 1999

In what ways shall we honor the memory of John Carapella? We shall honor his memory by recalling his life. In this way we will discern the moral lessons he imparted to all of us by precept and example.

Born on September 13, 1913, Uncle John was 85 at the time of his passing. His parents were Pasquale and Quintalina Carapella. He was one of six children. His sister Elizabeth and his brother Victor predeceased him. He is survived by his sister Lillian, and brothers Bernard, known as "Toots," and Alfred. John was the oldest in a traditional family and never hesitated to exercise the prerogatives of the first-born. I am told that he was exercising these prerogatives as late as last week. In plain language, he still was telling his siblings what to do. He grew up in Tuckahoe, where he was born, and went to the Main Street School.

Uncle John began his working career at age 6 as an apprentice to a baker named Carmine Davi. He worked at the bakery until he was about 18 years old. His employer apparently was an opera buff and frequently took Uncle John to the Metropolitan Opera. Although it is said that Uncle John enjoyed the opera, he did not like the night hours of a baker. He thought he could make better use of his nights and therefore sought a day job. He found day work as a carpenter for a contractor named Schmedle, who also took a liking to him and

taught him the carpenter's trade. It was around this time that Uncle John began to play first base for the Cardinals -- the Tuckahoe Cardinals, that is. He loved baseball and was a pretty good first baseman, playing in a Twilight League where the games took place at the end of the workday. It is said that he also liked to hang around 5th Avenue in Mount Vernon, a city in which there then lived a lovely princess.

According to ancient legend, Uncle John met this lovely princess, named Esther Mariani, at the home wedding of Lena and Charles Lamanna. Legend also has it that Elsie Schulze, Esther's childhood friend, also attended this wedding along with one Anthony Bruno. Who knows what romantic ideas are implanted in those who attend a wedding? In any event, John and Esther started to keep company. It was not easy for Uncle John, for he had to pass muster with the whole Mariani family -- Esther's parents, her sister Theresa and brothers Ralph and Maurice. Ralph, my father-in-law, also was a first-born son, and there may have been a clash of prerogatives. It is said that Ralph asked Uncle John if he could support a family, and Uncle John replied: "I don't know. How many Marianis are there?" After much discussion, the Mariani stamp of approval was given and romance blossomed forth.

On September 26, 1937, more than 61 years ago, John and Esther were married. Elsie and Anthony (Uncle Westy) Bruno had been married the day before, and the couples honeymooned together in Pennsylvania. There was barely enough money for gas for the

car, and the story of their joint honeymoon is one of the funniest stories ever, especially the part about sharing one room. Esther and John settled in Mt. Vernon, and John continued on his lifetime course of hard work. Anyone who ever knew Uncle John knew that hard work was one of the defining features of his life.

Children came along, all of whom needed to be provided for. First came Theresa, then Carol, then John. Sometime around 1948, Uncle John got into the plumbing trade and worked for contractors Pugliese and Iodice. Later, he worked for Billy Morris. He continued his labors until well after retirement, doing odd plumbing jobs from time to time. As he grew older, he spent time playing golf, cooking and playing cards. He had a number of friends who participated in these activities with him. But he was always there to help a relative or friend with something that needed doing, and he was free with his advice to anybody who asked for it.

But Uncle John's consuming passion was his garden. There, over a course of many years, he grew many good things to eat, spending hour after hour planting, cultivating and harvesting. One of the last things he insisted on doing, and he could be very insistent, was to finish this year's garden. Even though he knew he was very sick at the time and the work took an obvious toll on him, he pressed forward. I think that the garden symbolized life to him. He wanted it to grow properly, just as he wanted his children and his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren to

grow properly, nourished by the principles of morality and hard work that guided his own life.

Uncle John's children all took from him his values, as did his grandchildren Melissa, Danny and Carol Ann, the children of Theresa, and Lindsay and Johnny, John's children. Uncle John was especially close to his great-granddaughter Samantha, Melissa's daughter, and spent many hours teaching her about the things that are important in life. Uncle John had infinite patience with the very young. Just before the end, he was teaching his one year old great-grandson Carter, Danny's son, how to grow a garden. And speaking of Uncle John's garden, I would be remiss if I did not pay a special tribute to him as the greatest grower of hot peppers ever. He was known far and wide for his peppers, but few knew of the hard work necessary to produce them.

John Carapella, also known as "Sharkey," did not suffer fools gladly. He was a man of strongly-held views, and he did not hesitate to share those views. I very much enjoyed talking to him, for he was very well-informed. He kept current on the national news, on politics, on local government and on golf, baseball and most other sports. He maintained a lifelong interest in Tuckahoe, although he lived in Eastchester since 1968. He pretty much know what was going on all over Westchester County. He was a man without prejudice of any kind, a man who believed in live and let live, a man for all seasons.

Uncle John loved his children, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren, and they loved him back. He loved and was

loved by Esther, who stood by his side all these years, through good times and bad. Although Uncle John did not accumulate great material wealth, he was wealthy in the love of his entire extended family, of which I am proud to be a part, and of all his many friends. We all respected him, not because he demanded respect but because he deserved it. His values of love, kindness, caring, hard work, commitment to family, honesty, frankness, faith and knowledge will live on in all of us who knew him and in all who come after us.

Because he planted all these values so well, Uncle John's garden will grow for all eternity.