

“Connecting to a Bigger Story” by Mary Beth Moser, December 10, 2020

For the past seven weeks, The Seattle Trentino Club (STC) has been meeting online every Monday night for a Family History Hour. Each week we feature one of our members, who shares their Trentino family history and their connection to Seattle or other places in the USA.

To date we have featured the wonderful stories of [Jan Agosti](#), Anne Zadra, [Joan Barker](#), [Dan Zadra](#), [Clete Boldrin](#), Fernanda Say, and Dorothy (Miori) Whitney. (Please see our [Seattle Trentino Club](#) web site for highlights of these family stories.) Our attendance has been about 20-25 people each week. At our last gathering, we had folks from Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, California, and Canada.

Although we have missed our in-person gatherings this year, particularly our 10th anniversary celebration in March, and our annual summer polenta picnic in August, due to safety concerns in this time of pandemic, we have been enjoying our more frequent time together. Often at our regular events, there is not enough time to visit with everyone extensively. With this online forum, we can focus on one person’s story, hear the details of their family history, and ask questions.

Another “silver lining” has been that members who are far away --Tina and Tom Fellin in Stevensville, MT, Angela Branz-Spall in Helena, MT and [Gary Asson](#) in Eagle, Idaho, for example -- have been able to participate, some for the first time. Also, folks from other *circoli* have joined in. Dan Aspromonte and Marilyn Rauzi of the Circolo Trentino di San Francisco and Paul Antonioni of the Trentino-Alto Adige Cultural Society of British Columbia have regularly joined us, along with Barbara Zadra in California. Last week, Marlene Archer of the Tirolesi Trentini del Colorado joined us. Elena Flaim Kenny, a new member with roots in Revò, was able to join us for the first time from Vancouver, WA. Two weeks ago, our honored STC member Fernanda Say, age 96, was able to participate via phone and converse with members in Italian about her immigrant experience for her interview.

Best of all are the connections that are made among the participants. During the discussion of Clete Boldrin’s family history, for example, we learned that Paul Antonioni knows the gold mine where Clete’s great grandfather struck gold in the Klondike and Nome Gold Rushes of 1898-1899. Tam Agosti in Alaska knows well the valley in Switzerland, Val Poschiavo, where Clete’s great great grandfather harvested wild ginseng; Kim Boldrini-Senn, a former STC member who is now a practitioner of Chinese medicine and acupuncture in NY, shared the medicinal values of ginseng; and so on.

Our Trentino American histories are woven together in a larger story that spans the continent, and beyond. During these conversations, we often find threads that link our stories together and hear themes that resonate with our own family stories. “These Zoom meetings are an opportunity to connect on a deeper level, even with people you’d normally not meet up with,” observed Dan Aspromonte. After a beautiful night of storytelling focused on the Zadra family, Anne Zadra, our STC secretary, reflected that “the unstable and frustrating times that we are in

right now require solutions for peace-filled hearts and spirits. Seeing each other and relating the knowledge and memories of our ancestry through Zoom has provided a great reminder of precious and courageous moments in our family histories that I think gives hope for better times.”

In these times of challenge, loss, and separation, it helps to feel part of a bigger story. We descendants of Trentini are lucky to have a history strongly rooted to place. Our family stories remind us of the sacrifices of those who have come before us and stir fond memories of our meaningful ties to the places we miss and the people we love in Trentino. Remembering where we come from and connecting with our ancestors through storytelling is healing. By connecting with the past, we can renew our strength, and feel more hopeful for the future.