

Kelly's Corner

Simone D'Amico



The catkins of the oaks are now beneath our feet, no longer plump but lean. They have done their job, having seeded for next year. The pussy willows still look as if they should be vacuumed, and the mulch of last year's leaves is nurturing it all. In this beautiful weather stir your stems! Go out and take a walk; see the orderly pace of nature design and maintain your backdrop of every day. Think of all this never-ending and comforting growth as exterior decoration.

Marie Costa, my loving neighbor who will be 78 this August, is Bruna Lecce's godmother. Whenever I pack the bags and take off, Marie tends Bruna Lecce's whims daily at the laundromat. Marie and I go to lunch to celebrate our three-way friendship, and during these luncheons there is always something of note. Last time we planned on Yang Sea, but Marie said she must go to Mass first. Would it be too late? Not at all, and who am I to be left out? I'll go to Mass, too. Church was a pleasant feeling of friends and neighbors, all thinking and doing in a positive nature, rather like another version of Town Meeting. The group was small, older, and mainly Portuguese—more like the town I moved to years ago, far from Commercial Street and back in the neighborhoods.

From the communion rail I noticed a truly energetic walk, a bright red coat drawing my attention. It was Ruth Cook O'Donnell. I spoke with her afterwards. "Ruth, you have the vigor of a young athlete." "I'm 70 years old today," she said, "and I'm off to Jimmy Crawley's for cake and champagne with my friends and family. Tomorrow we'll go to the Mews for a birthday brunch." Ruth is in her twelfth year of working at Ciro's. That strut is the telltale waitress walk. Ruth is known for having twice the stamina of the others at Ciro's—"the young ones," as she calls them. Ruth began work at 14 and says, "I'd better not stop. That's a long wind-



Marie Costa and Elizabeth

up, and it keeps me going." She's a handsome woman, very poised, and wouldn't you know she's aware of it. Bright red at the altar rail. By the way, her favorite fish is mackerel should you have some extra.

The Regreening of Provincetown Committee has been busy all winter with plans and meetings. When the temperature is high enough, the members change from paper planners to ditch diggers. It's refreshing to see people who do not have to lift a shovel lift one with a smile. The result is that Provincetown has her face lifted every spring and is given facials until the snow flies.

The work started with tidying up all the squares and circles for Memorial Day. Sounds like geometric gardening. Lopes Square, the West End parking lot, and the area opposite the entrance to the Cape End Manor were the projects last week. Those coming up are cleaning and planting the steep hill at the entrance of the cemetery. This is a difficult spot to use machines, so the gremlins of regreening will scoot up and down

the steep bank. This is a small way to say we are all grateful to the town for aiding our work where needed. Town and state have always answered in the affirmative when we have needed help. The town, as a result, looks better every year. Other future plans are putting a bench on the state land at Harry Kemp Way and Conwell Street near our cultivated island there. Another bench will go under a tree as a resting spot at the Grace Hall parking lot. One idea was that benches could be donated and signified as such with a memorial plaque and, of course, the watering and weeding, the never-ending watering and weeding. If you would like to volunteer to become a member of this agrarian group, please call either Ghee Patrick or Barbara Rushmore. We always need more hands, backs, and company.

There is a group of people in our town, in all towns, who receive little recognition for what seems to me to be the world's most difficult job. The single parent is a more and more common phenomenon of the second part of the 20th century. A job that used to be shared with spouse, siblings, and extended family has fallen to one adult operating through a maze of sitters, day care centers, preschool programs, and play groups. All these organizations help with the hours of care, but the worry, the concern, the hopes, the dreams, and the decisions rest with one adult. Companionship is highly prized by this group of adults, good reliable companionship. It's a no-nonsense world when your job is raising your own child.

I saw Simone D'Amico trotting down Commercial Street the other day, obviously on an errand. Simone is the six-year-old daughter of Carol D'Amico. She is well-spoken, always looks Ivory Soap clean (which must be a chore in itself), and always seems to know just what she is all about. She describes her ballet classes, her diet, her playmates, and the neighborhood in an easy-to-listen-to conversational manner. On this day I saw that Simone was headed centerwise on Commercial Street with three dollar bills waving in the wind, four quarters tight in one fist, and sixty cents clutched in the other. "Where are you going, Simone? You have so much money." "This is three dollars, here is one dollar, and here is sixty cents. That's the tax. I'm going to All That Glitters for a paste-up book." I thought of the lesson that must have preceded this jaunt—a long careful talk and explanation at the kitchen table. I was curious how Carol got around tax and Dukakis. Well, it was not a course in economics but a basic explanation that tax means you need more money. In all of this the wonderful mother, Carol, worries that her child is becoming involved in consumerism. Her child's sense of value is uppermost in her mind.

Frankie Crave, one of our two bus drivers, has two full-time jobs. Besides driving the Provincetown-Hyannis bus four days a week, he has full care and custody of his two-year-old-daughter, Noel Rose Crave. Four days a week, before the 6:45 bus, Frankie washes, dresses, and feeds Noel Rose. On two days he delivers her to his mother and on the other two days, to his aunt. Then Frankie has two days off and keeps Noel Rose with him through laundry, shopping, and all the other household chores. Noel calls him Daddy when she needs a daddy, Mommy when she needs a mommy, and Honey when she needs a sweetheart. Rose is Frankie's favorite name. He thinks of his daughter Rose as the bud of life passing his life on for him. When Noel Rose is a bit older, Frankie would like to adopt a child, a girl a little older than Noel to be a big sister to her. He is a loving, thoughtful father and has Noel's future, as well as her day-to-day present, under control. His family is a great help to him and a wonderful gift of life to his baby daughter. I must find a copy of *The Legend of the Christmas Rose* by Nobel-prize-winning Swedish author Selma Lagerlof for Frankie and Noel. After all, that's what her name



Sharmilio—the darling couple this week

means, Christmas Rose.

We are now in Ramadan, the Mohammedans more deeply so than we. No, it is not a chain of hotels or inns. It is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar and the month of fasting. During all the hours of daylight no food, no drink (not even water), and no smoking is allowed. Not until that moment at dusk when you can no longer distinguish a white thread from a black one are you able to break the fast—and then the feasting begins. Of all the religious fasts, I think of this one as being the most sanguine. During my student days in Paris we would try to eat each night of Ramadan at the *Restaurante des Mines*, the Muslim student restaurant. There was so much food you would have to forfeit two of your student tickets (at 22 cents each), rather than the usual one. But the amount of food, the festive atmosphere, and the exposure to a different culture and religion was worth it. The rest of the year the Israeli student restaurant was the favorite—always plenty of food and a good Jewish mother atmosphere at the pots and pans to help us through our studies. So when the moon was sighted at the end of Ramadan and the Muslim meals returned to normal portions, we switched camps. Oh, the fickleness of the empty student stomach.

The back yards of Provincetown, the oases below sea level: Bikes, toys, lawn chairs, a bit of grass, and the flowers, always the flowers. For those who garden, an orderly array of shapes and colors. For those who don't, the wind and birds carry the seeds of nature's more adaptable beauties. The sounds of a radioed ball game, children's laughter, or sometimes just snoring. Anything from a cold drink to a full-course meal is served. Games are played, songs are sung, conversations of all types are held. Yards are populated during heat waves long after the sun has set. When a yard is unpeopled, it flies their clothes in the wind. Only when it rains do the yards get a rest from us. And, of course, half of Commercial Street has the ultimate back yard, the Bay.