

The Ghosts of Federal Hill

BY JAYNE M. IAFRATE, EDITOR

I've been thinking a lot about my father recently, and I think that this wave of nostalgia has something to do with "The Sopranos."

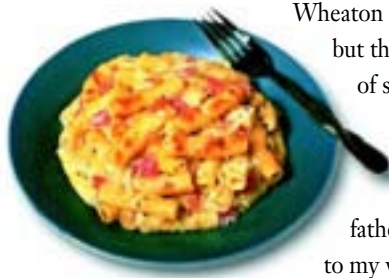
Renting the series' videotapes every weekend for the past few weeks, I've been catching up with pop culture and, in many ways, peeking into a little bit of my own family history. Like Tony, Big Pussy and many of the show's male characters, my father, Giorgio, was rotund, sedentary, often boyish, and very proud of his Italian heritage. Unlike the Soprano clan, my father was never a mobster. The hint of *La Cosa Nostra* was never far away, and because my father taught me to read using the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, I was somewhat aware of the ganglandscape of mid-1960s Rhode Island. We were not Mafia; we were Mafia-adjacent.

One of my favorite childhood memories is of grocery shopping with my father. There are certain foods you just cannot get at the local supermarket: pepperoni by the yard, warm, fragrant Italian bread, those little anise-flavored cookies that suffer greatly when under the influence of mass production. Federal Hill, Providence's own "Little Italy," was where my dad acquired these staples every Saturday morning, and my siblings and I pleaded—I mean, literally, on our knees—to go along. It was a ritual, and we didn't just love it; we *craved* it like an addiction. The Federal Hill outings introduced us to Italian food and adrenaline. We kids crouched in the car—hiding from the mob hitman that was out there *somewhere*—while dad walked from store to store. The combination of our favorite foods and imminent danger intoxicated us. Never on those trips did I see a real, live mobster, but I did develop an attachment to bakeries and delis.

My father's been dead for more than 20 years, a victim at age 50 of his lifelong love affair with fatty foods and cigarettes. It was the Pepperoni Mafia that whacked him, and I sometimes fear what it'll do to me. Since college—where I took the two requisite P.E. courses—I've struggled to maintain the balance between fit and fat, and I often think about my father. He chose to be sedentary, to eat with abandon, to smoke like a chimney. He loved life, but he chose to throw it away. I choose something else.

This year I seriously committed myself to regular, vigorous exercise and healthier eating habits. Is it a lifelong change? I hope so. Can

Wheaton students do the same? Perhaps, but they, too, will face the uphill battle of self-control and intelligent choices (story, page 16). The fight isn't easy. Every Saturday morning I awake with the ghosts of my father and Federal Hill. And then I go to my workout.



LETTERS

Bigger Magazine

The *Quarterly* I received yesterday is big, impressive, expansive, wonderful! The "In Memoriam" pages are such a nice testimonial compared to mention within the individual class notes. Thank you for your input to that growth and improvement; it affects all of us in a very positive way.

—Mary Hillyer '78

You've made drastic alterations to *Wheaton Quarterly*! Since this summer, I've really enjoyed the many beautiful photos, rich contents, clever layout, etc. As they are so beautiful and fun to read, I've started to keep them. Speaking of cover pages, I love the serene, black-and-white photo of Patricia A. King (summer 2002 issue) and the hilarious photo of Prof. [Joel] Relihan (fall 2002). Thank you for such a beautiful *Wheaton Quarterly*!

—Yaeko Jacques P'03

Harry Keefe Jr.

The obituary for Harry Keefe Jr. (summer 2002) is a tribute to him; however, it omits his initial connection with Wheaton and his motivation for his gifts. His first wife was Jean Mulcahy '44, who died Sept. 13, 1983. At the time of the Class of 1944's 40th Reunion, Harry Keefe Jr. established the Keefe Prize in Economics, which has been given annually. In recognition of that gift the class established the Class of '44 Memorial Scholarship Fund, which grows and flourishes. The soccer field is named for our classmate, Jean Mulcahy Keefe. The class appreciates Harry Keefe Jr.'s tenure on the Board of Trustees and his many subsequent gifts to Wheaton, including Keefe Hall.

—Mary "Myndie" Howard Nutting '44

CORRECTION

Muffy Pepper '62 writes: "The Great Class of 1962 has been hurt to the core!" and the *Quarterly* is the culprit. A photo caption in the fall 2002 issue incorrectly identified the foam-wigged Class of 1962 as the Class of 1975.