

One Life in Lodi Weekly News September 6, 2002

Jule Lo Faso Focarino by Artie Magloinico, Lodi Borough Historian

This story was printed in the Weekly News on September 6, 2002. Mrs. Focarino has since left us and is remembered here

Everything about Jule Lo Faso Focarino speaks of elegance; her style, grace and captivating charm puts her in a class of her very own. Even in the comfort of her living room the woman possesses star quality...a certain presence that immediately puts her on center stage. You cannot help but to notice her and once that you do there is no turning back. You are soon to discover that this special person is as interesting as she is lovely.

Jule was born on January 8, 1905. Her Father, John, arrived in the USA from Sicily in 1896. A year later he was followed by his wife Carmella and three children; James, Anna and Maria. In the spring of 1897, John moved his family from the crowded streets of New York City to the rolling hills and open meadows of Garfield New Jersey. By then the number of children had already grown by two; Joseph and Carmella. Not long after settling in Garfield, Jule was born. "My dad did construction work under the name of Pat Healy." recalls Jule. " He did that because all the work was going to the Irish people...my dad earned three dollars per week."

While John worked in construction Carmella stayed at home to care for her children. Back in the early 1900s, according to Jule, house work included scrubbing clothes on what was called a wash board...one piece at a time. To cook and heat the rooms during Winter a wood burning stove was used which meant ,of course, that someone had to venture out doors and chop away...often Carmella was that "someone." "We used hot bricks to keep us warm," remembers Jule."We'd warm our feet with them."

As did many of the families who settled in this area during the early 1900s the Lo Faso's raised their own farm animals. It wasn't unusual to see cows, chickens, pigs and goats roaming freely about the country side most of which was Jules' back yard. "One morning the children from a nearby school came over to play with our live stock." recalls Jule "We didn't realize that they were playing hooky in our yard until the Teacher arrived." The grammar school was located across the street from the Lo Faso home and was governed by teachers who answered to the names of Miss Sixpence, Miss De Scudder, Miss Mathis and Miss Brooks. "Miss Brooks struck terror in my heart," admits Jule "She was female Napoleon with a commanding air to match." Jule recalls the wintry day when she climbed to the top of the hill on Palisade Ave. with her new Flexible Flier sled. Miss Brooks bolted out the School house and asked to borrow it. "She whipped down the hill in a fever pitch with her long skirts blowing in the wind." say Jule "I still can't believe the incident happened."

Girlhood games included jump rope, hop scotch, and hide and seek. "The boys played marbles and base ball... but mostly they just pushed each other around." says Jule.

Jule married Lodi's Mr. Vince Focarino in 1932. The couple met on a cold December night while ice skating at Dahnerts Lake in Garfield. "My husband lived in Lodi with his parents Giuseppe and Carmela and eight sisters." recalls Jule "We had a house built on Grove Street in 1932 and have lived here ever since." During their early years of marriage Vince worked at his father's luncheonette which, at the time, was located at 483 Passaic Ave. in Lodi. In the mid 30s Vince began a local news paper called the Lodi Bulletin. In the early 50s Vince sold the paper to the Paci Family who in turn changed its name to the Lodi Messenger. After Vince's death in 1957 Jule, with three children to look after, went to work at the Lodi Library where, after 18 years, she retired from in 1975. "The day I left the boiler exploded," says Jule "Till this day they say I left with a bang!

Jule was the first member of the Lodi Women's Club which was organized in 1938. Some of the clubs earliest members included; Rae Sorbello, Rose Di Biasio, Hazel Costa, Mary Roma, Mary Paporozzi and Jane D. Riccardi. The original meeting hall was at the Second Reformed Church on 59 Main Street. Mrs. Focarino attended Garfield and Hasbrouck Heights High Schools and Graduated from Drake Business Academy in 1921. She was secretary of the Board of Education in the 1930s

"My special friend over the years remains Michelene Satkowski." says Jule "We worked at the Library together." Jule is the Mother of three children Joseph, Ron and Cynthia. She has one grandchild; Sara Kate.