

***Artful Thinking*** ( published in August 2012)

By Art Maglionico

I have always been, on some level, an entertainer. Even as a child I recall standing up in front of the relatives at those outdoor Italian weddings in the Bronx singing Volare with my cousins Johnny, Anthony, Philip and Richie . We'd sing a line or two in Italian, if that much, and would wind up finishing the song in a language all our own. The funny thing about it was that everyone sang along . For all we knew we might have been singing in Italian after all. I knew even then that performing was in my blood and was forever trying to work my way into the spotlight.

By my teenage years I was certain that singing and entertaining were my true calling--I had found my niche. What I didn't find, however, was an audience! Guys like Bobby Rydell, Frankie Avalon, Fabian and later, a group from Liverpool who called themselves the Beatles--perhaps you've heard of them--were stealing my thunder. There was no one around to sing in front of. My family was sick of listening to my various renditions of Volare. My girlfriend at the time, Molly, would stare dreamy eyed at first but that came to an abrupt end with the arrival of the "Fab Four" on the Ed Sullivan show in February of 1964. There were those who thought that I resembled one of the "Lads from Liverpool" and I enjoyed the attention . At the end of the day, however, the only audience I was going home to was my three-legged dog Dusty. But when the dog yummies ran out, Dusty was nowhere to be found. My dream of seeing my name up in lights was over unless of course I changed my name to "Exit" which didn't set to well with my Mother who saw fit to name me Arthur. Truthfully? I never really liked the name Arthur. Then again, the name Arthur kept with the flow of the other unusual names in my immediate family...Vito...Lena...Eugene and Arthur. My brother was given the nick name "Soupy" when he was in grammar school and it stuck with him until his death in 1995...Me? I'm still Arthur!

Anyway, where was I? Oh yeah. Shattered dreams all hidden in the shadows behind a lofty wall of failure. Am I being too hard on myself folks? My only failure was the failure to continue to pursue that dream of mine. Which is what I'm in the midst of

doing even as you read this. A few months ago, the King of Karaoke, Jack Sepede, and I decided to try our hand at performing in front of a live audience instead of the department store mannequins that Macy's had thrown out. After months of rehearsing and gathering material, we decided it was time to pack up the karaoke machine, grab the microphones and take to the road. Which, by the way, is the name of our group, *Two for the Road*.

Our first gig, which is the artistic name for job, was in front of 300 beautiful senior citizens at a pizza party held at their facility on Park Place here in Lodi. We received a warm welcome. Unfortunately for Jack and I, we didn't start performing until after the pizza--big mistake!

We made an attempt to sing while they were handing out the pizza. But we were interfering with the guy who was calling out the tables number by number. During my song, all you could hear was "Table 15, line up for your pizza" and so on. Finally, we had no recourse but to wait until everyone was done eating. By then, many of the seniors were putting on their coats looking for the door, which was right next to where we had set up.

We began singing in earnest as the audience walked passed us on their way to the door. All I could hear was Jack, standing next to me, warning them not to trip over the wire on their way out. No, he wasn't being sarcastic folks, he was genuinely concerned. By the time I had finished my song, the room was all but empty save for ten enthusiastic women who sat down in front of us. They actually enjoyed our performance. Not as much as the pizza, mind you, which is why it got top billing.