

Barbara (Morris) Reitz

I am the sixth of eight beautiful children born unto the most amazing parents a child could ask for. My parents, Joseph and Josephine (Salvagno) Morris, are the King and Queen of a very large family.

My parents were born in New York City in 1929 and 1930 and built their Castle among many Castles in the heartland of Southern of Bronx New York. But before my parents would build their castle they would share a similar life that will cross their paths at a very young age.

My father's parents date back to a settling in New England with English, Irish, French Canadian and American Indian heritage. According to story's past down and it is written in an ancestry family tree that is documented, that the famous writer, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is a great relative on my father's side.

My mother's parents, Giuseppe and Teresa Salvagno came to America in 1921 from Melfi, Italy. Melfi is a little town and comune in the Vulture area of the Province of Potenza, in the Southern Italian region of Basilicata. It is written in the manuscripts that my maternal grandparents came to America for a more prosperous life. It has been told to us that they struggled as immigrants, as many did, my grandfather having a hard time finding work then worked as an ice man. My grandmother raising 7 children in apartments called the cold water flats; she would take sewing jobs to help feed the children. Life was very hard.

In 1938, both my parents' lives would face tragic family hardships that would bring them together beginning a love story of all love stories. Fate. In 1938, my maternal grandmother passes at a very early age of 38, leaving 7 children behind with my grandfather to raise. My mom was 7 years old. In 1938, my paternal grandfather passes away at a very early age of 38, leaving 2 children behind with my grandmother to raise. My dad was 7 years old. With both my parents growing up in poor neighborhoods their parents struggled to care for their children. So by the end of 1938 both families would have their children placed in an orphanage. In 1938, my mom and dad at age 7, never knowing each other were now placed in Saint Joseph's Home for children in Peekskill, New York. It is where they met and

fell in love. It is no coincidence that their lives would bring them here where they will be raised by nuns until their graduation from Peekskill high school at age 18.

For the 10 years in the orphanage my parents along with their siblings lived a life of Faith and hope. It wasn't a perfect life for them separated from their surviving parent but for me and my brothers and sisters, it was the beginning of their love story and a legacy to live on through eternity. In 1948, my parents left the orphanage, married 2 years later and began to write a love story of their own. They lived in the Bronx and moved to Putnam County in 1968 raising 8 children (4 boys and 4 girls) My parents married for nearly 58 years until the passing of my best friend, my mom in 2006. My dad, retired, still shares stories of their childhood. Our family has grown into one of the most loving, close family's I have ever known. We are each other's best friends and when all together we are more than 100 strong. My parents showed us what love and faith is all about and gave us what they themselves lost at a very young age. "It is all about God's Children", my mom would say. Love them in faith and comfort and they will do the same.

I was born in the Bronx attended PS 30 as a child and moved to Putnam County in 1968. I was 10. I attended Carmel High School. I have 4 Brothers and 3 sisters who are my best friends. I am a proud mom of 3. My son Michael, married with 2 children is a Deputy Sheriff. My daughter Jaime is married and an amazing mother of 3 children. My daughter, Alyssa is a 2nd Class Petty Officer with the United States Navy. I love being grandmother (nonnie) of 5. I am married to an amazing husband, James F. Reitz for 10 years and we love living in Mahopac.

My whole life I knew I would work and care for our Youth. I am honored to work for the Putnam County Youth Court Program as Coordinator for the past 27 years. Youth Court is an actual court, a unique and effective alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system, diversion program giving youth a second chance at making positive choices in their lives. I enjoy teaching the youth about their civic responsibilities and upholding The Constitution. Youth Court has also allowed me to work with over 1,700 positive youth court members and families and give back to the community close to a half a million community service volunteer hours representing every town and every school district. Feeling blessed to work with our youth, They have honored me with many citations and recognitions from

congress, state and local legislatures, as well as the Putnam magistrates association, and in this past year, 2014 I received a proclamation as the recipient of Putnam County's first woman's leadership, service and alliance and chamber of commerce award. I have also worked with our at-risk population as a teacher assistant at Lakeland Alternative High School. I have also been a substitute teacher at Carmel High School and a community liaison at the New York State Senate Office for 3 years. I have an associate degree from Dutchess Community College; a Bachelors Degree in Social Work at Marist College in 1998. And a Masters Degree in Social Work at Adelphi University in 1999. I am currently a Board member of Cornell Cooperative Extension, serving as the chair person on strengthening youth and families committee. I have volunteered at many meaningful events, American Heart Society, March of Dimes, Salvation Army, MS walk, Make a Wish, and personally spending time at the Hartford's Children's Hospital Cancer Unit. My greatest joy is spending time with my Family and feeling blessed to be able to share my life and love with our greatest gifts, our children.

It is an Honor to be a part of the Italian American Club of Mahopac Family. I know my Italian/American grandparents are proud as they have made many sacrifices for our family to be able to live the Great American Dream they came here looking for. Alongside every great man is an amazing and powerful Woman!