Maria-Josephine Rosato was born in October 12, 1943 in Crespano Del Grappa, Veneto Region, Italy. One of 4 children she spent her time going to school until 11 years of age before, moving to a big city called Busto Arsizio, Lombardia and became a nanny.

She did not always know my Nonno, Domenic Pegoraro. He was born on May 3, 1938 and one of six children, he grew up in Bassano Del Grappa, Veneto Region, Italy. He went to school for five years before leaving to work in a factory for a while. At the age of 22 in 1960, struggling to find work, he joined the army for a year.

Their paths crossed 60 years ago, at a party in the mountains in Covolo. My Nonna was 13 and my Nonno was 18. In that time, when you met someone you knew you liked you had to hold onto it. They were both so young and so unaware of how their lives were about to change in the next 3 years.

After being friends for 3 years, my Nonno decided to pack up his things and move to Australia in order to work towards a better future for the both of them. Nonna was 18 when she came to Australia on a boat called Neptunia. 28 day boat ride. Nonno came on a boat called Oceania.

Gianna was from the same area and joined her. Nonno lived with Zia lina when he arrived. Lived with Zia Lina for a year, then moved to Tottenham and lived in a Bungalow for about a year. Then they went to live with Zio Mario in nORTH sUNSHINE for another year and then eventually bought a house in St Albans. Lived in that house for 32 or 33 years then moved to Sydenham.

When nonna first arrived the people were very nasty, the people she worked with, the aussie people were rude because they didn’t understand what the Europeans went through to get here. Nonna worked Pelaco in Richmond making mens shirts, there was one lady whe she used to walk in in the morning and she used to say goodmorning to this one lady and the lady called her a wog. She learnt English by watching tv and listening to the radio.

Ate everything Italian when she got here, in Footscray in Buckley street there was an Italian butcher and there was a deli and you could get good meats.

She didn’t like anything about Asutralia when she first came and used to eat bread and milk and cried and wanted to go back. The flat land and houses.

To have fun they would go out and socialize, go to movies in Footscray, Nonno bought his first car and they would go for picnics. Then they met friends and they would go camping and go travelling around Australia.

New:

Maria was 18 when she came to Australia in 1962, in search of a better life, a better career and to start a family. She came on a 28 day trip on a boat called Neptunia. Her soon to be husband, Domenic, had been in Australia for a year previous to that, trying to work to prepare for her arrival. At the beginning, thy lived with Domenic’s aunty for a year, before moving to Tottenham to live in a bungalow for a year. Finally, they lived with Domenic’s uncle for a year, before building their own house in St Albans. Maria said that in their street in that time, there were people from all over the world living next to them, who had come to Australia for the same reasons as her and Domenic. They lived in that house for 33 years and now reside in Sydenham and call Australia home.

In early days, Maria said the people were very nasty to her because she could not speak English. She believed that this prejudice was due to the fact that Australians did not understand what the Europeans went through to get to Australia, they didn’t know their story. Her first job was working for Pelaco in Richmond making men’s shirts. She then went on to take on a very serious role at Schweppes for many years. She told the story of how the opportunity to work, created problems for her personal life. She became devoted to her work, she enjoyed having something that she knew she was good at. Of course at first, Maria felt uncomfortable living in a country that she didn’t know. She did things like, not go outside, eat only bread and drink only milk, cry for days on end. In that time, there was only one place where she felt she could get Italian food from and that was a Deli and butcher in Buckley Street. Being able to go there made her feel like she was back in Italy for a second, because she could use those ingredients to cook Italian meals at home.

After quite some time, going out became a way for Maria and Domenic to include themselves into the Australian community. They would go to the movies in Footscray, they would go camping to Yarrawonga and Mildura in their caravan and would also go for picnics somewhere local.

After teaching herself to speak English by listening to the radio and watching television, going out and socializing with other recent migrants and stepping into the workforce, she realized what opportunities our country could bring her. Now she strongly suggests that she would never go back to Italy and Australia is definitely her home.