

The Blue Ring

(Based On The Biography Of Marie-Jeanne)

The Blue Ring

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Marie-Jeanne Vella's Genealogy Chart

Father's Side

Giovanni Di Vella - Grandfather
Jean Vella (French for Giovanni)

Teresa Di Angioli/Vella - Grandmother

Children of Giovanni Dei Vella & Teresa

Aaron (later known as Gerard Vella)
Vittorio
Armando
Pietrina

*Children of Honorine (later married to Antoine Cassini, known as Anto)

Liliane (daughter)
***Emma (daughter)

**Children of Pipo (married to Yvonne)

Jean (known as Jeannot - son)
Claude (son)
René (son)

***Emma (married Henri Luque)

Children of Gerard Vella & Olimpia

Giovanni Vella (known later as Jean Vella--nickname: Nini)
Marie-Jeanne Vella (named after Jean) (married to Merritt E. Darr)

Children of Marie-Jeanne Vella-Darr and Merritt E. Darr

Alan J. Darr
Chérie L. Darr

Mother's Side

Bernardo Pizzio - Grandfather
(also known as Pépé)

Catérina Pizzio - Grandmother
(also known as Mémé Catin)

Children of Bernardo Pizzio & Catérina

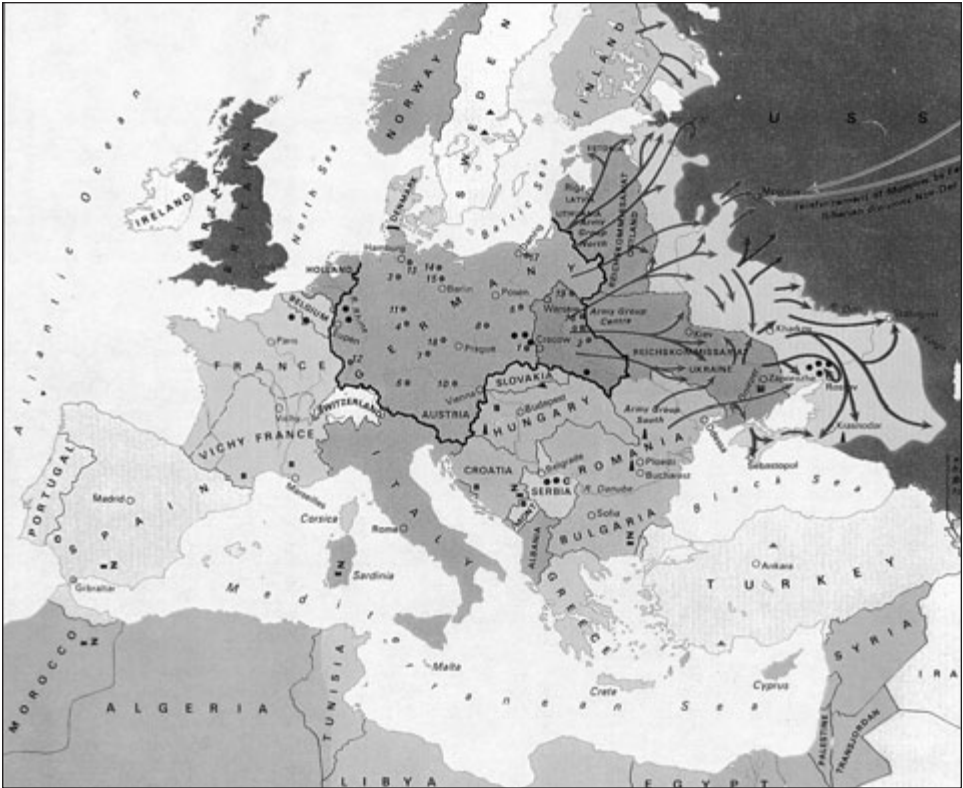
Olimpia Pizzio
Honorina Pizzio
Bernard Pizzio (Pipo)
Claudino Pizzio (Lino)
Valerino Pizzio
Adalgiza Pizzio (Ziza)

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Serbian Prince Milan, who also hoped that an aggressive foreign policy would relieve his domestic problems, demanded that *Bulgaria* cede some of its territory to *Serbia*. An international conference was convened to consider how the powers should respond to *Bulgaria's* enlargement and to *Serbia's* claims. It became deadlocked in November of 1885 and *Serbia* declared war. Prince Milan accepted an armistice only when *Austria-Hungary* threatened to enter the war in *Serbia's* defense. The Treaty of *Bucharest* (March 3, 1886) which concluded the war, reestablished the prewar *Serbo-Bulgarian* borders and left *Bulgaria* and *Eastern Rumelia* united.

When my grandfather, Giovanni was discharged, he petitioned to relocate



Europe about 1941.

to *Menton*, on the *French Riviera*. He also changed his name upon becoming a French citizen. Giovanni was changed to the French translation which is “Jean” and Di Vella became “Vella.” They quickly settled in as a family and had three sons and a daughter. The boys were Aaron (named after the King of Egypt), Vittorio (named after the King of Italy), and Armando. The girl was named Pietrina.

When Aaron started school, he began to use his middle name, Gerard, to

Our Family Roots

avoid being teased. Being tall and slender with large dark brown eyes, he was quite handsome. Moreover, his wit, charm and ambition often worked in his favor. However, he was also known to be unpredictable, unreliable at times, and quite a playboy. Being a promotional sales representative, he frequently took business trips to the *Italian Riviera*. On one of his trips, he met Olimpia.

At a distance of only 15 kilometers from the coast, *Perinaldo* is situated on the top of a small mountain and offers a wonderful view both over the sea and over the Alps. *Perinaldo*, founded in the XI century by Count Rinaldo di *Ventimiglia*, was a holiday resort with hotels, restaurants and good inns. The road which links this pretty village with the *Via Aurelia*, near Vallecrosia, winds amongst flower-fields and olive groves and the trip can be made in about twenty minutes.

Napoleon the First in 1797, during his campaign in Italy, stopped there. It is the native place of the well-known astronomers: Giandomenico Cassini (1625-1712) and Giacomo Filippo Maraldi. Cassini's castle with its tower from where he studied the vault of heaven, and a church he ordered to be built on the Ligurian meridian, are still there. In the parish church, dedicated to St. Nicolo and recently restored, there is a valuable artistic painting: "La Madonna del Suffragio" (Our Lady of Support) whose painter is unknown.

It is possible to make beautiful excursions to: *Monte Bignone*, *Monte Caggio*, *Monte Ceppo*, *San Romolo* and to the neighboring villages, easily reached by panoramic asphalt roads, which run amongst Pine and Chestnut-woods. *Perinaldo's* inhabitants are principally floriculturists (roses and mimosas) and agriculturists (wine and olive oil). Thanks to its splendid position in the hill country, distant from the sea as from the more elevated mountains, *Perinaldo* has a very mild climate and is an ideal place for a holiday.

Bernardo Pizzio, a lawyer by trade, had been elected to the office of Mayor of *Perinaldo*. He was also the conductor of the Municipal Band. Bernardo



Perinaldo located in the Alps (Italian Riviera) above San Remo and Ventimiglia

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played five different instruments and was very fluent in Latin and French besides his native language, Italian. His wife, Caterina owned the only store in town and one would have to buy everything he needed at her market. Otherwise, the next market was in *Ventimiglia*.

The Pizzio's had three boys and three girls. The boys were named Bernard, nicknamed Pipo (to avoid confusing him with his father), Claudino, nicknamed Lino and Valerino. The girls were Olimpia, Honorine, and Zize (Adalgisa). They had a large home which the family had built in 1892. It had three levels with balconies built all around. The home was located next to the Maraldi Castle.

On the ground floor, there was a large kitchen and a very spacious dining room with large doors opening into a yet larger room known as "La Salla". This room was where the Municipal Band would come to rehearse and where many large parties and gatherings were held. The other two floors were small apartments that had bedrooms with sitting rooms and mini kitchens. There were a total of six apartments. Bernardo had designed this house so that all of his children would continue to come and be together, having a place to stay during the summer. He thought that as his children grew up and had their own families to raise, they would continue to come and stay, having their own

privacy. They would, however, be able to get together with the other children and their families for meals in the main dining room on the ground floor. To this day, his idea worked and every summer, the families get together and stay in this home following this long-time tradition.

The Pizzio's were very much liked and respected in the community. They helped others constantly with free food and medications from their store and often Bernardo would even give them free legal advice for their personal affairs. Once a week, the Municipal Band would come and rehearse at Bernardo's home. The Band was composed of about fifteen to twenty musicians. On rehearsal night, however, there were always more than forty people gathered which made the rehearsals more like social gatherings. They would serve wine and



A street in Perinaldo.

Our Family Roots



Views from our balcony.



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Bridge in the vicinity of Marignane.

tion. In came the American delegation along with some French officials. I was so overwhelmed that I hardly remember what was said. I was introduced around and questioned in English. I answered as well as I could. Fortunately I understood every word; however, I was aware that my pronunciation was terrible. One of the majors broke away from the group and led me toward a typewriter. He introduced himself as Major Shinn. He was going to be in charge of the new depot “Engineer Depot E-521”. They were going to take over an old unused factory on the outskirts of town where there was a lot of land surrounding it. He asked several questions and told me to write everything down - both questions and answers. He also wanted to know how and why I had learned English. He had already been informed of my activities with the FFI. He smiled and said “When can you start?” I immediately replied, “Right now.”

With a big grin he said,

“Your knowledge of the English language, especially your writing is excellent. Your pronunciation, however, will need to be improved.” (This was a nice way of putting it) and he added,

“Consider yourself hired as of now. You are to report starting tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. A vehicle will be here in front of the City Hall to take you to the location. You will be in charge of recruiting French personnel. Everyday dur-

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With Glen Ford at the "Foire de Marseille".

mail." Naturally, I was speechless. When I recovered some I asked: "How long have you been on this route?" He replied: "Oh I have been on this route for years, and I could tell you pretty close how many letters you have received in the last year. I have a wonderful memory." He kept on divulging all his qualities as a postman. Holding the letter I walked into the house biting my lip and slamming the door with anger. My mother came running to the door to see what was happening and my Uncle Pipo came out of the shop concerned. After he had moved to town with his family, I didn't get to see him very much because I always came home late. I faced them both and asked, "Who gave you the right to hide my mail?"

They were confounded. Uncle Pipo started to scratch his head and looked at my mother for an explanation. So did I. She started to tell me she had lost

one son and did not want to lose the only child she had left because this was what would happen if I went to America. We did have a serious discussion. Then without a word, my mother went back to the spare bedroom and came out with three shoe-boxes full of unopened letters from Merritt; a 2 to 3-year supply of letters.

The atmosphere in the house was rather stormy. I spent that afternoon going through some of the letters. I did not know what to do. I had to write Merritt and tell him what?

A couple of weeks later I received a summons from the mayor of Marignane who wanted to talk to me. This was strange and perplexing.

When I reported to the city hall and spoke to the mayor he informed me that Merritt Darr had requested a search with the Geneva Red Cross to find out my whereabouts. It seemed this was not the first time the mayor had contacted my family. This time however, he decided to do it officially. A summons would get me to show up at city hall. I was extremely embarrassed, more so when he added, "Marie-Jeanne, this gentleman has been writing to you for the longest time and to us also and you have not responded. Give this poor man

« The Blue Ring » (la Bague Bleue)

La deuxième Guerre Mondiale (en notre opinion) a attiré un intérêt extrême qui ne changera jamais. Toutefois, personne n'a rendu hommage aux hommes, femmes et enfants sans quoi la Résistance n'aurait pas survécu. Ces citoyens faisaient partie d'un « groupe spécial, » qui recueillait des renseignements délicats et d'extrême importance, qui par des voies secrètes étaient transmis aux Forces Alliées.

« The Blue Ring » (la Bague Bleue) décrit l'enfance de Marie-Jeanne, et sa participation avec la « Résistance » et révèle son héritage de naissance, qui a affecté la vie de sa famille et en particulier la sienne et celle de son frère, qui a péri durant une mission spéciale lors de la « Bataille de la Bulge. »

Cet ouvrage non seulement retiendra votre attention, mais succédera a vous éclairer sur le rôle tenu par ces Héros méconnus.