

MY IMPRESSIONS OF BERNALDA WHILE EXPLORING MY ROOTS:  
SECOND TRIP (1996)

L.F. Dell'Osso

*Sunday, June 23 1996:*

We left Sorrento by taxi with Mitchel Hiroda and arrived at the Naples airport at 8:10 am. By 8:30 we were on our way to Bernalda. The countryside was as beautiful as I had remembered it to be. We were in Bernalda by 11:15. On Corso Umberto Primo we turned right and found via Verdi. We parked and registered at the albergo DiStasi.

I took Charlene on a short tour of Bernalda, passing some of the Dell'Osso houses and the new Commune building; this meant that there was a possibility that the older records would be available. We then had lunch and after that, we unpacked and took a nap. We had dinner at 8 and walked up and down Corso Umberto I, stopping at one of the Bars that Don Mariano had frequented. We met Mr. & Mrs. Angelo Tataranno. They were taking contributions for Russian children who were being cared for in Bernalda. He had written a historical account of a politically important time in Bernalda's history that included the roles of four Dell'Ossos, dott. Camillo, Francesco, Gaetano, and dott. Luigi. He promised to have his wife drop a copy off at the albergo for me. We later met Don Mariano and caught up on the past four years over drinks. At 1:30 am we returned to the albergo.

*Monday, June 24:*

The day began in the new Commune, where we were told that it would be impossible to see any records and could not even make a request until 4:30 the next day. I was not about to waste 1.5 days and be denied those records. With the help of one of the women who worked there, M. Salfi was called and when he arrived, he explained that he had rescued all the old records back to 1809, when civil records were begun, and had them at the biblioteca. We went to his house where we looked over records he was working on. A friend of his stopped by and offered to get me a short history that was done by school children. Also, we were told of an anthropology student, Rosa Parisi, who was studying the Dell'Ossos. She returned to Bernalda, and we met her while walking with M. Salfi. She accompanied us to his house and I showed her my computer printouts and program. It seemed that Don Peppino had some old church records from the 1700's and we decided that Rosa and I would try to get him to allow us to study them. We tried for several hours to locate him but he was traveling. He was due back at the church at 4:30 pm. We had lunch and rested and met Rosa at 4:30 in the park near the church. We waited but he did not show up. We checked an old, small church and found he would be there at 5:30. We went to the biblioteca and M. Salfi met us there and showed us the ledgers he had saved. They went back to 1809 from 1860, which was the oldest I had seen in 1992. I began to look through them with Charlene and, at 5:30 pm, we went to the small church and met with Don Peppino. I reminded him of my prior trip and of marching with him and Don Mariano in the Feast parade in 1992. He agreed to allow Rosa to borrow some ledgers and to have me look through them. We returned to the biblioteca and began looking through the civil archives M. Salfi had stored there. At 8 pm we went to Don Peppino's house to pick up some ledgers. They were very old and in poor condition but were the oldest records in existence. We took them back to the albergo and went to have dinner and relax for the evening. At 11:30, we returned to look at the records. There were two

birth and two matrimonial ledgers, dating from 1748 to 1802; from there the civil ledgers would take over.

*Tuesday, June 25:*

We had breakfast and I began writing this record of the trip to Bernalda. At 10:15, we went to M. Salfi's house. We worked on the church matrimonial and baptism books (all in Latin) from 10:30 am to 6:30 pm with about 30 min for lunch with M. Salfi and his wife. Before going back to the albergo, we stopped off and saw Guido. We discussed some of our family tree and he said that we would meet his father on Friday at 10 am and we would all have lunch together. He also said that his brother, Pierluigi would like to meet me; perhaps on my next trip I can stay in Rome for some time and meet with him. We rested for an hour and had dinner and Rosa joined us; she did not go to Potenza. We spent the rest of the night on Corso Umberto I, where we told Don Mariano of our work with Don Peppino's records. It seems that there might be copies of all Bernalda's church records in the dioceses of Matera (both Rosa and Don Mariano think so).

*Wednesday, June 26:*

We had breakfast and took laundry to be washed; then on to the biblioteca to work on civil matrimonial records from 1809-1838. We worked all day, having lunch (panino's) in the library with Rosa. We proved that there were two Filippo's (cousins) who gave rise to the two main branches of the family; one the Gianbatista (lawyers, notaries, politicians) and the other, my side, (priests, medical/pharmaceutical, craftsmen). To find the point the two branches joined, probably in 1700, we will need to see the church records in Matera (next trip). I will try to get the death records from Don Peppino when we return the matrimony and baptism records. I made copies of the analyses of the Don Peppino records for M. Salfi and gave them to him that evening at the "Monica" bar. We had dinner at the Ristorante Vecchio.

*Thursday, June 27:*

We spent the day at the biblioteca finishing the civil patrimonial records up to 1865; the rest are in the Communal building. M. Salfi joined us in the afternoon to go over the work, correcting errors in spelling, etc. He is looking into possible relatives from my side of the Dell'Osso family that are still in Bernalda. During dinner, Don Peppino stopped to greet us and I told him of our progress, especially of finding out that there were so many priests in my family. I asked if we could see the death records when we returned the others and he agreed. Rosa returns tomorrow and we should do that.

*Friday, June 28:*

After breakfast, we did some work in the library and then went to see Guido and his father, Berardino. Unfortunately, his father was not up to the trip and Guido arrived at about 12. While waiting for him, we went with Rosa to see Rosa Dell'Osso, who lives on Via Italia. She has a brother, Pasquale and she gave us a short description of her family, which may be connected to both Guido's and Giuseppe's; her father's name was Emmanuele. Guido doesn't think that his family is connected to hers or to Giuseppe's in the way I outlined; the records will tell. Guido had to leave and we arranged to meet again at 6 pm. We went back to the biblioteca and worked all day. At 4:30, we went to the cemetery with M. Salfi and afterwards, saw Guido again. We picked up our laundry and I went with Rosa to Don Peppino's, after picking up the church books at M. Salfi's. We gave them back to Don Peppino and he allowed us to take three books of deaths and

the first book of baptisms that we had missed on our first visit. This was the most valuable book of the trip. It started from 1748 and went to 1777. This would give us names of fathers and mothers dating back to about 1710 and should finally allow us to make the link between my branch and the Cav. Luigi branch of the Dell'Osso family. Rosa and I picked up Charlene at the albergo and went to see Giovanni Russo, who had some old records of the Dell'Osso family. He showed us church records of all members of the community that detailed economic, census, and personal information that probably was gleaned from the confessionals. The entry about my great-grandfather, Francesco Paolo, described him as a middle class cabinet maker who was a "good man". After leaving there, we went to dinner at Ristorante Vecchio and had pizza, desert and brandy Alexanders. We then had coffee at Monica's bar and went home.

*Saturday, June 29:*

We went to M. Salfi's and began the work on the baptismal records; the index alone took 3 hours; Rosa joined us late in the morning. We took a break at 1:30 (for lunch), rested, and resumed work at 3:30. We finally finished the book at 7:30 and made photocopies of the work and of M. Salfi's diagram of the Giambattista/Luigi branch of the family. We rested for an hour and went to dinner. After dinner we walked and met Don Mariano, M. Salfi's friend (the journalist), Mimi the librarian, and the woman who works at the commune. We had coffee at Monica's and went home after buying a gift for the Salfi's. We will try to meet Don Mariano for drinks at the San Donato bar Sunday night.

*Sunday, June 30:*

We began work on the three death books at M. Salfi's at 9 am. Before starting work, I used the computer to ask him and his wife to have lunch or dinner with us. They accepted for lunch. We were able to finish the three death books by 12:15 and we met for lunch at 1:30. Lunch took 2 1/2 hours and we then went to view the Grecian ruins, Pythagoris's table, tombs and the ancient city of Metaponto. We stopped at the beach before coming back to Bernalda. At 7:40, I picked up the church books at M. Salfi's and said goodbye to them and Mrs. Salfi. I got gas before the station closed, since it would not be open on Monday. We went out on the Corso Umberto for the last time to sit, drink and, later, eat (we were still full from the lunch).

*Monday, July 1:*

We drove to Naples, dropped the car off, relaxed at the hotel, and had dinner.

*Tuesday, July 2:*

We flew home from Naples to New York to Cleveland.