

Maryse and Silvano Maestriperi protagonists, alongside Bob McConnell, in the work for the realization of the CARES project 1961-1962

I was twenty when I decided to come to Italy to learn the language, as an au pair, for a year with a family in Florence.

A dear friend of the family, Madame Burri who belonged to the Church of the Brothers of Bern, very active and enterprising in collecting collections for the children of the Command Institute in Florence and for the Maternal Home in Portici (Naples), proposed that I accept an offer that was presented at that time to the Command Institute .

It was about replacing Vreni Tchanz, a girl from Bern, who took care of the smallest children of the Comandi.

At that time there was a great need for help looking after the children.

I didn't have to repeat it twice, just enough time to pack my bags and take advantage of the ride by Vreni's mother who was going to Florence to bring her daughter back to Switzerland.

Before leaving, I will never be able to forget my father's words: "You won't come back with an Italian"?

Not only did I come back with an Italian but I stayed in Italy all my life!

I only knew two words in Italian: Good morning and Good evening on I learned the rest with those ten wonderful children who me entrusted.



It wasn't easy at first ...

Many of them talked
only the dialect and for me
it was already difficult
Italian.

In three months I did many
progress, next day
day, starting with
everyday words:
breakfast, bread, milk,
barley, pajamas, school,
play, etc.



I took care of most
little ones: in the morning I helped them wash, dress, have breakfast, then get ready
with aprons, and finally I entrusted them to Walter who took them to school.

Nicolino Pietoso, I think he was four years old, he was the most lively and likeable,
he made me laugh so much when he said to me: "Tignorina I have to go to the tabinetto"!



Walter con i
bambini

Stewart looked after the older about 40 boys.

I admired Bob McConnel for his stubborn dedication to wearing ahead of that project with a thousand difficulties.

I remember with emotion his wife Marianne and good children.



I cherish, with affection, the memory of Gina at the porter's lodge, always intent on tidying up and reading the Bible in quiet moments.

Many volunteers and available, worked with the their time and energy, to carry on the work of Comandi: like Mrs. Cesarina Targetti, wife of a Florentine entrepreneur in the lighting sector, who helped in the wardrobe to mend and sew, together with Maria

and Ersilia.

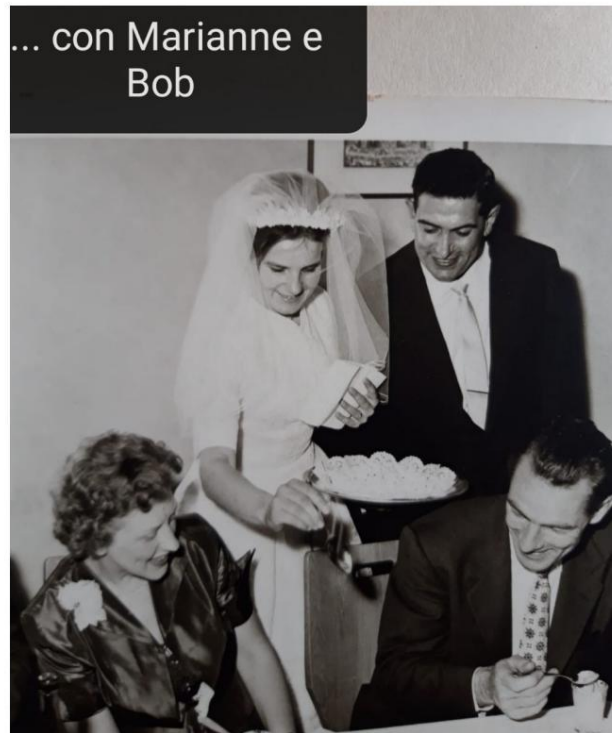
Every Saturday Silvano came to help Miriam in the secretariat, and to organize football matches with the boys.

I was immediately struck by the his attitude polite, always joyful and smiling in the be together with lads.

Marisa e Silvano
con i bimbi



He immediately flirted with me and after some time without much preamble he asked me to marry him, and I, who reciprocated his feelings, replied that I did not know how to tell my father!



AGLI SPOSI

Oh! lieto giorno d'amore,
Giorno d'unione e di raggiunta felicità,
Dinanzi al Signore con sacro vincolo uniti.
Sposo, a te l'amore immacolato
Della dolce tua sposa.
Ed a te sposa, la perenne fedeltà
Del tuo amato consorte.
Da ognuno dei nostri cuori
Scaturisca l'augurio sincero e puro
Di una vita serena e felice.
-di croce).

Silvano was full of initiatives to raise some money for the work with the boys and one of these was to raise chickens both for sale and for the Institute canteen.

He bought the newborn chicks and raised them under one lamp in the cellar and when they became chickens, the kids more adults sold them on Saturdays in neighboring houses.

Thanks to Bob

the Institute went

well and the boys

had increased by

number.

Bob often went

in Abruzzo and in

Campania a

visit of

people of his own

knowledge

invariably

came back with goods

kids

disadvantaged and in

difficulties in

their families, promising parents to give them an education and also help to place them in the world of work.



I have wonderful memories of the joy that was breathed during meals and of the joyful songs all together.

I must admit that I had a lot to do with the children, in the after-school and then in tidying up the rooms ... in the evening I was destroyed but, with the energy of my twenties, it didn't weigh on me that much because the children gave me so much joy.

For one Christmas some shirts were made for the boys and I took the measurements for each of them.

On Sunday there was worship in via della Vigna Vecchia it had become impossible to bring seventy boys , but to the streets of Florence so in the end Bob decided to worship at the Comandi.

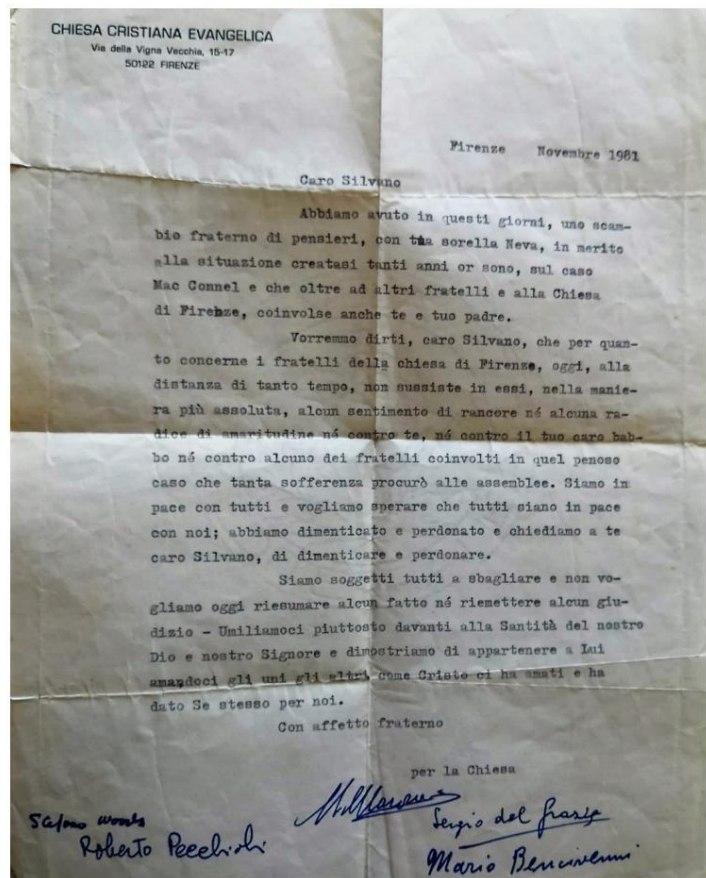
To my knowledge this was one of the reasons they cracked

the relations between Bob McConnell and the Elders of the Church of the Brothers of Florence who admonished him for the behavior not congruent with their wishes.

In the meantime, I had married Silvano and upon returning from our honeymoon we found a letter of "Excommunication" in the mailbox because we supported Bob in his work for the Institute.

We felt mortified and disappointed but, I prefer not to comment on this action ..., we still decided to continue to stand by Bob's side, aware of being right.

Twenty years later we received a letter of rehabilitation and apology.



Silvano neglected his work to dedicate himself body and soul to the birth of Casa Cares.

The first stop was the transfer to via Vannini and then via Aretina.

Naturally Bob also had the support of his brothers from the north: Paolo Baratta di Piverone, Lenti, Plato, Cipollini, Gastaldi, Ruffa and Gioele Mongiovetto.

Practically the whole Command Institute moved!

I left the service in the Institute to other girls such as Verena Liechti, Jeanette and Claire Guedel, to dedicate myself to the creation of a new family with Silvano.



In the summer of 1966 we went to Ischia to find Silvano's aunt to bring her some support and comfort as she lived in solitude.

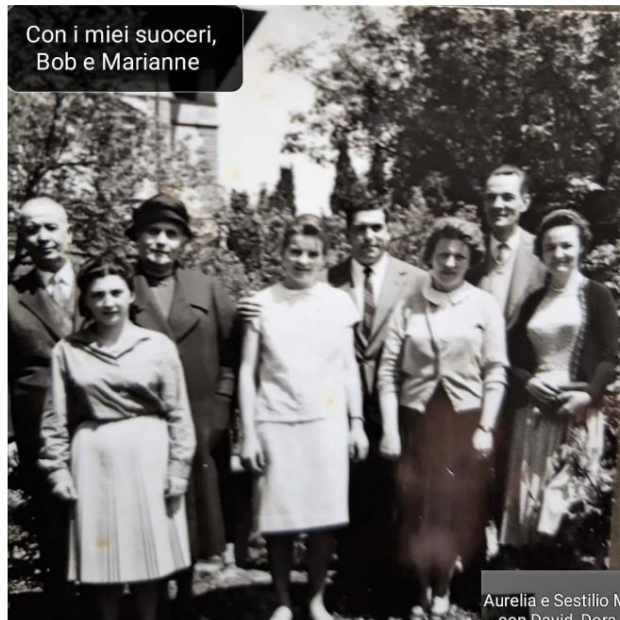
We were planning to stay 2 months ... we stayed there the whole time life!

I keep a wonderful memory of that time lived in Florence and the extraordinary events relating to the birth of Cares house.

From the chaos of the removals, first from Controls in Via Vanini and then from Via Vanini a Via Aretina, emerged a Family wonderful living today again.



Therefore, I am very pleased to meet you many years later and to talk with you about those times.



Aurelia e Sestilio Maestripieri
con David, Dora e Maryse
Zuercher



I embrace you all

Maryse Zuercher Maestripieri