

**STALKER-PEROTTI-ALLEN**  
**FAMILY FOOD TALES**

**CATHERINE S. ALLEN**

**LIFESCAPES 2003**

This book was created as part of *Lifescapes*, a senior life writing program sponsored by the University of Nevada English Department, the Washoe County Library System, and the Nevada Humanities Committee.

Copyright © 2003 by Catherine S. Allen

**FRANSEN HUMANITIES PRESS**

University of Nevada  
Department of English  
Reno, Nevada

Dedicated to:

*My Son*  
Lance Allen  
and  
*My Brothers and Sisters*

Catherine S. Allen  
2002-2003

My thanks to:

Dr. Stephen Tchudi

Dr. Monica Grecu

of the

University of Nevada English Department

and

Julie Machado

Programs Manager

Northwest Reno Library

## Contents

1. Great Aunt Josephine  
and Her Corn Cob Pipe..... 7
2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt  
and the Picnic..... 8
3. Columbus Day  
with Grandmother Perotti Making Gnocchi ..... 9
4. Grandmother Stalker and Yorkshire Pudding..... 10
5. The Allen Food Oddities ..... 11

**LIFESCAPES**

# 1. GREAT AUNT JOSEPHINE AND HER CORNCOB PIPE



Corncob Pipe

**G**reat Aunt Josephine was a very small Italian lady who lived in a tiny white house with green shutters. Her home was in Lime Rock, Connecticut. The house looked small from the front view but was built long like our ranch homes of today. Her yard had a brook flowing through it, a vegetable garden, fruit trees, and a grape arbor.

Whenever you visit Great Aunt Josephine, you would find her smoking her corncob pipe, working in her garden or in her home canning fresh vegetables. There was always a large cooking pot with something simmering in it on the back of her wood-cooking stove. As soon as she saw you, she would say, “You have to eat”; this was before you were even out of the car. In no time at all she would have us setting the table with a wine glass at every one’s place. She would toss together some kind of pasta dish, Polenta, and a salad—and we would be ready to eat. Whatever was simmering in the pot she would serve with either pasta or potatoes.

The wine was made from her grapes from the grape arbor. I often wondered how she accumulated so many different size glasses—small glasses for the children and larger

glasses for the adults.

While she was preparing the meal, she would be smoking her corncob pipe and talking at the same time. I wouldn’t be surprised to hear that she made her own pipe from her cornfield. Many times the pipe would burn out, and she would cuss at my dad saying, “Damn you Tommy, you made my pipe go out.” (My Dad’s name was Thomas.) He would answer, “If you didn’t talk so much it would still be burning.” They would laugh together after his response.

In the meantime she would be speaking to us in English and Italian and getting exasperated with us children if we didn’t understand her. We still had to eat a little of everything, even if we had a meal before we arrive at her home. The best food she served came fresh from her vegetable garden. She made the best peach and apple pies I’ve ever tasted. Funny how she always served pasta and potatoes, when her specialties for children were her pies.

I can still see Great Aunt Josephine with her corncob pipe and her little white house. I can still hear all of the laughter, at her happy home. God Bless our Great Aunt Josephine.



## 2. PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT AND OUR PICNIC



**P**resident Franklin D. Roosevelt was a Native Son of Dutchess County New York. His home was at Hyde Park, New York, about forty miles from my Grandparents' Homestead (The Perotti Homestead) on Perotti Road on top of Silver Mountain in Millerton, New York. Living there on top of the mountain you could see for miles around, into Connecticut to the East, South to Amenia, New York, and Northeast to Millerton. One road that intersected Perotti Road was called "Sunset Trail." Many people would drive there to have picnics and enjoy the beautiful views; one of those people

was our President Roosevelt. He would have his chauffer drive him and his little black dog Fala around the county to visit his neighbors and usually have a picnic at Sunset Trail. I remember him stopping along the roadside and visiting with my Grandfather Perotti. It didn't impress me--he was just a nice neighbor with a chauffer and little black dog out for a ride and a picnic. He was a friendly person. It wasn't until a few years later that I learned that the friendly man was a very important person The President of our country, The United States of America.



### 3. COLUMBUS DAY WITH GRANDMOTHER PEROTTI MAKING GNOCCHI



Columbus Day was a school holiday in the month of October. This was a warm sunny day when we grandchildren walked up Silver Mountain Road and through the woods, to grandmother Perotti's at the Homestead.

Grandma was going to make Gnocchi (a potato pasta noodle) for the family and needed helpers. Grandma had boiled the potatoes and had the other ingredients ready--the flour, whole eggs butter and salt. She had made the sauce earlier in the day, and it was simmering on the back of the wood-cooking stove. It smelt so good! Grandma stationed herself at the head of the large kitchen table with a mound of flour and the eggs ready to knead into a dough, which she and the older girls, Libby and Betty, kneaded into soft long thin rolls. Then we younger grandchildren

Mary, me, Marjorie and Junior rolled the pieces into sticks 1 inch thick and about 10 inches long. The children that could be trusted with a knife would cut the dough into 3/4 to 1 inch pieces. We younger children would press our finger in the center of the pieces to make a dent into them sometimes they would curve and look like a macaroni piece.

When the pieces were ready to cook and serve the gnocchi was placed in boiling water to cook. When the pieces were cooked they would rise to the top of the water. We would drain them and place them in a warm serving bowl, and then add the sauce that had been simmering for most of the day, and grated cheese was sprinkled over it and served at once, with a salad, bread, and wine. It was great!

## 4. GRANDMOTHER STALKER AND YORKSHIRE PUDDING



**E**very Sunday after Sunday school and church we would walk from church up Mt. Riggs road to Grandpa and Grandma Stalker's home.

It was about a mile and a half from the church and all up hill. It was a pretty walk past a few large homes with their beautiful gardens and then the smaller homes nestled in along the way. We would also pass the factory that made knife handles. It was situated along the stream beside the road. We would always have to stop and watch the water fall over the falls; it would be flowing quietly sometimes, and at other times it would just be roaring and tumbling over the rocks. So you see it would take us a little while to walk home to dinner.

When we arrived we would be greeted with the wonderful aroma of the roast beef in the oven. The batter for the Yorkshire Pudding would be ready to pour into the roasting pan. Grandma would take the roast out of the roasting pan and place it on a large platter to rest, and then drain off some of the pan juices and fat. She would then place the pan

back into the oven to reheat the fat. When the fat became real hot, she would then pour the batter into the hot pan and pop it back into the oven. The pudding would bake about 30 or 40 minutes. When the pudding had baked it was removed from the oven. It was just beautiful—golden brown in color and puffy above the sides of the pan. It smelt so good! But it was always a disappointment when she would make the first cut into the pudding and see the center of the pudding drop back into the pan; but it still tasted great.

Along with the roast she would have vegetables from their garden and always a large bowl of mashed potatoes with her wonderful gravy. Then we finished our meal with a wonderful home made pie, a green tomato mincemeat pie or a fruit pie. She was another great cook.

Grandma always had two cookie jars in the pantry filled with her homemade sugar and molasses cookies. We could help ourselves to these as long as we had a glass of milk with them and ate our meals.

## 5. ALLEN FOOD ODDITIES



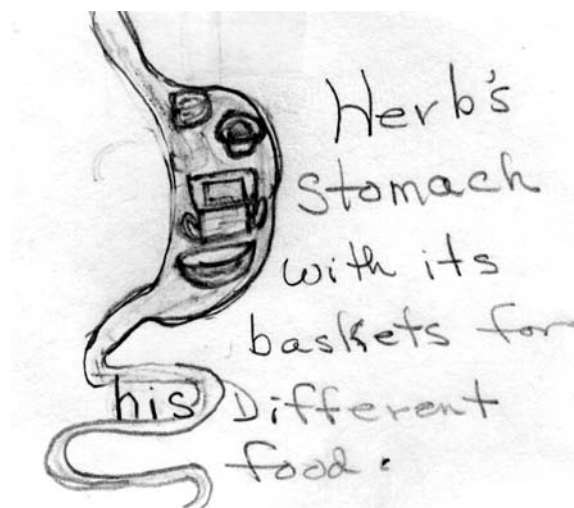
**H**erb didn't like liquid or juice with his stew. It had to be dry when served to him—definitely no food touching on his plate

His soup would have to be mostly liquid, with very few food particles in it. No cream soup for him; just a clear broth.

He stated that his stomach was

built with compartments: a basket for meat; a basket for vegetables and any other food that he ate. He didn't care for chicken and dumplings either. During World War II his Mother made many chicken dishes with gravy and he just grew tired of them. It was alright if it was brown and crispy.

*And No gravy.*



# LIFESCAPES

