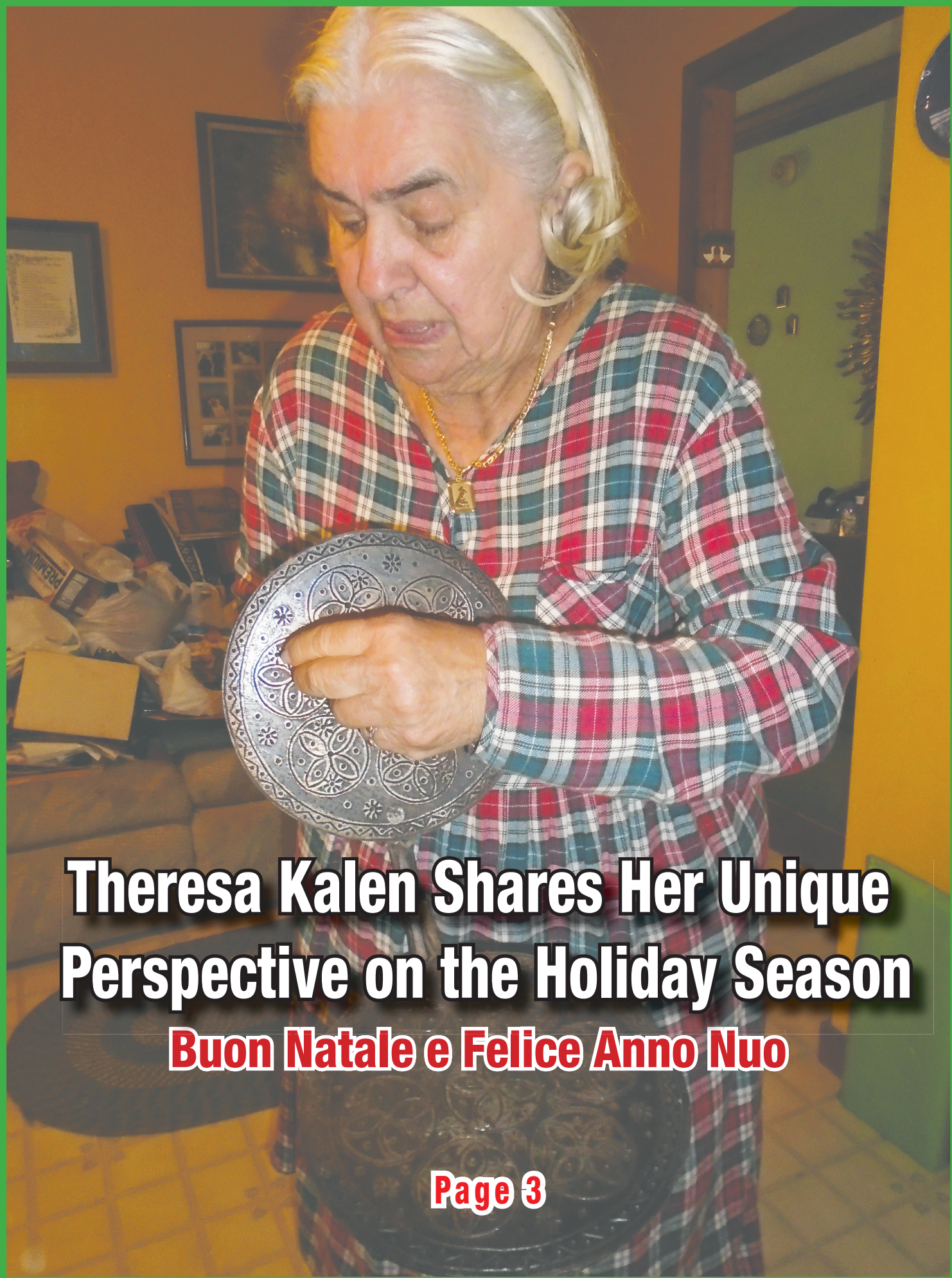


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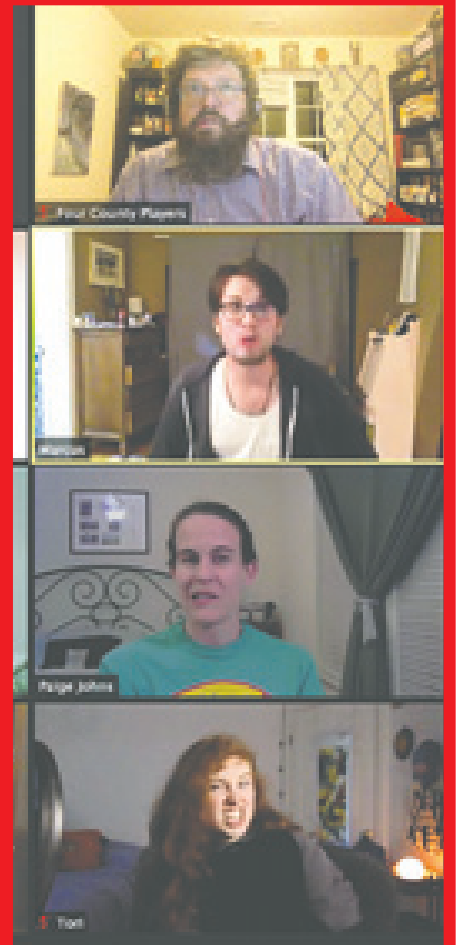
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Theresa Kalen Shares Her Unique Perspective on the Holiday Season

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FOUR COUNTY PLAYERS

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Next deadline: Wednesday December 9, 2020

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Theresa Kalen cherishes the chalda which her grandmother used to make pizzelles.

Cover designed by Marilyn Ellinger



Four County Players presents HELP DESK: A Stay-At-Home Play

By Edward Warwick-White
Contributor

After the postponement of the planned Season 48 (2020 - 2021) due to COVID-19, Four County Players has changed direction: "the show must go online!" Accordingly, Central Virginia's Longest-Running Community Theater is excited to present their first all-virtual play: *HELP DESK: A Stay-At-Home Play* by Don Zolidis -- a hilarious one-act comedy written to be performed on Zoom.

Show description: "When you call the help desk, you're looking for a solution -- but your problems might just be beginning. Whether you're getting shamed about your inability to log in,



giving your credit card information to a scammer, or having serious conversations with a clown, customer service calls spiral into absurdity for the customers and employees alike in this hilarious comedy." (description courtesy of Playscripts)

HELP DESK is directed by 'Derby' Thomas and produced by Wendy Novicoff. Anneliese Mabie and Connor Wells serve as production stage managers for the production. The cast features both newcomers and 4CP veterans, including some who no longer live in the area -- one of the benefits of a virtual show! Actors in *HELP DESK* include Rinzin Thonden Alling, Nathan Anderith, John Baker, Andy Davis, Matthew Ellis, Abby Jenkins, Paige Campbell Johns, Geri Carlson Sauls,

Meridian Stiller, Hannah Vidaver, Becca Vourvoulas, Jeff Ward, Annie Way, and Cate Wells.

Performances for *HELP DESK* are November 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 at 8PM EST, live on Zoom -- you will need to make sure you have the most recent version of Zoom in order to view the play (zoom.us/download). As these performances are live and recording is prohibited due to royalty restrictions, the aforementioned dates are the only times you may see the show.

Tickets are now on sale! The suggested price is \$20/ticket, though Four County Players is also offering a Pay-What-You-Will option in the interest of keeping theater accessible during what is a difficult time for many. After your purchase, a link to your chosen performance will be automatically emailed to you. Tickets may be purchased online at FOUR-CP.ORG or by calling the Box Office at 540-832-5355.

The *Lake Anna Life & Times* is an insert and is not affiliated with *Louisa Life*. The contents of *Lake Anna Life & Times* are the responsibility of its publisher.

Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo

By Pat Wilson, Correspondent

Growing up in a large family spanning three generations of Italians plus living in a small rural eastern Pennsylvania town gave Theresa Kalen a unique perspective on the holiday season. At Christmas, Midnight Mass and the religious aspects were the focus. No gifts were exchanged, and no tree or other decorations announced the occasion. But a creche would be displayed in a prominent place, and family would gather for a meal, with fish as the main dish.

"In Tuscany, eating seven different fish was the tradition, but, of course, those relatives lived near the coastline. Here, grandmother only had smelt from a nearby river that she would bread and fry," said Theresa. "She baked pizzelles, using what she called a chalda (a cast iron flat, round surface with lid and a long handle). Dough was poured on the base,



On Sunday afternoons, three generations gathered at the Nardini home for a meal prepared by her grandmother. Photo courtesy of Theresa Kalen

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Holiday Fun For Families

December 5~Family Fun Night Holiday Cookie Baking

This Family Fun Night includes everything needed to make and decorate your holiday cookies! Bridgitte Groome, from the Louisa Cooperative Extension Office, will host this event where the entire family can come together and enjoy quality time with one another. We will also write letters to Santa and make a holiday ornament to hang on your tree at home. Join LCVRT as we help to create this new holiday tradition! The deadline to register is Wednesday, December 2nd or when full.

Saturday
December 5th
Betty Queen Center
11 a.m.
\$25/per family
4 Min / 12 Max
register at www.lcprt.info



December 11~Father & Son Night "Enjoy the Ride"

Calling all fathers (or stepfathers, father-figures, grandfathers, uncles, etc.) and their sons 5 through 10 years of age. Join us for a special evening where the two of you can spend some quality time together. Time spent bonding teaches us positive principles, instills honest values and virtues, and presents countless life lessons along the way... and the best bonding experiences include food, movies, and cars! Enjoy dinner (pizza and drinks), watch the movie "Cars", and enjoy a father-son car building craft project. The deadline to register is December 7th or when full, whichever comes first. Fathers and sons: come on out and Enjoy the Ride.



Friday, December 11th
Betty Queen Center
6-8 p.m.
\$15 (1 adult & 1 child)
\$8 additional child
4 Min / 25 Max
register at www.lcprt.info

December 12~Kids' Night Out Polar Express Pajama Party!

Let your kids join us for a fun evening while you get some last-minute shopping and wrapping done. Our staff will host this Polar Express Pajama Party at the Betty Queen Center for ages 4 through 10. Your child can come in their pajamas and we will watch the movie *Polar Express* and make our own edible Polar Express train and some delicious hot chocolate topped with all kinds of goodies! Let your child cash in their "Golden Ticket" and join in this safe, fun event. Registration deadline is Wednesday, December 9th or when 15 children have signed up.

Saturday
December 12th
Betty Queen Center
6-10 p.m.
\$12 first child
\$10 additional siblings
10 Min / 15 Max
register at www.lcprt.info



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Recipe Clip and Save



Befanini Traditional Biscuits

Befanini - traditional biscuits of northern Tuscany baked during Italian Christmas/Epiphany holidays. Theresa Kalen's grandmother called them puffanas and her recipe which originated in an Italian convent of cloistered nuns has been passed down through generations with only a few changes.

- 4 eggs and 2 yokes
- ¾ lb. butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup Bisquick
- 5 cups flour

Topping

- 1 lb. almonds (blanched and ground)
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 egg whites
- 1 tsp. all spice
- 1 Tbs grated orange (might add some orange juice)

Mix the eggs and sugar until frothy. Add butter and dry ingredients to obtain a smooth dough. Refrigerate for 45 minutes. Spread the dough with a rolling pin to about a 1/3-inch thickness and cut into desired shapes using cookie cutters. Place the cookies on a buttered and floured baking sheet or one lined with parchment paper and add prepared topping. Bake for about 15 minutes in an oven preheated to 350 degrees.

then the chalda was closed and placed over the flames of the gas stove. While cooked pizzelles were warm, we would roll them and fill them whatever she wanted."

Each holiday Theresa still makes another cookie that her family called puffanas but are also known as bafaninis. Chilled dough is rolled and cut to desire shapes.

"I use a small glass to cut a circle. Then I pinch one end and slice the other, then add almonds at the bottom," she said. "My kids thought they looked like angels."

Presents were exchanged on the Feast of the Epiphany. Twelve days after Christmas, La Bafana, the Italian version of Santa Claus, mysteriously "visited." As a child, Theresa pictured her as "an old ugly, women wearing a scarf and long dress." She'd leave small presents which were opened after Mass and a family meal.

"Gifts were fruits and nuts or mostly home-made items. Grandmother knitted and crocheted, so I'd get a scarf, hat, gloves or sweater and always warm wool socks, that I loved wearing," she said. "Occasionally, I might have gotten a doll, but not a fancy one, more like a ragdoll."



At about age four, Theresa and her dog Skipper were photographed sitting in a bucket being used for road construction. Photos courtesy of Theresa Kalen

Italian Roots

Theresa's maternal grandparents continued numerous old country practices after they emigrated in 1911 and settled near other relatives who had preceded them to Tamaqua.

"My mother Maria was born in Barga, a town in northern Italy. My grandparents, Adolfo and Teresa Nardini, brought her to America though Ellis Island when she was four years old," said Theresa. "My father Philip Swetz was born in the United States and his family had settled in the coal mining town."

Three generations shared a rural, two-story house, and since her parents operated a general store, Theresa, an only child born in 1937, was primarily raised by her grandparents who only spoke Italian. It was the language she heard throughout her pre-school years. Even when the close-knit family gathered for Sunday meals, they too spoke Italian out of respect for her grandparents. Theresa especially enjoyed those visits and that her grandmother did the cooking but not always Italian dishes. Roasts and fish were often on the menu.

"Sometimes she would fix spaghetti, but it was served Tuscan style. The sauce wasn't mixed with the noodles," she said. "She put the noodles in a circle on a casserole dish with the sauce in the middle. Everyone mixed their own."

Their town had been settled over a century before by coal miners of German descent. But it had evolved into a multicultural area with mostly small businesses like their family's grocery. None of her immediate family worked in the mines.

"We attended St. Jerome's, the Catholic church started by the Germans, and I went to its schools through high school," said Theresa. "We didn't have a television and Mass was in Latin, so I finally learned to speak English in first grade from the nuns. Learning to read was much harder."

Theresa recalled feeling isolated at first, struggling with English and the "Dick and Jane" readers. She found Italian phonics much different than English, so relied on sight reading. Finally making a friend at school and discovering she lived within walking distance widened her knowledge.

"Francine was Jewish, so I got to taste bellinies," she said, then added with a smile, "I could never figure out why they didn't serve pork."



In the 1910s, Alphonso and Maria Nardini, her grandparents, ran a general store similar to the one her parents later operated.

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The Nardinis did have a radio and kept informed on national news. She credits that interest to the fact that many of her relatives were proud that they had become naturalized citizens. Theresa remembered the Sunday they listened to the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. She was four, did not understand the broadcaster and her parents repeatedly told her to "be quiet" and she actually got "a spanking."

The family moved into town when Theresa was ten, and her social life expanded. She even met Andy, her future husband, at a high school dance during her junior year. He was a freshman at George Washington University in D.C. and after they married, the couple lived in northern Virginia where he taught school for 40 years. The cou-



ple raised seven children before retiring to Louisa County. "Tamaqua lost a lot of businesses and families left after most of the coal mines closed. In 1954, I was in the last graduating class at St. Jerome's," she said. "I never knew much about coal mines but later learned of the hard work and dangers from Andy who had several relatives who worked in them." Prior to Andy's death in 2013, the couple visited her homeland five times. Theresa admits that she had lost much of her Italian language skills, but Andy took classes to become proficient. Each trip gave them an opportunity to meet "my cousins." "Researching the Nardinis was not always easy, as my mother always said that the name was like Jones or Brown in this country," said Theresa.

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SPECIAL NOTICES

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