

My Life's Lesson

His, Anthony's, father kept telling him how they were going to "the land of plenty" and "the land of milk and honey." Even though his father told him that, it all meant the same to him. He was leaving the little town of Palermo, Italy, and moving to America. He was grateful to leave his crime-stricken town, even if it meant leaving everything he had behind. Anthony Orlando was my great grandfather. His story is my life's lesson.

Anthony's family didn't have any money. The only jobs his father could get were jobs that involved robbing, or hurting people for the mafia. It was either flee, or join them; he knew he couldn't get involved with them for the sake of his family. He decided to leave Italy with his family in search of a new life. So my great-great-grandfather bought them all one-way tickets to America in the bowels of a cargo ship. It didn't matter to them though; as long as they were leaving, they were happy.

The family arrived at Ellis Island with only a few coins in their pockets and raggedy clothes on their backs. The first thing they saw was the Statue of Liberty, and engraved on it: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses." It was a great experience for them: seeing new things, knowing that they were far away from Palermo, and being in a new country. Once they arrived, they had to be

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quarantined; my great grandfather was an infant at the time. The people working at Ellis Island decided to change my family's last name from Orlando to Orlandy. Anthony's father saw the change, and scratched it out. He couldn't read or speak English, but he knew that wasn't right. Even though the times were rough and they were poor, they knew that America would be a better life for them. All the clothes Anthony had were some of his older brother's clothes and a rope for a belt, so they wouldn't fall off.

The family's next plan was to meet with relatives in Louisiana and find work. It was amazing that Anthony's father knew where to go, considering that he had never been to America. Anthony's father found a way to get to Louisiana; they traveled by railway. He and his family made it safely to his Uncle Joseph and Aunt Catherine's home. The conditions were dire. The two families had to live in one room and produce enough money to feed them all. It was even worse for Anthony's little sister. His sister, Annette, walked bowlegged due to rickets. Rickets is a lack of vitamin D where bones soften and deform. She had a harder time than anyone in Anthony's family.

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Time passed. Anthony and his family had their second Christmas. His mom had been saving leftover orange peels to sugar them for treats. She gave him those for Christmas, and she couldn't believe how happy he was. They were still poor and still had to sacrifice to make it. The entire family had to work. Their life in America was much better than in Palermo, but it was still very hard and challenging. Anthony at the age of four sold newspapers, and while trying to save the small money that he made, he discovered something. He had a quick mind. Anthony learned to read and speak English because of selling those newspapers. Even the teachers at his school thought that he had a quick mind.

Anthony worked hard and went to college. He and his family had saved for his college fund. He was the first person in his family to go to college and do well. Anthony realized he wanted to become a doctor - for one reason. He wanted to fix the poverty-ridden and damaged lives that he had seen his entire life. He worked himself through the University of Texas at Galveston Medical School, becoming a doctor.

At the age of 47, Anthony volunteered to join the army to help with World War II. He served in Guam as a flight surgeon for the Army. It was tough for his children - not knowing if their father was dead or alive. After returning from the war,

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Anthony practiced medicine for 50 years in San Antonio, Texas. People appreciated his work and his kindness so much; they started calling him Saint Anthony. My great grandfather made house calls until he was 74. He died at the age of 87 right here in San Antonio, after having lived a full and satisfying life.

Anthony succeeded in life by overcoming many obstacles: coming to America, learning English, being the first to go to college in his family, and working his way through medical school. In our lives, sometimes we take what we have for granted, but if we think about it, what we have is amazing. My great grandfather was right about our country; America is “the land of plenty”... and I’m blessed to have his example for my life’s lesson.