

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RJB-16
Three Brothers

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Dear Mr. Nolte:

On the evening of November 7, 1973, the three Cascio brothers dominated the second annual Western Electric soccer award banquet by collecting four trophies and two championship jackets.



Joe, Gandolfo, Matteo

North Andover is a long way from the small Sicilian town of Polizzi-Generosa where the brothers were born. Their father Bartolo and their grandfather before him operated a successful ice business before the Second World War. But, "After the war," Gandolfo says, "like so many Italians, times got harder economically for us."

Gandolfo, who was born 1939, was named after the town saint. He was followed by the only girl in the family, Pietrina, in 1941. Then came Matteo in 1943 and he was followed by Domenico in 1946 and Giuseppe in 1948.

As the family grew in size the economic pressure on the father grew, so when Gandolfo reached fourteen he stopped going to school and began work. Each morning Gandolfo would get up before five and ride his bike fifteen miles to the work site.

Gandolfo remembers those times. "Don't think I wanted to quit school. I didn't. My father needed my help, and so school was through. I quit at fourteen. I'm not complaining, that's how life is. I was a big strong kid and I didn't mind the work. My problem in those days was my temper. You wouldn't believe it, because I'm quiet now, but then I had a bad temper. What do you think. I was only a kid, and I fought a lot. Especially I was the oldest of the family and I had to protect my family."

Construction work in Italy, even more than in America, is seasonal, and the best work is with the government. By the time he was seventeen Gandolfo had established himself as a good worker, and again with the aid of his father he was able to land a job with a government firm. By now he had replaced his bicycle with a motor bike, and work went well. Gandolfo doesn't talk about it, but Matteo says that his brother lost his job with the government construction firm because along with several other young men he tried to organize the workers. Although there was no strike and the demands were met, those who organized were let go.

Gandolfo was unable to get unemployment compensation, and he decided it was time to look elsewhere for work. "I thought about going to Germany, but at the time Germany and Italy had an agreement that for an Italian to go to Germany he had to go with an Italian contractor. So my cousin and I signed up with the contractor. We had to agree to work for the contractor for a year, and then we were free to look for work ourselves." In April of 1960 Gandolfo Cascio was the first of the children to leave Italy.

"For me, the work was not that bad. It was like being in the army. We all worked together, and lived in barracks. We made less than free laborers and maybe we had to work harder, but it was steady employment." Gandolfo sent money home, and after a year he began writing about the possibilities of Matteo coming to work. He contacted his boss, and asked if he would take Matteo on. The contractor agreed and Matteo, who was excited about joining his brother and going to Germany, made arrangements to join him.

Matteo says, "Up to then I didn't really work. Sure, I quit school at fifteen, and I did construction work, but I worked for a construction outfit where my father was boss. I didn't get paid much, about 80¢ a day, but I didn't work much. My job was to bring the water around for people. When I think of working hard," Matteo continues, "I think of my father. He worked Sundays, holidays and vacations."

"When I went to Germany I had to sign a contract like my brother, but I was luckier than he was. Gandolfo had already learned German, and so when I moved in with him it was easier for me. Still, for a while I felt awkward but as a young man at eighteen or nineteen you can pick up a language pretty good.

"I never like the work. When I first arrived I noticed there was something wrong with my brother's chest, but he never wrote home to the family about it. You can't see it anymore but his chest was all funny. He was working down in one of the pits, putting in pipes, and the hole collapsed around him. He was lucky to jump high enough so his head wasn't buried. But the rest of him was buried, and he badly injured his chest.

"After six or seven months I told my brother I didn't like it and I wanted to leave. He was a good worker and had been given extra responsibility, so he was less anxious to leave. Finally I told him I knew some friends who worked at Mercedes Benz, and I wanted to go work there. He agreed to go.

"We had made 2 marks 60 pfennig when we left the construction job. We began at Mercedes Benz at 3 mark and 85 pfennig an hour, and rose to 5 mark 52 pfennig before we left. We were the second highest paid group in the plant. I still can't figure out how you say it in American, but in Italian we call it carrozziere. It means we put on the doors and different parts of the car.

"It was a good job. We moved into a place in Sinderfingen near the factory. From the time I came to work in Germany, Gandolfo and I worked in the same place and the same department for twelve years. It's only since we both started at Western Electric that we worked in different departments.

"At first," Matteo continues, "we sent money home every month, but after a while we sent money less frequently."

Gandolfo says, "I'm not embarrassed to say we sent some money home. When all the kids started growing up and my father needed the money less we sent less. After a while we only sent money home for holidays."

Matteo laughs and adds, "I think my father just wanted to make sure we weren't going to start asking him for money."

While the two boys worked in Germany their sister Petrina had married and moved with her husband to America. Dominick was growing up, and soon after he turned seventeen he thought of joining his brothers in Germany. By the time he was ready to go, the laws between Germany and Italy had changed and an Italian didn't need a work contract. Dominick came to Germany with his father, who decided it was time to visit his two eldest sons. The father stayed for fifteen days. It was a pleasant time for everyone.

Before Dominick's arrival Gandolfo and Matteo talked about where he should live. Both agreed that he should live with one of them till he became familiar with the area. Matteo decided to move out.

"I didn't want to move," says Matteo, "but it was best for Dominick to live with one of us, so I moved in with some other friends."

Both Gandolfo and Matteo wanted Dominick to join them at Mercedes Benz, but the company had a rule that no one could begin work until he was eighteen. Matteo made arrangements with some people he knew in personnel to take care of the paper work early, so that Dominick could begin work as soon as he turned eighteen.

Back in Sicily, Giuseppe was now the only child left. The economic pressure on the family had eased. It was decided that Giuseppe, the baby of the family, should have the advantages his brothers didn't have to continue his schooling. The state was now paying for school for children until they were eighteen. Giuseppe at first considered accounting so that he could go to a trade school in his home town. Instead, he went to Cefalu, a town near Palermo and about thirty miles from his home town. He went to the trade school in Cefalu to become a tv and radio repairman.

For Giuseppa Maria and Bartolo Cascio, the parents, it must have felt strange with all their children grown and gone. Soon they began discussing moving. Gandolfo and Matteo feel that it was their mother who was the loneliest, and began talking of moving to America to be with her daughter. Giuseppe remembers his father talking about the loneliness he felt on Santissimo-Crocifisso, a big feast day.

"See," Giuseppe says, "in our home town my family belonged to a small congregation of eighty or ninety families. Each year the feast day is handled by a member of the congregation. It was my father's turn and none of his children were there to help them celebrate. After that" continues Giuseppe, "I think my father decided he was ready to move."

Should they try to move to Germany where three sons were, or to America where their daughter and her husband were? The decision was to try to reunite the whole family in America. The elder Cascios made plans to move to Lawrence, Massachusetts where their daughter was living. In Lawrence their son-in-law had relatives and there were paesani-people from their home town. It would make things easier. The parents moved in 1966 and were soon followed by Giuseppe, who had just completed his technical courses. Next came Dominick in October 1967, and finally Matteo and Gandolfo came on December 23, 1967. Matteo and Gandolfo hadn't saved much during the six years they worked in Germany. They worked right up till the plant closed on December 22nd so they wouldn't lose the annual bonus.

Matteo says, "We could have saved a lot, we earned enough in Germany, but we never did. How were we to know what was going to happen?"

Gandolfo says, "What are you going to do? We were young. We almost never ate at home, and we sent out our laundry." Pointing to his feet he says, "We even sent out our socks. So we didn't have much saved."

"We were young then," Matteo adds, "and we wanted to go out and have a goodtime. The girls found us attractive. We always tried to be clean. Maybe they liked us because even though our clothes were not the most expensive, they were always clean. Our family taught us even if your clothes are not the most expensive keep them clean."

"I wasn't that anxious to go," says Gandolfo. "I liked it in Germany, and I didn't care Germany or America, but my mother it was very important to

her. She wanted to move to America, so we got ourselves ready to go to America."

Matteo agrees. "We had a good life in Germany. We worked hard, but we were paid well. At the beginning when we first went to work at Mercedes-Benz we were never absent. For two years, I was never absent, and Gandolfo wasn't either. But when they knew how good workers we were, well, then occasionally we were sick. You know, when we knew how things were. But I don't mean to say we didn't work. We worked hard. Wherever Gandolfo and I worked we were always among the best workers, and everyone knew it, but you get to know the company, and then you start living your life.

"As soon as Mercedes-Benz closed for the Christmas holiday we came to America. Our brother-in-law took us the next day to get social security cards, and Alien Registration papers."

"It was Christmas," Gandolfo remembers, "so it was hard to get work immediately. My brother-in-law, he worked in a clothing factory, but he suggested to us that we could make a little more if we went to work in the shoe shops. On January 2, 1968, seven days after we landed, we began working in the shoe shops.

"We worked in the shops for five years. People at Western Electric worry about the heat, but they don't know what heat is like if they haven't worked in the shoe shops. It gets to 110 and hotter near the furnaces. But we made good money for a while. It was piece work, and we worked hard, and we each made \$10,000 or \$11,000 the first three years."

"The best I ever did was make \$301 one week," Matteo says. "I worked seventy hours that week, and I worked like an animal, but I made the money. Heh," he says, "I don't like to work, who does, but I like money so I work. I mean, what else can I do. I don't want to be a crook and make a lot of money the way lots of people do. For people like me to make money they've got to work. And when I do a job, no one does it better, but like it, no I don't like it."

The economic position of the shoe shops began to deteriorate, and soon the \$10,000 that Gandolfo and Matteo made was reduced to \$7,000 or \$8,000. It was then that the brothers decided to look elsewhere for work. Both played soccer with local teams, and both knew Nunzio DeMarco of Western Electric. Nunzio suggested that the brothers apply to work at Western.

In January of 1973 both Giuseppe and Matteo began to work at Western Electric. For the first time in thirteen years Matteo and Gandolfo were not working in the same department for the same company. Soon, though, Gandolfo was also hired by Western Electric. Three of the four brothers were now working together. The fourth brother Dominick was working as a barber in a shop in North Andover.

When they first came to America all four sons moved in with their parents. Gandolfo was the first to move out. He met Nina Aiello one and a half years after he had arrived in Lawrence.

"I met her at a banquet," Gandolfo says. "We danced and I said a few words to her. We started going out. Her parents and my parents knew each other. Seven months after we began going out we got married, and I moved with my wife into an apartment above my in-laws."

Matteo was the next to move out of the family home. After Gandolfo began going out with Nina, both families saw more of each other. Soon Matteo was



First Row: Mathew Cascio
Second Row (from left): Joe and Josie Aiello,
Third Row (from left): Gandolfo and Nina Cascio,



Lisa Cascio, Giuseppe Maria and Bartelo Cascio
Irene Aiello, Frances and Mateo Cascio, Joe Cascio

going out with Frances, Nina's sister. Seven months after his brother got married, Frances and Matteo were married. One year and five days later their first child, Lisa, was born. A year later Mathew--Matteo smilingly says, "It's the Americanization of Matteo"--was born. They now live in an apartment a few blocks from the Aiellos.

The other two sons remain at home. It is only in the last year or year and a half that Gandolfo, Matteo and Giuseppe have felt comfortable enough with this new country to think seriously about their futures. Each of the three has ambitions and dreams.

giuseppe(Joe)

As soon as he came to this country, Giuseppe, nicknamed Pino at home, began calling himself Joe. For Joe, life in Sicily, especially while he went to trade school, was very exciting. "Cefalu," Joe says, "was a beautiful place and there were young people from many countries in schools in the town. Heh, I really liked it a lot. I was being offered good jobs by companies, but I couldn't take them because my family wanted to move to America. What are you going to do, we moved.

"I had heard of Boston. I think children all over the world hear of America, and of Boston, New York, Chicago, cities like that. I didn't know what to expect but I went. It was very hard for me. When you go from one country to another you don't know the language, you are like a baby. If I had been the first one here I think I'd have gone back in three months. It was easier for my brothers because they had already been in Germany.

"I thought, what was I going to do when I got here. I didn't think about school. I was nineteen, and then you think you are a man, you think you should work and make money. So I went into the shops, first the shoe shops and then the clothing factory.

"Slowly I began to pick up the language. Maybe I don't speak English so good, but I try. You may laugh at what I say, but only by trying can I learn. After a few years I began thinking about my future. I was no longer a kid and I started wondering why I was staying in the shoe shops. I don't have anything against people who work in the shoe and clothing shops, but I think maybe I can do better. So I moved to Western Electric, it's a big company with a lot of opportunities.

"When I began at Western I was already thinking about school. Sometimes I wish I were younger again, and when I first came here I'd gone to school but what are you going to do? I decided to start school again. I didn't ask nothing of nobody. I just started taking a course last summer at Lowell Tech. Somebody told me that the company would pay for it. I found out they pay half the tuition at the start of the course, and then if you pass they pay the other half. So far I've taken four courses and got 2 A's and 2 B's. I'm going as far as I can. Right now I want to get an associate degree in electrical engineering. I take three courses each term, and one during the summer. At my present pace it will take me three years. That's what I'm planning, but you never know what's going to happen.

"I'd like to get the degree, maybe even go for a BS. I figure by the time I get my associate's degree I'll have worked at Western for four or five years. People get to know you, you know them. I think they'll see I'm a good worker and help me out. In that way I think Western is a good place to work.

"Right now I'm living at home. You ask me how that is. It's fine. My parents treat me good. They don't interfere with my life. I don't think about moving out, why should I? I have nothing to prove. Some people in this country live away from their family because they need to prove something. But I lived away between fifteen and eighteen, and I feel I have nothing to prove. My parents say their house is my home until I marry, and that they enjoy having me. They won't let me contribute. If I brought something home they'd get mad. See, that is how it is in the old country.

"You must understand we live in America, but we keep some of the old values, especially my parents. My parents don't speak English, they speak Italian. Their friends speak Italian and we speak Italian to them. When they go shopping they go to the Italian stores. For them there is not so much difference here from their lives in Italy. That is the way it is for old people. But for us, the children, things are different, we must decide what type of life we want in this country, and whether or not we want to stay.

"I think that is why my sister and her husband moved back to Italy. My brother-in-law came here so they could make more money, but they always wanted to move back to Italy. If they think they can live better there than over here then why not. Back in Italy my brother-in-law is working on a farm. When they lived here my sister worked, she didn't mind it because that is how things are done in this country. I don't know what to call it, but it isn't like that in Italy. In Italy the woman stays home, she takes care of the house and the children. That is how my sister wants it. So maybe they'll have less, but they will live the way they want. For them to move back it made sense. It may be hard on their children but they are still young and they can learn to adjust.

"For me, I'll make a life here. I'm in no hurry to get married. I'm still young. I have my work, and I have school. Already I attend classes three nights a week for three hours. I have a busy life. I play soccer and I go out. If I meet a girl and like her, how do I know I'll like her more than a girl I'll meet next week?"

Matteo

Matteo, like Joe, wants to get ahead. But Joe is only 24, he is single, and already has a high school degree. Matteo is 31, married, and has two children.

When Matteo first came to America he didn't have the luxury of thinking about his future. He says, "When we came to America I had learned German pretty well. We had good jobs, and we were busy helping people from our country get adjusted to Germany. It was a big move for us to come to America, but our family wanted it so Gandolfo and I came over. It was harder for me to learn English than German. I was older when I came here, and it isn't so easy when you're older to learn a language.

"The work at Western is pretty good. It is not so hard as the shoe shops. The pay is not great, but it isn't bad, and I can work some overtime. Still, I'd like to get a better job, a better position, who wouldn't? But if you don't have a high school diploma or any education it's hard to get a better position, it's hard to move up to something like a technician.

"So in July I started going to classes for English. I went two days a week, two hours a day. If I pass, Western will pay 50% and I can get a better job, I'll

take the test in the next couple of weeks. I hadn't worked at Western more than six months and one of the supervisors started talking to me about whether I was interested in a better job, in his shop. Sure I was interested, what do you think, but I'd like to be more certain of my English. If I pass the exam I'll talk to him about the job. I don't know if I'll take any further courses but I hope I'll have some more opportunities, and that I'll speak better English.

"Sometimes I worry about rising prices, who doesn't? For Italians, when you get married you have to provide for your family. That means that I'm supposed to do the work and my wife takes care of the children. I know that things are changing in America, but in my house I'm still the boss. I respect my wife. I listen to her opinion, but I make the final decisions.

"I prefer that she stays home with the kids. I think she feels this way too. Economically things are tough, but we are doing ok. When you get married it is fine if the wife wants to work, but once the kids are in the house I want her to stay at home with them. If we can live on my pay then we will work it out. If we can't, then what are you going to do? If she has to go to work then she has to, but then I think we'll have to work different shifts so there is at least one parent home all the time.

"See, kids are very important. When you have children you have to teach them. You can't just tell them things, what's right and what's wrong. You have to teach them by having self-respect and living a good life. I see plenty in the plant, old men chasing young women, but that's no good. That is why I think Gandolfo and I were lucky. As young men we lived away from home in a foreign land. We had all the dreams of young men, and we were able to grow into men. See, that is why I don't need to fool around. If I wanted to I could have lots of women, but I'm a married man, and you lead a different kind of life. When I was young and single I did as I pleased. That is why I think all young people should have experience like my brother and me.

"My brother Gandolfo and I are very close, more than a brother and a brother, more like a husband and wife. For thirteen years we worked in the same department and for the same company. For many years we lived on our own together. We think alike on many things."

Gandolfo

Of all three brothers it is Gandolfo whom I know best. He came to work a week after I did. When I was introduced to him it was not as Gandolfo but as Andy. This last week I finally asked him why everyone at work calls him Andy. "When I came to work the supervisor had trouble pronouncing Gandolfo, so I told him call me Andy. After that everyone called me Andy. What does Andy have to do with Gandolfo, nothing, but it was easier. You know," he says, "in that way Americans are a little bit spoiled. If I were somewhere, even in China, I'd learn how to pronounce someone's name."

Gandolfo seems to accommodate when it is necessary. He is used to working, having worked since he was fourteen. When one new young worker flared up and cursed the job he was doing, Gandolfo came by and said, "Don't let it bother you, we only work to 3 o'clock. So why are you going to let it bother you? You come in, work eight hours and go home. After three they can't tell you what to do."

In this same way, while other workers crowd the bathroom taking breaks when they feel like it, Gandolfo says, "I try not to take many breaks. I don't like to do anything until I know what a place is like. That was what I was like in Germany. For the first year or so in any job, I'm quiet. I do my work and make

a good impression. Then I start feeling out what I can do and what I don't have to do. I do good work, but if you've worked for a long time like me, then you learn what to expect. I don't mind working, I've worked most of my life. When I was young I was a big strong kid, full of energy. When you're young, sure you work hard, but it doesn't make you so tired, and there is a lot to do.

"When my parents talked about moving to America I couldn't really care. I came to America to make my mother happy. I can live any place, my father is that way. But my mother wanted to move. Going to America meant the whole family would be together, so we all moved.

"When I came to this country I was 27 years old. I wasn't a young man anymore, and already I'd worked for thirteen years. First thing we did when we came was to find a job, then we could worry about what we wanted to do. It took me longer to learn English than German. I still don't speak English good. By the time I began to learn things, I got married and had responsibility, a wife. Sometimes I think about if I could write better I would get a better job. I'm not complaining, but it is too late for me. I missed something, but I'll send my children to school.

"That is my wife and I would like to have children but not so many. I'm not the kind of Italian who wants the big family. We don't need four or five children. The church may not like it, but you have to make your life, you know what I mean. If you have a big family like that it is just like the old country, your children don't have a chance for school. But we would like to have one or two children. So far we haven't had any luck.

"Right now my wife works. Since we don't have children, I let her do what she wants. What do you think, if I told her to stay home", he laughingly says, "what do you think she's going to do? She likes her job. She works as a secretary just a few hundred yards from the house. She is never tired when she comes back from work, and that makes me happy.

"I'm less tired now that I work at Western. Even on a hot day it is nothing like coming home from the shoe shops. I may make less money now at Western, but the work is better. With my wife taking home about \$80 and me about \$100 we don't need much more. Sometimes now I work overtime on Saturday morning. My wife goes to the beauty parlor on Saturday morning. What am I going to do, lay in bed? So I go to work and I'm home by 12:30.

"They offered me an upgrade. They wanted to know if I wanted to bid for a 33 grade job. I told them no. I would have to go on the 2nd shift, and to the other plant in Lawrence. I didn't want to work the second shift. If I wanted to work the second shift I could have started work at Western nearly a year ago. Maybe I'd have taken the job if we had children, but we don't need the money.

"My ideas have changed a little. When I was younger I never thought about retirement, now I do, not that I am old but when I get to be sixty or so and if I have a chance, I'll be ready to retire. I tell my mother-in-law that. I tell her she should quit and just relax and have a good time, instead of keeping on working. I'll find plenty to do when it's time for me to quit."

It is difficult for Gandolfo to talk about himself. It was from Joe, and especially from Matteo, that I learned how hard he worked when he was young to help the family, how he was a leader of a strike, how he was a lead worker on

the German construction site. Gandolfo does not talk about how hard he works. He says he doesn't work hard, that he takes breaks like everyone else. Yet everyone notices what a good worker he is.

Almost the only time you can get Gandolfo to talk about himself is when he talks about soccer. One day he came into work especially happy and told me that he had scored a goal. "You wouldn't believe it," he said, "from a corner kick, Yanick put the ball in, and then," snapping his head to show what he had done, he said, "I headed it in. I think it's the best goal of the season. Just like Pele did in the world championship."

To appreciate what Gandolfo is like you must see him on a soccer field. He moves around the field with precision more than grace. There is not so much about his play which can be called exciting. Unlike his brother Joe, voted the league's outstanding offensive player, there is nothing flashy about Gandolfo. He is more like a turbine than a gazelle. He seems to be always in the right place, always moving, never tiring. Up and down the field he goes, passing, setting up, coming back to protect the goalie.

And there on the night of the banquet he stands with his two brothers in front of his friends from Western Electric. Three times he is called to the front of the room for trophies: once for being the league's best defensive player, once for being the league's best referee, and once, and maybe most importantly a trophy presented by his teammates for being the team's best player. His pure soccer skills are certainly no greater than those of his teammate Yanick, but there is something about him which is compelling. There is a strength he has clearly carried for a long time, a strength from his Sicilian childhood.

Richard J. Buz

Received in New York on April 15, 1974