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Calling Italian fruiterers

Sydney-siders are invited to register their memories and old photographs of past and present local Italian fruit shops for a website and exhibition to be launched at Customs House in May 2010 entitled Sydney's Italian Fruit Shops – The Original Green Grocer.

The Italian Association of Assistance have been working with the families of Italian fruiterers to record oral histories, collect heritage photographs and memorabilia to document the history of all the iconic Italian fruit vendors scattered around Sydney's suburbs.

A daughter of one of these fruiterers, Angela Perna, recalls living in the residence of her parents' fruit shop at 148 Liverpool Road, Enfield from 1939 to 1951. During World War II many of Angela's father's Italian friends were interred in concentration camps. Angela's family were spared as her father was a naturalised Australian.

"As a little girl I remember taking the paper from the stacks of fruit and helping to keep the shop clean. It was a hard life as the shop was open 7 days a week," she recalls. "We made the best of the situation [with] evening sing-alongs around the piano and Dad, of course, played [the Italian card games] of Scopa and Tressette. We had a loving family and I consider myself [to be] a lucky person!"

"We are calling for anyone with precious memories and photographs of Italian fruit shops in Sydney to share them with us now," says Co.As.It.'s Heritage Project Officer Linda Nellor. "The website and on-line register and exhibition will leave a lasting legacy for present and future generations of Australians to fondly remember the Sydney Italian fruit shop that touched theirs, or their families' lives."

The website and online register is expected to be accessible from May 2010 and the exhibition at Customs House will run from 23 May to 8 August 2010.

For further information, contact Linda Nellor on 9564 0744 or linda.nellor@coasitorg.au or www.coasit.org.au/Heritage.aspx

Photo: Angela's mother Pearl Butta (left), Santina Messori (right) and a little friend (seated) inside their fruit shop at 148 Liverpool Road Enfield in 1940.



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