



Carmine Puleo
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Carmine Puleo was given the name *Carmelo* at birth. He was named after his paternal grandfather, which is an Italian tradition. His family came from Italy, mainly being from Sicily. His school records showed up as Carmine, so he continued to use that name. He eventually legally changed his name to Carmine right before retirement to avoid any conflicts on legal documents, since most of his records used that name. The nickname Chuck came about when he was in the army. They had trouble pronouncing the name Carmine and started to call him Charles that later became Chuck. He took the name “Chuck” while boxing and playing ball.

Chuck is married and has four daughters. The oldest, Stephanie, received her doctorate in counseling and was a professor at the University of Florida graduate school. She has since accepted a position at the University of Alabama teaching counseling and psychology. His second daughter, Marie Lenore, is a financial analyst on Wall Street who commutes from Westchester. She has two children, a boy 4 yrs. old and a girl 8yrs. old. Chuck’s third daughter, Karen, is an entrepreneur who owns her own business manufacturing jewelry in the Dominican Republic. Teresa, his fourth daughter, is an attorney working in Albany for a national law firm. Chuck is proud of his daughters and hopes that they followed his philosophy in encouraging them to pursue excellence. They have good work ethics, and they hold themselves accountable to themselves. Each of his daughters has her own talents and interests.

Chuck and his wife Teresa are ‘snowbirds’ living between Lindenhurst and Boynton Beach, Florida. They were married forty-three years on August 6. Chuck met his wife while he was in the

Service. She was born and raised in Park Slope, Brooklyn. His wife is very devoted to family with children being her highest priority. Chuck was born and raised in New York City in the Hell's Kitchen area. His father was a laborer who came to the U.S. in his early 20's. He tried various businesses working first as a laborer. His first wife died so he returned to Italy where he met with his old childhood sweetheart. They married, and he returned to the U.S. with a bride. He was 50 yrs. old when Chuck, their only child, was born. Chuck's father passed away in 1967 at the age of 77, and his mother passed away in 1972. His father worked as a longshoreman when he returned to U.S. and later worked as a security guard.

Chuck's mother still had family in Italy, but over the years after she passed away, he lost touch with them for about 20 years, mainly due to difficulty in communication since he couldn't read or write in Italian. Finally when he took a trip to Europe he was able to renew the friendship and relationship with them. He went to the town where his parents came from and visited the church where they were married. His maternal grandfather was the local barber and dentist in the town.

Chuck was born in 1930 during the depression, so he grew up in a time of economic survival. It was difficult for his father to support his family. They lived in a low socio-economic area. A lot of people growing up in that area took the road to crime, so he considers himself to be one of the most fortunate people around being the only child on his block of his generation who went beyond high school. This was one of the reasons why he chose education as a career. He, like his father, also worked as a longshoreman for a while. His parents pushed him into reading a lot. His father didn't have any education, and his mother finished up at the junior high school level. Chuck emphasized that if you want to be liberated from the chain of poverty, it was through education. While Chuck was commuting to L.I.U. by subway every day, he would come home from school and hang out with the guys from the neighborhood shooting dice, playing ball and other activities. When they finished with whatever activity they were involved in, they would go out for a beer or soda and would get into various discussions. Chuck was quite impressed on how intelligent his friends were. They were streetwise but had a lot of native intelligence. He felt that what was lacking was the cultivating of that intelligence through education. He decided that he could help these types of people through education. This made him choose education as his career. He

believed that through education people could improve their quality of life.

Chuck was asked if there was an adult who had an effect on him in his early years. He spoke of Bernie, the owner of the local stationery store in the neighborhood. As a teenager Chuck worked for him. Every day Bernie would preach something about life to him. People in general are so important according to Bernie. Each person is equally important and entitled no matter what situation they are in being it poor or wealthy. Each person is entitled to a certain quality in life. This philosophy of Bernie's stayed with Chuck all of his life. People should not be measured by their wealth or talents.

What was Chuck's earliest memory from childhood? At the age of 2 or 3 they lived on the top floor of a tenement house. One day his mother left him alone while she ran next door, and he began to walk down about 5 flights of stairs by himself and was scared. One of the neighbors heard him crying and took him into her apartment sending her husband out to look for Chuck's mother. They lived in a railroad apartment, so he didn't have his own bedroom. He slept on a convertible bed in the back room where there was no heat, so he remembers always being freezing. The heat came from the stove in the front room. One time a fire occurred on his block due to a Kerosene heater, so as a result all houses were then required to have central heating. They had to get rid of the coal stoves and kerosene heaters. His parents were the custodians for the apartment house, so one of Chuck's chores was that he was in charge of the coal stove that provided the heat for the entire apartment house. He had to shovel the coal and clean the halls and stairs of any soot. Eventually his parents became the owners of the building. His first paying job was a newspaper route picking up and delivering the newspapers to around five candy stores.

Chuck kept in touch with some of his friends from childhood. He has gone into the old neighborhood and said that his friend Spider is still there. There is a book published called "The Westies" in which some of his friends appear, Spider being one of them. A few of the guys that he still keeps in touch with became quite successful, mainly in business.

What was the family holiday that you look forward to? His big holiday is when his entire family gets together at his house on

Christmas Eve. This is a carryover from Christmas Eve from his side of the family. They have the traditional seven different kinds of fish. His children still come and visit every Christmas Eve and get their presents that night.

What were your interests as a kid, and what did you do after school besides hanging out with your friends as you've mentioned all ready? Chuck liked to read and was into sports. He was very athletic. He worked for the longshoreman from 1947-48. He did some boxing at the local CYO gym and was in the Golden Globes boxing, where he met and sparred with some high profile boxers.

Are you a night person or a morning person? Do you prefer getting up early or staying up late? Chuck prefers getting up late, especially now that he is retired. He didn't like it when he had to get up at 5:30 in the morning when he worked at the high school.

Chuck was then asked what his favorite season of the year was. He likes the fall. He said there is something about the fall with the changing of the flora. He sees it as a time when you know that things will become dormant and you know that it's a period of rest. Even with the tranquility however, there is a sense that things are going to renew themselves and will rejuvenate whether we do it through our children or other things. It's relaxing with a beauty and aesthetic quality about it that Chuck thinks almost personifies life itself. "As far as people are concerned, we get to a certain stage and we want to relax a little bit".

When asked if there were certain aromas that bring him back to childhood, he said it was definitely the aroma of his mother's Sunday morning cooking. The aroma of simmering tomato sauce still gets to him.

Chuck is a product of the New York City public schools. The first school he attended was P.S. 17 located on 47th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. He remembers being in Kindergarten when he didn't speak English yet and being told to move around but didn't understand what the teacher or the other classmates were trying to tell him. He would just sit and follow gestures. This is one of the reasons that he was an advocate of bilingual education. He feels very strongly that kids could learn the subject matter in their native language while learning English. They could keep up with the academic subjects while learning English.

Communication has to be established between two people so learning can occur. Eventually you will learn the English language. There's no reason to have to prolong the experience of learning because of the language handicap of not knowing the language with someone you can't communicate with.

Chuck could remember the names of all of his teachers in elementary school. His first grade teacher was Miss. Luis and second grade was Miss Thompson. He recalled many of the situations in every classroom he was in. He even kept in touch with several of his teachers. He also remembered a particular teacher from high school named Stanley Kaplan with whom he kept in touch. After elementary school he attended an all boys junior high school P.S. 51 on 45th Street. After that he went to a high school called Straubenmuller Textile High School on 18th Street where he played a little basketball. It was a combined academic and vocational school in the garment district. After graduating from high school he started working for the longshoreman down at the docks for about a year and then was accepted to L.I.U. in Brooklyn. He recalls that the first year was difficult, because, he had filled out the college application on a lark not really thinking about being accepted. While in high school, he had no plans to attend college, because he was not academically oriented. He remembered his mother was hugging him and kissing him one day when he came home from work but didn't know why. Apparently the acceptance letter from L.I.U. had just arrived in the mail, and she saw it. She was so proud that her son was going to college.

While in college he decided to go into education. He majored in education in his 3rd year in college. He graduated L.I.U. with a B.A. in education and a minor in English Literature. He got a job as an English teacher in N.Y. City and then was drafted into the Army. After the service he got a job as a 6th grade teacher in Lindenhurst in around 1954 where he recalls earning \$2,700 his first year. After 3 years he was asked if he wanted to be an assistant principal. He went to graduate school at Columbia University and went on to study towards his Doctorate. He had completed the outline for his dissertation and just needed to do his internship, but did not complete the degree, because he started to raise a family. He didn't have the time or the money to continue. His dissertation was going to be on Comprehensive Achievement Monitoring, which he later used in Brentwood when he helped to develop the B.E.S.T. testing program. (Brentwood Educational

System for Testing.)

After working as an assistant principal in Lindenhurst, Chuck decided that he wanted to be principal of his own school. He accepted the job as a principal in Catskill, N.Y. Because of its proximity to Albany, he thought he could continue the research he was doing at Columbia with the people in the N.Y. State Education Department. After 2 years he decided he wanted to come back to Long Island and sent his resume to Brentwood, where he was interviewed for the position of Principal of Twin Pines. A committee consisting of Manny Vega, Joe Graff, Ruth Rosenthal, Joe Karzan and a 5th person he couldn't recall first interviewed him. Arthur Brieger, Director of Elementary Education was sent up to Catskill to observe Chuck at work. Chuck was then asked if he could come down to L.I. for another combined interview with the Brentwood Board of Education and a sub-committee of administrators. Chuck was one of the first administrators to be hired from outside the district and not from within the ranks as was normally done in Brentwood. He worked as the principal of Twin Pines for 6 years, the Seventh Grade Center for 6 years and the principal of the Tenth Grade Center for a year. He then became the principal of the entire campus consisting of 5 buildings: The 10th Grade Center East, 10th Grade Center Northwest, Ross, Sonderling and the Maslow-Toffler School. Chuck was instrumental in the planning and construction of the 7th and 10th grade centers.

Chuck was asked if he sees Brentwood as a microcosm of the country. In answer he said, "I never met such a group of people who had so much devotion and commitment for their clients (students) as I met here." "I never met as much devotion and support, an altruistic approach to education as you would find here in Brentwood. "I think the great success in Brentwood is really the interpersonal relationship that the adults have with their clients which are the students." He spoke about the pursuit of excellence in education. Students are important people to our teachers. Our job in education as teachers is to help children to succeed and not just teach the academic content. We have to set up many different programs to help them succeed using different strategies that may not necessarily be traditional. He spoke of things like the breakfast program and the Maslow-Toffler School as examples. We have to be flexible and use strategies that will help students to succeed. "We are talking about developing character in students".

The question was asked if he was active in BPSO, and if his opinions of unions had changed over the years. He responded, "I think in the long run we are no longer considered a second class profession now with higher salaries and better benefits. In the long run this will attract much more talented people and probably the upper level of intelligentsia to come into the field and that in itself will help the whole education profession succeed." His concern however with unions, is that in many cases the leaders are more concerned about the members than they are concerned about the general educational enterprise. Union priorities are more and more for the benefit of the members and not the benefit of the students.

Who were some of the memorable people he got to work with in Brentwood? One of the people he spoke very highly of was Guy DiPietro whom he thought of as a master in terms of politics and getting jobs done. Chuck had great admiration for Guy, because there was no self-interest with him. Everything was done with the interest of the educational enterprise. Chuck felt that he himself was also doing things with integrity. It angered him when he saw decisions that were made for political reasons rather for education.

When did Chuck decide it was time to retire? He retired in 1990 for two reasons. One was that he got to the point where he had begun to realize that he wasn't as effective as he thought he could have been with some of the people he was working with, and he saw that a lot of things happening where that many of his ideas were being met with resistance. He began to recognize that one hundred percent efficiency was no longer there. He also retired for health reasons. He had gone through bypass surgery back in 1976, and in 1989-1990 was beginning to feel some of the same symptoms he had earlier, so he thought that perhaps maybe it was best to retire due these health concerns. As it turned out he had bypass surgery again in 1992. He had 36 years in education having started in 1954. The thing that he misses most is the idea of being able to help teachers. As an administrator he was able to help teachers with innovative ideas through his monthly meetings that he held with them. He was like a teacher teaching the teachers.

Now that he is retired he enjoys doing artwork, writing, fishing and golfing. He lives between Florida and Long Island. He has 2 books that he enjoyed reading and that had a tremendous influence in his life: All Quiet on the Western Front and Death of a Salesman. His favorite movie was Network. He felt that they all had a similar

theme of people being exploited.

When asked who his heroes in life were, he mentioned both his mother and father. He said his father was the kind of guy that would simplify things. He had an ability to take very complex things and simplify them for Chuck. He could cut through it all and get to the core of things and put things in simple terms. He expressed certain things in his way and was a self-educated man who didn't want his son to fall into things that weren't morally correct. His mother also had a tremendous influence on him. His parents had a lot of love for him and always had something to tell him and to teach him.

Chuck was asked if there was anything he didn't get to accomplish before he retired. He said he wanted to get Brentwood High School more academically oriented than it was. He felt that although many of the students were from a lower socioeconomic level than those from the surrounding areas, they are just as intelligent. If they put more value and orientation on academics, these kids could succeed, become more liberated and have more choices to pursue the kinds of things that can improve the quality of their lives.

In conclusion, Carmine's message is that he hopes that educators don't get caught up in all the benefits of their jobs as educators and that they go back to the basics of working with the kids and helping them to succeed.