



Linda Tiscione
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My name is Linda Tiscione; it used to be Gentile but when I married I took my husband's name Tiscione. My nick name is Lynn, though nobody really knows me as Linda except as my official name. I was born in Astoria, Long Island in 1946 right after World War II, became a "Boomer" and a Truman baby at the same time, and lived there for four years before moving to Jackson Heights, Queens. We moved next to Franklin Square in Nassau County, New York when I was in college. When I married, I went back to Queens for a year and a half and then my husband and I bought our house in Massapequa, in Nassau County, Long Island.

I don't really know how I got my name. I do know that my sister was named after my father's mother but I don't know where Linda came from. I've been married to the same man for thirty years this November and we have two sons; one is already an attorney. He's a Federal Prosecutor and works in Brooklyn. My younger son is currently in Law School. He attends Tulane Law School in New Orleans but was evacuated because of the storm and is now attending Hofstra University Law School as a visiting student. He hopes to return to Tulane University in February or by the end of January for next semester. My husband Frank, is an Accountant and he worked for Metropolitan Insurance Company for many years and now works for the Town of Oyster Bay. My oldest son was always interested in Law. When he was in Grade school he belonged to an advanced program and they were able to take classes in college on Saturday. So he took a Criminal Law Class and since he took that class when he was in about the fourth or fifth grade he became hooked on the Law. He did think of a few other things

and because he's a good writer, he tossed around the idea of going into the U.S. Air Force, but he always went back to law. He always wanted it just as he longed to become a litigator. My oldest son married in June of 2004. He's been married for about fourteen months. Her name is Lisa and he met her as an undergraduate at Hofstra University which he had no intention of going to but ended up getting a full scholarship which he accepted attending as an undergraduate and met his wife. Things work out; that's what I tell my younger son.

My older boy looks like his father and their family and my younger son looks more like me and my side. They both like the law but my older son has always wanted to do litigation and to be in court but my younger son couldn't care less about stepping into a courtroom. He'd rather be the person behind the scenes. He's more interested in Sport's law. That's what his major was at the University of Massachusetts. He went to U Mass and took Sports law. One of his professors who was the Head of the Department of Sports Management, was also a lawyer. He took a class on Sports Law and became hooked on Sports Law. He kept saying he thought he was going into law. So I said to my husband, "*Well, you know, Frankie changes his mind a lot. We'll see what happens, you know*", but, he did kind of stick with that. He graduated, but he didn't get into the Law School he wanted, so he waited a year. He was a paraprofessional -- a para legal -- for that year, and then was accepted into Tulane Law School which thrilled him, because it's a very good law school. Well, my younger son is now back home since he was displaced and is attending Hofstra Law School as a visiting student.

My older son attended Yale Law School and he was thrilled since it was the number one Law School in the country and since he came from Hofstra University Law School I don't think there had ever been a student accepted from there until he was, so that became quite a feather in his cap.

I recall when we got our very first TV and it was in the living room. It was kind of a square box with a little round screen. It might have been a ten inch black

and white screen and we were thrilled because that was the first television we ever had and it was a very big deal.

My mother's maiden name was Romanello. Her mother was born in America but her father was a first generation Italian who came here from Italy. He was from Naples, a barber by trade and brought that skill with him when he settled here. I think he also did some bartending. I seem to remember my mother doing some sewing for people and working as a dressmaker. My mom basically didn't work for a living, for many years but when my father lost his job she went to work for a while. She was good at caring for people. She worried about people in the family and was very family oriented. He was a people person when he wanted to be. He could be very friendly and charming and he worked in the hotel industry He was a bell man for many years. He worked at the Cornish Arms in Manhattan. He also worked at the International Hotel at Idlewild and Kennedy Airport. My parents were not well educated. I don't think my mother ever graduated from High School. That seemed to be normal at that time. My mother enjoyed being with her family and taking care of all of us. When I think about my father I remember when he had a car which was a big deal also and it may have been eight or nine years before we even got a car. It was something special when on the weekend your father wasn't busy and your mother was with you, we'd all take a ride to the beach. Not like it is today when there are so many cars on the road and you have many choices of places to go. Basically, you played on your block on the street with friends in the neighborhood and on the weekend if you were lucky you'd go somewhere in the car with your family. Occasionally, if a car came down the street you'd have to run to get out of its way, mindful of the danger and we also played in the empty lots too. I remember playing soft ball in a couple of the empty lots on the corner but there wasn't very much in the way of organized sports at that time. I attended Catholic grammar school and high school and there wasn't that much else to do. I went to St. Gabriel in Jackson Heights and St. Agnes in College Point. I don't remember there being any after school activities in that area.

I had one brother and one sister. My sister was three years older than I. She passed away about four or five years ago. My brother was considerably younger than me. He's fourteen years my junior. He was like a change of life baby who brought a lot of joy to the family. My brother's name is Joseph and he's a Psychologist. Right now he's at Winthrop Hospital but he'll be going back to Stony Brook University Hospital where he started. My sister was outgoing but had a cognitive challenge so it became difficult to be close with her. My mother unfortunately, needed to spend a great deal of time caring for my sister. When my father went to work my mother stayed home to care for the children. My brother was in effect, my kid brother. I was fourteen when he was born. I remember as a baby he used to like to bite and pull hair. My cousin was about the same age, I think she was about six months older than him. He'd be chasing her around trying to bite her and pull her hair and everything else. Not that he was doing it in a mean way but that was the way he played. Yeah! It was fun having a little brother growing up. We had aunts and uncles and were closer to my mother's family than to my father's because we saw them more often. At one point we had my aunt Mary and Uncle Joe living with us in the same house but in the apartment upstairs and then I think they moved to the apartment in the basement. Then he had Aunt Sue and her family living with us in the other apartment. So we got to see more of my mother's family. I think my mother had three sisters and I think she had four brothers but only one survived. The other two uncles I never met because they passed away before I was born. I think my grandmother also had a number of other children that died in childbirth. I think they were either stillborn or were strangled by their umbilical cords.

I decided that I wanted to teach when I was fairly young. I liked children. I liked to talk and explain things. I just thought, "*Well sounds like a good career to me*". I tossed around the idea of going to work for a magazine like Good Housekeeping but then I just kind of went toward teaching as a career. There was really no big decision involved.

I remember liking board games. I was like a *tom boy*. I liked to play baseball when I was young and one of my best friends was a boy, you know, we kind of grew up together. We were young maybe from about six or seven, to the time that I moved away. We were friends and he was a good friend of mine. I used to play with guns. We didn't think of them as a weapon as we do now. I never got involved with having too many dolls or things like that. I liked the more active elements of sports. Even now both my sons are very much into sports – during school. My youngest son was always, you know, kind of the jock.

A few years back, we were cleaning out some of my mother's things when she was still alive. And we came across this notebook she used to keep. It was kind of like, very nostalgic reading it because all of the prices she paid for things at the time, twenty cents for milk or whatever, I guess she was on a budget when she first got married. And it was all these things from way back, and I remember her listing all the things that she gave to me for my first Christmas. You know, and I'm reading it, and I think I got a high chair, and a bath toy, and I don't know whatever else, and I'm reading it and I said Mom, you didn't get me any toys, you just got be a bath toy? A highchair shouldn't count. We were laughing at it but it was like, very nostalgic. What I actually got for my first Christmas. You know it was interesting to read back because you're going back what –sixty years or whatever? It was funny. We had a good laugh over it.

I remember working in a merchandise store. It was called Great Eastern. I worked there as a sales girl. I worked, one of my worst jobs I think, working as a cashier in a supermarket. I did that when I was younger and I was also a counselor at one of those camps. I also worked for three different A & S stores, you know, little odd jobs like that.

I know I had a lot of trouble with Latin. It was not one of my best subjects. Today's students don't have to worry about Latin. I don't know if I failed the Regents or I didn't do well but I remember the teacher putting all the students

who didn't do well and needed extra help up in the front. And I remember that I was in the front. I remember I didn't like languages. One or two classes in college gave me problems in math. Other than that I was a hard worker. I had to study hard and I liked school

At that time my favorite season was summer. Today I would answer differently. Spring, summer and fall are my favorites now. Winter is the only season that I don't favor.

Certain familiar aromas of foods cooking remind me of my mother. Not that she was a great cook you understand. She wasn't. But she was still a better chef than I am. One of the things I remember about her that was funny was the way she would *'follow'* a recipe. She would say, *"Well I don't have salt, so I'll use this instead"*. And *I don't have that ingredient, so I'll try some of this"*. Then when she tasted it she would say – *"Gee! I don't know why this didn't come out right."* Then I'd have to say to her, *"But Mom, you didn't use half the required ingredients"*. She would use all these substitutions and then wonder why her efforts didn't come out right. But she would cook more than I do because I'm not really a cook. My youngest son is the comedian, you know? He was the only one in his college that actually liked the cafeteria food. I used to tell them, *"Look, You either want me to come to your games, or take you to the mall whenever you want to go, and do fun things with you and take you places or you can have the kind of mother that stays home with you and cooks. "No, No, that's okay Mom, they'd say. We'd rather have you do things with us."* We could always call out to get dinner. Now, you have a Masters Degree right? "Yes. I got that at Queens College. After I graduated I went back to school to St. John's University in Queens where I majored in Elementary Education and got My Masters Degree. The birth of each of my children gave me an overwhelming sense of pride in them. My husband and I have always been very proud of them when each one of them graduated from school. I have also felt great pride in myself for my educational accomplishments.

When we got married our plan was for me to work about a year and a half and then I was going to get pregnant and I was going to stay home. I don't know what changed. I guess being home a while I decided, I better go back to work. But I'm glad that I did because it involved a lot of pleasurable moments with the kids learning and also it provided a lot of extra money that we would not have had if I hadn't gone back to work.

I have some very good general memories especially of when I was teaching First Grade. The kids coming in from the beginning and can't even find the page in the book. They leave your room in June and they're reading and knowing so much more than when they came in. That's very fulfilling. So, you know, I have a lot of memories like that.

I first came to Brentwood right out of school in 1967. Why to Brentwood? At that time it was more difficult to find a teaching position in Nassau than in Suffolk. I was applying in different areas. I remember filling out my forms on the typewriter. We didn't yet have computers. I got to Brentwood and I said to myself, "Okay! *You're going to teach in Brentwood*". I don't know where that came from. I don't know why I said I'm going to teach in Brentwood. And I didn't think anything of it. I came to an interview with Mr. Saikin; Ralph Saikin, and Ralph Saikin was a Jokester and he wasn't very serious during the interview. We had a lot of fun talking and joking around and Mrs. Matson was sitting in on the interview. He offered me a job right on the spot. I accepted it and he said, "*What grade do you want?*" *I have openings in first, second, third and whatever.*" I said, "*I don't know. I guess ...First...*" *Stupidly, I said first, not realizing that it's the hardest grade. So I was hired there and I didn't go to any other interviews. I just accepted that one offer.* My intuition told me I was going to work in Brentwood even before I was asked. I think he asked me something about discipline and how I would handle something and I rattled on and on for so long, that I said, "*What was the original question?*" and Ralph said, "*I think it's a little warm in here*" and we all laughed and he said, "Let's open a window", or something, and I don't know, it just kind of broke the ice.

I always thought that the district provided a very good program for the children and we had all the supplies we needed and you'd constantly hear stories like I did from my cousin who started much later than I did, and started her career in "a bad area", meaning an underprivileged neighborhood in NYS burdened with all the usual economic challenges, social inequalities and seasonal deprivations. They only had four hundred dollars for the entire art department budget, and she couldn't get this and she couldn't get that. I always felt through the years that Brentwood always provided the latest programs and maybe even some programs that I didn't always agree with, but they always tried to be on top of things as far as the programs and materials were concerned. We didn't have the same as other districts where they had to go without things. For example, I piloted a couple of programs that were introduced and one of them was a Houghton Mifflin Series; I think it was a literature series. At first I didn't like it because it didn't really have a skills program to go along with it. But I ended up loving the program because it actually took books, well known authors and whole books not abridged versions and that's what the kids were reading. I felt that an experienced teacher would know the skills to put in or we could have gotten a skills book to go along with it. But anyway the program wasn't adopted and I kept the books because we were allowed to keep the books and I kept them as supplements, I loved them so much.

I really don't have that much experience visiting other places but only through hear say I believe what I've always felt about Brentwood. We have a lot of good teachers here. We have a lot of excellent programs, a lot of materials for the kids. We've been getting a lot of State money through the years, a lot of government money that was used. We were right up there with the computers when computers became big. I know there were periods when it became a little tight, when the budget didn't pass but generally speaking I felt that we always had what we needed to succeed. We were always kind of up there with new ideas and so forth. One of the things that used to be most annoying was when the machines would break down. You'd go in with a stack of new things to

run off and you only had forty minutes or whatever and the machine won't work. Yeah! We became very good at fixing the machine. Remember the old ditto machines? I would go home covered by purple on my hands and on my clothes. I'd have to wear an apron.

I met and worked with many people that I'm still friendly with that I met years ago. At that time her name was Sally Franzone, today it's Sally McAfee and Suzanne Auzillo, I'm still very, very good friends with them. Joe DeRiggo came in after I did. Actually Les Black started the year I did. I always thought he was cute looking you know, especially when he wore his little sun glasses. Well any way, we all kind of started at the same time.

I only taught First and Second Grade. I started out at North and then when I had my first child, I had to stop working because I was having problems. I went back to work after a year and a half and I was put in Northeast because there were no open positions available in North. Then a position became available after about a year, maybe it was two years and I went back to North, for a few months but then I got pregnant with my second child and again I took a leave and came back in a year and a half. I think that was when I went back to Pine Park. My friend Sally was working over there, so I asked, *"Is it a nice building?"* and I said, *"Then I might as well come over there."* Okay, I'll come there. There was a position open, for I think, second grade, so I came back to second grade there. And then after a while we were moved to Twin Pines. That was the year they were moving the sixth grade out. So therefore, Pine Park was going to be a Kindergarten Center. They were moving first and second grade over to Twin Pines. I remember we'd have a line of kids carrying their chair over to.... no that couldn't have been the move. We wouldn't have had the kids moving the furniture that must have been just a visit. Yeah! That was a big upheaval for us. The first year I was very nervous. You were just reaching around in the dark. Two steps ahead of the kids, really, as far as the curriculum and everything. I must have shown that nervousness because I had five criers that year. That was the first and only year that I had five crying. So they must have picked up on my nervousness.

I still remember the first kid I had. He was the first one to come in the room. He was a little chubby boy and he came in crying and I think he left in June crying. No, he would cry on and off. He was the first student that I remember. I always liked – loved children and I always had a lot of patience with them in the beginning—when I was young. I guess my purpose was really to have them learn. You know, explain things, have them learn things and pick up on things, have them leave the classroom knowing much more than when they came in and if there was something that I thought they should know about even if it wasn't in their curriculum, I'd throw it in. We'd work on some things that maybe I thought they didn't have to know. Just to help them out.

I never kept in contact with any of my teachers but I did with several of my own children's teachers. Oh, every so often some of my former students when they were in high school used to stop in and ask, "*Do you remember me? I'm so and so*" and I used to be very good with names and faces, but over the years my memory is not what it used to be and not since I retired do I see them anymore. But it was really nice to see them.

Just before I retired about four years ago, I had jury duty and was on a court case and one of the girls there on jury duty with me was a former student and I vaguely remembered her. She was a little bitty, tiny girl and I think I had her when she was in First Grade and we talked about Brentwood and we talked about what she was doing now and so forth. Another time I ran into someone at the Vanderbilt Planetarium who was working there. It's kind of scary because sometimes they know you and they've changed so much that you don't recognize them until they tell you their name and then you say, "*Oh yeah! Now I remember.*" Yes, I bump into people.

I was always a member but I never took an active part in, the BTA while I was in Brentwood. I did however become a test case for pregnancy/disability when I was expecting with my first child in 1977. I was unable to work when I was

pregnant because I was tending to have toxemia and the doctor didn't want me working for some reason and that question had never come up in the District before, so it was decided that they treat it as if it were a regular disability.

I retired July 1, 2001. Actually I still work for the District. I sit on CSEA Committees Part time as an employee of the District as the General Education Teacher when they call me twenty or twenty five days per year. The first year I retired I was working for the Bilingual Department doing ESL Testing, so consequently I haven't yet had both feet out the door. My total time in the District has been between thirty-five and thirty-six years. It's funny how certain things stick in your mind. My first year with Brentwood I made \$6,200 before taxes.

My primary reason for deciding to retire when I did was because I became aware that I was losing patience more often for things like broken machines and having to discipline the kids. I disliked having to discipline them. I like teaching, explaining things to them and helping them learn but I found myself unable to deal with the disciplining of them that was required. It was kids being kids, but with twenty-five of them in one room at one time that was becoming too much for me. It was hard to handle. Then also I was turning fifty-five I wanted to get the incentive and they took away the incentive for fifty-seven, I felt that it was time to do other things, there were ten people from my building retiring at the time, there was a new contract coming out and we were uncertain about what was going to be included in the new contract, and for all those reasons I wanted to do other things.

I think I might have liked to further my education by getting another degree or more credits. I probably would have tried to go into another area like Math Lab or Reading Lab. or becoming a Reading Teacher or going into Administration. I would have to give it more thought.

I looked more to my own family for role models. Family was always more important than singers and celebrities. The moon landing provided us with a mother load of historical photos and stories of interest to the children. I still had them to the last day I taught. We still talked about them and remembered reading about it when it happened.

I guess the thing that I've missed most since I've been retired is the camaraderie that I remember existing between teachers and administrators; just the very idea that you feel you're doing something very worthwhile. Like I said, most of my good friends are teachers that I taught with and that we still get together and do things. We have a mahjong group, I have other people that I travel with, other people that I play golf with, we always help each other and tease each other – you hear people speak of the extended Brentwood family; this is it. This is what it means. You have to kind of have a sense of humor. We used to have fun things going on between the classes because we needed to hold on to that sense of humor or you'd go crazy.

I think when you consider an area like Brentwood and some of the poorer areas, one of the things that I'd like to see is a great deal more involvement with parents as far as what to prepare kids for, how to help them at home, a lot of the kids coming in have a lack of basic things and that may not be a problem in other areas but I think in Brentwood it's a consideration. I always said, give me my kids four and a half hours straight, without any interruptions, and do the ESL, and the Bi-Lingual, and the music and the art and the lunch and the gym, --after --- one of the things I always felt is that it's too much. You didn't have enough time to work with them. The classroom teacher has the most responsibility and the least say as to the kid being out of the room at certain times and being in the room at certain times or whatever. And I always said have things before school or after the main program. You've got to get them early in the day. If you get them at the end of the day they're already wiped out. The state has to come out with better ideas. Maybe educators themselves can provide better advice to the policymakers with

respect to what to do and what not to do because some of these things don't work so well in reality. I always tell new teachers that it's not too late to choose another career. Teaching has become a lot more complex than it was when I started out – a lot more. You now have to be a psychologist, a social worker, a teacher, a friend and it's so involved you have to be a magician to get these kids to learn all these things. The curriculum is up here and the kids are down here you somehow have to bridge that distance in the best way you can. I always told the new teachers that there's a big difference between the curriculum they hand you to teach and the books they give you to go through to teach and the time you have to teach. And when I say teach I don't mean this spiral method where you do something and then you go on to the next thing. I believe in a lot of skill and drill; ie. – teaching for mastery. Years ago that was more the approach – teaching to mastery. So, when you're talking about that to the curriculum and everything, I think there's not enough time in the day to teach all the things we have to teach. I always tell the new teachers, *“Look just don't panic, because it's overwhelming. There are certain things that after a while you will know have to be done and certain things that you will know that you will just do quickly, or whatever. But certain things you have to teach to mastery and those you really have to know. That's where experience comes in and you have to know the difference”*. I didn't have a favorite year because there was a good and a bad part to every year. Certainly you'll remember the year when you had a few discipline problems in the room and other years when your class was basically seamless, and you didn't have anybody running down the hallway or climbing the walls. So I mean not one memory in particular but memories of different years. Which makes me think someone in Brentwood should write a book about all of the memories teachers have of different things they can recall. It would be some story because there are so many wonderful tales to tell. I would like to be remembered as a hard working, no nonsense type of teacher who always tried to think of what was best for the kids and may not always have had enough patience but always felt a huge responsibility for the kids themselves and getting enough teaching done to enable them to succeed in the next grade. At least, I'm hoping that's how I'll be remembered.