

LAURA CAMPIOTTI, North High Class of 1959



Laura Campiotti and Son Daniele Graziani

When I arrived in Denver after a two days bus ride from NYC, where I had landed following a seven days sea journey from Rotterdam, Holland, I had never been in a foreign country, with the exception of England where I had spent my summer vacations the previous year. (By the way, I am a native - and a resident - of Milan, Italy).

I had little information concerning what would expect me. I had been selected by the AFS (American Field Service, a structure created by Stephen Galatti as a volunteer ambulance service during World War 2, then turned into a non-profit organization sponsoring exchange programs for young people to enhance understanding between different cultures) to spend my senior year of high school in the USA and assigned by them to the Sweet family (who had joined the program). I must have looked fairly shy in a completely new environment, with my insufficient knowledge of local language, habits, mentality and my consequent limited understanding of what was going on.

Fortunately, I found the Sweet family very open and warm. Don and Beth treated me like a true daughter and Janice like a true sister. They all did their best to make me feel at home.

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When school started, it was like plunging once again in a new reality. Schools I had attended in Italy concentrated on giving me a certain education, but were not too concerned whether or not I developed a harmonious personality. Activities that would help a person grow, such as student council, speech classes, let alone sports, were unconceivable. At North High I learned that there could be different points of view in mutual respect and - without forgetting my roots - I had the opportunity to grow and profit by this experience, undoubtedly a worthy opportunity, and one quite rare at the time.

When I returned home after a year, I was a different person and the values I had learned have been a part of me ever since. That's why I cherish the memories of my stay at North. There, I discovered people can be friends even if they don't share the same background, religion and beliefs. I learned to respect differences and to broaden my outlook. I did my best to live by the standards I had acquired ever since, and to transmit my appreciation for your country to my children. It is not a chance one of my son's lives in California and the other works with American companies.

Even if things have changed in the past 50 years and the USA not always stood up to the principles I admired, I can still say - as we used to sing - "God bless America" and all that made my experience possible.

Well, that's the story of my stay at North.

All the best,

Laura Campiotti