



Framing a Life: A Family Memoir

Geraldine A. Ferraro

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Framing a Life is Geraldine Ferraro's touching memoir of her Italian American family. Like the frame on which her mother once crocheted beads to make a living, *Framing a Life* draws together a tapestry of immigrant family stories both past and present. Beginning with the arrival of her grandmother Maria Giuseppa Caputo on these shores in 1890, the author takes us on a grand journey that includes her own vice presidential nomination in 1984 and brings us to the present day, spanning a total of five generations.

In the immigrant ghettos of New York's Lower East Side and Italian Harlem, Maria Giuseppa raised ten children, one of whom was Gerry's mother, Antonetta Corrieri. The young Antonetta was forced to leave school after the eighth grade to work as a crochet beader in a garment factory, but she had aspirations to lead a better life. She fulfilled this goal when she married Dominick Ferraro, an up-and-coming Italian immigrant, and they opened a restaurant and store in Newburgh, New York. But her fortunes took a tragic turn when Dominick died suddenly of a heart attack. Determined not to let her dreams of a better life for her son and daughter die with her husband, Antonetta moved to the Bronx and returned to crochet beading to put Carl and Gerry through school. Once, observing Gerry's poor crocheting skills, Antonetta warned her, "Get an education or you'll starve to death!" Gerry took heed, becoming a teacher before she turned her attention to the law and to politics.

Antonetta Ferraro's single-mindedness paid off in the ultimate immigrant success story. Geraldine Ferraro, whose grandmother could not read or write and whose mother left school at age fourteen, rose to become a symbol of the American dream -- for all immigrants and for all women.

Throughout Gerry's runs for office, including her vice presidential campaign with Walter Mondale in 1984, Antonetta was a constant presence by her daughter's side. She lived to see one of Gerry's daughters receive an MBA from Harvard but passed away before the other daughter became a doctor.

In *Framing a Life* Geraldine Ferraro leads us along her family tree, from her Italian roots to the branches that stretch into the future. Throughout, she draws parallels between her own and other immigrant families and the basic values, including religion and the importance of education, that unite them. She notes that contemporary immigrants from Asia and Latin America are no different from our country's European forebears in their circumstances and their dreams of a better life. No matter where one's family originated, Ferraro's story has resonance for us all.

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