

Brooke Vaughn
Poggioreale in America
2023 Scholarship Program
Essay

In 1894, my Great Great Great Grandmother Agnes Messina Cangelosi boarded a ship with three young children to travel to America from Poggioreale, Italy, to be reunited with her husband, Jake Cangelosi. Jake had already immigrated to the Bryan, TX area looking to escape the poor conditions in Poggioreale hoping to make a better life for his family. Once Jake had settled as a farmer in the Brazos Bottom, Agnes and my Great Great Grandmother Dorothea, who was 10 at the time, along with her two sisters started their journey across the ocean to America. When I try to think about what Agnes did in today's terms, I think of someone asking if I would like to board a rocket to go live on Mars! What would I do? Would I have the same courage, fortitude, and determination that she had to make this scary and unknown journey on a boat alone with three children to find a better life and opportunity for her family? The actions that she took to come to America inspire me to strive to be just like her in everything I do!

Courage is defined as the ability to do something that frightens you. When I think of a time that I had to find courage despite being afraid, I think about my freshman year of high school when I didn't make the volleyball team. I was unsure about what I was going to do next. At the time, I had an agriculture teacher who encouraged me to raise an animal for that year's county fair, and, although I knew nothing about raising animals, and I was scared to try, I took a chance. I am so thankful I found the courage to do this because I fell in love with raising and showing animals. I know there will be many more times in my life when I am scared to try something new; however, it's during these times I think about Agnes and how much courage she had to face her fears in order to come to America, it continually inspires me to be just like her.

When Agnes and Jake settled in the Bryan area and became farmers, life wasn't easy. They were faced with many obstacles like the floods of 1899, 1900, 1913, and 1921. During these trying times, raising a family was hard, but Agnes had the fortitude to keep going in the face of adversity. Fortitude is a characteristic that I try to most emulate of Agnes' by not quitting when things don't go my way. I have had many opportunities to practice fortitude while raising and showing my animals; It is hard, takes tons of time, animals get sick, and no matter how hard you work you don't always win. But after each

show, I go back to the barn and start working hard again for the next show. Even though the adversity I face in the show ring isn't the same as what Agnes and my family faced, I know this is a trait that I inherited directly from her!

Just like Agnes, a characteristic we each share is determination. Through showing animals, I learned how to set goals and how to never give up. A big goal I set for myself this year was to be admitted to Texas A&M University. I recently found out that I accomplished this goal, and I am excited that I will be returning to the Bryan, TX area where all my Italian family first settled. I will be pursuing a degree in agriculture and following in the footsteps of so many of my Italian relatives. Agnes' determination and willpower laid the foundation for future generations, like me, to believe that anything I set my mind to is possible.

When I sat down with my Nana to hear the stories of Agnes Messina Cangelosi and the women in my family passed down through the generations, I realized that not just Agnes had courage, fortitude, and determination. In fact, each generation of Italian women in my family have these same characteristics. Strong women like Agnes, Dorthea Cangelosi Corona, my Great Grandmother Camelia Cuchia Corona, and my Grandmother Dorothy Corona Lund laid the foundation for my generation to succeed. I am honored to be a part of a culture and a family that has so many strong women representing it, and I am proud to be Italian!