

BEFORE and AFTER

It's been said that it is not where you came from but where you ended up that matters.

After all these years, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who accepted me for who and what I was and for helping me to develop as a person with hopes and dreams. I have been very fortunate to be blessed with a fulfilling and rewarding life. For this, I am indebted and truly grateful to many wonderful people. Thank you.

The BEFORE



Mario's formative years

Teachers Make A Difference

"Life is a journey formed by the people you meet and the experiences you encounter along the way."

Mario recalls...

"My family immigrated to Canada from Italy when I was eight years old. We made stops on our journey, in fact we stayed overnight in New York and then we stayed in Toronto for a few days with relatives. My father was influenced by relatives and friends who felt Canada was a richer and more prosperous country. My father was an exporter. He felt he needed to leave Italy for Canada so that he would not disadvantage his children. Dad decided to come here two years earlier to get established (two of his brothers were here as well), my mom and we three kids came two years later. My father wanted a better future and education for his kids.

It was difficult to leave friends, family and our country behind. I remember people crying and chasing after us as we walked to the train. They didn't want us to go. It was very difficult to leave. I spoke no English.

When I entered the school system in Sault Ste. Marie, I should have been in grade three, but because of my language deficiency, the school placed me in grade one.

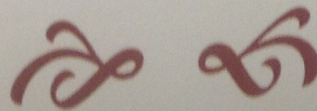
My teachers, especially Ms. Hughes, my grade one teacher, worked with me both during and after school to help me learn English. It would have been easy for her not to like me or to assume I couldn't learn because my family was poor. I didn't look like the other kids, I didn't dress like the other kids and I didn't speak like the other kids. Ms. Hughes didn't see me differently, her classroom created a culture of acceptance and she made me feel that I could learn just like any other student in her classroom. I helped my teachers mark Math papers – I was good in Math."

Interview on the early years

Ms. Hughes (now Mrs. McKay) recalls...

"When the new Canadians, that is what we called them back then, first came to Sault Ste. Marie, they used to automatically come to me.... Even though, like Mario, they were between seven and ten years old, they came into my grade one class for at least part of the day to learn English. We had approximately forty students in the class at the time so I had the older students help the younger children. The older students learned a lot from the younger students and vice-versa. I remember we had nothing but the notebooks provided by the school board and I had maybe 5 books to teach them with. I used to have the children glue pictures, and put the names of pictures on the catalogues to help them learn new words.

Although I taught a lot of Turcos, I remember Mario. My husband asked me recently how many children I had taught over the years, the number is in the 1000's but when I think of Mario, I get a picture of a round smiling face, pleasant, helpful and eager to learn. Mario wanted to learn, he loved to read and he was a quick learner. I am sure he still carries many of these traits today. It amazed me how quickly he caught on. To me, that was the most fascinating thing about all our new immigrants, by the time they left my grade one classroom, they could read. I am happy for Mario and am humbled to know that he feels his experiences in my classroom had an impact on who he is today."



Interview with grade one teacher, Ms. Hughes

The AFTER

THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 2012 ■ THE SAULT STAR

localnews

■ EDUCATION: Began career with public board in 1970

Rock star treatment as Mario Turco says farewell

BRIAN KELLY
The Sault Star

Mario Turco's final tour comes complete with its own swag.

The director of education with Algoma District School Board retires in July after 42 years as a teacher, principal and senior administrator.

Students at Alexander Henry High School and Sault Ste. Marie Adult Learning Centre presented Turco with a swag bag to recognize his last visits to all of the board's 50-plus schools.

The loot included a hat, bandana, notebook, coffee mug, frisbee and black T-shirt.

Turco's photo appears on the shirt's front. The back reads Director's Farewell Tour and lists the dates of each of his school stops.

"We weren't sure how he was going to take it, but he liked it," said Margaret Bernardi, a secretary at Sault Ste. Marie Adult Learning Centre on Wednesday.

"It sounded a bit like a rock concert tour. What's a tour without a T-shirt?"

She acknowledged the shadowy image chosen of Turco, where he looks "a lot like Marion Brando," may have also helped her boss appreciate the gesture.

Turco told trustees he was treated "like a rock star" at the Northern Avenue school on Friday.

There were more awards for the outgoing head of the public board at the trustees' meeting.

Chair Jennifer Sarlo presented Turco with a director emeritus certificate to mark his retirement. Superintendent of education Lucia Reece, who'll succeed Turco, gave Turco a plaque from Ontario Public Supervisory Officials Association.



"I've had a wonderful, wonderful job. I'm leaving feeling great about our organization, feeling hopeful for the future and looking forward to watching it from wherever I am, whatever I'm doing."

Mario Turco

tion.

Turco began his career with the public board in 1970. He taught math at Korah Collegiate. Turco's move from teacher to administrator began in 1980 when he became vice-principal at Bawating. He became principal of that school in 1986. He moved up to become a superintendent in 1990. Turco succeeded Ray DeRosario when he was appointed director of education in 2003.

"He epitomizes the goal of public education that in our province, our country a young immigrant can arrive, be valued for who he is, be educated, make a living, make a life, and most of all make a difference," Sarlo told trustees.

"You can retire proudly knowing that you have made a difference and have made a significant contribution to public education and therefore to society's citizens."

One of Turco's former students is Wanda McQueen, the board's vice-chair. She was chair when Turco became

director.

Turco said he was "truly blessed" to work for ADSB and its predecessor, Sault Ste. Marie Board of Education.

He's "not wanting to go" after more than four decades in education with not one day "I didn't want to come to work."

"I'd like to stay forever because I think we're making a difference," said Turco.

"I've had a wonderful, wonderful job. I'm leaving feeling great about our organization, feeling hopeful for the future and looking forward to watching it from wherever I am, whatever I'm doing."

He playfully offered his services for two upcoming board events. Thirty students from Korah Collegiate will travel to Italy in March.

"Do you need a chaperone next year?" Turco asked.

He also volunteered to chauffeur Harry Jones, First Nation trustee, when he travels to Toronto for a conference in August.

b.kelly@sourmedia.ca

"Sweet Mario" a la Neil Diamond

Where it began
I can't begin to knowing
But then I know it's growing strong
Was in the spring
And spring became a summer
Who'd believe you'd come along

Hands
Touching hands
Reaching out
Touching me
Touching you

Sweet Mario
Good times never seemed so good
I've been inclined
To believe they never would
But now I

Look at the night
And it don't seem so lonely
We fill it up with only two

And when I hurt
Hurting runs off my shoulders
How can I hurt when holding you?
Warm

Touching warm
Reaching out
Touching me
Touching you
Sweet Mario
Good times never seemed so good
I've been inclined
To believe they never would
Oh no no

Sweet Mario
Good times never seemed so good
Sweet Mario
I believed they never could
Sweet Mario
Good times never seemed so good

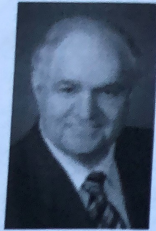


ALL THE BEST MARIO!

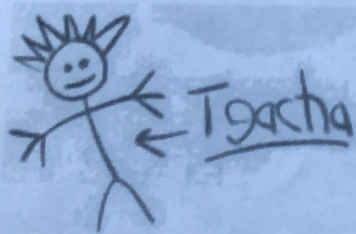
Principals' tribute (lyrics by Frank Greco)

THE ODE TO 'MAR'

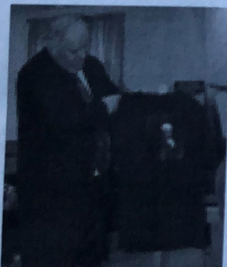
(sing to the tune of "My Way")



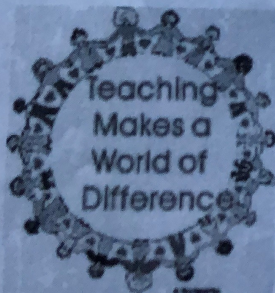
And now the end is near
And now I close the final meeting
My friends I'll say it here
'Cause you all know that fame is fleeting
I've gone from math to boss
And put big miles on the two lane highway
But you all knew to keep your jobs
You did it my way...



Big cuts, we've had a few
And governments too bad to mention
But still we soldier on
And teach our kids without exemption.
I said 'trust me' too much
But as you know it's me or the highway cause
If you plan on getting paid you'll do it my way



Though my good bye tour, from far and near
Seemed just as long as my career
But through it all my roadies said
The fame would never go to my head
Although I know that Marlon Brandow
Would play it my way (ok maybe Harrison Ford....)



I've laughed, you've cried, in June we're fried
But we are sad it's you we're losing
But hey when fall does come
We'll be at work and you'll be cruising
We wish you all the best and know
You'd say, not in a shy way
For forty years and more I did it my way

Retirement Party tribute (lyrics by Sue Barber)

The FUTURE



golfing with grandsons Tate and Tye



newest grandson Joseph Elias baptism. Soon to join our foursome.

Who could ask for anything more!