

A door creaked and I waited expectantly to see who was coming. It was Chesco. I made polite conversation, inquired about the price of chickens. Chesco roared.

"Signor, you do not understand! But it is not your fault, for I did not finish the story. Signor Marvin, he is tired of always to travel. So he built the house and the studio where he paints. Like always I come with him. I am the servant. I live in the little room downstairs and I cook and I make the garden.

"But the good signor he die. Then the lawyer comes and he tells me everything is mine . . . the money, the house, the garden . . . It is funny, is it not, signor? All my life I think, if I am ever rich I will have servants and a car and a boat and a radio and . . . and now I do not even have a watch."

He laughed—and his laugh was rich and hearty.

"You see, signor, nothing has changed. Only one thing. I have four boys and I send them to college. They are not really my sons, you

understand, but the boys of fishermen here in Provincetown. The parish priest he say to me: 'These are good boys and very bright. But their families are very poor. Would it not be good if they had the chance to go to college?'

"I go away and I think about it for a while and then I come back. 'It would be a good thing,' I say to the priest, 'and I will pay for it.' So now I have four sons who go to college in Boston.

"You understand how it is, signor? For me everything is the same like before. I still live in the little room downstairs and I cook and feed the chickens and make the garden. And every morning I go to shop for the neighbors. I am a servant, signor. Always I have been a servant. . . ."

NOT LONG AFTERWARD, when I returned to Provincetown for a visit, it was old Mrs. Gonzales who told me the news. Chesco was dead. He had died peacefully, even as

he had lived.

He should have a big tombstone, she said. No, maybe not a big one. Chesco wouldn't care for that. But it should say what we all think of him. Isn't that right? . . .

I asked old Mrs. Gonzales what she would write on the tombstone, and the question troubled her. She visited with the neighbors far into the night. Next morning she had a challenge in her eyes as she handed me a piece of paper. On it she had painstakingly printed:

To the memory of
Francesco Ronga
THE ETERNAL SERVANT

Born: Naples, 1876
Departed this life 1947

Everyone Loved Him

Funeral Is Held For 'Chesco' Today March 27, 1947 Conducted Restaurant Where Beachcombers Was Started—Born In Naples

Funeral services were held at 11 this morning in the Church of St. Mary of the Harbor, the Rev. William Bailey officiating, for Francesco "Chesco" Ronga, 70, who died Monday in the Truesdale Hospital, Fall River. Mr. Ronga, who had been in failing health for the past year, was taken to the Cape Cod Hospital Sunday in the Lower Cape ambulance from his home at 211 Bradford Street, and later moved to Fall River. Interment was in the Provincetown cemetery.

"Chesco", as he was known to a great many in Provincetown, was born in Naples, Italy, the son of Joseph and Mary Ronga. Fred Marvin, artist and brother of Mary Heaton Vorse, author-journalist of

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Provincetown, met "Chesco" while studying art in Italy and prevailed upon him to come to Provincetown. He returned with Mr. Marvin about 37 years ago and lived here ever since.

He opened up a small eating place in the building on Bradford Street where he lived and Chesco's Restaurant acquired a wide reputation. It was there that the artists, Charles Hawthorne, "Petey" Bicknell, Ambrose Webster, Lester Hornby and George Senseney and others met to discuss the plans for a social group of artists and literary people which later became the Beachcombers with Mr. Senseney as the first Skipper.

"Chesco" had the gay, volatile, and changeable temperament of a true Neapolitan and he was fond of singing, robustly, airs from operas as he walked down to get his groceries. He also had a "green thumb" and was very successful in growing flowers.

He is survived by a sister in Naples and a number of nieces and nephews.



Taken from Chesco's corner "Private Way". Eastern Cold Storage, and Schoolhouse, right. -- -- September 1946.
Howland Street, by white fence. Facing east end.