



A. P. GIANNINI AND HIS *VISION*

MY NAME IS AMADEO PETER GIANNINI. PETER, NOT PIETRO, BECAUSE I WAS BORN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN 1870. AMADEO BECAUSE MY PARENTS WERE ITALIAN. THEY EMIGRATED TO CALIFORNIA FROM A VILLAGE ON THE HILLS OVER GENOA. I STILL HAVE THE HOUSE OF MY GRANDPARENTS UP THERE. A HOUSE MADE OF STONE AND SAND, THE WAY HOUSES WERE BUILT BY POOR PEOPLE, BY THE FARMERS WHO LIVED ON THOSE MOUNTAINS AND WHO LEFT TO LOOK FOR THE PROMISED LAND FAR FROM THEIR OWN.

I WAS SEVEN WHEN I SAW MY FATHER DIE, KILLED FOR A DOLLAR. “NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO DIE FOR A DOLLAR” AND THIS IS WHY I ESTABLISHED MY BANK: THE BANK OF ITALY, THE BANK OF ALL ITALIANS IN AMERICA, WHICH THEN BECAME THE BANK OF AMERICA.

I DIDN'T WANT GUARANTEES FOR THE LOANS, I WANTED TO SEE THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO ASKED ME FOR THEM, TO SEE IF THEY WERE HONEST AND SINCERE HANDS, HANDS THAT WORKED. I LOOKED INTO THE EYES OF THE MEN WHO SAT IN FRONT OF ME. AND I UNDERSTOOD, I UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING, I SAW THEIR FUTURE. TODAY THEY CALL IT “VISION”, BEING ABLE TO SEE THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE WORLD WILL GO BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE DOES,

LIKE THE GOLDEN GATE OF SAN FRANCISCO, THE BRIDGE THAT NO ONE WANTED TO BUILD BECAUSE ONLY A CRAZY PERSON COULD THINK ABOUT BUILDING A BRIDGE WITHOUT CEMENT. BUT IT IS STILL THERE, SOLID, MAJESTIC, A SYMBOL OF A CITY AND A NATION.

THEY CALLED ME CRAZY ALSO IN HOLLYWOOD: I BET ON FILMS THAT NO ONE WANTED TO PRODUCE, SUCH AS “THE KID” BY CHAPLIN, WHO WAS ALREADY FAMOUS AS A COMEDIAN BUT HADN'T YET DIRECTED HIS FIRST FILM. THAT CRAZY CHAPLIN WANTED TO TELL THE STORY OF

AN ORPHAN WHO WAS SAVED BY AN ODD VAGABOND WITHOUT A DIME. HOW COULD SUCH A SAD FILM MAKE ANY MONEY? INSTEAD HE SURPRISED THE WORLD AND IT BECAME ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FILMS OF THE EARLY 20s.

THEN THERE WAS “SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS” BY WALT DISNEY. NO ONE WANTED TO FINANCE A FILM BASED ON A FAIRYTALE BY THE BROTHERS GRIMM DIRECTED BY AN INEXPERIENCED CARTOONIST. FROM THAT MOMENT, WALT DISNEY MADE EVERYONE DREAM, AND NOT JUST CHILDREN.

ONE DAY AN AMERICAN DIRECTOR BORN IN PALERMO KNOCKED ON MY DOOR: FRANK CAPRA. HE WAS ALREADY FAMOUS, BUT NO ONE WANTED TO FINANCE THE STORY OF A MAN WHO WANTED TO KILL HIMSELF AND WHO WAS SAVED BY HIS GUARDIAN ANGEL. I INSTEAD SHARED IN HIS “VISION”, I LOOKED HIM IN THE EYE AND HIS DREAM BECAME MINE. THIS IS HOW “IT’S A WONDER LIFE” WITH JAMES STEWART CAME TO LIFE.

YES, LIFE IS TRULY WONDERFUL, MINE WAS DIFFICULT, A DUSTY ROAD MADE OF ROCK AND SAND, FULL OF POTHOLES AND BOTTLENECKS, BUT IN THE END IT HAS TAKEN ME FAR, IT HAS TAKEN ME HOME.