

Gino “the lifeguard”

An immortal myth



by

Giorgio Buttazzo and Sergio Marra

PREFACE

This book was written in memory of Tommaso Luigi Montinaro, named Gino “il bagnino” (“the lifeguard”), born in Melendugno, a small town in the south-east of Italy, on March 8, 1946 and died in Lecce on June 27, 2002, at age 56, for a serious heart problem.



LOCATION OF THE TOWNS RELATED WITH THE STORIES.

Why writing a book about Gino? Usually biographical books are written to remember important people who have left a significant sign on the history. Which sign could have left a fisherman of San Foca, who never left his village except to go fishing or spend a few days off in some northern cities? It is not easy to explain, but everyone who got to know Gino personally agrees he was a special person, out of the common schemes. A simple man with little education, but with a sharp mind and quick reflexes, which set him apart from the crowd. He also had an athletic body, fitted and trained, and a keen sense of humor that made Gino a unique character.

Meeting Gino on the seafront of San Foca was a guarantee for having a lot of fun, because in any situation, even the most dramatic one, he could always see a comical aspect, underlined with a lightning joke.

Gino liked to bet on everything, above all with tourists and foreigners, because he wanted to make it clear that he was the best in physical skills. For example, he liked challenging people with swim races, or even boats over short distances, or proposing apnea time trials to demonstrate his ability to withstand several minutes underwater, or speed races with his rowing boat, challenging motor boats over short distances (and winning). He plunged from high cliffs, where the water was just a meter deep. Many friends were amazed to see how he was able to quickly come out from the water as a sharp flash, like a fish. He challenged even the sea, going fishing with his boat on stormy days, when all the other fishermen thought it was dangerous. But the challenges that everyone remembers more are those on table football. He offered many points ahead, playing with one hand (and the other tied behind his back), or by inventing more and more stringent rules, as allowing the opponent to win if he could only send the ball beyond his own half field.

But the best way to present Gino is through his stories, told by those who lived close to him in those years. All stories in this book are based on real events that have left an indelible trace in the memory of those who experienced them. Each story shows a facet of his character and his genius, and all together they describe, as the pieces of a large mosaic, the complex personality of this peculiar character. The stories have been grouped into several chapters dedicated to different aspects of his life: the idols who gave him inspiration, the events experienced as a lifeguard, the unbridled passion for the table football, the adventures with girls as a latin lover, and his life as a fisherman.

The bad words that often occur in the various stories should not be considered as a free vulgarity, but they are part of a very colorful form of expression, typical of the South of Italy, and in particular of Salento, the furthestmost South-Eastern part of Italy. Some of such expressions, like “*porcuddissi*”, are just used as filling words in sentences expressing anger mixed with wonder. They have not been translated to leave the reader a little taste of his original sound.

The following preface has been written by Antonio Nahi, a very good friend of Gino and editor of a small publishing house in Melendugno, who accepted my proposal to publish, with no profit, the first version of this book written in his original dialect.

Giorgio Buttazzo

PREFACE BY ANTONIO NAHI

Gino is no longer with us. He's gone in a flash. People say the disease and the long suffering prepare to detachment mitigating anxiety. And maybe it's true, because to many of us it seems incredible not to see him, hear him, say hello, exchange a few words, an innocent gossip, some jokes, that in a community like ours, ancient and strong, based on the sea and the land, represent the salt of life.

It's easy to imagine him on the seafront, next to his tower, second home and watchtower of hope, grappling with the spoils of a thin fishing that, free, he wanted to manage by his own. It's easy to imagine him leaving at sunset on the rippling sea, on his boat that he ruled with matchless skill, alone, confident, happy.

Gino had no enemies. Someone always looked for him. It was a part of San Foca, his San Foca, which is now poorer without his affable unmistakable voice. And also without Gino "il bagnino", "the lifeguard", expert like no others, always alert. Many remember his outstretched hand, his rescue followed by an incomprehensible harsh reproach, but soon mitigated by an open smile.

With these words Vittorio Poti (Major of Melendugno) said goodbye to Gino from the pages of "Il Melendugnese", a local newspaper. And he concluded:

Gino, with the permission of your beloved family, we want to remember you on the newspaper by reporting an old cartoon dedicated to you as protagonist, because, like all noble men, you could laugh at yourself. We know that you won't get angry for the jokes people tell about you, since you liked to play with them. Goodbye, Gino, we miss you!

In the same spirit we want to continue to remember our fellow townsman, entrusting to these pages a brief but symbolic portrayal, so that Gino is not only remembered, but passed on to future generations as an example of free spirit, proud, stubborn, but loyal, friendly and jovial.

Many remember Gino for his jokes. Who is not aware of some of his prowess? This booklet contains many of them, but others are missing and who knows whether, in the future, we are not going to publish a more thorough collection of jokes.

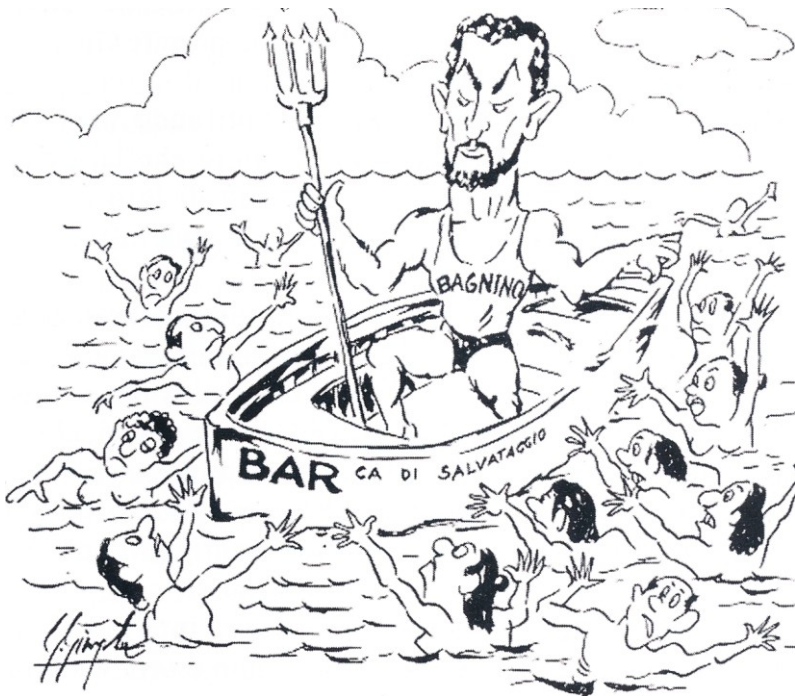
But who was Gino "il bagnino"? Gino was born in San Foca, in "his" San Foca, he loved above all things, capturing the essence of time, during his brief, although intense, life.

When I was a kid, secretly of my great-grandmother, Zi 'Anna', I vanished from the small courtyard where I was used to play with my friends, to go down in Gino's basement, where he was used to play bodybuilding, serious and concentrated. The equipment he used was made by him with some old iron pipe with the ends cemented in old paint cans. These were the rudimentary weights used by Gino, by which he managed to shape his statuary body, athletic and muscular, like that of Bruce Lee.

"I'm going to visit Stivi Rivis" he was keeping saying. He actually meant Steve Reeves, the Hollywood actor that played the role of several heroic deeds. He was his idol, and Gino had read in magazines that the actor was looking for extras in his adventurous movies about Maciste, Samson, and Hercules. Mythical heroes, as the spirit of our legendary Gino, always stretching the adventure and the unknown, a real sea wolf, and, perhaps, the last Ulysses of our days, the last free spirit able to live and let live memorable adventures through stories spiced by hilarious jokes.

Gino was like this: he could handle any situation, with the greatest spontaneity without showing any emotion on his face burned by salt and marked by north winds and waves.

He was proud of his beard; at a younger age, well-groomed, thick and black, carved on his long and angular face, where two eyes were looking the world with uninterested goodness.



It was not easy to accept the joke of his friends - all loved him - and he was hurt on something he considered very important: he started dreaming when he received a letter from Rome signed by Steve Reeves.

«Hey Pietro, he called me for an audition in Cinecittà... he saw the pictures I sent him... he said I'm photogenic... next Friday I'll leave!» - said to my uncle Pietro Longo, the photographer who took those photos that had to bring Gino into the world of celluloid.

But Gino never went in Rome to Steve Reeves. His friends with some jokes made him to realize that the letter came, yes, from Rome, but sent by one of them, at that time in the capital for the military service.

Gino was a formidable champion in the game of table football, always followed by all of us, who were stunned while admiring his accurate shots on the ball, which were often ending up into a goal. Opponents feared him so much that forced him to play alone against two, with the right hand only, and when even so he could win, they asked for points ahead, three – five, depending on the challengers.

The match, set at 11 points, often lasted for hours: the ball was flying at incredible speed for more than 30 minutes, and sometimes it was difficult to see and follow with the eyes; and his sweat poured on his bare chest and along his back, drenching the floor around his feet.

Telling the exceptional nature of those challenges cannot convey the magic of those memorable moments: what concentration and dutiful silence hovered around, despite the loud voices of the clients of the bar. There were even people who bet on one or the other challengers.

But Gino was primarily a fisherman, even better, the fisherman par excellence, although he was the beach lifeguard in the summer, hence the nickname “Gino il bagnino” by which he was also indicated during the summer season. Later on, all his love was only for the sea.

Gino did not like conventional behaviors and especially he did not liked what was being imposed arbitrarily, according to his conceptions of life. The habits and the sailor customs were his code of conduct, and he harbored a deep respect for “his” sea, that sea that had seen him as a solitary star of wonderful adventures, rewarding satisfactions, and untold suffering... that sea that always had cradled his dreams, his ambitions, sometimes misplaced, sometimes duly rewarded!

In this booklet we want to remember mostly his unconcealed and sly smile, his unbridled affection at first sight, his jokes that, although sometimes sealed, always caused to smile... and Gino has released a lot of smiles, always in his way: unconsciously, by innate and never “used” vocation, instinctively, serene and unpunished as a child mischief... Oh yes, because Gino was still a child, a boy at most, that free and intolerant drew the fish from the mesh holding in his heart the secret of a dream.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of this book was made possible thanks to the contribution of several people, who have enthusiastically supported this project. First of all, Vito Cisternino, who told, with great passion and details, most of the stories in this collection. Then Bruno Nicolì, a great friend of Gino since childhood, who shared with him so many youthful adventures. I thank Antonio Pizzuto, Enzo Tommasi (named Enzo "Concepita"), Alberto Durante, Sergio Marra, and Carlo Barba, for agreeing to tell their personal experiences with Gino. A great merit goes to Giorgio Durante, for having helped me organizing the meetings between myself and the various Gino's friends, so that I could record and collect the various stories. The first of such meetings took place at Giorgio's home, in Lecce, an evening in January 2005. That evening, during dinner, Vito Cisternino, taken by the enthusiasm, spoke continuously for more than 3 hours, allowing me to record more than half of the stories contained in this book. Special thanks goes to Gino's wife, Concetta, for providing several biographical data, including most of the pictures contained in this volume. Finally, I would like to thank Carlo Benvenuti, from Pisa, and Saverio Bioano, from Trepuzzi (LE), who, although never met Gino in person, were able to appreciate his genius through my stories and warmly encouraged me to undertake this work.

Giorgio Buttazzo

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The genius of jokes

One of the best qualities of Gino was his promptness to make jokes in any situation. The stories that follow are just one example of his genius.

THE IMPOSSIBLE BET

One day in San Foca, in the seventies, about noon, there was a group of boys that had gathered around a hitchhiker who claimed to be able to walk to Lecce (about 25 Km far) taking two steps forward and one back (regardless of the time spent) and was willing to bet 100 thousand lira. At that moment, Gino passed nearby: he had pulled his boat on the seashore and was going home to get a sandwich for lunch. One of the boys saw him and called him to hear his opinion on such a strange bet.

- Hey Gino, listen what this guy says.
- What's up?
- Gino, come here, listen. This guy says that for 100 thousand lira he can walk to Lecce by always taking two steps forward and one step back. What do you say, can he make it?
- Impossible! – *suddenly Gino said.*
- Have you seen? I told you – *one said* – if Gino says no it means he can never succeed, not even if it hangs himself.
- Gino, why do you say it's impossibile? – *another one asked.*
- He can never make it – *Gino said* – because when he passes by Strudà they lock him up.

[at that time Strudà hosted a mental hospital].

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY

In the villages of the South, during the feast of the patron saint, it is a tradition to go from house to house to collect offerings for the saint. One day in Melendugno, during the feast of Our Lady, Gino was at home and heard somebody knocking at the door:

- Who’s that?
- “Our Lady” – *a voice replied from the other side. Gino opened and after seeing an old ugly man he said:*
- “Pooorcuddissi... next time you better say you’re the devil!

AT THE TRAIN STATION

After her second child birth, Gino’s wife had to spend several days in a different town, far from Lecce, to recover from some complications. The day she came back, Gino went to Lecce to pick her up at the train station. As soon as his wife stepped off the train, Gino greeted her a little coldly, so she said:

- Jesus... Gino, I’m coming after so many days and you barely greet me! Watch that couple how they are kissing!
- Yes – *Gino said suddenly* – but she’s leaving.

AT THE CINEMA

At the cinema of Melendugno, Gino saw a scene where there was a beautiful girl hugging a tree. So Gino commented aloud:

- Oh, how I wish I were a trunk!

THE RADIO

One day Gino was in downtown Lecce walking with his friend Bruno. While they were on the sidewalk, Bruno saw a lady who was dusting an old radio that was leaning in unstable position on a window sill at the first floor of a building. As they passed under the window, the radio fell right on the head of Gino, who fortunately was not hurt too much. So Bruno asked:

- Gino, are you hurt?
- I got a good bang on my head, but I was also lucky.
- Why?
- Because when it fell it was playing light music.

THE CHICKEN

One day Concettina, Gino's wife, had bought a roast chicken for lunch. As she was cutting it, she realized it had one leg shorter than the other:

- Naaah Gino ... look here!
- Come on Concettina, I'm starving. What should I see?
- No Gino, look at this chicken!
- What does it have?
- It has one leg shorter than the other!
- Concettina... but why did you buy this chicken to eat it or to dance the tango? Hurry up, cut it and bring it here!



GINO WITH HIS WIFE CONCETTA.

THE SANDWITCH

Around noon, Gino was used to pull his boat on the seashore and go home to grab a sandwich prepared by his mother, with a lot of ham, tomatoes and arugula. He used to eat it on a marble bench near the pier, sitting on the back, with his elbows on his knees, while watching his boat.

One day, after a while he was seated, a guy that was nearby came close to him and began to walk around, looking at that sandwich fragrant and dripping, with the ham coming out from all sides. Gino was following the guy with his eyes, while he was hanging around him, pointing his sandwich. After three laps, Gino said:

- I bet you haven't eaten today, huh?
- No.

And Gino calmly:

- And then you can go swimming!

[because with an empty stomach you don't risk a congestion].

THE PAINTER

A day at Torre dell'Orso there was a painter, named Solari, who was placed near the tower to paint seascapes. At that time, Gino passed from there and stopped to look at the pictures displayed on the sidewalk. In particular, he was looking closely at a painting depicting the beach of Torre dell'Orso.

- Bravo huh. Nice huh. You are really good, you know? You'll become famous.
- Thanks... thanks.
- But ... this painting, did you do that?

- Yes, I did.
- But you did on Sunday, huh?
- What do you mean on Sunday?
- It so clear that you did it on Sunday. You haven’t done it today, for sure.
- Why do you say so?
- Porcuddissi you have put more beach umbrellas than “the Professor”.

[“The Professor” was the manager of a bathhouse with the highest number of beach umbrellas per square meter].



TORRE DELL'ORSO BEACH
AND THE PROFESSOR'S BATHHOUSE.

THE PORTRAIT BY CALLINGANI

When Gino was working as a lifeguard at the Valtur vacation village, he met a well known painter, named Callingani, who made a portrait of Gino and his mother, Elena, on a sheet of an arithmetic exercise copybook. So one day Gino said:

- Callingani.... porcuddissi. He made a portrait of me on a sheet of arithmetic exercise copybook. I look like a square root!

THE WAR MEMORIAL

When Gino was a boy, often he met with his friends at the park to play until late night at "palmu and chica" (a game that consists of throwing a coin against a wall so that it drops as close as possible to a desired point). Their preferred wall was the war memorial marble plaque, since the coins bounced very well on it.

One day, Enzo Marra, a carpenter who was living near the park and could never sleep for their noise, saw the usual group of guys standing near the church. So he stopped and said:

- Guys! You have to stop playing, or some day I shall report you! You make too much mess at night, when people want to sleep, because in the morning they get up early to work... And then, it's not nice you throw coins in front of the war memorial, which is considered a sacred place; and among the rest my uncle is also there.

Then Gino said:

- Enzo, if this is the problem, you can relax, we didn't hit your uncle.



ABOVE:
*The door of the
basement where
Gino trained.*

BELOW:
*Gino's house
in Melendugno.*

Gino and his idols

PEPPINO DI CAPRI

Peppino di Capri (an Italian singer of the '70s) was the idol of Gino, concerning music. Every time the singer gave a concert in the South of Bari, Gino went to attend it. He was even saying:

- Hey, my daughter looks like Peppino di Capri. Too bad she was not born male, otherwise I would have called him Peppino.

He said he had met him in person:

- Peppino di Capri knew me, and once he even dedicated me a song: (*singing*) “you’re like a disease...”



PEPPINO DI CAPRI

One day Gino was at the Valtur vacation village (where he worked as a lifeguard) and he was telling to all tourists:

- Tonight, you have to come to San Foca, my town, because there is the patron feast, and the mayor has invited the best singer in the world.
- Who is it? – *A lady asked.*
- You can't go wrong. There is only one.
- And who is it? – *The lady asked again.*
- Peppino di Capri.
- And who is Peppino di Capri?
- Nahh, porcuddissi! What do you mean "Who is it?"

A gentleman who was listening the conversation said:

- Yes, sure, he's a good singer, but he is not the best ever.

And Gino:

- He is the best! There is no better than him. Look, I've seen him many times. Once I went to see him I had high fever. I went there... and the fever disappeared.

And the gentleman:

- Yes, he's good, but he's more a singer for night clubs, for atmosphere, not a singer for the outside. I would say, he's winter singer.

So Gino replied:

- Ahhh... So, if Peppino di Capri sings a beautiful song in the summer, you have to put your coat on?

STEEVE REEVES

Another Gino's idol was Steve Reeves, a famous bodybuilder and actor of the '50s and '60s, known for having played Hercules in the epic film directed by Pietro Francisci. Gino, when he boasted of his body, said he looked like "Stivi Rivis", as he pronounced. Indeed, there was a resemblance, and he did everything to accentuate it, even cutting his beard the same way.



STEVE REEVES AND GINO WITH HIS FUTURE WIFE.

Gino paid a lot of attention to his body, not only because he had to be fit for his job as a lifeguard, but especially to impress girls. Gino was training a lot but, not having much money, he was forced to invent new exercises and special home-made tools

For instance, to strengthen his legs and improve his endurance, he was used to run into the pine forest near San Foca. For the back muscles he rowed a lot with his rowing boat, going from San Foca to Alimini and covering about 20 miles round trip. To strengthen the muscles of the shoulders and arms, he trained in his basement, in Melendugno, using a barbell with weights made by concrete he had built by himself. In summer, he liked to show up his body and all day he was going around in bathing suit, bare-chested, with at most a sarong wrapped around his waist (see the picture above).

Once, when he worked as a lifeguard at Valtur, the village manager told the tourists: "For any information, you can ask the lifeguard with a sarong." At that time, Gino was the only one who wore a sarong, and he did not know that the village manager had given that indication. So that day, a tourist approached him and said:

- Excuse me, attendant.
- Yes?
- What's over there after that hill?
- Aahhh – *he said very kindly* – Otranto, medieval town. It was invaded by the Turks. There is a cathedral. Go and visit it because it is very nice.

After a while, another tourist came to him:

- Attendant, sorry, what is there after the cove?
- Otranto – *he said* – beautiful city ... medieval, ... it was invaded by the Turks ... nice cathedral. Go and visit it.

After five or six tourists who always asked him the same things, he went to a friend and said:

- Porcuddissi, in such a fucking village, two thousand arrive and two thousand come to me to ask something. Why they don't go to the other lifeguards? I don't understand how the fuck it is! Perhaps they like me, they see my body... The others instead... one is so short that looks like a midget, the other one is so big that looks like an ace of spade. Then they see me, looking like Stivi Ravis, and of course they come, right?

Anyway, tourists were still going to him:

- Attendant, sorry, what is there after that hill?
- Otranto... medieval city... very nice.

After the same story repeated for the entire morning, another tourist went:

- But... attendant, what is there after that promontory?
- Ooootranto... may God strike you all!



OTRANTO BY NIGHT.

CASSIUS CLAY

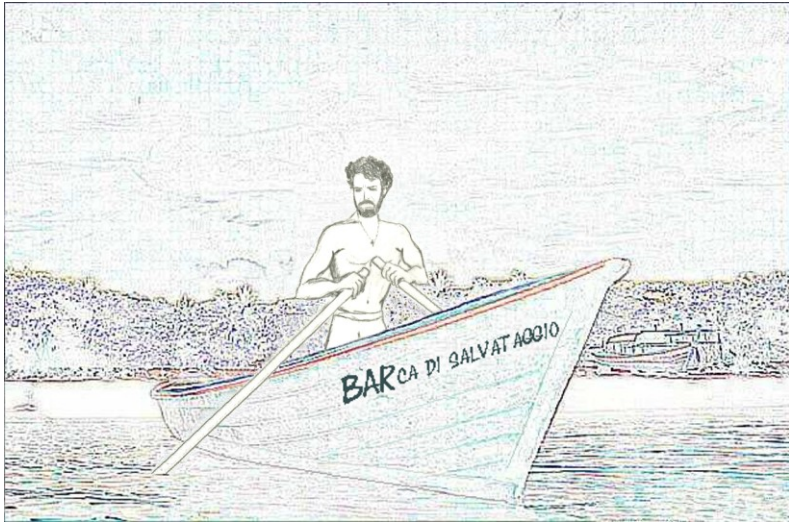
Cassius Clay was another idol that Gino took as a reference, especially for his self-confidence and for his peculiar way to face their opponents in challenges. As a child, in fact, Gino was very shy and was ashamed of being the son of a fisherman. This problem came out in particular when he fell in love with a girl from Lecce, the daughter of a lawyer, consequently belonging to a social class different from his. The emulation of his heroes has undoubtedly helped Gino to overcome his insecurity, which over the years turned into arrogance, so that he was not ashamed of anything or in front of anybody. The typical Cassius Clay behavior was coming out during the challenges at table football. When he had to face an opponent, Gino did his best to make him nervous, denigrating him and enhancing his own qualities. He often said:

- I'm as Clay, I'm too strong, I'm the best, and who dares challenge me, I'll kick his ass.



CASSIUS CLAY WAS ADMIRIED BY GINO FOR HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE.

Gino the lifeguard



GINO WHEN HE WAS DOING THE LIFEGUARD IN SAN FOCA.

Gino began to make the lifeguard in San Foca at the end of the sixties. Unlike modern lifeguards, who have a convenient location on the beach, he worked directly into the sea, going back and forth with his boat along the bay, rowing standing up to get a better view. He had a large and heavy rowing boat, all made of wood and painted in white, red and green (the colors of the Italian flag). On top of the bow, he wrote "BARca di salvataggio" ("Rescue boat"), but with the capital letters the meaning was "Rescue bar", demonstrating his sense of humor here, too.

Gino was also quick to swim and he was really good as a lifeguard. One day, I saw him save a drowning person close to the pier. He was on the dock talking with a friend when a man in a sea began to gasp. In less than two seconds Gino was already in the water. I remember he took a running start on the pier, he made two long jumps on the rocks and plunged into the sea to save that man. He reached him in less than ten laps, grabbed him by the neck and brought him back to the seashore.

POPPED EYES

Once, during a rescue, the man who was drowning was so frightened that his eyes were wide open, almost popping out. Gino swam to save him, but when he saw those eyes so wide open he was frightened and said:

- Porcuddissi... close your eyes otherwise we'll both drown.



IN THIS OLD PICTURE, GINO IS DOING THE LIFEGUARD IN SAN FOCA
AT "LA FONTANELLA" BEACH, TODAY NOT EXISTING.

MULTIPLE RESCUES

One day on the beach in San Foca, a person said to Gino:

- Gino! All call you lifeguard, lifeguard, lifeguard. But did you ever save people?
- Me, porcuddissi? Once, in San Foca, one guy was drowning and another one went to catch him. Since they were both drowning, a third guy dived to catch them, and then another one. In short, I had to go myself to save all of them. I took one and there were four hanging in bunches.



GINO AT THE POOL OF THE BRNESE VILLAGE.

THE CANOE

One day in August, around the mid-70s, Gino was discharging his usual duty in the bay of San Foca, going back and forth with his "Rescue boat" along the coast. That morning, a boy, Flavio, put his new shiny canoe into the sea to go for a ride. As soon as Gino saw him from afar, he cried out (defiantly):

- Hey, where are you going with that bathtub?
- Bathtub? You wish to have one like this.
- What the fuck are you saying. I do not really see you with that. Want to shoot? I go with one oar only and you with two, and I even give you twenty meters ahead.

The race took place in the entire San Foca bay. Gino won using one oar only as a rudder.



GINO WHEN WORKING AS A LIFEGUARD AT THE VALTUR VILLAGE.

THE SURFER

One day with a strong south wind, a tourist from Bologna was surfing at the Valtur bay. Gino was entertaining some tourists on the beach, as usual, when his friend Antonio noticed that the surfer was in serious difficulties, and said:

- Gino, look, perhaps that guy needs some help.
- Ihhh, what are you saying?
- No, Gino, I'm serious.

So Gino cried the gentleman from afar:

- Ooooh, should I come?
- Gino, better you go – *Antonio said.*
- I really don't understand some people. I bet he's not skilled with the surf.

So he dived and went to pick him up. Indeed, the tourist was in serious difficulties. Gino rescued him and then said:

- Sorry guy, but do you know how to use that tool?
- No.
- Then you are completely crazy! You went right in the wolf's mouth. Do you swim well at least?
- Actually, not much.
- Then you are not normal.
- No, but I just wanted to try, I won't do it any more.

After bringing him to shore, Gino saw that he was going home leaving the surf on the beach, so he said:

- But, is that tool yours?
- Yes.
- And are you leaving it there?
- Yes, why?
- When you came back you will find four of them.



GINO WITH HIS WIFE AND A FRIEND.

THE JELLYFISH

One morning Gino arrived at the Valtur village and saw that nobody was swimming.

- Beh? Anybody like swimming today?
- No, no, no, no.
- Why? The water is beautiful.
- Yes, but there are many jellyfishes around, they burn.
- Eh hh, you fear of those? Come on, I eat them.
- What? You eat them?
- Yeah, I eat them. Do you wanna bet an ice cream?

The animation chief of the village, who was standing nearby, took the microphone and said:

- "Today, the show is made by our lifeguard, Gino".

Gino was only waiting for that, since bets loaded him like a spring, and for a bet he would have been able to do anything. Then, as an expert fisherman, he knew well that the stinging parts of jellyfish are the tentacles, while the upper chapel is harmless. When they were trapped in the net, he often took them out with his mouth. Thus, Gino took a jellyfish with a landing net and started to rub it all over his body. Everyone began to take pictures. Then he said:

- Do you bet an ice scream that I eat it?

So he bit the jellyfish chapel and then spat it out without being seen. After this event he was saying: "I still eat ice creams".

THE PERMANENT JOB

When Gino was a lifeguard in San Foca, in winter he was not working. He went several times to the city hall of Melendugno to ask for a winter job, but with no success. After another summer, Gino went there once again to ask for a job. At that time the Major was Dr. Potì, who guaranteed him that in October he would have found a job for sure. But the job has never arrived. So, when someone asked him if he found a job, he answered:

- They told me they will give me a job in October, but they didn't say which year.



THE ALIMINI LAKE WITH THE BEACH

Gino and the table football

Gino was maniac for the table football. For him, it was like a drug. When he was playing, anybody and anything else existed any more. He was burning all the calories and was sweating like a horse. The ball was spinning so fast that it was hard to follow. So far, I have never seen yet any other professional player playing like Gino.



IN A BAR IN MILANO

For some time Gino worked in Milan in a sweet food factory. After the first week of work on the first Sunday, he had already spotted a bar where people played table football. He played so much that the bar owner said: "I've never seen a guy like this, playing football for fifteen hours straight without stopping and challenging half Milan." That day he earned 150 thousand lira, when his monthly job salary was around 120 thousand lira.

THE CHALLENGES AT TABLE FOOTBALL

When Gino was young, he was keeping himself with the table football. The "Fiat cinquecento" he bought was payed with money he won playing. He played from morning till night, not only in Melendugno, but also in neighboring towns. In Melendugno he had no opponents who could beat him. Even playing single he could not find people opposing him in couple. So he began to play against two opponents, but giving 5 or 6 points ahead. Then, he began to play with one hand. Gino was telling: "opponents were fighting to decide where my left hand should be". In fact, normally, when you play with the right hand, you rest the other on the left side of the table football (that is, the same side of the goalkeeper). However, with his incredible speed of movement, Gino could adjust the goalkeeper without being seen. So the opponents began to ask him to keep his hand in his pocket, or tied behind his back.

IMPOSSIBLE SAVES

One time, in San Foca, in the usual terrace bar where he was used to play, Gino challenged an opponent with one hand and giving 5 points ahead (out of 10). After several shots on goal without Gino having control of his goalkeeper, his opponent said:

- How the fuck can you save all shots?
- I keep the doll well trained—referring to the goalkeeper.

In certain situations, just to find someone to bet on, he was proposing to play with one hand (while the adversary could use both), gave 10 points ahead (in a game of 11), and granted the opponent to score a point if the ball could pass his own half. And even then he could win.

THE MISSIONS

Having no strong opponents in Melendugno, Gino began to go to the neighboring villages (such as Strudà, Vernole, Calimera) to challenge the strongest players. He had teamed up with Enzo (named "Concepita"), who played very well at bowls (a pool type of play), and with Maurizio (named "Mafietto"), who was very good at Goroziana (another pool type of game). Together, they often went around the villages of the county to challenge the strongest guys of the place. When they arrived in a new town, Gino entered the busiest bars and inquired about the strongest people in table football. Even in this way, he could not find opponents that could compare with him. And since he wanted to play at all costs, someone, when seeing him coming, tried to conceal in order not to play. Once he suspected it, because in a bar in Vernole, after not seeing the two opponents he was used to play with, he went to the bathroom door and knocked loudly: "Get out of there, come on, I know you're there." After a while, the two guys went out and one said:

- Gino, we cannot play with you, you are too strong.
- Mah, the important is you have told me.
- However, I know that in Trepuzzi (a town Northern than Lecce), at the Milan Club, there is a strong guy. But I don't remember his name.
- Where is it?
- In Trepuzzi.
- I'm going! Enzo, let's go!

Thus, Gino, Enzo Concepita, and Antonio Mafietto departed for Trepuzzi.

IN TREPUZZI

When Gino, Enzo, and Antonio arrived in Trepuzzi, the Milan Club was full of pimps and thugs dressed in pinstriped suits, wearing big rings, and playing poker at the tables. Gino entered the club and, without saying good morning or good evening, said:

- Sorry for the intrusion, but who is the smartest in this bar?
- Compa' – *someone said* – here we are all smart.
- No – *Gino replied* – I meant at that game (*indicating the table football*).
- Ah, then we are not interested. So, what are you looking for?
- At that game, I'm the best, and whoever tries to challenge me I kick his ass, huh! (*while he was talking Enzo was thinking: "This guy is completely crazy, now they kill us"*).
- Hey! – *the ugly face replied* – you seems too confident. Anyway, here there is a guy that plays well.
- Then go and fetch him. Indeed, send one to tell him that here there is one that will kick his ass.
- Gino – *Enzo said whispering* – but have you seen these guys? They are all dangerous people.

In short, after a while that boy came, a good boy, and Gino immediately:

- Are you strong at this game?
- Well, I play... I mean... I can manage.
- But are you the strongest in Trepuzzi?

- Yes, I'm the strongest, but I don't have money to bet. I'm a student at the university.
- Then I'm not interested in you.
- Compa' – *interjected the usual mug* – there are no problems, play and don't worry.

Gino had a particular tactic when he had to do with new players who did not want to bet too much money, because he was used to playing 20, 30, up to 50.000 lira per match. If the opponent did not want to bet more than 5.000 lira per match, he started to get bully to make people bitter. Then, he could lose the first match on purpose, so he could ask to up the ante, while his opponent was thinking "this is a chicken, he bullies and then loses." This is what he did in Trepuzzi. He lost the first, the second and the third match. At the fourth he said: "we do this for twenty." He lost the fourth and said, "now we do another for twenty." He studied the psychology of the adversary, and at the right moment he began to win like a train. After he won five matches in a row, all for twenty thousand lira, everybody in the bar knew that there was nothing to do against him.

A GOAL ONCE IN A WHILE

When someone tried to get him nervous, he was good to play things down. In San Foca, in the usual bar, during a fierce game, Gino suffered a goal (quite rare event). Then a guy from the crowd that was watching the match said:

- Ihhhh, you managed to get a goal.
- And now what do you want, should I cut my dick? – *Gino played down immediately.*

THE PLAYERS FROM BARI

One day a group of guys from Bari (regional capital of Puglia about 150 Km North of Lecce) came to Melendugno in a crowded bar and began to challenge everyone at table football. Gino was not there, he was at home asleep (when he could, he slept late). The guys from Bari were strong, very strong, and they were winning big with those of Melendugno. The owner of the bar, Cosimino Dentoni, who was watching the match, could not bear that those from Bari were winning and was thinking that the only one who could save that desperate situation was Gino. But Gino was not there. So, Cosimino called a boy and said:

- Hey, come here. Go immediately to Gino's house and knock down the door. He's at home sleeping for sure. Knock loud until he comes out. And when he comes out you have to tell him these words: "Cosimino said to go straight to the bar, because there are those of Bari who are breaking the bones to those of Melendugno".

The boy ran quickly to Gino's house and began knocking loudly on the door. After a few minutes we heard shouting:

- Porcuddissi, who the fuck is it?
- It's me! Open! Open! – *the boy said. Gino opened the window shutter.*
- What the hell do you want?
- Cosimino said that...
- What did he say?
- He said that at the bar...
- Meh?

- ...there are those of Bari who are cleaning up those of Melendugno and only you can break them the bones.
- Go and tell those of Bari not to leave, because I... the time to wash my face and I'm there.

The time to rinse and Gino arrived at the bar. Perhaps the guys from Bari were also waiting for him (because Gino was known throughout the Salento). He entered the bar more defiant than ever and when he saw the guys said to a friend:

- These are those from Bari?
- Yes.
- What have you come by?
- What do you mean?
- Did you come by car?
- Yes.
- Where is your car?
- Over there (*pointing to a black maggiolino parked outside*).
- That you leave here. And then, do you see that pillar? There you'll bang your head, all three.

This was the premise before playing.

After years, Gino was selling urchins in San Foca. A guy came up to the stall. Gino saw him and said:

- Urchins?
- No.
- Fish?

-
- No. But can I ask you one thing?
 - Yes.
 - Are you Gino?
 - Yes.
 - Are you recognizing me?
 - No, I'm not.
 - Do you know who I am?
 - No, who are you?
 - Do you remember? Once, in a bar, those with the black maggiolino?
 - Meh?
 - You asked us what car we came by?
 - Yes, I remember.
 - And you said that afterwards we had banged our head against the pillar. And we really did it.

In fact, Gino had destroyed them and cleaned them out all the money they had won and even the money they had brought.

Gino the playboy

MANDOLIN

On the pier of San Foca, a girl in a bikini passed near Gino wiggling, so he said:

- What a nice ass like a mandolin!
- Yes, but it doesn't play – *she replied promptly*
- I thought it was broken...

MERCEDES

A friend of Gino had known two beautiful French girls, just arrived in San Foca for vacation. Since he knew Gino was eager to know all the new arrivals, he approached him and said:

- Gino, can I introduce these two nice girls?
- Oh yes, What's your name? – *he said to one.*
- Marie (*the corresponding italian name is Maria*).
- So you speak in the plural? My name is "Gini". And you? What your name? – *he said to the other girl.*
- Mercedes.
- Then you go diesel.

DANCING?

In a disco, Gino saw three girls sitting, waiting to be invited. He went to the first and said:

- Like to dance?
- No, thanks.

So, he went to the second:

- Like to dance?
- No, thanks.

Then he went to the third:

- Like to dance?
- No, thanks.
- So why the fuck did you came here? Go home knitting, all three!

THE WIFE ENTRUSTED

Once, he was telling some friends about the period he worked as a lifeguard at the Alimini vacation village:

- Once there was a guy from Milano that came to leave his wife to my care for a ride on the boat.

Then whispering:

- He'd better leave her to the devil.

THE TERRACE BAR



THE TERRACE BAR OF “LIDO LA FONTANELLA” IN SAN FOCA.

In a period in the late '70s, the terrace bar of San Foca near the beach organized dancing nights with the Jukebox, alternating five slow and five shake. Not far from there, there was an area used as an amusement park, where they were playing loud music. Gino, a great Latin lover, took part in these dancing nights with the goal to meet beautiful girls and invite them to dance, in particular the slow dances, so that he could embrace them. One of these nights, in the terrace bar, Gino had spotted a beautiful girl, tall and blackberry, which he liked very much. In the confusion, however, he arrived late and she was invited to dance by a short and ugly guy. Gino could not wait for the end of the song to invite her to dance. But the short guy was not stupid and danced all five slows with the girl.

Gino was beside himself, and could not stand seeing her dancing with that guy. So he said to his friend: "Look porcuddissi... it looks like the archpriest is dancing with Don Rosario, huh." Everyone knows that the archpriest of Melendugno was a tall man, while Don Rosario (the priest of another village) was short and stocky.

As soon as the last slow ended, Gino immediately rushed to invite her. But the sequence of slows had just finished, and the shakes begun. So, while everybody was going wild on the dance floor, Gino was hugging the girl and dancing quiet, as if dancing a slow. At one point, she said:

- Sorry, maybe we're doing something wrong?
- Yes? And what?
- This is not a slow, but a shake.
- I know, but I'm dancing with the music coming from the amusement park (*that in that moment was playing a slow*).

THE TWO GERMAN GIRLS

One day Gino went to Lecce with his red Fiat Cinquecento to take care of his things. On the way back, passing near the Antille Bar, he saw two beautiful German girls who were hitchhiking to get to Otranto. These girls had stopped one day in Lecce to see its Baroque monuments and were going to Otranto to embark to Greece and reach their friends in Corfu. As soon as Gino saw them, he slammed on the brakes to give them a ride. They asked "Otranto?" – "Ya, ya, Otranto," Gino said, although he had no intention of going to Otranto. So they jumped into the car. When telling this story to a friend, Vito Cisternino, Gino said:

- They wanted to go to Otranto, but I'm not so idiot to take them to Otranto.

- And where the hell did you take them? – *Vito said*
- To Torre dell’Orso, of course! Where else could I take them? For sure not to San Foca, where people would have swiped them quickly.

So Gino (who did not speak German) told them:

- Torre dell’Orso... good. Torre dell’Orso... beach. Beautiful... Torre dell’Orso... sea.
- Ya ya, ya ya.
- Listen to me, don’t go to Otranto, there is nothing interesting there.
- Yes Otranto... Greece, Greece.
- No, Torre dell’Orso.

In short, he insisted so much that finally convinced them not to go to Otranto. When they arrived at Torre dell’Orso he said:

- Now we stop here, I call a friend, and we take a walk around, by night... beautiful... good, good... beach...

He brought them to a boarding house at the entrance of Torre dell’Orso, managed by a friend of him, Giuseppe:

- Giuseppe, listen, they deserve a special treatment. Don’t charge them much, because they wanted to go to Otranto but I convinced them to stay in Torre dell’Orso for a few days, so Enzo and I can fuck them.

Then, talking to them:

- This is friend of mine... Giuseppe... good guy.

- Ya, Ya.
- Now you settle here. I'm going to catch a friend. Then we come and we take a tour, okay?
- Ok, ok.

So, Gino went to San Foca to Enzo Concepita and told him the story:

- Enzo... listen what happened to me! I was coming back from Lecce, with my Cinquecento. I was passing near Bar Antille and guess what I found...
- What did you find?
- Two nice German chicks, who were looking for a ride to Otranto.
- Ok, and then?
- I stopped, of course.
- And did you take them to Otranto?
- Hey, do you think I'm so idiot? I took them to Torre dell'Orso. Now we go, we go out together for a tour, and then we fuck them... for sure.

So Gino and Enzo went to Torre dell'Orso to pick the German girls. As soon as they arrived, Enzo realized they were two really nice girls, so he whispered to Gino:

- What nice chicks! You bastard...
- Enzo, be careful, don't say anything to anybody and I promise we'll fuck them tonight.

After a short conversation, Gino and Enzo went out for a walk to show them the attractions of the place, the old tower, the promenade, the beach. They also bought some postcards, and after a while the girls said:

- Torre dell'Orso good.
- See? I told you! And you wanted to go to Otranto...

Then, after looking at some nice postcards of Leuca (the furthestmost Southern town of Salento), the girls proposed Gino to go there and visit the town. And Gino:

- Okay, okay. Tonight, Enzo and I will come to pick you up and will go to Leuca to dance. Dancing by night, okay?
- Ok, ok... Leuca... dancing... good.
- Enzo, see? We're gonna fuck them.

After a while they took them back to the boarding house, and Gino:

- Now, you relax here and we go home to take a shower. I also go to the barber, my friend Gaetano, to shampoo my hair. Then we come back, we pick you up and we go to Leuca to dance, ya?
- Ya.
- Enzo, see? At seven o'clock I'll come to pick you up, be ready. Spruce yourself up that we'll fuck them.

At seven o'clock sharp, Gino and Enzo left San Foca with the Cinquecento to fetch the girls to go to Leuca. But, once they just passed Torre dell'Orso, Gino turned right towards the downhill to the pine forest. So Enzo whispered to Gino:

- Where the fuck are you going? Aren't we going to Leuca?

- Uhhh, you idiot. It takes two hours to get there. They have no idea where Leuca is, so we say that it's here, understand?

As they arrived in the pine forest, Gino said?

- Good?
- Ya ... Ya (*without much conviction*).
- Leuca, by night – *Gino said*.
- And dancing?
- Wait – *and he turned his car stereo on*.
- This music is by Peppino di Capri. Natural disco. Let's dance...

IN FLORENCE

Gino had many friends, now successful professionals (doctors, architects and engineers) who at the time were studying in various Italian cities, like Florence, Bologna, Turin, etc. To visit his summer loves living in the North, he occasionally went visiting such friends. Without notice, Gino knocked at the door and when the friend came to open he said:

- Porcuddissi, eh, what are you doing here? Aren't you glad to see me?"
- Gino! What a nice surprise, what do you do here?
- Hey ... I must stay here for a couple of days, no more, because I have an affair with a woman...

Once Gino went to Florence, where there was a friend of him, Rossano, currently ophthalmologist in Melendugno, who was studying from morning till night, and never went out. One morning Rossano was still in bed, when he heard knocking at the door. When he opened:

- Rossano, my friend! Porcuddissi, what are you doing?
- Oh, Gino, you here?
- Aren't you glad to see me?
- Of course...
- I came here because... Hey! I've to stay two or three days.
- No, Gino, with all my heart, I don't have space here, the house is very small and I've only one bed for me.
- Porcuddissi, are you sending me back to Melendugno?
- No Gino, of course no, but how do I do? If you had told me in advance, I could have arranged something. Look, how small is my room.
- Hey, I must stay two or three days in Firenze. I've never been here before and I must find a woman that...
- Okay, okay... listen, for now you can stay here, then I'll talk to a friend living at the forth floor, and see if you can stay there.
- Then talk to him, what are you waiting for?

So Rossano washed his face, got dressed, and was about to leave to talk with his friend at the fourth floor to accommodate Gino for the night. And Gino on the door:

- Hey, Rossano – *rubbing his hands* – let's go out, huh.

- Gino, do you like to go out? If you want to have fun you should go to Gerardo, I must study (*Gerardo was another guy from Melendugno staying in Florence, but he was taking the University in a more relaxed way, so he would have had more time to devote to Gino*).
- Porcuddissi, I have the impression that the more you study the more you get dumb. Give me the address of Gerardo.

So Gino went to see Gerardo, who was just looking for an excuse not to study. So they went around Florence to have fun, and in a pub they were able to know two girls, one Polish and one German. Gino was able to make an appointment for the evening with the Polish girl. When he came back home, in the afternoon, Rossano was studying:

- Rossanooo! Pooorcuddissi... Firenze is a really nice city, you know? I bet you don't even know it. However, can I tell you something, Rossano? The best guy from Melendugno living in Florence is Gerardo.

And Rossano was thinking – "of course, who the fuck could it be? He doesn't do anything all day long."

- Meh? – *Gino resumes* – did you talk with your friend on the fourth floor?
- Yes, he said it's not possible. But he told me that there is a Turkish guy on the fifth floor who can host you for the night. He has already spoken and said you can go.

So Gino went to the Turkish guy (who could speak a little Italian), introduced himself, and settled there. Then he came down to Rossano and said:

- Rossano, you must tell the turkish to give me the key, huh.

- The key? No, Gino, don't cause problems to me...
- Come on, I met a Polish chick and I have the chance to fuck her. I've already cooked her well.
- Gino, what are you saying?
- Yes, I told you, it's done. You must get the key from him.
- Gino, no! I don't know him well. He was already so kind to host you for sleeping and you even want to ask him the house keys... he just met you... moreover he is Turkish. He's a good guy, he studies until late night and gets up early in the morning to go to the faculty.

Finally, Rossano convinced Gino that it was not nice to get the house key from the Turkish guy and that he could not bring the Polish girl in his house. Thus, Gino went out with the Polish girl, but came back home alone. The next morning, the Turkish guy got up early to go out, and without thinking, locked the house door, as usual. Gino was still sleeping and got up by noon, washed, and prepared to go out. When he tried to open the door he found it locked:

- Porcuddissi... the Turkish... damn... he locked me in.

So Gino opened the window and began to shout:

- Ohhhh, Rossanoooooooo! Porcuddissi! – *Then addressed to the pedestrians* – Hey, call Rossano, the doctor... the Turkish locked me in!
- Who are you looking for? – *people were asking*
- Rossano.... Melendugno... porcuddissi... first floor... the Turkish's friend... The Turkish locked me in, porcuddissi!

He made such a big mess that they almost called the police.

THE SHOES

It was Christmas Day and Gino was arranging with his friend Antonio "Scé" to go dancing in a disco, in Otranto.

- Antonio, at seven thirty sharp come to my house, because I need help to knot my tie.
- Hey, I can't believe you don't know how to knot your tie.

When Antonio went to Gino, he saw he was wearing a green suit and his tie was all wrinkled, because it was wrapped in the pocket. So he said:

- Eh hh Gino, look at that tie... and those shoes... those shoes are not good. You idiot, we are going to meet a high class woman, you went to Gaetano to shampoo your hair and... nooo, you can't come with those shoes.
- Are you serious? You don't like my shoes?
- No Gino, no way.
- Then come with me, jump on my car and let's go to Gino Sculacchia.

Gino Sculacchia was a guy from Melendugno selling shoes and living just above the shop. Arrived at his house, at about 8 pm, Gino got out and rang the bell. As he opened the door, Gino said:

- Gino Merry Christmas, huh.
- Gino, what happened? – *he knew Gino wanted something*
- I need a pair of new shoes.
- Noooo, Gino, today I can't. I've guests at home for dinner.

- Yes, yes, please open the shop, just five minutes.
- No, no... no way. Not today!
- Look, I have an appointment with a high class woman, ask him, huh ... – *and then addressed to Antonio who was still in the car* – get out of there, porcuddissi!

After several entreaties, Gino Sculacchia, exhausted, said:

- Okay, okay... damn you... but just two minutes. I open the shop and you take them, ok? Take the first I show you, ok?
- Yes, yes, I just want a pair of moccasins.

Thus, Gino Sculacchia opened the shop and said:

- Take these moccasins, ... do they fit?
- Yes, how much do they cost?
- Thirty thousand lira.
- Minchia! Are they made of gold? Anyway, keep the money and thanks a lot, huh. See you.

Gino put his new shoes and went with Anthony to Otranto. Just before arriving, Gino stopped the car on the side of the road and turned the light on to look at the shoes:

- Wow... these shoes... how they fit! Well, tonight I'll fuck her for sure.

Once at the disco, they began to dance and a boy, in the heat of the dance, stepped on Gino's shoes:

- Pooorcuddissi, be carful! What the fuck are you doing? I paid thirty thousand lira for them.
- Oops sorry, sorry... I've not done it on purpose – *the boy said, a little scared.*

After a while, dancing and dancing, the same boy stamped his feet again. And Gino:

- Argh... damn you! – *taking him by the neck* – Now you must give me thirty thousand lira, ask him, huh.

This guy, really frightened, decided it was better dancing somewhere else. Meanwhile, Gino had spotted a nice girl whom he wanted to dance, and since he wanted to do it his way, he went upstairs to the DJ to ask for a slow by Peppino di Capri. After a while, the DJ said into the microphone:

- And now a beautiful song by Peppino di Capri, dedicated to Gino Montinaro from Melendugno.

So Gino immediately rushed downstairs to invite this girl, but she refused saying she was leaving. After two minutes, however, Gino saw her dancing with another guy, just with the song of Peppino di Capri. Gino had turned purple for the anger and told Antonio:

- Bah... when they turn the lights on she'll kick herself.
- Why? – *Antonio asked.*
- Don't you see him? – *Gino said, referring to the boy with whom she was dancing* – he looks like a nail without head. Fuck! You refuse Stivi Ravis to go with a nail without head? You idiot!

AT THE UNIVERSITY

One day Gino went to Lecce with his friend Antonio Sce', who had to pass by the university. Gino parked just outside the main entrance. Since Gino was not dressed so well and would have certainly created some awkward situations, Antonio asked him to wait in the car, guaranteeing he would come back soon:

- Gino, please wait here, I'll be right back.
- Hey – *Gino said* – I wanna come with you, since I've never been to the university before. I wanna see how it is.
- No, Gino, wait here. Believe me, it's better for both of us.
- Noooo, Antonio, I'll come! I wanna see the university.
- Damn you! Okay, come on. But, please, don't make noise.
- No, no, don't worry.

When they entered the university lobby, there was a student huddled in a corner, bent on a book and concentrated to review his lesson. When Gino passed near him, he whistled loudly in surprise making him jump up. Then Antonio:

- Gino, damn it! What are you doing?
- Porcuddissi, didn't you notice he was sleeping?

Antonio was very embarrassed:

- Gino... that guy was studing, and you disturbed him.
- Eh, porcuddissi, I just woke him up a little bit, don't you see now he's more awake?
- Okay, but now shut up, please. I need to go to take some documents and then we can leave.

Antonio was looking forward to get out of that place, so he immediately went to take the documents he needed. When he came back, on the way out, they encountered a beautiful girl, who was Antonio's classmate.

- Hi Antonio, how are you?
- Fine thanks, and you?

Meanwhile, Gino was speaking quietly from behind:

- Antonio, porcuddissi, invite her to come to Valtur, I can give her deckchair and umbrella on the first row.

Gino kept repeating the same phrases, pulling his jacket, while Antonio pushed him away with his foot, pretending not to know him. At one point the girl said:

- Well, I've to go to the class, are you coming?
- No, I'm with a friend – *and Gino immediately, with exaggerated intrusiveness:*
- Nice to meet you! Gino, lifeguard, Valtur. Antonio, this summer we could give such a beautiful girl the best deckchair and umbrella of the beach. Please come, we wait for you, ok?

Antonio, to keep it short said:

- Beh, Angela, unfortunately I need to go. See you.
- See you, Antonio, I also need to run, because I'm going to follow a math class.

So the girl went away and entered a classroom. Then Gino said to Antonio:

- You must be fool. See you, see you. What the fuck you say, we are seeing her now and you say “see you later?”
- Gino, she had to go, because she was going to attend the math class.
- And so? We can go there too.
- Come on Gino, I took my documents, so we can leave.
- Nooo – Gino said – I falled in love with that girl. I must see her again.
- Gino, that’s impossible. She’s in a classroom with 300 students, with the professor who is teaching, and all in silence, take notes.
- Yes, but we enter quite, pretending we entered the wrong room. We don’t even say hello. I just greet her with a wave and she will understand.
- Gino, please, there is a math lesson, don’t make a mess.
- No, no, don’t worry.

So they went into the hall, opened the door slowly and saw that the professor was lecturing to 300 students. Gino to the professor:

- Pooorcuddissi, eh? What the fuck are you doing here?

It happened that Gino knew the professor of mathematics, because a few years before he found him a beach house for rent in San Foca, but he did not know he was teaching at the university. Meanwhile, Antonio had become of two colors and all students were looking at him, speechless. So the teacher said:

- Dear Gino... what a nice surprise, what are you doing here?

- Pooorcuddissi, eh? Do you know this guy? (pointing to Antonio). Make sure he doesn't fail the exam, okay?

Meanwhile he had broken the silence in the classroom and everyone was laughing. And Gino continued:

- Prof, I don't see you since many years. What happened?
- Since then, I got married and now I go somewhere else for vacation. However, I intend to return to San Foca.
- Not San Foca, now you have to come at Valtur. I work there now.
- What do you do at Valtur?
- I work as a lifeguard. Come there and I'll organize I nice week for you. It's full of chicks.
- No, thanks, I'm not interested in that, now I'm happily married.
- Porcuddissi, then it's true that matematics makes you all dumb. How is it? Do you like fishing more than fucking?

And then turning to the students:

- Open your eyes, otherwise you'll end up the same as him, you know?

At this point, the lesson was skipped and everyone was laughing loud. After greeting the professor (and also the girl), Gino and Antonio walked out from the hall. As they were near the exit, Gino saw a sign indicating the Library and said:

- What's there?
- Nothing, let's go.

- No, no, what's there?
- The library. It's a big room full of books where students go to study or do research.
- Beh, I wanna see it.
- No Gino, you can't see it, because they are studying there.
- Nooo, I wanna see it. I've never been in a library and once I've a chance to see it I wanna see it.

In short, to please him, Antonio decided to take him to the library. As soon as they entered, they heard a whispering all around. So Gino said aloud:

- Porcuddissi, what are you doing here, huh? Are you saying the rosary?



THE FIAT CINQUECENTO



ELEONORA VALLONE IN THE SEVENTIES
(RIGHT: in version "Oh, how I wish I were a trunk!").

ELEONORA VALLONE

Eleonora Vallone, famous Italian actress of the seventies, one year came to Valtur for vacation, and the village chief told Gino if he could help her, because she had to do gymnastics to dispose the cortisone she had taken for a treatment. He understood "silicone", not the one used for breast implants, but that used for sealing windows. So he thought: "And she come all this way here to get rid of the silicone?". By the way, Gino was seeing her every day in the early morning, when she was doing gymnastics:

- Miss, miss...
- Hi attendant, good morning.
- I know you have to exercise to dispose of the silicone, right?
- Yes, yes (*passing over the mistake, but having already framed the type*).

To court her Gino was proposing swimming exercises, water exercises with stones, and was already thinking of inviting her to go out with him. In short, he did so much that convinced her to go out with him in Otranto. While they were walking, Gino felt a little guilty thinking of Concettina (at that time engaged to him) and decided to call her. So, he said to Eleonora:

- Do you please have some telephone token? I need to make an urgent phone call.
- Sorry, I don't have tokens.
- Okay (*actually he thought: "porcuddissi, a rich woman like you doesn't have tokens? How the fuck is it?"*).

Thus Gino got some tokens and went to the phone booth. Being in the middle of August, there was a long queue. He wanted to talk to Concettina as soon as possible, so he said:

- Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry. This is a very urgent case. This is a matter of life or death. I absolutely have to make a phone call. Can I go ahead?

In the cabin there was an old lady, about seventy years old, who was still calling. So the first in line said:

- I'm the next one, as soon as the lady ends, if it is not a long call, you can go before me.
- Thank you very much, sir.

This lady, however, was slow to get out and Gino began to get restless:

- Porcuddissi, eh? When do you finish talking? It's time to hang! – *he could not stand quite.*

After few minutes, he could not stand it anymore and said loud to the lady:

- Hey lady, damn it, do you hurry or not? I have to make a call!

At this point the gentleman who had passed out interjected:

- Look good man, what you are doing is not right. I've given you priority to phone, but you can't pick on the lady, who is also seventy years old.

And Gino:

- What seventy, porcuddissi, when she came in here, she was twenty.

IN BARI

Towards the end of the seventies, Enzo Concepita was in the army in Bari, for his military service, as a reserve officer. While he was in the barracks, he was called at the speaker:

- Lieutenant Tommasi is urgently requested to go to the entrance, I repeat, Lieutenant Tommasi is urgently requested to go to the entrance.

Enzo, a little worried, immediately ran towards the entrance to see who was and, to his surprise, he found Gino. Enzo, who was very attached to Gino, was delighted by his unexpected visit. Gino, seeing Enzo all dressed up with the military uniform said aloud:

- Hey dude, what a nice dress, huh.
- Gino, my dear ... what are you doing here?
- Look, huh... what a beautiful dude!
- Come in, but speak low because here there are sergeants, corporals... you know.
- Enzo, do you remember that chick from Bari I knew this summer at the beach?
- Yes, of course.
- Well, I came to visit her.
- Good... all right.
- Yes, but I don't know the address.
- Then call her at the phone. You can call from here.
- Thanks, but I don't even know her last name.
- Holy shit! And what do you have in mind?

- I know her name is Anna and she lives at Carrassi quarter.
- But, do you know that Carrassi is the largest quarter in Bari?
- Enzo, you gotta put me up tonight because tomorrow I'll go out looking for her.

Thus, that night Gino stayed in the barracks as a guest of Enzo. For dinner they went to eat at the officers' club. In these places everyone eats in silence and if one hits the plate with a fork all turn to look. So Enzo said to Gino softly:

- Gino, what do you like, stew or meatballs?
- I like meatballs.

After a while, the waiter came with a plate with three large meatballs, so Gino said, shouting:

- Hey, what do you do here with such meetballs, do you play tennis?

During dinner Enzo felt observed by all. Then they went to bed. At night Enzo noticed that Gino could not sleep and was always tossing and turning in his bed, pulling the sheet from side to side and muttering "Porcuddissi... damn it...". So Enzo said:

- Gino, What do you have?
- Porcuddissi, these sheets have the wheels (*he ment* "they never stand still").

The next morning, Enzo had a battalion of recruits in foster care and had to muster. So Enzo had an idea and said to Gino:

- Gino, this morning I have to muster, you come with me and I'll introduce you to the 100 guys under my control.

So Enzo began with the formal procedure and, after standing all at attention, he said the recruits:

- Now let me introduce my dear friend, Gino.

Gino began to walk back and forth in front of the platoon, in silence. At some point, he raised his index and began to spin his hand slowly, as if had to ask a question: everyone was silent waiting for him to say something. After a few seconds, he said:

- Among all of you... who is the best at table football?

Everyone began to say “me, me”, and Enzo, worried:

- Gino, don't play for money, they don't have much.

Then Enzo continued to fulfill his duties as a lieutenant and after an hour he began to look for Gino. Enzo went into the parlor, at the canteen, at the officers' club, in the courtyard of the barracks and in various other places, but Gino had vanished. He asked several people, but nobody had seen him. At one point, Enzo had a flash: the post exchange! Because he remembered that there was a table football over there. He took a bicycle and started pedaling fast towards the post exchange. When he arrived he saw a crowd of people around the table football. He was playing with one hand (the other kept leaning on the left side of the table football), and near him there was a pile of candies and chocolates he had won by the boys.

After clearing all the recruits, Gino left the barracks in search of his friend Anna. He walked all day asking everyone who knows what, but in the morning of the second day served its purpose: he managed to find a person by knowing just the name and the district of residence.

THE VIRGIN

When he was a lifeguard in San Foca, Gino fell in love with a beautiful girl from Verona, who was staying at the Hotel Cote d'Est, the best hotel in San Foca, facing the Adriatic sea. One day, he called his friend Bruno and said:

- Brunoooo! Come with me. We have to take a ride with my boat. She's on the balcony and she gotta see me rowing.
- No Gino, I get sick on the boat, you kow.
- Come on, purcuddissi, don't leave me alone. Just ten minutes and then we come back.

So Bruno went with Gino on the boat. That day it was quite windy and when Bruno realized that Gino wanted to leave the port began to worry. But Gino rowed undeterred on the waves, bare-chested, toward the hotel. When they were near the hotel Gino began to say:

- Bruno, look, she's on the balcony and she's looking at me.
- Gino, you are dreaming, she's not thinking of you at all. And please let's go back since I'm not feeling well.
- No, purcuddissi, look, she is watching me through her binoculars and is thinking – "what a body, what muscles."

After several attempts, finally Gino got to know the girl and made an appointment to go out with her the next day. In the meantime, Gino had a burning at his penis caused by a pimple that gave him lot of troubles, and the doctor advised him to put an ointment and bandages for a couple of days. Of course, Gino was annoyed by this bandage, especially for the fact that such a problem had occurred just when he finally managed to convince the girl to go out with him.

The evening of the appointment, Gino went to pick the girl with his Cinquecento and brought her in the pine forest. After some talking, Gino immediately moved in to attack trying to kiss her. But she, understanding the intentions of Gino immediately said:

- Gino, no, go slowly, I'm still a virgin, you know... I'm like something new, even brand new.
- Ah, if this is the problem you don't have to worry, because I keep it still packed.

MIMINA

Gino fell in love with a girl from Vernole (a town between Melendugno and San Foca), named Mimina, but he had not the heart to approach her. He often went to Vernole with his Cinquecento, parking the car behind the column of the square and watching her for hours. One day, his friends persuaded him to take heart and go talk to her, because he could not continue that way. She noticed that he had watched her secretly and she felt shadowed. So when Gino went to talk to her, she attacked him, saying:

- You have to stop watching me, disappear! I don't want to see you any more.
- Mimina, I love you, I can't stay away from you, but since I don't want to bother you, I'll do as you say. But I must give me a hope, at least.
- Do you want a hope?
- Yes, please, Mimina. Anything...
- Then, come back in twenty years.

- Oh, you see? It was easy. Good, I am glad you gave me a hope, now I'm happy. I'm going. Ciao.

Gino came back to his friends who were waiting for him in the car and, on the way back, he told them what they said. When they were halfway between Vernole and Melendugno, Gino braked abruptly and said:

- I must go back immediately, I forgot to ask her something.

So he turned the car and went back to Vernole. He parked near the girl's house, got out of the car and said:

- Sorry Mimina, you told me to come back in 20 years, right?
- Beh?
- But when should I come in the morning or in the evening?



THE WATCHTOWER IN SAN FOCA.

Gino the fisherman



WHEN GINO WAS SELLING FISH, HE WAS ALWAYS KEEPING
HIS ORANGE WATERPROOF AND THE FUEL TANK.

Although son of a fisherman, Gino began to work as a fisherman around forty years old, after it had ended his career as a lifeguard. As in all his activities, Gino had his own way of selling fish. Since he needed a lot of money to fix his house, he was using all possible tricks and all his creative talents to sell what he had caught, even if it was not so good in quality. He could not give up until he had sold everything, and in some cases, he was seeking the suitable customers to get rid of the remains.

THE FUEL TANK

When selling fish, usually Gino was standing on the seafront of San Foca, near the tower. Besides having the scales not perfectly calibrated, he weighed the fish keeping it always in his hand and pushing the scales to make it weigh more. Then, he was always wearing his orange fisherman waterproof, keeping the fuel tank close to him. Such a setting served not only to create the atmosphere of the fisherman who had just returned from sea, but also had another purpose. When someone went to buy fish and asked for the discount, he pointed to the tank and said:

- Do you see this? (*referring to the fuel tank*). Do you know Tommaso? – *Tommaso was the owner of the gas station in San Foca, which, among the other things, was in front of his stand* – When you go to him to get some petrol, you get no discount and you gotta pay what he says. So, pay and shut up, I'm treating you well already.

STORMY WEATHER

One time a customer said:

- Gino, do you have cuttlefishes?
- No, just sea basses.
- Eh, but I want cuttlefishes.

After an answer like that, Gino felt challenged, so he answered back:

- A few days ago I had squids, but I think you did not want them. Anyway, today I just have sea basses.
- All right, all right.
- How many?
- Give me a pound.
- Look, the bulletin reports stormy weather, So you better buy more or you run out of stock.

Actually, a stormy weather would have caused more problems to Gino, because he could not to go fishing, but he was a master to reverse situations to his advantage.



GINO WITH A FRINED (LEFT) AND
ALBERTO DURANTE (RIGHT).

THE HELICOPTER

One day Gino was on the seafront to sell fish and saw a man approaching. Then, he began to shout:

- Urchins...

The man nodded his head to say he was not interested. Then Gino:

- Fish...

Again the man shook his head to say no.

- You don't want anything, then? I see you're staring at me.

And the man:

- You are Gino, aren't you?
- Yes.
- You know who is my son?
- No.

The gentleman explained that he and his son knew each other when they were boys and told a few episodes, but Gino was not remembering that guy.

- Ahh – Gino said, pretending to remember.
- My son got married.
- Well, I got married too – Gino said defiantly.
- Yes, but my son also has a child.

- Well, I have a nice daughter too. I called her Elena, like my mother. In fact, people call me "Gino of Elena" and now my daughter is "Elena of Gino".
- My son now has a very a nice house (*with bragging tone*).
- As a matter of fact, I also got a nice house (*starting to be annoyed*).
- Oh, but the house of my son is big, has many rooms and halls.
- And I bought the helicopter – *Gino said*.
- Are you serious? And what do you do with it?
- I'll take it when I move from room to room. Fuck you and your son.



GINO WITH HIS BOAT AND HIS TWO DAUGHTERS.

FISHING IN THE HARBOR

When it was too windy, Gino did not venture into the open sea, but not to lose the day, he casted the nets in the harbor. Then everyone was curious about what he had caught:

- Hey, Gino, what did you catch?
- Two patches, two socks, one arm of a doll, a urinal, and two or three pounds of sponsors.
- What do you mean by sponsors?
- I mean, ten bags from Coop, seven from Upim... *(they were local supermarkets).*

THE RAY

Once a gentleman asked him for a ray he had caught. Gino weighed it and began to wrap it. So the client said:

- What? Do you give it to me like that?
- Why? How do you want it?
- Don't you clean it?
- Eh? When you go the farmer to buy the salad, does he clean it?

He could always find the right joke for every situation, such that he emerged victorious.

DISTINGUISHED GIFT

Once a man told Gino that one of those days he had to buy some good fish, because he had to make a gift to a doctor who had done him a favor. And Gino:

- Look! Today I caught some fish which is fabulous. You will impress him, I guarantee!
- No, but I don't need it now.
- When then?
- It's not urgent. Tomorrow, in two days... I'll see. When you catch some good fish just call me, okay?
- Okay, as you like.

After a couple of days, Gino called that man:

- Hey, are you still interested in buying the fish?
- Yes, yes. However, Gino be sure it's fresh and of good quality, because I have to impress him. I'm coming.

So Gino wrapped some sea breams and gave them to him. A few days later, the doctor met the gentleman who had given him the fish and said:

- Look, I thank you for your gift, but the fish you gave me was not good. Was it fresh?
- Of course, I bought it directly from the fisherman.
- Hmm, nevertheless it smelled bad and I had to throw it away.

After such a poor show with the doctor, the man returned to Gino and said:

- Gino, thank goodness I told you I had to impress him. The doctor told me that the fish smelled bad and had to throw it away.
- My friend, I told you to buy it soon. If you decided to buy it two days later, what do you want from me?

TALKING FISH

One day, a man asked Gino for some fresh fish:

- Gino, I want to make a fish soup for some important guests, so I need two pounds of really fresh fish. Gino, you understand me? I've to impress them. The fish must be ALIVE!

Gino caught the fish for the customer, but when he got there, he examined it and decided not to buy it. Shortly after, Gino saw the guy coming back with an envelope in his hand, and he said to his friend Bruno:

- Bruno, what do you bet he went to buy the fish at the fishmonger?

Thus, Gino stopped him and said:

- So, is that fish fresh?
- Gino, if yours was fresh, this one talks.
- Really? Let me see what they gave you.

Gino discarded the envelope, took a mullet in his hand and put it in his ear. Then began to move his head, nodding, and said:

- You're right, you know? This fish talks.
- And what did he say?
- He said he wants to go back home, since he has been away for two years (*meaning that it was frozen*).



GINO WITH HIS WIFE CONCETTA
AND HIS TWO DAUGHTERS, ELENA AND VALERIA.

Gino the dealer

HOUSE FOR SALE

Gino decided to sell a house he had in the countryside, and since in that period he had enough money, he wanted to sell it for a high price. One day, in San Foca, a gentleman, knowing his house was for sale, stopped him to ask for the price:

- I heard you are selling your house. How much do you want for that?
- What's your job? – *Gino asked*
- I'm an employee, why?
- Then you can't afford it.

THE JEANS

One day Gino saw his friend Antonio Sce' from a distance and said to him, shouting:

- Antonio! What are you doing?
- Nothing.
- I could bet on that. When the fuck you work.
- Why?
- Wanna come? I'm going to Lecce to buy a pair of pants.
- Ah, then we can go to a friend of mine who has a shop.

- Can we get a discount then?
- Well, I think so, if you come with me.
- I just need to buy a pair of Levis, huh.

So Gino and Antonio went to Lecce by Gino's red Cinquecento, directed to Don Pablo shop, right in the center. At that time, parking tickets were just introduced in Lecce, with a fee of 300 lira per hour. As they arrived, Gino was parking the car in front of the exit of a department store. So, one of the workers of the place said:

- Maestro, you cannot park here.
- Eh, porcuddissi, I just need to buy a pair of pants, the Levis, the jeans, you know? The shop is just in front of here (and turning to Antonio) he said the owner is a friend and we can get a discount, huh.
- Maestro, you can't leave your car here because we must go out by trucks.
- And where do I park, porcuddissi?
- Put it there, at your side.
- All right, all right... damn it... today.

So, Gino parked his car in the parking area and entered the store with Antonio. After the usual pleasantries between Antonio and the seller, Gino began:

- I would like a pair of jeans, do you have Levis?
- We are the sole Levis agents.
- Then take a pair for me, but make sure it's good.

At that time, a new type of jeans just came out, lighter, with washed fabric, while Gino was still using the classic one, dark blue, that became clear over the years, after several washings. So the seller, to propose the latest in fashion, took the model with washed fabric and gave it to him to try it. So Gino:

- Porcuddissi, I can't wear these? These have already been used, don't you see that?
- No, absolutely, this is a new model.
- I don't care, I want the ones darker... darker.

The seller took a pair of dark jeans and gave them to Gino. He stood in front of the mirror and saw they were too long. So the seller said:

- Don't worry for the length, we now make the turnup and then we shorten them.
- Ah, can you also shorten them?
- If you like.
- No, because my wife is a taylor, huh?
- If you prefer that way, there is no problem for us.
- Well, that's fine, you can make it, so I don't bother my Concettina. Hey, make sure to put the zippers.
- Sorry? Why? There is no zipper?
- The zippers, the zippers. When my wife shorten them, she put a half zipper on the edges, so they don't wear out.

When it was time to pay, Gino said:

- Antonio... Did you tell this gentleman that I work to Valtur? If he comes there I'll give him a nice deckchair.
- You are very kind – *the seller said* – but it's difficult for me to come, because I don't take many days off, and in those days I go to the mountains.
- But you eat fish, don't you? Antonio, we'll give him a beautiful pound of sea basses.
- Thanks, but you don't have to take the trouble.
- Anyway, how much is it?
- Since you are a friend of Antonio, give me just 70 thousand lira.

So Gino started to take some bills of 10 thousand lira from his pocket, one by one, very slowly:

- ten, ... twenty, thirty,forty, and we are both fine. Well, Antonio it's late, let's go.

As they came out of the shop, Gino gave Antonio a strong slap on his neck:

- "Pahh" ... and thank goodness it was your friend! And thank goodness we should get a discount! It would have been better not to bring you, if I had come alone I would have paid less.

So they went back to the car and left to return to Melendugno. After a while, Gino noticed the ticket that the valet had put on the windscreen:

- And this, porcuddissi, what is it, huh?

- Eh –*Antonio said* – the valet put it, you have to pay.
- Porcuddissi, now I beat you and him. Because of you, I have to lose money.

When they were about to leave Lecce, Gino saw a person who had a flat tire and was turning the jack to lift the car. So he stopped and asked:

- Maestro, but if you don't pay this what happens?
- Eh, you have to pay a fine, tree times the amount.
- Really? Porcuddissi.

So he made a U-turn and went back to the parking to find the valet. As he saw him, stopped, got out, and said:

- Look how beautiful it is, huh?
- Are you talking to me? – *the valet said*.
- To you, to you, to you, come here. Did you put this there?
- Ahh, you are the one who left without paying...
- Yes, and now what do you want?
- That you pay it.
- So, I should pay too.
- Of course.
- And how much?
- 300 lira.
- Three hundred lira, porcuddissi. Keep one hundred and you are fine.

- Maestro, that's three hundred.
- Porcuddissi, for a minute, to buy the jeans, he didn't even give us a discount, and didn't even want a pound of fish. Now I'm in a hurry, since at noon I have to be to Gaetano for the shampoo.
- Hey, maestro, who is paying the other two hundred lira?
- You pay, huh, and the next time be careful where you put it, asshole!



GINO WITH HIS MOTHER ELENA AND HIS SISTER TERESA.

Gino the avenger



SAN FOCA'S SEAFRONT.

WATER BOMBS

While walking on the seafront of San Foca, Gino passed by a group of guys who were playing with water balloons. To intimidate them he said:

- Porcuddissi, if I'll get a drop of water you will take a shower of blood.

ON THE BUS

Once Gino was in Bologna, he bought a bus ticket (at that time the price was 50 lira) and began to wait for the bus. When the bus arrived, Gino went up and saw an empty seat and, athletic as he was, sat down quickly, overtaking another user who was going to sit on the same place. The gentleman approached him and said:

- Excuse me sir, I saw that place first.
- And how can I know? It was free and I took it.
- Hey, you don't know who I am.
- You are a person of fifty lira as I am.

THE CABLES

Gino was to restore his house in San Foca, which required the outer wall to be knocked down and rebuilt. At present, however, the wall could not be touched, because there were some cables for electricity and telephone (at that time managed by ENEL and SIP, respectively). Thus, Gino regularly applied to ENEL and SIP to request that the cables were removed and laid underground. The Director of ENEL was a certain Dr. Meo. Gino was in a hurry to complete the work, but no one came to remove the cables. His friends, bastard, knew the story, and began to tease him:

- Hey Gino, when do you fix this house, huh?
- First they have to remove these fucking cables.
- Yes, but if you don't solicit, they don't come.

- A few days ago I talked to the boss, Dr. Meo. He said they will come. I'm expecting them one of these days.
- Look Gino, they won't come if you don't press them.
- No, Meo promise me they will.

But in the meantime Gino was swelling under the provoking pressure of his friends. While they were talking, Gino saw a van by ENEL passing near there, and said:

- Wait, wait, porcuddissi, here they are, huh.

The van, however, passed from the square without stopping, so Gino began to shout:

- Oooh! Porcuddissi.

The van then stopped and one of the workers said:

- Maestro, what's that?
- Porcuddissi where are you going, huh? My house is here.
- Which house?
- Damn the sky, today! Did nobody tell you anything this morning, before going to work?
- And what should they have told us?
- Aren't you going to remove my cabs?
- Which cables, sir?
- Porcuddissi, the cables on my wall. Don't you work for ENEL? Those wires, you have to take them off.
- Maestro, but which cables are you talking about?

- Do you see that house? There I have to stay once I get married with my Concettina and I have to renovate. The mason must come to knock the wall down, and if he strikes down while working, I'll come and I'll strike both of you!
- You are blaming us, but we have nothing to do with it.
- Porcuddissi, but in the morning you go around sleeping?

Meanwhile, his friends were keeping pushing him:

- Gino, look, they are the ones, they are playing dumb.

And Gino continued with the workers:

- And I also went to the other lazy ones.
- To who?
- Those from SIP, aren't those your cousins?
- Hey, but we have nothing to do with SIP. SIP is SIP, and we are ENEL.
- Anyway, I give you time till tomorrow, otherwise I'll cut them off.
- Maestro, if you cut them, that's your fucking problem!
- I'm afraid of shocks, but if I had a hatchet I would cut them off. When you are back, tell them, huh?

After several days, the cables were still there and his friends were making fun of him:

- Gino, they forgot or they are fucking around with you.
- Damn it! Tomorrow morning I go to Lecce and burn them all.

The next morning, Gino took his red Cinquecento and went to get his friend Antonio to go to Lecce. When they reached the ENEL headquarters, Gino put his car sideways in front of the exit reserved for vans, pulled the handbrake and said:

- Antonio, porcuddissi, get out of here.
- Are you parking here?
- Yes, today no one will go to work.

So Gino locked his car in front of the van exit and walked toward the office. Meanwhile, at the exit there was a long queue of vans that had to go out and began to horn:

- Whose car is this?
- You can go home, take a day off, if you don't remove the cables.

Then he entered the office hall (full of people) and began to shout:

- Who is the boss here? Call him, I must speak with him. It's three months I'm waiting for them to come to remove the cables from my wall, since Prete [*the builder*] must come to knock the wall down, and if he gets shocked while working, I'll come here and I'll burn you all!

That day in the office there was Pietro De Simone from Melendugno (known as "Pitruzzu"), who worked there and knew Gino well. Seeing him so upset, he approached and tried to calm him down:

- Gino, calm down, to talk to the manager you need to stand in line.
- I don't stand in any line, that the others do.

- But if you want to talk to Dr. Meo...
- Yes, yes... Meo, Meo... I wanna talk to him.
- Then, you have to stand in line.

Finally Pietro convinced Gino to wait in line, but since he was very nervous, he was never still and was always mumbling. While he was waiting, he saw a man who walked past him, stepping over the line to enter the office where he was to enter. So Gino stepped out of line to chase him. He reached him and grabbed him by the scruff of the neck:

- Beast! Where the fuck are you going? Do you think you are clever than me?
- Sir, what do you want from me?
- Porcuddissi, come here and stand in line like everybody else, you're not clever than us.
- Look, but I work here, I'm an employee.
- What? Are you an employee? Then go, this time.

After many vicissitudes, finally Gino was assured that by the end of the week the workers were going to remove the cables from his wall. Once out of the office, Gino said to Antonio:

- Now let's go to the cousins [*the SIP employees*], those other lazy guys.

When they arrived at the SIP, it began to rain and the office was closed for lunch. Through the glass door, however, Gino saw that inside the building there was an attendant, who was eating a sandwich. Gino knocked hard on the glass door:

- It's closed! – *the man said from inside.*
- Open, porcuddissi, don't you see it's raining and we are getting wet?
- It's closed for the break, come later.
- You open NOW! We're coming from ENEL.
- What?
- Antonio, this guy did not understand anything.

After a while the attendant opened the door and Gino took him straight to the neck:

- Porcuddissi! Do you want to remove the cables or not?
- Ouch! You are blaming me, but I have nothing to do with your cables?
- You have to do a lot, porcuddissi. Don't you work here?
- Yes.
- Then you have to do with it, because the fish begins to stink from the head.

THE RING

Gino had just bought his new Fiat Cinquecento and had gone in the square of Melendugno, with his friend Bruno, to show it to his friends. Among them there was a certain Antonio that had one of those carnival rings that spray water. Thus, Antonio said:

- Hey Gino, we have to inaugurate this car, huh?

- Shut up, I finished all my money for that.
- Do you like to wet it, instead?
- No, leave it alone, you don't have to do anything.
- Then I wet it.

...and with the ring he began to squirt Gino's car with water. Gino became angry to the point that he wanted to beat Antonio:

- Shit, what the fuck are you doing? I just bought it! Don't you see how shiny it is? Stop it! Don't do it any more, ok?

Then Bruno interposed and convinced Gino to move out of there and stop at the bar of the park. But even there, after a few minutes, Antonio appeared. As Gino saw him, said:

- Antonio, porcuddissi, be quite with that fucking ring, huh? Don't make me mad.
- Eh, how irritable you are, for a bit of water. Don't you know that it brings good luck?

...and with the ring he squirted again Gino's car with water. Gino, furious like a beast, decided to leave with Bruno and go to San Foca. Arriving at the Scalilla farm, just outside Melendugno, they passed by a land, where two sprinklers were watering the grass, but they were hidden from view by a border fence. Moving on from there, a sketch reached the car of Gino, who as saw the water on the glass, braked abruptly and said:

- Porcuddissi, is he here too? This time I'll kill him!

Gino the meticulous

As Bruno remembers, Gino at work was very precise and on time. When a customer refrained from buying fish because he did not have enough money, Gino insisted that he took it anyway giving him credit, and thus secured the sale, even if delayed; when the customer, as sometimes happened, forgot to pay, he never ceased to remind him. Once a customer from Galatina owed him 5000 lira [which could be around 20€ in 2011]. After a while, not being able to meet him again, he decided to go and meet him in his own town, Galatina around 30km far, to recover the amount, even if it meant to spend nearly the same amount for gasoline!

THE EXPLOSION

One year a gas leakage caused an explosion in the bar belonging to Dentoni, which was right in front of Gino's house, partially demolishing the local bar.

- DENTONI: Bloody hell, what a mess!
- GINO: Porcuddissi. Who will pay for my damage?
- DENTONI: Which damage have you got, Gino?
- GINO: Can't you see? A little stone from the front fell down.

The outer wall of the house of Gino was made of river gravel cast in the plaster and one of the stones fell as a result of the shock wave.



THE HOUSE OF GINO IN SAN FOCA.

THE MINTS

Gino was a very precise person, since his childhood. Friends remember that when they went to a disco (usually in Otranto, the Leone d'Oro) Gino always carried black mints with him to refresh the breath, and his friends asked them. He always gave them only one each, and if someone insisted on having two, he accepted but said “next time you won’t get any”.

THE KITCHEN

After many years of sacrifices and hard work, he as a fisherman and his wife as a dress maker, Gino was finally able to save some money and settle in the house in Melendugno; to please his wife, he decided to buy her a new kitchen, so he went to the furniture store in Melendugno, owned by Antonio Dentoni:

- Hi Antonio, my dear!
- Ciao Gino, how are you?
- Hey, all the town knows it.
- What?
- That you have the best kitchens.

Antonio had already realized that Gino needed something from him.

- Antonio, we have to find a kitchen for Concettina. But we have to give her a beautiful one, huh. Beautiful. I don't mean the best you have, since they are all good, but a beautiful one.
- Gino, look in the shop what I have. If you don't like any you can look at the catalogues.

After making a tour of the exhibition, Gino said:

- Antonio, they are all beautiful, but I would like one ...
- Gino, don't worry, I'll show you the catalogues.

So Gino chose a kitchen from the catalog and, after they agreed on the price and terms of payment, said:

-
- Antonio, I ask you a favor.
 - Which one?
 - That the kitchen is delivered soon.
 - I guarantee, by the end of the week it will be here.
 - Please, I care a lot, the sooner the better. Look, my Concettina can not wait any more, we have to make her happy...
 - Don't worry, within this week the kitchen is here.
 - Thank you, ciao.

The next day, Gino showed up again in the shop:

- Antoniooooo, by chance do you need fish?

Antonio, to keep a good relationship with the customer bought the fish that Gino had with him.

- But... no delivery yet?
- Bloody hell Gino, even the fax didn't arrive yet. I told you in one week.
- Yes I know. I didn't pass by for the kitchen. I had good fresh fish. That's all, ciao.

The following day:

- Antoniooooo, all right? How are you, all right? I am not here for the kitchen, eh. I was just passing by. But... any news?
- Don't worry Gino, at the end of the week the kitchen is here.

Gino went to the shop every day, so much that Antonio called the company's kitchen and asked if they could bring forward the shipment since the customer had a urgent need. Thanks to the reminders, the kitchen came a few days ahead of schedule. So Antonio went straight to Gino to tell him that the next day the workers would be there to deliver his kitchen.

- Ginooo! I come to give you a good news, eh.
- Tell me Antonio (*Gino had a sad face*).
- The kitchen arrived. Tomorrow morning at 7 we are here to assemble it.
- Antonio, something bad happened.
- What? Did you change your mind?
- Nooo, I didn't change my mind. One of my relatives, a half-cousin, died, and tomorrow there will be the funerals, so we have to postpone. Do you mind to do it on Friday morning?
- Don't worry, Gino, this is not a problem. Friday morning we'll be here.

On Friday morning at seven o'clock the workers came to assemble the kitchen. Gino was always around to make recommendations:

- Hey, when you go upstairs, be careful here, the marble from Carrara has cost a lot per meter, huh. Don't scratch it.
- No Gino, don't worry.
- No, just in case a piece of furniture falls down... not for the furniture... but also for the furniture... and when you turn at the corners, turn large, because the edge... here the plaster has cost...

After just 10 minutes, Gino had made a price list of all the components of the house, constantly blaming the workers. A worker who had his head inside a cabinet to tighten a screw told that he saw the head of Gino appearing on the other side to check: "tighten well those screws, you know, otherwise they loose the fillet". So much that a worker went to the manager to ask him if he could persuade Gino to leave the house until they had finished assembling:

- Listen, you have to send that guy out of the house otherwise we end tomorrow. He does not let us working.
- Gino, let them breathe, don't worry, do you know how many kitchens we assemble? Be quiet, we don't break anything.
- No, but I am precise.
- Yes, we are precise too. Anyway, if there is something wrong we will substitute it, don't worry.

After a while Gino disappeared and Antonio saw him no more around the house, so that he thought that he might be offended for what he had said. Then Antonio went out and saw him leaning against a column, thoughtfully, shaking his head slowly. Thinking that he was angry, approached him and said:

- Gino, they have almost finished, you know? Be quite, beautiful kitchen, huh?
- Eh, Antonio – *Gino answered in a low voice* – but, how the hell is life, ah?
- Why Gino, what happened?

- Sometimes life is very strange...
- Why strange?
- A cousin who goes and a kitchen who comes!

[In Italian the words cousin and kitchen have almost the same sound]

THE JOKE

There was a time when Gino had burning sensations when urinating, so he wanted to be examined by a doctor. Some of his friends organized a joke: one of them said to Gino that he knew a good urologist who used to spend his holidays in San Foca, and that he would introduce him. In reality, the alleged urologist was a soap powder salesman, unknown to Gino, who agreed to play as a physician. After the examination he said:

- Mr. Montinaro, the situation is very serious, you need surgery and perhaps it is even necessary to amputate the organ.

Gino was extremely worried and did not know what to do. Another friend told him:

- Gino, do not despair, I know another doctor, very clever, let's go and meet him and we'll hear what he says.

So, for the second time, Gino was accompanied to another fake doctor who, after the visit, said (in dialect to make him comfortable):

- Mr. Montinaro, who told you that you need surgery? There is no need of operation or amputation.

Gino, relieved, turned to his friend and said:

- Have you seen? I told you that it was not a serious matter. Thank you doctor, eh, thank you.

But the doctor went on:

- No, there is no need to do anything since in 15 days it will fall by itself.

THE OCTOPUS

Once Gino, besides the usual fish, caught a very large octopus, about 5 kg, and went to sell fish near the stands for the sea urchins in San Foca. That same day, the Orfei Circus came to Lecce and Gino had promised his daughters he would take them to watch the evening show. By the end of the afternoon, Gino managed to sell all the fish, with the exception of the octopus. It was getting late, and Gino remembered that he had to go to Lecce with his daughters, but he was disappointed to leave without having sold the octopus. He said to a friend fisherman who was nearby:

- Beh, you know the news? I take it with me to Lecce. With all the people at the circus won't I be able to sell it? In the worst case I will exchange it for the show tickets. I am sure the staff of the circus will take it.
- The hell, what for ... to train it?
- No, they give it for food to the lions.

Gino the stubborn

THE NEW CAR

One year Gino decided to buy a new car, more comfortable than his red Cinquecento, to which anyway he was very attached. He was in doubt between the Fiat Uno and the Renault 9. In those days he asked always the same question to everyone he met on the streets:

- Do you know cars? Which is better, the Uno or the Renault 9?

Of course everybody had his say. Still in doubt Gino decided to talk with a gentleman from Melendugno who was a test pilot in the well known high speed track in Nardò. He took a bag of fish and went to talk with him at home in the evening:

- Hey, how are you? Take this fish that you can grill, it's very fresh.
- Thank you Gino, get in – *said the pilot, wondering the reason of that kindness.*
- You are wondering why I'm here, right? – *said Gino* – I'll tell you. I heard you are a test pilot at the track in Nardò.
- Yes, it's true, so?
- I am in doubt about which new car to buy, between the Uno and the Renault 9. Did you test them?
- Look, both of them are good, but the Uno is also energy saving, consumes little, it's comfortable...

After a long talk the pilot persuaded Gino that the Uno was better than the Renault 9. Nevertheless Gino asked:

- And why do you have the 127?

To make it short, Gino bought a Uno, metallic grey. He said to the friends:

- The Uno is the best car in the world. Moreover it's energy saving. Do you know what energy saving means? It saves energy because it has the fifth gear. And, let's be clear, just on that car Agnelli [*at the time Fiat's manager*] put more effort.

One day his car, parked near his house, was stolen and used for stealing alcohol at the bar La Torre, in Torre dell'Orso. Gino was desperate and was crisscrossing the whole county to find his car. The thefts, however, were not lucky because they had an accident near Acquaviva delle Fonti, and the car was burned. So the following day, around noon the police phoned Gino to report the finding of his car:

- Hello, Montinaro family?
- Yes.
- This is the police station in Acquaviva delle Fonti.
- Meh? What's up?
- Are you the owner of the Fiat Uno with plate...?
- Yes.
- We found it close to...
- Ehhhh Concettinaaaaaa, the car, they found it, I'm coming, I'm coming...

When he arrived at the police station in Acquaviva delle Fonti, Gino was taken to the place of finding, in the midst of the countryside. The car was totally burned and it was in a ditch, from which they were removing it with a crane. As soon as Gino arrived on site, the manager of the company called for the removal approached him and said:

- Are you Mr. Montinaro, owner of the car?
- Yes.
- You have to pay 400 thousand lira for the removal.
- Porcuddissi if you don't vanish from here... (*raising his arm showing the intention to slap him*). And should I give you 400 thousand lira for that wreck? I would give you 800 if you told me who stole the car. Isn't he from your town, porcuddissi?
- Hey, aren't you the owner?
- Meh?
- And then you have to pay.
- Who called you?
- The police.
- Then get the money from the police. Not only they burned my car, I should even pay you, vanish from here otherwise I smash you.

THE ROUND PAINTING

Playing at a carnival raffle, Gino won a large round painting by Aldo Salviero (an artist born in Salento, now dead), which portrayed an old olive tree, typical of Salento region. After several years, talking with a friend, Gino realised that the paintings by Salviero had increased in value and that his own might be worth a couple million lira [around 2000 € in 2011]. Given the size of the picture (about 1.5m diameter), difficult to hang in his home in San Foca, Gino started to think to sell it and and buy something else. As usual with Gino, the sale of the painting became an obsession, so he kept on asking everybody if he was interested in buying the painting. Any talk done with Gino ended up one way or another on the painting:

- I own a painting by Salviero, do you know him?
- No.
- He is the best painter in the world. The painting I own is worth at least two millions, but I don't have any place to hang it, so if you want it I can sell it for one million.
- No thanks, Gino, I don't need it, moreover I cannot afford it.

Once Gino heard that Antonio Sce' would go to the dentist, and immediately thought he could try to sell the painting to the doctor, who surely could afford the cost. He went to meet Antonio:

- Antonioooo.
- Hi Gino, let's meet later.
- Why?
- No, I'm going to the dentist.

- Oh yes? Good, let's go together.
- Why, do you have a tooth to pull?
- No, no, but let's go since I have to tell him something.

Antonio immediately understood the goal of Gino.

- Gino, don't mess up.
- Noooo, nothing, I have just something to ask him, eeehhh.

Antonio and Gino went together to the dentist, a newcomer in Melendugno. When it was the turn of Antonio, Gino got up and went with him in the consulting room. The dentist said:

- Sir, one at a time, please wait in the...
- Nooo doctor, I came with our friend Antonio.

The dentist allowed Gino to stay with them. While the doctor was working with his instruments in the mouth of Antonio, Gino started saying:

- Doctor... (*touching the arm of the dentist with his hand*) you have a nice dental practice, you know?
- Thank you.
- It's nice, it's nice, all the best, all the best, doctor, bravo, bravo.
- Thank you, thank you.
- Doctor... (*touching again his arm*) I was told that you got a nice daughter.
- Yes.

-
- Bravo, bravo, best wishes.
 - Thank you.
 - Doctor... I also heard that you have built a new beautiful house.
 - Yes, actually it is a beautiful house.
 - Doctor, and for a beautiful house you need a beautiful painting, and only me can give it to you.

The dentist did not buy the picture, and Gino kept on looking desperately for someone to sell it. At that time, in the little square in San Foca near his house, there was an exhibition of paintings. Gino went to talk even with the painter:

- Do you want a painting?
- I am here to sell paintings.
- This is a painting worth two million, you know. I can give it to you for one only.
- No thanks, I don't want it.

Eventually he managed to sell the painting to a couple from Turin who was on vacation at the Valtur resort. He took them by his Cinquecento from the Valtur to his home in San Foca and sold them the painting for two millions.

HUNTING

From a long time Gino kept on asking his friend Bruno to be taken with him hunting. But Bruno kept on postponing because Gino did not know how to shoot and with his loud talking would surely scare away all the birds. With considerable difficulty, Bruno managed to postpone the trip up to the end of the hunting season, thinking that afterwards Gino would no longer insist. But when Gino wanted something, nobody could stop him. So Bruno, exasperated by the insistence of Gino, decided to go hunting, even though it was forbidden. To limit the damage, however, he gave Gino a smaller rifle. When in the countryside, Gino began firing everywhere and managed to take some small birds on the trees.

Unfortunately, after a while, a forest ranger patrol arrived and quickly approached the two, asking Gino (who was the one with the rifle) to show the hunting license. Bruno, extremely worried, quickly intervened, saying:

- Sorry for the inconvenience, but we did not come here to hunt. The rifle is mine, and since my friend wants to buy a similar one, I came here with him to let him test it.
- RANGER: "Sir, when you want to test a rifle you go to shoot at targets and not to birds".
- GINO: "Ranger, I am not a hunter, I am testing the rifle" – *involuntarily waving the gun with the barrel facing the rangers.*
- RANGER: "Please keep the rifle aimed towards the sky".
- BRUNO: "You see ranger, what did I tell you? He is not a hunter, he is not even able to handle a rifle".

- RANGER: "Yes, but here I see some dead birds and you know that for this year the hunting season has expired; I have to fine you".
- GINO: "Ah, if it is so we are in order".
- RANGER: "Why?"
- GINO: "I have shot last year birds."

At the end, the rangers began to laugh and dismissed them without sanctions.



SALENTO COUNTRYSIDE WITH OLIVE TREES.

Gino the unpredictable

THE EXORCIST

Antonio Pizzuto, Enzo Tommasi and Gino had gone to the cinema in Castri to see the movie "The Exorcist". In the chair in front of Gino there was a boy who, for the strong tension of the first scenes, was all curled up on the chair. Gino, seeing him so scared, put his hand behind his head and suddenly grasped his neck while emitting a loud whistle behind the ears. The guy jumped from his chair and began screaming in fear, but everyone in the cinema was laughing out loud.

THE PHONE CALLS

One of the first loves of Gino was Rita, a girl from Turin he had met in San Foca during the summer. When she went back to Turin, Gino wanted to phone her, but had no money to do it. Then he devised a system to call her without spending a single lira. First, in San Foca, close to the pier, there was a house built on the rocks (called "I Gamberini") used as a first aid, and later as the office of the traffic police. The house was only accessible from the front, as the back side was on the cliff face over the sea. Thus Gino, to call Rita, went on the rocks, passed on a two-inch curb walking slowly on the wall, entered through the back window and made long phone calls with Turin. The policemen have always wondered why phone bills delivered to their office were so expensive.

AT THE CEMETERY

After the death of his mother, Gino received the arrears that had been asked years ago for her social support. So Gino asked his friend Bruno to take him to the cemetery to bring some flowers to his mother. At the cemetery, Gino stood in front of the grave with the flowers in the hand and began to swing thoughtful. Bruno looked at him thinking he was praying. But after a while Gino said:

- Mom, you know what I'm thinking? That you are yielding more lying than standing.

THE STEREO

Gino had recently purchased a Pioneer stereo 8 for his new Cinquecento and could not wait to install it. He had parked his car in the shade, near a tree in an isolated area, and was lying on the seat, with the legs out of the car door and the head near the gearshift. While he was there messing around with the wires, he heard a rattling noise coming from the rear wheel. He got up and saw that a guy was dismounting the rear wheel with a wrench. Then Gino said:

- Ouuhhh, beh?
- Come on – *the guy said* – let's agree, you'll fuck the stereo and I fuck the wheels.

Gino realized that he was a drug addicted, so he took him by the neck and said:

- Porcuddissi, I'm mounting my stereo, and this is my car. If you don't disappear immediately I'll kill you.

AT SCHOOL

When Gino was a kid, his mother went to ask the teacher of the elementary school about his son:

- Madam, Gino stresses me.
- Why professor?
- He never studies! In history, he knows nothing. For instance, yesterday, just to help him, I asked: "How many were the seven kings of Rome?"
- Then? He did not answer?
- Yes, you know what he said? They were five. So I asked: "and who were they?" and him: "Romolo and Remolo".

DON'T STUDY TOO MUCH

A summer I met Gino in San Foca, after a few years I did not see him. After greeting each other he said:

- I remember you leave in Florence, right?
- No, I leave in Pisa.
- And what do you do in Pisa?
- I teach Computer Science at the univeristy.
- Then you are a madcap. Don't study too much otherwise you go nuts.

THE FINE

Once Gino got a fine from the police for a violation committed with his car. Of course Gino tried to corrupt the policemen, proposing that if they had canceled the fine he would give them some freshly caught fish. Unfortunately it did not work, and the officer said he had to pay 20.000 lira. Gino, who always wanted to end up head-high, said:

- Anyway, with this fine I'm earning money, you know?
- Why?
- Because the fish I wanted to give you costed 50.000 lira. Thus, even if I get another fine of 30.000 lira we get even.

THE LADDER

One day, near his house in San Foca, Gino saw a friend of him, Mimino, who was working outside on top of a long metal ladder. Intrigued by the ladder, he approached him and asked:

- Mimino, how high is this ladder?
- Gino, wait a moment, as soon as I finish working you can measure it.

Finished the job, Mimino stretches the ladder to the ground and called Gino:

- Gino, do you still want to measure this ladder? Hold, this is the rule, you can measure it.
- You idiot, now that you have stretched it on the ground I can find the length, not the height.

GIOVANNA

Addressed to a girl he wanted to know, Gino said:

- Whats' you name?
- Giovanna.
- Nah, your name is like my sister Teresa.

THE MASON

One time, a man nicknamed Nino Zigata called Gino for a job as a mason. Since it was necessary to carry materials from the ground floor to the first floor of a house under construction, sometimes Nino Zigata, who was working on the first floor, called Gino telling him what he had to bring:

- Ginooo.
- Yes master Nino, how can I help you?
- Take upstairs a bag of cement.
- Immediately master.

Gino took a bag of cement, put it on his shoulders and began to climb the ladder leading to the first floor. As he saw the bag, Nino said:

- Not this, the quick drying one. This is not good.

So Gino went back to take a bag of quick drying cement and brought it up. After a while, Nino Zigata shouted:

- Ginooo, bring me the lime.

Gino took a bag of lime and brought it up. As he saw the bag, Nino said:

- Not this powder, the one already prepared, with the mixture.

So Gino went back to take the mixture of lime and brought it up. After a while, Nino Zigata shouted:

- Ginooo, bring me the water for the mix.

Gino, who was so tired of being wrong, replied:

- How do you want it, still or sparkling?

TWO-TONE SHOES

One day, Bruno saw that Gino had a black shoe and one brown. So he said:

- Gino, did you realized that your shoes have different colors?

Gino looked down at his shoes and said:

- Well, what's wrong? At home I have another pair like these.

THE TWO SISTERS

In the late seventies, Gino and his friend Bruno used to go to Castrì (a town near Lecce) to play football, and among other things, they were around two sisters who lived near Barbano's Villa. The girls' mother, to have more control of the situation, made them sitting on chairs of iron that creaked at the slightest movement. So, when the mother heard some repeated squeaks, she could interject from the other room:

- Hey, stop it, what are you doing, huh?

After several interventions, Gino said to the girl:

- Listen, don't you have other chairs in this house?
- So you didn't understand anything. She puts them on purpose.
- You mean... is it like an alarm bell?

The next day, Bruno and Gino decided to go to Castrì, and Bruno saw that Gino was holding a packet.

- Gino, what do you have there?
- This is for Maria's mother. Please hold it since I've to drive.

Bruno noted the package was quite heavy, but he did not say anything. Once they got there, Gino gave the package to his girlfriend and told her to give it to her mother.

- Mom! Come, Gino brought a present for you.
- Oh, thanks Gino, what a beautiful thought, what's inside?
- Open it – *Gino said.*

She opened the package and found a hammer, pliers and nails. So she said:

- Gino, what should I do with these?
- You have to fix your chairs.

THE PICTURE

A summer, in San Foca, a girl from Lecce fell in love with Gino. But she was a little fat and Gino did not want to be engaged with her. At the end of August, she had to return to Lecce, so she begged Gino to give her a picture of him.

- Gino, please, give me at least a picture of yourself so I can keep you in mind.
- The only picture I can give you is the ID photo of my driving license. Is that ok?
- Yes Gino, thank you, thank you so much. Ah, give me also your phone number, so I can call you sometimes.
- I don't have the phone, but I can give you the number of a neighbor. But don't call me often, ok? Otherwise she gets angry with me.
- Okay Gino, I'll call you only for important things. Thank you again. Bye.

After a few months, Gino heard knocking at the door. It was the neighbor:

- Ginooo, a girl just phoned for you, she said that she calls back in ten minutes.
- Yes, I know who it is, I'm coming.

When Gino answered the phone she began to say:

- Gino, I always think of you, I miss you. Thank goodness I have your picture. Did you know? I always keep it with me... actually, I must make a confession. One evening I was so excited that I have rubbed it on my whole body, mouth, breasts, legs, and even there. Maybe you won't believe, but I was so excited that I got pregnant.
- Hey, what the fuck are you talking about... you wanna make fun of me?
- No Gino, I'm serious, I'm pregnant.
- Hey look, I'm not an idiot, you know? That's not really possible.
- Yes, it is.
- Nooo, I told you it's not possibile.
- Gino, how can you be so sure about that?
- It is not possible, because the picture was only with my upper half.

THE LAST ONE

This is a story that Antonio Pizzuto told Concettina few days after the death of Gino:

- Concettina, I have to tell you this joke, please don't take it unkindly.
- Not at all, for me it's a pleasure – *Concettina said.*

Gino had gone to bring some fish to Antonio, who asked for it. But Antonio's mother, without saying anything, had already bought some fish elsewhere, so Antonio was explaining Gino that the fish was no longer needed. While they were talking, one of the sons of the sacristan passed by them. You have to know that in this family both the father and four children have a strange and lopsided way to walk. Gino saw the boy, and since he wanted to sell the fish at all costs, called him and said:

- Hey, porcuddissi, come here.

He gave him the bag of fish and said:

- Hold it, take it home, that your mother will be happy. Tell her to give you fifteen thousand lira. Then come back and bring them to me. Go! Hurry, that today you will eat good fish.
- Oh, thank you, Gino, thank you.

After a while, Gino saw him back still with the bag in his hand.

- Hey, what happened?
- Gino, listen. My mother said that with fifteen thousand lira we can eat meat for three days.
- Uhh, porcuddissi, now I understand why you all walk lopsided (*it was the period of mad cow disease*).

After two days he died.

Curiosities

THE MEMORIES OF FRIENDS

I remember Gino was often boasting, perhaps also to entertain the others, but never exceeded the bounds of propriety, he wanted to be tough and confident, as Cassius Clay, but underneath he was not, he was just a good man.

Sergio Marra

I met Gino one afternoon in August of 1972, when I saw him saving a person with an amazing speed. I was on the pier of San Foca when I noticed that a man was drowning near the rocks. Gino was also on the pier, and as soon as he saw the man in distress, immediately took his shoes off, took a running start and with two leaps dived into the water. He reached him in less than ten laps, grabbed him by the neck and brought him back to the seashore. For me it was already a myth.

Giorgio Buttazzo

Gino was the only friend that whenever he knew a girl he introduced her to me. He was generous and wanted to share his experiences with his friends.

Enzo Tommasi

THE WHISTLE

Gino liked to joke and take people by surprise. From time to time he came from behind without being seen and emitted a peculiar whistle, which made the unfortunate bouncing. The sound, faithfully reproduced by Vito Cisternino, is available (as MP3) at the following address: <http://feanor.sssup.it/~giorgio/fischio.mp3>

ANAGRAMS

GINO IL BAGNINO

lì, in ogni bagno	<i>(there, in every bath)</i>
bagni ogni lino	<i>(you wet every flax)</i>

GINO MONTINARO

mangio in trono	<i>(I eat on throne)</i>
non mangio tori	<i>(I do not eat bulls)</i>

TOMMASO MONTINARO

ammiro, non so' matto	<i>(I admire, I'm not mad)</i>
in mar, son omo matto	<i>(at sea, I'm a mad man)</i>
mostra tomo in mano	<i>(he shows tome in hand)</i>
Tommaso noto in mar	<i>(Tommaso, known at sea)</i>
sommo totano in mar	<i>(supreme squid in the sea)</i>
marmista monotono	<i>(boring marble carver)</i>

TOMMASO LUIGI MONTINARO

Gino, l'uomo stimato in mar	
	<i>(Gino, the man esteemed at sea)</i>



This book was written in memory of Tommaso Luigi Montinaro, named Gino "il bagnino" ("the lifeguard"), born in Melendugno, a small town in the south-east of Italy, on March 8, 1946 and died in Lecce on June 27, 2002, at age 56, for a serious heart problem.

Why writing a book about Gino? Usually biographical books are written to remember important people who have left a significant sign on the history. Which sign could have left a fisherman of San Foca, who never left his village except to go fishing or spend a few days off in some northern cities? It is not easy to explain, but everyone who got to know Gino personally agrees he was a special person, out of the common schemes. A simple man with little education, but with a sharp mind and quick reflexes, which set him apart from the crowd. He also had an athletic body, fitted and trained, and a keen sense of humor that made Gino a unique character. Meeting Gino on the seafront of San Foca was a guarantee for having a lot of fun, because in any situation, even the most dramatic one, he could always see a comical aspect, underlined with a lightning joke.

All stories in this book are based on real events that have left an indelible trace in the memory of those who experienced them. Each story shows a facet of his character and his genius, and all together they describe, as the pieces of a large mosaic, the complex personality of this peculiar character.