

What you probably never knew about **Pietro Germi**

(by Virgilio and Dino)

Pietro was born at 7, *Via Ponte Calvi*, a street located near the port on 14 September, 1914. Later, he and his family moved to 9, *Via Santa Croce* in the oldest part of the town where middle class families lived. Their flat was about 180 square metres large and was full of light. Through the many windows facing south the view was fantastic: you could see the sea right below and ships coming and going. Through the windows facing North you could see the cloister and the garden of *Santa Maria di Castello* Church dating back to 1450.

Peter's father was from *Salsomaggiore*. He first worked as an office boy, then as an employee and finally as a hotel night porter. He died in 1927 at the age of 58 leaving four kids (Pietro and his 3 elder sisters). Armellina (called Linda), Peter's mother, was born in Genoa, in *via Pareto*. She was a milliner. After her husband's death, she could support her family thanks to her job and to the help of her daughters who were seamstresses.

As a boy Pietro often played on *Sarzano* esplanade. In 1931, after attending a middle school (in those days it was 4 years long), he went on to *Nautico San Giorgio*, in *Piazza Palermo*. He attended the first three years with great assiduity and profit. He always got good marks (his final average grades were above 7 out of 10). The only subject he was not brilliant at was Religion and in the third year he was exempted (which was quite unusual in those days). His teacher of Religion was Giuseppe Siri who taught at *Nautico* from 1930 to 1935.

Pietro was a keen reader and often went to *Berio* Library. He was interested in philosophy, studied English, French and Russian and attended acting classes at *Santa Maria di Castello*.

In spite of his good marks, he did not continue his studies at *Nautico*. Cinema was his true passion. For this reason, he moved first to Milan and later to Rome where he lived in a small boarding house and attended courses in Acting and Film Directing at *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia*. He was supported by Alessandro Blasetti who was the first to realize his potential. His family sent him some little money to help him

Pietro returned to Genova in 1941 to marry Margherita Bancio, who was born in Turin but lived in Genoa. They got married in *Chiesa dei Diecimila Crocifissi* in *via Canevari*. In the act of marriage, it is written that he was a professional script writer and she was an employee. In 1947 they had a daughter, Maria Linda.

Pietro was both shy and aggressive and not too diplomatic but he gradually managed to emerge in the world of cinema thanks to his genius, his determination and his methodicalness. Even when he became famous, he rejected all forms of worldliness and preferred to spend time in taverns where he played *scopone* drinking wine and smoking Tuscan cigars.

Pietro was the director of about 20 films, the script writer of about ten, the assistant director of 5 and acted in many others. In 1961 he received an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay thanks to his film "*Divorzio all'italiana*". Some of his most famous films are "*Il testimone*", "*Il cammino della speranza*", "*La città si difende*", "*Il ferroviere*", "*L'uomo di paglia*", "*Un maledetto imbroglio*", "*Sedotta e abbandonata*".

In 1954, Pietro divorced his wife and on 25 March, 1966 he married the actress Marianna Olga D'Ajello. They had 3 children: the twins Francesco and Francesca and later on Armellina. It was a short unlucky marriage since his wife soon left him

He hardly ever returned to Genova to see his sisters and pay a visit to his parents' grave in *Porticato di Sant'Antonino*, in *Staglieno* Cemetery

He loved his home town and he described it as an extremely beautiful town, amazing in its scenic, architectural and environmental aspects with a unique historical centre. He considers the Genoese as serious, hard-working, square, reliable people but, on the other hand, also cold, greedy and devoid of cultural interests.

Pietro Germi died in Rome on 5 December, 1974 due to a worsening of cirrhosis of the liver from which she had suffered for some time.