

*Two Fortunes  
for the Immigrant Boy* BY SAM SHULSKY

IS OPPORTUNITY dead in America? Has the time passed when a young man can build a fortune, starting with nothing but courage, the will to work and study?

In his office in his television manufacturing plant in Long Island City, New York, Frank A.D. Andrea, one-time Italian immigrant boy, would laugh at these questions.

From his office windows, Andrea could look out across the East River to New York City's teeming lower East Side where he started the long, hard climb to success.

He was born in Salerno, Italy, and was brought to the United States as an 18-month-old baby by his widowed mother. Their home was a tenement in crowded Chinatown.

When he grew old enough, Frank got a job as a newspaper boy. His route lay in two of the toughest wards of old New York – his own 14<sup>th</sup> ward, and the adjoining eighth.

"The 'Paul Kelly boys' ruled the 14<sup>th</sup>," he recalled recently. "They used lead pipes as their authority. There was a rival gang in the eighth. Normally, no 14<sup>th</sup> ward boy in his right mind would cross Broadway into the eighth." But young Andrea had to cross. The way he did it was characteristic. He used the direct approach that was to help him all his life.

"I started across the street the first day," he said. "In a minute the eighth ward gang started drifting from doorways. My heart was in my throat – but I needed the job. I had to go on. I walked right up to them. I said:

"I'm from the 14<sup>th</sup>. I got to deliver some papers, but I don't know where the streets are. Can any of you fellows tell me where the Sunrise Café is?"

The direct approach worked. The surprised leader of the eighth ward gang put his arm around Andrea.

"Sure kid," he said, "we'll show you."

He was never bothered by the eighth ward again.

His next job, while he was studying engineering at night at the Mechanics' Institute, was as a stableboy at Old Sheepshead Bay race track in Brooklyn, and he appeared as a prize-fighter in a small club to eke out his income. When he graduated from his engineering course in 1913, he gave up racing and fighting to go to work with Frederick Pierce Co., a small experimental technical firm.

That was the turning point in his fortunes. He became interested in the new-fangled thing people called wireless. One day a tall man with piercing eyes came into the laboratory to have a piece of radio apparatus made to his specifications. He was Guglielmo Marconi, the "wizard of wireless."

Frank worked on the apparatus and had a chance to talk to the great man. When it was completed, Marconi told him: "You would do well in wireless. I will send you textbooks. Study them, and you will go far."

Frank did study them. Soon he left the experimental shop and got a job with Dr. Lee De Forest, inventor of the audio tube, helping him with research that made voice transmission over wireless possible. His greatest thrill was the day he sat in the workshop, earphones clamped to his head while a few blocks away De Forest talked into a crude microphone. Andrea recalled the occasion recently:

"Suddenly, in the midst of all the crackling static, I heard it. It was faint, but unmistakable. Dr. De Forest was calling:

"Frank, can you hear me? Can you hear me?"

It was the first voice broadcast using De Forest's tube. He soon became plant supervisor for De

Forest, but at the end of World War I, he decided to strike out for himself. His only assets were \$300 in savings, but he married Concetta Ambrose, his childhood sweetheart, and rented space in a Bronx butcher shop, where he made radio kits and parts.

At last, Andrea worked out the first commercially successful neodyne receiver, using a design by Prof. L. A. Hazeltine of Stevens Institute of Technology. He named the set after his initials – the FADA.

He was on his way to fortune. By 1932, he was wealthy and retired, to devote himself to fishing and golf.

Two years of retirement was enough for Andrea, an active man of 46. He said:

"These hobbies of mine are driving me crazy."

Concetta understood. She urged him to organize the Andrea Radio Corporation, with a limited investment of \$10,000 and television as his goal. Engineers who had helped him turn out the FADA radio joined him. By 1937, the company had developed a 5" set, one of the first TV receivers.

The \$10,000 investment grew into a second fortune.

The Andrea family included Frank Jr., at Penn Military University, and two daughters, Camille, president of the Andrea Sales Corp., and Phyllis, who divided her time between the offices and helping her mother at home.

Andrea was grateful to the land which gives everyone an opportunity. As proof of that he has a sign on his door: "Don't knock – walk in!"

**Engineer Frank Andrea Proved  
That America  
Is Still a Land of Opportunity**