

The name was changed, but the music's the same

Fred Delphia, principal at Dover High, smiles when he says he's not certain what his name is.

Delphia's grandparents, Alessandro and Beatrice Delfiaco, arrived in Midland, Pa., from their native Italy at the turn of the century.

Delphia explained that Midland was a strong Italian community in those days and very few people spoke English.

When Delphia's father Orfeo Delfiaco entered school in 1918, he knew little English and had difficulty pronouncing his own name. The school changed his name to Alfred Delphia.

"Perhaps it should not be said, but in those days schools could do pretty much what they wanted to do with school records, and there was no protest from home," Delphia said.

"It just so happened that four brothers and sisters followed my father through that school, and they were all Delphias, not Delfiaco.

"I should say, however, that in succeeding years some of my uncles changed their names back to Delfiaco, so now I have cousins with the last name of Delfiaco."

There also is some history behind Delphia's love of music.

He arrived at Dover High in 1966 as marching and concert band director and served in that post until he was named assistant principal in 1981.

During his tenure, the Dover band had a statewide reputation and he led them on several out-of-state trips, including to Washington, D.C., where the band performed in the Bicentennial Parade in 1976.

But musical excellence was synonymous with the Delphia, or Delfiaco, name long before 1966.

On his mother's side of the family, a great-great-



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great uncle, Joseph Casanova, was director of the Army Band of Rome in the 1800s.

Casanova also presented a special clarinet concert for the queen at the palace sometime late in the century. After the performance he was presented an ivory clarinet with gold keys by the queen.

"It is my understanding that clarinet still exists in the family in Italy," Delphia said.

The family credits Casanova for its music-oriented tradition. He also composed two marches which are still popular and being played in Italy today.

One of Delphia's great-great-uncles, Joseph Alexandro, became well known for traveling in various U.S. communities and organizing steel mill bands.

He became a teacher at the Eastman School of Music in Buffalo, N.Y., one of the most prestigious of its time.

It was he who taught Delphia's mother on the violin and piano.

Fred's father, Alfred, also had a musical interest, but it was not with the clarinet. He studied trumpet at the Peabody Institute of Music, and on several occasions sat in with the Glen Miller swing band.

"It is strange how those things (the clarinet) will run in a family," Delphia said.

"Mother tried to teach me the violin and piano when I was young. It just didn't work out. It was either too difficult or I had no interest.

"As a teen-ager, I was aware of the family history with the clarinet, but it never made that much of an impression on me. At least I was not aware of it.

"Then one day, I picked up the clarinet and it seemed to just take off — both the clarinet and my interest in music.

"Yes, I believe that somehow such talent or interest is inherited."