

Komiza, Home of My Ancestors

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Its 5:30 in the afternoon, as our large sea-going ferry from the port city of Split, Croatia, approaches the island of Vis approximately 27 nautical miles from the coast of middle Dalmatia in the Adriatic Sea. My cousin David Felando and I are passengers who have come to seek our family origins. This small island was first settled during the Neolithic period in 3000 B.C. and was originally named "Issa" by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Its name became officially "Lissa" under the Venetians and remained so until the end of Austrian rule when the Croatian name of "Vis" for the island was formally accepted after World War I. Today, the island and its offshore islets of Biševo and Svetac also known as Sveti Andrija are sparsely inhabited and are dominated by two major towns: that of Vis and Komiza. It is Komiza, on the western coast of this 11-mile by 6-mile island of Vis, which both David and I seek, since it is here that our family name Filanda - Felanda - Felando originated and our lineage can be discovered. My grandfather, Augustine Felanda and his oldest son Jurja by his second wife Aneta, left Komiza in 1904. He immigrated to the United States to be with his son Josip Felanda, David's grandfather, by his first wife. Many will follow their lead to a new country and a promising future in America.

That immigrant population of the early 1900's left the island of Vis for other parts of the world, but mainly the United States and specifically the Pacific Northwest and San Pedro, California, the harbor of Los Angeles. Here their descendants re-created the town of Komi•a with all its character, its unique Dalmatian dialect and customs. Both David and I were born in San Pedro and have experienced such traditions through special events as the "The Fisherman's Fiesta" and "Komiška Noć" which honors the patron saint of Komiza, Sveti Nikola, Saint Nicholas. On that night, families celebrate their linkage to their homeland with song, food and remembrances. I can still recall those times as I was introduced by my father to those who were related either by marriage or by birth. I was so young and at a lost, for I had no idea how so many were related to me or I to them. By my senior year in High School, I started my own family genealogy, but college limited any degree of intensive research necessary to put together such a document.

The trip to Komiza for David and me is a result of seven years of research into our families past and present descendants. Our first view of the town is from a winding mountain road that descends steeply through vineyards

Fig. 1 - View of Komiza from the Moli Kis or Small Cliff



Fig. 2 - View of clock tower and church of St. Nicholas



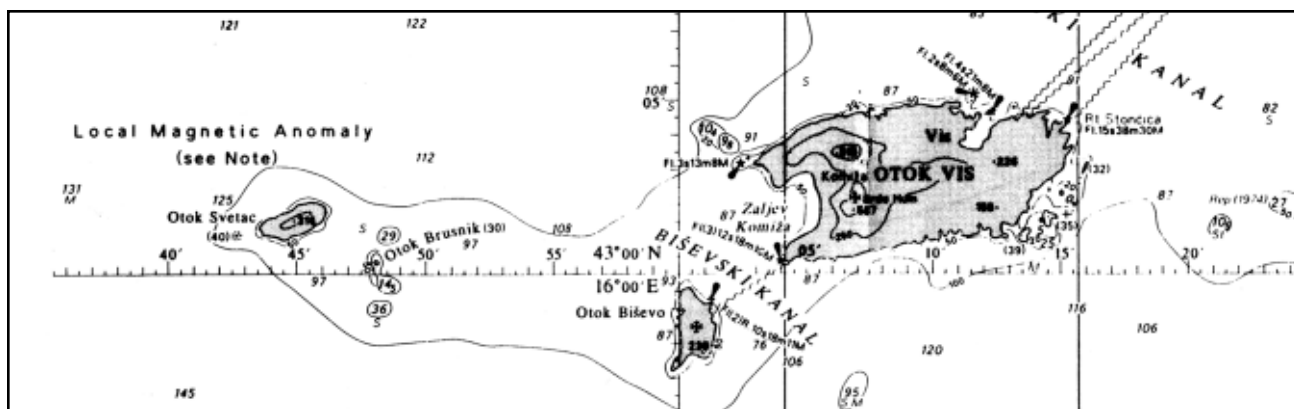


Fig. 3 - Map showing the islands of Vis, Biševo and Svetac (Sveti Andrija) in the Adriatic Sea

clinging to rocky hillsides, each encircled with walls of piled stones. Above the town dominating a hill is a 13th-17th century Benedictine Monastery and Church of St. Nicholas, also called the "Muster". Below, right up to the water's edge, are clusters of homes constructed of large stone blocks, slate and red tile for roofs, encircling the bay. Guarding the town and the bay is a stone castle fortress with a clock tower (Castle Mazzolini, "the Komuna") built in 1585 and a neatly constructed stone breakwater. We come with cameras, writing materials and a list of places and people to see in order to further expand our research with a visual record. Each day we walked through narrow streets shaded by rows of three to four story homes on either side.

My one of two remaining relatives left in Komiza, Ursa Lina (Felanda) Pečarić points out the homes of past family members and that of my grandfather which lies behind a small stone church called the "Novo Crikva" or "New Church" built in 1754. We also visit the "Spomen Dom" - "Remembrance Hall" where 107 photographs of those who gave their lives fighting during World War II are honored. This was a great sacrifice for this small town to give of its people. I begin taking photographs of each of them and especially those of Ivan Felanda, Silvestar Felanda, and

Josip Felanda. In the same building is the Magistrate of Records, Ivan Marinković, who we have come to personally thank for all the help he has given to us in the past in acquiring the names of our relations and their recorded births, deaths, and marriages from civil records dating back to 1870 to the present.

It was in my fiftieth year, in 1994, that my curiosity to know my family lineage resurfaced and I began to piece together each member and family unit into a genealogical document. To facilitate the recording and printing of information I used a PC running Word for Windows and a Lexmark Optra R+ Laser printer (1200 by 1200 dpi). My goal was to organize the genealogy by tracing each living family member to their original ancestry and include photos along with vital statistics such as occupation, birth, marriage, and death dates. I began by sending out a simplified diagram where they could enter dates, names and other genealogical data pertaining to their family members. Then I began to set up visits with each family unit to record information and to collect family photos present and past. Instead of borrowing the photos and risking damage or loss, I took my camera, a Nikon N6006 with a AF Micro Nikkor 60 mm lens, with me. With the aid of a portable stand with extended arm, I selected

Fig. 4 - San Pedro, Calif., 1906. View from Nob Hill looking south of 4th Street.

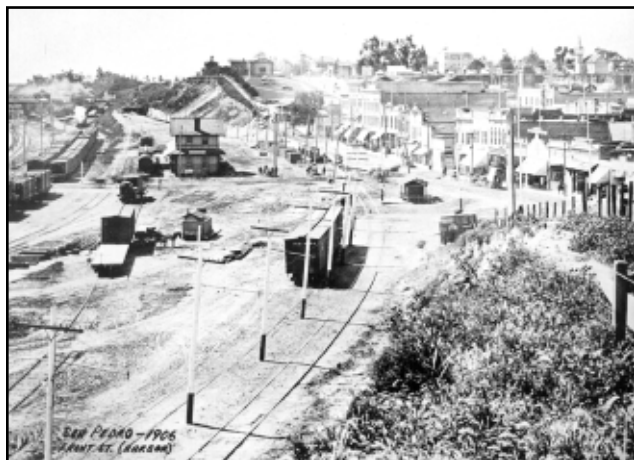


Fig. 5 - Church of St. Nicholas or the "Muster." Consecrated 21 August 1652





Fig. 6 - View of the Bay of Komiza and the "Komuna" built in 1585

the photos and photographed them individually as well as historical documents. This also allowed me to discuss the identity of those pictured which in most cases only the person being interviewed could identify. Generally, the names of those pictured were not recorded on the back of the photos. This also gave me a chance to talk to older members of the family who recalled how life was like in the "old country". These stories became an integral part of the family genealogical document. The women of the family were

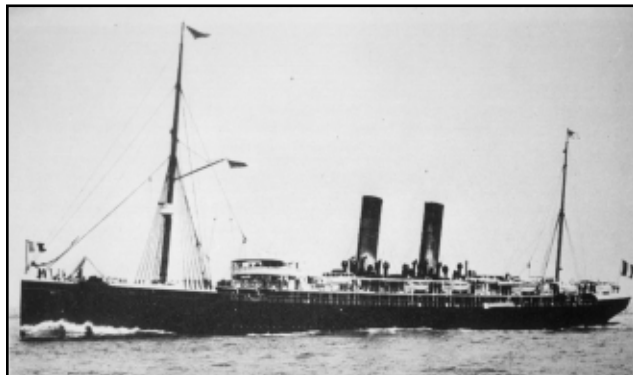
primarily the oral historians and gave their information with exacting accuracy both in pronunciation as well as spelling of family names along with clan names. For me this was greatly appreciated for I neither spoke Komiski or could accurately spell out the words. As I visited each family unit, old albums and caches of family photographs were brought out allowing me to photograph them and thus making them available to the whole family. However, some photos were lost forever. My paternal grandmother believing her children had no interest in old family photographs proceeded to burn them in her backyard. Fortunately, my Aunt Kay was able to retrieve a few of them.

By this time, David and I met for I had sought out the offspring of Josip Felanda who with Lukria Peëariae had four children. Their fourth child was David's father Robert Anthony Felando. When we met, we found out that both of us were seeking our family origins. We immediately combined forces. Our first successful search was determining how and when the first Felanda's immigrated to the United States. There were family stories but no accurate dates. We knew that David's grandfather, Josip Felanda left Komia and that according to David's father, 45 other Komizians left as well, but no one knew when. To validate such an exodus our next step was to find records of the ships that entered the United States and locate their manifests. Then David found that the Family History Centers of the

Fig. 7 - Novo Crkva



Fig. 8 - SS La Bretagne



Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-day Saints had extensive film rolls of ship's manifests. Luckily, most of these entries were indexed. Using the facilities at the Santa Monica Family History Center in Los Angeles, we began our research. David and I spent hours looking through the manifests and we located the ship, S.S. *La Bretagne* and its manifests listing "Guiseppe Felanda" and 44 other Komizians. Copies of the manifests were made. Photos of the ships that carried our relatives to America were found in the San Diego Maritime Museum, which has such collections as the Gregg L. Chandler Photo Album of Merchant Vessels; and many books such as the "Great Passenger Ships of the World" by Arnold Kuldass and "Trans-Atlantic Passenger Ships Past and Present", by Eugene Smith.



Fig. 9 - Magistrate of Records of Komiza,
Ivan Marinković

David and I continued our research by acquiring county death certificates and Church marriage records, which allowed us to place individual family members into their correct family units. With the help of our cousin Sveto Felanda and his wife Seka, we sent written inquiries to the Magistrate of Records of Komiza, Ivan Marinković and asked him to transcribe early civil records of family members. The latter took the time and typed out dates and names from available records from 1870 to the present. This information was our greatest step in finding the connecting strands that led to family members and their interrelations. However, the civil records only went back so far and we needed older church records to successfully find the origins of family units in Komiza. We did not know whether such records existed until David and I acquired two copies of "Stanivništvo Komi•e" (The Population of Komiza) by Nevenka Bezić-Bo•anić, published by LOGOS, Split in 1984. This work is written in Croatian with footnotes in Latin and Croatian and focuses on early-recorded occupation of the town of Komiza by individuals and families from the 16th through the 19th centuries. Both of us looked through the book and sought out every entry that referred to persons with the last name of Felanda. Then we had these parts of the book translated professionally. From these translations, we were able to discover early family members. More importantly, in the introduction, Nevenka mentions the existence of "the Books of the Married, Born and the Dead of Komiza that have been well preserved since 1636." Where were these books located and could we view them? Answers to these questions had to be found to further our research.

As I look back, the expression: "When the student is ready the Guru will appear" seems very appropriate to what

transpired in the early months of 1997. At that time, David came across the Croatian Genealogy HOMEPAGE maintained by Thomas K. Edlund and referred me to it. I immediately found on the Latest Update: 31 December 1997 the location of parish records recently microfilmed in the Zadar/Split area of Croatia. Among them was Komi•a. I acquired the catalogue numbers of the six film rolls that record church records of the births, marriages and deaths of the population of Komiza from 1684 to 1878 (SL#1,924,296 - 301 Text in Latin and Italian). They were photographed at the Arhiv Hrvatska in Zagreb and were placed on microfilm and cataloged by the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-day Saints and placed at their Family Historical Library in Salt Lake City, Utah in the European Film Area. At this point, I wasted no time in telling David what was available and he proceeded to order these film rolls to be sent on indefinite status for us to look at in the Family History Center at 10741 West San Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, Calif. When the films arrived, it was like looking at the San Pedro telephone book as familiar names appeared in entry after entry; Mardesich, Greget, Stanojevich, Pecarich, Bogdanovich, Borcich, Zuanich, Felanda. As we proceeded through the different tapes, we became familiar with each of the books distinctive formats. Then one day as we were looking at the earliest records of births on film roll #1,924,296 David found the baptism/birth of Antonius Nicolaus Felanda on December 9, 1772 and that his parents names were Antonius Felanda of Antonii and Margarita Vitaglich daughter of Agustini. Then David found another entry, on August 8, 1776 of the birth of the child Simon Stephanus Felanda to the same parents. This continued until David located the fifteenth child born to Antonii Felanda and Margarita, that of Catharinus Michael Felanda born on October 10, 1796 and Baptized on November 7, 1796. When each child was born, the Priest recording the event wrote down the parent's names but with the sixth child born, that of Augustinus, the priest wrote out much more: *Die 26 Decembre 1782, Augustinus fs. Antonii qu Antonii Cazalovich alias Felanda ...*" Day 26 December 1782 Augustinus son of Antonii of antonii Cazalovich alias Felanda ...[birth record from *Liber Baptizatorum* Komiza 27. IV. 1766 - 26. I. 1807 p. 191 Film Roll: SL#1,924,296]

This information gave us Antonii Felanda's father's actual last name, Antonii "Cazalovich" (From the root word "Kazati" meaning "One who tells, says or speaks to others" translation by Kalina (Felanda) Lisica) and that Felanda is an alias. Our next step was to locate the birth entry of the children of Antonii Cazalovich alias Felanda that resulted in six children, five daughters and only one son, Antonius. During this time, the Bishop Census of Komiza was taken in 1748 (from the book "Stanovništvo Komize" by Nevenka Bezić-Bo•anić page 206-210) and there are only two family units with the last name of Felanda. Only one unit of the family will be left in Komi•a as recorded in 1784, 1797 and 1807. That family was Antonius Felanda and Margarita Vitaglich and their 15 children. It is from this family that all Felanda-Felando family members in existence today can trace their lineage to by blood.



Fig. 10 - *Liber Defunctorum*, 1766-1842, for the parish church of Komiza

A recorded historical incident occurs, however, that will affect this large family and leave Margarita Vitaglich Felanda and her children without their father, two of their brothers and one sister. This tragedy took place at sea and we verified it by researching into the church records of Komiza and found on page 173 in the “*Liber Defunctorum*” (29. IV. 1766 - 28. I. 1806) the following death entry: “*Die 7 Maij 1802 Antonius Felanda cum duobus filiis Simone, Antonio nec non cum filia Catharina demersus est in Pielago prope S. Andrea scopulum,...*” Translation: “Day 7 May 1802 Antonius Felanda with both sons Simone, Antonio as well as with daughter Catharina are plunged into the Sea near the projecting rocks of S. Andrea ...”

This loss became more relevant to David and I as we left the port of Komi•a on the chartered boat “*Jastog*” (Lobster) and traveled approximately 13 nautical miles to the Island of Svetac formally known as Sveti Andrija/Andrea. Those on board recalled stories of what took place and that remains of the boat had washed ashore and that it may have taken place only a half-mile from the island of Sveti Andrija \ Andrea. No one knows for sure.

Retracing our family roots both through our research and visiting Komi•a and the surrounding islands became a trip through time that allowed us to find the identity of and recorded existence of family ancestors. We also saw the natural rugged beauty of these islands with their many inlets, coastal settlements and various sea grottoes called *špiljas* (Caves) such as the *Modra Špilja* (Blue Cave). These natural attractions have beckoned European visitors for decades along with those few Americans from San Pedro. Staying here is only more enhanced by the warmth and kindness of the people.

We have printed up our research so that family members can know of their historical lineage. David published a printed booklet entitled “*Komiza: Land of My Forefathers*” in 1997. By the year 2000, the booklet was revised and updated and is in its third edition. The work covers the history of the island of Vis and the town of Komi•a from its earliest beginnings to after World War II. (Published by TADMS, Inc. P.O. Box 8080 Fountain Valley, CA 92728 e-mail dfelando@earthlink.com, <<http://www.komiz.com>>)

My research resulted in “*A Genealogy of the Felanda - Felando Family.*” I assembled and printed the document in 1998 and with recent revisions, additions and corrections it presently is composed of 488 printed pages and 1800 printed photos (e-mail: arcanum@humboldt.net). The work contains an abbreviated version of David’s “*Land of My Forefathers*” work; written descriptions of the islands of Vis, Biševo, Svetac and the towns of Komiza, Vis, and Oključina with photos; and the Genealogy of the Felanda-Felando family from its earliest direct descendants to the present family members with photos, personal stories and remembrances. At present, 120 copies of this work have been purchased. One copy is available for public review in the San Pedro Historical Society 638 Beacon St. Room 626 San Pedro, California and a second copy is at the Family History Library 35 North West Temple Str. Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3400.

Fig. 11 - Lina (Felanda) Pečarić and Bepo Felanda, sole remaining family members in Komiza

