

## HONEYMOON

By James Collins

Mario Biondi served his country in World War II. Unfortunately, the country was Italy. They lost. He served in the Italian army and then the German army drafted him. This occurred when the Italians surrendered and the Germans captured Italy. He later served the British army as an interpreter and eventually the American army as an interpreter and ended up in America.

Mario met a lovely woman and they planned to get married in 1950. When they were discussing their plans, prior to the formal wedding, she wanted to go to Havana Cuba for the honeymoon. Mario was concerned. He was still an Italian alien immigrant and his travel to various countries was tenuous at best. This was because he was on the wrong side of the war and many hated Italy and Germany.

Since they lived in New York, they decided they should go to the Cuban consulate in lower Manhattan, present their plans, and see if there was any problem with them going into Cuba. They met with a lower associate in the consulate and he assured them that there was no problem involved. He took all the details from Mario, his previous history in Europe and his eventual travel to America. The consulate representative viewed Mario's green card that indicated Mario was an acceptable alien in the US and he told them to have a lovely trip.

The pair got married and the following morning showed up at the airport, got on the plane and flew to Havana Cuba. When they arrived in Havana, there was no large airport as there is now. When you landed in Havana, they wheeled a portable stairway up to the plane and the passengers disembarked. The Biondis got in line with the other passengers and slowly advanced to the door and in an orderly fashion walked down the stairway. As each passenger exited the plane, two Cuban officials examining passports and two soldiers carrying rifles met them. The attendants on the plane stood by as witnesses. The procedure went as follows. The passenger came down individually, gave their name and presented their papers. As an example, when Mrs. Johnson appeared, they checked her off on the list and sent her over to the left. Next Mr. Johnson received the same instruction. Mrs. Smith and Mr. Smith again received the same instruction. Mrs. Biondi went through the procedure with the same result. The official in charge, stopped Mario Biondi looked at him carefully, examined his papers, and said, "Would you go with these two gentlemen" as he was put in between the two soldiers with the rifles and marched off the runway.

They took Mario to a dungeon in the infamous prison associated with the main palace in Havana Cuba. His wife was frantic. Everyone she went to shrug their shoulders and said the government document directed the officials to have him arrested. It took two days for her to find out the charges

Apparently Cuba declared war on Italy during World War II. The war ended, but

**in 1950, Cuba had not signed a peace treaty. Officially, the two countries were still at war. Mario was the first and only Italian prisoner of war captured by the Cuban government. They were not about to let him go. Initially his wife went to the American Embassy in Cuba but they referred her to the Italian Embassy back in New York since officially Mario was still an Italian citizen. Since Italy and Cuba were officially at war, Italy did not have a representative in Cuba. His wife had to fly back to New York and she went immediately back to the Cuban consulate in New York City, met with the agent who assured her that would be no problem. She presented her entreaties and told him what happened. He gave his apologies and said that a much higher government level made the decision and he had been overruled. Many conversations went back and forth between the Cuban embassies the Italian Embassy and the American Embassy who decided to assist.**

**Three months later the Cuban government decided to release Mario Biondi from the dungeon. He was the only Italian prisoner they captured in World War II. Mario always referred to his honeymoon in Cuba as his honeymoon in hell.**

**THE END**