

# Golden years of Mama Lena and Dino

BANKSTOWN'S dynamic duo "Mama" Lena and Dino Gustin celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with gusto — twice.

Famed for their welfare and entertainment work in the local Italian community, more than 100 friends threw a party for the couple at the Appia Club, Leichardt.

The following day, the couple flew to Hong Kong to celebrate with their children.

Their two children — son Robert, who resides in Bangkok and Rosalba who resides in Hong Kong — organised a lavish dinner at the Conrad Hilton.

Messages congratulating the couple were received from around the world, including letters and telegrams from Prime Minister Bob Hawke, Federal Treasurer

Paul Keating and Premier Nick Greiner.

The couple received copious floral tributes and gifts from the community.

But for Dino and Lena, the most special gift of all was a heart-shaped gold plaque from their family.

"People ask how I can stay with one man for so long and all I say is — 'understanding'," Mama Lena said.

"It has all been good, although we had tragedy too with our first son dying at four years of age.

"When there is trouble, you just try to understand what is happening and then pick up and carry on."

The couple were married in 1940 in the Italian mountain village of Arzone, where Lena was born. They emigrated to Sydney in 1956 and soon distinguished themselves as journalists and radio announcers.

More than 200,000 people in Australia came to know Mama Lena over the airwaves during the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s through her 2CH radio program, "Arriverdici Roma," which Dino produced.

In 1967, Lena was awarded an MBE by the Queen and later the Italian Government recognised both Lena and Dino for their tireless contribution in helping the Italian community in Australia.

While a coronary heart bypass forced Lena to retire from her radio program in 1984, it didn't slow down her work in the community.

Two books have been published in Australia on



□ Golden couple . . . Lena and Dino Gustin.

this amazing couple, including *The Story of Mama Lena* in 1988 and a 700-page book called *70 Years in Two Countries: Italy and Australia*.

More recently, Lena and Dino have been fighting to have Italian accepted into the education syllabus in secondary schools and

taught as a community language.

"The highlight of the anniversary for both of us was that it was also the day we presented the Federal Government a petition with 200,000 signatures supporting the introduction of Italian in schools," Dino said.

## 'Dangerous' man

AN 18-year-old Lakemba man has been charged with driving in a dangerous manner after allegedly trying to run two acquaintances off the road after an argument.

The incident occurred in Kings Cross. The youth also allegedly threatened the pair with a gun.

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