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FRANCESCO PELLE // Le Voci di Antonimina

(The timestamps align with the start of the video)

00:00:00,110 --> 00:00:43,250

The mindset was fairly modern, let's say; it wasn't that backward. When I was little, the town was quite populated. The streets were full of kids and children, and now there are almost none left. Only a few of us remain. It was a fine town, peaceful, respectful, and welcoming. As a boy, there were many of us, so we played along the streets.

00:00:43,270 --> 00:01:02,070

The atmosphere was wonderful. There were two bars back then, and in the evening they were full of people playing cards and gathering together.

00:01:02,100 --> 00:01:11,100

It was a great atmosphere, mainly very peaceful.

00:00:11,130 --> 00:02:03,070

Life was wonderful. We would follow religious processions through town; someone carried the sacred banner where people pinned money for the patron saint, accompanied by drumming. In Antonimina, accordion music and traditional pipes (*zampogna*) provided the authentic Calabrian sound. After the procession, crowds gathered in front of the church and square to dance.

00:02:03,080 --> 00:02:41,230

Dancing the *tarantella* was great entertainment. It continues today on a smaller scale, but is gradually fading because fewer people live here now. Gatherings used to be livelier with larger crowds. Overall, daily life here in Antonimina remains rooted in its traditional feel.

00:02:41,250 --> 00:03:18,160

It's largely similar, though transportation changed: people used to ride mules or take the bus, whereas today everyone uses cars and motorcycles. People walked everywhere in the past; streets were narrow with stone steps.

00:03:18,160 --> 00:03:52,250

Vehicles couldn't navigate those narrow stepped alleys. All building materials—sand, cement, bricks—were transported using pack mules. My father worked as a muleteer, and my older brother and I helped him from a young age.

00:03:52,270 --> 00:04:12,070

As Antonimina expanded with home renovations and new construction, mule transport covered every street in town.

00:04:12,100 --> 00:05:15,110

Gradually, stone steps were modified so small motorized carts could pass, carrying far larger loads than a single mule. Over time, select roads were widened for small cars like the Fiat 500 or Panda, though many spots remain accessible only on foot. Agriculture was central to local life, with abundant farm animals and active homesteads.

00:05:15,130 --> 00:05:22,250

There are fewer farms today, but I still maintain mine.

00:05:22,270 --> 00:05:59,040

It's a full livestock farm now with cattle and goats. Agriculture was once the backbone of local livelihoods. Our village hosted various skilled tradesmen—blacksmiths, cobblers, and specialized craftsmen.

00:05:59,060 --> 00:06:37,150

Today those trades—like cobblers, blacksmiths, and farriers—have largely disappeared from Antonimina. Farmers feel the loss because specialized repair services now require traveling outside town.

00:06:37,180 --> 00:07:13,240

I handled mules as a boy and now ride horses recreationally. Decades ago, many locals emigrated to Argentina, though economic conditions there were tough. My grandfather emigrated to Argentina; he left poor and unfortunately passed away there without making a fortune.

00:07:13,240 --> 00:07:49,210

My grandmother eventually returned here. Five out of seven siblings moved to Buenos Aires, while my mother and one aunt stayed behind. My father refused to emigrate—a

wise choice in hindsight, as my uncles returned without significant savings.

00:07:49,230 --> 00:08:50,240

Some villagers sold land to fund emigration to Argentina, only to return empty-handed. By contrast, those who emigrated to New York fared much better due to well-paying jobs, building substantial wealth and returning periodically to visit. In Argentina, low wages and rent costs made financial success difficult.

00:08:50,260 --> 00:09:57,150

My father worked with a pick and hoe here, moved to Argentina, found the exact same hard manual labor, and returned home after three months, saying he preferred farming in Antonimina. I never wished to leave. Later, many former migrants to Argentina relocated to Biella in Northern Italy, where industrial jobs offered good wages. Half our town's population eventually settled in Biella.

00:09:57,150 --> 00:10:32,140

One of my sisters lives in Biella, but I never considered leaving. The town's biggest change is demographic: our population dropped from over 3,000 residents down to around 1,100. Evening social life used to be much more vibrant.

00:10:32,170 --> 00:11:13,020

When my sons go out in the evening, they meet up with ten peers, whereas in my youth a hundred youngsters gathered in the square. Despite fewer numbers today, community bonds remain warm and supportive in our peaceful village.

00:11:13,040 --> 00:11:28,220

Even with a smaller population, my attachment to Antonimina remains unchanged. My name is Francesco Pelle; we are from Antonimina and live in Antonimina.