

THE

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Summer, 1991

ITALIC WAY

The Newsletter of the Italic Studies Institute, Inc.



Record producer Frank Guida
with Dick Clark
and singer
Gary U.S. Bonds

IN THIS ISSUE:

Early Rock: Before the Beatles Italians Ruled

His Honor, Frank F. Fasi: The Mayor of Honolulu
Movie Review: Jungle Fever...Latin: Rising from the Dead

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Letters.....page 1,3	Focus (cover story)....page 12
All'Italiana.....page 4	Perspectives.....page 16,18
World Notes.....page 6	Project Italia.....page 21
Editorial.....page 8	Media Madness.....page 22
Forum.....page 9	Institute News.....page 24
Reviews.....page 10 ,15	Profilespage 26

Letters

Address all letters to: LETTERS, The Italic Way, PO Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11001

KEEP IT POSITIVE!

As much as I enjoy *The Italic Way*, as an Italian I am always embarrassed by the articles in World Notes demeaning other nations and cultures.

For example, in the May 1991 issue, "Last Exit to London" disparaged the London subways. Must we make others look bad to make ourselves look good?

I think we should promote the positive aspects of being Italian instead of taking potshots at others.

Susan Corva
Plandome, NY

(Ed. Soon after we read your letter a staffer found a tidbit in Parade Magazine (7/21/91) with a "humorous" warning about phony dentists in Italy. Two weeks later (8/5/91) we also found a Time Magazine "World Notes" page that featured a story of proud British military tradition alongside a "fun" story about Italian tax cheats. Readers have become so accustomed to this journalistic ploy that to see it reversed in The Italic Way appears shocking. We can appreciate your sensitivity for others and we encourage you to also write to Parade and Time. At least we can rationalize our London subway story as a travel advisory.)

ASSASSIN EXPOSED

A friend recently passed on a copy of *The Italic Way*. The issue certainly got my attention. I especially liked the review of Paul Hoffman's not very subtle assassination of the national character of Italians. Please accept my compliments for a review well done.

Joseph Capobianco
Douglaston, NY

CONFUSION

I received a copy of [*The Italic Way*], and I liked it. I found confusing that the picture of the individual that was involved in the article was on the next page and pictures of individuals from the next page were on the previous page.

Salvatore Canzoneri
Seaford, NY

(Ed. Although we mix rather than match, the placing of those particular photos was confusing. We'll try to be more careful.)



Parad down but not out: the elite Life Guards

BRITAIN Old Regiments Just Fade Away

The cold war is over, so why is there so much saber rattling in

parad-down regiments: the royal household's elite Life Guards, which sprang up in 1659 to restore Charles II to the throne; and the Blues and Royals, whose origins go back to the early empire. Scotland

ITALY Tax Cheats' Hall of Shame

Italians are notorious for not paying their taxes, but with the government staggering under annual deficits of more than \$100 billion, Rome can no longer afford to wink at delinquents. To embarrass delinquents, Finance Minister Rino Formica launched Operation Glass House, giving computerized lists of the past decade's 270,000 tax evaders to the press. The lists include such figures as leather-goods entrepreneur Roberto Gucci and Benito Mussolini's son Romano. The nation's No. 1 tax chea

It's easy to make some ethnic groups look bad by comparison. Example: Time Magazine

WHOSE RIGHT?

(The following letter was written by an Institute Advisor to the producers of a national radio show called "Car Talk.")

This morning, over WAMU in Washington, the so-called "car guys" engaged in the latest of their continuing series of ethnic slurs against Italians. A lady called in to ask about her Fiat's idling difficulties. Our "experts" began their response by remarking that Italians are always idle and indeed do not know how to work.

Perhaps these two feel they have a right to demean the Italian ethnic group of this country because they are of Italian extraction themselves. They do not

(continued p. 3)

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seem to understand the harm they are doing in promoting stereotypes.

I used to enjoy the "Car Talk" program. However, now I hear the hosts are only two vulgar, coarse individuals who may know much about automobiles but do not belong on public radio.

Robert J. DiPietro
McLean, VA

BON APPETITO

I just came across your wonderfully informative publication while dining at the *Foro Italicum* restaurant on West 34th St.. Once I started to read it at the suggestion of the owner (the charming Mr. Orlandi) I couldn't put it down — in fact I went back and read it again. Good luck and great success ahead for *The Italic Way*.

Richard H. Roffman,
New York, NY

SOUR HOPS

With regard to the picnic at the Platzel Brauhaus in Pomona, New York.

My instinctive reaction was that any social gathering sponsored by the Italic Studies Institute should appropri-

ately be held at an Italian restaurant or resort.

I will continue to support your institution, but I will by-pass this invitation until such time as a more appropriate invitation is forthcoming.

As one who speaks Italian and has been to Italy 5 times for a one month stay each time, I feel very strongly about this.

Jack Scordo,
Watertown, NY

(Ed. The Social Committee of the Plenary Council has no problem in using an Italic facility next time. However, the Platzel Brauhaus currently offers the best amenities and price. Germans are famous for Gemulicheit!)



Although we didn't wear our *lederhosen*, the Plenary Council picnic turned out *benissimo*. Food & prizes galore. More photos on page 24.

FUTURE ISSUES OF THE ITALIC WAY

- SICILY - Italic from the start
- THE ITALIAN CIVIL WAR - It Made Italy Great
 - FORBIDDEN ITALY - Sex Among the Ruins
 - CELTIC ITALY - The Irish Side
 - MAFIA - Strangers among us



All'Italiana

SERVIZIO SECRETO

The name is Bruno. Giordano Bruno. Born in Nola, Campania, this Italian philosopher was a defender of the Copernican theory and one of the first to postulate the existence of extra-terrestrial intelligence. But, until recently, no one ever suspected that Bruno was also a spy for British Intelligence. That's the theory put forth by John Bossy, a professor at England's York University. According to Bossy, Giordano Bruno acted as a double agent for Queen Elizabeth I in her bid to prevent Mary Queen of Scots, a Roman Catholic, from ascending the British throne. Along the way, Secret Agent Bruno is accused of betraying British and French Catholics to the English monarch. Notwithstanding his possible treason, the Inquisition burned Bruno at the stake in 1600 on the charge of heresy.

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

• America lost some class this summer with the passing of filmmaker

Frank Capra at age 94. Son of Italian immigrants from Sicily, Capra is best remembered for upbeat movies such as *It's A Wonderful Life* (James Stewart), *It Happened One Night* (Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert) and some 30 others that have become American classics. Capra brought decency to the screen and made a permanent home for old-fashioned American values.

• He made room for America. Palermo-born inventor/entrepreneur **Bernardo Castro** passed away at the age of 87. The word "Castro", like Frigidaire and "Xerox", has entered the American lexicon because of his Castro Convertible Sofa.

• Marking the 115th anniversary of Custer's Last Stand some modern vets planted an American flag at the Brooklyn tomb of **Sgt. John Martin** (Martini?), ole Yellow Hair's bugler and messenger. Born in Italy, cavalryman Martin survived the ill-fated battle when dispatched by Custer to get reinforcements.

• Off on the American horizon looms international singing sensation **Eros Ramazzotti**, Italy's answer to Julio Iglesias. With a sexy name like Eros and career that includes sales of six million albums and 2 million singles, this Latin



Frank Capra: A film genius with positive values.

will be a shot-in-arm for the Italian language. Not since Domenico Modugno (*Volare*) has America been exposed to such sonorous sounds.

FAUX PAS

There he goes again. Perhaps it's his mental aging, moral myopia or a classic case of Gallic duplicity, but French President Mitterand's precocious embrace of Soviet coup leader Gennadi Yanayev and his band of bolshevik thugs is a sure sign that France's eminent elder has a faulty grasp of the new world order. But that should not be unexpected. Mitterand encouraged state terrorism against the Greenpeace movement, missed the mark with German unification. What can you say about a head of state who literally hides behind trees in an effort to upstage fellow leaders at summit conferences? *C'est la goof.*

FUGAZY "SPIKED"

In July 1991, CBS President Laurence Tisch ignored NECO (The National Ethnic Coalition of Organiza-



When Sgt. John Martin returned with help his regiment didn't exist.



All'Italiana

tions) Chairman William Fugazy's request to halt the network television premiere of Spike Lee's controversial film, *Do the Right Thing*. The Italic Fugazy was dismayed by Lee's incessant negative portrayal of Italian-Americans and sought to block a movie that "stymies the ability to promote brotherhood and understanding." But CBS said *Tisch, Tisch*, and the movie aired. What resolve Tisch will have when Spike's anti-Semitic opus, *Mo Better Blues*, chances to make its television debut?

BROADWAY BLUSTER

No one is more susceptible to stereotypes than a starving actor in search of a role. Some, like Ricardo Montalban, who refused roles that cast his Hispanic heritage in a bad light, maintain their dignity and earn the respect of their peers. Others knuckle under to craven directors and help perpetuate negative images. Unfortunately, many of the latter are Italian-Americans. Two of the most recent offenders are Vincent Gardenia and Philip Bosco. These fellows appear in a Broadway play called *Breaking Legs*. (No, it has nothing to do with thespian fortune.) The play concerns lovable gangsters who just happen to have Italian accents. It's a comedy of terror that is struggling to succeed on the Great White Way.

When asked by television commentator John McLaughlin if their roles offended Italian-Americans, the deprecating duo responded with a suspiciously curt "no". In light of these cheap theatrics, it may be time to rework Shakespeare: "Kill all the actors."

PONTIFF POPS OFF

Who is Alex Rocco and why is he saying those terrible things about the Vicar of Christ? Don't worry, folks.

It's only a movie about those "slinky" Italians and their secret plans to steal the Vatican lot and loot. This screen gem is called *The Pope Must Diet* and features actor Rocco as conniving Cardinal Rocco, a corrupt church official who is in cahoots with mafioso Herbert Lom (*Pink Panther*). Before it was even released Catholic organizations, including those affiliated with Italian-American groups, howled in protest over the movie's title (originally *Die* not *Diet*). They claimed it was insulting to the faithful and an affront to His Holiness. Actor Alex Rocco defended the film and his role in it by falling back, as do most scoundrels, on his Roman Catholicism. The filmmakers hired *Chutzpah* attorney/author Alan Dershowitz to ward off would-be lawsuits.

By the way, this double-barrel cinematic insult also features Italian stereotypes. No doubt for Dershowitz it's the First Amendment, and maybe the money. What *chutzpah!*

OCTOBER SURPRISE SLAYING

Conspiracies are un-American. Iran-Contra, for example, was the work of a lone fanatic and his shredding machine.



Investigative author Dan Casolaro. Suicide or a victim of an international crime organization?



The film, *The Pope Must Diet*
Few religions are treated with such disrespect.

Nope, nothing even remotely conspiratorial ever happens in the U. S. of A. Such behavior is typical of nations that lack a tradition of democratic principles. Tell that to the Casolaro family. On August 10, 1991, freelance writer Dan Casolaro was found dead in the bathtub of his hotel room in Martinsburg, West Virginia. His wrists were slashed in an apparent suicide. But his brother, Dr. Anthony Casolaro, a physician, believes otherwise. Dan Casolaro had been investigating a link between Inslaw Inc., a small Washington computer company, the B.C.C.I., the Reagan Administration, Iran-Contra and the 1980 October hostage surprise. At the time of his death, Casolaro claimed to have found proof that the Reagan campaign used funds gained through the sale of Inslaw computers and funneled via the B.C.C.I. to sell arms to the Iranians and thereby thwart the reelection of President Jimmy Carter. That is, the Iranians were given the arms in recompense for holding the American hostages until Ron Reagan became President. Casolaro called this insidious network the *Octopus*. Fact or Fiction? We may never know. But Dr. Anthony Casolaro's words are haunting: "Danny was dealing with some people who were pretty bad players."



World Notes

[We present this section to inform our readers of events and trends that may be of interest with regard to ethnic opinions or cultural values.]

BITTER WITH THE BETTER

Italians can be proud of the fact that they have the highest personal savings rate in the world, exceeding even the Japanese and Germans. Not only does it fuel Italian capitalism but it finances the government debt. Unlike the U.S., Italy owes most of its IOU's to Italian citizens not overseas banks.

Also helping to off-set that debt are tourist dollars, to the tune of \$21 billion last year. But wait! Would you believe the United Kingdom earned \$39 billion from tourism? Sounds a bit lopsided but that's what *Time Magazine* reported.

And how about those Italian school kids? The legendary land of *siesta* keeps its students in the classroom longer than any other western nation — 216 days. The U.S. figure is 180 days. Only kids in Japan and South Korea sit at their desks longer (243 days and 220 days, respectively).

On the down side, French and Italian officials reported the largest number of new AIDS cases in Europe, although Switzerland has the highest *per capita* rate. The main cause of AIDS in Italy is intravenous drug use.

THE OTHER FOOT

For thousands of years Italy has sent its sons and daughters to every part of the globe. Today, prosperous Italy is on the receiving end of the migration patterns. Poverty-stricken Albanians, much like the despised Gypsies, are finding very little Italian hospitality. To many of its citizens and to much of the world, the Italian government's fight-them-on-the-beach reaction to illegal aliens from Albania is, well, un-Italian. Suffice it to say that Italian authorities do not want to be dumped on. Jobs in Italy are already scarce (unemployment is about two million). And these immi-

grants rarely even bring luggage.

To solve the problem at its source, Italy has already shipped 2,000 tons of humanitarian supplies to Albania as well as 700 Italian soldiers to distribute them properly. Now that's Italian!

FRENCH OFFENSIVE

Or maybe "offensive French," to be more precise. In a double whammy, the irrepressible Gallic tongue has lashed out at Britons, Americans, Germans, and Italians this past summer.

In a biting put-down of males in the UK, Germany and the U.S., the French Prime Minister, Edith Cresson has written them off as hopeless homosexuals, at least 25% of them. Observing that men in those countries don't ogle the female figure as men do in *la belle France*, Madam Cresson's remarks provoked some Brits to question the authority of France "where men carry handbags and kiss each other on the cheek in public," to pass judgement.

The Italians, who are well beyond this sort of sexual slander, suffered a different defamation. French police authorities have lumped Italians with North Africans and Yugoslavs as the



Italian school children spend more days in class than any other Western nation.

cause of a rash of train robberies in the South of France. These highwaymen or "pirates," as the French put it, disable passengers with mace or sleeping gas before making off with their valuables. Although the authorities have no proof of the criminals' ethnicity, they are quite sure that these bandits are not virile Frenchmen.

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

As a result of animated Bible videos that portray Jews as hook-nosed, money-grubbing merchants dedicated to the destruction of Jesus Christ, several powerful Jewish organizations have mounted a *chutzpah* campaign to rid the airwaves of these corrosive cartoons. Angered by an *infotainment* commercial on the Family Channel promoting the Bible videos, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and the Anti-Defamation League of New York blasted the Christian broadcasting network for systematically "reinforcing negative and dangerous stereotypes about the Jewish people." In response



Paper from corn stalks. Italian research may yet save our forests.

World Notes



to this pressure, television stations in Los Angeles, Minneapolis and San Diego have suspended the *infotainment*. The creators have agreed to redraw some characters with smaller noses.

In the world of cartoon animation — where Super Mario and Luigi are considered positive ethnic characters — a little *chutzpah* can make the difference.



President of the Swiss Federation,
Flavio Cotti

HEAVENLY INSPIRATION

As though inspired again by the spirit of its founder, Amadeo Giannini, BankAmerica is pushing for the number 2 spot. Originally founded as the Bank of Italy and America at the turn of the century, BankAmerica was founded and funded by Italian-Americans in San Francisco. By mid-century it was the largest bank in America pioneering today's branch banking system.

With the acquisition of the Security Pacific Corporation, BankAmerica will have assets of \$190 billion, enough to make Citicorp (bank #1 with \$217 billion in assets) a bit nervous. One might guess that the new merger was made in heaven.

SWISS QUEASE

Swiss President Flavio Cotti (Italians make up a quarter of the Swiss Confederation) has marked his nation's 700th anniversary with a stern warning to his countrymen. Beset by an explosion of drug use, homelessness, and AIDS, as well as an influx of third world immigrants, the Swiss are having doubts about their future. President Cotti, on the other hand, thinks Switzerland can deal with these problems as it can with the new order of Europe if it remains calm and confident. Cotti is concerned that demands for an overhaul in the traditional Swiss way of life will cause major complications later. To paraphrase the president, "Keep your eyes on the cheese, not the holes."



Once a land of poverty, Italy has become the dream of Albania's poor. But to the Italian government their migrations are a nightmare.

INDIA'S LATIN LOVE

Italian-born Sonia Gandhi is still the darkhorse candidate of Indian politics. Having rejected the presidency of India's Congress Party upon the death of her husband Rajiv, Mrs. Gandhi continues to hold court at home. A who's who of the subcontinent pays homage to her daily and many are convinced that matriarchal India will eventually be led by its adopted Italian daughter.

HEALTHCARE SYSTEM TRASHED

Tenor Luciano Pavarotti often recalls that one of the favorite past times of Italian youth is to go to the opera to boo bad tenors. Ranking a close second to panning overcooked macaroni, criticizing everything is an Italian method of maintaining quality. So it is not surpris-

ing that 40% of Italians responding to a poll said their national health system needs to be totally scrapped. Most other countries with similar free medical care didn't think their health care needed such radical surgery (only 17% of Britons polled wanted to scrap their system). Is the grass greener outside of Italy? One American cynic has observed the only difference in being killed by doctors in Italy or the U.S. is that in Italy the relatives aren't stuck with the bill.

CORN PAPER

Italian agri-giant Ferruzzi has announced the development of Chart-Bi, a corn plant substitute for making paper. Potentially, this corn fiber can save the planet's trees since it can replace 80% of the cellulose needed in the production of paper. Moreover, because it is resistant to oils and fats, the new paper is perfect for food wrap and drawing paper. The product will be available in late 1991.



Editorial

DOES ITALY COUNT?

By all indications the Italian Republic counts for very little in the so-called new world order.

Despite its remarkable achievement in reaching the number four position among the industrial economies, Italy remains the odd man out when it comes to global politics. The Italian government exudes an international image that approximates that of Spain or Holland rather than any of the Big Seven to which it belongs. (Even in photo sessions of the Big Seven, Italy takes a back seat even though alphabetically Andreotti and Italy are front-row material.) Italy is a dutiful ally of such consistent loyalty that it can be safely ignored by the more dynamic powers. And more often than not, the Vatican takes precedence over the Quirinale.

However, Italian leadership is far from insignificant. Italy has always been a trailblazer and counselor of the highest order. It was Fiat that first pierced the Iron Curtain in the 1960s with its Lada automobile plant on the Volga. In fact, today the Italians are the second leading trading partner (after Germany) of the USSR. But, at the Big Seven summit in London last August, they adopted a low profile. Had the Italians spoken up more aggressively about their desire for massive aid to Gorbachev, the prince of Perestroika might have been spared a coup and the subsequent fragmentation of his country. The last thing Europe needs is another Yugoslavia of Russian proportions.

If our brave new world is to benefit from Italian imagination, somebody in Rome had better start using a megaphone. -JLM

PRIMARY HERITAGE

Battle lines are drawn in the struggle to right historical wrongs. There is no denying that the dominant white power has sanitized some history to suit its own purpose. And even among whites, the Anglo-Norman (the term *Anglo-Saxon* belies the conquest of 1066) has practiced selective memory. Notwithstanding this subjective revisionism, the Western heritage is the best we've got.

Columbus, they say, found an Indian paradise and made it hell. That the Caribs were cannibals or that the Aztecs practiced human sacrifice finds no place in the eulogized American Eden. Likewise, a recent tragedy in Kenya demonstrates the darker side of African civilization. In the course of a rampage protesting higher tuition charges at a co-ed high school, 300 tribal boys mass-raped 71 girls and killed 19 others in the process. All reports indicate that it is a common practice among the tribesmen to take what they want from the womenfolk. One female school official bemoaned the deaths by saying, "*The boys never meant any harm against the girls. They just wanted to rape.*"

Asian culture too has its warts. Mass regimentation, high suicide rates among youths, infanticide, footbinding of girls, and even suttee (throwing the living wife on the husband's funeral pyre) are not altogether extinct cruelties.

Although it is far from perfect, Western civilization brought with it mechanisms for change and improvement which allows it to strive toward higher ideals. And because it rests on Roman foundations it is best suited for mass urban populations and is tolerant of diverse individuals and subcultures. Few civilizations can meet that double test.

It is right and proper to celebrate the glories of other cultures. Nevertheless, we should not divert the mainstream of our civilization. -JLM

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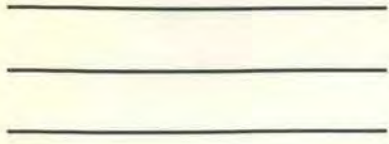
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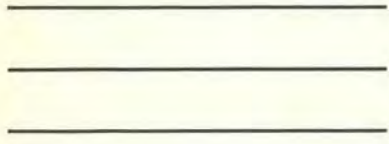
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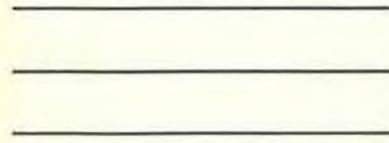
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Forum of the People



Is Italy a muddled caricature or a progressive Western democracy?

(Ed. The following response was received from Clyde Haberman, former Rome correspondent of the New York Times. We chided him for painting a distorted picture of Italy with such one-liners as, "...[Italians] have had it with late-running trains, strike-bound planes, phones that fail, health services that further afflict the afflicted and mails that go through now and again."

If America were incessantly depicted by foreign correspondents as a land of rampant criminality, pervasive illiteracy, and deplorable social services, even the most apathetic American would cry "basta!" If our huge federal deficit, scandal-ridden banking system, and disintegrating cities were seen as "typical" American problems, it would offend our sensibilities. Why, then, is Italy not held to the same standard?)

Dear Rosario Iaconis:

Sorry to have taken so long to respond to your letter to editor of March 13, but by the time it arrived here in Rome I was in the Middle East, where I have spent most of the last two months covering the recent plight of the Kurds who had fled from Iraq.

Obviously, there is no point in trying to refute your letter, item by item, since your mind is clearly made up. All I really can say is that it is the job of journalists to present reality in the countries they cover, and sometimes that means writing a bit more than sweet stories about lands where the wine flows endlessly and the pasta is terrific. I could just as easily list for you a fairly lengthy number of stories about Italy that I've written in which I talk about the robust economy that is much maligned overseas (unfairly so), about interesting personalities, about cultural excellences and so on. But again, I suspect that it would be a waste of time.

So let me simply note that whenever you saw an article of mine that you perceived as negative toward Italy, the viewpoint expressed was not my own but that of Italians — repeat, Italians. The last time I looked it was the Italian president who complained that too large a swath of the Mezzogiorno is in the hands of the mafia and its cousins, it was the Italian Treasury

**"If this is your idea of 'habitual Italo-bashing,' as you call it, then so be it.
I call what you're doing a letter writer's version of killing the messenger."**

Minister who complained that Italy's public deficits and flawed public services create dangers for the post-1992 period, it was an assortment of Italian intellectuals and others who fret that modern advances, while welcome, come at a price of lost traditional values. The list goes on.

If this is your idea of "habitual Italo-bashing," as you call it, then so be it. I call what you're doing a letter writer's version of killing the messenger. But take heart, dear sir. I'm about to be transferred to a new assignment in Israel. You won't have to read me much longer from Italy, a chore that I must assume wasn't all that painful for you. From the rather detailed list of my sins recorded in your letter, I gather that you've managed to wade through a fair number of pieces of mine. Either you're a glutton for punishment, or the chore of reading me wasn't so painful, after all.

Clyde Haberman
June 3, 1991 Rome Bureau Chief



REVIEW

JUNGLE FEVER

a film by Spike Lee

Long before Spike Lee gave us *Jungle Fever*, Star Trek's Captain Kirk and Lt. Uhura startled America with their version of interracial bussing. Southern affiliates were not amused by television's first black and white kiss. And this episode may have contributed to the program's untimely demise. But, while James Tiberius Kirk bore a noble Italic moniker, no one ever ascribed base ("jungle") motives to the commander of the Starship Enterprise.

Unfortunately that's not the case with the Italic characters depicted in Lee's latest cinematic diatribe. Perhaps stung by the charges of anti-Semitism he received for *Mo Better Blues*, Spike reverts to type in *Jungle Fever*, bashing his least favorite ethnic group with all the zeal of a KKK grand wizard. And why not? Italians are easy targets. They take their media lumps with nary a whimper.

Ostensibly, *Jungle Fever* was dedicated to the memory of Yusuf Hawkins, the black teenager who died at the hands of street toughs from Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. However, this reel life story is far too vituperative to represent a saga of social justice. No, by focusing solely on the racial makeup of the two lovers, Lee veers perilously close to exploitation. And, in many respects, he rekindles pernicious stereotypes even as he tries to demolish them. For instance, although the love scenes between Annabella Sciorra and Wesley Snipes are lovingly rendered and the two characters exchange views in a neorealistic, no-holds barred fashion, the dialogue between some of the secondary figures is downright ugly.

In the film, there exists a black women's faction—led by Snipes' scorned mulatto wife—that serves as nothing more than a bully pulpit for

Spike. Lee's dialogue has the women spouting epithet after racial epithet. White women want nothing more than well-endowed black men. They often lie in wait for these black demi-gods. Black sisters should stand together against the pale white witches. Is this what Spike Lee, New York University Film School graduate and self-anointed savior of the races, truly believes?

This group is counterbalanced by a gang of Italian-American youths whose resemblance to the Bowery Boys would be comical if it were not so tragic. It is here that Spike gets in his licks. With the exception of the sensitive, intelligent

In general, Spike's black characters are not nearly as wretched. Ossie Davis may be ossified and Ruby Dee scatter-brained, but they are people, not caricatures. Even Wesley Snipes' drug addicted brother is imbued with a crude wit and a world-weary dignity. Wesley Snipes' mulatto wife is stylish, sleek and speaks the King's English. Angie (Annabella Sciorra) is bright in a low-brow, gum-snapping sort of way. She's white but a low-class white. All's well that ends well. A chastened Flipper (Wesley Snipes) and his hardened-though-amorous wife close the film in a tender embrace. Angie returns to her



Living well is the best revenge. Spike Lee's version.

character played by John Turturro, the rest of the group is a loathsome bunch. (To Spike's credit, he allows the Turturro character, Paulie, to mention the 1891 lynching of Italians in New Orleans.) *Dese boys can't wait to get dem black bastids. Y'know what I mean? Capeesh?* Spike the racial geneticist salies forth with racial theories that would shock even Professor Shockley. He even tries to goad the Italo-Americans into a schism between the olive-complected and their more fair-haired brethren.

city peasant flock in Bensonhurst. And the love affair is a forgotten interlude.

Make no mistake about it, *Jungle Fever* is a gritty, urban melodrama that poses stark racial questions. Yet it answers none of them. With the possible exception of the late Frank Capra, few directors can provide answers to the vagaries of the human condition. But that's another, more wonderful life.

-RAI

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Focus

BEFORE THE BEATLES ITALIANS RULED

by Joyceann Yaccarino & Al Contrera

Baby Boomers may recall the summer of '64 when radio stations across the country were pitting America's favorite sons, The Four Seasons, against an upstart English group called the Beatles. Patriotism aside, the listening public found the British sound exciting and different. It was a turning point in Rock 'n Roll now known as the "British invasion."

But few realize the strength of the Italian-American presence during this era. Today's Madonna, Springsteen, and Bon Jovi are only the leading edge of an Italic tradition that reached well back into the early 1950's, to the birth of Rock. Some vocalists changed their names to fit the American scene. Others formed groups that carried a uniquely Italian-American sound. Perhaps the most famous group with a long-running string of hits was an act known in 1958 as the Four Lovers: Frankie Castelluccio, Tommy DeVito, Bob Gaudio and Nick Macioci. They changed their name to the Four Seasons and the lead singer, Castelluccio, became Frankie Valli. Starting with *Sherry* in 1962, the Four Seasons enjoyed over 40 chart hits throughout the years.

On the solo side there was no lack of talent either. Bobby Darin, better known in his Bronx neighborhood as Walden Robert Cassotto, recorded *Splish Splash* and *Mack the Knife*, which brought him to stardom in 1959. Dion DiMucci and the Belmonts had a big hit with *Teenager in Love*. June Valli of the Bronx recorded *Crying in the Chapel* in 1953. Concetta



Dion DiMucci (before *Abraham, Martin & John*)



The Four Seasons

Ann Ingoglia of Brooklyn changed her name to Connie Stevens (*Sixteen Reasons*), Geraldine Ann Pasquale recorded under the name of Dodie Stevens (*Ten Shoes with Pink Shoelaces*) and Joan Carmela Babbo took the recording name of Joanie James (*Your Cheatin' Heart*). Constance Franconero (Connie Francis) had the big hits *Who's Sorry Now* and *Stupid Cupid*. Bobby Rydell (*Dance with Me*) was a Philadelphia boy who remained active well into the 1970's. Former mouseketeer Annette Funicello also recorded a hit with *Tall Paul* and later became the number one girl in the film life of Frankie Avalon (*Venus*) and the beach party movies. Ironically, Annette did not anglicize her surname thanks to that all-American icon, Walt Disney. The fatherly Disney urged her not to abandon such a beautiful Italian name.

Italian-Americans hit all the right notes including the high ones. Falsetto-voiced Lou (Luigi Sacco) Christie (*The Gypsy Cried*) is still in demand at nostalgia concerts. Johnny Rivers (*Memphis, Tenn.*), Jim Croce (*Bad LeRoy Brown*), and Ernie Maresca (*Shout, Shout*) each had a unique style. Felix Cavaliere and the Little Rascals mellowed out on hits like *Groovin'*.

Origins: First Generation

During the 1950s, a new music was emerging from the streets of the cities around the nation. Italian-American teens,

Focus



inspired by the great black groups of the day, were particularly fond of harmonizing on street corners of south Philly, Brooklyn and a score of other cities. The Cleveland DJ Alan Freed coined the phrase "rock n roll" to describe this new sound. When Freed moved from Cleveland's WJW to New York's WINS in 1954, he began his show "Rock n Roll Party" and spread the good news of rock music across the soundwaves. Other DJ's followed Freed's lead and rock became a national obsession. The subcategory Doo Wopp became associated with the Italian-American sound. The term itself was not meant to be derogatory but rather described the background vocal accompaniment.

In the late 40's and early 50's, before the rock n' roll sensation took a firm hold so called "popular" artists dominated the airwaves, and among them were a number of Italian descent. Prior to the new rock sound, Perry Como ran a close second to Francis Albert Sinatra in the number of released chart-topping recordings. Tony Bennett (Benedetto) was earning his reputation with songs like *Rags to Riches* and *Because of You*.

Dino Crocetti, known professionally as Dean Martin, managed to slip some Italian lyrics into such hits as *That's Amore*, *Innamorata*, and *Return to Me*. He was, by the way, Elvis Presley's first idol. And, in the summer of 1964, Dino's hit single *Everybody Loves Somebody* overtook the Beatle's number one spot on the charts. Another young man from the Bronx, Gennaro Louis Vitaliano, who made a living assembling transformers for fluorescent lights, used to sing part time. He changed his name to Jerry Vale and had his first major hit in 1956. Vale remained popular through the mid-1960s.

During Rock's nascence, Italians and the Italian language were involved in more hit records than any other foreign language. Lou Monte's rendition of *Dark Town Strutters Ball* in 1956 and *Peppino the Mouse* in the early 60's had a mix of

down home Italian lyrics. *Volare*, the number one chart topper for all of 1958, was entirely in Italian. Written and sung by the Sicilian guitarist Domenico Modugno, *Volare* won the first Grammy ever, and is still a world classic.

And lest we forget, the song *I Will Follow Him* (singer: Little Peggy March) was one of many original Italian (*Char-iot*) compositions that were translated and hit it big in America. Laura Branigan's *Gloria* was another, as was Tom Jones' *Love Me Tonight*.

Case Study: The Mystics

Landing a record contract and reaping the rewards of top forty fame became the dream of many young Italian-American teenagers who spent their time listening to Alan Freed,

watching Dick Clark's American Bandstand, and practicing a *cap-pella* the songs they heard. Some Brooklyn boys later formed the Mystics. "We would try to sound like the The Five Satins singing 'shood-ooop and shoobie do' over and over until it sounded right. Sometimes it would take all night to get one part," reminisced Al Contrera, bass singer for The



The Mystics: Then and Now (Al Contrera stands 2nd from left and front row center)



Mystics. During the late 50s when the rock n' roll artists began to force out the popular singers of the previous era, Contrera and his neighborhood buddies eventually splintered off into three groups—The Mystics, The Passion and The Classics. Contrera and four others became known as The Mystics and after more practice, decided to cut a demo in Manhattan. The engineer who worked on their demo liked their sound and passed the recording on to Jim Gribble who set up an audition with Bob and Gene Schwartz of Laurie Records. The song they recorded, *Hushabye*, went on to become a national hit. "Just like that, five Italian teenagers from Brooklyn were in show business," says Contrera. Bob Ferrante, Phil and Al Cracolici, George Galfo and Al Contrera toured the country for the next couple of years with Alan Freed, Dick Clark and Clay Cole. "We were sharing the stage

(continued p.17)

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REVIEW



A Soldier of the Great War

A novel by Mark Helprin
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$24.95

This is the novel that promised to end all novels about the war to end all wars. At least, that's what Harcourt Brace Jovanovich would have readers and reviewers believe. From the Giorgione dust jacket to Helprin's lyrical prose, it holds out the hope of a journey to a world gone by. It is a world closer to the 1890s than to our own benighted century. *A Soldier of the Great War* aspires to literary greatness and in many ways it rivals Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. But Papa has nothing to worry about.

Mark Helprin is a gifted writer and former military man, but a misguided historian. The main character, Alessandro Giuliani, is more philosopher than patriot, and the blending of the author's political musings with his subject's sojourn through the minefields of the Great War rehashes the usual perspective on Italian nation-building. Here is one particularly telling passage:

"Italy was left out of all this [colonialism]. We had our underdeveloped country right in our own south. And when we tried to imitate England, France, Germany, Holland, and even Spain, in seizing regions of the world, it was pathetic. It was comical."

What is comical is Helprin's use of dialogue as a forum for his historical prejudices. In this example, the sagacious Professore Giuliani is giving the illiterate Nicolo', who, predictably, hails from Calabria, a quick lesson in Barzini-speak. It gets worse:

"So, by the early part of this century Italy was crazy for making up lost ground. From the Nineties on, we had begun to look to Africa with a vengeance. We built naval bases at Augusta, Taranto, and Brindisi, and waited for a chance to redeem our prestige in Europe by seizing coconuts and diamonds."

A brief reference to Italy's Roman Empire, however, is quickly followed by an insult to both Italians and Africans:

"Those were battles in which we were made to look ridiculous—at Custozza, in the mountains, and at Lissa, on the sea, and at Aduwa, in Eritrea, by a bunch of Africans."

Spike Lee couldn't have said it better. Helprin conveniently forgets the Italo-Turkish war. That's how Libya be-



came a colony. The author also does not even hint at humiliating defeats suffered by other major nations. France was brought to its knees by just about every enemy including the Algerians and Vietnamese. Even the stiff upper Brits met defeat at the hands of a "bunch of" Afgans and Zulus. Helprin redeems himself later when he has Giuliani tell Nicolo' about the Italians' stunning capture of 500,000 Austrian troops at Vittorio Veneto, the only Allied field victory of World War I. But this quick snippet is blithely tossed aside as so much historical trivia.

A novel should not be the place for historical revisionism. Nor should it encourage polemics at the expense of prose and character development. Alessandro Giuliani is far too interesting a character to be swallowed up by Helprin's politics.

A Soldier of the Great War works best when delving into the psyche of Alessandro Giuliani. Whether he is bedding an Irish travel agent or pummeling the Austrians in the Alto Adige, Giuliani is much more of a man than Hemingway's alter egos ever were. He is at once a valorous soldier and an army deserter. At all times, however, Giuliani remains a towering intellect. He defeats his family nemesis, Orfeo Quatta, and most of the German and Austrian troops while quoting Augustine and Aquinas. And Helprin supplies more than a touch of humor when he has Alessandro inform Nicolo' that the Italian troops could have used the boy from Calabria at the bitter defeat of Caporetto.

If you can separate fact from fantasy, *A Soldier of the Great War* is a pretty good read.

-RAI



Perspectives

[Highlights of historical records that shed light on modern times]

LATIN: NOT FOR LOVERS ONLY

by Joyceann Yaccarino

So, you think Latin is a dead language? Maybe it's just *moribund*. Try this vocabulary with an Italian accent (and a hard 'c') and you can even communicate with great Caesar's ghost:

Calculator, biceps, cinnamon, alias, et cetera, per annum, cactus, video, aquarium...

In fact, there are over 300 words in English that have come directly from that most ancient of Italic languages. Furthermore, over a third of English vocabulary has Latin roots (like *territory*, from *terra* = land). With those kinds of credentials is it any wonder that the American educational system is emerging from its decades-old dark ages to rekindle the light of classical learning?

Knowing Swahili or Russian may make you a better person, but if you want to deepen your understanding of English and Western Civilization, and open your vistas to the Romance languages, then all roads lead to Rome.

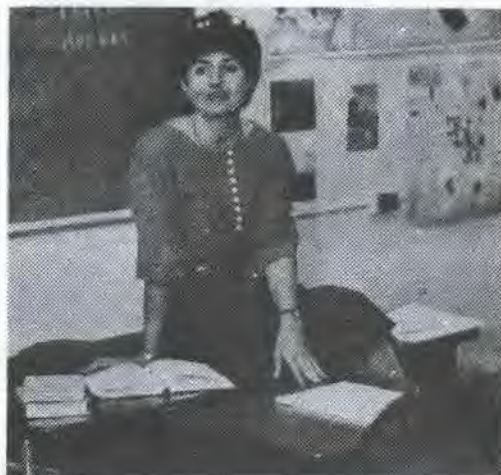
"Through the study of Latin and the

ancient culture one is able to communicate across the centuries to find one's heritage" explains Robert Wilhelm, Ph.D, Director of the American Classical League and professor of Classics at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

A less esoteric reason for Latin studies is the evidence that studying Latin improves verbal SAT scores. And many experts are convinced that the rigors of Latin conjugation, declension, and syntax do wonders for your thought processes. Of course, you get out what you put in — *quid pro quo*.

Although in absolute terms the number of students of Latin in this country wouldn't fill the Colosseum, enrollment is up 12.5% over 1986. This, while ancient Greek and Hebrew studies have declined. (Italian language enrollment, by the way, is also up some 21% over the same period.)

Reports of Latin's death have been greatly exaggerated. It is still the official language of Vatican City and it certainly lives on in law, medicine, and many sciences. If only the Church hadn't



Latin teachers aren't grayhaired grammarians anymore. Teacher Peggy Brucia of Port Washington, NY, brings Latin alive.

switched to the vernacular, many Catholics could still practice Latin on Sunday. (Remember: *Et cum spiritu tuo?*) But did you know that the Vatican has updated its official Latin dictionary to include modern jargon? *Exterioris pagine puella* (cover girl), *escariorum lavator* (dishwasher), *orbium phonographicorum theca* (disco) are among the new entries.

Paralleling the excommunication of Latin from church, the demand by the

(Continued on p. 18)

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Rock n' Roll (continued from p.13)

with the very people we had idolized," says Contrera. Not forgetting their friends still practicing technique on that Brooklyn street corner, The Mystics brought The Passions and The Classics to see their manager. Both groups landed record contracts. The Classics (*Til Then*) and The Passions (*Just To Be With You*) both had their moment of fame.

Most of the groups of the 50s and early 60s enjoyed short-lived success, with one or two hit records and a couple of years working as full-time entertainers. Today many of the groups are still performing. After thirty years, revivals and reunions keep some of these men and women working today.

Behind the Scenes

Not all Italians in music were singers. And certainly there was more to rock than just Italian-Americans with stage names. Rock was, and is, Soul, Motown, Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and more. Don Costa, an arranger at ABC Paramount Records in the late 1950s, is largely responsible for launching the highly successful career of singer/songwriter Paul Anka (of Syrian descent). Costa arranged for the recording of Anka's first big hit, *Diana*, in 1957. Bob Marcucci and his partner Peter DeAngelis were the driving force behind the careers of Fabian, aka Fabiano Forte (*Turn Me Loose*), and



Paul Anka (Syrian descent) and his first arranger Don Costa

Frankie Avalon.

The possibilities for achieving fame and fortune in the business of making rock n' roll seemed endless. However, rock's influence appeared to be waning by the beginning of the next decade. It seems difficult to imagine, but in 1960 *Billboard*, *Variety*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life* and others touted the demise of rock n' roll. Even Dick Clark's American Bandstand stood on the verge of cancellation for lack of fresh sounds.

(continued on p. 25)



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LATIN (Continued from p.16)

Sixties generation for "relevancy" in school *curricula* brought Latin to the point of extinction. What brought it back was a return to more conservative academic values and President Jimmy Carter's Commission on Foreign Language in 1979. Today, we are witnessing not merely a resurgence of Latin but also a new enthusiasm. Latin teachers are becoming downright fanatical in their love of the classics and pass on their enthusiasm to students. The problem now is a paucity (*paucus* = few) of Latin teachers.

Even though some 70,000 students took the National Latin Examination in 1990, not all of them have gone on to teach the language. Some schools are so desperate for Latin teachers that they offer bonuses. Teachers who want to switch to Latin can enroll in summer

programs like the one given by the Latin Institute at the University of Georgia. These teachers are finding a surprising number of scholarships and other financial support available for their retraining.

Reflecting on our loss of this ancient medium brings to mind a humorous incident. There was a time when Latin was a common reference pool for educated Americans. Witness the headline one New York journalist conjured up to proclaim a subway strike a few years back: SICK TRANSIT, INGLORIOUS MONDAY. Though few readers understood its origin, the author could not resist his latent Latin impulse. Whether future generations will be tickled by such a play on words remains to be seen. But if Latin dies out completely, its epitaph will surely be: *Sic transit gloria mundi*. (Thus passes the glory of this world) ****

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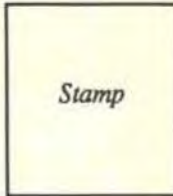
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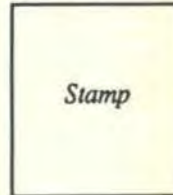
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Three advance previews were held to obtain comments on the Institute's video documentary, *The Italians: The Classical Heritage*.

Some 50 people attended the Washington, DC showing and approximately 70 saw the two New York previews. Comments varied but the vast majority agreed that the documentary was extremely suitable for Public Television broadcast and for distribution to senior high school and college-level classes in Social Studies.

While we were disappointed that not one political figure made time to see the video in Washington, we plan to home in on Italian-American Congressmen and New York State Legislators in the near future. The purpose would be to gain their help in future funding and distribution of the video.

The Project Italia staff is going forward with efforts to reach the Public Broadcast market. Future distribution to schools and to the general public must await further development.

Organizations interested in contributing to distribution can contact Lydia Tenaglia at (516) 488-7400.



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AT ISSUE: NATURAL LAW

If relevance is what you are after, then the Institute's first video documentary couldn't have been more on target.

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The original concept was perfected by the Roman statesman Cicero and among its modern day defenders is Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.



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Ian Pearl



Gregory Kussof

ITEM: In Atlantic Beach, a gang of five whites (not an Italic among them) led by one Shannon Siegel, clobbered a black youth in the skull with a baseball bat. In Crown Heights, the Hasidic Jewish and black communities confronted each other in the streets stemming from the traffic death of a youth black and subsequent murder of an Hasid.

COMMENT: Unlike the tragic Bensonhurst violence, *New York Times* columnist John Kifner did not play up the "closed, insular world" angle that he found so useful against Italian-Americans. Nor did he trot out professor of sociology Dr. Jerry Krase to analyse the Italic mind that predisposes Italian-Americans to violence. Neither did "60 Minutes" producer Alan Weisman become inspired to write an on-the-spot autobiography defaming his paternal ancestors much as he did to his Italian grandfather. And most probably, filmmaker Spike Lee will be hard-pressed to figure an Italian angle in his next movie about white racism.

What does all this say about American media?

ITEM: In a new episode of "The Simpsons," Bart gets a job mixing drinks at the Springfield Legitimate Businessmen's Social Club, a mob front. Actor Joe Montegna provides the voice of the head gangster.

COMMENT: Et tu, Bart! Montegna, you-u-u dirty rat.



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Media Madness

A Shady Pol Is Italy's Most Respected

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ITEM: Long Island *Newsday* prints an article about politics in Italy with the title, "A Shady Pol Is Italy's Most Respected." (Currents Section, 6/23/91)

COMMENT: Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti is the subject of the piece. To call Andreotti, a Classics professor by training, a "shady politician" is not only an insult to the Italian nation but outright slander of a venerable statesman. Try using such language on a less tolerant people and see what whirlwind it reaps.

ITEM: *The Westmore News*, a periodical in Port Chester, New York, reprinted a portion of a century-old front page, without any comment or introduction, entitled "Like Locust, They Swarm."

COMMENT: The article is the observations of an unnamed author making light of Italian work gangs building a railroad in Port Chester in 1891. In addition to the word "locust" the author refers to the poor laborers as "ducks," "bees," "sawed-off and condensed bits of humanity." Elsewhere in the piece, in describing the Italian victim of a train accident he writes that the train struck the "fated Italian" in the head "...scattering his brain all along the track."

That Italians were treated so contemptuously in those days should come as no surprise. But readers should also expect a qualifying explanation for reprinting insults from the past. Or, is that just our hypersensitivity showing?

100 years ago this week

The following articles and advertisement appeared in *The Port Chester Journal*, a weekly newspaper, on Thursday, June 18, 1891.

LIKE LOCUSTS, THEY SWARM.

On the Monday noon train, or near the watching hour of noon, any one who was at the depot or in the vicinity of the railroad tracks, would have been treated to a sight as rich as it was novel. On the said train there came up from New York a motley crew of Italians in work on the improvements of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. There were sawed-off and condensed bits of humanity in abundance, but this was not the remarkable feature of the gathering. What amused us and others most was the manner in which the "parade" moved up the railroad track. Like ducks on their migratory flights they treaded in this shape:— The sunny son who led the van trotted under a soap box, a mattress, a bundle of clothes, pots, frying pans, etc. In fact this fellow was a furniture van in which were all his kitchen utensils, his bedroom furniture, and his parlor bric-a-brac. Then as they came along we noted the following figures: Alpine hats as pointed as a sugar loaf, coats of corduroy, vests of many colors, pants of corresponding lousiness, shoes with tons of big headed nails. As some had bags slung around their necks like old fashioned port-monies; tied in the middle and bulging out at the ends. Some had trunks whose outside was profusely covered with tin snags, such as are used in feathering water proof and roofing papers on buildings. Anon a fellow would go by with a bagging sack over one shoulder, a pair of boots on the other, a bundle of track on his head, and in each hand a parcel of miscellaneous articles. Every one was loaded down with his whole wardrobe and housekeeping track and they moved

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BILLED ON THE TRACK.

On Monday afternoon about 4:30 o'clock, one of the Italians at work on the railroad was struck by a train on the East Port Chester Bridge and instantly killed. The unfortunate fellow and about two dozen of his countrymen were on the track and started to cross the bridge over the road. All the other men succeeded in escaping the iron horse which had opened its throttle valves wide to warn the men who had just cranked off work and were going to the sixties in East Port Chester. The engine however struck the fated Italian square on the head, scattering his brain all along the track. The train quickly slowed up, and backed to the East Port Chester crossing when the body was put on the rails and taken to the Port Chester depot. As soon as the men reached the shanty, the Italians there swarmed out like bees and all went rushing to the depot in a wild mob, and there was the greatest demonstration of grief on the part of those of them when they saw their unfortunate brother laborer. The next trail up took the body to Greenwich, as the death had occurred in Connecticut, where Dr. Jones held an inquest the same evening and returned a verdict according to facts. It is only a miracle that more persons are not killed on the tracks. The same train that killed the Italian came near picking up a well known assassin of East Port Chester.

THE F. C. CORNET BAND

The powers of our many excellent local bands, the Port Chester Cornet Band, have been so long in existence that they are well known wherever the sound of a trumpet is appreciated, or the



News of the Institute

BUDGET EMPHASIZES GROWTH

Although behind schedule, the budget was finally ironed out and approved by the Plenary Council. Among the new expenditures are a permanent office in Floral Park, New York, and additional computer equipment. Funds were also added to *The Italic Way* budget to increase circulation.

PROGRAMS TO EXPAND

The Project Italia film, *The Italians: The Classical Heritage*, was previewed in Washington, DC, and in New York City. Approximately 120 guests were in attendance. Asked to comment on the 30-minute video, all agreed that it is a new and professional work that is suitable for Public Television and for use in senior high schools and colleges. For information call Lydia Tenaglia (516) 488-7400.

We hope to report an expansion of the Aurora Youth Program in the next issue. The Institute is attempting to "transplant" the program to various locations. The purpose will be to test standardized procedures and logistics. For information call Susan Tenaglia (516) 488-7400.

PLENARY COUNCIL NEWS

As we go to press, the Council is discussing a proposal to increase General Membership dues. The first meeting of the 1992 Dinner Dance Committee was held by Chairman Louis Mantia. For additional information on the Fifth Annual Dinner contact Monica Polizzi (516) 488-7400.

The First Annual Picnic was a success despite an active bee population. Thousands of dollars in door prizes were given out and over 230 people attended the all-day affair. The committee was headed by Social Chairman Mike Carbone, and included John Santora, Lou Mantia, Joe Ricciardi, Angelo Croce, John LoBianco, John O'Connor, Edward Emma, Anthony DiMauro, Mike Downey, and Joe Graham.

First Annual Picnic



Rock n' Roll (continued p.17)

But American Rock's revival can be linked, at least in part, to the release of *New Orleans* in 1960. Sung by Gary U. S. Bonds and written and produced by an Italian-American, *New Orleans*, with a booming double bass drum opening, marked the beginning of Rock's second generation. U. S. Bonds (aka Gary Anderson) was a clean-cut black kid from Norfolk, Virginia. The writer, producer and founder of the LeGrand label U. S. Bonds recorded under was a young man named Frank J. Guida. The "rough and ready" Norfolk party-down sound created by Guida and his studio band, The Church Street Five, became the heart of today's rock n' roll.

A record dealer, popular music producer and song writer who migrated from the Bronx to Norfolk in 1953, Frank Guida influenced the beginning of rock's second generation and a decade of sweeping musical change. Guida's music topped the charts in the early sixties.

The next hit for Guida and U. S. Bonds was *Quarter to Three*. The crackling house party sound that gave the feeling of a live recording revolutionized the sound of rock and paved the way for many artists including Stevie Wonder and the Beatles. The Norfolk Sound, as it came to be known, gave birth to the Liverpool Sound. "Brian Epstein used to write me asking for advance copies of my records and even invited me



Fabian Forte

to Liverpool," explains Guida. Guida never made the trip but he did send copies of his recordings across the Atlantic. Jack Good, a writer for the English periodical *Disc*, wrote: "*Quar-*

(continued on p. 28)





PROFILES



His Honor Frank Fasi and wife Joyce

Frank F. Fasi The Mayor of Honolulu

by Joyceann Yaccarino

"If I had to depend on the Italian vote here, I couldn't get elected dog catcher."

So jokes Frank Fasi, mayor of the city of Honolulu for nearly two decades.

A native of Connecticut, and a 1942 graduate of Trinity College at Hartford, Fasi joined the Marine Corp during World War II. It was while stationed in the Pacific in 1944 on the north island of Kahala that this Connecticut Yankee, who, by the way, still carries a trace of a New England accent, got the bug for far away places. Upon discharge and his return home, he borrowed a couple of hundred dollars from his sister, bought an old car and headed West again to Los Angeles. "I

didn't like what I saw in LA, so I went further north to San Francisco. I liked it there. Then I saw an ad offering a trip to Hawaii for \$125. I didn't know anybody in Honolulu," he admits, "but I liked the weather and the people so I figured: What better place to earn a living?"

Upon his arrival in Honolulu, the young Fasi began his search for employment. His first civilian job was with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Later in 1946, Fasi began a contracting, building-demolition and salvage company. His business expanded when he opened a building supply firm and became a general contractor in 1951.

He made his debut into the world of politics when elected to the state senate and then to the city council in 1964. In 1968, a tumultuous year in mainland America, Fasi was elected Mayor of the city of Honolulu. He served three consecutive terms as mayor, but in 1980 he lost a close election by a fraction of one percent, and was out of office for the first four years of the 1980's. He came back to beat his opponent and has been mayor ever since. And his achievements are legion.

Nineteen years at the helm has afforded the mayor an opportunity to make a number of significant accomplishments in the 11th largest city in the USA. Under Fasi's stewardship, the city now boasts a bus system second only to New York City in





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ridership. "We have a bus system that originally only had 90 buses and now has about 500. For sixty cents you can go 500 miles." In transportation for wheelchair users, Fasi scores high marks again. Honolulu's *handi-van* system, one of the first of its kind in the nation, provides reliable transportation to Honolulu's 2,000 disabled citizens. "We also make sure we do not charge our senior citizens, including tourists, over the age of 65 to ride public buses. They can ride any place on the island any time for free." The people's open market is another Fasi project. Farmers come to nearly 30 different sites in the city and sell fresh island produce below market prices. Affordable housing projects, parks beautification programs, and homes for "street people" and "beach people" are all part of the Fasi administration list of accomplishments. But don't move yet, the cost of living is 33 percent over the national average.

"If I had to depend on the Italian vote here, I couldn't get elected dog catcher"

The number of Americans of Italian ancestry is almost negligible in Honolulu. "Some of the mayors from New Jersey and New York who have visited have said: 'Gee, you must have a big Italian vote here!'" chuckles Fasi. Since every ethnic group in Hawaii is a minority, Fasi explains that they do not have the same types of racial problems prevalent throughout the United States. Although the mayor does admit to a certain amount of racial tension, with so many small groups of ethnicity no one group is truly dominant. Polynesians from all of the Pacific Islands, Koreans, Chinese, American-Japanese, Filipinos, 6,000 full-blooded Hawaiians as well as Caucasians, the largest of all the ethnic populations, comprise Mayor Fasi's constituents. We noted that the Mayor's political literature refers to his Roman heritage as a plus in leading this tolerant and progressive paradise in the Pacific.

"In Hawaii you are not judged by the color of your skin or the shape of your eyes, but by what you can contribute to the people who live here. We live, work, and play together without considering nationality. We call it the Aloha Spirit."

Although the Mayor had no friends or relatives in Hawaii when he arrived in 1946, his roots now are firmly planted in the community. He and his wife, Joyce Kono Fasi, have raised a large family in Makiki, and his devotion to public service for nearly forty years has won him a place in the hearts of the Hawaiian people.

For both Frank Fasi and his constituents, his \$125 trip to Oahu turned out to be a great deal. ****

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Rock 'n Roll (continued from page 25)

ter to *Three* threw light on the limitations of the current approach to the business of making records." The sound in a Guida recording appears to be of low fidelity, in the middle of a wild, wild party. The spontaneity and freedom of the Guida "party records" made a significant artistic contribution to rock music.

Dick Clark is quoted as saying in 1961: "[Frank Guida's] recording of *Quarter to Three* definitely saved rock music from extinction and kept my Bandstand show from being cancelled." The recording style dubbed "Impressionist" opened a new era in pop recording. Guida broke all of the technical rules and ran counter to every idea of progress in recording techniques.

The sound coming out of Norfolk in the early 60's influenced many notables in rock today including Isaac Hayes, Barry Gordy, and the dynasty of Motown, as well as the Beatles and Bruce Springsteen.

Perhaps the best testimony to the achievement of Italian-Americans performers is that they endure. New generations are looking back to them as a refreshing change from the hard rock noisemakers of today. Surely, the melodies, the styles, the themes of love and fun of the old standards are a reminder of good days gone by. *Cent'anni!* ****



Bobby Rydell
(Robert Lewis Ridarelli)



Connie Stevens
(Concetta Ann Ingoglia)



Connie Francis
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