

Vol. 5, No.2, Fall, 1992

THE Italic Way

The newsletter of the Italic Studies Institute

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the start.

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Letters

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

PRODUCTS TO CELEBRATE

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for so kindly donating the placemats and Columbus commemorative coin to the students at the Chelsea School, P.S. 33-M.

I was so pleased to have had the opportunity to celebrate with them the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage of discovery.

Matilda R. Cuomo
Christopher Columbus
Quincentenary Comm.



THE DEFEAT OF GERALDINE FERRARO... ... is a message for all Americans of Italian descent.

What are we to think when a courageous Italian-American, the first woman candidate for vice president of the United States and an experienced politician in the national arena, is brought to defeat by smears and innuendos?

Ms. Ferraro has lost her bid for a U.S. Senate seat. According to exit polls, her defeat by a mere 1% margin was plainly caused by voter distrust after a smear campaign. The method of her defeat is a clear and present danger to all Americans of Italian descent. Italian-Americans are surely on the defensive. The signs are unmistakable.

A portion of our full-page Newsday ad of 9/27/92 that warned of eroding civil rights across the nation.

and Liz Holtzman used their racist tactics to smear Ms. Ferraro. [They] showed their utter lack of respect for Italian Americans.

Edward Albano
Middletown, NY

While I, in the main, agree with much of what you say about the unfair depiction of Italian-Americans, specifically

how they are unjustly connected with the Mafia, I observe another problem which you did not mention. What about the relationship of your people with African-Americans? I am not certain if membership in the Mafia is nearly as bad as being violent, fascist stormtroopers, as in Bensonhurst.

I agree with your criticism of prejudice against Italians — and will gladly join you in public and private opposition to it. I only request that you go further in your condemnation.

Rev. Jon Eikels
Union Methodist
Minister,
Flushing, NY

I'm enclosing a check for forty dollars. My wife Ann joins me in wanting to be a member. Please do not be another Italo-

American organization that talks a lot about our glorious past, gives dinners, collects dues and does nothing else.

Antonio Ferricone
Brooklyn, NY

I read your article in "Newsday". Please send me a copy of your newsletter. Let us stick together.

Lucy Mancusi
Astoria, NY

VIDEO REQUEST

I'm a teacher, and I feel that the role of Italian Americans in contributing to the growth of America has been underplayed. I kindly request the video [*America: The Italian Legacy*] so that I can teach my students the significant role Italians have made in building America.

Ann Marie Magliulo
Brooklyn, NY

STRIKING A NERVE

Thank you for your very timely and eye-opening editorial in the recent *New York Newsday* (Sunday, Sept. 27th). I was sickened by the way Bob Abrams

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POST SCRIPTS

Letters (cont'd)

Your full page in Newsday was a wonderful expression of our views. May I subscribe to your newsletter?

R. Gatto
Forest Hills, NY

I'm not of Italian descent but I agree with the article whole-heartedly. Please send me your newsletter.

Joseph Dietz
Jamaica, NY

TALESE PANNED

I write to compliment Bob Masullo both for his excellent review of the Gay Talese book, *Unto the Sons*, but also for his accurate analysis of the author. Because he is well known, Mr. Talese has begun speaking on matters dealing with Italian Americans. I agree with Mr. Masullo who thinks it is good that Talese's Italian American conscience is developing. I also agree that it is at a very immature level. Italian Americans should also remember that Mr. Talese's previous book, *Honor Thy Father*, not only made money for him but hurt the Italian American community with still another book about Italian American criminals.

I believe we should welcome him to our family — but with caution.

Vincent S. Romano
Chairman, Commission for Social
Justice, Order Sons of Italy,
Bellmore, NY

QUINCENTENARY: Coast to Coast



Only two monuments that we know of were erected in the United States on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage. Curiously, both were erected at opposite ends of the country. The Explorers Monument was funded and built by the members of the Benevenuto Cellini Lodge of the Sons of Italy, in New Hyde Park, Long Island. Conceived by Anthony D'Urso, who is also a member of the Institute, the project took four years to become a reality. The monument commemorates Columbus, Vespucci, Cabot, and Verazano.

The other monument is a full figure of Columbus sculpted by a Japanese artist.

It stands on the campus of Pepperdine University, outside Los Angeles. Conceived by Robert Barbera and Edward Di Loreto, the statue was funded through the Italian Heritage Culture Foundation and the Federated Italo-Americans.



VINDICATED!

Among the injustices enumerated in our full-page Newsday ad (see p. 1) in support of Geraldine Ferraro, we noted that the dismantling of the City University's (CUNY) Italian-American Institute was a spite act by Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds. It was done in retaliation for a class action complaint by the Italian-American faculty of discriminatory practices at CUNY.

Lo and behold, Federal Judge Constance Baker Motley reversed (by injunction) the dismantling and agreed that the CUNY action was "retaliation" and that the treatment of CUNY's Italian-Americans revealed "evidence of discriminatory intent." The matter is now scheduled for a trial.

Dr. Joseph Scelsa, head of the Italian-American Institute at CUNY, must be praised for his courageous stand against Reynolds and her ilk. (Dr. Scelsa is also a member of the Italic Studies Institute.) Although Dr. Scelsa was backed by a number of Italian-American organizations, the defense was spearheaded by the Coalition of Italo-American Associations led by Richard Grace.

Anti-Italic bias is no phantom issue. It is generated by stereotypes and it is becoming more open. If it can be practiced by a New York City institution, in the midst of the nation's largest Italian-American community, it has frightening implications.



All'Italiana

LEE'S LAST STAND

In the span of just one year, Lee Iacocca has accomplished another automotive miracle. By instituting a new line of Jeeps, suburban roadsters and luxury sedans that emphasize quality, design and elan, Chrysler's charismatic Chairman has saved his company from the abyss once again. Last year, Chrysler was floundering with a loss of \$795 million and an antiquated product line. Iacocca moved swiftly to revive his company. He called Chrysler's 500 top executives to attend a retreat in a rustic Wisconsin setting. This self-help session forced upper management to focus on solutions in a creative, non-programmatic fashion. The results were eye-opening. In addition to the product line changes, Iacocca had injected a new can-do spirit into Chrysler. Now Chrysler cars are the equal and, in many cases, superior to Nippon's best. What's more, Iacocca's miracle helped Chrysler notch a \$202 million profit for the third quarter of 1992—the only one of the Big Automotive Three to do so. Lee Iacocca will retire in January 1993. With his astounding track record and intellect, perhaps he should turn his attention to Washington and the Oval Office in 1996. After all, who knows better about breaking out of gridlock than an old automotive pro like Iacocca.

PANTRY PRIDE

Mom's apple pie, hominy grits and yam have given way to focaccia, risotto and gnocchi. Increasingly, America's palate is turning Italian. It began after the Second World War and continues unabated to this day. More Italian comestibles such as extra-virgin olive oil, pasta, tiramisu' and balsamic vinegar are imported each year. Italian cookbooks dominate the shelves in bookstores. And Italian food has now become a staple in the American diet. Fully one-third of American adults con-



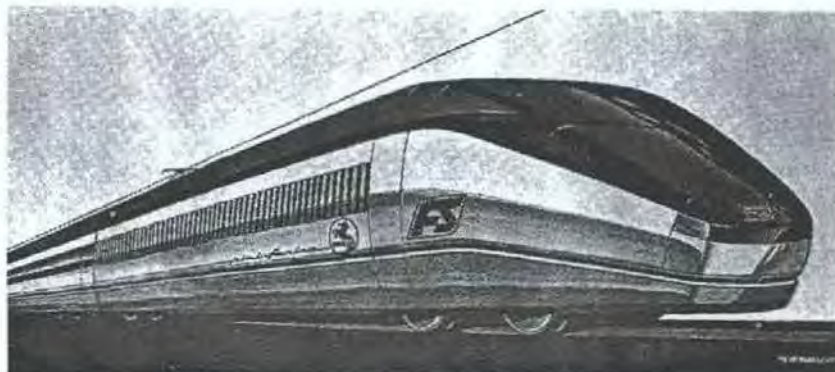
Some already claim pizza is an American invention. Now everything else is up for grabs.

sider Italian their favorite ethnic food. Other cuisines may be almost as tasty but cannot be prepared at home without culinary contortions. French food is delicious but rarely filling. Chinese fare while delectable can be too spicy. Greek dishes require much lemon and lamb. Spanish meals are a piquant pleasure but plainly quixotic. And, of course, Mexican is *muchas* gaseous. Any wonder that Americans are cooking Italian? Just think, it all started with Thomas Jefferson who called it macaroni.

ITALY IN ISRAEL

• Italians in Israel made news across the millenium. In the Israeli town of Beit Sean, archeologists unearthed a Roman city in its entirety. According to Gabi Mazor of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, this ancient Italian metropolis "is one of the biggest and best preserved sites of its kind in the Middle East." Ironically, an earthquake in A.D. 749 had buried the town in rubble, preserving its structures nearly intact. Israeli authorities marveled at the level of craftsmanship of the structures from both an architectural and artistic standpoint. The excavation also revealed the quintessential elements of ancient Italian urban life: a civic center, shops, a temple, an arena and an extensive network of baths.

• Update to the 20th century, Italy's undersecretary for foreign affairs, Giuseppe Giacomazzo, inked some key technological deals aimed at helping Israel modernize its energy and transportation links. The Italians will do Moses one better: they will use their engineering wizardry to increase electrical energy production from the Red Sea and the Dead Sea via a canal between the two bodies of water. In addition, Italy will help the Israeli trains run on time by building a railroad system linking the city of Eilat on the Red Sea to the rest of Israel. Giacomazzo also issued a warning to the Arabs. He said



Israel opts for Italian trains



All'Italiana

the economic boycott of the tiny Jewish State was "an injustice and contrary to every system of logic."

BLACK BUCKS

Italian-American organizations that have tried to squeeze a contribution from any Italian company know that the *lira* rarely crosses the Atlantic. However, African-American filmmaker Spike Lee (*Do the Right Thing*) has found an easy mark in Italian clothing manufacturer Benetton. Lee, who earned his fortune making Italian-Americans look like Neanderthals and racists, coaxed the controversial clothier into coughing up \$50,000 for the newly established Malcolm X Scholarship.

Benetton is famous for its United Colors marketing technique which flaunts interracial harmony using shocker photos like a white baby suckling a black breast. It appears that Benetton also endorses Spike's image of Italian-American women craving black studs (*Jungle Fever*).



Spike Lee has succeeded where Italian-Americans have failed.



Some scientists theorize that villages like this in Tuscany are still populated by Etruscans.

RACISM ON RISE

Italy has not escaped the sudden rise in racial and ethnic strife now coursing through Europe. Neo-Nazis have attacked a Rome synagogue and set fire to an Italian citizen of mixed Somali-Italian blood. Italian Jews went so far as to counterattack the Nazis with the tacit support of the Italian public. The Rome government has pledged to meet the threats forcefully.

MISSING LINK

A group of scientists is trying to prove that all Italians come from three ancient gene pools: Etruscan, Celtic, and Greek. Using the Tuscan town of Murlo, where they believe all the folk are pure Etruscan, the team will compare modern DNA with DNA from ancient bones.

What is perplexing, perhaps because our information is sketchy, is where do the ancient Italic people fit in? No doubt the average Italian carries the blood of the major groups mentioned above along with German, Spanish, Norman, and French corpuscles as well. However, the bone marrow, so to speak, is definitely

Italic, the people who assimilated all the others.

Perhaps the next challenge facing these genetic time travelers is to figure out why the natives of Italy have been called "italians" (*italici*) for two thousand years.

AIDS VICTORY

Under the leadership of Dr. Dani Bolognesi, director of Duke University's Center for AIDS Research, scientists have come up with a new weapon in the never-ending struggle against the dread H.I.V. virus. Laboratory experiments have yielded a protein fragment that halts AIDS in its tracks in human cells. Although this victory occurred in the laboratory, Dr. Bolognesi believes it will result in the development of a potent array of anti-H.I.V. drugs.

Dr. Bolognesi can count on a network of support including the National Cancer Institute led by Dr. Robert Gallo and the Nation Institute of Health headed by Dr. Anthony Fauci. These men have been in the forefront of the AIDS battle.



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.]

SPACE TRIUMPH

"Arrivederci, Lageos-2" were the words of Columbia space shuttle Commander James D. Wetherbee as six astronauts lofted a 900-pound mirrored Italian satellite into orbit almost 4,000 miles above the earth. The Laser Geodynamics Satellite 2 was the chief event of the shuttle's 10-day mission and will be used by earthquake researchers around the world. These researchers will beam lasers from Earth to the Lageos-2; the satellite's 426 prisms will then reflect the pulses back to the scientists on the ground. These pulses will be used by geologists to detect movements in the planet's tectonic plates. Star Trek, Italian style. The \$4 million satellite and its \$120 million booster are the handiwork of the Italian Space Agency, one of the world's most advanced bodies for space science and exploration. Like the United States, Italy is playing a key role in exploring the cosmos. In acknowledgement of this continuing effort, the astronauts aboard Columbia wore green, white and red knit shirts as they deployed Italy's latest scientific space marvel.

BRITAIN: WHISKEY & TWEED

Britain is hemorrhaging. In addition to incessant terrorist bombings in London, a no-growth economy—the worst since the Depression—a devalued currency, rising unemployment, a resurgent Scottish nationalism whose battle cry is "Rebuild the Wall!" (a reference to Roman emperor Hadrian's wall which separated Roman Britannia from Scotland), England has now suffered one of the most humiliating labor layoffs of the twentieth century. Hobbled by increasing imports of foreign coal and a dramatic drop in demand for its product, British Coal threatened the



Who pushed Perot?

shutdown of 31 mines and the firing of 30,000 miners. Militant mine workers immediately called for a nationwide strike. Meanwhile, the British penchant for indolence is reflected in Prime Minister John Major's hope to muddle his way through these crises. On top of it all, the Queen's castle had a multi-million pound fire that has set off a new round of demands to dump the teutonic Windsors or at least cut their government stipends. In



Yakuza crime lord Sasakawa with his unwitting host, 1939. Il Duce knew little of Japanese politics.

their defense, many economists feel the regal pomp and pageantry generates precious foreign exchange from tourists.

The mood of the nation is summed up by member of Parliament Tony Benn, "We are still a feudal society trying to live off whiskey, tweed, and royal family."

CRIME & POLITICS

A major national newspaper editorial called for a cleansing of the nation's political process: "The fact that underworld figures . . . partook in national politics . . . must be revealed to the full extent." The nation in question is not Italy. Nor is it a John Gotti-connected United States. Rather, it is Japan—Land of the Rising Sun and expanding mob control. Although it is largely ignored by the American media, Japan's Yakuza is the world's most ruthless and influential criminal organization. The Yakuza dwarfs the so-called "mafia" or "cosa nostra" in the ability to infiltrate every level of society. From Japan's Diet or Congress to the neighborhood brothel, Yakuza crime lords have a stranglehold on Nippon. In fact, Yakuza mobsters move about Japan with impunity and are accorded the highest respect. Former Japanese power broker Shin Kanemaru once used the services of the Yakuza to help suppress right-wing opponents of former Prime Minister Noburu Takeshita. According to the aforementioned Asahi Shimbun newspaper, this disgraceful tradition, which is deeply rooted in Japanese history, "puts Japan's reputation in the international community at risk."

Not to worry — until Coppola makes a movie about it.

PEROT'S PUSHER

A lot of people were upset when presidential hopeful Ross Perot

World Notes



dropped out of the race earlier in the year. What made him reconsider and reenter the race? No one but Mr. Perot really knows for sure, but the feisty contender revealed one of his motivations during the televised announcement to throw his hat back in the ring.

Holding aloft a photo he had received from a nine-year old Kansas girl named Adriane Caggiano, Ross said the youngster had written three weeks before to urge him back into the campaign.

Adriane admitted that her partiality for Perot came from her father Tony, an engineer for the Boeing Company. But she summed up her feeling for the man this way: "I can tell Ross Perot is real nice and he's telling the truth."



Italian space equipment will track the movement of continents.

COMPETITION FOR THE UN

Who needs the United Nations when we have Sant'Egidio. By day, the volunteers of this community organization of crusading Italian Catholics staff soup kitchens, tend to Rome's poor, and do missionary work in the wartorn African country of Mozambique. By night they dabble in diplomacy and mediation. So

successfully that they managed to gain the trust of both warring factions in Mozambique. The Sant'Egidio team coaxed the rebel leader out of the bush and brought him to Rome for indirect talks with the central government. With

the help of the Italian government, a peace accord was signed on October 4th ending the 16-year civil war. The United Nations was invited to oversee the transition to peace.



Italy is committing 2,400 troops to the U.N. force in Somalia. Italian citizens have brokered peace in Mozambique

Independence-minded Scots want to politically rebuild the Roman wall that divides them from England.





Editorial

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we leave another year behind and address our goals for 1993, we must pay homage to our lifeblood — our members and supporters. Although still a relatively small organization we have much to be proud of in the way of accomplishments. Our commitment to the expansion of Italic Studies is meeting with success.

Our Aurora Education Program signed up a record number of youngsters this year. The Project Italia video on Roman Law has been well-received by the educational community and prominent individuals. *The Italic Way* has a readership across the nation and is growing. Our annual dinner dance, the primary source of funds, has become a Manhattan tradition. The Institute picnic, held each year to bring families together, has developed into a fundraiser to help various charities — especially those that support children's well-being. In this respect, we are emulating the ancient Roman *alimenta*, the world's first public welfare program for children. Proceeds of our picnic raffle went to such worthy causes as Tomorrow's Children, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Covenant House, Juvenile Diabetes, and the Don Monti Foundation for cancer research.

It is our desire to build relationships with other like-minded organizations, to expand our membership and to become a resource for all. The next twelve months will be an exciting and challenging year as we look to continue our growth.

My very best wishes to all our members and supporters.

A. Crecca

ITALY: ALWAYS ON THE BRINK?

We laud Francesco Nicotra, editor of the magazine ITALY ITALY, for his assessment of a malady that is becoming epidemic in the news media. That malady is obsessive negativism toward the state of Italy. While nations around the world cope with monumental struggles for their very existence, amid ethnic strife, the collapse of the family, gun mania, brutal civil wars, and the like, the news services are forever predicting Italy's crash. Mafia terrorism, the oversocialization of industry, north vs south, genetic aversion to paying taxes — these are the tell-tale signs of Italy's imminent demise, or so the news people predict. Nicotra clearly sees the international press feeding off naysayers in the Italian press. Under Fascism, the Italian press was obliged to report only positive things, according to Nicotra. However, today's press feels obligated to point out every wart in Italian society, not unlike the bleacher fans at La Scala who booed Pavarotti for missing a note. This slanted reporting ignores the relative strengths of the Italian nation viv-a-vis the truly dreadful state of affairs in such less self-effacing countries as Germany and Britain. International correspondents ought to be more than just parrots.

-RAI

THANK YOU JOYCE

For reasons of geography and logistics, we have changed our editorial staff. Joyce Yaccarino, our managing editor, has stepped down to join the features staff. Joyce lives quite a distance from the Institute office and was finding it increasingly difficult to fully participate in each issue. Besides, she is very much involved with a number of other efforts. We thank her for taking on a rather difficult assignment long distance. You'll be hearing from her again.

-JLM

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Forum of the People



CIVIL WRONGS

by John A. Positano

Last September, viewers of the Nickelodeon show *Double Dare* were treated to the "light-hearted" defaming of an Italian-American family by the show's host: "Oh, you're Italian. Good! Do you know where Jimmy Hoffa is buried?" Of course it was all said in jest. And the targeted family was not questioned by the police or subject to arrest and detention on any suspicions. The telling non-sequitor of this children's gameshow incident reveals a shocking truth. Italian-Americans have lost the word association game. In short, in American minds Italian surnames equal criminal connections.

While Italic America has made unprecedented and dramatic progress in politics and economics, our civil liberties have been severely curtailed by a combination of ethnic stereotyping and the fad of "political correctness" now sweeping the country.

Undeniably, the number of Italian-American U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, jurists, state legislators and governors is

at an all-time high. And Italian Americans have indeed flooded the entrepreneurial, executive, and professional classes with a vengeance, forever peeling off the "blue collar white ethnic" label we've been stuck with for decades. Still, powerful trends have emerged threatening us with "civil wrongs," massive denials of due process and overt suspicions which have negated the foregoing progress.

In Kansas City, innocent relatives of alleged hoodlums have been rounded up and jailed in a "guinea hunt" not seen since the Sacco-Vanzetti trials. In metropolitan New York, the murder of a drug enforce-



Protesting the police round up of Italian-Americans in Kansas City

**"Do you
know
where
Jimmy
Hoffa
is
buried?"**

ment agent led Federal and State investigators to deliberately raid and ransack Italian American social clubs. Most clubs had no mobster members whatsoever. In both cases, officials harassed the admittedly innocent to "give up" the allegedly guilty, a tactic which would not even be contemplated in hounding the KKK, neo-Nazis or IRA.

In Maine, real estate developer Joe Ricci was ruined by the casual, gratuitous and now unproven allegation that he was mob-connected. In the 1980's, Federal Appeals and District Courts sanctioned dragnets of "Italian looking" suspects in airports during drug sweeps. In the Carter administration, one cabinet officer ordered "mafia searches" on all Italian-surnamed contractors doing business with the Federal Government.

More recently, ABC's Sam Donaldson shrilly defended the right of the media to ask any Italian-American candidate if he/she has "Mob" connections. A Long Island contractor, Fred de Matteis, was banned from the New York City bid list by the Comptroller for whispered mob links. All of these "civil wrongs" evidence disturbing violations of the right to confront one's accusers, and the right to a fair hearing for cause, both enshrined in our laws since the Magna Carta.

In New York State, U.S. Senatorial candidate Geraldine Ferraro was linked to the mob in a tortured meandering fashion: a pornography tenant in one of her husband's properties. (Such a guilt-by-association standard would mark Allstate as a mob tool if they insured John Gotti's automobile.) Nevertheless, the smear was enough to cost Ferraro the primary. Only the righteous indignation of Italian-American voters (Republican and Democratic alike) spared incumbent U.S. Senator Al D'Amato defeat by similar



Indian militant Russell Means: winning by intimidation

(cont'd p. 17)



REVIEW

LA STORIA

Five
Centuries
of the
Italian American
Experience



JERRE MANGIONE & BEN MORREALE

La Storia:
Five Centuries of the
Italian-American Experience
by Jerre Mangione & Ben Morreale
508 p., \$30, illus.

Any Italian-American who has had to endure yet another streets-are-paved-with-gold coffee table book about his forebears will groan as intellectuals Mangione and Morreale do their red, white and blue best to curry favor with their publishers. A cardinal rule in the cottage industry of Italian-American immigrant sagas is to imbue Italo-Americans with a superpatriotic fervor for their adopted land and make poor old Italy seem like darkest Africa. There seems more soul and nobility in Ireland's potato famine than the straight-forward poverty of 19th Century Italy. And while other benighted immigrants of northern Europe are depicted yearning to breathe free only Italians, it seems, came to eat and work. Moreover, the ancient drive and cooperation that have made Italian-Americans economically successful and Italy a first-class nation are not to be found in this tome.

Balderdash is basic boilerplate for most Italian-American intellectuals. Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale are

no different. They haven't a clue about Italian history before 1,000 A.D. Mangione was an English professor and Morreale taught literature. Their aversion to ancient history is reflected in their bibliography, which includes the usual suspects: hoary Italian-American works and an inordinately ridiculous number of mafia and Arab histories.

Jerre and Ben manage to do their best to nuke the "old country." Garibaldi is described as a bloodthirsty, megalomaniacal adventurer who loved nothing better than to bayonet his enemies. Mazzini becomes an slimy, calculating politician. And the entire *Risorgimento* (reunification of Italy) is but an insidious plot to exploit the *meridionali* (southerners). The authors barely hint at the brutality, stupidity and inhumanity of the Spanish, Austrian, and French overlords of pre-*Risorgimento* Italy. To claim, for example, that post-*Risorgimento* Italy failed its regional populace is partly true; but wasn't that the case with post Civil War America (Reconstruction) and modern reunified Germany? In their rush to please publisher Harper Collins, Mangione and Morreale tie it all up by saying: "But in the end, if *Il Duce* gave some comfort to the hurt pride of some Italian-Americans, the vast majority could not forget that they had left a land that treated them as dumb animals."

Some chapters strive to present a more balanced view of the Italian people. Mangione and Morreale delineate Filippo Mazzei's pivotal role in the birth of the American republic. Tonti, Caboto, Columbus, Vespucci and Verrazano are given their due—albeit fleetingly. Italy is lauded as a land of explorers and the locus of learning. Italian architecture is given its just due: from the pillars of Palladio to the spires of the Kremlin.

Paying homage to the stereotype of Italians as eternally oppressed *misera-bili*, however, other chapters undermine the very underpinnings of Italian and Western Civilization:

The Romans were among the first to ravage the South. The persistent exploitation of the South eventually produced the legendary rebellion of Spartacus.

Any Kirk Douglas fan can tell you that Spartacus was a Thracian slave, not Italic. Jerre and Ben should have realized that Italians make lousy slaves, they always want to lead. Thanks to an overabundance of such shoddy historical analysis is it any wonder young Italian-Americans do not even know, much less care, about Virgil's explanation of the Roman Empire, "*Sit Romana*

... their bibliography: an inordinately ridiculous number of mafia and Arab histories.

potens Itala virtute propago, ("Such shall be the power of Roman stock, allied to the valor of Italy"). To understand the energy, tradition, and persistence of Italian-Americans one needs to read more Roman history and less mafia lore.

In maligning and ignoring Rome, Mangione and Morreale betray a simplistic worldview that only underscores their paucity of knowledge. Sadly, most Italian-American authors share this ignorance. Gay Talese, author of *Unto The Sons*, dismissed the Romans with just one paragraph. How ironic that at the same time the multi-culturalists try to pass off scant and rudimentary artifacts as incontrovertible evidence of mighty civilizations, Italo-Americans work to nullify their ancestors' role as the founding fathers of Western civilization. You have to wonder if other suc-

(continued on p.28)

NIGHT TIME IS TIME

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Focus

SICILY: ITALIC FROM THE START

by John Mancini & Rosario Iaconis

Not all Sicilians accept being called Italians. And not all Italians consider Sicilians as their brethren. It's not much different than the Yanks and Rebs syndrome right here in the United States. A major difference is that this regional antagonism goes back at least 25 centuries. Native Sicilians as well as Americans of Sicilian origin rightfully take pride in the prodigious accomplishments of their island region. But some, in reaction to defamations by other Italians, will claim to be anything but Italic in origin. The reverence for *Magna Graecia* — idealizing the ancient Greek colonies of southern Italy — is as much a desire for regional identity as the Lombard League of the north. In this age of ethnic self-determination, even Italy's regions are getting the bug.

In truth, despite centuries of foreign occupation and devastation, Sicily shares the same Roman patrimony as all other Italian regions. This fact was echoed recently by Italy's President, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who admonished his countrymen for referring to Sicily as "occupied territory." Although he is a ceremonial head of state, President Scalfaro forcefully scolded journalists and politicians for misstating that Italian troops sent to Palermo in the wake of the mafia violence were merely the latest in a long line of occupiers. He reminded the unenlightened that the troops stationed in Sicily were on Italian soil. But old mindsets die hard.

For Americans who still think of Sicily as a land of donkeys and *cannoli*, it may come as a shock that there is as much a "New South" in Italy as in the United States. For example, the Sicilian dialect is nowhere to be found officially. It exists as a picturesque speech among the older generation and in traditional songs. Linguistically an Italic language, Sicilian was once held in such high esteem that Dante Alighieri nearly chose it over the Florentine model for his *Divine Comedy*. Florentine won out and eventually became Italy's standard language. Sicily's newspapers, texts, road maps, street signs and commerce are all written and spoken in



Sicily's fate was sealed in a sea battle between Rome and Carthage off the northern coast of Sicily at Milazzo, in 260 BC. The land-loving Romans invented the boarding ramp to defeat their seafaring enemy.

standard Italian. A recent poll revealed that Sicily is one of the regions of the peninsula where Italian—not the local dialect—predominates. Only Venetians approach Sicilians in adherence to the mother tongue, according to a recent poll. This survey indicated that more people speak the local dialect in Rome.

Politically, Sicilians are also showing their fellow Italians the way. After years of stultifying proportional representation, the mayor of Palermo will now

be directly elected by the people. A recent editorial in *La Repubblica* heralded this reform and urged Rome to follow Palermo's lead.

These developments should not be seen as startling. For, despite the economic and social disparities between the North and the South following the reunification, Sicilians have



Ages apart. Greek temple meets highrise housing.

Focus

always held high political office in Italy. Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando, a Sicilian, helped galvanize Italy's war effort in World War I and was one of the Big Four leaders at Versailles, along with Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau. Bettino Craxi, perhaps Italy's most successful postwar prime minister to date, had his parental roots in Sicily. Today, Italy's defense minister is another Sicilian, Salvatore Ando'.

If northern Italy has had its Columbus and Verdi, central Italy its Fermi and Da Vinci, Sicily has had Cannizzaro (Father of Chemistry), da Messina (a developer of oil painting), and opera composer Bellini. Sicily can even throw in Capra, Di Maggio, and Sinatra as sons once removed.



Roman bikinis set the tourist tone for post-Greek Sicily. (From a mosaic at Villa Casale, Piazza Armerina)

WHY IS IT ITALIAN?

Sicily's beauty and geographic location have made it, over the millennia, a crossroads of diverse cultures. And depending on the bias of the historian each of the competing cultures was better than the culture that finally won out. So, we are told that Sicilians flowered under the Greeks, became learned under the Arabs, thrived under the Normans, triumphed over the French, and prodded along under the Spanish. But under the Romans and Italians Sicily was enslaved and exploited.

This flawed historical perspective has one major problem: what is the true Sicilian identity? Notwithstanding the obvious genetic mixing, Sicily was originally inhabited by Italic tribes, Romanized for 700 years and Italianized for another

1,500 years.

The vestiges of non-Italic occupation are, admittedly, evident to this day: Greek ruins, some vocabulary, some hispanic customs, Norman folklore, Arabic place names and even Hellenic surnames that include *-andro* (man), *-cala* (good) etc. But to separate Sicily from the culture and bloodlines of the Italian peninsula is to betray 3,000 years of struggle to keep Sicily Italian.

Contrary to popular belief, the ancient Greeks did not discover Sicily. The Greeks colonized Sicily and subjugated the indigenous people, who were the Siculs, an Italic tribe. But the Greeks weren't the only invaders and the Siculs were not the only indigenous tribe. While the Greeks landed on the east coast (Taormina-Catania-Syracuse) the Carthaginians (a North African Semitic people) occupied the west coast (Palermo-Trapani-Marsala). The natives there were probably of Iberian stock.

The Greeks might have been great artists and philosophers

... it may come as a shock that there is as much a "New South" in Italy as in the United States.

but they never did fully win over the Italic folk. It was not the Greek way to treat "inferiors" as equals (universal citizenship was a Roman development). Instead, the native Siculs were used as slaves and pressed into military service to fight Athenians in the many fratricidal wars of the Greeks. Nevertheless the days of the Greeks were numbered. Like their fellow colonists on mainland Italy, the Greeks of Sicily were being out-populated by the prolific Italic people. Eventually, mercenary cousins of the Siculs from the mainland, the Mamertines, managed to instigate a war between Syracuse and the mother of all Italics, Rome. This war and the 1st Punic War against Carthage brought Sicily to Italy's bosom.

Admittedly, Sicily under the Romans was only a shadow of its former self. The thinning of Greek blood and years of warfare took their toll on the island. Evolving into an agricultural and tourist region, Sicily received new colonies of Roman veterans which further Latinized the island. Modern tourists can easily find the physical evidence of Rome's presence in such places as Taormina, Catania, Piazza Armerina, and Termini Imerese. Baths, theaters, villas, mosaics, and statuary attest to the ancient Italian link. (By the way, our cover photo was actually taken at Taormina not Sant'Alessio.)

From the decline of the Roman Empire to our present day, Sicily was subjected to new waves of invaders who attempted to stamp out its Italic culture. Along the way, Sicilians received the scars and trappings of a score of would-be



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The end of Greek Sicily was personified in the tragic murder of its greatest scientist Archimedes, by a Roman soldier.

conquerors. But each time, the mainland refused to yield so vital a region to foreigners. At certain times, colonies of northern Italians reinforced the Latinization of the island. These northerners composed much of the middle and upper classes of Sicily, serving Norman and other overlords.

It must be difficult for historical revisionists to explain



Between Rome and Garibaldi, the Church struggled to keep Sicily Latin and Italic.

why an island that had so many occupiers in 3,000 years still clung to its basic Italic roots. For example, the Sicilian dialect is Italic, not Hellenic. Sicilians are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, not Moslem or Orthodox. Pasta, not rice, is the staple food. Credit for Italy's tenacious hold on Sicily must go to the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Normans and French. The restoration of Latin and the expulsion of non-Western culture irrevocably attached Sicily to Italy. Were this not the case, Sicily would be another Malta — half Arabic, half European, a nation unique in the world.

GARIBALDI AND BEYOND

Sicily was not to see its liberation from foreigners until 1860 when the firebrand Giuseppe Garibaldi invaded the island with a thousand Red Shirt volunteers. At first, Sicilians welcomed reunification with Italy, that is, until the economic and political realities set in.

We have only to recall the heartache of our own South after

the Civil War when "reunification" meant Reconstruction. That traumatic time of social upheaval, Northern economic domination, and political defeatism clearly took us a century to recover from. Likewise, the reunification of Germany after only 40 years of East-West separation has thrown that nation into severe economic crisis, street violence, and surprising regional antagonism.

In Sicily's case, it eventually took the Fascist era to deal with the outward signs of regional separateness such as dialect and mafia. Yet, resentment toward the central government reached its peak right after World War II when separatists dreamed of joining the United States. Why Sicilians thought they would fare better under Protestant America, where many of their compatriots were lynched, is anyone's guess. Instead, the new Italian constitution granted the island autonomous status.

AND OF COURSE...

The mafia is what has made Sicily infamous. Whether people believe it to be a highly structured criminal organization or a set of values ascribed to by divergent criminals, the so-called mafia is still tearing Sicily apart. Whether it began as a vigilante group, like the Klu Klux Klan, or was just banditry by another name, it has now become the parasite that feeds on its host. Any romantic notion Sicilians might have had about mafiosi has turned to disgust. Today's mafia lords are plainly terrorists. Sicilians by the hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets or have, as individuals, courageously given their lives to combat this menace.

The eradication of organized crime may be the key to Sicily's prosperity. Many feel that once unfettered by this scourge, Sicily will take a leadership role in the Italian nation.

* * *

The unity of Sicily within the Italian nation cannot be understated. We have only to use our American experience to demonstrate the mighty links among Italy's regions. Here, despite colorful remnants of local dialects and customs, Sicilians are unmistakably Italian-American. And why not? They were Italic from the start. ****



The first Italian invasion since the Romans occurred when Giuseppe Garibaldi landed his 1,000 Red Shirts at Marsala in 1860.



Perspectives

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



DAWN OF THE ATOMIC AGE

Fifty years ago, a team of scientists led by an Italian alien ushered in the nuclear age. The date was December 2, 1942, and physicist Enrico Fermi, a political fugitive from Fascist Italy directed the construction and activation of the first atomic pile. Although the theory of the "chain reaction" was known to many scientists, including Albert Einstein, it was Fermi who had first split the atom in Rome in 1934. A chain reaction was to perform the same feat on a grand scale.

Under a stadium at the University of Chicago, Fermi's team wasn't fully confident that once started, they could control the chain reaction. Was it possible that they could destroy Chicago or set off a global nuclear disaster? Even for Fermi this was *terra incognita*. His faith in the scientific theory and his own intuition were his only guides. Man had never trod this path before.

Yet, so confident was he in the pile's design, that he broke for lunch during the experiment. And when it had achieved its goal the team celebrated with a bottle of Chianti. A short time later, a message was sent to President Franklin Roosevelt who had been waiting in anticipation. It read simply: "The Italian Navigator has reached the New World."



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Civil Wrongs (from p. 9)

innuendos and even a fascist tag.

Clearly, WASP Americans were not watched too closely or stereotyped by their massive participation in the Savings and Loan frauds. Jewish Americans were not besmirched by New York Chief Judge Sol Wachtler's sordid and dizzy blackmail scandal. Nor were Irish-Americans tainted by the near \$1 billion fleecing of General Motors by Long Island car-dealer John McNamara. America's eyes, it seems, are too focused on Italian Americans. If any of these scandals concerned Italian-surnamed criminals, we'd no doubt have stories about new Mafias in banking and Al Capones in long, black judicial robes. We can be sure that the next cinematic theory of the JFK assassination will be the mafia-angle. The bogeyman continues.

Political correctness has effectively made the Italian American the fall guy. Witness Denver's Columbus Day parade. The rights of Denver's Italic citizens succumbed to threats of violence by American Indians. Even with a city permit to march and marchers gathered around floats, Italian Americans were intimidated to cancel their rightful parade. Indians are politically correct, Columbus and Italian-Americans are not.

Could these civil wrongs be abetted by the media obsession with the Guido and Mafia stereotypes? Is it possible that the public forms opinions based on television shows, movies, sequels, and parodies of movies and sequels? Are some Italian-Americans themselves to blame for allowing and perpetuating stereotypes? It would be deeply disturbing if the demeaning of the Italic community's rights were caused by an overblown obsession.

In the early days of WWII there was talk of rounding up Italian-Americans as a dangerous group. Only logistics and the recognition of Italic contributions to American life deterred the absurd notion. Yet, thousands of Italian aliens were, in fact, arrested and shipped to camps in the American hinterland and Canada. Today, an obsession with the mafia has directly affected the rights of Italic citizens in Kansas City and political candidates around the country. Unfortunately, this obsession is carried forward in semantics. For, as all organized crime has come to be called by the Italian name "mafia", Italian surnames have become synonymous with it also.

Italian Americans, snuggled in their economic progress, must wake up to the growing litany of civil wrongs and the forces that evoke them. Such civil wrongs threaten even the most secure, most prosperous Italian-Americans, however Americanized.

(John Positano is an attorney, and was formerly a writer for L'Agenda, an Italian-American political newspaper.)



Profile

TITA MONTI

This past December Al Crecca, President of the Institute, and his wife Kathy attended a benefit dinner for cancer research sponsored by the Don Monti Foundation of Long Island. This event marked the 21st anniversary of the Foundation and drew over one thousand supporters. To date, over \$13 million has been donated. The money was spent for research and treatment at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, as well as for the new Don Monti Memorial Pavilion.

The founder and motivating force behind this foundation is Tita Monti. The Foundation is dedicated to the memory of her son, Don. We are proud to note that this dynamic lady is a member of the Italic Studies Institute's Plenary Council.



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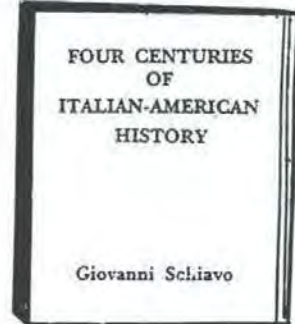
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Media Madness

[In which we present media material with commentary]

ITEM: "In some ways it brings us to face to face with the worst stereotypes of Long Islanders. Joseph Buttafuoco is a Guido-type person, pardon the obnoxious ethnic reference, who puts a lot of effort into appearance such as working out his body and working on his cars. Amy Fisher is a princess stereotype, the spoiled child who appears to have been given whatever she has wanted."

Barbara Ehrenreich, Sunday *N.Y. Times*, Oct. 18, 1992



COMMENT: Ms. Ehrenreich carefully refrained defining "princess" with more ethnic precision. Mr. Buttafuoco was "guido-ized" from day one of the event as "Joey". Readers and viewers nearly forgot that it was the princess who pumped a bullet into Mrs. Buttafuoco's face.



ITEM: "How does the Italian male really relate to females? The principle characteristic of Italian men seems to be attachment to their mothers. Their bond goes far beyond the natural tie to a parent...the need to feel loved, understood...to constantly receive affection while never giving any in return."

Insight Guides: Italy, Katherine Barrett, editor, APA Publications 1991

COMMENT: What can we say? They used to talk about Gypsies this way, but now that's politically incorrect. This does not seem like a good way to be introduced to the Italian people. It sounds like the writer experienced a little personal "heartbreak" on her or his last trip.

ITEM: "We're all fighting each other, but we have one enemy in common. I say it's the Roman Empire and the Vatican...they invaded our societies"

Sinead O'Connor, Irish singer

COMMENT: No doubt Ms. O'Connor has a troubled past. For the record: the Romans did not invade Ireland but its influence was carried on, partly, by the Church. If she thinks things are bad now, were she living under any other non-Italic civilizations she could possibly be stoned in the streets, garroted in a bog, wrapped in a veil, suffered foot binding, endured a clitorectomy, burned on a husband's funeral pyre, restricted to her kitchen while her husband entertained whores, or a host of other non-liberated indignities. As one Irish-American author observed, "...[Ireland] never experienced the stabilizing effects of [Roman] government." Perhaps Ms. O'Connor's problem lay closer to home and to this century.





Media Madness

ITEM: "Oh, you're Italian. Good! Do you know where Jimmy Hoffa is buried?" (Host Mark Summers speaking to an Italian-American family during a children's game show.)

Double Dare (Nickelodeon)

COMMENT: Hey, no problem! It was over the kid's head anyway. While *The Italic Way* cannot answer the burning question, we can say that Mr. Hoffa was not Italian, and hopefully neither is Mr. Summers.



ITEM: New reprints of First World War British history books are touted by the seller this way: "...first reliable account [of the Italian front], Italian histories being notoriously inaccurate and self-serving.... the Italian front was nearly civilized, the war came to a virtual halt daily from noon to 3, to allow for the traditional mid-day repast."

The Battery Press & The Imperial War Museum

COMMENT: With allies like the British, was it any wonder that Italians turned to Mussolini? How would they account for Italy's 650,000 war dead? And, perhaps the only Allied field victory at Vittorio Veneto did not happen. That battle bagged half a million teutonic prisoners, achieved the collapse of Austro-Hungary and hastened Germany's surrender ten days later. Self-serving indeed!

ITEM: A member of the Institute from Michigan sent in a complaint about an eatery named Tony's of Birch Run, Michigan. Owners Barb and Bob (Jibber) Lagalo put out a menu that features Daigo (sic) Chili and Wop dressing. And just so the younger generation will know the meaning of Wop, the Jibber added "Italian" in parenthesis.

COMMENT: It is no use trying to convince the rest of America to drop the stereotypes if people like the Jibber peddle it to the public. The Institute is asking Mr. Lagalo to cool it. And to show him the error of his ways we are donating 1,000 of our exclusive placemats for his customers so they may learn something positive about the Italic people while dining at Tony's.

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Tony's has been run by the Lagalo family for 45 years in the Saginaw area. 18 years ago, we moved our business from Broadview Street in Saginaw, to its present location in Birch Run. The restaurant was small, only able to seat 60 people, in its one small dining room. Now, thanks to the patronage of our many regular customers and tourists, we are able to seat 200 people in our three dining rooms. We have become known far and wide for





News of the Institute



AURORA EDUCATION PROGRAM

Youth - Because of increasing demand we had two classes for youngsters aged 11 and 12, totalling 40 students. Where we once had only a Saturday morning session we now have a morning and afternoon with two teaching staffs. Our office in Floral Park is large enough to handle both the kids and the audio-visual supplies. Students who pass this Level I will join last winter's class in a Level II program. Each year we are finding more public schools allowing us to distribute the Aurora brochure to the target age group. A major attraction for parents is that the course is free. It is co-sponsored by the Cellini Lodge (Sons of It.)

Adults - Knowing full well that many adults crave to learn Italian but are not prepared for the complexity of learning a foreign language, our Aurora staff has put together a 5-session "Trip to Italy" course for grown-ups who get the thirst for Italy. Easy on the grammar, this course gives the willing-but-not-heavily-committed a taste of Italy. With useful phrases and plenty of insights into modern Italy, the "Trip to Italy" is just the right amount of language instruction for most people. There have already been two classes given in Manhattan and another is planned for Long Island. The problem at the moment is a teacher shortage. The course is free to Plenary Council members, \$20 for General Members, and \$40 for non-members.

PROJECT ITALIA

We have assembled a team to start planning our video interviews of Italian immigrants. These oral histories are important to document the passing generation. They will also be used in the next film project. We need to locate the subjects and determine how far our budget resources will take us. If you know of anyone with an interesting past and who would make a good video subject, contact Michelle Vricella at (516) 488-7400.

DINNER DANCE

Angelo Croce of Silverstein Realty in Manhattan was chosen the 1993 Dinner Chairman. Angelo has already taken his place on the Dinner Committee and committed us to another year at the Waldorf-Astoria on May 8th. Ticket prices will remain at \$300 per seat. The proceeds will help fund Institute operations and programs in the 1993-94 year.

GOLF OUTING

Plans are underway for a July or August 1993 outing in conjunction with the securities firm of PaineWebber. Details will be worked out and a special mailing made to all members. This project is being spearheaded by Elizabeth Polizzi.

ITALY TOUR

Social Chairman Pat Grecco is putting together a package tour of Italy based on the questionnaires he sent out last summer. Noting that it is difficult to make everyone happy, Pat is trying to assemble a tour with both a southern and northern flavor. An itinerary and pricing will be assembled this winter for a late summer tour.



Angelo Croce



\$1,000 INCENTIVE PRIZE

The winner of the second incentive award was the family of Cindy Lipcic. Cindy's family joined the Institute and entered the contest after Cindy enrolled in our Aurora Youth Program. Talk about a payback! By the way, we wish to express our thanks to Lina Cernigliaro, our first award winner, for donating back \$250 of her prize.

OFFICER NOMINATIONS

February 1993 is election month for the Institute. Plenary Council members with experience as chairmen, program directors, or officers may be nominated for the various posts. Anyone wishing to apply for nomination or chairmanships should contact John Mancini at (516) 488-7400.



Aurora student
Cindy Lipcic,
\$1,000 winner

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

During the year, the officers authorized donations to the following charities: Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, Don Monti Cancer Foundation, Tomorrow's Children, Covenant House, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum.

1992-93 BUDGET PASSED

The officers, governors and Plenary Council were able to agree on the new budget, even though a bit late. A vote by the Plenary Council ratified it. 65% of expenditures will go toward Institute programs like Aurora, Italic Way and Project Italia.

PICNIC

The second annual picnic was a great affair this past September. Held at the Plazl Brau Haus in Pomona, NY, over 350 family members attended. The weather was good, the food excellent, and thousands of dollars in prizes and gifts were given out. The 50-50 raffle produced \$2,000 for charity. Social Chairman Pat Grecco and Assistance Chairman Mary Ann Minucci and their committees deserve much thanks for their efforts.





PROFILES



ROMANIZING HARVARD

by Pam Gleason

Fifty years after graduating from Harvard College, Carl Pescosolido of Ipswich, MA, realized that his education lacked perspective. A history and government major, he had never studied ancient Rome or the many contributions Italy has made to Western civilization. "When I graduated, I thought I was a well educated American. It turned out I was a poorly educated American," he says.

It did not take Pescosolido long to correct his own lack of education about things Italian. "I read everything I could get my hands on," he says. But Pescosolido took his mission several steps further. Reasoning that if he never had the chance to learn about the achievements of Italy, many other Americans were in the same condition, and he set about the task of re-educating America.

The first step was to begin conducting research and writing his book, *The Proud Italians*, which he completed with the help of freelance writer Pamela Gleason (the undersigned) and published with Latium Publishing Company in 1990. The second step was to go back to Harvard to help reshape the curriculum in order to include more courses with an emphasis on Italy. Several years earlier, Pescosolido had established a scholarship for Harvard students of Italian descent. Now his plan was to bring a better understanding of Italy to the entire undergraduate population.

After much consultation with then president Derek Bok and other members of the Harvard administration, Pescosolido gave the college a gift of one million dollars to endow the Carl A. Pescosolido Chair in Classics. Professor Richard Tarrant, chairman of the Classics department and a specialist in Roman literature, was named to the new chair. One of his first tasks was to set up a special course to introduce Roman culture and civilization to undergraduates who might otherwise, like

Pescosolido, graduate without a real appreciation for the gifts of ancient Italy.

The course, titled "*The Rome of Augustus*", was first offered in the spring of 1991. It was a survey of Roman art, literature and culture during the period that marked the lifetime of Augustus Caesar. Unlike other courses that might focus on one narrow aspect of a particular culture or era, this course introduced students to the broad spectrum of Roman achievement during one of the most fruitful and interesting periods of history. Professor Tarrant used a multimedia approach in teaching it, illustrating his lectures with slides of Roman art and artifacts from across the vast empire, and even organizing trips to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, where students viewed a fine collection of Roman statuary, paintings and coins.

"*The Rome of Augustus*" was an exceptionally well received course, earning high ratings from students who found the material fascinating and applauded Professor Tarrant's imaginative approach to the subject. The first meeting of the class had so many students that many literally had to find seats in the outside corridor or stand in the back of the classroom. Harvard responded to the high demand for the class by moving it to a large room that could accommodate the nearly one hundred students who registered. The course will be offered again this spring, and Tarrant estimates that as many as one hundred and fifty students will enroll.

Part of the reason for the large enrollment in "*The Rome of Augustus*" was the faculty's decision to make the course a part of Harvard's Core Curriculum. The Core Curriculum is designed to ensure that students take classes from several different areas, including the physical and social sciences as well as art, history and literature. All students are required to take courses in areas both inside and outside their field of

concentration from courses in the Core. "*The Rome of Augustus*" satisfied a Core requirement for Literature and Art.

"I think it's wonderful that the course is part of the Core," says Pescosolido. "It's more than I dared to ask for."

Interest in the course would probably be high even if it did not satisfy a Core requirement. Professor Tarrant conducted



Carl Pescosolido



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short interviews with every student in the class and found that most had a sincere interest in ancient Rome, even before taking the course. "It was quite a varied audience," comments Tarrant. "But many students said they had always been curious about the Romans and were now glad to be able to include them in their college curriculum. The interest was already there in a great number of students, and it was quickly created in others."

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Partially in response to the growing interest in the Romans, partly because of efforts like Pescosolido's, the number of courses covering some aspect of Roman civilization is growing at Harvard. Harvard is also planning to add more Roman historians to its faculty, and will doubtless soon be offering even more courses that will illuminate the achievements of both ancient and modern Italy.

"The course at Harvard was only the beginning," says Pescosolido, whose enthusiasm for spreading the word about Italy is practically boundless. When he is done "Romanizing Harvard" (as he likes to say) he plans to go on and "Romanize the rest of America."

"Over the past years I have come to realize that our educational system has been distorted. My goal is to correct it," he

says, with the gleam of the conqueror in his eye. Pescosolido is now planning to create an educational foundation to foster the understanding of Italy. "We can have wonderful success if we get the word out in the right places," he says. "I originally chose Harvard because it was my own college, but I don't want to stop there."

And no one should doubt Pescosolido's ability to get something done once he sets his mind to it.

When he first arrived at Harvard sixty years ago, he was told that at five feet six he was too small to play on the football team. Not only did he prove his detractors wrong by making the team, he also set a record for the longest touchdown run in the history of the Harvard stadium: a record that stands even today. Pescosolido definitely retains the same winning style, and it should not be long before America, like Harvard, feels the influence of his Romanizing spirit.

(Ed. - Mr. Pescosolido co-founded the Italic Studies Institute.)



Prof. Richard Tarrant



La Storia (cont'd from p. 10)

cessful ethnic groups — Greek-, Jewish-, or Asian-Americans — have more reverence for their ancient heritage than Italian-Americans do. For, invariably it is we who endlessly repeat the “We were so poor...” litany to the exclusion of the Pax Romana and other group accomplishments. In the eyes of Italian-Americans “Italian genius” extends only to individuals rather than the nation.

Publishers generally enjoy and encourage controversial authors. Books that overturn conventional wisdom can be surefire moneymakers. Unless, of course, the topic is the Italian-American experience. Then it becomes a case of give me your tired, swarthy masses yearning to eat. Throw in some references to the miserable *Mezzogiorno*. Portray the ancient Romans as the first in a long line of brutal oppressors. Men-

tion that buffoon Mussolini. Hype the artists and laborers; ignore cooperative efforts. Make sure to include DiMaggio and Sinatra in the ubiquitous accomplishments chapter. Oh, and puhhleeze don't forget Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

* * *

Like a mystified Lieutenant Columbus, I kept returning to *La Storia* to determine if Mangione and Morreale really told the story that was in their soul. I was drawn to a passage, a quote, from an old *Attenzione Magazine* article written in the 1970's by Joseph Papaleo. In this piece he posits Tony the butcher, barber, bookie, hairdresser, tailor, politician and waiter. Whatever his incarnation, Tony remains the quintessential “smiling wop.” Papaleo loathes this smiling, happy-go-lucky image foisted on Italo-Americans:

There is nothing wrong with that except the way they create it and stuff it down our throats. Then we have done what they wanted. We use stupidity for

safety when we meet them. And if the stereotype is gone, then why are we still the most self-hating buried bastards in the entire world?

Papaleo's concluding words as Tony the politician represent a devastating condemnation of the sorry status of Italian-Americans today:

I found out right away that we were a group not permitted our normal rage.

The inclusion of Joseph Papaleo's scathing indictment may be construed as an act of protest or defiance. If Mangione and Morreale truly had the courage to topple conventional stereotypes, however, their entire book would have echoed Papaleo. And both servile Italian-Americans and the patronizing Establishment would have been put on notice. Alas, Jerre and Ben chose to sugarcoat their coffee table curiosity instead. Is it any wonder that a president of Yale once said that if Italians aren't inferior they do a good imitation?
- RAI



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