

The Founders' Log

No. 12

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February 2000

Founders of the Italic Studies Institute, 1987

Stefano Gristina

John Mancini

Carl Pescosolido

Dear Member:

As we journey into a new century and millennium, it is interesting to reflect how relevant the Italian heritage still is in our everyday lives. January 1, 2000: a month named for the Roman god Janus; a calendar developed by Italians, originally by Julius Caesar and later updated by Pope Gregory XIII; even the words "century" (*cento* = 100) and "millennium" (*mille* = 1000, *anni* = years) reveals the world's debt to our ancestors.

Yet, we are now asked by some among us to ignore a great heritage and focus instead on the "joys" of self-defamation. We are asked to continue to sacrifice our rich cultural patrimony for the greater glory of box office returns and Nielsen Ratings with not even a dime trickling down to us. You probably saw the "godfather" Pepsi ad, as did millions of other Americans who watched ABC-TV's Peter Jennings ring in the new era. This Pepsi ad was a year old and the subject of unequivocal condemnation by all the major Italian-American organizations. Still, Pepsi, led by CEO Roger Enrico, went for the laughs. This month, you may even be watching and enjoying a new run of *The Sopranos* on HBO. Welcome to the 21st Century. Not much different than the 20th Century.

Despite it all, our Institute is forging ahead, building the new heritage that will redefine what an Italian American is. Our goal has always been to create the tools and the perspective for future generations -- generations who will not be 100% ethnic Italian but who will need to discern truth from propaganda. Our *Aurora* Program is steadily expanding and gaining the support of educators, politicians, and diverse ethnic groups who see the Italian language as the alternative to the Spanish juggernaut. Elsewhere, the Italian government alone is financially sustaining classes for 2,500 elementary school students in the Connecticut public school system and 1,500 in the Chicago suburban schools. There is also evidence that regular Italian language classes are enjoying a modest increase in popularity.

Our National Appeal started off well and we urge you to translate your love of heritage and good wishes for the Institute into dollars. What other Italian American organization accomplishes as much as ISI or produces such quality programs with no full-time staff? We have no equal. Imagine what we could do with proper funding!

Finally, our grounding-breaking efforts in Congress are beginning to bear fruit. The unwarranted denigration of 600,000 Italian-American civilians during the Second World War, while a like number of their sons and daughters served in the American armed forces, may well be atoned for this year. Yet another benefit of your Institute membership.

May we all attain our grandest dreams and be strong in our resolve.

Best Regards,

John Mancini, Chairman

Message from the President

Dear Members:

It gives me great pleasure to tell you that the Institute's achievements for 1999 have reached new highs. Your continued support of the Institute and its goals is to be commended. Your dedication, time and energies to our cause have made possible the great successes of our events and programs during the past year.



As you know, our 13th Annual Gala, the first of the new century, will take place at the Grand Hyatt Hotel on May 20th, 2000. This promises again to be the highlight of the year for the Institute. To ensure the success of this affair, the members of the Board of Fifty, which is primarily made up of the most active members of the Plenary Council, have each been asked to commit to assembling a table of ten and one Journal ad for the Gala. We will be posting the names of the Board of Fifty in a follow-up letter, which will also describe in more detail the honorees, etc. We welcome any member who wishes to participate in this select group. Rededication to this Gala and the Institute as a whole will give new meaning to y our life, as it has to us.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not extend my utmost thanks to all of you who assisted me in bringing new focus to the Institute. Special thanks to Tony DeNonno, Frank Fellone, Steve Napolitano, Nick Montesano and John Mancini. Your support is a must if we are to bring this heritage of ours to its deserved prominence in the new century.

My best wishes to you and your families for health and happiness in the new year.

Sincerely,

V. Pizzulli

Announcement

I am a best-selling author writing a novel about a unit of Black American soldiers who served in Italy during World War II. I am seeking information from any Italian Americans who have relatives here or in North Italy (the Tuscany region) who have had any contact with these units--however minor. Any anecdotes and memories from this period would be greatly appreciated.

James McBride

Author of The Color of Water

Tel. & Fax: (212) 953-6833

Save These Dates!

May 20, 2000

Millennium Dinner Dance

Grand Hyatt Hotel, NY, NY

August 15, 2000

Golf Outing

Lido Golf Club, Lido Beach, NY

September 16, 2000

Annual Picnic

Platzl Brauhaus, Pomona, NY

Year 2000 National Appeal Update

The Institute gratefully thanks the following individuals and organizations for their generosity. We regret if we have inadvertently omitted anyone -- please inform us of any omissions.

Guardians of the Italian Heritage - \$1,000 +

Richard Camarco (\$2,000 in office furnishings)
Lisa Carcaterra-Napolitano (\$1,500)
Viola Cirio (\$1,000)
Giuseppe Mazzini Lodge #137, OSIA (\$1,000)
Thomas S. Lacorazza (\$1,000)
John L. Mancini (\$2,000)
Steven M. Napolitano (\$1,500)
National Italian American Foundation (\$5,000)
Vincent J. Pizzulli (\$1,000)
Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimo` (\$1,000)

Benefactors to the Italian People - \$750 +

American Express Foundation (\$800)
Rick & Gina Feld (\$750 in office decorating)

Builders of Italic Pride - \$500 +

Comites Special Events (\$500)
Fieri Scholarship Fund (\$500)

Patrons of Italian Heritage - \$250 +

Martin I. Demsky (\$250)
Italian Club of Staten Island (\$300)
Martin H. Kornheiser (\$250)
Richard M. Marshall (\$250)
Jeffrey F. Mitzner (\$250)
James J. Orphanides (\$250)
Carlo & Anne Simoni (\$250)

Sustainers of the Institute - \$100 +

Rose Mary P. Auteri (\$100)
Charles J. Cerutti (\$100)
Bruce Cohen (\$200 in Aurora supplies)
Joseph A. Crapotta, MD (\$100)
Fieri Inc. (\$100)
General Plumbing Corporation (\$100)
Carmine D. Marinelli (\$210)
Anthony Martignetti (\$100)
Michael X. Mattone (\$150)
Michael J. Polelle (\$100)
Anthony Ruggieri (\$100)
Philip I. Salomon (\$100)
Richard J. Vannucci (\$200)

Supporters of the Institute - \$50 +

- Dominick & Diane Bianco (\$50)
- Alfred Cardone (\$50)
- Gregory Carrubba (\$50)
- Giovanni Cannone (\$50)
- Bruce J. Clay (\$70)
- Joseph F. Colavita (\$50)
- Joseph Doe (\$50)
- Piero M. DeLuise, MD (\$50)
- Frank & Dorothy Elarde (\$50)
- John M. Fiore, MD (\$50)
- Rosa R. Giglia (\$50)
- Frank Litterio (\$50)
- Joseph Marini (\$50)
- Peter R. Mennella (\$50)
- Nicholas J. Montesano (\$50)
- Joseph Montesano (\$50)
- Carmine Panico (\$60)
- Louis Richard Pisaniello (\$50)
- Patrick C. Russo (\$50)
- Cesidio Tallini (\$50)

YES, I want to demonstrate my support of the Institute's mission. Please use my tax-deductible donation as follows:

Amount \$ _____

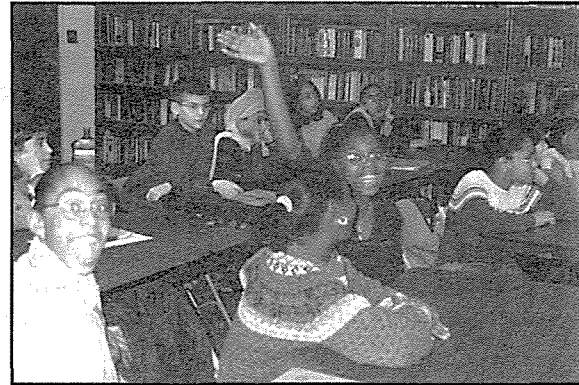
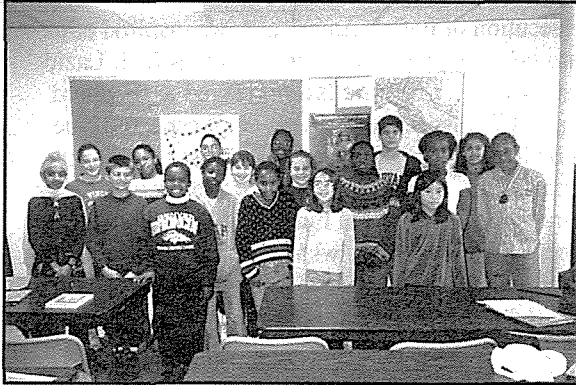
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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aurora Youth Scholarships | <input type="checkbox"/> Concert Band |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-Defamation (Project Italia) | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Italic Way Magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above |

Make your check payable to **Italic Studies Institute**, P.O. Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11001.

Name _____

Address _____

Aurora Advances



Program director Tony DeNonno has delivered on his promise of 14 *Aurora* classes in 8 New York counties. Over 300 ethnically diverse children are currently enrolled and loving it. We are beginning to find kids who never tasted a cannoli and are afraid to try one! The one snack everyone seems to love is Nutella on biscuits, a staple of Italian childhood. Because of the ethnic diversity, Tony has been able to tap into legislative grant money to help support the classes. Local politicians are fascinated by the *Aurora* techniques and the excitement of the students. Our most recent class just opened in West Hempstead, Long Island, thanks to teacher Josephine Maietta who persuaded the parish of St. Thomas the Apostle to host the class.

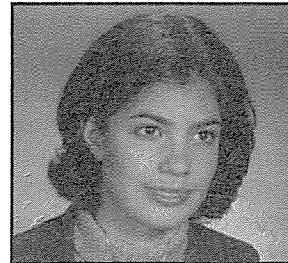
In the last *Founders' Log* we incorrectly stated that the *Aurora* budget was \$100,000. The correct figure is \$50,000. Such a bargain!

Sometimes we hear from former students who inform us how *Aurora* changed their lives. Michael DiGioia is now in his 20s and took one of the first classes eleven years ago. He is currently a member of the Institute and spent a number of years in Italy. He will tell his story in a future Log.

Here's an e-mail from Dena Biondo Solis, mother of former student Chrystie Solis:

Dear Rita and John,

Haven't spoken to you in a while but just wanted to let you know that Chrystie decided to major in Italian and is now spending the year studying abroad in Florence. She also applied for and received a \$2,000 study abroad scholarship from the National Italian American Foundation. And to think it all started with Aurora. Thanks for being a part of this. - Dena



(Note: Chrystie is part Hispanic and was enrolled in *Aurora* to celebrate her Italic roots. You see the results.)

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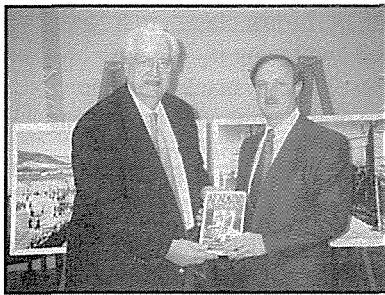
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Fax: (212) 268-8052

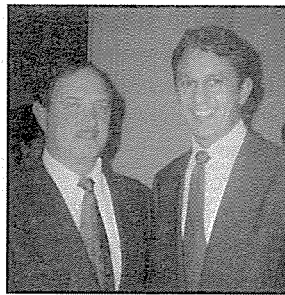
Congressional Action

When the Institute commenced its correspondence with former Senator Al D'Amato (R-NY) in 1995 in search of Congressional redress of the 1942 persecution of Italian Americans, we inspired other organizations to take up the banner for justice. D'Amato failed us then, but Representatives Rick Lazio (R-NY) and Eliot Engels (D-NY), inspired by Engels' staffer John Calvelli, have managed to shepherd HR 2442 through the House, calling for an investigation by the Justice Department of all aspects of the 1942 episode. The bill is now in the Senate, sponsored by Robert Torricelli (D-NY). If approved in its current form, the maltreatment of 600,000 Italian Americans will be acknowledged by the President.

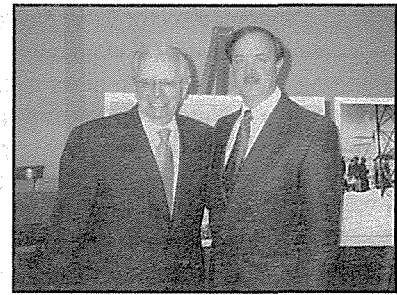
ISI has insisted from the beginning that some modest congressional funding should be set aside to inform America through the mass media of this shameful period. This is what was done for the Native Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Jewish Americans. Given the wretched state of our media image, this is the least the nation can do to set the record straight.



ISI Chrmn. John Mancini submits the Stephen Fox book, Unknown Internment, to Judiciary Comm. Chairman Henry Hyde



J. Mancini with Rep. Rick Lazio



With Dominic DiMaggio, brother of Joe, a witness at the House hearing. DiMaggio testified about his family's mistreatment in San Francisco in 1942

Gala 2000 Underway

The Executive Council has begun the process of assembling a Board of Fifty to sell tables and ads. If you wish to join the Board, contact our Executive Office at (212) 268-8085. Board members commit to sell 10 seats and one journal ad. Seats cost \$375 each, and journal ads start at \$500.

The Gala will be held at the Grand Hyatt in Manhattan on Saturday evening, May 20th. The honorees will be announced in a later issue.

Profits from the annual Gala (this will be our 13th) provide the Institute with its primary funding for the year.



Planning the Gala are (l. to r.) N. Montesano, F. Fellone, M. Minucci, V. Pizzulli, M. Polizzi and P.C. Cicala