

The Founders' Log

No. 13

Published by the Italic Studies Institute Council of Governors

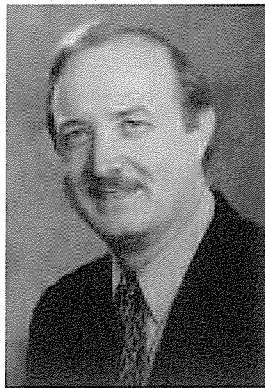
November 2000

Founders of the Italic Studies Institute, 1987

Stefano Gristina

John Mancini

Carl Pescosolido



If there was ever a crisis of faith among those of us who struggle to regain the pride of Italian heritage it occurred this summer when an audition call went out for HBO's *The Sopranos*. Fourteen thousand people jammed the audition seeking to cash in on the one basic requirement of the producer - "to look Italian." Imagine. A national media program that portrays a fictional Italian-American family of gangsters and degenerates has captured the hearts and minds of the great American viewing public to such a degree that it can blatantly call on its ethnic victims to march happily into the slaughterhouse. And 14,000 of them can see no reason to refuse! This is the abyss into which a once proud people has sunk after 30 years of media propaganda. Pick any ethnic group in this country and substitute the situation and you will soon realize how low we have sunk.

Crisis or not, those of us who bear the Roman spirit owe our children and our forebears uncompromising resistance to this ethnic suicide. It wasn't too long ago that we had to clean our own house of this pathetic attitude. We fought it with *The Italic Way*. We fought it with the *Aurora* Youth Program. These are positive tools designed to reach the minds of the American people. They can be major weapons in the fight to restore the sanity. It has only been a matter of money, not determination, that holds us back. The Institute must reinvent itself in order to increase its financial resources: to master the science of grant-writing and the art of major gift appeal. While golf outings, galas, and raffles bring in sorely needed operating funds they are too dependent on local participants who, in turn, are bombarded with scores of similar requests to buy tickets. We have programs that are so unique that they readily lend themselves to grants and donations. Tens of thousands of dollars in grants from corporate and legislative sources are already in our pipeline. Donations have now exceeded profits from our annual events. It is now time to create a grant-writing staff to maximize our potential. Of course, we never want to forget the generosity of our membership without whose donations we could never survive between grants. Special thanks go out to Viola Cirio of Phoenix and Joseph Corso of New York City as well as Lisa and Steve Napolitano of Long Island for their special faith and support. In addition, my fellow founder and governor Carl Pescosolido will shortly announce his own major donation to *Aurora*. They are our answer to the 14,000 *cafoni*.

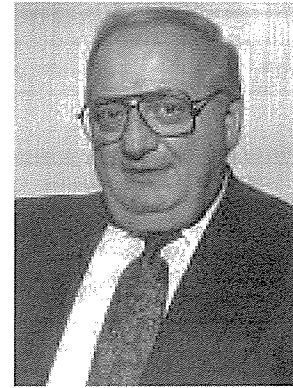
Hopefully, you have all received issue XXX of *The Italic Way*. At the suggestion of one of our members we submitted the "Deep Roots" article from that issue to *American Heritage Magazine* so that the rest of America could see what Italic people have contributed to this great nation. The editor of *American Heritage* praised the piece as "first-rate" but had no room to publish it anytime soon. Moral: our true story is harder to sell than the fiction.

Best wishes,
John Mancini, Chairman

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members:

Another year has passed and our Plenary Council has reached its fundraising goals. Again, as some of you know, particularly those members who have served on the various event committees, it remains a considerable effort to attain these goals through the various events we hold. The success of these affairs is primarily due to the loyal and steadfast members and friends of the Italic Studies Institute. Although these events have given us a positive image in NYC's commercial real estate field, they are not enough to sustain the Institute in its projected growth for future years.



This past year, we have received an exceptional amount of grants for the *Aurora* program. The effort in obtaining grants, although seemingly simple, requires a considerable amount of documentation that must be submitted. In addition, we possess too few individuals who specialize in grant-writing. The few organizations I have spoken to were more than willing to donate to the *Aurora* Program particularly because of its accessibility to children of all ethnic backgrounds. These grants are available from many organizations, but we urgently need professional help to locate and apply for such funds. At present, we are considering recruiting an individual or individuals who could devote full time to this endeavor. Until we are able to recruit such a person, I would ask those of you to look to resources familiar to you, i.e. wealthy individuals, local corporations, etc. with the possibility that they would want to participate in funding the *Aurora* program. The results of these efforts could be phenomenal. We at the Institute are available to assist you in this matter, just let us know.

Our Millennium Dinner Dance, held on May 20, 2000 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, was a great success. At this time I would particularly like to thank the Dinner Committee for their help and dedication: Frank Fellone, Steve Gristina, John Mancini, Steve Napolitano, Mary Ann Minucci, Nick Montesano, and Monica Polizzi.

On a closing note, although the Institute is moving forward, the lack of knowledge that many have regarding our Institute and its purpose still amazes me. What is even more amazing is the interest and support we have obtained once people understand our purpose and our goals. The need to market the Institute and to explain our cause in simple, logical terms, is paramount.

The momentum is there. The financial and moral support from each of us will keep it moving toward our ultimate goals. Again, my thanks to all for making this year a success.

Sincerely,

V. Pizzulli

Italic Studies Institute

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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.

Member and Individual Donations

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

Richard Camarco (\$2,000 in office furnishings)
 Lisa Carcaterra-Napolitano (\$1,500)
 Viola Cirio (\$ 3,000)
 Corso Family Foundation (\$1,000)
 Mohawk Industries, Inc. (\$2,000)
 Thomas S. Lacorazza (\$1,000)
 John L. Mancini (\$2,000)
 Steven M. Napolitano (\$1,500)
 Vincent J. Pizzulli (\$1,000)
 Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimo (\$1,000)

Benefactors to the Italian People - \$750 +

Rick and Gina Feld (\$750 in office decoration)

Patrons of Italian Heritage - \$250 +

Charles S. Cerutti (\$250)
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Sustainers of the Institute - \$100 +

Rose Mary P. Auteri (\$100)	General Plumbing Corporation (\$100)
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Charles J. Cerutti (\$250)	Michael X. Mattone (\$150)
Bruce Cohen (\$200 in <i>Aurora</i> supplies)	Louis J. Merola (\$150)
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Food Systems Unlimited (\$200)	John Villanella (\$100)
John Garretto (\$100)	Stauber Family Foundation (\$100)

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Christine Nick Andriotis (\$50)	John & Elizabeth Fiore (\$50)
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Gioacchino DeNicolo (\$50)	Cesidio Tallini (\$50)
John M. Fiore, MD (\$50)	John & Rosemary Villanella (\$50)

Grants

American Express Foundation (\$800)
 Cellini Lodge Charitable Foundation (\$1,000)
 Comites Special Events (\$500)
 FIERI Brooklyn (\$500)
 FIERI Inc. (\$100)
 FIERI Manhattan (\$500)
 FIERI Scholarship Fund (\$500)
 Giuseppe Mazzini Lodge #137, OSIA (\$1,000)
 Italian Club of Staten Island (\$1,000)
 State of New York Department of Education
 - through State Senator Vitigliano (\$2,500)
 - through State Senator Gentile (\$3,500)

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

Amount \$ _____

Aurora Youth Scholarships
 Anti-Defamation (Project Italia)
 The Italic Way Magazine

Concert Band
 Office Technology
 All of the Above

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

Name _____

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Where the Sun Rises On the Best of Italy

CLASS WORK



John
Hildebrand

Don't try telling John Mancini that all the human damage done by mobster movies happens solely to victims on the screen.

Possibly the worst damage takes place in the minds of the viewers.

Mancini is a real-estate manager who, in his spare time, teaches schoolchildren about the cultural wonders of Italy. It's not the cultural side, though, that necessarily sticks.

Not long ago, Mancini gave questionnaires to a class of pre-teenagers in Nassau County, asking them to match names of well-known women with their activities. Among these were Bonnie Parker, who held up banks in the 1930s with her boyfriend Clyde, and Maria Montessori, a renowned Italian educator from the turn-of-the-century.

Five students thought Montessori was a bank robber, despite the fact that her name today remains affixed to schools worldwide. To Mancini, this suggests that gangster shows such as "The Sopranos," which just finished its season on HBO, exert a powerful influence on the public's perception of people with Italian names.

"That's right, when they put people on TV, in movies, you remember it," Mancini recently told a Saturday class of fifth- and sixth-graders. Several youngsters had just acknowledged that they thought of mobsters as primarily Italian — probably because of what they'd seen in the media.

It's not easy, erasing the Godfather image, but Mancini keeps trying. He's chairman of the Italic Studies Institute, a nonprofit agency with offices in Floral Park and Manhattan. The organization draws considerable media attention itself with letter-writing campaigns against movies and TV series it considers offensive.

But the institute's work doesn't stop there. Since its founding 13 years ago, the agency has sponsored free weekend classes in Italian language, culture, history and geography. The program is known as Aurora, or "dawn" in Italian, and it's still expanding, with 14 class sites in seven counties across the metro area.

The newest class opened a few weeks ago at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in West Hempstead. Every Saturday morning, youngsters from nearby communities meet in a basement classroom for two hours of lessons and games, taught in a mixture of English and Italian.

"Good morning to my teacher. Everyone is ready."
"Buon giorno mia maestra, noi siamo pronti."

Instructor Josephine Maietta launches into the opening lines of the Aurora class song, and 19 students quickly join in. Maietta is a language teacher by profession, a lively woman with an incandescent smile and a knack for coaxing a few words of Italian out of the most self-conscious 11-year-old.

"*Molto bene* (very good)," Maietta tells a student who recites the day's date in Italian. "*Bravissimo*. *Bravissima* (well done)," she tells others, as the language drills proceed.

Students who sign up for Aurora learn, among other things, that Copernicus, the Polish astronomer, attended school in Italy, and that Shakespeare drew on Italian themes for several of his best-known plays. The tone, though, is really celebratory rather than chauvinistic.

Much of the instruction is organized around fast-paced word games, including a bingo-like contest known as Tombola. Classroom walls are covered with enough posters from Campania and Umbria to stock a travel bureau, and mandolin music plays from a nearby boom box. The hours in Signora Maietta's class pass quickly.

"She puts all the learning in games, so she makes it enjoyable," says 11-year-old Luisa Migliaccio.

Luisa's mother, Sylvia, who emigrated from Italy as a young girl, notices that some songs used in Maietta's class are the same as those sung in her old school near Naples.

"It's a part of your life, you know," the mother says. "When I have grandchildren, I would like them to know the songs, too."

One needn't be Italian to sign up for Aurora.



Newsday Photo / Dick Yarwood

Josephine Maietta teaches students Italian language, culture, history and geography as part of Aurora, a weekend class held at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in West Hempstead.

Ten-year-old Michael Brennan of Garden City, whose family is of Irish-German extraction, began attending after his mother, Karen, decided that was preferable to his watching weekend cartoons on TV.

On a recent Saturday, students were taking turns reading about the Italian experience in America. Michael happened to draw a passage about a violent incident that occurred in New Orleans in 1891. Eleven Italian-Americans were lynched by an angry crowd in that episode — part of a wave of anti-immigrant violence that swept the country.

Michael found the historical anecdote interesting. Still, his mind was more focused on the future — specifically, on a family trip to Rome and Pompeii planned for the end of June. The fifth-grader hopes to use his newly acquired Italian then. "We're going to see volcanos and things," he said. "Pretty cool."

send e-mail to hildebrand@newsday.com

Richard A. Capozzola's



FIVE CENTURIES OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

Little Known Facts



1776

William Paca of Maryland signs the Declaration of Independence. Later, he becomes Governor and Chief Justice of the state. (Paca's family is traced to Cardinal Pacca (1756 - 1844) of Naples and Benevento.)

1808

The paternal grandfather of New York's Governor Al Smith is born in Genoa, Italy.

1859

Sixteen-year old opera singer **Adelina Patti** is a sensation in her debut at the Academy of Music in New York. "The reign of Patti" lasts 46 years until her death in 1906.



1871

Antonio Meucci files a caveat for his "teletrofono" with the U.S. Government, 5 years before Alexander Graham Bell's patent. Following a Staten Island ferry boat explosion which leaves Meucci in critical condition, his wife sells all devices for the telephone as junk for \$6.00.

1905

Dr. **Vincent Sellaro** convenes the first official meeting of the Sons of Italy in New York City. Sellaro does not live to see his organization charter more than 2,000 active lodges throughout the nation.

1907

Giuseppe Uddo, age 23, and his young bride **Eleonora Taormina** emigrate from Sicily to New Orleans. The pair import cheeses, fresh olives, oils and other Italian staples, founding the Uddo & Taormina Company. Today the business thrives as PROGRESSO FOODS.

1945

John Pastore of Rhode Island is elected governor. At 5'4", Pastore calls himself, "The smallest governor from the smallest state." Pastore is big with the voters having never lost an election in his 50 political years, which also saw him elected the first Italian-American United States Senator.



1945

John Basilone, the man whom General Douglas MacArthur called, "a one-man army" is killed during the landing at Iwo Jima. Basilone becomes the only man in the history of the United States to win the two highest military honors: the Medal of Honor from the Marines for his "virtual annihilation of a Japanese regiment" on Guadalcanal, and the Navy Cross for valor during the landing at Iwo Jima.

Over THREE HUNDRED little known facts and stories about a people who contributed to the greatness of the United States. "An absolute must for every proud American of Italian heritage."

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FIVE CENTURIES

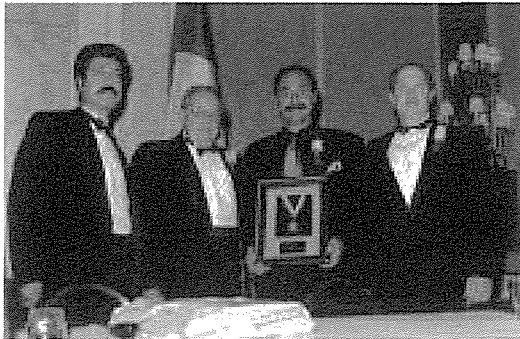
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Altamonte Springs, FL 32714

AURORA SEASON

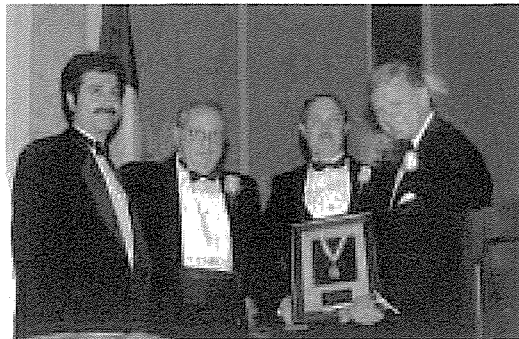
October 28th marked the beginning of *Aurora* classes around the Metro New York area. Contact our Long Island office for information (516) 488-7400. Do you have a 5th or 6th grader who needs a dose of *italianita*? Our most excellent *Aurora* Director, Tony DeNonno, is spearheading the program once again. The program has now been discovered by *Newsday*, a leading Long Island newspaper (see the attached clipping).

MILLENNIUM GALA

Our 13th Gala was celebrated last May at the Grand Hyatt in Manhattan. Honorees were our co-founder Carl Pescosolido, New York City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, Women's World Champion Soccer coach Tony DiCicco, *NY ITALIA* Magazine Publisher Domenico Vacca, and vocalist Connie Francis. Featured that night was the *Aurora* Color Guard, 24 marchers bearing the flags of Italy's regions. The man who chaired the gala and made it a success was our president Vince Pizzulli.



(l. to r.) **Rosario Iaconis**, Dir. of *The Italic Way* Magazine; **Vincent Pizzulli**, Pres. ISI; Coach **Tony DiCicco** of the World Champion Women's Soccer Team, and **John Mancini**, Chairman ISI.



(l. to r.) **Rosario Iaconis**, Dir. of *The Italic Way* Magazine; **Vincent Pizzulli**, President ISI; **John Mancini**, Chairman ISI; New York City Council Speaker **Peter Vallone**.



(Dais l. to r.) **Maria Galetta** (ISI's Italian Liaison); **Rosario Iaconis**, Dir. of *The Italic Way* Magazine; **Vincent Pizzulli**, Pres. ISI; **John Mancini**, Chrmn. ISI; NY's Consul General **Giorgio Radicati**; NYC Council Speaker **Peter Vallone**; *NY ITALIA* Magazine publisher **Domenico Vacca**.



Elements of the *Aurora* Color Guard with **John Mancini**, (l. rear) Chrmn. ISI; *NY ITALIA* Magazine Publisher **Domenico Vacca**; and New York's Consul General **Giorgio Radicati** (center rear)

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

We have included with this newsletter, for your information, a sheet entitled "Little Known Facts," compiled by Richard A. Capozzola, author of **Five Centuries of Italian-American History**.

PRO-ACTIVE STANDS

The Institute recently participated along with eight other national organizations in a protest vigil in front of HBO's headquarters in New York City. On Emmy night, Rosario Iaconis, Director of *The Italic Way* magazine, represented the Institute on the streets of New York City in a joint protest of HBO for its propaganda series, *The Soprano's*. In addition, we joined in support of the Columbus Citizens Foundation's decision to reject a *Soprano's* float in the annual Columbus Day parade up Fifth Avenue.

In each of the above demonstrations no Italian-American politicians stood with us. It has been the position of the Italic Studies Institute that media defamation will not be stopped until all Italian-American politicians stand with us. This has never been done.

CARTOONIST NEEDED

Do you have a talent for cartoon drawing? Do you have a friend or relative with that talent? ISI needs someone for political and *Aurora* cartoons. Call us now at 516-488-7400, or e-mail us at ItalicOne@aol.com.

THIS BOOK'S FOR YOU!

How would you like to save money while helping The Italic Studies Institute raise money at the same time? Visit www.entertainment.com, purchase an Entertainment Book and you will! The Entertainment Book is packed cover to cover with two-for-one and 50% discounts on everything you love to do including:

- Dining -- No matter what you're hungry for, you'll save with discounts on everything from fine dining to casual favorites and even take-out pizza!
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- Travel -- Continuous 50% savings at thousands of hotels worldwide.
- Local Services -- Save on everyday needs including car washes, dry cleaning, video rentals, photo processing and more!

The book quickly pays for itself and you've helped support a great cause!

The books are available for over 150 metropolitan areas in 43 states and Canada. The purchase price of the book varies, depending upon the area, but most are between \$20 and \$30.

Our account number is: 628553-0.

Be sure to enter it when you buy a book!

If you don't have access to the Internet and would like to purchase a book, call the Institute office at 516-488-7400, and we will purchase it for you. We have a limited number of Long Island and New York City books in stock in the office.

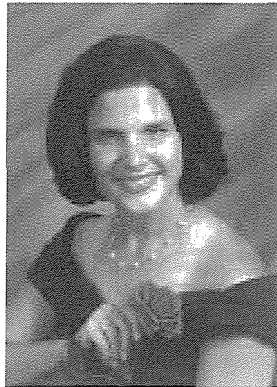
PICNIC RAFFLE

Unfortunately, the picnic had to be cancelled due to circumstances beyond our control. However, the 50/50 raffle was still held. Congratulations to the winners: R. Nicastro of Bayside, NY (\$106); Vincent P. Durso of Marlton, NJ (\$150); and Rosa Giglia of Floral Park, NY (\$250).

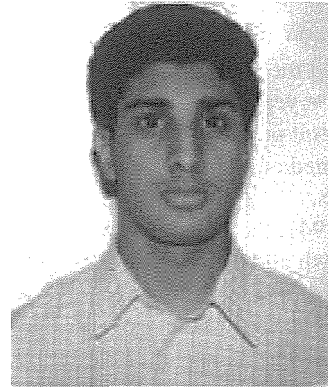
Those members who had contributed money to be used for prizes and souvenirs generously agreed to let their contributions be transferred for use in the Aurora Program. The winner of the special drawing for the Family Boosters was Andrew F. Minerva of West Islip, NY (\$50).

LATIN AWARDS

Every spring, the Institute presents a cash award and a commemorative medallion to the top Latin student in several high schools on Long Island. We do this to keep alive the link between ancient and modern Italy. Latin is an Italic language. This past spring, four students were honored. They were:



Elizabeth Mazzapica
Sacred Heart Academy



Rahul Bhargava
The Wheatley School

In addition to the two students pictured above, Samuel Ludwig of Garden City High School and William Dubon of Chaminade also received the award.

BREAKTHROUGHS

Some amazing things happened recently that give us hope in restoring Italian pride. First, a request by the cast of *The Sopranos* to appear on a float during New York City's Columbus Day parade was summarily rejected by the Columbus Foundation. Citing the negative image of Italian-Americans that the cast has presented to the American public, the Foundation, led by Institute member Larry Auriana and Charles Gargano, opted to separate the fiction of HBO from the reality of Columbus's great deed. It was reported that some of the cast members were shocked and angered by the rejection. They insist that what they do is fiction and does not influence how America thinks about Italian American culture. Their comment was that anyone who doesn't agree with them should "get a life."

We can only say that the parade goes up Fifth Avenue, not Madison Avenue where advertising illusions are created. Maybe *The Sopranos* cast should wait until the parade changes its route or until hell freezes over.

Another thing that occurred was the courageous stand in Denver by Italian Americans who finally decided that they would no longer be intimidated by American and Hispanic Indians who, for eight years, threatened the Italic community from honoring Columbus during their Italian Pride Parade. It was a simple matter of the First Amendment that stiffened the backbone of Denver Italos. Despite protests and signs such as "Mafia Scum" from Indian demonstrators (who ironically call themselves "American Indians" after Amerigo Vespucci), the Italian Americans completed their march and launched a new attitude. *Bravi!*

Finally, word comes that the long-sought Congressional recognition for the wartime persecution of Italian Americans in 1942 has met with continued success. The resolution to investigate the civil liberties abuses passed in the House in 1999, and now has passed in the Senate. The next step will be to President Clinton's desk for signature.

Members of the Institute can be proud that we initiated the approach to Congress back in 1995. Though unsuccessful at that time, the torch was picked up by Congressional insider John Calvelli (also an ISI member) who shepherded it through the House. It has been a bi-partisan project ever since, rightly so.

NOVEMBER ALMANAC

- Nov. 5** - Ella T. Grasso was elected governor of Connecticut in 1994. Ms. Grasso was the first female elected as a governor in the United States.
- Nov. 7** - Patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi turns Southern Italy over to King Victor Emanuel in 1860 with a handshake after having liberated it from the Spanish Bourbons. The following year, Garibaldi was offered a commission as a general in the Union Army by President Lincoln.
- Nov. 10** - In 1494, the first book of accounting was published by Fra Luca Pacioli. It explained to the world the Italian method of double-entry bookkeeping, a mainstay of today's capitalist society.
- Nov. 15** - In the year 1512, Michelangelo's ceiling painting in the Sistine Chapel was first seen by the general public.
- Nov. 18** - Comedienne Imogene Coca, famous co-performer with Sid Caesar during the 1950's, was born in 1908.
- Nov. 19** - In 1941, the Italian Army's crack Ariete Division fought a gallant defense against overwhelming British and Empire forces at El Gubi in the Western Desert. Their stand allowed Rommel's Afrika Corps to safely retreat.
- Nov. 21** - The Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge was dedicated in 1964. The longest suspension bridge in the world was named after the Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano who first sailed into New York Harbor in 1524 for the French.
- Nov. 25** - Joltin' Joe DiMaggio, baseball great, was born in 1914 in Martinez, California.
- Nov. 27** - Italian physicist Giovanni Giorgi was born in 1871. He developed the Giorgi International Systems of Measurement (also known as as "mksa"). He contributed greatly to hydroelectric technology, urban trolley development and electrical distribution networks.
- Nov. 29** - Composer Giacomo Puccini (*Madame Butterfly*) died in 1924 before completing *Turandot*.

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