

The Founders' Log

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Founders of the Italic Institute of America, 1987

Stefano Gristina

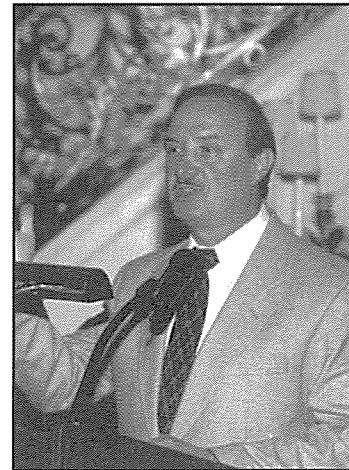
Carl Pescosolido
(deceased)

John Mancini

A Message from the Chairman

Dear Member,

I am proud to announce the appointment of Don Fiore, a long-time Advisor, to the post of President, pro tem. Don is a man who came by his pride in heritage the right way, with extensive research, reading, and living it for over 40 years. He is without equal in writing skill and logic. Despite my own decades of research, I still learn from Don.



On another subject, what if there were a vacancy on the Supreme Court and the Bush Administration informed the media that Jews or Irish need not apply because there was already one of each on the court. Is that discrimination? Is it affirmative action for other candidates? Would this "rule" also apply to the Bush Cabinet, ambassadorships, agency heads, etc.? Would Jewish Americans or Irish Americans resign themselves to such second-class treatment?

Well, such a thing did happen, but it was an Italian American candidate who was shown the door. Nary a whimper was heard from the Italian American community, its leading organizations, or its "assimilated" politicians and actors. Nevertheless, your Institute went on record to protest this second-class treatment. In fact, there are already two Jews and two Irish on the court, and no limit on them has been decreed. (A copy of our press release can be found on pages 7 and 8.)

At the heart of this attitude is the question of whether Italian Americans are more ethnic than mainstream. What might have been true 100 years ago is not necessarily true today. Anyone who believes that Italian Americans today are "ethnic" while the rest of the European melting pot is all-American is not paying attention. There is still a Sons of Norway. Scottish bagpipes and kilts are still to be seen everywhere. Irish kids still learn Step-dancing and wear claddagh rings. WASPs still belong to the Anglican Church. German-Americans still celebrate Oktoberfest and Von Steuben Day. There are Dutch and German Americans called Amish and Mennonites. There are French Americans

called Cajuns with their own language and foods. The real difference is that our media image tells mainstream Americans, including the Bush Administration, everyday, that we are stuck in an unending cycle of *Saturday Night Fever*, *Moonstruck*, *Olive Garden*, *The Godfather*, and *The Sopranos*. If someone came down from space and judged us by our media image, yes, we would be classified as ethnic. But how many of us live that image or even carry on the old traditions? Does an Italian American voting bloc exist? After 100 years in America, dispersed families and intermarriage, we are not the same "greenhorns" (my father hated that term) that the Bush people need to control.

Just to delve deeper into this issue, we are enclosing a survey for your input. Please take the time to fill it out so we can assess just how ethnic we still are. Surveys are also being sent to the parents of our *Aurora Program* students and published in some local newspapers. We shall let you know the results.

Speaking of *Aurora*, we did it again! Despite the drastic cuts in the New York City funding, your Institute still managed to conduct 16 classes this season, with over 400 children receiving a full cost scholarship. It is a tribute to our Director Tony DeNonno and the great people who believe in us, including Dominic Mascara of Healthplus, the Italian government (through the IACE program), FIERI, and some lodges of the Sons of Italy. And of course, those members who made the effort to support the program financially.

Finally, we are launching our 2003 National Appeal. Again, I urge you to underwrite our work. It is quite amazing what still needs to be done. Even our American rights cannot be taken for granted. Each day brings us a new challenge. Give us the resources to wage this struggle.

Warmest regards,

John Mancini

Italic Institute of America

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President's Message



My Italic ancestry has been a defining identity factor since as far back as my memory will take me. Impressions absorbed from my father, an immigrant from Molise with a strong awareness of his Italic heritage, had gradually jelled into hard form by the time I reached the sixth grade. By this point, I was already acquiring a rudimentary Italian vocabulary, listening to opera, and taking great delight in discovering new facts about Italy and Italic achievement throughout history. Being an Italian American meant, for meat least, an enviable opportunity to claim legitimate kinship to the Romans, as well as the ability to associate myself directly with an ingenious and vibrant culture that for two and a half millennia was, and continues to be, the centerpiece of civilization.

But I also discovered that most of my peers, regardless of their ethnicity, were simultaneously developing loose definitions of Italy and Italians that were radically different from mine. They were comfortably familiar, for instance, with the standard depictions of jolly, mustachioed chefs on pizza containers, and could readily identify Topo Gigio and Al Capone, but not one of one of them had ever heard of Cincinnatus, Garibaldi, or Alessandro Volta.

Their enlightenment was not forthcoming in the classroom, where our history teachers treated the Romans as a vanished race, and glazed over or entirely omitted the Italic role in the great events across the ages. And even if a link between Italians and their Roman ancestors was supposed, Hollywood was hard at work convincing movie audiences that this was not an enviable thing, with a blockbusters like *Spartacus*, *Ben Hur*, *Hannibal*, et al, all depicting the Romans as debauched, evil, and tyrannical. Cartoon images of fat, viking-helmeted divas screeching out ear-splitting arpeggios may have contradicted my own growing appreciation of Verdi and Rossini, but were readily accepted by other kids as "opera" and therefore another incomprehensible and much-to-be-avoided component of Italic culture.

From those distant days until now, I've never stopped my attempts to adjust popular culture's unflattering and misguided perceptions of my heritage. And it's been a lonely road to march. Though I might have been considered a long-standing "presence" in the Italian American community, I joined no organizations, being consistently disappointed to find the leadership and membership of most were as clueless of authentic Italic heritage as my sixth-grade classmates had been. In 1992, I gratefully found the single exception to this shameful rule in the Italic Institute of America, the only Italian American organization, in my opinion, that truly "gets it," and the only one with mission and motive tightly matching my own. I have no doubt that many of you have joined IIA for the same reasons.

But being part of the Institute has made the road only a little less lonely. Despite IIA's consistent clarity of vision, progressive ideas and programs, and its characteristic willingness to take hard line action, we're still a voice crying out in the Italian American desert. My initial message to you, then, is a call to action, an invitation to take a direct hand in promoting the Institute and everything it represents to help increase our membership and resources, and to strengthen our presence and influence in the national Italian American community. Great things are waiting to be done.

DF =

AURORA FACTS

Another Aurora season has come to a close. Here is a summary of this year's activities:

Number of Classes: 16

Nassau County: Floral Park, New Hyde Park, West Hempstead

Suffolk County: Kings Park

Westchester County: New Rochelle

New York City: Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, Staten Island

Number of Students Graduated: 346

2002/2003 Operating Cost: \$82,800

Anticipated Grants: \$62,000

Anticipated Deficit: \$20,800

Remember this, we are the only organization in the United States that acculturates this many pre-teens, free of charge, in the Italian language & culture. We give the scholarship of heritage. Cost per child: \$240.

Visit our website

at

www.Italic.org

SURVEY OF ITALIAN TRADITIONS

We are trying to determine to what degree Italian traditions are disappearing. Through family dislocation, intermarriage, and the pressures of daily life, it is not surprising that families are becoming more American and less Italian in culture.

(Circle your choice. More than one answer is acceptable)

Complete the survey and mail it or fax it to:

**Survey
Italic Institute of America
PO Box 818
Floral Park, NY 11002**

Fax: 516.488.4889

1. **Does your child/children have Italian ancestry?**
 - a. All Italian
 - b. Half Italian
 - c. Quarter Italian
 - d. Trace Italian
 - e. Non-Italian
2. **Is Italian the primary language of any family member?**
 - a. Grandfather/Grandmother
 - b. Father/Mother
 - c. None
3. **How are your children named?**
 - a. Italian first name (Salvatore, Mario, etc)
 - b. Named after a grandfather or grandmother
 - c. Non-Italian, non-traditional name
4. **Do you have dinner with the extended family on Sundays (grandparents, etc)?**
 - a. Every Sunday
 - b. Infrequently
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Never
5. **Do you have a set day to eat macaroni for dinner?**
 - a. Every Sunday
 - b. Every Wednesday
 - c. Every Thursday
 - d. No special day
6. **What do you call the tomato-based topping you use with pasta?**
 - a. Sauce
 - b. Gravy
7. **Do you eat salad at every meal?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. **When do you prefer to eat salad at home?**
 - a. At the beginning of the meal
 - b. At the end of the meal
9. **Is fruit a part of your daily diet?**
 - a. I try to eat fruit or juice daily
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Rarely
10. **Which of these traditional foods is cooked on occasion in your home:**
 - a. Baccala`
 - b. Tripe
 - c. Beans & macaroni
 - d. Escarole
 - e. Scungilli
 - f. Clam sauce
 - g. Pesto sauce
 - h. Polenta
11. **Is wine considered a dinner-time beverage at home?**
 - a. Every night
 - b. Just on weekends
 - c. Only on holidays
 - d. Never
12. **At a weekend dinner or holiday, do you let your underage child/children taste a little wine?**
 - a. Just a taste on holidays or weekends
 - b. Never
13. **On Christmas Eve, does the family observe an all-fish dinner tradition?**
 - a. We don't do anything special on Christmas Eve
 - b. Yes, we eat assorted fish dishes
 - c. No, we eat all-meat
 - d. No, we have some fish and some meat
 - e. It was never a tradition in my Italian family
14. **Which of these Italian holiday foods does your family consume?**
 - a. Panetone (Fruit cake)
 - b. Pizza di Grano (Grain Cake)
 - c. Struffulli (Honey Balls)
 - d. Pizzelle (Thin Wafers)
 - e. None of the above

15. Do you or your spouse or your parents make any of these homemade items?
- Wine from grapes or juice
 - Pasta fresca
 - Sausage
 - None of the above
16. Do the male members of your family greet each other with a kiss on the cheek?
- Sons and fathers do
 - Brothers do
 - Extended family members do
 - No one does
17. Does the family relate to Opera?
- We have recordings
 - We sometimes go to an opera
 - We do not listen to opera
18. Does anyone in the immediate family (of Italian descent) play an instrument?
- Your child (children)
 - Brother
 - Sister
 - Mother
 - Father
 - No one
19. Is your family Roman Catholic?
- Yes
 - No
20. Has your child/children been to Italy?
- Yes
 - No
21. Has any member of the nuclear family been to Italy?
- Father
 - Mother
 - No one
22. How strong a feeling does the wife have for her Italian heritage?
- Very strong
 - Some pride and affection
 - Interested
 - Not interested
 - Non-Italian
23. How strong a feeling does the husband have for his Italian heritage?
- Very strong
 - Some pride and affection
 - Interested
 - Not interested
 - Non-Italian
24. Do you believe that films and television are affecting how your child sees his/her Italian heritage?
- The media image of Italian Americans is not good for my children
 - The media image of Italian Americans has no effect on my children
25. In your opinion, how does the rest of America see Italian traditions?
- They think we hug, kiss and eat all the time
 - They think we have family members who are mobsters
 - They think we are just like every other American group.
26. Does your family's home life come closer to:
- An Olive Garden commercial
 - The Sopranos
 - The Ray Romano Show
 - None of the above
27. Do you have ties to a traditional Italian neighborhood?
- We live in a predominately Italian neighborhood
 - I have relatives who still live in the old neighborhood
 - We live in ethnically mixed neighborhoods
28. Does any family member belong to an Italian-American organization?
- Your father or your mother
 - Your spouse's father or mother
 - You or your spouse
29. Does your Italian ethnicity influence your vote?
- Yes, if there is a choice I will vote for an Italian American
 - I only vote Party line
 - I do not count a candidate's ethnicity or party when I vote, only his/her appeal
30. How do you or your spouse relate to Italy?
- Have dual citizenship (me, my spouse)
 - Interested in any news about Italy or Italians
 - No connection, no interest
 - I would like to know how to apply for dual citizenship
31. How do you observe Columbus Day?
- Participate or attend a parade
 - Eat Italian food that day
 - Watch a movie about Columbus
 - Do not observe any special traditions

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Institute:

Josefina Acosta	Mr. & Mrs. James D. Lambert
Mr. & Mrs. John F. Adragna	Linda Lesar
Teresa Alberti	Mr. & Mrs. Harvey E. Levine
Raymond Ambrosio	Senta LoGelfo
Audrey Anazco	Catherine Lucarelli
Mr. & Mrs. Maurizio Arena	Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence C. Lucarelli
Mr. & Mrs. Brian K. Bee	Joann Maniscalco
Frank Bernabei	Joseph & Rose Mancusi
Anthony J. Botti	Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Merlino
Mary Bruschi	Francesca Mugavero
Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Bullara	Catherine Muratore
Joseph A. Calderera	Frank A. Nania
Susan Carhart	Robert D. Necci
Jacqueline Chirico	Jacqueline A. Nelson
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Clark	Donald G. O'Keefe
Thomas & Maryellen Cunningham	Steven Pacitto
Salvatore D'Angelo	Mr. & Mrs. Ronald J. Parigoris
Susan D'Anna	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Parrone
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Dejuri	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Persico
Sharon Deland	Brenda Picone
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Di Donato	Josephine M. Picone
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Durant, Jr.	Josephine Romano
Robert P. Firriolo	Maria Russo
Donna & Michael Fontanetta	Mr. & Mrs. Joseph C. Simeone
Mr. & Mrs. Louis S. Frontario	Mr. & Mrs. Roy L. Sullo
A. Fufidio	Mr. & Mrs. Gerard Tangredi
C. Gallo	Antonina Turano
Brian T. Gorton	Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Tutone
Annamarie Hernandez	Mr. & Mrs. Hendrik Van Ophemart
Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Holmes	Vincent Valente
Mr. & Mrs. Eric M. Johnston	Linda & Michael Varrone
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Kelly	Mr. & Mrs. Omar A. Vendome
Catherine Kilfoyle	Virella Family
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Kuchenbrod	

MEMORIAL DONATION

The Institute gratefully acknowledges a generous donation from Maria C. Poulos in memory of Dennis Caterine.

NATIONAL APPEAL

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for starting off our campaign with their generous gifts.

Special Friends of the Institute (\$5,000 +)

Anonymous Donor
Health Plus PHSP, Inc.

Guardians of the Italian Heritage (\$1,000 +)

Builders of Italic Pride (\$500 +)

Patrons of Italian Heritage (\$250 +)

FIERI Brooklyn
The Patronis Group
The Stauber Family Foundation

Sustainers of the Institute (\$100 +)

Maria Gloria
Charles Vesce, Jr.

Supporters of the Institute (\$50 +)

Charles J. Cerutti
Carmine DiLeo
Marco & Wanda Savona

YES, I want to demonstrate my support of the Institute's mission.

___ Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____, payable to Italic Institute of America.

___ Please charge to my American Express Card:

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ Amount \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Please mail to **Italic Institute of America, P.O. Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11002**

Your donation will be used to support *Aurora* Youth Scholarships, *The Italic Way* Magazine, and Anti-Defamation Activities (*Project Italia*).

PRESS RELEASE**ITALIC INSTITUTE OF AMERICA**

FOR RELEASE ON MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2003

For more information contact Rosario Iaconis at One Holland Avenue, Floral Park, NY 11001, 516.488.7400, fax 516.488.4889, email ItalicOne@aol.com

**ITALIAN AMERICANS ARE STILL STUCK ON ELLIS ISLAND,
ACCORDING TO THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION**

The White House selection process for future Supreme Court vacancies, as reported in the *NY Times**, unfairly limits Americans of Italian descent. It appears that President Bush's senior staff members do not consider Italian Americans as mainstream, but rather an ethnic group subject to a quota. According to the report filed by *NY Times* correspondent Neil Lewis, the prime reason that candidate Judge Samuel A. Alito Jr. is being sidetracked has to do with the fact that there is "already an Italian-American on the Supreme Court, Justice Antonin Scalia."

The Institute's Midwest spokesman, Bill Dal Cerro, remarked, "It comes as quite a shock that Washington power brokers still consider Americans of Italian descent 'second-class' citizens. Decades of mobster movies and now *The Sopranos* have apparently given the Bush administration the wrong impression of how 'American' we are. Our surnames shouldn't set off alarms, especially after 500 years on this continent and generations of military sacrifice and intermarriage. We should be judged on our own merits, not classified because of a vowel at the end of our name." Dal Cerro asked, "Does this 'Bush Doctrine' also apply to the Cabinet and other appointed positions?"

Added John Mancini, Chairman of the Italic Institute of America, "To label Italian Americans as 'ethnics' for the purpose of limiting their access to higher office in pursuit of some political strategy is clearly a form of discrimination. Why are Irish, German and Jewish Americans no longer 'ethnic'? Last time I looked, these other good Americans were still celebrating St Paddy's Day, von Steuben Day and Salute to Israel Day as well as enjoying their respective ethnic foods and culture. There appears now to be two Jewish justices, two or more with Irish surnames and two with northern European surnames. Would the republic collapse if there were two Italian surnames on the Supreme Court?"

The Institute's Director of Communications, Rosario A. Iaconis, noted the irony of the Bush policy: "Who in the Administration will break the news to Italian-American

Republicans that President Bush opposes affirmative action yet endorses a restrictive quota system for the scions of Italy?" Iaconis continued, "Must Judge Alito be excluded just because Scalia is on the bench and might be nominated for Chief Justice?"

The *NY Times* article reported no such restriction voiced by the Bush officials for candidates who may be ethnically related to the current Irish, northern European, African, and Jewish members of the Supreme Court. Institute President Don Fiore expressed amazement that Bush officials would even talk on the record about discriminating specifically against a candidate of Italian heritage. "The remark is translatable as 'one Italian is enough' and is an ominous indication that the particular disdain routinely directed toward Italian Americans by the entertainment media is not absent in the political world".

The Institute urges President Bush to publicly disavow this discriminatory policy and to explain the reasons for this throwback nativist attitude in the 21st Century.

Founded in New York in 1987, the Italic Institute of America is a non-profit, educational organization that explores the contributions of ancient and modern Italy to contemporary America and the world.

* Page 1, Friday, December 27, 2002 ("Expecting a Vacancy, Bush Aides Weigh Supreme Court Contenders")

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