

The Founders' Log

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Founders of the Italic Institute of America, 1987

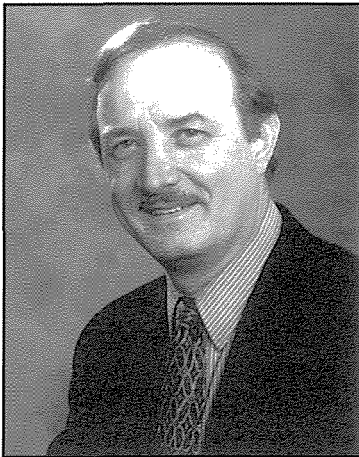
Stefano Gristina

Carl Pescosolido
(deceased)

John Mancini

A Message from the Chairman

Dear Member,



In the last issue of *The Italic Way* there was a book review for **Ghost Soldiers**, the story of the daring rescue of American POW's in the Philippines in 1944. Actually, we at the Institute knew of this exploit years ago when Colonel Henry Mucci, the leader of that mission, died and we reported his story in a previous issue of the magazine. Just recently, I saw a documentary on the rescue and learned more about this remarkable leader. Mucci was a strong leader, an example to his men, and a man of steely determination. After the war he made an attempt to run for Congress from his district in Connecticut but failed to beat another Italian American who spoke Italian. It would appear that many Italian-speaking voters believed Mucci's opponent would be more accessible for their personal needs. That Henry Mucci never served in Congress was probably a missed opportunity for his community and Italian Americans in general. We sorely needed someone with daring and courage. Men like La Guardia, Pastore and Marcantonio were made of sterner stuff than the self-conscious pols that currently claim our loyalty. Mucci might have set the standard.

Our informal survey results are detailed beginning on page 4. Some results are thought provoking, others are disappointing. The main disappointment is that significant numbers of non-Institute respondents do not see the dangers of negative media, especially the younger ones. This explains why our struggle is so frustrating; we are fighting ourselves.

Consider another frustration: Youth. Where are the 20-somethings or 30-somethings who embrace our classical heritage? I am not talking about high school or college Italian clubs or restaurant-hopping organizations or a bunch of interns who are flown to Italy or Washington for a week or two. They are lovers, not fighters. I am referring to

motivated, intellectually aroused young adults who can challenge the status quo and want to build on our great heritage. Who will follow us? Look around. Do you know anyone under 40 years of age who fits the description? I would guess that most of our members are aged fifty, sixty, and beyond. Have two generations of Mafia movies totally wiped out our seed corn? I hope not. Let us know.

Warmest regards,

John Mancini

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Institute:

Joseph S. Amella	Schaumburg, IL
Rev. Thomas G. Arminio	Union, NJ
John & Janet Aquaro	Hempstead, NY
Dr. Sebastian P. Avolese	Plandome, NY
Mr. & Mrs. Kevin R. Bagnasco	Farmingdale, NY
Louis Bevilacqua	Manhasset, NY
Charles Bovino	Cutchogue, NY
Dr. Patrick F. Carone	Massapequa Park, NY
Mary L. Consolo	Pembroke Pines, FL
Phyllis B. Costello	Romeoville, IL
John J. D'Alessandro	Teaneck, NJ
Michael DeBellis	New York, NY
Frank D. Dejute	Girard, OH
Robert Forlenza	Staten Island, NY
Catherine Anne Gallagher	West Hempstead, NY
Marie A. Goldstein	Kings Park, NY
Joseph Graziose	North Babylon, NY
Louis A. LaCivita	McKees Rocks, PA
Lucy Lenti	Kew Gardens, NY
Barry Maizel	Garden City, NY
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Merlino	Kings Park, NY
Eugene Mirabella	Santa Clara, CA
Gary J. Parisi	Floral Park, NY
Louis E. Pelfini, MD	Petaluma, CA
Jannine Corti Petska	Oceanside, CA
Philip D. Rotele	Denver, CO
John Sampieri	Garden City, NY
Alan T. Santinon	Jackson, NJ
Mario J. Spidalieri	Katonah, NY
Anthony Susino	West Hempstead, NY
George Terenzio	Stamford, CT
Arthur F. Vergara	Palm Springs, CA

BERLUSCONI: CONNECTING THE DOTS

An interesting thing happened in Europe this past summer when Italy assumed the 6-month presidency of the European Parliament: German politicians and journalists launched a smear campaign against Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. He was labeled "The Godfather" on the cover of Germany's most popular magazine and heckled by a German delegate named Martin Schultz while he presided over his first session of the European Parliament. When Berlusconi upbraided Schultz with a caustic suggestion that he take a starring role in an Italian production about a Nazi prison camp, the whole German nation went into an uproar, denouncing the Italian. Most Germans missed Berlusconi's ironic use of the word *kapo*, a German term for a prison leader, as a foil for the Godfather "capo" insult he had recently endured. In fact, CBS News interpreted Berlusconi's targeting of Schultz as a play on *Hogan's Heroes* character, Sgt. Schultz. Either way, the Germans have no tolerance for ethnic smears.

The point to be made is that the albatross of the Mafia that has hung around the necks of 16 million Italian Americans has now made its way to the elected leader of 57 million Italians. Connect all the dots and you have a disturbing global ethnic profiling. Remember, *The Sopranos* is a hit in Europe too. We need to do some serious soul searching on both sides of the Atlantic to combat this senseless erosion of the Italic image.

MADONNA'S MYSTICAL MILLIONS

We have heard many upsetting things over the years, like Italian Americans who earn a living promoting Mafia lore, or politicians who forget who elected them, but we recently learned something that really tested our faith. Earlier this year, super star Madonna Louise Ciccone donated \$6 million to build an Institute in London for the study of the Jewish Kabbalah, a mystical cult that even mainstream Jews shy away from. It seems that Madonna believes that Kabbalah mysticism has aided her career (she has studied it for seven years). She has even taken a Jewish name, Esther, and wears a medallion with a big E. Her Italian heritage and name has apparently helped her not at all. Such is the clay we work with.

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HERITAGE SURVEY RESULTS

We collected almost 300 responses to our Heritage Survey from a variety of sources. Those sources included 97 readers of Chicago's *Fra Noi* monthly newspaper, 67 readers of New Jersey's *Italian Tribune*, 92 of our own Institute members, and 36 parents of Italian language students in NY.

There are several points to consider as you digest this information. First, all the respondents are much closer to their heritage than the vast majority of Italian Americans as demonstrated by their membership in the Institute or subscription to an ethnic newspaper. Second, you can be sure that, except for the parents of Italian language students, most respondents are between 55 to 85+ years of age. In short, if you see a decrease in cultural traditions among these folks, it is far greater among the rest of the 16 million Italian Americans. Multiple answers were allowed for some questions:

What is the ancestry of your children?

56% are full-blooded Italian, 39% are ½ to ¾ Italian

NOTE: Among Institute members 63% have full-blooded children. Among the younger Italian Language Class parents only 36% of their children are full-blooded, 47% are half Italian.

What member of the family is a native Italian speaker?

Respondent 24%, Parent 34%, No one in the family 52%

How are your children named?

Italian first name 35%, Americanized grandparent's name 54%, Just American 33%

Do you have extended family dinners on Sunday?

Every Sunday 24%, Infrequently 45%, Rarely 16%, Never 14%

When do you eat macaroni?

Every Sunday 43%, Every Wednesday 7%, Every Thursday 13%, No special day 56%

What do you call the tomato topping on macaroni?

Sauce 57%, Gravy 43%

NOTE: 70% of Institute members call it sauce; 75% of the Italian language class call it sauce.

Do you eat salad every day? Do you prefer to eat salad before or after the main course?

Yes 56%, No 44% Before 45%, After 55%

Is fruit or juice a part of your daily diet?

Every day 80%, Occasionally 17%, Rarely 3%

Which of these traditional foods do you still cook at home?

Baccala`..36%, Tripe..21%, Pasta e Fagioli..69%, Escarole..64%, Scungilli..17%,
Clam Sauce..56%, Pesto..42%, Polenta..39%

How often does your family drink wine?

Every night..39%, Just weekends..24%, Only holidays..30%, Never..7%

Do you let underage children taste a little wine on holidays or weekends?

Yes..69%, No 31%

Do you have a special meal on Christmas Eve?

All fish..66%, Fish and meat..19%, All meat..2%, Nothing special 6%, Never a
tradition in my family 7%

Which holiday foods do you make or buy?

Panetone 67%, Grain Cake 33%, Strufulli 52%, Pizzelle 56%, None of these 9%

Which of these do you still make at home?

Wine 22%, Pasta fresca 40%, Sausage 24%, None of these 44%

What male kissing traditions do you have?

Sons and Fathers 46%, Brothers 28%, Extended Family 55%, No kissing 29%

Do you relate to Opera?

Recordings 56%, Attend the Opera 33%, No interest 33%

Does someone in the family play an instrument?

Yes 62%, No 38%

Is your family Roman Catholic?

Yes 93%, No 7%

NOTE: 95% of Institute respondents are Roman Catholic. Although all the Italian language students have some Italian ancestry, only 83% are Roman Catholic.

Has one or more of your children been to Italy?

Yes 55%, No 45%

Have you or your wife been to Italy?

Yes 68%, Neither 19%

Wife's feelings for Italian heritage?

Very strong 60%, Some pride/affection 21%, Interested 8%, Not interested 1%, She's not Italian 16%

Husband's feelings for Italian heritage?

Very strong 68%, Some pride/affection 19%, Interested 5%, Not interested 2%, He's not Italian 11%

What effect does media image of Italian Americans have on your children?

Negative effect 53%, No effect 47%

NOTE: 68% of Institute respondents say that media has a negative effect. Only 33% of the Italian class parents agreed.

How does mainstream America view Italian Americans?

We hug and kiss all the time 55%, We are connected to mobsters 57%, We are normal Americans 22%

NOTE: 64% of the Italian class parents believe they are viewed as connected to mobsters. Does this seem illogical in light of their response to the Media question above?

Which TV show does your family life most reflect?

Olive Garden commercials 28%, *The Sopranos* 2%, *Ray Romano Show* 33%
None of them 44%

*NOTE: 8% of the Italian class parents feel that their family life reflects *The Sopranos*. 56% of them see it more like the *Romano Show*. 59% of Institute respondents chose "None of the Above."*

What kind of neighborhood do you live in?

Predominantly Italian 13%, Ethnically mixed 87%

Does the family participate in Italian American organizations?

Grandparents, 27%, Parents 54%

What influences your voting?

Vote for Italian American candidates 52%, Vote party line 7%, Vote by appeal 40%

How do you relate to Italy?

Dual citizenship 6%, Interested in all news about Italy 82%, No interest 8%, I would apply for dual citizenship 16%.

How do you celebrate Columbus Day?

Attend a parade 26%, Eat Italian food 18%, Watch a movie about Columbus 2%, Nothing special 28%.

THE AURORA PROGRAM NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Due to a lack of funding, we may have to cut our *Aurora* Italian Language and Culture Program for Children from 16 classes to 4 classes this school year. The budgetary problems in New York City have caused it to decrease our grant from last year's \$25,000 to only \$5,000, we haven't received any word about our New York State grant, and the generous grant from Health Plus is also in jeopardy. Please help us continue to offer the *Aurora* Program by sending us your check today.

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*).

SEPTEMBER ALMANAC

The 7th month of the year until the Romans moved New Year's from March to January

September 1 – World Heavyweight Champion **Rocky Marciano** (Rocco Marchegiano) was born in 1923. He won all of his 49 professional fights – 43 by knockout.

September 2 – Battle of Actium, 31 B.C. Julius Caesar's nephew, **Octavian**, defeats the fleet of Anthony and Cleopatra and becomes the sole ruler of the Roman world. He is later bestowed the title of **Augustus** and creates the Roman Empire.

September 8 – General **Joseph Gallieni**, French Commander of Italian heritage, completes the reinforcement of the Marne River defense line that saves Paris from the Germans in 1914. He mobilized all the Parisian taxis to accomplish the movement of his "Taxicab Army."

September 9 – Scientist **Luigi Galvani** was born in 1737. His discoveries in the field of electricity have given us the word "galvanize."

September 10 – **Elsa Schiaparelli** was born in Rome in 1896. An innovator who led the French fashion industry with colors and accessories, she introduced padded shoulders in 1936 and shocking pink in 1947.

September 12 – In 1919, Soldier/Poet **Gabriello D'Annunzio** led an unauthorized military expedition to seize the Austrian port city of Fiume which was historically and culturally Italian.

September 14 – Poet **Dante Alighieri**, author of the *Divine Comedy*, the first epic written in Italian, died in 1321.

September 16 – Sir **Anthony Panizzi** was born in 1797. He developed the world-famous British Museum (and Library) in London.

September 20 – **Sophia Loren** (Sofia Scicolone) was born in Naples in 1930.

September 21 – Publius Vergilius Maro (**Virgil**), Italy's greatest poet prior to Dante Alighieri, died in 19 B.C. He wrote the *Aeneid* ("Of arms and the man I sing..."), the epic of Rome's legendary founding.

September 23 – **Octavian**, the future emperor **Augustus**, was born in 63 B.C.

September 26 – **Gaetano Lanza**, founder of M.I.T.'s School of Engineering, was born in 1848.

September 29 – Italy declared war on Turkey in 1911. This was the first use of airpower in modern warfare. Italy's victory gave her possession of Libya.