

# The Founders' Log

No. 19

Published by the Italic Institute of America, Council of Governors

December 2003

## Founders of the Italic Institute of America, 1987

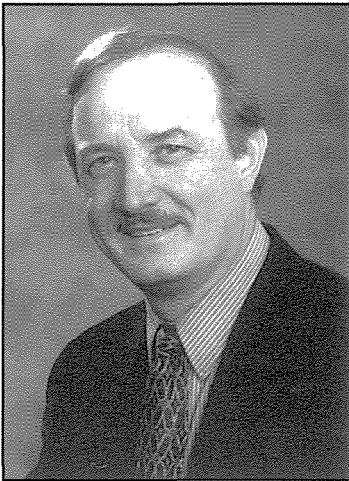
Stefano Gristina

Carl Pescosolido  
(deceased)

John Mancini

### A Message from the Chairman

Dear Member,



What do you get when you combine *The Sopranos* with a full-length animated children's film? Answer: simply the most tasteless example of Hollywood propaganda. This is what is under development at the DreamWorks studios owned by Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg. And yes, all of our favorite self-hating "Italians" have joined this kiddie defamation: DeNiro, Scorsese, and some of the cast of *The Sopranos*, doing voiceovers. The name of this film is *Shark Tale* (it used to be called *Sharkslayer* but that name was thought to offend America's sensibilities to violence). The plot is adult standard: the peaceful undersea world confronts the marine Mafia, led by Don Lino and Don Brizzi, the sharks.

Rather than getting into the reasons why this film is the greatest challenge now facing our community, we have enclosed a flyer entitled, *Hollywood Images Have A Price*.

So, what are we doing about *Shark Tale*? On September 15<sup>th</sup>, Messrs. Spielberg and Katzenberg received (signed return receipt) a formal letter from the Italic Institute requesting that they "de-italianize" this fish story in the name of our children and their parents. As of this writing, neither man has replied to us. Letters were also sent to Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association and to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of the B'nai B'rith. Valenti did not respond and the ADL took a pass. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, the Institute issued a national press release to some 5,000 newspapers, radio and television stations that resulted in only one response. That response was from an AM radio program in San Diego. I was invited for an on-the-air interview by the self-proclaimed "white bread WASP" host and his sidekick producer of Italian extraction. As we are no strangers to the ambush style of these talk show fellows, I asked Rosario Iaconis, our Director of *The Italic Way* magazine, to join me on the conference call. Meanwhile, our president, Don Fiore in Chicago, monitored the entire show on the internet. As expected,

the show was a set-up in which the host trotted out an "Italian" skill from his radio audience who stated that the *Shark Tale* plot didn't "bother" him (he just heard about the film 2 minutes before). Rosario and I hammered both the caller and the host with facts and rebuttals to the point that we were summarily thanked and cut off. Thereupon, the host joked with his audience that we might be "gunning" for him later. The bottom line is that Italian Americans represent merely entertainment to the media. According to them, we have no issues and no other dimensions.

An entire campaign has now been launched under our *Project Italia* section (our media arm), led by Don Fiore, to see this thing through. The campaign started with a Rally for the Italian Heritage, held at our Long Island headquarters on November 8<sup>th</sup>, featuring the *Aurora* Color Guard and their parents. Other facets of the campaign are appeals to the various Italian American groups, politicians, and child welfare associations. *Shark Tale* is a long way from completion, which means that DreamWorks can still "de-italianize" it.

In other news, Institute Director Tony DeNonno opened our 16<sup>th</sup> season of the *Aurora* Italian Language and Scholarship Program. Four classes are now underway with over 100 children. Severe budget cuts by the City of New York and New York State have held up the start of ten other classes. We are hoping for a January start up at those sites.

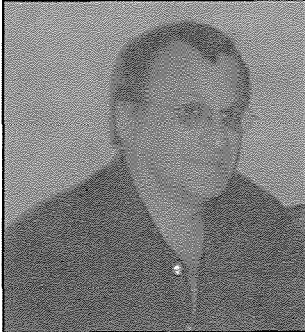
And finally, December 11<sup>th</sup> is the date of our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Luncheon with presentations of our Silver Medallion to four Italian Americans who have made their mark on America and the world. As I always remind people, we award individuals for the honor they have brought the Italic people, not for how many tables they can sell. An award from the Italic Institute of America is far more precious for that reason.

So, how can we do all the work I cited above on a shoestring budget? Devotion. The Founders are blessed having the most dedicated staff of unpaid executives in the service of their heritage: Don Fiore, President & Director of Project Italia, Rosario Iaconis, Director of *The Italic Way*, Tony DeNonno, Director of *Aurora*, and Bill Dal Cerro, VP Midwest. We, in turn, are blessed by our hundreds of members who have stuck with us, through thick and thin, giving their support and contributions. I cringe when I see an Italian cook on television talking about how Italian cuisine is made with "love," when he means "recipes." To understand love, he needs to join the Italic Institute.

Warmest regards for the Christmas Season,

**John Mancini**

*Say "Merry Christmas" with the gift of heritage.  
Give a friend or family member a one-year gift membership in the Institute.  
Call our office at 516-488-7400 for details.*

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

With characteristic vigilance, the Institute was the first among all of the nation's Italian American organizations to detect the fetid stench of something rotten drifting in from the direction of Hollywood. I'm referring, of course, to *Shark Tale* (see enclosed *Hollywood Images Have A Price*), an animated film currently in production at DreamWorks SKG that brings the Italian American mobster image to the level of America's schoolyards and playgrounds.

If there was ever an issue abominable enough to percolate the blood of even the most complacent Italic soul, this is it. As John Mancini noted, we have launched a campaign to prevent the film's release as currently scripted. The Institute has taken plenty of challenges head on before, but this time we need the direct help of everyone on the entire IIA membership roster. Here's what you can do: First, read the enclosed flyer and visit the Institute's website ([www.italic.com](http://www.italic.com)) to learn more about *Shark Tale* and the Institute's specific position. Advise as many others as possible of the upcoming film and of IIA's campaign of opposition. Encourage them to join our campaign as well. Write letters to DreamWorks (100 Universal City Plaza, Building 10, Universal City, CA 91608), newspapers, magazines, community leaders, and political representatives objecting to the film's propagation of the Italian/mobster image to children (sample letters are available through the Institute). Be sure to forward a copy of your letters to the Institute so we can track and monitor the campaign's progress.

If you would like to do more, please feel free to contact us directly. But remember, we might not be able to win this one without you. We're counting on your involvement.

With all sincerity,

Don Fiore

**Italic Institute of America**

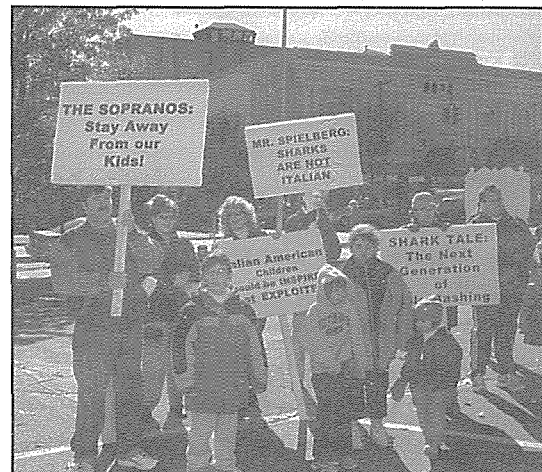
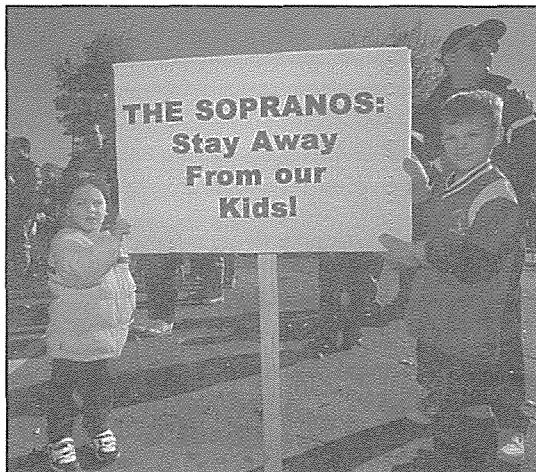
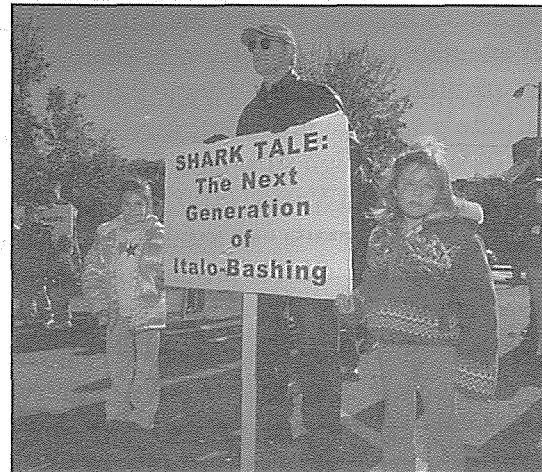
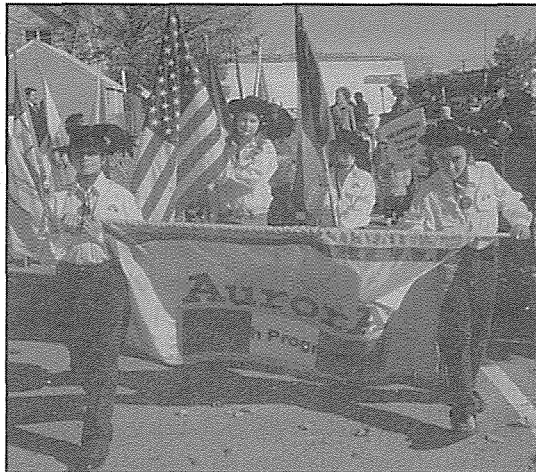
**Operations Center**  
P.O. Box 818  
Floral Park, NY 11002  
Tel: (516) 488-7400  
Fax: (516) 488-4889

**Manhattan Desk**  
164 Madison Avenue  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 11016  
Tel: (212) 268-8085

E-mail: [ItalicOne@aol.com](mailto:ItalicOne@aol.com)  
Website: [www.Italic.org](http://www.Italic.org)

### RALLY HIGHLIGHTS HOLLYWOOD PROTEST

With the blessing of the Village of Floral Park, a portion of the municipal parking lot next to our main office was turned into a parade field. Students of the Floral Park *Aurora* class were formed into the *Aurora* Color Guard to conduct our annual Parade of Regions. Parents and local residents came to support the rally and to protest the making of the animated children's film *Shark Tale* by DreamWorks Productions. The film, which is scheduled for completion in 2004 is a blatant attempt to bring *The Sopranos* to kiddie movies. The not-so-subtle plot has the fish world confronting Italian American mafia sharks. Outraged parents went on record in opposition to this collaborative propaganda effort by Steven Spielberg and Italian American actors including Robert DeNiro, Martin Scorsese, and some cast members of *The Sopranos* cable series. The Institute is pursuing this issue on many fronts.



### AURORA® SEASON IS UNDERWAY

True to its mission, the Institute started its Italian language classes on November 1<sup>st</sup> at four sites in Nassau County, The Bronx, and Brooklyn. Total enrollment is over 100 children aged 10, 11 and 12. A severe shortage of grant money, caused by the national recession and subsequent budget cuts, has put an additional ten classes in jeopardy.

For those of you who are new to the Institute, our *Aurora® Youth Program* is the only standardized, multi-site Italian language program in the United States. *Aurora®* teachers and students follow a very structured class and study schedule designed to introduce youngsters to the language, history, customs, music and food of Italy. *Aurora®* students go on to study Italian in their local schools and (sometimes) bug their parents to take them to Italy on vacation. The 12-session course is offered free, but parents are encouraged to join the Italic Institute. For those students who are all or part Italian, *Aurora®* is a strong boost to their self-pride that remains with them forever.

### AWARDS LUNCHEON HONORS FOUR GREATS

Each year, our Advisory Council selects a number of individuals who are tops in their field and who have brought pride to the Italic people. This year, our Silver Medallion is being given to **General Peter Pace** USMC, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, **Paul Tagliabue**, Commissioner of the National Football League, and **Catherine Bertini**, Under-Secretary-General for Management of the United Nations. Our Bronze Medallion is going to **Jim Sciutto**, war correspondent for ABC-TV.

The luncheon will be held at Nicola Paone Restaurant at 207 East 34<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan from noon to 3:00 pm. Tickets are \$75. There will be entertainment by vocalist Mary Mancini (no relation to our chairman) and accordionist Mario Tacca. Call 212.268.8085 for reservations.

### NATIONAL APPEAL – PERFECT TAX DEDUCTION

It is now December and only a few days remain in 2003. It is a perfect time to write that check to the Italic Institute and to get your charitable deduction. The Institute needs to accomplish its missions, all of which benefit you directly as an American of Italian heritage. Compare our work with any other group and you will see that we are the most focused, the most creative, the most efficient, and the most effective of them all.

A recent survey in the *New York Times* found that most charities expend 60% to 90% of their income on overhead, including outrageous executive salaries and perks. Our 2002 tax return shows our overhead as only 23%. An amazing 77% is invested in heritage. If you are considering a major contribution, our books are open for inspection. Recently,

one of our new members expressed a desire to contribute stocks instead of cash. So, we now have a brokerage account to receive such donations. Check with your accountant to see if the Italic Institute can fit into your financial plans. We have been a 501c(3) educational non-profit since 1987.

We would like to thank the following members and organizations for their donations:

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

Anonymous Donor  
Health Plus PHSP, Inc.

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

Catherine Gallagher

**Builders of Italic Pride (\$500 +)**

The Degmore Group

**Patrons of Italian Heritage (\$250 +)**

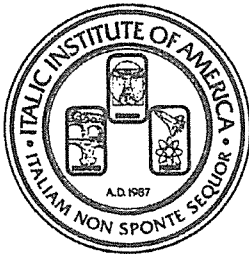
FIERI Brooklyn  
The Patronis Group  
The Stauber Family Foundation

**Sustainers of the Institute (\$100 +)**

Charles J. Cerutti  
Dunwell Elevator Electrical Industries  
Maria Gloria  
Long Island Society of Italian Americans  
Cesidio Tallini  
Charles Vesce, Jr.  
John Villanella

**Supporters of the Institute (\$50 +)**

Janet & John Aquaro  
Alan C. Biondi  
Lina Cernigliaro  
Olga DeLuise  
Carmine DiLeo  
David A. Frigo  
David M. Gratta  
John T. Luna  
Marco & Wanda Savona



## Hollywood Images Have A Price

### Why You Must Care About the Movie *Shark Tale*

Let's face it, this whole thing about Mafia movies has divided the Italian American Community for decades. Most people don't care about shows like *The Sopranos* or movies like *GoodFellas* because they feel that the media has no effect on their personal image or their success and happiness. In fact, most of the actors and filmmakers involved in these shows and movies are Italian Americans.

But now Steven Spielberg's company DreamWorks comes along with an idea to combine *The Sopranos* and all those other Mafia movies with an animated film for kids. The perfect recipe for Hollywood success: a hi-tech cartoon that can last for generations with zany Italian American gangster sharks. It's the kind of combination that will entertain both the kids and their parents and bring Mr. Spielberg and his partner, Mr. Katzenberg, zillions of dollars.

So, what is wrong with this picture?

- **Crossing the Line** – Mr. Spielberg has previously made an Italians-as-bad-guys film in 1985 called *The Goonies*. It was a live action film that viewers see occasionally on television but few people buy as a video or DVD. But, bringing the Mafia theme and *The Sopranos* cast to animation is a major escalation in defamation and propaganda. Animated films are brought into the home and shown repeatedly to generations of children.
- **Mainstream Problems** – Recent polls have shown that decades of Italian mafia movies have separated Italian Americans from what is considered "Mainstream America." In other words, most people consider someone with an Italian surname to be "ethnic" rather than "all-American." The Bush Administration has said as much in the selection of future Supreme Court justices. (*NY Times* 12/27/02, p.1). Why would rational Americans of Italian lineage want to pass this disadvantage onto their children?
- **The Big Lie** – Intelligent people know that Italian American criminals don't have an exclusive on crime. Nevertheless, movies, newspapers and district attorneys know that Italian American gangsters always make headlines. Mr. Spielberg's film continues this media tradition. But, why do any cartoon characters have to be ethnic? Are some ethnicities more sacred than others? Mr. Spielberg won't tell us.
- **Trashing Our Sacrifices** – Ask yourself if this is the way your children should see their heritage. For a people who discovered and help to build America, a people who gave their lives and treasures in all of America's wars, is this denigration something we want immortalized in a children's film? Think of all the new immigrants from Asia, Africa and South America whose children will watch and buy *Shark Tale* in the years to come. This will be their introduction to our heritage. And your children? Will this be one of your gifts to them?

The first amendment protects corporations like DreamWorks in defaming 16 million Americans of Italian lineage. That's the way the law works. Our only recourse is protest and an appeal to reason. To win this battle we need to go public – contact your local and national politicians, write to newspapers and the other media. Apathy will give DreamWorks, Mr. Spielberg and Mr. Katzenberg what they need: freedom to manipulate the minds of American children and millions in profits.

Protect your children. Act Now!



1. The first part of the document is a list of names.

2.

3. The second part of the document is a list of names.

4.





\*\*\*\*\*

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*).

\*\*\*\*\*

**NEW MEMBERS**

We welcome the following new members to the Institute:

- |                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Julia D. Aiello             | Littleton, CO        |
| Steven Antonuccio           | Colorado Springs, CO |
| Frank Badali                | Middletown, NJ       |
| Salvatore Barbaro, Jr., PhD | Jamestown, RI        |
| Felix Bari                  | Oakland Gardens, NY  |
| John Biasetti               | Port Jefferson, NY   |
| Carol Coyne                 | Fort Worth, TX       |
| Leonard Giarratano          | San Diego, CA        |
| M/M Armondo Giordani        | Austin, TX           |
| Victor Mastrovincenzo       | Bronx, NY            |
| Angela B. Mietus            | Adelphi, MD          |
| Eugene T. Sampieri          | St. James, NY        |
| Renata Sdao                 | N. Hollywood, CA     |
| Thomas D. Tucci             | Gig Harbor, WA       |

**DECEMBER ALMANAC**

**December 2** – Scientist **Enrico Fermi** supervises the first controlled nuclear chain reaction in 1942 in Chicago. News of the historic event is sent in code to President Roosevelt: “The Italian navigator has landed in the New World.”

**December 5** – Italian scientist **Giovanni Battista Morgagni** dies in 1771. He made pathological anatomy an exact science.

**December 11** – Italy withdraws from the League of Nations in 1937 in protest of its treatment of Italy during the Italo-Ethiopia war.

**December 15** – The Italian Space Agency launches its first satellite in 1964.

**December 16** – **Guglielmo Marconi** conducts the first wireless radio transmission across the Atlantic Ocean in 1901.

**December 17** – U.S. Brig. General **James Dozier** is kidnapped by Red Brigade terrorists. He is later rescued by Italian police and military.

**December 19** – Italian frogmen sink the British fleet at Alexandria Harbor in 1941.

**December 23** – Inventor **Antonio Muecci** files a caveat with the U.S. Patent Office for his newly-invented telephone in 1871.

**December 24** – Songwriter **Salvatore Guaragna** (Henry Warren) is born in 1893. His songs included the score for the musical *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* and many other popular hits.

**December 26** – The newly created **Italian Republic** adopted its constitution in 1946 after a general referendum overturned the monarchy.

**December 28** – Exiled King **Vittorio Emanuele III** dies in Egypt in 1947.

-- Catastrophic earthquakes in Calabria and Sicily claim 150,000 in 1908.

*Italic Institute of America, Inc.*

*P.O. Box 818*

*Floral Park, NY 11002*

Nonprofit Org.  
BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 14  
Floral Park, NY  
11001