



February, 2006  
No. 23

# The Officers' Log

## Chicago Film Project Launched

Our Institute is once again in the film production business. This time it will document the Italic people of Chicago.

The Italic Institute will be a producer and fiscal agent for the one-hour documentary chronicling the arrival of Italians to the Chicago area, starting with the first European explorations by Enrico Tonti in the 1600's. The film will spotlight such Chicago luminaries as atomic physicist Enrico Fermi, Mother Frances Cabrini, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and media stars such as actor Joseph Montegna and the late sports announcer Harry Caray, all Chicago-based. In fact, Mr. Mantegna may even narrate the film.

To assemble this project, the Institute is retaining filmmaker Gia Amella, a Chicagoan who not only has a degree in Italian American studies but has specialized in ethnic documentaries, her last being the story of German Americans for Long Island PBS station WLIW. Gia's company, ModioMedia, has drafted a budget of \$200,000, which means that some heavy sponsors need to be recruited. We are currently in negotiation with a number of Chicago companies and individuals. Besides the pride and on-screen credit, sponsors will be able to write off a sizeable portion of their donation because the Italic Institute is a 501c3 non-profit.

The working title of the film is *And They Came to Chicago*. It will eventually become part of our series of films with the grand title of *Beyond Italy*. The Institute has two films already "in the can," *Italian American Visions* (by DeNonno Productions) and *The Italian Legacy* (by Vitale Productions). All films are produced by our Project Italia Division. (Coincidentally, the current Director of our Project Italia Division is Don Fiore, former president of the Institute and Chicago born

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## Sam Alito, Cicero and Me

by Rosario A. Iaconis

Long before he became the *bete noire* of liberal activists and the darling of the conservative right, Judge Samuel Alito took time from his busy schedule to speak with me about a diversity of topics. Having learned from a *New York Times* article (12/27/02) that a senior White House official had nixed this learned jurist for a seat on the highest court in the land—the Supreme Court already included one Italian, Antonin Scalia, you see—I wanted to let the world (and Italian-American leaders) know of the Bush Administration's *de facto* quota system.

After all, no such strictures existed for the Court's Jewish or Irish jurists.

Though Judge Alito could not comment on this delicate issue, he regaled me with his cordiality, intellect and deep-seated *italianita*. We discussed our roots in Calabria and the majesty of Dante's vernacular. Like me, Sam Alito keeps current on events in Italy via Milan's *Corriere della Sera* and RAI TV. I also learned that the judge had journeyed to *il bel Paese* to write his Princeton (undergraduate) thesis. And the subject, appropriately enough, was the Italian Constitutional Court.

We dissected the glaring anti-Italian bias in the media, noting the incessant stereotyping that afflicts the community on a daily basis. And I came away doubly impressed by his nuanced legal philosophy and incisive mind. Alito is an impeccable magistrate who evokes Cicero, Ulpian and Justinian—ancestors all.

After the Harriet Miers debacle, President George W. Bush turned to Samuel A. Alito, Jr. and his jurisprudential genius. Bush even

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## Our Italian School System

### Going it alone

by John Mancini,  
Executive Director, Aurora



One of eight Aurora classes in session this year

Members of the Italic Institute are quite familiar with its *Aurora Education Program*. For eighteen years Aurora has been without equal in acculturating 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the magic of *italianita*. But unless you actually experience a class of 10- and 11-year-olds learning a foreign language for the first time and singing the official *Aurora* song in Italian, sounding every bit like natives of the "old boot" with only two lessons under their belt, you will not appreciate the magic of *Aurora* and its obvious potential for growth.

During the past three years, the Institute has been reaching out to all the major Italian American organizations trying to explain how the community needs an equivalent to Greek School or Jewish cultural schools. We have attempted to explain how *Aurora* is not just an Italian language program but a system of standardized education that is expandable, centralized and proven to attract children and legislative grants. Our letters, news articles and even telephone calls have been universally ignored. Organizations that

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# Elections in February

Every two years the Italic Institute is mandated to hold elections. Elections will be held in February, 2006. For the past few years this ritual has been akin to musical chairs, with the same individuals rotating positions. It is not necessarily a bad thing. Each of our officers brings a different angle to the job. By far the big difference in angles occurred when the Institute shifted from a businessman-based leadership to one of educators. Although businessmen brought relative prosperity to our cause they weren't always on board with our mission. Many wanted to emulate the charitable giving of other groups. Few grasped the potential of the *Aurora Youth Program*. Most wanted *The Italic Way* magazine to be a food and fashion journal, more glitz than guts. Worse, some wanted us to ignore personal lapses in judgement that would reflect badly on our spotless reputation. So, what we have evolved into is a financially-challenged non-profit with impeccable credentials. But all of our officers are now grounded in classical Italic studies and a devotion to the Institute's mission.

The following offices will be subject to election. Please review the prerequisites and decide if you would like to submit your name in nomination. If you don't meet the prerequisites kindly explain your equivalent experience. You will note that geographic location is not limited. Mail or fax your nominations if you are a Core member.

**President:** must be a member of the Core Council and have served as an officer, director or committee chairman for one year.

**Vice President:** must be a member of the Core Council and have served as an officer, director or committee chairman for one year.

**Financial Secretary:** must be a member of the Core Council

**Treasurer:** must be a member of the Core Council, have knowledge of basic accounting

The current officers are:

President: Rosario Iaconis (NY), Vice President: Bill Dal Cerro (IL), Financial Secretary: Alfred Cardone (NY), Treasurer: Renata Sdao (CA)

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## Council Chairman Runs for Parliament



Anthony Cardillo, our Advisory Council Chairman, has chosen to run for the Italian Parliament on the National Alliance ticket.

It was the National Alliance, under the direction of Mirko Tremaglia, that pushed to give Italian citizens abroad the right to representation in the homeland.

Cardillo has been an NA representative in New York for many years and counts Tremaglia and Italy's foreign minister Gianfranco Fini as personal friends. The voting district for this office covers all of North and Central America, a widely scattered constituency.

**Chicago Film** (cont. from pg. 1)  
and bred.)

We look forward to welcoming Gia and ModioMedia to our family of production companies. To cement our relationship she has made Institute Vice President Bill Dal Cerro her associate producer. (Bill and Gia happen to be cousins.) Bill is a local educator who will help with research and fundraising.

To clinch this entire project we have a letter of intent from local PBS station WTTW to air the finished film in October, Italian Heritage Month. With a budding relationship with ModioMedia, Joe Mantegna and WTTW, the Italic Institute must now focus on sponsors. If you or your company wants to be a part of this historic broadcast, and later a DVD that will be a part of every Italian American home in Chicagoland, call us at 312.867.1644 or 516.488.7400.

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## Sustaining The Cause

The Institute gratefully thanks the following donors:

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

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

The City of New York (Councilwoman Madeline Provenzano)  
The State of New York (State Sen. John Marchi)

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

George P. Ricci  
The Stauber Family Foundation

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

Anonymous

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

Charles J. Cerutti  
George DiScala  
Anthony Martignetti

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

Rev. Thomas G. Arminio  
Joseph S. Barbaro  
Adele Assante Carlson  
Judge Philip F. Ludovici  
Charles Sclafani  
Carlo Simoni  
Richard J. Vannucci

### Friends of the Institute (\$25 +)

Diane T. Bianco  
Giovanni Cannone  
Bottari Construction  
Teresa E. Cieurleo  
Louis J. Familghetti  
Robert Firriolo

# Spotlight on the Future

## What Could Be...

We take a great deal of pride in the youngsters who spend their Saturday mornings learning Italian language and culture at our *Aurora* classes. This year, *Aurora* is serving some 200 children aged 10 and 11 in eight classes in four counties. Although they come from varied ethnic backgrounds, clearly the majority has some Italian heritage. Here are two students from one of our Nassau County classes, Victoria and Robert. Were *Aurora* fully endowed and the major organizations paralleled their existing programs with ours, this is what the future might offer Victoria and Robert:

- Ages 10 & 12** - Twenty-four Saturdays of Introductory *Aurora* language & culture
- Ages 13 & 14** - Prep at a local Roman Academy (to be founded by the Italic Institute)
- Ages 15 - 18** - Public or private school with Advanced Placement language
- Age 15** - Three-week summer camp for total immersion
- Age 16** - Summer in Italy program
- Age 18** - Generous scholarships for a college and major of their choice.

The above system would give each child a solid classical foundation upon which to grow. It would ease the financial burdens on Italian American families and carry our heritage to the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond. This is similar to what Jews, Greeks, Armenians and other ethnic groups do to guarantee their future.



**Victoria Angelina Caccamo**  
5th Grade  
100% Italian

Ancestral region: *"Sicily"*  
Why she is attending *Aurora*?  
*"To learn about my heritage."*  
Is *Aurora* her first foreign language course? *"Yes."*  
Does anyone speak Italian in her family? *"Yes, my dad."*  
Has she ever been to Italy. *"No."*  
Her favorite *Aurora* things?  
*"The games & snacks."*  
Want to continue *Aurora*?  
*"Definitely!"*  
What language does she want to take in school? *"Italian!"*



**Roberto Talerico**  
5th Grade  
100% Italian

Ancestral region: *"Calabria, Sicily"*  
Why he is attending *Aurora*?  
*"To speak better with relatives"*  
Is *Aurora* his first foreign language course? *"Yes."*  
Does anyone speak Italian in his family? *"Yes, mom, dad, grandparents"*  
Has he ever been to Italy. *"Yes"*  
His favorite *Aurora* things?  
*"Mille Miglia(game) and how learning is fun."*  
Want to continue *Aurora*? *"Yes"*  
What language does he want to take in school? *"Italian!"*

# Shop Macy's, Help the IIA

A special Community Shopping Day will be held from **9:00 am - 10:00 pm on Wednesday, April 26 at Macy's Roosevelt Field**, Garden City, NY. You can purchase a special shopping ticket from the Institute for \$10 (IIA keeps 100% of the proceeds from ticket sales). Benefits to the shopper include:

- 20% savings on women's, men's and children's fashions and accessories, jewelry, furs and area rugs. (Certain exclusions apply)
- 15% savings on bed and bath, housewares, china, crystal, silver, watches, frames, luggage and Stride Rite. (Certain exclusions apply)
- The first 1,000 customers to enter the store with their pre-purchased ticket will receive a \$10 Macy's gift card. One customer will receive a \$500 Macy's gift card. Customers will also be eligible to win thousands of dollars worth of prizes.

Call the IIA office at 516-488-7400 for more information, or mail your check for \$10 per person to: Italic Institute of America, P.O. Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11002. Your ticket will be mailed to you.

## Dispatch from Italy

*[Bob Masullo is a member of our Advisory Council and rep for southern California. He is currently spending a year in northern Italy.]*

My first impressions: The incredible amount of Italy's wealth that has gone into churches (and still goes, since these structures have to be maintained) is something that we should seriously examine. My suspicion is that the focus on erecting churches has done more to harm than help Italians and by extension Italian Americans. Think of the loss in infrastructure and education these churches cost our ancestors. Today many Italian cities have more churches than they have priests.

I have been unable to engage anyone in a serious political discussion here. They don't like Bush, that is for sure, but unlike the French and Germans, they don't get apoplectic about him. They react to him much the way they react to the pope, with polite respect and almost total disdain.

Their problem is Berlusconi, and unless I am misreading signs, they are going to do something about him come April. I predict he will lose badly.

The attitude of Italians toward Italian Americans is odd. When they learn that you are IA they will always ask what town in Italy your family came from. Then they will say, "Oh, yes, I know it well" or "I don't know it" and that will be the end of it. There is no sense of kinship expressed. IAs here are just like any other Americans in the eyes of most Italians. Italians show more emotion when I tell them I am from California than when I tell them I am IA. "California" means utopia; "IA" means nothing.

Italy needs kids, as do all western European countries, and they're getting them. Unfortunately, they're coming from eastern Europe, Turkey, Africa and Asia.

I feel fortunate to be here now. Italy and all western Europe is still living high on the hog. I doubt that will be true for many more years, though.

Bob

**Our Italian School** (cont. from p. 1)

you would think were created to underwrite programs like *Aurora* turn a cold, deaf ear to it. Yet, politicians of various ethnicities embrace *Aurora* classes as assets to their districts. In fact, we have eight classes currently in session in four Metro New York counties. Churches and public schools donate classrooms to *Aurora*, school principals and superintendents allow us to distribute flyers to their students, and legislators provide grants to us year after year. But our own brothers and sisters, leaders of organizations we all know and respect, treat our appeals like crank calls. We are not even given the courtesy of a curt reply. These are organizations to which many of our members belong.

It is difficult to explain why the Italic Institute is overlooked. One guess is that each organization has an unbending charitable agenda based on medical donations or individual scholarships. Perhaps they have no desire to dilute their customary giving. Maybe they prefer to give money to high-profile medical charities and to individuals who will benefit directly with a scholarship grant. Perhaps they just don't understand what *Aurora* is all about.

The bottom line is the Italic Institute must proceed alone. We must redouble our efforts to seek grants from non-Italic sources, from states and cities, from corporations and wealthy donors. At one time, before 9/11, our *Aurora* budget was \$50,000. Today it is \$24,000. Al Qaeda dealt a blow to Italian heritage as well as the United States. Unfortunately, we need money to seek money. Writing grant applications, filling out the burdensome paperwork required by bureaucratic government agencies and the budget-breaking cashflow problems resulting from extended waits for actual grant money is a financial challenge for

us. Yet, in comparison to the scholarship programs maintained by the major organizations, only a fraction of "Italian" money is needed to run our *Aurora* after-school system. In other words, the major organizations need to raise 100% of their give-away money from Italian American donors. Our Institute needs only perhaps 10%. The rest is funded from public money (public money, by the way, that is regularly tapped by other ethnic groups to educate their children). Someone needs to explain this to the major organizations. They are certainly not listening to us.

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**Alito** (cont. from pg. 1)

reversed his "Italians last" strategy, passing Michael Luttig and Harvie Wilkinson to find someone who could successfully run the Congressional gauntlet. (Italic people always seem to get the job done.)

For the record, Alito's dad was a college graduate and served as the director of New Jersey's Office of Legislative Services (1952-1984). Additionally, Judge Alito has more judicial experience—15 years on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals—than Chief Justice John Roberts, who sailed through Congressional hearings.

But Samuel Alito, who was nominated to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court, still generated *Sturm und Drang*. Howard Dean kicked off the invective with a *sub-rosa* document trashing the judge's Italian heritage.

Commentators scurrilously suggested that as a U.S. prosecutor Alito took a dive in a New Jersey mob case. In fact, Alito's predecessor had badly botched the court preparation.

Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio (NPR) and The Nation's Katrina van den Heuvel fueled this animus with staccato references to "Scalito" and Machine-gun Sammy."

Sam Seder and Janeane Garofalo—Air America Radio's Fred and Ginger—began depicting Judge Alito as the Beelzebub of back-alley abortions.

Even conservative curmudgeon Robert Novak let fly with a William Bennett-like Freudian slur: "Alito's dissents on criminal-search and gun-control cases are cited to turn him into a 'jack-booted thug.' Perhaps a heavy-handed suggestion of a fascistic Alito.

Radio wag Don Imus allowed one of his coarse on-air cronies to refer to Alito as "a meatball sucking wop."

Though not a Republican (or Democrat), I came away convinced that this individual would make a first-rate Supreme Court justice. What's more, Samuel Alito is a Renaissance man and a humanist. I am confident that his judicial decisions will be based on law and reason, not blind ideology.

## RaffleTime!

You will notice a raffle book enclosed with this newsletter. Ticket donations for the benefit of the *Aurora Program* are \$5 each or 5 for \$20. **First prize is \$500, second prize is \$250, third prize is \$150, and fourth prize is \$100.** The drawing will be held on March 11, 2006 at the Garden City Park *Aurora* class. The winner need not be present. Mail the ticket stubs and check to: Italic Institute of America, P.O. Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11002, or use the enclosed envelope.

**YES!**

**I share the values of the Italic Institute.**

Enroll me as a member [\$20]

Enclosed is a donation [tax deductible]

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

## How Do We Do It?

by Alfred Cardone, Financial Secretary

The major Italian American organizations give away millions of dollars each year and still keep hefty sums in reserve, carry heavy overhead such as buildings, produce glossy periodicals and pay full-time staffers. One group has 23 full-time employees! That's over a million dollars right there. Yet, we have found our niche as an Italian American "think tank" and the leader in heritage education, all on a budget that would put the big guys out of business.

The secret? The Italic Institute works from rent-free home offices. And, what we miss in fundraising galas we make up for in public grants and member donations. And, of course, we owe 95% of our productivity to the men and women who freely give their time and skills to our mission: **Vincent Elarde**, computer support; **Andrew Ricci**, design; **George Ricci, Esq.**, legal; **Maria Galetta**, translations; **Anthony Cardillo**, Italian gov. liaison; **Tony DeNonno**, *Aurora* fundraiser; **Rita Mancini & Maria Peluso**, administration; **John Mancini**, IIA chairman; **Rosario Iaconis**, IIA president; **Bill Dal Cerro**, IIA Vice President; **Renata Sdao**, IIA Treasurer; **Don Fiore**, IIA Director *Project Italia*; **Tony Vecchione**, feature writer, *Italic Way*; and a new member of our staff, **Gia Amella**, filmmaker.

Our members and the Italian American community are fortunate to have such a team.

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