

The Officers' Log

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WE PROTEST "LATINO" MUSEUM

A press release was sent out in May with copies to U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA) objecting to the use of the word Latino on a newly proposed museum for Hispanic heritage for Washington DC. We contend that "Latino" is a term of convenience rather than an accurate description of certain peoples of the Americas. Government agencies have generally not recognized "Latino" as a formal designation for Spanish-speaking citizens or foreign nationals whose ancestry is traced to the Iberian peninsula, Africa and native American population.

Latium (Lazio) is in Italy. Latins or "*Latini*" include people of Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese blood. Using "Latino" to encompass native Indians, mestizos, mulattos and anyone who speaks Spanish is clearly inappropriate. As an example, the annual trans-Atlantic conference held with Spanish, Portuguese and South American delegates is called the Ibero-American Summit, not Latino. ****

NY TIMES & A.P. ASKED TO EXPLAIN

Our officers have noticed that both the Associated Press and *The New York Times* regularly use the word Mafia (capital M) to describe Italian American organized criminals. Historically, as a result of the Valachi Hearings in 1963 and the demands of Joe Colombo's Civil Rights League in 1971, the FBI and local law enforcement stopped using "Mafia" in favor of LCN (*La Cosa Nostra*). In fact, the FBI also uses that term "American Mafia." The Mafia (unmodified) describes organized crime in Sicily.

We explained all this to the "Stylebook" editors at the Associated Press and the *Times*. (These are the folks who choose the nomenclature that all reporters must use.) Their response was cordial but surprisingly unscholarly. For example, when we cited the primary dictionary definition of the Mafia, they countered with the secondary definition. When we quoted law enforcement nomenclature, they claimed it would only confuse the general public. When we asked that they use "American Mafia" they retorted that

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AURORA- A-MANO COMPLETED

Our "Hands-On" pilot course was completed in April with eight graduates.

After an hour of language instruction and games the students learned to mold chocolate Italys (our exclusive molds), write Italic calligraphy and make working models of a Roman water clock and calculator. The real gimmick was that both the calculator and clock functioned with macaroni parts. These gadgets were designed exclusively for *Aurora*.

The 5-lesson course was improvised to keep *Aurora* alive after an extra long hiatus resulting from a funding gap. Spring is the worst time for after-school programs as Saturdays are taken up with communions, sports and family outings. Both our Introductory and Advanced course are usually held in the late fall.

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SUSTAINING THE CAUSE

Builders of Italic Pride (\$500 +)
UNICO - North Shore LI Chapter

Supporters of the Institute (\$50 +)
S.M. Apollo
Charles Sclafani

Friends of the Institute (\$25 +)
Marie G. Barbieri
Grazia Francioli Bittner

Classical or Immigrant?

Some people don't understand the need to change their perspective. Do you know someone who needs heritage awakening? Give them a membership in the Italic Institute.

We are the Alternative!

_____ Enroll the person below as a member (\$50 check enclosed)

_____ Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation of \$_____

Name

Address

Italic Institute of America
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Floral Park, NY 11002
Tel: (516) 488-7400 Fax: (516) 488-4889
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NY TIMES & A.P., from p.1

“American” would be redundant. When we noted to the Associated Press that their phrase “Italian Five Families” was incorrect and redundant because only Italian American organized gangs are labeled “families,” they agreed to use “Italian American” but not drop the ethnic tag. Call it spiteful.

In short, the media has full control not only of our image but how we are labeled.

So, why make an issue of semantics? Perhaps the better question is why allow others to define you? This is the essence of our image problem. We often cite journalist Robert MacNeil, author of *The Story of English*, who wrote that attaching criminal jargon to Italian Americans “is to do with the power of the media not the Mafia.”

It is interesting to note that in Italy the media and law enforcement do not use terms like “crime families” but the English-Scottish word “clan.” Imagine trying to sell that usage to the American press!



ADVANCED PLACEMENT TESTS FINALIZED

The Italian government has funded half the \$3 million cost of restoring the Italian Advanced Placement tests in U.S. high schools and the balance was raised from the major organizations (mainly the Columbus Citizens foundation and the National Italian American Foundation). We contacted the College Board to find out exactly what \$3 million bought. Essentially, the Board agreed to freeze the annual number of students applying for the AP tests at 2,300 indefinitely. This is the highest number that Italian language had attracted in the previous three years. The Board originally demanded a minimum of 5,000 –10,000 students. Students pay the College Board to take the AP tests, and receive college credits for each test passed.

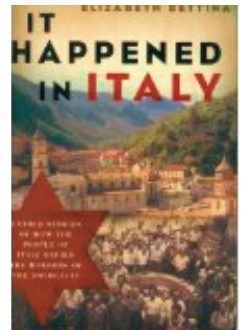
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JEWISH MUSEUM CONTACTED

Member Joseph Graziose alerted us to displays at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan that failed to give Italy and Italians full credit for saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust, by some estimates 100,000 lives.

An official letter of concern was sent to Museum Director David Marwell. Copies were sent to former NYS Governor Mario Cuomo and former U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato, both of whom were crucial to the establishment and funding of the Museum in the 1980s. Mr. Marwell has not replied to our letter nor to our phone call. From experience, we doubt if D'Amato or Cuomo have any interest in coming to our assistance. An alternate strategy is in the works.

The museum bookstore does not even carry landmark books on the subject such as *It Happened in Italy* by Elizabeth Bettina or *Italians and the Holocaust* by Susan Zuccotti- a telling oversight. The museum's website is www.mjhnyc.org.



www.italic.org

We've made some recent additions to our web site, italic.org, that you may find interesting and informative.

Among them is a new section called *Galleria Italica* showcasing videos that illustrate the significance of our Italic heritage, often overlooked or denigrated by American culture. These videos, produced by the IIA's Vice Chairman Don Fiore, are hosted on YouTube.

WIKIPEDIA UPDATE

Institute member Mario Ingnagni of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota took it upon himself to revise the popular Wikipedia entries for Italian American History and Stereotyping. Mario utilized previous issues of our *Italic Way Magazine* to pump up the facts on these websites. The entries are now more authentic and worthy of visiting researchers. Our community needs to be more pro-active and vigilant in defense of its image and history. *Bravissimo, Mario!*

Remember, our Institute can be accessed at www.italic.org. Check out the changes.

Our Institute had continually advised the Italian Language Foundation and others in the community that reaching 5,000 would be impossible given the absence of after-school programs for Italian American pre-teens and teens. Our message must have gotten through. By insisting on the anemic 2,300 students, community leaders lowered the bar and gave themselves a breather. Restoring the test is clearly an ego trip costing \$3 million to hang in with the big boys — French Spanish, Mandarin — but just barely. It will be a struggle enough to maintain 2,300 students. The Italian AP tests were suspended for two years and some potential students have already avoided Italian. If the wolf comes to the door again we will no doubt be under 2,000 students. A sad commentary. ****



Folklorist and Institute member Lionel Bottari (with U.S. flag) and friends staged a tribute to freedom fighter Giuseppe Garibaldi and Italy's reunification at his statue in Garibaldi Park in the Taylor Street ("Little Italy") neighborhood of Chicago's Near West Side.

AURORA, from p. 1

Keeping *Aurora* alive is an Institute priority. However, the program was designed to be multi-site, not just a local Long Island activity. "So many things are undermining the original vision of *Aurora*," says John Mancini, Director. "The lack of funding and support by the major Italian American organizations, the scarcity of classroom space on Saturdays, and the competition for youngsters' free time are difficult to overcome. Until community leaders and parents embrace heritage education all we can do is maintain *Aurora* as a model and update our techniques and materials."



President Jason Nappi of the local Nassau County, Long Island chapter of UNICO presents IIA Chairman John Mancini with a \$500 check for the *Aurora Heritage Program*

MEET FATHER SAL POLIZZI

St. Louis -- “Can you believe they’ve been showing *The Godfather* all day on cable TV today? What an absolute disgrace.” These are the first words heard upon meeting Father Sal Polizzi, the legendary dynamo of St. Louis’s famous Italian American neighborhood called “The Hill.”

Later on, Polizzi, whose family emigrated to St. Louis from Sicily, clarifies his stance on the 1972 film about a Sicilian mob family: “Whenever people say they love (*The Godfather*), I tell them that the movie is a personal insult to my mother and father. I always make that absolutely clear.”

Born 80 years ago in an Italian enclave that preceded the nearby “Hill” area, Father Polizzi attracted national attention in the 1970s when he led the fight to successfully block the dispersion of the neighborhood. Little Italys across the country were being destroyed in the name of urban renewal. Father Polizzi was determined that “The Hill” would not be one of them.

Under Polizzi’s leadership, and with the help of high-profile former natives of the neighborhood like baseball great Joe Garagiola, “The Hill” not only survived, but thrived. It remains one of St. Louis’s most visited tourist spots.

“See those fire hydrants?” he says, pointing. “We were one of the first places in the country to paint them red, white and green, the Italian colors. And the local bocce ball hall holds tournaments with teams from around the U.S.”

In addition to introducing “toasted ravioli” to the Italian American menu, “The Hill” nurtured baseball greats Garagiola and Yogi Berra, built St. Ambrose Church, and produced a slew of talented soccer players who helped the U.S. team beat mighty England in the 1952 World Cup.

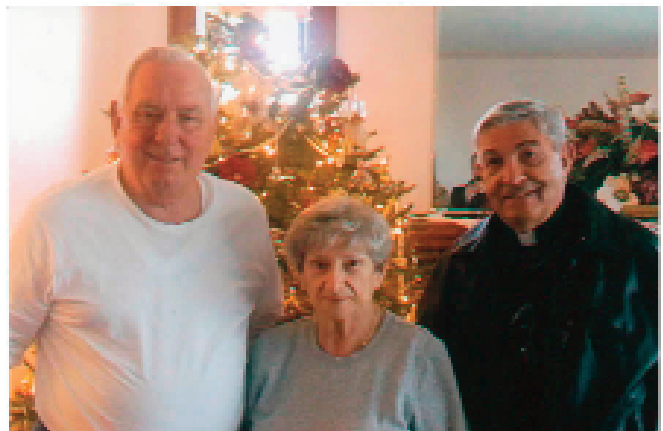
Father Polizzi says that the success behind “The Hill” is its unique triangular foundation: “You have the Church, elected officials and local neighborhood organizations all working together. When you cooperate, things get done.”

That success is what has made “The Hill” a magnet for visitors, both local and out-of-state. On Friday and Saturday nights, the area lights up with cars and revelers, many of them looking to enjoy the sights and smells of Italy.

To learn more about St. Louis’s “The Hill,” visit : www.Hill2000.org



Father Sal Polizzi (right), next to his cousin, Father Vince Bommarito, outside of St. Ambrose Church.



Father Sal Polizzi (right) with parishioners John and Rose Marie Bianchi.