



# The Founders' Log



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March, 1998

Brian Schiavo, Editor

*We welcome your participation. Please send us job opportunities, new employment, personals or any other news items of interest.*

*Fax the ISI office at: (516) 488-4889*

*or mail to:  
Italic Studies Inst.  
PO Box 818  
Floral Park, NY 11001*

**The 11th Annual Gala** is May 30th at Terrace on the Park (Queens County, overlooking the Unisphere)- Tickets are \$275 each. Honorees: **Gen. Anthony Zinni** USMC (Persian Gulf Command), **Admiral Guido Venturoni** (Italian Chief of Staff), **Daniel Petrocelli, Esq.** (Simpson Civil Trial), **Robert Mondavi** (Vintner), **Peter Falk** (television's Lt Columbo). Your hosts are Dinner Chairmen **Charles Guigno** and **Michael Cafiero**. For information call (516) 488-7400.

## Memorandum

Founders of the Italic Studies Institute, 1987

*Stefano Gristina  
John Mancini  
Carl Pescosolido*

*March, 1998*

**Re: Being Open and Frank**

Dear Member,

We were approached by a number of members to explain why several internal issues have been the subject of "street talk." It appears that many rumors are floating around that seem one-sided and negative toward the Institute's mission. Although we prefer not to debate rumors, we have been persuaded to speak out for the sake of truth. And what better way to speak out than to be interviewed. So, two of us (Steve and John), here in New York City, sat down with Founders' Log Editor Brian Schiavo for a frank chat.

Warmest regards,

The Founders

**Q. Why doesn't the Italic Studies Institute give money to charities? To scholarships?**

**STEVE:** Because we are a charity! I personally give to charities like the Church, to the poor, to cancer research. However, when I give money to Italic Studies, it's because I expect it to go to projects that promote my heritage and my children's heritage. Is it right to accept donations for Italic Studies and then give them to The Salvation Army, for example? It is not. That is not our purpose!

**JOHN:** Scholarships sound nice but our mission is to promote the Italic culture not Italic people. If we give \$500 to an Italian-American college student to study, say, French Literature, is that what we are here for? But why give \$500 to one person when we have an Aurora program that reaches hundreds of kids learning Italian? For \$500 we can subsidize fourteen children in our Level I course. It is such a good idea that NIAF and the Italian government contribute to our Aurora Program.

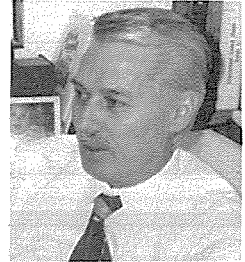
**STEVE:** In some cases we have given to charities, I mean, money we get from raffles and special appeals. We have given thousands of dollars to other charities through these special appeals. But the money that comes in from -- members' dues, from the Gala, and the luncheons -- it is all given to the appropriate charities within the Institute.

**JOHN:** Steve makes an excellent point. We have given thousands of dollars to medical and educational charities. We can still do that so long as the money is raised as a sideline such as

raffles, etc. I thought this compromise was working well, but some well-meaning members want to convert our original mission even more and that's when you have to question the idea.

**Q. Is it better to raise money for a specific project like the Aurora program or a building in Manhattan rather than to attract money to a general fund?**

STEVE: Yes. One of the reasons people donate money is a belief that it will be used in a certain way. So maybe you will find more people interested in [giving] money for a building and others that will not think it important.



Steve

JOHN: Our constitution designates each Institute Program [*Aurora*, *Project Italia*, *Italic Way*] as a "cost center." Your \$20 general membership fee goes solely to *The Italic Way*. Donations to *Aurora* help only that program. A building in Manhattan will be on its own, in the same manner. We are not here to sacrifice our mission or to get sidetracked.

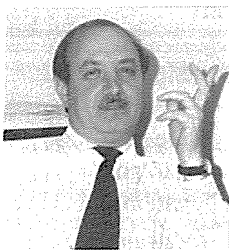
**Q. Is there any real chance of buying a building in Manhattan?**

STEVE: The last solicitation we made brought in \$2 million in pledges. Unfortunately, the building we had our eye on was sold for \$3 million; Manhattan real estate is very strong. But we proved that the membership wants to focus on a building. This is what a President and Vice President should be doing. This is why we had a Domus Board of past governors and a Plenary Council of businessmen. Not only to raise funds but to build for the future.

JOHN: Let me say that not only it is possible, it is long overdue. The problem is that we lack the focus. Instead of analyzing and re-analyzing the mission of the Institute and trying to make it into a charitable club, we should be using our creative energy in real estate to establish our Domus (Home) in Manhattan.

STEVE: Definitely, I agree with you. We, [the Founders], are committed to renting an office in Manhattan by the middle of this year, in a prestigious building. It will be a step closer to our own building here. The leadership in the Plenary Council will accomplish this in a shorter time because they will understand why we exist.

**Q. Has the Institute been seriously hurt by losing its President and Vice President last year?**



John

JOHN: This is our 11th year and we have survived despite unhappy members who just couldn't accept our original mission. They either walk away or they become apathetic. We started something very important here in Manhattan. I must say that it bothers me very much to lose the interest of some great people, who I considered friends and business associates. I am the first to admit that I am a fanatic about many things but I always tried to accommodate different views, within reason. *Italic Studies* is a strange concept to many people-- it's about elevating ourselves as well as educating. We broke a lot of old stereotypes. But *Italic* people are resilient. Other dedicated, hardworking people have stepped forward to carry the standard. But we never told anyone to leave ISI, it was their choice. I, for one, would welcome them back if we could iron out the problems. Unfortunately, there are some individuals who have chosen to use rumors as their means of vengeance. Obviously, the Institute's good works take a backseat to their personal vendettas.

STEVE: Look at the facts. All the programs are in operation -- the magazine, the newsletter, the children's classes, the luncheons. Our honorees this year are of the highest caliber -- the head of the Italian military, a four-star American general. We will have a Golf Outing in July and our Band Concert in October. That sounds good to me! And I have always said we have more to unite us than to divide us.

**Q. This year's Gala is being held in Queens instead of the Waldorf-Astoria. Isn't that a step down for the Institute?**

STEVE: It's not a step down. The main purpose of the Gala is to raise income, not pay high overhead. Also, to have fun and enjoy each other's company. The honorees and the awards are secondary. Giving the awards is more important than where you give them.

JOHN: You have to remember that many of the other organizations hold their affairs at lesser-priced hotels than the Waldorf. I, personally, would prefer the Waldorf for its cache value but this year's Dinner Chairmen, Charles Guigno and Michael Cafiero,

have been charged with maximizing profits. This is their decision and we back them 100%.

**Q. Is it wrong to want the Institute to be a club like the Columbus Club or Tiro a Segno [Target Club]?**

JOHN: We are certainly not against having a club -- a dining club, that is -- within the Institute. Actually, that is why having a building is so important. We realize the publicity value of such a club, especially an exclusive one. Why not even have a cooking school there? Italians in this city love to eat yet there is no Italian Cooking Academy in the Metropolitan area -- amazing. The building could house an Italian language center, a library and research center, representative offices for the 20 Italian regions. We already have the plans on file.



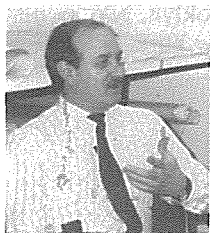
STEVE: If some people wanted a club, why don't we have one now? But the purpose of a club is not just to eat. It is to support Italic Studies -- something that is permanent, that lives beyond the life time of its Founders. We should build a home for the Institute; the club will follow. This is a goal to unite us.

**Q. How can the Founders keep the Plenary Council motivated to generate the cash we need?**

STEVE: A tough question! We must select the appropriate people for each task. People must have faith in the Institute or they will not accomplish anything. We, the Founders, are responsible for whatever happens. We must find the right people for the right positions.

JOHN: If the leaders of the Plenary Council -- the President, Vice President, and committee chairs -- do not understand the mission of the Institute they will not be motivated. I can understand that it is easier to ask for donations for hospitals, handicapped children, or earthquake relief, but I am proud of what we do. Does Harvard University tell its alumni that their contributions help Ronald MacDonald House just to get money out of them? No. Education is not a dirty word. Preserving, defending, and promoting the Italic heritage is not a second-class cause.

**Q. Is ISI over-reaching itself by trying to involve itself with the Italian government and the U.S. Congress?**



STEVE: It is part of our mission. We should know the representatives of the Italian government, be aware of what is going on in Italy, and understand the politics of the new Italy. Look, we have finally received grants from Italy, and Italian companies participate in our dinners. Do Jewish people avoid Israel? Aren't Irish organizations close with Ireland?

JOHN: Thirty-one members of the United States Congress claim Italian ancestry. This is probably one of the largest groups in Congress, and yet they have done zero for the Italic culture. They are an untapped resource. We are, without question, the last ethnic group in this country to wake up to that fact.

STEVE: In Italy, more than 90% of the people vote. In America, less than half of us vote. We must learn to participate fully in a democracy, like the Italians.

**Q. We heard that you, John, asked Mayor Giuliani to pay for his ticket to the Gala in 1996. Isn't that counter productive if you want political support for the Institute?**

JOHN: I did not ask Mayor Giuliani to pay to attend the dinner. We thought that the Mayor was a great opera fan and would want to see Franco Zeffirelli, our honoree, one of the great directors of opera in the world. Instead, he passed the invitation on to a commissioner with an Italian name in the computer department. Mind you, not a close staff member or relative. Since we were paying Waldorf prices, it wasn't a football wedding you know, I asked the commissioner to support Italic Studies by purchasing a ticket. He chose not to.

STEVE: I cannot think of anything Mayor Giuliani has done specifically for Italians in this city. Can you? Sometimes a little controversy can bring attention. How do you say it? The squeaky wheel gets the oil.

**Q. Doesn't being Italian mean family, love and food? Why doesn't that come across in the magazine?**

STEVE: Those things take care of themselves without our help. We need to talk about other things like political power,



prominent people in business, Italy's place in the world. Where do you find these subjects except in *The Italic Way*?

JOHN: They are nice stereotypes, but as Steve says, they support themselves. We should explore the 100 other sides of being Italian. Does family, food and love explain the Renaissance or the Roman Empire, or even Christopher Columbus?

**Q. What are the weaknesses of the Institute?**



STEVE: Very little money. Many things can be corrected with money. We are not professional fundraisers. We do not have money to hire them. Until we have enough money to have professionals working on all these good ideas and good projects our growth will be very slow.

JOHN: Our weaknesses are the same as every other Italian-American group -- we are all clever but clever individually. We all need to march to the same drum and march in the same direction. We need to mobilize our politicians to work for us, not just stroke us at election time. We settle and accept too easily, whether it's Hollywood or apathetic politicians.

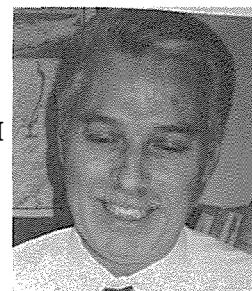
**Q. What are the strengths of the Institute?**

JOHN: Easy. Creativity and vision. We have touched on every point of education. Whether it is music, through our Italic Studies Band, or through our magazine, *The Italic Way*, or through our youth program, we will take any problem and overcome it. We have some great talent within our organization. I am afraid to mention names for fear of leaving someone out. But they are devoted to our mission and have chosen to stay and work despite inevitable disagreements now and then. They are the stuff that made the Italians a great people.

STEVE: We fill in the missing pieces that other organizations overlook. We are better equipped to attract the more thoughtful Italian-American, and non-Italians who want more knowledge about our history and culture.

**Q. What is your vision for the Italic Studies Institute?**

STEVE: I have been in this country almost twenty years. I raised my children and grandchildren here because I love this country. But I was shocked when I first arrived to see what a poor image Italian-Americans had. Their mentality was from 100 years ago. Italy is modern and very aggressive in every field. But Italian-Americans knew nothing about it. Everything here was about pizza and the mafia. That's why we founded the Institute. My vision is to change the mentality of Italian-Americans. We still have a long way to go.



JOHN: I want the Institute to be the center for Italic culture in this country. There is no central core for the 15 or 20 million people who claim Italian ancestry. This is the last generation, the last opportunity, to accomplish this. Intermarriage is making us dinosaurs. My vision is for an *Italic Way Magazine* with a circulation of 50,000 instead of 3,000. My vision is for a premiere cultural center in Mid-Manhattan. My vision is for Italian-Americans to know more about their heritage than on what hilltop their poor grandfathers eked out a living. I envision a people who know good image from bad image, and who don't settle for propaganda. But we need to focus. I am always sobered by the fact that it took the Romans 500 years to unify Italy. After that, it only took Italians 200 years to conquer the world. ❖

### Council Reports

◆ The Advisory Council met on January 31st. An unanimous vote of confidence was given to the Governors and the *pro tem* officers on their direction and their adherence to the ISI constitution. The Advisors agreed that elections for officers is not required until February, 1999. This will allow the *pro tem* officers to serve until then.

◆ The next issue of *The Italic Way* (XXVIII) is at the printer and will be mailed out by month's end. This issue focuses on Imperial Italy (Roman Empire) and features articles on the Italian Navy, Italian-American Radio, historian Giovanni Schiavo, Italy's Civil War, and Italy's New Role in the World.

◆ The Plenary Council held its Friday the 13th Luncheon at La Veranda Restaurant in Times Square in March. Guest Speaker was Prof. Salvatore Primeggia who regaled the crowd with anecdotes of Italian superstition. Fifty-five members attended.

MARCH ALMANAC

**ISI Calendar of events:**  
**Annual Golf Outing** is July 27th at the Hempstead Country Club  
**Columbus Day Band Concert** is Oct. 2nd

- March 1** - National sports broadcaster, the late **Harry Caray** (born **Carabina**) was born in St. Louis in 1920.  
 - The late judge **John Sirica**, who broke the Watergate Scandal that destroyed the Nixon presidency, was born in 1904.
- March 4** - **Antonio Vivaldi**, classical composer of the Four Seasons opus, was born in 1678.
- March 6** - Comedian **Lou Costello**, of Abbott & Costello, was born in 1908.
- March 9** - Queen Mary of Scotland's advisor **David Rizzio** was murdered by her jealous husband in 1566.
- March 10** - **Marcello Malpighi**, founder of the science of microscopic anatomy was born in 1628.
- March 11** - Supreme Court Justice **Antonin Scalia** was born in 1936.
- March 13** - **Joe Bellino** was born in 1938. He was the first U.S. Naval Cadet to receive football's Heisman Trophy in 1960.
- March 14** - Eleven Italian-Americans were murdered by a New Orleans mob on this date in 1891. Although they were found innocent in a court of law, the mob considered them *mafiosi*, who assassinated the City's crooked sheriff.
- March 15** - **Julius Caesar** was assassinated by members of the Roman Senate who feared his dictatorship.
- March 18** - **Antonio Salviati** was born in 1816. He established the island of Murano in Venice as the center of Italian glass manufacturing for mass production.
- March 19** - St. Joseph's Day when the birds fly back to **Capistrano**, CA. The city was named for an Italian saint.
- March 23** - **Mussolini** founded the Fascist Party in 1919 in Milan, to combat a Communist takeover of Italy.
- March 24** - Civil rights activist **Viola Liuzzo** was murdered by white racists in the South in 1965.
- March 30** - A popular uprising in Palermo, Sicily, to oust the French occupiers, began in 1282. The rebellion is known as the **Sicilian Vespers**.

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