



# The Officers' Log

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## LA CASA: Sour Grapes?



Recently, a journalist for Italian television (RAI) contacted our Institute complaining about his treatment by *La Casa Italiana* at Columbia. Yes, that's the same *Casa* that doesn't like Italian Americans hanging around.

"It seems that Sig. Renato Cantore had worked with the Paterno Family on a biography of Dr. Charles Paterno, one of the original donors of *La Casa*," explains Executive Director John Mancini. Cantore, an editor for RAI's press section, continued on p. 2

### CORRECTIONS TO LOG #51

Member Mario Ignagni lives in Minnesota, not Wisconsin.

*La Casa Italiana* – We originally objected to Columbia University and the Italian government in May, 2008, not 2009

## CALLING HOLLYWOOD

The moguls of Hollywood have a lobby group called the Motion Picture Association of America. The MPAA has an office in Washington, DC, where it schmoozes our national legislators and regulators. Their main goals are to protect "intellectual property" against piracy and to project a good image of Hollywood.

Last month we had occasion to write to the CEO, former U.S. Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT). We asked his advice about how to curb the incessant Hollywood defamation of Italian Americans as evidenced in



**Christopher Dodd**

two new movies, *The Family* and *Don Jon*. The former is a comedy starring Robert DeNiro dealing with an all-violent mob family sent to live in France under the Witness Protection Program. *Don Jon* continued on p. 3

## MEDIA JACKPOT

"It's been a good month for ink!" mused Institute Director John Mancini. "Our officers are now familiar spokesmen to key news outlets."

Chairman Rosario Iaconis published articles and letters promoting *italianita`* in *The New York Times Magazine*, the international edition of *The New York Times*, *The New*



*York Daily News*, *Investor's Business Daily*, New Jersey's *Star-Ledger* and Great Britain's *Financial Times*.

Our president, Bill Dal Cerro, had a letter in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, provoked a frank exchange with an *ESPN* journalist, and caused a stir at *USA Today*.

"What most people in our community don't understand," explains Institute Governor Don Fiore, "is that getting a letter or op-ed continued on p. 2

# YOUR GENEROSITY

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

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Joseph Geraci  
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## ENRICH YOUR PASSION FOR ITALIC STUDIES

Visit our website at [italic.org](http://italic.org). You can catch up on previous issues of *The Italic Way Magazine* or time-travel back to the 1930s with *Atlantica Magazine*. Or check out our monthly Almanac for inspiring anniversaries.

For more timely news check out our Media section.

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## Go For the Entree!

If we Italians love to eat, why stop at the first course?

We are the main course of the Italian heritage, not the *antipasto*.

## We are the Alternative!

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

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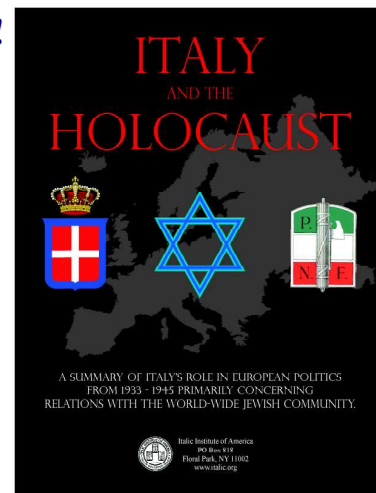
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## Media Jackpot, from p. 1

piece published in mainstream media is a tremendous accomplishment and reaches tens of thousands of new people. Imagine if we had the money to multiply these efforts!"

Our officers fervently believe that the Italian-American media image is in dire need of an upgrade. Observes Chairman Iaconis, "We are the proverbial *rara avis* to many editors. They find our perspective utterly at odds with the prevailing stereotypes of Italian Americans. But we must invest more heavily in this arena."

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## La Casa, from p. 1

approached *La Casa's* director David Freedberg for a book reception at *La Casa* to introduce the bio in America. Cantore was told that *La Casa* does not do such promotions, even if Cantore picked up the costs. Carla Paterno, granddaughter of Dr. Charles and an Institute member, wonders if our lawsuit prompted the snub.

Institute Advisor Alfred Cardone thinks not. "Mr. Freedberg may be rigid but he is consistent," suggests Cardone. "When I first visited *La Casa* a number of years ago the 20,000 volume Paterno Book Collection had been removed and the lobby devoid of any *italianita`* except a semi-pornographic photo passing for 'art.' [Note: That photograph was removed at the behest of our Institute in 2008.]

On a positive note, Carla Paterno reports that the Paterno Collection has been consolidated at Columbia's Butler Library, where it was banished and scattered when *La Casa* was renovated in the 1990s. Again, this consolidation was done by Columbia as a result of Carla's efforts and a prior understanding between the Italic Institute and Italy's Consul General Natalia Quintavalle in February, 2012.

Chairman Rosario Iaconis notes, "Victory is not yet ours, but Columbia University has learned to respect the Institute's reach and righteous indignation."

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# Documenting the Futility of War

Among our members, Dr. Gaetano Cavallaro, M.D., stands out. Born in the USA, Dr. Cavallaro obtained his medical degree in Bologna and, after almost a half-century of practice, he embarked on a project that has interested him since childhood – World War I on the Italian Front. His research culminated in a 3-volume self-published history, one of the first comprehensive looks at a struggle few English-speaking people know of beyond Hemmingway’s epic *A Farewell to Arms*.

## A LOST REMEMBRANCE

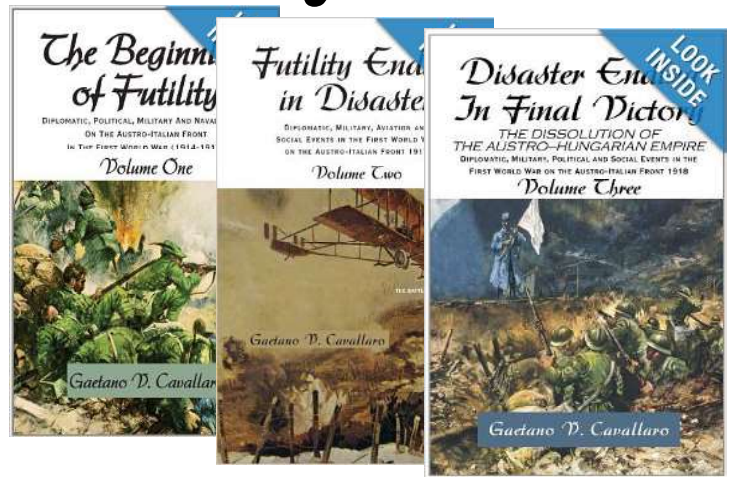
Arrangements are being made in Europe to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of *la Grande Guerra* in 1914, which spread to Italy in 1915. Even after one hundred years, many of the Anglocentric histories of the Italian Front have been negatively skewed or lacking in detail.

This was a war where the ill-equipped but brave Italian army suffered 500,000 combat dead, 1,000,000 wounded and 100,000 starved to death in POW camps. The casualty rate was so high that Italian mothers who already had two sons killed in combat were asked to pick which surviving son would be spared serving in the first line trench (an automatic death sentence).

At the time Italy had an almost 70% illiteracy rate, approaching 90% in the infantry. There existed a great social gap between the infantryman, who spoke only dialect, and his officers who spoke standard Italian. Most of the infantry came from south of Rome and had little concept of an Italian nation.

Combat was often at heights of over one mile and in below-zero temperatures. Soldiers suffered as much from the frigid conditions as from bombs and bullets. Amputations of toes and feet due to frostbite and gangrene were common. Avalanches often buried thousands at a time. Still, ill-equipped Italian infantry stormed Austro-Hungarian positions in eleven bloody offensives, gradually pushing the enemy back and forcing the Germans to come to the rescue of their beleaguered Austrian allies.

That rescue culminated in the infamous Battle of Caporetto in 1917. Using the four commandments of *blitzkrieg* — deception, infiltration, isolation, and annihilation — the Austro-Germans surprised the Italians, causing a 100-mile retreat to the Piave River. (This was the basis of *A Farewell to Arms*.) Confusing the Italians still further, enemy troops were often in front and behind them. These same tactics would be used by



[Dr. Cavallaro's books can be purchased on the internet.](#)

the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge during the Second World War.

Afraid that Italy would collapse, the Allies rushed troops to its aid. These troops arrived after the Italian Army had already stabilized the front. And within three months 75% of them returned to France.

Exactly one year later a resurgent Italy finalized the collapse of Austria at Vittorio Veneto, capturing 450,000 prisoners, and exposing Germany’s southern flank. Germany agreed to an armistice on the Western front only a week after Vittorio Veneto.

At the end of the conflict Prime Minister Orlando told the Italian Parliament: “*Italy today is a great nation not because of an indulgent diplomatic concession but because she has revealed a capacity for action.*”

Prominent men who served on the Italian Front were Pope John XXIII, Ernest Hemingway (American Red Cross Driver), and Lt. Erwin Rommel. \*\*\*\*

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## Hollywood, from p. 1

concerns an Italian American porn-addicted masturbator with a low-life father (played by Tony Danza).

Executive Director John Mancini explains, “There is no use talking to either DeNiro or Danza. DeNiro has already publicly called Italo activists ‘*stronzi*’ (sh-ts) and Danza, an English teacher by diploma, doesn’t quite grasp that Italic refers to Italy. I know, I had to explain our name to him when we met some years ago. Their focus is on money no matter how they get it.”

Dodd may give us the courtesy of a reply since he once was a public servant. Any response would be of interest to us.

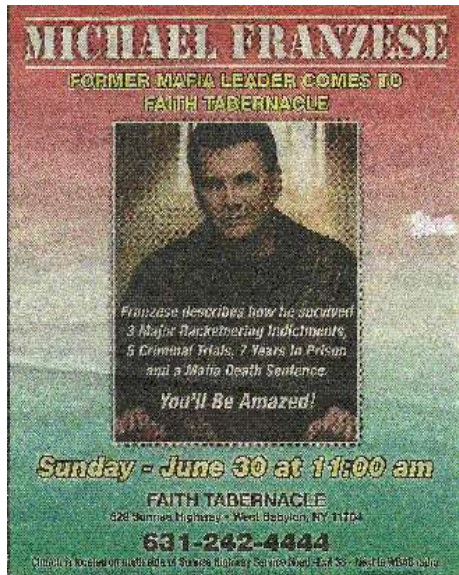
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# Mondo Pazzo

Fox has ordered a pilot of *The Middle Man*, a crime drama about the FBI's attempt to break the Cosa Nostra in Boston during the 1960s. No doubt this series was inspired by *Vegas*, CBS's version of Italian American mobsters "running" the West during the same decade. East to West, crime was an Italian monopoly, according to the media. And what about a series for Boston's own Winter Hill Gang led by Whitey Bulger?

It is with much irony that we must report an offer made directly to our Long Island office by the producers of a new feature movie *The Wannabe*. "I was contacted to help provide extras for a new movie about John Gotti," reports Executive Director John Mancini. "It seems that the production assistant found our website and noticed that we are the 'Guardian of the Italian Heritage.' To her that meant we also help make mob movies."

The newspaper ad reads: "Former Mafia Leader Comes to Faith Tabernacle." A small Protestant sect on Long Island welcomes former Italian American gangsters to preach repentance. After they saw the light (and served their time)



Michael Franzese and Joseph Donato accepted invitations from Pastor James Graziano to share their life lessons with his modest congregation. So now we know that goombah thieves and murderers can do gigs at church as well as in movies. Good to know that even our ethnic screw-ups have a value.

[A mobster hits the lecture circuit](#)

Former New York Governor Mario Cuomo stuck to his principles at a recent Fordham University symposium. Asked if he had reconsidered his negative feelings toward the movie *The Godfather*, Cuomo insisted that the movie and the spin-offs sent a "horrible" message about Italian Americans. He finally watched the movie after 40 years and admitted that it contained "great artistry." But even artistry cannot excuse the defaming message, according to Cuomo.

Bill DeBlasio, the proud half-Italian-American mayor-elect of New York City, handled the Columbus Day controversy like a

seasoned politician. He praised the Genoese admiral's courage and contribution to the discovery of the Americas, but in an obvious nod to his progressive base, DeBlasio noted in an interview at the Columbus Day Parade that there are some "troubling" aspects to Columbus's voyages. Observes Institute Vice President Anthony Vecchione, "Bill DeBlasio is clearly a breath of fresh air, as far as his pride of heritage. Let's hope he will accentuate the world-changing nature of Columbus's accomplishments rather than his demonization."

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## Judge Not...

Italian ridicule doesn't extend to the courtroom, according to New Jersey's Supreme Court.

But it seems Italian American Vincent Sicari thought he could have his *cannolo* and eat it too. The 44-year old municipal judge from South Hackensack moonlights as a wise-cracking comedian with the stage name Vince August. Sicari's comedy routines include self-deprecating jokes about his Italian-American and Catholic background. At a television comedy roast for a *Sopranos* cast member Sicari suggested the roastee take on "a real Italian name," suitable for the "FBI's witness protection program." Not much of a zinger, but being a judge...well.

The state Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Sicari's entertainment career is not compatible with the state's code of judicial conduct. The court feared that Sicari's self-loathing might cast doubts on his impartiality at the bench. Sicari's barbs were also directed at gays and children.



[The ex-judge at his night job](#)

Perhaps the comedian's toughest job now is to explain to his family that ridiculing Italians will be his only job.

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## One Hit, One Miss

The owners of the "Wandering Dago" food truck lost a round in NYS Supreme Court trying to defend their 1st Amendment right to ridicule Italians. But don't count them out just yet, because...

Our institute's complaints to the FCC about anti-Italian dialogue on CBS prime time shows were rejected due to the 1st Amendment. Slander does not apply to victimized groups.

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