



UPDATE

Italic Institute of America
"Italian Pride on a Classical Foundation"

August, 2021

www.italic.org



More than Soccer

by John Mancini, Executive Director



I'm not a soccer fan but, of course, when Team Italia made the European finals against England, I had to cheer them on. We weren't disappointed. The score was tied 1-1 and went into overtime and penalty kicks — to the last nail-biting end, when English kickers failed to get past Neapolitan goalie Gianluigi Donnarumma, whose 6'5" frame maximized his reach.

Most Europeans favored Italy out of spite for the UK's rough exit from the European Union. The Brits needed a victory to demonstrate that Brexit would restore their past glory. But losing to Italy was mostly inglorious.

Even though he was in "enemy" territory, Italian scorer Leonardo Bonucci mocked the booing English fans as weaklings who should "eat more pasta!" These same fans had booed the Italian national anthem earlier.

But the brunt of post-game English anger was directed at three of its own Black players who had failed to score penalty goals. Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself had to denounce his racist countrymen.

Although this wasn't a World Cup victory, it was significant enough to rally Italic people around the globe - especially in the Americas. We are some 60 million out-

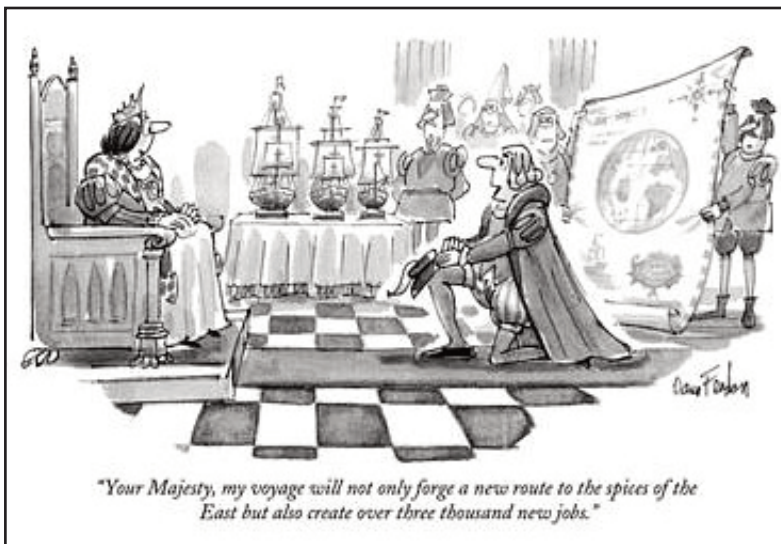
side the ancestral homeland. In light of Italy's suffering from the China Virus, this was a spirit-raiser.

Italian AP on the Edge

The pandemic has affected the turnout for Italian Advanced Placement tests, as it has for other languages, except Japanese. But the Italian tests dropped from 2,658 in 2019 to 2,518 in 2020. The College Board set 2,500 as the minimum for administering tests. Remember, back in 2012 it cost the Italian government and our community \$3 million to restart the tests, promising to keep the test-taking students above 2,500. How many took the Italian test this year has not been published yet, but we are skirting with failure. Enrollment in high school Italian has dropped 5% and 96 fewer colleges are offering Italian — ominous signs.

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Year	Student tests
2018.....	2,926
2019.....	2,658
2020.....	2,518
2021.....	?



Clearly, a monumental underestimate!

Cartoon by Dana Frador via The New Yorker and Conde Nast

Almanac Completed

We have finally completed our online 365-day Almanac. It's an easy way to learn Italian history, only a minute a

day. Just visit www.italic.org and click the Almanac month you want and find out what our ancestors accomplished that day. Chances are it affected world history in some way.

August was when Julius Caesar uttered those famous words: "I came, I saw, I conquered"; when Garibaldi began his reunification of southern Italy; when Pompeii was buried by Vesuvius. Every day is a chance to reflect on our great legacy.

Sparring on Radio

National Public Radio (NPR) reached out to the Institute for an on-air interview last month about *The Godfather* movie series. Our opposition to Mafia movies caught their attention. Bill Dal Cerro and Rosario Iaconis did a Zoom session with NPR's Aisha Harris for her program *Pop Culture Happy Hour*.

As expected, the interview was geared to: Why would anyone be against such great movies? For Aisha (left), who is a 20-something Black woman, filmmaker Cop-



pola's ethnicity added "authenticity" to *The Godfather*. Ditto *The Sopranos*, which she saw as a show which added diversity to the gangster portrayal. Bill (center) and Rosario (right) explained that these 'enriched' films are so pernicious because they wed Italian culture to stereotypes. Although Aisha accepted the premise, she insisted that Mafia movies are inside views of the Italian experience, whereas racist films like *Birth of a Nation* were an outsider's view of Blacks.

To drive home an important point, Bill asked Aisha to name any positive films about Italian Americans that would add balance to our movie image. She was truly flustered and none came to mind.

As Bill and Rosario assessed the interview, they concluded that even a well-informed young Black woman cannot readily see similarities between anti-Italian defamation and anti-minority defamation. Political correctness appears to be a single lane with no room for Italian or even Euro-American sensitivities.

Manchin Encouraged



Recently, our Executive Director John Mancini sent a personal letter to Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) on the subject of his surname. Manchin's original family name was Mancini or Mancino. (The unusual American spelling probably mimicked the Italian pronunciation Mahn-CHEE-knee.) Mancini is among the top 20 common names in Italy

– like Smith. It derives from the Latin for "left-handed" and can be traced as a surname to ancient Italy as Mancinus.

The letter praised Manchin's independent stand in the U.S. Senate in resistance to the Democratic far left agenda, liking it to Manchin's ancient Roman namesake who also found himself unpopular with his colleagues. The coincidence was too good to pass up, according to our Executive Director. He recounted to Manchin the Mancinus conflict in the Roman Senate over 2,000 years ago, documenting the story with excerpts from a book by Cicero. In the end, Mancinus won his battle and was vindicated in history, earning praise from Cicero himself a century later.

If we get a response from Sen. Manchin, we'll let you know.

Grant in Limbo

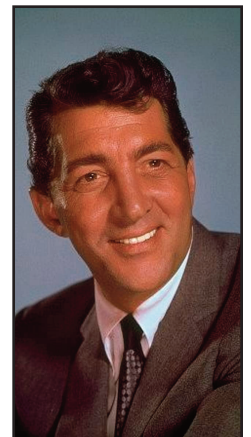
In our last *Update*, we noted that a \$10,000 grant from the New York State Assembly was stalled by the pandemic, which not only decimated the state bureaucracy but bankrupted the already debt-ridden state treasury. Our grant paperwork was frozen after we were "pre-qualified" to receive funds. But, not a dime was sent to us.

However, the U.S. Congress under the new Democratic regime in 2021, made Democratic New York whole again...and then some. Sixteen billion dollars flowed to Governor Andrew Cuomo, thanks to Senator Chuck Schumer, which the NYS legislature promptly absorbed and created new debt. (Maybe we should defund the NYS legislature!)

So, what happened to our 2020 grant money? That's what we are trying to find out, thus far without success. The NYS grant managers went silent, and our new state legislator may not have the time to dally in old business. Stay tuned.

Dean Martin Revisited

The REELZ cable channel has a morbid feature called Autopsy: The Last Hours of.... in which it re-investigates the deaths of celebrities. A recent episode explored the cause of death of crooner Dean Martin (born Dino Paul Crocetti) in 1995. You may recall Dino's bubbling personality and talents that ranged from movie comedies, as Jerry Lewis's partner in the 1950s, to serious Westerns and eventually his



own TV show; all the while earning a living as one of America's premier vocalists. Among his Italian hits were *On An Evening in Roma* and the unforgettable *That's Amore*.



But tragedy overtook him when his son (one of seven children) Dean Paul, Jr. (pictured) was killed piloting an F-4 fighter jet in 1987 at age 35. His son's sudden death had a profound effect on Dino's health. He had been divorced three times and had no wife at the time. Already an addicted smoker and social drinker, Dino was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1993, refusing to undergo surgery. He began taking the painkiller Percodan with an increasing alcohol intake. His lungs and body eventually failed.

He died at 78, a victim of a lifetime of bad habits, but surely made worse by a broken heart.

Saints to Scum

Screenwriter/director David Chase has an obsession with Italian American guttersnipes. His maternal grandmother changed the family name from De Cesare to Chase, but he managed to cash in on his ethnic heritage nevertheless. As the creator of *The Sopranos*, a fictional crime family running rackets from New Jersey, Chase added value to the Mafia genre by introducing Tony Soprano to psychotherapy. Chase's own neurotic failings were blended into Tony and his gang.

Chase's father belittled him constantly and his mother was a "passive-aggressive drama queen..." always on the verge of hysteria," to quote Chase. She became Livia Soprano, Tony's murderous mom. Chase, himself, suffered from depression and panic attacks as a teen. His depression got worse in college where he slept 18 hours a day – no doubt he slept through any lectures on Italian history.

We now await his prequel movie about the Soprano clan, coming to theaters in October, titled *The Many Saints of Newark* (NJ). The plot revolves around the 1960s race riots in that city, well salted with Italian mob racism. Critics are already fawning over the 2-minute trailer. There is even one with Arabic subtitles so Muslims can see what scum Italian Americans are.

Gaga Goes Gutter

To better embrace her heritage, singer/actor Lady Gaga (Stefani Germanotta) is starring in the forthcoming movie *House of Gucci*, due out in November. The fa-

mously wealthy Gucci Family will get the Borgia treatment – that Renaissance family that supposedly poisoned their way to the top. Here is the IMDB plot summary: *House of Gucci* is inspired by the family empire behind the Italian fashion house of Gucci. Spanning three decades of love, betrayal, decadence, revenge, and ultimately murder, we see what a name means, what it's worth, and how far a family will go for control.

Gaga will join Al Pacino in this cinematic roast of the Gucci Family.

Sicilian Elephants

There's an old joke that the animal with the best memory is a "Sicilian elephant". Of course, there are no elephants in Sicily, but there once were. During the 19th Century, elephant fossils were found in a cave outside Palermo that dated back 50,000 – 175,000 years ago. These Sicilian elephants were dwarfs, a fraction of the size of African and Asian elephants. The photo below reveals the amazing size difference. Scientists are interested in finding out how the species managed to downsize over only 40 generations (1,300 years), rather than millennia.



Addio Alitalia!

In 1934, Italy's three leading airlines merged to form *Ala Littoria*. This new national airline, "Wing of Littoria (Fascist Italy)" was ranked as the third largest in the world, at the time. In 1947, it became *Alitalia* (Wings of Italy). By the end of this year, this national airline will be downsized and renamed ITA (*Italia Trasporto Aero* – Air Transport of Italy). This new moniker is less prideful than the old. Of today's fleet of 92 jetliners, only 60 will remain; and 6,000 employees will be let go. How the mighty have fallen!



Space Lady

The European Space Agency has announced the appointment of astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti to the command of the International Space Station in 2022. Already a veteran of space travel, Cristoforetti, 44, will be the first European woman to command the Station.

Olympic Score

Fresh from its European victory in soccer, Italy has fielded a winning group of athletes at the Tokyo

Olympics. As we go to press, Italy is #12 in medal standing with 5 gold, 9 silver, 15 bronze. Among the surprise wins was Lamont Jacobs who copped the gold in the 100-meter dash — first Italian win in that category, ever. Jacobs was raised by his Italian mother in El Paso, TX, as a single mom. His father is Black.

The Columbus War

Because bigger things have occupied the U.S. Congress, the Columbus Day holiday is still on the books. But, that hasn't lessened the battle on the local level throughout the nation. Many cities and schools have replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. In one case, a desperate school board in New Jersey just dropped the names of all holidays, replacing them with "Day Off." That lasted about a week before the absurdity sunk in.

Indigenous people may have lost an ally in Black people as more historical information is spreading of Native American tribes enslaving Blacks before the Civil War. Still, the onus of defending Columbus Day is still exclusively on Italian Americans and their organizations.

Rotating Up

Congratulations to our Chicago colleague Robert Allegri. A long-time board member of the National Italian American Foundation in Washington, DC, Bob has been elected its president.



Bob has been an Institute member since we expanded to Chicago, way back. He has been very supportive of the Italic Institute, providing good counsel and even hotel rooms for our travels. His passion for heritage runs deep, with a defining moment in Rome's Colosseum when he was 10-years-old.

He has one added title as honorary consul for the Republic of San Marino. That tiny nation hit the big time when one of its athletes, Alessandra Perilli, won a bronze medal in trap shooting in Tokyo last month — the first ever, and the smallest country to win anything in Olympic history! Bob, of course, was ecstatic.

North to Alaska!

Our colleague Bill Dal Cerro stumbled on information that an Italian immigrant found the largest gold deposits in Alaska at Fairbanks in August, 1902. The famous Klondike Gold Rush began five years before, but

the gold petered out and the terrain was daunting. It was Felix Pedro (actual name, Felice Pedroni), who had come to the U.S. in 1881 hispanizing his name and working his way across the country until he settled in Alaska — before any gold rush. He honed his mining skills and befriended Native Americans. At one point he saved the life of a Native youngster and the tribe clued him in on possible gold deposits. Eventually, Pedroni located paydirt at "Pedro's Creek" in 1902. When word got out, a thousand prospectors flooded the area and the city of Fairbanks was born.

Pedroni (pictured) had a number of mining partners over the years to monitor operations; one may have done him in. Eight years to the day from the Pedroni Creek discovery, Pedroni died at age 52, ostensibly of a heart attack. His Italian partner Vincenzo Gambiani suspected foul play and had the body shipped back to Italy for an autopsy. Hair samples revealed poisoning.



Sounds like a great movie plot.

A Reminder

We are not a membership organization, but rather a resource for anyone interested in the Italian heritage. Our unique perspective begins with Classical Italy, not with the fall of the Roman Empire.

You don't need to spend a dime to access a wealth of opinion, history, and information. Just visit our website www.italic.org to share our world of things Italian.

The only Italian American website with a Research Library, a Video Gallery, educational publications, and an interactive blog platform.

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