



UPDATE

Italic Institute of America
“*Italian Pride on a Classical Foundation*”
March, 2023 www.italic.org



Forging Ahead

by John Mancini, Executive Director



Despite the plagues and politics upending the country, our Institute continues to move ahead, thanks to your generosity and embrace of the classical heritage.

Our 2019 NYS Grant is in its final stage (finally!) and we recently received our first check for some \$3,800 (\$6,200 is still in the

works). In patience and red tape alone we definitely earned this funding.

Part of this money is going to our Italian Jukebox — a new feature on our website (www.italic.org). Although still under development I’ve asked our webmaster to activate it for your listening pleasure. Using a Spotify platform (you only need to sign-in once) our Italic musical culture will be at your disposal — from traditional songs to fun tunes and vocalists from both sides of the Atlantic.

Grant money will also help pay for the completion of the 3rd volume in our Italian History Series — *Italy at War*. These easy-read books covering the volatile 20th Century are groundbreaking for their balance and little-known revelations. Such research and perspective is what sets the Italic Institute apart from other education centers.

Elsewhere in this issue are profiles of some amazing individuals who are singlehandedly keeping our Italic legacy alive — one fellow has even raised Latin from the dead and speaks it fluently.

Enjoy the read!

“Keep’ It Real”

That’s the name of the podcast launched by Institute associate Frank Di Piero from Chicago. He’s done over 100 interviews on this 30-minute platform with a variety of Italian American movers and shakers. Number 102 was with accordion *maestra* Monica Ambalal (pictured) from California who recounted the history of this versatile instrument. We find out that Ancona, Italy is still producing these even though their heyday was before the Second World War. Monica’s Italian grandfather encouraged her to take a detour from her violin and she’s been hooked ever since. Now a professor at Merrit College in Oakland, CA, she happily reported to Frank that the accordion is taking hold among non-Italian immigrant children and is making a comeback.



He had a different *slant* on construction.

Monica pointed out that many Italian American attics may have an accordion accumulating dust, testifying to our community’s past love for the instrument. In fact, some years back our Institute hired accordion master Mario Tacca to perform at a gala. You can still find his CDs online. He is spectacular!

Looking Back in Anger

Subscriber Donna Raab of Florida shared a posting from her family website dealing with an ethnic controversy in 1925.

Donna is part of the Paterno clan that helped us in our unsuccessful struggle to restore the mission of *La*



Major NY builder
Raffaele Ciluzzi

Casa Italiana at Columbia University. It was the Paterno and Campagna families that built *La Casa* and donated it to Columbia in 1927. We suspect that their generosity was partly driven by very caustic public comments spewed by a Harvard professor in 1925 which aroused the Italian community to uniformly denounce him.

When an Italian senator at the time highlighted the need for Italy’s burgeoning population to immigrate around the globe — the U.S. had recently restricted Italian immigration here — Harvard’s Dr. Edward M. East responded by denigrating southern Italian immigrants as “dregs”, a “cancerous tumor”, “incompetent and lacking in intelligence,” “Grade D and E” humans and that Italy was “well rid of them” because they were a different race than Italians. He urged Italy to implement birth control measures to limit them (trans: us!).

You can imagine how well that went over. Among the prominent Italian Americans who denounced Dr. East was construction magnate Raffaele Ciluzzi, brother-in-law of Dr. Charles Paterno. Writing in an Italian American magazine, Ciluzzi let it rip: East was a bigot whose ancestors were “half-naked barbarians” and “decaying English loafers” today. He listed the contributions of Italians, from Columbus to the Bank of America (then named the Bank of Italy) as well as our immigrant military contribution in WWI and in building America.

We don’t know what consequences there were for Dr. East, but this attitude helped send Sacco & Vanzetti to the electric chair two years later.

[We thank Donna Raab and her cousin
Carla Capiello Golden for this family history.]

Latin, Anyone?

He speaks fluent Latin, ancient Greek, French, German, Russian, Japanese, and of course Italian. He was also a U.S. Army helicopter pilot, and teaches geology and planetary sciences. He is the very definition of a polymath: someone of wide-ranging knowledge.

Our Institute is pursuing an interview with this amazing person, Luke Ranieri, to learn more about him. We know he was born in Bucks County, PA, a rural area that hooked him on nature and



geology. His father is an artist who led him into the classics and whet his appetite for foreign languages. His facility for languages branched into memory skills that he teaches to others.

You don’t have to take our word on Ranieri. There are plenty of Youtube videos of him speaking Latin with Vatican priests and even with Italians at the Colosseum to see if they understand their ancient Mother Tongue.

He easily goes from Latin to ancient Greek or to any modern language. His videos cover etymology and language evolution with erudite precision. In short, he is a wonder to behold, and a proud classical Italian.

Old Razzama-Chazz

With such inspiring stories as those cited above, you can only wonder why some of our national organizations still wallow in celebrity profiles of negative messengers like Chazz Palminteri (r). He made the cover of one publication with the billing: “*Interview With An Icon*” An iconic mob actor?



You may know Chazz as the creator of *A Bronx Tale*, a enhanced memory of his childhood that started as a one-man stage show, morphed into a Hollywood feature, then morphed back into a one-man stage show that costs audiences \$77 a pop. In the interview, Chazz insists his story of a mob hit, which he saw as a preteen, was a fork in the road of his life. He had to choose his bus driver father or the neighborhood thug as his role model. In the telling and retelling *ad infinitum*, this “morality” play has been sending the message to America that such are the life choices for Italian Americans.

Chazz, whose major movie credits also include gangster roles in *Bullets over Broadway*, *Boss of Bosses*, and *Analyze This*, was asked to name the biggest challenges Italian Americans face today. His reply: “*The stigma about organized crime. I don’t know if we will ever be able to shake that one. It’s so indoctrinated in American culture.*” This man needs self-awareness therapy!

The Italian Jukebox

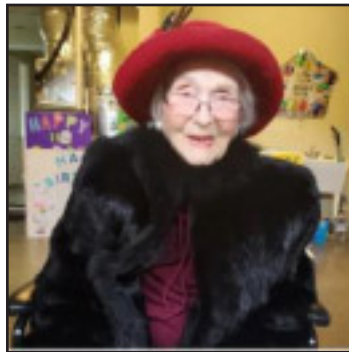
We have just added music to our website and call it *The Italian Jukebox*. To hear a variety of your favorite tunes sung in Italian with visible lyrics, just click on the Jukebox icon on our homepage (www.italic.org). You’ll be guided to sign up for Spotify — the free musical app col-

lection — and choose the Italian musical category you want to enjoy: *Opera, Traditional, Regional, 1940s pop, 1950s pop, 1960s pop, Bilingual, American Artists, Fun Tunes, Patriotic, and Contemporary.*



A California Wonder

Edie Ceccarelli was born Edith Recagno 115 years ago on February 5th. That makes her the oldest American and the third oldest person in the world.



She was one of seven children born to Italian immigrants in northern California, where she still lives. Until age 107, she lived alone in her own home. Although impaired she has some mobility.

No word on her secret to longevity, but she does live in wine country and near the giant Redwoods that can live up to 2,000 years.

[Thanks to associate Ken Borelli of CA for this story.]

Nobel Winner

Chemist Carolyn Bertozzi (below, in Stockholm) won the Nobel Prize last October for her innovative work in cancer diagnosis and treatment. That's a big deal for women and for Italian Americans, but some in the



media want you to know what's really important is that Bertozzi is a lesbian.

Woke strikes again! Did her sexual orientation produce such a scientific mind? Or did it come from her DNA? Her 91-year-old father is Prof. William Bertozzi, a recognized world leader in electromagnetic nuclear physics.

Don't Keep Us Secret!

Tell your friends and relatives the best kept secret in the Italian American community.

We are the antidote to superficiality, the deep end of the heritage pool.

We have the only Italian American website with a Research Library, a Video Gallery, an Italian Jukebox, educational publications, and an interactive blog platform.

Italic Institute of America
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Donations are Tax Deductible

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

"Thus passes the glory of the world." Here are just a few of our community that made an impact on America before passing:

Dr. Vincent DiMaio, 81, was a lifelong medical examiner who performed some 900 autopsies and investigated 25,000 deaths. Sought out as an expert in murder trials, DiMaio confirmed that Lee Harvey Oswald killed JFK. An expert in gunshot wounds, he was shot four times by his second wife and survived.



His own father was a NYC coroner and DiMaio proudly wrote that there were male doctors on his mother's side going back to Italy in the 1600s.

Albert Primo, 87, created "Eyewitness News," the local TV news format that used two anchors and some banter.



Around 1965, as a young news director in Philadelphia, he reimagined the staid, one-man local news as a 'family' team with field reporters and male/female anchors. Eventually, he made his TV family reflect his audience in race and ethnicity. One of his hires, Geraldo Rivera, observed that Primo *"humanized*

and democratized local news.” From Philadelphia and New York City, Primo’s new format spread to local TV stations around the country. News teams wore matching blazers with the logos to promote the station.

One media expert concluded that Primo’s innovations became the blueprint for local news everywhere.

Fred Franzia, 79, rattled the wine industry with his cut-rate *vino*.

Born into his grandparents’ winery business in Modesto, CA, Franzia opted for marketing wine rather than producing it. He launched his Bronco Wine Company to buy surplus wine. He famously bought the bankrupt *Charles Shaw* winery, which had a respectable Napa label, and marketed it at



Trader Joe’s for \$1.99 a bottle — a shock to Napa Valley vintners whose pricing was many times that amount. In 1993, Franzia pleaded guilty to mislabeling varietal wines and had to step down as president of Bronco. Eventually those vintners got California to mandate that Napa wines must have 75% Napa grapes. Still, Franzia’s wines were cheap but not adulterated.

This wine rogue never gave up trying to deflate the wine moguls. When asked how he was selling his wine for less than bottled water, Franzia shot back, “They’re overcharging for the water — don’t you get it?”

Franzia is now available in boxes, equivalent to \$4 a bottle — mostly Chilean vintage. Having an airlock spigot instead of a cork, boxed wine doesn’t degrade after opening like bottled.



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Placemats Keep Multiplying

In our last *Update* we featured our Chicago associate Frank Di Piero who was spreading our *Inventions of Italy* placemat around the Windy City. These educational placemats were designed by us in 1994 for patrons of Italian restaurants, pizzerias, etc., to read as they eat. Our stock is limited, but if you would like some to distribute at a school or business, just let us know how many...no charge.



As you can see, Frank is still making friends and influencing diners.



Ivana Hair Studio

Here’s Frank’s wife Ivana, behind the flowers, with her staff and mom Luigina.

Here’s Frank on the left.



Italian Cultural Center at Casa Italia



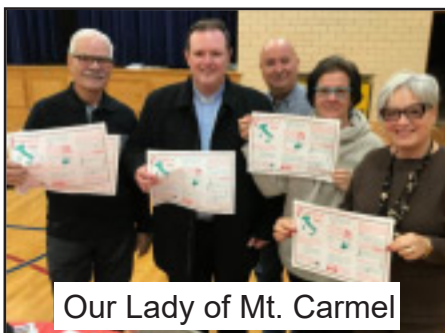
Saponi Napoletani



DiMaggio Cafe Restaurant & Pizza



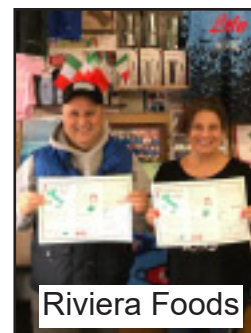
RoccoVino



Our Lady of Mt. Carmel



Little Italy Cenetta



Riviera Foods



Trattoria Porretta