

PAPPAGALLO



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SICILY ~ SICILIA! (Continued from last issue)

Sicilians bring hard work, a rich history, and talents to Rockford

By Peggy Sagona Werner

Sicily is a country rich with natural beauty, history, culture, tradition, agriculture, and a character that is intrinsically tied to its people, who are known for their warm and engaging ways, hard work and indomitable spirit. Many people made their way from Sicily to Rockford, IL, decades ago and impacted the city with their talents and strength of character. Two of those couples still live in Rockford, have made their mark, and have fond memories and strong ties to their homeland.

Phil and Nina Foti came from Sambuca di Sicilia to America in the spring of 1960. They had been childhood friends and lived within blocks of one another. When they were engaged to be married, a Sicilian friend working in Rockford called and offered Phil a job. The call to work in America hastened their marriage plans.

Phil was offered a job as a woodworker at Weiman Company on Eleventh Street in Rockford. The successful furniture manufacturer was one of many along "furniture row" that gave Rockford the distinction of being the second largest furniture manufacturing center in the country. Weiman's, however, was unique in that it was the first furniture-making business started by a group of non-Swedish men.

Eventually, the business moved from Rockford to North Carolina. The Fotis choose to stay behind, because they had just started a family and were calling Rockford "home."

It wasn't long, though, before Phil was back to work. He met another friend through the Sons of Italy, who was retiring from what is now Commonwealth Edison. That vacancy created a spot for Phil and he worked at Commonwealth Edison until his retirement in 1993. Nina's skills had her working with her hands, too. She had learned at an early age to crochet and sew and was making all of her own clothes by the time she was 17. After raising her family, she went to work doing



Hand carved table by Phil Foti

alterations for Marshall Field's for two years and then for Weise's (now Bergner's) for another 18 years. Phil and Nina both came from large families and had four children of their own. Just five years after moving to American, they became U.S. citizens. Their family has now grown to include nine grandchildren. Three sons live in the Rockford area, and their only daughter lives in Antioch, IL.

As much as they had embraced Rockford as their home, the couple never forgot their roots and wanted their children to be well aware of the places and people where it all began. The family traveled to Sicily often. "We wanted our children to see their grandparents and other relatives. We wanted them to know about the people we talked about all of the time. Now, with families of their own, some of the children continue the tradition of travel to Italy to see relatives who still live there," Nina said.

Each time the Foti family would travel to Italy, they made several stops before settling down in Sambuca for a couple weeks. Once in Sambuca, they knew they wouldn't be going far, immersed in Italian hospitality, surrounded by family and friends.

Family members gathered to reunite and share stories of the past and present. Friends would come and go as everyone talked, laughed, told stories, and feasted on food and drink. The close connections are what it's all about.

"There is closeness among people over there. You open your door, and your neighbor comes out to ask you about your day. That doesn't happen here," Phil said.

When Diego Tarara came to Rockford from Aragona, Sicily, in 1958, he didn't speak much English, but he knew how to work.

His great work ethic shortly paid off, when Anthony Stacionis, the owner of AA Construction Company, offered Diego a co-ownership because he liked his work and didn't want to lose him.

Diego's met his wife, Antoinette, through an uncle who introduced them. She was also from Aragona, but grew up in Beloit, WI. They met in 1967 and were married two years later. The couple had four children;

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Diego in field



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three sons who still live in the Rockford area and are all business owners and a daughter who lives in Nashville, TN.

Barely teenagers, Diego would have his children tag along with him to work once in awhile, to get an idea of what it takes to make a living.

"I wanted them to know where a dollar came from and I wanted them to have a good work ethic," Diego said.

Diego, the fourth of eight children, was the son of a sharecropper and landowner, so he grew up understanding the meaning of hard work and daily chores.

"We were poor, but we were never hungry. We might not have had money in our pocket or in the bank, but we always had food. Farmers never went hungry," he said. And they would barter with other farmers for fruits and meats.

In retirement, he works just as hard. He still goes to work and at home can repair or create just about anything. He loves to cook and has made his own wine, bread, spaghetti sauce, cheese, prosciutto, and more. He loves to garden and grows a lot of the ingredients he uses in cooking.

"It's incredible the things he does. He has so many hobbies and is always doing something. He is constantly on the go. Everyone marvels at what he does, but that's because he's not doing it in their kitchen. I am proud of him, as long as he cleans up his mess," Antoinette said. "Most people don't understand why he does what he does and they get a big kick out of him. He is a very unusual individual. But I can tell you one thing for sure, he gives away more than he uses. No one leaves our house empty-handed," she added.

Although most of the family immigrated from Sicily to America in the 1950s and 60s, there are still many nieces, nephews and cousins who live in the hometown area. For that reason, the Tararas have been back to visit many times.

Italian roots grow deep.

"Even though we have been here for 50 years, I never feel far away. We are always in touch by letter and phone. There is never enough time to spend with family and friends," Diego said.

They have returned to Italy about eight times, the last time being in the spring of 2010. They especially love Easter in Sicily and have been there three times for the traditional Easter procession that lasts a whole week and is a reenactment of the story of Christ's journey to the cross and the Resurrection.

"Easter is a most fascinating time in Italy," they said.

Respect and commitment toward family is deeply ingrained in the Sicilian culture.

Although the country has progressed in many ways, one

thing never changes.

"Family is all we care about. The world outside can be falling apart, but all that matters is what is going on within a family," Diego said.



Taganu, a must for Easter dinner

Antoinette's Tarara Taganu

- 1 lb. large rigatoni
- 1 ½ lb. thinly sliced Tuma cheese
- 1 ½ dozen large eggs
- 1 lb. grated Romano cheese
- 1 c. chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. saffron (powder)

Blanch rigatoni in salted boiling water for about 2 minutes. After straining, rinse with cold water, and spread pasta out to cool. In a large bowl, mix eggs, cheese, black pepper, salt, cinnamon, and saffron. Mix with an electric hand mixer for 2 minutes or until well blended. Add parsley and stir with a wooden spoon. Blend in the cooled rigatoni into the egg mixture. Stir. Mixture will be placed into a 4-quart large baking dish. (I use the insert of my crock-pot in fact, Taganu, means baked in a clay pot.) Grease the large baking dish with butter or non-stick oil spray. Start to layer the egg/rigatoni mixture when layering, alternate pasta and Tuma cheese. The last layer is finished with the remainder of the egg mixture.

Bake at 400 degrees for about 1 ½ hours. To insure that the Taganu is cooked, insert a long knife in the center of the dish and pull out, if knife is clean and not wet it is done.

Let cool and enjoy!

Taganu Tid Bits:

- Sometimes we use a Bundt cake dish for a little variety.
- Some people use meat and chicken broth but my mother always said, "That's not the way we did it!" In Aragona, they did not have a lot of meat to waste on the Taganu. Meat was a luxury. Sometimes broth was added if we were running short on eggs. Remember, the people of Aragona, started to save eggs for their Easter Taganu, sometime around January.
- Back in Aragona, people would also line their clay pots with day old bread to prevent the Taganu from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Thank goodness, for non stick pans of today!



Easter procession in Aragona

Buona Pasqua and Buon Appetito
Antoinette Tarara



Western Islands of Italy

Danarea

The island is an inactive volcano with a total surface area of only 3.4 km. The highest point on the island, Punta del Corvo, is 421 meters above sea level. There are thermal springs near the village of Punta di Peppe e Maria. Scuba diving is a popular excursion on this tiny island, and you can even swim to a shipwreck between the offshore rocks of Lisca Bianca and Bottaro.

There is archaeological evidence on the island dating back to Mycenaean inhabitants 1200 BC. Later, the island was settled by Romans. There were people still living on the island until pirates and other Mediterranean raiders made life unbearable after the Fall of Rome. In modern times, Panarea has become a fashionable vacation spot. In 2011, it was described by W magazine as "the epicenter of the chicest Summer Scene in the Mediterranean."

Panarea and the entire Aeolian chain were declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. Largely because of this, construction and development are strictly regulated and the community retains its storied insularity. Most residences admit only temporary occupancy, and the few year-round homes available are highly expensive and difficult to obtain. Put this on your list to visit next summer!



Capo Milazzese, Panarea

Salina

Salina is an island in the Aeolian Islands, Sicilian: Isuli Eoli north of Sicily. It is the second largest island in the archipelago. Salina is divided between three comuni: Santa Marina on the eastern coast, Malfa to the north, and Leni to the south-west. There are currently approximately 4,000 residents living on the island.

Salina has a total surface area of 27 km. It is included on the World Heritage List especially because of its worth for vulcanology. It is composed of six volcanoes: the oldest ones are at Pizzo di Corvo, Monte Rivi and close to Capo Faro, although these are barely recognizable. While the volcano-layer of Monte Fossa delle Felci, is the highest peak in the archipelago and Monte dei Porri are almost perfectly preserved: the latter's crater lies just above sea level near the small village of Pollara.

The most recent eruption on Salina occurred on the western part of the island about 13,000 years ago and formed

the semi-circular crater of Pollara; its activity was mainly explosive and produced large pumice deposits.

All that remains are some post-volcanic phenomena called "gurgling" and a thermal spring at Pertuso. The emission of underwater gases from this spring creates this phenomenon that can lift the sea-bed!

From a distance Salina looks entirely green with two rounded high mountains and a smooth coastline. More than 400 different types of plants grow here. The cultivation of grapes, olives and capers are basically their economy.

The mountainsides of the island are covered with ferns, poplars, chestnut trees and typical Mediterranean vegetation covered with caper bushes, prickly pear cactus and a variety of orchards, olive groves and vineyards. Above all there is Malvasia, a famous white wine that is only produced on Salina. Malvasia is golden in color and has an intense, delicately sweet bouquet. There has also been a local revival of the production of superior-quality low-acid olive oil. Areas on the island, including the two mountain peaks, were designated as a natural reserve in 1981. The salt lake in Lingua was once a site for production of sea salt, hence the name Salina ("salt mill" in Italian). Sanctuary of the Madonna del Terzito, located between Malfa and Leni in the saddle known as Valdichiesa between the twin volcanoes, and built in 1630. The religious centre of Salina, it attracts pilgrims on the main feast day of July 23 every year.

Stromboli

Sicilian: Struògnuli, is a small volcanic island north of Sicily in the Tyrrhenian Sea, off the north coast of Sicily and belonging to one of the eight Aeolian Islands. Its name is a corruption of the Ancient Greek name Strongulē which was given to it because of its round swelling form. The island's population is between 400 and 850. The volcano has erupted many times, and is constantly active with minor eruptions, often visible from many points on the island and from the surrounding sea, giving rise to the island's nickname "Lighthouse of the Mediterranean". The last major eruption was on April 13, 2009. Stromboli stands 3,034 ft above sea level, but actually rises over 6,500 feet above the sea floor. There are three active craters at the peak. A unique feature of the volcano is the Sciara del Fuoco ("Stream of Fire"), a big horseshoe-shaped depression generated in the last 13,000 years by several collapses on the northwestern side of the cone. A few miles to the northeast lays Strombolicchio, the volcanic plug remnant of the original volcano.

Mt Stromboli has been in almost one continuous eruption for the past 2000 years. This pattern of eruption has been maintained, in which explosions occur at the summit craters with mild to moderate eruptions of incandescent volcanic bombs at intervals ranging from minutes to hours. This characteristic Strombolian eruption, as it is known, is also observed at other volcanoes worldwide. Eruptions from the summit craters typically result in a few second-lasting mild energetic bursts emitting ash, incandescent lava fragments and rocks up to a few hundred meters in height. Stromboli's activity is almost exclusively explosive,



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but lava flows do occur at times.

Settlements: The two villages, San Bartolo and San Vincenzo lie in the northeast while a smaller village Ginostra lies in the southwest. They are governed by the larger island of Lipari. In the early 1900s a few thousand people inhabited the island but after several emigrations the population numbered a few hundred by mid 1950s. Many of our friends have visited the volcanic island, but we have yet to visit it. Ahh...Italy so much to see and so little time to do it!

Lipari

At Campo Bianco there is a mountain of white pumice. Abandoned loading jetties anchored near the shore. The young slide from the top of the pumice mountain into the sea.

They climb like Sisyphus back to the top and race each other to the bottom...totally covered in the powder of the pumice leaving white clouds behind them. A free slide to enjoy for hours!

Later, lunch is served in one of the small island's restaurant: zucchini frittata with a mixed green salad, white peaches and Pino Grigio. Ricotta insalata; small pears with white figs; egg-plant mousse; beef straciatto over mounds of rice and fresh green beans; lemon cake with limoncello! We Italians weather from the islands or mainland, do know how to enjoy our food!



White pumice at Campo Bianco

Alicudi

Alicudi seems like a quite stepsister when reading about Lipari. Upon first appearance as one arrives by boat, one sees thousands of cactus plants looking like green velvet planted on terraces many years ago. The everyday boats transport water and produce to the few who live here. All roads are streets of stairs with mazes of alleys. Near a small buff colored house stand two ancient olive trees reminding one of the simple life. There is one car in the port that is wrapped in cellophane. It is red won in a lottery but is useless except as an icon.

Filicudi

On to the island of Filicudi where La Grotta del Bue Marino lies and is so large that the tourist ferry can enter without a particle of paint being removed! The ancients believed that a woman, disguised as a sea monster lived. The warm gentle waters lulled one into entering the cave. Who knows what happened to them as they felt the security of the waters?

Favignana (Sicilian: Favignana, Italian: Favignana) is a comune including three islands (Favignana, Marettimo and Levanzo) of the Aegadian Islands, southern Italy. It is situated approximately 7 km west of the coast of Sicily, between Trapani and Marsala, the coastal area where the Stagnone Lagoon and the international airport of Trapani, are sited.

The island is famous for its tuna fisheries and is now a popular tourist destination with frequent hydrofoil connections to the mainland.

In ancient times Favignana was called Aegusa, meaning "goats' island". The present name is derived from Favonio, an Italian name for the foehn wind. It was colonised by the Phoenicians, who used it as a stopping point on their trans-Mediterranean trading routes.

The island was fought over during the First Punic War between Rome and Carthage. On 10 March 241 BC, a major naval battle was fought a short distance offshore between the two powers. Two hundred Roman ships under the consul Gaius Lutatius Catulus met and decisively defeated a much larger Carthaginian fleet of 400 ships, with the Romans sinking 120 Carthaginian vessels and taking 10,000 prisoners. So many dead Phoenicians washed ashore on the northeastern part of Favignana that the shoreline there acquired the name "Red Cove" (Cala Rossa) from the bloodshed. The Romans took possession of the island under the terms of the treaty that ended the war.

Under Roman rule, the islanders adopted Christianity by the 4th century AD, although (judging by inscriptions dated to the 1st century BC they appear to have retained at least some Phoenician culture. In the early Middle Ages, Favignana was captured by Arabs and was used as a base for the Islamic conquest of Sicily. The Normans subsequently took possession of the island, and built fortifications there from 1081. Under the Aragonese rulers of Sicily, Favignana and the other Egadi Islands were hired out to Genoese merchants and in the 15th century the islands were granted to one Giovanni de Karissima, who adopted the grand title "Baron of Tuna".

The plentiful tuna fish found offshore were first exploited systematically under the Spanish from about the 17th century onwards. Facing severe financial problems from their ongoing wars, the Spanish sold the islands to the Marquis Pallavicino of Genoa in 1637. The Pallavicini substantially developed the economy of the island, prompting the establishment of the modern town of Favignana around the Castello San Giacomo. In 1874, the Pallavicino family sold the Egadi Islands to Ignazio Florio, the son of a wealthy mainland industrialist, for two million liras. He invested heavily in Favignana and built a major tuna cannery on the island, bringing prosperity to many of the inhabitants. Tuff quarries were also opened with stone being exported to Tunisia and Libya.

The islanders had a much more difficult time during the 20th century. Favignana's economy slumped between the two World Wars and many inhabitants emigrated to the mainland and abroad. The tuna fishery also declined with the rise of factory fishing after World War II. However, the island's fortunes were turned around by the advent of tourism from the late 1960s onwards.



Festivals and Holidays of Italy

March

St. Joseph's Day *San Giuseppe*

- March 19
- Celebrated world-wide and in Italy, but especially in Sicily. This is Father's Day in Italy
- This day commemorates St. Joseph, who in Sicily is attributed to helping save lives in the Middle Ages by ending a devastating drought.

April

Liberation Day *La Festa della Liberazione*

- April 25
- A national holiday throughout Italy
- This day celebrates the end of World War II in Italy, on April 25, 1945.

Italians Celebrate Liberation Day

(La Festa della Liberazione)

Italy's Liberation Day: April 25

Liberation Day is a public holiday in Italy.

Each year, on the 25th of April, Italy celebrates Liberation Day, locally known as *La Festa della Liberazione*.

Liberation Day commemorates the day when Italy was liberated from the direct control of the Allied Forces after the World War II. It is also the date when Italy remembers those who perished in the war. In some context, it also commemorates the fall of Benito Mussolini's Italian Social Republic in 1945.

Unlike other holidays in Italy that are only recognized in a certain region, Liberation Day is celebrated nationwide.

History of Italy's Liberation Day

Two years of infighting and intense resistance movement happened in Italy after the country entered into an armistice with the Allied forces in 1943. Italians both within Italy and abroad and some 35,000 women joined the resistance movement under Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime.

One notable event in the loss of lives of members of the resistance movement was the movement in major establishments and factories in Turin, Milan who refused to cooperate with the then German military forces known as *Wehrmacht*. Those who took part in the resistance movement during that time were deported to Germany and later put in concentration camps for forced labor and later killed through lethal gas chamber. People at a garrison in Cefalonia who heavily resisted against the invading German forces were eventually killed with casualties ranging from 6,000 to 7,000.

Eventually, after much offensive from the Allied Forces of World War II, the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) surrendered. From April 21 to April 25, people saw the liberation of each important cities in Italy including Bologna

(April 21), Parma and Reggio Emilia (April 24), and finally Milan and Turin on April 25.

Italy's Liberation Day: Traditions, Customs and Activities

During Liberation Day, all government offices are closed while a great number of restaurants, shops, and public transportation do not operate. Music concerts, political rallies, and government-sponsored marching parades are common.

Tourists are advised to check with their hotels if they're arriving on or before the 25th of April as most establishments are closed during the celebration.

May

May Day *La Festa dei Lavoratori*

- May 1
- A national holiday in Italy, it honors workers.
- In ancient times, this day was known as Il Calendimaggio, a day when farmers and seasonal workers took the day off to eat, drink, and dance, knowing full well that a summer of hard work was coming.

June

Birth of the Italian Republic *Festa della Repubblica*

- June 2
- A national holiday throughout Italy
- This day celebrates the birth of the Italian Republic in on June 23, 1946.

July

The Palio *Il Palio*

- July 2
- Celebrated in Siena
- This is the day of the famous Palio horse races in Siena. It dates back to the 15th century where bareback horse riders represent Siena's 17 contrade or districts.

August

Assumption *Ferragosto*

- August 15
- Celebrated throughout Italy
- This is the month that traditionally most Italians take their vacations. In the past, it was celebrated in connection with the summer harvest. This day also is celebrated in the Catholic Church as the Assumption of the Blessed Mary.



Padua Feast Day a blessing for two St. Anthony parishioners

By Mike Doyle

The first sign that something unexpected was about to occur came when our tour bus drove through Padua, Italy. There were buses parked in many places, and our driver and guide could not agree on where to stop to let us off.

It was the third day of our tour in central and northern Italy. We had already visited Assisi and the awesome inspiring Basilica of St. Francis, Siena, and Florence and were on our way to Venice. On Monday morning, June 13, 2011, our tour stopped in Padua, site of the Pontificia Basilica di Sant' Antonio – the Basilica of St. Anthony.

As good fortune would have it, our tour visited Padua on St. Anthony's Feast Day. This was why we could not find a place to park the bus. As we stepped off the bus, we wound our way through the crowded market square, where vendors sold clothing, wooden objects, umbrellas, souvenirs, and the first of St. Anthony items, statues, candles and the like.

We continued to walk past shops, we saw many vendors selling Dolce Santantonio, St. Anthony's bread with prices starting at seven Euros. Other shops were adorned with blue-and-yellow posters heralding the day. Other buildings celebrated the city of Padua with red banners. The colors brightened the otherwise drizzly day and continued when we first saw the red brick of the basilica, adorned by the green, white and red flags of Italy and the yellow of the Vatican. There were dozens of people in the square, including some TV crews with cameras and reporters. On the left side of the square was an imposing statue of the Venetian general Gattamelata.

Above the basilica's main entrance is St. Anthony, holding a book, which symbolizes the vast amount of knowledge he gathered as a monk before he became famous. To the right was a banner with the saint holding the blessed child with the words – Venite a me voi tutti ... e io vi daro solievo. As we entered the basilica, we saw why there were so many buses in Padua. The interior was packed with pilgrims taking part in a Mass.

Our group was steered to the left to join a dozens of others who were making their way to the Chapel of St.

Anthony. The line moved glacially slow but soon we were next to the altar-tomb of St. Anthony, which dates to 1594. Before we got close to the altar-tomb, we realized that people were leaving messages and prayers in the wire mesh that surrounded the altar. My wife Nora worked toward the tomb, where she was able to leave a message

for St. Anthony to pray for her mother, who was having serious health problems.

Slowly, the line moved on. We listened to the priests say the Mass in Italian and people stopped to watch and kneel. Our group made its way through the Chapel of the Black Madonna to the area behind the main altar to the apse and the radial chapels, and then to the Treasury Chapel, the Chapel of the Reliquaries. The solemnity of the chapel was clear as uniformed officers continually reminded us pilgrims to be silent and take no pictures.

It is quite moving to see St. Anthony's original rough hewn wooden coffin. Then as you continue, you gaze upon his tongue. St. Anthony was known for many miracles, several of which are depicted in the stained glass windows at our own St. Anthony of Padua Church. They include the Miracle of the Reattached Food, St. Anthony Preaching to the Fish, and the Miracle of the Mule and the Sacred Host. The tradition of St. Anthony's Bread dates back to the 13th century when he restored to life a little girl in return for the mother's promise to donate the child's weight in grain for the poor. St. Anthony was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1195, the oldest son of a prosperous family which allowed him to have an excellent education. Instead of following his family's chosen path to become financially successful, Ferdinand, his birth name, chose a life of piety. Eventually, he became a Franciscan friar, following the path of St. Francis, and chose the name Anthony. He learned even more under St. Francis and was content to live the simple life of a friar.

Then one day, he attended an ordination in Fiori. When the preacher failed to arrive, Anthony was asked to take his place. Anthony's provincial told him to say whatever was on his mind. He started slowly, and then became to speak eloquently with great fervor. Word of this event reached St. Francis, and soon Anthony was speaking to the faithful near and far in Italy as well as France.

St. Anthony died in Padua on June 13, 1231, and 32 years later, his remains were moved into the new church built in his honor. When the casket was opened, his body had been reduced to dust – with the exception of his tongue, which remained intact and retained its red color.

The center display area of the reliquary features St. Anthony's tongue and lower jaw as well as his vocal cords. In the front of the display is another cherished relic – his robe.

As we left the reliquary, we entered the Magnolia Cloister. It is named because of the majestic magnolia tree that was planted in 1810. On the day we were



The Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua on his Feast Day, June 13, 2011. St. Anthony's Feast Day in June, 2011.



St. Anthony reaches out to the Christ Child in the Magnolia Cloister at the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua.



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A pilgrim receives a blessing on St. Anthony's Feast Day in June, 2011.

there, it was in full bloom. The cloisters also feature a beautiful statue of St. Anthony holding in one outstretched hand the Christ child who is said to be coming down from heaven. One cannot help but be moved by the similarity of the bronze statues of children in the Memory Garden of St. Anthony's in Rockford.

With the Mass over, pilgrims moved

into the square and out into the surrounding streets. After we did some walking on our own, our group met in a nearby outdoor café. A final look at the square revealed friars giving blessings to individuals and another banner – S. Antonio benedici chi entra nella tua casa!

As we walked back to our bus, we saw again the vendors selling bread, statues, and candles. We left Padua for the short drive to Venice. Our morning visit to Padua left us with many memories. And we were able to relive some of that when we turned on our hotel room TV and watched video of hundreds of pilgrims following the statue through the streets of Padua to the basilica. It was moving to think that we were a small part of that feast day – a day that we will never forget.

Remembering an Italian American Hero

By Paul Logli

Major General Fred Ascani grew up in Rockford, Illinois and went on to become a combat hero, a renowned test pilot and the developer of a modern supersonic bomber. In his 32 years of active service from 1937 until his retirement in 1973 he earned numerous decorations and awards including the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem and the Croix de Guerre (France).

Alfredo John Ascani was born in Beloit, Wisconsin on May 29, 1917, the son of Italian immigrants Gino and Marias Ascani. While still a boy, the family moved to Rockford and like many Italians settled in the area just north of the downtown on the east side of the Rock River. The Ascani family operated a grocery store in the 700 block of North First Street while Fred attended Rockford High School. He graduated as valedictorian in 1935. Fred later recounted that he developed an early interest in aviation when, in 1927, he watched Charles Lindbergh fly overhead in the Spirit of St. Louis en route to New York to begin his famous trans-Atlantic flight to Paris.

After two years at Beloit College, Ascani received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated 34th out of a class of 425 and in 1941 he was commissioned a second lieutenant. Shortly thereafter, he completed basic and advanced flight training. After the U.S. entered World War II Ascani was assigned as a flight instructor and training squadron commander. In 1944, then Major Ascani joined the 816th Bombardment Squadron as its commander. Based in Foggia, Italy, Ascani flew 53 combat missions in the B-17 bomber including a daring secret mission delivery of supplies in German-occupied Czechoslovakia to partisans and the evacuation of escaping Allied airmen. During a mission to Memmingen, Germany he lost his entire squadron flying at the rear on an unescorted mission after being attacked from behind by over 200 German fighters.

After the war, Ascani distinguished himself as a test pilot

and was considered one of the "Men of Mach 1." He flew a variety of research aircraft and in 1951 achieved the highlight of his flying career when he flew an F-86-E Sabre jet at the National Air Show in Detroit establishing a new 100km closed course world speed record of 635.686 miles per hour, and was awarded the MacKay and Thompson trophies. "A crowd of 91,000 gasped in awe as he streaked across the airport at the start and finish of the speed run" the Associated Press reported. Years later, General Ascani's youngest son David told the *Los Angeles Times* that he always wondered what his father was doing "flying over 600 miles per hour 50 feet above the ground when he had six young kids" at the time.

In 1961, he was named project director for the B-70 Valkyrie, a six-engine aircraft that was envisioned as the successor to the B-52 bomber. However, the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles reduced the need for it and President Kennedy ordered the soon-to-be-developed plane to be used solely for research.

In 1965, Major General Ascani was named vice commander of Fifth Air Force, Pacific Air Forces in Japan. He returned to the U.S. in 1967 and retired from active duty on August 1, 1973. After a post-retirement career as an adjunct professor in the Washington, D.C. area he returned home to his family in 1981. Major General Ascani died as a result of lung cancer on March 28, 2010 and was interred with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery with his wife of 61 years Catherine Hanretta Ascani. He is survived by his eight children.

His children described the son of Italian immigrants as family-oriented and a devout Roman Catholic who had a remarkable sense of humor and to his last day remained fascinated with technology. General Ascani remembered fondly his days as a youth growing up in the midst of the Rockford Italian community and was honored to be inducted in 1980 as a member of the Greater Rockford Italian American Association Hall of Fame.



GRIAA Seeking Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Nominations

GRIAA is accepting nominations for persons of Italian heritage whose exemplary lives have made significant contributions to the community in the arts, sciences, business, industry, education and government. Other considered categories are civic, volunteer or philanthropic activities. Such contributions should reflect a notable community impact, and highest standards and ideals. The primary difference between Hall of Fame and Special Recognition is that the Hall of Fame candidate must have positively impacted the Italian American community.

Nomination form is printed below--- It is not necessary to specify which honor you are nominating the individual for.

The committee will decide based on the provided information.

Completed forms must be mailed to GRIAA, P.O. Box 1915, Rockford, Illinois 61110-0415. Deadline is on or before May 15, 2012. For further information go to GRIAA.com, or contact Whitey Marinelli (815/227-9424) or Frank Perrecone (815/962-2700).

The induction and recognition ceremony will take place at the awards banquet on Saturday evening October 6, 2012 at Giovanni's Restaurant. For banquet information, see reservation form printed on the next page (page 9).



Italian Hall of Fame/Special Recognition Nomination Form

Please return to: GRIAA P.O. Box 1915 Rockford, IL 61103

Additional comments and supporting documentation may be included on supplemental pages.

I would like to nominate: _____
(Last Name) (First) (Middle)

Address: _____
(Number & Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Business Address: _____
(Number & Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Phone Numbers: _____
(Home) (Business)

Occupation, Profession, or Title: _____

Company Associated with: _____

Overall Impact on Italian American Community:

Major constructive achievements:

Date Achievements

Major constructive achievements:

Date Achievements

Major constructive achievements:

Date Achievements

Nominator name: _____
(Last Name) (First) (Middle)

Address: _____
(Number & Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Phone Numbers: _____
(Home) (Business)



Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Award Banquet

Saturday, October 6, 2012

Giovanni's Restaurant

6:00 p.m. Social Hour

7:00 p.m. Dinner

Music provided by the Mike Alongi Trio

8:00 p.m. Awards Program

Menu

Garden Fresh Salad and Pasta Appetizer

Choice #1: Combo entree of Seared Filet of Sirloin with Chicken Marsala served with Roasted Red Potatoes and Julienne Vegetables

or

Choice #2: Entree of Roasted Vegetable Strudel encased in pastry with Basil Pesto and Sundried Tomato Sauce

Dessert of Homemade Cannoli

(Flaky, made from scratch, Italian Shell, filled with Sweet Creamy Ricotta and Chunks of Chocolate, topped with a Dollop of rich Cocoa Mousse)

\$30.00 per person

R.S.V.P as soon as possible

Please make your check payable to GRIAA. Send the following information:

Name _____ Phone _____

Number Attending _____

Entree Choice #1 _____ Entree Choice #2 _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Mail to: GRIAA, P.O. Box 1915, Rockford, Illinois 61110-0415

If you have any questions, please contact Gene Fedeli at 815-877-2888

We hope to see you there to help us recognize these distinguished Italian Americans from our Community!



The Greater Rockford Italian American Association GRIAA

The Italian culture is one steeped in rich history and tradition. That's why it is important for Italian Americans to keep in touch with their roots and share their pride and heritage. Founded in 1980, and originally known as The Columbus Day Committee, the Greater Rockford Italian American Association (GRIAA) strives to do just that. GRIAA's mission: to promote the Italian culture, celebrate our heritage, sponsor social events and activities, and perform works of charity and philanthropy benefitting the local Italian American community.

A non-profit organization headed and staffed solely by volunteers, GRIAA serves as a conservatory of Italian culture and traditions. It provides the community an opportunity to experience the customs and traditions of Italy first hand by participating in a variety of educational programs and public events, such as:

Festa Italiana - This popular Rockford tradition began in 1979. This fun-filled, three-day festival held during the first weekend of August offers a taste of many the sounds, flavors and customs the Italian culture has to offer. It is also GRIAA's major fundraiser.

Men's Italian Open and Women's Italian Open - These golf play days are popular with golfers in the Rockford area. They present opportunities for golfers to display their skills on the links and build friendships.

Pappagallo - This informative and entertaining bi-annual newsletter keeps its readers in touch with the Italian culture through features on Italian history and customs, Italian phrases, recipes and listing of cultural events in the area. It is distributed to the public at no charge.

Culture & Education - This committee preserves and protects our Italian heritage and culture and disseminates it to the community. It promotes the teaching of the Italian language, as well as a multitude of educational programs, lectures, videos and hands-on demonstrations that showcase the Italian and Italian American experience.

Hall of Fame and Special Recognition - This prestigious group is comprised of area Italian Americans who have made significant contributions to the Italian American community and community at large. These men and women have shown a tremendous amount of dedication and leadership. Inductees are nominated by the community and selected by members of the committee. They are honored at the annual awards banquet in October.

Community Services - This committee reaches out to those within Italian American community who are in need, addressing issues with Italian pensions and dual citizenship.

Scholarships - Through this committee, scholarships are presented each year to area Italian American families to defray the cost of Catholic grade and high school education. To date, over \$550,000 in scholarships has been presented.

Amici Italiani - They are more than a dance troupe. This group is Italian culture brought to life via graceful movement and alluring sounds. With two divisions - adults and children - the troupe performs traditional folk dances in full costume, reflecting the pageantry found in the small communities of Italy. In addition to performing locally, Amici Italiani dance troupe has traveled far and wide, performing throughout the Midwest.

Sister City - The City of Rockford, through Sister Cities International, forged a Sister Partnership with Ferentino, Italy in 2005. GRIAA's Sister City committee works with the partnership to solidify the cultural and social relationship between the two cities. Ferentino's many immigrants to Rockford founded the St. Ambrogio Society in honor of the city's patron saint.

Please join us at one or more of our upcoming events and activities which can be found at GRIAA.com



Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families

The first to arrive from Italy were the Maffioli family –Giacomo, Henry, Peter, and Louis. It was 1878, and there were jobs available in Rockford. They left a country that was poor and not united, one with few opportunities for strong men and women who were willing to work and build new lives. The Maffioli family was soon joined by Sam Marelli, which began the second largest ethnic migration in Rockford's history.

They came from Rome and Tuscany, Venice and Naples, from the hill-top city of Ferentino, from the southern Italian provinces of Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Apula, Basilicata, and Calabria, and from all of the corners of Sicily. Their first stop was along North Madison Street, but that neighborhood proved too small to house all of the immigrants. Eventually, the majority of Rockford's Italian immigrants settled in South Rockford, each with a story to tell. And that's what the Greater Rockford Italian American Association's new project is all about.

Through The Immigration Histories of Rockford's Italian Families, GRIAA wants to tell the stories of those people who came from those places. It wants family stories. It wants your stories.

GRIAA wants to collect the history of any Italian family who came to Rockford, whether it was the 19th century or late 20th century. We want you to type one or two written pages that tells how your grandparents or your parents found their way to Rockford whether it was through New York City's Ellis Island or north up the Mississippi River from New Orleans.

This project will be a wonderful way to tell your family's story like it has never been told. Through it, you will learn about the thousands of other families who came to Rockford.

It is important for your ancestors. It is important for you. It is important for your children.

GRIAA will have space in the Culture Tent at this summer's Festa Italiana so you can see some of the family histories that have been created. Please write a short history of your family for this project and submit a picture. GRIAA will gather all of them and place them in a book for all of us to see. And enjoy. And learn.

Please contact Gene and Shirley Fedeli at e.fedeli@com-cast.net



Rockford, Illinois 1880

Albert Gaetano Thomas Fedeli and Maria Santina Piazzalunga
(1899-1976) (1901- 1994)



My name is Eugene Anthony Fedeli, the son of Albert Gaetano Thomas Fedeli and Maria Santina Piazzalunga Fedeli. My father, Albert, was born in Bolladello, Varese, Italy on September 5, 1899 and my mother, Santina Piazzalunga, was born in Barzana, Bergamo, Italy on January 28, 1901. My father came to America to find work and arrived in New York through Ellis Island on October 19, 1921. Albert traveled by train from New York to Rockford, Illinois. Albert lived with his brother, Andréa Fedeli, on Stanley Street in Rockford, Illinois (this area was known as the Gas House Gang, where most northern Italians lived). My father worked for a paper mill for several years and then returned to Italy to marry Santina on December 5, 1925. After marrying, Albert came back to America to make more money and eventually send for his wife. Santina arrived in Rockford in 1931. Their first home was at 401 Stanley Street. Albert and Santina had two children, Louisa Maria Fedeli was born on January 29, 1934 and myself, Eugene Anthony Fedeli born on January 3, 1936. In 1940, we moved to 1421 Green Street still part of the Gas House Gang Neighborhood. Time passed, I married Shirley Martignoni on October 24, 1959 we lived for a few months on the corner of Elm Street and Hinkley Avenue. In 1960, Shirley and I moved to 3628 North Court Street where we are presently living. On September 12 1968, our daughter Lisa Marie Fedeli was born. Many Italian families were moving out from their original neighborhood and in 1970, Albert and Santina Fedeli moved to 703 North Johnston Avenue. Albert Fedeli ended his journey on earth on August 9, 1976 and Santina Fedeli passed on May 10, 1994. On December 1, 1995, Lisa Fedeli married Christopher Peter Hughes; they have one daughter Alexandra Catherine Hughes who was born on September 5, 1999.

Submitted on April 3, 2012 for the Genealogy Project -- Culture and Education Committee of GRIAA-
"Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families"



G.R.I.A.A. Conversational Italian Courses

Hello everyone. Spring classes will be starting the week of March 12th for levels 2 and 3. Level 2 on Monday nights and Level 3 on Thursday nights. Level 1 will be Wednesday nights starting April 4th. Location to be announced later. Class is once a week from 6-7:30 PM for ten weeks. Classes are \$30 for course plus cost of book. If you are interested please contact me at antonino.tarara@sbcglobal.net. More details to follow. - Tony



Sicily:

Think about adding this tidbit the next time you speak with your friends about this amazing island. Naturally, you would speak about the most delicate, beautifully created sweets, the huge lemons, blood oranges and other delicious fruits, the amazing olive oil and wines produced there, but now add the Ettore Majorana, the Centre for Scientific Culture located in Erice. Yes, the same town that you may have visited to feast on Maria Grammatico's pastries! Within the bowels of that charming town lies the imposing Centre for Scientific Studies. See Google for more! Another amazing part of our heritage.



Pietro Cesare Alberti

Do you know who was the first Italian to settle in America?

In 1635, Pietro Cesare Alberti, a 27 year old Venetian aristocrat, got off a Dutch ship in the New World and became its first Italian immigrant. The only Italian in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (later New York), he married Judith Jans Manje the daughter of influential Dutch settlers.

The Dutch altered his name from Alberti to Albertis. He and his wife prospered, acquiring a tobacco plantation in Brooklyn. They were killed in a 1655 Indian raid, but six of their seven children survived to adulthood.

In the early 1900's what is now 104th Street in Corona, Queens was named Alburdis Avenue but the name was changed when Queens numbered its streets around 1927. In 2011, thanks to the Italian American Cultural Roundtable and its president Frances Bologna it was named in his honor. Feel free to add this to your Italian trivia.



Interested in Dual Citizenship?

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), in conjunction with the Embassy of Italy, offers a free, online Italian Citizenship Questionnaire to facilitate your research and pursuit of Italian citizenship. Visit <http://www.niaf.org/citizenship>.



SCHOLARSHIPS!

Here is a list of help for high school and/or college students. The following is a listing of this year's scholarship offerings and how to apply for them. Most scholarships have attendance and other requirements, so gather your applications early and study them carefully before applying. Thanks to the Fra Noi exciting new magazine for letting us share this list!

Arcolian Dental Arts Society: two \$1,000

scholarships awarded to third or fourth year dental students of Italian heritage. A written narrative is required. Deadline mid-September. Presentation: December. Contact Dr. Frank Maggio at maggiof@sbcglobal.net

Benedictine University: One scholarship awarded to an Italian American woman studying English, business or education at Benedictine University in Lisle. Contact Jason Leppin at 630-829-1814 or jleppin@ben.edu

Chicagoland Italian America Charitable Organization: Several \$2,000 scholarships awarded to high school seniors and current college students based on academic achievement and need. Deadline March 15. Presentation: April. Contact Frank Giudice at 630-941-4700 or frankgiudice@fbgcorporation.com

Columbian Club Charitable Foundation: Several scholarships of various amounts awarded to graduating high school seniors and undergraduate graduate students of Italian descent who are permanent residents of the state of Illinois. Deadline: Oct. 31. Presentation: January. Visit www.columbian-club.org

Italian American Chamber of Commerce Midwest: Two \$1,000 scholarships awarded to students or Italian ancestry with a minimum GPA of 3.5 on a 4 point scale, given from high school graduation through junior year in college. Contact 312-553-9137

Italian American Executives of Transportation: Several scholarships of various amounts averaging \$1,000 awarded to high school seniors based on academic achievement and need. Italian ancestry a plus. Deadline: Sept. 1. Presentation: Nov. 17. Visit www.iaet-chicago.org or contact Charlotte Sorci at 630-272-3947 or csorci@comcast.net

Italian Catholic Federation: Several \$400 scholarships awarded to high school students who are of Italian heritage and Catholic faith for (or are children of non-Italian ICF members) and who meet academic, financial need and character. Requirements: Grants may be renewed for second, third, and fourth terms. Deadline: March 15. Visit www.icf.org

Italian Cultural Center: Several scholarships of various amounts awarded to non-professional vocal students between the ages of 17 and 26 who are studying with qualified teachers or institutions. Deadline: Early fall. Presentation: November. Contact 708-345-5933 or info@casaitaliachicago.org

Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans: One \$2,000 scholarship awarded to a student of Italian ancestry who is either a high school senior accepted into a college with intent of communications, or an undergraduate majoring in journalism or communications. Deadline: April 17. Presentation: May 17. Visit www.jccia.com or contact 708-450-9050 or jcc@jccia.com

Justinian Society of Lawyers: 10 to 20 scholarships of \$1,000 to \$5,000 awarded to law school students of Italian ancestry based on academic ability and need. Deadline: Early September. Presentation: Late September. Visit www.justinian.org or contact Anthony Farace at 312-255-8550 or amf@amari-locallo.com

Sons of Italy Foundation, Illinois: Several \$1,000 scholarships awarded to students of full or partial Italian ancestry graduating from high school. Financial need, scholastic record, activities showing character and leadership are criteria. Personal statements and faculty recommendations are required. Deadline: July 1. Presentation: October. Only written requests will be honored. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Illinois Sons of Italy Foundation. 9447 W. 144th Place, Orlando Park, IL 60462

UNICO National: Four undergraduate scholarships and one postgraduate valued at \$6,000, paid at \$1,500 per year for four years, plus one medical scholarship of \$5,000 and one nursing scholarship of \$2,500, paid on award. Applications must be submitted through a local UNICO chapter. Deadline: April 15. Presentation: August Contact Joan Tidona at jntidona@unico.org



Available for your reading pleasure...

The Italian Gallery of the Ethnic Heritage Museum has purchased a few new books for your reading pleasure. Call 815-962-7402 to make arrangements.

Distasi, Lawrence Mal Occhio The Underside of Vision. If you have any stories about the infamous "Evil Eye" please call or write us, we'd like to include some of your stories in one of our Pappagallos.

Diocese of Rockford 1908-2008 Msgr. David Kagan

Edsel, Robert M. The Monuments Men Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History. A great read!

Hutchison, Sheryl L., Mentor Inbound, The Authorized Biography of Fred J. Ascani, Major General, USAF Retired Holder of the 1951 World Speed Record.

Meucci, Sandra Antonio and the Electric Scream. The Man Who Invented the Telephone All of us should be aware of this part of our history between Garibaldi and the Meucci Museum located on Staten Island, N.Y.

Pulera, Dominic J. Green, White, Red The Italian-American Success Story

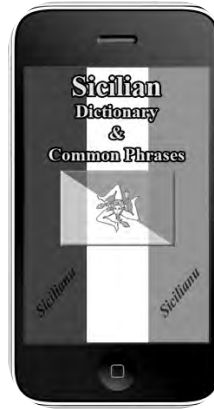
Amici Italian Youth Troupe

We are looking for dancers for the upcoming Festa 2012. If you are between the ages of 8 – 14 and want to experience traditional Italian folk dances come join our troupe. Under the direction of Pauline Urso and Carla Mullin our dancers meet once a week beginning in May (date to be announced) at the Boylan Alumni Center on Tuesdays from 5:00 -7:00.

Please contact Pauline Urso at 815-218-0063 or email her at ursodance@aol.com



Sicilian for you Smart Phones



Pappagallo readers, I was asked to collaborate with NLMobile on their iPhone and Android application Sicilian Dictionary. <http://www.nlmobile.com/siciliandictionary>.

I translated and recorded audio for over 700 words and phrases for travel and every day use. This app will be up and running with my voice by the end of April so download this app to learn and practice the Sicilian language of your grandparents or great grandparents.

Micheli Scalisi

**Ethnic Heritage Museum
2012 Italian Woman of the Year**

Join us congratulating her this March 25, from 2-4 p.m.
Congratulations- ROSE MARY ZAMMUTO!

Rose moved to Rockford from Cherry, IL, she grew up just blocks from St. Anthony of Padua Church.. She became a member in 1929, the same year the church was built and she has been helping to give it life ever since. Rose helped the Franciscan Sisters clean the church. In 1936 she began to assist Fr. Anastasius with secretarial duties for the newly formed Holy Mass League.

Rose met her beloved husband Peter Zammuto in the 2nd grade at St. Anthony School. They were married in St. Anthony church in 1945. Rose and her husband Peter were active with other families in the Rockford Christian Family Movement (CFM). Rose is also active in the National Catholic Society of Foresters St. Anthony, Court 674. Rose made four Tabernacle Veils, which are still used at Christmas and Easter.

Today, at 91 years old Rose continues her duties as Eucharistic Minister and Lector, and volunteers at St. Anne's Center where she is a board member and spends time visiting the sick and praying with them. In her spare time she makes rosaries and knits hats for newborns in the neo-natal units of OSF St. Anthony and Rockford Memorial Hospitals. She is an active member of St. Anthony of Padua parish's Altar & Rosary Society, Renew Prayer Group and the St. Joseph Altar committee. As her special devotion to St. Joseph, she leads the novena in Italian.

Rose was honored by St. Anthony of Padua parish when she was named the 2011 Woman of the Year for the Rockford Deanery.

Rose is the embodiment of the angel she continually wears on her shoulder. She is never without a kind word and a smile.



Ethnic Heritage Museum



Friday, April 27, 2012

Cliffbreakers Riverside Resort

Doors open at 5:00 pm • Dinner at 6:30 pm

Adults: \$45 • Children: \$15

Ethnic Musical Traditions

Silent Auction • Entertainment

All funds raised at "Celebrate Our Musical Heritage 2012 will support the Museum's Capital Building Campaign

The museum is adding 1,800 square feet of space for a multipurpose gallery, accessible restrooms, a library, office and basement.

The Ethnic Heritage Museum is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization

• Pay by check, using the form below or • Purchase online: www.EthnicHeritageMuseum.org

Make check payable to EHM. Mail with this form to:
Barb Berman, 23 Country Club Beach, Rockford, IL 61103.
Your check is your reservation. Open Seating.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Number of adults @ \$45 ____ Number of children @ \$15 ____

Number of vegetarian meals ____.

I cannot attend, but please accept my donation of \$ ____.

Number of reserved tables of 8 @ \$360: _____

Purchase Tickets Online

Go to www.EthnicHeritageMuseum.org

Questions? Call Event Coordinator Barb Berman, 815-289-3551

Greater Rockford Italian American Association - GRIAA

PAPPAGALLO

P.O. Box 1915

Rockford, IL 61110-0415

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Your editors:

**Shirley Martignoni Fedeli,
Peggy Sagona Werner and
Mike Doyle**

THE UNITED ITALIAN AMERICAN NEWSLETTER



AMICI ITALIANI...Ballo! Ballo! Ballo!

Authentic Folk Dance Troupe of Rockford, Illinois

Amici Italiani Adult Dance Troupe was established in 1985 by Shirley Martignoni Fedeli. The troupe gathers Italian Americans of all ages and backgrounds to learn and share the rich tradition of Italian Folk Dance. Their goals are to preserve and share the Italian culture by educating and entertaining audiences with the color and warmth of rich Italian heritage.

Dances performed by Amici Italiani are researched through The Italian Folk Art Federation of America, Inc., in

which Amici Italiani has active membership. Their dances include various Quadriglias, Saltarellos, Mazurcas, Tarantellas, and Codigliones. Director Rosie Scalise Sheridan and Dance Instructor Bea Giammarese Ricotta maintain attention to detail and authenticity.

Members range from high school age to senior citizen age! If you would like to join the adult troupe and share in their dancing tradition, contact Rosie at (815) 978-4779 or Bea at (815) 964-0035.