



# AMHS NOTIZIARIO

The Official Newsletter of the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage  
Society of the Washington, DC Area  
MARCH 2014

Website: [www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org](http://www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org)



## THE FIRST GENERAL SOCIETY MEETING OF 2014



**Top** – AMHS 1<sup>st</sup> VP-Programs, Nancy DeSanti with Professor Roberto Severino who presented the program on Gabriele D’Annunzio on January 26, with AMHS President Maria D’Andrea and Father Ezio Marchetto, Pastor of Holy Rosary Church. **Bottom** – AMHS newly elected officers and members of the Board Maria D’Andrea, Nancy DeSanti, Bruno Fusco, Sarah Scott, Maria & Sergio Fresco, Jeff Clark, John & Eileen Verna with current Board members Lynn Sorbara and Peter Bell. (photos courtesy of Joe Novello).

**NEXT SOCIETY EVENT:** Sunday, March 30, 2014, Dr. John C. Mather will speak on “The History of the Universe”. See inside for details.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends/Cari Soci ed Amici,



The New Year has gotten off to a successful start for AMHS, with a very well attended meeting on January 26, 2014. Close to 100 people gathered to hear a program on one of Abruzzo, and Italy's, most prolific writers, Gabriele D'Annunzio. Professor Roberto Severino offered a very informative presentation on the

life and poetry of D'Annunzio. At the March 30, 2014 general Society meeting, AMHS is honored to have Dr. John C. Mather, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics, speak on "The History of the Universe from Beginning to End, and Observing with the James Webb Space Telescope". We will also hear from Laura Jones, one of the 2013 recipients of the AMHS/NIAF scholarship. I encourage all of you to attend what promises to be a very enlightening program. Be sure to read Nancy DeSanti's articles on both the January 26 and March 30 meetings elsewhere in the *Notiziario*.

Your Executive Committee has hit the ground running in 2014. We will work to bring you quality programs, to schedule activities that appeal to our membership, to collaborate with other Italian American organizations on issues of common interest, and to keep us on solid financial footing. As many of you may know, Romeo Sabatini has decided to step down as Chair of the Scholarship Committee, the Publications and Publicity Committee, and the Website Management Committee. Romeo has shown tremendous dedication in these various pursuits, and it has been a great pleasure for me to work with him. He will be missed, but we know we will see him around at various AMHS activities. I am pleased to announce that Dick DiBuono has agreed to step in – for one year – as Chair of the Scholarship Committee. Maria Fresco has agreed to work with me as Editor and Co-Editor of the *Notiziario*, and Sarah Scott and I are going to work together to find an appropriate Chair for the Website Management Committee. While the positions being vacated by Romeo have been filled – or will be filled soon (we hope), we are in need of help. We have had a long-standing vacancy of Chair, Social Committee, and Dick DiBuono has been serving as Chair of the Fundraising Committee for a little over a year. Anyone who has skill or familiarity in either of these areas, please reach out to me or to Dick DiBuono to find out what is involved in chairing these committees.

I wish to offer my personal thanks to the AMHS members who contributed generously to the AMHS Scholarship Fund in our donation drive held during the latter part of 2013 - we were quite successful, collecting close to \$4000.00 for 2014. Combined with monies collected from raffles, Dick DiBuono, Lucio D'Andrea and I were able to deliver a check for \$4000.00 to NIAF on February 26, as our matching contribution to the AMHS/NIAF scholarship. Please be sure to

read Dick DiBuono's article on this fundraising initiative, and the scholarship, elsewhere in the *Notiziario*.

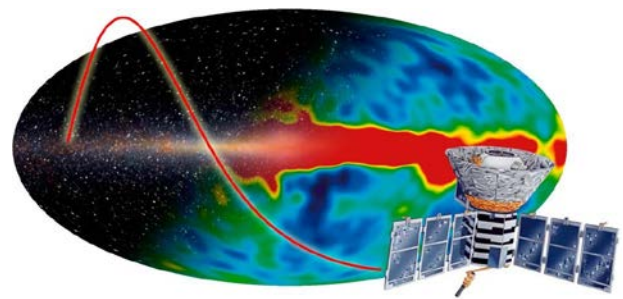
In closing, I hope that the New Year has gotten off to a great start for all of us – we have certainly "enjoyed" some cold days and more than our share of snow; hopefully warmer days are ahead of us.

Cordiali saluti,  
Maria D'Andrea

## NEXT SOCIETY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

### MARCH 30, 2014 GENERAL SOCIETY MEETING: NOBEL PRIZE WINNER TO EXPLAIN THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE

by Nancy DeSanti, 1<sup>st</sup> VP-Programs



The history of the universe in a nutshell, from the Big Bang until now and on to the future, will be the subject of our next program on Sunday, March 30, 2014, at 1 p.m. at Casa Italiana. We are pleased to announce that our speaker will be Dr. John C. Mather, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics and former NASA colleague of AMHS member Joe Novello. Dr. Mather will tell the story of how we got here, how the Universe began with a Big Bang, how it could have produced an Earth where sentient beings can live, and how those beings are discovering their history. Mather was Project Scientist for NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) satellite, which measured the spectrum (the color) of the heat radiation from the Big Bang, discovered hot and cold spots in that radiation, and hunted for the first objects that formed after the great explosion. He will explain how Edwin Hubble discovered the expansion of the universe, how the COBE mission was built, and how the COBE data support the Big Bang theory. He will also show NASA's plans for the next great telescope in space, the James Webb Space Telescope. It will look even farther back in time than the Hubble Space Telescope, and will peer inside the dusty cocoons where stars and planets are being born today. It is capable of examining Earth-like planets around other stars using the transit technique, and future missions may find signs of life.

Dr. Mather won the Nobel Prize in physics in 2006 for his work on the Cosmic Background Explorer Satellite, for which he was project scientist at NASA. In 2007, he was listed among *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People in the World." Dr. Mather is also the author of *The Very First Light*, with John Boslough. Dr. Mather will have copies of his book



for sale for \$10.00. Dr. Mather enjoys traveling in Italy and appreciates Italian culture as well as scientific know-how.

We will also be honored to hear from Laura Jones, one of the AMHS/NIAF scholarship recipients in 2013. Ms. Jones will tell us about her heritage and the importance of the scholarship to furthering her academic studies.

A delicious lunch will be served by Piero's Corner Ristorante Italiano. A flyer with additional details about the meeting, including the menu, is found elsewhere in the *Notiziario*. Please make your paid reservations by March 23.

## RECENT SOCIETY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

### JANUARY 26, 2014 GENERAL SOCIETY MEETING: D'ANNUNZIO PRESENTATION DRAWS BIG CROWD

by Nancy DeSanti



The year got off to a great start as the first program of 2014 drew a sizeable crowd to Casa Italiana on Sunday, January 26. The idea of the program came about after Maria D'Andrea saw a book review on an award-winning book entitled "Gabriele D'Annunzio: Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War" by Lucy Hughes-Hallett. This most famous writer from Abruzzo,

who was also a controversial historical figure with a decidedly dark side, seemed like a topic our members would enjoy knowing more about.

Over a game of cards, AMHS members Romeo Sabatini and Ennio DiTullio invited Professor Roberto Severino to be our speaker and he graciously accepted. Professor Severino, who was born in Catania, Sicily, is well known to many of our members as Professor Emeritus at Georgetown University's Italian Studies Department and as President Emeritus of the American University of Rome. He is also a poet, a collector of rare books of Italy, a jokester who tells very funny jokes, and a champion card player (He has 6 briscola trophies to prove it!). One of his card-playing buddies, Omero Sabatini, uses the words "*fuori serie*" to describe Professor Severino, meaning he is "in a class by himself."

So expectations were high for Professor Severino's talk and he did not disappoint. Aided by Romeo Sabatini's slides, Professor Severino described how the young Gabriele D'Annunzio's early life had a bearing on his later years. He was born in Pescara in 1863 into a rather dysfunctional family but his precocious talent was recognized early on and he was

sent to school in Prato and later studied at the Rome University La Sapienza where he became a member of various literary groups and wrote articles and critiques for local newspapers. But the style and content of his writings began to alarm critics who called him a perverter of public morals, although others called him a breath of fresh air. D'Annunzio published his first novel (*Il Piacere*) in 1889. His first poetry was also written around this time.

As D'Annunzio was gaining notoriety for his work, his personal life was a mess. Although he was not considered at all handsome by the standards of the day, he had no problem attracting women - lots of them!! He married Maria Hardovin di Gallese, then after ending the marriage, he began an affair with the famous actress Eleanora Duse. D'Annunzio provided roles for her in some of his plays before the stormy relationship finally ended in 1920.

All the while, his extravagant daredevil lifestyle forced him into debt, so he fled to France to escape his creditors. Eventually returning to Italy as World War I was about to begin, he volunteered and achieved further celebrity. The war strengthened D'Annunzio's ultra-nationalist views which have been called by some the precursor to fascism.

Angered by the proposed handing over of the city of Fiume (now in Croatia) which had a majority Italian population, D'Annunzio led the seizure of Fiume and declared Fiume an independent state. Needless to say, this did not go well for him, and he ended up finally surrendering after a bombardment by the Italian navy.

After the Fiume debacle, D'Annunzio retreated to his home in Gardone Riviera on Lake Garda where he established the Vittoriale degli Italiani, an impressive museum and literary and historical archive which also holds his torpedo boat and a plane. The crafty D'Annunzio bequeathed the *Vittoriale degli Italiani* to the Italian government which then became responsible for paying for the upkeep.

Professor Severino also delved into the complex rivalry between D'Annunzio and Benito Mussolini. D'Annunzio is often seen as the precursor of the ideals and techniques of Italian fascism after his political ideas took shape in Fiume with the help of Alceste de Ambris. Mussolini imitated the culture of dictatorship that he learned from D'Annunzio, but the two men were wary of each other. In 1922, D'Annunzio was seriously injured when he was pushed out of a window by an unknown assailant. He survived but was badly injured. D'Annunzio retreated from public life after this incident, yet Mussolini doled out funds to D'Annunzio as a bribe for not entering the political arena. Professor Severino noted that Mussolini reportedly said that "when you have a rotten tooth, you have two possibilities open to you - either you pull out the tooth or you fill it with gold."

Nevertheless, D'Annunzio kept trying to intervene in politics, such as trying to convince Mussolini not to enter into an alliance with Adolph Hitler. In 1924, King Victor Emmanuel III gave D'Annunzio the title of Principe di Montenevoso.

At the height of his success, he was known for the originality, power and decadence of his writing, which had a big impact throughout Europe and influenced generations of Italian writers.

At the end of the presentation, we saw a video narration of D'Annunzio's famous poem "*La Pioggia nel Pineto*" ("The Rain in the Pinewood") with background music by Chopin. Some in the audience remember having to memorize it as school children. It was indeed beautiful!!

A delicious lunch was provided by Pasta Plus. (AMHS members will recall that the owners, Massimo and Sabatino Mazziotti, raised \$17,000 in one night in a fundraiser for the victims of the April 2009 earthquake in Abruzzo).

### **AMHS MEMBERSHIP**

*by Sarah Scott, AMHS 2<sup>nd</sup> VP-Membership*

Our 2014 membership renewal program is in full swing! I am pleased to announce that 179 members have renewed. However, many of our 2013 members have not renewed. All 2013 members will stay on the membership list only until the end of March 2014. We have many great activities and opportunities coming for our membership and you will not want to miss any of them!

In case you have misplaced your renewal information, no worries! A reminder will be mailed soon with everything you need to renew. Also, you can go to our website for a form you can print, fill in your information and send to our Treasurer to keep your membership active (<http://www.abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org/membership.htm>).

Remember to "Like" our AMHS Facebook page to see photos of and keep up with our events <https://www.facebook.com/abruzzomoliseheritagesociety>

### **New Members**

A warm welcome to our newest members: Rico Allegrino, Richard DeCesare, Donald Fandetti, Tom & Sheila Fontana, and Pasquale & Filomena Santini.

### **Birthdays and Anniversaries**

The following members celebrate birthdays and anniversaries in March and April. *Buon compleanno, buon anniversario e Auguri!*

### **Birthdays**

Eileen (Parise) Del Monaco, March 1; Greg Bernabei, Robert D'Onofrio, March 2; Maria Fresco, March 3; Salvatore Di Pilla, Renato Sozio, March 8; Barbara Pappas, March 9; Sam Yothers, March 12; Raffaella Luciani, March 13; Mary Petrino, March 14; Frances De Marco, March 15; Lucio Marchegiani, March 16; David Scalzitti, March 19; William Berl, March 20; Pam Lupo, Fiorenza Pasquini, March 21; Mary Katherine Theis, March 25; Lucio D'Andrea, March 28; Anna Maria Di Pilla; March 31; Eva Del Vecchio, April 1;

Joseph Theis, April 4; Diana Bernabei, Gay Ferrante, April 6; Elizabeth Chiaverini, April 9; Emidio Pasqualucci, April 11; Gloria D'Andrea, Rita Giovenco, April 12; Joseph Scavetti, April 13; Domenico Santini, April 14; Joyce Del Borrello, April 18; Theda Corrado, April 19; Stephen Ulissi, April 21; Julia Conti, April 22; Michael Nardolilli; Belinda Sabatini, April 25; Louis De Santi, April 26; Joann Novello, April 28; and Tommaso Profenno, April 30.

### **Anniversaries**

Robert & Marlene Lucian, March 3; Angelo & Melvena Puglisi, April 11; Vince & Dora Marinucci, April 15; Greg & Diana Bernabei, April 21; Gino & Lina Marinucci, April 24; Roberto & Bess Di Tullio, April 25; and Silvio & Lina Pronio, April 29.

## **SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING . . . A TRIBUTE TO YOUR GENEROSITY**

*By Dick DiBuono, Chair, Fundraising Committee*

Members responded very generously to the Fundraising Committee's December letter requesting donations to the annual scholarship program. A total of \$3,800 has been donated as of mid-February. The granting of \$4,000 scholarships, which are funded jointly by our Society and the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), to each of two worthy students every year, is one of our Society's finest programs. In the coming months, the Scholarship Committee will be reporting to you about the selection of the two student winners of our 2014 AMHS/NIAF scholarships. The Committee wishes to thank everyone who responded with a donation, for you have helped to assure the financial health of our annual scholarship program for this year.

## **SIAMO UNA FAMIGLIA**

### **WELCOME LOUISA ZÉLIE LLOYD**

AMHS Board Member Lana Nardella proudly announces the



birth of her 11<sup>th</sup> grandchild, Louisa Zélie Lloyd, on January 4, 2014. Louise is Lana's 11<sup>th</sup> grandchild! *Tanti auguri a tutta la famiglia Nardella!*

## **A CELEBRATION OF LOVE**

Our young member Mike DeBonis and Dena Iverson were married on February 15 at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, in Washington, DC. The elegant marriage ceremony was followed by a black-tie reception at the Washington Hotel.

Italian *confetti* were passed out during the festivities and were enjoyed by all. *Confetti*, or Jordan almonds, are mandatory at weddings in Italy. The ones handed out at Mike and Dena's wedding were particularly special not just because they were manufactured in Sulmona, L'Aquila, the capital of *confetti* production, but because they had been purchased last summer in Sulmona by Mike's parents, Sheila and Tony, when they were attending a family reunion.



Mike is a graduate of Georgetown University and Dena of Oberlin College. Currently Mike is a reporter on local politics and government for the *Washington Post* and Dena is a Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Department of Justice. The newlywed met when Dena was working as Communication Specialist and Press Secretary at the Executive Office of the Mayor of Washington, DC, and Mike was reporting for the *Post*. The couple will live in the District. We wish them *ogni bene e felicità*.

Mike participates frequently in our Society's general meetings; many of us remember seeing him enjoying the food served there. It reminds him of the cooking of his grandmother Isabella who came from Secinaro, L'Aquila. (submitted by Omero Sabatini)

## JOE GRANO: REMEMBERING A LIFE WELL LIVED

On Sunday, January 19, 2014 at 6:00 p.m., more than 160 people gathered in Casa Italiana to celebrate the life of Joe Grano. It was a moving and fitting tribute to a man who worked tirelessly on causes that were important to the Italian American Community and to the city in which he lived and worked for so long, Washington, DC. Two members of Congress were in attendance, including DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Senator Peter Strauss (a "shadow" Senator for DC); DC Council Chair Phil Mendelsohn and Ward 3 DC Councilmember Mary Cheh. Very poignant eulogies were given by Delegate Norton and Phil Mendelsohn; long-time friends and the President of the Rhodes Tavern of Historical Society of DC, Nelson Rimensnyder; Association of Oldest Inhabitants of DC (AOI) President Bill Brown; AMHS Immediate Past President Dick DiBuono (see his eulogy, to follow); and The Lido Civic Club of Washington, DC

President, Francesco Isgro. Joe's cousins Cindy Zietzler and Dennis Bonanno provided remembrances of Joe which were read by me on behalf of the family.

One of Joe's dearest friends, Bill Rice, prepared a wonderful video tribute that captured highlights of Joe's life, from his time as a young boy in New York, to his various activist causes in DC. Dear friends of Joe later paid personal tributes to Joe. AMHS member Lourdes Tinajero did a very kind gesture for the family, in securing a United States flag that was hung over the U.S. Capitol at the request of Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski.

There were wonderful pictorials and other memorabilia that allowed all in attendance to see the impact of Joe's life in the Washington, DC and Italian American communities. Following the service, everyone enjoyed a light reception and the opportunity to talk together and to share personal remembrances of Joe.

Never had I seen such evidence of the love shared for a man who had an impact on so many lives. To Joe, we are forever grateful for the path you set us on and in your memory, may we continue to fight for the causes most dear to you. To quote Isla Paschal Richardson, "*Grieve not, nor speak of me with tears, but laugh and talk of me as if I were beside you. I loved you so—'twas heaven here with you.*"

AMHS is incredibly grateful to Father Ezio Marchetto, Pastor of Holy Rosary Church, for scheduling the service, and to all who worked with me on the planning committee: from AMHS, Dick DiBuono and Nancy DeSanti; from AOI, Bill Brown, Bill Rice and Nelson Rimensnyder; from the Italian Cultural Society, Arrigo Mongini; from The Lido Civic Club, Francesco Isgro; and Teri Malvez, friend of Joe who printed the graphic easel boards and the programs. We are also thankful to AMHS members Lynn Sorbara and Peter Bell for taking care of hospitality for the event.

It was Joe's wishes to be buried alongside his parents in Force, Pennsylvania. A funeral Mass will be held there, sometime in Spring (probably in May), and Joe's family hopes that some of us will be able to attend. There will also be a service at the Church of the Annunciation in Washington, DC on April 6 (details to follow). (submitted by Maria D'Andrea)

JOSEPH N. GRANO

A Eulogy

by

Richard J. DiBuono

God smiled down on me the day I first met Joe Grano, a wonderful man who soon thereafter became my good and dear friend. God smiled down again on me and my fellow members of the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society the day, a little more than three years ago, when Joe agreed to serve as a member of our Society's Board of Directors. This event did not happen without a lot of persuasion for Joe had made it clear that, while he did join organizations of interest to him, such as our Society, he didn't fancy being involved in their



administration and management. Persisting in my appeal to him, he finally relented. I could not have been more pleased and as it turned out the Society could not have found a better person to serve on its Board.

Nobody I know has had a greater passion for celebrating the contributions of Italians and Italian Americans to our nation and the world than did Joe. Even before joining our Society he had succeeded in leading the effort to convince the U.S. Congress to pass legislation awarding Constantino Brumidi, the famed Italian American painter of the Capitol's interior, a Congressional Gold Medal. Joe, with the help of some of his closest friends, who are here today, also eulogizing him, mastered and executed the very complicated and involved processes of shepherding a bill through both houses of our Congress. That was a major achievement for which he deserves the major credit.

Joe must have maintained a calendar of the dates of birth, death or significant achievement of each and every important Italian and Italian American, for he initiated efforts to seek official recognition by our Congress for such prominent individuals as Galileo, Palladio, Brumidi and others on such anniversaries, a hundred or hundreds of years later. He would send out letters to all the prominent national and regional Italian American organizations seeking their support in getting Congress to pass resolutions or even for a luncheon at Casa Italiana to honor them on those occasions. Some of you may recall attending such a luncheon honoring Brumidi in 2010 on the 205th anniversary of his birth and then following Joe up to the painter's grave in Glenwood Cemetery to pay our respects. He arranged a similar event some years earlier, but I cannot recall for which Brumidi anniversary it was. I assure you, that until I met Joe, I never even once envisioned myself taking part in such a situation. Joe had that special quality whereby he could excite you into action in support of one or more of his many causes. His enthusiasm was infectious and, of course, his causes were ones that no proud Italian American would consider not supporting. In, 2011, his first year as a director of our Society, he suggested we lead an effort to celebrate Andrea Palladio's achievements. So, under the combined sponsorship of the Italian Cultural Society, the Lido Civic Club, the Italian Cultural Institute and our Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society a wonderful presentation by Dr. Calder Loth on the life and achievements of Palladio was conducted at the Embassy of Italy.

Until I met Joe and falling into his thrall, I never once envisioned myself holding banners promoting a cause in front of the U.S. Capitol....but because he asked me to do so, I did. He convinced me and many of our Society's members to do just that. Many of you here today probably did so, too. Standing with or holding beautiful banners that Joe had had prepared, we promoted the celebration by the Congress of Italy's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its unification and we promoted that the Congress hold a ceremony posthumously awarding Brumidi's Congressional Gold Medal in the Rotunda of the Capitol, beneath the man's greatest achievement, his painting of the Apotheosis of George Washington. Yes, Joe's enthusiasm for good causes was infectious....very infectious.



*Dick DiBuono and Nelson Rimensnyder with Joe, in front of the U.S. Capitol to urge Congressional action to recognize Italy on its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary*

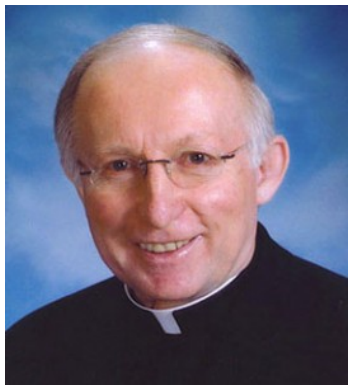
On a personal level, I enjoyed any and all time I shared with Joe. He made a wonderful companion, for conversations with him were always enlightening and positive in nature. Frequently, after our Society's evening Board of Directors meetings, I would go out of my way (I live in Alexandria) to drive him to his home up past the National Cathedral off Wisconsin Avenue. Joe did not own a car. I don't even know if he knew how to drive. So driving him from here up Massachusetts Avenue gave us time to talk about many matters, especially those of interest to him. I felt honored when he would seek my counsel on a matter he was wrestling with. And, of course, I sought his counsel on matters, too. Once we reached Wisconsin Avenue I would invite Joe to join me for a late repast at my favorite restaurant in D.C., Café Deluxe. We then would extend our time together in wonderful conversation over food and drink, although Joe partook little of either, given the hour. Yes, he was a fine companion.

My most cherished memory of time spent with Joe is the two or so hours I spent with him -- just the two of us -- in his room at George Washington University Hospital on what I think was the Saturday before his death. He was being treated for his newly discovered diabetes and for the serious infection it had precipitated in his blood stream. Joe was sitting up and in good spirits, expecting that he would be released to a rehabilitation clinic in just a matter of days. We talked of many matters. One subject we discussed during this time together, one I never before had broached with him, was his marital history. I asked if he had ever been married. He replied he had not. What he divulged was that he once had been deeply in love with a fellow schoolteacher back in New York City, but that their relationship ended, sadly for him. There never was to be another woman in his life after that. He was, he said, a one-woman man.

That visit was precipitated by Joe calling me from his bed at the hospital and leaving a message on my answering machine asking me to visit him. I have left his recorded voice on that machine as a precious memory of him.

*Heaven is richer for Joe's passing, but we, my good friends, are the poorer for it.*

## FAREWELL TO FATHER LYDIO



The farewell dinner for Father Lydio Tomasi was a sold-out affair at Casa Italiana, with over 150 parishioners and friends gathering to honor Father Lydio on Saturday evening, February 8, 2014.

As we have known for a few weeks, Father Lydio is leaving Holy Rosary to return to the Center for

Migration Studies in New York to continue his important work there and to help celebrate the Center's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He left February 15 and will be living in Greenwich Village.

Anita McBride, the mistress of ceremonies, talked about Father Lydio's life, from his early years and education in Italy, his first posting in the U.S. at Staten Island, and his years at the Center for Migration Studies in New York City before coming to Holy Rosary in 2006. AMHS member Francesco Isgrò elaborated on the importance of Father Lydio's work on migration studies. Francesco himself is Senior Litigation Counsel, Office of Immigration Litigation, U.S. Department of Justice, and he said that anyone working on immigration reform must be familiar with Father Lydio's work - that's just how important it has been. He noted that Father Lydio, who has a Ph.D. in sociology, has written many books and scholarly articles on migration that are widely respected by sociologists. In addition, Daniel Stabile spoke about how Father Lydio played a key role in COPILAS to spread the study of the Italian language and culture. But he also called him a friend, and the kind of priest "you could have a couple glasses of wine with and confess your sins." He then gave Father Lydio an award in the shape of a globe which he said symbolized how Father Lydio's work has had an impact on the world.

Father Lydio received several standing ovations. He thanked everyone at Holy Rosary and ended by saying, "If I have offended anyone, please forgive me, and please pray for me."

Father Ezio Marchetto, the current pastor of Holy Rosary Church, noted that he has known Father Lydio since 1977; they even worked together at the Center for Migration Studies. He noted how Father Lydio has worked closely with such groups as The Lido Civic Club and the Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society. Father Ezio called his predecessor a humble man who really embodies the qualities of a good Christian.

A delicious dinner was catered by Il Canale, whose owner, Giuseppe (Joe) Farruggio, was in the audience. Before the dinner, guests enjoyed wine, prosecco and antipasti.

Since Father Lydio's birthday was February 6, the crowd sang happy birthday to him and then helped eat his birthday cake.

All in all, the evening was a wonderful tribute to Father Lydio and a good reminder that Holy Rosary is indeed a family. (submitted by Nancy DeSanti).

## THE STORY OF AN AMAZING HERITAGE

by Nancy DeSanti

*Explorers, Immigrants, Citizens* is the title of an important new book co-authored by an Italian-American in Washington, Linda Barrett Osborne, and an Italian in Italy, Paolo Battaglia, under the auspices of the Library of Congress. Ms. Osborne came to Casa Italiana on Sunday, February 2, 2014, for a book signing and a brief lecture about how the book came to be. She explained that she is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Italian-American whose family name was originally Boccuzzi (later changed to Barrett apparently because it also started with a B). As the book notes, this name-changing was common years ago.

The book took 2 years to finish. Ms. Osborne explained that she was about to retire from the Library of Congress when Mr. Battaglia presented his idea to the Library of Congress, so she decided to "un-retire" to work on this project, which she saw as a labor of love.

She said Mr. Battaglia was motivated to do the book, which was published in Italy by a publishing house in Modena, because he thought that if Italians today could understand how Italians came to America and began to succeed and prosper in just a few generations (in spite of or perhaps because of hardship and discrimination), then they would have a better perspective on the current immigration situation in Italy.

Ms. Osborne noted that the book was published in mid-October 2013 around the time of the Lampedusa tragedy in which hundreds drowned at sea when their boat capsized trying to reach the island off the coast of Sicily.

The book illustrates the gamut of the Italian-American experience with over 500 images ranging from the first map using the name "America" to stories and pictures of Fiorello LaGuardia, Vince Lombardi, Martin Scorsese, Joseph Petrosino, Mario Cuomo, Charles Bonaparte, Joe DiMaggio, Frank Sinatra, and many, many others. And the book recounts the fascinating stories of people such as Amadeo Pietro Giannini, founder of the Bank of America. The authors describe how after the terrible earthquake in San Francisco in 1906, Giannini sifted through the ruins of his bank, then called the Bank of Italy, discreetly loaded \$2 million in gold, coins and securities into a wagon bed, covered them with a layer of vegetables and headed home. Within a few days, he had set up shop on the docks and with a wooden plank straddling two barrels for a desk, he began to extend credit "on a face and a signature" to small business and individuals in need of money to rebuild their lives.

No doubt AMHS members will be familiar with some of these stories or may have even seen some of the people mentioned in the book. Angelo Puglisi, for one, recalls seeing Tony

Bennett perform and remembers watching Rocky Marciano win the heavyweight championship in 1952. However, Angelo told Ms. Osborne he wished she would have included more New York Yankee ballplayers and not just Yogi Berra and Phil Rizzuto. Like Ms. Osborne told him, there were just too many people to include them all. And when you think about it, that's a good thing!! (At least 454 Italian-Americans have played baseball in the Major Leagues since 1897).

Anyone who would like to order a copy of the book, which would make a great gift, can order it online at [www.accdistribution.com/us](http://www.accdistribution.com/us), by e-mailing [sales@antiquecc.com](mailto:sales@antiquecc.com) or by calling 1-800-252-5231. (You will recall that AMHS member Lucio D'Andrea submitted an item on this book in the January issue of the *Notiziario*. The Society purchased a copy of the book and anyone with interest in borrowing it for review, please contact Lucio at (703) 490-3067 or via email, [ldandrea1933@yahoo.com](mailto:ldandrea1933@yahoo.com)).

## OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS

by Joann Novello, AMHS Member

On January 25, 2014, a group of AMHS members attended a performance of Joe DiPietro's heartwarming, funny and at times poignant play, *Over the River and Through the Woods* at the Bowie Playhouse. While striking home for Italian-Americans, the production also spoke to the universal themes of "family, faith, and food," according to the director, Frank Pasqualino.

The basic storyline is the struggle of the grandson, Nick, to tell both sets of his grandparents that he has been offered a job on the West Coast, or, in the words of his grandfather, "the far Washington." Machinations ensue to keep Nick near the homestead, including introducing him to a young woman, "even though" she is Irish-American. Nick, in a situation parallel to that of his immigrant maternal grandfather, must make the decision to go it alone in a new environment or stay in New York to content his grandparents. The story of love and separation is one of the age-old themes of drama, and unfolds with laughter and also with tearful nuances.

The actors skillfully captured the cadences, facial expressions and body language of the Italian-American family members without resorting to stereotypes. It just rang true for those of us who remember the family dynamics of Sunday dinners at the grandparents' home. Even the stage décor and the props reminded us of the households in which we were raised. Much to the delight of those in attendance, the director was available to greet attendees and answer questions during intermission, and, at the end of the performance, the audience had the opportunity to speak to several of the six actors. Hopefully, this wonderful play will return for an encore performance in our area so that AMHS members can enjoy the play and the memories evoked. It is highly recommended!



*The cast of Over the River and Through the Woods*

## THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

by Lucio D'Andrea, AMHS Member

As new residents of Lake Ridge, VA in Prince William County (PWC), Edvige and I recently learned that the teaching of Italian has been quite successful in the PWC Public Schools. Italian was introduced in the 2004-2005 school year in Hylton High School. Since that time three additional high schools and a middle school are offering Italian. The current enrollment is 1,213 students, of which 1,005 are in high school.

Hylton has five students planning to take the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Italian exam. Increasing the number of students taking this exam is a key objective of the Embassy of Italian in promoting Italian in high schools in the United States. Edvige and I had the pleasure to meet with Carol Bass, World Language Supervisor of the PWC school system to learn more about the success Italian has achieved in PWC. We were told that, in a survey on preferred foreign languages conducted in 2012, covering 15,000 students, Spanish was first and Italian second! Ms. Bass noted that the success of Italian is due to: 1) the passion and quality of teachers; 2) general fascination and interest in Italian culture; and 3) administrative interest and support. Edvige and I were invited to serve as volunteers at Hylton to practice Italian with students planning to take the AP exam.

In a conversation with Claudia Defferre, we learned that the PWC school system is linked to the Embassy of Italy through the Italian Consulate in Philadelphia, and not the Embassy in Washington, DC. To help sustain the Italian language program, the Consulate provides grants to the PWC school system.

Edvige and I asked Ms. Bass if there were additional needs that would help to further sustain the language program. Ms. Bass noted that there is a need for English/Italian dictionaries. Funds for these are not provided by the PWC school system. Society members may recall that the Mantua Elementary Italian language program was able to secure funds for the



purchase of dictionaries from The Lido Civic Club of Washington, DC. We told Ms. Bass that we would explore with Italian American organizations in the Washington, DC area, financial contributions to help the school system with the purchase of dictionaries.

## MORE ADVENTURES IN PUGLIA

by Nancy DeSanti

October is a wonderful time to visit Puglia, a truly beautiful region - the “heel of the boot” with the Adriatic Sea on the eastern side and the Ionian Sea on the western side. So in October 2013, I went to Puglia for the first time, with a group of mostly National Italian American Foundation members (mostly from New York and New Jersey) and OSIA Fairfax, VA Lodge officer Joe La Marca and his wife June.

In the January 2014 *Notiziario*, I wrote about our stay in Lecce and Bari. Lecce is a wonderful city full of beautiful palaces, churches and elegant stores, with an ancient Roman amphitheater right in the middle of the downtown area. Bari, the capital of Puglia, is truly “a city with a soul.” There are street bands and musicians, and in Bari Vecchia (the old quarter), you can find women making pasta on tables outdoors and men playing cards. And across town, you can find top designer stores along wide avenues lined with palm trees, a beautiful waterfront area, and a Swabian castle that is lit up at nighttime.

During our stay in Puglia, we went on several day trips. Our first day trip was to Otranto. This beautiful town on the Adriatic is the easternmost point of Italy, and on a clear day you can see Albania about 95 kilometers away. On New Year’s Day, there is a big celebration of the first sunrise in Italy.



Otranto

Otranto has a very interesting history. It was under attack by the Turks (the Ottoman Empire) for 200 years beginning in the 15th century, so the area is full of watchtowers and many symbols of a dolphin biting a crescent moon (symbolizing defeat of the Muslims). The people of Otranto held out for 15 days during one large siege, giving the Spanish time to get there and win a big battle against the Turks. In the year 1480,

approximately 800 people were impaled or beheaded by the Turks for failing to convert, and this year the 800 were canonized the same day Pope Benedict XVI resigned. Pope Francis held the canonization ceremony on May 12, 2013. The cathedral in Otranto contains the skulls and bones of the 800 martyrs and they can be seen on both sides of the altar downstairs. The beautiful cathedral contains some unusual Byzantine mosaics such as a cat with boots only on its two left paws (symbolizing right and wrong).

Our next trip was to Gallipoli, on the western side of Puglia. It’s a big port city which has lately become known as “party central” in Salento, as the southern area of Puglia is called. There are a lot of clubs and bars, and even a yacht club. Not surprisingly, there are a lot of fishermen in Gallipoli, and after they finish going out to sea for the first time that day, around 10:30 a.m., they gather in their clubhouse to play cards, especially *tressette* (and *sette e mezzo* at Christmas time). The impressive clubhouse has a sign on the door saying “*Comitato Pescatori Gallipoli*”.

In the homes of Gallipoli, you can often see the customary “*altarinu*,” the little altar or shrine that consists of photos of deceased loved ones and votive candles, visible through windows or front doors as you walk through the town.

On another day trip, we went to Ostuni, which is built on a hill surrounded by an ocean of olive trees, some of them over 500 years old. Ostuni is known for all its whitewashed houses. It is one of the oldest inhabited areas of Italy, and bones have been found there of a girl from 25,000 years ago.

While in Ostuni, we went to the Osteria del Tempo Perso for a cooking class (more like a cooking show!!) where the two chefs showed their expertise in making some delicious dishes. These guys could really cook, and, at the end of the class, they prepared a light cheesecake made with ricotta. It got our vote for “best cheesecake ever!!”

Another day trip was to the Polvanera Winery, named after the black soil of the area. Outside we were invited to taste the pizzuto grapes on a 150-year-old vine - so delicious!! The Cassano family which owns the operation has been in business for just 10 years but it is already successful. It uses stainless steel vats to make organic wine. The owners explained that instead of using pesticides, they use ribbons with pheromones to trick the male and female insects so they don’t reproduce. About 80% of their wine is sold abroad (China, U.S., Denmark and Belgium). Years ago, coal was mined in the area so the soil was black; the owners decided to keep the name Polvanera consequently. Out of the thousands of wines in Italy, Polvanera’s wine was ranked number 27.

Yet another day trip was to Altamura, which is famous for its bread. Altamura is also famous for the “*L’uomo di Altamura*” (“man of Altamura”), the Neanderthal man whose 400,000-year-old bones were found here in a limestone cave. It’s a well-fortified city with high walls built in 1300 (the newer part of town was built in 1700). The beautiful Romanesque

cathedral of San Nicola features an archway depicting scenes from the Old and New Testament.

On a beautiful Sunday morning, we went to Trani, a medieval town by the sea. We learned that historically, by the 12th century, Trani had one of the largest Jewish communities in southern Italy. And the churches have tall belltowers similar to the churches in Croatia which is close by. Some of us went to Mass in a small church in Trani and the priest gave a heartfelt sermon on the Lampedusa tragedy where hundreds of migrants drowned in the sea trying to reach Sicily. Afterwards, we wanted to do a little shopping so we asked a man passing by where we could find some shops, and he told us all the shops were closed on Sunday. Luckily for us, we then thought to ask a woman whether any shops were open, and she immediately showed us some beautiful shops, open for business. Lesson learned.

The town is known for its “*pietra di Trani*,” a special stone found in local quarries which is used to build in Bari and elsewhere. Along the Trani waterfront are fishermen selling their wares - fish so fresh you can see the gleam in their eye, and octopus too.

Of course, we couldn't come to Puglia and not go to Alberobello, with its 1,000 trulli (conical-shaped whitewashed houses with gray stone roofs). One member of our group has a cousin in Connecticut who built a trullo in his back yard with stones imported from Puglia.

We learned that about 500 years ago, the early trullo masters learned how to build these conical structures without using cement. This came in handy when the owners would dismantle their houses and the walls around their property just before the tax man came around each year. Then, after the tax man had made his rounds, these crafty homeowners would reassemble their trulli and stone walls. The trulli also feature a good luck symbol on the top of each structure. There are a variety of symbols to ward off the evil eye (*malocchio*). This is not just a thing of the past, either. In the South, 17 is considered an unlucky number, just like the number 13 in the North. As a result, we were told that Alitalia planes do not have rows numbered 13 or 17 (we checked, it's true!!) and hotels do not have room numbers ending in 13 or 17 (also true).



*Trulli in Alberobello*

On another day trip, we went to Matera, in the Basilicata region. Matera is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, because of its “*sassi*,” or prehistoric cave dwellings. The city of Matera was built in a canyon, with the center city built in a gully. It's an upside-down city, with cemeteries built on top of the churches. The famous “*sassi*” are cave houses chiseled out of rock, whose residents lived in primitive conditions - no running water, no electricity - well into the 20th century. In the 1950s, the cave dwellers were forced to move into the “*other Matera*” after Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi became aware of their plight. The “*sassi*” were originally built by Greek monks centuries ago, but over time, 3,000 caves came to be occupied by communities of about 90 people, each with a boss whose rule was law. The caves had no doors or windows, and people lived together with their animals. Life was harsh, but people were inventive - among the tools they made were 5 hollowed-out bamboo shoots strung together to wear on the hand to protect the fingers while working in the fields.

Matera actually resembles Jerusalem of 2,000 years ago, so it has been used in movie sets for a number of movies, including Mel Gibson's “*The Passion of the Christ*.” Matera is certainly a unique city. And on the side of the streets, there are rocks with arugula growing in between that can be picked and eaten (delicious!!). Nearby, a small club with musicians playing in the middle of the day was another unexpected treat. Before leaving Basilicata, we visited the beautiful church of Santa Lucia alle Malve in Matera which has a strong Byzantine influence, as do many of the churches and buildings in Puglia.

Towards the end of our trip, we went to the Castel del Monte. The castle is one of the most famous in Italy, and it's pictured on the one-cent euro coin. The castle has 8 towers made of 8 sides. It's built on a hilltop and has red marble taken from Caserta. It was built in 1240 by Italian-born King Frederik II of Swabia for no apparent reason since it's not near the sea or a city and may have been built as a hideout for the king's mistress. The castle was built with lower, thicker walls than earlier castles in Italy, because by this time their enemies had begun using cannons rather than catapults.

Our last evening was spent in Polignano a Mare, a beautiful seaside town built on a rocky cliff. The evening in Polignano a Mare was our final chance to taste the delicious Pugliese food before heading home. The town's most famous native son is Domenico Modugno, the singer, songwriter, actor and (later in life) member of Parliament best known for his 1958 international hit song “*Nel blu dipinto di blu (Volare)*.” (The song, co-written by Modugno, became an enormous success and won two Grammy Awards in the United States).







*Polignano a Mare*

I have to say the food in Puglia was amazing - I could live on the bread made with onion, tomatoes and olives, called “pizzo,” which is of course very different from the meaning of the word in other parts of Italy – lace, goatee, and protection money, to name a few. One of the many delicious dishes was the *orecchiette con cime di rapa*, and of course the fresh fish was a real treat too.

Among the interesting traditions of Puglia is the *fischietti pugliesi*, a tradition which began in the Middle Ages. These are whistles which are handmade products of terra cotta painted by hand in vibrant colors. Many are in fanciful animal shapes (a popular one being the rooster) which showcase the skill and imagination of the craftsmen. With their unique sound, the whistles are meant to give joy equally to those who see them and those who play them.

Another tradition becoming more popular nowadays is dancing the *pizzica*, the folk dance originally from Salento which has spread to other parts of Puglia and also Calabria and Basilicata. The pizzica is part of the larger family of tarantella dances. In recent years as the pizzica became popular with a new generation, there has been a summer Notte della Taranta, an all-night affair where many well-known musicians and pizzica orchestras perform.

Although Puglia does not see a lot of visitors from the United States, this beautiful region is well worth seeing. As they say in Bari, “Sciamunsin.” (Note: I would like to thank Cecilia Fiermonte for the valuable information she gave me before my trip to Puglia, a place she knows very well as it is the birthplace of her mother and sister).



## FROM THE REGIONAL CORNER

### VILLAVALLELONGA, PROVINCE OF L'AQUILA, ABRUZZO

by Nancy DeSanti

Translated by Maddalena Borea, AMHS Member



Villavallelonga may be small, but it is a fascinating village in a mountainous area in the province of L'Aquila, full of wild animals, exotic flowers and an amazing cultural history.

The small town has approximately 931 inhabitants, known as villavallelonghesi. The town is located 57 kilometers from the city of L'Aquila. It lies within the boundaries of the National Park of Abruzzo, among green woods and pastures. In the past, the economy was based on the presence of the forests (for hunting and harvesting the fruit trees) and on raising sheep. Nowadays the economy has shifted towards winter and summer tourism.

Archaeological findings show that the area was inhabited during Italic times, but the present town center was built in the 11th century as a fortification. In the early Middle Ages, the town was under the dominion of Count Ruggiero d'Albe and later the Count of Celano, among a series of feudal lords. In 1445, the town was called “Collis Longus cum Rocca di Arce,” with the town's current name appearing in the 18th century. Among the sights to see is the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, which dates back to the 11th century and was originally under the Benedictine jurisdiction of Montecassino. The belltower was built in the 16th century, when the inner frescoes were also made. Unfortunately the original architecture and frescoes were damaged by an earthquake in 1915 and again by World War II bombings.

The beautiful town of Villavallelonga is known for its horticulture, such as the Marsican iris and crocus, and wildlife including the Marsican bears, deer, wolves, lynxes, owls, mountain goats and wild boars.

Recently the town was mentioned in a *Washington Post* article which described the third annual *Panarda* held at Le Virtù restaurant in South Philadelphia, which features the cuisine of Abruzzo. The restaurant served an epic nine-hour 40-course banquet.

The article noted that the first documented *Panarda*, in 1657, took place in Villavallelonga. Legend has it that a young mother of the Serafini clan left her baby in the crib while she went to a well to get water. When she came back, the baby was clamped in the jaws of a wolf. After she prayed to

Sant'Antonio Abate, the protector of those who raise animals, the wolf released the baby unharmed. The mother vowed to hold an annual feast in the saint's honor. Every year since then, the Serafini family has played a role in hosting Villavallelonga's Panarda, which is held on the saint's feast day, January 17.

The Panarda is a centuries-old tradition that still takes place in some Abruzzese villages, especially in the mountains, where the winters can be bitter cold and where a celebratory meal that requires days of preparation can provide comfort and camaraderie.

In centuries past, the Panarda was hosted by the town's aristocracy for the townspeople who labored for them, in celebration of the harvest held at the time of year when the annual pig slaughter took place and the pantry was full.

This year's Panarda at Le Virtù restaurant in Philadelphia took four days to prepare and was modeled after a 1994 Panarda held at Villa Santa Maria, sponsored by the famous cooking school in Val di Sangro, in the Chieti Province, Abruzzo, that has produced some of Italy's best chefs.

#### What to See

- Botanical Garden (Giardino Botanico) "Loreto Grande"
- Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie

#### Important Dates

- January 16-17: Feast of Sant'Antonio Abate with a traditional Panarda
- 1st Sunday in May: Feast of La Madonna della Lanna
- 2nd Sunday in August: Sagra della pecora
- September 2: St. Leucius, the patron saint, with fair and exhibition of folk traditions
- Early September: Marcialonga del Cerbiatto

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### **VILVALLELONGA, PROVINCIA DI L'AQUILA, ABRUZZO**

Villavallelonga, piccolo centro della provincia di L'Aquila, è un bellissimo paesino di montagna, in una zona ricca di animali selvatici, di fiori esotici, di cultura e di storia antica.

Conta 931 abitanti, i quali sono chiamati Villavallelonghesi. A 57 chilometri dall'Aquila, confina con il Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, ed è circondata da verdi foreste e da pascoli. Nel passato la sua economia dipendeva dalle foreste, per la caccia

e per i frutti dei suoi alberi. Oggi dipende dal turismo invernale ed estivo.

I reperti archeologici ci dicono che la zona fu abitata sin dai tempi degli antichi Italici. Il centro fu costruito più tardi, nell'undicesimo secolo, come fortezza. All'inizio del Medioevo fu dominato dal Conte Ruggiero d'Alba, e più tardi dal Conte di Celano. Seguirono poi altre dominazioni. Nel 1445 la cittadina era conosciuta come "Collus Longus Cum Rocca di Arce". L'attuale nome apparve nel diciottesimo secolo.

Fra le bellezze locali abbiamo la Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie, che risale all'undicesimo secolo, e fu sotto la giurisdizione dei monaci Benedettini di Montecassino. Il suo campanile fu eretto nel sedicesimo secolo, contemporaneamente a degli affreschi interni. Sfortunatamente la struttura originale e gli affreschi perirono durante il terremoto del 1915, e durante i bombardamenti della seconda guerra mondiale.

Questa bellissima cittadina è conosciuta anche per i suoi giardini, pieni di fiori esotici come iridacee e corcori, e per la sua fauna, rappresentata da orsi, cervi, lupi, linci, capre selvatiche, gufi e cinghiali.

Recentemente il *Washington Post*, il maggiore giornale locale, ha parlato di Villavallelonga. Ne ha parlato in occasione di una celebrazione annuale, "La Panarda," tenuta al ristorante *Le Virtù*, di Filadelfia, durante la quale si celebra la cucina d'Abruzzo. Una recente Panarda al ristorante *Le Virtù* offrì un banchetto di 40 pietanze, e durò nove ore.

La prima Panarda, ci disse il giornale, ebbe luogo a Villavallelonga nel 1657. Secondo la leggenda, una giovane madre, della famiglia Serafini, si recò al pozzo per attingere dell'acqua. Al suo ritorno a casa, trovò il suo piccolo nella bocca di un lupo. La donna, atterrita, chiese a Sant'Antonio Abate, protettore degli allevatori di animali, che le salvasse il bambino. Il lupo rilasciò il piccolo, incolume. Dall'ora in poi la donna fece voto al santo di celebrare ogni anno una festa in suo onore.

Questa celebrazione ancora oggi viene effettuata sotto il nome di Panarda. Questa festa avviene ogni anno il 17 gennaio. La migliore Panarda ancora oggi avviene sulle montagne, dove gli inverni rigidi trovano conforto nella preparazione di piatti che richiedono una lunga preparazione, ma dà la possibilità agli abitanti del luogo di fraternizzare coi compaesani e coi vicini.

In tempi passati la Panarda veniva spesso offerta dall'aristocrazia del paese in ringraziamento al popolo che lavorava le sue terre. Si celebravano, durante le Panarde, anche il raccolto e l'uccisione di maiali, che assicuravano un inverno di benessere.

La Panarda di quest'anno al ristorante di Filadelfia ha richiesto quattro giorni di preparazione, ed è stata modellata alla Panarda del 1994, offerta a Villa Santa Maria dalla famosa scuola di Arti Culinarie in Val di Sangro, in provincia di



Chieti, Abruzzo; scuola che ha formato alcuni dei migliori chef d'Italia.

#### Attrazioni del luogo

- Giardino Botanico "Loreto Grande"
- Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie.

#### Date da ricordare

- 16 - 17 gennaio: Festa di Sant'Antonio Abate, e la tradizionale Panarda
- Prima domenica di maggio: Festa della Madonna della Lana
- Seconda domenica d'agosto: Sagra della Pecora.
- 2 settembre: San Lucio, Santo Patrono, con fiera ed esibizioni folcloristiche
- Inizio di settembre: Marcialonga del Cerbiatto

### **FOSSALTO, PROVINCE OF CAMPOBASSO, MOLISE**

by Nancy DeSanti

Translated by Maddalena Borea



Fossalto is a small town located in the center of Molise, stretched across a ridge like many of the towns in the region. Located 15 kilometers northwest of Campobasso, the town has approximately 1,603 inhabitants.

The town was originally known in the 13th century as "Santa Maria di Fossasecca." In 1862, its name became Fossalto, to avoid being confused with two other towns called Fossasecca. The first mention of the town was in 1269, when Carlo I of Anjou gave dominion to the feudal lord Guglielmo Stendardo. In 1410, King Ladislao di Durazzo gave dominion over the town to Niccolò Sanfromondo, the Conte di Cerreto. A series of feudal lords ruled the town until the 18th century, when the baron of Fossalto, Antonio Pellegrino, died without leaving any heirs.

Fossalto is a town with ancient farming traditions. This was recognized last year by the European Commission which awarded a prize to Fossalto as part of the "Images of Rural Europe Competition" sponsored by the EC. During the award ceremony, Fossalto received an award for the photo "Fienagione" taken in Fossalto which depicts the gathering of hay and the creation of a *stiglio*, a traditional way of storing hay by stacking it and pressing it around a pole. It was noted that "this is a unique rural tradition and a method that is difficult to preserve in an increasingly automated market

which focuses on economic competitiveness to the detriment of European rural traditions, more and more of which are disappearing."

The Festa della Pagliara is a major event in Fossalto. The preparations begin on April 30 when flowers and other plants required for decoration are collected. The underlying frame consists primarily of a lightweight mesh adapted into a cone shape. A cross is placed on top of the resulting "tree" now covered entirely with branches, flowers and fava beans.

By the morning of May 1, the Pagliara is ready and waiting to come to life. (A designated person will stand inside the Pagliara and literally wear it like a costume). It is blessed by the priest in the presence of children who will march in the parade. The tree has an opening for the person wearing it to see out, and the face of the wearer can at times be seen smiling to the crowd. As the jubilant parade makes its way through the town, announcing the fertile month of May, residents open up their doors and windows to throw buckets of water at the Pagliara while shouting "*Rascia, Maie!*" (Abundance, May!). The entourage is made up of zampogna (bagpipe) musicians and children in traditional costumes carrying water urns, with everyone else following behind.

At the final stage of the procession, the cross is detached from the summit of the cone and then given by the pastor to the mayor. At the end of this remarkable day, after the speeches by the pastor and mayor, the fossaltese musical groups entertain the appreciative crowd.

An enjoyable video of the Pagliara can be seen on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-K7a20LgxQ>

#### What to See

- Town Hall

#### Important Dates

- January 17: Falò
- April 29: San Pietro Martire
- May 1: Festa della Pagliara
- May 6: Feast of San Nicola, the patron saint

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## FOSSALTO, PROVINCIA DI CAMPOBASSO, MOLISE

Fossalto, nel centro del Molise, si estende lungo la costa, come tante altre cittadine della regione. A circa 15 chilometri da Campobasso, conta circa 1603 abitanti.

Conosciuta, nel tredicesimo secolo, come Santa Maria di Fossasecca, nel 1862 divenne Fossalto per evitare che venisse confusa con due altre città chiamate Fossasecca. Si parla per la prima volta di questo centro nel 1269, quando Carlo D'Angiò ne affidò il governo a Guglielmo Stendardo. Nel 1410 il re Ladislao di Durazzo diede il comando della cittadina a Niccolò Sanfromondo, Conte di Cerreto. Una serie di feudatari seguirono, fin quando nel diciottesimo secolo, il Barone di Fossalto, Antonio Pellegrino, morì senza eredi.

Famosa per le sue tradizioni agricole, la cittadina ha recentemente ricevuto un premio dalla Comunità Europea per queste sue tradizioni agricole. Durante la cerimonia di premiazione, sponsorizzata dalla CE, la città ha ricevuto in dono una foto chiamata "Fienagione", eseguita a Fossalto, durante il raccolto del fieno e la creazione dello *stiglio*. La creazione dello *stiglio* è una maniera speciale di raccogliere il fieno, di compressarlo ed ammassarlo intorno a pali; una tradizione rurale molto unica, e un metodo difficile da preservare in un mercato che è in competizione con gli altri mercati, a danno delle tradizioni, che vanno sparendo giorno per giorno.

La festa della Pagliara è uno degli eventi principali del luogo. I preparativi di essa hanno inizio in aprile, quando si comincia a raccogliere fiori e piante che serviranno per decorarlo. Una cornice, di materiale leggerissimo, in forma di cono, e una croce sopra un albero decorato di rami, di fiori e di fave, sono i protagonisti della cerimonia.

Il primo maggio la pagliara è pronta. Un sacerdote la benedice, davanti ad un corteo di bambini che marciano, e l'albero ha un'apertura per la persona che vi è dentro, che di tanto in tanto si può intravedere sorridere alla folla. Mentre la parata giubilante attraversa la città, annunciando la fertilità del mese di maggio, gli abitanti lanciano da porte e finestre secchi di acqua, gridando "Rascia Maje", "Abbondanza in maggio". Il corteo procede al suono di zampogne, e tutti gli stanno dietro.

Alla fine della processione, la croce viene staccata dal cono, donata dal sacerdote al sindaco della cittadina, e la folla, a questo punto, può finalmente godere la musica degli zampognari e degli altri musicisti locali.

### Attrazioni del luogo

- Il palazzo del Comune

### Date da ricordare

- 17 gennaio: Falò
- 29 aprile: San Pietro Martire
- 1 maggio: Festa della Pagliara
- 6 maggio: Festa di San Nicola, Santo Patrono

## CASACALENDA AND THE CELEBRATION OF LA MADONNA DELLA DIFESA

by Ronald Ciarlo, AMHS Member

In response to the article on the Molise town of Casacalenda in the January 2014 *Notiziario*, AMHS member Ronald Ciarlo is contributing the following article:

If you grew up as a child in America and heard of towns like Bonefro, Guardialfiera, Larino, Montorio nei Frentani, Marrone del Sannio, Provvidenti and Ripabottoni; or if you heard Italian expressions like "*U cane ch bbàje nne mmocceche*" ("*Un cane che abbaia non morde*" - Barking dogs do not bite); or you ate bucatini pasta tossed in a sauce of fried bread crumbs, raisins, sugar and walnuts on St. Joseph's Day; or perhaps at Christmas, you enjoyed a fried pastry coated with honey and walnuts called *caragnoli* - then you may have heard of a town called *Casachèlénne*, or Casacalenda, a small town found in the southern part of central Italy in the region of Molise, province of Campobasso.

Casacalenda is a small provincial town with a population of approximately 2,500 people located between the Biferno and Cigno rivers. The town is located in a rural setting nestled among olive groves and sloping hills whose inhabitants make a living from agriculture and from tourists seeking the peace of the countryside. The city proper consists of alleys and narrow flights of steps leading from the center of town to the countryside. Casacalenda has never been a center of major industry - for the most part, it was a quiet town marked by few events. Unfortunately, that changed during World War II because Casacalenda was used as a concentration camp for Jewish and politically dissident women from 1940 to 1943. After the war the town was in desperate conditions: no work, no money, and fields ruined by the war. The only solution was emigration. The majority of the Casacalendesi made their way to Canada, to cities like Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton. Very few came to America because of its immigration policies after World War II. In Montreal, the Casacalendesi gave life to the city; they created a Casacalendese Association and helped revive the parish of La Madonna della Difesa. They brought to the parish many new parishioners and devotees to help continue the annual celebration of La Madonna della Difesa that was started by earlier immigrants from the late 1890's.

Now, why was this event of pre- and post-war immigration one of importance? It was important for several reasons. First and foremost, the Marian devotion to La Madonna della Difesa was of recent origin - its roots needed to be planted more securely on this side of the ocean. On January 15, 1898 Bishop DiMilia from Larino declared that a church was to be built on the site of La Difesa. During the period 1890-1920 the mass exodus from Italy was taking place. Naturally the Casacalendesi took with them their devotion. Secondly, this mass migration pre- and post-war planted the seeds of devotion in both Montreal and in Johnston, RI. For example, a handful of Casacalendesi founded La Società della Madonna della Difesa on July 20, 1908 and in January 1913 the Parish of Our Lady of Grace was founded where the sanctuary to La



Madonna della Difesa is located. So we can see that our forefathers set in place a means to continue a religious tradition to be handed down to future generations in Rhode Island and in Canada. And, lastly, the Casacalendesi came to our shores as craftsmen, laborers and shop keepers, thus improving their living conditions as well as those of other Americans and Canadians.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE LATTER PART OF 2013

### VIVA VERDI!!

by Nancy DeSanti



The Year of Italian Culture 2013 was a remarkable success, with 300 events in 60 U.S. cities, Italian Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero reported. The events focused on art, science, fashion, and cinema. The Ambassador noted that one of the year's highlights was the celebration of the bicentennial of the great Giuseppe Verdi.

October 10, 2013 - the 200th anniversary of the birth of the renowned composer Giuseppe Verdi - was a big day in Italy and for opera lovers around the world. On this important anniversary, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan honored the great composer with performances of his operas *Aida* and *Don Carlo* as well as a special lecture and musical program. In Bari, the Teatro Petruzzelli featured performances of Verdi's last opera, the comic opera *Falstaff*. In Italy, a special TV broadcast on RAI Uno featured "Va pensiero" and an interview with Riccardo Muti, the music director of the Chicago Symphony who was born in Naples. Locally, the Washington National Opera featured "The Force of Destiny" (*La Forza del Destino*). An orchestra from La Scala performed at Strathmore Music Center in Bethesda, MD on December 4.

Casa Italiana had its own "Viva Verdi!" program on October 12, directed by Maestro Bruno Fusco. By all accounts, it was very successful. Maestro Fusco's program featured arias from 6 of Verdi's beloved operas - *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Aida*, *Il Trovatore*, *I Vespri Siciliani* and *Nabucco*. The evening's emcee was Cassandra Hoye. Outstanding performances were given by sopranos Marie Palmieri, Ritika Chaturvedi, tenor Tony Torchia and baritone Jose Sancin. They were accompanied on the piano by Stephen Brown. In between the vocal performances were dances choreographed by Tuccio Rigano and performed by four accomplished dancers who

came from Italy - Annamaria Perilli, Margherita Maffettone, Matteo Pastore and Alessandro Pastore.

Following the performances, awards were announced, with Joseph Gawler's sons and Tuccio Rigano receiving the Premio Internazionale delle Arti and Giuseppe Farruggio receiving the Premio Internazionale dell'Artigianato.

Bringing the delightful evening to a close, Minister Cristiano Maggipinto from the Embassy of Italy took the stage to announce that Italian President Giorgio Napolitano had bestowed upon Maestro Fusco the title of "Cavaliere della Repubblica." Tanti auguri, Maestro!!

## ITALY HAILS NEW NY MAYOR DE BLASIO

by Nancy DeSanti

Italian-American Bill de Blasio's landslide victory in New York City's mayoral race on November 5, 2013 was hailed all over Italy but nowhere more so than in a small town near Naples. That would be Sant'Agata de' Goti, a town in the province of Benevento, where de Blasio's maternal grandfather was born. His maternal grandmother was born in Grassano in the province of Matera in Basilicata. As the ballots were counted in New York, about 100 townspeople gathered in Sant'Agata de' Goti's former movie theater in the early morning hours to watch a broadcast of de Blasio's victory speech.

The New York mayor-elect said: "Tonight I feel the deepest appreciation for generations of my family including those no longer with us, and a special thank you to my Italian family and friends in Rome and in my grandfather's hometown of Sant'Agata de' Goti, and my grandmother's hometown of Grassano. To them I say: *"Grazie a tutti."* The town erupted in celebration after the election results were broadcast. The townspeople cracked open bottles of Falaghina spumante, set off fireworks, and waved American flags. Many wore T-shirts saying "Forza Bill."

Among those attending the town's victory party was Mayor Carmine Valentino, who said he appreciated de Blasio's mention of the town and his greetings in Italian after his victory. The mayor commented that de Blasio "has not forgotten his roots. Pictures of de Blasio and his family were plastered all over town, on bulletin boards and shop windows, and American flags hung from balconies. A sponge cake filled with hazelnut and white chocolate has been named in his honor. A Neapolitan artisan fashioned a terra cotta figurine of de Blasio with a tricolor sash, while a pizza maker wrote "Napoli love [*sic*] de Blasio" in mozzarella on a pie.

De Blasio minored in Italian at New York University, worked with his mother on a book about the Italian resistance during World War II, and accompanied her on research trips. De Blasio has said he is working to perfect his accent by practicing with his barber, who also shares Italian newspapers with him.



The  
Abruzzo and Molise  
Heritage Society  
Of the Washington, DC Area



Website: [abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org](http://abruzzomoliseheritagesociety.org)



*NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer Satellite*

∞ LUNCHEON MEETING ∞

***"The History of the Universe"***

*Presented by*  
**Nobel Prize Winner**  
**Dr. John C. Mather**

**WHEN:** Sunday, March 30, 2014

**TIME:** 1:00 PM

**LOCATION:** Casa Italiana  
595 Third Street, NW | Washington, DC

**MENU:** Lunch will be catered by Piero's Corner Ristorante Italiano, with a menu of two pasta dishes (one vegetarian, one with meatballs), lemon chicken, salad, bread, and beverages.

**COST:** \$20.00 for members; \$25.00 for non-members.

**PAID RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED  
NO LATER THAN MARCH 23, 2014.**

**PROGRAM:** Join us for a fascinating explanation of the history of the universe, from the Big Bang until now, and on to the future. Our speaker, Dr. John C. Mather, is the winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2006, an expert on the Big Bang theory, and a former NASA colleague of AMHS member Joe Novello. In 2007, *Time* magazine named Dr. Mather one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World". We will also hear from Laura Jones, one of the 2013 AMHS/NIAF scholarship recipients. AMHS members, guests and friends – please be sure to join us!

For information call Joe Novello (301) 927-4766 or Dr. Lynn Sorbara (301) 926-7792  
All are welcome!

✂----- *Return with Payment*

**Reservation for AMHS General Society Meeting on Sunday, March 30, 2014**

Please make check payable to AMHS.

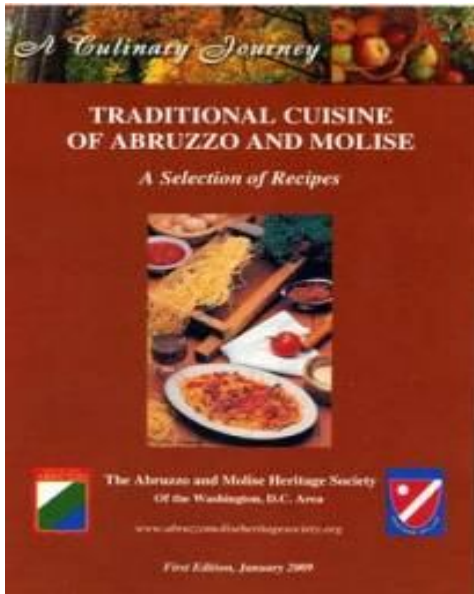
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GUEST(S): \_\_\_\_\_

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## THE ABRUZZO AND MOLISE COOKBOOK



"Traditional Cuisine of Abruzzo and Molise: A Selection of Recipes", assembled for the enjoyment of AMHS membership.

**PRICE:** \$10.00 + \$3.00 per book for postage and handling

Make check payable to AMHS, c/o Maria D'Andrea,  
4669 Lawton Way, #104, Alexandria, VA 22311


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## JANUARY 26, 2014 AMHS GENERAL SOCIETY MEETING



**Top left** – Professor Roberto Severino talks about Gabriele D’Annunzio, one of Abruzzo’s most influential writers.

**Top right, center and bottom left** – Almost 100 members and guests listen with rapt attention to Professor Severino’s presentation on D’Annunzio.

**Bottom right** – AHMS Immediate Past President Dick DiBuono and current AMHS President Maria D’Andrea present a certificate of appreciation and dedication to Joe and Joann Novello, for their many years of service as AMHS Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.  
(photos courtesy of Joe Novello)



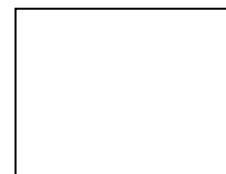
## REMEMBERING JOE GRANO'S PASSION FOR THE ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY



**Top left** - engaging with guests at the March 27, 2011 AMHS meeting at The Portofino Restaurant. **Top right** – with AMHS members Mary A.D. and Jeff Petrino after their presentation on “The Veil of Manoppello”, July 29, 2012 AMHS meeting at Casa Italiana. **Center** - with Dick DiBuono (AMHS), Ron Cappelletti (ICS), Maria D’Andrea (AMHS), and Phil Finelli at the November 8, 2012 concert by Francesca Hurst at the Italian Cultural Institute. **Bottom left and right** – with Christiana Cunningham-Adams, art conservator and Steven Livengood, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and AMHS members at the U.S. Capitol on June 11, 2011 for a private tour to see the famous works of Constantino Brumidi. *(photos courtesy of AMHS archivist Romeo Sabatini).*



The  
Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society  
4669 Lawton Way, #104  
Alexandria, VA 22311



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