

ORDER SONS OF ITALY
IN AMERICA



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Keeping up with.....

Fiorello LaGuardia Lodge #2867

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President's Message

Brothers and Sisters,

Is summer over already? I always have mixed emotions this time of year. I love summer, the carefree days, barbeques and reading on the beach, but I also look forward to the crisp fall weather and all that it has to offer. This upcoming September, the Sons of Italy has planned many events that I hope many of will attend. On September 4th Fourth Annual Golf Outing at the Oyster Bay Golf Course, September 15, there is an event of Belmont Raceway and September 23 is Italian Heritage and Culture Month Concert "From Italy with Love" at Hofstra University.

I would like to thank everyone who attended our August meeting. In the past, summer months have proven to have a light attendance; however, I was pleased to see a majority of existing members, as well as applications for new members. It gives me great pleasure to welcome six new members: Rosemarie Alagna, Maryann Grasso, Theresa Pierro, Joseph Pierro, Louise Diletto and Tino Maiolo. I would like to mention that Tino is a radio host on ICN Radio every Saturday at 12:pm. You can listen to him by visiting www.icnradio.com. I am pleased to announce the creation of a committee for Media Management for the Fiorello LaGuardia Lodge# 2867 and Tino as my chair of this committee. Tino and I have been working together to promote our Lodge and expand our membership through the airwaves and I will continue to work with the local newspapers as the Public Relations Chair.

Just a reminder that our next membership meeting is on September 20, 2012 at 7:30pm at the Old Mill Yacht Club. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

Fraternally,

Rosemary Ciulla-Frisone
President



President Rosemary Ciulla-Frisone and ICN Radio Host and new Lodge member, Tino Maiolo



Upcoming Events

9/22/2012–Italian Concert..From Italy with Love at Hofstra University Monroe Theatre, featuring Christopher Macchio, Marissa Farmiglietti and Uncle Floyd. For tickets call 516-785-4623.

9/23/2012 - Italian Experience at Hofstra University. The 20th Annual Italian Experience at Hofstra will begin at 11:00am.

10/13/2012– New York OSIA Casino Night for Autism. Autism Fundraiser “Casino Royale” to be held at the Constantino Brumidi Lodge Hall, Deer Park at 7:00 p.m. Donation is \$75 per person

10/14/2012– Institution of the Luigi Pirandello Lodge #2875 of Fresh Meadows
Institution, initiation and installation will take place on October 14th at St. Nicholas of Tolentine RC Church, 150-75 Goethals Avenue, Hillcrest, Queens, 4:00 pm.

Buon Compleanno

September Birthdays

- Michael Cappello
- MaryAnn Carey
- MaryAnn Minucci-Scudiero
- Peter Modica
- Dennis Rigas

Calendar

Membership Meeting @ Old Mill Yacht Club 163-15 Crossbay Blvd. September 20th, 2012 @ 7:30p.m.



Little Italy

by William Aiello

Little Italy is a great place to go any time of year. But in September it is most famous for the San Gennaro festival. Therefore, this month, Little Italy will be the topic of this column.

Little Italy, known by many as Piccola Italia, is arguably New York City's most famous, iconic ethnic neighborhood. Over a century ago it was a bustling, busy center of Italian immigrant life, activity and culture. One can go there today and almost mystically be transported back to its heyday.

You can practically see the pushcarts of fruits and vegetables drawn by Italian men, the flowerpots of tomatoes, basilico and peppers on the ledges of the tall, narrow apartment buildings. And the Italian women hanging laundry on the clotheslines suspended between the narrow alleys or small back yards. The voices of the Italian children playing or bicycling in the streets is faintly audible.

The area of Mulberry Street and environs was not the only neighborhood teeming with Italian families at the turn of the century and the roughly five decades that followed, but it was perhaps the most famous. Astoria and then remote Staten Island had theirs, and on the west side of the Hudson, Newark and Hoboken, New Jersey had their Little Italys. But it was this Italian neighborhood which more than any other earned fame as “Little Italy”.

Regardless of where they came from, they arrived in America with a dream for a better life. Earning small salaries, facing ruthless discrimination, unfamiliar with English, living in poor housing and working at jobs with no unions or protection, their lives were unimaginable by today's standards.

A visit to the Italian American Museum on Mulberry Street offers a fine retrospective of Italian life. Little by little, Italians created a community for themselves. A bank was established, stores catering to Italian tastes, and a church. Most Precious Blood Catholic Church. The latter was founded and funded exclusively by Italians, and is still there, in perfect condition. The names of the founding families proudly displayed inside.

The early part of the twentieth century were difficult times. World War II, the Depression and small salaries made it difficult for families to escape the often tenement conditions. World War II, in 1941, added to the dilemma. After World War II, life in America changed dramatically. Americans throughout the country were leaving the crowded cities for greener pastures and suburbs. Earning higher incomes, families with two cars and pets no longer found the small congested quarters of Little Italy meeting their expectations. And so, gradually, but surely, they left. Off they went, to Brooklyn and Queens, Staten Island and Yonkers. The Bronx and Long Island, New Jersey and

points beyond.

And also, gradually, but surely, Little Italy lost much of its character. By the 1950s many families were gone. By the 1960s, a great deal more. By the 1970s, only a small number remained, including one I knew, who honestly admitted to me that Little Italy was not what it was decades before.

By the 1980s one could practically count on one hand the number of Italian families that remained. The life the small, old apartment buildings without elevators or fire escapes offered paled in comparison to what life elsewhere would be.

Each year, my friend Lou and I make an annual trip to Little Italy each summer. Mulberry Street is closed to traffic and the four-block stretch is a festive tourist attraction. In addition to the museum and church, numerous restaurants, pastry shops, and souvenir stores abound. Whether looking for a great meal, pastry, t-shirt, history lesson, movie poster or any memento of New York's famous Italian immigrant neighborhood, one can find it here.

Alas, all is not quite as authentic as it appears. While many of the restaurants and eateries are owned by Italians, the souvenir shops and memorabilia shops are not. Nor are the wait staff of Italian descent. Most of the shops are owned by Asians, and the restaurant workers mainly of Bulgarian, Yugoslavian and other Slavic descent. In fact the façade of one clearly identifies it a Chinese/Italian restaurant.

A few years ago, the historian in me did a little detective work of my own. Starting at one end of Mulberry Street, walking to the other, I was curious as to how many Italians still called this their home. Going into the lobbies of every apartment building on Mulberry Street and cross streets such as Hester and Broome, I did my own little survey. Relying strictly on names on mailboxes, with only one possibility – a name which could have been either Italian or Spanish – not one Italian name was seen. A few Spanish, and all the rest Asian.

I realize my experiment was not scientific, but it revealed enough to tell me that the Italian presence in Little Italy is indeed little. I'm not decrying the Asian or Slavic presence, that would be wrong. As wrong as condemning an Italian restaurant in Chinatown. I do so instead to show the great change that has occurred in Little Italy.

Little Italy is a fun experience I'd recommend to anyone, native or tourist. The demographics have changed, the apartments have been renovated and the exteriors steam cleaned, air conditions have replaced flowerpots, and the congregation of the church is mostly Vietnamese. But the narrow streets and the former tenements remain as a testimony to what our Italian ancestors experienced. For us Italians, it keeps us in touch with our past. For tourists, it is a lesson in Italian-American history. No longer an Italian community, today it is mostly a symbolic tourist attraction. One can argue whether it is New York's most iconic ethnic neighborhood, but no one can doubt its significance. And the San Gennaro festival is a grand event to attend.

Next month I'll look at another Little Italys across America, as there are many – frequently in regions not associated with Italian-Americans. (Please visit our website for photos)

Trivia

In the 1950s-1960s, two Italian-born actresses won Best Actress award within seven years. Can you name the years, actresses, and films?

Answer to the Summer Trivia question: John D. Pastore, Rhode Island