

LA VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. BOX 2591, SARASOTA, FL. 34230 WWW.GCICS.ORG

May 2021

Prepared by Mary Rinaldi



President's Message

I am writing this month's message with my eye on the future. We are looking forward to September and October, feeling with somewhat certainty or at least very hopeful that we will be back to our pre-covid lifestyle and routines. Your Board will begin the 2021-2022 Program Year planning process during its May EB meeting. We will be discussing how we can get back safely to social and cultural gatherings. In addition, we will plan for next year's Scholarship Program and how to fulfill that obligation. We hope to have a Welcome Back function with a location yet to be identified. Tom Hurban has confirmed that our Bocce Picnic will be November 7th. We will seriously think about a Holiday/Christmas party, Mardi Gras Celebration, boat cruises, and numerous cultural events/lectures that we know are a vital component of our Society.

This year, George Arfield has worked tirelessly bringing to our members the most interesting people from across the Atlantic to our homes via virtual technology. These cultural happenings came about because of George's connections and hard work. This is not easy, so again, please support his efforts by participating in these Zoom events. For those who participated in these transatlantic interviews, I cannot imagine not continuing with these interesting cultural events. They have been a very welcome adventure during this time. This past week, some GCICS members had the pleasure of meeting Professor Ivan Hrastovcak who

zoomed with us from Istria speaking about “The Past and Present of Istria”. Please look for George’s report in this issue. Thank you, George!

Please put your thinking caps on and share with us some of your ideas that will bring us together for enjoyable experiences -- something new, possibly a lecture or someone whom we would find interesting and satisfy our cultural hunger. Or perhaps there is an outing that we have not previously done or thought about. This is what excites us and make our organization a forward moving society, fun and interesting. Please reach out to any board members with ideas.

GCICS needs new members. Our membership lightened up, so to speak, during Covid. In truth, all organizations need to grow its membership. I ask all of you to invite someone you know, in hopes they would enjoy being part of our Society. We should always be looking to bring into our fold new, and do I dare say, younger members. Let us face it, we are a community that serves the retired population, and although GCICS appreciates all of us, we will need members to carry on our mission.

I want to welcome our newest board member, Gordon Bloom. Many of you know Gordon and his wife, Joyce, from the many Social Hours we have conducted. George has facilitated several with Ellen and me. We look forward to his help on many projects. This talented man will bring much to GCICS, and we are anxious to have him as part of the team. Thank you, Gordon for accepting our invitation.

This year we have selected seven Scholarship recipients. You will find their names and high schools elsewhere in this newsletter. Since our Brunch Fiesta was not possible this year, Linda has put together videos sent in from each student. A Scholarship Edition of the newsletter is being prepared for your enjoyment. Next year we will again have a celebration of their accomplishments at a gala affair. I had the pleasure of bumping into David Del Purgatorio, one of our seven recipients, at Eggstraordinary Cafe where he works. You will find his photo with the listing of recipients. David was appreciative of his award, all smiles.

Sadly, Linda Ahern will be leaving our Board as Scholarship and Fundraising Chair. We need to fill these necessary posts. Please let me know if you are interested in getting involved in either of these two GCICS endeavors. Linda has been an active member of our Board for many years. She has always gone above and beyond. Linda with her positive attitude of “I can do that”, and “it’s not a problem” has contributed greatly, making our Society a success, and always exceeding her responsibilities. Linda will continue to be an active GCICS member, and we hope to see her at future GCICS events. GCICS thanks Linda for her contributions through the years, and we wish her success and happiness no matter what path she chooses.

If anyone has an interesting story or a few words about how they spent this past year, or wishes to share something meaningful that you experienced, we would love to hear from you. Some of us have grown spiritually, been resourceful and in some cases, have made contact with others whom we have not been in contact with for many years. We look forward to your stories and perhaps we can include them in a future newsletter. We continue to keep Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary, in our thoughts as she recovers from a serious fall two months ago. While healing, Ellen has not missed a beat and her work for GCICS was not stalled or hindered in any way. I will add that she demonstrates a work ethic and an energy that many of us would aspire to. Thank you, Ellen, for all you do. I would also like to thank Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor. Mary has worked so hard getting information via our Newsletter to all our members. Most of us do not realize the amount of work that is involved to make sure it gets done correctly. We especially appreciate these efforts at a time when Mary is in the midst of selling two homes and building another. Thank you, Mary. Thank you, Jerry for keeping us zooming. For all the other Board Members whose dedication keeps us moving forward so that we continue to be the organization we aspire to be, thank you! One final note: please SAVE THE DATE of May 27 from 5-6pm for our final Social Hour of the spring. Ellen will announce it soon.

Julie Bondarenko, President

GCICS VIRTUAL SOCIAL HOUR – March 23, 2021

Article by Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary



Famous Italians

I am pleased to write about our 3rd virtual Social Hour of 2021. We learned so much from one another while getting to know our fellow members. Thirteen members participated, of which we had one “First Timer”, Rabbi Barbara Aiello, beaming in from Calabria. Thank you, Gordon, for your gentle facilitating style. The topic was **“Famous Italian Person(s) Who Have Impressed You”**.

Gordon Bloom opened the session speaking about **Enrico Fermi** (1901-1954) and sharing photos of his life in Italy. He was a University of Rome professor of physics before coming to the US where he worked on the atomic bomb. He received the 1938 Nobel Prize in Physics.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello reported that she just experienced 5 days of cold weather in Calabria including 3 days of snow. She spoke about **Dr. Maria Montessori** (1870-1952), an Italian physician and educator, acclaimed for her educational method that builds on the way children learn naturally. She opened the first Montessori school—the Casa dei Bambini, or Children's House—in Rome on January 6, 1907.

Ellen Roderick spoke about **Very Rev. Fausto Stampiglia S.A.C.**, Pastor (1991-present), St. Martha's Catholic Church, Sarasota. Father Fausto was born, raised, and ordained (1960) in Rome. Father is an innovator and leader in the Sarasota ecumenical community. He initiated the celebration of Black History Month with a special mass with a gospel choir from a local black church followed by a dinner. He also initiated a dinner in which St. Martha's parishioners join members of a Jewish synagogue and the Islamic Society's mosque to develop a better understanding of our religious beliefs and traditions.

Joan Del Giudice introduced us to **Matilda Cuomo** (nee Raffa) (89), a former New York State First Lady. Having been a teacher, she founded the New York State Mentoring Program in 1984. She transitioned that initiative into Mentoring USA, an international nonprofit child advocacy organization serving to create mentor relationships for youth ages 7–21. Joan had the good fortune to travel with First Lady Cuomo to an international conference on mentoring.

George Arfield spoke about **Giuseppe Verdi** (1813-1901), born within the borders of the First French Empire. George talked about his music being "gigantic", that his music "reaches into your soul," and is so "sublime". Verdi was a great melodist. George adores *Nabucco*, the opera that is considered to have permanently established Verdi's reputation as a composer. George also spoke about the "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves", the best-known number from that opera.

Maureen Napoliello shared the life of **Guglielmo Giovanni Maria Marconi** (1874-1937), an Italian inventor and electrical engineer, known for his pioneering work on long-distance radio transmission, development of *Marconi's law*, and a radio telegraph system. Maureen spoke about having her

“ears glued to the radio as a child.” She highlighted his 5/13/1897 wireless over open sea; his 12/12/01 first Morse Code; and his 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics. In 2020, the world reaffirmed that Marconi is the “Father of Broadcasting”.

Vincent Napoliello adores **Andrea Bocelli** (b. 1958). He loves listening to as well as watching Bocelli perform. For those who might not know, Bocelli is an Italian opera tenor and multi-instrumentalist. He was diagnosed with congenital glaucoma at 5 months, and became blind at age 12, following a football accident. Bocelli was made a Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (2006) and was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (2010) for his live theater contributions.

Mary Rinaldi introduced us to **Giovanni Caboto** (John Cabot) (1450-1500), an Italian navigator and explorer. His 1497 voyage to the coast of North America under the commission of England’s Henry VII is the earliest known European exploration of coastal North America since the Norse visits to Vinland in the 11th century. He was credited with discovering Newfoundland and Nova Scotia; he died at sea; and is considered the “Father of Canada.”

Penny Thomas shared the story of **Gay Talese** (b. 1932), an American writer born in Ocean City, NJ, and a graduate of the University of AL. As a journalist for The New York Times and Esquire magazine during the 1960s, Talese helped to define contemporary literary journalism. Talese's most famous articles are about Joe DiMaggio and Frank Sinatra. He wrote 7 books and numerous magazine articles. One of his most famous books was “Honor Thy Father.”

Barbara Dondero has been a devoted fan of **St. Francis of Assisi** (1181-1226), an Italian Catholic friar, deacon, mystic, and preacher. He founded the men's Order of Friars Minor, the women's Order of Saint Clare, the Third Order of Saint Francis, and the Custody of the Holy Land. Barbara talked of Francis' love of birds just as she adored birds, spending time in the Hudson Valley. "Francis was a simple man who could talk to any animal. He prayed all day long and he stressed the simple way of life".

Julie Bondarenko closed out the hour, speaking about **Stanley Tucci, Jr.** (b. 1960). Most recently, Tucci hosted the culinary travel series "Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy", a six-part original series following the actor on a food tour of Italy. Tucci's roots are in Calabria. He was on Broadway in minor parts, moved into the film industry as a writer, director, and actor. He began in films in 1985 and has continued through 2021, first with minor roles and later major roles. He has published two cookbooks.

In closing, we asked Gordon if he would be willing to deliver a lecture with visuals on **Enrico Fermi** for the Society and he said "yes". We look forward to an exciting presentation when we are together again. Also, we felt that **Father Fausto** should be invited to speak at a GCICS function. Rabbi Barbara suggested that he speak on his beloved city of Rome, past and present.

GCICS 2021 Scholarship Recipients

Johnna Bowden: Sarasota HS

Emma Craig: St. Stephen's Episcopal School

David Del Purgatorio: Venice HS

Benjamin Gordon: Pine View School

Leo Gordon: Pine View School

Madison Kahler: Lakewood Ranch HS



President Julie Bondarenko and David Del Purgatorio from Venice HS

A Visit to Northern Italy with Claudia Zeni

By: George Arfield

More than 30 members enjoyed a vivid virtual visit to Northern Italy on April 7 with professional guide Claudia Zeni addressing us from her home in Arco, in the province of Trento.



Claudia Zeni

She told us about her roots in Trentino Alto-Adige, an autonomous region of Italy, in the north, “bordering Austria, Switzerland and a short distance from the art cities of Verona, Venice and Milan. It consists of two self-governing provinces that make up the region: the Province of Trento, commonly known as Trentino, and the Province of Bolzano, commonly known as South Tyrol (*Alto Adige* in Italian), which is the German-speaking section.”

Claudia described the area as “the land of the Dolomites, the beautiful mountains in the heart of the Alps declared World Heritage Site by the Unesco in 2009, (and) featuring an incredible variety of environments, colors, climates and situations from the low altitude on the shores of Lake Garda” to permanent glaciers at an elevation of 9,000 feet.



Dolomites



Dolomites



Claudia’s dad rock climbing

Claudia underscored that “for the art and history lovers, Trentino Alto-Adige can offer more than two hundred castles, manors and ancient palaces, together with beautiful towns like Trento, Bolzano, Merano, Riva del Garda and many others which host art museums, and well-preserved historical centers surrounded by medieval walls, with ancient churches, towers and stately buildings, where you can experience the evidence of the past together with the nowadays life, with open-air cafés, restaurants, shops, typical open markets and many cultural and folkloristic events.”



Trobole on Lake Garda



Her Home



Lake Garda Terrace

Claudia related how she “gained a passion for travelling at a young age from my parents, who lived in various parts of Italy and Spain. She received a degree in tourism and hospitality in Verona and became an experienced travel specialist, amassing more than 25 years of experience in tourism in Italy as well as other European countries. Her multilingual abilities, including native Italian as well English, Spanish, German and a little French help her share her passion through specialty tours with culture, music, sport, and culinary emphasis, with a deep attention to nature and local traditions.”

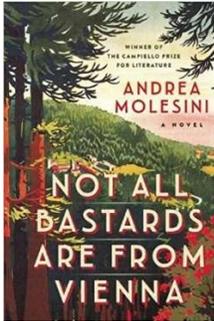


Mountain Winery



She can be reached at claudiazeni@hotmail.com.

Italian Book Shelf By Leita Kaldi



Not All Bastards Are from Vienna, by Andrea Molesini
Grove Press, 2010, 347 pages

Claudia Zeni's wonderful zoom tour of Trentino/Alto Adige included photos of what were military bunkers in the passes of the Dolomite mountains during the war. That reminded me of this fascinating book, *Not All Bastards Are from Vienna* by Andrea Molesini. It is the story of the aristocratic Spada family whose town, Refrontolo, near Trentino is invaded by Austrian soldiers in 1917, as they advanced into Northern Italy, and they take over the Spada's villa, the largest estate in the area. Narrated by seventeen-year-old nephew, Paolo, all the characters are distinctive: the cynical grandfather and the patrician grandmother, who see the war as the end of civilization, and the dynamic, elegant aunt, Donna Maria. The stalwart maid, Teresa, and her treacherous daughter, Loretta, who is in love with Renato, the villa steward, are involved in the Italian resistance. Events unfold as the family pretends to cooperate with the enemy while sabotaging their activities. As Aunt Maria says, "At present we have no choice but to live with these men, these Germans. The future may be rather arduous; we must know them well so we might better fight them."

Various characters observe with sorrow that this war is destroying the old order and its civilized way of life. They suffer atrocious horrors of battle, and the degradation suffered by the vanquished Italians. As Paolo tries to understand the shifting alliances around him, his once proud family succumbs to acts of jealousy and betrayal. They become the enemy within. Then he is recruited to participate in a calamitous incident that puts his life in terrible jeopardy.

Andrea Molesini lives in Venice, where he was born. *Not All Bastards Are from Vienna* was an international bestseller and it won the Premio Campiell and Premio Comisso. He is a professor of comparative literature at Padua University. Molesini's fluid writing style and dramatic characters vividly portray northern and central Italy's involvement in "The Great War," the erosion of social order and moral values, and the fall of an Italian aristocratic family.

PRESIDENT'S TRIBUTE TO LINDA AHERN



In thinking about Linda Ahern's departure from our Board, I realize that I am saddened to accept her resignation, yet I totally understand. Like so many of us, she has given much to GCICS over the years. It is time for her to travel down a different path. I understand that she is anxious to get out on the golf course and wow all her soon-to-be competitors.

I want to share a personal story about Linda and how she affected my life. Several years ago, I met Linda at a GCIS St. Joseph's Celebration held at Chianti Restaurant. She sat directly across the table from Vin and me. My first impressions were positive. For anyone who knows Linda, they know that she has a killer smile. I did not know her up until then, but I knew I wanted to be counted among her friends. At the time, she was GCICS Scholarship Chair, and I was to work on her committee. Linda is a take charge, get the job done kind of person. Her positive attitude and fun to be with approach makes work happen easily. It was that attitude that convinced me that I might be successful sitting in her "chair". Linda then devoted

her time to Fundraising. But as anyone knows, there are but a few that fill in wherever and whenever necessary, and Linda is that person.

She led our famous Bocce Invitational each year at the Cascades, with competition followed by dinner, wine, socializing, and dancing. Sadly, we were not a threat to those Cascade players who took the trophy home all but one time. Linda asked all GCICS members attending to bring a homemade dessert. It was our saving grace, and it was great fun. There are many other wonderful success stories that are attributed to her efforts and dedication to GCICS.

So again, I am sad that she will be leaving our Board but happy for whatever and wherever her free time takes her. I am happy to hear that she will continue her membership and we look forward to seeing her at future events. Linda, with great appreciation for all that you have given to us, the entire GCICS Board of Directors will miss you and thanks you.

Julie Bondarenko

OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

President

Julie Bondarenko
juliebondy@yahoo.com

Vice President

Linda Mercurio
Lindascot5770@gmail.com

Secretary

Ellen Roderick, PhD
itrain@erols.com

Assistant Secretary

Judy Herman
taxmadam@msn.com

Treasurer

Penny Thomas
dafyddpen@AOL.com

Bocce

Tom Hurban, DDS
dorisntom@gmail.com

Courtesy

Nancy Schubert
Sunshine.gcics@gmail.com

Membership

Mary Lou Ferrari
MLFFLYME@yahoo.com

Fundraising /Scholarship

Vacant

Newsletter Editor

Mary Faith Rinaldi
maryfaithrinaldi@gmail.com

Social and Cultural

George Arfield
arfield@yahoo.com

Website Coordinator

Jerry Hall
CZHalls@verizon.net

Directors At Large

William Korp
wrkorp@comcast.net
Gordon Bloom
Gordon.bloom@att.net

Past Presidents

Joseph Raffaele, PhD	1988-1992
Gabriella Thurston	1993-2001
Patrick Corsentino	2001-2004
Arthur Castraberti	2004-2006
Marie Corsentino	2007
Mary Amabile Palmer	2008-2010
William Korp	2010-2014
Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020

Happy belated birthday to long time member Joan Ferrante

Joan writes:

My head, heart, soul and mind are just always looking and feeling towards the “real us”, — Even if the “rest of us” continues to move forward !!



Aida LaBrutte writes:

April, 2021

Dear GCICS friends,

Steve had, and I have, some wonderful memories of time spent with our many friends at the Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society. Those memories, and your prayers, will help me in the days ahead. With appreciation and love,

Aida

