

## Spotlight Shines on Sambuca

*Lorraine Bracco makes ancestral home of many local families an HGTV star*

**By Mike Doyle**

Sambuca di Sicilia, a community of about 5,900 in southwestern Sicily, is known for its annual feast of *Maria Santissima dell'Udenzia*, which dates to 1575. It is also the ancestral home for many emigrants from Sicily to Rockford. Recently, it has gained attention for its bold venture to offer local homes for sale for one euro, or \$1.10. As a result, more than 100,000 people put in requests for 16 homes. But one request was special – it came from TV and film star Lorraine Bracco, known for her memorable roles in “Goodfellas,” “The Sopranos” and “Rizzoli and Isles.”

Renovation of the 200-year-old home Lorraine purchased for a single euro was the subject of a three-episode HGTV series, “My Big Italian Adventure” in October and November, 2020. Even more compelling is that several *Sambucesi* featured on the show have ties to Rockford, including the main contractor for the building project and Lorraine’s hairdresser.

“Lorraine brought a lot to Sambuca, not just because she bought a house, but (with) her friendly and kindly ways, she became part of the family of Sambuca,” said Rosa Giacone, the hairdresser.

“This represents a lot for the city, a lot more than you think,” said contractor Piero Verardo. “The attention in the media has been good for the town.”

Sambuca was one of about 20 towns across Italy that sold abandoned homes for one euro. Most of these places are in the countryside, small and getting smaller as younger people move to larger cities which offer more opportunity. What made Sambuca stand out was that a famous American actress decided to purchase one there. According to an article in the *Chicago Tribune*, Lorraine was captivated by a story she read about where people could purchase an “Italian fixer-upper” cheaply and restore it. Then she took it a step further and pitched the idea to the HGTV cable network, which is owned by Discovery, to have a camera crew film the entire project.

HGTV paid for the production costs and for Lorraine’s appearance in the show, while she paid for the home’s renovation. This all occurred, despite the fact that Lorraine, who is Italian on her father’s side, did not speak Italian nor had she ever been to Sambuca, let alone Sicily. “There would have been a lot of reasons not to do it,” she said in the *Tribune* story. “But I was so intrigued.”

The series began its three-episode run on October 30, 2020,

and appeared the next two Fridays. In the newspaper story, Lorraine said, “I say I’m crazy. A little nutty, but good.” In the first episode, which was taped in the summer of 2019, she says, “When I told my friends I was going to Sicily to buy a house, they went nuts.”

When she got to Sambuca, she chose the last of the three houses she was shown. However, after she quickly realized that the home was too small to suit her needs, she was able to buy the adjacent home which “a sweet old lady,” Lorraine said, was willing to sell. “It shares a wall with the one euro home, so we can connect them.”

Soon Lorraine met architect Domenico Cari and Piero, the project’s contractor who was born in Rockford but moved to Sambuca. “Even though the TV aspect pictured me as ‘the contractor,’ I was actually hired by Discovery Channel as a

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*Lorraine Bracco (center), whose renovation of a home in Sambuca started with one euro, is embraced by Piero Verardo (right) and his wife Cynthia (left).*



## Meet the artist

Rockford artist Angie Scordato and a colorful collection of her art work. A self-taught artist, Scordato’s repertoire includes portraits, murals, art classes, paint parties and book illustrations. Story and photo on Page 7.



*Film and TV star Lorraine Bracco (left) and Rosa Giaccone, her hairdresser in Sambuca.*

project manager far in advance (of) the start of the show to lay the ground work for the timeline and logical aspects of both the restoration and the show," he said.

Piero said that on Lorraine's first visit to Sambuca, she met Cynthia, Piero's wife who

is also from Rockford. "Cynthia had the role of translator in the show, but, in reality she covered much more behind the scenes," said Piero, adding that his wife was in charge of hiring Sambuca residents for the support crew, including the hairdresser, Rosa.

Lorraine did purchase the home for one euro, but part of the agreement was that the new owner must restore the building within three years. When Lorraine added the purchase of the home next door for 45,000 euros and an early estimate of renovation costs at 87,000 euros, the project cost rose to 132,001 euros. Add-ons then brought the total to 145,201 euros or about \$148,500. (In the end, it was closer to between \$250,000 to \$300,000).

Piero said renovation began August 1, 2019, and was completed the first week of November that year. Right away, there were twists and turns to overcome as one would expect in a 200-year-old home in Sicily. There were structural problems, uneven tiled floors and a wet basement floor in a room that Lorraine wanted to make a ping pong room. "The water in the basement was one of many (problems) we had to overcome," Piero said. "The biggest challenge was actually making the timeline of the restoration to match the show's shooting schedule. Normally a restoration of this complexity takes around a year to complete, and, convincing everyone that it had to be done in less than one-third the time was the hardest thing to do."

The show seems to depict Lorraine often unable to cope with the delays and stoppages.

"Piero, what happened here?"

"Piero, what are you doing to my house?"

Piero would then answer in a calm voice, "There are a lot of unknowns in this case."

In reality, Piero said, "(We) had a great working relationship, which led to a close friendship between her whole family and mine. What made it all more possible is the trust she gave me overseeing what is actually her house and the management of the budget."

Rosa was selected by the local officials to become Lorraine's hairdresser because of her skill and ability to speak English. "With my English, it was easier," Rosa said. "She was happy that

I was able to understand her."

Rosa added that Lorraine brought a lot to Sambuca. "And not just because she bought a house, but with her friendly and kindly ways," Rosa said. "She became part of the family of Sambuca. We all miss her."

Another goal of the one euro home effort was to promote tourism and give the local economy a boost, and Lorraine succeeded with the renovation as well as the attention she gave it via the program. "She gave workers in Sambuca the opportunity

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## Sambuca home a dream come true

**By Mike Doyle**

On a trip to Sciacca, Sicily, in June, 2019, Rockford native Dan Scalise, his son Carlo and Carlo's fiancé, Yazmen, his daughter, Marta, her husband Chad, and their son, Danny, drove a short distance to Sambuca, the ancestral home of the Scalise Family. While there, Carlo contacted a friend he made on previous trips. Carlo recalled watching "House Hunters International" with his father and told how they had dreamed about the possibility of buying a house in Sicily.

"We went to Sambuca to walk around and hang out," Carlo said. "We made a connection with a friend, Giuseppe Cacioppo, and we mentioned the possibility of buying a house. He ended up showing us three houses. I had no idea we were going to (buy a house), but my dad was serious, and we were all pretty intrigued. The first two houses needed a lot of renovation, then we saw the third one and fell in love with it."

He said this happened before the media attention about small towns in Italy offering homes for sale for one euro. "We had talked about it before all that came about," Carlo said. "We have family history in Sambuca, my great-grandmother Rosalia Abbate was born there."

In a short time, they had signed papers, and, by December, 2019, the house was theirs. Then the COVID-19 hit. "We plan to go as soon as possible, but in the meantime, Giuseppe is keeping an eye on things there."

The house is located in an older part of town but had been rebuilt in 1994. It has three stories with a garage and pizza oven on the first floor; kitchen, living room and a bedroom on the second; and more bedrooms on the third. "It has three bedrooms, 2 ½ baths and a rooftop with a nice view," Carlo said.



*Dan Scalise and his son Carlo purchased this home in Sambuca.*





## First Lady has Italian roots



*President Joe Biden and his wife Jill, who is Sicilian on her grandfather's side.*

**By Mike Doyle**

When Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th U.S. president, his wife Jill became the first Italian-American First Lady in history. Jill's grandfather Gaetano Giacoppa emigrated from Gesso, Sicily, to Ellis Island and worked as a furniture deliveryman in New Jersey. In time, the family surname was Americanized to Jacobs, and Jill was born in Hammonton, N.J., as the oldest of five sisters. She grew up in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, before moving to the Philadelphia suburb of Willow Grove where her father Dominic started as a bank teller and became the head of a savings and loan in Philadelphia.

She has a strong sense of her Italian heritage as she recalled regular visits to her grandmother and grandfather's home in New Jersey. "We would go to my grandparent's house every Sunday because her cooking was the best ... the red sauce and the meatballs and pasta," Biden told Joe Battaglia of *orderisda.org*. "I have beautiful memories of cooking with my mom, grandmother and four sisters. It was at their house that I made homemade sauce for the first time."

Jill holds a bachelor's and doctoral degree from the University of Delaware as well as two master's degrees. She taught high school English and reading for 13 years as well to adolescents with emotional disabilities at a psychiatric hospital. Since 2009, she has been a professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College.

She met Joe Biden on a blind date set up by Joe's brother, Frank, who knew her in college. She married Biden, a widower with two sons, in 1977 and they have a daughter, Ashley.

Gesso, the ancestral home of Jill's grandfather, is a village of 550 in the far northeast corner of Sicily, about 5-½ miles from Messina. Located on a rise, it is in sight of Mt. Etna and the Aeolian Islands. Through genealogical records, a distant cousin was located who has invited the Bidens for dinner whenever they visit.

"I'm so happy," said Caterina Ciacoppo, a cousin eight times removed. "I invite her to Gesso. I really hope she comes to visit me. When and if she will be here, I will make for her platefuls of

meatballs with tomato sauce, lasagna, grilled meats and sausages of all kinds, and we will eat together."

Caterina also plans to make two local delicacies – *Aubergine Parmigiana* with cheese, *Pasta 'nCasiata* and cannoli pastries filled with fresh goat ricotta, which, she said, "are my specialties."

*Editor's note – Recipes for "Aubergine Parmigiana" and "Pasta 'nCasiata" can be found on Page 13.*

*Sources: wetheitalians.com; orderisda.org; forbes.com; tekdeeps.com*

## Editor's Notebook

In our mission to entertain and inform readers in these turbulent times, we know how things can change with the next news cycle. At deadline, we know of at least one St. Joseph Altar scheduled, a carry-out, drive-by event described on Page 14. We are hopeful that the city of Rockford will issue special permits for events, such as the GRIAA's annual fund-raiser *Festa Italiana*. If things do open up, pencil in August 6-8, 2021, on your calendar.

The main story in this issue tells of how film and TV star, Lorraine Bracco, renovated a home in Sambuca, the ancestral home of many of Rockford's Italian-Americans. Her effort was documented on HGTV, with the help of two people with Rockford roots. Homes were available for purchase for one euro, albeit with many conditions, and Sambuca was one of about 20 Italian towns to make such an offer. The story was carried by many news outlets, including the *Pappagallo* in the Spring 2019 issue.

An update on the story of Italian bakeries in Rockford from the Spring 2020 *Pappagallo* brings new information to light as well as even more sad news about a significant part of our culture.

Research for the story about the closing of Roma Bakery on December 31, 2019, indicated that the Dodaro Family opened the first Italian bakery in 1914 in South Rockford at 1122 Rock Street. However, additional information and further research found that Jasper Santangelo, whose family is known today as St. Angel, first opened a bakery at that site, according to a listing in the 1911 Rockford City Directory. He operated the bakery for five years, then sold it to the Dodaro Brothers. Luigi Dodaro emigrated from Cosanza, Italy, to Canada to join his brother Dominic where they had a bakery. When that burned down, they moved to Chicago and opened Piemonte Bakery at 159 Kensington, then moved that business to Rockford. The 1915 city directory lists the Dodaro brothers' bakery at 1122 Rock Street. In 1918, Luigi Dodaro purchased the building from Jasper Santangelo, and the family operated Piemonte Bakery at that location for more than 100 years.

The sad news is that the Bella Luna Bakery, operated by Polly Matranga Happich and Lorie Parker-Weinrich in the Stewart Square Building downtown, closed in late 2020 due to the COVID-19 and other issues. Bella Luna featured a variety of Italian baked items from Polly's family as well as Norwegian and Swedish delicacies from Lorie's family. "We took orders until Christmas," Polly said.

*Mike Doyle, editor*



## Sicilian a language, not a dialect

*While professor's book makes distinction from Italian clear, fewer are speaking it today*

By Frank Perrecone

Growing up in South Rockford, I lived by, knew and interacted with many Sicilian immigrants. My grandparents spoke Sicilian on a regular basis, and I heard Sicilian often as a child, understanding limited words, phrases and expressions. At that time I did not fully understand that Sicilian was a language different from Italian. I believed Sicilian was a dialect of Italian.

All that changed when I came across *Learn Sicilian/ "Mparamu lu Sicilianu,"* a book by Gaetano Cipolla, professor emeritus at St. John's University, and a leading Sicilian language authority in the United States. Professor Cipolla makes clear Sicilian is a stand-alone language, not a dialect of Italian. But in different regions of the island, certain words are pronounced and spelled differently. The example he uses are the different words for "rooster;" *gaddu, jaddru, juddu, addu and iaddu.*

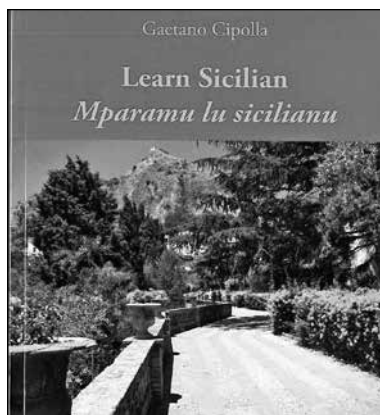
Professor Cipolla explains in Sicily, the Italian language is taught in schools. Italian is generally spoken in stores, banks, schools and government offices. Sicilian is mostly spoken among family, friends and people they know well. Older persons are more likely to speak the language as well. Younger Sicilians have grown up with Italian television, songs and the internet. People in smaller cities or villages speak Sicilian more than in larger cities where inhabitants are less familiar with each other. Unfortunately, each generation is losing aspects of the language, most notably the speaking ability of the younger Sicilians. Newspapers, books and articles are written in Italian making Sicilian language publications difficult to find.

Although *Learn Sicilian/ "Mparamu lu Sicilianu"* is the equivalent of a college language textbook, I use it as a resource book. There are Sicilian to English and English to Sicilian translations for most words in the book.

In a check of the chapters, I noticed a lot of words contain double consonants such as *ddrittu* (straight), *draddraia* (witch), *ddibbulizza* (weakness), *ddebbitu* (debt) and *picciriddu* (little boy). Many masculine nouns in Sicilian end with the letter "u," whereas in Italian, many of those nouns would end in the letter "o." An example is the word "attorney," *avvucatu* versus *avvocato*. Another example is the masculine name of "Mario" in Italian, but in Sicilian is "*Mariu*." As a separate language, many words are totally different from their Italian counterparts. The words "he" and "she" in Sicilian are "*iddu*" and "*idda*," in Italian "*lui*" and "*lei*."

The revised edition (\$32 and available at Amazon) has an excellent audio DVD to illustrate pronunciation which tracks the language exercises in the chapters.

Professor Cipolla's insight into the Sicilian language brought to mind several experiences my wife Jody and I encountered in Sicily. While spending time with my relatives, who live in central



Sicily, one of our translators had a very difficult time understanding their Sicilian. She explained that she was from Messina, which is on the eastern side of the island, and my relatives were using and pronouncing words she did not understand.

Another experience came to my mind was in

Corleone at the Anti-Mafia Museum. The English speaking *Corleonese* docent who was our tour guide asked if anyone knew the reason the original spelling of "*Maffia*" was changed to "*Mafia*." He gave a clue: the pronunciation of "*Maffia*" sounded too much like commonly used words of endearment. Drawing in part on my childhood listening to the immigrants speak Sicilian, I responded "*ma figghia*", what I believed to mean "my daughter." Not only did he say I was correct, but he commented that I spoke the words with a Palermo pronunciation.

My take away from *Learn Sicilian/ "Mparamu lu Sicilianu"* is that although Sicilian is a stand-alone language, there are dialects within the language. And within the dialects, words may be either totally different or somewhat similar with different ways of pronouncing words depending on the region of the island. My recommendation – stick with the Italian language in Italy and Sicily, occasionally using some Sicilian on the island when you want the listener to know your family has roots in Sicily.

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## *I Promessi Sposi:*

*Plague forms backdrop to classic Italian love story*

**By Rosaria Mercuri Ford**

As Don Abbondio, the weak-hearted priest of a small village near Lecco, walked along the peaceful banks of beautiful Lake Como, nonchalantly reading the breviary, two *bravi* (thugs) approached him with the words: “*Questo matrimonio non s’ha da fare!*” (This marriage shall not be celebrated!) In a nutshell, this is the opening scenario of *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed), the celebrated masterpiece by the great Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) who published the final version of the novel in 1842, after years of painstakingly polishing his work for stylistic and linguistic accuracy.

Manzoni, a well-known and respected author of many literary works, saw it as his civil duty to promote, by means of this novel, the Italian national language accompanied by a reawakening of patriotic aspirations. Manzoni was imbued with ideals and sentiments of the time known as the *Risorgimento Italiano*, movement which would lead to the consolidation of the various kingdoms and states into one Italian nation, to be finally achieved in 1861.

With *I Promessi Sposi*, set in seventeenth century Lombardy, Manzoni aspired to tell a simple, heartwarming story of two young people of humble origin; the silk-weaver Lorenzo (Renzo) Tramaglino and his *promessa sposa* (betrothed young woman), the pious and shy Lucia Mondella. The couple soon to be wed by Don Abbondio, will encounter many impediments and hardships due to various causes. The work becomes a multi-layered story that denounces social injustices, political upheavals and human suffering reflected in the period of the *Peste di Milano*, the Great Plague that afflicted Milan and much of Lombardy between 1628-1633.

The Duchy of Milan was then under Spanish rule and governed by local ruthless lords, like Don Rodrigo who had set his lustful eye on the bride-to-be and had sent his men to intimidate the poor priest. An even fiercer lord was *L’Innominato* (the Unnamed), whose name people did not even dare to pronounce. He will eventually succeed in kidnapping Lucia for Don Rodrigo. The climate of threats and fear thwarts the marriage of Renzo and Lucia, as recounted in the many episodes that follow the accosting of the priest by the *bravi*.

However, there are many people of goodwill who intervene to help the downtrodden, some being just regular folks, others representing religious institutions, like the humble Capuchin friar, Fra Cristoforo, and the pious authority, highly respected Cardinal Borromeo. Fra Cristoforo helps Renzo, Lucia and her mother Agnese to escape from their village and find protection elsewhere. Lucia ends up in the convent of Monza where she is supposed to be safely sheltered. Unfortunately, she is assigned to the sinful *monaca* (the nun, Gertrude) who, instead of protecting innocent Lucia, ends up arranging for the young woman to be kidnapped

by the henchmen of the Unnamed.

Meanwhile, Renzo gets tangled up in many bouts of social unrest in hunger-stricken Milan. At one point, he is even suspected of being an *untore* (anointer), someone who is believed to knowingly spread the plague. Renzo almost ends up in jail just before escaping to Bergamo where, aided by a good local man with a boat, is able to cross the Adda River and reach the village of his cousin Bortolo. There he will work as a silk weaver before finally returning to Milan.

In the closing chapters, Renzo, who has caught and recovered from the plague, learns that Lucia has been set free by a repentant *Innominato*, thanks to Cardinal Borromeo’s moral influence on the ruthless baron. She is now recovering in a *lazzaretto* (hospital) for those stricken by the plague and where Don Rodrigo is dying of the same disease. Fra Cristoforo urges Renzo to forgive Don Rodrigo and absolves Lucia of her vow of chastity, taken to escape the evil barons’ intentions. The two young lovers are finally wed and will go on to have a well-deserved blessed life together.



## GRIAA seeks Hall of Fame, Special Recognition nominations

The Greater Rockford Italian American Association is seeking men and women who have shown a tremendous amount of dedication and leadership. Inductees are nominated by community members and selected by GRIAA’s Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Committee. Nominees should be persons of Italian heritage who, through their exemplary lives, have made significant contributions to the community in and through the arts, sciences, government, business, industry, athletics, and volunteer, civic and philanthropic activities or any other appropriate category. Such contributions should reflect a notable community impact and the highest standards and ideals. The primary difference between Hall of Fame and Special Recognition consideration is described below:

**Hall of Fame** criteria – The nominee should have made a significant overall impact to the Italian-American community.

**Special Recognition** criteria – The impact of the nominee in the Italian-American community is significant but more specialized, such as in athletics or the arts.

Nomination forms are available at the GRIAA website, [www.griaa.org](http://www.griaa.org). It is not necessary to indicate on the nomination form which category for which you are nominating the group or individual. The committee will make that determination on the information provided.

Because of the COVID-19, no individuals or groups were honored in 2020.





## Consider these alternative sights on your next trip to Italy

By Mike Doyle

There are so many sights to see in so many locations in Italy that I can't get by without consulting a guidebook. My wife Nora and I have seen many places in our three trips to Italy and Sicily and plan another once we are able. Most of the sights we



*This landscape shows many of the 14 towers in San Gimignano.*

have seen have been worth the effort, but not all. Here are a few well known destinations that some may not feel are not worth your time. In no way does this list, compiled from internet and personal sources, take away from any personal experience. You just may want

to consider the alternative. (Or, in the long run, visit them both and make your own decision.) So, instead of visiting:

- The Tower of Pisa, you may want to see the towers in the central Italian city of San Gimignano. Wanderwisdom.com notes that it may be worth visiting the Tower of Pisa while in the vicinity but that is not worth it otherwise. There are other leaning towers in Italy, and, as Danny DeVito said, "I've been to the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It's a tower, and it's leaning. You look at it, but nothing happens, so then you look for someplace to get a sandwich." San Gimignano is known as the "medieval Manhattan" because it had 72 towers in the 14th century and 14 remain today. (Personal note: One our second trip to Italy, we had a chance to take a day trip to Pisa or spend the day in Florence. Like all of our fellow travelers, we opted for Florence. In our case, we went to Sunday Mass at the Holy Cross (*Santa Croce*) Basilica and saw the tomb of Michelangelo. Then we walked around the adjoining square, had traditional Tuscan cuisine at Cucina Venazano and saw the *Palazzo Vecchio*.)

- Pompeii, you may want to see Herculaneum. I will never forget our tour of Pompeii, but, when we saw a restored villa or palace, the guide told us about artifacts found there that were on display in the National Archeological Museum in Naples. It happened so often that we wondered if we should have gone to the museum instead. Herculaneum, also destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D., is not as grand as Pompeii but offers a more intimate look.

- Romeo and Juliet's Balcony in Verona, you may want to see the Arena of Verona, built to replicate the Coliseum in Rome. Verona's Coliseum version is remarkably well preserved and the site of Verona's summer opera festival. Besides, the balcony only exists in Shakespeare's famous tragedy.

- The Greek theatre in Siracusa, Sicily, make a plan to see the Teatro Greco in Taormina. The theater in Siracusa is part of a complex of Ancient Greek sites, but it is not very impressive with crumbling seats covered by peeling wood and metal rods holding other pieces in place. The theater in Taormina is breath-taking with its location overlooking the Ionian Sea. It is still in use today.



*Teatro Greco, the Greek theater in Taormina, which Mt. Etna in the background.*

- Trevi Fountain, check out the two famous fountains in *Piazza Navona*. Trevi is famous for being the centerpiece of the film "Three Coins in the Fountain" and the custom of tossing coins over your shoulder to ensure a return trip to Rome. However, the

photos you see online and in travel books are deceiving because there are always people there. Lots of them. You have to wait your turn to get close enough to the fountain for the coin ritual or to take a photo. The *Fontana del Moro* and the *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* both are stunning and just steps from each other. And each was created by Bernini. Finally, it is safe to drink the water from these fountains in Rome. So, you can refill your water bottle. In all fairness, Trevi is a short walk from *Piazza Navona*, and you can easily fit in both on the same day. And, unless you visit Trevi early in the morning, be prepared for the crowds.

*Sources: Travelalot.com, wanderwisdom*

## Where will we go when travel returns?

Sometime soon (we all hope!) regular travel to places like Italy will return. So, we asked some seasoned travelers to *Italia* what would be their first destination when that occurs.

Joan Schmelzle, a regular *Pappagallo* contributor who has made at least 15 trips to Rome. "As you've probably guessed the first place I would go to is Rome. Since my first trip there in 1961 as part of a several country tour, I have loved that city. I love the churches which are actually some of the best art museums and free. I never miss checking the ruins where Caesar was cremated and there are always flowers or some tribute inside. I enjoy the friendly people who are most often very helpful. Right now I miss the roasted chestnuts!"

Dina Getty, chairperson of the Rockford Italian Sister City Alliance. "Ferentino (Rockford's Sister City in Italy) primarily because of family and friendships that I've developed over the past several years. I never tire of the deep history of Ferentino, especially that of St. Ambrogio."

Mike Doyle, *Pappagallo* editor who has been to Italy three times with his wife Nora. "We would go to Sicily, specifically Roccamena, where Nora met some second cousins for the first time on our last trip in 2017."



## Angie Scordato: Bringing Art to Life

*Self-taught artist uses her talents for work and to help others*

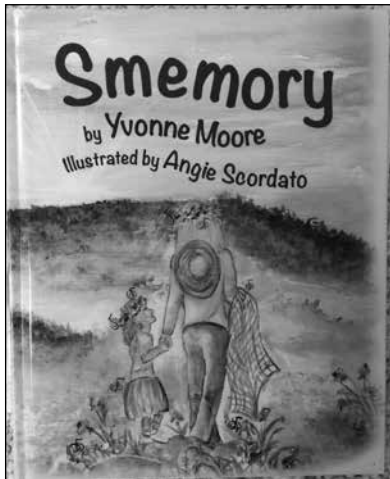
**By Paul Anthony Arco**

Local artist Angie Scordato has a simple belief in which she lives by: "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say 'I used everything you gave me.'"

It is a principle that has resonated with her throughout her life. "I believe you have to do everything you can to give back," she said. "I am able to use my talents for work but also to help people in need."

Over the years, Scordato's career as a full-time artist has varied from canvas, portraits, art classes for adults and children, paint parties and mural work.

Raised in Belvidere, the Roscoe resident always dabbled in art. She took an art class in high school and found it fun and relatively easy. But it wasn't until she volunteered to create a portrait sketch of a fireman for a 9/11 charity event, which she says ended up in the 9/11 Museum in New York, that her love of art really took off.



*Angie created the cover and all illustrations for the children's book by Yvonne Moore. It was the first of the seven books she has illustrated.*

moving. That's when I knew that I wanted to help others through my art."

Working in her Roscoe home studio, Scordato finds inspiration just about everywhere. Sometimes she works during the day, sometimes at night. Her schedule is flexible. "I go with the flow," she said. "I do whatever is going on at the time."

She works with a variety of tools – sketch pencils, paint brushes, texture knives, tiny toothpicks – anything she can get her hands on. "I don't throw anything away unless it's broken," she said. "I keep my brushes, even the icky, bad ones. You can drag the paint, which is wonderful for painting trees."

Scordato is self-taught. She's not opposed to taking a class but sharing with other artists is her best teacher. She loves talking shop with well-known local artist, Tom Heflin. "I love for

him to pick my stuff apart," she said.

"Some artists might be offended by the criticism, but not me. I find it refreshing. Tell me if my work looks funky."

About 10 years ago, Scordato started hosting paint parties for groups of two to 40 people. She's hosted parties for local events such as *Festa Italiana* as well as a women's retreat in Tennessee. "I love people who come in and say, 'I can't paint.' I show them the easy tricks and they find out how simple it really is."

Like any creative person, Scordato has days when she struggles to put paint to paper. "Sometimes I have to put my work aside," she said. "There are times when I can't paint a rainbow. A simple rainbow, are you kidding me? God gives the gift, and He can take it away. I just say a prayer and come back later to start my piece."

These days, Scordato has developed an enthusiasm for mural work. One of her first jobs was a mural for the Fifth Alarm Firehouse Pub in Byron. That project opened the door for other opportunities. She's painted murals for companies, businesses, private homes and nonprofits such as General Mills, Keith Country Day School, and Vito's restaurant. She even painted murals for Parish Hall at St. Anthony of Padua Church of two basilicas in Assisi and Padua, Italy.

"I love doing murals," she said. "The big ones are a great challenge. I remember doing the lettering on a local business. I was standing on scaffolding 40 feet in the air, rocking and swaying. I was scared to death."

For Scordato, all projects are memorable in their own way. But it's portraits she sketches, especially for those who've lost loved ones, that mean the most. "I spend time talking to the family first because I want to get to know the person I'm painting," she said. "I want to bring that portrait to life. I owe it to that grieving family."

Before her sister died of breast cancer, Scordato created a generational portrait of her sister, her sister's daughter, as well as their mother and grandmother. Her creativity, she says, always comes from the heart.

"I get so wrapped up in my work," she said. "The project is always meaningful to someone. It's important to get it right."



*This portrait sketched for a 9/11 charity event wound up in the 9/11 Museum in New York*





## Football star's incredible story of survival

By Mike Doyle

Mario "Motts" Tonelli, a star halfback for Notre Dame, could have been good enough to make our All Italian-American Pro Football Team had World War II not intervened. However, his incredible story of survival while serving in the Pacific Theater of War is memorable as he was a survivor of the Bataan Death March.

The son of a quarry worker who emigrated from Italy, Tonelli grew up in Chicago and was athletic enough at 5-foot-11 and 200 pounds to earn a scholarship to Notre Dame. On November 27, 1937, with the score tied 6-6 late in the fourth quarter against USC at South Bend, Indiana, Tonelli got the ball deep in Irish territory and ran 70 yards until he was tackled short of the end zone. But, nine seconds later, he scored the winning touchdown as Notre Dame won 13-6. Tonelli played three years for Notre Dame and, after playing in the College All-Star Game in 1939, he received a gold class ring. Tonelli served as an assistant coach at Providence College and spent one year with the Chicago Cardinals of the National Football League in 1940 before joining the army in early 1941. He planned to return home to his new wife Mary following his one-year commitment with the coastal artillery in Manila, capital of the Philippines. Things changed on December 8, 1941, when the Japanese attacked the Philippines and overwhelmed the Americans.

Not all Americans could be evacuated and the Japanese ordered the remaining 15,000 troops in the Bataan Peninsula to march 65 miles to the port of Mariveles. Thousands of Filipinos and between 500 and 650 Americans died on the grueling march. Those unable to keep up were executed by rifle or samurai swords. Tonelli survived the agonizing ordeal with an empty canteen. At one point as guards plundered the meager belongings of weary survivors, a guard pointed to Tonelli and demanded he give up his Notre Dame ring. Tonelli refused and, as the guard reached for his sword, another prisoner said, "Give it to him. It's not worth dying for."

Shortly after he surrendered his ring, a Japanese officer approached Tonelli, and said to him in perfect English. "Did one of my men take something from you?" Tonelli replied, "Yes. My school ring." The officer pressed the ring in Tonelli's hand and said, "Hide it somewhere. You may not get it back next time." Tonelli was speechless as the officer said he was educated in America – at USC. "I know a little about the famous Notre Dame football team," he said. "In fact, I watched you beat USC in 1937. I know how much this ring means to you, so I wanted to get it back to you."



Mario Tonelli in his U.S. Army uniform

Tonelli was then transported to a slave labor camp in Japan, from where he was liberated in the summer of 1945, malnourished and fighting malaria on his 100-pound frame. By the time he returned home, he had gained more than 80 pounds and was able to return to the NFL. Cardinals owner Charlie Bidwill signed him to a one-game contract to ensure he would get a pension, and he played sparingly in the Cards' 33-14 loss to Green Bay on October 28, 1945. Shortly afterward he became a Cook County commissioner in Chicago and had a distinguished 42-year career in politics and public service. He died at the age of 86 in 2003.

Source: [news.nd.edu](http://news.nd.edu)



Mario Tonelli takes off on his 70-yard run that set up his winning touchdown when Notre Dame edged USC in 1937.

## All-Italian All-Star Pro Football team

By Mike Doyle

The Fall 2020 issue of the *Pappagallo* featured my version of the All-Italian All-Star Baseball Team. In this issue, I offer you the All-Italian All-Star Pro Football Team, which was more difficult to create because most of the Italian-American pros in football played quarterback, running back, defensive end or linebacker. There are few all-star offensive linemen and even fewer defensive backs. My research included the members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame as well as my own experience of covering the Chicago Bears for 14 seasons for the *Rockford Register Star*. I also consulted former sports writing colleagues Fred Mitchell of the *Chicago Tribune* and Dan Pompei of the *Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*.

In keeping with the standard set by the all-star baseball team, the players here were outstanding in their day and many are members of these two halls of fame.

### Offense

**Joe Montana QB** – San Francisco quarterback with four Super Bowl winners is the second greatest quarterback of all time behind Tom Brady. Three-time Super Bowl MVP, played 13 years with the Niners and two with the Chiefs.

**Dan Marino QB** – Shattered all passing records over 17 years with the Dolphins. Led Miami to the Super Bowl in 1985.

**Franco Harris RB** – Four Super Bowl rings with the Steelers from 1972-83, he is best known for the "Immaculate Reception," considered by many the greatest play in NFL history.

Continued on Page 9





**Tony Canadeo RB** – Rushed for 4,197 yards on 1,025 carries, he was the Packers' first 1,000-yard rusher.

**Charlie Trippi RB** – A Chicago Cardinal from 1947-55, he led the Cardinals to their last NFL title.

**Alan Ameche FB** – Caught the winning touchdown in Baltimore's victory over the New York Giants in overtime in the 1958 NFL title game. The first overtime in league history, it ranks as one of the greatest games in history.

**Dante Lavelli WR** – Played for the Cleveland Browns from 1943-56, led the Browns to league titles in 1946 (AAFC) and 1950 (NFL).

**Mark Bavaro TE** – Prototype of the modern tight end, Bavaro won Super Bowls with the Giants in 1986 and 1990.

**Jim Covert T** – Considered by many the best left tackle ever in the NFL, he anchored the Bears line for eight years. Named the offensive lineman of the year in 1986. One of five Pro Football Hall of Famers from the Bears' Super Bowl XX team.

**John Conti OL** – At 300 pounds, he was the largest player in college football in his playing days at the University of Detroit. He played for the Detroit Lions.

**Gino Cappelletti K-WR** – Kicked the first field goal in AFL history in 1961 for Boston Patriots. As wide receiver, named AFL Player of the Year in 1964. Played 11 seasons.

**Adam Vinatieri K** – All-time leading scorer in NFL history, played 24 seasons with New England and Baltimore. Played on three Super Bowl teams with the Patriots, one with the Colts and kicked game-winning field goals in Super Bowl XXXVI and XXXVIII.

#### Defense

**George Musso T** – Played for the Bears from 1933-44, including four NFL champions. Only college player in history to play against two future presidents – Ronald Reagan (Eureka College) and Gerald Ford (Michigan.)

**Ted Hendricks T** – Nine-time All-Pro Bowler, 6 time All-Pro in his 15-year career, played on Baltimore's 1971 Super Bowl winning team.

**Leo Nomellini DE** – All-Pro for 49ers, never missed a game in 14 years. Only Pro Football Hall of Famer born in Italy (Lucca).

**Andy Robustelli DE** – Six-time All-Pro played with the Rams for five years and Giants for nine.

**Gene Brito DE** – NFL's most valuable defensive end in 1954, played 12 years with the Rams.

**Gino Marchetti DE** – Joined Baltimore in 1953 and made then-record 11 straight Pro Bowls; named league Player of the Year in Colts' 1958 championship season as well as the best defensive end in the league's first 50 years. Played 14 seasons.

**Doug Buffone LB** – Bears linebacker from 1966-79 had 18 sacks in 1968 and 24 career interceptions. Fourteen-year career spanned the days of Gale Sayers, Dick Butkus and Walter Payton.

**Nick Buoniconti LB** – Played seven seasons with Patriots before being traded to Miami for 1969 season. Played on three straight Super Bowl teams with the Dolphins, including 1973-74 winners.

Named to all-time AFL team in 1970.

**Joe Fortunato LB** – Five-time all pro for the Bears, played from 1955-66, including 1963 title team. Recovered 22 fumbles.

**Mike Lucci LB** – Played 12 seasons with Browns and Lions, All-Pro from 1969-71.

**Phil Villapiano LB** – Defensive standout in Raiders' 1976 Super Bowl team, finished career with the Bills.

#### Coach

**Vince Lombardi** – Won five NFL championships with Green Bay Packers, including first two Super Bowls, and one with the New York Giants. Super Bowl trophy carries his name.

#### Owner

**Ed DeBartolo Jr.** – Collected five Super Bowl trophies as owner of the 49ers.

## 2021 Spring, Summer Festivals in Italy

*Due to the coronavirus, many events in Italy have been cancelled or postponed*

#### March (Marzo)

19-24 – Squid Festival, *Pinarella di Cervia*

19 – St. Joseph's Day, also Father's Day in Italy

#### April (Aprile)

25 – Liberation Day

#### June (Giugno)

4-6 – Bergamo Jazz Festival

#### July (Luglio)

6-7 – *L'Ardia Sarda* Horse Racing Festival in Sardinia

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## Scholarship opportunities for Italian-American students

Several scholarships are available for students of Italian-American descent ranging from elementary and high school to college and post-graduate schools. While most of the application deadlines have passed, those interested can look ahead to 2022.

### Greater Rockford Italian American Association

Through this committee, scholarships are presented annually to area Italian American families to defray the cost of a parochial education. Through the 2019 *Festa Italiana*, \$730,000 in scholarships have been presented. Visit [www.griaa.org](http://www.griaa.org), then onto the Scholarship Committee, chaired by Ben Todaro and Frank Valentine. Scholarship information can be viewed and printed by clicking on Application Form.

### Columbian Club Charitable Foundation

Several scholarships of various amounts are awarded to graduating high school seniors and undergraduate/graduate students of Italian descent who are permanent residents of the state of Illinois. Scholarships are also available for undergraduates in music education and graduate students in law, medicine, and dentistry. The 2021 deadline has passed, however, contact foundation for 2022 deadline information. Visit [www.columbianclub.org](http://www.columbianclub.org).

### Sons of Italy Foundation, Illinois

Several \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to students of full or partial Italian ancestry graduating from public or private high school. Financial need, scholastic record, activities showing character and leadership are the criteria. Personal statements and faculty recommendations are required. The deadline for application for 2021 has passed, but for information for 2022, contact the Illinois Sons of Italy Foundation, 9447 W. 144th Place, Orland Park, IL, 60462 or by email at [osia.org](mailto:osia.org).

### National Italian American Foundation

Sixty to 70 scholarships from \$2,500 to \$12,000 are awarded annually to undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate, medical and law students. Applicants must be of Italian descent and members of NIAF. Application deadline for 2021 has passed but information about future scholarship opportunities is available at [www.niaf.org/scholarships](http://www.niaf.org/scholarships).

## Visto en linea (seen on line)

You know you're an Italian-American if:

- You can't talk without using your hands at all times.
- You have a garden – with tomato, basil and zucchini.
- You're related to someone named Tony, Mary, Sam, Frank or Angie – and a lot of them have the same name.
- You feel like you lost your hearing after every family gathering.
- You've heard the Ellis Island story many, many times.
- You dip your Italian bread into the extra sugo.

## The *Panotii*: A Sicilian legend

The *Panotii* are people in a Sicilian legend, whose ears are so big they cover their entire body. In fact, they are so large that they reach to their feet, so they use them as a blanket to keep them warm. That's because, according to the legends, they live in cold regions, such as northern islands or high in mountains. These people are very shy, which is why they are seldom seen. So when they see travelers, they use their wings to fly away.

Origins of the mythological creature come from Greek and Roman mythology, and it is logical that the legend could have been brought to Sicily by these and other invaders. And early Sicilians could have embellished the story



*The Panotii, the legendary Sicilian creature*

by speculating that the *Panotii* lived on Mt. Etna.

*Panotii* do appear in *Baudolino* a 2000 novel by Umberto Eco about the adventures of the man in the title who dwells in the known and mystical world of the 12th century.

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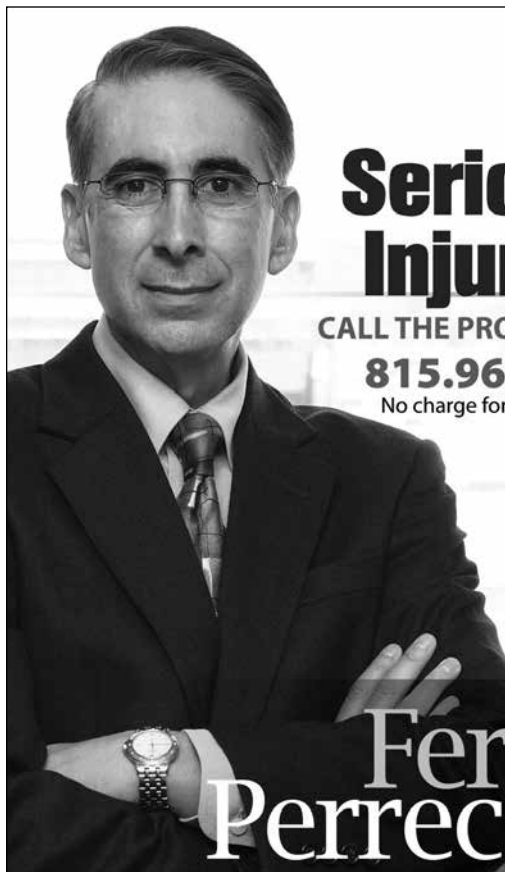
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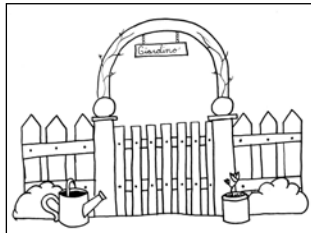
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## What's in season in Italy?

Homebound has taken on a new meaning in these unprecedented times, and, as we look forward to spring and being outdoors, many of us are looking forward to planting our gardens. Many of our garden favorites have roots in Italy. According to *orderisda.org*, as early as the mid-1880s, Italian immigrants were growing varieties of eggplants, fennel, broccoli and cucuzza, the snake-like Italian squash. Tomatoes originated in South America but became popular in Italy, and then America. Peppers and zucchini are native to the Americas.

While our growing season in northern Illinois is defined by our climate, there are no clear seasonal deviations in Italy, which allows for vegetables and fruit to mature at different times of the year. What follows is the first of two parts of What's in Season in Italy. The second part will appear in the Fall issue.



### What's in season in the spring?

Fava beans (*fave*), asparagus (*asparagi*), artichokes (*carciofi*), zucchini flowers (*fiori di zucca*), spring peas (*piselli*), leeks (*porri*), beets (*barbabietole*), beans (*fagioli*), garlic (*aglio*), lemons (*limoni*), kiwi (*kiwi*), strawberries (*fragole*) and cherries (*ciliegie*).

**March** – It's the end of the pumpkin and radicchio seasons, the star of March is the simple leek. A great flavoring ingredient, try it in potato-leek soup.

**April** – This is the month for artichokes. It's a short season and involves a lot of prep work and peeling once cooked but certainly worth it. One suggestion is *Carciofi Impottiti*, which can be found later in April. This also is the start of the wild mushroom season. However, you must have a license to pick them in Italy. *Pasta Funghi* recipe follows.

**May** – Asparagus flavor is at its peak in May. Great in risotto, as steak and asparagus or pasta with asparagus. Also, cherries ripen between now and June.

### What's in season in the summer?

Cucumbers (*cetrioli*), eggplant (*melanzane*), cantaloupe/melon (*melone*), peppers (*peperoni*), zucchini (*zucchine*), zucchini flowers (*fiori di zucca*), basil (*basilico*), tomatoes (*pomodori*), peas (*piselli*), coconut (*cocco*), peaches (*pesche*) watermelon (*cocomero/anguria*), berries (*frutta di bosco*), plums (*susini*), figs (*fichi*).

**June** – That beautiful yellow in your garden comes from zucchini flowers (*fiori di zucca*), which make great appetizers. Strawberries also are ripe this month and the end of the month marks the first fig harvests.

**July** – This is the month that so many fruits begin to ripen, such as blueberries, apricots and cherries.

**August** – Summer vegetables are at their peak now with tomatoes and eggplant at the top of the list.

## *Carciofi Impottiti* Steamed Artichokes

5 artichokes  
1 cup breadcrumbs  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
½ cup Romano cheese, grated  
Salt and pepper to taste



Cut off artichoke stems, remove any dead leaves and snip the pointed tips across the tops. Wash thoroughly and dry upside down. Mix all ingredients and stuff mixture in between the leaves, which spread apart. Place upright in saucepan large enough to hold them all. Pour in water to cover about an inch or so at the bottom of the pan. Simmer covered over medium-low heat for about 40 minutes or until done. Check water and add hot water as needed. To eat, pick off and skim the inside of leaves, moving to the center. Remove the heart and enjoy the rich buttery consistency and flavor.

## *Pasta Funghi* Pasta with Mushrooms

1 pound spaghetti  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 pound mixed mushrooms, torn into bite-sized pieces  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 tablespoon flour  
½ cup heavy cream  
Salt and pepper  
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1/3 cup parsley, finely chopped  
½ cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated

Cook pasta to taste and set aside. Melt 2 tablespoons butter over medium high heat, then add one garlic clove and sauté for one minute until fragrant. Add the mushrooms and sauté for 5-10 minutes until golden brown and softened, then set aside. Add the remaining butter to the pan over medium heat. Add the remaining garlic and sauté for a minute until fragrant, then add flour, stir fry for a minute to cook out the flour taste. Slowly add the cream, whisking to blend. Let the mixture simmer until thickened. Season with salt and pepper. Add olive oil and water as needed to keep the sauce from becoming too thick. Toss the sauce, pasta, parsley and mushrooms together. Top with Parmesan and serve.

Source: Italian American Cultural Center of Iowa





## Recipes from Gesso, Sicily

### *Aubergine parmigiana* (Eggplant Parmesan)

3 medium *aubergines* (eggplants)  
1 garlic clove, slices  
20 ounces tomato paste  
10 basil leaves  
6-1/2 ounces Mozzarella cheese, sliced  
2 ounces Parmesan cheese, finely grated  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
Salt to taste

Slice the aubergine lengthwise into one-inch-thick slices and soak them in salty water for 30 minutes. Pat dry and fry the aubergine slices in vegetable oil until golden. Place in a colander to drain excess oil. To prepare the tomato sauce, sauté garlic with the extra virgin olive oil for one minute, taking care not to burn or the sauce will taste bitter. Add the tomato paste and basil leaves, season with salt to taste. Cover and cook for 10-15 minutes and set aside. To assemble, place a soot of tomato sauce at the bottom of an oven-proof dish. Top with a layer of fried aubergine, tomato sauce, grated Parmesan and sliced Mozzarella. Repeat the layers. Finish the top layer with tomato sauce and grated Parmesan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.

Source: *Greatitalianchefs.com*

### *Pasta 'nCasciata* (Messina-style baked pasta with eggplant)

1 pound macaroni-style pasta  
14 ounces ground beef  
1 onion  
1/2 pound *Caviocavallo* cheese (you can use *Scamorza*, Dried Mozzarella or sliced Provolone)  
3-1/2 ounces *Parmigiano Reggiano* cheese  
2 eggplants  
White wine  
Basic leaves  
3-4 tablespoons tomato sauce  
Salt  
Extra virgin olive oil

Wash and cut the eggplant into cubes. Place them in a colander, sprinkle them with coarse salt, and let them sit for an hour to release any excess water. Rinse them under running water

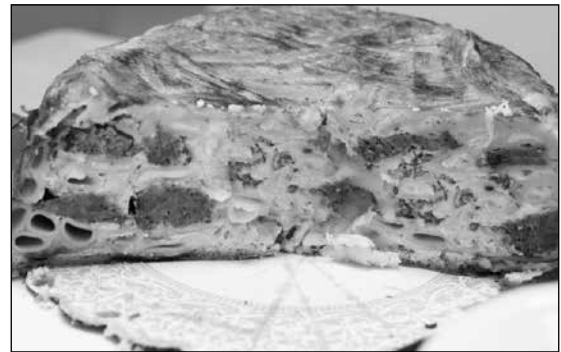


and pat them dry with a cloth. Fry them in a pan with plenty of extra-virgin olive oil, then remove them and let them rest on a plate lined with paper towels, which will soak up any excess oil. In the meantime, chop the onion and sauté it for a few minutes in a pan with extra-virgin olive oil. Add in the ground beef, a glass of wine, and let it cook for about 10 minutes. Then add a few tablespoons of tomato sauce to the beef and continue cooking for about an hour. In a pot, cook the pasta and drain it once it's *al dente*. Transfer it into a baking dish, pour the sauce on top, and mix well. Add in the eggplant, the *Caciocavallo* cheese cut into strips, the basil, and finally sprinkle the top with the *Parmigiano Reggiano* cheese. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes and serve with a nice glass of *Nero d'Avola*.

Source: *lacucinaitaliana.com*

### *Taano* (Sicilian Easter casserole)

2 1/2 dozen eggs (large or extra-large) beaten well  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 cup parsley, chopped  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
1 1/2 cups plus 2 pounds aged Romano cheese, grated  
2 pounds *Tuma* cheese, sliced about 1/8-inch thick  
2 pounds ground veal, sauté with 1 teaspoon salt, dash cinnamon, 1 tablespoon parsley  
1 pound Rigatoni pasta, cooked *al dente*  
3/4 cup chicken broth with a little saffron (optional)



Prepare 6-8 quarter casserole dish, greasing with butter or margarine. Beat cinnamon, parsley, salt and 1 1/2 cups Romano cheese into eggs. (Note: tuna and pasta are always dipped in egg). Start by putting some beaten egg mixture into bottom of casserole, then add tuna, *Tuma*, grated cheese, egg, and meat, continuing this pattern for all layers. Occasionally drizzle small amount of broth with each layer. When about 1 to 1 1/2 inch from top, add plain *Tuma*, not dipped in cheese for top layer. Let it set for a few minutes. Bake at 350 degrees for the first hour, then reduce to 325 degrees until done.

Test if done with a knife – it will come out clean when done.

Source: *Marie Falzone in Cucina Italiana: Rockford Style.*



## Carrying on the St. Joseph Altar tradition with a carry-out event

Every two years, Rosie Scalise Sheridan's family prepares a St. Joseph Altar at her home west of Rockford, and, because this was her year to have one, she wasn't going to let the dynamics of the COVID-19 stop her. Instead of guests visiting her altar, she and her family will prepare the traditional *Pasta con Sarde* to hand out in a drive-by event. Her altar will be held from noon to 4 p.m. on March 19 at her home at 7020 Clikeman Road.

"We're preparing for 500 meals," Rosie said. "Normally, we prepare for 300-350. We will cook pasta and *sugo* until 4 o'clock so that no one will drive away without. We may run out of bread, *froschia* or *fave* beans, but we will not run out of pasta."

Every visitor will get the same size carry-out, she said. Those who want to attend will be asked to stay in their vehicle as the meals are brought to them. A crew of about 20 from the Scalise family and two others, who are all in the same bubble, will prepare the food. Those driving by will be able to see her altar through the picture window.

"I have 100 pounds of pasta on order and several cases of the *con sarde* and bread," she said. "We want to feed a lot of people. So, pick up food for the family, a homebound friend or a sick neighbor, etc."

Knowing that last year's altars were among the first cancellations of the pandemic era, all of those involved determined to find a way to make the tradition continue—albeit with a twist. Rosie also said that Pope Francis' designation that 2021 be the Year of St. Joseph had a factor in her decision. "It was my year to have one," she said. "That is what motivated me to make it happen, then, because it is the year of St. Joseph, my family and I decided we've got to do it."



## Amici Italiani dancers sought

The *Amici Italiani* Youth Dance Troupe is open to young people from first to eighth grade. Practice for this troupe is anticipated to begin in late May or early June. For information, contact Anna Mirabile at 815-871-7789 or Pauline Urso at 815-218-0073.

Dancers 14-years-old and older are sought for the *Amici Italiani* Adult Dance Troupe. For information contact, Bea Ricotta at 815-520-1010.

## Sister City eyes return of Taste of Italy

The Rockford Italian Sister Cities Alliance (RISCA) is hopeful that events cancelled by the COVID-19 will return in 2021. RISCA has tentatively scheduled its sixth annual Taste of Italy fund raiser for Sunday, November 7, 2021, at the Venetian Club. Last year's event was cancelled as well as a trip to Rockford's sister city of Ferentino, Italy, in October and November for high school students and two chaperones.

RISCA members remain in touch with teachers in Ferentino in hopes that they can bring a group of students to Rockford this fall. Information about RISCA is available at its website, <http://www.ourrisa.org> or through [risca2006@gmail.com](mailto:risca2006@gmail.com).

## Museums begin to open up

The two museums in Rockford which focus on ethnic groups and immigration have opened and begun to make plans for the year.

Midway Village Museum is welcoming back visitors following the second COVID-19 closure in November. The museum is opening its Main Museum Center and gallery exhibits with self-guided tours at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. Regular hours of operations are 10 a.m. through 4 p.m. for visitors to the museum Wednesdays through Sundays. Walk-ins are welcome with a capacity of 150 in the Main Museum Center.

Visitors walk through self-guided tours of the exhibits and learn Rockford's history including stories of the past as they walk through the "Many Faces, One Community" gallery. This exhibit features stories of Rockford's immigrants from 1834 to the present. In that gallery, visitors walk through a 19th Century boarding house featuring various cultures including an Italian kitchen representative of that time in history.

Midway Village Museum is located on Rockford's east side off Guilford Road between Perryville and Mulford roads. More information is available at [www.midwayvillage.com](http://www.midwayvillage.com).

The Italian Gallery at the Ethnic Heritage Museum will be focusing on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church. St. Joseph is the patron saint of workers and Pope Francis has called for Catholics to turn to St. Joseph as their patron for 2021. Look for more information on Facebook as well as in the gallery, including palm weaving prior to Palm Sunday, which may include virtual basic weaving instructions.

The Ethnic Heritage Museum @Heritage Museum Park, 1129 S. Main Street, will be open on Sundays from 2-4 p.m. by appointment; other times through the week for tours by appointment. The tour includes the Graham-Ginestra House. Contact the museum at 815-962-7402 or email [us@ehm1129@comcast.net](mailto:us@ehm1129@comcast.net).





## Photo highlights from Columbus Day Mass



*In photo above, celebrants are ready for the presentation of items symbolic of Italian heritage at the St. Anthony of Padua Church at Columbus Day Mass on October 11, 2020.*

*In upper right photo, before Mass, St. Anthony's Director of Liturgy and Music Vickie Dombrowski and guest vocalist Karen Cantele are framed by rose window in the balcony of the church.*



*Below left, Johnny Fandel brings his item to the altar.*



## 'It's like that little flower that kind of blossoms in an empty yard'

*Continued from Page 2*



*Lorraine Bracco's finished home in Sambuca.*

to work, and, you can understand the Sambuca economy got richer," Rosa said.

"This represents a lot for the city, a lot more than you think," Piero said in the final episode. "The attention in the media has been good for the town."

All the pieces came together in the final episode with sweeping scenes of bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms, rooftop terraces and, even, the ping pong room. The last scenes showed Lorraine and her family welcoming all of those who took part in the entire project and shots of the people of Sambuca touring the stunning home.

Lorraine finished with special comments to Piero. "I could never have done this without you. I am grateful from the bottom of my heart. I can't believe we made this from rubble."

"It's like that little flower that kind of blossoms in an empty yard," Piero said to Lorraine. "Sometimes all it takes is just one little flower. It's been an honor to do this for you."

Greater Rockford Italian American Association – GRIAA

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*Rockford native Dan Scalise (at left) and his son Carlo followed their dream when they purchased a home in Sambuca, Sicily. Story and photo on Page 2*

# PAPPAGALLO



## 2021 Calendar Items

*All dates are tentative and subject to change*

### March

19 – Drive-by St. Joseph Altar, noon- 4 p.m., 7020 Clikeman Road, Rockford. Sponsored by Rosie Scalise Sheridan and family.

### August

6-8 – *Festa Italiana*, 400 St. Francis Drive.

### November

7 – Taste of Italy, fund-raiser for Rockford Italian Sister City Alliance, Venetian Club.

### We want to hear from you. Contact us

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