

Il Gazzettino

November 2017

Message from the Board

We had our first ever Festa Italiana Hawaii on October 7 and it was a smashing success! More activities are planned for December including our annual Festa di Natale...

Cordiali saluti,

Friends of Italy Society of Hawaii Board
info@friendsofitalyhawaii.org

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Upcoming Events

January 2018: Italian language classes
Level 2

Friday, December 1: Pizza Social at
Brick Fire Tavern (already sold out!)

**Saturday, December 10: Festa di
Natale** at Café Julia



Upcoming Events: Italian Language Class and Pizza Social

Board Member Carlo Andrea Malanima recently completed a Level 1 Italian course with a group of our members (great job, Carlo!). The course focused on the foundations of the Italian language, namely conjugation of frequently-used verbs, articles of speech, etc.

Because the Yacht Club is no longer available as a venue, we have worked tirelessly for the last several weeks to secure a location to hold the Level 2 Italian course, but our efforts were unsuccessful. As such, the Level 2 course will be postponed until **January 2018**; by that time, we expect to secure a venue for the class.

We have also received a number of inquiries from members asking when the Level 1 course will be held. We are looking into bringing on a second instructor that can teach a Level 1 while Carlo teaches a Level 2. Otherwise, a Level 1 course would not begin until late March/April 2018 when the Level 2 course ends. If you know anyone who may be interested in being a course instructor, please contact us at friendsofitalyhawaii@gmail.com. We appreciate your patience as we work to secure a venue so that we can continue the language courses.

Join us on **Friday, December 1** from **6:00-9:00 p.m.** at **[Brick Fire Tavern](#)** ([click here for their website](#)) located at **16 N. Hotel St. in**

Chinatown. We will have the outdoor upstairs patio area reserved just for our club (walk through Brick Fire to the back patio and take the outdoor steps up one flight).

Festa Italiana veteran Brick Fire Tavern will serve up a delicious array of appetizers and pizzas. The "Man Behind the Wine of Festa" - Donato Loperfido of [Flavors of Italy](#) - will bring a handful of delicious European wines for the tasting. What better way to ring in the holiday season??

There is no fee to attend this event. Food is on the house, compliments of FOISOH. If you wish to partake in the wine-tasting, you can buy a Wine Ticket (six 2-oz pours, which equals ~3 glasses) for **only \$15 (cash only, per favore!)**.

Unfortunately, we have already reached capacity and this event is now closed to registration

Upcoming Events

Festa di Natale

DECEMBER 10, 2017: Festa di Natale at Cafe Julia

****Registration is now open****

It's that time of year once again! Friends of Italy Society of Hawai'i is excited to host [Festa di Natale](#) at Cafe Julia in downtown Honolulu. This year, we will dine outside under the cafe lights so you surely do not want to miss out on what will be a lovely evening!

We are offering an "early bird" rate of until November 26 so make sure you **register today** for the Christmas Party ([click here for link](#)). More information about Festa Di Natale can be found on our [website](#).

Feel free to email Zach Dilonno (zachdionno@gmail.com) with any questions regarding the upcoming events.



Past Events

Festa Italiana Hawaii

Festa Italiana Hawaii, held in Kaka'ako on Saturday, October 7 was a great success with crowds of people, delicious food and wine, stirring music, fancy Italian sportscars and much more!



Feature Story

PRISONERS IN PARADISE*: ITALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN HAWAII

By Mark Ethridge

May 13, 1943: General Giovanni Messe, commander of the Italian First Army, surrenders his 80,000 troops to the British near Enfidaville in Tunisia, effectively ending the North Africa Campaign. The German commander Von Arnim surrenders the day before, so a total of almost 275,000 battle-hardened German and Italian veterans are marched into captivity. Most of these prisoners are shipped to prisoner of war (POW) camps in the U.S.



Left: General Messe presents himself to British General Montgomery after capture in Tunisia.
Right: Aerial view of POW yard in Tunisia.

Approximately Italian 50,000 POWs are sent to the U.S., and about 4,800 of these prisoners are sent to Hawaii, first passing through Fort Lawton in Washington State. Nearly 1,000 of these Italian POWs find their way to the Sand Island Detention Facility, another 2,000 at Schofield Barracks, and others at Kalihi Valley and Kaneohe.

On September 8, 1943, with the announcement of the signing of the armistice by the Badoglio government, Italy officially became an ally of the United States. As a result, Italian POWs

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were faced with the dilemma of whether to “collaborate” (i.e., perform war related work in Italian service units) with their former enemy captor or continue resistance. According to *“Italian Prisoners of War in Hawaii, 1942-1946,”* by Louis E. Keefer, of the 50,000 shipped to the U.S. after Italy's surrender, 35,000 POWs worked with the U.S. Army as cooperators, but 15,000 “non-cooperators” remained in stockades until their release in 1945 and 1946.

Why were these Italians sent to Hawaii? The U.S. military has never publicly explained why these prisoners were sent so far away from the European theater of the war. Historian Gwenfred Allen in her book *“Hawaii’s War Years 1941-1945”* mentions that the Army started importing Italian prisoners of war in July 1944 “to do work permitted under the Geneva Convention.”

However, she further explains: “Most of these men [those who chose not to collaborate] were considered politically dangerous or otherwise unacceptable for the Italian service units on the mainland which their comrades were allowed to join after the Italian surrender.” So, it is likely that they were sent to isolated areas where they would pose a minimal security risk, and not “cause trouble.” Since Hawaii is one of the most geographically isolated places in the world, it certainly meets that requirement.

Mario Benelli, one of the Italian POWs imprisoned in Hawaii, stated on his return to Hawaii 50 years later that he was sent to Hawaii because he refused to join Italian service units and fight with Americans. “We did not think it was the right thing to do – to jump on the bandwagon and join the winner. We just wanted to stay loyal to our country.” Benelli was only 19 when he was drafted in 1941.

Once in Hawaii, “we were generally well treated,” Benelli admitted. He said the POWs were paid 90 cents a day for work on Oahu. Some worked at Schofield Barracks laundry, others cleaned the beaches at Waikiki and the campus at Saint Louis School, planted trees on Oahu firing ranges and manicured the grounds of the Iolani Palace.

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In 1980, Allen Bailey, former Kamehameha School principal, told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin's* military writer Kyle Nelson that the Italian POW camp in Kalihi was located at the entrance to school's campus. "We could see the camp from the Boys' School dining hall, and I remember the prisoners spent much of their time playing soccer in their barbed-wire enclosure," said Bailey.

This Italian prisoner contingent was highly skilled in construction and engineering, and as a voluntary effort they were used extensively on many construction projects around the island where skilled labor was, at that time, in short supply, particularly around Honolulu Harbor, Sand Island, etc. (US Army)

"For the most part, the US Army welcomed their labor and skills in construction of needed military facilities."

"At the end of each day, the Italians would salvage whatever waste materials were about as well as scouring and scooping up cement from spillage." (Moreo)

Many of the prisoners were not only good workers, but skilled artisans, artists and musicians. With this salvaged material the Italian POWs built buildings and works of art (fountains and statues) at various locations on O'ahu (these pieces are at Schofield Barracks, Fort Shafter, Sand Island and the Immigration Building.) Many of these works still remain on Oahu.

At Sand Island, "(a)t sunset, hundreds of Italians formed a male chorale and sang for an hour. It became widely known and so popular that visitors came in the evening to listen and applaud."

At Fort Shafter, one POW's handiwork included a fountain bearing Venice's emblem — winged lions, and another crowned by pineapples. Alfredo Giusti of Pietrasanta, Italy, inscribed his name and address on the north side of the fountain.

The fountain at Fort Shafter stands in front of Richardson Hall. The hall was named after Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson, Commander

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of the Middle Pacific area, who wrote the artist in June 1946:

“You and your comrades left a little bit of Italy in Honolulu both at Sand Island and at Fort Shafter in the two beautiful fountains that you have built.”

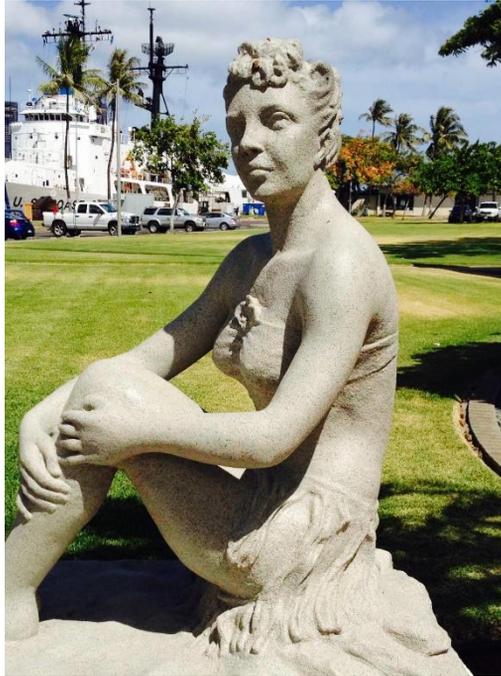


The fountain may look a little familiar to those who saw “Pearl Harbor”—the fountain, along with Palm Circle, appeared in the movie a few times.

Another hard-to-see fountain crafted by the Italians is within the secured Immigration Center on Ala Moana Boulevard (you can see it through a chain link fence on the makai/Fort Armstrong side of the facility.)

Alfredo Giusto also sculpted two statues that are still located at the entrance to the Coast Guard facility on Sand Island. The “Hula Dancer” and “Bathing Beauty” statues were constructed by Giusti during WWII to honor the women back home, waiting for the prisoners' return.

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The Bathing Beauty

Photo credit: Joe Magaldi



Bathing Beauty statue inscription

Photo credit: Joe Magaldi

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The hula dancer Photo credit: Joe Magaldi

The most ambitious POW project was the construction of an entire chapel at Schofield Barracks dedicated to Italian-born Mother Francis Cabrini who traveled to the United States in 1889 to spend 28 years working with the sick and poor. She became the first American saint of the Roman Catholic Church in 1946. The chapel was designed by Astori Rebato of Venice and was constructed by nearly 2,000 prisoners in 1945 from scavenged materials during off duty hours and Sundays.

Astori started work on the chapel in July 1944, and said he designed and supervised the construction of the Cabrini Chapel and its four fluted pillars as “an act of devotion to the Madonna, so I could see my 75-year old mother again.”

The Mother Cabrini Chapel “was huge, with an altar, and two large paintings of Mother Cabrini all done by the POWs. The chapel had a full basement for vestments and religious articles. Out in front of the chapel, the area was paved and filled by ‘well-constructed benches acting as pews for a thousand or more worshippers.’”

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Upon the chapel's completion, Sunday mass was celebrated every week with the prisoners exiting the prison compound in order to attend the services, seating themselves in the open-air pews. As word spread to the adjoining areas, Pearl City, Honolulu, Nanakuli, and even as far as Waikiki, a small group of Catholic worshipers started to drive up to the chapel on Sunday mornings to attend the services." (Dominic W. Moreo).

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Unfortunately, the Cabrini Chapel no longer exists. In June 1949, the Army decided to demolish the chapel because it didn't have the funding to maintain it. The Catholic Church also declined to manage the facility because it was not located in a practical place and other chapels were available for Schofield Barracks military personnel. Another deciding factor was that almost all the Italian POWs who were using the chapel had left by early 1946.

Four POWs, however, did not leave – they died during their internment and were originally buried at the chapel and later moved to the Schofield Barracks cemetery.

Italian Prisoners of War Interred in the United States (Continued)
SUPPLEMENTARY LIST NO. 1 - Corrected to 10 March 1952

<u>Name of Decedent</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>ISN</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Place of Burial in U.S.</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
AENO, Germano	Pvt	8WI-7826	16 Jan 46	Schofield Bks Cem, T. H.	Suicide (Hanging)
CIRMELE, Francesco	Pvt	8WI-786	24 Sep 44	Schofield Bks Cem, T. H.	Asphyxia (Drowning)
CUOGHI, Giovanni Italian	Col	1552	23 Sep 44	St Peter's Cem, St Island, NY	Carcinoma of Gall Bladder
(GUNGIOTTI, Aldo	Pvt	Not Given	11 Apr 45	Not Given	Tuberculosis, Pulmonary
D'ANGELO, Francesco	Pvt	81-I-364912	22 Jun 47	Ft Leavenworth Penitentiary Cem, Kansas	Suicide (Attempted)
DIOGUARDI, Vincenzo	Sgt	7WI-11337	22 Dec 45	Wash Post Cem, Vancouver Bks	Fractures/Truck Accident
MAFOLANTANO, Giovanni	Pvt	8WI-14554	21 Oct 45	Schofield Bks Cem, T. H.	Chloromeningitis

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Three of the four deceased Italian POWs at Schofield Barracks are listed here.

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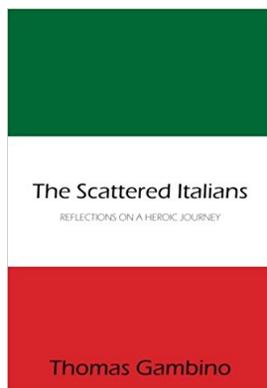
* “Prisoners in Paradise” is the title of an award-winning documentary film about Italian POWs held in America during World War II. The film was directed and produced by Camilla Calamandrei (prisonersinparadise.com). The title seems even more appropriate for Hawaii.

Most of the material and quotes here are taken from a series of *Hawaii Star-Bulletin* articles (May 10, 14, and 15, 1993 by Gregg K. Kakesako). Another significant source of material comes from the book, “*Riot at Fort Lawton, 1944*” by Dominic W. Moreo, 2004.

COMING IN JANUARY: RETURN TO PARADISE – the return of 8 former Italian POWs to Hawaii in May 1993, 50 years after their capture in North Africa and placement in internment camps on Oahu.

Announcements

Book Publication: “*The Scattered Italians: Reflections on a Heroic Journey,*” by Thomas Gambino



“*The Scattered Italians,*” an impressively deep and revealing book concerning Italian migration, has been recently revised and released. It critically examines events leading up to the mass movement of the Italians from a mostly Latin-Agricultural society to an Anglo-Industrial one. The WHY, WHEN and WHERE of this phenomenon is evaluated leading to conclusions on WHO we are as Italian-Americans and why we act out our life’s drama as we do.

“... happiness is to be found, in great measure, in the percentage of our heritage that we can retain and augment...”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Thomas Gambino was part of the airline industry for over 34 years working his way through the ranks to become a senior director for a major carrier in Europe. His extensive travels, for both business and pleasure, have given him an international perspective which he shares with the reader in telling this significant tale. He was also the **Vice President of FOISOH** for several years.

Included in the revised book is a lively Q & A exchange between Mr. **Zach Dilonno** of FOISOH and the author giving interesting insight into club activities including the fabulous Festa Italiana that recently took place in Honolulu.

Enjoy the read!

<https://www.authorhouse.com/Bookstore/BookDetail.aspx?BookId=SKU-000216129>