

Il Gazzettino

January 2018

Message from the Board

We are working hard on planning events for the new year. Our objective is to plan one event per month, which will include our perennial events like the Annual Members' Dinner, Festa Italiana, and the Christmas Party. If you have an idea for an event or would like to connect us to a business that we can collaborate with, please email Events Director Zach Dilonno (zachdionno@gmail.com).

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Upcoming Events

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Upcoming Events: Italian Language Class

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.

We are close to securing a facility to hold again the Beginner's Italian Class. Due to the overwhelming interest in a Level 1 course, the club will seek to offer another Level 1 course that will span 10 classes. Dates and related details will be shared with the membership once the facility is secured. We appreciate your patience. If you have ideas or suggestions for another facility (that is preferably free or very inexpensive), please email us at friendsofitalyhawaii@gmail.com.

New Blog by Tommaso Gambino

To complement the Gazzettino, club member Tommaso Gambino will take on the duties of administering our club website's [blog](#). In the upcoming weeks, you'll be able to see the first blog post, with posts to follow roughly every two weeks thereafter. We're very excited and appreciative that Tommaso is taking this on. If you haven't already, you should check out Tommaso's book "The Scattered Italians." It's a great read! To order, click on the following link:

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

Past Events

Festa di Natale

Below are some photos of Festa di Natale, held at Café Julia on Sunday, December 10. These are photos that we did not include in our December edition of the Gazzettino.



Feature Story

RETURN TO PARADISE: EIGHT FORMER ITALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR RETURN TO OAHU (continuation of our December Feature Story)

By Mark Ethridge

May 15, 1993: Eight former Italian Prisoners of War participate in the blessing of the graves of four of their less fortunate compatriots who died 50 years ago during incarceration at Schofield Barracks on Oahu during World War II. The Schofield Barracks Roman Catholic chaplain, Lt. Col. Joseph Goudreau, 25th Infantry, sprinkles holy water on the headstones while Mario Benelli, one of the POWs who have returned to Oahu, offers a silent prayer and gazes at the Ko'olau Mountains in the distance. An Army bugler sounds taps as Benelli and the other POWs drape leis on the tombstones.



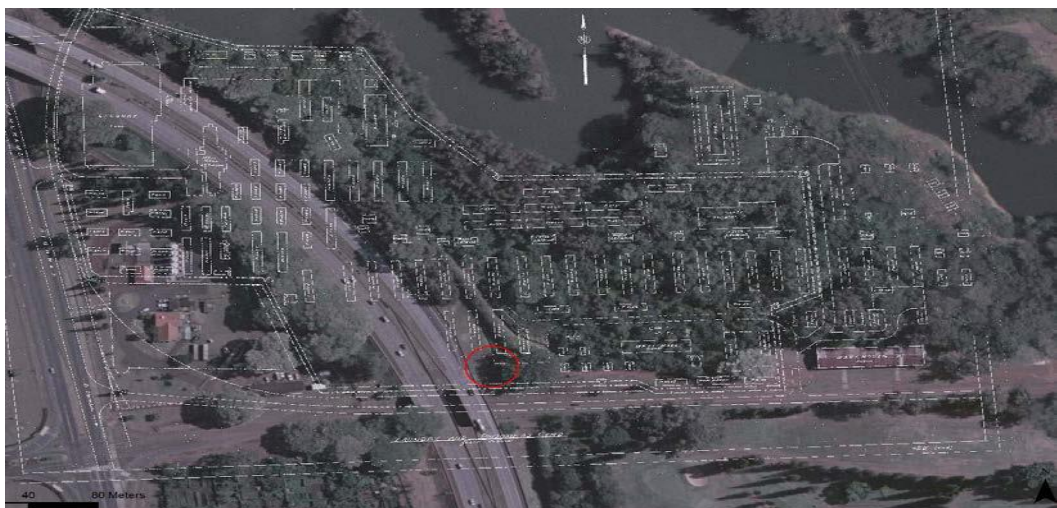
The eight former Italian POWs in Honolulu – Honolulu
Star-Bulletin

Feature Story (cont.)

The eight POWs who have made the pilgrimage from Italy are Mario Benelli, Renato Astori, Fernando Rosati, Mario Lugaresi, Biagio Montaldi, Ezio Luciola, Angelo Sacchi, and Gianni Pizzigoni. In addition to visiting the graves of their comrades, they come to visit some of the artistic and architectural masterpieces they built with scavenged materials on their own time: a beautiful chapel dedicated to Mother Frances Cabrini, the first Italian-American saint, and several fountains, rock walls, and statues of a Hawaiian hula dancer and a bathing beauty.

However, to their great dismay, they learn that the Cabrini Chapel was torn down in 1946 after neither the Army or the local Catholic Church authorities could find any use for the structure. With the departure of the last Italian POWs, there is really no “congregation” left to use the church, and no one with the foresight at the time to preserve it as a historic structure.

The chapel existed at a location which is now at a bend of the H-2 near Higgins Road on the East Range of Schofield Barracks across from Wheeler Army Airfield.



The red circle indicates the site of former chapel. The plan of the former POW camp has been superimposed on an aerial photograph of the current location. O'ahu Army Cultural Resources Program (OACRP)

Feature Story (cont.)

Benelli told Army representatives that several former POWs chose not to come on the visit when they heard that the chapel had been torn down. “They cried like babies when they heard the chapel was gone.”

Recently, the Oahu Army Cultural Resources Program (OACRP) has been busy researching the POW camp and the chapel built by its Italian prisoners. During 2015, researchers discovered several fluted columns that were part of the former chapel.



In addition to the gravesites at Schofield Barracks, the former POWs visit a fountain at Fort Shafter, and the Coast Guard’s Sand Island Station to view the two statues sculpted by Alfredo Giusti, a fellow POW, who died several years before the visit. The Italians originally sculpted the dancer topless, but the military later painted a bra on the statue. Benelli reacted to this saying, “it’s like putting underwear on Michelangelo’s David.”

Feature Story (cont.)



By Steve Atkins, Coast Guard

Gianni Pizzigoni kisses the statue of the Bathing Beauty. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Both statues bear the inscription, "Dedicated to give hope to those without hope" - a reference to Hansen's disease sufferers. The Coast Guard has adapted those words to its mission of giving hope to those lost at sea.

The group also meets with Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi and is interviewed by local reporters.

The impetus for the return visit came from former POW Mario Benelli. Benelli, who became a businessman in Italy, spent more than 1 ½ years as a POW in Hawaii. "A part of my life is here, and I wanted to see what it is like today," he told a translator during his Oahu visit. He said that he and his fellow prisoners "wanted to take a sentimental journey to relive old memories."

Feature Story (cont.)

In 1992, Benelli, a certified public accountant, wrote to Louis Finamore, the honorary vice consul for Italy in Hawaii, saying that he wanted to return to the islands to revisit the stockades and especially a chapel the prisoners built at Schofield Barracks.

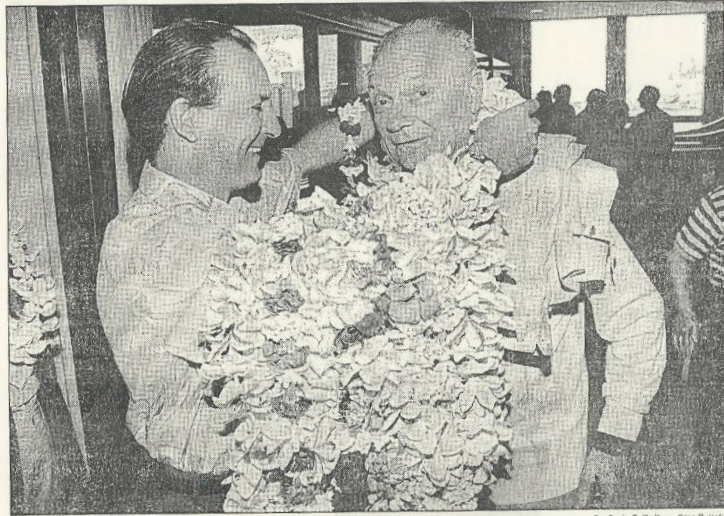
The Italian POW trip to Hawaii was coordinated by Armando Beccaria, President of the Friends of Italy Society of Hawaii (FOISOH) in cooperation with the honorary vice consul for Italy.

After the visit, Mario Benelli, the group's leader sent a thank you letter to the FOISOH members:

“A few days ago, we had a meeting with some POWs who could not make the trip to Hawaii and we told them how we were welcomed... last May. I must say we were all surprised by the warmth and affection with which we were received. I wish to express my gratitude to you, other representatives of the Friends of Italy Society, the Honorary Consul Louis Finamore, the Mayor of Honolulu, and the Immigration administrators. I do not know whether our hope to return again will come true, given our age: it is certain, however, that we will remember May 14, 1993 as one of the most beautiful days of our lives...”

For officers and young cadets of the 71-year-old *Amerigo Vespucci* — the oldest Almost a decade later, in early September 2002, the crew of the *Amerigo Vespucci* comes to Honolulu and visits some of the same sites, including Schofield Barracks and the statues at the Sand Island Coast Guard Station. FOISOH also helps coordinate these visits.

Feature Story (cont.)



Former POW Gianni Pizzigoni receives a Hawaiian lei greeting from Piero Sarale, the group tour leader.

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

"I feel a little bit sad because if you die not in your country, without your parents and the people you love, probably it's not a very good thing," said cadet Marco Epifanio, 21, of the four graves at Schofield.

"Places like this, it's kind of linking to (Italian) naval history and what happened in the past," said Lt. j.g. Sebastian Rossitto, 26, a staff officer. "So, of course it's very important for us."

Feature Story



Marinaio Sergio Cadalano of the Italian tall ship *Amerigo Vespucci* examines "The Hula Dancer," created by Alfredo Giusti, an Italian POW who was interned on Sand Island during World War II.

Most of the information and photos in this story have been extracted and adapted from a series of articles in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* from May 10 to May 15, 1993, as well as a *Honolulu Advertiser* story dated September 2, 2002.

Information and photos of the Army's investigation of the Cabrini Chapel site were taken from the *Ecosystem Management Program Bulletin Volume 60, Issue 3* published by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit, in cooperation with the U.S. Army Garrison Hawai'i, Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Division.

Announcements

Hawaii Opera Theater presents . . .

Gaetano Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment*



"It's a rollicking combination of *esprit de corps*, slapstick antics and innocent romance — not to mention intoxicating music highlighted by spectacular vocal writing." ~ NPR

Donizetti's hilarious comedy about Marie, the army brat who is raised by a troop of soldiers, is full of brilliant music and vivid vocals. A true tomboy, she has fallen in love with Tonio, a handsome lad who must join the regiment in order to win approval from Marie's many adopted fathers. Presenting another twist to winning Marie's hand, the Marquise of Birkenfield arrives on the scene with the secret knowledge that Marie is in fact of aristocratic roots and must marry according to her station. Will Tonio rise to the occasion?

Performance Schedule*

- February 9, Friday, 7:30pm
- February 11, Sunday, 4:00pm
- February 13, Tuesday, 7:30pm

**All performances at the Blaisdell Concert Hall*

Sung in French with English translations projected above the stage.

Announcements (cont.)

Hawaii Symphony Orchestra presents...
Lang! Lang!



Performance Date: [February 18](#)

Featured Compositions:

- Mussorgsky (arr. Ravel) — *Pictures at an Exhibition*
- Gershwin — *Rhapsody in Blue*

JoAnn Falletta, conductor

Lang Lang, piano

Announcements (cont.)

One-Week Italian Cooking Holiday in Abruzzo

Charlene de Lory is putting this amazing trip together from July 1-8, 2018. If you are interested, please contact her directly at 818-222-2796.



View an interview by Pauline Chakmakjian with Dr. Carbone about health benefits of Italian cooking on ThinkTech Hawaii:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9s7YDdPA5k>