

# *Il Gazzettino*

## Message from the Board

We hope you had a wonderful summer. We are excited to hear about your adventures and to have you at the great events we are working on! Join us in true Italian spirit, with food, friends, and lots of fun! And more food.

We are striving to create more events and opportunities that our fellow *Friends* will enjoy. If you have any have any comments or suggestions, we would love to hear from you.

Abbracci,

Friends of Italy Society of Hawaii Board  
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## *In this issue:*

### 1 Message from the Board

### 1 Upcoming Events

Picnic in the Park Potluck  
Spooky Wine Tasting Social

### 2 Recent Events

Pizza Party Fundraiser

### 3 Feature Story

How an American came  
to love Italy

### 5 Announcements

Farewell Tommaso  
New Board Member:  
Jo Andrea Napoli  
Hawaii Symphony Orchestra  
Opening: Pines of Rome  
Flavia Pennetta Won US Open

## Upcoming Events

### Picnic in the Park Potluck

On September 26 at 3:00 we will be having a potluck get-together at Kapiolani Park Picnic Area 26, located under the banyan tree under the Diamond Head tennis courts. There will be food, fun and bocce! Free event, just bring yourself and some food.

### Spooky Wine Tasting Social

Join us October 23, 6:00—9:00 p.m., for a wine tasting at Hawaii Loa Ridge House. We'll bring the wine; you bring the food (potluck-style). Bring the kids! Everyone is welcome to come in costume for some Halloween fun. To end the night, Janet Grace Milone will tell us about her new book: *Bischero in Florence: Travel Guide for Parent and Child*.  
Members: \$5, Guests: \$10

## Recent Events

### Pizza Party Fundraiser

On June 20, Selli and Fernando hosted quite the pizza party spectacular! The turn out was great; the crowd was an international mix filled with young and old alike. Everyone seemed to find their little corner of paradise in the multi-level garden and grab a slice of delicious pizza as it was passing by.

A special thanks to Selli and Fernando not only for opening their home to us for this beautiful evening, but for cooking all kinds of delicious pizzas!



Fernando at the pizza oven



Selli (right) crafting pizzas

*We are so glad so many of you could join us!*





# How an American came to love Italy

By Mark Ethridge

I have always been interested in foreign cultures. I studied French language, literature and history at the University of Toulouse in southern France. I later married a Vietnamese woman and experienced many aspects of her culture, especially the wonderful cuisine. And although I studied Italian for a semester in college and visited Italy several times, it was not until I visited Italy with my wife and parents in 1998 that my “love affair” with Italy started.

This trip inspired me to learn Italian. I started at the beginning and seven years of study later, I improved to an advanced conversational level. Little did I know, this would lead me on an extraordinary adventure!

In March of 2005, I decided to send an e-mail (in Italian) to the online column of the Italian journalist, Beppe Severgnini. Mr. Severgnini is a very talented and popular journalist for Italy’s largest newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*. His column, called “Italians” appears daily in the online edition. He publishes e-mails from readers daily, and highlights one of those e-mails as a lead and writes a response to it. In my e-mail, I talked about my trip and how it spurred me to learn Italian and closed with the statement: “Perhaps Italian is not the language of international communication, but it is a beautiful and musical language, full of humanity and of the joy of life.”

You can imagine my surprise a couple of days later I found my e-mail published in its entirety with a long response from Mr. Severgnini (in Italian of course). He used it, along with two other letters to illustrate a point: many foreigners are learning Italian not because it is useful, but because they love the language. He concluded, “I understand one thing: these foreigners - young and not quite so young- have not bought the usual ‘Italian postcard,’ (Tuscany, olives, Chianti, and a plumber named Giovanni) , but have understood the country, accepting its contradictions, as one must always do with beloved things and people. These foreigners – who we must thank - have chosen ‘Italia’ and not just ‘Italy.’ There’s a difference, believe me...”

And this is still not the end of the story! As a result of this letter, I was deluged with emotional e-mails from Italians. All the responses were favorable and I responded to each of them. One e-mail was rather curious in that the respondent cited a poem, *L’infinito*, written by Giacomo Leopardi, one Italy’s greatest poets (although I didn’t know him at the time). This e-mail would change my life for it led to a correspondence that continues to this day. I would exchange American literature, poetry, and history with this Italian, and he would respond with Italian culture and stories for me. The writer was a married man with children 22 years younger than me, an avid skier, free diver, and collector of porcini mushrooms in Valtellina, a part of Italy between Lake Como and Switzerland.

## How an American came to love Italy (cont.)

### **L'Infinito – Giacomo Leopardi**

*[Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle,  
e questa siepe, che da tanta parte  
dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.  
Ma sedendo e mirando, interminati  
spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani  
silenzi, e profondissima quiete  
io nel pensier mi fingo; ove per poco  
il cor non si spaura. E come il vento  
odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello  
infinito silenzio a questa voce  
vo comparando: e mi sovvien l'eterno,  
e le morte stagioni, e la presente  
e viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa  
immensità s'annega il pensier mio:  
e il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.]*

*This lonely hill was always dear to me,  
and this hedgerow, which cuts off the view  
of so much of the last horizon.  
But sitting here and gazing, I can see  
beyond, in my mind's eye, unending spaces,  
and superhuman silences, and depthless calm,  
till what I feel is almost fear. And when I hear  
the wind stir in these branches, I begin  
comparing that endless stillness with this noise:  
and the eternal comes to mind,  
and the dead seasons, and the present  
living one, and how it sounds.  
So my mind sinks in this immensity:  
and floundering is sweet in such a sea.*

(translated by Jonathan Galassi)

Finally my entire family (including our 12-year old daughter) decided to visit his family in the small town in Valtellina. Little did we know that this would be an extraordinary visit. First, although we had proposed to come by train, he insisted on picking us up and driving us 120 miles to and from the Milan airport (*he had to make 4 trips*)! Then he arranged for us to stay in his sister-in-law's modern apartment with a generously stocked refrigerator. They took us all over the area, served us pizzoccheri and bresaola and other local specialties. We were overcome by their generosity, warmth, and enthusiasm.



Valtellina – a view from my friend's house

Everyone was moved by our stay; I really felt a sense of destiny that these people were to become a significant part of my life. This family has become part of our extended family. We communicate several times a week, exchange holiday presents and we even visited again several years later. It is my hope that they can make it to the U.S. some day.

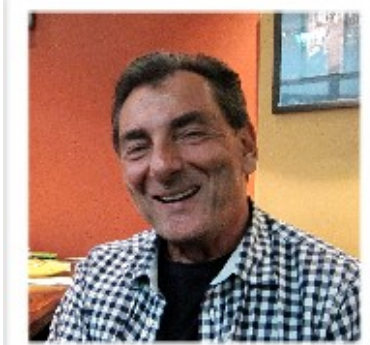
## How an American came to love Italy (*cont.*)

In Italy, as in every country, there are both good and bad people. What I find exceptional is that the good people in Italy are some of the best I have met -- as generous, welcoming, gracious, loyal, and thoughtful as anywhere on earth, with a great capacity to appreciate the simple pleasures of life, and in an uninhibited and expressive way. And that is why I love Italy - it's not just the food, the music, the architecture and the literature, but the Italian people themselves and the beauty and expressiveness of the Italian language. I feel very comfortable in this culture and I think allows me to express the best aspects of my character and my humanity, and to appreciate the simple joys of life.

## Announcements

### Farewell Tommaso

*Buon viaggio* to Board Member Tommaso Gambino and his wife Katy! They are moving to Brussels, Belgium, for three years where Katy will take on an exciting new project for All Nippon Airways. They anticipate returning to the islands after their time finishes (and during vacations). Tommaso has been instrumental in helping us establish Friends of Italy Society activities, events and future projects. He provided keen commentary and articles for Il Gazzettino and helped us continue to search for ways to highlight Italian culture and connections here in Hawaii. Grazie per tutti, Tommaso -- e ci vediamo!



### New Board Member

Jo Andrea Napoli joined the FOISOH board as the new Gazzettino editor.

### Hawaii Symphony Orchestra Opening: Pines of Rome

Season Opening on Sunday, Sept. 27 at 4:00 p.m. at the Blaisdell Concert Hall.

<http://hawaiisymphonyorchestra.org/>

### Flavia Pennetta Won US Open 2015

Roberta Vinci won her match against Serena Williams only to lose to Flavia Pennetta in the title match. Pennetta announced she will retire at the end of the season.



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