



Il Notiziario

[The Newsletter]
of the

Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.



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Volume 4, Issue 4

Editor: A.A. Grillo

Fall: October 1, 2023

News from our Executive Board

by Frank "Ciccu" Bruno

Ciao! Comu va?

After a robust first and second quarter of this year, FOI is in a planning mode. Your Executive Board members have been planning for 2024, yes, I said 2024. Where has this year gone? Next year will again see another two, highly in demand, High Teas, one in Monterey on April 6, and one in Pittsburg on May 5, 2024. And we will have our Annual FOI Scholarship Picnic in Martinez in June. Mark your calendars.

2024 will be FOI's 5th Anniversary. In February 2019, FOI formed a 501 (C) 3 nonprofit organization. We are planning a huge extravaganza you will NOT want to miss. More to come in our next newsletter.

We are still holding our monthly FOI Family Rosary night. Upcoming Zoom Rosary dates for the remainder of 2023 are as follows: Monday October 2, Monday November 6, and Monday December 4, all starting at 6pm, via a Zoom meeting format. Our attendance has been increasing so come and join us, bring a family member or friend. "A FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER, STAYS TOGETHER!"

Our membership numbers have held steady at 190. A long time FOI member, Linda Campbell Haynes and VP Mary Coniglio have implemented a new renewal invoice system. When you receive your invoice by email, please consider renewing your membership dues. If you want a hard copy of the invoice, please let us know by email at friendsofisola@gmail.com. Please send your renewal checks to FOI, 609 Claire Ct., Novato, Ca. 94949. Your support helps us keep the doors open and assists us in funding our scholarship program. Thank you all for your continued support. Our goal for 2023 is to reach 200 solid members. Please help us reach this goal.

Although FOI is idle for now, we are planning some BIG EVENTS in 2024.

Stay tuned! Thank you for your unwavering support, trust, and love.

Sincerely,
Frank "Ciccu" Bruno – President of FOI

To preserve, protect, and promote the Italian-Sicilian cultural heritage among the descendants, immigrants, citizens and friends of Isola delle Femmine, Sicily and around the world.

Co-founder & Chairman of the Board: V.S. Di Maggio, Co-founder & President: F.B. Bruno, Vice-President: M. Pappas-Coniglio, Secretary: D. Pellegrini, Treasurer: V.M. Mafitano D.M.D., Liaison to Isola delle Femmine: S.N. Coniglio, Advisor & Business Consultant: A.D. Seeno, Jr., Historian: V.S. Ferrante, Historian & Researcher: A.A. Grillo Ph.D.

News from Isola

by Giuseppe Lucido

During the night between July 24th and 25th, there was a terrible fire in Isola delle Femmine. This fire, set by some unknown person, started in the mountain of Isola delle Femmine and the flames reached down the mountain to the edge of the city, in particular very near to some houses and firms located there. This fire was fed by the high temperature (almost 44°- 45°C or 111°- 113°F) and the hot Scirocco wind (South East Wind from North Africa). Unfortunately, this occurrence is not unusual in Sicily, especially during the very hot days.



Mountain of Isola on Fire, 24-Jul

evacuated; and, above all, a car dealership (also located near to the mountain) was destroyed by flames with a hundred cars parked there charred beyond repair. The firefighters, when the night became day, started extinguishing the fire, but the damaged area was so

interrupted for several hours in some parts of the city; some houses were

engulfed in flames and closed for some hours; the electricity and telephone lines were interrupted for several hours in some parts of the city; some houses were

charred beyond repair. The firefighters, when the night became day, started extinguishing the fire, but the damaged area was so vast that we currently see the scorched earth around the mountain and along the highway, in addition to all those burned up cars at the dealership. During that morning of July 25th, thick black smoke, coming from the extensive damage to the car dealership, invaded part of Isola delle Femmine and it was very difficult to put out these flames. The night after, between July 25th and 26th, there was another fire, smaller than the previous one, in the mountain between Isola and Capaci. Even though the firefighters extinguished these flames, before they were successful, the fire burned another part of the mountain. We can never understand the reason people choose to set fires. Setting fire to the mountain and, in general anywhere, is very dangerous for all the people, animals and vegetations living nearby. In some cases, it can lead to serious injury and death for some. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries or deaths from this fire. We all rely on the common sense of people and we hope that this was the last time for us to experience something like this.



The Other Fire Between Isola and Capaci, 25-Jul



Flames in the Highway A9
Palermo -Mazara



Destruction of the Car Dealership

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What's Happening

by Frank "Ciccu" Bruno

As part of our Mission Statement "To Preserve, Protect, and Promote the Italian-Sicilian cultural heritage among the descendants, immigrants, citizens and friends of Isola delle Femmine & Sicily", last year FOI VP Mary Coniglio launched a video presentation of her Sicilian recipe cooking show, "Cooking with Mary's Village Style." Mary has now come up with new recipes, new hosts, new format. She has well over 2,000 viewers each time she shows her videos.

You can view all her cooking shows on YouTube.com. Enter "Cooking with Mary's Village Style" then just click on the video you want to watch.

This year Mary will have celebrity guest hosts join her and some of the shows will be remote.

The past shows included: Pasta with Clams, Stuffed Artichoke's, Stuffed Eggplant, Panelli, Sfingi, Sicilian Olives, Breaded Cauliflower, Italian Holiday Roasted Vegetables, Sicilian Seasoned Bread Crumbs, Eggplant Stufatu, Salmon & Onions, Pasta with Cauliflower, Te Tu Italian/Sicilian Chocolate Ball Cookies, Italian Nucatoli Cookies and more.

Your FOI board is in dialog with the Sister City Forever Committee-headed by Tonino Scala and Stefano Bologna in regards to a joint project in Isola. Stay tuned for more information.

At this time, we don't have any plans for a trip back to Isola but stay tuned as there may be something when this joint venture is completed.

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEED BACK ON THE FOI NEWSLETTER. YOUR COMMENTS ARE INVALUABLE TO US. WE WANT TO SEE IF WE ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK SO WE CAN BUILD A BETTER NEWSLETTER FOR YOU.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO RIENDSOFISOLA@GMAIL.COM.


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I Ricordi d'Isola [Memories of Isola]

by Giuseppe Lucido

The Story of the “Scalo della Madonna”

Along the shoreline of Isola delle Femmine away from the beach area, there are several coves that locally are called “scalo”, each one with particular names. For example, there are “Scalo di Peppe Seria” (Cove of Peppe Seria), “Scalo del Sindaco” (Mayor Cove), “Scalo di Levante” (East Cove), “Scalo Regia”, “Scalo Ponente” (West Cove). Each cove is used for different activities: in Scalo Regia fishermen put their boats up in Winter; in Scalo Levante some people spend time in order to bathe in the sea, and so on. In particular, in the Piano Levante area, there is a cove that in common speech is known as “Scalo della Madonna”. This cove is currently very popular and most of the people, both citizens of Isola and visitors, frequent in order to spend a day at the sea. However, when, in the common speech, we say “let's go to Scalo della Madonna”, many citizens do not know what this name means; what is the origin of this name and who gave this name to the cove. That's why I will tell you this interesting story in the following lines. The story of this name is very singular; was passed down for generations and was also strictly related to the building of the Church of Isola delle Femmine. So let's take a leap back into the past.

A very long time ago, in the 1700s, a fisherman of Isola delle Femmine found in that cove a marble statue representing the Madonna with the son Jesus in her arms. The statue was badly damaged because of the storm. In fact, we might assume that the statue got there due to a big winter storm. The fisherman took that statue to Piazza Umberto I, where nowadays there is the Church, but in that moment it hadn't been built yet. Some citizens built a wooden pedestal in Piazza Umberto I; put the statue on the pedestal and used this monument as a place to pray. Year by year, the citizens

of Isola wanted to have a Church built in Piazza Umberto I. Since there was no money to use for this building, many fishermen started saving money for many years with the intent to use this money to finance the building of the Church. They engaged a sort of structural engineer asking him to design the Church. When this project was ready, many fishermen weren't in agreement about it because they preferred to have the Church built with the facade facing the sea and not facing the city, as planned by the structural engineer. The structural engineer tried to convince them that it was better to build the Church as planned because in this way all the citizens would be able to look at the Church facade from the city. For this reason, two committees were formed in Isola delle Femmine: one of citizens who wanted the Church facade facing the city, and the other of fishermen who wanted it facing the sea. Because of these problems between the committees, the structural engineer was about to withdraw his project, but some citizens noticed that the statue of the Madonna, which they had previously placed in Piazza Umberto I, had its facade facing the city. Since that statue was their reference point for prayers,



Scallo della Madonna [Cove of the Madonna]



Statue of the Madonna

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they wanted to use this pretext to orient the Church's facade as the statue was oriented and as planned by the structural engineer. Clearly the fishermen committee did not agree to use this little pretext and they turned the statue towards the sea. The day after, someone noticed that the statue was again turned towards the city: the fishermen committee accused their opposing committee of having turned the statue, but they said they had not. There was great controversy and in the next days a new wooden pedestal, higher than the previous one, was built; the statue was put again on the pedestal, and in this way nobody would be able to reach the statue and turn it. The following day, the citizens noticed that the statue was again turned towards the city, and for this reason, all the citizens started thinking that it was a miracle of the Madonna. Some citizens, using the stair, moved again the statue and spent all the night there in order to verify if someone moved the statue or not. In the morning, they noticed again that the statue was turned towards the city: some were speechless, some believed in a miracle, and for this reason all the citizens of both committees decided to have the Church built with the facade facing the city, in the same direction as the statue's orientation. With this agreement, the Church was built and inaugurated in 1827.

Later, after the church had been built, no one knew what had happened to the statue. Some said it was stolen; some said it was walled up behind some altar as it was old and damaged. The fact is that the statue had played a crucial role in the construction of the Church. This interesting story about Isola delle Femmine, passed down from generation to generation starting from the 1700s, is known as "the miracle of the Madonna" and since that statue of the Madonna was found in that cove, the citizen called it "Scalo della Madonna". Nowadays most of the young citizens might not know of this interesting and controversial story, while the older ones are surely aware of it. Reading this article can represent a good starting point to investigate the origin of our city where we currently live. The Madonna is also the Patron Saint of Isola delle Femmine, and every year on July 2nd, we celebrate this anniversary with a religious procession and fireworks. The new version of the Statue of the Madonna, which resides in the church and is used during the religious procession, was surely built taking example from the ancient statue found in that cove many, many years ago.



Ancient Picture of the Isola delle Femmine Church
Maria Santissima delle Grazie
with the façade facing the city

A Bit of History that Is Ours

by A.A. Grillo

A History of the Sicilian Language

Sicilian is one of the many Romance Languages that evolved from Latin, the language of the Roman Empire. To say, however, only that Sicilian evolved from Latin greatly oversimplifies its history and development. It is important to convey its complexity as well as a rough timeline of its development, which adds to its richness. This complex history of the language must also include some history of the politics and the governing of the region in order to understand some of the forces at work. The goal here, however, will be to focus on the effects those political changes had on the people and their language. Most of the endnote references are internet articles and not considered primary sources, but they are easy to access with a computer and they do contain many references to primary sources for anyone wanting to research further.

At its largest extent, the Roman Empire spanned from the western end of the Iberian Peninsula to ancient Babylon in the middle-east and from North Africa along the southern boundary of the Mediterranean Sea to the isle of Britannia in north-western Europe. Over this vast area, the people of the Roman courts and the scholars spoke, wrote and read classical Latin, while the commoners spoke simpler versions referred to as Vulgar Latin, as well as some local pre-Roman languages. Due to the great distances and slow forms of communication, these forms of Vulgar Latin varied across the empire, indeed varied even along the Italian peninsula. As these variations mixed with other locally spoken languages after the many barbarian invasions at the end of the empire, they evolved into the many languages of the lands of the former empire. For Sicilian, the non-Latin influences were present both before and after the Roman Empire.

From prehistoric times, Sicily was invaded by one group after another. As the areas surrounding the Mediterranean Sea were the incubator for what is referred to as Western Culture and Sicily is the largest island in that Sea occupying a central location, possessing Sicily provided the opportunity to influence, if not control, the entire area. Control of the island changed many times even up through the 19th century, and these changes played a dominant role in the development of its people's language. The pre-historic peoples included the Sicanians, Elymians and Sicels. Only the Sicels are known with any certainty to have spoken an Indo-European language [1], likely closely related to that of the Romans. There are also some pre-Indo-European words of an ancient Mediterranean origin that remain in Sicilian. Two such words are "calancuni" [ripples caused by a fast running river] and "calanna" [landslide of rocks] [2]. The Greeks were one of the first to arrive with a written language to leave records as well as the language itself for the inhabitants to speak. Their first settlement was at the eastern end of Sicily at Naxos in 735 BC with many more to follow, especially the dominant settlement at Siracusa [3]. The Phoenicians and their colonists from Carthage in North Africa made a settlement near the western end of the island, but they left very little trace of their language, possibly because the Romans did everything possible to destroy Carthage, its Sicilian settlement and all traces of its culture after defeating it in the Punic Wars of 264-146 BC [4]. The Romans thought Greek culture worth saving, copying and adapting for their use. They controlled all of Sicily as a Roman province after the defeat of Carthage in the first Punic War in 241 BC until Rome's fall in the 6th or 7th century AD, depending upon what event you choose to mark its end. The Latin language then left a major imprint on the local language. There was a later Greek influence as well during the Byzantine era. After the fall of the western Roman empire, the eastern empire continued for several centuries, even throughout the middle ages, with its capital in Byzantium (the former Constantinople). In the 6th century AD, it established a Byzantine province in Sicily, including Calabria, with a major city Siracusa [5,6]. Greek gradually replaced Latin and Greek rites of the Eastern Church were adopted. One can appreciate then the significant influence of Greek on the Sicilian language, both from the early pre-Roman period and the more recent Byzantine Greek period. In addition to the Greek roots of many Sicilian words, there are even first names and surnames with Greek origin. Greek dominance lasted until the conquest of Sicily by the Muslims in the mid 900s AD.

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The Arab control of Sicily was actually prompted by a Byzantine commander Euphemius, who exceeded his authority, was deposed by the emperor and solicited Arab tribes from North Africa to support his position against the Byzantine forces. Apparently, the stronger Arabs liked what they found and stayed. This new ruling power lasted for only about a hundred years, but left influences in architecture, agricultural practices and language. For Sicilians with ties to Isola delle Femmine, the Arabs were responsible for constructing the Tonnara [tuna trap] and its name “Fimi” that likely evolved into the Fimmini of Isula di Fimmini and then Isola delle Femmine [7].



La Sala d'Ercole [Hall of Hercules]
Sicilian Regional Assembly Room in the Palazzo Reale
built in 1130, so named for frescos on walls & ceiling

have been the language at the Norman court, their administrators and artisans all spoke one or more of the other three languages. It is during this period that the Sicilian language became more formalized, its basis being the local version of Vulgar Latin [6] but with strong influences of Greek and Arabic. The Normans formally established the Kingdom of Sicily with Palermo its capital. Two landmarks that still stand of this Norman Rule are the Palazzo Reale [Royal Palace], which now serves as the seat of the Sicilian Regional Government, and the Duomo di Monreale [Cathedral of Monreale], both pictured here.

Further developments of the Norman Rule, particularly their Kingdom of Sicily, and its support of the Sicilian language will follow in the subsequent installment in the next issue of *Il Notiziario*.

Just as Scandinavian Vikings became interested in the more southern lands of western Europe, they also found the Mediterranean area attractive as early as the mid 800s. Some served as mercenaries in the southern parts of the Italian mainland, primarily against the Muslims that were not universally appreciated by the Christians. The name Norman derived from words like Northmen, first applied to the Normandy area of northwest France, but also applied to those invading southern Italy including Sicily.

The Muslim rulers tolerated the Latin and Greek speaking peoples of Sicily. The Normans went further to not only tolerate but to make good use of the Arabic, Latin and Greek speaking inhabitants. While Norman-French is thought to



Duomo di Monreale [Monreale Cathedral]
Started in 1172, completed in 1267

1. “Indo-European Languages”, *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages.
2. “Sicilian Language”, *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian_language.
3. “Naxos (Sicily)”, *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naxos_\(Sicily\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naxos_(Sicily)).
4. “Punic Wars”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Punic-Wars>.
5. “Sicily (theme)”, *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicily_\(theme\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicily_(theme)).
6. “Vulgar Latin”, *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgar_Latin.
7. A.A. Grillo, “Origin of the Name Isola delle Femmine” (2020), <https://friendsofisoladellefemmine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Origin-of-Name-Isola-delle-Femmine.pdf>.

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Mangiate Bene Tutti [Eat Well Everyone]
by Mary Pappas-Coniglio “Cooking with Mary’s Village Style”

Salutè

FOI MEMBER RECIPE

Pasta u Graté | Ricetta della Nonna Teresa



The recipe for this issue was provided by Caterina Ferrante. She and her husband Joe Ferrante, the son of Joe & Nora Ferrante of Pittsburgh, are both FOI members from Pittsburgh. Joe & Nora were co-owners of Ferrante's Market on the corner of 7th and Cutter across the street from the Naples Bakery, also in Pittsburgh.

Here is Caterina’s background story for the ricetta [recipe] and Nonna Teresa:

This recipe is Italian baked mac and cheese! My mother, Teresa Masturzo, used to prepare this dish for our family in Italy, and she handed it down to me and my children.

Ever since she was little, Teresa loved to cook and was constantly in the kitchen. As an adult she worked as a personal cook for private families in Italy preparing traditional Italian dishes. Eventually, Teresa moved with her daughter (me!) to Monterey, California where she continued to practice her passion of cooking traditional foods both professionally for fine restaurants and for her family.



Caterina Ferrante



Pasta u Graté Served

She worked at the Whaling Station Inn, Domenico's, and Rafaello restaurants in the Monterey area until she moved to the East Bay where she worked at Tullio's and Sorrento's restaurants in Walnut Creek. She finally retired and enjoyed the remaining years of her life with her family, teaching them to cook!

When we make this comfort food, it always reminds us of our Nonna Teresa!

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FOI MEMBER RECIPE

Pasta u Graté | Ricetta della Nonna Teresa



Baked pasta with a béchamel sauce, mixed cheeses, ham, and boiled eggs

Pronunciation: pasta ooh gruh-tay | Prep Time: 1 hour | Servings: 6-8

Ingredienti [Ingredients]

- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 cup diced cheese such as Swiss, cheddar, or provolone (or blend of cheeses)
- ½ cup of grated parmesan cheese
- 4 cups whole milk
- ½ tsp nutmeg
- 1 lb. pasta such as rigatoni, mostaccioli, or ziti
- 1 cup diced mozzarella
- 5 slices of boiled deli ham, diced (about 1 cup)
- 5 tbsp flour
- 1 stick of butter (8 tbsp), plus more to coat the baking dish
- ½ tsp salt
- bread crumbs, to coat the baking dish, and to sprinkle on top (about 1/4 cup – 1/2 cup)

Istruzioni [Instructions]

Preheat the oven to 375° F. Coat a 13x9 baking dish with butter, and then bread crumbs. Grate the parmesan cheese. Dice the hard-boiled eggs, cheeses, and ham. (Note that you can use any blend of cheeses you like, in addition to the mozzarella and parmesan.)

To prepare the béchamel sauce, add the flour to a saucepan. Slowly add some milk while whisking to make a paste. Once you have the paste and the flour is well combined, add the rest of your milk, stirring continuously. Add the salt, nutmeg and butter to the saucepan. Heat on medium-low heat, stirring or whisking continuously, until the butter is fully melted, and the sauce is slightly thickened. Be sure to stir continuously to avoid sticking at the bottom. The sauce should be slightly thick like the consistency of a chowder – the cook time is about 20 minutes in total.

As you prepare the béchamel, boil the pasta in salted water until al dente, then drain. (Note: the eggs can be boiled simultaneously with the pasta, if you don't have hard boiled eggs already prepared). Return the pasta to the cooking pot.

Pour most of the béchamel sauce over the pasta, reserving some for later. Add your cheeses, ham, and eggs to the pot (reserve some parmesan cheese to top the dish). Stir to combine, then pour the pasta mixture into the coated baking dish. Pour the remaining sauce over the top. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top. Finally, sprinkle the bread crumbs to thoroughly coat the top.

Bake in the preheated oven at 375° F, for 15-30 minutes, or until the top is golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow it to cool for about 10 minutes. Cut into 6 to 8 square portions and serve immediately.

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New Members of Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.

One new member this quarter adding to our growing 190 registered.

Greg Grillo

more to be published in future issues



Isola delle Femmine from the Air



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