



# Il Notiziario

[The Newsletter]

of the

## Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.



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Volume 5, Issue 3

Editor: A.A. Grillo

Summer: July 1, 2024

### News from our Executive Board

by Frank B. Bruno-President and Vincenzo S. DiMaggio-Chairman of the Board

Ciao a Tutti,

Our non-profit is now over 200 members strong and growing. We have members as far away as Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Vermont and Canada. The majority of our members are from all over California.

Although most of the migrating Isolani's ventured to the Pittsburg, Martinez, and Monterey areas, many of those Sicilians settled in New Orleans, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Colorado, Michigan.

One of FOI's objectives is to provide scholarships to first time and returning college bound students of our members' families. This year our goal was to again award six \$1,000 individual scholarships but this year we received nine qualifying candidates. So, your FOI Scholarship Committee decided to award all nine with a \$1,000 scholarship.

This year's FOI Scholarship recipients are as follows:

*Jessica Baskett* of Auburn, attending San Jose State U., of member Nana Girolana Michelli of Meadow Vista

*Katherine Compagno* of Mill Valley, attending Villanova, of members Father John Compagno & Nana Catherine Compagno of Monterey

*John Kelly* of Martinez, attending San Diego State U., of members Mother Danielle Pellegrini Kelly & Nonno Dan Pellegrini of Martinez

*Francisco Cardinale* of Fresno, attending Cal. State U., Fresno of member Nanu Pete Cardinale of Pittsburg

*John Rios* of San Francisco, attending U. of Oregon, of members Nonni Leonard & Mary Gianno of Fairfield

*Sabella Singh* of Salinas, attending Cal. Poly SLO, of member Nonna Mary Manuguerra of Salinas

*Olivia Valles* of Reno, attending San Diego State U., of member Mother Desiree Valles of Reno

*Sofia Cardinale* of Fresno, attending Cal. State U. Fresno, of member Nana Cynthia Cardinale of Pittsburg

*Anthony Short* of Shingle Springs, attending Sacramento State U., of members Nanu Ron Short of Pittsburg & Aunt Ronnette Pueliu of Livermore

Congratulations to all 9 recipients. Good luck in college. Make us all proud.



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## News from Isola

by Giuseppe Lucido



Soccer Squad of Isola: A.S.D. Città Isola delle Femmine

group C are located in the North West of the Province of Palermo. The rules of the tournament are very easy: after all the teams in a group have played the other teams in their group twice, the team classified 1<sup>st</sup> in each group is promoted to the next category. The soccer teams classified from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> place in each group play an internal playoff and the winner of each internal payoff will participate in a final playoff, involving the three teams who have won the playoff of their group (Palermo A, B and C). The 1<sup>st</sup> classified in the final playoff tournament will get the pass for the next category. However, if in the group stage, the difference in points between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of any group is more than 10 points, the 2<sup>nd</sup> classified will be directly admitted to the final playoff tournament (avoiding the internal playoff). In the group C, the soccer team of Isola was characterized by a very impressive trend.

The tournament started on October 28, 2023, and in the first 12 matches Isola won 11 of them. They were at the top of their group for almost the entire tournament. Unfortunately in the 13<sup>th</sup> match, played on March 10, 2024, they lost the game against Sferracavallo, which was played in a neutral stadium due to a government restriction. This cost them the leadership of the group and the disappointment was great, but the promotion wasn't lost, only postponed. In fact, as mentioned above, the big points gap in the group between Isola (34) and Terrasini (23) allowed the soccer

team of Isola to directly join the final playoff tournament, where they faced Bompietro and Marineo, winners of their internal playoffs of groups A and B respectively. The final tournament started on April 20 and ended on May 5, 2024. The soccer team of Isola won both games. They won the 1<sup>st</sup> away game against Bompietro (0-6) and the last home game against Marineo (2-0), getting a well-deserved promotion in the next category. This last game was played in the Stadium of Isola delle Femmine

(home match) and our team was steadily supported by a lot of citizens of Isola who attended the game. The tournament for the next season, the "Seconda Categoria", won't be easy since we'll face strong and consolidated teams, but now it's time to celebrate this incredible promotion. Thank you guys for this amazing end of the season, we all are very proud of you!

		P	G	W	D	L	GD
1	Sferracavallo 2023	38	14	12	2	0	39
2	Città Isola delle Femmine	34	14	11	1	2	28
3	Terrasini Paese di mare	23	14	6	5	3	11
4	Real Pioppo	18	14	5	3	6	-1
5	Città di Montelepre	18	14	5	3	6	-9
6	Conca d'oro Monreale	15	14	4	3	7	-13
7	Sporting Biorgetto	8	14	2	2	10	-24
8	Città Balestrate Trappeto	3	14	0	3	11	-31

Group C Standing

		P	G	W	D	L	GD
1	Città Isola delle Femmine	6	2	2	0	0	8
2	Marineo Calcio	3	2	1	0	1	1
3	VIS Bompietro	0	2	0	0	2	-9

Final Playoff Standing

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## What's Happening

by Mary Pappas-Coniglio & Frank "Ciccu" Bruno

On April 6, your Monterey Chapter of FOI produced another successful High Tea "Masquerade" Italian Style event. Congratulations to Roselyn & Vince Malfitano and Mary Coniglio for another FANTASTIC event of exquisite décor, wonderful & amazing Sicilian cuisine, astounding entertainment by James Coniglio, Josie & Louie Esposito, Stephanie Satterwhite (Esposito), Erasmo Aiello and the International group. Our army of volunteers made this Monterey high tea another marvelous FOI production.

We raised a substantial amount of funds for our annual scholarship program and the positive reviews are still coming in. The Monterey High Tea is the talk of the town. Great job by all. The winner of the Golden Card drawing of \$540 was Pino Aiello.

One month later on May 5<sup>th</sup>, the FOI Pittsburgh Chapter headed by VP Mary Coniglio, Chapter Director-Wolf Cronskey, and Roselyn Malfitano with another army of volunteers delivered an amazingly successful High Tea, "Masquerade" Italian Style. The entertainment was provided by Jim & Leandra Coniglio including their son James and daughter Siena Coniglio along with Josie & Louie Esposito, Stephanie Satterwhite (Esposito), Derek Silva and Diane Lemay of Diane's Embroidery and Graphics and a surprise song by Sharon Sobel Idul of Pittsburgh Performing Arts & Black Diamond Ballet. What an afternoon. Again, the food was fabuloso, plentiful, and delicious. The Elks Club hall with 25 tables were appropriately decorated and spectacular. Thank you all for your generosity of your time and unwavering support for FOI.

The winner of the Golden Card drawing was Linda Pellegrini – congratulations – who donated the money back to FOI. Thank you so much.

Next up, we had the FOI Annual Scholarship Picnic on June 9<sup>th</sup> at the Waterfront Park in Martinez with 150 attendees. Zandonella Catering made the pasta and salad. Danny Pelegrini and crew BBQ'd the Kinders Italian sausage. And following what has become an FOI picnic tradition, Martinez Mayor Brianna Zorn, city council members Jay Howard, Mark Ross and Satinder Mahli dished out the wonderful food to our guests. Martinez Chapter Director Mike Inzerillo and committee made this event another success. Thanks to Alise Inzerillo, Mike & Susie DiMaggio, Danielle Pellegrini, Michelle & Keith Ferguson, Mary Goodman, Cindi Erickson, Mary Hatch, Danny Pellegrini & BBQ crew, Mary Coniglio, Wolf Croskey, Liz Ferrante, Vince & Midge DiMaggio, Vince & Roselyn Malfitano and others for another successful scholarship picnic.

Three of the nine \$1,000 scholarship award winners were in attendance: Jessica Baskett, Anthony Short, John Rios. All nine winners are listed on page 1. Dr. Vincent Malfitano gave another motivating speech to the students regarding love of family, purpose of culture & heritage, and of tradition. To date we have awarded over \$31,000 in college scholarships thanks to our members.

You can see 2024 has shaped up to be another extraordinary year of food, family, entertainment, culture and love. See pictures of these events on the next three pages. More exciting & enchanting events are in the planning stages.

Ciao!

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# Monterey High Tea 2024



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## I Ricordi di Isola [Memories of Isola]

by Giuseppe Lucido

### The Story of Piano Levante

In the previous issue of *Il Notiziario*, the topic of this section was the story of a square in Isola called Piano Ponente. This issue will discuss the other big square of Isola delle Femmine, located in the Eastern part of the city, known as Piano Levante. The name relates to the directions on the Mediterranean Compass Rose as did the name Piano Ponente. Referring to the numbered areas in the figure at right, Piano Levante consists of three relevant parts: a parking area (1), a training area (See boundary in blue.) and a municipal villa (See boundary in yellow.) in which one can find a circular fountain (3), a circular section area (4) and a rectangular area with four benches (5). The figure also includes two other interesting reference locations in the city: Cove of Madonna (6), discussed in the October 2023 issue of *Il Notiziario*, and a garbage collection center (7). The municipal villa is characterized by some trees and plants and is surrounded by a sidewalk, around which it is possible to park cars with the same regulations as in the parking area that will be mentioned later.

Piano Levante has always represented a very strategic point for both citizens of Isola delle Femmine and visitors. For residents it is a place to spend time having fun in the municipal villa or to go to the sea at the big reef in front of it. It is also the place to take the bus to Palermo since the terminal point of the bus is located there. For the visitors, when they come from Sferracavallo, the neighborhood of Palermo nearest to Isola, Piano Levante is the first square reachable from the State Highway.

The origin of Piano Levante is very similar to that of Piano Ponente, but the evolution over the years of both squares has been quite different and the aim of this paper is to retrace the story that has characterized Piano Levante in the past centuries. At the beginning of the 1800s, the Counts of Capaci granted a part of the costal territory to the fishermen in order to build a small city, later becoming Isola delle Femmine, and they planned some big spaces to be left empty, in order to allow the citizens to take advantage of them for their own activities. One of these spaces was Piano Levante and, as happened to Piano Ponente, both squares, from the end of 1800s to the beginning of 1900s, were big empty areas where the fishermen used to place their big cotton nets for drying. Starting from the 1900s, with the improving fishing techniques which included the use of the nylon nets, the need to dry the old cotton nets decreased, and only the costal side of Piano Levante was used to dry them. The other side of the square was no longer used and maintained, and it started turning into unimproved grounds with a lot of stones. In particular, Piano Levante was first delimited by a wall in order to separate the area belonging to private citizens from the area belonging to the fishermen (granted by the Counts of Capaci) and later to the public local administration. So, during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1900s, due to its composition, the inner part of Piano Levante was underutilized. Just the western part, where now exists the parking area, was usable since it was composed of topsoil, and the young guys would enjoy playing soccer there. Between the end of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s, Piano Levante underwent some changes. The local public administration, in fact, decided that Piano Levante should change its intended use: the main part of the unimproved grounds was turned into a municipal villa with a circular form, in order to create a big area available to all the citizens. In those years, both young and old citizens used that area to spend their afternoons with friends and relatives. The western part of the square was asphalted and became an area available to park cars. The innermost part, below the



Piano Levante: 1)Parking area, 2) Training Area, 3) Fountain, 4) Soccer Area, 5) Benches, 6) Cove of Madonna, 7) Garbage Collection Area

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municipal villa in the map figure, was not upgraded during those years and it remained just a natural vegetation area with some plants and herbs. At the beginning of the 1980s, the municipal villa was renewed. It turned into a trapezoidal form, was expanded in length and inside three significant parts were built: a small rectangular area on the left with four benches at the top, a circular fountain with a statue of a Siren at the center and a circular area on the right.



Bench Area: #5 in the Map Figure

This big renewal gave more value to Piano Levante. Most of the young guys were attracted by those large available spaces and they took many advantages of them. The area with the benches has always been used during different parts of the day and night for friends to visit. The circular area turned into a sort of soccer rink. Despite its small and circular space, the young guys used that space to play soccer matches with small numbers of participants and organized a lot of unofficial tournaments. It was a source of much entertainment since most of the young guys interested in playing soccer used to go there and enjoyed themselves. The generations born between the end of 1980s and the beginning of 2000s spent their youth playing soccer there in the afternoon.

Due to the nearness between the fountain and the circular area, during the soccer matches the ball very often was thrown into the fountain and the guys were forced to go in the water to recover it. Moreover, from the beginning to the 1980s to the end of the same decade, a big shed was built in the innermost part. It was needed to host the students of the primary school since the school building was under maintenance and renovation in those years. Then the shed was dismantled and the innermost part of Piano Levante remained an empty space. Starting from the 2010s, some changes also concerned the parking and the innermost area. The parking area was then regulated. During the summer, private companies manage the parking of cars with the payment per hours



Fountain with Siren Statue:  
#3 in the Map Figure



Circular Section: #4 in Map Figure

parked, and the available space to park has been extended also around the municipal villa. The innermost part, instead, was delimited by a sidewalk so as to be a simple city garden with small herbs. Also, at this time, a garbage collection center, called "Isola Ecologica Mobile", was established in Piano Levante. It consists of a suitable area where, following a specific calendar, it is possible to deposit bulky objects to be discarded. In 2023, another renewal project concerned Piano Levante. The innermost area, previously delimited by a sidewalk, was

divided into two parts: the part on the left remained a city garden and the part on the right turned into a training area, a sort of outdoor gym, with the building of some training tools available to everyone. In May 2017, Piano Levante was renamed "Piazza Nicolò Piombino", in honor of a policeman killed by the Mafia in 1982. In our common speech Piano Levante can be mentioned in two different ways: the younger citizens call it "Villetta" because of the form of the municipal villa, and the older citizens call it with the proper name "Piano Levante".

Nowadays the state of Piano Levante is not good. Most of the municipal villa is very dirty, full of rubbish and weeds. The water in the fountain is similar to a marsh and the plants are not well treated. Moreover, during the night it is not an enjoyable, safe place. The young generations are no longer interested in enjoying that area, and they often go there just to cause chaos. We are always hopeful to see this area in a better state. We citizens must be first to safeguard our territory, but at the same time a greater interest from the public local administration is necessary.



Renaming of Piazza Nicolò Piombino

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## A Bit of History that Is Ours

by Vincent S. Ferrante

### 1903 Black Diamond Town Pioneer Trustees

In 1900, the Rancho Los Medanos land grant of about 8,500 acres was purchased by lumber baron C.A. Hooper. Hooper, who had lumber holdings up and down the west coast, settled on Black Diamond becoming the location for the first of his many manufacturing concerns, Redwood Manufacturers. Through his San Francisco office, Hooper would facilitate many others to follow. This would provide alternative work opportunities for many Sicilians as well as draw in many other ethnic groups to man the work, and the town would grow greatly and prosper. The large-scale coal mining industry that took place in the nearby Mt. Diablo foothills greatly assisted in providing the fuel needs in the development of the west. However, this industry had come and gone here by 1885. What's interesting to note is that the early coal miners were Welsh and Irish but by 1884 the majority of local miners were Italians.

However, at this period of time of the early 1900s, the primary industry here was commercial fishing, which had existed from at least 1855 along the waterfront, known then as New York Landing. As early as the late 1860s, Sicilians would begin to immigrate to the area to provide the majority of the workforce in the harvesting of a variety fish here in the Sacramento Delta such as salmon, shad, striped bass and for a time sturgeon. The Sicilian numbers would continue to grow greatly in the 1880s as they called for more of their family, relatives and friends to share in the job and housing opportunities here. Today, if you were to closely examine our ancestors ship manifest records, you may note that their destination location was the town of Black Diamond, a name associated with the area even before it had official standing. This holds true for my great grandfather Vincenzo Ferrante, who immigrated here in 1899. The town had one large cannery operated by the Sacramento River Packers Association as well as several sizable packing plants along with several boat building facilities which were owned by several families of Sicilian and Italian surnames, notably Junta, DelMonte, DeStefano with Siino/Seeno being chief among them.

As early as the 1860s, the Black Diamond Coal Company (BDCC) began to obtain property from the foothills to the waterfront for the right of way for coal cars, which transported coal from the mines to the coaling station at the river's edge. Given their heavy influence, the town that was known as New York Landing began to be called Black Diamond. In an effort to incorporate a town, a census was taken. The population stood at nearly 3000 people with a vast majority of the populace being of Italian surname, upwards to 75%. To be certain there were many other ethnic groups here made up of farmers, business owners, as well as fishermen and cannery workers. In 1903 the town of Black Diamond (present day Pittsburg) was incorporated by a vote by its citizens and took its name from the BDCC, which at that time was one of the largest land owners.

Also in 1903, during the same vote to incorporate, the first town board of trustees, akin to our present-day city council, was selected in a vote of its citizens and it is interesting to point out that two were of Sicilian descent, J.A. "John" Junta/Gunta and Vincenzo DiMaggio. DiMaggio happens to be the direct ancestor of FOI Board member Albert Seeno Jr. Jackiniero "John" Attilio Junta was from Livorno Sicily and immigrated to America in 1878 with his family when he was about 8 years old. The Junta family came over with the Viscuso's, Lanzafame's and Nicolosi's. Their descendants continue to reside in and around Pittsburg to this very day. John was very industrious, eventually settling in Black Diamond in 1878. He was a carpenter and boat builder as well as a fisherman and a partner in a local fish buying firm. As a carpenter he built or assisted in building many of the early homes located between Front St. and York St. In 1900, Junta was engaged in the building of some of the early canneries in Alaska and soon became employed by F.E. Booth and King Morris Canneries to help select more sites for their businesses. In 1900, Junta

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joined P.H. McCue and opened a hardware store in Black Diamond, which also supplied fishing gear and equipment to local fishermen. Junta, along with his brother-in-law Arasimo Cardinalli, became affiliated with others in the American Fish and Oyster Company, which operated packing plants in Black Diamond, Stockton, San Francisco and San Diego. After his second marriage, he built a Victorian styled cottage on Black Diamond St. in Pittsburg, which still stands today as one of the few remaining residential homes from the town's early period. In later years, Junta operated a locksmith shop in the back of his residence for over 20 years. In 1955, he was chosen as Grand Marshall for the city's Columbus Day Parade for his role as a pioneer trustee. His interest in the Columbus Day festival dates back to the earliest ones from the 1910s when he crafted replicas of the Santa Maria ship for the observance.



Vincenzo DiMaggio

Vincenzo DiMaggio was from Isola della Femmine, Sicily and arrived in Black Diamond in the 1890s. He became an entrepreneur early on as a local fish buyer. Vincenzo and his wife Angela (Davi) operated a merchandise store to cater to the families of local commercial fishermen. They later opened the town's first Emporium store on Black Diamond St., which they operated in conjunction of the county's first macaroni factory.

A charitable couple, they undertook the responsibility of making arrangements for many Sicilians, who followed them to this area as early settlers. During the 1906 Great Earthquake in San Francisco, they housed, clothed and fed as many as 15 homeless families at one time. The family resided for years in town on Black Diamond and 5<sup>th</sup> St. Many of Vincenzo DiMaggio's descendants still reside in and around the city of Pittsburg.

This write up serves as a reminder of how some of our early immigrant families traveled to America and found great success through hard work and determination to succeed and provide for their families as well as actively participating in civic engagement in the community from the earliest times. These men took part in creating the foundation for the present-day city of Pittsburg and their descendants played an active role and continue to do so in the development of the city and beyond.

Sources:

Pittsburg Historical Society (PHS) Archives

PHS Family History Room Seeno Display, Provided by the Seeno Family

PHS Family History Room Junta Display, Provided by Barbara Stubbs



J.A. "John" Junta

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**Mangiate Bene Tutti [Eat Well Everyone]**  
by Mary Pappas-Coniglio "Cooking with Mary's Village Style"

*Salutè*

**FOI MEMBER RECIPE**

**Grace's Strawberry Cream Cheese Gelatin**



contributed by Kathleen Lucido Culcasi

*I am submitting my mother's gelatin recipe because this was on every holiday table. My mother was an amazing cook, as was her mother. She came from a family of restaurateurs. Her mother and extended family had various restaurants in Monterey. She and my father had restaurants in Pittsburg and Antioch, and by the time I was 10 years old, she owned Vetrano's Italian Restaurant and my dad owned Lo-Cost Liquors both in Antioch. I began working with them in the family businesses at that time.*

*It seemed that she and I were always in the kitchen, which annoyed me when I was young. We were always working for holidays and parties. I felt we were missing out on the fun, but at this point in my life, these are the very BEST memories. My mother never measured anything. When preparing her dishes she relied on her senses. If it looked, felt, smelled and tasted right, it was ready. Today with anything I make, or do for that matter, she is at the front of my mind directing me.*



**Grace's Strawberry Cream Cheese Gelatin**

**Ingredients**

- 1 large package strawberry Jello
- 1 large 20 oz. can crushed pineapple
- 1 large 16 oz. container cool whip
- 2 8 oz. packages cream cheese

**Directions:**

- Set cream cheese out to soften.
- Drain pineapple well, reserving the juice for the next step.
- Make the Jello following the box directions, except use the reserved pineapple juice plus sufficient water to make 3 cups of liquid for the mixture, instead of the 4 cups prescribed in the box directions.
- Once the Jello is mixed, let it set in the refrigerator until partially set 1 to 1 ½ hours.
- Once it is set, add a few spoonfuls of Jello to the softened cream cheese and mix it using an electric mixer. Do not over mix. Leave the cream cheese a little bit chunky.
- Add the remaining Jello and pineapple to the cream cheese and mix. Again do not over mix.
- Fold in the Cool Whip and let set.



Kathleen, daughter Monica Culcasi Coniglio,  
Mother Grace Lucido

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**AND PICTURE OF YOURSELF!**  
**ALONG WITH A SHORT**  
**BACKGROUND OF THE RECIPE**  
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**New Members of Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.**

We continue to add new members.

Richard Pellegrini

Leslie Cardinalli Skegrud

*more to be published in future issues*



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