



In the true custom of Italian celebrating, a toast to a new year.

The Italian American Association News

December 2017

Dear IAA Members,

I hope this message finds you fully into the Christmas Spirit. As we close out 2017, please know that the IAA is already thinking about 2018.

To prepare for the new year, the IAA held its Elections/Dinner Meeting at Clifton's Pizza on November 15, 2017 to elect the 2018 IAA Board of Directors. In addition to the spirited evening of politics, members, their family, and friends enjoyed the wonderful all-you-can-eat feast of salad, stuffed mushrooms, garlic bread, pasta, and pizza that has become a tradition at this event. Before dinner, the members eligible to vote, elected the 2018 Board of Directors.

It is my pleasure to announce that James Benassi was re-elected to another two-year term. The voting members also re-elected Bob Scorsolini as vice president and Phil Castagno as treasurer. James Benassi was elected as secretary. I am pleased to announce that I have the honor of being reelected as president of this association for another year. Also returning Walt Carpenter, Angelo Vaccaro, Lisa Palmisano, Aaron Silletto, and Albert Tomassetti, Jr. Please express your appreciation to all these individuals for their willingness to serve the IAA. The members should feel good about the prospects for the organization in 2018 with the return of these experienced board members.

Below is the contact information for the 2018 IAA Board of Directors. Please feel free to contact any of them with questions you have regarding suggestions for IAA-sponsored events and activities. We welcome your comments and ideas.

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It is also important to note that **Michele Melillo** will continue to serve as the editor of the **IAA Newsletter**. Please send any information, announcements, photographs, or story ideas you have for the **IAA Newsletter** to Michele at michelcl@ulh.org or at micheleamelillo@yahoo.com

The IAA will continue its efforts to have monthly social events during 2018. However, in a world filled with increasing divisiveness, the Board is particularly interested in raising the community profile of our organization by developing opportunities to partner with other non-profit groups or agencies to co-sponsor charitable events and activities. If you have any suggestions for such possibilities, please feel free to contact me or other members of the board of directors.

Finally, I want to encourage of you to renew your membership for 2018. A membership renewal form is located at the end of this newsletter.

I do look forward to seeing all of you, your family, and friends at future IAA activities.

Best regards,
Bernardo J. Carducci, President
Italian American Association
bcarducc@ius.edu
502-432-3169.

2018 IAA Elections at Clifton's Pizza



Bernie Carducci with Walt and Vicky Carpenter and their granddaughter Jenny Guild. This is the third year in a row for a photo-graph with Jenny, a new IAA tradition.



Bernie Carducci with "Honorary Italian-American" Richard "Rocky" Rosencrans.

The Befana

What we nowadays call the Befana is an image coming from immemorial layers of cultures and symbols. On the one side was the Christian tradition of the Epiphany, the first "revelation" of Christ as man and God to the Magi who came with gifts for the Messiah. On the other side were the many folk and pagan traditions connected to the New Year, and to the twelve days following the winter solstice which in the centuries came to be superimposed on the Christian Christmas cycle.



[Italian]

La Befana vien di notte
 con le scarpe tutte rotte
 col vestito alla "romana"
 viva viva la Befana!!
 Porta cenere e carboni
 ai bambini cattivoni
 ai bambini belli e buoni
 porta chicchi e tanti doni!

[English]

The Befana comes by night
 With her shoes all broken
 With a dress in Roman style
 Up, up with the Befana !!
 She brings ashes and coal
 To bad nasty children
 To the nice good child
 She brings candies and many gifts!



The name Befana appeared historically for the first time in writing in a poem by Agnolo Firenzuola in 1549. She is portrayed like an old ugly woman, dressed in dark rags who during the night between 5th and 6th January flies over the houses riding her broom and entering through the chimneys (in modern apartments through a keyhole). Into the socks that children left hanging near the fireplace she leaves candies and gifts for good children, black coal (actually black sugar today), garlic and onions to the bad ones. Parents of course would always include some coal over the gifts, to cheat their children. And the night before the family leaves some wine and cakes for the old lady.

The Christian Tradition

The name "Befana" is a popular version of the Greek term "Epiphany" which was the festivity following Christmas, commemorating the visit of the Magi to the Baby Jesus on 6th January. According to the legend the three wise men on their journey were stopped by an old woman with a broom who asked them where they were going. They told her that they were following a star that would lead them to a newborn baby, and invited her to come along. But she replied that she was busy sweeping and cleaning and did not go. When she realized that the baby was the Redeemer that all the world had been waiting for her regret was so great that she continues to wander about Italy and at the Epiphany (January 6, when the Wise Men finally found the Child Jesus), begins rewarding good children and disappointing those who were bad.

This was the feast that the children used to wait for throughout the year, in the times when Babbo Natale (created in Coca Cola colors, the fat and joyous symbol of wealth imported from America, where he was derived from the figure of St Nicholas, who in Southern Italy used to bring gifts to children in past centuries) was unknown in Italy. The bony, ragged old lady was much nearer in spirit to the poverty of Jesus, and was the only gift-giver for children. The gifts she delivered were reminders of the gifts that on that same night the Magi following the star had offered to the Divine Child, born in a poor manger in Bethlehem.

Pagan origins

The feast of this fairy-tale old lady, so much beloved and feared by Italian children, takes origin from the "old lady" which was burned in the squares to celebrate the end of the year, a symbol of time cycles always ending and beginning again. The Befana is also related to the mysterious rites of the Celtic peoples once inhabiting the whole Pianura Padana and part of the Alps, when wicker puppets were set on fire in honor of ancient gods. The witch, the woman magician (the priestess of the ancient Celtic culture that knew the secrets of nature) took the form of the Befana. The "coal" that she would leave to the nasty children was also a symbol of fertility connected to the sacred bonfires and the "ceppo". The other almost universal symbol accompanying the old lady, the broom, that clearly resembles a magic wand, is also connected to the tree and the nature rituals of the Celts in their forests.

In the pre-Christian calendar solstice rites used to celebrate the cycle of the sun, and were slowly merged with the cycle of the life of man and the generations, following one another. This eternal cycle was represented by symbols to exorcise anxiety. In many cultures the relations between grown-ups and children is based on the observance of rules achieved through the fear of punishments and expectations of reward. To this family of figures belong the ogre and witch, transformed into the more positive and pedagogical figures of Santa Claus and the Befana. As a testimonial of this connection, here is an old Italian lullaby that goes

[Italian]

"Ninnaò, ninnaò,
questo bimbo a chi lo do
se lo do alla Befana
se lo tiene una settimana
se lo do all'Uomo Nero
se lo tiene un anno intero
ma se il bimbo fa la nanna
se lo tiene la sua mamma"

[English]

"Ninnaò, ninnaò,
who will I give this child to
if I give it to the Befana
she will keep him one whole week
if I give it to the Bogey Man
he will keep him one whole year
but if the child goes to sleep
then his mother will him keep"

The Epiphany in the folk Traditions

In European folklore the twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany were the period in the year when the presence of witches was most felt. Especially on that twelfth night (see Shakespeare), the night of the Epiphany, which was considered one of the magic nights in the year. And our Befana with her broken shoes flies on a broom, another important magic symbol in many European cultures. In anthropology the Epiphany, the last festivity of the Christmas period, is considered a celebration of renewal, announcing the coming of the new season. In the peasant culture that was the moment when forecasts and predictions on the future were drawn, and people used to sit around the fireplace telling fantastic tales. On that magical night our great-grandparents used to look into the future interpreting natural phenomena.

In the **Romagna** region Epiphany was a pagan festival when the Ancestors (symbols of a worship of the dead connected to agrarian symbols of fertility) brought a good omen of abundance to the living. From that take origin the Befanotti (representing the ancestors) going from home to home singing the "Pasquella", and the Befana coming down through the chimneys.

In Abruzzo, as in other Southern regions of Italy, the children's most beloved festivity was called Pasquetta, possibly to remind of the arrival of the Magi to Bethlehem to homage the Child Jesus, or for the songs and music in the streets accompanied by tambourines, cymbals and flutes, especially before the mansions of the rich, requesting gifts and food.

Widespread in **Abruzzo** is the worship of little statues of Child Jesus. There is a beautiful tradition in Lama dei Peligni on the evening of the Epiphany. The villagers, especially the children, go to the church to kiss the statue of Gesù Bambino, kept inside a precious silver urn, and dressed in apparel and with a head cover of the year 1759.

If an olive tree leaf, thrown into the fire, took long to burn it was a sign that the wish would be fulfilled, if instead it burned quickly, the opposite. Girls (see Finamore in "Credenze, usi e costumi abruzzesi") used to pray before going to bed wishing for their future bridegroom to come into their dreams. And under their pillow they placed three broad beans: one full, one without peel, the other half-peeled. Then in the morning they caught one: the full one meant the groom would be rich, the unpeeled one he would be poor, the half-peeled one something in the middle.

On the morning of January 6th sacristans would go from house to house leaving the "Bboffe water", which was kept for devotion or used to sprinkle the rooms to keep witches away.

A non-conformist Befana

Alas, the picture of the benevolent old fairy has been fading away, year after year, obscured by the myth of the "fat red-dressed laughing servant of consumerism", and the children stare at a play station screen and not at the sky in search of the Befana.

Nowadays there is an amusing, non-conventional re-evaluation of the Befana:

"The Befana is Alternative because:

- 1- She is Ecological, since she travels on a broom
- 2- She is an Animalist, since she does not exploit poor reindeer
- 3- She is a Proletarian, since she dresses in non-fashionable clothes
- 4- She is a Justice Bearer, since she rewards only deserving ones
- 5- She is Tolerant, since her punishments are very mild, just ashes and coal
- 6- She is not Exacting, since in exchange for all her work she only takes some bread soaked in wine or milk."

The birth of New Year brings a great sense of joy and happiness of all. It marks the end of bygones, the sad and bad memories and sets the pace for a new and fresh life. New Year resolutions are bountiful and it gives a lot of hope and rejoices to take a New Year resolution and try your best to fulfill it throughout the year. To quote Bill Vaughan "an optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves". Every year, the New Year gives us another chance to set right our mistakes and resolve ourselves not to commit them again. New Year also marks making new friends and getting into the general stream of the whole new humanity. Though most of the New Year resolutions are not fulfilled, we continue to take a new one every year with the hope that this year would be different. Let this hope survive as hope is the string that binds us all.

An Italian Christmas is one of abundance. No matter what the regional differences may be, there is always lots of food, love and family. Whole families come together to celebrate with traditions that have been handed down for generations, to share old traditions, and to begin new ones.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a happy New Year, filled with love, peace, and prosperity!

Buon Natale!

A great movie ... see it now on NETFLIX



Sunflower

An Oscar nominee for Best Score (Henry Mancini), SUNFLOWER is a grandly emotional melodrama featuring a stunning performance from Sophia Loren. In another of the actress's great collaborations with director Vittorio De Sica, Loren plays Giovanna a steel-willed Italian woman on a desperate search to find her husband Antonio (Marcello Mastroianni), who has gone missing on the WWII battlefields of Russia. Making the grueling overland journey years after the end of the war, she tracks Antonio down and finds him a changed man. The heart-wrenching reunion will forever alter the course of their lives/

Cast Summary:

Sophia Loren, Marcello Mastroianni, Glauco Onorato, Lyudmila Savelyeva, Germano Longo, Anna Carena, Silvano Tranquilli, Galina Andreyeva, Nadya Serednichenko, Marisa Traversi, Gunar Tsilinsky

ITALIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION January 2018 - December 2018

PLEASE PRINT

	New Membership		ADULT \$15 per year per person
	Renewal Membership		YOUTH to age 17 free with parent membership
	Lifetime Membership		LIFETIME \$125 one time payment per person

LAST NAME		HOME #	
FIRST NAME		CELL #	
MIDDLE NAME		WORK #	
ADDRESS		FAX #	
CITY		E-MAIL	
STATE		BIRTHDAY	
OCCUPATION			
BIRTHPLACE			

SPOUSE

LAST NAME		HOME #	
FIRST NAME		CELL #	
MIDDLE NAME		WORK #	
ADDRESS		FAX #	
CITY		E-MAIL	
STATE		BIRTHDAY	
OCCUPATION			
BIRTHPLACE			

YOUTH (Please list all youth members age 17 and under)

LAST NAME		LAST NAME	
FIRST NAME		FIRST NAME	
MIDDLE NAME		MIDDLE NAME	
BIRTHDAY		BIRTHDAY	

LAST NAME		LAST NAME	
FIRST NAME		FIRST NAME	
MIDDLE NAME		MIDDLE NAME	
BIRTHDAY		BIRTHDAY	

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED FORM AND DUES TO:

Phil Castagno . 802 Edenwood Circle . Louisville, KY 40243

Make checks payable to: **The Italian American Association**

Amount enclosed	\$	<i>Thank you!</i>
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2018 IAA Elections at Clifton's Pizza



Dr. Bob Weiss [L] and Aaron Silletto [R] “belly up to the bar” to discuss the IAA election.



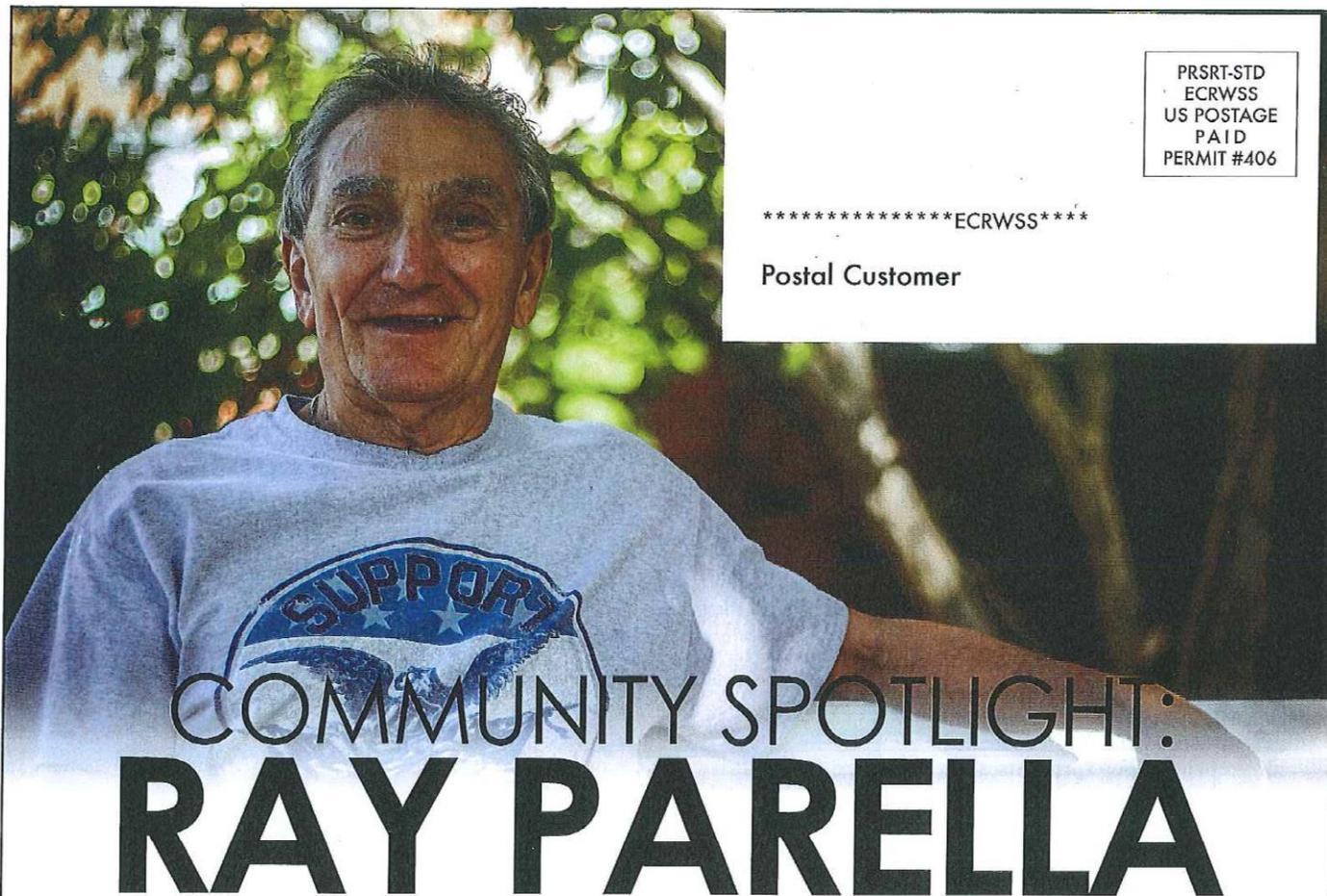
Paul Castagno and Lisa Palmisano study their ballots.



Mark, owner of Clifton's Pizza, and Jennifer, event coordinator, are recognized for all they do for the IAA.



The IAA banner let's folks know “the Italians are in the house.”



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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: RAY PARELLA

A few questions with a local favorite, Ray Parella. As a Jeffersonville restaurant owner for more than 40 years, he and his family have created a legacy in our community. Loyal patrons are hard to come by these days, and Ray has them aplenty.

WHAT IS THE ONE RECIPE YOUR CUSTOMERS ASKED FOR THE MOST OVER THE YEARS?

Red Sauce. We call it gravy, because it was always rich and thick. I can't give out the recipe, because there's no such thing as a recipe. You just go with the flow. My key ingredient would be California tomatoes. The secret is to spice it in the end, not in the beginning. Once you add the spices, turn off the heat.

WHO WAS YOUR ROLE MODEL AS A YOUNG RESTAURATEUR?

My mother.

NAME ONE OF YOUR REAL-LIFE HEROS.

A dear friend of mine named Joe Mellilo. We've traveled to Italy together many times, we've broke bread together many times. He was a great father and husband.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF PERFECT HAPPINESS?

Running outdoors.

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES AS A RESTAURANT OWNER IN JEFF?

Stopping by tables and picking up the kids. I still see them from time to time. They come up and tell me they remember my spumoni, my meatballs, and being there with their parents.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST MARKED CHARACTERISTIC?

Honesty. I always speak the truth. Gets me in trouble a lot of times.

FAVORITE RESTAURANT IN THE WORLD?

A little pizzeria in Brooklyn called The Pizza Wagon. You grab a slice from the storefront, and eat it out on the street. The first thing I do when I get to NYC when I visit is buy a whole pie from the Pizza Wagon. It's my favorite. Later in the day I find my Italian pastries and enjoy them with a nice cup of coffee.