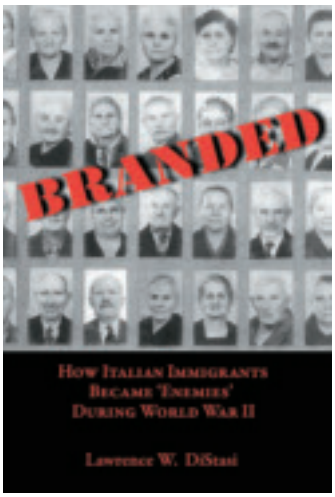

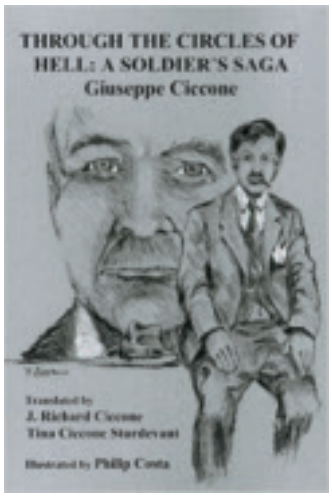

pistachios, and Ghirardelli chocolate with milk and cream from local dairy farms.

Part culinary ethnography, part oral histories, part farm-to-table testament to Italian American traditions, "Great Italian American Food in New England" explores everything historical, linguistic and surprising about the region's food, spanning stories from first-generation immigrants to their great-grandchildren.

John Carafoli's oeuvre reflects his personal resilience. When he was young, a fire ravaged his family's home. Only a younger brother and father survived. Carafoli found his "solace and foundation" in memories and experiences of food. A love note to his Cape Cod village of Sagamore, the book is also a lifeline to Italian Americans curious about their roots.

— *Kristen Keppel*

Branded; How Italian Immigrants Became 'Enemies' During World War II

By Lawrence DiStasi
Sanniti Publications; 312 pages; $22.95 paperback

In the days and months to come, more than one million permanent resident aliens in the United States would learn the same lesson: with war, their rights as Americans had vanished, had in fact been reversed.

No chapter in our country's history is perhaps more troubling than the way 694,000 Italian immigrants were forced to register as aliens of enemy nationalities during the period before and during World War II. In "Branded," DiStasi not only chronicles the antecedents of anti-Italian sentiment in America, he examines the disturbing way the Federal government mistreated its un-naturalized immigrants.

From the pink identification cards that had to be displayed upon request; to the travel prohibitions that prevented parents from visiting military installations, where their sons were defending the freedoms that they themselves were stripped of; to the Fourth Amendment's routine circumvention that gave license to search homes and seize property; to the restrictions that were imposed on fishermen residing along the West Coast; to the forced evacuations and internments of families, "Branded" is a meticulously researched, scholarly book.

However, it is DiStasi's heart-wrenching interviews with second- and third-generation family members that makes this such a powerful work. These narratives are often first-hand testimonies to government overzealousness. As one eyewitness recalls, "the image of my Papa and my Mamma wailing is etched deeply in my memory. And they were such good and proud American citizens. *Che vergogna!* (What shame!)."

— *Douglas Gladstone*

Through the Circles of Hell: A Soldier's Saga

By Giuseppe Ciccone

We had all arrived at our homeland,
To our beloved Italy.
It is true; we were all going to war.
We were going to help our motherland.

An Italian soldier using poetry to express his emotional anguish at the Italian Front during WWI is the basis for the book "Through the Circles of Hell: A Soldier's Saga," by Giuseppe Ciccone. With references to the Bible, Dante's "Divine Comedy," mythology and history, the pages of this book bring to life Ciccone's traumatic experience during WWI and his possible suffering from "shell shock," known today as PTSD.

Ciccone gave his manuscript to his daughter, Tina Ciccone Sturdevant, in the early 1970s when she traveled from the United States to Italy to visit him. The original poem was written in Italian; starting in 2012, J. Richard Ciccone, MD, (Giuseppe's grandson and a professor of psychiatry) and Sturdevant translated it into English.

Born in the Calabria region in 1887, Ciccone immigrated to America in 1901, but felt a calling to fight for his native country and returned to Italy in 1916. His poetic lines, from 1916-1917, document his inner struggles with trench warfare in the Italian army with straightforward yet powerful words:

It was like the depths of hell
Where Pluto stokes the fires.

There was no shelter from death.
The fighting was everywhere.

With photographs of the original poem on one page and the English translation on the opposite page, with footnotes, there's plenty of thought-provoking imagery drawn from the words. A fascinating poem about one man's confrontation with war.

— *Robert Bartus Jr.* ▲

Director Dino Risi's

Neorealist Time Capsules

By Maria Garcia

A Film Retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art

Catherine Spaak and Vittorio Gassman in a scene from "Il Sorpasso"

In the summer of 1943, THE CONTROVERSIAL ALLIED BOMBING RAIDS ON ROME LED TO THE SHUTTERING OF CINECITTÀ'S STUDIOS, THE CENTER OF ITALY'S FILMMAKING INDUSTRY. AFTERWARD, THE DAMAGED LOTS BECAME THE BACKDROP FOR A REFUGEE CAMP, HOUSING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE DISPLACED BY THE WAR. THAT IS WHEN ITALY'S FILMMAKERS TOOK TO THE STREETS. THEIR FLIGHT, EMBARKED UPON WITH A SHORTAGE OF EQUIPMENT, FILMSTOCK AND EXPERIENCED CAST AND CREW MEMBERS, MANY HAVING FLED FASCIST ITALY, LED TO ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PERIODS IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE CINEMA. ITALIAN NEOREALISM, WHICH LASTED LITTLE MORE THAN A DECADE, TRANSFORMED ITALY'S NARRATIVES.

Movie-makers began to chronicle the lives of orphaned children and working-class Italians, many homeless and impoverished by war. The feature films they produced, often based on real events, were usually accomplished with non-professional actors. Ironically, these revolutionary movies, including Rossellini's "Rome, Open City" (1945) and Vittorio de Sica's "The Bicycle Thief" (1948), were box office flops. De Sica's film took eighth place in Italy at the time of its release, bested by American comedies, and movies starring Totò, the "prince of laughter."

By the early 1950s, Italy's state-funded film industry began releasing comedies and dramas with a veneer of Neorealism's social and political critique, but with well-known or up-and-coming actors, such as Vittorio Gassman, Silvana Mangano and Stefania Sandrelli. A brief transitional period that some critics snidely referred to as "*neorealisma rosa*" or rose-colored Neorealism, gave way to the era now dubbed "*commedia al'Italiana.*" The latter began with such films as Mario Monicello's "Big Deal on Madonna Street" (1958) and Pietro Germi's "Divorce Italian Style" (1961).

In 2015, the Museum of Modern Art and Luce Cinecittà, a state-owned agency of Italy's Ministry of Culture that promotes Italian film, organized an excellent retrospective of the work of *commedia al'Italiana* writer-director Antonio Pietrangeli (1919-1968). In December 2016, the same partnership curated a less impressive festival of the films of Dino Risi (1917-2008), one of the most successful writer-directors of the *neorealisma rosa* and *commedia al'Italiania* eras. Luce Cinecittà also partnered with the Film Society of Lincoln Center in the Spring of 2016 to screen the films of Anna Magnani that spanned these eras, and that included newly restored prints of the iconic actress's great performances. (All three events were covered by Ambassador.)

These retrospectives are the result of a 2012 initiative by Luce Cinecittà to digitize its archives, which contain over 100,000 movies and photos dating back to 1927. Because the technology that aids in film restoration, preservation and storage changes rapidly, given the choice of what to preserve, most curators tend not to discriminate too closely. The result is movies that are historical artifacts. Dino Risi's work is a case in point. Unlike Pietrangeli, whose films hold up to modern scrutiny, Risi's are mostly time capsules. One outstanding exception is "il Sorpasso" (1962). Risi's masterpiece was restored with the very latest 4K technology, which allows for custom repairs to image and sound.

Among the other 16 features screened at MoMA were the director's breakout film "The Sign of Venus" (1955), a drama co-starring a very young and slender Sophia Loren and the wonderful Franca Valeria; "A Difficult Life" (1958), about the quest of a former partisan for meaningful work and to rekindle a wartime romance; and "il Gaucho" (1965), which pokes good-natured fun at the film industry. In addition, Risi's newly discovered documentary shorts, many filmed just weeks after the end of World War II, were screened in their original 16mm and 35mm formats.

The Milano-born Risi was a psychiatrist before becoming a full-time filmmaker. It is undoubtedly his original profession, chosen to please his mother, that gave him a gift for characterization. That talent lends unusual depth to Italian movie stereotypes. In "The Sign of Venus," for example, a post-war capitalist, played by Alberto Sordi, is a *mammone*, or mama's boy, who compensates for his inability to have a relationship with a woman through his work as a black marketeer.

Risi's screenplays, on the other hand, are less effective, often comprised of longueurs and narrative tangents that weaken the film's structure. In the *commedia al'Italiana* tradition, his comedies are tinged with sadness or tragedy, but because they primarily reflect Italian life at the time they were made, even those of the 1970s are marked by race, class and gender biases that, in America, would have garnered some criticism. In Risi's "Scent of a Woman" (1974), for instance, a blind army officer "smells" women and stalks them. (It inspired Martin Brest's 1992 remake, noteworthy only for Al Pacino's Oscar-winning performance.) Risi's recurring depictions of men broken by war, such as Sordi's character in "A Difficult Life," intended as a social critique, are difficult for modern audiences to appreciate, couched as they are in a *neorealisma rosa* story.

This is not the case in "il Sorpasso," a classic male-quest story and road movie. The film was released here as "The Easy Life," but its literal translation, "The Overtaking," more accurately describes the plot. "Il Sorpasso" stars Vittorio Gassman as Bruno, the recurring male character in so many Italian films—narcissistic and irresponsible, yet the epitome of male bravado. Risi explores the attraction of such characters, revealing the dark underside of the Italian psyche. A middle-aged guy who insinuates himself into the life of a shy student (Jean-Louis Trintignant), ➤

"I mostri". *1963.* Italy. Directed by Dino Risi

Bruno also "overtakes" Roberto, leading him into risky physical behavior and psychological peril. With his clinical eye, Risi illustrates the deleterious effect of Bruno's self-centeredness at the same time that the audience may be reveling in the character's irreverence and sardonic humor.

Risi worked with nearly all of *commedia al'Italiana*'s best actors, including Vittorio Gassman, Nino Manfredi, Alberto Sordi, Catherine Spaak, Ugo Tognazzi and Franca Valeri, so his *oeuvre* represents an opportunity to appreciate Italy's largely uncelebrated contribution to screen acting. Historians of any stripe can mine Risi's films for their snapshots of Italian life; in this sense the influence of Neorealism on his work is apparent.

In a 1979 interview, Risi said of Italian filmmakers: "We all drank of the neorealist milk." That *latte* was largely born of Socialism, and the Italian people's enduring humanity. This view is most obviously articulated in "A Difficult Life," in the dignity conferred on Sordi's character, despite his many imperfections.

In that same 1979 interview, Risi named "il Sorpasso" as the film "that resembles me the most," and "The Difficult Life" as "close to my heart." These two films also represent his best work. Risi's success, and his rise in Italy's postwar era, in *neorealisma rosa* and *commedia al'Italiana*, may be explained by the fact that Italians, burdened by the memory of war, wanted to laugh. Yet, it may also lie in the fact that his protagonists, mostly men whose lives were interrupted by war or bad luck or poverty, do not always triumph in the end, though they do not lead what Henry David Thoreau described as "lives of quiet desperation." In the Italian sensibility, what deserves celebration is simply *la vita*, life lived in the moment. Adjectives to describe it are absurd, backward glances.

Risi's early appeal lay in characters drawn from real life—women pregnant from wartime romances, or raising their child alone because their lovers abandoned them, and men who in mid-life regretted that abandonment. Instead of the imperfect visages and regional accents of Neorealist "actors," audiences saw themselves represented by Sophia Loren or Alberto Sordi or Vittorio Gassman.

"La fabbrica del Duomo". 1949. Italy. Directed by Dino Risi

"Il Sorpasso" is the departure. It is about what happens when people invite chaos into their lives—and forget that *la vita* is everything. Like all great movies, "il Sorpasso" defies the categorization of scholars and film promoters, and belongs to no era. ▲

Maria Garcia is a New York City-based author, writer and frequent contributor to Ambassador magazine. Her reviews and feature articles also appear regularly in Film Journal International and Cineaste. Her book, "Cinematic Quests for Identity: The Hero's Encounter with the Beast," was published this Spring. Visit her website at mariagarciawrites.com.

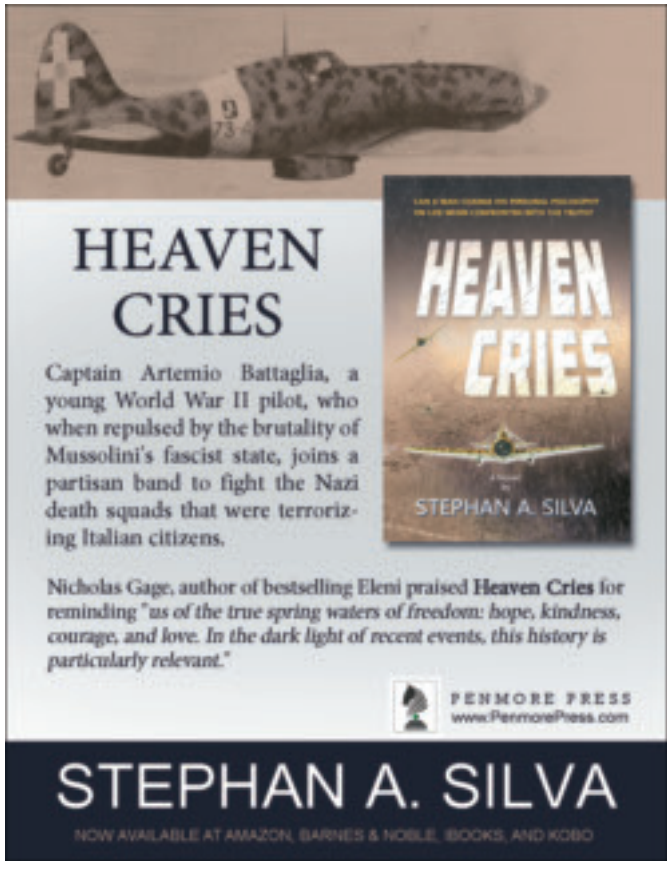

Photo courtesy of Marchesi Antinori

Left: Alessia Antinori at the "Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence" exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston in August

Right: "Prudence"; ca. 1475; Glazed terracotta; Andrea della Robbia; Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art

going home

the Della Robbia exhibition

"Resurrection of Christ" (before conservation); ca 1520-1524; Giovanni della Robbia (Italian, Florentine, 1469-1529/30); Italian Renaissance; glazed terracotta. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

This incredible, two-ton, "Resurrection of Christ" arch sat in relative obscurity at The Brooklyn Museum since the early 1900s. How'd it get there? Luca della Robbia's exquisite terracotta works, and his sculptures in bronze and marble, were widely collected in the late-19th and early-20th centuries by Americans traveling to Italy who wanted to bring home a piece of the Renaissance. A piece, indeed.

See, Luca Della Robbia was a 15th-century master sculptor who invented a miraculous terracotta glazing technique that retained true colors over centuries. The technique made him one of the most innovative artists of the 15th century—not bad company since it included the creative likes of Leonardo da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli. Luca shared the secret technique with his nephew, artist Andrea della Robbia, who passed it on to his own artistic sons. The Della Robbia family workshop in Florence prospered for generations over a century before its secrets were lost forever.

As the story goes, Niccolò and Alessandro Antinori, of the famous winemaking Antinori family, which dates back before 14th century in Florence, commissioned Luca Della Robbia in the early 16th century to create a magnificent arch known as the "Resurrection of Christ." One of the Antinoris is depicted in the artwork, and Della Robbia sculpted the Antinori family crest into both corners.

Fast forward to August 2016, when the Museum of Fine Arts Boston unveiled a wonderful show of glazed terracotta sculptures created by several generations of the Della Robbia family, borrowed from American collections, alongside choice loans from Italy. That launched the first U.S. exhibit ever of Della Robbia.

Fast forward again to February 5, when the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., opened the magnificent exhibition "Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence," sponsored in part by Marchese Antinori and on exhibit through June 4. The largest work in the exhibition is an architectural arch from the Antinori estate.

"The Della Robbia exhibition is steeped in history. It transports us back to the Renaissance period in Florence. The colors are as vivid today as they were almost 500 years ago," says Alessia Antinori, the 26th generation of the Antinori family that today still ranks among the world's elite winemakers.

"My family has a personal connection to one of the masterpieces…. It's an amazing piece! My family supported the year-long conservation of this piece to restore it to its original splendor. We are so pleased that it is now on display at the National Gallery of Art."

Italy's Antinori family is especially pleased that the Brooklyn Museum, in late 2017 or early 2018, will lend the Antinori Della Robbia arch to the Bargello Museum in Florence.

In other words, in the moment, the Antinori Della Robbia arch will be going home.

— Don Oldenburg

Top Right: Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; *Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1921

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Like Father, Like Son

Richard Pitino Creating His Own Shot

By Wayne Randazzo

TonyTheTiger (CC-BY-SA-3.0)

Richard Pitino, head coach of Men's Basketball at the University of Minnesota, at Williams Arena

For University of Minnesota men's basketball head coach Richard Pitino, it would be easy to just rely on his name. Richard is the son of basketball royalty after all. Rick Pitino, Richard's father, is still an active head coach at the University of Louisville, but his place in basketball history has already been cemented with induction into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2013.

Between the collegiate level and the National Basketball Association (NBA), the elder Pitino has amassed nearly 1,000 wins as a head coach. He has been to the Final Four seven times, he has won two national championships, and he has guided two of the NBA's most storied franchises, the New York Knicks and Boston Celtics.

Despite all of that, Richard Pitino uses up little of his day thinking about how he's going to size up with his famous father.

"I don't wake up in the morning and think about how I'm going to try to live up to my father's name," he says. "I'm usually thinking about where I might have to bring my kids or something about the next game."

Pitino's a lot like his father in many ways. He works just as hard. He believes in his team just as much, and he doesn't take anything for granted.

Now in his third season in Dinkytown, Pitino, at age 34, still holds the distinction of being the youngest head men's basketball coach of any Power Five conference team—the NCAA's top conferences—in the country.

As the Gophers trudge through the Big Ten schedule, it's easy to overlook the progress that the team has made. Last year, Minnesota managed just two wins against conference foes. This year, they split their first 12 games, including a pair of hard-fought overtime wins. The presence of freshman Amir Coffey has helped get the Gophers off the ground.

"Amir could have gone to a higher profile school, but he wanted to stay right here in Minnesota and build a winner," Pitino says. "Those are the kinds of kids we need to make this thing successful."

Pitino knows what a winner looks like. He spent five years as an assistant at top programs, including three on the bench at Louisville alongside his father. He also had two seasons away from dad, at the University of Florida, assisting Billy Donovan (currently head coach for the NBA's Oklahoma City Thunder).

It was those experiences that helped fast track him to the title of head coach. After a one-year stop as head coach at Florida International University to get his feet wet (he led FIU to its first winning record in 13 years), the University of Minnesota came calling to hire Pitino to replace longtime NCAA basketball coach Tubby Smith.

Year one at Minnesota was no problem. Pitino's squad won 25 games and the 2014 National Invitation Tournament (NIT), beating Larry Brown's Mustangs of Southern Methodist University. The 25 wins were a school record for Minnesota, but the team didn't have a chance to rebuild. That's something it's doing now as Pitino can finally put his stamp on the future of the program—and the future of the family name. ▲

Wayne Randazzo is the New York Mets pregame and postgame show host and fill-in play-by-play announcer on WOR-AM. He's also a freelance television play-by-play announcer for ESPN and Big Ten Network. Read his first-person column, "A Day in My Life," about being radio broadcaster for the New York Mets, in the Fall 2016 issue of Ambassador.

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NIAF Museum Exhibiting Italian American History

By John M. Viola, NIAF President

Don Oldenburg

Most people who've visited my home, or set foot in my cluttered office, would probably diagnose me as a hoarder. What they've failed to realize is that I am the son, grandson, and great-grandson of antique dealers, and I have spent the majority of my life traveling around the country and Italy putting together a fantastic collection. You see, my hoard is actually a carefully curated collection of over 2,000 artifacts that tell the story of the Italian and Italian American experience. In recent months, this trove of objects has formed the core of the new NIAF Museum and Victoria J. Mastrobuono Learning Center we are building at the NIAF Headquarters.

The Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Building, which NIAF has called home since 1994, sits just off of Dupont Circle in the heart of Washington, D.C. Although it has served these past 20-some years as a proud and welcoming home for our Foundation, many at NIAF have felt that we could do more with such a special place. So, in 2010, when our Foundation received a bequest from the estate of Victoria J. Mastrobuono (the largest gift in NIAF's history), we made a concerted investment in transforming our headquarters to even better serve the Italian American community. In truth, I can't count the number of times I've been asked by a member of our community, "What can be done to create a truly significant Italian American Museum here in the nation's capital?"

Recognizing this glaring absence, and aware of our role as the Italian American voice in Washington, in 2014, our Board of Directors voted to establish the NIAF Museum here at headquarters. The idea was simple: use our building as a central repository, collecting the memorabilia, personal stories, and oral histories of our people to tell the complete Italian American story, and to create a centralized resource for all Italian Americans to contribute to the national discourse on who we are and what our experience has been.

Last year, we launched the NIAF Italian American Museum Fellowship to find young student-scholars to curate the items we have acquired and design the Museum's exhibits. As we set out to find an ideal curator for this new venture, we realized that, instead of hiring one person, we could create an opportunity for young people in our community to join NIAF and share their take on our community's history with the thousands of members and guests who visit us each year.

Under the tutelage of a volunteer professional curator, these young people are not only learning Italian American history and gaining invaluable work experience, they are telling the Italian American experience from the perspective of a new generation!

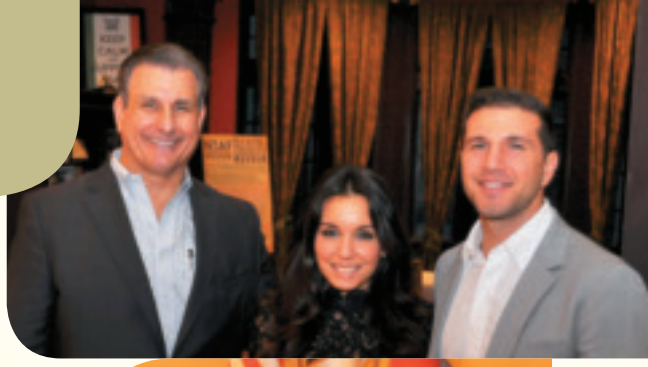
A 2014 interior remodeling of the Secchia Building created two interactive exhibit spaces to house artifacts of the Italian American story from 1860 to today. A special interactive space in our foyer tells the story of the National Italian American Foundation from its founding in 1975.

In the years to come, we plan for a significant expansion of our small museum with an area already designated for the NIAF Italian American Memory Center—an electronic database for Italian American oral history—along with an onsite memory booth for Italian Americans to record their own stories which can be added to our repository.

The Victoria J. Mastrobuono Learning Center will assemble and make available thousands of hours of audio-visual resources and catalogue miles of books and extensive digital archives that NIAF has acquired over the past 42 years.

So far, the Museum's early stages have been an unprecedented hit with visitors at headquarters. Our Museum Fellows gave hundreds of enthusiastic visitors a first glimpse of what we have planned at a mobile exhibit at Expo Italiana during our 41st Anniversary Gala Weekend. Famous names from Italian American community, such as Lena Prima and Franco Harris, have already contributed personal artifacts, and countless guests, following their visits, have sent us personal heirlooms that tell their family stories—and will now help to tell the story of us all.

If you're in Washington, be sure to come visit us. The collection you'll see represents a tiny sampling of the pieces we maintain at headquarters. It's our hope that you will enjoy them and appreciate their place in our history, and ultimately join us on this exciting journey to preserve, promote and protect the heritage of 25 million Americans of Italian descent. ▲



The 2017 NIAF Leadership Retreat

Photos by Don Oldenburg

Washington, D.C. – At the fourth-annual NIAF Leadership Retreat, members of the NIAF Board of Directors, the Italian American Leadership Council (IALC), and NIAF staff converged on the Nation's Capital, at NIAF Headquarters at the Ambassador Peter F. Secchia Building, January 12-13, for two days of meeting, workshops, socializing and fine dining, to plan the Foundation's upcoming year.

Discussions and decision-making kicked off on early that Thursday morning for Board members and Executive Officers with a working breakfast that lead into an Organizational Update session and an Executive Committee meeting. Following lunch, Board and IALC members joined staffers in working sessions that discussed major 2017 NIAF events and initiatives, from the New York Spring Gala (March 22) and the Anniversary Gala (November 3-4) to new programs for young professional NIAF members and continued development of the NIAF Italian American Museum.

Thursday evening, after a full day of work, Retreat participants enjoyed a casual and delectable dinner at award-winning chef and restaurateur Luigi Diotaiuti's new and acclaimed contemporary Italian restaurant Aperto, in downtown Washington. A longtime friend and supporter of NIAF, Chef Luigi and his staff served house-cured duck-breast prosciutto and artisan cheeses, tagliata (Tuscan-style ribeye) and house-cured Lamb Chops Scottadito, among other exceptional dishes and Italian wines.

After two productive days, the Retreat sessions adjourned in early-afternoon on Friday to allow participants to escape the city for the airport and train station ahead of the usual Friday rush—and before the early arrivals for the following week's Presidential Inauguration.

Arriving at NIAF Headquarters for the Retreat: (top) IALC member Giulio Gianturco with NIAF Director of Programs Gabriella Mileti and NIAF Chief Financial Officer John P. Della Fave; and (above) NIAF Vice Chairs Gabriel A. Battista and IALC member Anthony DiSandro.

Chef Luigi Diotaiuti welcomes NIAF Board member Basil Russo and wife Patricia Russo (far left) and NIAF President John M. Viola (left) to his new D.C. restaurant Aperto.

During the Retreat planning sessions: (right) IALC members Lawrence Purpuro and Joe Cosentino with NIAF Board member Basil Russo; and (below) NIAF Webmaster and Network Services Administrator Chris Korin (on right) and NIAF Finance Manager Xavier Atizol

Dinner at Aperto: (above) NIAF Regional Event Planner Andrea Bartlett, IALC member Tom Gentile, IALC member Giulio Gianturco and NIAF Public Policy Manager Lisa Femia; (top left) NIAF Vice Chair Patricia de Stacy Harrison and NIAF Board Member Mike Zarelli; (left) Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society Treasurer Peter Bell and Mary Ellen Cosentino with IALC members Joe Cosentino and Sam Vitale; and (bottom) IALC member and Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society President Maria D'Andrea-Yothers and IALC member Anthony DiSandro.