



The News

March 2022
Volume 40 No. 3

THE AMERICAN ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

A Nonprofit Corporation; Omaha, NE

40th Anniversary Gala



Saturday, March 12th, 2022 5:30p - 9:30p at il Palazzo

5:30 Complimentary Cocktails and Antipasti as the Silent Auction Tables Open

7:30 40th Anniversary Dinner prepared by

Chef Leo Fascianella, Retired Executive Chef & Owner of Pasta Amore:

Italian Salad and Rotella's Hard Rolls

**Mostaccioli Marco Polo with Beef Tenderloin & Mushroom Demi-glaze Sauce
Mixed Vegetables**

Dessert

8:30 Presentations and progress of the Society with member recognition

9:00 Oral Auction

COST: \$65.00 per person \$500.00 for table of 8

All Members are invited to attend and support the 40th Anniversary Gala

Contact Jen at the office for reservations - Deadline March 9th

Ph: 402 493-8888 x1 Email: Secretary@omahaitaly.com

NO TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR

****Dressy/Casual is the Attire for the Evening****

Silent auction items include gift certificates to restaurants, lawn care, teeth whitening, and wine baskets. Oral auctions items include prized collectibles, Chef prepared dinners for 8, CWS tailgate party, Trip to Italy with airfare and lodging, Trip to Chicago with tickets to a Cub game and lodging and a Home Surround Sound System.

The Mission Statement of the American Italian Heritage Society

The fundamental purpose of the American Italian Heritage Society is to encourage, promote and preserve Italian culture and heritage with its activities centered upon Italian traditions, foods, language, culture, history, religion,

The News is a monthly publication of the American Italian Heritage Society, an independent, nonprofit organization, legally incorporated in Nebraska. The deadline for submissions is the second Wednesday of the month. Correspondence and articles can be sent to secretary@omahaitaly.com.



THE AMERICAN ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

UPCOMING EVENTS

Membership Meeting March 14th 7:30p Il Palazzo
AIHS 40th Anniversary GALA March 12th

Easter Sausage Sale April 9th 10am-1pm
Spring Spaghetti Dinner TBD

February Membership Meeting Minutes

The General Membership Meeting, held on February 21, 2022 was called to order by President Terry Bolamperti and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance with veterans Lou Buda and John Portera as flag-bearers. There were 20 members in attendance. Members were asked to bow their heads in silent prayer for those members of the Society that are currently ill. The Treasure's Report was given by Terry Bolamperti and approved by the membership. There was discussion from the floor on how the Board decides to handle financial issues. President Terry Bolamperti reported that the Board is currently working on a budget for 2022 and the financial decisions will be thoroughly researched and decisions will be made accordingly for the best outcome for the Society. It was also stated as per requests from the floor that the Board will review the committees as set up in the Bylaws. This is Board business and it will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

Old business discussed was the Christmas Sausage fundraiser that was a big success. Also the Dan Polley/Lou Buda Award winners were announced at the last meeting in December and listed in the January Newsletter. The Epiphany Celebration was cancelled in January due to spike in Covid 19 cases in our community.

New business was discussed including the Carnevale and the Society's 40th Anniversary Gala. The Carnevale will be held on March 1, 2022 at Pasta Amore. The cost is \$35.00 for antipasti dinner and dessert. The merriment will start at 5:11 and continue until 9:11pm. All interested must call Pasta Amore for reservations. Chef Leo Fascianella will be preparing the meal. Members were asked to attend this fun event.

The rest of the meeting included a thorough description of the 40th Anniversary Gala. The event program was discussed and a long list of prizes for the Silent Auction was read off for those in attendance. The menu of antipasti, dinner and dessert will be prepared by member Chef Leo Fascianella. Also complimentary cocktails and wine. It was discussed that Members are urged to attend as guests and we also need help to run the event. Those that attend and those that can help are to call our Secretary, Jen and sign-up.

Lastly the Easter Sausage Fundraiser will be we held April 9th. More details to follow. The St Joseph Day Celebration will not be held this year due to proximity to the date of the 40th Anniversary Gala.

The meeting was adjourned and the Piece of the Pie winners drawn were Terry Bolamperti and Rose Koch. After the meeting members enjoyed pizza prepared by John Portera. The next meeting will be held on the Monday after the Gala on March 14th.

Submitted by AIHS President Terry Bolamperti

2022 AIHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman of the Board: Toni Bac
President: Dr. Terry Bolamperti
Vice President: Jeff Ladwig
Treasurer: Joe Garrett
Secretary: Nikki Sandmeier
Board Member: John Potera

Newsletter Help Wanted!

We are looking for someone to take over creating the monthly newsletter. The club secretary will assist in preparing the pages.

This is a great way to help our Society from home and it only takes a few hours each month.



Dr. Ted Bolamperti: In his own words

Dedicated Founders Brought Dream of AIHS, La Festa Italiana to Life

By Mary Zgoda

Since the Society is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, Dr. Ted Bolamperti was recently asked to share the story of the American Italian Heritage Society's founding as part of a member spotlight. (See accompanying article: Energy, Precision, Passion Define Dr. Ted.)

Speaking with pride and clarity, he recounted names and dates in exact detail. As he began, he wanted to first cite the seven other founders besides himself to thank them for their dedication and service. They are Jeaniene Tomasello Bolamperti, Toni Capellupo Blazeovich, Paul Blazeovich, Ermenegildo "Gildo" Cortese, Raydelle Kaline Meehan, Angelo A. Perry and Mary Jo Romano Petersen. "Toni, Paul and Gildo have passed away but we all grew up together and those who remain are close to this day," Ted said.



The story began at 510 Pine Street in Omaha, his childhood home where he lived with his parents, Richard, a chef, and Palma, a homemaker, Ted's four other siblings and his Uncle Pete Cortese. The home was originally used as a boarding house for a time because of the close proximity to the railroad. They eventually shared the home with the Marchellos (his aunt on his mother's side) but in the early 1950s it became the Bolamperti home. The home came to be known as The Cortese House – the gathering place --the scene of many holiday gatherings, family celebrations and summer picnics for all of the aunts, uncles and cousins. It continued to be the gathering place for many years into their adulthood. Palma had two sisters, Amelia Marchello and Yolanda Capellupo, and a brother Gildo Cortese.

Growing up, Ted spent a lot of time around St. Ann's Parish, at 24th and Poppleton. His cousins, the Capellupos, lived on 22nd street, a few blocks from St. Ann's. It was there that he met his future wife Jeaniene Tomasello. "I knew just about everybody who attended school at St. Ann's so I always attended St. Ann reunions with Jeaniene.

Fast forward to the present as Ted recounts the Society's founding. On this particular day, Jeaniene excitedly takes part in the conversation.

In Ted's own words, the story of the founding of the AIHS begins.

It was 1980-1981. At the time there was a lot of interest in ethnicity, Ted said. Toni and Raydelle collaborated and organized the Ethnic Festival, a very popular festival that celebrated different ethnic groups that was held in downtown Omaha at the Civic Auditorium. It piqued his interest. "When Jeaniene and I hosted a St. Ann's reunion at our home, I got the idea that it would be great if there was a Society just for the American Italian culture," he explained.

"My family was close growing up and I think this instilled in me the love of family traditions and culture. Plus, my father-in-law Tony Tomasello was very much into his Italian customs and traditions, and I felt people were missing out on this. I wondered what I could do to invigorate their culture."



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Dedicated Founders article continued:

A meeting was subsequently held at 510 Pine – still the gathering place – and the future founders met and moved quickly.

As a way to get started the group planned a dinner at old Cantoni's restaurant on Leavenworth Street, which was owned by the Marchello family. Invitations were sent to people they knew and some they didn't know. "Guests got to observe the food being prepared by the hosts. They paid for their own dinners. These were our first food demonstrations that remain popular with our Society to this day," Ted said.

"Everyone who was invited came to the dinner, about 75-100 people in all at the first dinner." Two more dinners like this were held. At the dinner, Ted and his Uncle Gildo introduced plans for an American Italian organization. "There was a lot of remembrance of traditions but a loss of how to do it," he said.

Recent immigrants to the U.S. from Italy also attended the dinners – everyone from trades people to physicians – and joined the Society because they were so impressed with the plans, Ted said.

The group publicized their plans in other ways. To help spread the word, Pete Capellupo, his uncle, built a stand/information booth to have at the Santa Lucia that received a lot of interest. "This was probably our first official fundraising event," Ted said.

Excitement was building and membership quickly grew by word of mouth. Within a year there was a couple of hundred members. The organization established non-profit status and the AIHS was officially "born" in 1981. Tasks were assigned, committees were formed, and a group developed a monthly newsletter.

Meanwhile, a festival – it would eventually become La Festa Italiana – was planned from the beginning, Ted said.

The first year the Society participated in the Ethnic Festival. The Society's very own folkdance group was developed with the assistance of fellow member Jo Distefano Olson, a ballroom dance teacher, and choreographed by Jeaniene, an experienced ballet dancer. Dancers first performed at the Ethnic Festival and it was wildly popular. The audiences couldn't get their fill of the dancing and requested encore after encore. Through the years the folkdance group remained very popular and performed at venues throughout Nebraska and locally. They put together their own first costumes but soon they had colorful costumes made in the Italian colors of red, green and white.

In July 1982 the Society had its very own festival at the Civic Auditorium, occupying all three floors.

To prepare for the first Festa, members of the planning group explored and attended the festivals of other American Italian organizations across the U.S. They visited San Jose, Denver, Kansas City, Chicago, New Orleans, Milwaukee, Philadelphia and New York City.



Dedicated Founders article continued:

“That first Festa was a huge success with 21,000 to 22,000 people attending – record breaking to this day,” Ted explained. “Although we’ve always had good attendance, we’ve never had that many people at a Festa since then. It featured pictorial displays, artisans, sculpture, furniture, statuary and ceramics and rooms with furniture and items to display what an Italian room would look like.”



The Festa was held at the Civic for three years, then moved to Peony Park for several memorable years. Other Festa locations through the years included Metro Community College Fort Omaha campus, College of Saint Mary, Roncalli High School and the Army National Guard Readiness Center.

Food preparation was always a challenge for the group at Festa time. In the early days with no official home, the group prepared food at St. Francis Cabrini and St. Ann's. Searching for more cooking space for the first Festa, Ted heard about a caterer at the Stockyards who would be willing to lend his cooking space and equipment to the group to help prepare the food. “He didn't even ask for my ID, Ted says, he just gave me the key. I'm not afraid to ask for things,” he said laughing.

Over the years, renting equipment was expensive so the Society borrowed extensively from restaurant supply stores. “Everything from sinks to stoves,” Ted said. It used other venues to prepare food, including Creighton University. Another time a storage unit the Society rented provided

enough space to build a small kitchen. They even gave it a name: Pompeii, named after the ancient Italian city. In addition to making the food, they delivered it to the site, then had to pick up equipment with trucks borrowed from members and others.

“Unlike other Italian festivals around the country, to date we are still the only Festa that makes its own food,” Dr. Ted said.

The Festa gained national attention in 1984 when it was featured in USA Today to “celebrate Italian food, culture and heritage. The festival was successful and became an annual event,” the article noted.”

At any Festa, workers typically prepare an enormous amount of food, including 7,500 cannoli, 8,000 meatballs, 225 gallons of spaghetti sauce and 45 gallons of peppers. It takes approximately 700 members to prepare the food as well as members on the food line.

The Society had several “homes” over the years. It's first home was the old St. Wenceslaus Church on 13th Street that the Society purchased in 1983-84. It eventually became the scene of many dinners and activities, including food demos, Pasta Fridays, Carnevale (a celebration the day before Ash Wednesday), language lessons, history discussions, St. Joseph's Day, Feast of the Epiphany, a game feed dinner, sausage making and sales, just to name a few events over the years.

The Society eventually sold St. Wenceslaus due to the cost of upkeep and continued to save for a new home through Festas, bingo and pickles and donations. The same year the Society found a temporary home for the next 10 years at Pasta Amore thanks to Lillo “Leo” and Pat Fascianella.



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Dedicated Founders article continued:

Finally, AIHS acquired its own permanent home, purchasing land in northwest Omaha. Construction began in 2013 and they moved into the building in August 2014. They held their first Festa in the new building a few weeks later.

One of the Society's fundamental goals was to have an organization that would actively focus on preserving Italian culture and heritage, where families can share in building upon the foundation of their Italian ancestors. It continues to host a variety of activities, including monthly meetings, a monthly newsletter, pasta dinners and wine tastings, religious festivals and college scholarships and the Society's "Special Recipe" Italian sausage fundraiser. And, of course, its signature event, La Festa Italiana. The Society continues to grow with a current membership of approximately 550 families, Ted said.

Just like the show must go on, the Festa must go on, too. Because of Covid, there was no Festa in 2020 but in 2021 the Society sponsored a very successful drive-through Festa. The 38th annual Festa is scheduled this year for September 2, 3 and 4.

"It's an exciting time again for the AIHS," Ted said.

Mary is a freelance writer and public relations professional. She was a member of the team that developed the Society's first newsletter.



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PRAYERS FOR OUR MEMBERS

Please keep in your thoughts and prayers our members who are ill, including Ted Bolamperti, Tom Morinelli, George Grillo, Cookie Mascarello-Ladwig, Teri Carlino, Lou Marcuzzo, Lou Buda, Dee Mascarello, Joe Daniels, Maria Leo and Margo Pirruccello.

Memorial:

Keep those who have passed away in your prayers.

Grazie/Thank you

The American Italian Heritage Society is a qualified 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation for Federal tax purposes.

Please consider including American Italian Heritage Society in your estate planning.

Scholarship Application - Deadline May 1st

AIHS SCHOLARSHIP: We will be offering two generous scholarships. Applications are now available to members' children attending a credited college. Must be members for 2 years.

THE JOHN SCIGLIANO SCHOLARSHIP: We are now taking applications for any AIHS members' children and grandchildren attending Creighton University in the science program.

If interested, please call the AIHS office at 402-493-8888

Please Consider Advertising with us!

We are looking for additional businesses to advertise in our monthly newsletter. If you have a business or know of one that would like to advertise in our newsletter, we encourage you to call the office at 402-493-8888 or email secretary@omahaitaly.com.

AIHS COOKBOOKS FOR SALE

Our original cookbook "A Taste of Italy" is still available for sale for \$25, tax included. There are many great authentic, family recipes and Society specialties.

TAGG (Together A Greater Good)

Download the TAGG mobile app on your smartphone. Visit participating businesses, snap a photo of your receipt. Choose American Italian Heritage Society. Hy Vee is among businesses that donate a % to AIHS for your purchases.

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Ricotta

page 239 A Taste of Italy Cookbook

Josephine Distefano

2 gal whole milk

1 C lemon juice (about 4 lemons)

1 qt. half and half

1/4 C. water

2 T salt

Heat milk and cream to 175*; add salt. Heat again to 198* and add lemon juice with water, stirring only while pouring in juice. When ricotta comes to the top, turn off heat and let it set for 5 minutes. Take out a little at a time and drain in a colander lined with a cheesecloth. Ricotta can be used in savory dishes like Lasagna as well as cookies and desserts like Tiramisu. Can be stored in your refrigerator for a week.

**Easter Sausage Sale**

Pick up April 9th, 2022 10am-1pm



We will begin taking orders for sausage after the Gala, March 16th thru April 5th

Call **402.493.8888** or email **secretary@omahaitaly.com**.

Please include: name, phone number, regular or hot sausage and number of peppers and olives. Emails will be replied to, phone messages will not.

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