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SACCO & VANZETTI: WHO WERE THEY?

BY KEN KANE

On Nov. 15 at 3:30pm in Carvlin Hall, 2408 SE 16th Av. in Portland, Jimmie Moglia will delve into the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. This might have been the most notorious trial of the early 20th Century ... at least until the time of the Lindbergh baby kidnapping.

For many, the trial of the two radical Italian immigrants was as infamous as the deed of which they were accused: murdering two men during an armed robbery in South Braintree, Mass., in 1920. Seven years of legal wrangling and appeals occurred before the pair was finally executed for their alleged deeds.



The conduct of the original trial was called into question almost as soon as Judge Webster Thayer's final gavel sounded. A Sacco and Vanzetti defense fund kept the appeal process going while original testimony was recanted and new evidence pointing to other perpetrators came forth.

No less distinguished a legal expert than future Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter thought the verdict a was sham ... though Frankfurter used more legal, and slightly less emphatic, language. His thoughts were published in a lengthy [article in the March 1927 issue of *The Atlantic*](#), a month before the defendants were executed. Here is one example of Frankfurter's analysis of the original 1921 trial. It reflects his overall feelings about its quality of justice:

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NEXT MTG:

SUN., NOV. 15, 3:30PM

CARVLIN HALL

UPCOMING MEETING:

DEC. 20

DAL PRESIDENTE

A HISTORY LESSON NOV. 15

BY JIMMIE MOGLIA
PRESIDENT



At our meeting this Sunday, Nov. 15, I will give a presentation on Sacco and Vanzetti, the two Italian anarchists executed in the electric chair in Massachusetts in 1927, for a crime they did not commit. Their names are gradually fading into forgotten history. Yet, Sacco and Vanzetti are historically important for reasons only in part related to anarchism.

Their story enables us to examine the phenomenon of immigration (and particularly of Italian immigration), from a somewhat different point of view – different from the standard clichés, which concentrate almost exclusively on economic factors. In fact, economic and ideological perceptions and considerations were inextricably intertwined –

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REMEMBERING THE TRIAL AND TRAVAILS OF SACCO, VANZETTI AND ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS ON NOV. 15



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that may also apply to families of the members of our Association, when they emigrated to America.

At our meeting last month, Prof. Silvia Boero described the Italian political-social situation in Italy during the 1970s – a time of turmoil and terrorism. There were terrorist attacks from the Left and from the Right, on masses and individuals – culminating in the assassination of Aldo Moro, leader of the majority Christian Democracy Party.

Massive research on the murder, its executors and instigators, has not removed the overall perception – that it was a pre-emptive strike to prevent the inclusion of the then still-active Communist Party in government. In some way, the event parallels the assassination of President Kennedy.

Prof. Boero also showed some scenes from an Italian movie of the period, by the long and intriguing title of *La Mazurka del Barone, della Santa e del Fico Fiorone* (*The Mazurka of the Baron, of the Saint and of the Flowering Fig-tree*). Mazurka, perhaps, is (was), more popular in Italy than elsewhere – it was originally a Polish dance, a kind of waltz, but faster.

Located in the region of Romagna, the movie could be described as an allegory and satire of a mode of thought prevailing in Italy at the time, and notably in Romagna. The movie is available online at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8cKMRuDoPY>

There are no English subtitles, but Italian gestures, expressions and body language are a reasonable substitute.

Ever prone to forget the essential, at our last meeting I

neglected to thank the kind ladies who provided refreshments, snacks and cookies. Which I do now – thank you!

See you Sunday, Nov. 15, at 3.30pm, at Carvlin Hall,

Handwritten signature of Silvia Boero.

L'ANGOLO ITALIANO

DI CARLO ILIO MANNOCCI

Non si registrano scossoni, solo malumori (cosa all'ordine del giorno nella vita italiana) specialmente riguardanti il futuro del riacquisto della cittadinanza italiana per coloro che sono emigrati all'estero e che per varie ragioni hanno perduto la cittadinanza italiana.

Il Parlamento ha volutamente evitato di valutare proposte di legge che avrebbero consentito la RIAPERTURA del riacquisto della cittadinanza per coloro che per motivi vari NON avevano usufruito della apposita legge in vigore dal 1992 al 1997.

La nuova legge approvata beneficia solo i nuovi emigrati in Italia, sia concedendo la cittadinanza per nascita (con qualche limite) sia per residenza (specialmente rivolta ai più giovani). Grande disappunto per migliaia di italiani che speravano nel rinnovo della legge e che adesso credono di essere solo un peso per la terra di origine.

INVENTOR, AUTHOR, LECTURER, CAT LOVER ... THAT'S OUR JIMMIE!

BY KEN KANE

(Author's note: This is the final installment of the article I wrote for L'Italo Americano over the summer about our club president, Jimmie Moglia.)

William Shakespeare didn't say it, but he could have: Inspidation instills inspiration. Well, he might have said it if...

- 1) inspidation was actually a word, and
- 2) he'd had the chance to meet Jimmie Moglia.

When we left Jimmie, the Rhinestone Renaissance Boy, last time, he was hopscotching the Atlantic, to attend one interminably insipid work meeting after another ... after another. At first



the workplace state of affairs – perhaps it should be called a workplace *stale* of affairs – frustrated him.

But eventually it inspired him to write his 1,400-page reference book *Your Daily Shakespeare*. The weighty tome which, at three-and-a-half pounds, Jimmie wryly concedes “doubles as an elegant paperweight,” cites hundreds of quotations from the Bard. They are presented as rejoinders for 10,000 everyday situations – including ways to extricate oneself from boring work meetings.

It took 15 years for Jimmie to distill Shakespeare's 37 plays into snippets of elucidation and observation, then figure out how to index and cross-reference the quotes and situations. “Much of the work wasn't writing, but it was *compiling* to make the book useful and easy for people to use,” Jimmie explained.

Soon after starting work on the book, in the late 1980s, Jimmie left his employer to strike out on



his own. While learning the then-vital computing language BASIC, he had a revelation.

“I had never been very good at teaching myself something,” Jimmie recalled. “But in this case, my lack of success turned out to be a good thing.”

However, a pricey thing, too, since his coding mistakes had to be printed out and proofread to be detected. That meant he was running through a lot of dot-matrix ribbon cartridges – expensive cartridges. Jimmie figured there had to be a way around the expense, but there wasn't, so he and a partner invented one: the MacInker.

“The art of our necessities is strange, that can make vile things precious,” is how Jimmie (and King Lear) explained it. Jimmie took the vile used-up ribbon cartridges and, using some of his engineering background, created a mechanical device that would re-ink the ribbon. It turned out to be a precious thing – and prescient, too, since this was 1984 and the concept of re-inking computer cartridges is still in use today. Jimmie and the MacInker were featured in [a late 1980s news story](#) from which the photos you see on this page were taken.

The MacInker led Jimmie to start a technology accessories company in Portland, Computer Friends, which he headed until his retirement in 2009. But he hasn't exactly been sitting around since then. In fact, his insatiable appetite for knowledge and its dissemination has led to several projects.



To his original book he added a companion blog (left), YourDailyShakespeare.com, as a means not only to sell the book but to demonstrate how to illustrate with Shakespeare the points one wishes to make. The site is updated with Jimmie's unique takes on life,

(see **BLOG**, page 4)

SCANNING THE INTERNET NEWSSTAND...

There are a lot of interesting Italy-related stories and Websites worth a look. For example... For non-subscribers, L'ItaloAmericano.com provides a briefly posted sampling of the articles that appear in the print and digital versions of the paper, for example, this current feature on our own [Bill Marinelli](#). Recipes can also be found, like this one for [ribollita](#). Italian-language stories appear, too, including one on [street performers](#) in Naples. If you need your Italian news in English, check out [TheLocal.it](#), including an article on [salami and cancer](#).

The items on the [WeTheItalians.com](#) site tend to have a longer shelf-life. The magazine section has features on Florence's [Boboli Gardens](#), a look at [Sardinian archaeology](#), and – most appropriate for our club this month, a brief profile of [Sacco & Vanzetti](#). There's even a scrumptious-looking recipe for [stuffed, skewered sardines](#).

BLOG OFFERS MORE OF JIMMIE, BEYOND HIS NEWSLETTER COLUMNS

(continued from page 3)

always seen through Bard-colored glasses. A recent post about French fries had four Shakespearian citations.

Jimmie took the concept of his first book and applied it to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Employing a revised methodology, Jimmie proudly said it took "only" three years to write. *Il Nostro Dante Quotidiano* (*Your Daily Dante*), written in Italian, was a project done in collaboration with the Tuscan government. Contact Jimmie at jimmie.moglia@gmail.com to purchase a copy.

He's produced another book, written in Italian and published online, which gives Jimmie's perspective on the history of the United States. *USA e Getta* (*Use and Throw Away*) is available at <http://sakeritalia.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/USA-e-Getta.pdf>.

He's got another book in the works which will detail what he calls "active reading" and the approach to memory training called "philosophic painting" which he first encountered as a high school student in Genoa.

For the past couple of years, Jimmie has been focused on a continuing online project called *Historical Sketches*, available at https://youtu.be/_8gyol-q87A. After thorough research, he's produced a series of 28-minute lectures on topics ranging from Napoleon to St. Joseph, and from histories of Gypsies, the Ukraine and slavery in the United States to an event Jimmie calls "a kind of Woodstock of the 15th Century."

No stranger to Italian readers, nor Italian interviewers for that matter, Jimmie's unusual path – including his teenage stint as a shipboard Country & Western troubadour on the Mediterranean – begs the question, How famous is he in Italy? "I am remarkably *unknown!*" he said, turning to Portia in *The Merchant of*

Venice to continue the thought:

"The lottery of my destiny bars me the right of voluntary choosing."

"You cannot say, 'I'll do this and I'll succeed, and I'll do that and I'll succeed.' Because there are so many components and things you cannot control.

"If my ambition were to become famous, then I would be suffering," he concluded with a wry smile. "But I couldn't care less. That's why I live with a cat!"



TRIAL OF ERRORS DOOMED SACCO AND VANZETTI

(continued from page 1)

"The temper of the times made it the special duty of a prosecutor and a court engaged in trying two Italian radicals before a jury of native New Englanders to keep the instruments of justice free from the infection of passion or prejudice. In the case of Sacco and Vanzetti no such restraints were respected. By systematic exploitation of the defendants' alien blood, their imperfect knowledge of English, their unpopular social views, and their opposition to the war, the District Attorney invoked against them a riot of political passion and patriotic sentiment; and the trial judge connived at—one had almost written, cooperated in—the process."

Jimmie will remind us of the temper of those times and the way many Americans looked upon Italian immigrants during the Roaring Twenties ... and how the conviction and eventual execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the worldwide attention it garnered, still informs us, even 90 years later.