

## HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR DEC. 16

Our holiday happy hour is coming up on **Dec. 16, at 3:30pm**, in the community room at [215 Oswego Summit](#) in Mountain Park. Once again, we'll do appetizers and dessert rather than a full dinner potluck. If your last name falls in the first half of the alphabet (A-L), bring an *hors d'oeuvre* to share. If you're at the back end of the alphabet (M-Z) you're providing something for the back half of the meal: specifically, dessert. If you want something other than coffee or tea to drink, bring that, too.

We'll provide our own entertainment. If you're musical, bring your instrument and we'll put together a holiday ensemble on the fly. If you don't play anything ... well, you can sing Christmas carols, can't you?



*FESTA DELLA BEFANA*  
2017

## LA BEFANA BRINGS FAMILIES TOGETHER

What makes children of all ages smile? Cookies, magic tricks, fairy tales ... and celebrating *la famiglia*! So, mark your calendar for a day of smiles on Jan. 6!

Our annual Italian Epiphany celebration, *Festa della Befana* is right around the corner. And this year, through the luck of the calendar, our celebration falls on the Epiphany itself: **Jan. 6 at 2:30pm at Carvlin Hall at St. Philip Neri Church, 2408 SE 16<sup>th</sup> Av. in Portland.**

The Tuscan Association, *Amici d'Italia* and the Sons of Italy sponsor this event for children aged 3 - 10. Goodies, gifts, magic, stories and a visit from *La Befana* herself all enchant the lucky kids. Children *must* be pre-registered

(see **BEFANA**, page 4)



*FESTA DELLA BEFANA*  
2016

## NEXT MTG:

**SUNDAY, DEC. 16, 3:30**

**215 OSWEGO SUMMIT**

*FESTA DELLA BEFANA*

**SUNDAY, JAN. 6, 2:30**

**CARVLIN HALL**

## THE PREZ SEZ...

BY **GEORGE LAFRAZIA**

It's hard to believe the year is almost over and another Christmas is upon us. We plan a social meeting on Dec. 16 with music of the season and light refreshments. Regarding the food, if your family name ends in A to L bring an appetizer, and those M to Z bring a dessert.



I have asked the musicians I know in the club to bring their instruments to help those of us with little talent make it a song-filled event. If you play something please bring it along and join the fun of an impromptu jam session. I will bring Christmas CDs – Andrea Bocelli and popular carols – to sing along with.

December is dues paying month. I am sure Audrey will be happy accept your check for the next year's dues (see page 4 for details).

(see **TWO**, page 4)

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# MIXING BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE IN A COAST-TO-COAST TREK OF ITALY ... PART 1

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STEVE JOHNSON



I have traveled to Italy ten or so times over the last 40 years for both business and pleasure. My first trip was in 1976 when I was returning to the US from an assignment in Saudi Arabia. My last trip in 2015 was spent in Bologna, studying Italian at the Madrelingua Italian Language School. I have traveled extensively in northern and central Italy, but I had not traveled south of Rome. That changed this fall, with a trip that was several years in the making...

During 2017 several ideas and opportunities began to gel. The Portland Bologna Sister City Organization began planning a group trip to Bologna. Since I am the Secretary of this fine

organization, my travel juices started flowing.

For several years I have enjoyed dinners organized by Portland Food Adventures. PFA has organized trips to Spain for several years and in 2017 they held an “Eating” tour of Tuscany. My son and his wife celebrated their fortieth birthdays on that trip and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. PFA announced a 2018 “Eating” trip to Sicily ... and I started getting hungry! Earlier this year I took the plunge and started planning an Italian Adventure.

The Sicily tour started in late September and I needed to be in Bologna around the middle of October, so I decided to add Naples to my itinerary as an in-between stop. Looking at the calendar, I determined I could spend

(see **LIVING**, page 6)



# CHILDHOOD HOLIDAY MEMORIES FROM ITALY, PORTLAND, AND ELSEWHERE

BY LISA BARGER, CARLO ILIO MANNOCCI, JIMMIE MOGLIA, ROSALIE SCHMITZ, JOSEPHINE MOORE, MARLENE TAEVS, MARYBETH FOSSATI AND KEN KANE

*“What do you remember about Christmas when you were growing up?”* That’s the question *La Lettera Toscana* put to several OregonTuscans recently. Their answers prove that no matter how many holiday seasons have come and gone, there’s still a little kid – or should we say *bambino* – in all of us.

*For some, the memories are local...*

**Lisa Barger:** “Christmas at our house in Milwaukie in the 1950’s and 60’s are some of my dearest memories. The LoPiparo household was filled with Dad, Mom, four sisters and our dog. How our parents made me and my three older sisters always feel like we had the best holidays ever (with just one modest salary), is still a mystery to me ... but they did!



“Dad worked as a baker so on Christmas morn a fresh supply of baked goods was always ready for us girls to devour. Mom didn’t work outside the home and was in charge of cooking the Christmas dinner that always included a huge side of pasta. I mean **HUGE!**

“Barba (uncle) Paul would come by with those huge Hershey candy bars for everyone and our Grandma and Grandpa Centoni would have a huge box of *Torrone* candy – and Italian wine for the adults – to enjoy.

“We always felt being Italian (at any time of year) meant sharing with family, lots of laughter, non-stop talking when we were all together, and massive quantities of pasta!”



**Marybeth Fossati** [Lisa’s childhood friend in Milwaukie]: “When I was a teenager, I found in a holiday magazine instructions to make the traditional Italian *ceppo*, a

triangular wood frame with four levels for a manger scene, gifts, candy and a sprig of rosemary, all lit by candles on the sides of the frame.

“I enlisted my dad to help me make it as a gift to my Italian mother. I painted it red and used empty Campbell Soup cans cut in half to hold the candles. We have displayed it every year since then to celebrate an Italian Christmas.”



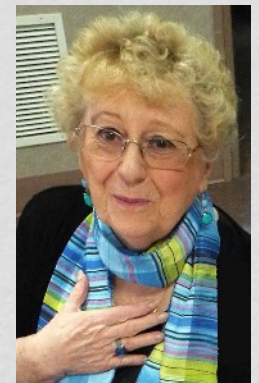
**Rosalie Schmitz:** “From the time my Dad bought a family car in 1950, when I was 10, we’d drive over to Peacock Lane to see the houses decorated with holiday lights. I remember I enjoyed seeing it – I wanted to go every year.



“Not so many people around town then put up lights like they do now. I don’t think anyone on my block on Southeast Franklin put up lights. So, Peacock Lane was special! They didn’t have so many ground displays as they do now. Oh, but the lights! It was a real destination, even though we only lived a mile away.

“In the 1950s, my Mom and I started baby-sitting for the Snodgrass family, who lived just up the street from us. There were seven kids: Daryle (the only girl), Dennis, Drake, Dan, David, Drew and Dean. Each year, Mr. and Mrs. Snodgrass would give us a flocked Christmas tree. Today, you’d know the family for its Seven D’s Nursery!”

**Josephine Moore:** “I recall vividly the Christmas Eve gatherings in Southeast Portland with my grandmother, aunts and uncles, etc. They always served dried Cod fish that was soaked for a week or so to reconstitute. It was then fried and served on a platter.



(see **HOLIDAY**, page 5)



**L'ANGOLO ITALIANO**  
*DI CARLO ILIO MANNOCCI*

*Siamo giunti ad un altro Natale e questo e' il tempo dell'anno in cui ricordiamo tutti i nostri cari e i nostri pensieri vanno a riscoprire ricordi e periodi della nostra vita.*

*Auguro a tutti i soci, amici , conoscenti e a tutti gli Italo-Americani un Buon Natale e un Buon Anno!*

## BEFANA CASTS HER SPELL ON JAN. 6

(continued from page 1)

in order to attend, and there is a limit of 40 participants. To register, please contact Kerry-Lynne Demarinis Brown. Call her at 503.287.3255 or e-mail [difamigliabari@outlook.com](mailto:difamigliabari@outlook.com).

*La Befana* is a compulsive cleaner who missed her chance to accompany the Wise Men to the manger of the Baby Jesus. She's been trying to catch up ever since by stopping by wherever young children are present ... including Carvlin Hall!

Volunteers will be needed that day to set up and clean up. And cookie bakers are needed, too. If you donate cookies please drop them off at Carvlin Hall at St. Philip Neri between 1:00 and 2:00pm – *and please do not use nuts in your recipes.*

Please contact Kerry-Lynne if you can help out in one way or another.

## TWO HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS

(continued from page 1)

A couple of changes – one already in place, the other which may take place – should be noted...

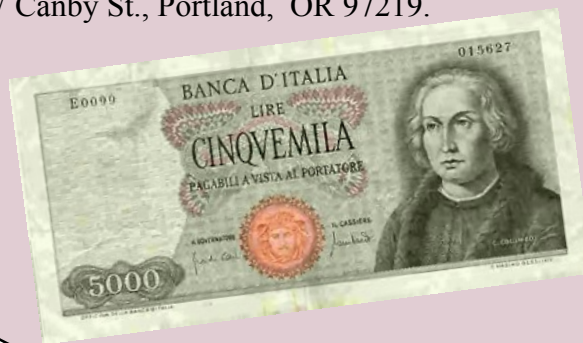
First, this fall Antonella Mancini started college and is working hard, so she has resigned as co-president of the Association. I will miss her enthusiasm and help. Please be patient as I try to keep our meetings interesting and educational with a focus on Italian history and culture.

Second, it might be possible for our meetings to return to Carvlin Hall at St. Philip Neri parish in 2019. I will follow up with them and we can discuss on Dec. 16.

## HEY, YOU'RE DUE!

It's time for the Tuscan Association to collect annual dues. Dues are \$25 for singles and \$35 for couples. Annual dues help pay for coffee, tea, food, printing, mailings, *La Befana*, our Website and MeetUp sites, and, especially, meeting space.

Audrey Perino will gladly accept your dues at the Dec. 16 holiday happy hour, or mail her a check made out to "Tuscan Association of Oregon" to 37 SW Canby St., Portland, OR 97219.



## WHETHER YOUR GARAGE DOOR IS AT THE NORTH POLE, OR IN NORTHERN TUSCANY HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY SEASON!



# HOLIDAYS A TIME FOR THOUGHTFUL REMINISCENCES AMONG OUR CLUB MEMBERS

(continued from page 3)

“It was called *Baccala'*: a real delicacy for everyone *but me!* I remember the odor while it was frying and to this day wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole!

“The sweets from the Puglia area were called *Cartedate*. A thin dough made into a rosette that was deep fried and then doused with honey. I still make them – they're so delicious!”

*For others, they remember the old country...*

**Jimmie Moglia:** “Christmas is a good time to start a session of sweet silent thought and summon up remembrance of things past.



“In Turin, my mother and I went on the hills on the south side of the River Po, to gather the moss for the Nativity Scene. I looked forward to the preparation of the Nativity Scene, including a river with tin-foil to mimic water, comet on the manger, and the positioning of my favorite statues at strategic points on the landscape. Each year there would be a new statuette.



shining on a clear sky, bells were ringing inviting people to the traditional midnight Mass. And after the Mass people were exchanging greetings and wishes now that the terrible war was over, the majority of them converging toward the main square, trying to keep warm with improvised bonfires.

“Suddenly from the road to the north of the village a soft sound of drums was heard and a group with rudimentary torches appeared: a few men carrying the torches, a young woman with child riding a horse, followed by a drummer.

“A surprising, unexpected scene – an impromptu, unplanned and simple revival of the Nativity. They were indeed poor, simple, local farmers whose only riches was the horse – people who decided to give the town a sign of hope and peace improvising the scene.

“I was then 14 years old ... today I am 87 and every Christmas I do shed a tear remembering that December 25, 1945.”

*Some in the club remember growing up neither in Italy nor Portland, but they still have their Christmas memories...*

“On Christmas morning my grandfather would arrive and it was a customary priority to inspect the Nativity Scene and give his impressions. He was lavish with praise, besides being always very generous, and a special person whom I remember with very great affection.

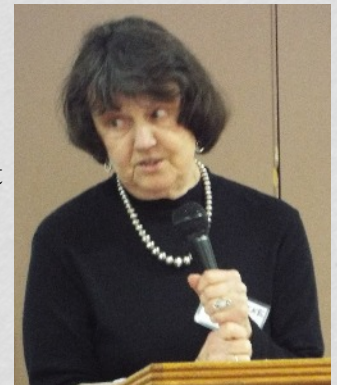
“The gifts were opened after dinner – my mother and grandmother had prepared Piedmontese ravioli and other delicacies.”



**Carlo Ilio Mannocci:** “Christmas 1945 in Italy. The war has been over for eight months; my little Tuscan village was still half-destroyed and accumulations of debris were scattered all over the place.

“It was Christmas Eve, *La Vigilia di Natale*, very cold, stars were

**Marlene Taevs** (who shares her thoughts on growing up a “very naïve eight-year-old” in Nebraska from her current home in Connecticut):



“After dinner, Grandpa Hill took my five young cousins and I to the basement to hear his stories as we sat around the noisy furnace, until we heard lots of activity above us and then sleigh bells and Santa hollering ‘Ho, ho, ho!’

“Finally we came up the outside cellar stairs and in the kitchen door to find the small living room filled with all kinds of presents, mostly wrapped in brown paper. Also in that crowded little house was Santa!  
(see **KNOWING**, page 7)

# LIVING, INVESTING, EATING, DRINKING AND TOURING FOR A MONTH IN ITALY ... HOW COOL IS THAT?

(continued from page 2)

the month of October playing but I would need to be back to Portland around the first of November. I cannot go to Italy without spending time in Venice, since it is my favorite place in *tutto il mondo*, so I added Venice onto the end of the trip.

While these thoughts were percolating, I received an email promoting a “Live and Invest in Italy Conference” which was being held in Abruzzo during October. *Now* my trip was getting *serious*! I have always wanted to visit Trieste so I finalized my trip as, Portland to Sicily, to Naples, to Bologna, to Abruzzo, to Ravenna, to Trieste, to Venice, to Portland. Five weeks of good food and wine!



We made pasta, ragu, roasted fish, and cannoli. For those people who want to know the *best* thing I ate, it was the freshly made *cannoli* (left). We visited several wineries, an olive grower, and many historical sites.



A highlight of the tour was a visit to Cafe Sicilia in Noto. Fans of the Netflix *Chef's Table* series will recognize the name of this delightful purveyor of sweets. Another highlight was a sailboat cruise off the coast when we were in Siracusa. We all jumped into the delightful Mediterranean and swam in the wonderfully warm but salty water. Before my trip, I was slightly apprehensive about traveling in Sicily. After the trip I am an ardent promoter of Sicily. I will return to see more!

(End of Part 1. In our next issue, in February, Steve heads to the mainland.)

The Sicily Tour was put on by Chris Angeles of Portland Food Adventure and Astrid Ensign of Taste of Italy Travel. They were a fantastic team to lead the trip. Astrid first went to Italy as a high school exchange student and lived in Italy for many years. Her knowledge of Italy, its customs, its language and its food were invaluable.

The tour focused on the southeastern quadrant of Sicily which proved fantastic. We started in Catania, at the foot of Mount Etna, traveled to Taormina, then traveled to Modica and Noto before ending up in Siracusa. In Catania, we toured the ancient fish market and purchased fish, vegetables, and other ingredients for a cooking class.



# KNOWING WHAT WAS COMING MADE ONE CHRISTMAS UN-BEAR-ABLE

(continued from page 5)

– who was, unbeknownst to me, Joe the Plumber, Grandma's good friend.

"I remember being in thrall as I sat on Santa's lap, thanking him over and over for the wonderful ice skates he brought me, never noticing that Grandma asked Santa, 'Joe, do you want a piece of cake?'"

"The next summer I learned there was no such thing as Santa Claus and, after being crushed by the news, I felt incredibly embarrassed at how I had gushed my thanks to Santa."



**Ken Kane:** "I opened our attic door in New Jersey one December day and – what to my wide, seven-year-old eyes! – I had found Santa's hiding place for our unwrapped presents. And right there on the stairs, staring back at me, was just what I had hoped for: a stuffed Yogi Bear doll! Oh, was I happy!"

"Until Christmas morning, that is. Knowing what was coming – and not just for me, but for my four siblings – took all the fun out of tearing off the wrapping paper and jumping for joy."



"I learned my yuletide lesson that year: Don't go chasing after Santa's sack. Let Christmas come to you!"

Thanks to all of our contributors, for their trips down Memory Peacock Lane!

To them and to you, may the 2018 holiday season and Christmas "come to you" in a most fabulous and memorable way!

*La Lettera Toscana* is edited by Ken Kane, for the Tuscan Association of Oregon.

If you have feedback, story ideas, photos, a letter to the editor, or any other kind of submission, please e-mail it to:

[ken@woodbloom.com](mailto:ken@woodbloom.com)

or send it to

37 SW Canby St., Portland, OR 97219.

**ROSALIE SCHMITZ:** "I DON'T REMEMBER IF I *REALLY* BELIEVED IN SANTA CLAUS OR NOT, BUT IN THE MID-1940'S I REMEMBER MY MOM WOULD TAKE ME BY BUS DOWNTOWN TO VISIT SANTA AT MEIER & FRANK'S."

Many of us remember the Santaland train that ran on tracks up on the tenth floor of Meier & Frank's. Of course, not only isn't Santaland there anymore, the store itself is long gone.



Attention Rosalie: a portion of that 10<sup>th</sup>-floor Santaland (including the memorable train) has come to life again this month at the Oregon Historical Society downtown.

