

Febbraio 2019

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Tuscan Association of Oregon

# LA LETTERA TOSCANA

## IMMIGRATION OUR TOPIC ON FEB. 17

Our Feb. 17 meeting at 3:30pm in the [Oswego Summit community room](#) features a presentation by Portland State Professor Angela Zagarella. It will be comprehensive, covering Italian history, literature, current affairs and politics – just as you'd expect a college instructor of 26 years might want to do!

Angela is Sicilian. She grew up in Siracusa and studied in Catania, about one hour away. Catania is the second-largest city in Sicily, after Palermo. She moved to the US in 1988.

She's taught Italian – its language, culture and literature – at PSU since 1993. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Italian literature at the University of Oregon. So, on Feb. 17, come ready to learn! Angela's topic will be the impact of immigration on Italy over the past three decades. She previewed her talk recently with *La Lettera Toscana*...

ANGELA  
ZAGARELLA



"Being a native of Italy, but having lived most of my life here, I bridge the two worlds. I go back there every year. But in reality, it's better to be away in order to reflect on what is going on in a country. The distance offers a little perspective, rather than if you are living in that country with all of its day-to-day distractions.

(see **CHANGES**, page 3)

NEXT MTG.:

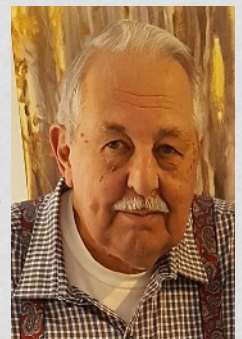
SUNDAY, FEB. 17, 3:30  
215 OSWEGO SUMMIT

AFTER THAT:  
SOMETIME THIS SPRING

## THE PREZ SEZ...

BY GEORGE LAFRAZIA

The holidays are over and a new year has begun. The new year brings many things, my yard has spring in mind with crocus and Lenten Rose in bloom, also new is the time we need to pay our dues.



Our Feb. 17 meeting will bring a very important subject to our attention, one of the most critical issues facing Italy today. Bring a friend to learn about Italy and possibly join our organization. Remember: they do not have to be from Tuscany or even Italian.

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

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# TRAVELING ITALY FOR BUSINESS AND PLEASURE ... PART 2

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STEVE JOHNSON



ON THE WATER NEAR SIRACUSA, SICILY

*(Back in the fall, Tuscan Association member Steve Johnson [above] spent five weeks in Italy. In the last issue of La Lettera Toscana, he told us about his exploits in Sicily. Now the Secretary of the Portland-Bologna Sister City Association moves to the mainland ... and the sister city.)*

I have always enjoyed train travel in Italy. On this trip my travels between cities were all by train. I found a fantastic app called "Trainline" for my iPhone. It allowed me to search for schedules and book all of my train trips while I was on the go. It even provides a boarding pass just like the airlines. I recommend it to all European travelers.

My trip from Siracusa to Napoli was interesting. After traveling up the east coast of Sicily to Messina, the train was loaded onto a large ferry and floated across the Straights of Messina to the Calabrian coast.

Naples was fantastic. I loved the energy and vitality of the city. The old twisted streets were alive and

beckoning. I marveled at the packs of Vespas, Hondas, and other motos. I wish I had the courage to ride one! I spent a wonderful morning at the Archeological Museum, including the Secret Room.

As you may know, the best antiquities from Pompeii are in the Museum. I took a "street food" tour and a day trip to Pompeii. The public transit was my friend and I traveled all over the city. Once I left Sicily, the rest of my stay was booked on AirB&B. I found many nice rooms. The room in Napoli was large with a great balcony with a view of Vesuvius. I will return to Napoli!



MT. VESUVIUS AT DAWN, FROM NAPOLI

I caught an 5:00am train to Bologna since I was meeting up with my Portland-Bologna friends for a 10:00 tour of City Hall. The tour was arranged by our Sister City compatriots from Bologna. In Bologna, the city (or Commune) actually pays the expenses of the Sister City organization and they do not need to rely on donations like we do here in Portland.

At the city hall, we were given a private tour of the civic  
(see **WEDDING**, page 5)



# CHANGES IN POPULATION, POLITICS CAUSE ITALY TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT ITSELF

(continued from page 1)

"Italian society has changed quite a bit in the last 30 years. It has become a multi-cultural society. We used to be by ourselves but since 1989, with the end of the Soviet Bloc and the fall of the Berlin Wall – and also with the way people move and the ways to connect through communication – immigration is a topic not just in Europe, but here and all over the world.

"The way the Italian government is looking at immigration is a very big topic. There is some racism, which makes the topic very controversial and very political.



GABRIELLA  
GUERMANDI

"[At the meeting] I plan to talk about the changes to Italian society during this important historical time and how it connects to the past and what is happening in the

present. Not only are there immigrants coming to Italy, but there is a proliferation of books written by these newcomers, called the 'literature of migration.'

"These are books written by people who live in Italy and speak Italian, and they give another perspective on things. They may be people who have moved to Italy or they may be first-generation Italians. They may have Italian last names but often they are people of color because, for example, they came from Ethiopia and had

Italian fathers. The author Gabriella Ghermandi is one such person. Her novel, *Queen of Flowers and Pearls*, tells us about what it felt like to have an Italian parent and an Ethiopian parent, and she writes about the Ethiopian resistance to Mussolini.

"Another such author is the Algerian immigrant Amara Lakhous. His book, *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*, was even made into a movie.



AMARA  
LAKHOUS

"These people are coming to Italy, and they tell us the about the other side of Italian colonialism. This is something that we don't know about, because all that the Italians heard [from the 1930s through the post-war period] was the propaganda of the regime.

"When I studied in Italy in the 1970s, it was still too soon to talk about these things. But now the difference in time is enough so that we can look back, and these new immigrant authors can tell the other side of the story.

"It's very controversial because historically the Italian literary canon has not included this group of people.

(see **WHO**, page 4)

## L'ANGOLO ITALIANO

DI CARLO ILIO MANNOCCI

*Un saluto e un augurio particolare ai soci e simpatizzanti dell'Associazione Toscana dell'Oregon per un sereno e prolifico 2019. Non vi parlo della situazione odierna in Italia, la Professoressa Zagarella ve la illustrerà con competenza e professionalismo alla riunione del 17 febbraio prossimo. Sono soprattutto felice di vedere che dopo 23 anni siamo ancora funzionanti e continuiamo le nostre attività culturali e sociali nella comunità italo-americana di Portland.. A tutti voi i miei auguri più sinceri sperando di poter essere con voi il 17 prossimo.*

## HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Thanks to those who have helped sustain the Tuscan Association for another year. As for the others, what are you waiting for?! Dues are \$25 for singles and \$35 for couples.

Audrey Perino will gladly accept your dues at the Feb. 17 meeting, or mail her a check made out to "Tuscan Association of Oregon" to 37 SW Canby St., Portland, OR 97219.





## FESTA DELLA BEFANA BRINGS TOGETHER CHILDREN OF ALL AGES



Thanks to everyone who made the annual *Festa della Befana* celebration a success! From the cookie bakers, to storyteller Kerry-Lynne Demarinis-Brown, to magician Bob Eaton, to Louise Ramunno-Johnson as *La Befana* herself, to the set-up and clean-up crews, to Patricia Badia-Johnson for these photos, it was a great day for the kids and the event sponsors, *Amici d'Italia*, Sons of Italy and the Tuscan Association. *Grazie mille!*



## “WHO AND WHAT ARE ITALIAN?” LEADS TO NEW AND CHALLENGING ANSWERS

(continued from page 3)

“It becomes political because it raises questions of what is Italian and what isn’t Italian, and who it is who determines this. It’s a broad topic and one that makes people stop and reflect. And it’s not just peculiar to Italy but is something that has happened to other countries, too. For example, in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, and even so today, this is reflected in Chicano literature.

“This change in the literary canon happened earlier in many countries with a colonial past, and they’ve dealt with it. Today, it’s an area that is allowing Italians to revisit some of our past because Italy had some colonial past, but it’s not something we talk much about.

“How is Italy responding to these changes? There is a big divide in Italy about immigration, just as there is in this country. This is what we’ll talk about on Feb. 17.

“The Mediterranean has always been an area of circulation and connection when it comes to people. But these days, some people want to create barriers and walls. Now, you have North African authors moving to Italy – those countries consider themselves Mediterranean, *not* North African. It’s a very interesting way to look at that part of the world.

“I’m not afraid to talk about it politically. My take is always political, because how can you *not* talk about politics? Otherwise all you’d talk about is pizza and *mandolino*, which is boring!”



## WEDDING VOWS, FABULOUS FOOD MAKE BOLOGNA A MEMORABLE STOP

*(continued from page 2)*

government chambers. Our tour leaders, Phil Potestio and Sally Hudson, reenacted their wedding vows in the very red matrimonial room. What a moment! On Saturday we were treated to a wonderful dinner in a penthouse overlooking Piazza Santo Stefano. It was very nice, finally, to meet our other half. I have an affinity for Bologna, so I will return, probably for some more Italian lessons.

After a nice train ride, I arrived in Pescara in the province of Abruzzo for my "Live and Invest in Italy" Conference. Abruzzo is located about halfway down the Adriatic coast. It is about a three-hour bus ride from Rome. It has beaches and mountains, including a famous ski area.

There were about 45 people at the conference, mostly of retirement age. Some were actively looking to relocate to Italy but most like me were just "kicking the tires." If anybody is interested, I can put them onto a great opportunity for truffle growing!

The conference was interesting, but the highlight was a couple of tours put on by real estate agents. The mayor of Citta Sant'Angelo, packed up about 20 of us on a bus, took us to his mountaintop city,



where he arranged tours of a winery, a tomato grower and an olive oil producer. Then he gave a presentation at City Hall and hosted a dinner at a local restaurant. He

really wanted to attract some foreigners with \$\$ to relocate to his city! It was a beautiful city, right out of the guide books. If I was moving it would be a possibility.

Abruzzo is a poor region compared to the northern cities. Its main claims to fame are its beaches which are packed in the summer by vacationing Italians. I could imagine all of the beach fun going on in the summer!



Over the weekend another real estate agent took about 15 of us on a tour of several other cities in Abruzzo. We saw many houses and apartments which were for sale ... some were better than others. In several little towns, we were greeted by the mayor, the chief of police and many residents. Along the coast we saw several interesting *trabocchi* fishing huts. I liked the area, and I will most likely return.

*(End of Part 2. Next time, Steve winds up his whirlwind tour with a visit to his favorite city, Venice.)*

