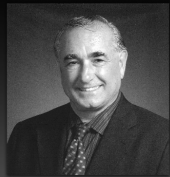


IAHF NEWS

ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER • JANUARY 2012 • FOUNDED AUGUST 5, 1975 • CELEBRATING 36 YEARS

President's Message

by Ken Borelli



IF WINTER COMES

The holidays are winding down and on behalf of the IAHF Board, our hopes and wishes for a wonderful New Year. I am personally now joining the chorus of those who say, any year, and, actually, any day, is a good time without major health problems (*allora, anche buona salute per 2012*). As we go into winter, it may seem the darkness of the hours kind of slows thing down, but as every good son or daughter of a *contadini* knows, winter is a very busy time of the year. For any one who tends a garden, nature does not leave much slack time for a lot of rest. A stunning summer garden reflects a lot of winter work. Its no difference in one's personal life, as well as with life at the IAHF.

So many of our events, projects and activities are being planned during these winter months. Likewise, hall upgrades and repairs are begriming to be assessed in preparation for future activities, along with developing a work plan and activity flow for the year. Committees, too, are begriming to re-group for our projects and our on going foundation activities. To some extent, the starkness of winter is an illusion, because behind the scene is the on-going organizational planning by several of our standing committees as we gear up for our 2012

events. There used to be some down time associated with Festa planning and that, too, has changed. What we experience at the Festa in August has its roots in January's planning. The Scholarship, Festa, Membership, and Finance Committee have already started their new committee work, with Hall Marketing and Cultural soon to meet.

This year, too, we hope to infuse our historical photo collection with additional upgrades, and expand a greater appreciation of Italian American life in Santa Clara County with a mobile exhibition. Likewise as noted, a part of our foundation is social support. A sense of networking could really be

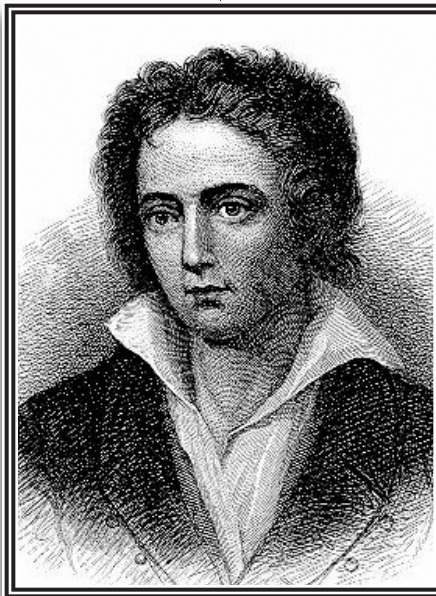
enhanced by receiving a "sunshine committee" that checks in on our members, especially those under the weather, and simply let them know we care. In addition, our on going activities, such as regional lunches, language classes and film series, are resuming from the holiday break, so life is returning to a very active pace at the IAHF.

As members, please consider being a part of this winter preparation and programming at the IAHF. As noted, all the committees invite your participation at what ever level you care to support your

interest. Simply contact Rosa at the IAHF office of your interest and we will get back to you ASAP. It is actually great fun, a way to connect with your interest, and help us share our great traditions and heritage with our family and friends throughout the valley. The interesting thing about our winter activities is how fast it all flies. My favorite winter

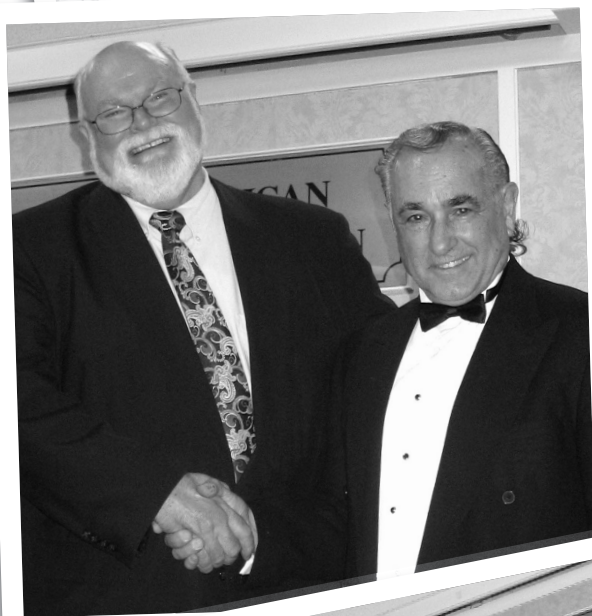
quote use to be from Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*.... "O Wind, if winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" At this stage in the life of the IAHF I want to say, we just need a little more "winter time", before we get up to full swing! With your volunteer help and support we can do it. Incidentally, the

famous English poet, Shelley, was one of the original "bohemians" and reading about his life online defies what an individual can do in just 30 short years. Shelley lived at the time he wrote this poem in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. He died in a boating accident off the coast of Viareggio in 1822, and is interned in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Today he is considered one of England's greatest poets, but during his life time he was considered a wild rebellious kid (and he was all that and much more)! 🍷



Happy New Year!!

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA!



Photos by Judy Verona Joseph

THE FOUNDING OF THE WORLD FAMOUS SAN FRANCISCO OPERA



In the summer I attended a series of operas at the San Francisco Opera House. During one of the intermissions I happened to see a plaque dedicated to the founders of the original SFO company. What I found of interest was that all of the founders were Italian Americans. For the most part I never had heard of them before, and wondered about their tale... how did they come together... what motivated them, and how did such a major world opera company come into being. I think the mystery is now solved, and I want to pass on to you, by way of SF Chronicle Reporter Carl Nolte, who writes in his on going column "Native Son". Mr. Nolte gave the IAHF permission to share with our readers. The article is entitled "Poker Player Dealt the City a Generous Hand With Opera". The entire article is found in the Sunday, December 18 edition of the paper (P:A2). Mr. Nolte notes:

"...The San Francisco Opera is one of the city's crown jewels, but not many people know that this cultural gem grew out of a poker game in North Beach. At this time of the year, it is nice to remember that the opera was made possible by a gift from an Italian American businessman.

"His name was Giuseppe Brucia, who was born in a little town in Sicily and came to the United States just after the turn of the 20th century. Like a lot of others of his time, he believed that hard work in a new country would lead to success and it did.

As his grandson Larry Brucia tells it, one night in 1918 or 1919, he and nine of his friends and some of them relatives, (some just pals) were at their usual card game. One of the guest was Gaetano Merola, an Italian conductor with the San Carlo Opera Co. Merola had conducted in San Francisco many times; he knew that the city had a long opera history.

So, someone said that night, if San Francisco likes opera so much, why doesn't the city have its own opera company? Great idea, the men said. And they pledged to back and finance a San Francisco Opera. Merola went to work and after some time the company was formed. The first performance would be in June 1922, at the Stanford football stadium (in Santa Clara County!). The story goes that Martinelli (the star) had one condition: he wanted to be paid \$15,000 up front. No money, no opera star. Brucia and the other 9 men went to A.P. Giannini, head of the Bank of Italy, and asked for a business loan. Giannini asked for a collateral, but only Brucia stepped up. He signed a personal guarantee.

And the show went on.... 30,000 people saw the first season of the San Francisco Opera at Stanford... "Without Giuseppe Brucia, there never may have been a San Francisco Opera," said David Gockley, the current opera general director. Giuseppe Brucia raised his family to love and support grand opera. He died in 1974 and his son Joseph continued his work. The family always believed that opera was not just for wealthy people, and in 2006, Joseph Brucia put up the money to simulcast a performance of "Madama Butterfly" on a giant screen in the Civic Center.

Joseph Brucia died the next year at the age of 92. And every year the Opera presents a free performance. This year's was at AT&T Park. 30,000 people came. This fall, Mary Brucia Bonura, the last surviving child of Giuseppe Brucia, received an award from the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society in recognition of the family's service to the Opera. Last month she celebrated her 100th birthday. A perfect day: she went to the opera her father helped bring to life."

What a story, and what a family! A special thanks to Carl Nolte for sharing this fascinating story and a timely reminder, too, of "an immigrants dream". The community always will need these dreams and inspirations to keep us going. I am particularly grateful that the IAHF can also share this legacy with our members. In the end, that is really what heritage is all about, the continuity and passing on of our values and traditions to the next generation. With special appreciation to the Brucia family, too, for their gift through three generations of providing music and vision to our community. *Per la famiglia Brucia, "grazie tante!" - by Ken Borelli*

SAVE THE DATE!

THE ITALIAN FAMILY FESTA
RETURNS TO GUADALUPE RIVER
PARK & GARDENS
ON
SATURDAY, AUGUST 25
AND
SUNDAY, AUGUST 26, 2012



CELEBRITY BARTENDER NIGHT WITH DR. FRANK FISCALINI



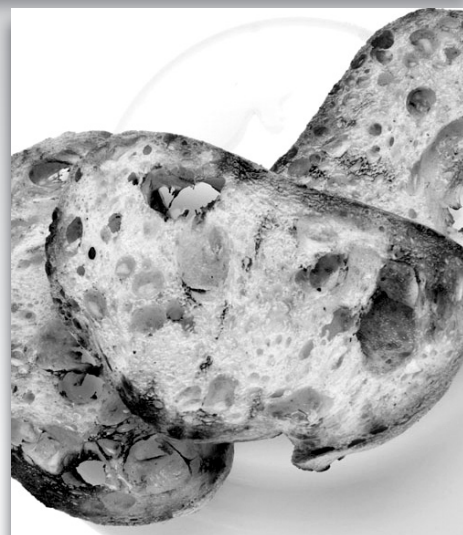
- *Wednesday, January 25, 2012*
- *At the beautiful Silicon Valley Capital Club in San Jose*
- *5:30 pm to 7:30 pm*
- *Proceeds will go to the Little Italy San Jose*
- *For more information, call 408-641-7573*

BUONA BRUSCHETTA!

Tuscany, Italy - From mid-October to the end of December everybody in Tuscany gets ready for their first bruschetta (pronounced "broo-SKET-ta") of the season. Hard to find a simpler dish than an autumn bruschetta. At this time of the year you won't find any fresh tomatoes or basil on it. Just the essentials: a slice of bread and a generous serving of Tuscany's peppery Extra Virgin Olive Oil. There are two rites of passage to your first bruschetta of the olive picking season. The first is by eating it right at the frantoio (mill/press), literally fresh from the olive press. Nothing nicer after a long week of olive picking and the resulting backache, than that welcoming smile and a lovely slice of bread dripping with the frantoio's freshly pressed green oil.

Then there is the *variazione del tema* (lit., variation of the theme). To taste your new oil in all of its shades, it's an imperative to repeat the procedure first thing you arrive back home. A few slices of bread are toasted on the fire or in the oven, before you drizzle the green golden liquid on top of the toasted bread. Once you've tasted it the essential way, you are free to add a bit of salt, or swipe the bread with a clove of garlic before pouring the oil on it. Obviously with so simple a dish, the ingredients have to be of prime quality. Nevertheless be generous with the oil.

After the first bite of bruschetta covered in your very own oil, you'll remember why the olive presser's farewell wasn't any of the usual greetings. A simple Ciao or Arrivederci won't do. There is only one salute adequate to the sacredness of this moment – *Buona Bruschetta!* 🍷



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WON'T YOU HELP??

This photo was shared with me at the IAHF Festa Cultural Tent this summer by Ben Paradiso. Ben is now in his 90's. The photo was taken when he was a young child helping out at a cherry packing plant around 1922. It was taken at the Nick Infantino orchard approximately around Northrup and Pedro Streets. Today, of course, the orchards are all paved over, but the photos do highlight the agricultural roots of our community, as well as the sense of family life, too. This was a family unit, and that strong and loving bond is exemplified in this photo. So while the pastoral life may have passed away, our appreciation of our Italian American family life does not need to do so. This is one more reason why our IAHF Photo Collection needs to be updated, and Italian American life in the "Valley of Heart's Delight" be documented. Won't you help? -- by Ken Borelli 🍷



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The IAHF has a collection of folding metal chairs for sale for the *incredible* price of only \$3 each for IAHF members and \$5 each for non-members. The chairs are in good condition and useful for a variety of purposes, like big Italian parties. So, if you need some good, sturdy folding chairs (and you know that a few would come in handy), please call Rosa at the IAHF office at 408-293-7122 for more information. 🍷



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*Deceased

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IAHF NEWS

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IAHF News is published monthly by The Italian American Heritage Foundation.

Editor: Primo Public Relations
Design: John Romano Creative

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- 🍷 January 19
Luncheon - Liguria
- 🍷 February 5
Dinner and Instalation of Board of Directors
- 🍷 February 16
Luncheon - Puglia

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IAHF Christmas tree at

Christmas in the Park, San Jose.

Many thanks to the volunteers that made this happen.

ITALIAN MOVIE NIGHT

La Prima Cosa Bella

(The First Beautiful Thing - 2010)

This beautiful and touching comedic drama was filmed on location in Livorno and stars award-winning actress and acclaimed Italian beauty Micaela Ramazzotti. The film follows a strong and optimistic mother raising her two children against all odds. Throughout grief and pain she teaches her family to remain open and loving and to cherish the little joys in life. Famed Italian director Paolo Virzì has crafted a heartwarming tale filled with unforgettable and emotional true-to-life performances that will make you laugh and cry, sometimes both at the same time. 🍷

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