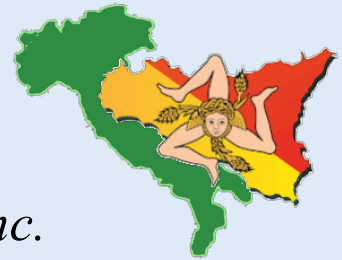




Il Notiziario

[The Newsletter]
of the

Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.



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Volume 4, Issue 1

Editor: A.A. Grillo

Winter: January 1, 2023

News from our Executive Board

by Frank "Ciccu" Bruno

Buon Anno Nuovo a Tutti,

Wow! A year has passed and a new year is in front of us. What a great 2022 FOI had. At the end of October, the FOI Monterey Chapter, headed up by Vincenzo and Roselyn Malfitano, had a successful screening of the award-winning documentary *Potentially Dangerous: "When it was a Crime to be Italian"*. (See the article later in this newsletter.)

We ended the year with three additional FOI Family Rosary evenings. We will continue the Rosary's in 2023, dates to follow via email.

We also ended 2022 with a record-breaking membership, adding 35 new members this year to now total 170. A fantastic achievement. The word has spread that FOI is doing great work to preserve, protect, and promote our Sicilian & Italian cultural heritage. Renewal notices will be sent out to you soon if your membership is ready to renew.

In this busy year, we held a That's Italian Dinner Show, a very successful High Tea-Italian Style event in Pittsburg, two well-attended screenings of the *Potentially Dangerous* documentary in Pittsburg and Monterey, a historical talk at IL Cenacolo-Italian Cultural club in San Francisco, a FOI Family Rosary every month, a raffle for a Puerto Vallarta Costa Sur vacation for two with the lucky 2022 winner Catherine DiMaggio of Salinas, a volunteer party, a Sicilian style three-hour dinner prepared by FOI chefs held at Frank & Robin Bruno's home in Novato won by Claude Grillo at the That's Italian dinner, published four quarterly newsletter issues and we gave away 10 college scholarships at our annual Old Fashion Sicilian Picnic in Martinez totaling \$10,000. Did I forget anything?

A special thanks to our major donors for their support, trust, and belief in what we are doing.

Our gratitude also extends to the outstanding contributions of Mike Inzerillo, Vincenzo & Roselyn Malfitano, Vincent Ferrante and Wolfgang Croskey for their respective events. Mille Grazie.

Your FOI Executive Board will be gathering soon for a planning session to road map 2023. Stay tuned. But we do need more of our members to step up and help us as we are getting older and it's getting more difficult for the same small group to sustain these wonderful events. So, please consider helping by CONTACTING US AT FRIENDSOFISOLA@gmail.com.

I don't know how we will top 2022 but stay tuned as we try to do so.

Ciao! Frank Bruno,
Co-founder & President of FOI

To preserve, protect, and promote the Italian-Sicilian cultural heritage among the descendants, immigrants, citizens and friends of Isola delle Femmine, Sicily and around the world.

Co-founder & Chairman of the Board: V.S. Di Maggio, Co-founder & President: F.B. Bruno,
Vice-President & Secretary: M. Pappas-Coniglio, Treasurer: V.M. Mafitano D.M.D.,
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Historian: V.S. Ferrante, Historian & Researcher: A.A. Grillo, Membership Advisor: C. Bonanno

News from Isola

by Agata Sandrone & Vincent S. Ferrante

Joe DiMaggio Day in Isola and Martinez

The 25th of November marked the 108th anniversary of Joe DiMaggio's birth. Many knew him as "Joltin' Joe" or the "Yankee Clipper" or just "Joe D" due to his world fame as a ball player for the New York Yankees in the 1930s and '40s, but he was, and still is, also important to Martinez, California where he was born and to Isola delle Femmine where both of his parents were born and raised. Thanks to the efforts of Stefano Bologna and other Isolani, there is a Joe DiMaggio museum in Isola with much memorabilia related to the ball player. Martinez also has an organization called Joe DiMaggio Hometown Hero Project of Martinez with a focus to maintain Joe DiMaggio's legacy in the town of his birth.

Agata Sandrone, the curator of the Joe Di Maggio museum in Isola, reports that the museum was open to the public on the 25th for a special celebration in honor of the anniversary of Joe's birth.



Isola Museum Memorabilia Display

She wrote that they are grateful to Stefano and his family for providing the facilities to house the museum which allows the continued "recounting of the deeds of the legendary Joltin' Joe, of his family, but above all to remember all those who emigrated leaving their land in pursuit of the American dream." She also added that the museum is planning for a special Christmas event titled "Natale in Casa Di Maggio".

Also, on November 25, our friends with the Joe DiMaggio Hometown Hero Project of Martinez held a fundraiser celebrating Joe's birthday at the Martinez Yacht Club. FOI Historian Vincent Ferrante and wife Nicole attended this year's event as well as FOI Martinez Chapter President Mike Inzirello and his wife Alise. The event was very well attended and Zandonella's Catering provided a delicious variety of lasagna dinner offerings. A live auction was conducted to raise funds for the project with the marquee items consisting of several authenticated Joe DiMaggio autographed memorabilia including a baseball, a baseball card and a baseball bat graciously donated by Joe's granddaughter and Hometown Hero Project board member Paula DiMaggio Hamra. Winning bids were eye opening.

The Hometown Hero Project volunteer organization is made up of a board of influential Martinez locals headed by President Rick Aldridge. Funds are being raised in the hopes of providing support for a possible future museum which would host a variety of Joe DiMaggio exhibits including the beautifully restored "Jotin' Joe" pleasure boat and themed displays as well as future plans for a mural and a statue honoring the Yankee Clipper. To learn more please visit their website at martinezhero.org

There is more about the DiMaggio connection to Martinez in the History Section.



Present for the Museum Celebration:
Benedetto Nevoloso, Tonino Scala,
Agata Sandrone, Orazio Billeci,
Stefano Bologna, Toti Lucido.



The Joltin' Joe Cruising Lake Tahoe

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What's Happening

Two significant activities filled our third quarter calendar.

First, a presentation made to the San Francisco based Italian club, Il Cenacolo, reviewed by Frank "Ciccu" Bruno:

Their club motto, "ITALA GENTE DALLE MOLTE VITE," is translated literally as "Italian people of the many lives," or, more poetically, "Many-lived Italian people."

The name "cenacolo" means "supper room", but when capitalized is taken to refer to Da Vinci's *Last Supper*. Their Mission Statement is: Il Cenacolo is an organization that preserves, enhances and encourages all aspects of Italian arts, language and culture and recognizes the unique contribution of Italian heritage that is intertwined in the history and life of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Frank Bruno was contacted by their program chair Lisa Sciandra, who said that she found us via our website. She asked us to give a talk on the history of Pittsburg and its connection to Isola delle Femmine. By way of establishing this contact, Lisa joined us at the Pittsburg screening of the *Potentially Dangerous* documentary.

Our presentation was made on October 6, 2022 at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club in North Beach. Chairman V.S. DiMaggio, Vincent Ferrante, and Frank Bruno presented an extensive historical review of Pittsburg, forces in Sicilia, which fomented the large emigration at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the continued relationship between their descendants and those in Isola delle Femmine. Vincent, Frank, and Alexander Grillo, who was unable to attend, developed the PowerPoint slide presentation. Lunch was provided and after the presentation there were many questions and expressions of interest. Vincent, Pittsburg historian, did an excellent job covering the history of Pittsburg and the Delta as well as answering questions that arose.

Thank you, Alexander and Vincent, for putting this important historic presentation together.

Second, a Monterey screening of the documentary *Potential Dangerous: "When it was a crime to be Italian"*, reviewed by Vincenzo "Vicenz" Malfitano

The first event hosted by the Monterey Chapter of The Friends of Isola took place October 19, 2022 with the screening of the Documentary *Potential Dangerous: "When it was a crime to be Italian"*. Eighty-one attendees were comfortably accommodated in theater type seats of the Grand Room of the Monterey Elks Club.

FOI President Frank Bruno and FOI Treasurer and Director of the Monterey Chapter, Vincenzo Malfitano, officiated at the event.



Cenacolo Presentation at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club



Vincenzo Malfitano Welcomes Attendees

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Vincenzo welcomed the attendees with a short introduction in Sicilian. He took time to explain that The Friends of Isola organization does not just include immigrants and their descendants from Isola delle Femmine, but rather includes those from the whole of Sicily, including Marettimo, Trapani, Capaci, Terasini with its Favarotta district, Sferracavallo, San Vito lo Cap, Palermo and all points in between. FOI encompasses and celebrates all Sicilian immigrants and their descendants, our strong compassionate ties and our family values. He then went on to remind everyone of the importance of our Sicilian roots and heritage, noting the incredible contributions that the Sicilian immigrants made to the building of our nation. He pointed out a few of the notables that were in attendance to show the various fields of endeavor in which many of the Sicilian descendants are involved, such as The Chairman of Friends of Isola, Mr. V.S. DiMaggio, Dr. Alexander Grillo, Editor of our popular quarterly newsletter *Il Notiziario*, Mr. Vincent Ferrante, FOI Historian and Curator of the Pittsburg Historical Museum, Mr. Bert Cutino, proprietor of the Nationally known Sardine Factory in Monterey, and United States Representative, the Honorable Jimmy Panetta.

The event left many of the attendees emotional and tearful as they recounted how members of their own families were affected by the World War II treatment of Italian-Americans.

To cap off the event, Roselyn Malfitano organized Members of FOI Monterey Chapter to bake hundreds of authentic Sicilian cookies, which were enjoyed by all. A big Thank You to all the attendees, Members of the Monterey Chapter for their participation and The Monterey Elks for providing a very nice venue. We look forward to those non-members in attendance deciding to join FOI as members.

The Monterey Chapter will be scheduling events in the coming New Year that will again bring together family and friends to enjoy one another's company.

Ciao a Tutti
Vicenz



Attendees Listen to the Introduction



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I Ricordi d'Isola [Memories of Isola]

by Orazio Sansonini

A History of Isola's Palazzo Comunale

The Palazzo Comunale [Town Hall] of Isola delle Femmine has been recently restored inside and out. It now looks majestic and elegant, dressed in white on the side facing inland where the entrance is located and white and pink on the side facing the sea just beyond the Piazza Pittsburg.

The masonry wall where the Town Hall of Isola delle Femmine stands did not yet exist, when in 1176, William II, the Good King of Sicily, granted by his famous edict the Tonnara [tuna fishery] of the Island of Fimi, along with many privileges and gifts, to Teobaldo, first Abbot of the cathedral of Monreale. (For more information about this naming of the Island of Fimi and the Tonnara, refer to an article on the Friends of Isola website: <https://friendsofisoladellefemmine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Origin-of-Name-Isola-delle-Femmine.pdf>) At that time, the Tonnara had already existed for some undocumented period, but not the masonry construction which was built around 1400. The front of this masonry work ran from the location of the current town hall to the private houses at the corner with Via Roma. A mighty arch led to the Baglio, a large enclosed space surrounded by walls where nets and fishing tools were deposited and where the catch was processed to be preserved in salt in wooden barrels. It also included a courtyard and accommodation for the monks, a chapel, service rooms, and lodgings for fishermen and other workers. The Baglio of Isola was still identifiable in the post-war years in a closed courtyard behind the town hall surrounded by humble and rustic fishermen's houses. Today it has been totally transformed with modern houses, facing Piazza Pittsburg and the sea beyond with a small anchorage for the tuna boats.



An Early Picture of the Building that Became the Palazzo Comunale of Isola delle Femmine
The Masonry Wall in Front Extends Far to the Right

Of the complex of masonry works and equipment of the Tonnara, transformed over the centuries, today there is only a memory supported by faint traces. In the early 1800s, the Conti [Counts] Pilo of Capaci, Lords of Isola delle Femmine, built their "Casina al Mare" [small house by the sea] for occasional stays with their family. This construction was on the west wing of the buildings with the old Baglio della Tonnara. By 1820, the people of Capaci became irritated with the Count continually spending so much time in Isola that a serious revolt ensued and the Capaciotti [people of Capaci] destroyed the Pilo castle and home in Capaci. The Count refused to rebuild his castle and home in Capaci and was thus forced to take refuge at his Casina al Mare. Then in 1830, Count Pilo sold the casina, which would later become the town hall of Isola. By then the building had been equipped with a double external staircase, accessed through an arch.

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Isola's Completely Refurbished Palazzo Comunale,
The Inland Face with the Entrance in View.

Since then it has undergone radical transformations and expansions, such as the continuous work on the existing upper floor adding other rooms with three more windows on the inland side and three on the sea side with the splendid view of Piazza Pittsburg and the statue of the fisherman, the small marina and via Monterey. Finally, last year's complete restoration resulted in the elegant building described in the opening sentences of this story.

Several decades later in the 1940s, it was purchased by the Podestà [medieval name for the highest city office holder], the lawyer Vincenzo Di Maggio, for the sum of 40,000 lire to be used for the Town Hall. In the early 1950s, some rooms were used for an elementary school. I remember this well having also attended elementary school for two years right there.



Isola's Completely Refurbished Palazzo Comunale,
The Seaside Face.

A Bit of History that Is Ours

by Vincent S. Ferrante

The Martinez Side of Joe DiMaggio

As many of you know, Joe DiMaggio, The Yankee Clipper and one of Major League Baseball's most decorated players of All-Time, was born right here in Martinez, California.

When on the west coast Joe lived with his sister Marie in San Francisco's Marina District, a home which he purchased in the late 1930s. What's lesser known by many is that Joe would visit Martinez, especially close relatives, on a regular bases including the holidays, quite often partaking in sport fishing and duck hunting in the local waters of the Carquinez Strait. This article sheds a little light on the subject as told by some of those who were there.

Joe's father Giuseppe arrived in America about 1899, initially settling in the large fishing village of Black Diamond (present day Pittsburg), eventually relocating to Martinez amongst many famiglia and paesani. About 1902, Giuseppe's wife Rosalie (Mercurio) and daughter Nellie arrived from Isola delle Femmine, Sicily. The family settled in the Sicilian fishermen's colony along Granger's Wharf. (The name grew to include collectively the homes in the area of the wharf.) Many of Giuseppe's and Rosalie's close relatives, including their siblings from their native Isola, lived in this colony. The Mercurio family owned a couple of homes near present day Berrellesa St. and Mercurio Way and that's where the DiMaggio family settled. By the following year, their family started to grow with the birth of Mamie, followed by Thomas, Mary, Michael, Frances, Vince and finally Joe in 1914. Eventually the family moved to San Francisco's North Beach to be closer to an eye specialist for daughter Frances. It was there in The City where Dominic was born in 1917 and where the children were raised to adulthood. But Martinez remained the locus of their extended family of close relatives.

Joe's first wedding was to Hollywood actress Dorothy Arnold in 1939 at St. Peter & Paul Church in San Francisco. YouTube video will show that the church and surrounding were mobbed by adoring fans, reportedly 20,000, but Joe would often seek the "seclusion" and closeness of relatives in Martinez. A historical marker indicates that a wedding reception took place at the home of Joe's Aunt Frances and Uncle Salvatore DiMaggio on 236 Buckley St. This would have been in the heart of the Sicilian fisher families' section of town among Joe's large extended family. That close-knit neighborhood included the homes of my father's maternal DiMaggio and Billeci clan on the same street. Cousins Pete and Mary DiMaggio Amato, owners of Amato's Restaurant and Bar, were also hosts to Joe and Dorothy as they stayed the night at their Howard St. residence before embarking on their honeymoon. This fact is shared during the Martinez Museum historical home tours. ...But my Amato cousins will tell you just the same.

There is a locally famous photo of brothers Vince and Jack Amato (sons of Pete Amato and Mary) holding a nice sized sturgeon tied to a broomstick with Joe in the center as well as an accompanying photo with his cousin Chucky DiMaggio. This photo was taken at Amato's Bar on Ferry St., a regular stopping point for Joe. Amato's of course was known for delicious Italian family homestyle food. Joe and Chucky would also partake in the Friday lunches in the back room which was reserved for close family, county officials and the political elite of Martinez. Vince and Jack would keep a stock of baseballs on hand for Joe to sign for local children, more often than not younger cousins. My father was a first cousin of the Amatos with Mary being the elder sister of my Nanna Marion DiMaggio. It was at Amatos Bar as a teenager in 1978 that I was asked by Vince Amato if I wanted Joe's autograph. With eyes lit up and without hesitation I said yes! Low and behold several weeks later dad came home with a personalized autographed baseball which I treasure to this very day.



Joe between Vince & Jack Amato with prize Sturgeon at Amato Bar

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Joe greatly enjoyed hunting and fishing with local legend, cousin and “running buddy” Chucky. He was called a “delta outlaw” by some but a colorful character to those that knew him best. Also, along at times for the excursions aboard the famed pleasure boat “Joltin’ Joe” Chris Craft were cousins Harry Russo and a young Tom Bellecci Jr. The “Joltin’ Joe” was a beautiful wooden boat that was given to Joe in 1949 on “Joe DiMaggio Day” by the New York Yankees on behalf of the Yankee fans. Joe kept it in Martinez under the care of his cousin Mike DiMaggio. As of late, led by the local Sons of Italy, Diablo Valley Lodge, the boat has been restored to award winning condition.

Joe, always with his sister Marie, were frequent visitors to Martinez during the holidays. Thanksgiving was often spent at the home of cousin Harry Russo on Alhambra Valley Ave. along with many other relatives for a traditional Thanksgiving meal, Italian style, including homemade ravioli of course. Christmas and other holidays were spent at the home of his cousins Tom and Mary (DiMaggio) Bellecci on Escobar St., often 30 people deep as recalled by cousins Todd DiMaggio Mather and Debbie Bellecci McKillop. They enjoyed a feast of traditional home cooked Italian ravioli, fresh crab, calamari, cioppino and pies made from scratch along with traditional American servings. The family surnames in attendance included DiMaggio, Bellecci, Cardinali, Enea, Lucido, Mather, McKillop, Mercurio, Pizzamenti, and Viglienzoni to name a few. Names that we all know and can easily find in our own family trees. The Bellecci house served as a home base of sorts as Joe had a close connection with his cousin Mary. Word would travel quickly whenever Joe was in town and it wouldn’t take long for the local autograph seekers to begin knocking on the door. It was up to Mary to draw the line and turn people away in an effort to protect Joe and to allow him to relax in the comforts of family without being disturbed.

Bob Cellini remembers with fondness that in 1964, “The Clipper” was on hand to speak to his youth baseball team for which his father Lloyd coached. This was at the request of Chucky DiMaggio whose son-in-law Lee Newgard also coached and his grandson Ron Newgard played. Joe signed autographs and posed for a group photo which is treasured in and around Martinez. In the 1970s, Tom Bellecci Jr. was asked by Mayor Menesini to request that Joe throw out the first pitch for the DiMaggio Baseball Fields dedication at Waterfront Park. Joe obliged and young cousin Jeff McKillop was on the receiving end of that “First Pitch.”



Joe with the Youth Baseball Team
Cousin Chucky behind his right shoulder

Joe also enjoyed fresh fruit, and with first cousin Dominic DiMaggio and Dom’s grandson Todd Mather, would make the rounds at the homes of friends and relatives to pick lemons, oranges and other offerings. When Joe spotted ripe larger fruit at the top of the tree, it was a young Todd who was tasked with the tree climbing to pick them. Joe would often request an order of homemade marinated olives from Dominic. These fresh fruits treats would be taken to his sister’s house in San Francisco’s Marina District in an effort to “stock up.”

Also growing up in Granger’s Wharf was Danny Pellegrini who recalls that Joe and Chucky would show up at Gino Marazzani’s house across the road from the Pellegrini’s while again making the rounds to have coffee and to chat about the old days.

These are just the tip of the iceberg examples of Joe DiMaggio’s close connection with his relatives in Martinez that went on for most of his adult life. While it is true that Joe grew up in San Francisco and spent a great deal of his adult life on the east coast, his birthplace of Martinez was always his home away from home. For more stories just ask his Martinez cousins, they’re all over the place!

Sources:

Cha-Cha Amato, Tom Bellecci, Bob Cellini, Todd DiMaggio Mather, Debbie Bellecci McKillop, Danny Pellegrini, the Martinez Gazette, Joe DiMaggio Hometown Hero Project website.

Mangiate Bene Tutti [Eat Well Everyone]

by Mary Pappas-Coniglio “Cooking with Mary’s Village Style”

Visit us “Cooking with Mary’s Village Style” and “Friends of Isola delle Femmine” on Facebook, Instagram & YouTube or on our Website: https://friendsofisoladellefemmine.org/food_travel/

Couscous with Lamb and Chicken Stew

Courtesy of Linda Campbell (Trentanelli) Haynes

Linda writes: “This north African dish has been a favorite of my family for many years. The recipe was handed down to our family from Giuseppe Bruno (my Great Grandfather), who was a fisherman from Isola delle Femmine and traveled to north Africa to fish, bringing this recipe back to his family.

This recipe serves 8 – 10 people.

Ingredients:

Cream of Wheat cereal – 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ packages

Butter – 1 cube

Salt & Pepper

Peanut Oil (or Olive)

Lamb bones (neck or breast)

Pork bones – 2-3 (Optional)

Roasting Chicken – 3 lb

Garlic – 2 cloves

Banana squash – 2 lb peeled, cubed

Sweet potatoes or yams – 3 large peeled, cubed

Cabbage – 1 medium head quartered

Green bell peppers – 4 medium sliced

Turnips – 2 large peeled, cubed

Rutabagas – 2 peeled, cubed

Zucchini – 2 cubed (Optional)

Onions – 2

Carrots – 4

Green beans – $\frac{1}{2}$ lb

Egg plant – 1 cubed

Celery – $\frac{1}{2}$ head chopped

Artichoke – 2 quartered

Cecci beans – 1 can drained

Dried red chili peppers – 8 small

Parsley



Linda Cooking in Her Kitchen

Preparation:

Couscous:

Place cream of wheat in a large bowl, gradually sprinkling it with water and working with fingers and palms so the kernels soak up as much water as it can until the mixture becomes coarse.

Caution, do not allow the kernels to become soggy.

Place the cream of wheat in a large sieve over a pot of boiling water.

Add butter, salt and pepper, then allow to steam about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stew:

Brown the meat, onions and garlic in oil in a large pot.

Add chicken broth and simmer for 1 hour.

Add vegetables and more chicken broth to cover all until vegetables are cooked.

To Serve:

Put Cream of Wheat in a large bowl, cover with stew, and let soak for about 10 minutes before serving. Garnish with parsley.

This recipe was published in the Pittsburg Post-Dispatch November 16, 1955 featuring my Great Aunt Rose “Sudie” Bonanno

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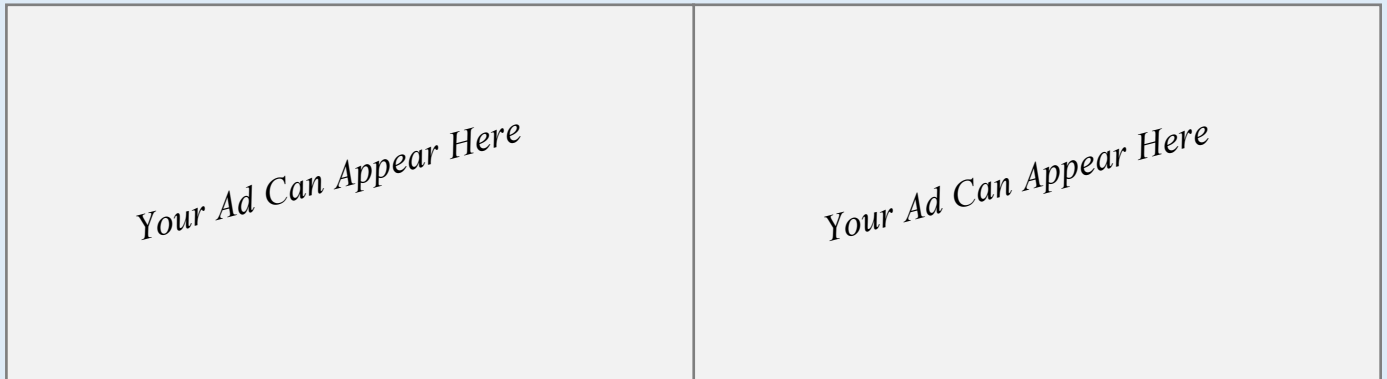
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New Sustaining Members of Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.

We continue to add new members. Twelve were added this past quarter, now totaling 170!

Maria Aliotti	Maria Bruno	Bartolo & Frances “Dianne” Bruno
Debbie Otmar	Robert Sasaki	Anthony & Sandie Russo
Jerilynn Crivello	Rich Aiello	Phyllis Nicolas
Cicina Norton		

more to be published in future issues



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