

Il Notiziario

[The Newsletter]

Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Inc.



https://friendsofisoladellefemmine.org email: Friendsofisola@gmail.com Follow us on Facebook

Volume 3, Issue 3

Editor: A.A. Grillo

Summer: July 1, 2022

### News from our Executive Board

by Frank "Ciccu" Bruno

Buongiorno Tutti,

The second quarter of 2022 is in the books and it has been a very productive quarter for FOI. Our membership is growing every month. We are now over 160 members and growing. Those that are members see the value we bring. And their donation dues help us keep the doors open and plan our events.

In April, the FOI Scholarship Committee received and reviewed ten scholarship applications for five \$1,000 scholarships. After evaluation, our committee decided to offer the other five students \$500 scholarships. The applicants for initial college entrance were first in line to receive the \$1,000 awards. All the scholarship recipients are listed in the announcement on page 4. Ken Molinaro again donated a one-week all-inclusive, including airfare, vacation to his Costa Sur Resort and Spa in Puerto Vallarta for two. Tickets are \$50 and the drawing will be in December. These funds support our scholarship program. Go online to www.friendsofisola.org and buy your tickets NOW.

We launched the FOI Family Rosary evening via Zoom. The next Family Rosary will be on July 11<sup>th</sup> and the first Monday of every month at 6pm for the rest of 2022, except for some holidays like July 4th. Please join us and tell your family and friends to join us. Watch your FOI email for your Zoom invitation.

Mike & Alise Inzerillo represented FOI on a visit to Isola delle Femmine in April. See their story below.

Unfortunately, we have threefold sad news to share. Rosa Aiello Scala, wife of Tonino Scala, president of the Pittsburg-Isola delle Femmine Sister City Forever Committee, passed away. Rosa had the most beautiful smile welcoming us on trips to Isola. See Tonino's note on page 7. Joan Rita Evola, a past Treasurer of FOI in its formative period, also passed away in June. Joan was dedicated and loved by all. As requested by her family, a contribution was made in her name to the Pittsburg Historical Museum. A third supporter of our FOI community, Jess Leber, died earlier this year. A teacher and mentor, he led many of our sister city trips.

We had a High Tea-Italian Style at the Pittsburg Elks Lodge where we served 200 patrons. Everyone had a wonderful time with great food and so much fun. The waiters were dressed in costumes: Father Guido Sarducci, the Godfather, the Old Sicilian, a Gondolier, Roman Senator, Caesar, a Nun and even Elvis showed up. It was another successful production by Mary Pappas Coniglio and Roselyn Malfitano. A job well done even though it was a back breaking amount of work. See pictures on page 5 and stay tuned for next year's High Tea.

June 12 saw our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Old Fashion Sicilian-American Picnic at the Waterfront Park in Martinez. We again packed them in. This event is where we showcase our scholarship program by distributing checks to the winners.

As you can see, we have been busy again. There is no stopping us. We need to raise funds to survive as an organization and to provide scholarships to our members' families. To put on all of these wonderful cultural events we need help. Some of our members have stepped up to help, thank you, but we need more help. So please volunteer to our cause, to protect, promote and preserve our Italian-American cultural heritage. Contact us at <u>friend-sofisola@gmail.com</u> and let us know how you would like to help.

Mille Grazie

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

### N Notiziario of the

of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

Volume 3, Issue 3

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### News from Isola

by Mike Inzerillo

### Our Trip to Italy with Stops in Palermo and Isola delle Femmine

During the first two weeks of April, my wife Alise and I finally took our much-delayed trip to Italy. Our first time over was in 2017 when we went to Rome, Palermo, and Isola delle Femmine. Our second trip was in 2019 with visits to Milan, Riomaggiore, and Venice. It was right after this trip that I learned I had two cousins of the same generation as mine, one living in Perugia, the other living in Palermo. Another trip had to be planned – pronto, but due to Covid, we had to reschedule multiple times.

On the mainland side of our vacation, we visited Perugia to meet my Sicilian male cousin Gigi for the first time, then Florence, Naples, and the Amalfi Coast. The last few days of our trip were spent in Palermo where we toured the city, met my other cousin Serena, sister of Gigi, and had a spectacular day trip to Isola delle Femmine for some very important business!

We flew to Palermo from Naples and stayed at a very nice bed and breakfast right behind the famous Massimo Theater. The B&B is called Al Massimo 36. I highly recommend it. Also, with the B&B being right next to Massimo theater, there is a cab stand right there for when you need one.

The next day, we had booked a walking tour of Palermo with someone by the name of Domenico Aronica (easy to find him on his website or on Facebook). We instantly became friends. I had so many great moments with him in the few hours we spent together. He totally understands slangy American English and will crack jokes with you and at you. We met in Quattro Canti, officially known as Piazza Vigliena, and he took us to a few incredible churches and was very informative. While walking through Palermo, Domenico talked about the history of the city, its people, and showed us many buildings damaged during WW2. We saw how restoration of them has finally begun.

He took us through Ballaro market and I'm so happy he did, because in 2017, Alise and I only walked through there – we didn't even buy anything! I felt completely safe and confident and happy while going through Ballaro with him. He introduced us to many of his friends and everyone was enthusiastic to meet us. I had the same experience during our very brief visit to Palermo and Isola in 2017. People are incredibly friendly to an American like myself, who has a direct family connection to the city. At the market, I had a huge piece of sfincione pizza, a plate of panelle, some arancini, and a few other things like a handful of olives.

At the end of our tour, we went back to a cafe in Quattro Canti for what Domenico had said was the best cannoli. I found out the next day that this jokingly angered the Isolani who saw the photo on Facebook. This was a pistachio flavored cannolo with lots of toppings. The Isola crowd like their cannoli completely plain. That night, we met with my cousin Serena! She took us out to the part of town in front of Chiesa dì Sant'Anna. There is a lot of "night life" there, a lot of college age kids. It was so cool to finally meet my cousins after four years of waiting!

The following day was a big one. Thanks to my friendship with the Friends of Isola delle Femmine, Tonino Scala and Marco Mogavero picked us up to take us to Isola for some "business". First, we went to Gran Caffe and met with former mayor Stefano Bologna. We were served 'proper' Canolli – only the shell and the cream, no flavors or toppings. I handed Stefano some basic information on my late grandfather who left Isola in 1915. Stefano sent the info over to the office so they could print a new certified copy of his birth certificate for me. I am working on getting dual citizenship and obtaining the ancestor's birth certificate from Italy is one of the hardest things to do – but not if you have friends and go in person!

Next, we went over to the fisherman statue in Piazza di Pittsburg for some obligatory photos. We were then taken to City Hall to meet the current mayor Orazio Nevoloso, a very friendly guy. He gave us a book on Isola and signed it for us, and we took pictures together. After that, we walked up Via Cristoforo Colombo to number 70 to see the old Inzerillo house. It is believed to be used for marina storage now.

### Il Notiziario of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

#### Volume 3, Issue 3

### Summer: July 1, 2022



At Piazza di Pittsburg: Marco, Mike, Alise, Tonino

We returned to Gran Caffe for an early dinner. So

far, both of my very brief visits to Isola delle Femmine were incredible. Ask me sometime in person about our trip in 2017. After dinner, as Alise and I walked back to the car, Marco went back into the Caffe and purchased a platter of almond cookies for us to bring home for Easter. He was unbelievably kind. On the way back to Palermo, I noticed we took a different routewe went past Modello Beach. Wow! Super nice! I would like to visit there someday! I feel that there is still so much more to do and more people to meet in Palermo and Isola delle Femmine. It feels almost defeating to realize there is also the whole rest of the island to explore – gee.... maybe I should... live there!

From there, we walked to the office building to get the birth certificate. Here is where things got pretty awkward. The birth certificate was not printed and ready. The two ladies who worked there were very angry and argued with Marco for like 15 minutes. In the end, he got the certified copy for me. All I could get from Marco was that they were angry that I was basically "skipping the line" and just showed up and asked for services on the spot. Finally, back to City Hall, Marco ran up and had Sindaco Nevoloso sign the certified copy. Amazing.



The Isola delle Femmine Sindaco Office: Sindaco Nevoloso center between Alise & Mike with two office personnel

What an incredible two weeks and what a way to end it! Thank you Friends of Isola delle Femmine and Tonino Scala and Marco Mogavero for your generosity!



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### Friends of Isola delle Femmine Scholarship Winners for 2022

The winners of this year's scholarship program were announced and awards presented at our annual picnic held in Martinez on 12-Jun-2022. The winners' names with a bit of their background and plans are listed here. Pictures from the picnic and the High Tea Italian Style held on 1-May are included on the following page.



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**N Notiziario** of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer: July 1, 2022

What's Happening Pictures of two events this past quarter – were you there?

Second Annual Old Fashion Sicilian-American Picnic and High Tea - Italian Style



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N Notiziario of the

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Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer: July 1, 2022

### I Ricordi d'Isola [Memories of Isola]

by Orazio Sansonini, translated by Sal Coniglio & A.A. Grillo

### The Building of Isola delle Femmine's Parish Church

The parish church of Isola delle Femmine was built by the Isolani people in several phases and in different eras. Although St. Peter was chosen to be the town's patron saint, the church has always been dedicated to the Madonna delle Grazie. Since 1400, the first chapel, of  $6 \times 8$  meters connected with the Tonnara, existed facing the sea. This is when the territory of Isola delle Femmine was part of the field of Capaci. It is unknown who erected it. Traditionally, it is said that it was built by the few inhabitants of the place.

In 1799, with the increasing migratory flow of people from Capaci to the newly inhabited settlement, the need was felt to build a new church, as the primitive chapel was no longer suitable to accommodate the ever more numerous faithful.

In 1810, with a loan obtained from Mrs. Marianna Balestrino of Palermo, Don Michele Lopes, the chaplain at that time from the Capaci mother church, began the construction of the new church. It was to be an enlargement of the pre-existing small chapel, with the facade no longer facing the sea, or perhaps a new building at a different site but close to the previous one. The fishermen undertook to contribute to the collection of funds by paying a quarter of what was due each fisherman based on the fishery production. Thus, they contributed in a decisive way to the conditions of the contract stipulated between Mrs. Balestrino and eight owners of fishing boats, who made a commitment of honor handed down from father to son, making it possible to complete the new church.

The inhabitants of the new village were almost all fishermen and farmers from Capaci, very poor indeed, headed by Don Vincenzo Di Maggio, who eventually the second mayor of Isola delle Femmine. In time, they were forced to ask for a new loan that was granted to them by Paola Bellavista, a rich lady from Palermo. This new loan was also honored. The fishermen would gather on the ground floor of the so-called mayor's palace, then the home of Don Erasmo Di Maggio, founder of the Di Maggio family and father of Don Vincenzo Di Maggio, to make important decisions such as committing to continue the voluntary payments based on the catch of their boats for another five years. The commitment was thus renewed several times up to 1843, and the amount of volun-



**Chiesa di Isola** After 1810 construction, the nave with one aisle.



Chiesa di Isola after expansions of 1860 & 1903 with short campanile. Building at far right is not part of church.

tary contributions always increased to complete the work of the new church, including new expenses such as the construction of the cemetery, the maintenance of a chaplain for the new church and more.

The new church began to take on a respectable shape in 1840, again with the spontaneous cooperation of the faithful. Considering the distance between the Tonnara and Capaci and the increased number of inhabitants, Archbishop Brunaccini, with a decree in 1849, allowed the baptismal font to be erected in the new church and for its chaplain to administer the sacraments. In 1855, Ferdinand III, King of the Two Sicilies, decreed that the Tonnara hamlet be separated from the municipality of Capaci and elevated to a municipality with its own administration. Since then it has no longer been called Tonnara, but Isola delle Femmine.

Il Notiziario of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

### Volume 3, Issue 3

Immediately afterwards, with great determination, the inhabitants of Isola delle Femmine, headed by the mavors, first Giovanni Siino and then Don Vincenzo Di Maggio, asked that the Parish Church in the municipality of Isola delle Femmine be made autonomous from the mother church of Capaci. For this reason, in the years between 1855 and about 1863, a dispute arose between Don Vincenzo Bologna, pastor of the Mother Church of Capaci, and the Mayors of Isola delle Femmine. Even after the competent authorities ruled that the separation had to take place, the unfortunate issue did not subside. Pastor Bologna, with continuous appeals, slowed down and prevented the decision

from being respected and executed. Even the political situations of those years, such as the revolutionary uprisings of 1860 helped to block it. Only after 80 years, that is, on 1 December 1935, was there officially created an independent parish of the Church of Maria SS. delle Grazie in Isola delle Femmine

It was stated that the new church began to take a more proper form in 1840, but until 1860 it consisted of a small rustic stone church with a nave containing only one aisle and without a rectory. Subsequently, some neighboring houses were purchased to the left of the building, which gave the possibility to widen the church with a second aisle and four side chapels with their altars. One of those chapels contains the statue of the Madonna delle Grazie, which had arrived in 1859. In 1903, the restorations of the existing church began; that is, the vault of the central nave was raised and the entire floor of the church was filled and covered to level it to the height of the piazza. This involved covering the small crypt, which had been used for burials. Then, other houses were purchased on the right of the building that allowed for the construction of the right aisle with four more chapels and a squat bell tower equipped with three bells. The facade was also completed. At that time, the King of Italy allowed the purchase of a building adjacent to the church to be used as a rectory. Thus, the church of Isola delle Femmine also had a rectory starting in 1939. The completed church as it stands today with a heightened campanile is shown in the figure at right.



Chiesa di Maria SS. delle Grazie As it appears today at night.

### Note from Tonino Scala

Since no one from FOI could attend the services for Rosa in person, a wreath of flowers shown below was sent. Tonino sent us the note below with the card bearing Rosa's picture.

To our FOI family, With sincere gratitude, there are not enough words to express our heartfelt thanks for the sympathy, love and support you have expressed to our family during this time of loss. We appreciate all your thoughts and prayers. Thank you. The Family of Rosa Aiello-Scala

The words in the upper right corner of the card read:

Vorrei donare il tuo sorriso alla luna, perché di notte chi la guarda possa pensare a te per ricordanti che il mio amore è ... per sempre.

The English translation is:

I would like to give your smile to the moon, so that at night whoever looks at it can think of you as a reminder that my love is ... forever.

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# Summer: July 1, 2022

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of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer: July 1, 2022

A Bit of History that Is Ours

by Vincent S. Ferrante

### Early Pittsburg Power Boats and Boat Builder Frank Seeno<sup>1</sup>

In our previous article, we provided a glimpse into the archives focused on local historical commercial fishing sail boats. In this article, we will touch on the early Pittsburg power boats and a particular boat builder, Frank Seeno. "[He] ... played an important role in the development of the fishing industry in Pittsburg. Over 400 commercial fishing launches have slid down the ways of his Railroad Avenue shop since he opened for business in 1900."<sup>2</sup> It remained in operation until his death in 1952. Other well-known boat builders in the area were G.E. Seeno and Angelo Siino, brothers of Frank, John DeStefano, Rosario Junta and the Del Montes.

The story below, an excerpt from a 1947 Pittsburg Post Dispatch article written by Charles M. Zeno, Jr. entitled "City's Oldest Boat Builder, 74, Still Plies Trade in Waterfront Shop Here: Veteran Craftsman Still Active Here After 49 Years"<sup>2</sup>, sheds some light on the subject.

How a young Italian immigrant converted an \$80 bankroll [\$2753 today] into Pittsburg's leading boat shop is revealed in ... [his story].

...

It all started back in [about] 1898 when Seeno, an apprentice boat builder, left his birthplace, ... Isola delle Femmine [,Sicily] ... for America.

As he says "I arrived in the little fishing village then known as Black Diamond full of ideas and enthusiasm on how to get ahead but short of ready cash".

Three excursions to Bristol Bay, Alaska with the salmon fishing fleet paid off enough for him to build his own boat shop ....

Operating on initiative, determination and a handful of simple tools, Seeno was ready to

accept responsibility as Black Diamond's only boat repairman at the turn of the century.

The young craftsman "arrived" at his chosen profession late in 1900 when he completed "by hand" the 26-foot sailboat, "The Champagne" for the late Geronimo Davi.

That first project, which cost the owner \$180 [\$6195 today], marked the beginning of a long line of crafts that slid down the ways of the now popular Railroad Avenue building concern.

Applying trade secrets learned as a youth in Isola delle Femmine, Seeno followed a series of conventional craft with the construction of the first power boat in the Pittsburg area. Built for [Pietro] Ferrante in 1904, he used a two-cylinder engine in a



"Uncle" Dave Gatto, owner of the Bayview salon, with his new boat "Junior" built by Frank "Maestro Sheko" Seeno on the right.

Picture courtesy of the Pittsburg Historical Society

**Il Notiziario** of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

Volume 3, Issue 3Summer: July 1, 202	.2
sailboat hull. Ferrante, now a prominent fish canner in Monterey, thus became the envy of the entire fishing colony as sole possessor of a "power job" in the area.	
In his early thirties, Seeno became known to his Italian cronies as "Maestro Chico" a title of distinction carried only by those who master their respective trades	
[A ]turning point came in his career in 1905 when Seeno installed a donkey engine, [among] the first steam-driven power[ed] machinery in Contra Costa County.	
With the advent of new developments in machinery, Maestro Chico used a steam power band saw and planer which stepped up production.	
Next in his series of "firsts" was the commercial pick-up boat, introduced to San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers in 1905. Larger than the standard sailboat, the new craft measured from 36 to 42 feet in length and was designed to fit the needs of fish buyers.	
Seeno points with pride to the fact that one of the three original pick-up boats, the 42-foot Edison still is operated by O.V. Davi, the owner of Davi Fisheries.	
Two sister launches, the Marconi and Katherine were in use for more than 30 years before they were decommissioned.	
[The ]most common project in his line of work is the commercial fishing launch, a 28-footer, patterned after similar craft on which Seeno worked the Mediterranean area.	
Seeno estimates that he has built not less than 200 launches of this type since he first intro- duced it to Pittsburg. Often referred as the Monterey-Type, this particular craft is distinguished by it's [sic] sharp features fore and aft.	
Maestro Chico speaks lightly of the fact that he built the 22-foot "Shad" for Jack London in the early 1900's when the famed author was game warden for this sector. "Just another game warden." was his reply to the request for description for the fiery writer who wrote "Call of the Wild", "Valley of the Moon" and many other popular novels Still active despite his advanced years, "Maestro Chico" credits his good health and trim appearance to the fact that he works at least ten hours a day <sup>3</sup>	
Historian's Note, John Light in his 1971 dissertation on "A History of Commercial Fishing in Pittsbu California" indicates that the first of the motor launches was the "Envy" built in 1902 and owned by f buyer Arasimo Cardinalli. More on that and other noted boat builders in our next article.	-
Sources:	
<ol> <li>These references and other background information provided by the Pittsburg Historical Society.</li> <li>Earl J. Hohlmayer, Gardnerville Nevada, private communication to the Pittsburg Historical Society, 2006-2007.</li> <li>Charles M. Zeno, Jr., "City's Oldest Boat Builder, 74, Still Plies Trade in Waterfront Shop Here: Veteran Craftsr Still Active Here After 49 Years", Pittsburg Post Dispatch, Pittsburg, CA, November 20, 1947.</li> </ol>	nan

- 9 -

### **Il Motiziario** of the

of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer: July 1, 2022

### 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/

## "Cooking with Mary's Village Style" Italian Rolled Meat

### Braciola in Italian and Bruciuluni in Sicilian

This recipe was given to me by my Grandmother Mary Aiello Pappas She was the owner operator of many restaurants during WWII until the 1970's: Lincoln Grill, Checker Café, Vogue Fountain, Pappas Market,

Deli corner of Railroad and School Street among other businesses.

### Ingredients

1 Flank Steak – I use Kinder's, about 2-3 pounds.

2 Lg Yellow onion chopped small

6 Lg Green onions, chopped Parsley (Chopped fine)

1 Head fresh garlic chopped small

Olive oil or canola oil

 $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of pine nuts, walnuts, or golden raisins, all optional

5 Cups Plain bread crumbs (There will be breadcrumb mixture left over.)

1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Cup Parmesan Cheese, Kraft canned (Grated)

<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Cup Regular grating cheese salt and pepper to taste, garlic powder and onion powder

1 Lg Egg (beaten), 2-4 Slices Baked ham

3 Lg Eggs (hard boiled and sliced)

### **Directions:**

Have the flank steak tenderized. Only one time through their machine.

Trim off any excess fat gently; covering meat with plastic wrap, pound the meat to an even thickness.

Sauté onions in a little canola oil until lightly browned and transparent;

Add parsley and cook until soft; then add garlic until fragrant but not brown.

After mixture is cooked, blend in food processor until it becomes almost a paste.

In large bowl, combine 5 cups plain bread crumbs and the onion mixture.

Then add a few tablespoons of olive oil just to moisten the mixture but do not make it into a paste. The mixture should be crumbly.

Add other ingredients nuts, raisins, grated parmesan cheese, garlic powder, onion powder, salt and pepper to taste. Coat one side of the steak with the beaten egg.

Using no more than two cups of moistened bread crumb mixture, sprinkle it to create a thin layer over the meat. Add the 2-4 slices of ham at each end of the meat and the sliced eggs in the middle.

Roll the meat to create a rolled roast. Tie the meat gently to keep its shape.

Brown the rolled meat in a little oil in a fry pan until lightly brown.

To cook on stovetop, place rolled meat in a pot of your favorite tomato pasta sauce and simmer for 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours. For oven cooking, use a covered casserole or roaster pan with pasta sauce halfway up the side of the rolled meat and bake covered at 400 degrees for one 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Untie, slice and serve. Make sure you have a pot or casserole that fits your finished, browned rolled meat log.

**N Notiziario** of the Friends of Isola delle Femmine

Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer: July 1, 2022

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

We continue to add new members. Fourteen were added this past quarter!

Douglas Otmar Catherine Compagno Joseph Cardinale Lynette Allen Ed & Bella Leonard John Compagno Melba Catania Gwynne Davi Peter & Rochelle Coniglio Patricia (Russo) & Edward Terwilliger Faye Dawdy

more to be published in future issues

### Ambassadors

Nicole Impagliazzo	Lou Esposito II	Vincent & Midge Di Maggio
Lisa Dondero	John Lineweaver	Vincent & Roselyn Malfitano
Ken Molinaro	Mike & Jan Fernandes	Salvatore M. Coniglio
Jim Coniglio	Albert & Sandy Seeno	Bert & Bella Cutino
Wolfgang Croskey	Nicky D (DePaola)	Leandra Ramm Coniglio
Josie Esposito	Frank & Robin Bruno	Virginia Simonian
	Alexander & Jean Grillo	Vincent S. & Nicole Ferrante

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