

# *LA VOCE DI GCICS*

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. BOX 2591, SARASOTA, FL. 34230

[WWW.GCICS.ORG](http://WWW.GCICS.ORG)

December 2020

*Merry Christmas*



## President's Message,

Welcome to our final GCICS Newsletter for 2020. It has been an extraordinary year to say the least, and it appears that 2021 will begin the same as 2020 ends. However, we have a renewed sense of hope and we are confident that we will see an end to our pandemic. I want to acknowledge the sorrow it has caused our nation and beyond; and want to thank you for exhibiting good citizenship during this time. Many of us continue to maintain social distancing and are wearing masks. We are conscientious about one another's safety. We have faced many challenges during these past ten months, and we have risen to the occasion. Virtual technology allowed us to continue as a Society, spreading Italian culture while conducting Board Meetings, Social Hours, Transatlantic Presentations, Silent Auctions, and Language Classes. We not only fulfilled our objectives socially but also maintained programs that have allowed us to fulfill our mission and scholarship commitments.

GCICS could not do this without its members. You are especially important. We have concluded our dues collection for the 2020-2021 Program Year. The process began on Aug 15th and ended on Nov 30th. You will see a membership report in our Jan 2021 newsletter provided by Ellen Roderick. To all who renewed, the Board thanks you for your continued support. For all who became new members, we welcome you. We depend on you not only to keep us financially vibrant but most importantly, to foster a camaraderie which is so crucial to the success of our Society.

Italian Language Classes have resumed and again taught by GCICS member Paola Tate. She offers two levels, Beginners and Italian Conversation. We have 12 enrolled in the Beginners class and 8 enrolled in the Conversation class. You must be a paid member to participate. I have only heard good reviews from those who have taken advantage of this "free" opportunity. Thank you, Paola. We sincerely appreciate your contribution.

On Nov 18th, we conducted our Scholarship Silent Auction using Zoom technology. It was planned and conducted by Linda Ahern, Penny Thomas, Linda Mercurio, and Judy Herman. Thank you so very much for all your work. Seven baskets were awarded for a total of \$340-- thank you

to members who bid on the baskets. These funds will go toward our 2021 student scholarships and the Youth Opera and Youth Ballet.

We have initiated a new column-- a book corner by Leita Kaldi Davis, a GCICS member. She will be recommending books with Italian themes to our members. Ellen Roderick approached Leita about doing a monthly column in our newsletter and Leita accepted the challenge. Look for her first column in this issue.

Finally, GCICS is in the process of redesigning its website. I have established a Website Redesign Committee of Jerry Hall and George Arfield to interview several web designers to facilitate this undertaking. Once the Board selects the contractor, the Committee will guide the redesign process, working closely with the contractor.

To all those who made GCICS the success it has been during these last ten months, we thank you. There are many on our Board who make our Society what it is. I would be remiss if I did not give special thanks to George Arfield for initiating our transatlantic presentations and Jerry Hall for making sure we became skilled Zoom users. I want to thank Ellen for her work. Without her, I am not sure we would have worked in as timely a manner as we have. Thanks for keeping us focused and for being the most operationally organized person I have ever worked with.

I have genuinely enjoyed my first six months as your GCICS President and look forward to continuing my leadership role. The GCICS Board wishes you a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. Finally, all the best for all of us in the New Year, 2021.

## BOCCE CORNER NEWS

Our Board had decided months ago to not sponsor any in- person activities due to the coronavirus; therefore, this includes bocce.

GCICS purchased some Har-Tru material last spring. The court was then top dressed and made more smooth. Jerry Hall has maintained the court weekly. Approximately 8-10 “friends” arrive at 2 pm each Sunday to play for a couple hours, weather permitting. Being in the open-air breeze has been a means of changing the indoor confines for each of us who freely choose to participate. Hopefully normal activities will resume in the near future and we can again sponsor play.

If there are any new members who are not familiar with our court at the Conservation Foundation grounds in Osprey and need any information concerning our bocce, please feel free to call me!

Happy Holidays and a Merry Christmas!

Tom Hurban  
Bocce chairperson  
908. 507 3048

## Italian Book Shelf By Leita Kaldi Davis



*A Thousand Days in Venice* [Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2002, 272 pages];  
*A Thousand Days in Tuscany* [Ballantine Books, 2009, 283 pages];  
*That Summer in Italy* [Ballantine Books, 2008, 283 pages]  
by Marlana DeBlasi

Marlana DeBlasi was a successful master chef and interior decorator in St. Louis, whose life was in order until she went to Venice and met her “Prince Charming.” Fernando, who had seen her in Piazza San Marco the year before, found her there again the following year. A fairy tale romance ensues, the love story interspersed with mouth-watering details of food, the imaginative redecoration of Fernando’s drab flat and, most intriguing, perceptions of many Venetian characters whom Marlana befriends, from the local mason to a royal countess. *A Thousand Days in Venice* is dedicated to “The blueberry-eyed Venetian who waited.”

After their marriage, Fernando decides to quit his banking career and seek a more meaningful life with his beloved bride in Tuscany. After weeks of touring the vividly described province of Tuscany, they buy an old farmhouse in a rural village. *A Thousand Days in Tuscany* tells the tale of their sometimes-fraught personal relationship, their adventures in farming and cooking, and intimate stories of the *simpatico* villagers who slowly reveal themselves to Marlana and Fernando. Unflinching character dialogues reveal deep, sometimes negative feelings, like those of the village sage. “You come here from another life, and yet you seem to expect to step into this one just as it used to be in the nineteenth century. As though it were waiting for you, as though it were Utopia. ... there is no Utopia here, never has been. ... The past here was sometimes brutal and tragic, just like the present can be.”

In *That Summer in Sicily* the couple finds a somewhat ruined castle in the mountains where they meet Tosca, the patroness of the village. Her dramatic love story involves her husband, ‘ ... the last prince of Sicily,’ who defied the local Mafia, who kidnapped him. Tosca waits, like Penelope, for the return of her prince.

DeBlasi’s writing style is vivid and exquisite, often verging on the poetic. “I want the rain. I want to be washed by this water that smells of grass and earth and hope. I want to be drenched in it, made supple in it like a shriveled fruit in warm wine.”

## GCICS VIRTUAL SOCIAL HOURS – OCT & NOV 2020

### Article & Photos by Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

I am pleased to report on our 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> virtual Social Hours that took place in Oct & Nov 2020. After two successful Social Hours in Sept, members were anxious to continue these gatherings via zoom. Our Oct Social Hour was facilitated by Nancy Schubert, GCICS Courtesy Chair, while Linda Mercurio, GCICS VP, facilitated our Nov event. Both were a grand success. We extend a special thank you to Nancy and Linda.

**Oct 20:** We had 13 attendees with the topic: **“A favorite piece of Italian art (e.g., painting, fresco, sculpture), a favorite Italian art museum, or a favorite piece of Italian architecture.”** Mike & Patty DiMichele have always loved the Fontana di Trevi and a favorite sculpture, Moses (Michelangelo), housed in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli (chains), Rome. Sandy Russell loves Spoleto, an ancient city in the Italian province of Perugia. A specific piece of architecture she adores is the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi (1227) and particularly the Lower Church. Ellen Roderick adores the 1439-1444 frescos of Fra Angelico (Angelic Friar) that are in the Monastery of San Marco, Florence. Linda Mercurio found the Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano, oldest public church in Rome, a magnificent piece of architecture. Leita Kaldi Davis adores Giotto’s Madonna painting (1290) exhibited in the 10<sup>th</sup> century parish church in Borgo di San Lorenzo, north of Florence. Carl Schubert spoke about his favorite artist, Michelangelo, sculptor, painter, architect, and poet, highlighting the world-famous David in Florence and La Pietà in St. Peter’s Basilica. Members shared photos of the works they discussed which enhanced the Social Hour. Robert Gaglio shared beautiful photos of his favorite Cattedrale di Monreale, Palermo, Sicily. The cathedral is one of the greatest existent examples of Norman architecture begun in 1174. A favorite of Jerry Hall’s is the Basilica of Santa Margherita, Neo-gothic style, in the Tuscan town of Cortona. A grand time was had by all!

**Nov 19:** We had 10 attendees with the topic: **“Your Favorite Italian Treasure.”** “A picture is worth a thousand words”. Enjoy the photos of your fellow members with their treasures. Jerry Hall, Ellen Roderick, Joyce Bloom, Linda Mercurio, and Sandy Russell all shared pieces of Murano glass. Jerry and Ellen showed their clowns (Jerry’s was a decanter); Joyce shared a pretty paperweight, Linda shared her mom’s red vase, and Sandy showed a delicate blue and gold bell.





Gordon provided the history behind an oversized rosary made of wood and metal that he purchased in a shop off St. Peter's Square. In 1968, Joan Del Giudice purchased a beautiful piece of artwork called intaglio (a design carved into the surface of hard metal or stone). In her piece, the stone is marble. She also purchased a tabletop with similar workmanship, finding them in a shop on the Arno River, Florence. Before meeting her husband, Jack Norman, Mary Rinaldi visited Taormina, Sicily, purchasing a goblet patterned after design of the Venetian gold ducat, or zecchino. On their honeymoon, Jack and Mary purchased a demitasse set of gold ducat. Jack could not attend the Social Hour, so Mary shared a favorite purchase of his--a delicate donkey and cart (see photo).



Judy Herman purchased cameo earrings she cherishes while 18 years ago she found a Prada handbag (30 mi N of Rome) that was \$450 cheaper than in the USA. She loves and uses that handbag to this day. Members shared some additional items (Sandy—bas relief in silver-Four Seasons pieces; Ellen-collection of cameos; Joan-colorful Sicilian handbag; and Linda-Pisa coffee mug and David apron).

As you might imagine, we could have talked for hours about our favorite artists, art works, architecture, and our cherished treasures purchased in Italy. Please consider joining us for a Social Hour when next announced. We learned so much about one another. We have such kind and caring folks in our Society.

## GCICS SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER

Virtual Silent Auction

Article by Ellen Roderick



Thank you to all who bid on the ten raffle baskets and especially to the highest bidders who will have the baskets delivered to them. Penny Thomas had a busy Wednesday (11/18/20) afternoon, taking your bidding calls. Thanks also to the committee members, Linda Ahern, Penny Thomas, Judy Herman, and Linda Mercurio, as well as to all members who contributed baskets or basket contents months ago. And now for the basket recipients.

- Mignon Snider "Doubled Her Fun" in acquiring the desk set & chocolates.
- Mike & Patty DiMichele will be enjoying High Tea in acquiring the "Tea Basket".
- Sandy Russell acquired the "Italian Basket"; this was a hard-fought item with six bids. Enjoy those 3 bottles of vino Sandy!
- Joe Moccia will be consuming lots of espresso, winning the "Espresso Café Set" basket.
- Linda Ahern and Rich Potts will be sipping lots of great coffee after their bid on the "Coffee Break" basket.
- Jack & Joan Ferrante (residing in their MD home at present) were delighted to acquire the "Italian Cooking Chest" basket that included a cookbook, pasta, sauce, dessert, and tea towels.
- And Sandy Russell returned to have "Fun in the Sun", bidding on a basket that included items for a beach picnic.
- And Jack & Joan Ferrante returned to make a donation when they were outbid on another basket.

Bottom Line: GCICS added \$340 to its Scholarship Account. Again, many thanks.

## Virtual Venice Zoom Presentation

By George Arfield



Robert Gaglio

Fellow GCICS member Robert Gaglio presented the history and a personalized tour of Venice, The Pearl of the Adriatic on November 30<sup>th</sup>,2020. He displayed some of its' finest architecture of this world's most unique city.

The Zoom event attracted nearly 40 members and began with an outline how refugees fleeing enemies of the decaying Roman Empire settled on the mudflats at the northeastern edge of the Adriatic. Time and talent turned their efforts into what became the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean Sea and quite possibly the wealthiest city in Europe.

Robert's own photographs took viewers on an hour-long make-believe placid gondola ride or stroll along calles and fondamentas, from the well-known Grand Canal and Piazza San Marco to lesser visited corners of this enchanted city. The session ended with a mouth-watering demonstration of one of Venice's legacies to the world: tiramasú.

The virtual visit was enhanced with the comments offered by Giulia Marini, a friend of Robert's, who joined in from Valpolicella, in the province of Verona.

Robert, both of whose parents were born in Sicily, says he gave up a career in banking to "reinvent himself... on a course to follow his passion for Italian food, culture and his heritage." He now organizes small-group tours of Italy ([www.italianculinarytours.com](http://www.italianculinarytours.com)) and demonstrates his mastery of Italian cooking in Florida.



Sheryl Lazzarotti 2016-2020

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GCICS is pleased to announce the offering of **Italian Language for Beginners & Italian Conversation classes** in a virtual environment (Zoom) for GCICS members only. Please make sure that you have paid your 2020-2021 dues. As in the past, classes will be taught by Paola Tate on Wednesday afternoons. Here is the schedule:

**\*Italian Language for Beginners: 2:00-2:55 pm Eastern time**

**\*Italian Conversation: 3:00-3:55 pm Eastern time.**

Prior to each Wednesday, Jerry Hall emails enrollees the Zoom link. GCICS has a Zoom subscription that gives greater flexibility in time. The classes are accessible on a PC or iOS device -- computer, tablet or smartphone using the Zoom app; it's free at the App Store website. No need to RSVP.

Ci vediamo presto!

George Arfield,

GCICS Social & Cultural Chair