

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

1811 Englewood Rd., #317, Englewood, FL 34223 WWW.GCICS.ORG December 2025

Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor



President's Message

The cultural event arranged by Camille Kramer on Dante's *La Commedia* was highly informative and an immense success given the number of members and guests present. Please read Camille's accompanying article for details.

I hope that you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and are looking forward to the December holidays. Patty and I were fortunate to celebrate with our son, daughter-in-law, our two grandchildren, and one on the way.

The December 14 Holiday/Christmas Party/Scholarship Fundraiser at the beautiful home of Patty and Mike DiMichele, I am quite certain, will be a thrilling celebration. We will be entertained by mystery guests so get ready to enjoy yourselves. By the way, there is only one space remaining.

The January 10 Annual Meeting, luncheon, and program at Peridia Golf & Country Club promises to be an enjoyable event. I am looking forward to renewing friendships with our snowbirds. There are 3 seats remaining so check your calendars.

As previously mentioned, for GCICS to survive, we need to entice prospective members to join and also retain our present membership. To these ends, I suggested creating small group activities. Examples include Italian cooking demos, Italian language instruction, Italian ancestry, Italian sing-alongs, and coffee klatches, to name a few. I am encouraged that a sizable number of members have expressed interest in these activities. I will keep you updated regarding our progress.

Until next time, your president
Phil Miner

MEET OUR NEW GCICS BOARD MEMBERS

PHILLIP GORDON



I was born in Sydney, Australia and lived there with my family into my late teens. When my father retired, my parents wanted to move back to Italy where my mother was from and be close to her extended family. I was truly fortunate that - as Italian was my Mom's mother tongue – she always spoke to my sister and me in Italian throughout our lives. So, I am bilingual. Lucky me!

When I secured a position with a large travel company (Globus), I had the opportunity to move to the office in New York. Here is where I met my wife, Marianne, who happens to be of Calabrian heritage. When we were engaged, I had a career promotion to work in the head offices of Globus in Lugano, Switzerland. And that is where Marianne and I got married. Subsequently, my career path

took me back to New York. Our two daughters were born in New York before we moved our company out to Denver, Colorado. They were mere toddlers when we moved, and Denver is where they grew up before heading off to out-of-state colleges.

I very much enjoyed my career in the travel industry. In my last seven years with Globus, I was the president & CEO of the North America division. One of the perks in the industry is the opportunity to travel. No surprise that our favorite country in our family travels was Italy. When I retired in 2014, we moved to Sarasota; and Marianne and I joined GCICS in 2018. I am very honored to have been asked to join the GCICS Board of Directors, and I very much look forward to contributing in any way I can.

JOLENE RUFFO



I married the love of my life and husband of forty-three years on my spring 1982 birthday. I spent my childhood in Norwich, CT with loving parents and four siblings. After high school, I graduated from a New England parochial college taught by Daughters of the Holy Spirit, spending my younger and college years in church groups. My true path began when I went on a blind date one cool autumn evening with Joseph Ruffo, ten years my senior. After dating six months, we became engaged and married exactly one year later.

After marrying in Norwich's Cathedral of Saint Patrick, we moved across the CT state line from Norwich, CT to RI to a "cottage" on the Atlantic Ocean that Joseph had purchased five years prior to our dating. After eleven months renovating the cottage to a winterized, permanent home, we welcomed son Joseph in May 1983. During that year, I graduated UCONN with an MA as a Reading Language Arts Consultant.

When son Anthony arrived in 1990, we became an unwavering team at family life, spending academic days in our Norwich home, and weekends and summers at the

beach in RI. My commitment to our sons extended beyond academic endeavors. We traveled around the east coast as leading fans of our boys' ice hockey, soccer, basketball, and baseball teams.

My professional life was an honorable dedication to teaching English to children and adults in Norwich. I passionately taught grade 8 in a Norwich Middle School, and English IV evenings in the Norwich Adult Education Program. I continually advocate for adults and children. In 2013, after thirty-six years teaching, I retired from the Norwich Public Schools.

I treasure holidays – excuses to host a party, wear a costume, or don a coordinated outfit. Also, I vehemently embrace being Nana to our four grands embracing their personalities, interests, and desires. After thirteen years owning a home in FL as snowbirds, I love volunteering as an Asolo usher and am active in our Lakeridge Falls community as co-chair of the Community Relations Committee and a member of the Social Committee. One can say, I am always up for a new adventure, and I am immensely enjoying being a GCICS Board Member and serving as GCICS Courtesy Chair.



THEODORE "TED" ALFORD WILSON
(July 2, 1946 – October 11, 2025)
GCICS Member: 2023-2025

Obituary: Written by Ted's Family

Theodore "Ted" Alford Wilson passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by family, on Oct. 11, 2025, in Sarasota, Florida. Born on July 2, 1946, in St. Joseph, MO to Garland and Jane Wilson. Ted lived a full and joyful life grounded in love, curiosity, and connection.

Ted's career highlights included running the family business, Seitz Packing House, which began in 1921 and carried through several states before he eventually settled in Bloomfield, Michigan, as a commercial real estate broker. After a fulfilling career, he retired to Sarasota, where he embraced the warmth of the community and the beauty of coastal living.

Ted had a passion for travel and loved exploring new places. He was an avid golfer and found great pleasure in lawn bowling. He also enjoyed serving his community through volunteerism and participation on local boards, where he brought forward the public's voice and worked to strengthen civic connections.

During his years in Michigan, Ted was deeply committed to the Optimist Club, where he formed lifelong friendships and worked to make a positive difference in the lives of young people. Above all else, he cherished time spent with family and friends, creating lasting memories filled with laughter and love.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Valerie Wilson; his three children, Ted Wilson II, Justine Wilson, and Ashley Bond, and their spouses; four grandchildren who brought immense joy to his life; nine nieces and nephews; and his older brother, Garland "Butch" Wilson.

Ted was a frequent blood donor, which reflected his generosity and care for others. In lieu of flowers or gifts, a financial donation in his memory may be made to the Suncoast Blood Centers. May his memory bring comfort to all who knew and loved him.

HUBERT "BART" MACK SNIDER
(October 10, 1935 – September 18, 2025)
GCICS Member: 2019-2025



Mignon and Bart Snider

Obituary: Written by Family

Bart was born in Louisville, Kentucky on October 10, 1935, to Hubert Daniel and Margaret Elizabeth (McDowell) Snider. Bart served his country as a sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps before earning his degree from the University of Kentucky in 1961. His discipline, integrity, and leadership, shaped by both his military service and Kentucky roots, carried through every chapter of his life.

After graduation, Bart began a long and successful career with the General Electric Company in Binghamton, New York. His talent and vision in marketing and communications led him to GE's Corporate Office in New York City (later Fairfield, Connecticut), where he managed GE's national advertising program. Under his direction, GE received numerous awards, including five CLIO's, one of the industry's highest honors.

In 1987, Bart took a bold step and launched his own marketing and advertising firm in Sarasota. There, he combined professional excellence with personal dedication, serving both local and international clients with the same intelligence, enthusiasm, and creativity that defined his entire career.

Bart was an avid golfer, boating enthusiast, and savvy card player. He loved to spend time with family and friends captivating them with his great stories. He cherished life's simple joys. He loved a great Netflix series, a late-night ice cream treat, managing his homeowner's association, time spent with old friends, and quiet evenings with his beloved wife, Mignon. He was a proud grandfather who delighted in his grandchildren's accomplishments and adventures.

He is survived by his wife, Mignon Snider; his sons, Daniel Snider (Lilian) and David Snider; his sister, Susan Snider (Mark Fetzer); and two grandchildren, Ryan and Christopher. He is also survived by his stepdaughter, Moja Belmont (Daniel), stepson, Ted Brennan (Amy), and step grandchildren, Caroline, Jack, Finnegan, William, Victor, Vivien, and Violet who all adored him.

Bart's legacy will live on in the kindness he showed, the creativity he inspired, and the family and friends who loved him deeply.

He will be laid to rest at Sarasota National Cemetery on December 4 at 1:00 PM, honoring his service to his country and the life he lived with purpose and grace.

BOCCE NEWS



NEW MEMBERS PLEASE READ ! Others too! Some history!

About 10 years ago our Society rebuilt an abandoned bocce court at what was then The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast grounds in Osprey. We continue to maintain it so they reserve its use for us each Sunday afternoon from 2-4.

One of our members was living at The Cascades, which had a VERY active bocce group and an Italian Club. For many years we had an afternoon of friendly competition with them followed by food, drink and merriment. Their Italian Club has since disbanded as did the challenge matches. We lost handily each year except for one year when the courts were wet and it threw them off. Last year, thanks to the hospitality of Society members Marianne and Phillip Gordon, we were able to substitute friendly intra club matches, followed by a potluck picnic at their community, The Hammock Preserve, on

Honore Ave. You have been seeing this event listed in the “save the date” notifications sent out by Ellen. I am asking as many of you as possible to set up a team of four to participate. The courts there are very different from those we “regulars” play on, meaning it’s fun for anyone. Newcomers are encouraged to participate. The whole idea is just to have fun.

So, SAVE THE DATE, Sat. Jan. 24, from 1-4. Bocce starts on time followed by the potluck picnic; detailed information will follow. Please join us at “our court” on a Sunday, 2-4, at 400 Palmetto Ave, Osprey, sort of behind the Osprey library on the bay, to familiarize yourself with the simple game of bocce.

TOM HURBAN, Bocci Chair
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ITALIAN BOOKSHELF

By Leita Davis



Women of War: The Italian Assassins, Spies and Couriers Who Fought the Nazis

By Suzanne Cope

Dutton Publishers, 2025; 500 pages

At last! A book about women in *la Resistanza*! Four particular women: Carla Capponi who made bombs in a basement bunker in Rome, then delivered them to partisan soldiers at the Italian northern border; Bianca Guidetti Serra who rode her bicycle through the Alps to deliver news and munitions to the anti-Fascist armies hidden there; Teresa Mattei, who carried secret messages and hid bombs; Anita Malavasi who led troops across the Apennine Mountains on life-threatening missions.

Women of all social classes who knew nothing of political events were offered political education classes, created pamphlets and learned to work together on common cause that there be “... bread, peace and freedom.” They met in cemeteries and basements. They were an important part of the Committee for National Liberation, dedicated to “... resist

the bullying of a tyranny that has already been condemned by history.” They harbored Jews and helped them to escape the Nazis. One of Bianca’s friends was Primo Levi, who was sent to Fossoli, Italy’s only internment camps.

“Tens of thousands of women supported one hundred thousand men who would take up arms against the Nazis and Italian Fascists.” I’m not surprised that these women’s heroic stories helped to launch the feminist movement in Italy after the war.

Women of War is based on past interviews with the protagonists, archival documents, their photographs from family or historical institutes in Tuscany and Reggio Emilia. It is so abundant in scope and information that I can barely touch upon a few stories here. If you’re a history buff, I’d say it’s required reading.

CULTURAL EVENT: DANTE LECTURE AT SELBY LIBRARY RECAP

November 13, 2026

Article by: Camille Kramer

Photos by: Gordon Bloom and Linda McKenna



Dr. Mary A. Watt

On November 13 at 2pm at the Selby Library Auditorium downtown Sarasota, Dr. Mary A. Watt, Professor of Medieval Italian Literature and Culture at the University of Florida in Gainesville engaged GCICS members and guests in a riveting lecture entitled, “Lions and Tigers and Bears – Oh My! Dante’s Inferno and the Yellow Brick Road to Salvation” about redemption and the journey to getting “on the right path.” Calling upon popular culture icons that mirror Dante’s message, like The Wizard of Oz, Fellini’s La Dolce Vita, and Apocalypse Now among other movies, she connected the

fourteenth century masterpiece to modern times, emphasizing its continued relevancy.

The question-and-answer portion of the lecture was a robust segment, in and of itself, with insightful and provocative questions that Dr. Watt addressed with clarity, elaboration, and humor.

Each participant received a free raffle ticket for Dr. Watt’s most recent book, Dante’s Golden Legend, for which she drew the winning number and graciously signed the book.



Sixty-one attendees gave Dr. Watt rousing applause and many lingered to continue the Dante conversation with her.



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Mary Amabile Palmer	2008-2010
William Korp	2010-2014
Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020
Julie Bondarenko	2020-2025

Trivia Italiana: Did you know?

by Camille A. Kramer



1. Italy is home to the most UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
2. Mount Etna is Europe's most active volcano.
3. Italy produces the most wine in the world.
4. Italy is home to the oldest operational university - University of Bologna founded in 1088.
5. You can visit two sovereign states within Italy - Vatican City and San Marino.

Source: <https://www.insightvacations.com/blog/fun-facts-about-italy/>



Cassariano Italian Eatery - Lakewood Ranch (La Cena)
Florence and the Spice Boys - UTC
Irma's Tacos, Craft Beer and Tequila Bar
Libby's - Hillview
La Violetta (\$50 x 2) (La Cena)
Mattison's 41 (\$75 x 1) (La Cena)
Pazzo on Orange
Scarpino's

All donated \$50 except for the 2 noted.

