

# *LA VOCE DI GCICS*

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

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

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

January 2021



## President's Message,

Aah, 2021 is finally here! We waited so anxiously for the beginning of this year, filled with promise. The promised vaccine is at hand and looking down the tunnel I can see a glimmer, a light. We cannot let down our guard. We are still navigating our way through the walls of COVID-19 that surround us, but the light is there and will get ever brighter. Just be patient a little while longer. Our doctors, nurses, frontline workers, and countless others who have put themselves in the forefront of this pandemic caring for so many, without regard for their own safety, are among the first receiving the vaccine. I give a sigh of relief for this and wish to acknowledge their bravery. I came across a card that read "2020 Rated 1 Star", followed by a caption underneath that read "I'd like a refund, please!" At times, this too has been my sentiment. "I'd like a refund".

Well, let us now focus on what has happened this past month. We are moving forward with plans for our new website. We selected Gary Mrusz to be our website designer and will be working closely with members, Jerry

Hall, George Arfield, Mary Rinaldi, Nancy Schubert, Ellen Roderick, and myself. We are eager and excited to be working on this project together with each of us contributing our own specialties and talents. In the end, I will be excited to say with confidence "check out our new website". We will keep you posted on this initiative.

I know that our Secretary has extended an invitation to all of you to attend our Annual Meeting on January 22, 2021, at 2:00 pm, via Zoom. I implore all of you to please attend. I realize some of you have attended many Zoom events these past months and may be experiencing Zoom overload. However, this meeting is of importance to all of us. It is an opportunity to share with one another and to provide feedback as to what we will do during 2021. As Ellen has distinctly noted, the program will allow a time to network, vote, participate in planning, and most of all to bond with one another. Bonding is the most critical element to our success. I look forward to meeting all of you online on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Have any of you had an opportunity to read “Thousand Days in Venice”, “Thousand Days in Tuscany”, or “That Summer in Italy” by Marlena DeBlasi? Leita Kaldi Davis, in her new column “Italian Book Shelf” (December GCICS La Voce di GCICS), recommended these books. I am so happy that she has a love for all things Italian, including books with Italian themes. Leita’s review and write up was just enough for me to enthusiastically put them on my book list.

We will continue our meetings and functions using Virtual Technology. We will discuss

alternatives as the situation warrants. I am as anxious as anyone to return to in person meetings and events. It will eventually happen but in the meantime, we will rely on technology.

In closing, I want to wish all of you a Happy New Year. I also want to thank the Board for their dedication. I especially wish to thank Mary Rinaldi, Newsletter Editor. She has always been a huge support to our organization, and I am especially thankful for her good humor and patience.

Julie Bondarenko  
President

## JOIN US FOR OUR ZOOM MEETING



## ANNUAL MEETING



# MEETING NOTICE!

Our GCICS Bylaws require that we hold an Annual Meeting (AM) once a year with all members. The Board has set **Friday, January 22, 2021** via zoom from **2:00-3:00 pm**. On 12/2/20, I sent a “save the date” e-mail to all of you. . .now I am sending a formal invitation and a request to RSVP me with your name(s). Close to the zoom meeting, you will receive the zoom link.

This year, we anticipate a business meeting, a town hall feedback segment, and a “limited program”. Why should you participate in this meeting? Let me count the ways: (1) to network with your fellow members; (2) to have a vote in the election of Board members; (3) to share your ideas on future programs and how we may entice you to participate in our virtual events; and (4) to enjoy some light entertainment.

Regarding the entertainment, a GCICS member has kindly stepped forward and volunteered to “sponsor” a female singer who will perform some opera pieces. No doubt they will be light and airy – as we continue to face the pandemic but with great hope as two vaccines loom on the horizon for us. My nephew, an ER doctor at Georgetown University Hospital in DC, received his first shot on Wed (first in our family to receive the vaccine). He has been on the front lines since March 1, 2020. So, it is coming for all of us who wish to take it.

Please join us on Jan 22. And please email me your reservation. I will do one or two more reminders as we move into January. Happy New Year, 2021 to you and your families.

Ellen Roderick  
GCICS Secretary

## ITALIAN BOOK SHELF BY LEITA DAVIS

The Lying Life of Adults by Elena Ferrante

Translated by Ann Goldstein; Europa Editions, 2020, 322 pages



The story begins in typical Ferrante fashion. A woman, Giovanna, sits at her desk recalling a moment of painful disillusionment in her youth. Ferrante's women are tormented, helpless, maybe that's why she let the world guess she was male until she gained the power of success.

Like the Neapolitan novels, Naples is depicted in detail, as a character of place. The wealthy live on the hill tops, while the poor spend miserable lives at the bottom. Giovanna is growing up at the top of the hill, and the world has been gentle to her. Until it is shattered at age twelve, when she overhears her father call her ugly, like his estranged sister, Vittoria.

Giovanna is torn between wanting and not wanting to be like Vittoria; being like her felt like a rebellion against her father's respectability, which dissolves as he leaves Giovanna's mother for his best friend's wife. Giovanna's mother returns the favor by carrying on with the best friend. "What happened in the world of adults, in the heads of very reasonable people, in their bodies loaded with knowledge?" Giovanna muses. "Lies, lies, adults forbid them and yet they tell so many." Then Giovanna discovers the joys of lying. "I liked lying more and more, I felt now that praying and telling lies provided the same consolation."

Giovanna's relationship with her best friend, Angela, recalls that of Lila and Lenù in *My Brilliant Friend*. She says to Angela, "Only bitches like you study like parrots, get promoted and are respected by their boyfriends. I don't study, I get flunked, and I'm a whore."

Vittoria's capacity for hatred has no limit – she is the most emotional of all the intense characters. There's a thin line between Italian passionate behavior, however, and hysteria, when overwrought emotions became redundant and the reader is overwhelmed.

Ferrante herself states the dilemma. "... these lines that are intended to give me a story... nobody, not even the one who at this moment is writing, knows if it contains the right thread for a story or is merely a snarled confusion of suffering, without redemption." That is the question.

This is a coming-of-age story in spades. I couldn't decide if it is too raw or not raw enough. Giovanna states her "confusion of suffering" when she says, "I feel ugly, like I'm a bad person, and yet I'd like to be loved." The ambiguity is somehow resolved by Ferrante's final comment, "It's impossible to stop growing up."

## GCICS VIRTUAL SOCIAL HOUR – December 2020

### Article by Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

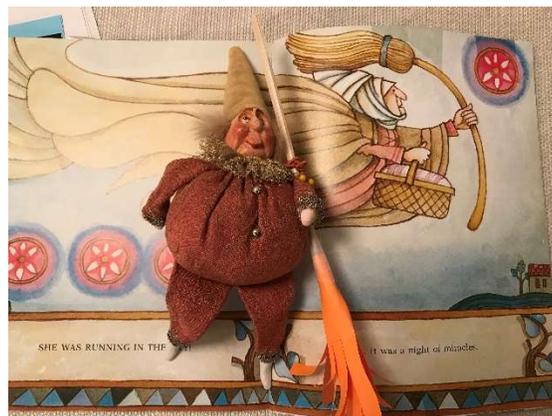
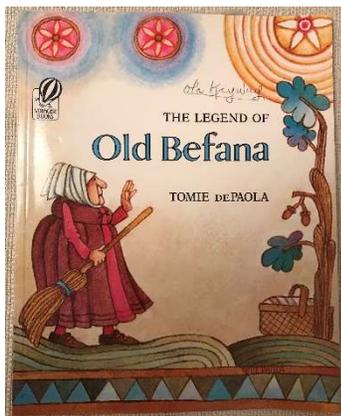
I am pleased to report on our 5th virtual Social Hour (12/17/20). Although members were busy with the upcoming holidays, eleven (11) joined together to share **Christmas/Holiday Traditions**. It was Penny Thomas's first time attending a Social Hour (she is a working woman); she told us she will join in the future as her schedule permits because she enjoyed the hour.

We began with **Leita Kaldi Davis** who spoke about the "Feast of the Seven Fishes". Nonna & Nonno were the hosts. Nonna and Leita's aunts created the many culinary delicacies. In addition to the abundance of delectable dishes, there was singing, card playing, and socializing for hours and hours.

**Penny Thomas** spoke about her being raised by an Irish grandmother BUT upon her marriage, she was immersed in the traditions of the Italians, including the Seven Fishes Feast. Along with the singing and feasting,

there was storytelling and jokes. Penny decided to take on the challenge of doing a Fish Feast in which she created 17 different fish dishes from soups to conch salad to entrees. Her guests enjoyed it immensely; however, Penny said that was her first and last time. . .too much work!

**Gordon and Joyce Bloom** were prepared to share using visuals. Gordon spoke about a children's book: The Legend of Old Befana. In Italian folklore, Befana is an old woman who delivers gifts to children throughout Italy on Epiphany Eve (night of January 5) in a similar way to St. Nicholas or Santa Claus. A popular belief is that her name derives from the Feast of Epiphany. Joyce's mom, an artist, built stages (dioramas) related to the story. When Gordon traveled to Italy on business, he visited Padua and found a doll that looked like Old Befana.



Joyce is of Ukrainian ancestry and spoke about 12 course meals on Xmas Eve with empty settings (places) for those who had died during the year. Her artistic mom made

exquisite Ukrainian eggs. Included also is a photo of the Christmas Village collection on display in the Bloom home.



**Julie Bondarenko** spoke fondly of Xmas Eve at Aunt Rosie's home in the Bronx with massive amounts of food including clams, shrimp, flounder, and pasta dishes of all kinds; and afterwards, the Xmas presents were stacked high. Julie's dad had his two daughters entertain with songs. **Mary**

**Rinaldi** also spoke about Xmas Eve dinner at her mom's home with 25-30 guests. When Mary and Jack Norman married, they began a tradition of purchasing a Xmas ornament in each country they visited. She shared the Spanish flamenco dancer, an Alaskan totem pole, and a bell from Argentina.



Joining us from her home in Austin, TX suburbs, **Lucille Samartin** spoke about Xmas Eve at her grandmother's home with fried eel, pasta with oil and garlic, and loads of desserts. The children

played games and the men played cards. **Linda Mercurio** shared the beautiful handiwork of her mom: handmade Xmas stockings for each family member; she showed us the one her mom made for Linda's husband, Michael. Did you know that **Jerry Hall** decorates his Sarasota home each year with over 15,000 lights? We need a "field trip" to his community. Also, he and his wife Carol (deceased) held a holiday party for over 40 years. **Beth Rose** spoke about her husband Ted (deceased) who was an expert at gift wrapping. Ted had learned the "art" from his mom and then taught Beth. So together, they took pride in wrapping Xmas gifts in elegant ways.

And finally, **Ellen Roderick** (yours truly) spoke about her Irish Xmas traditions. Attending Midnight Mass was an Irish

tradition we followed once we were in our teen years. Our big meal was on Xmas Day with turkey and all the trimmings. Irish vegetables included stuffing, mashed potatoes, carrot & parsnip mash, steamed Brussel sprouts, and turnips. Desserts were pies, especially mincemeat and Xmas pudding. Living in the shadow of the White House (11 mi), I began collecting White House ornaments produced by the White House Historical Association. In the photos I am holding the Truman Balcony 2018 ornament honoring President Truman (1945-1953) and the posthumous official White House portrait of John F. Kennedy 2020 ornament honoring President Kennedy (1961-1963). In closing, watch for 2021 Social Hour announcements and join us for an hour of fun and sharing.



For us in Florida



**GCICS MEMBERSHIP REPORT**  
**December 21, 2020**  
**Prepared by Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary**

I began the Membership Renewal Process using e-mail and providing the Renewal Form on August 15, 2020. Reminders were sent out in Sept, Oct, and Nov. Additionally, Board members called several members to determine if they planned to renew. The deadline was Nov 30, 2020. Of course, anyone may join or rejoin at any time. Any good business process sets deadlines which we did. Those who did not renew have been removed from: (1) the e-mail distribution lists I maintain; and (2) the official Membership Matrix which forms the basis for our Annual Directory to be issued in January 2021. Significant data follows:

**Non-Renewals as of 12/21/20:**

8 couples & 14 singles totaling 30 persons have come off the GCICS membership rolls.

There were a few reasons for non-renewing: (1) left the Sarasota area; (2) illness; (3) aging and thus not able to participate; (4) never bonded with the organization (e.g., rarely if ever participated); (5) widowed and did not wish to participate as a single; and finally, (6) no reason given.

**Membership as of 12/21/20:**

46 couples & 45 singles totaling 137 members

**New Members: 9/17/20-12/21/20: 5 singles (sponsor in parenthesis)**

1. Rosemarie Lumetta (9/17/20) (Internet) – Lakewood Ranch, Del Webb
2. Barbara Dondero (10/31/20) (Leita Kaldi Davis) - Bradenton
3. Ann Mascalino (10/31/20) (Barbara Dondero) – Toms River, NJ
4. Joan Langdon (11/22/20) (Linda Mercurio) – Los Angeles, CA
5. Ann Caruso March (11/29/20) (Mignon Snider) – Longboat Key

**Bottom Line:**

- Began membership renewal on 8/15/20: 162 members.
- Did not renew: 30
- Renewed (sent dues): 132
- Joined as new members: 5
- $162 - 30 = 132 + 5 = 137$
- **Official membership on 12/21/20: 137**

**We sincerely hope that you will partner with the Board in recruiting new members as we commence face-to-face events when the virus is no longer a threat to our health and safety.**

## OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

### President

Julie Bondarenko  
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### Past Presidents

Joseph Raffaele, PhD	1988-1992
Gabriella Thurston	1993-2001
Patrick Corsentino	2001-2004
Arthur Castraberti	2004-2006
Marie Corsentino	2007
Mary Amabile Palmer	2008-2010
William Korp	2010-2014
Anthony Esposito	2015-2016
Sheryl Lazzarotti	2016-2020



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