

# *LA VOCE DI GCICS*

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

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

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

April 2021



## President's Message

Happy Spring! As I write this, the weather has been cooler than one might expect for late March. We must remember that the lazy days of summer will soon be here. It will be hot and humid, and most likely rainy. For those who play golf it will be a time when golfers long for October when cooler temperatures remind us why we play. October will bring possibilities other than hitting a ball with a club and hoping it will go where intended, a difficult feat sometimes for me. I wonder why I like it so much. It must be the challenge. October will also bring with it the return of our members to Sarasota. I am extremely hopeful that we will once again enjoy in-person meetings and get together. Our first will be a grand and emotional celebration. I am not sure

what the COVID forecast will bring. I just feel it in my bones that it will not be more of the same as we have experienced of late. The vaccine has found my arm and I am happy to say I have received my first of two shots. I expect to receive my second by the first or second week of April. It has given me a sense of freedom and safety. I am still wearing a mask in public, washing hands often, and respectful of others' space. It is our new normal. We must adhere to caution and not flaunt our perceived freedom less we be reckless and suffer once again. This will be the rule for some time to come. We are much smarter or so we think. We have answers or so we think.

Let us be kind--it is the best thinking. I have one request which hopefully will be received with the intention it is given. I have become familiar with many of you on a more personal basis while serving as president. This familiarity has fostered a fondness; you have become important to me. So, for anyone who is hesitant about receiving the vaccine, I implore you to raise your arm and welcome it, especially now that variants are said to be more contagious, more deadly, and will quickly find their way to the unprotected and the unsuspecting. Of course, it is up to each person, but I say again: "You are especially important! Let science rule!"

### ***Scholarship Program***

Linda Ahern and her committee have selected 10 finalists who will be interviewed on April 10<sup>th</sup>. It is always an exciting time as we decide on the final awardees. Despite few fundraising events this past year, we managed to garner sufficient funds to give these awards as we have always done. The amounts and how many recipients are still to be determined. These monies are solely available because of your generosity. As always, you have stepped up to the plate, showed your generosity, and helped fulfill our mission. Linda will have more

exciting news to share with us as the selection is completed.

### ***Cultural Programs***

George Arfield will bring us another transatlantic program on April 7<sup>th</sup>. George has been responsible for our transatlantic interviews. Once again, he has managed to organize an exciting interview, this time with Claudia Zeni. Claudia will bring to our GCICS zoom audience a wonderful lecture consisting of slides and video all about the less traveled areas of northern Italy--the ones that tourists usually miss. This is the Italy that should not be forgotten or forsaken. I know Claudia, and my experience with this talented and knowledgeable tour guide, chef, and all-around fun to be with woman will be nothing less than fascinating. Now for my thoughts. After every virtual cultural lecture, I am left disappointed because I so wished that many more members had witnessed what I had just witnessed. All these virtual events have been nothing less than remarkable and so thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. I always walk away from my screen thinking how wonderful it all was, how much I thoroughly enjoyed it, and how I wished more members had just experienced what I had. I truly encourage you to be with us on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Look for Ellen's e-mail blast with the details.

### ***Social Hours***

This past week I had the pleasure to participate in a GCICS Social Hour. Gordon Bloom once again facilitated, and Ellen was our timekeeper. This month's subject was "Famous Italian Person(s) Who Have Impressed Us". Please look for Ellen's report in the May newsletter. Also, this was Ellen's first appearance since her accident, and she looks wonderful. I wish her a very speedy recovery. It was so nice to see her again. And a First Timer to our Social Hours was our long faithful member, Rabbi Barbara Aiello, beaming in from Calabria.

### ***Easter Greetings***

I want to wish you a Happy Easter, and may the warm weather bring an

air of comfort to all as we pass from COVID to hopefully a new beginning. The Board is working diligently to get us to our end goal, socializing in person. We must continue to be cautious and understand the implication should we not. I also want to thank all those who help our organization run smoothly. Mary Rinaldi, thank you for producing our Newsletter; Linda Ahern, thank you for running our Scholarship Program; George Arfield for bringing us the most interesting cultural events; Jerry for zooming us where we need to go; and Penny for watching "our pennies". And I wish to thank Ellen for her swift return to GCICS.

## GCICS CULTURE BEAT IN THE TIME OF CORONA By George Arfield, Culture-Social Chair



A medley of social and cultural events — a combination of fun, fellowship, and education — are among the benefits your Society aims to deliver at events that in more normal times have drawn scores of attendees. The Covid-19 pandemic squashed all our plans at very short notice, compelling us to search for events that could be delivered in compliance with the prudent measures recommended by public health authorities.

Soon after the pandemic put the brakes on virtually all gatherings your board recognized the need to resort to the Zoom app in order to reach out to members. A paid subscription has made it possible to hold meetings lasting beyond the free 40 minutes maximum that the free version of this app offers.

The next challenge would be to engage speakers with an interesting, Italian-related topic to address not a live audience but members tuning in to Zoom, a medium we realize not everyone enjoys using.

Attendance to these internet-based events has been mixed. Although undoubtedly Zoom does not generate the atmosphere of a conventional meeting, it does easily impart information and opinions, allowing for illustration and conversation between the

presenter and the attendees in their own home.

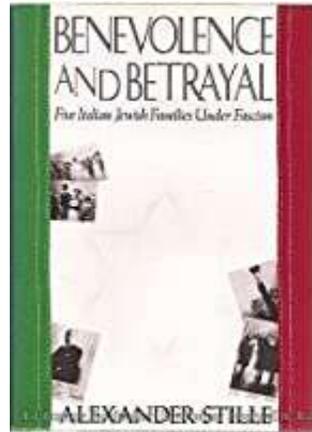
Among the events delivered using Zoom as a platform were presentations by Dr. Davide Tanasi, Prof. Scott Perry and fellow-member and travel organizer Robert Gaglio.

There have also been valuable suggestions by members, such as the conversations about Italian-centric topics

As of this writing, during the third week of March, we have no idea when we might be able to resume regular cultural meetings, either at the Community Foundation headquarters or at a public facility. Nevertheless, we continue to work on bringing you Zoom-based events. Among these is (a) an overview of Italy's influence on and periodic presence in parts of the Eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea and (b) a virtual tour of truly picturesque and culturally significant parts of Italy that are less likely to be overrun by hordes of tourists.

Stay tuned, and if YOU have any practical suggestions involving speakers who can present interesting topics, please share your thoughts with me. My email: [arfield@yahoo.com](mailto:arfield@yahoo.com).

## ITALIAN BOOK SHELF BY LEITA DAVIS



*Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism*  
by Alexander Stille  
Summit Books, 1991, 365 pages

Alexander Stille is a knowledgeable, articulate and engaging writer. He has written several books on Italy, its culture, politics and the Mafia, from Benito Mussolini to Silvio Berlusconi. In this book he writes about five wealthy families who joined the fascist party after 1922 when Mussolini came to power, donated to the party and many Christian charitable and cultural causes. Even after the racial laws of 1938, these families believed their benevolence protected them from Nazi “solutions.” As Stille describes each family’s personal story, it seems unbelievable that they continued to think they were exempt from fascist persecution until, one by one, they disappeared, were murdered or sent to concentration camps. The stories are told by the families themselves through extensive interviews that Stille conducted with their descendants, interwoven with his illuminating historical narrative. There’s Ettore Ovazzi, a militant fascist even after the anti-Semitic racial laws were introduced. He

ran a newspaper that criticized unpatriotic Jews. The writer Pittigrilli worked for OVRA, the Italian secret police and informed on his Jewish friends, including the writer, Carlo Levi. Franco Schoneit from Ferrara and his father survived Buchenwald and Franco’s mother, Gina, stood up to the SS and miraculously survived Ravensbruck. The Di Veroli family of Rome’s Jewish ghetto were relatively poor, and their narrative includes the moving story of Catholics who donated gold and money when the Jewish leadership was ordered to supply a ransom of fifty kilos of gold. Massimo Teglio, an aviator, was instrumental in saving many lives with the help of members of the Catholic clergy.

Stille recreates the obscure world of Bassani’s *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, where Italy’s Jews felt invulnerable to the vagaries of vicious fascists until it was too late. Within that history he explores the complexities of human behavior with sensitivity and profound insight.



# Angelo Steven LaBrutte

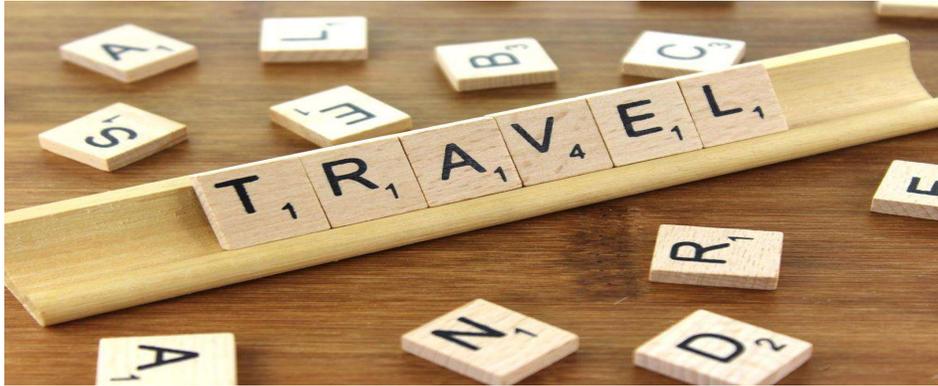
1931 – 2021



Angelo Steven LaBrutte (March 9, 1931 – March 9, 2021) passed away on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Steve was born in Pittston, PA to Sam and Rose Sperazza La Brutte. He served in the United States Air Force and graduated from Rider University in New Jersey. He is survived by his wife Aida La Brutte, nee Spulveda, and by sisters Connie Arnone and Rosemary La Brutte, as well as nieces Rosemary Sudnick, Roseanne Burchill, and Rita Cream, and nephew Joseph Culla. Steve loved good red wine, all things Italian, and Paris France.



GCICS SOCIAL HOUR FEB. 25, 2021  
TRAVELING TALES FROM ITALY  
Submitted by Doris Hurban



Gordon began the discussion, and spoke about traveling issues with trains and buses in Italy. Joyce fondly remembered a week they spent in Florence for Gordon to attend an intensive Italian language course. While he was in class, she was free to explore; she especially enjoyed the Ponte Vecchio and the Uffizi Gallery.

Next Maureen Napoliello relayed Vincent's and her first trip to Italy was a Perrillo Tour, going to the 3 main cities of Venice, Florence and Rome, but having to pack and leave each day was too difficult. Their second trip was an Oceanic Cruise which proved better for them—unpack only once.

Doris shared that Tom and she have had 13 wonderful trips to Italy. Her favorite spot they have revisited several times is Orvieto, plus they visited Doris' relatives in Grumo Appula, Bari, Puglia, two times, but never were brought to see the farm her Grandfather had worked but which is still in the family.

Linda busied herself with research on her family history in Montauro, Calabria. Her husband Michael found a restaurant in Tampa with the same name. Going to dine there, they enjoyed the food as well as the owner who said they are probably related, about 6 cousins removed.

Joan, still in NJ, filled us in on the present snow situation there. She delves into the political and fashion side of Italy in a weekly newsletter, "Italics". Her trip to Pompeii appeared to be her favorite, to which she hopes to return soon on her next trip, especially to see what the new digs have revealed.

George mentioned that Dr. Tanasi wants to return to our club in person soon to fill us in on his new dig in Noto, Sicily. George alerted us to Sunday train service in Italy for seniors is BOGO, enabling them to both have first class tickets for the price of one. His most favorite area is the Western Italian Riviera, especially the

towns of Santa Margherita and Bassano del Grappa.

Penny has been to Italy twice. The first trip was a tour. Her boat cruise was much better for her. She would like to stay in one place for a week at least.

Julie stayed with her childhood friend, Juliana, in an apartment in Civitavecchia outside of Rome, loving it. But she really spoke highly of a trip staying with previous owner Angelo of Salute in 2014 at his family Tuscan vineyard for a week shared with many area friends who live in Sarasota.

Joan summed it all up exclaiming it's time to make another trip! By then, it was time for us to get on with our evening dinner plans.....



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## GEORGE WRITES:

*"Spring is here and we have sprouting another live and new "Zoom Conference" from across the ocean. If you can't get there due to COVID-related restrictions, what could be better than a virtual visit to Italy's scenic, historic and uncrowded north, led by a professional guide? Coming up on **April 7** that's exactly what we're scheduling, to be enjoyed from your home. More details will follow soon but please put this on your calendar:*

**WHAT:** A virtual guided visit via Zoom to and conversation about beautiful Northern Italy.

**WHEN:** Wednesday, April 7, 2:00pm - 4:00 pm EDT.

**WHO:** Our guide will be Claudia Zeni, professional guide born, raised and living in Trentino-Alto Adige.

**WHERE:** Anywhere with an internet connection on your computer, tablet or smartphone.

**NOTE:** Prof. Paola Tate has graciously consented to suspend the Italian Language Instruction hours for this occasion.

