

VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

1811 Englewood Rd., #317, Englewood, FL 34223 WWW.GCICS.ORG November 2023

Mary Rinaldi, Editor



President's Message

Greetings to everyone. I hope you are enjoying the cooler weather that this time of year brings to the Gulf Coast. It is fall, no abundance of falling leaves after turning beautiful hues of red and orange. Inasmuch as this would be a welcome treat, we should remember we can still enjoy summer activities with lots of sunshine.

Thanksgiving is just weeks away and I am thinking about the necessary preparations. Who will attend? What size turkey? Get out the saved recipes reserved just for this occasion. Thanksgiving is always a time to share with those we love and care about. We should think about how truly fortunate we are as we sit around our bountiful table at Thanksgiving. We will reflect and pray for those in the world who are suffering. I will be filled with gratitude for we are blessed and fortunate. My prayer is for peace and calm during these turbulent times and be ever faithful to the ideals of peace. Let us carve the turkey, pass the gravy, and be ever thankful.

Our Welcome Back Luncheon on October 14th was a grand success for many reasons. It was great to see many of our snowbirds who have returned from the north and elsewhere after an enjoyable summer visiting family

and friends. Thank you to our faithful members for attending and to the guests you brought. This was our first event of GCICS's 2023/2024 program year. I am excited about the many events that will take place going forward. Please look for Ellen Roderick's "Save the Dates" emails, and procedures for registering for our many events.

At this year's Welcome Back Luncheon, we honored a new GCICS Italian American of the Year, Dr. Davide Tanasi, and welcomed his wife Dr. Denise Cali and their two sons, Alberto and Frederico. You will read about Dr. Tanasi and this day further on in this newsletter. However, I wish to share my personal feelings about the day. Davide has given several lectures to our Society and each time I have come away realizing that he has accomplished much in his life and in his field of study. He is one of those unique personalities who you realize in short order has gifts beyond his bountiful knowledge and accomplishments. He has a unique ability to reach out, connect and create an interest with those whom he lectures; and with those who sat with him during lunch as I had the good fortune to do. When Davide went to the podium to speak, he let us into his personal world and was forthcoming about his life.

With his wife Denise, they became a remarkable duo. With the children, one can see all the attributes that contribute to his success. Denise is an outgoing personality and as you will learn is also a professor at USF. And one last thought - Dr. Tanasi is a true inspiration to all of us. Consider yourself fortunate if you have attended one of his lectures about Sicily and the Mediterranean. Do not miss his next one. (Note: I want to thank Doris Hurban for her calligraphy talents. Doris applies this talent to our GCICS certificates that we present to our special guest speakers. Thank you.)

As we move forward, I want to recognize Board members for their work. We are the recipients of weekly Happy Hours that are always fun. Many thanks to Linda Mercurio, Jerry Hall, and Ellen Roderick for the success of our HHs. Thank you, Gordon Bloom for continuing to ensure that our website is up to date. Thank you, Josephine Fontana, Treasurer, for working effectively with Kathy Antini, our bookkeeper, to make sure your monies and investments are safe and used for their intended purpose - our programs as well as our scholarships and grants. Thank you, George Arfield for bringing us many interesting cultural lectures through your invaluable connections. Thank you, Mary Rinaldi for your creative work as our Newsletter Editor. Thank you, Tom Hurban for successful bocce gatherings on Sundays at the Bay Preserve, Osprey, from 2-4 pm, and for special bocce events. Look for Tom's announcement on our upcoming

Welcome Back Picnic, Nov 12th, in this newsletter.

Thank you, Sandra Russell, Scholarship Chair, and her committee for their work. The committee will be active over the next months, and we will hear more about their work then. I am responsible for several events, work on several committees, and like to think of myself as willing to pitch in, take the reins, when necessary, extract calm and encourage our Board to be cognizant of and faithful to our purposes. Thank you, Ellen Roderick, Secretary, for your work. There exists no aspect of the Society that Ellen does not have her hands on. I appreciate her taking on responsibilities that go far beyond her GCICS office.

I want to welcome back Patty & Mike DiMicele who were on an extensive tour in Southeast Asia. Patty suffered a fall, dislocating her shoulder, and had other calamities along with it. She returned home on October 22. I am praying and hoping she experiences a speedy and full recovery. I am certain she would appreciate your well wishes. Her address is: 8425 Turnberry Circle, Sarasota, FL 34241.

I wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. I look forward to seeing you at future events. Please support our mission. With much appreciation,

Julie Bondarenko



WELCOME BACK PICNIC



Greetings all. The Board and picnic committee have decided to maintain the change in venue from the grounds adjacent to our bocce court to the location at the North Jetty Park in Nokomis. We have received only VERY positive feedback on the event and changed location. This event had previously been referred to as the bocce picnic but now this new name has evolved. Jetty Park has a large pavilion which has many picnic tables undercover. The beach and restrooms are close by. This location is easy to find. After crossing the bridge to the Nokomis beaches on Casey Key, turn left and travel until the homes end, then turn right into the parking lot. Our reserved pavilion is now visible to your left.

WHEN: November 12, Sunday, from 12:30 until 4:30

WHERE: North Jetty Park pavilion. Nokomis. Rain or shine

SEATING: Multiple picnic benches. Bring a different chair if something more comfortable is desired.

DRINKS: Alcohol is permitted. Bring whatever your personal beverage preferences are. One restriction is that the Park Commission wants NO glass. Handle this the best way you can.

UTENSILS: We provide plastic silverware. You are welcome to bring metal. We also have paper plates, napkins, plastic glasses.

FOOD: After many years we have found the following system works. Each party brings whatever main course they themselves will enjoy. You are also asked to bring another item to share with the group. This can be an appetizer, a salad, or a dessert.

FEE: NO charge! PLEASE COME and share a friendly GCICS smile!

Reservations: Not needed, but we want to be prepared so please let me know if you plan to come. Guests are welcomed. Please wear your name badge.

Thank you, Tom Hurban
Bocce and picnic event chairperson
tags. dorisntom@gmail.com or 908 507 3048

**SARASOTA CULTURAL SOCIETY HONORS USF EDUCATOR AND RESEARCHER
WITH “2023 ITALIAN AMERICAN OF THE YEAR” AWARD
Written by George Arfield**



Dr. Davide Tanasi

The Sarasota-based Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society (www.gcics.org) Saturday, October 14, 2023 presented its “2023 Italian American of the Year” award to Dr. Davide Tanasi, a professor in the Department of History and Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Anthropology of the University of South Florida. He is known for the application of leading-edge digital technology to archaeological research delivering discoveries that have enriched current knowledge of ancient history.

Dr. Tanasi was honored for his trailblazing techniques that employ digital technology to advance and expand the remains of ancient life in the Mediterranean Sea. The presentation was held at a local restaurant (Mattison’s 41) at a luncheon attended by 70 GCICS members and guests.

In conferring the award, GCICS president Julie Bondarenko drew attention to Dr. Tanasi’s formal instruction in Italy--he holds a Ph.D. from the University of Turin—and his subsequent recruitment by and advancement to tenured professor on the faculty of USF’s Department of History.

At the moment, Dr. Tanasi is actively involved in projects that, among others, seek to identify the source of ingredients, such as olive oil and wine, in the original Mediterranean diet by bringing up from the sea cargo remaining on sunken Roman vessels. He also is leading excavations in Malta. Both projects are advanced using modern digital technologies that pierce water and earth to reveal long-hidden objects. In recent years Dr. Tanasi has delivered several lectures on his discoveries to educational and cultural organizations in the Sarasota-Manatee area.



President Julie Bondarenko presenting Dr. Davide Tanasi his award.

INTRODUCTION: DR. DAVIDE TANASI
“GCICS 2023 ITALIAN AMERICAN OF THE YEAR”

October 14, 2023

Written by Julie Bondarenko, GCICS President
Presented by George Arfield, GCICS Social & Cultural Chair

What an exhilarating experience for those of you who have had the privilege of knowing our guest of honor, Dr. Davide Tanasi. If you have attended his lectures, you fully understand why we honor him today with our GCICS Italian American of the Year recognition. Dr. Tanasi, received his PhD from the University of Torino, Italy, in 2007 and is a highly respected and accomplished fully tenured professor in the Department of History, University of South Florida. He is the Founder and Director of Digital Exploration of Archaeology. This technology allows for Dr. Tanasi to embrace archaeological science and computer science in his research. Dr. Tanasi has unleashed a treasure trove of ancient secrets in Sicily and Malta – Mediterranean prehistory held deep within the earth that until recently was only discoverable through traditional means. Now, through digital applications, it offers the ultimate learning experience derived from virtual interaction between the subject and the student. Dr. Tanasi’s parents, Angela and Bruno, might have predicted that their son would go on to become an incredible husband, father, and teacher; and yes, this is true. His mother who resides in Sicily and his father, now deceased, have had the pleasure of being enormously proud of their son’s accomplishments. Dr. Tanasi has achieved much more than what may seem obvious. He is a man gifted with talent and a resolute scholar. He was nurtured by his own innate curiosity and by family who recognized his insatiable appetite for knowledge. His interests were not those of a normal child. From the beginning, his curiosity about his world, present and ancient, was always evident. His parents read to him stories of

Roman and Greek mythology instead of fairytales. It was because of these influences that our guest went on to carve out a fascinating career in Digital Archaeology. Dr. Tanasi shares his life with Denise, whom he met in college. They have two sons, Frederico age 10 and Alberto age 13. Denise has a PhD and is on the faculty of USF. A member of the History Department, she teaches Italian Language and Culture as well as Greek and Roman Civilization. We understand from Dr. Tanasi that Denise is very adventurous and loves exploring new countries and ancient ruins. She adopted the role of an adventuresome spouse eager to accompany her husband as he took on a key role at USF.

Another significant person who gave Dr. Tanasi his profound interest and who was important in guiding Davide to move forward with his study of archeology was his Uncle Vincenzo, a full professor at the University of Catania and director of a major excavation in Crete. Davide explained that to become a full professor in Italy is an extraordinary achievement. It was evident in our discussion that Davide has great admiration for his uncle who truly impacted his life choices. In closing, we wish to hail his parents, Angela and Bruno, who instilled in their son a love for all that is profoundly worthy of research, and of interest to all as he unlocks many unknown answers that benefit our society. Today, we are honored to have Dr. Davide Tanasi as our guest speaker and honoree. Please welcome Dr. Tanasi with a huge round of applause.

CITATION: DR. DAVIDE TANASI "GCICS 2023 ITALIAN AMERICAN OF THE YEAR"

October 14, 2023

Written and Presented by Julie Bondarenko, GCICS President

*Since 1991, GCICS has honored several outstanding "Italian Americans of the Year." The Society is always eager to honor an Italian American who has made significant contributions to the welfare of the residents of the Gulf Coast. This is an important dimension of our Society's mission. The Board of Directors was unanimous in its selection of Dr. Davide Tanasi as our 2023 recipient. It is an honor to share with you many of his contributions to our Gulf Coast community as well as to our country and the world.

*Dr. Tanasi is Founder and Director of the Institute of Digital Exploration, a "state of the art" research center for the application of 3D Digital Imaging to archaeological cultural heritage study at the University of South Florida. He is an Archeology Scientist, specializing in the application of computer science and chemistry to archeology. His focus centers around Mediterranean Pre-History and Archeology of Ancient Sicily and Malta. His use of 3D imaging and mapping has led to extensive new understanding and insightful discoveries of antiquity. His many accomplishments have been acclaimed by the scientific and archaeology communities worldwide.

*Dr. Tanasi has published hundreds of papers and journals as well as authored or co-authored more than a dozen books. His writings have documented many new discoveries and concepts that have far surpassed traditional archeology practices.

*Closer to home, Dr. Tanasi has had a significant impact on residents of FL's Gulf Coast. Permit me to share a few examples:

- (1) As Program Director of the Spring Break and Summer Study Abroad Programs, with six USF students, Dr. Tanasi recently uncovered a 2,000-year-old Roman house during excavations in Malta.
- (2) Collaborating with a local school district, Dr. Tanasi has engaged in community outreach at the elementary school level. Children interact with models and 3D printing, allowing learning by touching. In essence, the young students are working with Digital Reality.
- (3) Collaborating with the staff at the Ringling Museum of Art, Dr. Tanasi has created a system whereby the public can, by virtual means, view the interior of John and Mable Ringling's home, Ca' d'Zan.

*Dr. Tanasi has given of his time and expertise by delivering lectures to the following organizations and museums.

- (1) Affiliated and active with the Museum of Art, Tampa.
- (2) Dr. Tanasi is an active member of the Italian Club of Tampa, a club known for its love of Italian Culture and Art. He has shared with club members numerous areas of expertise, offering lectures on Ancient Sicily on a recurring basis.
- (3) Dr. Tanasi teaches archaeology courses 3 times a year at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. A recent course was entitled "Religion and Power in Ancient Sicily."
- (4) He has been a frequent lecturer at the Sarasota-based organization, Time Sifters.
- (5) And finally, Dr. Tanasi has "graced the stage" of our Gulf Coast Italian Culture

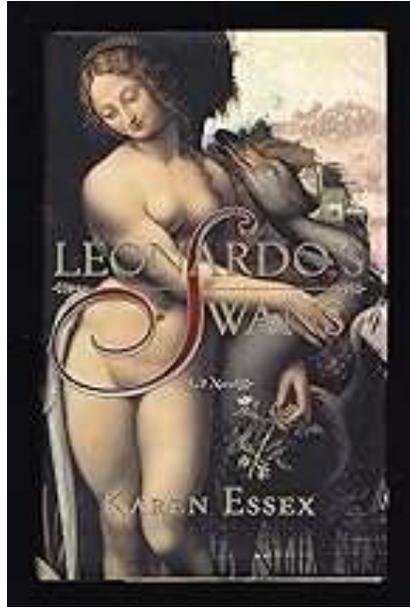
Society, by providing fascinating lectures. He has opened our members' minds to the ancient world of Sicily and the Mediterranean.

*Dr. Tanasi is a skilled professor who has a special talent for "reaching his students." His teaching style and dedication bring out the best in his students. He does not impart information but instead teaches so that his students learn how to leverage their own intelligence; he calls it "critical thinking."

*These are highlights of Dr. Tanasi's extensive contributions to the world of science and archaeology. I know you will join me in a round of applause as we thank Dr. Tanai for being such an inspiration in our world today. Dr. Tanasi, please join me at the podium for a formal presentation.



Italian Bookshelf By Leita Kaldi



Leonardo's Swans by Karen Essex
Doubleday, 310 pages, 2006
Review by Leita Kaldi Davis

Swan Song: “The swan is white without any spot, and sings sweetly as it dies, with this song its life ends.” From Leonardo’s notebooks quoted by the author.

This book is about one of the most fascinating eras of Italian history, characterized by fifteenth century Reformation icons, Ludovico Sforza, Isabella d’Este, Countess of Mantua, the Visconti dynasty, the Gonzagas, the Papal Borgias, French King Louis, German Emperor Maximilian, all in the framework of the illustrious Maestro Leonardo da Vinci. Incredible wealth and lifestyles are described within the tension of relentless struggles for territory and power among the reigning domains of Milano, Venice, Naples and, of course, the Vatican. The book centers on the sisters Beatrice and Isabella d’Este, countesses of

Mantua. Isabella is the more beautiful, gifted, brilliant, who marries the Marquis Francesco Gonzago, but is envious of her sister’s arranged marriage to Ludovico Sforza, foreseeing the power that he will hold. She easily seduces him into a dalliance until Beatrice asserts herself and he falls in love with her.

The title derives from a gift of a pair of swans that Isabella sends to Ludovico. Perhaps a symbol of the eventual “swan song” of any powerful empire.

Unfortunately, the author’s writing is not equal to its subject matter. I skimmed many parts, looking for the marrow of this bone, and appreciated the historical accounts. But it is read more as a romance novel than an historical narrative.

A Proclamation on Columbus Day, 2023

Today, we celebrate all the Italian Americans, whose courage and character reflect and help define our Nation.

In 1891, 11 Italian Americans were murdered in one of the largest mass lynchings in our Nation's history. In the wake of this horrific attack, President Benjamin Harrison established Columbus Day in 1892. For so many people across our country, that first Columbus Day was a way to honor the lives that had been lost and to celebrate the hope, possibilities, and ingenuity Italian Americans have contributed to our country since before the birth of our republic.

More than a century later, we mark Columbus Day with that purpose — celebrating the heritage of Italian Americans, whose hands helped build our Nation and whose hearts have always carried faith in the American Dream. For many Italian Americans, the story of Christopher Columbus' voyage — from the Spanish port of Palos de la Frontera on behalf of Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II — remains a source of pride. It reflects the stories of trips across the Atlantic that so many Italian Americans grew up hearing at the dinner table, whether tales of ancestors who set sail on wooden boats across rough waters to begin new lives on our shores or grandparents who immigrated here with little more than hope in their hearts. These are stories of people leaving everything they knew and loved behind for the promise of opportunity in the United States.

Today, we honor those stories told around the dinner table and celebrate what these hopeful Italian American newcomers brought to our Nation. Italian Americans are educators, service members, doctors, engineers, artists, Government officials, and leaders and innovators in every field. The Italian American community is also a source of strength for our Nation's enduring relationship with Italy — an essential NATO ally and partner in the European Union. Together,

we are working to address the challenges of our time, especially supporting the people of Ukraine in defense of their freedom.

America was founded on an idea: that we are all created equal, endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights, and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. Though we have never fully lived up to that idea, our aspirations have never let us walk away from it either. Today, we honor all the Italian Americans who never walked away from our fundamental creed and who, for generations, have helped realize the full promise of our Nation.

In commemoration of Christopher Columbus' historic voyage 531 years ago, the Congress, by joint resolution of April 30, 1934, and modified in 1968 (36 U.S.C. 107), as amended, has requested the President proclaim the second Monday of October of each year as "Columbus Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 9, 2023, as Columbus Day. I direct that the flag of the United States be displayed on all public buildings on the appointed day in honor of our diverse history and all who have contributed to shaping this, Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.



GCICS mourns the passings of former members who joined GCICS in the “early days” and, with their husbands, were part of the “backbone” of our Society for many years, until 2017 when the first of the four died. Two sisters married two brothers. Both couples lived on Siesta Key and were very close friends of Joe and Blanche Barresi who lived down the street. Pete died in Jan. 2017 and many of us attended his funeral at St. Michael’s on Siesta Kay.

On 10/9/23, **Carmela (Millie) Figari** died; her funeral was on 10/28/23 at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, Siesta Key at 11:00 am.

On 10/17/23 Millie’s sister **Clara Figari** died.

Here is the **obituary for Carmela Figari:**

*It is always difficult saying goodbye to someone we love and cherish. Family and friends must say goodbye to their beloved **Carmela A. Figari** (Sarasota, FL), who passed away at the age of 93, on October 9, 2023. She was predeceased by her husband Peter. She is survived by her children, Noreen Ginsberg (Barry Wolk), Peter Figari (Beth) and Frances Figari (Jim Beckner); her grandchildren, Melissa Payne (Patrick), Lauren Webber (Grant), Jillian Ginsberg, Jason Figari (Ali), Steven Figari (Rachel), Elia O’Leary (Kevin), James Volosin (Kristen) and Peter Volosin (Malcolm Quigley); her great grandchildren, Quinn Payne, Colton, Knox Webber, Giovanna, Amelia Figari and Finn O’Leary; her sister Clara; and her brother-in-law Frank Figari. She is also survived by many loving nieces and nephews. A funeral mass will be held on Saturday, October 28th, 2023, at 11:00 AM at the St. Michael’s (5394 Midnight Pass Rd, Sarasota, FL 34242).*



Pete & Carmela (Milie) Figari (on the left) and Frank & Clara Figari (on the right).

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SUPPORT

Members wishing to support Dr. Tanasi's archaeological and digital projects can do so by visiting the website of the University of South Florida (USF). For payment with credit card use this link:

<https://giving.usf.edu/online/gift/f/420187/>

Donations are tax deductible.

George Arfield

FYI



The Columbus Circle statue was unveiled on Oct. 13, 1892, at the foot of Central Park in New York City. It was built to appease the Italian American community during a period of unflinching discrimination.



