

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE 9/7/14

Saluti a tutti!

As we complete the third quarter there were enough challenges that kept us engaged and some were national in scope. During the summer I was contacted by an author, Douglas Gladstone, who wrote a book about Luigi Del Bianco, the chief carver of the figures on Mount Rushmore. He explained to me that the object of his book was to gain greater acknowledgment and recognition for him. He was also very interested in CSJ's involvement to do the same. We decided that the guides from the National Park Service on the Mount Rushmore tour mention Del Bianco specifically as the chief carver, and it is our interest to include a monument in his honor there. Furthermore, I contacted National CSJ President Joseph Boncore to include this issue on his agenda and told him NY CSJ would greatly aid in this quest for greater recognition for Del Bianco. Hopefully we'll get a beneficial result. It should be noted that Luigi's grandson Louis is on a tour throughout the country drumming up petitions and making dramatic presentations in his grandfather's garb, instructing all he comes in contact with about the exploits of his grandfather. If any of you should come in contact with a petition, show your support for this worthy endeavor by signing it. Del Bianco's contribution once again demonstrates how Italians have contributed to the historical landscape of this country and therefore deserves the recognition that eludes him.

On a another national note we were faced with an issue much more negative in tone. Thanks to Board member John Fratta's discovery on Facebook, two companies were found to manufacture defamatory t-shirts emblazoned with "Sons of Italy" on them. One was designed with a skull and two sawed-off shotguns crossed together underneath the expression, and another depicted a sleazy gangster with a machine gun under the same expression. Once known, our OSIA members fired off critical e-mails to these companies demanding that production and distribution of these shirts be terminated immediately. We're also having our Counsel Mike Santo investigate trademark infringement since the expression "Sons of Italy" was emblazoned on the shirts. I want to commend all of you who responded to this issue spontaneously without our solicitation. It really demonstrated the deep pride you have about your Italian ethnicity. The companies did admit that if trademark infringement is the case, they would terminate production. We'll have to see.

Turning closer to our home turf, we had enough to tackle. In the summer Newsday produced its seasonal ad magazine entitled "Long Island." Perusing it I noticed that the "Suffolk Sod Father" ad was run again. This piece is produced by an Italian American landscaper who sells sod retail, but this ad uses all the offensive mafia motifs we traditionally oppose— — "my competitors will swim with the fishes, all my competitors will be whacked, I'll make you an offer you can't refuse"—and introduces a stubby character dressed in a fedora. At our August Board meeting I presented this piece, and immediately Recording Secretary Keith Wilson and Counsel Mike Santo engaged the landscaper on the phone personally expressing their protest of the ad. The upshot was that Mike would discuss with the landscaper ways to reformulate the ad to make it less offensive to us. We await the result, of course.

No sooner than that episode we were faced with a shocking blockbuster! Frank Cicero, President of the Father Vincent Capodanno Lodge on Staten Island, called me to inform me that the Borough of Staten island was cancelling its Columbus Day parade this year and substituting an Italian culture festival instead. Immediately others in the Order had heard of this development and weighed in on the issue. Since there

was such a strong reaction, I decided to call an emergency meeting of the Board to discuss the issue, air out all complaints, and decide on a course of action. We decided on a 4-part ambitious plan, but upon review of our plans by President Joe and Counsel Mike Santo, it was decided to focus on part of the plan for now—a meeting with Borough President James Oddo, President Joe, and John Fratta to discuss the matter and seek a resolution. Under CSJ letterhead I wrote a formal letter to BP Oddo requesting same, sent an e-mail personally to him for the same reason, and called his scheduler personally to set up an actual meeting date. As of this writing I am still awaiting a return call.

In the meantime State Senator Diane Savino, who serves the Staten Island borough, wrote an opinion piece in the Staten Island Advance downplaying the traditional parade march, which spurred on more disgust and horror from OSIA members. Members of the Capodanno Lodge wrote scathing e-mails critical of her stance, and I encouraged our Rapid Response Team to do the same and some have already done so. We hope Senator Savino comes to her senses, converts, and becomes an ally with us to re-instate this parade! We'll keep you posted.

Personally, I want to thank and commend Frank Cicero and members of the Capodanno Lodge for their spontaneous concern and interest as our infantrymen on the spot on this matter. We all must stand behind them as dedicated brothers and sisters and see to it that a tradition they have always enjoyed is maintained! Stay tuned for further developments, and if you can lend a hand, please do so!

On a more positive note, I am still dedicated to creating a strong statewide organization at the grass roots. In July I traveled to District 7 and had two meetings with the lodge presidents, liaisons, and state trustees encouraging them to select liaisons from each lodge. Although wide distances fracture this district, they said they could still create strong communications amongst them all and remain in the loop. Some Board members who were there and also attended these meetings were very helpful in offering their advice and suggestions to make this district strong. In August I traveled to District 8 and was greeted by a large contingent which was very interested in what I had to say about organization. In addition, we discussed issues endemic to this district and began some preliminary plans to address them. We are going to try to introduce Italian in Odyssey High School in Greece since there is evidence of strong parental and student demand for it there. Casa Italiana, the Italian Culture Center at Nazareth College in Pittsford, is threatened with extinction due to financial constraints. Two teachers from Greece, Lino Pizzolanti and Ida Wilder, who attended the meeting will help us in this regard. Consequently, in the first year of my tenure I have visited all districts in the Order statewide now and will begin my rounds again.

Keeping a vigilant eye right now on our upcoming Italian Heritage and Culture Month in October, Board member Liz Rizzo has written to all public libraries on Long Island urging them to celebrate this October month with Italian culture programs. We will also send e-mails to all other statewide libraries and encourage them to do the same. Already we see some notable results. District CSJ Chairmen and respective Lodge Liaisons, please take heed and follow through! Make sure your district libraries are doing something in this manner! If we press on, it will be quite a month!

Lastly, one bitter and one sweet note must be mentioned. Board member Rocco Lanzilotta has had to resign from the Board because of an immediate job transfer to New England with Liberty Travel. It's a fabulous opportunity for him, and we wish him all the best, but we will miss him

terribly! He was so creative, committed, and witty that he lent a tremendous array of ideas for us to pursue, and believe me I have recorded them for future review. Buona Fortuna Rocco! The sweet note is that Board member John Fratta has been appointed National CSJ Vice-president at the August national plenary session. I am ecstatic because his appointment is not only so well-deserved but it also gives us a direct line to the National CSJ! I have already forwarded to John my suggestions for National's agenda (as I did also for new National CSJ President Joseph Boncore), and of course NYS CSJ will be a committed partner and helpful satellite. Buona Fortuna John!

SEMPRE AVANTI!

Fraternally,

Lou