

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE 9/7/15

Saluti i miei fratelli e sorelle!

I hope you had a wonderful summer. I know I did, highlighted with quick, short getaways at a local beach nearby every few days, swimming in the Sound along the shore with a dusky sunset in the distance. Despite such a lark, CSJ issues were never too far from my mindset, of course.

And we were busy and rather occupied. In late July an assault on Columbus catapulted on the scene! In Hamilton Township, New Jersey, near Trenton, an \$18,000 statue of Columbus on the grounds of the Mercer County Italian American Festival Association headquarters was defaced with black paint and coarse expletives. Despite the fact that this incident was in neighboring Jersey, it demonstrates the continuous provocation against this great Italian icon surrounding us. A similar incident took place in a Boston park in the spring. It calls to mind our ordeal with the Southampton Intermediate School and District in eastern Long Island last winter. We even know that on the same date of the New York City Columbus Day Parade this year that Native Americans will hold their own Indigenous Peoples Day Parade on Randall's Island in the city. Concerned with this history, I left a message with Mike Lane, a detective on the case in Hamilton and told him to do his best to find the perpetrator(s) of this heinous crime. I personally spoke to John Scarpati, the Festival Association Chief, who told me that the Association had to spend \$4,500 to clean up the statue and will be ordering surveillance cameras and lighting to protect it. On August 29th local Hamilton Italian American organizations and elected officials met to rededicate the statue and to protest this despicable incident. I wanted to attend, but on that date I traveled to Geneva in District 8 for a scheduled meeting on CSJ issues and updates, but I did pledge to John our CSJ help if he ever needed it.

So, please all of you be ever so vigilant of these Columbus assaults and let us know as quickly as possible! This is the time of year when they surface! It certainly does not stop in Jersey.

From late June to late August we wrestled with the Wandering Dago food truck again. Thanks to the Columbia County Lodge and the Roma Intangible Lodge in District 6, I was sent a poster about a Food Truck Night to be held on August 27th in Kinderhook (mid-Hudson Valley) on Village grounds sponsored by the Kinderhook Business and Professional Association (KBPA). One of the vendors on the poster was WD. Eventually, I called the Village, protested the attendance of the truck at the event, and requested an immediate meeting with Village and KBPA officials. A Village official requested that I write an e-mail to the Village explaining CSJ's position on the matter, which would then be sent to all necessary parties involved. I then received from the KBPA an e-mail that said since it was known that there was pending litigation regarding this truck, the KBPA would decline our request to ban the truck from the event. Disappointed, I turned to another tactic. After some research, I learned that the prime organizers and sponsors of the event were a husband and wife team who owned a local restaurant in Kinderhook and were quite connected to Village officials and the KBPA, Andrew and Connie Chase. I spoke to Connie and expressed to her our vehement opposition to the WD attending the event and strongly urged her and her husband to use whatever influence they could to dissuade the WD from participating, particularly since she admitted to me she was the one who invited them! Unsatisfied with leaving the matter to the Chases and days away from the event, I immediately sent an animated e-mail to the CSJ Executive Board members and the lodges in District 6 to barnstorm the Chases with e-mails and phone calls, encouraging them to prevail upon the Chases to pressure them to dissuade the WD truck from attending the food truck night. A few days later Andrew called me and told me that the WD was not going to attend! He told me that the owners of the truck felt it was too much of a hassle to come. I then asked Ed Konow

from the Columbia County Lodge to check on site just in case. His e-mail informed me that WD DID NOT attend! We succeeded! I want to thank wholeheartedly all the Board and lodge members who barraged the Chases. It actually made the difference, and we will follow them all over the state if we have to until they change the name on that truck!

Our ire not only peaked with WD. The New York Daily News upset us just as much. Local newspapers have lately covered the constant flaps between Governor Cuomo and Mayor deBlasio over some political issues, but the coverage by the NYDN really drew our undivided attention! On July 1st on its front page there appeared a picture of Cuomo and deBlasio in dark suits and fedoras firing submachine guns at each other with the caption "VENDETTA." You know the subtlety is not lost on us! This particular coverage was the final straw! E-mails were sent by Board members and lodge liaisons chiding the Editor-in-Chief, Colin Myler. Under CSJ stationery I sent a scathing letter to Myler demanding he and his staff change their perception and behavior towards Italian Americans. At the August CSJ Board meeting discussion was animated and vociferous. The Board on its own motion decided that we gather past derogatory NYDN articles on Italian Americans as evidence and take a full page ad in one of its competitor's newspapers excoriating NYDN for its continuous, infamous coverage of our people. District 8 liaisons also suggested we target their advertisers too. Both will be entertained! Stay tuned for further developments.

An ongoing development is the Capone book series in New York City schools that we have reported in the past. Since I know that the New York State Legislature in its last session passed a resolution allowing the Mayor control of the NYC schools for one year, I wrote a letter to deBlasio to intercede on our behalf to force the NYC Schools Chancellor to meet with us about this wrenching matter. We hopefully await his word. On July 14th John Fratta organized a protest before the NYC Department of Education building including CSJ, his Italian American National Network, and an Italian American group from Harlem. In addition, we entered the building to attempt to meet with Chancellor Farina on the spot, but because we did not have a scheduled appointment, we weren't permitted. We did though succeed in meeting with Farina's Scheduler who told us she would try to get us a meeting with Farina, but later Farina flatly refused, which in turn prompted my letter to the mayor. We will continue to press to get this book series off the NYC schools approved reading list!

While pressing there, we also plod on with our demands to the National Park Service in acknowledging Luigi Del Bianco more prominently as the Chief Carver of Mount Rushmore. National CSJ Vice-president John Fratta succeeded in getting the National CSJ to approve our letter to elected officials nationwide in urging them to lobby the NPS to achieve our goal. The letter will be sent first to all Grand and subordinate lodge members nationwide who are in turn to send them to the officials. The idea is to create a groundswell at the grass roots to show these officials the broad support we have in this effort. We will monitor and report back to you. I managed to contact and speak with the Deputy Director of the NPS' Midwest Region (the area in which the Mount is located), Patricia Trap. We had a respectful conversation, and I stressed to her that Del Bianco is quite an icon amongst us. We expect at least that the Park Rangers who lead the guided tours mention Del Bianco in their presentation before the Mount. As far as a singular monument in his honor, she said there was no room for it in the Park and that

perhaps we should pursue such a monument in the surrounding private museums in Keystone, Arizona. We surely are not ready to concede that move as yet. We'll see how the letter fares.

As those developments linger, we turned our attention to a restive issue we were finally able to springboard! On September 6th, at a District 1 Presidents meeting and John LaBarca's "Italian House Party" radio program in Farmingdale, Long Island, District 1 CSJ Chairman Charlie Lucie and I launched the "Save Columbus Day" ground petitions! Eventually, these petitions will go nationwide and include the Knights of Columbus and other groups. The petition is directed at the President of the United States, and we demand from him that a Capitol luncheon, and an Evening Reception be held in Columbus' honor for obvious reasons. A Presidential Address is to be presented about Columbus' accomplishments and Italian Americans' historical contributions to the world. The goal is 100,000 signatures over the course of a year. That figure was chosen because the presidential administration will only recognize those petitions with that amount of signatures. We want all of you and whomever involved! Do not shrink from this responsibility! All of us will carry these petitions wherever we go and whatever Order function takes place! You already know that our heritage is under attack by revisionists, and it's time to play offense against these odds! District 1 CSJ will lead and monitor the effort in conjunction with our Grand Lodge office. Our petitions are already on our website. Go to nyscsj.org and get started! Thank you!

In the meantime, I'm back making my rounds around the districts. In August I met with District 8 presidents and liaisons at the Geneva Lodge. Thanks go to District Chairman Joseph Rube' and State Trustee Tony DiCostanzo for all the arrangements, and kudos to all participants for such interest and involvement. You are a great district, and you will not go unsung! I'm meeting in September with Districts 5 and 7, and in October I will complete my second round with District 6. We will truly make CSJ a solid, statewide organization!

As a final note, I want to remind all that the booklet "What Italy Has Given the World" is being circulated by me wherever I go. Keep \$5 in your pocket, and when you see me, ask for the booklet.

SEMPRE AVANTI!

Fraternally,
Lou