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Contents

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INTRODUCTION 2

CITIES ON THE HILL 4

Paolo Soleri • Christopher Columbus

Vito Marcantonio • Philip Mazzei • Diane di Prima

Andrea Sbarbaro • A.P. Giannini • Simon Rodia

Baldasare Forestiere

CORNUCOPIA 22

Francesco DeSantis • Sandra Gilbert • Pietro Bandini

Secchi DeCasale • Angelo Pellegrini • Joseph DiGiorgio

John Bruccato • Achille Paladini

Frank Pomilio

WORKERS & ANARCHISTS 38

Carlo Tresca • James March • Pascal D'Angelo

Bartolomeo Vanzetti • Rosa Mondavi • Angela Bambace

James Pettillo • Luigi Antonini

THE PEOPLE'S EYE 54

Ralph Fasanella • Charles Atlas • Frank Frazetta

Jimmy Grucci • Beniamino Bufano • Raymond Bocci

Mike Mantzo • Romano Gabriel

AN EMPIRE OF FOOD 70

Hector Boiardi • Andrew & Nina Balducci • Amedeo Obici

Domenico Ghirardelli • Albert Innaurato • Jeno Paulucci

Antonio Ferrara • Ernest & Julio Gallo

August Sebastiani

Xáât .8

THE MUSICAL THEATER 86

*Rosa Ponselle • Adelina Patti • Michael Bennett
Gian Carlo Menotti • Lorenzo Da Ponte
Tony Pastor • Antonietta Pisanelli • Mario Lanza
Enrico Caruso*

DA VINCI'S CHILDREN 102

*Antonio Meucci • Giuseppe Bellanca • Enrico Fermi
Emilio Segrè • Edmond DiStasi • Mariana Bertola
Pietro Rossi • Salvador Luria • Michael Gazzaniga*

SAINTS 118

*Francesca Cabrini • Oreste Trinchieri • Blundinus Segale
Eusebio Chino • Pietro DiDonato • James Groppi
Geno Baroni • Joseph Bernardin • Efram Tittel*

SINNERS 134

*Lucky Luciano • Johnny Torrio • Charles Finci
Al Capone • Frank Costello • Sam Giancana
Charlie Siringo • Rudolph Giuliani*

**THE ELECTRONIC PUPPET SHOW
150**

*Annette Funicello • Penny Marshall • Perry Como
Julius LaRosa • Arthur Fonzarelli • Jimmy Durante
Alan Alda • Lou Costello*

THE LEGENDS OF SPORT 166

*Joe DiMaggio • Yogi Berra • Eddie Arcaro
Ralph DePalma • Joe Montana • Vince Lombardi
Willie Pep • Rocky Marciano*

MUSICIAN'S TALES 184

*Frank Sinatra • Russ Columbo • Lennie Tristano
Joe Venuti • The Doors • Madonna • Elisa Biscaccianti
Arturo Toscanini • Frank Zappa*

ARTISTS OF THE POSSIBLE 200

*Fiorello La Guardia • Al Smith • Geraldine Ferraro
Ella Grasso • Lawrence Ferlinghetti • Peter Rodino
Frank Rizzo • Mario Cuomo • John Pastore*

THE HOUSE OF VALENTINO 216

*Rudolph Valentino & Sons • Anne Bancroft • Ida Lupino
Frank Puglia • Frank Capra • Sylvester Stallone
Francis Ford Coppola • Martin Scorsese*

THE REVISIONARIES 232

*Mary Sansone • Onorio Ruotolo • Salvatore Polizzi
Joe Gargiolo • Lawrence DiStasi • Joe Maselli
Nick LaRocca • Enrico Banducci • Philip Lamantia*

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SECTION: 500 & COUNTING; Pg. 2

LENGTH: 762 words

HEADLINE: Growing Up Italian;
Chicago Experiences Flavored Young Lives

BYLINE: Miriam Di Nunzio

BODY:

Nearly 400,000 Italian-Americans make their home in the Chicago area. A mixture of the old world and the new, their culture and traditions are an integral part of Chicago's rich ethnic heritage.

Three prominent Italian-Americans reminisced about growing up Italian and American in Chicago.

Anthony Bottalla, chairman of the American United Cab Association, Chicago; chairman, 1992 Columbus Day Parade.

He came to America with his parents in 1938. He learned to speak English by pointing to objects and listening to an American friend identify them.

"The first three years that I was in this country, I was horrified because I didn't speak the language and I had to start first grade without being able to talk to the other kids, " Bottalla said.

"It's scary being in a new place, a whole new country where you don't speak the language or don't dress like everyone else . But being a child, I think I actually learned the language faster and started to 'fit in' faster. "

After three years in Kewanee, Ill., the Bottalla family moved to Chicago's Little Italy community.

"I was fortunate because though I lived in an Italian neighborhood, I attended Wells High School, primarily Polish and Irish, so I learned about other people's cultures and heritages."

Bottalla's father - a school teacher in Italy - worked as a laborer in America.

"My father swept floors, loaded boxcars - whatever it took to support his family and give us a better life in America," Bottalla said. " And he really taught me to respect all people, and to work for what you want in life.

"I'm an Italian, yes, but I'm so proud of being an American and so grateful to this country because this country has been good to me. The opportunities here are unlimited if you're willing to contribute positively to society."

Chicago Sun-Times, October 9, 1992

Andrea Mugnolo, Jr., vice president of sales for Racconto Pasta Co., Melrose Park.

Growing up in Elmwood Park, Andrea Mugnolo thought everyone in the world was Italian.

"Our neighborhood was totally Italian, and for whatever reasons, we always hung around with Italian kids," Mugnolo said. "Maybe it was because everybody's parents wanted to know who your friends were and who their families were, and if they were from the same ethnic group, it was OK. As a kid, the world was pretty much Italian."

School changed Mugnolo's view of the world.

"I met kids of all ethnic backgrounds. It was such an enlightening time in my life. That's what America is all about - a chance for all cultures to live together and learn from each other."

Some traditions remained.

"On Sundays the whole family got together at our grandparents' house for the big pasta dinner and everybody talked about what happened that week. Everybody went. It was a given - you just went on Sundays."

"I don't look at Columbus as someone who came here and took something away from someone," Mugnolo said. "He opened the door to a new world. I'm proud of what he did and of the immigrants who came here and sweated and sacrificed to build this country into what it is today. This is a time to celebrate everything that America means."

Theresa Petrone, member, Illinois State Board of Elections; also served as its first female chairman.

"Italian women have always held a powerful position within the traditional family," Petrone said. "We're strong, fiercely loyal to our families and our communities. We're modern women - we're senators, chairmen of boards, teachers, doctors, lawyers."

Born in Venice, Petrone came to America with her parents as an infant. The family settled in the Grand and Racine area, predominantly German and Swedish at that time.

"My parents lived in Venice, but they were Austrian, so I spoke Italian and German - no English - by the time I entered first grade because that's what we spoke at home."

Petrone experienced an almost non-traditional upbringing. Her parents - believing that a good American citizen worked hard - enrolled her in extra-curricular classes such as dancing, cooking, sewing and gymnastics. Saturdays were reserved for weekly visits to the Art Institute and the Field Museum. Sundays meant attending a Roman Catholic church service in the morning and a Presbyterian service in the afternoon.

"My parents really taught me and my sisters to experience life to the fullest, to see what other cultures were all about, which is why we went to

Chicago Sun-Times, October 9, 1992

two different churches. We learned and studied and became women with strong family traditions, but we also acquired the knowledge and determination to succeed outside the home.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: October 31, 1992

Italian Dinner

Tommy Lasorda

Sal Marcianno $\Rightarrow$ sportmaster

Betty Vebella

Julius Nasso

Nicolas Cage

Sophia Loren

Carlo Ponti

Joe Garagiola

Paul Tagliabue

Jon Bon Jovi

Nanny DeVito