



MARINAI d'ITALIA NEWSLETTER USA GROUPS



October Italian Heritage month

October will always be **Italian Heritage Month** in the heart of Italian Americans, and although Columbus and his day may be considered today politically incorrect, so much that is now shared with the Indigenous People's Day, as we have always done, we live and let live and hope others will extend to us the same courtesy.

Therefore, October is for us a time to recognize the contributions of the Italian community to the development and progress of American society. It is a celebration of the achievements and successes of Italian immigrants and Italian-Americans, people who, proud of their tricolored roots, have contributed to and continue to shape American culture, economy, or science, who today represent the fifth-largest

ethnic group in the United States, and continue to make, a cultural impact, leaving a profound imprint on society and customs. Take, for example, **Amedeo Pietro Giannini**, the subject of another article in this newsletter, considered the inventor of modern banking practices. Take **Renzo Piano**, the brilliant architect, who designed the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Hollywood, a modern breathtaking spherical structure, the most important cinema museum in the world, the 1,000-seat David Geffen Theatre, and the Dolby Family Terrace. Although Italy as a nation didn't exist until 1861, it sent millions of its people to the North American shores. The first immigrants—Neapolitans, Sicilians, Calabrians, Ligurians, and Venetians—often struggled to understand each other due to vastly different dialects. Once in the United States, they rolled up their sleeves and became Italian-Americans. At the beginning of the 20th century, they profoundly changed the continent with hard work, ingenuity, perseverance, intelligence, and a generous emotional charge—and they continue to enrich society today. This ongoing contribution is evidenced not only by the steady arrival of researchers, technologists, scientists, innovators, creatives, and entrepreneurs but also by the constant dedication that each of these modern immigrants puts into their work.

One of these is **Valentina d'Escamard**, a brilliant researcher of Italian origins, with roots in Sardinia, and very close to us Italian Sailors in America as she participated with the New Jersey group to several events organized by the Group. Valentina recently published an article in the Nature Cardiovascular Research Journal titled: 'Integrative gene regulatory network analysis discloses key driver genes of fibromuscular dysplasia' (<https://www.nature.com/natcardiovascres/volumes/3/issues/9>), a mouthful for sure for us non-scientists. The article delineates the processes fol-

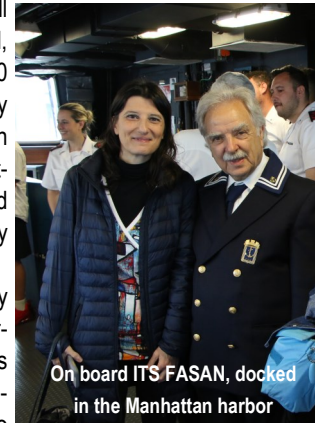
lowed and the results achieved by a research, co-authored by her, on Fibromuscular Dysplasia (FMD), a poorly understood vascular disease (predominantly affecting women) that can lead to serious health complications such as arterial dissection, aneurysm, stroke and even death. The research was conducted at Mount Sinai Hospital in NY. Several

previous genetic studies failed to shed light on the possible mechanism and causes of this complex disease. Valentina was hired to perform the most crucial experiments and help with planning and managing the project, all while being a full time mom of her then 3 months old son Artu! In the ten years (yes, not a typo, ten long years of hard work) it took to complete the research, Valentina's team was able to reproduce in vitro and in vivo some of the features of FMD, creating the first animal model for this disease, and opening the way to fully understand the complex pathophysiology of FMD, and to further studies for a potential therapeutic approach.

In Valentina's own words: "I can't tell you it was always easy because, well, it wasn't. Very often over the past 10 years I thought about something my grandmother used to say (in Sardinian dialect): "Centu concasa, centu berrittasa" (a hundred heads, a hundred hats, meaning many heads, many different ways of thinking). However, at the end of the day many "berrittasa" make science move forward. I will be forever grateful to this country that welcomed me as an immigrant and gave me the opportunity to grow professionally and as a person".

We are extremely proud of Valentina and to have her as a friend of the Italian Sailors in America.

From cinema to finance, from architecture to medicine, from technology to sports, from fashion to design, and art in all its forms—Italy is a multicolored world reflected in all of us. Each day with our work we continue to build a piece of America by valuing our Italian heritage and values. With our stories, emotions and achievements, we Italians and Italian-Americans build a sense of belonging to "our" cultural community, and no one can take this away from us.



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A Poor Man's Banker, Amadeo Pietro Giannini.

How the son of Italian immigrants revolutionized the financial industry and built one of America's largest banks.

Sounds like an anomaly, doesn't it? A "poor man's banker," but that's what thousands of disenfranchised immigrants called the gracious Amadeo Pietro Giannini.

His contemporaries referred to him as "America's Banker."

The son of Italian immigrants, Virginia and Luigi, Amadeo was born on a farm in San Jose, California on May 6, 1870.

At 7, he was traumatized by the death of his father, and at 14 he went to work in his stepfather's produce business. The hardworking Giannini — who earned a partnership in the business — found success, sold the company to his employees and "retired" at the young age of 31.

Giannini's reputation as an astute and talented businessman quickly spread, and he was enticed to join the Board of Directors of the Columbus Savings Loan Society, a small bank in San Francisco's Little Italy.



Mr. Giannini, thrilled with the offer, saw an opportunity to provide banking services to immigrants and the underprivileged. But he was too often at odds with the policies of the Board, which had little interest in servicing the hardworking immigrant class, so he resigned.

In 1904, he opened his own Italian Bank directly across the street from his former employer, the Columbus S&L.

Giannini intended to provide banking for "the little fellow": the farmers, merchants and laborers, many of whom were immigrants. He visited homes of the less fortunate and convinced them it was safe to move their small savings from their mattresses to his bank.

Giannini's banking operations took off, but unfortunately in 1906, disaster struck San Francisco. The infamous earthquake disaster destroyed



many of the banks, including the Bank of Italy.

But Giannini was determined to continue banking, especially at a time when his customers would need it most.

After borrowing a wagon used to transport produce, Giannini raced to North Beach, battling the fires and rubble, and brought the bank's valuables and records back to his home.

He set up an office in front of his house, using a plank stretched across a couple of beer barrels, and amid all the rubble, he continued to offer loans to customers. When some of his more destitute customers apologized for having nothing of value to offer as collateral for a loan, he often replied: "**Your**

face is sufficient security for me!"

The innovative bank welcomed small borrowers who might otherwise have to use high-cost loan sharks. Most banks at the time regarded people with modest incomes as credit risks not worth the paperwork". But experience had taught Giannini otherwise: that working class people were no less likely to pay their debts than the wealthy.

Seeking more customers, the former produce salesman returned to his old familiar places: the fertile valleys of California. He "walked in rows beside farmers engaged in plowing" to explain how bank branches make credit cheaper and more reliable. When most banks closed at 3 p.m., Giannini kept his banks open until 9 or 10 at night for workers.

Giannini was a gracious professional banker, but he was also a genius with great foresight who revolutionized the banking industry in the United States. Most bank customers today take for granted the things Giannini pioneered, including home mortgages, auto loans and other installment credit.



A Poor Man's Banker, Amadeo Pietro Giannini

In 1928 became one of the major sponsors of the University of California with a \$1.5 million donation



Historic headquarters of the Bank of Italy which later became the Bank of America

In 1909, he pioneered the concept of "branch banking," after he noticed customers traveling long distances to do business. Town by town, he built the first statewide branching system in the nation. His first of hundreds of branches was opened in San Jose. In 1919 he had organized Bancitaly Corp. as a launching pad for statewide expansion. That was succeeded in 1928 by TransAmerica Corp., a holding company with wide interests in financial services, including some overseas banks. That same year he bought Bank of America in New York, one of the city's oldest lending institutions and merged it with the Bank of Italy. On November 1, 1930, the Bank of Italy in San Francisco changed its name to Bank of America. The bank today has the same national bank charter number as Giannini's old bank— #13044.

Giannini retired again in 1930 and moved to Europe, convinced that his successor would carry on in his spirit. But during the Great Depression, TransAmerica management switched focus and objectives. Feeling betrayed, Giannini returned to retake control. He had always encouraged employees and depositors to become shareholders of the bank. To win a 1932 proxy fight, he knocked on doors again, getting all those working-class shareholders to give him their votes and to elect him

Chairman of the Board. By 1945, under his Directorship, the Bank of America became the largest bank in the United States. He then consolidated TransAmerica's California bank holdings under the Bank of America name, which survived till federal regulators forced TransAmerica to break up in the '50s. Giannini made a career out of lending to out-of-favor industries. He supported large and small businesses alike, with significant financial assistance. He helped finance the construction of the Golden Gate bridge. He provided financial backing to help the California wine industry get started, then bankrolled Hollywood at a time when the movie industry was anything but proven. In 1923 he created a motion-picture loan division and helped Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith start United Artists. When Walt Disney ran \$2 million over budget on the production of Snow White, Giannini stepped in with a loan.

During his life Giannini was a great philanthropist, a man of great compassion and generosity. He gave much of his money to charitable foundations. Proud of his Italian heritage, Giannini donated extensively to Italian American causes.

When Giannini died on June 3, 1949, at age 79, his estate was worth less than \$500,000 and it was purely by choice. He could have been a billionaire but disdained great wealth, believing it would make him lose touch with the people he wanted to serve. For years he accepted virtually no pay, and one year upon being granted a surprise \$1.5 million bonus promptly gave it all to the University of California. He once said: "Money itch is a bad thing. I never had that trouble."



A.P. and his eldest son Lawrence Mario photographed in early 1949

It's always nice to meet a friend !

Remember the saying "He who finds a friend finds a treasure"? Nothing could be truer! And if that friend is a sailor who you did not expect to see and that all of a sudden you bump into him, the unexpected surprise immensely multiplies the value of the encounter.

One beautiful October morning, in Rome, while I was crossing the Guardhouse of the Grazioli Lante Barracks to go to the ANMI National Presidency, I saw two people in civilian clothes who were asking the guard to be allowed access the building and to the ANMI Offices to meet someone from the National Presidency. I would have expected everything except to meet right there, that morning, my friend Giovanni Filingieri, member of the Banfi Group of NJ, who was in Rome, visiting his daughter and her family.

Was nice meeting them, but on a second thought, what do two sailors, of such different ages, who lived their experience in the Italian Navy in times so far apart and who had served on vessels that were completely different from one another have in common? Why so much enthusiasm and feeling? How can we explain so much joy in seeing each other again as if we were two



The Headquarters of the P.N. in Rome

conscript brothers of the same draft lot? Do you remember this expression so much in vogue at the time of the mandatory draft in the armed forces? I thought about it for a long time and the explanation of so much brotherhood can only be the result of the few hours spent together on the pier waiting for the arrival of a ship, or the exchange of ideas during a visit on board. I am sure that other important factors have contributed to creating this spirit. It could be the few minutes spent on the phone just to have a chat or, even, the evenings spent together in front of a screen participating in one of our meetings via Zoom, animated by a serene spirit and the desire to



Adm. Messina and Adm. Rutigliano welcomed Giovanni Filingieri and Turi Cervone, members of the NJ Banfi group, to the P.N.



Terrace of the Caio Duilio Officers' Club in Rome

listen to each other. It is unfortunately true that we will never again find ourselves on the bow of a ship, at night, splashed by the salty water from the waves, hearing the whistling sound of the wind, or that we will not have again the joy of sharing the midnight pizza in the crew canteen nor we will pretend to paint a candlestick, that we have already painted a hundred times, just to look busy as we have other opportunities waiting for us.

We can always easily share our thoughts with other friends who have walked along our same paths even if at different times, but who are always motivated by a sincere spirit of listening to and supporting friends, whatever the cost!

We must continue to communicate with each other with the desire to build something, regardless of how big or small it will be, but that it is unique and belongs to us, and is permeated by our esteem and mutual respect for each other.

T.C.

EVENT IN NEW YORK



Tony Ferri, Gen. Alfonso Manzo, Rocco Munna, Paolo Romagno

A delegation of the ANMI Group of NY, Amerigo Vespucci, and one of the National Carabinieri Association participated in an event held in NY on October 13 to celebrate the "Festa degli Alpini". Following the event, the President of the Amerigo Vespucci Group, Rocco Munna, together with the Vice President Paolo Romagno, met the new Head of Office of the Italian Military Delegation to the United Nation, General of the Carabinieri Alfonso Manzo, to whom we extend the warmest "Welcome!" on behalf of the Italian Sailors of all the ANMI Groups in the United States.