



# IL PENSIERO

## “THE THOUGHT”

Member of FUSIE (Federazione Italiana Stampa Unitaria all'Estero)

Office: 10001 Stonell Drive

Dicembre 2023

St. Louis, Missouri 63123

THE ONLY ITALIAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

CONTINUOUS SERVICE AND ACTIVITY SINCE 1904

NUMERO 12

An Italian American Publication

12 PAGES

# BUON NATALE

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM IL PENSIERO



## Remembering Cav. Gene Mariani

submitted by The Italian Club of St. Louis



Cav. Gene Mariani, President Emeritus of the Italian Club of St. Louis, passed away on Tuesday, October 31, 2023, at the age of 91. Everyone who met Gene quickly learned of his love for his Italian ancestry, and, quite frankly, his love for all things Italian. He became one of the most iconic faces among Italian Americans in St. Louis. To know Gene would be to understand that he was truly a Renaissance man!

Gene was born on May 6, 1932, to Gino, an Italian immigrant from Valdottavo in the Province of Lucca, and Lina Barsanti Mariani, whose family came from Bagni di Lucca. He grew up in south St. Louis along with his younger brother James. His parents instilled in him and his brother a deep respect for education. After spending his freshman year at the old South Side Catholic High School (later called St.

Mary's), his mother enrolled him in Saint Louis University High School. He often said that attending SLUH was one of the greatest gifts his mother ever gave him. After SLUH, he studied Industrial Engineering at Saint Louis University. While in college, Gene was a member of the Air Force ROTC. Upon graduation in 1954, he and Susan Dolan, his high school sweetheart, were married, and they had five children: Linda, Lisa, Karen, Julia, and Tony.

Gene went from his college ROTC days to being a 2nd Lieutenant who proudly served his country during the years of the Korean War. After leaving the Air Force, Gene began an extensive career in the field of engineering. A man of his generation, he, Sue, and their young children, moved about the country for his career, including Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Memphis. Gene and family returned to St. Louis when he joined Arthur Anderson as a consulting engineer. Gene eventually took a job with Metal Goods, a division of the former Alcan Aluminum.

During his long tenure at Metal Goods, Gene earned his master's degree in industrial engineering from Washington University. This afforded him the opportunity to become an adjunct professor in Washington University's engineering department, which he did for 37 years. Teaching became a passion for him. Upon retirement from his business career, Gene earned his PhD in Engineering Management from the University of Missouri-Rolla at the

age of 65. At the time, he was the oldest PhD graduate in the history of the school. He then began his second career as a full-time professor at Washington University. One of the highlights of his life was his two semesters of teaching in the Webster University MBA program in China. He taught one semester in Shanghai, and another in Chengdu.

His love of all things Italian became an ever-present force in Gene's life. Gene and his father Gino, who had served as an Italian *Bersagliere* in World War I, made numerous trips to Italy. They would rent a car and visit the cities along the Gothic Line, the German defensive line of the Italian Campaign during World War II. Gene was enrolled in an Architecture and Urbanism class with Dr. Udo Kultermann at Washington University while studying towards his master's degree in engineering, even though architecture was his true passion. During one semester the focus of his research was "The History of the Monument to King Victor Emmanuel II," a building in Rome sometimes referred to as the "wedding cake" or "the typewriter." As a prominent engineer of Italian ancestry, Gene and his family were given a once in a lifetime tour of the monument in 1992. In fact, when approaching the uppermost terrace from a winding staircase, one of his children reached up to touch a horse's hoof of the stately bronze quadriga before the guard shooed them back down the steps.

Continued on page 5



Gene wrote an extensive 50+ page paper for his class, no doubt deserving the highest grade.

Gene had also joined the Italian Club of St. Louis, an organization that he would take to new heights. Gene was not simply a long-term member and supporter of the Italian Club; his leadership was truly the driving force behind its revitalization and growth into its current identity. He was always proud of the Club, yet modest about his role in its success. In its inception in 1922, the Italian Club of St. Louis, a club of professional men with Italian ancestry, devoted themselves to supporting each other and hosting visiting dignitaries from Italy. One of the Club's founders, Vincenzo Borghesi, was Gene's uncle on his mother's side. As President, Gene's vision was to modify the Club's mission towards educating its members about Italian culture, especially music, literature, visual arts, food, cities, etc. He supported Italian language programs and began a scholarship program for area schools. Gene was surrounded by devoted Club members and friends, including Cav. Armando Pasetti, Cav. Valerio Bianco, Mr. Ed Berra, Mr. Vito Tamboli, Mr. Pete Puleo, Cav. Aldo della Croce, Cav. Antonino Lombardo, Dr. Roger Gennari, Ms. Marianne Peri-Sack, Cav. Barbara Klein, and many others. Under Gene's leadership, the Club adopted a new format for meetings: each month the members would meet and dine together at a local restaurant. After dinner, an expert on some aspect of Italian Culture would give a presentation. The Club continues to follow this format for many monthly meetings.



**Dr. Roger Gennari, Mr. Vito Tamboli, Mr. Pete Puleo, and Cav. Gene Mariani**

When asked what his most important contribution was to the Italian Club of St. Louis, Gene responded with "After giving that question much thought, I clearly believe it was when I was able to bring women as full members into the Club. I marvel when I think of the tremendous contributions of the many women as officers and directors, including our Past President Marie Cuccia-Brand, and our current President, Angela Pasetti Holland." Joann Arpiani and Evelina Pasetti were the first female members in 1990.

Gene's numerous contributions to the Italian Club of St. Louis, and to the overall Italian community have been recognized both in St. Louis and in Italy. In 1992, he was awarded the Gold Medal Award called "Ai Lucchesi che hanno onorato l'Italia nel Mondo" by the President of the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Lucca, Italy. The award is presented to people of Lucchesi descent who have distinguished themselves through their work in various

### Il Pensiero

fields and endeavors throughout the world. Gene's father had previously received this same award. Gene was immensely proud when in 2005 the President of the Republic of Italy named him a *Cavaliere of the Ordine Della Stella Della Solidarieta' Italiana* with all the rights of that Knighthood. And in 1996 the Italian Club of St. Louis recognized his contributions and achievements to the Italian American community of St. Louis with its Italian Heritage Award. Shortly afterwards, Gene was also proclaimed President Emeritus, a title that would be his for life.



**Seated: Cav. Armando Pasetti, Cav. Antonino Lombardo, Cav. Joann Arpiani, and Msgr/Cav. Salvatore Polizzi  
Standing: Cav. Michael Lombardo, Cav. Valerio Bianco, Cav. Dante Marconi, Cav. Gene Mariani, Cav. Aldo Della Croce, Cav. Franco Giannotti, Consul General of Italy, and Cav. Joseph Colagiovanni**

Gene was preceded in death by his beloved wife Susan Mariani (nee Dolan); his parents Gino and Lina Mariani, and his brother James Mariani. He will be greatly missed by his dear companion Cynthia Stollhans; his children: Linda (Alan) Taege, Lisa (James) Carey, Karen Mariani, Julie (David Camp) Mariani and Tony (Sally) Mariani; his grandchildren Christopher, Ian, Michael, Leslie, Pia, Nick, Lauren, John, and Sam; his four great-grandchildren, and all other family members and friends who knew him.

As Gene would say "Sempre Avanti - Always Forward" a phrase he coined as the motto for the Italian Club of St. Louis to commemorate its 100th Anniversary.

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT OCT. 15 - DEC. 7

## Medicare Made Simple

Let's talk:

- in person
- by phone
- online

314-395-9369  
www.mpalazzolo.com

**PALAZZOLO & ASSOCIATES**  
LOCAL INDEPENDENT BROKER

We do not offer every plan available in your area. Any information we provide is limited to those plans we do offer in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all your options.

## NIAF Gala Celebrates Italic Excellence With Distinguished Guests & a Surprise Presidential Appearance

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) 48th Anniversary Gala, held on October 14, 2023, in Washington, D.C., at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, brought together a remarkable assembly of esteemed honorees, influential guests, and supporters to celebrate the rich heritage and achievements of Italians and Italian Americans. The evening was a resounding success, featuring a surprise appearance by the President of the United States, Joe Biden, alongside the First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden.

The First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, first took the stage to express her gratitude to the NIAF leadership team and the entire Italian American community. Her heartfelt remarks paid homage to the enduring values of Italian Americans and the importance of preserving and passing on this remarkable heritage to future generations.

In a moving speech, she recounted her own family's journey through Ellis Island, underscoring the shared values of loyalty, generosity, kindness, and faith that have been cherished by Italian Americans for generations. Dr. Biden conveyed her pride in serving as the first Italian American First Lady and the importance of keeping these values alive.

The gala guests were then surprised when the First Lady called upon her husband to come to the podium. President Joe Biden lightened the atmosphere with his characteristic humor. He shared personal anecdotes from his life growing up in a neighborhood with a strong Italian American presence and humorously claimed that he deserved the Order of Sons of Italy Man of the Year award he once received.

The President praised Italian Americans for their enduring contributions to art, literature, and culture. He cited Michelangelo's dedication to setting angels free from marble as a metaphor for the Italian American spirit, and he commended the community's relentless pursuit of excellence.

The NIAF Gala honored several distinguished individuals, including Gerry Cardinale, Founder and Managing Partner of RedBird Capital Partners; Stefano Domenicali, President and CEO of Formula 1®; Veronica Berti Bocelli, CEO of Almud Music Editions and Vice Chair of the Andrea Bocelli Foundation; legendary musician and songwriter Neil Giraldo; and Dr. Sara Farnetti, an acclaimed medical doctor and scientist, for their outstanding achievements and contributions to various industries. Italian actress Cristiana dell'Anna, who portrays Saint Francis Cabrini in the upcoming film CABRINI, delivered an inspirational speech.

The evening also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Italian Air Force, with Lt. General Luca Goretti hinting at the possibility of the Frece Tricolore flying the Italian flag over American skies in the future.

Emilia-Romagna, the NIAF 2023 Region of Honor, was prominently featured, with Stefano Bonaccini, the region's president, participating in a ceremonial opening of an 80-pound wheel of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese alongside the president of the Parmigiano Reggiano

Continued on page 6



by Carina Marino

## BIRTHDAYS

- Walker Coyne
- Josephine Gandolfo-Sabaski
- Francesca Ferrara
- Rosanna Leone
- James Marino
- Linda Marino
- Gina Seier
- Sofia Seier, 1st birthday

Submit content to [info@ilpensiero.net](mailto:info@ilpensiero.net) before December 15, 2023 to be featured in the January issue. We look forward to receiving your announcements! Thank you



**Cav. Eugene Mariani, President Emeritus of the Italian Club of St. Louis, passed away on Tuesday, October 31, 2023, at the age of 91. Gene was not simply a long-term member and supporter of the Italian Club; his leadership was truly the driving force behind its revitalization and growth into its current identity. He was also proud of having been knighted by the Italian government—given the title of "Cavaliere"—for his work in our community. We will miss him. May he rest in peace.**

Submit an obituary to [info@ilpensiero.net](mailto:info@ilpensiero.net) by December 15, 2023 for the January issue.



**A Special Note:**  
Season's greetings!  
*Carina Marino*  
and the Il Pensiero staff



**The Malt Shop** | 1751 Smizer Station Rd. Fenton, MO 63026

- We offer personal ice cream cups in our most popular flavors: Vanilla, Chocolate, Oreo, M&M, Cookie Dough.
- We take away the hassle of trying to keep ice creams frozen by offering our own Malt Shop freezers to keep your ice cream perfectly cold.
- Delivery is a convenient service that we provide so dessert is good and ready to go for your event.

Give Malt Shop Catering a Try!  
Call or Visit Today for more info: 636-825-2121

Continued from page 5

Consortium, Nicola Bertinelli.

Also, during the gala, NIAF announced its newest partnerships with Aurelio De Laurentiis to offer grants to aspiring filmmakers and an accord with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch Roots Tourism in 2024 for Italian Americans. The gala was further graced by the presence of special guests, including Jimmy Pitaro, Chairman of ESPN and Sports Content at The Walt Disney Company; iconic race car driver Mario Andretti; Italian actress Cristiana d'Anna; and Grace Nelson, among others.

The sold-out, star-studded event was made possible through the generous support of sponsors, including the region of Emilia-Romagna, RedBird Capital Partners, Blastness, Campari Group, Colavita USA, Ferrero GE Healthcare, Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Hassler Roma, Intesa Sanpaolo, Interstate Commercial Real Estate, Nero Group, Sbarro Health Research Organization, The Francesco and Mary Giambelli Foundation, and Three Chord Bourbon.

For more information about the National Italian American Foundation and its initiatives, please visit [niaf.org](http://niaf.org).

**About NIAF:**

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a nonprofit organization based in the United States that promotes Italian culture and heritage. Founded in 1975, NIAF has been a leading advocate for Italian Americans, preserving their legacy and promoting their contributions to the United States.

## NIAF Arizona Regional Gala Celebrates Honorees and Raises Funds for Nonprofit Organizations

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is excited to announce that the upcoming NIAF Arizona Regional Gala is set to take place on January 27, 2024, at the luxurious Waldorf Astoria Arizona Biltmore Hotel. This prestigious event will recognize outstanding individuals for their contributions to the community while raising funds for two deserving nonprofit organizations.

The 2024 NIAF honorees include Sheriff Paul Penzone, Maricopa County, Carla A. Consoli, Esq., Shareholder, May Potenza Baran, and Gillespie. Both individuals have demonstrated exceptional dedication to their fields, embodying the spirit of Italian American excellence. The gala will also present the 2024 Tomaso Maggiore Culinary Excellence Award to acclaimed Chef Gio Osso, owner of Virtu Scottsdale, and the 2024 Al Carfora Italian Heritage Award will be bestowed upon Phoenix City Councilman Sal DiCiccio.

The evening's proceeds will be dedicated to supporting Boys Hope Girls Hope of Arizona, the First Place Phoenix Transition Academy, and the NIAF

Continued on page 8



**Christmas Mediterranean Artichoke Dip**  
an Il Pensiero favorite

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cans of artichokes
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- 1 cup of Parmesan cheese

Chop up artichokes and add the ingredients and mix together. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until bubbly. Serve with your choice of cracker.