



# La Notizia Italiana

*POINTers in Person*

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## POINTers Celebrate 10th Anniversary



*By Al Marotta*

At the fall meeting on October 27, Lou Costello Chapter #15 of POINTers in Person celebrated their tenth anniversary with a special presentation by Ms. Marylou Romano, Artistic Director of the Coro d'Italia. Marylou gave insights as well as hands-on demonstrations of Italian musical customs and culture. Her five year old niece, Antonia Maria Romano, (*pictured at left with Marylou*) accompanied her. She introduced herself with this open-

ing, "Growing up in New Jersey as a little red-headed Italian-American girl, there was much about my heritage I was proud of, but there was much more I wanted to know."

Marylou discovered that her maternal grandfather was from Aquilonia in the province of Avellino. An earthquake completely destroyed the original town in 1930 and killed 600 people, including Marylou's great grandparents and many relatives. She was able to visit the new town, which was built a quarter of a mile away. The other side of her family came from Castlegrande in the

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Province of Potenza. Her grandparents originally settled in the First Ward of Newark, NJ, which was one of the cities major "Little Italies." Hers was a close-knot family. All of her extended family lived within a two block radius of one another.

In her presentation, Marylou showed the audience the various parts of the regional Italian dance costume *(pictured below)* and accessories



(head kerchief, sleeves, apron, white stockings, and fabric ballet-type shoes, etc.) A 1930's book she brought was on display. *(pictured on page 3)* It featured detailed plates of costumes, reminding us that each region had its own style of dress for special occasions. She was wearing a replica of the costume worn by Rocchina Ruglio Gonnella, when

she lived in Caposele, Italy. When Marylou admired a 1939 photo of this outfit in Rocchina Gonnella's home, Ms. Gonnella recreated the hand-sewn costume for the Coro d'Italia.

Following an informative talk on Italian costumes, Marylou demonstrated the technique for playing some Italian folk instruments: large tambourines, ocarinas, and various rhythm instruments. She mentioned Alan Lomax, an American folklorist and musicologist, who, in 1953 and 1954 recorded traditional

Italian folk music styles (especially from small towns) before they disappeared.

Marylou, vivacious with ever-present humor, then demonstrated some dances with the help of her niece and members of the audience *(PIP members Lucille Kent and Michele Marotta, pictured below)*



## ***About the Coro d'Italia:***



The Coro d'Italia is America's first and the NY tri-state area's only group solely dedicated to traditional Italian and Italian-American music, dance, and costuming. The Coro d'Italia is a community based chorus/dance troupe which welcomes both amateurs and professionals who have a love for Italian music and culture.

The Coro was founded in 1932 at Columbia University in Manhattan and was based in NYC for most of its existence. The ensemble has been based in Essex County, NJ for the past 5 years and continues to delight its audiences with a unique blend of traditional, folk, and popular songs and dances - all in regional costumes. Marylou and her twin sister, Joanna, stumbled upon this group when they visited NY and immediately joined. The timing was fortunate, since many members were elderly and thought they would retire and perhaps close the group. Instead, they were able to teach Marylou and her sister the dance techniques and the songs and hand over the reins to them. They have expanded the group's activities to include a Scuola d'Italia program (Italian language lessons and cultural projects for children) and a Bambini group (for children to learn Italian dances and songs in hopes that they will perform with the Coro). It originally had a connection to the Metropolitan Opera.

In order to learn even more authentic, little known, but thoroughly researched dances and tunes, Marylou and other members of the



Coro have taken Master Classes for Italian dance from Allesandra Belloni at her studio at St. John the Divine in Manhattan. Ms. Belloni is an expert and scholar in Southern Italian folk and ritual dance and is the founder of the performance ensemble, "I Giullari di Piazza."

Coro d'Italia's motto is:

"Vivete per il presente,  
Sognate per l'avvenire,  
Imparate dal passati!"

"Live for the present,  
Dream of tomorrow,  
Learn from the past!"

### ***Thanks to Al Marotta:***

*For writing the above article and supplying the photos of our 10th Anniversary!*

***Pictured above, left:*** books and Italian artifacts;  
***Pictured above, right:*** Marylou Romano demonstrating traditional Italian dance



### **POINTers in Person**

The POINTers In Person program, an autonomous branch of **POINT - (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together)** was founded in 1992. Our group, Chapter 15, was organized in September 1996. The 21 nationwide chapters of POINTers In Person provide genealogical researchers an opportunity to meet socially, and learn and share information pertinent to Italian research. Each chapter is independent and sets forth its own procedures and schedules of events.

We cordially invite Italian genealogical researchers to attend our quarterly meetings. Membership is open to all. In addition to regular meetings our group takes occasional field trips to genealogical research sites in the New Jersey/New York area.

Membership in our parent organization, POINT, is not a prerequisite to joining our group; however, it is highly recommended.

### **La Notizia Italiana**

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#### **The Lou Costello Chapter**

POINTers In Person  
Chapter 15  
Northern New Jersey  
(201) 803-9117

#### **OFFICERS**

**President:** Maria Carparelli  
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**Treasurer:** Maryanne Graham  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Lucille Kent  
**Recording Secretary:** Albert Marotta  
**Newsletter Editor:** Maria Carparelli  
**Web Master:** Annita Zalenski

Your letters and comments are welcomed.  
We reserve the right to edit submitted materials.

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### **Calendar**

#### **Chapter 15 Future Meetings:**

Elmwood Park Municipal Building  
10 AM

*Come early, have coffee!*

#### **May 3, 2008:**

**Presentation:** *Genealogy Resources from the Newark Public Library New Jersey Room.*  
by James Lewis and George Hawley

#### **August 2, 2008:**

#### **Renowned Italian Researcher:**

**Larry Fermi presents "Buon Giorno" -**

*A seminar designed to help understand Italian records. Included in presentation: what records are available for Italy, where to find them, how to read them and how to use them to extend your Italian family history.*

#### **November 1, 2008**

#### **Presentation:**

*Genealogy Resources at the Jersey City Library and in Hudson County, presented by Ms Cynthia Harris*

#### **Passaic County Genealogical Society:**

10 AM, Lambert Castle

Next Meeting

**February 9, 2008,**

#### **Genealogy Society of Bergen County:**

Ridgewood Library, 7PM

#### **February 25:**

*The Use of Catholic Sacramental Records in Genealogy Research: Looking for Family History in All the Right Places.*

**Kathleen S. Dodds, DA,** - Archival Assistant, Msgr. William Noe Field Special Collections Center and Archives, Walsh Library, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ

#### **March 24**

*A Roots Visit to the Ukraine and Slovakia*

**Ted Semegan-** Powerpoint presentation discussing his genealogy research, the trip preparations and photos of the trip.