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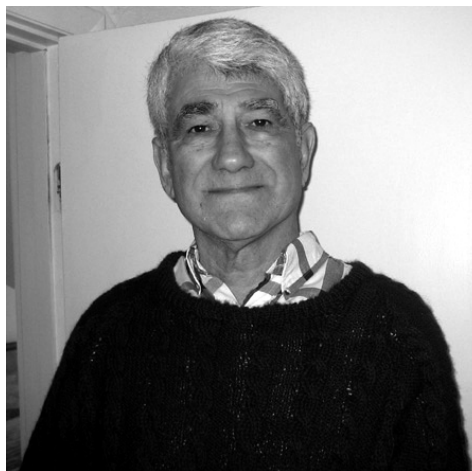
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If your Italian Organization would like to help promote our culture, heritage & language through IACF educational programs, please contact Peter Apicella at 1-800-551-2101.

## IACF Welcomes Two New Trustees!



This month we want to introduce our two new trustees, who typify the range of IACF supporters. Jerry Polizzi grew up in Manhattan and moved here two years ago with his wife Connie Sancetta (also a trustee). Jerry's father was born in Catania, but came to New York as a baby with his widowed mother and older siblings. Jerry's mother was born in the U.S. to immigrants from Campobasso. Like many second-generation Italian-Americans, their focus was on being accepted as Americans, and since the family did not live in an Italian neighborhood Jerry grew up with little consciousness of his heritage, although he always felt that something was missing.

After two years in the U.S. Navy and eight more in the Merchant Marine, he got a Masters degree in Geography from Rutgers University, and after teaching college for a few years, spent the rest of his professional life working for the federal government in the area of human resources and training programs. After retiring in 1994 he worked in real estate and spent six summers as head counselor at Encore-Coda Music Camp in Maine.

His interest in his heritage was reawakened when a friend told him about POINT (Pursuing Our Italian Names Together), which has a chapter in the Washington, D.C. area. He began reading numerous books about Italy and Sicily, and visited there several times. It was at a POINT meeting in 2005 that he met Connie, whose grandparents had come to Cleveland 100 years ago. They moved here in 2007, and are becoming increasingly active in the Italian-American community.

Our newest trustee is Melissa Fini, former winner of IACF Literature Awards and now a teacher of Italian at Mayfield High School. This year she has been teaching Levels II, III and IV (Honors). She will be taking over supervision of the IACF awards program previously handled by Jack and Vicki Thomas.

Melissa's father came to the U.S. as a student in 1965 from Frosinone (Lazio), just in time to be drafted. In fact, he became a citizen during

boot camp, having providently married Melissa's mother back in Frosinone a short while before. Once he finished his tour of duty in Vietnam (1969) they both came here and raised four girls in South Euclid. Melissa, the youngest, was lucky enough to grow up bilingual, learning Italian from her parents and English from her sisters. Most of her dad's family are here in Cleveland, but her mother's relatives are all back in Italy, and she has been visiting Italy every few years for her whole life.

All four daughters entered the essay program throughout high school and college, and all consistently won awards. Melissa's favorite book was Linda Cateura's *Growing up Italian*, especially the chapter on death and mourning, because



it recalled so vividly her own feelings after the death of her father. Indeed, it stimulated her creativity, and she later wrote an essay on "The Italian-American Funeral" which was published in VIA. The essay "has taken on a life of its own", and has been republished two more times, winning several awards, including the Dr. Fred Gardaphé award from the University of Stony Brook, New York.

Melissa always wanted to be a teacher. Other little girls play with dolls; Melissa had a chalkboard in the basement playroom and pretended to be teaching a class. At John Carroll University, after she had taken several classes in Spanish, she chose a multi-major in Spanish, Italian, and Education. During a six-month stint in Rome she picked up a laureo in Italian from John Cabot College. She's also acquired a Masters of Education from Indiana Wesleyan University and is now preparing for a PhD program, currently enrolled at a post-Masters program at Notre Dame College. Her Masters portfolio was on curriculum design in education.

We are looking forward to working with Jerry and Melissa. Look for both of them at the next awards dinner, if not before!