



VOL. 11 NO. 3 DECEMBER 2015

# IL CAVALIERE

OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF THE ITALIAN LEGIONS OF MERIT

## HOLIDAY ISSUE

*WISHING ALL OUR MEMBERS A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON*

### THE SOCIETY TO CELEBRATE ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA



*The ASILM will hold its 50th anniversary gala dinner in the Ballroom of the Essex House in New York City on Thursday, February 25, 2015.*

Hundreds of Cavalieri of all ranks, residing all across the United States, will come together to celebrate the 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner of the American Society of the Italian Legions of Merit on Thursday, February 25, 2016.

Never has there been a more important occasion for all 600 ASILM members to take part. This black-tie event will pay tribute to its 50 historic years of life, while also showcasing exciting

new features that will memorialize this special anniversary edition in the hearts and minds of all those who attend.

The program will feature a cocktail reception, an authentic Italian gourmet dinner paired with Italian wines, and the highlight of the evening: an awards ceremony honoring exceptional individuals who have enhanced the image of Italy in the United States. Live music by Panorama Music

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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to announce that, after months of preparation and high anticipation, the book "I Cavalieri in America" by the American Society of the Italian Legions of Merit is now available.

I Cavalieri in America is dedicated to the hundreds of outstanding personalities who have received decorations from the Italian Republic over the years. This group of decorati constitutes an important and highly-qualified segment of the North American population, and we are thus pleased to honor and recognize them with this unprecedented first volume, with hopefully more volumes to come in the future.

A great number of these "Cavalieri" have held or are still holding important positions in American society, both in the United States or in Canada, and, independently from their nationalities, are bonded by a common interest for Italy that makes them exceptional Italian ambassadors to the two North American countries.

Over the past year, we have received hundreds of biographies and pictures submitted by Cavalieri all over the U.S. and Canada, creating a variety of challenges to

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF THE  
ITALIAN LEGIONS OF MERIT

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## WANT TO SUBMIT YOUR NEWS?

For members who wish to submit their recent honors or activities to be included in the next issue of Il Cavaliere, please do not hesitate to e-mail [president.asilm@yahoo.com](mailto:president.asilm@yahoo.com). This information will also be placed in the "Member News" page of the website of the Society: [www.asilm.org](http://www.asilm.org), unless otherwise specified.



## ASILM MOURNS THE PASSING OF BARONESS MARIUCCIA ZERILLI-MARIMÒ (1926 - 2015)



It is with great sadness that ASILM mourns the loss of Cav. di Gran Croce Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò, who passed away on October 18 at the age of 89.

Baroness Zerilli-Marimò was a dear friend, devoted member and distinguished Board Member of ASILM for many years, an active philanthropist and a highly-respected icon of Italian culture. She will be dearly missed by the Society and by anyone who has had the opportunity to have known her.

Born in Milan in 1926, she completed her studies in History, Languages and Literatures at the University of Lausanne.

While working for the Partito Liberale Italiano, she met her husband Guido Zerilli-Marimò, and together they frequented New York, where she became closely tied to New York University through her friendship with Elmer Bobst and his

wife Dodo (Mamdouha). She recognized that, although NYU had a Deutsches Haus and Maison Francais, the university was missing a Casa Italiana, which is especially noticeable when considering that the NYU's central location in the Village was once a strong part of Little Italy.

Thanks to her generous donation and in memory of her late husband, the Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò was founded in 1990.

The donation enabled the restoration of the 19th century household, located in the heart of Greenwich Village near Washington Square. The mission of Casa Italiana is to spread Italian culture outside of its national boundaries, offering cultural events pertinent to Italian culture, including art exhibits, concerts, lectures, film screenings, literary presentations and awards.

Casa Italiana is home to NYU's

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

## THIS HOLIDAY SEASON GIVE THE GIFT OF A DONATION TO THE ASILM EDUCATION FUND

The Society is pleased to announce that the ASILM Education Fund is officially open for donations from members.

This recently-established scholarship fund is dedicated to financing scholarships for undergraduate college students interested in pursuing degrees in the Italian language.

With the rising costs of college tuition, and decreased state support, scholarships are becoming increasingly essential in helping students get into the college of their choice and pursue their passion. Too many hard-working students who deserve to go to college and study their desired major end up not doing so because of their economic situations.

ASILM is proud to set up this fund to help secure a successful future for these students.

While the Society is focusing on guaranteeing a college experience for a select number of students, it is simultaneously encouraging the study and use of the Italian language in the United States, which has always been an important goal of ASILM.

ASILM has made its initial contribution of \$25,000.00 to the fund.

The fund is open to tax-exempt contributions from ASILM members and friends who wish to support the initiative to promote Italian education of qualified students.

Members are thus invited to contribute to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



## *(50th Anniversary Gala Dinner Dance & Awards Ceremony - continued from page 1)*

will fill the room as guests dance, socialize and enjoy the evening's line-up within the Grand Salon of the JW Marriott Essex House (more commonly known as the Essex House).

A five-star hotel with marked prestige, international fame and a scenic location opposite Central Park, the Essex House is the ideal venue for an elegant and unique celebration of the ASILM Gala's Anniversary Dinner. Celebrities, politicians and royalty flock to the hotel, attracted to its luxurious interior and outstanding reputation as one of the best hotels in New York City. Some of the hotel's well-known former guests and residents include George Burns, George Allen, Milton Berle, Betty Grable, Composer Igor Stravinsky, and musicians Bing Crosby and David Bowie, among many others.

In addition to a whole new location for this special anniversary edition, new awardees will be honored with the Grand Award of Merit, the highest presentation of the Society, in recognition of their activities to spread Italian excellence throughout the United States. Every year, this prestigious award is given in recognition of those who have dedicated themselves to improving the daily lives of the public with their contributions in diverse fields, including the arts, medicine, banking and finance, business, politics and jurisprudence. These distinguished personalities thus represent Italian excellence in every sense.

This year, the Society is proud to continue its tradition of honoring some truly exceptional individuals. One such individual is Dr. Antonio Bernardo, a highly accomplished, award-winning neurosurgeon whose expertise in skull-base surgery has changed the field of neurosurgery. Through his pioneering efforts to expand the use of innovative 3D technology for brain surgery across the U.S., he has saved countless lives and enriched the field of medical technology as a result. Accordingly, there are few professionals more deserving of the Grand Award of Merit on the occasion of the Society's 50th anniversary dinner. (See page ... to read more on Dr. Antonio Bernardo).

ASILM will also celebrate the life of Cav. di Gran Croce Susanna Agnelli with the honor of presenting the Grand Award of Merit in memoriam. As is well-known throughout Italy, Susanna Agnelli was the first woman appointed Foreign Minister of Italy. In addition to her long political career, she was also a leading businesswoman, writer and philanthropist. Her company, Fondazione Telethon Italia, which she founded in 1990, raised millions of dollars in support for Daybreak Children's Rare Disease Fund, whose mission is to support research aimed at finding cures for rare, genetic diseases. (See page ... to read more on Cav. di Gran Croce Susanna Agnelli )

The additional honorees will be announced at a later date.

Last year, the award was presented to several outstanding leaders in their respective fields: Comm. Mario Andretti, world-champion race car driver; Cav. del Lavoro, Marchese Piero Antinori, President of Marchesi Antinori; Dr. Joseph Bertino, Chief Scientific Officer of Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; Uff. Giovanni Mantovani, Director General of Veronafiere-Vinitaly; Uff. Hon. Eugene Nardelli, Counsel of Boies, Schiller & Flexner and former Associate Justice of the NY Supreme Court; Cav. Joseph Perella, Founding Partner and Chairman of Perella Weinberg Partners; Count Lucio Tasca d'Almerita, President of Tasca d'Almerita; and Cav. del Lavoro Gianni Zonin, Chairman of Zonin1821.

Other past recipients of the Grand Award of Merit include: Dr. Silvia Formenti, Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at NYU Langone Medical Center and a leader in breast cancer research; Cav. del Lavoro Giovanni Rana, founder of the Rana Group and one of the most prominent food producers in Italy; Hon. Patricia de Stacy Harrison, President and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; and Mr. Francesco Cafiso, a gifted jazz musician who received the award on behalf of his predecessors: Sicilian jazz musicians who contributed to the development and diffusion of the musical style throughout the world; Hon. George W. Bush, former President of the United States; H.E. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic; Comm. Dr. Fabrizio Michelassi, Surgeon-in-Chief at New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center; Cav. di Gran Croce, Hon. Arnaldo Pomodoro, the renowned Italian artist; Cav. di Gran Croce, Hon. Antonin Scalia, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; and Gr. Uff. Hon. Ronald Spogli, former United States Ambassador to the Italian Republic.

Dress code is strictly black-tie with decorations.

To add a more meaningful, long-term impact to this upcoming event, the proceeds from the Gala are used solely to further the ASILM Education Fund.

Created by the Society in 2013, the ASILM education Fund endows scholarships for undergraduate college students to pursue degrees in the Italian language studies. The scholarships are granted on the basis of achievement, character, motivation and financial need, and are subject to renewal throughout the student's undergraduate career.

All payments to the Gala are tax-deductible.

Formal Gala invitations will be mailed to ASILM members in December 2015. Some members have already made their reservations in advance, and space is very limited. Therefore, members are encouraged to R.S.V.P. at their earliest convenience. ■



*(Message from the President - continued from page 1)*

overcome, particularly with editing. But the end result is a book of huge relevance to the community of “decorati” residing across these two countries.

Never before have the lives of so many decorati been captured together in one book. We are proud of this endeavor, and we hope that our readers will be just as proud.

On this special occasion, I am sure that you will join me in sending the warmest thanks and deepest sense of gratitude and admiration to President Sergio Mattarella for his support of this important project, and whose message can be read in the opening pages of the book.

I would like strongly thank the sponsors of the book, without whose support and generosity this book would not have been made possible: Cavaliere di Gran Croce Mr. Lawrence Auriana, Cavaliere di Gran Croce, the Honorable Frank J. Guarini, Cavalieri di Gran Croce the Honorable Peter F. Secchia, Grande Ufficiale Ambassador Daniele D. Bodini, Cavaliere Ms. Vivian Cardia, Cavaliere Dr. Ralph DeFronzo, Mr. Nicholas Gravante, Jr. and Cavaliere Joseph Perella.

My sincerest thanks also to members of the Board of the ASILM, and to the honorary Chairman of the Board, Cavaliere di Gran Croce, the Honorable Dominic Massaro.

I cannot conclude without thanking the three people who put in a lot of hard work in preparing the book, which has

required a significant amount of time, effort and research: Kimberly Fry, Marta Bergamaschi and Viviana Gaia Luchena.

Lastly, I wish to thank all the decorati who have participated in the book, and I congratulate them on their past and future accomplishments. ■



**TO ORDER YOUR COPY OF I CAVALIERI IN AMERICA,  
OR TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOOK,  
PLEASE CLICK HERE  
OR VISIT [WWW.ASILM.ORG](http://WWW.ASILM.ORG)**



*Mark your Calendars!*

*50th Anniversary  
ASILM Gala Dinner Dance  
& Awards Ceremony*

*February 25, 2016*

*Essex House, New York*





## PRESENTATION OF I CAVALIERI IN AMERICA TO THE BOARD OF THE ASILM AND PRESS

*I Cavalieri in America*, the book by the American Society of the Italian Legions of Merit devoted to the personalities who were decorated by the Italian Republic and reside in the United States and Canada, was presented to the press on December 7, 2015.

The presentation took place during a reception in a room of the restaurant Le Cirque in Manhattan in the presence of members of the Board of Directors of the ASILM.

The book, in an elegant and prestigious typography, collects profiles and photographs of personalities decorated, divided into the various orders of Merit of the Italian Republic and includes the names of some of the most famous Italians and Americans.

During the presentation ceremony, ASILM President Dr. Lucio Caputo, addressing those present, stressed the great importance that this unprecedented publication plays in giving further prominence to all decorated individuals.

Caputo then recalled, with deep appreciation, the message of the President of the Italian Republic, Hon. Sergio Mattarella, who expressed his gratitude “to all those who – awarded with an honorable decoration – have contributed, each in their own field of activity, to the prestige and well-being of our country.”

Dr. Caputo also thanked the Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Lawrence Auriana, Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Frank J. Guarini, Cav.

di Gran Croce Hon. Peter F. Secchia, Gr. Uff. Ambassador Daniele D. Bodini, Cav. Vivian Cardia, Cav. Ralph DeFronzo, Cav. Joseph Perella and Mr. Nicholas Gravante Jr. for generously contributing to the printing costs of the book.

Special thanks then went to members of the diplomatic corps, and in particular to the Consul General Natalia Quintavalle, to all members of the ASILM Board, and honorary president of Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Dominic Massaro.

In extending the greetings of the Consulate General of Italy, Isabella Periotto Vice, Consul in New York, said that she was delighted at the challenging implementation of the volume and thanked President Caputo for having accomplished this.

“The book,” she said, “is a rich source of information for the combination of the name, the decor and the photo of the decorated which provides the curriculum.” Consul Periotto also expressed thanks for inclusion of decorated diplomats currently serving in North America in the volume. ■

*(Left) Vice Consul Isabella Periotto gives a speech on behalf of Consul General Min. Natalia Quintavalle at the formal presentation of I Cavalieri in America on December 7, 2015.*



*ASILM Board Members attend the book presentation of I Cavalieri in America. (L to R) Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Dominic R. Massaro, Mrs. Christina Grassi, Comm. Prof. Salvatore Rotella, Comm. Prof. Marco Grassi and Vice Consul Isabella Periotto.*



*ASILM President Dr. Lucio Caputo discusses the importance of this unprecedented book to guests present.*





*Board Members of the Society, consuls and press were invited to the book presentation at Le Cirque on December 7, 2015.*



*(L to R) Mrs. Lisa Salibello, Gr. Uff. RoseMarie Gallina-Santangelo, Comm. Stefano Acunto, Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Dominic Massaro and Cav. Vivian Cardia attend the book presentation.*



*Gr. Uff. RoseMarie Gallina Santangelo reading I Cavalieri in America.*



*Mrs. Lisa Salibello, Comm. Salvatore Salibello and Mrs. Mary Ann Mattone pose together at the event.*



*Ms. Kimberly Fry and Ms. Viviana Gaia Luchena unveil the books to the guests.*



*Comm. Prof. Marco Grassi and Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Dominic R. Massaro reading through copies of the book.*



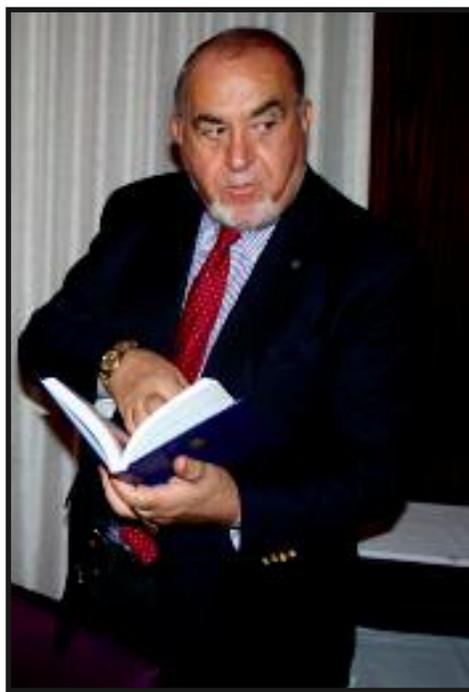
*Ms. Viviana Gaia Luchena, Ms. Kimberly Fry, Dr. Lucio Caputo and Ms. Marta Bergamaschi present copies of the books.*



*Cav. di Gran Croce Hon. Dominic Massaro (left) and Comm. Salvatore Rotella at the presentation held at Le Cirque restaurant.*



*Vice Consul Isabella Periotto shows off her copy of I Cavalieri in America.*



*Cav. Berardo Paradiso flips through the pages of the Society's new book.*



*Uff. Hon. Eugene Nardelli browses through I Cavalieri in America at this special event.*

To view more pictures and read more  
about the book presentation of I Cavalieri in America,  
please visit:

<http://asilm.org/photo-gallery/presentation-of-i-cavalieri-in-america/>



*(Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò' - continued from page 3)*

Department of Italian Studies. This prestigious department owes its autonomy to the Baroness's efforts, as it originally shared its space with the university's French department. Today, the Department of Italian Studies is ranked number one in the United States.

In her essay "A Labor of Love," written on the occasion of the Casa Italiana's 20th anniversary in 2010, Baroness Zerilli-Marimò wrote in her essay "A Labor of Love," "Today the Italian lifestyle, 'Made in Italy,' and our culture are valued everywhere, but beyond the giants of the past that everyone who has ever studied or spent time in Italy knows, it is our duty to let the Italy of today be known, with its many talented artists and writers, and our ideas projected towards the future."

She mentioned the Society in this same essay, "It is with great pleas-

ure that every year I participate at the New York meeting of the Italian decorated members of the American Society of the Italian Legions of merit, presided [at that time] in a masterly fashion by New York Supreme Court Justice Dominic Massaro."

Earlier this year, she submitted her biography for inclusion in the Society's new book, *I Cavalieri in America*, in which she mentions some of her many achievements, board and member positions, and her influential role at Casa Italiana.

Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò is survived by her daughter, Maria Chiara Zerilli. ■



*(ASILM Education Fund - continued from page 3)*

Donors, unless otherwise requested, will be given proper recognition.

When a substantial amount is reached, a committee composed of qualified members of the academic world will be set up and will contact universities in the United States to discuss conditions for the assignment of scholarships.

Universities that offer the best opportunities for applicants will be assigned the scholarships or, upon extensive review, the committee will select the university with the best proposal.

Any member with a scholarly background who wishes to join this separate committee to contact various universities should contact ASILM at [president.asilm@yahoo.com](mailto:president.asilm@yahoo.com).

Members of the committee will perform tasks without any direct or indirect compensation.

ASILM would like to thank those members who have already contributed to this important fund. ■



## DID YOU KNOW? HOLIDAY EDITION

### NATIVITY CRIB SCENE

One of the most important ways of celebrating Christmas in Italy is the Nativity crib scene. Using a crib to help tell the Christmas story was made very popular by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 (Assisi is in mid-Italy). The previous year he had visited Bethlehem and saw where the stable, where it was thought that Jesus was born. A lot of Italian families have a Nativity crib in their homes.

The city of Naples in Italy is world famous for its cribs and crib making. These are known as 'Presepe Napoletano' (meaning Neapolitan Cribs). The first crib scene in Naples is thought to go back to 1025 and was in the Church of S. Maria del presepe (Saint Mary of the Crib), this was even before St. Francis of Assisi had made cribs very popular.

Having cribs in your own home became popular in the 16th century and it's still popular today (before that only churches and monasteries had cribs). Cribs are traditionally put out on the 8th December. But the figure of the baby Jesus isn't put into the crib until the evening/night of December 24th. ■



*Nativity Scene.*

~Article by WhyChristmas.com

### THE TRADITION OF THE CEPPO

The traditional Yule Log, or ceppo takes on two (if not 3) distinct forms in Italian Christmas tradition. The first, and most common internationally is the actual Yule Log, a tradition which is linked to the pagan God Thor. A great log would be dragged into the house and burned on the hearth by the head of the family while everyone would sing festive songs and toast with wine. This log was supposed to signify a sacrifice, and to bring good fortune. The log would then remain in the hearth for the following 12 days of Christmas.

In Genoa the long standing tradition of the Ceppo is maintained, when the Doge would be presented with the log and then proceed to wet it with wine. In Abruzzo the tradition of the burned ceppo is also still alive yet revisited. As well as burning 13 small pieces of wood, to remember the 12 apostles and Christ, there's the Christmas Tomb, where a large bon fire is light in the central square in Christmas Eve.

The Yule Log has also been transformed in minimalist Christmas tree. A tall wooden frame shaped like a pyramid divided by shelves laden with gifts like fruit and candy, and candles, hence it is sometimes known as the Tree of Light. At the bottom of the pyramid, a nativity scene would be placed.

The third and most delicious incarnation of this tradition is the Tronchetto di Natale, a sponge, chocolate and cream dessert shaped like a log which is usually enjoyed on Christmas eve. ■



*A traditional Tronchetto di Natale.*

~Article by www.swide.com

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**50th Anniversary**  
of the  
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&  
**Awards Ceremony**

**February 25, 2016**

**For more pictures from previous edi-  
tions of the annual ASILM Galas,  
please visit Photo Gallery on the  
website of the Society:**

**[www.asilm.org](http://www.asilm.org)**

*Cavalieri* who receive honors and other  
recognitions should send information and  
a portrait photograph to:

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IL CAVALIERE  
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