

SPRING 2005

CHAPTER NEWS

## FLORIDA

*The Emperor Bids Farewell* The Grand Lodge of Florida will lose one of its most dynamic presidents when **Dennis Piasio**, the self-styled “emperor,” steps down in June after serving two terms.

Born and raised in the Bronx, New York, Dennis got involved with the Sons of Italy in 1980. He became Florida state president in 2001, after serving as state membership chair.

Under Dennis, the Grand Lodge of Florida added 26 new lodges with 6 more expected to be formed before the end of his term. OSIA now has about 3,800 members in Florida and more than 40 filial lodges.

His administration has added new programs, including golf tournaments, concerts and lobster fests, and encouraged lodges to work together more often on projects. “Our lodge presidents are our strongest link,” says Dennis. “They must do whatever it takes to make their lodges grow and the Grand Lodge must help them whenever possible.”

Dennis says the average age of Florida OSIA members is getting younger as more working people move to the state. The Italian American population in Florida grew from 850,000 in 1990 to more than 1 million by Year 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. “We let the newcomers know that the Sons of Italy is here for them with friendship and business opportunities,” Dennis says.

## ILLINOIS

***TANTI AUGURI!*** Grand Lodge President **Tony Baratta** cuts the cake during a special celebration of the Illinois state chapter's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Chicago last September.

The Grand Lodge was established in 1924 under **Dr. Francis La Piana**. The Grand Lodge began a Mortuary Fund and in 1938 was the first in OSIA to adopt an actuarially based death benefit system. One former state president, **John Spatuzza** also served as OSIA national president in 1975-77.

Among the many charities the Grand Lodge has supported over the years are the Alzheimer's Association, the Cooley's Anemia Foundation and the local Villa Scalabrini nursing facility for the elderly. Since 1916, 89 local lodges and 23 junior lodges have been chartered in Illinois.

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## PENNSYLVANIA

***Justice Honored*** Former OSIA national president **Frank J. Montemuro, Jr.** was honored by the Pennsylvania Bar Association last December in Philadelphia with the Wachovia Fidelity Award, given annually to a person whose career includes "significant accomplishments in improving the administration of justice."

Justice Montemuro was appointed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1992. He assumed his current post as a senior judge with the Pennsylvania Superior Court in 1994. Justice Montemuro also served as OSIA national president for two terms (1977-81) and founded the Commission for Social Justice in 1976.

## TENNESSEE

*Music To Our Ears* Nashville, home to country music, has hit a new note with the establishment of the first-ever OSIA lodge in Tennessee, says **Val Ciullo**, OSIA second vice president and national membership chairman.

The **Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #2818** was launched last February when Val installed lodge president **Joe Lo Casto** and the other officers during the traditional ceremony held in Brentwood, near Nashville in the presence of nearly all 50 lodge members.

Lo Casto, who moved from New York four years ago, now plans to have his lodge bring bocce tournaments, an Italian festival and a Columbus Day parade to town.

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