
Per Niente Per Sempre

Per Niente Forever

by Salvatore Martoche

I remember the first time I read *Per Niente* magazine. I couldn't believe it. The editor was an old friend of mine, Joe Di Leo. We worked together as teenagers at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. I fell in love with the magazine, just as so many of you have.

It was so full of love and respect for family, for community, for Italy, and for the USA. And, oh, the photographs that made it all come to life. I am so grateful to Joe and Toni Marie Di Leo, Lee Coppola, and of course the late Joey Giambra, who keep this special repository full of these incredible memories alive and available to future generations without any monetary compensation, simply for the joy and pleasure it gives them and so many other readers.

I've been writing for this magazine for about 15 years. As regular readers, you probably know that I have been a frequent contributor. I love it! I have watched the magazine get better and better, more professional. I've watched circulation rise dramatically. And I've watched as more and more Italian-Americans have contributed articles about their family's journey from the old country to the new world.

Many of these stories have been about the process that led so many Italians, who migrated mostly from the south and middle of Italy from 1880s - 1920s. The articles have described the desperation, hard work and faith that made these journeys possible. They were mostly fearful peasants with pennies in their pockets, mostly unable to read and write, who were summoning all their courage to build a better life and lay down roots in the new world.

Little did they know, but in the process of building this new life, they became significant contributors to building this still new country. Their skills and hard work resulted in beautiful buildings, fine highways and, of course, great restaurants. In subsequent generations followed lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers and artists, among others.

But for many, it also resulted in forgetting their history, their roots and their journey. They were busy, they were happy, they were American. And their heritage was sometimes placed on a back corner of the shelf of their

lives. But it is publications like *Per Niente* that have elegantly reminded people of their past and their ancestors. Many realized they had to "pay it forward" if future generations were to understand and appreciate who they were and where they came from and to share the pride and love of Italy the older generation felt.

Thank you, Joe and Toni Marie, who have been there from the beginning, and so many others for giving us a chance to tell our stories and a place for our children and grandchildren to read about our stories and see pictures of our larger-than-life heroes.

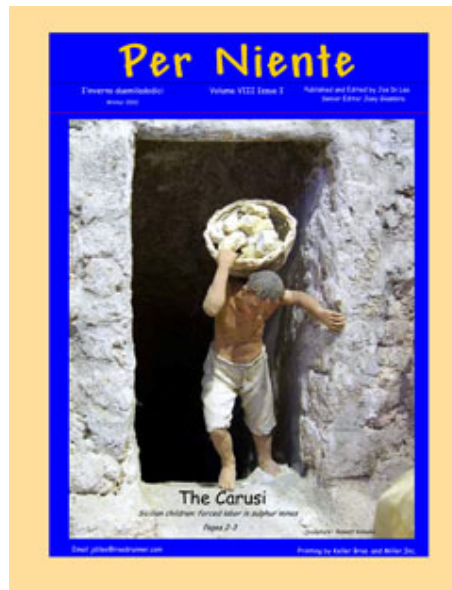
The founders of *Per Niente* are also the founders of the Per Niente Club - Joe, Toni Marie and the wonderful team of volunteers who have made the club's dreams a reality. The club started a Christmas fund at about the same time. It was just a little thing to help out deserving folks at Christmas, friends and neighbors who were down on their luck. But the fund has changed and changed for the better. The generosity of people who read this publication has helped make it into an extraordinary community asset. It helps single mothers, the homeless, the sick and the frightened. It helps immigrants and others who have, for one reason or another, fallen out of the safety net.

It has reached the point where representatives of social services and other like agencies call Joe and Toni Marie, who have assembled a team of generous, hard-working volunteers, mostly older folks who are not getting any younger, to assist these folks by purchasing through the Christmas fund appliances, beds, furniture, clothes, household supplies, and gift cards for necessities. You name it. They do it. Or should I say, you do it.

We need to make sure that this important work continues. If not, I fear this gem will fade and die. That would be a shame. Let us remember our ancestors who came to this world in rickety, fetid ships to build their dream in the new world. And let's make it possible for others to build their dreams as well. Let's make it possible to pass on the spirit of our ancestors to our brothers and sisters through *Per Niente* magazine and the *Per Niente* Christmas fund.



First Issue January 1, 2005



Winter 2012



Summer 2014



Fall 2015



Fall 2016



Summer 2018



Spring 2020



Fall 2021



Special Issue 2020