Tutto Italiano
Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano*

By the late 1800s, *Mount Vesuvius* (region of Campania) was a popular tourist destination, with people climbing the volcano by foot, on a mule, or riding in a sedan chair – a chair supported by poles and carried. To bring more visitors to Vesuvius, a funicular, two cars attached with cables that counterbalance each other as they ascend and descend, was installed and in operation in 1880.

The funicular on Mount Vesuvius, the first on an active volcano, was the inspiration for “Funiculi, Funicula,” the song that became popular worldwide. Giuseppe (Peppino) Turco, a journalist who vacationed in Castellammare di Stabia, wrote the lyrics in the Neapolitan dialect and Luigi Denza put the words to music. It’s noted that Denza, a music composer born in Castellammare di Stabia, wrote 800 songs, but he is most well known for “Funiculi, Funicula.”

The song, an instant hit in 1880, has several English translations and an Italian version. As written, the lyrics tell the tale of love in relation to the funicular that travels up and down. An early English translation, from the late 1880s, tells of happiness “with laugh, with dance and song.” It made the transition to opera when it was inadvertently misinterpreted as a traditional folk song and written into a symphony for a full orchestra. (Denza sued and received royalties.)

Andrea Bocelli, Mario Lanza, and Luciano Pavarotti are among the many who have sung “Funiculi, Funicula.” Last year, the song was a spontaneous performance at the John Lewis food hall (food market) in London. It was sponsored by *Sacla’ Italia*, a food company started in 1939 in Asti (region of Piemonte), and devoted to “the Italian culture of eating well.” See the video of the performance here: [http://www.sacla.co.uk/shopera](http://www.sacla.co.uk/shopera)

As a folk song “Funiculi, Funicula” is often associated with the tarantella, the dance named after the tarantula, which was named for the town of Taranto (region of Puglia). According to one legend, the fast pace of the dance would expel the poison from the bite of a tarantula. Another legend compares the dance to the movements of the tarantula; and the dance is also said to be performed during courtship.

The legends live on, but the funicular on Mt. Vesuvius is gone. It endured three management changes and three volcanic eruptions, but the 1944 eruption – and World War II – ended the cable cars’ run. Subsequent attempts to build a new funicular have been mired in controversy and today it faces opposition from those concerned about environmental issues.

Much thanks to Ralph for sending the *YouTube link* to the video that started the research for “Funiculi, Funicula.”

*Vesuvius: the world’s most dangerous volcano*

*Mt. Vesuvius Online*

*Luigi Denza* (In Italian)
A Monument to an Italian Immigrant in America
Creating an image from stone is a special talent, and carving faces into a mountain more than 5700 feet high is no easy task. Few people possess the skills and stamina required for a project of that scope, and Luigi Del Bianco was one of them.

Del Bianco worked with Sculptor Gutzon Borglum several years before Borglum was asked to carve (a tourist's attraction) of regional heroes into the Needles of the Black Hills in South Dakota. After two visits to the site, in 1925 Borglum chose a nearby mountain and suggested carving faces with a national appeal – George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt were later added to the initial design.

Borglum asked Del Bianco to be the Chief Carver of Mount Rushmore in 1933, and Del Bianco worked on the mountain, fine tuning the facial features until 1940. A year later, with the onset of World War II, federal money for the project ran out. Although written documentation by Borglum acknowledges the importance of Del Bianco to the completion of Mount Rushmore, Del Bianco is often overlooked in books and other materials about the project.

Through interviews, performances, news releases, and a website, Gloria Del Bianco (Luigi's daughter) and her nephew Lou (Luigi's grandson) have been working to let others know about Luigi Del Bianco's accomplishments. (In 2010, he was added to Thirty-One Days of Italians and featured on the 2012 List.)

This past June, a memorial plaque was unveiled in Port Chester, New York (where he lived). Earlier this year, Carving a Niche for Himself: The Untold Story of Luigi Del Bianco written by journalist Douglas Gladstone was released by Bordighera Press. The book has received a good amount of press, but you won't find it in the National Parks Service Book Store.

For some reason, the National Parks Service has a policy that everyone who worked on Mount Rushmore will receive equal credit. Douglas wrote, "So I've taken the agency to task in my book. And now they've taken to banning my book from their bookstores. You read that right. If you believe in freedom of speech; if you believe that ideas are sacrosanct, and if you love reading books, the Parks Service's position is a real head scratcher."

A petition "to be delivered to The United States House of Representatives, The United States Senate, and [the] President" has been started to "Get the National Park Service to formally recognize Luigi Del Bianco as the Chief Carver on Mount Rushmore." It reads in part, "Even though our family has documentation that proves his value to the work, the National Park Service refuses to formally recognize his important title and great achievement. This is patently wrong on so many levels. Let's get the NPS to do the right thing!"

Add your name, sign the petition.

Luigi Del Bianco Official Website

A Stone Carver's Daughter Tells of Mount Rushmore
Italian Culture in America

The Italian Cultural Society in Sacramento, California, headquartered in the Italian Center of Northern California, is a very active organization that sponsors numerous events each year and hosts the annual Festa Italiana; 2014 was its 29th year. Language classes for children and adults, travel packages, folk dance groups, food and cooking demonstrations, and screenings of Italian films are some of the activities it offers. If you are in the Sacramento area, stop by the Italian Center and get involved.

Opened on Columbus Day in 1930, the Italian Garden in Cleveland, Ohio is part of the “garden chain” in the Cleveland parks system that represents “the many cultures of the world.” The formal two-story Renaissance garden features artwork dedicated to Dante, da Vinci, Giotto, Michelangelo, Petrarch, Virgil, and several others of Italian heritage. More here.

During the 1940s, concerts were held in the garden and in the summer of 2008, the tradition was revived with “Opera in the Italian Garden.” Every year since then, Opera per Tutti performs a free concert that draws record-breaking attendance.

Thirty-One Days of Italians

This day, the last in October and of Italian American Heritage Month, celebrate your favorite Italian –someone not on the list of Thirty-One Days of Italians, but still greatly admired.

Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,
Janice Therese Mancuso
Author of Con Amore
Thirty-One Days of Italians
The Italian American Press

Please Note: On the date of publication, the links in this newsletter were current. In older newsletters, some links may be inactive if the URL has changed or is no longer available.

©2014 by Janice Therese Mancuso. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission except when quoted for promotional purposes. Publish with this credit: Excerpted from Tutto Italiano ©2014 by Janice Therese Mancuso. www.jtmancuso.com