



## ITALIANS IN AMERICA: *CUSTER'S LAST STAND-PART 1*

By Robert Penna

**I**t is an iconic image in American history: Custer's Last Stand. Immortalized in legend, print, and on the screen, no one knows exactly what happened on that hilly plain on June 25, 1876, for there were no survivors. It was only the next day that troops of other units came across the remains of Custer and five companies of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and discovered the scale of the disaster.

Custer had often been described as vain, arrogant, and headstrong. However, he was a West Point graduate and enough of a soldier to have been promoted to Brevet Major General during the Civil War. It is known that Custer unexpectedly found himself facing a Lakota and Northern Cheyenne force numbering in the thousands, led by Chief Sitting Bull. Hampered by poor intelligence and an unclear mission, Custer was trying to keep the Native Americans from escaping a developing encirclement, not defeat them in battle. Custer had no idea of the situation into which he was leading his men that day. All this is widely known. What is far less well known is the fact that six Italians would play various parts in that day's events.

The six Italians did not form any sort of unit, nor was it likely that they even recognized any sort of kindred spirit in one another. The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry of that June day was comprised of 43 officers and 793 enlisted men, of whom 40% were foreign born. Of this number 129 were Irish and 127 were Germans. The remaining 64 were a motley collection including Canadians, French, English, Scots, Welsh, Swiss, and Danes. In this mix, the six Italians hardly caused a ripple. Moreover, the six came from widely different regions and backgrounds in what today is considered Italy. The nation of Italy was a concept which itself had barely taken hold in the few years since unification.

Those six were: 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Charles Camillus De Rudio (aka Count Carlo Camillo Di Rudio) of Company A, Private Augustus L. De Voto (aka Augusto De Voto) of Company B,

Private John James (aka Giovanni Casella) of Company E, Private Frank Lombard (aka Francesco Lombardi) of the regimental band, Private John Martin (aka Giovanni Martini), a trumpeter of Company H, and Chief Musician Felix Villiet Vinatieri (aka Felice Villiet Vinatieri) of the regimental band.

De Rudio was the only one who could not be expected to downplay his origins. He was a nobleman by birth and, as such, was *pro forma* a gentleman. His commission depended on recognition of this distinction. The most he would do was anglicize his Christian name and change the spelling of his surname to make it more phonetic for English speakers. The other Italians, however, labored under no such burden. They had no urge to maintain their cultural identity, since, as far as

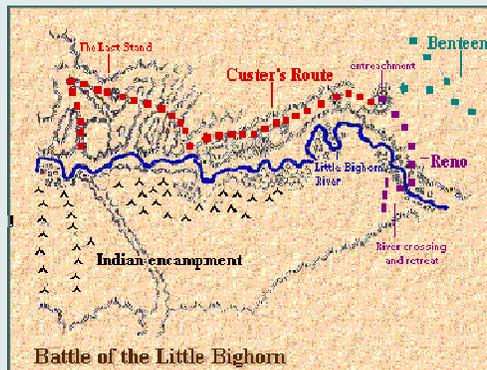
they were concerned, they belonged to no ethnic subculture. They simply desired to lose themselves in the general population and become Americans.

Three of the six Italians held music-related positions, a traditional occupation for Italians in America at the time, especially those in the Army. Italians stereotypically were thought to possess greater natural musical talent than other ethnic groups and thus

were much sought after for military bands. It is no mystery that Chief Musician Felix Vinatieri was the regimental bandmaster, Frank Lombard was a musician (instrument unknown), and John Martin, while a line private, was a trumpeter in his company. Some years before immigrating, when he was only 14, Martin also had served in the Italian army as a drummer boy.

As with John Martin, two other Italians, De Rudio and James, claimed prior military service. The former attended an Austrian cadet academy in Milan and served with the revolutionary forces of Mazzini and Garibaldi during the period of the Roman Republic in 1848. The latter simply listed his previous occupation as soldier. Vinatieri and Lombard were formerly musicians.

*Continued on page 4*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Happy 2014!



If one of your New Year's resolutions is to become more active, then I encourage you to participate in some of the wonderful events planned at the IACC this year. As you look through the issues of *Siamo Qui*, you will see that committees have been busy planning many activities for your enjoyment. Make your reservations and enjoy as many as you can. Join your friends and have a great time!

It has been sometime since the club has developed a 5-Year Strategic Management Plan, providing objectives and direction for the IACC. We are looking for an individual with project management experience and/or good writing skills to head up this initiative. If you are interested, please contact me.

I would like to remind you again that if you have any questions or would like to participate on a particular committee, please feel free to contact me at 424-2668 (cell). I will be glad to hear from you.

Thank you to Lynn Indelicato and her committee for a wonderful Family Christmas Party. Enjoy the upcoming events: Super Bowl Sunday Party on February 2 and our Second Annual Carnevale on March 1.

*Angelo Tarantino, President*

### February Calendar

View our complete online Calendar at [italianamerican.com](http://italianamerican.com)

Every Monday	Italian Grand Buffet
Every Tuesday	Open Bowling
February 2, Sunday	Treviso closed for lunch & dinner
February 6, Thursday	Super Bowl Party
February 14, Friday	Foundation Board Meeting
February 18, Tuesday	Dinner Specials at Treviso
	Board Meeting
	General Membership Meeting

#### Save the Date

March 1, Saturday	Carnevale Dinner Dance
March 7, Friday	Movie Night
March 16, Sunday	St. Patrick/St. Joseph Mass and Brunch
March 12, Wednesday	Women's League Meeting
March 13, Thursday	Italian Language Classes begin
March 19, Wednesday	Book Club
April 12, Saturday	Bus Trip to Arthur Ave.

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#### IACC Office

Linda Sciocchetti IACC Office Manager

Monday–Friday 9:30 A.M.–2:30 P.M.

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[IACCOffice@italianamerican.com](mailto:IACCOffice@italianamerican.com)

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Please submit articles, suggestions, or comments to:  
Rachel Cameron, Editor, [rcamero@nycap.rr.com](mailto:rcamero@nycap.rr.com)



# CARNEVALE DINNER DANCE

Saturday, March 1, 2014 • 6:30 P.M. – 11:00 P.M.

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**Cocktail Hour**

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# Cultural Corner *Did You Know...?*

## 'BACCALA'... AN ITALIAN FAVORITE! *By Rosanna Aiuppa*

The most popular fish of the holiday season and the centerpiece of the traditional 7, 11 or 13 Christmas Eve fish dinners, is surely *Baccala'*. This might seem a very Italian food staple. Around 800 AD, the Vikings developed the innovative method of preserving the abundant cod caught by them in the cold waters of the North Sea. Through their sailing skills and trade routes, they brought their plentiful food product to the rest of Europe. *Baccala* was introduced to Southern Italy during the reign of the Normans who occupied Sicily and the heel provinces of the peninsulas as far north as Rome around the year 999 AD. It soon became a staple of the Italian cook and allowed even people living inland, far from the sea, to enjoy ocean fish at any time. Throughout Europe, *Baccala'* was used to supplement and help keep starvation at bay when not enough food could be grown to last during those long cold winters. This non-perishable, nutritious fish became a center of trade of Northern Europeans for centuries. Today, discerning Italians buy only the best that they can afford, from the many stalls at food markets and stores that start carrying it in early December. Recently, in Rome, the selling price of top quality Icelandic *Baccala'* was 23 Euro per kilo or \$32.50 for 2.2 pounds.

Did you know that fresh cold water cod is called *Merluzzo* in Italy? However, when split open, back bone removed and salt cured, it is called *Baccala'*. When it is gutted and air dried, it becomes *Stoccofisso*. Years of overfishing have resulted in North Atlantic cod becoming scarce and more costly. When buying top

quality *Baccala'*, look for good coloring: flesh should be white with no yellowing, with clean light-colored skin on the underside. It should have a strong fish odor that will dissipate once reconstituted. Salted *Baccala'* should never have a hint of a chemical smell. Avoid prepackaged *Baccala'*.



Preparations are as varied as the regions of Italy and the fantasy and skills of the cook. In the Veneto they prefer it cooked in milk until, when flaked, it is translucent. The Livornese like it cooked with tomatoes, garlic, and basil. The Neapolitans say they have at least 365 ways to prepare their *Baccala'*. In the area of Le Marche, they love their *Stoccofisso* in a sort of stew with tomatoes, celery, olives, white wine, potatoes, and other root vegetables. Whatever favorite recipe you use, the better the quality, the better the taste. First, rinse off all surface salt well, cut into pieces, and steep in a large pan with fresh water that **MUST BE CHANGED** every 12 hours for at least 3 days or more until de-salted to taste. Pat dry, remove all visible protruding small bones, and prepare as you prefer. Remember that, especially throughout the holiday season, *Baccala'* plays an important part of our Italian food traditions!

*Continued from Cover*

De Voto identified his previous occupation as that of bookbinder.

That three of the six Italians should claim prior military experience is not unexpected, although seemingly flying in the face of the musical stereotype. Italy had been a hotbed of revolutionary activity and active warfare for the past several decades. Americans typecast Italians as artistic and musical. However, given the amount of warfare that afflicted Italy during the struggle for unification in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the reality was that Italians were much more likely to be soldiers than music makers.

The six Italians were from different parts of Italy, spoke different dialects, and probably felt very little solidarity with one another. De Rudio was from Belluno, in the Province of Venice and was born a subject of the Austrian emperor.

De Voto was from Genoa, Vinatieri was from Turin, and Martin was from Sola Conzalina. They were born subjects of the Piedmontese King of Sardinia, who would one day become King of Italy. James was born in Rome and was a subject of the Pope. Lombard was born in Naples and was thus a subject of the Bourbon King of the Two Sicilies.

Further straining any sense of camaraderie was the fact that De Rudio, as a nobleman, an aristocrat, had nothing in common with the others, and would have felt no bonds with his fellow Italians. One thing is certain: at 43 De Rudio was the oldest officer riding toward the Little Bighorn on that fateful June day in 1876. He was perhaps too old, cynical, and wily for Custer to consider him a good cavalry officer. This fact resulted in a last minute transfer that saved his life. The story will continue in the next issue of *Siamo Qui*.

# St. Patrick and St. Joseph's Mass and Brunch



**Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**

Doors open at 10:00 A.M.

Mass at 10:30 A.M., Brunch served after Mass

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The instructor is Carolina Mancino, a native Italian speaker.

**Intermediate (Room 2):** For those who have completed elementary courses or who have another background in Italian. Accompanied by the latter half of our textbook, this class will delve deeper into the grammar and vocabulary, which can develop a more skilled speaker who is also able to understand the spoken word. As always, cultural lessons will provide a sense of life in Italy and the mind of contemporary Italians.

The instructor is Maria LaMorte, a native Italian speaker and teacher.

**\$75 Members • \$85 Non-Members**

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We will be using a new textbook this session.

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Class size will be limited

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# Finding Our Immigrant Ancestry *by Angelo F. Coniglio*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Genealogical research, after all, revolves about *names*. The names of ancestors and relatives are the keys that connect us to them and help to put flesh and bones on the dry statistics we may find. To identify individuals, most western cultures use at least two names, a *given*, or birth name, and a *sumame* – that is, a family name which, in English-speaking societies, is called the “last name”. Determining the correct name is of utmost importance when trying to identify an ancestor. A country’s *naming conventions*, its customs for naming children, can provide invaluable help.

Today, many children are given a name that ‘sounds nice’, or represents a favorite celebrity, sports hero, or even a color, or a food! In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were more traditional, orderly methods of naming children. The convention used in Italy, and primarily in the ‘*Mezzogiorno*’ – Southern Italy and Sicily, can be called the ‘*Sicilian naming convention*’.

The *Sicilian naming convention* was to name a couple’s first son after the husband’s father and the second son after the wife’s father. The first daughter was named for the husband’s mother, the second daughter after the wife’s mother. Later children might be named after great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, or favorite saints. This tradition was so strong that in many cases it was thought to be required. Naming a first son after anyone but the child’s paternal grandfather could lead to family disharmony, or even shunning of the offending couple. An example follows of how seriously the custom was taken: A couple named their first son Leonardo, after the husband’s father. They had several other children, all ‘properly’ named. After the boy Leonardo reached age eleven, sadly, he died. His parents continued to have children, and the first boy born after Leonardo’s death was named... *Leonardo*.

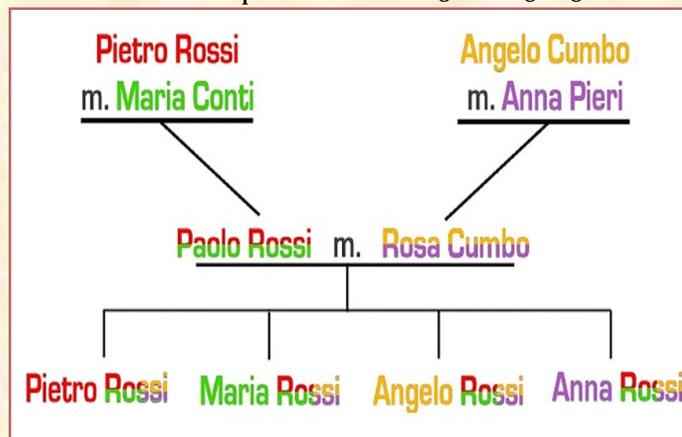
Here is another example: If the first-born Leonardo had died as an infant, the next son born would be named Leonardo – and if he died as an infant, the *next* son would be named Leonardo, and so on, until one survived! There was high infant mortality at the time. I have seen poignant evidence of this in birth records showing that a couple would lose three or four children, all named the same, while the parents continued to have children and re-use the name. Usually, a birth record would be filed for every birth, even stillbirths, giving the child’s

name. So, if your ancestor was the last of one of these ‘Leonardos’, you might find records for several, with the same given name and the same parents, and you’ll have to be sure that your research is applied to the right one.

Naming a child after its own parents was uncommon but not unheard of. It was done more with boys than with girls, usually not until all the ‘prescribed’ names had been given to the eldest children, and several other children had been born. But if the wife died in childbirth, often the baby would be named after her. If a husband died before his wife gave birth, the child would be named after him. In both cases, the child would be named for the deceased parent, regardless of the baby’s gender. For example, if a father named Angelo died before his daughter was born, she would be named *Angela*. This convention was stronger than the general custom. For example, if a man died before his first son was born, the baby would be named for him, not for the paternal grandfather. Another occurrence affecting naming might be that a mother would pray to a saint

for some favor: say, to St. Lucia, to cure an eye affliction. If the prayers were granted (or even if not), she might break with tradition and name her first girl ‘Lucia’.

An interesting twist might today be considered bizarre: if a wife died, leaving her children without a mother, most usually the father would remarry. The first child born of the second wife would be



named after... the first wife! Strange as they may seem, these traditions were a way of perpetuating the name and memory of ancestors – a custom too often cast off in the modern world.

The Sicilian naming convention often resulted in some interesting situations. For example, suppose Pietro Rossi and Maria Conti had five sons, and each of them eventually married. If each son had at least one son and one daughter, there would be five boy-cousins named Pietro Rossi, and five girl-cousins, each named Maria Rossi! While these naming conventions can be confusing in genealogical research, they can be invaluable in finding and corroborating the names not only of ancestors, but of their siblings and descendants as well.

Visit Angelo's website, [www.bit.ly/AFCCGen](http://www.bit.ly/AFCCGen), and write to him at [genealogytips@aol.com](mailto:genealogytips@aol.com). He is the author of the book, *The Lady of the Wheel* (La Ruotaia), based on his genealogical research of Sicilian foundlings. See [www.bit.ly/ruotaia](http://www.bit.ly/ruotaia) for more information, or order the book at [www.bit.ly/racalmuto](http://www.bit.ly/racalmuto).

## Family Christmas Party

by Lynn Indelicato



“Christmas magic is silent. You don’t hear it—you feel it, you know it, you believe it.” This quote by Kevin Alan Milne embodies the spirit of the day as members of the IACC, along with their family and friends, gathered for our annual Family Christmas Party on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Even though the

snowstorm that began the night before threatened to cancel the event, the snow ended that morning, adding to the magic and beauty of the Christmas spirit.

Stepping away from all the hustle and bustle that pre-Christmas brings, everyone took the time to appreciate the spirit of the season, enjoying each other’s company on a Sunday afternoon filled with good food, entertainment, and camaraderie.

The group was treated to two very special dances performed by the IACC Foundation Children’s Dance Group—the *Tarantella* and *Mambo Italiano*! In addition, there were crafts, raffles, and musical entertainment provided by DJ Ernie from Sound Control, who kept the group hopping with special dances, prizes, and lottery tickets for the “Big Kids” in a trivia game! Santa Claus

stopped by to greet everyone and bring a special gift and goodie bag for each of the children!

Special thanks to Christine Marando and Louise Giuliano for their time and efforts organizing and instructing our wonderful dance troupe, as well as to Luigi and Maria De Nitto for donating one of the fantastic gift baskets that was raffled off. In addition, many thanks to Mary Lou Marando, Maria De Nitto, Donna Zumbo, Marissa Di Ionna and Joe Di Ionna for all their help, Jeanette Anziano, who crafted beautiful little stocking holders for the candy canes, and the Mallozzi family and staff for the wonderful food and their help in making the afternoon a huge success!



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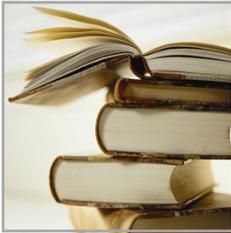
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# Foundation Book Club

by Richard Ognibene

## Take A Train Ride In Italy With the Book Club

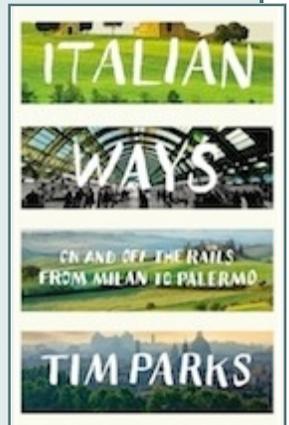
On Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, at 7 P.M., the book club will discuss Tim Parks' *Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo*. Parks pokes affectionate fun at his fellow train travelers and surveys a rapidly changing Italian landscape. The author has lived in Italy since 1981 and has written a series of charming memoirs about his experiences there. In his new book, Parks chronicles his adventures on the nation's rails while commuting from his home in Verona to his teaching job at the university in Milan, as well as his travel on other cross country trips.

Train travel in Italy is very popular and provides a way to observe what's happening in Italian society as a whole. His observations mingle travelogue, history and memoir, spanning the years from 2005 to the present. Parks tells amusing stories

about the crazy bureaucracy that runs the railroads, and funny anecdotes about the variety of passengers he describes as chatty, objectionable, resigned, long suffering, sticklers who obey all the rules and the sly ones who break them. Parks' journeys inevitably strengthen his affection for his adopted country while increasing our understanding of it. Reading his book will do the same for us.

The Book Club meets on the second floor. All members and non-members are welcome to attend. For further information, contact Dick Ognibene at 372-4919 or at [rtognibene@nycap.rr.com](mailto:rtognibene@nycap.rr.com).

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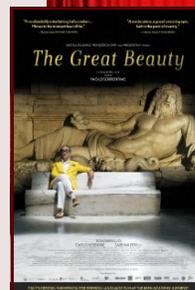
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## Movie Night

Please join us on Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> to shake off the winter blues with dinner and a show. Please bring a covered dish to share. We will begin dinner at 6 P.M. with the movie to follow at 7:30 P.M.

The Movie will be Paolo Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza* "The Great Beauty". This film has won best film, director, actor for Toni Servillo at the European Film Awards and best foreign film honor at the 71<sup>st</sup> Golden Globe Awards and is nominated and favored to win the OSCAR as best foreign film. The movie is in Italian with English subtitles. Please join us for what we anticipate to be a fun filled evening.

## General Membership Meeting

The Membership can meet with the IACC Board on Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 P.M. This is your chance to ask the board questions. Please join us.



Sunday, February 2, 2014

\$25 Members | \$30 Non-members

Doors open at 3 P.M.

Pre-Game Buffet (5:30 P.M.)

Sausage and Peppers

Panini Rolls

Italian Roasted Potatoes

Penne Pasta Marinara

Chicken Parmesan

Tossed Salad with House Dressing

Eggplant Rollatini

Halftime Station

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# Women's League

*Hello Ladies!*

Happy New Year!!

Well, the holidays are over and we find ourselves in the deep, deep of winter. I wish you warmth and good health!!

Our December meeting was a very lively Christmas party. The "Ugliest Christmas Sweater Contest" was a hoot with many imaginative get ups. 5 of them won centerpieces to take home. Our traditional gift exchange and raffle was fun, reminding us of our special friendships.



Along with our delicious meal, we enjoyed beautiful bowls of traditional "Wands", so flaky and light, made fresh for us by Rosetta Barbato, Pina Tirino, Maria Ianucci, Sally Simeone, and Maria De Nitto. Grazie! Thank you so much for bringing to our party a taste of our childhood Christmas.

You will recall that there are no meetings in January or February. Our March meeting will take place on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Look for food choices, details, and contacts in next month's issue.

All the best,

*Maria La Morte*

Women's League, President

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# CARING & SHARING

By Anna Acconi



## February Birthdays

Deborah Bennett  
Frances Blendell  
Tommasino Conte  
Anna Dagostino  
Phyllis D'Antonio  
Kathleen DeFruscio  
Adam Del Torto  
William Dillon  
Michele Doodian  
Joseph Ferracane  
Paul Giuliano  
Lisa Hrimatopoulos  
Judith Ingemie  
Susan Isbell  
Earl Knowles  
Chris Kollias  
Diana Kretschmer  
Christine Mallozzi  
Armand Marando  
Lisa Mirabile

Mary Nardiello  
Ann Nunziato  
Richard Ognibene  
Thomas Papa  
Joan Rosetti  
Patricia Rumore  
Albert Sacca  
Ernest Sacco  
Catherine Saglimbeni  
Victoria Sano  
Dorothy Schafer  
Linda Sciocchetti  
Dominic Scovello  
Mary Scuderi  
Gail Tarantino  
Marie Vitillo  
Jeanne Wilson

## Condolences

Our condolences are sent to Nancy Sano and her family on the recent passing of her beloved aunt, Angela Cardinale.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family of John Armao who recently passed away. John, who was 102 years old, holds the distinction of being the oldest joining member who was enrolled by his family when he reached his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

We regret to announce the recent passing of long-time member, Gloria Miller. Condolences to her family.

Please contact Anna Acconi at 966-8664 or [aaacconi111@aol.com](mailto:aaacconi111@aol.com)

## Note from Treviso Automatic Gratuities

The federal government is no longer allowing "automatic gratuities" on restaurant checks. Therefore, from now on, at the Monday night Italian Grand Buffet, the buy-one-get-one free member checks will not include automatic gratuities. Treviso staff is hopeful that IACC members will appreciate the work of the servers and add an appropriate gratuity to their check.

## Baccala Salad

By Mary Lou Marando



1 lb Baccala, soaked  
Lemon, 1 slice  
1 small Red Onion, chopped  
1 clove Garlic  
1 bunch Scallions  
1 cup Celery, chopped  
1 can Black Olives  
1 jar Cherry Peppers, stems removed and quartered  
(hot or sweet – your preference)  
Oil  
fresh Parsley  
Salt and Pepper, to taste

After soaking Baccala for at least 2 days, put in a pan with boiling water and poach slowly. Place a slice of lemon in water with Baccala. After Baccala becomes tender, drain and let it cool. Mix in rest of ingredients. Best to prepare the day before serving.

## IACC Bowling

Open bowling is on Monday nights at Westlawn Lanes at 6:30 P.M. We play 2 games at \$3/game (shoe rental extra). Please call Maria Marchio at 438-9067 with questions.



## Beware of Telephone Scams

Several members have noticed a recent increase in telephone scams. Typically you might receive a phone call or voicemail asking you to "verify" personal information like your social security number, mailing address, or credit card number. DO NOT give out any personal information over the phone.



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