

Covid-19 Stories Issue

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*The Newsletter of the
Lancaster Italian Cultural Society*

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LANCASTER
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SOCIETY



L'Osservatore Lancastriano

President's Message

Auguro a tutti un felice Giugno,

Hopefully, by the time you receive this newsletter we will have our restrictions lifted. Covid-19 is something we would all like to forget. I do hope everyone is well and staying safe.

Not much is happening under the circumstances, as we had to cancel all of the LICS trips for this year, and the 20th Anniversary Celebration. I am still hoping that we can have the Italian Night at the Clipper Stadium on August 8th.

During our calls to membership to check on how members were doing, we gathered some stories to share about their experiences during this strange time. We hope you will enjoy reading them in this issue.

Arrivederci a presto,

Rosemary LaFata, President



Our Pandemic Experience

by Dolores Gareis, May 25, 2020

This pandemic has been difficult for everyone. It's hard to find a silver lining in this kind of crisis. I've been really trying to make the best out of my current quarantine and I think I have been partially successful.

We have lived in our house for the past 42 years and have raised five kids and six exchange students here as well as several grandchildren. I always said that one day I will have the opportunity to organize and divide up some of the things I have accumulated over the years. This includes photographs, movies newspaper articles, documents, stories, artifacts, etc. I always said one

day I will do it, well now is the time to clean organize and divide up these memories. My husband and I now find treasures every day that should and will be shared with the rest of the family.

On the culinary side, I must say I love to cook, bake and just enjoy eating, particularly Italian food. I love to bake my own bread and make my own pizza but I realized that I had no yeast. No bread, no pizza, no cake, something had to be done! Yeast was like toilet paper, not to be found in the stores or online. Sure, I found some yeast online, but it was from China and I didn't want to use it, so I decided to make a sourdough starter.

You can use the natural wild yeast in your environment to make a starter by following the recipes that can be found online (How to make a sour dough starter without yeast) or from following my recipe, which is included in this newsletter. It can be made using flour, water and the wild yeast in the air. It is best to use no metal container or mixer in this process and use bottled or spring water. You can also use the water that remains from boiling potatoes, that's one of my family traditions. If you follow the directions in the recipe it is easy but it takes some time, about 5 to 7 days to get a good starter. The time also depends on your kitchen temperature. If you have a small warming device like a yogurt maker it would help but you must be patient and with your first attempts follow the directions carefully. A temperature gauge is important. Too hot and you kill the yeast, too cold and things go too slow. You can help this production by adding a small amounts of yeast and I have done that in the past,

but please don't tell! This time my sourdough turned out fine and we are producing excellent bread and pizza dough with the results. Once you are comfortable with the starter and you know how to make it and feed it, all the rest is fun!



Corona Virus

by Nella Seward, May 23, 2020

At the beginning of February 2020, I moved into my new house. Because my previous house closing was scheduled for the end of the same month, I traveled often back and forth to bring small odds and ends waiting to be picked up. I had a lot of renovations going on at the condo, so the only area I could use was my bedroom and the master bath. Knowing that eventually I would need to do much cleaning, I went to Costco and purchased lots of Lysol wipes and sprays, paper and bath towels, all kinds of soaps, cleaning solutions and rags. I had a refrigerator, but no stove or microwave to prepare meals, so I purchased a variety of cold cuts for sandwiches. I went to Goodwill many times to donate things, but for some strange reason a brown bag full of fabric remained hidden, unnoticed on the floor of the back seat of my car.

So now I was settled in with the

daily visitations of the carpenter, electrician, painter and the plumber. I was living with lots of noise, very little space to move around due to boxes filled with things to be put away. My Sunroom was crowded with so much that I could not even enjoy the friendly morning sun.

Finally, after living like this until the beginning of March, the kitchen miraculously was 99% completed. I now was able to fill the cabinets and cook my meals. So, to celebrate, I baked a cake, all for me. Then I baked my Easter bread and sent some to my family and friends, then I made more Easter bread just for me, while my body was enjoying the sinful effect of gaining weight.

During those days, at the beginning of March, the Corona Virus was taking a fast course. The news was horrendous, officials were suggesting we wear masks. I remembered the "forgotten" bag full of fabric I still had sitting in my car. So, immediately I started making cloth masks for me, my family, friends, my parish priests, the nuns and anyone who needed them. My daughter Lyza asked me to make as many as possible for the people that were working with her. God only knows how happy I was to be able to help during this terrible pandemic. Somehow my messy house was no longer important. I felt blessed, called to lend a helping hand. At the same time, we became all united. People calling and checking on each other, praying together, getting groceries as needed, making video calls all over America and to my family and friends in Italy. Never like then had I felt God's hand upon us.

I saw this as an opportunity to mend my life, to be thankful, to find the strength to keep the faith and never let go of hope, because *Hope Never Fails*. Perhaps some will say that I am naïve, but please, mind your own business, do not try to take away the knowledge, the miracle that God is doing during this time. So much has changed and grown within us! I do not need to count the

ways, we all know them, we only need to let our heart and mind speak, so do it.

By the way, do you remember all those paper towels, cleaning and disinfecting solutions/wipes I bought just before the virus breakout? They sure came in handy and were necessary during these past two months! One must admit, "God surely works in mysterious ways!"



Above: Dolores Gareis & Nella Seward, LICS Directors and article authors.

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**Toilet Paper Story from Ann Brill,  
94 years young!** by Rosemary LaFata

Ann was down to her last roll of toilet paper and she started out to the nearest Giant store. She immediately went to the paper aisle and what do you think she saw – EMPTY shelves. She inquired at the Service Desk as to when would they restock toilet paper, and was told to come back tomorrow at 8:00 AM, when supplies would be restocked.

So the following day, she got up early and set out at daylight to drive to Giant, entered the store and quickly got to the paper aisle and again NOTHING, the shelves were empty! As she walked down the aisle with her empty basket, she saw a man who had TWO MULTI-ROLL Packs in his basket. Disgusted and angry she said, with a scornful look, to the man, "What is it with all

these hoarders, I need toilet paper and there's none!" As she approached the man, he took pity on her and gave her one of the packs. She thanked him. After that, he gave her the 2nd pack, before leaving the store empty-handed. Again she thanked him.

Ann said perhaps he wasn't very generous after all because he wouldn't have left the store without it, if he really needed it. Now she has all the toilet paper she needs for a while although she really doesn't like it. She said, "I'll reserve the name brand so it doesn't get bad publicity. Funny it's my brand!"

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Sour Dough Starter Recipe by Dolores
Farruggio Tringale Gareis

**How to make a sourdough starter
without yeast.**

You need a glass measuring cup, a plastic or glass or ceramic bowl for mixing and storing and a wooden spoon.

Take one heaping cup of flour of your choice and with a wooden spoon mix it with 1/2 cup of bottled water, spring water, or water left over from boiling potatoes. The water must be at room temperature and not chlorinated.

Cover the container with a top or plastic wrap with a rubber band. Place in a warm spot but not too hot. 75° to 85° is fine.

Wait 24 to 36 hours until you see bubbles are starting to form. Discard 1/2 of the mixture and add 1 cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water and mix.

Wait another 24 hours. Discard 1/2 the mixture and add 1 cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water and mix. If you see bubbles and the mixture rising you know you were on the right track. If within 8 to 10 hours it begins to fall after rising first, discard half the mixture and add 1 cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water and mix. You are "feeding the starter."

We are now into the fourth day. Feed the mixture in the morning after discarding one half of the mixture as you did before and watch to see if rising and bubbling occurs. If before the

end of the day it starts to rise, then fall, discard 1/2 and add one cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water.

Over the next two days repeat this process. Feed the starter each day but feed it a second time only if it bubbles up and starts to fall. That means that it is hungry.

We are now into the 7th day and you are probably ready to use the starter to make bread or pizza. The process may be longer or shorter depending on the heat of your kitchen which should never be over 95°. After you use starter for your bread or pizza recipe it should be fed with one cup of flour and 1/2 cup of water. Caution: you should not use the starter until you have waited at least 12 hours after feeding it. The starter can be stored in the refrigerator unless you use it often. If a starter is properly fed it can survive for years.

Using the starter to make bread or pizza dough.

Sift 2 cups of flour and 2/3 teaspoon of salt into a mixing bowl. If this is your first batch you might wish to add a three-quarter teaspoon of yeast but as you know that is cheating!

It's probably not necessary if you have a really bubbly product.

Add 1/3 cup of water and 1/3 cup of starter together and add to the flour. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and add the other 1/3 of the water as needed, mix thoroughly. Keep flour handy and use as necessary as you knead the bread dough until it feels elastic. More flour will be necessary to keep it from being too sticky. Keep in a warm location for 30 minutes to an hour. It should rise depending on the temperature of your kitchen and if you added yeast. After 30 minutes, punch it down and shape it onto the baking pan, which is wiped with olive oil. Heat your oven to 350°. The bread will continue to rise. Before putting it in the preheated oven slit the top three times and brush it with egg yolk.

Baking time will vary and depends on many factors. I use an electric 42-year-old GE oven and bread takes 23 to

25 minutes to become golden brown.

Hint: I make small loaves of bread using up to 2 cups of flour. It gives me the opportunity to experiment and bake several times a week without producing too many leftovers.



LICS Directors interviewed some of our members about their Covid-19 experience. Enjoy!

Susan and Justin Cappiello

Justin Cappiello MD is an essential worker during this pandemic. His wife Susan administrates the running of his office.

This has been a difficult time for Susan, who lost her sister in New York from the COVID-19 virus on Easter morning. She was 79 years old. For Susan this is nearly impossible to process since there was no funeral and no opportunity to mourn with the family. The last time she saw her sister was on February 10th at her aunt's 100th birthday party.

Susan is also experiencing physical and emotional strain, as she is in the process of moving to Washington Boro. She has been cleaning and sorting things in her Lancaster home, where she has lived for many years.

Despite the pandemic, life goes on and she continues to prepare and eat healthy food. She shops for fresh vegetables at Giant and wears gloves and a mask and keeps a supply of Wet Ones handy. She shops at Mandros for cheese and specialty items and Mr. Bill's for fish, but has stopped visiting Central Market. Her husband Justin especially enjoys the French bread from Giant. They would like to get takeout food but have been disappointed so far, particularly by the local pizza. They both like pizza alla Romana style, which they have not found in Lancaster. Susan particularly enjoys preparing an eggplant dish with fresh basil and buffalo mozzarella.

Susan and Justin deserve our appreciation for continuing the practice of medicine during this pandemic.



Nick and Judy Siviglia

Nick and Judy are essential medical workers during this pandemic. Nick is the founder and President of Lancaster Contact Lens Inc. Judy is his office manager. They have continued their practice throughout this pandemic. Nick and Judy are both very conscious of the threat of this virus and have instituted special procedures to ensure the safety of their patients and themselves. They wear masks at the office and have instituted special surface cleaning before and after each patient. Nick said, "I have never seen anything like this in my life. I believe everyone should take this COVID-19 virus threat seriously and follow the guidelines of the medical professionals." They are both a little surprised that some people take this situation so cavalierly.

Judy continues to prepare healthy foods during this pandemic just as she has in the past with salads, vegetables and low cholesterol dishes.

Nick and Judy also deserve our appreciation for continuing to serve the people of Lancaster during this pandemic.

Mary Jane Ferretti

"I'm a quilter and I like to piece things into hangings, small quilts, place mats, runners and other items that can be gifts. I dove into what quilters call 'my stash'...drawers and drawers full of fabrics that can be made into something someday. I have ended up with Christmas gifts for everyone on my list and made a lot more room in those drawers.

I also made at least 30 masks. The same fabrics that became pieced and quilted gifts also made good masks. The problem, as many will know, was finding elastic. I started with white and then had to move to black. Even my 94-year-old cousin is doing some sewing on masks. I used YouTube videos to guide me in how to make these masks and it worked very well.

I also have a big book of genealogy waiting for me...that may be my next

project for the stay-at-home times.”

Charles Criniti

“I spent most of the time outside working on my vegetable garden. It was just the right time to do it. Now my garden is all finished and ready to produce all its crops. It is really beautiful and it makes me happy.”

John Gerdy



John Gerdy, who joined LICS this year for the first time, is the Executive Director of *Music For Everyone*. We interviewed him to see what has been a pleasant surprise during these long weeks of staying at home. In general, he has experienced this as a time of quiet space to think about what is really important. He commented that we often are a bit like hamsters on a wheel, running really fast but not necessarily clear about where we are going. This enforced stillness has given John a chance to do some journal writing, take regular walks, and get out the paint brushes to make some pictures. In March, shortly after the stay at home directions came from the governor, John received a note from his neighbors, a pleasant young couple with whom he enjoys talking. Using that as inspiration, John has been writing two or three “gratitude notes” almost every day. He writes to people from his past as well as people from today and puts the notes in the mail. “It seems like getting a hand-written note has become something special and out of the ordinary. It’s a small thing, but I have enjoyed taking the time to think about these people and put some of my gratitude into words to send them.”

As the Executive **Director of Music for Everyone**, John has been pushed to rethink how to make music happen for the community even in the midst of a pandemic. On May 15, Lancaster’s Music Friday, **MFE**, with the support of several businesses, was able to send a flat-bed truck around the city with two safely distanced musicians, who

played and sang for the residents of Lancaster. John has also been making short, instructional videos designed to teach children about the Blues and music in general. He says it is like “channeling my inner Mr. Rogers,” to reach an audience that exists somewhere on the other side of the iPhone in a world yet to come. We are all looking forward to that time and we hope that it continues to be filled with music, theater, and beautiful works of art.



First Time in Europe by J. Hastings Day

I was fearful. Not one to attempt something without figuring out first how to do it, I was out of my comfort zone. The shuttle ride from Lancaster to JFK Airport went through a heavy April snowstorm, followed by a rain shower in New Jersey, and ended in sunshine and clear skies at our destination. It was 1990 and I was forty. As yet, I had not flown much at all, and never from JFK. My first footfall in Europe was in the Lisbon Airport, having flown Air Portugal, on the way to meet my wife, Linda, in Barcelona, Spain. She was there with our oldest daughter, Becca, and a dozen high schoolers for a 3-week homestay student exchange in Figueres, part of Catalonia. They had left from the Newark Airport three days before.

Seeing Linda at the airport was a tremendous relief. My Spanish was practically nil; she was a Spanish & French teacher. The rest of the time in Spain, I relied on her for any interaction we had with the locals. That included touring Figueres, where the exchange students lived, Barcelona, Girona, and spending Easter in Port de la Selva with the family that Becca was assigned to. There we enjoyed a huge pan of paella.

The day after Easter, I boarded a Eurolines bus in Figueres at 1:15am bound for Venice. It was over an hour late due to the roads being clogged with people returning from Easter family gatherings. (So technically, it was the second day after Easter.) Twelve hours later we arrived in Torino. The scenery

along the coast of France was spectacular. Between the numerous tunnels, there were steep hills on the left as the Maritime Alps came down to the sea, and the beautiful Mediterranean on the right. Vineyards covered the hillsides, with small villages tucked in to narrow valleys here and there.

Only three passengers remained on the bus after we stopped in Milano. For some reason the drivers were confused as to how to go to Bergamo (my destination). I offered my AAA map for them to study, and this somehow helped them. They even dropped me off near the train station instead of their usual Bergamo spot. With my rudimentary Italian, I wasn’t quite sure what was happening. The two girls remaining on the bus pointed out the train terminal and gave me some lire for a phone call, refusing the dollar I offered in exchange.

I needed more help (and lire) from a young man at the train station in order to find a phone that worked and to make the call to my mom’s first cousin, Franco Segà. In broken Italian, I told his wife, Lidia, where I was, and she said Franco would be there in twenty minutes. He and his English-speaking daughter, Federica, walked through the train station. We had never met before, but my backpack and pitiful look made them guess that it was me. Double kisses on the cheeks welcomed me to Italy.



Beautiful Lago d’Iseo

My two days in Italy was a non-stop adventure of visiting all my second cousins, seeing the house in Affi where my grandfather was raised, and taking tours of Lago di Garda, Lago d’Iseo

(see picture), and Bergamo. The bus ride back to Figueres was just as long, this time through some snowstorms in the mountains heading down toward the sea from Torino. This was my first of many trips to visit my cousins, and though it was short, it was memorable. You only get one chance to visit Italy for the first time.

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**Our condolences to:**

Dolores Biedenkapp and Family on the passing of her mother, **Anna Segro**.

Cathy Dunn and Family on the passing of her mother, **Maria Galanti**.

Marie Witkonis and Family on the passing of her brother, **S. Edward Savoca**.

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From Poor Food To Fast Food

In the years after World War II, Italy, like the rest of the world, discovered fast food. The pizza was ripe for development and by the end of the 1960s a new kind of pizza was found all over Rome: the *pizza in teglia*. This consisted of flatbread cooked in large oblong dishes with all kinds of toppings from the simple to the inspired. It would then be cut into squares and sold by the slice.

This kind of pizza, also inexpensive, found favor almost everywhere, including among tourists, students and families who would buy them as treats for their kids. It soon became Rome's preferred street food and the number of shops selling it boomed.

Until the 1950s, round pizzas had been associated almost solely with Naples. But in this decade pizzerias started springing up all over Rome and with them came a new kind of pizza, the pizza alla Romana.

(Photo Credit: Abbie Stark, Text Credit: Devour Rome Food Tours)

Practice Italiano

A poco a poco - By little and little **A prima vista** - At first sight

A vostro comodo - At your leisure, at your convenience

Al fine - To the end **Al fresco** - In the fresh, in the open air

Altro che! - Certainly; I should think so!

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The Lancaster Italian Cultural Society is considering moving away from printing and mailing newsletters to electronic distribution. Sometime in the next month, the Board Directors will be calling all the members to get your opinion on this move. "Communication is the most important part of any relationship", Nella Seward reminds us. We want to continue to communicate with all of you in the ways that make the most sense and keep us all in contact with one another.

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Upcoming LICS Events

Due to the current Covid-19 guidelines and restrictions, and our goal to keep our members safe, we do not have any upcoming events at this time.

We are hopeful that we will be able to schedule some for later this summer.

Please check the LICS Website for updates.

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