



Le Notizie

A Publication of Roma Lodge #1573

July-2019

Job Well Done!

Frances Della presented her final scholarships as the chair of the Roma Lodge Scholarship committee at the June meeting. Frances has gone above and beyond the call of duty for many years in chairing the committee. As she turns over the application and selection process to **Melissa Watkins**, she is to be commended on her dedication as our scholarship chair. Thank you Frances from the Roma Lodge members.



Scholarship Presentation

Katrina Reinart is shown with her parents **Todd and Sherry** and grandparents **Joann and Leroy Beecher** along with **Frances Della** at the June meeting during the Roma Lodge scholarship night. Our other recipient **Garren Dutta** lives in Oregon and understandably was unable to attend. **Congratulations to All!**

The **Sola Family** provided a wonderful dinner of ravioli and tri-tip for the June meeting. As a special surprise the whole family was there to assist and wish **Frances Sola-Della** a happy 90th birthday. Roma Lodge had two members **Frances** and **Angie Milanesio** who celebrated their 90th birthdays in June.



Frances introduced the family and gave a little history of the family who came from Italy. The family provided a birthday cake which was enjoyed by all the members on a special evening.



Turning Point!

Convention Report

I attended my first Grand Lodge convention, as a delegate, since I was lodge president nearly 20 years ago. I want to personally thank our Roma Lodge delegates, **Louie Benedetti, Melissa Watkins, Shurene Curti, Karen Pedroncelli and David DePaoli** for serving as Roma Lodge delegates at the 83rd Grand Lodge Convention in Reno, Nevada. Roma Lodge members were well represented at the convention by our queen **Gianna Benedetti (Miss California)**, alternate delegates **Giovanna DePaoli, Kathy Briano** and our junior members **Adelyn, Giulia and Kate Watkins**.



I would also like to thank our State Trustee from the Central, **Louise Silacci**, who has done a phenomenal job in keeping our lodge informed of Grand Lodge activities and representing us so well during the past two years. Unfortunately, the majority of delegates, from other lodges, did not see the contributions she made to the Grand Lodge Council and the changes she had initiated to improve the organization and move it forward. Therefore, she was not elected to become a National Delegate and State Vice-President from the Central. Louise worked very hard to bring about change within the Grand Council. She will now focus her efforts from outside the council to change the direction the organization is headed. **Thanks Louise for your dedication to Roma Lodge and the Grand Lodge!**



I also want to thank our GL President **John Costa** for his leadership at the convention. I also want to thank all the GL officers, convention organizers and members of the **Cristoforo Colombo Lodge #1543** for being our local lodge hosts for the convention. John was re-elected as president for the next two years and will be up to the challenge.

I would also like to thank the co-chairs for the convention **Lynn Lawrence Murphy and Lori Rossi** who did a great job in organizing the convention at the Atlantis Hotel in Reno. The social activities, such as the Star Wars event and entertainment night were great.



Unfortunately, the focus of the business sessions of the convention were not on the major issue facing the Grand Lodge of declining membership. **In 2018 alone there were 302 new members added to the order with 382 cancelled memberships. When you include the 105 members who died the total loss of members in 2018 was 185 members! Only 7 of the 49 lodges in the Grand Lodge had a net increase in members of 5 or more members. For an organization that had over 20,000 members at one time the Grand Lodge is in a crisis. At this rate there will not be a Grand Lodge in a few years! The organization is at a Turning Point in its history. Maintain and increase membership or perish.**

Blueprint for Success!

Shown at right is GL President **John Costa**

pleading with Roma Lodge Delegates **Shurene Curti and Karen Pedroncelli** asking them what can he and the Grand Council do to make changes to the organization to turn around declining membership. Well John, here are a few suggestions to add to your blueprint for success, from Roma Lodge which is now the largest lodge in the state.



Be Positive-Not Punitive

We would encourage the Grand Council Leadership (GLC) to look at your bylaws and convention protocols and make the organization one in which members want to be active because of a positive atmosphere rather than a punitive one. You are fined unless you can get all your assigned delegates to attend, you are called out by lodge if one of your delegates misses a session, you are fined if you tell a bad joke, you are fined if you wear shorts.

Look at your bylaws. If you have under 25 members you need to close, if you close the GL can come down and take your lodge paraphernalia, take your money and your president can be investigated by the state president if he or she speaks out against the Order. **Really!**

It's time to make the organization more positive versus punitive and welcome new ideas and make changes to be more inclusive rather than punitive.

Challenging Versus Critical

How many times during the convention did we hear, ***"We need to be considerate of the fact these people are volunteers and should not be criticized."*** During one of our evening events we had all of our Veterans stand up to be recognized. Today, we have an all volunteer military. When I was in the Marine Corp the man standing to my left or right was a volunteer. A volunteer I could count on to help save my life if need be. A volunteer, who if he or she did not do their job, was held accountable.

It is time for our local lodges to hold our GL

leadership accountable, challenge them to do the best job they can and allow them to step aside if they cannot fulfill their duties. Often times there are plenty of individuals in our Order willing to step forward and take on leadership roles. ***We need to ask and challenge them versus criticize their efforts.***

Local Lodges Are More Than Delegates

How did the GL get so paranoid about delegates attendance at the convention? This year a delegate stood up and said five years ago he attended the convention and the room was filled with twice the number of people there this year.

You Think! Look what the leadership of the Grand Lodge has done over the past several years.

We have become so paranoid about the number of delegates, voting, fining lodges for not sending delegates, etc., etc. It is time to invite anyone and everyone to attend the convention. Go to the Senate system of two votes per lodge, have those two individuals have a voting card when voting takes place. Equal representation for each lodge versus big lodges versus small lodges. ***Again, be positive not punitive.***



***Louie Benedetti
Vice-President of
Roma Lodge and
father of 3 Miss Cali-
fornia Queens***

Buy In For Breakouts

Want to fill the room with twice the number of attendees at the convention you had this year? Simple. Every lodge should be allowed, at a minimum, to send their President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary and Treasurer to the convention. ***That would be 250 attendees doubling the 127 delegates you had this year!***

During the convention breakout sessions should be held for each of these local lodge officers to share ideas, receive training from the GL as to how to do their jobs and coordinate their activities with the GL. ***Positive versus punitive.***

Queen Conundrum

Webster defines **Conundrum**, in part, “as a confusing and difficult problem.”

As we heard at the convention there were delegates confused about all the changes in the Grand Lodge Queen, excuse us, Royal Pageant contest. Many of us feel the entire thing is nothing but a money grab by the Grand Lodge.

According to the 2018 Actual Final Budget (We are told the

books may or may not be accurate) netted the GL a profit of \$19,949. **The question needs to be asked, how many queen, or king in our case, contestants buy their title?** Miss Tulare County, Miss California, Miss America, Miss Universe, Miss Understood! **We think not.**

Let's make our Royal Pageant contest something our members can be proud of. Judge contestants on personality, intelligence, speaking ability, cognitive skills and if you still have to have raffle tickets only make that a small portion of the scorecard. Get three community judges from the site of the convention to do the judging, have final interview questions at the Black and White Ball and select your winners.

During the convention have several workshops on speaking, makeup, dress and other self-esteem builders. How many of our young people would not become a queen contestant because they had to sell tickets? **Be Positive Not Punitive!**

Charitable Fines

Local lodges are fined \$200 per day, per delegate for not attending. Let's do the math. Roma Lodge has 6 delegates.

(Still confused why the convention book shows we are the largest lodge and yet don't have the largest number of delegates.

John is checking on that.) Therefore, if we do not send anyone to the convention next year it would cost our lodge \$3,600. (6X\$600=\$3,600)



This year we sent 6 delegates, 3 junior members, 3 alternates and had a few guests attend. With just the delegate registration packet, hotel room for 4 nights and mileage will cost the lodge \$1,073 per delegate or \$6,438 total for 6 delegates. We could save our members a minimum of \$2,838 without sending anyone to the convention. That is a lot of Italian Sausage sandwiches we have to sell at the World Ag Expo each year.

Let's challenge the GLC to allow lodges who cannot afford to send delegates donate the fine dollars they are charged to one of the charitable organization lodges donate to during the last session of the convention. **Positive not Punitive!**

Building Blues

At the convention there was a lot of discussion on the sale of the Grand Lodge Building. A total waste of time. We were told that the solvency of the Grand Lodge is such

that there will **not** be a dues increase from the state for at minimum of 4 years. **A positive step.** The GLC must understand that, “**It's not the building stupid**” it's the fact that the delegation voted to sell the building and the GLC did not give the delegation a satisfactory explanation on why it was not done. **Case closed.**

Trust But Verify!

Ronald Reagan used the Russian Proverb “**Trust but Verify**” when dealing with the Russians. At the GL convention there was a lot of



confusion about the accounting reports as to the status of the GL and Western Foundation accounting system. Again, we challenge the GL and Western Foundation leadership to verify the next set of reports will be accurate and as delegates we can inform our local lodges

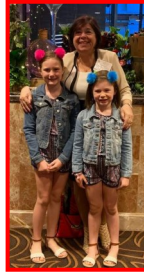
of the accuracy of the balances in both of these accounts.

We requested an outside audit and were told it would be too expensive. We will also challenge the GL and Western Foundation leadership to inform us of who is responsible for entering receipts and disbursements for both organizations and let the membership decide if this is adequate.



Our Future, Now What?

Roma Lodge had three of our junior members attend the convention. Pictured at right are **Adelyn and Giulia Watkins**, along with our State Trustee **Louise Silacci**. Yes, we will always consider Louise a true leader of the Order. **Titles do not make leaders, actions do!**



Roma Lodge members are confident we will be a vital part of the Tulare community and we plan to continue promoting the Italian Culture as we have done for nearly 90 years. We have 50 members age 15 or under. Our junior members who attended the GL convention are not convinced they will attend again. They are our future, so what happens next?

As outlined in our **"Blueprint for Success"** are major actions that the GLC needs to take to move the organization forward. Roma Lodge delegates and members recommend the GLC takes these steps to start the process.

1. Get the GL and Western Foundation accounting system corrected and report to local lodges by December 2019. **The GLC needs to ask local lodge members, with expertise in bookkeeping or accounting, to review the books and not GL trustees!**
2. Identify the person(s) responsible for receipts and disbursements of the GL and Western Foundation accounts by October 1, 2019 or sooner.
3. Identify and support a common accounting software (Such as QuickBooks) so reports are easily generated.
4. Change the fiscal accounting budgeting process to a January-December system. The reports with half year amounts are too confusing.
5. Support a Roma Lodge resolution (2020) to allow each local lodge two voting delegates, (regardless of membership) and as many local lodge officers and guests to attend the convention for 2021.
6. Challenge the GLC to direct any dollars collected for fines of absent delegates to be given to approved charities recognized by the Grand Lodge.
7. Provide breakout sessions for the 2020 convention for local lodge leadership to attend for professional development.
8. Start the process to change the Royal Pageant Contest.
9. It is time for GLC Term Limits. Of the 14 GLC positions only **3** have new members serving. It is time to bring on new people with new ideas.

Roma Lodge delegate participation in 2020 will depend on the GLC taking action!

Members in the News

Congratulations to two of our members **Nick and Kathy Canata** who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary in June. They would also like to inform you to change your directory as they have new contact information. Nick Canata 661-668-9002 Kathy Canata 559-720-9002 (This is not a misprint. The last 4-digits of their cell numbers are the same)



Roma Lodge Junior members **Austin and Aiden Gentry** placed flags on the graves of Veterans at the **Shafter Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Shafter** on Memorial Day Weekend as part of their Scout Troop activities.

Sunshine News

Get well wishes goes to **Gary Dutto** who suffered a mild stroke when he was attending his grandsons graduation in Le Grange, Oregon. After a short stay in the hospital he went to stay with his daughter Kristen Haener who lives in Meridian, Idaho. He is doing well and vacationing with family.



Mark Your Calendar!

Melissa Watkins is planning a junior member fun activity for **Sunday, August 4th** at either Quantum Leap or the Adventure Fun Park in Visalia. Roma Lodge will provide funding for the event. Our junior member meeting will be on Monday, August 5th where we will have a special night just for our junior members where we will give out school supplies for our junior members.

Check our August issue of the **LeNotizie** for details to make your reservations for your junior members to attend. Juniors are our future and we need to get them involved at meetings and these fun activities!





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Your Roma Lodge Officers 2019-2020

President	Larry Dutto (901-4683)
Vice President	Louie Benedetti (827-1492)
Treasurer	Karen Pedroncelli (732-1591)
Recording Sec.	Kathryn Gomes (331-0025)
Financial Sec.	Pam Sola (901-1781)
Orator	Gary Dutto (686-6201)
Historian	Melissa Watkins (361-0811)
Guard	Ken Bertorelli (788-8496)
Past President	David DePaoli (804-5443)
Chaplain	Nicole Taylor (804-7056)

Trustees

Danny Dutto	(686-1348)
Mike Saltzman	(686-4340)
Matt Watkins-Chair	(647-7161)
Dominic Pitigliano	(359-1907)
Rob Pinkerton	(331-3183)

Mistress of Ceremony

Frances Della	(784-7653)
Toni Pinkerton	(331-3183)

August Meeting
August 5th
6:30 PM-Dinner

Junior Member Night



**Dutto-Luis-Cleek-Gentry
Summer BBQ**