

MINUTES OF OCT. 9, 2016 TUSCAN ASSOCIATION OF OREGON MEETING

Attendees:

Lisa Barger, Jack Huffstetler, Lori Huffstetler, Candis Hurlbut, Linda Johnson, Tom Johnson, Ken Kane, Bill Marinelli, Jimmie Moglia, Josephine Moore, Audrey Perino, Astrid Pieretti, Gino Pieretti, Louise Ramunno-Johnson, Mirella Rizzatti, Rosalie Schmitz

The meeting began at 3:45pm on Oct. 9, 2016.

Audrey began the discussion by reviewing the situation that no one has volunteered nor been found to step into the role of Tuscan Association president.

Jimmie suggested that perhaps the club should merge in some way with Amici D'Italia.

Bill, citing the early years of the Tuscan Association, pointed out that the two organizations are organized differently as non-profits, making a merger possibly difficult, though such a merger might reenergize both clubs. He also suggested a possible alliance with the Portland-Bologna Sister City Association, which might be a way to attract some younger members.

[Editor's note: Other attendees asked how active the Sister City Association is. A post-meeting check of its Website showed no upcoming scheduled events.]

Bill also suggested that the Tuscan Association has some responsibilities and opportunities that must be considered before merging with any other organization. Among these are the possibilities of future student scholarships for Italian summer study and possible future monetary contributions to the Tuscan Association from *Regione Toscana*.

Jimmie noted that the current status of *Regione Toscana's* relationship with the Tuscan Association can best be described as "dormant," though perhaps not dead.

Gino advocated maintaining the Tuscan Association as a separate entity at least for another year in the hope that *Regione Toscana* and Italy may someday soon become solvent again and reinstate the scholarships and some level of club funding. To the best of those assembled's recollections, it has been three years since our club has had the opportunity to sponsor a summer scholar.

Gino also hoped our club would maintain a relationship with Lucchesi Nel Mondo worldwide and particularly with *Associazione Toscani Dell'America Del Nord*, headed by Renzo Orsi in Montreal. Among other responsibilities, this group administers the funding coming from *Regione Toscana* for North American Tuscan groups.

[Editor's note: after the meeting, Carlo Mannocci noted in an e-mail that our club received \$1473 from Regione Toscana last year for club expenses in 2014. He expects another \$884 for the club for 2014 expenses and a "scaled down contribution" for our 2015 expenses. As he put it in his e-mail:

“We hope that in the near future the Region will resume the activities even if scaled down. A new Regional Law covering the activities of the Tuscans Abroad is being drafted and should be effective in early 2017.”

Carlo has insight into these matters, since he is the treasurer for Associazione Toscani Dell’America Del Nord. In other words, he writes the checks.]

Gino considers the potential availability of scholarships one of the most important and defining aspects of the Tuscan Association. The club has a history of sending dozens of young scholars to Italy over the years.

A conversation ensued about how many meetings the club could reasonably put on per year. In recent years, this number has been eight or nine, which includes the *Festa della Befana* event, which is a joint effort of the Tuscan Association, *Amici d’Italia* and the Sons of Italy. Given the current lack of a president to develop programs for such meetings, it was generally agreed that fewer meetings would be reasonable.

Gino noted that the major value that the Tuscan Association offers is its cultural and education programs and the opportunity for members to keep in touch with their friends. He thought the club should be able to provide these benefits at least four times each year. Eventually the attendees agreed that about four meetings per year was a reasonable number.

Josephine suggested that a committee of about four members be created to create such programs, perhaps with each committee person responsible for one meeting. Gino suggested that program creation was easy. Audrey disagreed, saying it was the part of being president she most disliked. She also reminded the group that running a meeting also involved planning for refreshments and setting up the room.

Gino and Josephine volunteered to serve on a committee to plan meetings. Audrey said she was willing to continue as club treasurer.

A discussion ensued about the Tuscan Association and *Amici d’Italia* in some way opening their meetings up to the other group in a more definitive way, and perhaps alternating programming responsibility from month to month. However, Gino noted for such a plan to succeed a common meeting day and time would probably have to be agreed upon. He suggested the Sunday afternoon time slot probably would work better for both groups than the Thursday evening slot used by *Amici*. However, Mirella (representing *Amici* for today’s discussion) noted that Sundays were not good for her group and particularly not for *Amici*’s president.

A related discussion took place regarding whether the Tuscans and *Amici* could merge in terms of their meetings and events like *Festa della Befana* in January and perhaps the St. Joseph Day celebration in March, however retain their individual memberships, organizations and treasuries, and possibly their names. Eventually this idea was deemed logistically unrealistic.

But it was thought that if the Tuscans and *Amici* both reduced the number of meetings they held, and alternated their meetings by month, each club could promote the other's to its membership. (Mirella noted that *Amici*'s planning committee maps out their year in January, so it will be a while before such cross-promotion across the clubs could take place.)

The group agreed on a rough Tuscan meeting schedule as follows...

December 18 – holiday potluck

February 19 – meeting, possibly an Andrea Bocelli concert DVD

April 23 or 30– meeting, program TBA

June ?? – BBQ, possibly at Audrey & Ken's

Candis noted that sometimes movies can be a program element, even spread over two consecutive meetings. She also noted that she is interested in the cultural and learning experiences that the Tuscan Association affords its members. And that as one gets older, these opportunities can become fewer and fewer.

The issue of the age of members was discussed, especially regarding the future of the Association. Candis noted that family commitments, the need for two incomes to maintain a household, advances in technology, and the rigors of 21st century life, all conspire to make people less inclined to devote time to organizations like ours.

Gino said he thought people are not ready for an ethnic heritage club like the Tuscans, *Amici*, etc. until they turn 60, so recruiting new, younger members may be fruitless. Still, he remembered when the club began in 1996, most of the membership was in their 50s and 60s. Now they are in their 70s and 80s. He wished another influx of people in their 50s and 60s was on their way to the club, but he doubted it.

Bill noted that the problems of leadership succession and recruitment of younger members are shared by many fraternal and social organizations. Louise offered the idea of going to co-presidents, as a sorority she belongs to has done. It is working in that situation. Ken noted a co-presidency situation failed miserably for his alumni club, so he cautioned that the co-presidents must know and work well with each other before entering into the arrangement.

Rosalie asked whether having fewer Tuscan Association meetings might provide a savings in rent. Audrey said that at \$185/month to rent Carvlin Hall, such savings would be nearly \$800 annually. Dues from members would cover the cost of four room rentals per year. Dues are not sufficient to cover eight rentals per year. She also noted the Tuscan Association has about \$5,000 in its treasury.

[Editor's note: there are 44 dues-paying members of the Tuscan Association. Of this number, there are 13 couples and 18 individual members.]

It was briefly considered whether a different meeting space should be sought, but this idea was dismissed.

Ken floated the idea of the Tuscan Association bringing a Puccini exhibit curated by the Pittsburgh Lucchesi Nel Mondo club to town to coincide with Portland Opera's production of Puccini's *La Boheme* in May 2017. He will make some inquiries into cost and the feasibility of such a project, which might also be tied into the club's meeting in late April.

[Editor's note: several members who were absent had expressed their sentiments beforehand about the future of the club to people who were present. These included the Menicosys, Lamannos, LaFrazias, Palandranis and Kerry-Lynne Demarinis-Brown. During the course of the discussion, their points were addressed either directly or in the course of the general discussion.]

Audrey summarized the 90+ minute discussion, saying that there seemed to be agreement:

- on continuing the Tuscan Association as an independent entity, at least for one more year
- on fewer meetings (probably four, plus *Festa della Befana*) between now and next June.
- that those meetings would be planned by a committee which would include but not be restricted to Gino and Josephine. A different committee person would probably be the "lead" for each meeting. *[Editor's note: **please consider joining this committee** as a demonstration of your commitment to the club. To do so, please contact Gino at 503-850-4445.]*
- that more cross-promotion with *Amici* was a good idea, particularly if *Amici* went to an alternate-month meeting schedule
- that for the present, there would be no Tuscan Association president ... but that this is not a long-term solution.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30.

Minutes recorded by Ken Kane.