

Michigan Author Garners Global Award from Her Native Italy

Michigan author Pierette Domenica Simpson was honored by her native country of Italy for preserving her roots. The prestigious award, “Piemontesi Protagonisti”, is bestowed annually to someone who emigrates from Northern Italy and contributes a cultural, literary, and patriotic work reflecting one’s heritage.

Novi, Michigan June 10, 2009 Pierette Domenica Simpson, author of *Alive on the Andrea Doria, The Greatest Sea Rescue in History*, was honored by the Museum of Emigration (Museo dell’Emigrazione) in Frossasco, Italy, on May 23, 2009.

Simpson is now among illustrious company of ‘protagonisti’: actors Alan Silvestri and “Fernandel”, former White House spokesperson Dana Perino, first woman governor of the U.S. Ella Grasso, and many other notables.

The goal of The Museum of Emigration of Frossasco, Italy is to highlight the importance of preserving one’s native roots in a multicultural world. Because emigration is a historical study revealing character, culture, and civilization, the annual award of “Piemontesi Protagonisti” congratulates those who put these values in action through literature or other noteworthy projects.

Simpson, who resides in Novi, Michigan, explained to the audience of about 100 her goal in documenting her personal emigration to America on the ill-fated ocean liner, *Andrea Doria*. “I wrote *Alive on the Andrea Doria* on behalf of justice, with data showing that captain and crew of our liner had been maligned in the tragic collision with the Swedish liner *Stockholm* in 1956. I documented humanistic and scientific data which proves that the Italian crew had acted competently and honorably—but were inaccurately blamed for the collision due to negative stereotypes against Italians. My book also includes my personal family story of emigration, like that of millions who sought fortunes in the New World.”

The audience, comprised of civic and media leaders, was delighted to hear the honoree deliver parts of her speech in the native language and dialect, decades after her emigration. Simpson, a new “Piemontesi Protagonisti” was treated to music by the local band and a multicourse luncheon with typical dishes of the Piedmont. The author was interviewed by Italy’s broadcasting company, La Rai; her interview was televised on the same day.

The festive ceremony was attended by key executives of the Italian media, provincial and local government officials, Museum of Emigration executive board members, as well as family and friends of the honorees. The event was held in conjunction with The Feast of the Piedmont (La Festa del Piemonte) and the 35th anniversary of the bronze statue named “To the Piemontesi in the World”, which will be acknowledged on June 20.

The *Andrea Doria* author reflects on a possible prophetic event: “I received my award for preserving history one week before the passing of another shipwreck survivor, Millvina Dean, the last survivor of the *Titanic*. Millvina and her family were supposed to emigrate from England to Kansas. The ill-fated emigration led Millvina back to her roots where she did her part to preserve her historical role: she lived

her retirement years attending conventions, appearing in documentaries, TV and radio shows, and relating her tales to school groups. Can you imagine this world without the movie *Titanic*? When the movie rights I've sold turn into a film, perhaps the buzz will be about the *Andrea Doria*." Also reflecting on the meaning of her award, Simpson explained, "I hope that receiving an award overseas is considered a contribution to my adopted state of Michigan, and my town of Novi."

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