

Three Scholarships Given

Two Girls and One boy Qualify for Memorial Scholarship Awards for 1987
By Bud Markel



Photograph taken October 30 , 1987, at the Istituto Tecnico Commerciale, Cerignola, Italy at the annual presentation of scholarship awards presentation. Standing L to R are: Umberto Albanese, Rosaria Conversano, Beatrice Markel, Antonietta Lotito, Dario Grassi, and Bud Markel

Beatrice and I went to Italy after the Colorado Springs reunion last October. The purpose of the trip was twofold, (1) a much needed and long overdue vacation, and (2) to be present, as representatives of the Association,* at the Scholarship Awards presentation ceremony for the three successful candidates for the year 1987. (*In keeping with policy set by the Scholarship Committee, none of the Scholarship Funds or Association Funds were used for this trip, which was made at our own expense) We had previously invited members of the Association to join us as representatives of the Association at the awards ceremony, however, the names of the candidates, and the time and place of the ceremony were not known in time for our members to make travel plans.

The award ceremony for next year will take place on Friday, October 7, 1988, in Cerignola, Italy. Place: Istituto Tecnico Statale Commerciale, Via Tiro A Segno, Cerignola. The school is located about 15 blocks southeast of the large Catholic Church, (Piazza del Duomo) which fronts Cerignola's main street, Via Garibaldi/Via Roma. Time: 5:00 PM . This should give members desiring to attend, time enough to make travel plans. There are good accommodations and restaurants in Foggia and Bari, and at least one motel in Cerignola. Trains between major cities in Italy maintain daily schedules and are not too expensive. Rental cars are available too. See your travel agent for details.

The awards presentation ceremony had already started when we arrived at the Istituto Tecnico, where it took place, as it took more time than we had anticipated finding Professor Umberto Albanese's apartment, (it overlooks the ancient Roman granary, and opera house opposite). We had been delayed en route because of a traffic jam on the autostrada, (toll freeway, some routes in the south are free). It was dark when we drove into Cerignola from Foggia where we were staying, and with Italian street signs posted on the sides of buildings, if at all, the Albanese apartment was almost impossible to locate. Ironically, the next day when we returned to Cerignola, we found the house quite easily, but in the dark of night, and a bit rushed, and having to stop every two blocks to ask for directions, it was a different matter. Umberto's son Roberto,

Beatrice and I were introduced to the gathering of about 200 friends and relatives of the three recipients in a large meeting room in the school. We both (in our limited Italian) made short speeches. They overlooked our fractured grammar, as the enthusiastic applause said it all. Just reading their faces told us how important the scholarship program is to the community. Each student was presented with an off-white scroll bound by blue ribbon that contained an enlargement of the Association's insignia. The scholarship money that had been telexed to Italy before our arrival had been distributed to the students just prior to this. The headmaster of the school in his speech to the crowd said that the availability of the new scholarships each year serves as incentive for more students to keep their grades up. One of the recipients, Rosaria Conversano, the daughter of Francisco and Giannina Conversano, made a beautiful speech in English expressing her heartfelt thanks for the Association's scholarship program. Her father Francisco, we later learned, was the barber who cut hair for some of the 484th HQ staff. He remembered barbering Col. Keese as well as Col Bush and others. This is the first direct connection where an offspring of a 1944-45 Torretta/Cerignola resident was awarded a *borse di studio* (scholarship).

One of last year's recipients, Lucia Nigro was also present, and we were able to talk with her as well as this year's recipients, Dario Grassi, Rosaria Conversano and Antonietta Lotito. They all expressed genuine appreciation for their awards and of the Association members.

We were quite impressed with all of the students, They seem to share a sense of presence unusually high for students of that age. You get a feel of this from the tone of their conversation with others, and while reserved a bit from the inexperience of youth, they are not reluctant to speak. We are convinced that Umberto is finding the best students from those available from/ the Torretta/Cerignola area.

While we were busy trying to get some photographs at the end of the meeting, what with stopping to shake hands and greet people who came up to us at the end of the presenta