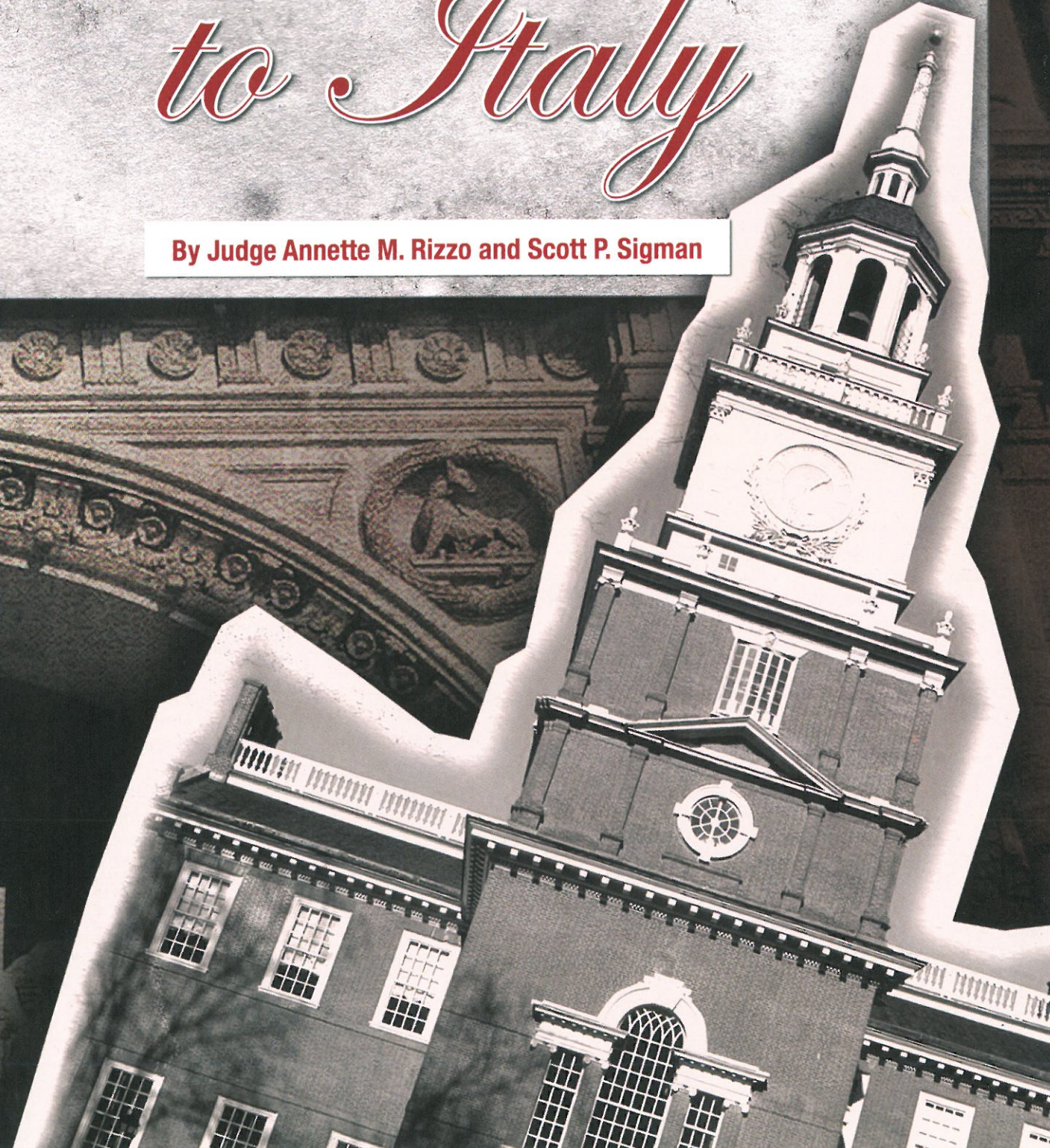




PHILADELPHIA'S AMBASSADORS *to Italy*

By Judge Annette M. Rizzo and Scott P. Sigman





Lawyers and judges from the Philadelphia delegation gather on the steps of Palazzo Montecitorio, the Italian parliament in Rome. Photos courtesy of Scott P. Sigman

This past March, 26 lawyers and judges from the Philadelphia area traveled to Rome, Italy to serve as ambassadors of the United States' legal profession. Sponsored by the Temple American Inn of Court, the trip was the brainchild of Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge Annette M. Rizzo (who studied law at Temple University – Rome) and coincided with the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Italy.

The trip was planned with the mission to facilitate an intimate exchange with Italian lawyers and judges, absorb the history and government of Italy, and to share American jurisprudence abroad. The trip provided an opportunity for the Philadelphia lawyers and judges to teach and learn, while enjoying each other's company in the beautiful, ancient city of Rome. During the week-long foreign excursion, the Philadelphia group promoted ethics, civility and professionalism to all aspects of the Italian legal system – from students in its law schools to the chief justice of the Italian Supreme Court.

The week kicked off with a grand opening reception at Temple University's Rome campus along the Tiber River, bringing together Philadelphia judges and lawyers with prominent members of the Italian Bar, Italian law students and professors from La Sapienza and LUISS Law Schools, and Temple Law alumni, students and professors. The reception was followed by an opening dinner, a Sicilian feast, at a nearby ristorante where the group experienced camaraderie and collegiality and discussed the week's events with excited anticipation.

From the inizio, the Philadelphia delegation introduced American jurisprudence to the Italian legal system by

spending the day at La Sapienza, before a classroom of more than 70 Italian law students, lawyers and judges. The Philadelphia lawyers and judges presented an all-day seminar on introduction to electronic discovery; jury selection; state and federal jurisdiction; administrative appeals; and the legal concepts of common law/legislation; stare decisis and precedent.

By midweek, the Philadelphia delegation was hosted by the justices of the Italian Supreme Court, the Corte Suprema di Cassazione, which is located in il Palazzo di Giustizia. During the half-day visit to the Italian Supreme Court, the Philadelphia lawyers and judges exchanged ideas with the Italian justices about each country's legal system, and the Philadelphia group was given the opportunity to observe civil and criminal proceedings before the Italian Supreme Court. During the lively discussion, the Philadelphia group shared ideas on case administration, American common law, and alternative dispute resolution – all of which were of great interest to the justices. Later that day, the group was hosted by the president judge and vice president judge of the Tribunale Penale, Rome's Criminal Court, where the Philadelphia delegation exchanged ideas with criminal court judges and



observed a criminal trial.

After spending time in the Italian courts, the Philadelphia delegation traveled to the Italian Parliament located in the Palazzo Montecitorio where they were hosted by a member of the Italian parliament, Hon. Cavaliere Amato Berardi, who serves as the elected representative of Italian citizens living in North America and resides in the Philadelphia area. While at the Italian parliament, the Philadelphia lawyers and judges had the opportunity to tour Parliament, exchange points of view with members of parliament, and gain knowledge of the Italian political system while sharing ideas about the American legal system.

This amazing ambassadorship continued with a pilgrimage to Vatican City, where the Philadelphia delegation met Pope Benedict XVI on the morning of Ash Wednesday. With the help and coordination of Cav. Berardi and Judge Rizzo, the group had an audience with the pope. In a first-of-its-kind ceremony, the Philadelphia delegation was acknowledged aloud in the Vatican by an English-speaking cardinal and then blessed by the pope. After such a moving experience, the delegation visited St. Peter's Basilica and toured the Vatican Museum, where they learned about the roots of the modern legal system.

During this eventful week, the group also studied the

European Code, comparative law, access to justice, and the beginnings of an Italian mediation system in several CLEs taught by Temple Law Professors Rafael Porrata-Doria and David Sonenshein, Italian lawyer Giuseppe De Palo, and by Italian lawyers at Rome's largest law firm, Gianni, Origoni, Grippo & Partners. The Philadelphia delegation were

privileged to tour this prestigious law firm located in a 300-year-old palace, il Palazzo del Drago, which belongs to Lady Domietta del Drago, who continues to reside on its top floor.

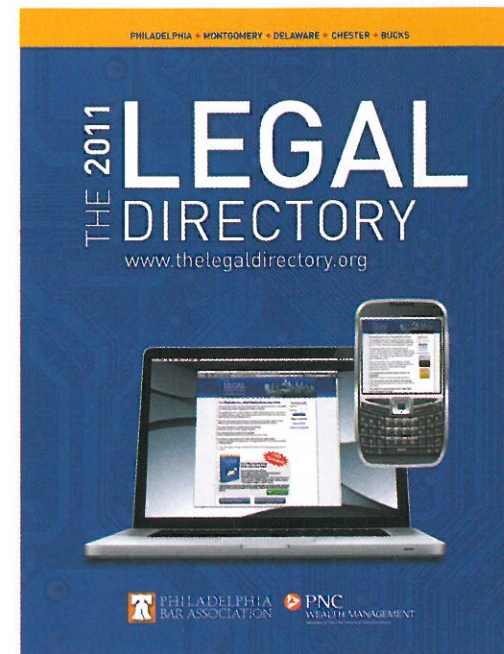
The trip closed with a large celebratory dinner with Judge Rizzo, U.S. District Court Judge Cynthia M. Rufe, Bucks County Court of Common Pleas Judge John Rufe, Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge M. Teresa Sarmina, U.S. Magistrate Judge M. Faith Angell, Professor Porrata-Doria, Professor Sonenshein, along with attorneys Tamara L. Wible, Scott P. Sigman, Rich Rochlin, Paul Weiner, Kenneth F. Carobus, Andrew Carobus, Larry Bendesky and Elizabeth Turchi, dining alongside Italian lawyers and Cav. Berardi. ■

With the help and coordination of Cav. Berardi and Judge Rizzo, the group had an audience with the pope.

Judge Annette M. Rizzo (annette.rizzo@courts.phila.gov) is a judge in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. Scott P. Sigman (ssigman@sigmanandrochlin.com) is a partner with Sigman & Rochlin, LLC.

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The Philadelphia delegation enjoys dinner hosted by the Temple American Inn of Court at Il Checchino in Rome's Testaccio section. A guest at the dinner was Italian parliament member Hon. Cavaliere Amato Berardi.

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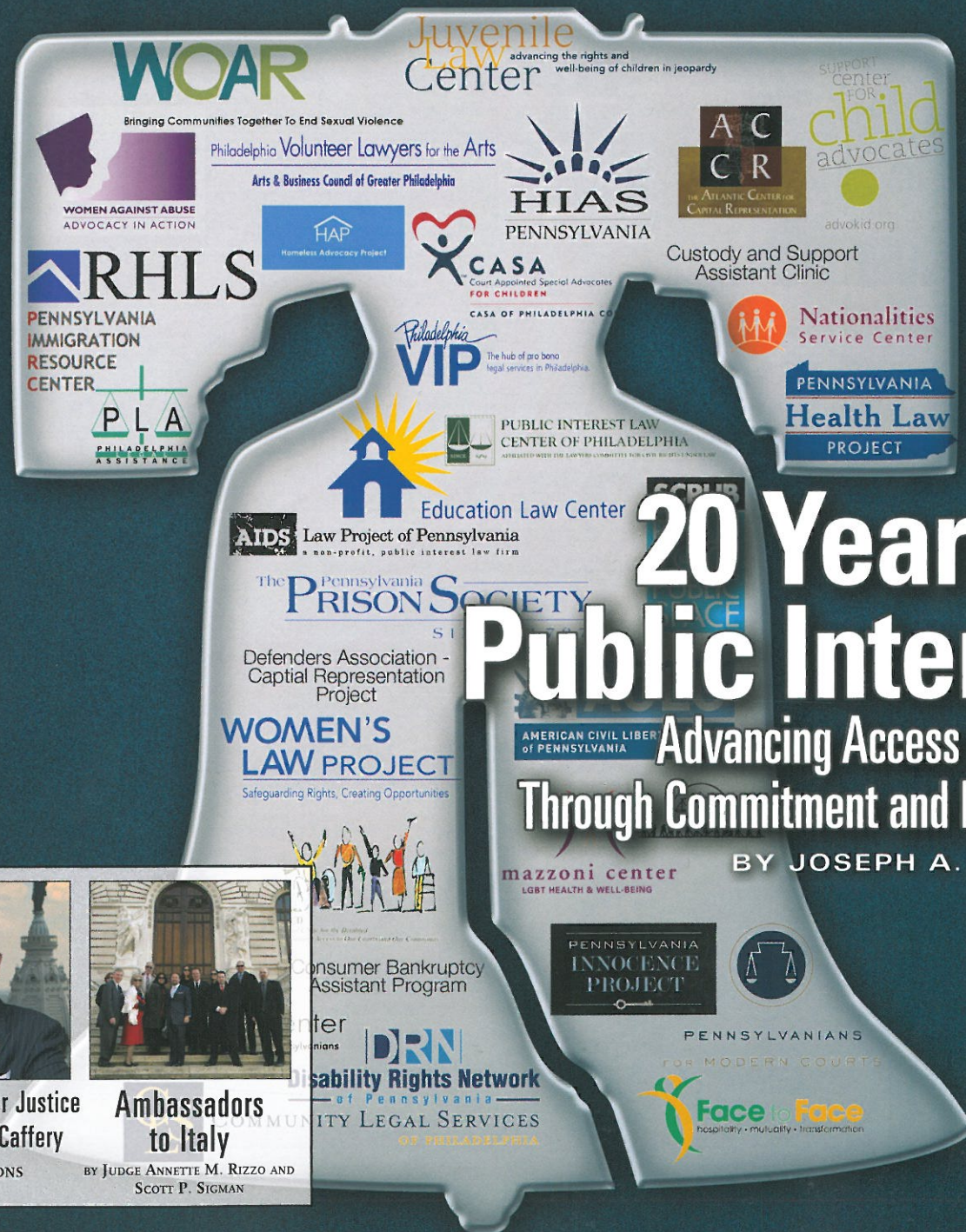
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