



# tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

Editor: Jackie Capurro

IFafa Website: [www.italian-american.com/ifafa](http://www.italian-american.com/ifafa)

VOLUME 26

2007

No. 1

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

For those of you who are unaware, the IFafa Board of Directors recently compiled a slate for the election of new officers. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, and to enthusiastically and graciously accept the responsibilities of the office of President and CEO of IFafa. My name is Mark DeSanctis.

First and foremost, I'd like to take a moment to thank a few individuals. Paul Torna, for all of his hard work and dedication to the IFafa organization throughout his two terms as President. I don't believe that Paul has gotten the credit he deserves for all of the behind-the-scenes work he has put in over the years. For that, he is truly appreciated. In addition, it also bears notice that two very important, long-term members of the IFafa organization are stepping down from their duties as officers. Rose Giarrusso and Rita Tonitto, who have held the positions of Treasurer and Secretary respectively, are both resigning from their positions effective this year. We should all take a minute to show gratitude for their longevity, dedication, and devotion to the ultimate cause of IFafa. I believe I speak on behalf of the entire membership when I say that I hope they'll continue to provide us with their wisdom by remaining on the Board, for many years to come. Thank you to you both!

And finally, before I get to the task at hand, a little bit about myself. I'm 27 years old, grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and have been performing with our local dance group since 1985. I've held the position of Dance Director and Choreographer of the group since the age of 17. I've been a member of IFafa since my first conference in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1991, and since then, have had the chance to meet many wonderful individuals at each of the yearly conferences. Over the years, I've taught several workshops, and most recently, decided to embark in a leadership role for IFafa. In 2004, I accepted the role of Director, and very shortly thereafter, accepted the position of Vice President. As I mentioned above, I have most recently decided to take on the position of President. For now, I'll spare you the remaining history of my life...

At this moment, however, it's time to get down to brass tacks. I have given myself a deadline – 8 months – 8 months until the next conference to turn this organization right-side up. To perpetuate a new enthusiasm for IFafa that hasn't been seen since the member growth of the earlier days. Speaking not only as your newly-elected President, but also as an officer of a folk group who occasionally struggles to locate the information necessary to sustain its absolute mission (preserving the Italian culture), I believe that IFafa should once again become that conduit by which information is spread. A resource that is filled with available information and knowledge that can be tapped. An organization that not only accepts new membership along with their dues, but provides that critical return on investment that I believe many groups feel we lack.

Please allow me to quote directly from our constitution:

According to Article II, Section 2.01: "The purposes for which the Italian Folk Art Federation of America is formed are:

- For advancing education, training, and study in the history, customs, and folk traditions of Italian culture and Italian heritage, with special emphasis in the areas of performing arts and exhibitions;
- Providing an organization to sponsor programs that will stimulate the furthering of the research and preservation of Italian folk arts, song, dances, instruments, and costumes, and the traditions and customs related to these;
- Acting as a center for gathering, storing, and disseminating the information;
- Bringing together Italian folk groups and interested individuals;
- And to do all things necessary to accomplish the above purpose."

(continued, page 2)

### Newly-Elected Officers of IFafa

The following officers were recently elected by the Board of Directors.

President	Mark DeSanctis
Vice-President	Chris Civitate
Secretary	Patrick Capurro
Treasurer	Anna Marie Fiori

Congratulations to all of our new officers! Let's help them out however we can.

Mark your calendar  
for the 2007 IFafa Conference  
in Dallas, Texas.  
November 2, 3, & 4, 2007  
See page 3 for further details.

## President's Letter

(continued from Page 1) I believe that all of these purposes can be achieved solely by concentrating on two very simple, yet important areas of concern: **Increasing and sustaining our membership**, and **gathering new and fresh ideas**.

I propose the following:

- Committees will once again be resurrected. I shall call upon the Board of Directors to appoint heads of the following initial committees:
  - Membership
  - Folk Art and Development
  - Public Relations and Marketing
- We shall return to the homeland! Italy is absolutely brimming with traditional folk groups representing all the things we here in the U.S. hope to represent as part of our mission. It's time to tap that resource! As part of a subgroup, I propose the following:
  - Set up ties between each and every member group of IFAFA, and a similar folk group residing in Italy. Imagine the possibilities!

- I will again call upon the Board of Directors to seek out a qualified individual to serve as IFAFA's Artistic Director. This individual must hold that same quality level that this organization soon hopes to possess (again, maybe someone directly from Italy?).
- ...and I have many more bullet points to come (14 listed on my agenda to be exact...).

Despite whether you have been inspired by this letter or not, I ask that you rest assured – rest assured that IFAFA will again become that institution that you or your group can turn to when searching for guidance.

I also ask one favor of each and every one of you that has read this letter: Send me an email! [email: [MarkDeSanctis@gmail.com](mailto:MarkDeSanctis@gmail.com)] Tell me your thoughts. Give me an idea of which direction you would like to see this prodigious organization travel. Most importantly, let me know that you as individuals still see IFAFA for what it is – an extremely important society that helps all of us sustain the everlasting link from our American lives, right back to our Italian origins. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome all of you, to the new IFAFA.

Mark DeSanctis, President

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## Soprani Italian Folk Trio

The Soprani Italian Folk Trio performs throughout the tri-state area in local clubs, at Italian festivals, and for various organizations. A CD of Italian folk tunes featuring the trio is under development.



**Joe Soprani** (accordion, pictured center) is a noted performer, educator, and arranger-composer who has dominated the accordion scene in Philadelphia for more than forty years. His appearances before King Mohammed V of Morocco, the King and Queen of Cambodia, the Emperor of Japan, President Eisenhower, and other well-known dignitaries—as well as with the United States Air Force Concert Band under Colonel George S. Howard and the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy—have won him praise for his superb artistry, extraordinary gift of communication, and effortless virtuosity. Soprani's name appears in the Congressional Record of the United States for his achievements in the world of entertainment. Most recently, he appeared at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts with Peter Nero and the Philly Pops. Soprani appeared, on five occasions, with opera singer Luciano Pavarotti, was invited to arrange the opening selection for Rock star Jon Bon Jovi, appeared with Russell Watson on *Good Morning, America*, and performed in Broadway shows such as "Fiddler on the Roof," "Zorba," "Cabaret," and "Irma la Douce." Soprani is also the in-house accordionist on the Don Giovanni Show on WNWR-1540 AM, Philadelphia (Sundays, 4-5 p.m.).

**Joseph Todaro** (pictured right) began playing the guitar at the age of twelve and the mandolin at the age of sixteen. In 1985 he earned a bachelor of science degree in music education at West Chester University, PA. In 1990 he joined the Munier Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra and is now its assistant conductor. He writes original music as well as arranges solo ensemble works for guitar and mandolin. His compositions are influenced by his many travels to the Andean Mountains of South America. He currently offers music lessons and instruments through his music store in Lansdowne, PA, which he opened in 1988.

Guitarist **Len Orazi** (pictured left), a native Philadelphian, has toured the country playing in various show bands. He has a bachelor's degree in music composition (magna cum laude) from West Chester University, where he was student chair of the New Music Committee and his compositions were often played by the West Chester Guitar Ensemble. He studied classical guitar with Joseph Mayes and Glenn Lyons, and jazz bass and guitar with Curt Black.

The Soprani Italian Folk Trio has assisted IFAFA in the past in transcribing and re-recording dance music from video tapes. For contact information, please visit <<http://www.joesoprani.com/>>.

## Web Sites to Explore

A new column written by Francesca Di Meglio, an Italian-American journalist, is available at <<<http://www.italiansrus.com/articles/ourpaesani/ourpaesani.htm>>>. Her column "Our Paesani" appears weekly on Italians-RUs.com and strives to bridge the gap between Italians and Italian Americans. It is written in English and her first entry, *A Love Letter to Napoli*, was a tribute to the city in Campania.

Now you can take a virtual tour of the most famous and beautiful Italian piazzas when you visit <<http://italy.explore.it>>. This website offers panoramic 360-degree images of Florence, Venice, Rome, Sicily, Bologna, Pisa and many other locations in Italy.

## Regional Italian Folk Costume

We continue the series of descriptions of folk costumes taken from the book, now out of print, *Il Costume popolare in Italia*, by Emma Calderini, published by Sperling & Kupfer, Milano. In this issue, we highlight two costumes from the region of Piemonte.



**LEFT:** *Massaia di Carema nell'antico costume*  
Housewife of Carema in ancient costume

Large bonnet of pleated white lace netting. Blouse of white homespun linen decorated at the neck with ruffled lace. Red woolen vest, laced in front. The woolen shawl may be of various designs and colors. Black knit stockings. Shoes of common leather. Apron of delicate chain-stitched organdy or gauze.

**RIGHT:** *Costume antico di Courmayeur*  
Ancient costume of Courmayeur

Shirt of homespun cloth. Short brown pants of rough woolen cloth, with brass buttons. The vest, of the same cloth, is double-breasted with lapels and brass buttons. Jacket of the same cloth as the pants, also with brass buttons. Red spats of heavy rough wool, with brass buttons. Hat of fine black felt with a narrow brown ribbon. Thick hob-nailed shoes of black leather.



## Italian Folk Art Federation of America -- 2007 Conference

*I Colori Italiani* of the Italian Club of Dallas are busily planning this year's conference, which will be held November 2, 3, and 4, and are in the process of confirming rates and logistics. We have preliminary information to share to help you in making plans to attend, and we will have complete details and a registration form in the next *Tradizioni*, later this summer. We have reviewed your suggestions from last October and will be working with many of you in scheduling workshops.

Plans thus far include:

- **Workshops**—dance workshops and several sessions such as making mosaics and home-made wine taught by Italian Club of Dallas members, plus workshops suggested by many of you in the October questionnaire. We'll be contacting you!
- **IFAF A Chorus**—Mary Ellen DiTucci will lead us in singing old favorites and possibly some new selections to present at the Festa.
- **Photography/Art Exhibit/Competition**—continuation of the photography and art exhibit/ competition introduced at the Des Moines conference and to include photography, art, or sculpture on the theme *Reflections on Italy* and submitted by students through age 22. Students, start thinking now of something to submit!
- **Exhibits**—you are encouraged to bring items such as artifacts, scrapbooks, photos, instruments, costumes, etc., for display. We'll have forms in the next newsletter that will let us know what you will need.
- **Sale Tables**—you can sell items related to Italian folk art, music, CDs, books, costumes, etc. More information and a form will be in the next newsletter.
- **Friday Night Jam**—Bring your **instruments** so we can "jam" on Friday night!
- **Special sessions** for our younger members.

For those of us who attended the Dallas conference in 1993, we will be at the same hotel. The IFAFA conference rate is \$99 per night plus 15% tax for suites including a king and a sofa sleeper or two double-beds and a sofa sleeper. The cut-off for the \$99 IFAFA rate is October 22. After that date the hotel regular rate of \$149 will apply.

**Embassy Suites Hotel—Dallas Park Central**, 13131 North Central Expressway, Dallas, Texas 75243, (972) 234-3300 or 1-800-EMBASSY. To view information about the hotel on the Web, visit <<<http://embassysuites.com>>> and type "Dallas" into the "City" box; then select "Dallas Park Central."

There are two airport options for air travel:

- **Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport** is served by most national carriers (except Southwest Airlines) about 16 miles to the hotel. Super Shuttle service costs approximately \$25 one-way at this time.
- **Dallas Love Field** serves Southwest Airlines and just a few other airlines and is 10 miles from the hotel.

We look forward to hosting you in November!

-- *I Colori Italiani* Conference Committee

## Gigliotti or Gelateria - Isn't That Italian for Ice Cream?

An early memory of mine is watching my mother stirring tomato sauce on a Saturday afternoon. (Though she is of Irish and German descent, she's married to an Italian, and her cooking rivals that of my Italian aunt. Of course, I'd never tell my aunt that!) The phone rang and my mother answered it.

"Hello," she said, and a few seconds later the caller answered. My mother then said, "Yes, this is she, and the last name is pronounced 'Ja-loh-tee.'" She always corrected anyone that mispronounced her married name. At a mere three or four years of age, I had no idea how much my last name would shape me as a person.

It's always a rare surprise to meet someone who can pronounce my last name properly. Admittedly, the phonetics are a bit of a challenge, but it's amazing how people stumble over the letters. I've heard variations like "Gelato," "Giggle-otti", "Jiggly-otti", and countless others, with "Gelato" the most common.

As a young child, I secretly pined for a different last name. Something easy, and common, like Smith or Jones. The small coastal town where I grew up was full of aristocratic folk of Irish and English descent. There were few Italians and even fewer minorities. Yet while I secretly wished for a simpler name, I relished the fact, that, in some small way, I stood out. While kids in elementary school pulled out their bologna sandwiches on squishy white bread, I unwrapped the wax paper on my salami and provolone sandwich on thick hand-cut Italian bread.

For several years, the only thing I really knew about my Italian heritage was the food. My father rarely talked about Italy, but purely out of ignorance. He'd ask my grandfather, who immigrated from Cantanzaro in Calabria to America when he was 9 years old, what life was like before they made the long passage, stuffed in steerage, to the "promised land." My grandfather would quip in reply, "It was no good, so we left. Don't ask any more questions." That was it; nothing else would be said about it.

Italian was never spoken in my grandparents' house either. It was the 1950s and fashionable to be American and downplay your ethnicity. My grandparents were proud to be U.S. citizens. Amusingly, when they were talking about something important, or scheming a proper punishment for one of the kids, they spoke in hushed Italian.

Not having the opportunity to learn Italian is something my father regrets, as he could have passed his linguistic skills on to my sister and me. Instead, I had to wait until college to start studying the language. It was also in college that I first had the incredible opportunity to go to Italy. Those five months were an eye-opening and enriching experience that shaped me considerably.

Though I lived and interned in Milan, I spent all of my free time exploring the country. I knew I had a short time to learn as much as possible about my grandparent's country so I could better understand myself and my family.

My grandmother came from Decollatura, a town outside of Naples. As I walked through the gritty city, I quickly realized why her family left. Sunny seaside Naples had none of the feel of cosmopolitan Milan. Unemployment was high and new industry was scarce. Though the people were spirited, the bleak economic conditions were obvious. That was 1996, but it could have been the early 1900s, as the conditions were effectively the same.

My language skills strengthened considerably while I was in Milan, and for the first time, I heard my last name pronounced in Italian. Right away, I decided to only pronounce my surname, as "Gee-lee-oh-tee." And not "Ja-loh-tee."

I am the only one in my entire extended family that uses this pronunciation. My sister tells me I'm weird to do so, but to me it makes sense. And, frankly, I think it sounds better in Italian!

It's been eleven years since I've been to Italy. My Italian is rusty and I'm sure I'd get lost trying to find the Loreto metro station from my old apartment on Piazza Aspromonte. The experiences I had there, however, are always fresh in my mind, and I still love to show the scrapbook of my travels. Those several months gave me the excellent opportunity to contrast modern Italy with that of my grandparents. It showed me how resilient they were and how important it was for them to give their families better opportunities that could not be achieved in the "old country." These traits have been carried down into my generation and will be passed on to future generations.

About a year after I came back from Italy, my aunt told me that Gigliotti is Calabrian dialect, meaning "little lily" in English. I found it sweetly ironic since lilies, especially star gazer lilies, Easter lilies and tiger lilies, are some of my favorite flowers. My family also always had lily plants in the garden, and my grandmother grew lily of the valley near her pear tree. This wonderful bit of information that my aunt provided was welcome news, as I could now arm myself with an interesting tidbit after people struggled to pronounce my last name and asked, "Hey, isn't that *ice cream* in Italian?"

Leslie Gigliotti,  
Fieri Folkloric Dancers, Washington, DC

### Correction

In the last issue of *Tradizioni*, we listed a number of Italian American Centers across the country. Please note this correction for Phil DiNovo's organization which was listed as the American Italian Historical Association. The correct title is the *American Italian HERITAGE Association*. Additionally, their AIHA Museum and Cultural Center will have an Italian Folk Room. They have two websites, the one previously listed, <[www.aiha-albany.org](http://www.aiha-albany.org)>, and <[www.americanitalianmuseum.org](http://www.americanitalianmuseum.org)>.

### IFAPA Groups Interact

On Saturday November 11, 2006, members of the *Fieri Folkloric Dancers* (Washington DC) and *Vivaci* (Philadelphia) met in Philadelphia for a day of Italian folk dancing and Italian-oriented networking. The two groups shared dances, discussed building membership, and ate lunch at world famous Pat's Steaks in South Philadelphia. Members of *Fieri* and *Vivaci* decided to get together after meeting at the 2006 Milwaukee conference.

## **Cuor d'Italia Dance Troupe Performs in Virginia**

"Virginia is for Lovers," they say. It rings true for us, *Cuor d'Italia!* We loved performing at the Italian Festival in Virginia Beach, Virginia, this past September. The weather, the view, the festival were all wonderful. But, above all, we had the opportunity to share our culture and dances with such a superb and receptive audience. They clapped and cheered as we danced *Tarantella Siciliana*, *Tarantella Peppina*, and many more. Of course, it wasn't all work and no play. We simply couldn't resist getting our feet wet in the grape-stomping vat. All in all, it was great to be a part of this community's first Italian Festival. There was such great interest and respect for the Italian culture and our dances. Yes, Virginia *is* for Lovers .... of Italian folkdance . . . so much so that they've invited us back for the Second Annual Italian Festival.

--Pauline Kavanaugh



(LEFT) Pauline Kavanaugh (far right) and members of *Cuor d'Italia* participate in grape-stomping at the Italian Festival in Virginia Beach.



(RIGHT) Lively *tarantella* steps performed by members of *Cuor d'Italia*.

## **Mario Lanza Institute and Museum**

The Mario Lanza Museum formerly housed at the Settlement Music School, is located on the first floor of Columbus House at 712 Montrose Street next to St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Church in South Philadelphia, PA. The museum was officially dedicated the morning of November 3, 2002, immediately following the annual Mario Lanza Memorial Mass. The museum is open from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00p.m. Monday through Saturday. Admission to the museum is free and donations are accepted.

The Mario Lanza Institute is a nonprofit organization which has awarded over 200 scholarships in Lanza's name since its inception in 1962. Please visit the web site at < <http://www.mario-landa-institute.org/> >. For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, please call 215-238-9691.

## **Pani e Fili: Breads and Threads of Italy**

At the 2006 IFafa Conference in Milwaukee, Paul Torna made available to all participants free copies of the book, *Pani e Fili: Breads and Threads of Italy*. The books were donated by Vima de Marchi Micheli of Sacramento, California, who co-authored the book with Dolph Gotelli. The book, written in both English and Italian, describes and illustrates two traditions of Italy. The first part of the book covers the traditional decorative breads of Italy, such as those created for various feast days (St. Joseph's, St. Blaise, etc.), as well as specialty breads of Sardegna and Romagna. The second part of the book explores the traditions of Italian embroidery, lace-making, and weaving. For further information about the book, you may contact Vima at her email address: <[ricamovima@aol.com](mailto:ricamovima@aol.com)>.

## **MEET OUR ITALIAN FOLK TROUPES**

### *I Gagliardi Italiani* of Canton, Ohio

*I Gagliardi Italiani* (translated. "The Vivacious Italians") was started in 1975 by several Italian Americans, including Nick and Rose Boscia, Jim Tortora, and Rosalia Guarini Berger. The purpose of the group continues to be to learn to sing and to dance to Italian folk songs from all over Italy. Members also wished to share their Italian heritage of music with their children. The group had a period of time when many children were involved in singing and dancing as well.

Michael Canestrero was the first musical director for many years. Then Scott Walsh directed the group for nearly ten years. Tom Cunningham is now directing the group for his 4th year.

*I Gagliardi Italiani's* officers are Rick Rocco, President; Alice M. Cleary, Vice President; Joann Franz and Rosalia Berger, Co-Secretaries; and Joanna Rocco, Treasurer.

We are only one of two groups that sing, dance and provide our own music accompaniment. Nick Conte was a fervent and marvelous musician on the accordion, and played with the *Gagliardi* for many seasons. Our group currently features three accordionists, Diane De Gasparis, Pete Lupica and Roy Gelanese; harmonica player Nick Adessi; guitarists Joe Settimeo and Mike Petrucelli; and concertina player Gabriel Pelosi. We will be adding mandolin players later this year.

As the years have passed, *I Gagliardi Italiani* continues to sing and dance at Italian Festas, Italian dinners, anniversary or birthday parties, and sometimes at the IFafa conferences. *I Gagliardi Italiani* will perform this year at the Cayahoga Falls Italian Fest and the Stark County Italian American Festival, both scheduled in July 2007, and at numerous other festivals and parties.

Members practice two hours weekly for the months of February through November. Walking into a rehearsal of the *Gagliardi* is like coming home. We are more family than a group of volunteers!

This year, we are scheduled to produce a CD of our music in the spring. We have cassette tapes that were made in the past, which are still available for purchase. There are two different tapes for sale at \$7.00 each.

We celebrate that after 32 years, we still have a couple of our founding members participating in our group. What dedication!!

How to Contact Us

IFAF A President : Mark DeSanctis  
**email: MarkDeSanctis@gmail.com**  
 Mailing address:  
 W134N6822 Wild Rose Court  
 Menomonee Falls, WI 53051



Tradizioni Editor : Jackie Capurro  
**email: viva\_ifafa@hotmail.com**  
 Mailing Address:  
 2512 Glen Hastings Court  
 San Jose, CA 95148

**Founder's Fund**

The Elba Farabegoli Gurzau Founder's Fund was originally established as a living memorial to the founder of the Italian Folk Art Federation of America. Contributions for any intention, i.e. birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion, as well as in memoriam, are used only for artistic endeavors.

Donations may be made payable to IFAFA – Founder's Fund and mailed to IFAFA Treasurer, P.O. Box 1192, Rockford, IL 61105.

When sending a donation to commemorate an event, please provide the following information: Identify the occasion and give the full name of the individual to be honored. Also give the full name and address to whom the announcement is to be sent. The contributor should also provide his/her name, address and telephone number.

A special letter, announcing the contribution and naming the contributor, will be forwarded to the honored person or family, and an acknowledgement will be sent to the contributor.

**This Issue's Contributors**

The editor would like to thank the following people for contributing articles and/or information for this issue:

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Maria Chobany  | Leslie Gigliotti  |
| Alice Cleary   | Pauline Kavanaugh |
| Mark DeSanctis | Paul Torna        |

**FOLK DANCES,  
 COSTUMES  
 AND  
 CUSTOMS OF ITALY**

by Elba Farabegoli Gurzau

Softcover book, 128 pages, which includes black-and-white and color illustrations, 17 dances with description and notated music, information about Italy, costumes, customs, etc. Comes with recorded music to accompany the dances, your choice of audiocassette or CD.

Price: \$25.00, plus \$3.95 for handling and postage. Be sure to specify CD or cassette.

Please make check or money order payable to IFAFA and mail to:  
 IFAFA Treasurer  
 P.O. Box 1192  
 Rockford, IL 61105

The purpose of the ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA (IFAF A) is to preserve and foster interest in Italian folk art; to research Italian folklore, traditions, customs, costumes, dances, songs, instruments, etc.; to act as a center for gathering, storing, and disseminating the information; and to bring together Italian folk performing groups and other interested individuals.

IFAF A is an outgrowth of the Italian Folk Art Project initiated at the Nationalities Service Center (NSC) of Philadelphia in 1977. With the assistance of NSC and the leadership and dedication of Cav. Elba Farabegoli Gurzau, IFAFA was incorporated May 7, 1979, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a non-profit cultural and educational organization.

**MEMBERSHIP in IFAFA**

- I am interested in:
- Annual Membership
    - Performing Folk Group \$25.00, plus \$5.00 per member address (if new, send for application)
    - Supporting Organization \$25.00 (non-performing)
    - Individual \$10.00
    - Student/Senior Citizen \$5.00
  - Contributing to the work of IFAFA \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name:  
 Address:  
 City:  
 State/Zip:  
 Phone:

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 c/o IFAFA  
 P.O. Box 1192  
 Rockford, IL 61105

