

NYC. Italian National Holiday with Fiat 500

Nicola Earth (June 03, 2009)



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He arrived at Cipriani Wall Street in a Cinquecento and spoke of the cooperation between the two countries. "Our future is here. The future lies in both countries working together. I am proud to have driven the Cinquecento, a car that represents the new industrial partnership between Italy and the United States. It is a car that exemplifies the future of transportation in large cities, with more parking spaces and less pollution and traffic." And so Consul General Francesco Maria Talò inaugurated the festivities for the 63rd anniversary of the Republic of Italy. The event took place one day following a bankruptcy judge's approval for Chrysler to sell most of its assets to FIAT, and hours



after General Motors entered bankruptcy protection. It was the first time that a brand new Cinquecento had been driven through the streets of Manhattan with so much fanfare. Consul General Francesco Maria Talò braved traffic and drove the new model of FIAT's Cinquecento about 6.5 miles from the consulate's Upper East Side headquarters on Park Avenue to Wall Street.

Dozens of people along the way were intrigued by this small (11.5 feet long) yet elegant Italian car, with a passers-by frequently stopping to take pictures of the car.

The Consul General got out of the car along with his family and left it parked in front of Cipriani Wall Street in the shadow of skyscrapers and under the gaze of onlookers.

Cipriani was again the venue for this year's celebration, the most important event of the year for the Italian community with more than a thousand guests in attendance.

Along with Consul General Francesco Maria Talò, representatives from New York's "Sistema Italia" were present, including the Italian Cultural Institute's Director Renato Miracco, the **Italian Government Tourist Board's** Director Riccardo Strano, the Italian Trade Commission's Executive Director for the U.S. Aniello Musella, the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce's **President** Alberto Comini. Also present were Regional Minister for Puglia Tourism Massimo Ostilio and Regional Manager for the Cultural Heritage of the Veneto Fausta Bressani.

The Ambassador of Italy to Washington, Giovanni Castellaneta, also attended this year's celebration and presented Francesco Maria Talò with a very special gift: the decoration of Commander bestowed by the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano. "I am so excited," said the Consul General. "I am usually the one presenting it...."

Many other distinguished guests also attended the gala event, such as Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to the U.N. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi, Roman Catholic Bishop of Brooklyn Nicholas Di Marzio, New York City Council Member Tony Avella, Judge Dominic Massaro, and Permanent Representative of Italy to the U.N. Ambassador Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata.

The crew of an Alitalia airplane arrived from Kennedy airport to deliver an airline ticket to Christina Marracini, the first-round winner of the Miss Italy pageant.

From the podium, Italian-American actor Joe Piscopo entertained the audience with various jokes and anecdotes. Tenor Cristian Ricci paid tribute to Italian opera with a performance of "Mattinata" by Ruggero Leoncavallo and "Lucevan le stele" from Puccini's Tosca.

The national anthem was sung by Roberta Gambarini and the choir from the Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi. Their bilingual rendition is a testimony to the vitality of Italian culture demonstrated by younger generations here in New York.

In the words of the Ambassador Castellaneta, there is a tremendous sense of pride and a profound recognition that informs the work of the Italian-American community. "I'm proud of you all," said the ambassador, while conveying a greeting on behalf of President Napolitano who was not remiss in remembering the Abruzzi people who had been affected by the recent earthquake.

Through a live webcam, i-Italy broadcast and recorded the entire evening's program which was followed by many viewers across the ocean.

The staff of i-Italy and Italics also interviewed several attendees at the reception in between cocktails and videos of Puglia and the Veneto. We will soon publish a video summary of the interviews.

The tiny yet stylish FIAT parked outside opulent Cipriani Wall Street evoked a hint of nostalgia for many of those who caught a glimpse. Released in 1957, the original Cinquecento model was the embodiment of an inexpensive if somewhat unreliable car. More importantly, it symbolized Italy's recovery after World War II and signaled the start of the country's economic boom. With two bucket seats in front and a snug bench in back, for many Italians of a certain age the diminutive car calls to



mind memories of first cars and first loves.

Our wish, then, is for the new Cinquecento to usher in a new boom for both the U.S. and Italy.

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The First Fiat Cinquecento in New York

(Translated by Giulia Prestia)

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