

tions, we did not get a chance to visit with everyone present. The grandfather of Antonietta Lotito, had suffered a stroke some days before the ceremony so we could only exchange a few words with the girl and her family as they were rushing back to the hospital. Members of the Association who were on the Italian tour in 1982, will remember the hospitality of this family when the tour bus stopped in front of the building formerly occupied by the 767 squadron's infirmary. The Lotito family grandparents, who were then living in this building, hosted the entire busload with refreshments in the family living room. Just before the bus departed, the grandmother, who is rather small and frail, rushed out of the house with cold drinks and proceeded to serve them in the aisle. "It was the least I could do", she said later, "It was a rather warm day." In a subsequent phone conversation with the family, we learned that the grandfather had passed away.

After the completion of the ceremony, Bea was presented with a lovely flower bouquet, and I was presented with an engraved folding plaque, identical with one prepared for Chris Donaldson and Ed Goree, the two scholarship committeemen. As a gift from the Association, I presented Umberto with a engraved gold Cross pen and pencil set, and an honorary membership in the Association. Umberto was obviously surprised and pleased, as he seemingly forgot his discomfort due to a recent attack of sciatica, and was grinning from ear to ear when I presented him with the certificate of Honorary Membership, complete with the Association seal and red ribbon.

After the meeting, the headmaster of the school took us into his office for a short visit, and repeated what he had said earlier about the importance of the scholarship program, and that it was unusual in his experience for a military organization such as our Association to award scholarships. I think he wanted to know what the motivation was that prompted the scholarship program. At this point several conversations were going on at once and I didn't get a chance to make a proper reply. I believe that memorializing fallen comrades with a living memorial, which is what our scholarship program is all about, is not within the realm of Italian experience, because in all probability this is the first time in recent history when this has been done in southern Italy, hence the question of motivation. Per

haps it is the uniqueness of these bequests rewarding others that is most appealing to them. We will find the answer to this question later in future correspondence.

Later on, at Professor Albanese's house, where we were so graciously invited to partake of one of those truly unforgettable meals prepared by Umberto's wife, Antonietta, we presented Umberto and Antonietta with a house gift from Bea and I personally, as well as Association caps.

We met their very close friends, Gino and his wife Fernanda Bonita, who hosted another marvelous meal on the second day. Their apartment is right next to the Piazza del Duomo, and overlooks both the church and the via Roma. We understand that both of them have helped Umberto with the scholarship program. They are both very intelligent and knowledgeable. We found that we could carry on conversations, express ideas, and discuss complicated issues with complete understanding, even with our very limited Italian vocabulary, and the many times we reverted to English. We noticed a subtle warmth in Italian hospitality that makes you feel you have known them all your lives.

To sum up, we felt after meeting Umberto, and observing him, and talking to him over a period of two days that he is very professional in his methods of choosing the candidates, uses the media to full advantage to announce the availability of the scholarships, and accomplishes his task in a discrete and businesslike manner. Umberto no longer uses a translator to convert our letters and documents into Italian, preferring to do this himself using an Italian-English dictionary and lots of midnight oil. He is very modest about his own contribution of time and energy to the program, and wants full recognition solely for the Association. He said that the scholarship program is very important to him, and that being a part of an organization that helps give these students aid with their academic careers is his only reward. He is our second honorary member carrying the number HM-2. As we were about to depart, Umberto expressed a desire to attend the 1988 San Francisco reunion. I, on the behalf of the Association, dispatched a letter of invitation to him and his wife upon our return from Italy.

The end



The three students stand with their parents on either side after the awards ceremony. From L to R: Antonietta Lotito, Darlo Grassi, and Rosaria Conversano