

**CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS MONUMENT COMMITTEE MAN OF THE YEAR  
AWARD**

**OCTOBER 7, 2017**

**REMARKS BY RICHARD A. DILIBERTO, JR., ESQ.**

We all have defining moments from our early years. When I was about 10 years old, I remember my father coming home each day, exhausted from his police officer's shift in Hazleton, PA and then doing a second job; working as a private contractor, doing cement work, asphalt work, carpentry, cleaning services, and whatever people called "headache jobs" they didn't want to deal with themselves. I'll always remember his large, strong, bronzed hands, hardened from years in the sun swinging a pick or digging with a shovel, but how they were so surprisingly gentle when he would hold our hands or stroke our faces.

We had an Acme Super-Market near our home, and down the street, a few blocks away, a senior citizen high rise apartment building. After the senior citizens would shop at Acme, they would slowly wheel the grocery carts, filled with their grocery bags, to the high rise apartments, then leave the carts in a jumble in front of the building. It wasn't long before the Acme Market manager had a problem---a dire shortage of grocery carts-- which became a "headache job" perfect for my father.

My dad made a deal with the Acme manager that he would stack the carts in the back of his bright gold pickup truck, and return them to the Acme, in return for 50 cents a cart. I remember those carts would fit one-into-the-other and my dad could nest 20 carts, 10 on the left and 10 on the right of his pickup truck each trip, at a tidy profit of \$10.00 per truckload. He would take me along to help, and give me half the profits, or \$5.00. One sunny Saturday afternoon, we were taking those 20 carts back to the Acme, driving directly past the baseball field where all my friends were playing a game. Now, I suspect none of you have ever been in a pickup truck carrying 20 shaking, rattling and rolling steel grocery carts up a potholed street, but it is not a quiet journey. As my dad and I clattered along in the truck, my friends abruptly stopped the game, all looked up simultaneously, and in unison pointed stiff-armed at me in the passenger's seat and laughed uproariously. **I remember putting my hand over my face to hide my identity, but they all knew it was me in my dad's bright gold pickup truck.**

After we passed the field, my dad looked over, gently stroked my face, with that work-worn hand, and said quietly: **"Are you ashamed of your daddy, Ricky?"** **"No, I'm not ashamed, dad,"** I fibbed. **"Don't you ever be ashamed if you are working your hardest and earning an honest dollar,"** my dad replied.

Many of you have similar stories. And, like our woman of the year, Denise Boroski, many of you constantly exhibit those qualities of discovery, perseverance, and hard work, along with high ability and distinguished community service, exemplifying Christopher Columbus, which this award recognizes, because of lessons learned from your parents and grandparents. You all should share in this award.

It is a high, high honor to receive this award. I rightfully share this award with my colleagues on the Delaware Commission on Italian Heritage and Culture, **Commissioners Louis Arena, Nick Caggiano, Joe Conaway, Joe DiPinto, Jimmy Gambacorta, Jack Polidori, Mary Teresa Morrison and Mike Terranova.** Also, I receive in in the memory of our late colleague, Commissioner **Justine Mataleno-Clerc**, who was a shining example of how to cherish, protect and perpetuate our Italian-American heritage.

So, I deeply thank the **Columbus Monument Committee** for this award, and thank my family: my wife **Faith**, and our daughters, **Amanda, Ashley and Aria**, for their unwavering love and unconditional unity over the years.

You know, not long after the shopping cart incident, I was in that same senior citizen high rise visiting my grandmother. The doorbell rang, and a deliveryman had a package. Me, being ten, thought, **“It must be a present for me!”** so as the delivery man handed my grandmother a clipboard to sign the receipt, I nimbly maneuvered to each side of her to peek up through the bends in her elbows to figure out what it was. She twisted and turned several times to seemingly hide the receipt and clipboard from me as she moved her pen on the receipt. And then, I figured out what she was hiding. **She could not sign her name, but marked the receipt only with an “X”.**

And, it’s an American miracle that today, I humbly stand before you, the grandson of a woman who could not write her name, and through these inadequate but heartfelt remarks, try to express how much I value our common and sacred bond as Delaware Italian-Americans the guardians of our ancestor’s honor and sacrifice.