



# AMERICAN FIREWORKS NEWS

HE WHO HATH ONCE SMELT THE SMOKE IS NE'ER AGAIN FREE

No.299

August, 2006

## TAGGIA: ST. BENEDICT'S CELEBRATION

### A VERY WILD AND UNUSUAL PYROTECHNIC SHOW

By Lucio Cizza

#### THE PLACE

Taggia is a very old Italian country-town on the *Ponente Ligure* coast, 24km from the French border. It boasts one of the larger historical centers in Northern Italy, is well known for flower cultivation and is in the middle of the production zone of the famous "*taggiasca-quality*" olives (imported in 1400 by the Benedictine Monks) and the top-quality oil they produce. During the last 40 years the place enjoyed great tourist development, mostly due to the mild climate during the wintertime. But please! Don't confused it with *Arma di Taggia*: this is a parent town at the edge of the sea that is mainly dedicated to summer vacations. Taggia is very proud of their Medieval origins and don't like to be confused with the "modern" *Arma di Taggia*.

Taggia is quite a strange place: we could best describe it using the words of *Giovanni Ruffini* (the Italian Patriot, follower of Mazzini) in the novel "Doctor Antonio" (Edinburg 1855):

*"...Lucy turned sharply round and embraced at one glance the wonderfully varied scene before her. To the North a long, long vista of deep, dark frowning gorges, closed in the distance by a gigantic screen of snow-clad*

*Alps - the glorious expanse of the Mediterranean to the South - East and West, range upon range of gently undulating hills, softly inclining towards the sea - in the plain below, the fresh cozy valley of Taggia, with its sparkling track of waters, and rich belt of gardens, looking like a perfect mosaic of every gradation of green chequered with winding arabesques. Ever and anon a tardy pome-granate in full blossom spread out its oriflamme of tulip-shaped dazzling red flowers. From the rising ground opposite frowned medieval Taggia, like a discontented guest at a splendid banquet..."*

In this description there is most of the character of Taggia and *Taggiaschi: medieval* is the town and "*medieval*" are the inhabitants who interpret the traditions whose origins are lost in the mists of time, with a strong sense of historical continuity (the very first houses seem to have been founded by the Etruscans and successively it became a station for change of horses for the Romans traveling the Aurelia Way to the extreme frontiers of the known world at that time). The second adjective also fits well to both town and inhabitants: the grumbling, intractability and, perhaps some peevishness aren't lacking in the *Taggiaschi*.

#### THE ORIGINS

Among the numerous local traditions, the festivity of St. Benedict is strongly embraced

ISSN 8755-3163

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Printed in U.S.A.



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