

Reminiscences of
**A LIFE
OUTSIDE THE
BOX**



by
Enzo Larry Pisoni

*Le livre de la vie est le livre suprême.
Qu'on ne peut ni fermer, ni rouvrir à son choix;
Le passage attachant ne s'y lit pas deux fois.
Mais le feuillet fatal se tourne de lui-même;
On voudrait revenir à la page où l'on aime.
Et la page où l'on meurt est déjà sous vos doigts.*

Alphonse De Lamartine

*The book of life is the supreme book,
Which you cannot close or reopen where you want;
The touching passage cannot be read twice
Where the fatal page turns by itself,
You would like to return to the page you love,
And the page where you die is already under your
fingers.*

Alphonse De Lamartine

Reminiscences
of a Life Outside the Box

“ *I dedicate this essay to my wife, Carol,
America’s best with whom I “miraculously”
shared, up to now, sixty-five years
of joys and sorrows* ”

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Introduction

I believe that one of our most important blessings, as humans, is our ability to read. As Dante wrote “Fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza” (We were made not to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge). Only humans have the privilege of reading the ideas that were expressed since writing was invented 5,000 years ago. That is the reason why I am so fascinated by quotes transmitted throughout the millennia. Once an aphorism makes sense to you, once it gets inside your head and starts striking sparks, it sticks with you forever.

Aphorisms carry us all the way from Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Churchill, Einstein and on and on to our modern times.

Recently I selected a book because the title intrigued me: “Every Time I Find the Meaning of Life, They Change It,” by Daniel Klein. At first it sounded like a joke, but the more I thought about it, the more it made sense. The concept is as old as the immortal “Panta Rei” by Heraclitus. As I rapidly navigate through my eighties, I realize that constant change is the only sure thing in life. At the same time, I am aware that the past is only a memory, and the future is just a hope. The only thing we can count on is the present, which is a fleeting moment. Goethe appreciated so much the value of the moment that he wished to prolong it: “Moment linger, you are beautiful”.

Regarding the faith in the various religions that believe in eternal life, here is a breathtaking declaration by Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Eternal life belongs to those who live in the present”.

My main reason for writing an autobiography is to recall significant moments in my life and leave a memory developed through unusual, international circumstances.

After finishing the “Liceo Classico” in Trento, I enrolled and graduated at Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio.

Unfortunately, I soon realized that my international education did not prepare me for any specific job. Consequently, I created a profession that did not exist: Hotel Broker! It consisted in finding and booking groups of people for de-luxe hotels in Italy. My sources were in Germany, Switzerland, the U.S., Canada and the American and Canadian military clubs in Europe. Travel agencies and airlines, especially Alitalia, which used to be an excellent company, assisted me in finding various groups of people, clubs or associations interested in sightseeing, golf or tennis tours, ski weeks or cooking courses in the most interesting hotels and locations from the Alps to Sicily, including Venice, Florence, and Rome.

The magic word was low season when the hotels had empty rooms and their managers were delighted to host my groups at very discounted prices, which I, partially, passed on to the people to be competitive, but still de-luxe! I created these “luscious tours” throughout Bella Italia, including accommodation, meals, and guided tours. During my best season, I managed to bring up to 3,000 people per year into Italy. This type of activity lasted for about forty years, until internet, Expedia, Trip Advisor and so on came into the picture.

My family name, Pisoni, has remained the same since the ancient Romans. Ceasar's wife, Calpurnia, was a member of the Pisones family. The region where I was born, (Italian speaking South Tyrol), was part of the Austrian Empire until 1918, at the end of WWI. My parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents on both sides, were subjects of the Hapsburg Empire, the same nationality as Arnold Schwarzenegger, a naturalized American like me.

There was political division among my grandparents. My paternal grandfather studied law at Innsbruck University, became a judge at Bregenz, Austria and an Austrian Army officer. Consequently, he was pro-Austrian. On my paternal grandmother's side, they were well-educated landowners, who longed for the Italian culture and tradition. On my maternal side, my grandfather, a pro-Austrian former Kaiserjaeger, was a small farmer and musician, who cultivated his land like a garden of Eden. I spent my second-grade year at his home with my aunt and have very fond memories of my childhood there. Wish I had learned how to graft plants from him along with the skills of cultivating the land with its variety of fruit trees, vineyards, and small fruit.

My region, Italian speaking South Tyrol, had become Trentino as part of Italy in 1918, after WWI. Therefore, being born in 1937, I was a first-generation Italian. Prior to 1918, the great majority of the population was rather poor, but content enough under the well-run Austrian administration, which allowed the Italian language and culture. Primary education was compulsory until the sixth grade, so everyone was able to read and write.

When the Italians arrived, it was a real letdown because their administration was poorly organized and the great majority of the Italians, especially in the South, were illiterate.

I am now in my eighties, and I have known the joys and sorrows of a full life. Although one can never reconcile oneself to the tragedies, one can reminisce selectively. As Rose Kennedy wrote in her masterfully written autobiography, "I prefer to remember the good times".

Bertrand Russel, a precocious forever youngster, who lived to the age of ninety-eight, warns against an undue absorption of the past: "It does not do to live in memories, in regrets of the good old days, or in sadness about friends who are dead. One's thought must be directed to the future, and to things about which there is something to be done".

I am therefore still enthused about future plans. Specifically, I would like to implement the following two plans:

- 1) Collaborate with whoever is passionate about animal welfare, especially C.I.W.F (Compassion for World Farming), PETA, and the Humane Society of the United States in globally outlawing factory farming, the biggest cause of animal cruelty on the planet. It is also a major driver of water pollution and soil loss.
- 2) Convince the State Department to display at the entrance of every Embassy and Consulate worldwide, Benjamin Franklin's picture with the following words that summarize the essence of the social experiment called the United States of America:

God grant that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say, "This is my country".

I am happy to report that my bronze plaque with these words is proudly displayed in front of beautiful Lake Garda, Italy, after an international ceremony that our “Thank You, America Committee” organized to celebrate the 70th year anniversary of the end of WWII in Italy on May 2, 2015. Subsequently, a picture of the plaque, is displayed in the conference room of the American Consulate in Milan. After many bureaucratic delays that lasted until May 2024, I was allowed to insert the plaque in a more proper setting as shown on page

Life can re-start even at 80, as long as one stays healthy. I still swim every day when I am in South Beach, Florida, trying to imitate my mentor, Ben Franklin, who, at a ripe old age, swam across the Seine, every day, regardless of the weather. At home in Vezzano, I walk with the dogs, work in the park, enjoy chopping wood, the old way, a fantastic physical exercise, similar to a golf swing, but with more concrete results, at least for me. Then, it's pleasant to read with Carol in front of our lit fireplace. Of course, there always is nostalgia for my lusty days, but a self-imposed optimistic view of life makes me as serene as in the recently re-discovered song, “I’m glad I’m not young anymore” beautifully delivered by Maurice Chevalier.

Finally, after years of delaying due to “Planes to catch, and bills to pay”, as Johnny Cash used to sing, I am ready to enjoy the “Argentine Tango”. My first lesson started on August 22, 2022, at the “Academia de Tango”, excellently run by the teachers Carol and Graziano Paissan.

A Life Outside the Box

Noon on February 27, 1945 was a sunny, cold World War II day in my little hometown of Vezzano, Trento, the German occupied part of South Tyrol. My family of four, plus the maid were having lunch, while, from our kitchen window, which had a perfect view of the 6000 ft. Paganella mountain. We saw a sky full of planes surrounded by grey and white puffs of the deadly German Flak. We knew the American “Flying Fortresses” were bombing the strategic railroad bridges of the Brenner Railroad that the German troops used to support the entire war effort in Nazi occupied Italy. A plane was hit, and we witnessed a ball of fire from where seven parachutes started floating in the sky.

The following day, with some other kids, we went to the local piazza and saw two young, good-looking men dressed in khaki uniforms. They were so different from the stern looking German soldiers dressed in field green that we were used to seeing. They were the first Americans I had ever seen. They had clean open faces that smiled at us children. I immediately thought: How can these be the mean monsters that the Nazi-Fascist propaganda media was delivering to us?

Although I was only seven, I remember that I was deeply shocked when I learned that they had been shot the following day on their way to an SS station in the town of Arco. During the following years, my father explained to me that these two young men were the symbols of the American spirit that liberated us from the Fascist-Nazi regimes. Therefore, every time I passed by that fateful spot, I thought of those two Americans who had smiled at me.

That episode changed the course of my life. From that moment a dream was born, which was reinforced by the food and all the help provided to Italy by the American people as soon as the war was over. In fact, a small American command of the 10th Mountain Division stayed in our home, and we were generously given plenty of food. That’s when I had my first banana, chocolate milk and fruit cocktails. The American command left with us a large, call of wild type dog named Herblin, who was supposed to fight in the Pacific against the Japanese. Fortunately, they left him with us. He loved our home and became our pet for the rest of his life.

Looking back, I realize that my life-long love affair with Americans, especially the military, was marked by those episodes. My father gave me an attractive colorful book on how to learn English. We had fun, learning words, until I proudly showed the book to my second-grade schoolteacher, who sternly commented, “Before learning English, learn Italian, which you don’t know well”. I was so devastated by her reprimand, which sounded logical at the time, that I didn’t consider studying English for the next twelve years. Reflecting on it now, it makes me realize how extremely important it is for children to have good, inspiring teachers.

I was born when Mussolini and Hitler were at their peak, but I grew up in a Huckleberry

type environment, free to happily run around barefooted, playing soccer with old shoes in our dusty piazza. We had electricity and running water at home, but no phone. My father was a surgeon who preferred to work as a general practitioner taking care of about 2,000 people scattered in seven villages around our main town of Vezzano with about 600 inhabitants. Most people were eking out a life tilling the rocky soil. I remember that some people would carry topsoil on their back packs up the sides of the hills to cover the rocks to create enough tillable soil.

We had artisans who were busy every day creating whatever was useful to our local economy. There was occasional rivalry with the kids from neighboring towns. One of our favorite sports was exchanging shots of pebbles with the kids of the nearby towns. We were as agile as cats, luckily blessed by guardian angels who prevented major accidents.

Occasional cars would pass through our town. One of our challenges was to see who the most courageous kid was to dart across our main street, Via Roma, in front of incoming cars. I vividly remember an irate driver who stopped, jumped out of the car and started kicking our 6-7-year-old running butts as we were trying to run away. I remember asking him why he was mad at us since we were risking our own lives while his was safe inside the car...

For whatever reason, I spent my second year of elementary school with my aunt and my maternal grandfather in the town of Roncesgno, where my mother had grown up. During the Austrian Empire, up to the start of WWI, the town had enjoyed a flourishing period because it had famous "ferruginous healing water". Grand Hotels and spas were built for the enjoyment of the European nobility. My grandfather remembered grand balls in the best Viennese tradition. The town had an elegant park with tennis courts and two different sites for outdoor bands. After the collapse of the Austrian Empire, Roncesgno became Italian and lost most of its charm; however, the structures, the landscape and the thermal baths were still operating, although at a much lower scale, when I was there. My grandfather, Guglielmo, had learned how to become a specialized small farmer, cultivating his three acres like a garden of Eden that made the family self-sufficient and reasonably well off, by selling some of the products to the local stores and to visitors.

He took time to play in the local band and enjoyed writing simple poems like the following, in praise of his own wine:

*Brownie, brownie from the low-hanging vine
do you want me to drink your nectar divine?
If I enjoy you, you betray me,
if I leave you, you decay,
Brownie, brownie,
Let's enjoy and betray.*



My grandfather Guglielmo Bazzanella, Kaiserjaeger (Austrian Army), farmer, poet, musician. In the middle, my mother at four, next to her my grandmother. Above left, my aunt Rina. Above right aunt Maria

It reminds me of so many stories and excuses for enjoying good wine. Here is what Prince Albert used to say about the art of drinking wine:

First you look at it, then you smell it, then you taste it, then you drink it. Finally, you talk about it.

After all, as my mentor Ben Franklin used to say to his Mason brothers in France:

“In vino veritas, says the wise man: Truth is in wine. Before the days of Noah, men, having nothing but water to drink, could not discover the truth. Thus, they went astray, became abominably wicked, and were exterminated by the water, which they loved to drink. The good man Noah, seeing that through this pernicious beverage all his contemporaries had perished, took it into aversion; and to quench his thirst, God created the vine, and revealed to Noah the means of converting its fruit into wine. The more wine he drank the more truth he discovered. Therefore, ever since Noah’s time, all things of peculiar excellence, have been called divine”.

Getting back to my year at my grandfather’s home, I remember an episode that has influenced all my life. As kids we had the habit of seeing who could throw small stones the farthest. Unfortunately, one of my stones shattered the elegant lamp at the entrance of the Hotel Villa Rosa. We could have easily run away, because we were rather far from the light, it was getting dark, and a lot of kids were throwing stones at the same time; however, I decided to walk into the hotel and tell the owner that I was the guilty one. The kind lady told me that she would forget the damage because of my honesty. I never forgot that episode and, as a customer, I still enjoy telling the story to her grandchildren, who are now running “Villa Rosa”.

My mother kicked an armed German soldier during WWII, and survived

W.W. II was going on since 1940, but we were unaware of it. My father did not trust the news because they were blatantly misleading. When the Italian troops lost battles, it was called a strategic retreat. Since it was forbidden to listen to foreign broadcasts, he would secretly listen to "Radio London" to get the news.

Somehow my family had enough to eat to survive. The Fascist regime issued food stamps that were often below the minimum nutritional standard. My mother, who was strong and fearless, used to travel by train at night to carry back a heavy sack of grain from Veneto where she had relatives, who were farmers. It was considered black market, so she had to have the grain milled secretly in our town. She would hide it in my covered, sleek baby carriage. One day the chief of police stopped her because he wanted to see the heavy baby who was making the carriage stand so low. She managed to talk her way out telling the chief that I was a nervous baby who would keep her up all night if anyone would disturb my nap.

After September 8, 1943, deciding that the war was lost, the Italian government switched sides, which made the Germans mean and vindictive toward anything Italian.

Since we had a rather large house, a small German Command (Wehrmacht) was sharing part of it. The soldiers and the officers were friendly with us kids.

Luckily, our region, which had been part of the Austrian- Hungarian Empire until 1918 (end of WW I) was considered part of Greater Germany. Therefore, the soldiers behaved well toward the population, although we spoke Italian.

However, as the German armies were very slowly retreating while the Allies were inching their way over the rugged Italian Apennine mountains, the bombing raids were becoming more intense, and we started feeling the effects of war. My parents took my sister and me to our grandparent's home, located in the countryside, outside the main road where tanks and trucks travelled frequently.

When my parents returned to visit our home, they found it full of retreating, exhausted German soldiers, who were lying all over the floor and on our beds with dirty boots. My mother, who liked to keep a clean house and had a fiery temper, saw a German soldier looking at our family picture on the wall. The soldier had his hands on his back and was leaning forward to have a better view of the picture. Without hesitating a moment, my mother kicked the soldier in the derriere. My father started to run away, either out of fear or because he knew one of the parents needed to survive. The German soldier picked up his machine gun in anger, and my mother started screaming. Fortunately, a kind officer intervened and solved the situation, establishing a historical first: An unarmed civilian woman managed to survive after kicking an armed German soldier in a war situation!!! In those days a civilian's life was worth nothing. I remember people talking about a father and son shot by the retreating, battered German tank-troops because they were caught smiling. By the way I recently learned that the German Tiger tanks had Porsche engines.

On September 2, 1943 there was a first time bombing on the city of Trento. The target was the railroad station, but the bombs fell on a close by area and caused more than 200 dead. That day, my mother was in Trento for some commissions, when she heard the air alarm.

Nearby there was an air shelter built underneath a large public building. People were running into the air shelter, but my mother hesitated because my father had told her that the only safe air shelter in Trento was built underneath a hill on the other side of the city. Therefore, she refused to go into the close by air-shelter and started pedaling her bicycle furiously toward the safer one, resisting the local police that were trying to pull her into the nearby one. She just managed to arrive at the safe air-shelter, as the bombs started falling on the city. They also fell onto the air shelter that she had refused to enter. Unfortunately, that building had collapsed, bursting the water pipes in the basement, drowning all the occupants. Another miracle for my courageous mother.



Pisoni family, taken in the late 30s. An armed German soldier was curiously looking at it toward the end of WWII in April, 1945 when my mother kicked him in the derriere because his comrades with dirty boots were occupying her home while pursued by the 10th Mountain Division.



*My mother Amelia with me and my sister Adriana.
To the right, the two of us aged 6 and 3.*



Rifle shot toward a slow-moving pickup

Toward the end of the war, when I was six or seven, I remember an episode when a local soldier by the name of Arturo, enlisted in the new Germanized Italian police (Polizia Trentina), had a short furlough. He was trying to hitch a ride to get back in time to avoid punishment at the headquarters in Trento. A little, slow-moving truck was puffing up the road when Arturo signaled for a ride; however, the truck kept on going. In a split decision I told Arturo, “You are a soldier, who needs to do his duty and a civilian driver does not stop? Fire your gun and see what happens”. He did. The truck stopped immediately, and the driver got out, on his knees, saying that he had not stopped because he would not have been able to start again. The truck was hardly moving thanks to a homemade contraption called “ga-sogeno” obtained by slow burning wood, coal, and biomass, that substituted gasoline that was very scarce. We, kids, happily started pushing and the truck got moving again with the soldier and the driver amicably chatting away.

Small, life lessons

In grade school the teachers were allowed to physically punish us by pulling our hair, ears or beating our fingers with a ruler. They didn’t really hurt us; however, the system kept us disciplined. Other than that, we got a good education. Just right after the end of the war, when I was in second grade, my father gave me a beautifully colored book on how to learn English. He told me that English was the language of the future, so I proudly brought the book to school to show it to the teacher. Instead of praising me for the initiative, she scolded me, saying that I should first improve my Italian before trying to learn other languages. Her reprimand sounded very logical to me, so I never touched the book again. Later in life I reflected on how important it is to have teachers who are mentors that inspire pupils instead of scaring them for a lifetime.

During more happy times, when I was fourteen years old, already riding my beloved Vespa along Lake Garda with my mother in back, I saw a guy on a bicycle, coming in the opposite direction. He was going slowly and looked unstable. Then, he clumsily fell off the bike and hit his face on a big stone. I immediately turned around to help him. Somehow, I managed to stop a big truck, telling the driver to take the man to the hospital, since he was losing blood from what looked like a superficial wound on his forehead. The truckdriver was a bit hesitant, so I threatened to report him to the police. While the heated conversation was going on, the wounded guy started blabbering that he had seen everything. What did you see, I asked him? I saw that you hit me and made me fall! The truck driver commented that the guy was obviously drunk. In the meantime, my mother, asked me to move over and started punching the guy still on the ground, hitting him with her favorite, large, protruding gold ring. The drivers that were passing were slowing down, looking at a woman who was hitting a guy with a bloody face. After a while, the guy sort of lost his senses, so my mother told him: “Now you saw nothing and remember nothing. Let’s go, she told me, and

remember: With nice people you should be three times nice, with bastards you should be three times bastard.”

Well, later in life I found out that, once again, Ben Franklin’s advice works better” “You can catch more flies with a spoonful of sugar than with a barrel of vinegar”.

Growing up with a doctor and philosopher mentor

My father was a remarkable combination of doctor & philosopher, who graduated *summa cum laude* in Medicine at the University of Bologna, at age 23, two years ahead of the normal curriculum.

As a doctor, during the war, he had to walk to the nearby villages to visit whoever needed medical help. During those walks, I often accompanied him. He would talk about history, literature, poetry, and politics. He spent time to explain the difference between dictatorships and democracies. He had a friend, Count Theodor Wolkenstein, who lived in his own Castel Toblino on the peninsula jutting out into nearby Lake Toblino.

Together, right after the end of the war, the two of them belonged to a party called M.U.I. (Movimento Unionistico Italiano). They printed a few publications and were proudly wearing a lapel pin with M.U.I. engraved on it. In 1947 they attended an international congress in Montreux (Switzerland) to propose Italy as the 49th State in America, which at the time had 48 States. Nothing developed except my father's fascination with the United States, which was transmitted to me. The conversations during our walks impressed me so much that I borrowed the following words from my favorite poet, J.W Goethe, to put on his tombstone: **“To walk with you, Doctor, is honorable and enriching.”**

I am proud to include some of his “Rules for a Good Life”, which apply at any age. In fact, very similar concepts on diet and exercise are expressed by the famous Dr. Sanjay Gupta in his book “Keep Sharp” published by Cosmic Publications in 2021.

Meditations and Rules for Life
by
Dr. Adriano Pisoni

THE E.D.S.S.S

When I practiced the medical profession, I kept a confidential file with the names and diseases of each patient. In some of these files, in one corner, I would put the initials E.D.S.S.S. to indicate that that patient “ate” a lot, “drank” a lot, and “smoked.” Later I added two more letters: S.S., to mean that the patient had stressful and sedentary habits.

With wide approximation I calculated that, on the average, each “vice” could shorten his life by five years. For instance, a person who was fat, a drinker, a smoker, stressed and sedentary, who for his constitution would have lived 80 years, was likely to die at 55.

With regard to overweight, it is interesting to note that in my early years of profession (‘34-’45) when misery and tuberculosis were rife, the problem was to gain weight, because if you gained weight, TB fever decreased. Today the opposite happens: people die before their natural deadline because they eat too much. Back then it was important to use the thermometer, today the scale is enough.

Another curiosity is the fact that it was the insurance companies with incontrovertible statistics, and not the doctors, who proved the link between overweight and mortality. The damage caused by alcohol is too well known to need to be discussed.

As for smoking, it is the “deadly sin”: Enemy No. 1 that causes bronchitis, Berger’s disease, cancer, and heart attack.

Stress leads to gastric ulcer and sedentary life leads from the chair to the bed...Life is movement and...vice versa.

THE OXYGEN HANGOVER

The oxygen contained in the air we breathe is the basis of life processes. Chemically, the biological phenomenon is an oxidation, i.e. a slow combustion: our muscles burn carbohydrates (glucose) as engines burn hydrocarbons (gasoline). The human body was formed in the long evolutionary process that involved continuous movement throughout the day. Now, machines have completely replaced our muscles and we have become more and more sedentary, with serious damage to our health. The blood becomes “blue” like that of the ancient nobles, who did not work, while that of the plebeians, who toiled all day, had “bright red” venous blood.

To get an idea of how important this is, just think that oxygenated water is already a good disinfectant. But oxygenated blood enhances all other vital functions. In this way the organism becomes not only healthy, but also robust and validly repels infections and all other diseases, including tumors, as I have seen in many cases. The oxygen binge brings a euphoria like that of alcohol and is the best medicine there is.

MEDICINE AND HEALTH

The enormous abuse of medicines practiced in industrialized countries is due to a chain of circumstances that contribute to reaching the same results. The starting point is the fear of the patient and his family. Then, there is the interest of the doctor who, to be respected, “must” prescribe drugs. Then, the interest of the pharmacist, who, however, has an iron alibi; in fact, the word Pharmacy, in the original Greek etymology means “poison”. At this point no one can claim not to have been warned. The last and strongest link of the perverse chain is constituted by the industries that produce medicines, always very efficient in the “industrialized” countries.

The paradox of the situation is that it is precisely the “effective” medicines that should not be used. Examples: laxatives, much abused in the past, are certainly effective, but they aggravate constipation. Sleeping pills certainly make you sleep, but then insomnia gets worse. Antibiotics accelerate the healing of infections, but then lower the level of natural immunity. So do hormones, vitamins, and all other medications, as they upset the natural organic balance.

Diseases can be healed by removing the causes that produce them and by taking care that the various organs actively function according to nature’s rules.

THE IDEAL WEIGHT (15 DECEMBER 1989)

The fact that eating and drinking too much shortened the life span was well known even to our ancestors, who used to repeat the proverb: “The throat kills more than the sword”. However, this was rather vague, undefined and, above all, lacking a scientific demonstration. The usual objection was: But look at that guy: he weighs 90 kg and is 90 years old. In fact, the exceptions to the rule are quite numerous. But they remain exceptions, which confirm the rule. The scientific, mathematical, incontrovertible proof did not come from the doctors, but from the insurance agencies, based on statistical facts over millions of people. From these calculations, the conclusions were clear, precise, mathematical: In fact, each extra kilogram of weight shortens the lifespan. At this point Mr. and Mrs. Obeses find a lot of excuses. To hear them tell their story, they eat very little. They even skip breakfast in the morning. Then, it is not true that they are fat. It’s their interlocutor who is too thin. And here arises the problem of the “ideal weight”. How to establish it? As a starting point we can say that the kilos of weight must correspond to the centimeters of height over one meter, i.e., Height m. 1.70, kg. 70 of weight. Then there is the “line” or profile: the abdomen must not protrude from the chest. It is easy to construct a “BELLY-METER”. All you need is a string line and a bedside lamp. The shadow of the string and that of the body tell whether the thorax or the abdomen protrude. Another test consists in stiffening the abdominal muscles and taking between two fingers the skin with the fat underneath.

PANZA IPSA EST MORBUS (The belly itself is a disease).

A large number of disorders, very different from one other, have overweight as their only cause: diabetes, uricemia, hypertension, heart disease, etc.... It is therefore worth knowing how one can increase or decrease body weight.

To increase one’s weight is very easy: if I put a glass of water, wine or any other drink on the table in front of me, and this liquid weighs, let’s say, 100 grams, and I

drink it, in a few seconds I weigh 100 grams more. Objection: “Then I urinate, and the 100 grams are gone.” Reply: “This is not entirely true, because while weight gain happens in a few seconds, weight loss takes several hours and may not be complete, especially if you eat salty food. Water is an essential component of living organisms and an alteration in water exchange is the first step toward obesity.

The same reasoning is even more valid for solid foods which, besides weight, also have calories. On the contrary, lung respiration and skin transpiration (sweating) cannot increase weight, but only decrease it, especially in summer.

In conclusion, to gain weight there are only two ways: eat and drink. On the contrary, in order not to gain weight it is enough not to eat and not to drink: no kind of obesity resists to absolute fasting. Of course, this is the best way to lose weight. There is the formula “ALOMITOA.” that serves excellently, not only for the shape weight, but also for living healthy and happy for a long time. “A LOT OF MOVEMENT IN THE OPEN AIR”. This is the best formula to prevent or counteract all kinds of diseases, including the surely deadly one that is old age. The easiest way to move is to take long walks every day, preferably uphill. Nordic walking is a fantastic exercise. Of course, you cannot expect to get poisoned and then feel good, so no EDSS. I propose to drop a kilo a month, until one reaches and keeps an ideal weight. Eat little at dinner, since, what you eat at dinner is not consumed: it’s all on the scale the next morning.

Same concept expressed by Ben Franklin: Dine with little, sup with less; do better still, sleep supperless

THE FIGHT FOR LIFE

The biological phenomenon is competitive: every living being, plant or animal is perpetually competing with its neighbors to survive. Human beings certainly do not escape this cruel law of nature.

Particularly interesting is the observation of three characteristic forms:

The first type of competition is that between young and old. The former would like to achieve at once what the latter has obtained through long years of work and sacrifice. This struggle is the mildest, because all young people, if they do not die first, become old with the passage of time.

The second kind of competition is between the poor and the rich. Here the struggle becomes harder because some poor people manage to become rich, but certainly not all!

The third form of struggle is hopeless and is that between the lesser and the more intelligent. The Jews are more intelligent than the other peoples and this is offensive: It explains the hatred and persecution.

THEORY OF TUBES!

To be healthy we need to have a simple but clear idea of how our body works. In a nutshell, we are a “bundle of tubes”, in each of which a different fluid flows: air in the bronchus and lungs, liquid in the biliary and urinary tracts as well as in the blood vessels. Finally, a semi-solid content in the digestive tract.

Each of these internal channels of ours is equipped with muscle fibers and is elastic,

so we get the fluids flowing. However, this is the crux of the matter: If the body does not move sufficiently as a whole, the fluids tend to stagnate and form deposits. Thus, phlegm forms in the bronchus, stones in the urinary and biliary tracts, sclerotic plaques in the arteries, and finally constipation in the intestines.

Western medicine, as it is practiced, prescribes innumerable drugs against each of these disorders, while only two would suffice, rational nutrition and sufficient movement in the open air: gardening and walking.

LENGTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Like any other living being, humans inherit from their ancestors a time-based life charge. There are families whose members reach an average of 70 years of age, others reach 80 or more, depending on the genes contained in their chromosomes.

It amuses me to think of life as a long queue of people in front of a counter where everyone receives a ticket to go “beyond” and make the long journey. The right of way in this well-ordered queue naturally belongs to the first to arrive, that is to those who were born earlier. However, there are hasty and rude people who abusively pass in front of those who precede them in age. From the height of my 78 years, I have seen many of them leave before their theoretically allotted time. I don’t get angry at this rudeness and wait patiently for my turn, that is sure to arrive, anyway: “Nihil mortis certius” (nothing is more certain than death). The tricks used by these hasty people are summarized in the E.D.S.S.S. formula, already illustrated in a previous writing.

It may be interesting to know the opposite formula: “Lots of movement in the open air”, if you want to live better and longer.

THE SORCERER

Like the other mammalian animals, man lives in groups, called “herds” for the animals, “tribes” for the non-civilized and “clans” for the civilized.

These groups are led by the leader, who is the strongest and has the right of precedence over food and females. The weapons used in this biological competition are nails and teeth. The horns for those species that have them and the beak for birds: all “organic” weapons, that are part of the organism.

At a certain moment of human evolution, a new fact happened, exceptional and decisive for further evolution: the human monkey, attached with his hands to the dry and low branch of a tree and springing with his feet on the ground, caused the breakage of the branch itself. In that instant the first non-organic weapon was born, that is external to the body of the animal. Our distant ancestor, twirling the piece of wood he had in his hand, hit by chance the heads of curious companions who were approaching, and they fell to the ground stunned: all, including the head of the pack!

The inventor of the “stick” found himself to be “the strongest”, and the whole group submitted to his authority, because it was easier to “kill” anyone. Intelligence had won over muscular strength. From that moment on, the “technical” project was slow, but inexorable. At the top of the wooden pole was tied a stone, to hit more effectively (Paleo and Neolithic) then a metal tip (Bronze Age and Iron Age). Note that every product of human ingenuity was first a weapon and then a peaceful tool for work.

This is true of both the stick and the atomic bomb. The latest invention, the hydrogen bomb (or fusion): so far, humans have not yet managed to make use of it in power plants.

The events summarized above are part of a “cultural evolution” typically human and alien to other animals. It so happened that the chieftain was the strongest, but not the most intelligent, so he found it useful to keep close to him an elder advisor who knew the secrets to build weapons and tools, used poisons and medicinal substances, foresaw the alternation of seasons and the course of diseases. In a word, he was a “Magician” or someone who knew “more” (magis) than the others about the forces of Nature and the means to dominate them. It was a Master (Magister), a Doctor (Mecicus: mega = great) This character still exists among the primitive tribes and we call it “Sorcerer”. Instead, among civilized people, the figure has been duplicated, so we have the “Priest” (presbiteros = elder) and the “Doctor”. The first for the problems of the spirit, and the second for those of the body. A purely didactic distinction made for the effort to understand something. In reality, the human being is one “unique” thing and today even priests recognize this.

Message to Posterity and Heirs

Subject: Experimental Earthly Paradises

Contrary to what people tend to believe, the Heavenly Paradise and the Earthly Paradise are “compatible” with each other, i.e., one does not exclude the other: in order to deserve the Heavenly Reward, it is not necessary to spend on Earth a life of HELL. It is enough to observe the GOLDEN RULE:

“DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU.

In fact, the GOLDEN RULE is shared by all religions. We should strive to hand over to the future generations a better ENVIRONMENT than we received from our ANCESTORS.

*Adieu,
Adriano Pisoni*

On May 15, 2022, I organized a ceremony in the town of Ranzo for the unveiling of a Carrara marble plaque with the following words:

**In memory of Dr. Adriano Pisoni
During his forty-year mission (1938-1978)
He cured the people with science, conscience, and empathy.
Health is the unit that gives value to all the zeroes of life**



Il gruppo Alpini di Ranzo ed il Comune Vallelaghi



General Considerations just after WWII

1945 to 1949 were the pivotal four years during which, thanks to the American military and economic help, Western Europe benefited of 75 years of peace, freedom, democracy, and prosperity.

Although I was young, through my father I was very well informed about the national and international events, which I consider part of my growing up during times when there was a thin layer between being part of the free world or an involuntary subject of the Soviet Empire. Therefore, I was and still am thankful to the United States of America.

President Harry S. Truman and his extraordinary collaborators (Gen. Marshall, Stimson, Clay, Byrnes,) were determined to put all of Europe back on its feet, including the former enemies Germany and Italy. President Truman had the requisite courage, determination, and intuition. In fact, destiny placed the right man at the right time for the “Pax Americana” in Western Europe.

In fact, Americans fought two world wars without asking anything in return. They blanketed the rest of the world in the two postwar periods with wheat, medicines, old clothes, raw material, cotton, and coal, without anybody thanking them for their trouble. They helped saved the lives of millions -mostly the very young and the very old - and saved nations from collapse and revolution, with no other thought than the hope to enjoy common, lasting peace. As an example, I ran into the following statistics provided by the American Embassy in Moscow:

Even before the United States entered World War II in December 1941, America sent arms and equipment to the Soviet Union to help it defeat the Nazi invasion. Totalling \$11.3 billion, or \$180 billion in today’s currency, the Lend-Lease Act of the United States supplied needed goods to the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1945 in support of what Stalin described to Roosevelt as the “enormous and difficult fight against the common enemy — bloodthirsty Hitlerism.”

- 400,000 jeeps & trucks
- 14,000 airplanes
- 8,000 tractors
- 3,000 tanks
- 1.5 million blankets
- 15 million pairs of army boots
- 107,000 tons of cotton
- 2.7 million tons of petrol products
- 4.5 million tons of food

In talking with my Italian schoolmates at Liceo Classico, most of them were convinced that the U.S. needed Italy for military and economic reasons. The extremely well-organized communist propaganda had permeated the Italian society from kindergarten to old age. Fortunately, the Christian Democrats were led by the P.M. Alcide De Gasperi, the best

statesman that Italy ever had. He was born in the Italian speaking South-Tyrol only a few kilometers from where I was born, and became a member of the Austrian Parliament in Vienna for several years, so his background was not really Italian.

My wise father, who went through two world wars, used to tell me that Italy was much more dangerous as an ally than as an enemy. In fact, the German armies became much more efficient in Italy, after the “Italian ally” got out of the war. In all fairness, the German general General Frido von Senger, a Rhodes scholar, who was a true gentleman and a Renaissance man, after WWII justified the Italians’ surrender: In his book “Das Krieg in Europa” he wrote that the Italians understood very soon that the war was lost beyond any possible hope.

Personally, I strongly believe that in no other country in the world the plant man grows stronger than in Italy, as Stendhal used to say. Probably, the exceptional individual growth is caused because Italy does not work as a system. Therefore, everyone who grows up in Italy, realizes at a very early age that, to survive, he needs to become “street smart” as a way of life. For instance, while preparing for my first driver license in Italy, with tests artificially complicated, I remember that most participants always wanted to know who the examiner was. Knowing how to drive was not as important as having the right connection. To summarize the mentality, I am taking the liberty of quoting a few lines from Luigi Barzini, Jr’s, “The Italians” masterfully written in 1964, and mostly still true today:

“The virtues necessary to become the head of anything in Italy, head of a convent, municipal kennel, a vegetable market mafia, a secondary railroad station, or the mayor of a mountain village, are such that could, in most other countries, easily make a man foreign minister, the alcove favorite of the queen, the chief of staff, or the president of the republic”.

The last week of the war in Italy: April 25 to May 2, 1945

After WWII with its 80 million victims, the world was devastated, except for the U.S., whose industrial and scientific might dominated the world. The only rival was the Soviet Union, a former ally led by the diabolically wily “affable uncle Joe”, as President FDR was fond of calling Joseph Stalin.

Because of my background, this book will mostly focus on the situation in Italy, starting with the end of WW2. I was and still am astonished to find out that all the Italians, whom I had questioned, did not know when the war finished in Italy. Historical documents show that the unconditional surrender was signed between the representatives of Nazi-Fascist troops and the Allies (American, British and a Soviet General) at the Royal Palace of Caserta on April 29, 1945, to be implemented on May 2nd at 2:00 pm; However, as far as all the Italians I have questioned, the official end of the war and the liberation of Italy from the Nazi-fascist dictatorship occurred on April 25, 1945, as the Italian partisans entered into Milan, while the German forces were retreating.

At the time, the Italian communist party was extremely well-organized and well-armed. They had more weapons than the entire Italian Army (Biography of President Francesco

Cossiga): 1,077 mortars, 212,000 automatic rifles, 40,000 machine guns, 415,000 hand grenades, 80,000 pistols, 5,335 artillery shells, 2,000 mines, 5049 kilos of dynamite, mostly hidden in farmhouses.

Their propaganda machine took over the media, the school-texts, and the movie industry to convince the Italians, confused and terrorized by the war, that the Partisans had won the war when they entered Milan on April 25th. International history states that the German troops were already retreating toward the Alps, pushed by the advancing American and British armies and air bombardments.

During the last week of April 1945, the Allies invaded the Po valley and moved rapidly to occupy northern Italy. Mussolini was killed and brutally hanged with his lover Claretta Petacci in Milan on April 29, and Hitler killed himself with his wife Eva Braun on April 30. The 10th Mountain Division entered Verona on April 26th. Communications were disrupted, and war went on. The elite 10th Mountain Division was met by the fanatical paratroopers and SS Waffen who fought for three days and nights along the northern banks of Lake Garda (Torbole and Riva). It's very sad that on April 30th General Darby was killed by an errant artillery shell in Torbole, after he and his troops had won the battles, had pacified the territory and the unconditional surrender had already been signed five days before.

To gather information from the German side, I came across the book "Das Krieg in Europa (The War in Europe, oddly titled "Neither Fear nor Hope", in the English translation. The Author was General Frido von Etterlin und Senger, commander of the Panzer divisions in Italy and chief strategist, under General Kesserling, of all the German operations from Sicily to Monte Cassino, the Gustav line, and the Gothic line. General von Senger has intrigued me as an extraordinary person. He was fluent in French, Italian and English. When he was 18, he was selected as a Rhodes Scholar; an experience that widened and shaped his life as a renaissance man. He always despised the Nazis and Hitler in particular; however, as a German patriot he felt the obligation to fight for his motherland. I mention him in particular because he realized that the war was lost. Consequently, he sympathized with the Italians, who surrendered on Sept. 8, 1943. He repeatedly tried in vain to convince the high German command to surrender. As a Benedictine layman, he was invited to a Christmas dinner by the monks of the Abbey at Monte Cassino. He gladly accepted on condition that he would be put in a place in the dining room that would prevent him from seeing where the Allies were located. What an incredible, true gentleman!

When he oversaw the operations in Sardinia and Corsica, after the Italian Government surrendered and switched sides, the Italian troops started fighting against the German troops. After long fights, the Italians surrendered, and Hitler gave the direct order to Gen. von Senger to shoot all the Italian officers. General von Senger was able to delay the execution. At the same time, on a daring night-operation he was able to organize a masterful evacuation of all the German forces in Sardinia and Corsica, by using all sort of boats, some powered by airplane engines. In spite of the allied dominion of air and water, the German convoys landed safely at Livorno without losses. Consequently, Hitler invited Gen. von Senger to Berlin for the highest decoration, which Gen. von Senger, reluctantly, had to accept.

During the last weeks of the war, General von Senger was living south of Trento as a

host of the Count Bossi-Fedrigotti, whose wife was the daughter of the officer in charge of training the Lipizzaner horses. The count was a member of the Italian Liberation Committee against the Germany occupation. General von Senger knew about the count's activity, but he never did anything about it because he considered that the count did the right duty as an Italian patriot. The two of them would get together in the evening, enjoying elevated conversations, trying to devise plans on how to make the lost war less painful for both the German military and the Italian population.

Although the unconditional surrender was to be implemented at 2:00 pm on May 2nd, the fanatic paratroopers and the Waffen SS were willing to fight to the last man. One captured paratrooper, wounded and unable to see, told his captors: "If I were able to see I'd kill all of you!" //

During the night of May 2nd, General von Senger spent two frantic hours on the phone to convince General Kesserling, the German supreme commander in Italy, to surrender, since everything was lost. Finally, General Kesserling agreed. Fortunately, Hitler had died on April 30th, otherwise, according to Gen. von Senger's book, Gen. Kesserling might not have agreed to surrender on May 2nd. The peace implementation of the end of WW2 in Italy occurred right at Torbole, just 30 km south of my village of Vezzano, where I remember seeing twelve flak 88 cannons in the town's square, overlooking the southern side of the valley.

When the fighting stopped, the frightened population was convinced by the religious authorities that the patron San Valentino had saved Vezzano from being destroyed. In fact, the celebration is still carried on with a procession. No further comment!

After reading several documents and books written by American, English, German and Italian authors, and protagonists, I expanded my interest in linking the events on a European scale.

8 May 1945 to 12 May 1949

These were the pivotal four years, during which, thanks to the essential military and economic assistance of the U.S., the longest period of peace, liberty, democracy, and prosperity was established in the history of Western Europe.

Destiny placed the enormous task on President Truman, on whose shoulders fell the responsibility, just after President Roosevelt's death on 12 April 1945. Up to that moment, Vice President Truman had been kept in the dark about major events.

We must go back to September 1944, when President Roosevelt and P.M. Churchill met in Quebec (Canada) to establish the war goals. Along came the very powerful Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. a good friend of President Roosevelt. Mr. Morgenthau, together with his assistant Dr. Harry White, had formulated the Morgenthau Plan, explained in their book "Germany Is Our Problem". The theory sustained that Germans were unyielding warriors, responsible for both WWI and WWII. To prevent WWII, Morgenthau's plan contemplated the dismantling of all the industries and commercial activities, reducing the German population to pastoral agriculture. According to many experts, such a plan would

have put the Germans a thousand years back and caused the starvation of about 10 million out of a total population of 60 million. At first Churchill was contrary to the Plan, as too punitive; however, Morgenthau, knowing that the British Empire was collapsing economically, proposed a loan of \$6.5 billion to the U.K. At that point, Churchill agreed to the Plan. Since Roosevelt was already convinced, the Plan would have been implemented immediately after the end of WWII. Fortunately for Europe and the world, President Truman was against the Morgenthau plan. He considered it much too punitive, remembering that the unfair Paris treaty at the end of WWI, had laid the basis for WWII.

Only seven years later, exactly in 1952, the Soviet spy Elizabeth Bentley, testifying at the American Senate, confessed that Dr. Harry White, who devised the Morgenthau Plan, was a Soviet spy. Evidently, the Morgenthau Plan had been conceived between the high caliber Soviet spy, Dr. White, and Stalin, to neutralize Germany, for an easy conquest of all of Europe by the Soviet Union, all the way to Portugal.

The Potsdam Conference (17 July to 2 August 1945)

On May 8, 1945, Germany signed an unconditional surrender that finished WWII in Europe. The U.S., the U.K and the Soviet Union planned the Potsdam Conference (July 17 - August 2) to decide how to set up a new Europe, especially Germany. Fortunately, for the survival of free world, Truman succeeded President Roosevelt on the day of his death, April 12, 1945. During the conference, Truman, Stalin, and Churchill (later substituted by Attlee), established the future of Europe, just after the end of WW2, while the war with Japan was still going on. Harry S. Truman understood Stalin's plans at Potsdam and did not trust "Uncle Joe". The Morgenthau Plan would have reduced 60 million Germans to the status of beggars.

Thanks to President Truman's determination, Morgenthau's revenge was prevented. During Roosevelt's presidency he had free access to the White House because his wife was an intimate friend of Mrs. Roosevelt. When he found out that he was not part of the American delegation for the Potsdam conference, he obtained an audience with President Truman, and insisted on joining the conference. When President Truman remarked that as Secretary of the Treasury he was badly needed in the United States, Mr. Morgenthau declared that either he went to Potsdam, or he would quit. Here is Truman's reply as reported by his daughter, Margaret Truman, in her magnificent book "Harry S. Truman": "If that is the way you feel, I'll accept your resignation, right now"! Grand, President Truman!!!

Although, President Roosevelt had kept V.P. Truman in the dark about the most important issues (including Project Manhattan), he quickly caught up during the sea voyage on the battleship Augusta on his way to Potsdam.

Stalin was thoroughly prepared in the most minute particulars. Churchill was an inspirational historic figure, the moral winner of WWII and a great speaker; however, the imminent military and economical decay of the British Empire, made him rather ineffective against Stalin, who only valued force.

The war with Japan was still going on and Truman was eager to convince Stalin to join the American forces to finish the war and save many American lives, since Japan still had a very strong military presence in Manchuria.

During the conference, via very secretly coded messages, Truman was informed that the experiment with the atomic bomb in the New Mexico desert had been successful. The Manhattan project on which the finest scientists in America and the U.K had been working for years at a cost of about \$23 billion in 2008 dollars had been completed. The explosion came as a big surprise since many experts believed the atomic fusion would never work. In fact, Admiral Leahy, the military advisor to both President Roosevelt and Truman, had declared: “The atomic bomb would never function, and I say this as an expert on explosives”.

The day after the announcement, President Truman informed Marshall Stalin that a new, tremendous weapon had successfully exploded. Stalin received the information with non-chalance, just recommending to make good use of it. Both the American and the British delegation interpreted Stalin’s reaction as proof that he did not realize the enormous importance of the atom bomb. On the contrary, several years later, it was learned that Stalin was very well informed because he had key people working on the Manhattan Project, who were Soviet spies. The most infamous was Dr. Klaus Fuchs, who passed nuclear secrets to the Soviets.

End of WWII in Japan

The surrender of Japan on August 14th, 1945 was forced by the horrific, but necessary decision to use the atom bombs. According to the ratio of the carnage in island hopping of American forces against Japanese forces, it was calculated that shortening the war saved about 10 million Japanese lives and one million American lives.

After the war was over, Japan enjoyed great benevolence because of General Douglas MacArthur’s enlightened vision. The American State Department, the British Foreign Office and the Soviet Union wanted to process Emperor Hirohito as a war criminal. Gen. MacArthur emphasized that the Emperor was sacred to the Japanese, who would have started a guerrilla warfare in his defense.

The General had lived in the Orient and valued and respected the Japanese mentality, managing to steer Japan toward democracy, freedom, and prosperity through Emperor Hirohito, who fully collaborated.

In his “Reminiscences” General MacArthur lists the tasks that he faced as Governor of occupied Japan. Here are a few: Destroy the military power. Punish war criminals. Build the structure of representative government. Modernize the Constitution. Hold free elections. Enfranchise the women. Release the political prisoners. Liberate the farmers. Establish a free labor movement. Encourage a free economy. Develop a free and responsible press. Liberalize education. Separate church from state.

Practically, General MacArthur’s enlightened vision put Japan back on its feet and established a democratic country.

In fact, the Japan's Constitution was mostly drafted by American authors. A few Japanese scholars reviewed and modified it. Much of the drafting was done by two senior army officers with law degrees: Milo Rowell and Courtney Whitney, although others chosen by MacArthur had a large say in the document.

Getting back to the beginning of August 1945, just after Truman's return to Washington, the American Government sent an ultimatum to Japan demanding an unconditional surrender. The Japanese Government ignored the ultimatum, so Truman decided to drop the first, devastating atomic bomb on Hiroshima. After another non-response by the Japanese, Truman decided to drop the second bomb on Nagasaki.

I was a seven-year-old kid, in my grandfather's orchard during a peaceful, sunny afternoon, but I vividly remember my father commenting on the historical event as he was reading the headlines in the Italian paper "Corriere della Sera."

President Truman's decision was highly criticized, and it still is nowadays, but it stopped the war and saved millions of American and Japanese lives.

The Soviets were extremely impressed, fearing that the next target might be Moscow. Stalin had come to Potsdam not to negotiate, but to impose his terms on the Anglo-Americans. Soviet losses had been enormous. During the last two weeks of the war, the Soviets used 6,000 planes and 4,000 tanks, and lost about 300,000 soldiers. The civilian deaths in the Soviet Union exceeded 8 million people. Therefore, Stalin felt he had the right take over Europe. The following nations fell under the Soviet Union: East Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Czech-Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Georgia. Yugoslavia and Albania were already communist, while in Italy, the communists had more weapons hidden on the farms and on the mountains, than the remaining Italian armed forces.

A historical speech was delivered by Winston Churchill, as a private citizen, at Westminster College at Fulton, MO on March 5, 1946. It illustrated the tragic situation in eastern Europe just ten months after the end of WWII:

"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow. Athens alone -- Greece with its immortal glories -- is free to decide its future at an election under British, American, and French observation. The Russian-dominated Polish Government has been encouraged to make enormous and wrongful inroads upon Germany, and mass expulsions of millions of Germans on a scale grievous and undreamed-of are now taking place. The Communist parties, which were very small in all these Eastern States of Europe, have been raised to pre-eminence and power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control. Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case, and so far, except in Czechoslovakia, there is no true democracy."

Paris Peace Conference from 29 July, 1946 to 15 October 1946

The purpose of the Peace Conference in Paris, attended by the representatives of 21 nations, was to draw up recommendations for peace treaties with Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Italy, and Rumania. Here are the first lines of the speech delivered by the Italian P.M Alcide De Gasperi:

“I’m addressing this world congress with the feeling that everything, except your personal courtesy, is against me. Above all, being considered a defendant, after most of you have already reached your conclusions, it is my duty in front of the conscience of my country to defend its survival, speaking as an Italian; I feel the responsibility and the right to speak as a democratic antifascist, representing a new Republic with the universal values of Christianity for the cooperation among people for a lasting, reconstructive peace.”

At the end of the speech, there was dead silence. As De Gasperi was walking back to his place at the end of the room, the American Secretary of State James Byrnes, stopped him to shake his hand, saying, “You’re a good man”.

Mr. Byrnes felt it was the right thing to do, considering that De Gasperi had already suffered enough, having been jailed by the Fascists.

Consequently, the P.M De Gasperi was invited to visit the U.S. in January 1947, where he had the honor of speaking at a joint session of Congress.

Here is a comment by the famous Walter Lipmann, that gives De Gasperi his due: “Mr. De Gasperi is no-enemy statesman. Instead, he has always been our ally and the partisan of the civilization, which the war was fought to defend.” After his visit, the United States initiated generous reconstruction help to a famished country.

Italian P.M. De Gasperi’s trip to the U.S. from January 3rd to 15th, 1947

“We hope that this trip, promoted by the generosity of the United States will generate a resumption of the cultural and commercial exchanges between the two countries... We’re hoping for bread for our children, coal for our furnaces, raw material to rebuild our homes, railroads, hospitals, schools, churches: raw material not only for building walls, but also for building spirits.”

From 1947 to 1949: Soviet Union’s harassment for expansion into Western Europe

After the end of WWII, the Soviets had 33 well-armed divisions, versus 3.5 American divisions, a few British and French with old equipment. In 1947, communist rebels in Greece and Turkey were fighting to overthrow the two governments.

On Friday, February 21, 1947, the British Embassy informed the U.S. State Department officials that Great Britain could no longer provide financial aid to the governments of Gre-

ece and Turkey, two countries under communist attacks. American policymakers had been monitoring Greece's crumbling economic and political conditions, especially the rise of the Communist-led insurgency known as the National Liberation Front, or the EAM/ELAS. The United States had also been following events in Turkey, where a weak government faced Soviet pressure to share control of the strategic Dardanelle Straits. When Britain announced that it would withdraw aid to Greece and Turkey, the responsibility was passed on to the United States.

In a meeting between Congressmen and State Department officials, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson articulated what would later become known as the domino theory. He stated that more was at stake than Greece and Turkey, for if those two key states should fall, communism would likely spread south to Iran and as far east as India. Acheson concluded that not since the days of Rome and Carthage had such a polarization of power existed. The stunned legislators agreed to endorse the program on the condition that President Truman stress the severity of the crisis in an address to Congress and in a radio broadcast to the American people.

Addressing a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman asked for \$400 million in military and economic assistance for Greece and Turkey and established a doctrine, aptly characterized as the Truman Doctrine, that would guide U.S. diplomacy for the next 40 years. President Truman declared, "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." The sanction of aid to Greece and Turkey by a Republican Congress indicated the beginning of a long and enduring bipartisan cold war foreign policy. The above message became known as "The Truman Doctrine".

The Berlin Airlift

On June 24, 1948, the Soviets blocked the Autobahn, the railroad and the waterways that gave access to the city of Berlin, which was divided into four zones: American, British, Soviet and French. The CIA, the American and British generals promptly informed President Truman that the western powers had no military chances against the Soviets. Finally, someone thought of arranging an airlift to supply food and fuel to the over 2 million people living in West Berlin. A logistic masterpiece was set up with planes taking off every 30 seconds 24-7 regardless of the weather and the threatening buzzing of Soviet fighter planes that were trying every possible menage short of actual firing, to scare and confuse the pilots, mostly American and British. Miraculously, the daily supplies amounted to as many as 8,000 tons per day. Unfortunately, in various accidents, mostly due to bad weather, 12 planes were lost with their crews.

After eleven months, exactly on May 12, 1949, the Soviets decided to reopen the access to West Berlin. Truman's daughter, Margaret, in her splendid book "Harry S. Truman" pointed out that the **President had to fend off several times the request by Secretary of Defense Forrestal to use the atomic bomb against the Soviet Union. In fact, fleets of B-29s, B-50s and B-36s were positioned with atomic bombs in Great Britain, Egypt, Okinawa, and Alaska ready to hit 133 targets in the Soviet Union.**

Fortunately, at the time, the Soviet Union did not have the atomic bomb. Their first-hand knowledge of the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan, the unwavering determination of President Truman, and the information provided by his spies, convinced Marshall Stalin not to run the risk of seeing his country atomized.

The Marshall Plan (1948-1952)

An inspirational, very generous vision that involved 5% of the American GNP (\$13 billion, equivalent to about \$100 billion today), that included many advantages for the sixteen benefiting nations, including former enemies Germany and Italy. The goal of the Plan was to create prosperous markets for exchanging products, restore Democracy, capitalism, and a new military alliance to ensure a valid defense against the threats of the Soviet Union.

In the meantime, on April 4th, 1949 NATO was formed. So far, it has guaranteed, 76 years of peace, liberty, democracy and prosperity to Western Europe.

Thank you, America, and President Truman in particular.

Happy ten years at “Ca’Serena” on Lago di Ledro

From 1947 to 1957 was a significant chunk of my life from childhood to young adulthood at Lake Ledro with three months of carefree summer vacations every year. When I was ten, my parents bought a summer-home called “Ca’ Serena” on the shores of a splendid, crystal-clear alpine lake called “Lago di Ledro”.

For the next ten summer years it was my paradise. I remember learning how to operate a small sailboat at age eleven. With my sister, who was only eight, we decided to cross the lake. We were both good swimmers and had no fear. When we reached the other side of the lake, I was just coasting along the shore, when a kid about my age threw a rock that hit me on the right side of the head, very close to my temple. I was stunned, but managed to jump into the water, furiously swim a few meters before reaching the beach and running with vengeance to punish the little bastard. Unfortunately, as I was catching up with him, he started yelling and was able to run into a gate that a group of catholic sisters had opened for him. I managed to climb over the gate but was stopped by the sisters. The kid must have been the son of the director of the institution because the sisters and other people who gathered around started blaming my parents for allowing such little children to operate the sailboat. I did not say anything to my parents because I was afraid that they would have forbidden me from using the sailboat. End of the story. However, whenever I pass in front of that building, it still bothers me that the potential murderer got away unpunished.

Every summer, my lucky, carefree life, continued for the next ten years. When it was not raining, I would jump out of my window on the second floor, first thing in the morning, and start running at full speed toward the lake. Without stopping I’d jump into the crystal-clear water and swim as long as I wanted, ready for a hearty breakfast with the rest of the family.

We often hosted friends my own age with whom I played soccer galore in the nearby town. We would jog for about 3 Kms, play a soccer match and jog back home.

When I was 14 my father bought me a Vespa, a motor scooter that still has a mystique about it. It became an extension of my body and helped me a lot in being popular with the girls, whom I had started to be interested in. Most of the time they would be happy to take a spin on the back seat. However, one of them, Maria Teresa, who very good looking, tall, with raven black hair, blue eyes and a splendid smile, wanted to learn how to ride the Vespa. I reluctantly allowed her to operate it, with me on the back seat. Her long black hair caressing my face made me feel in paradise. Also, having my hands free, while she was concentrating on “piloting” the Vespa, I took advantage to occasionally hold on to her well-developed boobs while we toured my favorite Lake Garda. I still remember the German tourists driving in the opposite direction, who were smiling in seeing my young initiative.

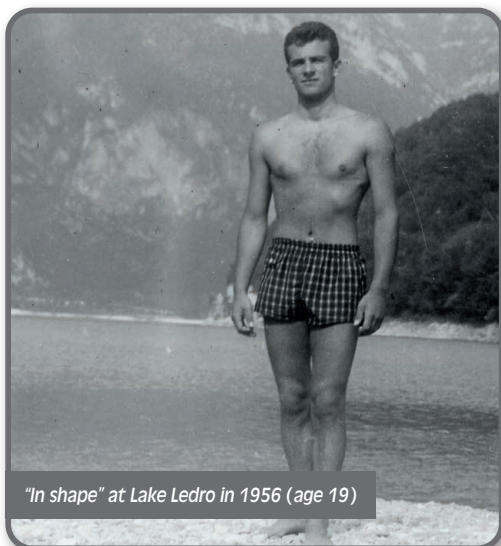
My only commitments concerned studying and soccer. For the former, thinking about it, now, I had the wrong approach. Instead of concentrating on deepening my learning on the various subjects, I concentrated on just passing the written tests and surviving scary interrogations.

Unfortunately, the environment was conducive to that type of thinking. The only exception was provided by the magnificent Prof. Renzo Dalponte who made me love German literature.

At my very serious and selective “Liceo Classico Prati” a few of the students had a “sporty” attitude. Among them I remember Tullio Largaiolli, who was one or two years my senior. Although, in soccer, I was better than he was, he had a very strong physique and a beautiful sunny smile. Instead of the Vespa he was riding a real motorcycle: “Guzzi 250cc. During the warm months, while riding slowly around Trento, if he spotted a good-looking girl on a sidewalk close to the road, he would slow down, take his glove off his right hand, give a significant pat on the girl’s derriere, and take off in joyous acceleration. Obviously, those were the days before “Me too!”



With the splendid Maria Teresa



“In shape” at Lake Ledro in 1956 (age 19)

Attempts at becoming a “great” soccer player

I was so taken by Maria Teresa that I wanted to play for her town’s soccer team, Molina, to help them win the championship of the local clubs. However, since I was already enrolled in the Trento Boys Team, it was forbidden to enroll in other clubs. The president of the Molina Football Club and the coach talked it over and proposed to use me under the false name, Bottamedi, who was a second stringer for Molina. When the referee called everyone’s names before the match, I gave my false one: Bottamedi. During the game I had to be careful not to talk because the Molina boys spoke a local dialect that I was not very familiar with. Also, my style of playing was more sophisticated than the country “Molina” style based on sheer strength. I had to speak a bit during the match and noticed that some of the opponents were starting to get suspicious. Also, since I used to run track, I was much faster than the opponents, so I had to slow down not to be noticed too much. To make a long story short I scored the only goal for Molina and we ended up 1 to 1. On the way back to

the town of Molina, Maria Teresa rode on my Vespa instead of going back on the truck with the other fans. During the trip she casually asked me who had scored.

What a disappointment! I gave a false name, risking being disqualified for a year, made the only goal so her team Molina was not defeated, and she did not even notice who scored? I was seventeen and thought I had a lot to learn about life. However, now that I am over 80, I have not learned much more, since every experience is different. By the way, here is quote I like about experience: "The experience I gained at age 21 would be useful if I were 21 again, but I'm 71 and new at it and keep making 71 age mistakes" (Robert Brault).

My dream was to become a famous soccer player. However, growing up in a little village I had to play in the local team made up by farm boys who were strong, but slow and tired by having to carry heavy loads all day long. I was practically self-taught. Fortunately, my high school was in Trento (100,000 inhabitants) where I managed to play with the junior members of the Trento team. Since TV was not operational in Italy, I had no access to watch top players from whom one would learn a lot. As soon as we had the first black and white TV, I remember seeing the famous Argentinian player Omar Sivori "El Cabezón". As he was approaching the goal, the goalie started running out to get to the ball from him. The skillful champion Sivori, instead of trying to kick the ball hard into the goal, waited for the goalie to come out, did a body fake on the right-hand side while caressing the ball with the outer part of his left foot, and gingerly jogged into the goal with the ball practically attached to his left foot! The following Sunday I was in a similar situation, where I normally would have tried to kick the ball hard into the goal. Thinking of Sivori, I performed his trick and the spectators applauded, while I scored, entering the goal with the ball almost attached to my left foot. Since I was a naturally "left-footed" I never thought of kicking the ball with my right foot. In addition, my physician father advised me not to hit the ball with my head because it might have caused a concussion. Consequently, I was playing with two self-inflicted handicaps. Fortunately, a young doctor came to substitute my father. He was smart, fast and short, but had trained himself to hit the ball well with his head. He taught me how to do the same, while encouraging me to use my right foot as well, for kicking the ball. His coaching made me into a much more effective player. In fact, I became a top scorer. I was sixteen, had a Vespa, and started going out with girls to dances. The priests considered me a bad example and punished me by flunking me. In all sincerity, at the time I was not a good student. The following year I enrolled in the rival "Liceo Classico Prati" in Trento, that was co-ed. I loved the new atmosphere and did well in school. Once a year we had a soccer match Arcivescovile vs. Prati. At the time, the Arcivescovile had a very strong team with junior players for the city of Trento. We, at Liceo Prati, were sort of a motley crew and had not a chance in the world. However, somehow, I was in top form and scored three goals: two headers and one with my recently discovered right foot. Therefore, our team won 3 vs 2, with the Arcivescovile boys in tears. Too bad there is no record of it, except in my memory./

I was fast and agile, however I noticed that my upper body was not strong enough. Then I found a body building book. By practicing the instructions 30 minutes a day for a year with and without weights, I developed a good physique, which allowed me to be much more effective in playing soccer. Although I was practically self-taught, I had the satisfaction of being selected for try-outs with the Italian National Junior Team in Verona. I still regret the interruption of my soccer career since I decided to go to college in the U.S where soccer was practically unknown.



First one on the left with the coach and my five teammates trying out for the Junior Italian National Team.

Adventures with friends, whose mother owned a taxi-limo service near my home

In my late teens, whenever I was able to take a break from studying, I used to hang around with a couple of brothers whose mother owned the only gas station in the valley along with a taxi-limo service performed with the elegant Lancia Aprilia car that could carry four or max five people, including the driver. On September 8th, 1954 we decided to go to Monza to watch the Formula 1 Grand Prix. We were all teenagers, except for a Roman friend who, at age 27, we used to call nonno (Grandpa). We managed to pack eight of us into the car. Amazing how flexible we were as determined teenagers. None of us had ever been outside Trentino, but Flavio, our driver, who had a taxi license, drove us skillfully there and back. What an adventure. The Grand Prix was a lot of fun to watch because, in those days one could stay very close to the racetrack and be able to see the faces of the race drivers, who just wore a small helmet and goggles. It was there that I learned how to take curves at great speed. The race drivers did not take the curves smoothly. They managed to negotiate them by constantly moving the steering wheel back and forth. Then, when the back of the car tended to slide off the road, they skillfully corrected the trajectory. “Controsterzo = Counter-steering”. A work of art.

The top competing cars were the new Mercedes called “Silver Arrows”, the Ferraris and the Maseratis. As Italian fans, we were disappointed because a Mercedes, driven by the Argentinian super-star Manuel Fangio, came in first. The Ferrari of the Italian ace, Alberto Ascari, broke down just before the end of the race. We had fun during the return trip along the shores of Lake Garda, and got home happy and exhausted.

I have to mention a little episode that made us laugh for many years. In those days there was no autostrada so all the traffic from the Brenner to Lake Garda went through the little town where my friends had the gas station, strategically placed on a curve that invited the drivers to stop there. During the German vacations, the tourists would drive slowly and, occasional stop for gas or for directions. All of them asked, in German, how many Kms to

Riva, the first town on the Northern shore of Lake Garda. My friend Flavio would always have the same answer, in perfect German: 25 km, then have a nice trip and aufwiedersehen. Surprisingly, one of the tourists asked him, in German, “How many Kms to Arco?” Flavio did not know how to say 21 km in German, so he made the following “historical” reply in perfect German: “Fuenf und swanzig Kilometers und vier Kilometer zurueck”, i.e. “Twenty-five Kms and four Kms back”.

Occasionally, when there was an interesting movie in Trento (20 kms away), our group would get together and have Flavio drive us in his “Lancia-Aurelia”. As usual, we managed to pack in eight of us for the trip; however, there was also Bino, a very friendly guy, who was working as an apprentice baker in the next house. All of us wanted to take him along, but there was not an inch of space anywhere. Then, one of us came up with the solution: “Tie Bino onto the roof of the car and drive, slowly, for 12 km into Trento. We tied him carefully on top of the roof with ropes that went around the inside of the car, keeping the windows partially open, so we could communicate with the “rider” on top. After the movie, around midnight, we repeated the operation and started driving back home. After a couple of KM’s as we were driving along the road that offers a spending view of the city of Trento with all the streetlights on, Bino started pounding on the roof of the car. Flavio stopped the car, slowly, and we all got out quite concerned. A tied-up, beaming Bino, looks at us with a big grin and says”, “Admire the splendid view: It looks like Verona at night”. We managed to laugh for many years...

My high school was called “Liceo Classico” where one studied the humanities very intensely. We had ancient Latin and Greek, with German as the only modern language. Very luckily, I had the famous Professor Renzo Dalponte, who had studied in Switzerland and Germany.

He was very intelligent, looked like my favorite actor Kurd Juergens, was a fantastic teacher and made me love German literature. Although he was strict, he always had time to tell short jokes. During our summer vacation in 1951, he took 30 of us students to visit Switzerland and Germany. I remember Frankfurt and Cologne totally destroyed. In fact, the only building still standing in Cologne was the battered cathedral.

The environment at our school was very selective, book wise. Personality, social graces, physical skills were considered irrelevant. Only grades counted! What a grim change from the ancient Roman doctrine of “mens sana in corpore sano” (healthy mind in a healthy body). The professors were good, but some were almost sadistic and intimidating. My math teacher scared me so much that I was unable to reason when interrogated. In fact, the terror remained with me until I was more than 30 years old. When I had to figure out the bill for guests that were staying in a hotel that I was managing, I had to go back to the office with an excuse to do the calculations alone. After a few minutes, I would return with a satisfied smile and present the bill to the customer.

According to my experiences, the major differences between schools in Italy and the States was the rapport between teachers and students. In Italy, teachers were seen as adversaries who should be fooled with all kinds of tricks to get a passing grade. The knowledge of the various subjects was secondary. It was more important to be on the good side of the teacher, with the hope that he would be more indulgent in his grades. Always according to

my experience, in the States the teachers worked with the students as teammates. Consequently, in Italy there was a mutual, almost hostile atmosphere, while in the States everything was much more relaxed. Although grades were important, in the States the goal was to create citizens, who would be well-rounded persons in society.

At the end of Liceo Classico I decided to study abroad because Trento and Italy seemed too limited to me. Thanks to my father, I had worldwide visions. The obvious choice would have been Germany since I had studied German in school. However, something irrepressibly subliminal got into my mind and heart. Probably because I remembered that a few years earlier I had seen a young American lady, of Italian descent named Lily, who married my near-town neighbor Ezio Bressan. In her living room I saw magazines like “The Saturday evening Post” and “Life” with beautiful colored pictures of splendid cars and elegant homes, just like in the movies. I thought I had seen paradise, and I never forgot. Consequently, I wanted to go to college in the U.S.

Everyone I knew tried to discourage me, pointing out that it would have been impossible without first learning English at an academic level. Regardless, like Caesar, my die was cast!

I obsessively studied English with records, the Voice of America, and songs. The first songs, which I started to understand, were “Love Me Tender” by Elvis and “White Christmas” by Bing Crosby.

Winter 1957: Admitted to Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio and transatlantic crossing on the ocean liner “Augustus”

Trained to Genoa with my parents and embarked cabin class on the ship “Augustus”. The crossing and the company were beautiful. Nothing to do all day except eat, dance and sleep. My roommate was a nice Italian American Marine, who spoke a bit of Italian. Once I saw him reading the “Stars & Stripes”. There were words in the titles that I did not know, so I asked him. He turned toward me with a worried expression on his face, saying, “I don’t want to discourage you, but how can you expect to attend college if you can’t even read a newspaper”? After he left the room, I started crying, realizing how right he was. On the other hand, there was no turning back. After ten days, on January 7, 1958 we landed in New York. I remember that an official delegation came onboard to assist the students. They found out that my Italian passport expired after six months, while the minimum period was a year. Consequently, a policeman escorted me in a taxi to the Italian Embassy, where an official renewed it for two years. I was happy to get a free tour, surprising the policemen with my knowledge of the names of the main skyscrapers of N.Y.C. When I got back to the ship, I went through customs, escorted by US Government volunteers, who assisted me all the way. Although I was planning to go by train from N.Y.C to Alliance, Ohio, a nice rep from TrailWays busses gave me a price \$50.00 cheaper than the train ticket. Being a penniless student, I immediately took the deal.

This nice gentleman took the time to show me where to store my two heavy suitcases, and started showing me N.Y.C. He even took me to the top of the Empire State Building and

paid for the ride. I wanted to pay him, but he said: Just send me a postcard to let me know you arrived. In the confusion of events, I never did and still regret it. A belated thank you to an unknown, true New York gentleman.

It was around noon and my bus was scheduled to leave at 10:30 pm, so I started walking around Manhattan in awe. Eventually I got hungry and saw a cafeteria sign. I had no idea of what a cafeteria was, but it looked like they had food. I went in and sat down at a table waiting for a waiter. No one came, so I asked a customer what the procedure was. He told me to just pick up a tray, get in line, pick any food I wanted and pay at the end. I decided to get a coca cola and a sandwich with ham and cheese. The girl across the counter understood coke and cheese but did not understand my “ham” pronounced “am” because in Italian we do not pronounce the “h” in front of a word. She asked me if I was German, since I was blond with blue eyes. When I told her I was Italian, they got a cook from Trieste who asked me what I wanted. I told him in Italian, and he ordered ham and cheese pronouncing the “h”, so I had my first English lesson in America. After lunch, I kept walking around following a good map of N.Y, that I had brought from Italy. Saw a sign for a double feature, which sounded good, although I really did not know what it meant; went in and enjoyed it, although I understood very little. Before my 10:30 pm bus trip I called my sponsor, Ezio, in Alliance, OH. In those days, one had to use operators at public phone booths. The operator started asking me where I was calling from, in order to charge me the proper amount. I was unable to understand what she wanted because everything was new to me. I even told her that I was not an American. She kindly replied that it was abundantly clear, but she still needed to know the phone number of where I was calling from. I told her it was a public phone booth (in Italy public phones had no numbers because the operator was right there with her own switch board). Finally, she was able to make me understand that I needed to give her the phone number written on the phone just in front of me, i.e. Columbus etc. Finally, I understood and was able to talk to my sponsor, Ezio. As soon as the bus got going, a half-drunk guy asked me when the bus was due to arrive at St. Louis. Fortunately, other passengers intervened, saying the bus was going to Pittsburgh, my intermediate destination, before taking the connection to Salem, near Alliance. Arrival was due in Salem, OH at 10:30 the following morning. After an all-night trip the bus arrived at the Trail-Ways station in Pittsburgh. Although I was dead tired, I looked at the porters unloading the trunk of our bus. Fortunately, I was on the right-hand side and recognized my two suitcases that were being unloaded. I jumped out of the bus and told our driver: Those are my suitcases, “I have the ticket”, waving my baggage receipt. There was a year worth of clothes in the two suitcases, and I cannot even imagine if they had gotten lost.

The following morning my sponsor picked me up, both of us happy for my trip survival, and we went grocery shopping in a supermarket. I had never seen a supermarket and was flabbergasted by the size and the fact that people were free to pick whatever they wanted and pay at the cash register before leaving. BTW, when I returned to Italy the following summer, I told my Italian friends about the supermarkets in America. Everyone commented that they would never work in Italy because Italians wanted personal service and would hide products in their pockets. No comment!

College life

First day at the Student Union. The house master showed me my room, which had a spring bed with a mattress, a chair, and a table. I had grown up with two maids who made my bed, washed, and ironed my clothes. Welcome to America, I thought! Fortunately, all the students were very friendly and helpful, so I fit in very easily. My first friend was Bob Kreisel, an intelligent, sensitive student, going through college on a GI bill. He had served as a paratrooper in Germany and was full of anecdotes about his GI life in Germany at same time when Elvis Presley was serving.

My advisor, Mr. Tripp, the Registrar at MUC, recommended as subjects, English, American History, and other credits to better acquaint me with the English language and the American culture.

After carefully studying the list of the 126-credit necessary for graduation in four years, I thought: Why should I compete with Americans who had been studying these subjects from first grade through high school? So, I chose subjects that I already had in my own curriculum, such as: Latin, German, European History, Geology. In addition, I chose Speech and Health. I figured that the former was a challenge, starting from zero, the latter was fun because I was in top physical shape.

First lesson: Geography taught by Dr. “Rocky” Rice, a great, fun teacher who liked to drive a hearse in which he’d take us on field trips. Bob Kreisel told me that the cool students liked to sit on the back row of the classroom, so I chose the very last row with a group of other “cool” guys. After forty minutes of a 45-minute lesson, I finally understood one word: OK!

Fortunately, all the tests were written instead of the torturing oral interrogations that I was used to in my Liceo Classico. With my background of Italian, Latin, Greek and German, I easily understood all the scientific words, although I was not able to pronounce them in English.

For instance, perseverance was easy, while stick-to-itiveness was difficult. After I learned what it meant, I wrote a protest note to the professors who were substituting the very effective, ancient word “PERSEVERANCE”, which became a life-long mantra for me.

While reading Calvin Coolidge’s autobiography I realized that my “Liceo Classico” education was very similar to his. In my opinion that type of education represents the essence of our western values transmitted from the Ancient Greeks and Romans, as President Coolidge wrote so eloquently:

“Through my teachers, I first learned of the glory and grandeur of the ancient civilization that grew up around the Mediterranean and in Mesopotamia. Under their guidance I beheld the marvels of old Babylon, I marched with the TenThousands of Xenophon, I witnessed the conflict around beleaguered Troy which doomed that proud city to pillage and flames, I heard the tramp of the invincible legions of Rome, I saw the victories galleys of the Eternal

city carrying destruction to the Carthaginian shore, and I listened to the lofty eloquence of Cicero and the matchless imagery of Homer. They gave me the vision of the world when it was young and showed me how it grew. It seems to me that it is almost impossible for those who have not traveled that road to reach a very clear conception of what the world now means”.

It was in that period that I learned something of the thread of events that ran from the Euphrates and the Nile through Athens to the Tiber and thence stretched on to the Seine and the Thames to be carried over to the James, the Charles and the Hudson. I found that the English language was generously compounded with Greek and Latin, which it was necessary to know if I was to understand my native tongue. I discovered that our ideas of democracy came from the agora of Greece, and our ideas of liberty came from the forum of Rome. Something of the sequence of history was revealed to me, so that I began to understand the significance of our own times and our own country”.

My social life was limited to the Saturday night show, where I usually took a co-ed after picking her up with my sponsor’s, magnificent 1953 Road-Master Buick. One of the films I liked the most was “GIGI” with Leslie Caron and Maurice Chevalier who sang the immortal “Thank Heavens for Little Girls”. After the movies, we went for an ice cream and parked the car in some quiet spot. In those days, the Catholic families had the statue of the Madonna



Before the “Gala Dance” at Mount Union College with the Norwegian Exchange student Jureen Aanensen

placed on the dashboard to protect the family. My good sponsor, Ezio, used to remark that when I took his car back the statue of the Madonna was always turned around, looking toward the outside instead of the inside of the car. Happy days...

One day, an exchange student from Norway, Jureen, on a Fulbright scholarship, was attending MUC for a year. Being both European, we immediately liked each other and kept going out together until she returned to Norway, which I got to know through her descriptions. The second year there was another girl, Ann, from Sweden, guest of the family of the President of the College. She was only 17 years old, attending the last year of high school. Somehow, she was attracted to me more than I was to her; however, she was good looking, smart, witty and much more open minded than the average American collegiate girls who all had the same dating procedures and habits. No kiss on the first date etc. etc, which, to me, took away all the spontaneity. As soon as the President found out that we were sort of dating, he ordered me not to ever take her to my apartment. I would have probably not done it if he had not approached me that way. It turned out that she ended up in my apartment. As an uninhibited, young Swedish girl, she suggested a “hot” shower together. Consequently, we ended up naked in my bed. As I was ready to fulfill our mutual enthusiasm, she said, sort of matter of fact: “From this moment on I will not be a virgin anymore”. Those words surprised me and shocked my conscience to the point that I abstained. We remained friends but stopped dating. Ten years after the non-fact, she somehow traced me back when I was running my bungalows in Italy. She had come all the way from Sweden just to pay me a “courtesy” visit with her husband.

By studying hard and taking full advantage of the subjects that I had already studied in Italian, I was able to get a B- average during my first Semester. The Rotary Club of Salem, OH, somehow, found out that I was the only foreign student at MUC, and invited me to give a speech about my experience in America. I practiced my speech with a tape recorder. My “home-made” pronunciation made it rather difficult to understand me because I noticed that several people were straining, making facial efforts. While we were having lunch, the President of the club told me that they were planning to sponsor a foreign student from Taiwan to attend Mount Union College. Although I was usually shy, I unabashedly said, “Why don’t you sponsor me? I’m foreign and I’m already here”. Although I caught them by surprise, after a few months the Salem Rotary Club granted me a \$2,000.00 loan, which paid for almost two years of college, full board. Six months after graduation I paid the loan back, thanking the club; however, I regret not having kept up some correspondence with them. Will send them a copy of my “Life Outside the Box.”

My main regret in college was not being able to play soccer, which the whole world, except the U.S., calls football. I whimsically saw my same-age student, Aga Khan Karim, pictured on the front page of “LIFE” magazine playing soccer at Harvard U. There I was, in Ohio, idle as a former semi-pro soccer player. Regrets I have a few...I tried American sports, but I was awkwardly moving in slow motion in comparison with the other students who had grown up with those sports. Twice a week we had a swimming course. The class was scheduled at 1:00 pm, right after lunch. In Italy, I had grown up with the rule that one must wait two hours after a meal, before going for a swim. Since I was used to swimming in mountain lakes with no lifeguards, I never wanted to take a chance. In college, however, I was swimming in the YMCA pool, so someone will surely save me. In practice, I never had any trouble, except being slow in free style, which all the American kids knew very well, while I was good only in breaststroke, that nobody else practiced or cared about.

My only sport satisfaction was at the gym, when the coach occasionally would allow us to play soccer. When the ball was placed on the ground, all the other “soccer” players were moving in slow motion. I specifically remember our star basketball player, a big black guy on a scholarship, opposite me at the center with the ball placed in the middle of the circle. When the coach whistled, I was always able to get to the ball before him. With a body fake, I would get him off balance, dribble around him, on his right or left side, and go on with the ball. Eventually, he tried to figure it out by spreading his long legs and enormous feet around the center. It made it even easier for me to tip the ball between his legs and run around him to pick it up. On the contrary, whenever I tried to compete in American sports, I was the one who moved in slow motion. As the saying goes, “It’s hard to teach new tricks to an old dog”.

The food in the cafeteria was ok and abundant. They had a chocolate milk, which was not available in Italy, so I enjoyed a lot of it. Consequently, when I returned to Italy in the summer, after my first semester, I was sporting a little belly. Imagine, a “former athlete” with a belly at age twenty! I took care of that in a few weeks by just returning to a regular Italian diet plus a lot of tennis and swimming.

On the way back to college, in the fall, I took the usual train ride through France and boarded a student ship at Le-Havre. There were a couple of beautiful Canadian college girls from Vancouver, who had spent a couple of months in Europe. They kept telling me how much they had enjoyed Italy: “We cried when we had to leave Italy to return to college in the fall”. When we had to depart in NYC, I was sorry not to be able to follow them, crossing the US on route 66, just like in the movies. At Mount Union College, I was enjoying college life, although I was studying and working hard with little time for recreation. Occasionally, some of my college friends would invite me to their homes, especially in the Pittsburgh area. My good friend, Bob Kreisel, told me that being Italian in Pittsburgh, did not sound impressive, if I wanted to pick up girls on our evenings out, so I first opted for French, but then I switched to Fin, figuring that the chances of finding someone from Finland were almost nil. Besides, no one had any prejudices for or against Fins, so I was free to just be myself.

I am happy to say that, after a couple of generations, Italians born in the States have made incredible progresses in all fields. Italian families have always been very grateful for the opportunities that the American system was offering. They strongly encouraged their children to get a good education. The ones from southern Italy, who did not have any opportunities in their native land, made all kinds of sacrifices at the bottom of the American society. Some were in the underworld, but their children were proud to join the Marines or emerge in the finest schools. Consequently, Italian-Americans in the States, nowadays, are doing very well, socially and economically.

For instance, the Director of the Apollo program was Rocco Petrone. Then there are the brothers Cuomos and Anthony Fauci. Recently, the formidable Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo, whose interview with Christiane Amampour on CNN, was formidable. There also is an incredible story about General Christopher Cavoli, who was nominated NATO Supreme Commander on June 22, 2022. As a 10 old kid, he was living in Vicenza, where his father, Ivo, was the Post Commander as an Army Col. At the time I was running the Sport Hotel in Monte Bondone where we used to host “Class in the Snow” for groups of Italian and American school children. Chris was one of them, and now he’s sitting at General Eisenhower’s desk as NATO Supreme Commander.

Another friend, Fred Kunkel, invited me to spend the Easter holidays with other M.U.C College boys at his parent's vacation lodge in West Virginia. I had a great time! The family was wonderfully friendly and of very good class. During one of the dinners, someone asked me if they could tell a joke about the Pope. I got embarrassed, saying that, in Italy, even the communists don't dare to tell jokes about the Pope: No comments, except that I am still embarrassed about such a backward reply. It was even more embarrassing to fail to send the family a thank you note. I just did not have the social graces.

Was able to get odd college jobs like washing dishes, cutting grass, and raking leaves for college professors, washing windows during collegiate vacations, parking cars at a funeral home etc. The best job was a ten-hour a week commitment to keep the administration building floor clean and shiny. I became so good at it that I was sliding through the floors in half the time granted, allowing me to be free for more study or recreation.

One evening, the elegant, beautiful, young wife of a rather old professor, came into the Administration building because she wanted to copy some papers. We engaged in a little conversation, and she became interested in knowing where I kept the equipment in the basement. We went down the stairs, entered the furnace room, where I started showing her where I was getting the water etc. She got quite close to me and looked more attractive than ever in her Marilyn Monroe tight sweater and flashy scarf. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I pretended not to notice because I was terrified of doing something against the rules and be expelled from college. As the song goes, "Regrets, I have a few..."

After three months, I got the bad news that my job had been given to a football player. As soon as I found out who had made that decision, I made an appointment with Professor Webb, the person responsible, and asked him if I had done something wrong in my job. No, he told me, you always did an excellent job; however, we received pressure to grant a job to a football player. I told him that my choice to attend college in America was because I was convinced that it was a good system where, if you worked hard and correctly, you would be rewarded. My arguments must have convinced him because he called me the following days, allowing me to keep my job. Thank you, Professor Webb.

During my sophomore year my sponsor, Ezio, took me to Cleveland where he had an appointment with the Italian Vice Consul. When he found out that I had graduated from Liceo Classico, as he did, in Italy, he told me that my education was equivalent to at least two years of college in the U.S. I immediately wrote to the Department of Education: After a couple of months, I got a letter stating that I should receive credit for at least one year of college. MUC granted me 30 credits of elective subjects, which allowed me to pass from a first semester sophomore to a first semester junior, enabling me to graduate in three years instead of four!

Thinking back about my life at MUC, considering that I truly was in a new world, surrounded by people who had no idea about my background and goals, I managed to navigate pretty well through the uncharted waters. Unfortunately, I found accounting too difficult and time consuming, so I settled for a major in Geology. Because of my background, it was much easier for me, although my real interests were in history and languages; however,

since I was attending college in the U.S., I felt that an American education had to be in the scientific or business world. My friend Bob Kreisel, who was majoring in German, suggested that I go with him to the University of Munich for a year abroad sponsored by the German section of M.U.C. It would have been great fun to attend the University of Munich, learn German well and get credit in the States. Well, the road not taken...

After graduation, in practical life, I learned that a college degree in the early sixties in the U.S. gave you a diploma that made you hireable by corporations at the bottom rank of the executive level. Although you don't know much, the diploma proves that you had enough intelligence and perseverance to go through the educational process. Had I stayed in Ohio, I would have been hired by corporations like Goodyear, or Firestone or Procter & Gamble that knew Mount Union College. In fact, a representative of Goodyear, who interviewed college seniors, wanted to hire me as management trainee. However, life had other plans for me...

My friend and sponsor, Ezio Bressan

At this point I would like to make a due digression to describe the life of my friend, Ezio Bressan, who sponsored me for my American adventure. Ezio was just 15 years older than I. Therefore, when war broke out, he had to serve in the Italian Army with the Alpini troops, and was captured by the Germans in September 1943, when Italy switched sides. He and his Alpini pals were kept on the dry parts of the Isarco riverbed than runs through the city of Bolzano, waiting for the trains toward the concentration camps in Germany.

One night he managed to climb up the banks, diving onto the other side while the bullets whistled over his head. Fortunately, he had an aunt in Bolzano and was able to reach her house in the darkness. He was very lucky because the German speaking population of Bolzano was 100% pro-German and immediately turned over any Italian soldier still in uniform. Eventually, he managed to walk about 100 km on his way home, staying on top of the mountains, which he knew well. Because of his endurance while in the Alpini, he was nicknamed, the "Camel" because of his endurance in going on with little food and water.

At the end of the war, Ezio became an accounting teacher at our local village, free to ski his heart out every weekend. He would leave our town of Vezzano, right after school, Saturday afternoon, and walk four hours to get to the ski lodge at Monte Bondone. There, he and his friends would dance all night. In the morning they would go skiing. Since there were no ski-lifts, they had to walk up to the top, ski down and back again, until it was time to walk home. The following morning, he was at school at 8:00 a.m. with a tan. Ezio, a superman. He was tall, good looking and debonair, as the French say so well.

Following in his father's footsteps, he operated a small factory in his town of Fraveggio, producing and exporting walnuts. After a few years, his production was outpriced by cheaper and bigger California nuts, so he had to close the activity. Eventually, he ran into a visiting, beautiful American girl, daughter of a Trentino immigrant to whom my great grandfather had lent the money for his trip to America.

Love at first sight with subsequent marriage. His smart father-in-law had bought a profitable bar, called the “Red Rose” near a big factory in Alliance, Ohio. Ezio worked there as a bartender and made enough money to get into his own business: Import excellent Italian shoes into the U.S. At the peak of his activity, he co-owned seven small factories in Tuscany, had an office at the Empire State Building in N.Y.C., and had about 30 salesmen US and Canada-wide.

Everything was going very well, when Ezio was hit by three fatal blows: Strikes in Italy, unexpected taxes in Italy and the devaluation of the dollar during the Nixon Administration. Ezio lost everything. I don’t know the exact story, but his hard working, very good wife, Lily, finally abandoned him. He trained himself to become a ski instructor both in the U.S. and Italy. By that time, I had my own ski hotels along with others across the Italian Alps where I’d book rooms for my tourist. I would always select him for accompanying my skiers, and everybody was happy.

Eventually, at age 64, he got a job in a large holiday village, where his colleagues were in their twenties. In the summer, he would accompany families on excursions up and down the local Alps. He managed to walk as many as 3,000 people per season and never had anyone injured. He preselected the participants, demanding adequate equipment and military-type discipline.

Unfortunately, toward the end of his life, he lived in his hometown, alone and embittered. I am truly sorry because he deserved better. Ciao Ezio and thank you for helping me when I needed it.



With Ezio Bressan, second from left, and two Canadian skiers at Madonna di Campiglio

Romance on the Queen Elizabeth I



On June 8th, 1960, I booked my summer transatlantic voyage on the historically famous Queen Elizabeth I, from New York to Le Havre (France), planning to continue the trip on a 24-hour train ride through France and Suisse into Italy, all the way up to Trento. Landing in France, from New York, cost \$50.00 less than going from New York to Genoa.

As I was boarding the ship, with my lateral vision, I saw a beautiful, blond girl whizzing by. In the evening, I was assigned a number for the first dinner sitting in the huge dining room. As soon as I sat down at my assigned spot, I saw this beautiful girl again, in the distance, poised like a queen, with a ticket in her hand, trying to find the assigned spot at the table. I followed her path very carefully, figuring that I'd look her up after dinner. She kept getting closer and closer. Finally, she sat down, right next to me. WOW! We introduced each other and started talking a mile a minute. Her name was Carol! After she learned that I was Italian she told me that she had just finished reading a book by Bertrand Berenson about the Italian Renaissance. She knew more about it than I did. I was flabbergasted. What a difference with the other American girls I had met in Ohio, who, right after hearing that I was Italian, used to ask me if my mother made pizza.

After a while her mother and aunt came along. The three of them had made reservations for three months in Europe. Those were the days... Carol and I were together all the time, except when we had to go to our respective cabins. We started exploring the immense ship.

I suggested that we venture into first class, and we sat on two lounge chairs enjoying the sun and the ocean breeze. After a few minutes a dignified steward came along with typical English aplomb, asking: Mr. and Mrs. Robinson? As he spoke, he nonchalantly indicated the names written on top of the two lounge chairs. We smiled sheepishly, apologized, and left, back to tourist class.

The transatlantic voyage took five days and five nights. It's incredible how much one can pack in less than a week when you concentrate on just one person with nothing else to do. Although our backgrounds were completely different, we had the same ideas and ideals on just about everything. We talked about history, literature, sports, family, relationships etc. etc.

We even got along in politics, although her family voted JFK, while I would have voted Nixon, had I been a U.S. citizen. I must admit I was quite disturbed by the prejudice I heard against Kennedy when I was in a 90% republican environment at Mount Union College.

Carol's father was a nuclear physicist who had worked with Enrico Fermi at Los Alamos, right after the Manhattan project. Her mother was a French language teacher. Although Carol was not a socialite, her family lived in Bethesda, MD and was part of the upper-class WASP. With her rich, well-connected girlfriend, Pat, she attended the Hoffa hearings and was introduced to both Bobby Kennedy and her brother, Senator JFK. After a few days, Carol saw the senator sitting by himself, and walked up to him to shake hands. As he politely got up, Carol said: "We met last week, but you probably don't remember me. He sheepishly said "no", flashed his famous smile and politely exchanged a few words. Eventually, through the same, well-connected girlfriend, Pat, Carol was invited for breakfast at the White House by President Eisenhower. Unfortunately, that day she had a high fever, and her parents did not let her go. Personally, I would have gone in ANY condition.

When Carol was eighteen years old, during the summer, she had a disk-jockey program at a local radio station. For the record, she was the first female DJ in the Washington area.

When she was a freshman at the American University in D.C, she met U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver (D-TN), through his secretary, who was a good acquaintance of Carol's parents. The Senator spent about 20 minutes, in his office, chatting with Carol. Must have been impressed because he offered her a position on his team for running for V.P of the U.S. in 1956, with Adlai Stevenson as President nominee. Carol preferred to focus on her education. Eventually, she told me that Sen. Estes was also known as a womanizer, so the job offer might have come with strings attached. Amazing, how sensitive, even young girls are about the facts of life.

Getting back to our romance on the "Queen Elizabeth", I could not believe that Carol was interested in me when there were Harvard, Stanford, and other ivy-league students rather envious of our "relationship".

BTW, I remember that there was a rather conceited Harvard student who kept challenging me at checkers and kept losing. I had the clear feeling that he would have preferred to beat me up because he was interested in Carol, who was not paying attention to him. In any case, at Harvard they must have taught him that one must always be the best in whatever he is doing. Finally, after the 5th or 6th lost game, to add insult to injury, I told him that I considered myself a very mediocre checker player.

When the ship docked at Le Havre, I had to disembark, while Carol continued to South-

ampton to visit Merry England. I stayed on board with Carol until the very last minute before catching the train. The French conductor, thinking I was American because I had a college jacket on, was quite annoyed, gesturing that I had been drinking. No, no, I yelled, I am Italian and wanted to stay on the ship as late as possible before saying goodbye to my new mademoiselle. He then smiled and helped me to get my bags onto the already moving train.

Carol's tour was programmed but they had three days free from 3 to 6 September in Italy. I immediately told Carol and her mother that I could book them into a hotel on Lake Garda, which was bigger, with more history and even more beautiful than Lake Como, which is better known to Americans. They accepted and I counted every day that summer.

Happy Summer Days at Lake Garda

Finally, Carol, mother and aunt arrived at the hotel I had booked for them in Torbole, on Lake Garda at the beginning of September, the most beautiful part of the year. I gave her the grand tour on my Vespa, visiting all the places that I loved and knew so well. When I introduced her to my friends and acquaintances, many thought they had seen her before, which was impossible, since she was visiting Italy for the first time. Then they figured she looked so much like Grace Kelly, who had become Princess Grace of Monaco a few years before.

By coincidence my family was having a grand reunion, so I introduced her to my relatives. They all liked her, and she liked them. My two uncles were professional people. One was a Professor at the Naval College in Savona, and the other had "recycled" himself as a dentist, after he had survived the wars in the Alpini Arditi (Special Forces) in the campaigns of Ethiopia, Albania, Greece, and France as a professional military officer.

Lake Garda is the largest and, in my biased opinion, the most beautiful of the Italian lakes. It has been famous since the ancient Roman times, who wrote poems (Virgil & Catullus) about it. Even Dante commented with the following verses:

*"Suso in Italia bella giace un laco,
a piè de l'Alpe, che serra Lamagna
sovra Tiralli, c'ha nome Benaco".*

Unfortunately, Dante's divine verses and rhymes cannot be translated in other languages. Here is an attempt by Longfellow:

*"Above in beauteous Italy lies a lake
At the Alp's foot that shuts in Germany
Over Tyrol, and has the name Benaco".*

Goethe described it in his poem "Mignon" beckoning as "The Land where Lemons Grow". Ezra Pound: "Lake Garda in front of me, and my life was changed forever"

Winston Churchill spent quite a few summers at the famous "Punta San Vigilio", paint-

ing and editing his WWII books., commenting that Tremosine (a village overlooking the lake) was the Capri of Lake Garda.

Thinking back, I, and I hope, Carol, had the most beautiful three days of our lives. We were both on vacation, seniors in college. She at the American University in D.C., I at Mount Union College in Ohio, in love, with our young lives in front of us. Although I had planned not to even think about marriage until I was at least 26, Carol was perfect for me, so I proposed. She told me that she was “fond” of me, but she was already engaged. Although, after three years in America, my English was good, I didn’t know what “fond of” meant, so I repeated: I love you and I want to marry you. I know that you really like me too, so what the hell is this “fond of”? Somehow, I talked her out of her “previous” engagement and she consented. We planned to tell her mother on the way back to the States. Here comes another incredible, fateful coincidence, which we interpreted as planned by Destiny: Unknown to each other, three months in advance, we had both booked our return trip on the Queen Mary, both a week late for college. Same trip and ship from LeHavre to New York! On board the Queen Mary, her mother, rather reluctantly, accepted our engagement. We regretfully separated in New York for our respective destinations in Alliance, Ohio and Bethesda, MD.

Trip to Bethesda during Thanksgiving, followed by marriage just before Christmas

During the Thanksgiving vacation a college friend drove me from Alliance, OH to Bethesda, Md. With Carol we played a lot of tennis at her beloved Edgemoore Tennis Club and decided to get married during the following Christmas vacations. Just before leaving for Bethesda, a Catholic priest found out that I was marrying a non-Catholic. Carol and her parents were not affiliated with any church; however, the priest told me that, since I was a Catholic, Carol had to become one as well. I told him that she had agreed to raise our future children as Catholics, which I thought was a great concession on her part; however, I did not want to force her to become a Catholic. The priest would not give up. At a certain point I told him that Carol and I, as free, independent adults, would not accept to be forced into something we did not want. Finally, he said, “how are you traveling to Washington”? By car, I replied. Well, I want you to be aware that if an accident happens to you, you will go to hell. I immediately got up and told him as I was walking out of the room, “As far as I am concerned, I’ll go to Washington, and you go to hell”! By the way, in 1962, just two years later, Vatican II, under Pope John XXIII, decreed that a Catholic was allowed to marry a non-Catholic. Welcome to the club!

My mother-in-law suggested we married with the Episcopalian rite, which was very similar to the Catholic, except that the Presbyterians did not recognize the Pope. I thought it was a good compromise, so we got married in Washington, DC, Georgetown, on Dec. 23, 1960. A friend of the family lent us her house and her car for our honeymoon. Actually, we spent a lot of time at the Library of Congress to do our term papers. Mine was on “Goethe’s Journey to Italy” which I enjoyed reading. At the end of the Christmas vacation, I reluc-

tantly went back to MUC to finish my last month before graduating at the end of January.

Then I went back to Bethesda, living with my in-laws while working as a waiter at the Marriott's Hot Shoppe. I knew I was returning to Italy for the summer, so I did not even look for a college graduate job. Unfortunately, I had the wrong attitude because I considered the job below my social status. I was nice to customers, but I did not have the ambition of becoming a good waiter, even on a temporary basis. Nowadays I have respect for good waiters or anyone who is good at whatever he's doing. In fact, every time I have a chance, and even when I don't have one, I provide the following piece of advice to young people: Try your very best at whatever you do, even if it's a temporary occupation. Being a good waiter is one of the best occupations for making a living and interacting with people. In addition to learning how to move around gracefully and serve properly, a good waiter should learn about food and its combination with wines. Students, or aspiring musicians, singers or actors, or anyone with ambitions for professions that are very hard to get into, should park themselves as good waiters, until the right break comes along. While waiting for their dreams, "temporary" waiters can be financially independent and even meet customers who can help them get into their desired profession.

Return to Italy

Carol flew back with me to Italy, where we enjoyed a splendid summer. However, we realized that it was very difficult to find jobs. My education was good, but I did not know how to do anything specific. My major was Geology and I realized that in Italy my B.S was worth exactly that. Carol had majored in English Literature and spoke almost no Italian. Finally, we got a job teaching English at a newly founded Interpreters School in Trento. Our salaries were low, but it was the best job we ever had. The students loved us, and we loved them.

During a trip to Germany, in the summer of '61, I found out that the new trend for the German tourists was to stay in bungalows at the seashore. My parents had bought a tract of land on the Adriatic Sea between Venice and Ravenna, so I convinced them to build 16 bungalows which we called "Villaggio Adria". No one in the family had any idea about how to get customers for the bungalows. Fortunately, my mother knew a hotelier, who gave me addresses of his old customers and travel agencies in Germany. Consequently, Carol and I went to Germany to promote our bungalows and we landed a fantastic contract with AvD, the German Automobile Club. We managed the bungalows, which generated an excellent income, so we were very happy. Our clientele was of good class. The fact that I had learned German well in school helped me a lot. By being able to quote Goethe, occasionally, I made up for shortcomings in the water supply or the sewer's system. I really enjoyed my occupation with total responsibility. Of course, there were many episodes that I still recall. One of them involved the embarrassment of seeing the hammer and sickle of the Communist party painted on a house about 200 meters from the bungalows. One night, together with an Air Force Chief Master Sargent we painted the American flag over the hammer and sickle. The paint was so strong that I believe the flag is still there.

One day, a beautiful German girl, whose parents had gone shopping, walked into my

office saying that the flame on her gas stove was not working properly. I went into her kitchen and checked everything very carefully. When finished, I looked at her to show her that everything was functioning. Much to my surprise, she had lowered the top of her bikini, exposing two beautiful boobs. Low and behold, I managed to slide past her and escape from the tight kitchen pretending I saw nothing. Regrets, I have a few?

The opposite of the joke about a guy who said that a girl kept knocking at the door of his hotel room, but he did not let her out!!!

An unpleasant surprise arrived toward the end of a splendid and profitable 1962 summer, when everything was going very well: I got a card from the Italian draft board because I had not fulfilled my military obligations in Italy. I wanted to avoid the Italian Army because there was no salary, and I would have been unable to support Carol. When I reported to the draft board there was a rough non-commissioned officer named Lutzemberger, who told me that my number was up. Then, noticing my last name, he asked me if I knew Alpine Col. Leonidas Pisoni. Sure, I said, he's my favorite uncle. Well, he commented, sit down, and let me tell you an anecdote: Your uncle was my commanding officer as a Major, just after the war, when we were both stationed in Verona. Once he asked me to find a thick file on the wall of the office. Noticing that I had trouble finding it, he told me to move away from the wall. He got his Beretta out and fired a shot, indicating that the file was the one with the bullet in it. As I mentioned before, my uncle Leonidas, what a perfect name for him, was a war hardened special forces veteran, who disliked the fascists, but had to serve anyway in Ethiopia, Albania, Greece, and France.

"Emergency" Return to the U.S.

Well, Lutzemberger said, in honor and respect of your uncle I give you two days to legally get out of the country to allow you to go back to the States. Carol and I packed in a hurry and flew back to Bethesda, looking for jobs. We went together to most interviews. She, who grew up and excelled in the system, was offered a job every time. I never was. Finally, through Alitalia, a very interesting job was offered to me as assistant to the Commercial Attaché at the Italian Consulate in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, Carol did not like the idea of going to Philadelphia, so I refused: The road not taken. I believe that, had I accepted, I would have learned a lot about international trade and found some Italian manufacturer who wanted me to represent his company in America. However, with age I've learned that life has so many unforeseen variables that it's best not to speculate on what would have happened if, etc, etc...

Although I was a college graduate, Mount Union College was not known in D.C., so no one wanted to hire me. If I had stayed in Ohio, I had already been hired by Goodyear. For them a B.S. degree from Mount Union College was a good enough guarantee that I was management material. In the Washington metro area, the reply I got from the interviewers was, "Mount Union what"? In fact, in spite of my education, I did not fit into the system. In addition, for most jobs in the DC Metro Area one had to be a US citizen, since they were

connected with the Government. I remember being interviewed for a management position at the Marriott's. The interviewer really wanted to hire me, but the written tests did not allow him to do it. For instance, when the form asked for sports records, soccer was not even included in the list, so I looked like a weakie. Having been captain of the Trento boys, and selected for the Italian National junior team, was not contemplated on any of the pre-written forms. I also naively thought that the American measuring system was medieval in comparison with the metric system, figuring that by the time I graduated from College, Americans would finally switch to the much more rational metric system, as the Canadians did. Alas, every test involved the "medieval" system, where I obviously lost a lot of points.

Later on, I was extremely disappointed to learn that my mother-in-law was a schoolmate at the University of Utah of both the Marriott founder Willard J. Marriott and his future wife Alice Sheets. If we had been in Italy, a mother-in-law would have immediately recommended me; however, that's not the way it worked for me with my in-laws in the States.

Request for a McDonald's franchise in Italy

In the early sixties I was not a vegetarian yet, and I loved hamburgers. There were many fast-food chains, but the one that impressed me the most was a new one called McDonald's from California. During one of the food shows in the Bethesda area, I introduced myself to their managers, proposing to be their rep for a franchise in Italy. Unfortunately, they told me that they were totally involved in expanding US-wide and had no intention of going overseas. I had the right intuition, but I was more than thirty years ahead! As the saying goes, "Timing is everything".

Finally, we got jobs: Carol at the Italian Naval Attache's office in D.C, and I, as assistant department manager at the Woodward & Lothrop department store.

Close call for Vietnam duty

Although I was not a U.S. citizen, as a green card resident I was subject to the draft. I passed my physical exam, and, according to a draft board employee, # A1 on the totem list. We were in 1963 and the Vietnam war was starting to escalate. However, President JFK decreed that there were enough unmarried men to fulfill the quotas. Therefore, I was deferred. However, in 1965 the war was escalating more, and the Government started drafting married men, provided they had no children. Fortunately, Carol was pregnant with our son, Mark, so I was exempt, again. Thank you, Mark! I was really lucky because a tour in Vietnam as an inexperienced, idealistic second lieutenant, with Viet-Cong traps hiding in elephant grass, would have been very dangerous indeed.



Carol was satisfied with her job and environment at the office of the Italian Naval Attaché, but I did not like my job, partially because I was given the wrong advice by an old salesman who sounded very wise to me. When I told him that, as an assistant department manager, I should have taken my job home to learn more about the merchandise and the ads in the paper that promoted our products, he replied: "You're being paid just for your time in the store. The moment you walk out of the building, you're a free man and can do anything you want until you return to the store". Years later I understood why, with such a mentality, he never became an executive. Unfortunately, I followed his advice, which made my job unpleasant because I was never on top of it.

I also did not accept the rigid policy of the "customer is always right". Once, a Chevy Chase woman, top of the rat-pack kind, came in with an old beat-up vacuum cleaner, saying



she wanted a new one. I politely informed her that we would surely repair it, even free of charge, but a new one was out of the question. She looked at me with disdain, telling me that she'll show me how to do it. She went straight to the store director and got a brand-new vacuum cleaner, free. Before walking out of the door, she looked me up and made an ironic comment. We were in July, and I did not quit right away because my Naturalization Ceremony was going to take place on August 8th, 1965. By the way, it was a very meaningful ceremony which pointed out the rebirth of a person as a full-fledged American citizen, regardless of his origin, race, or religion.

Nevertheless, on August 9th I was on the plane back to Italy, with a rather reluctant, seven-month pregnant Carol, following me...

Return to Italy to manage the bungalows at "Villaggio Adria"

I was very proud to be an American citizen, but I felt that my chances of success were better in Italy and Europe, where I knew how to move, especially in the tourist field. A few days after my return to Italy, I got a card from the Italian Army to report immediately. When I reported at the draft board office, the familiar Lutzenberger was still there. This time, he said with sort of a smile, your number is up. I pulled out my brand-new American passport and he was astonished. He told me that if I had changed into any other nationality, I still would have needed to serve in the Italian Army. The U.S. citizenship was the only exception. Thanks, Uncle Sam. By the way, a few years later, I got a call to report to the American Consulate in Milan. They were suspicious because I had left the U.S. the day after becoming a citizen. I simply told the Consul that I was proud to have become an American, but I felt that my chances for supporting my family were better in Europe than in the States. I also added that I always filed and paid income tax both in Italy and the U.S. Congrats, the Consul said, I confirm you as an American citizen.

I was back in the saddle again and put all my energy into traveling throughout Germany from fall through winter to promote our Villaggio Adria with tourists.

Consequently, the following season, 1966, we were fully booked from early spring to the end of September, when the short days, the humidity and the mosquitos dictated the end of the season to the experienced tourist hosts. That summer I tried to prolong the season when everyone else had closed. I will never forget the American family that arrived by car from Naples, where the climate was still great, to stay in our bungalows. It was getting dusk when they pulled into our village. As a matter of courtesy, I opened their car door to welcome them. A storm of mosquitoes invaded the car with a Marine captain with his wife and two small children. I gave them some specific spray for themselves and for the bungalows. They were quite sporty about it. He had just returned from Vietnam, and they were all grateful to be together, battling the mosquitoes instead of the Viet-Cong.

On November 6th of 1966 Italy suffered one of the worst floods in the last 100 years.

Florence and a lot of other cities, including Trento were flooded. While I was watching the horrible situation on TV, I got a phone call from our bungalow custodian informing me that the sea had flooded our Villaggio Adria. I immediately got into the car and drove through the night four hours to inspect the damage. The sea had already retreated, but sea water has the characteristic of penetrating the foundations and working its way up the walls for about six feet. The only solution was to throw away most of the furniture, peel off the walls up to six feet in height, re-cement and re-paint or re-tile them. The cost of reparation was horrible, and my parent and I were devastated. Then I read that the I.M.I (Istituto

Mobiliare Italiano) would have lent money at a very low interest to allow the damaged tourist business operators to get back on their feet. I drove to their office in Padua to see what could be done. The officer examining our case was rather standoffish and hopelessly bureaucratic. As I was ready to walk out the door, I remembered that, when I was in D.C., I used to frequently play tennis with I.M.I.'s director in the U.S., Count Cau di San Marco. He told me to mention his name if I ever needed financial support from IMI for my future business. When I mentioned his name, the bureaucrat immediately lit up and asked me to sit down, saying: "Dr. Count di San Marco was my superior and mentor, therefore just tell me what you need, and I'll give it to you." He did, and that was the only time I made money with tennis. BTW, here in the States they say it's who you know that counts, not what you know. That might be true at the beginning, but, in the States, if one does not know his job he does not last long. In Italy, at least in my days, if are "recommended", knowing your job is almost irrelevant, if you're protected at the top.

With the loan we reconstructed Villaggio Adria and had other splendid seasons in 1967, '68, '69 and '70. In the mid-sixties, I had discovered that there were about 850,000 American military in Germany, so I started contacting them through articles in the Stars & Stripes and visiting the various installations. In those happy days there was practically no security.



Carol, Mark and Grace

The number of American guests and German guests was about even. I had to adjust to their different habits. The Germans wanted to rest, swim, and go to bed early, while the Americans liked to party, barbecue, stay up late and get up not too early since they were on vacation. At a certain point, I had to separate the two nationalities by putting them in bungalows not next to one another because there was a certain friction due to the different lifestyles.

Carol was busy raising our two wonderful children, Mark and Grace, who were growing up happy and healthy. I made them run barefooted on the gravel to toughen the sole of their feet as I did when I was a kid. I told them that there was the famous Zulu warrior Shaka, who trained his warriors to run barefooted over any type of grounds, so they were more agile than with shoes or sandals. Mark and Grace did not really appreciate it and still remember the experience with rather amused pain.

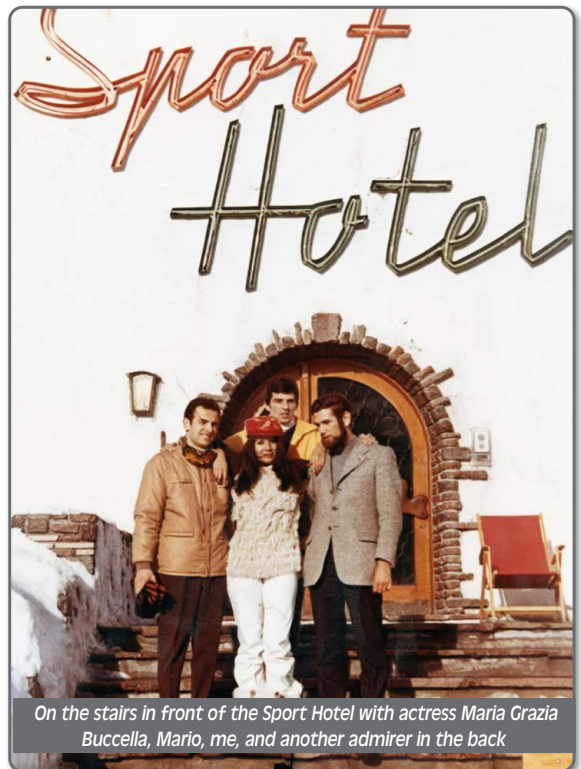
I had plenty of time to play tennis and go to the open-air movies with Carol. I still remember the scent of the sea pines as we were watching the movies. Those were the days....

Thinking back to all the years, I'm convinced that my decision to return to Italy was best from a business point of view. However, a great mistake was to return to Vezzano and Trentino instead of choosing Florence or Rome or Venice. Operating an "inside" travel agency while living in a rented hotel in any of those three cities, would have allowed me to expand globally. At the same time, Carol would have joined the local American Women Clubs, which would have allowed her to frequent her own people instead of having to adapt to a completely new world in a rural environment. However, with all the uncertainties connected with life, one cannot just select one specific move, and pretend all the rest would have not changed. So be it!

Ski Hotels

Time for implementing new ideas: The beach resort where Villaggio Adria was located was gradually becoming low class and I saw no future in it. Therefore, my parents and I decided to sell the bungalows and move on. We were living in beautiful Trentino, with ski seasons in the winter and lake resorts in the summer, so I decided to rent the Sport Hotel, the nicest in Monte Bondone, right on the slopes in a ski area located just 25 km from my hometown.

As usual, my idea was splendid, but I had no training on how to run a hotel. I realized that my only skill consisted in finding customers. Therefore, I looked up an old friend of mine, Mario Nardelli, whose family had been running hotels for a couple of generations. We made a splendid 50/50 partnership, which lasted thirty years. I filled the hotel with guests and he managed it. We were young, full of enthusiasm and felt not only on top of the mountain, but on top of the world. By applying the same technique as in filling the bungalows with guests, we immediately had a fully booked ski season. It did not start well because, due to lack of experience, we opened the hotel too soon, at the end of November instead of just before Christmas like the experienced hoteliers were doing. We had to pay rent, feed, and pay the personnel (30 strong), the heating and the electricity for the hotel, and had no customers. Mario and I enjoyed splendid meals in our private dining room, prepared by our professional chefs and served by our top professional head waiter. Every morning I would look out of the window which had stained church-like glass that prevented a clear vision until one adjusted gradually. Unfortunately, every day was “another sunny day in South Africa” and, with no snow and no income, we were losing money, big time, every day. I was starting to get a stress provoked ulcer. One morning I did not have the courage to look out of the window myself, so I asked Mario. He looked and took the longest time without speaking or showing any facial expression. Finally, unable to resist, I said, “Come on Mario, how is the weather?” With his typical nonchalance and dry English-type humor, he said, “Well, if we’re lucky it looks like we might have another beautiful sunny day!!!”. Mario, I miss you!



On the stairs in front of the Sport Hotel with actress Maria Grazia Buccella, Mario, me, and another admirer in the back

Finally, on December 19, 1969, we had the first group of Americans led by my-soon-to become good friend Rex Gribble, a very intelligent, good looking, debonair former P-38 fighter pilot in WWII against the Japanese in the Pacific. He was a gifted journalist full of one-liners: Here is one: "Italian bread, like Italian women, age quickly. On the other hand, I'm here for just a week". Here is another one. "If you're learning cross-country skiing, start with a small country". He was a born leader, very popular with everyone. Once, some friend was trying to make fun of him, saying that he had flown 130 missions without knocking down a single Japanese plane. Well, he remarked, I actually had flown 136 missions. I didn't get any Japs, but they did not get me either, which, on second thought, was much better than winning 2 to 1 or even 4 to 1."

Here is what Rex wrote about our location and hotel: "Monte Bondone is as Italian as pizza, and Italian skiing has a twang all its own. It seems more leisurely, lift lines are nearly nonexistent, laughter abounds, the slopes are groomed-and the Lira stretches a bit more than in the neighboring currencies, so here was the one liner: " Let's go to Italy, where the Lira outskies the Dollar".

At Bondone, we put our skis on outside the Sport Hotel, our local digs, and take them off there at the end of the day. Translated, this means that we're right on the slopes. Lots of major areas can't make that claim. Lifts rise in many directions, and they link up. The runs are long, some for the hotshots and some for the Mamma Mia.

Meanwhile, down at the bar the gluhweins and cappuccini go for about half the tab you find in other ski countries. The Italians know how to enjoy life" Grand Rex! I must add that his wife Rachel managed to create a family atmosphere involving the children who had a home away from home. Rex had friends from Texas, who contributed to create a fun atmosphere after dinner. During one of the many parties, one of the Texans distributed prizes for people who had, somehow, distinguished themselves. One of the prizes went to the person who came the farthest. Of course, he won that prize since almost everyone came from Heidelberg or other parts of Germany. Then, there was an unmarried couple who had spent a lot of time in their room, instead of skiing. Of course, everyone in the group had noticed their absence, so the couple won the prize for the ones who came the most.

We had to find the personnel, at least thirty people, to run the hotel with the restaurant and a beautiful Tyrolean bar and bierstube in wood carved by Austrian craftsmen.

Since I knew that in the winter months the pensions and the hotels at the Adriatic beaches were closed, Mario and I spent a few days to select the best among the owners of the family pensions and hotels. These people were fantastic because they knew how to run everything connected with the hotel business. We never had to tell them what to do and we became friends with most of them, sending many of our customers to their places in the summer. The only local personnel were the chamber maids, who were local "Trentine". Imagine the connection between the mountain girls and the beach boys. During the course of ten years of management of the Sport Hotel to which we added Hotel Zodiaco, we figured that we "contributed" to create twenty married couples", plus who knows how many affairs.

As mentioned before, my task was to fill the hotel, which I did by visiting the various American and German ski clubs in Europe for a couple of months in the late spring. Once

the hotel was full and operational, Mario was working while I was skiing and having a good time. The other hotel owners, the ski instructors and all the people who worked at the ski resort didn't know how to figure out why Mario was the only one working with no complaints on his part. We used to laugh about our "odd" partnership.

Carol and our two children, Mark and Grace, would stay at the hotel any time they wanted except during the very high season when there were no free rooms. The only problem for the children was having to take long minibus rides to the closest school. Then I remembered Carol telling me that one of the best years in her life was when she was seven. While her father was being investigated for a government job at Los Alamos, her parents decided to take her and her 5-year-old brother on a US-wide car voyage that lasted almost a year. Carol's mother got the program for the second grade and made sure that Carol did not fall behind. In fact, when she returned to school a year later, she was ahead of the other students, even knowing how to write longhand, which the others had not learned yet. As parents, we decided to keep our kids "educated in the family" every ski season. They both got excellent grades in school, every time they returned. Thinking back, from a learning point of view it was a great decision, but school is much more than book knowledge. In my opinion, our kids got a bit spoiled and felt privileged, which later in life might have created disadvantages, especially for Grace.

Getting back to my splendid life at the ski hotels, I even had a little revenge from my humiliation at Woodies, the department store in D.C. A lady was sitting on one of our wooden benches in our "Tavern". Somehow, she damaged her pants with a splinter in it. She rightly complained to me, demanding a new pair of pants. I told her very politely that she would surely be reimbursed; however, I mentioned that my partner, who was running the hotel and knew about our insurance policy, would be back in the evening. She got angry and said, "I don't care about your partner or your insurance policy, I want new pants right now!" With a satisfied, sob smile, I informed her that I had quit my job in DC when a similar-type customer wanted a new "free" vacuum cleaner to replace her beat up old one. She got it by going over my head, making fun of me. "Well, lady, here the situation is different. With your attitude, you allowed me to even the score. You'll never get new pants from us because I, as top dog here, have decided not to give them to you. If you want to press the issue legally, my secretary will be happy to provide you with the address of the nearest American Consulate": DC vs Trento 1 to 1."

I remember a great piece of advice that Heinz Wieland, director of the Westdeutscher Ski Verband, gave me: If you want to get along with Germans promise 90 and deliver 100. I always applied that in all situations, regardless of nationality. That way I created loyal customers, and many became friends.

Another Boccaccio type episode involving my unmarried partner, Mario, happened during one of the winter seasons. A beautiful, sporty, married lady from Milan was staying at our hotel. She and Mario started getting along very well, spending some passionate nights together. At the end of the week, the lady's husband arrived to pick her up. He seriously pointed his finger at Mario, looking him straight in the eye, and said: "You and I have good taste with something in common". Mario started feeling very uncomfortable, suspecting that some of our personnel had tipped the Milanese husband off. With a smile the husband said, "You are wearing the same fashionable jacket that I usually wear in Milano". Close call, Mario.

"Friendly Persuasion" and other adventures at my Sport Hotel and beyond

I am happy to recall the following episode when the American Heidelberg Ski Club arrived at the Sport Hotel during one of our winter seasons: All the available rooms were filled except for a twin-bedded room reserved for a couple, whom I thought was Mr & Mrs. Allen. It turned out that the couple was made of a guy and a girl who knew each other but were not married or even engaged. It was snowing outside, and it would have been difficult to find another accommodation. Besides I did not want to end up with an empty room for the rest of the week. I decided to invite the two strangers to dinner, offering them the best dinner with champagne, "on the house". They asked me why I was doing that. Well, I told them, occasionally I like to give people pleasant surprises. Toward the end of the dinner, after noticing that they were getting along well, I took the long way around, but I finally convinced them to sleep in the same room on separate beds. Forty-two years later I get a call from a concierge from the Hotel Montana at Monte Bondone, saying that an American couple had stopped there because they wanted to see Larry Pisoni to thank him for an episode that happened a longtime ago. I drove the 25 km from my home and, low and behold, I found out that my "friendly persuasion" generated a very happy marriage between Ms. Carolee Baker and Mr. Del Allen, who got married and had been living together, for 42 years, "ever since that night".

Wrong move with an Italian "Excellency" at the Sport Hotel

Ski hotels in Italy have a season that goes from Christmas to Easter, i.e. about 100 days, regardless. After Easter, Italians think of the beaches, even though there might still be a lot of snow on the mountains. The peak season goes from December 26th to the Epiphany, with New Year's Eve being the absolute peak. Here is what happened at our Sport Hotel, caused by my inexperience: The secretary of the Commissario del Governo (Representative of the government at our Region) calls me to beg for a room on New Year's Eve for "His Excellency Dr. Schiavo and his First Lady". I had only one twin-bedded room left, but I was waiting for someone to commit themselves for a two-week period. The secretary kept on insisting, saying that he and his excellency would be so grateful if I would find a double room for the VIP couple. Finally, I found two customers willing to occupy the room for two weeks, with one caveat: I told them that the room was available, provided he and his wife would leave it free for the night of New Year's Eve. I offered them a room at the Grand Hotel Trento, located in downtown Trento, 25 km away from the ski runs. The couple accepted the proposal, happy to be able to spend 13 days in a hotel right on the slopes. I joyfully called his Excellency's secretary, who was delighted. Consequently, Dr. Schiavo and his wife arrived the afternoon of December 31st. After inspecting the room, they found it unacceptable because it only had a shower and a basin. I told him that a full bath was reserved just for him, adjacent to his room. I pointed out that I had to send a two-week customer away for the night of December 31st, to be able to accommodate him and his wife for just one night. By the way, in the seventies, in Italy, only deluxe ski hotels had full baths in the rooms, so I

assumed that Dr. Schiavo would accept the facilities of an adjacent bathroom room just for him. I was wrong, so he left in anger, and I stayed with an empty room for the night, which I could have rented ten times at top prices.

A few days later I started getting phone calls from the director of the tourist office, the secretary of the Mayor of Trento, the Chief of Police and other prominent people in Trento, for the unacceptable way I had treated the “Commissario del Governo”. BTW, he was a Sicilian and would have certainly been vindictive toward my business operation by sending the Italian equivalent of the IRS and other public entities to harass our business. Evidently, I had spent too much time in America, where a government executive did not demand submission. Well, to make a long story short, my partner Mario, who knew better how things worked in Italy, convinced me to write a letter of apology, and learn a lesson, right or wrong!

Faced two armed “Carabinieri” bodyguards on night duty at our hotel

Here is another episode of my free, adventurous life, as co-director of the Sport Hotel: On the way back from a party, somewhere on Monte Bondone, around 2 or 3 am, I had three possibilities: Drive 25 km down the mountain road to get home and wake up the family or sleep in one of the two hotels that Mario and I managed. I opted for the Sport Hotel because it was closer. However, I did not have the key to the entrance and did not want to wake our night watchman, who worked hard during the day, washing dishes, so I opted for plan B. Knowing my habits, I always kept an unlocked window on the second story of the hotel. I knew how to climb up, using the protruding large stones that made the climbing easy enough for someone still in good shape. By the time I got to the window, two uniformed carabinieri pointed their weapons at me. I had forgotten that they were protecting Judge C. Coiro, who had been threatened by the Red Brigades, and was spending his ski holidays with his family at our hotel. Well, I remained calm and, somehow, explained that I was the co-director of the Sport Hotel, who had forgotten his keys and did not want to wake up our night guard. I must have been credible because, after a while, they relented and we ended up drinking a few glasses of champagne, on the house!

120 Tourist Villas for Sale on the Adriatic

Although I had sold our bungalows at Lido di Pomposa, I still had connections with some of the old operators in the area. One day in the mid-seventies I get a call from Rino Stecca, the director of a large holiday village at Lido di Pomposa. He told me that a beautiful Holiday Village with 120 villas was on sale. The villas had all the amenities and were built on reclaimed land between the sea and a private artificial lake with salt water. The pictures looked beautiful, like a mini Miami Beach or Davis Islands at Tampa, so Mario and I drove to the beach to have a look. We were enthused about the possibility, so we fixed an appointment with the owners in Milan. In an elegant office we met a smooth speaking lawyer, who

represented the owner. We had brought our own consultant, who got into complicated negotiations way above our limited expertise. The price was very attractive, but the situation did not seem clear to us. After talking figures for a couple of hours, we took a lunch break with their accountant, who had just come from New York, where he had met the owner of the 120 villas. During lunch, it turned out that the package of shares was owned by a company controlled by the famous millionaire -financier Michele Sindona, who, later on, turned out to be associated with the Vatican and the Italian-American mafia (Joe Adonis, the Genovese family etc.). Fortunately, despite the very attractive price we decided not to get involved in the “cloudy” affair. A few years later, Michele Sindona ended up in jail, first in the States and then in Italy, where he was poisoned in his super-protected cell with a cup of coffee. Evidently, he knew too much. What a scare for us, innocent lambs.

Roman “Holiday” Hotel, missed opportunity

In 1972, TIME magazine had a cover photo of Charles K. Wilson, “The Man with 300,000 rooms.” He was the founder of the Holiday Inn worldwide chain and had just built the beautiful Holiday Inn- Villa Pamphili Hotel in Rome. The article explained all the studying that went into the project before deciding where to place the hotel. I convinced my partner, Mario, to drive to Rome to spend a couple of days at the brand new “Holiday Inn”, strategically located on the main road between the Fiumicino airport and the Rome beltway (Grande Raccordo Anulare). I figured, why not build a hotel as close as possible to the Holiday Inn, both as competition and collaboration? In Time Magazine, Wilson said that he loved to play recreational tennis everywhere he went to control and build new hotels. In fact, he said” I’m an international tennis player.” “Same here”, I thought!

Mario and I got enthused about the idea and started looking for someone who would finance the operation. We managed to convince Mr Q. Mazzalai, one of the wealthiest builders in Trento, who had already built a hotel at Monte Bondone. Through a series of lucky coincidences, we found a friend, a Trentino priest, who was the chief economist for the “Salesians of Don Bosco” who had their world headquarters at Via della Pisana, strategically located for our hotel. The Salesians, who always needed money for their missions, were interested in selling part of their huge park. Mr. Mazzalai was really interested in the idea, so we drove to Rome with him and his right-hand man. Mr. Mazzalai was an excellent driver and loved to drive the newly purchased Mercedes-Benz 600 limo that had belonged to Pope Paulus VI. During the negotiations we enjoyed several trips on the autostrada between Trento and Rome in that VIP limo. On the last trip, Mr. Mazzalai got tired and asked his secretary to drive the car for a while. While we were amiably chatting away, our driver jammed the brakes to avoid rear-ending a car that had made an almost sudden stop. Evidently, he had been following it too closely. Somehow, the “Big Popemobile” made a screeching halt, stopping sideways across the middle of the autostrada. Luckily there was little traffic at that moment, but it was quite scary. Evidently, our “inexperienced” driver had put max pressure on the power brakes while the steering wheel was turned, risking to flip the big car over. If Mr. Mazzalai had let me drive it would not have happened, since I never tailgate and also had a lot of experience with power brakes in the States. The accident made me think of how fragile life is, even

when you're making big plans. At the end of the story, the operation did not materialize, mostly because the "infamous" secretary, who, by the way, was also a communist, ideologically contrary to my capitalistic idea. Well, we really missed a huge opportunity that would have changed my life. At the time, except for the new Holiday Inn, there were no other hotels between the airport and the Beltway. Subsequently, since 1972, many hotels have been built along that route. However, one must not dwell on those "what if" theories. If the operation had been successful, who knows what might have happened on the many future trips...

As I am writing these lines, for curiosity I just read that Mr. Wilson had convinced his friend Sam Phillips, who was in the music business, to sell the contract he had with Elvis Presley for just \$35,000.00 to RCA, saying to Mr. Phillips, "Hell, he can't even sing. Take the money". Fortunately, to be sure, Mr. Phillips made a healthy killing on Holiday Inn stocks.

In addition to the "Holiday" episode, Rome used to be one of my favorite sources for finding skiers for the hotels that I represented in the Alps. Therefore, I used to go there on business, visiting the head offices of banks, ski clubs, telephone companies, electric companies, or anything of interest that I could find in the phone book. On one of those trips, I decided to visit the American Embassy to see if any of the staff might be interested in ski trips. The Embassy is located in the famous Via Vittorio Veneto, one of the most elegant streets in Rome. After I was finished with my business, accomplishing nothing, I started walking along the wide path that leads to the large exit limited by a huge iron gate, which, at the time, was open during the day. I was dressed well, carrying an elegant attaché case. Right at the exit I see a stunning looking girl, in high heels, impeccably dressed with boots and mini-skirt, who started walking toward me, as if she knew me. Then, as our paths crossed, she gave me a very intense, long stare, through her light tinted sunglasses. In fact, I still remember the look in her eyes. At the same time, a taxi pulls up along the sidewalk, with a smiling driver who motions to me and to her, assuming that we were both waiting for a ride together. I was in a hurry because I had a courtesy ticket for the international soccer match Italy vs. Germany, so I got into the cab and told the driver to take me to the "Stadio Olimpico". The driver acted sort of disappointed, commenting that I had missed a good opportunity. As I was driving toward the stadium, and later during my life, I came to the conclusion that the very attractive lady and the taxi driver had KGB connections and had taken me for a young American diplomat for a "From Rome with Love" operation... Who knows!



Luckily, “missed opportunity” at a new deluxe resort at Capo d’Orso, Costa Smeralda in Sardinia

Among our Sport Hotel customers, we had Marco Franceschini from Trento, a successful entrepreneur, who was also an excellent skier, an expert mountain climber and an amateur pilot with his own plane. He had purchased a holiday village in Sardinia, at Capo d’Orso, on one of the most fashionable coasts of the island, on the northern part of the “Costa Smeralda”. At the time, Prince Karim Aga Khan, “my missed soccer player connection”, was developing the Costa Smeralda project with world class connections, architects, builders, golf courses and clients.

During an after-ski session, Mr. Franceschini told Mario and me that he wanted us to run his operations at Capo d’Orso. We liked the idea, since our hotels were open only in the winter, and his village open only in the summer. However, Mario had a little family hotel where his sisters wanted his help, and I did not want the responsibility by myself. Of course, I knew that my only skill consisted in getting customers, not directing personnel, maintenance people and all the practical problems involved in running a big, or even a small operation. Mr. Franceschini really insisted, saying that he would have compensated us very well for our services. He trusted us both as Trentinis, and was impressed by how we were running our own successful hotels. Since we were hesitating, he offered to take us in his private plane to visit and evaluate what he was offering us.

We agreed to take his offer at the end of the ski season, right after Easter. A few days before Easter we read in the papers that Franceschini’s plane with his secretary on board had disappeared from the radar between Genoa and Olbia, on the way to Sardinia. How unpredictable life can be...

Booking groups in a 200 room ski hotel “almost” completed in just ten months.

Here is another experience during my days as a “hotel broker”. Just before the Christmas holidays I booked 150 rooms at the Hotel Vigo that was under construction, “almost completely,” miraculously, in just ten months. I still remember the face of the trip captain for the Mannheim Ski Club, when she saw that there were 30 cm of sawdust in the Hotel Vigo lobby, hundreds of electric wires hanging from the ceiling and a big hole where the swimming pool was going to be, the following day. She was starting to faint, so I proposed to drive her, have dinner, and stay overnight at the Hotel Crystal at Val Senales, three hours away! It was dark and she was so upset that, instead of going around the road to park her car in the garage, she started driving into the void on top of the garage. We managed to stop her at the last second! During the trip from Mannheim, she had driven with a guy, so I gave them a double room because I assumed that they were sort of living together. Unfortunately, it was not the case, so we worked it out with two single rooms, found with some difficulties, at the last moment. By the time we returned to the Vigo, the following day, everything was working, except for the swimming pool. My good friend, Elke Hess, was the trip captain of

the Heidelberg Ski Club. She got a map of the rooms and started placing her people into them according to how the utilities and the furniture were operational.

Getting back to my long friendship with Elke, here is an episode that we still laugh about, almost every time we meet, after forty years. Somehow, the passenger's seat belt got blocked on my very reliable Volvo 240 GL. At the time, seatbelts were not compulsory in Italy. Since I almost always drove alone, and the one on my side was working, I did not go out of my way to have the one on the passenger's side fixed. I did take it to the dealer, but he needed to keep it for the whole day, and I had a pressing trip to Germany, so I procrastinated. When I went to see Elke, we decided to play tennis in a club just 2-3 kms from her home. Since the trip lasted just a few minutes, and I knew that her seat belt was not working, I did not put my seat belt on. We chatted amicably, played tennis, and started driving back to her home. This time, after a few meters, Elke remarked rather sternly that, in Germany, it was compulsory to wear seat belts. Oh, no problem, I said, putting my seat belt on, immediately. As I was driving, I was looking at her using lateral vision to see how she managed the seatbelt operation. She kept on trying in a lot of different ways. Being a very rational, methodical German, she really applied herself, unwilling to believe that she was unable to put her seatbelt on in an almost brand-new Volvo. Eventually, she got red in the face and had to give up, when we were almost back home. I finally told her that I did not put my seatbelt on to start with because I knew hers was not working, and I did not want to embarrass her. She started laughing so hard that I had to stop the car, while we were both laughing like crazy, and still are.

Italians are great at performing difficult things. It's the normal programs that they have trouble implementing. In fact, I will never forget the following comment made by my German friend of Ulrich Ritter, who had lived in Rome for years, as a radio correspondent for the national German station Deutsche Welle.

"If you give six months to complete the same project to a group of Germans and to a group of Italians, the Germans will complete it by systematically working for six months, on a daily basis, allowing for the holidays. Instead, the Italians would waste a lot of time bickering during the whole period, and complete the project during the last week.

An English Ski-Connection

In the mid-seventies I got to know an English guy, named Ron Stanton through the international "Round Table" that I belonged to. He liked the activities we had at the Sport Hotel; however, he was convinced that the tavern was not used to its full potential. He told us that he had experience in running restaurants in England, so he proposed leasing the tavern from us during the winter season. My partner and I thought it would be a good "international" idea, so we settled for a three-year lease. Ron brought two beautiful young girls and a guy from England to run the tavern. We soon found out that none of them was professional. However, the girls were good looking and sporty, which was good enough for creating a cheerful atmosphere and attracting a lot of skiers. Unfortunately, toward the end of the first winter season, Ron found out that that he was running the operation in the red.

Consequently, he made the decision to get into his beautiful Jaguar and disappear into Merry England, without paying the suppliers, the rent, and his personnel. We managed to hire his personnel, so they had free meals and a roof over them, but the suppliers and we were left unpaid. Eventually, through the grape-vine, I found out that Ron had accompanied his son on a ski trip to Saalbach, Austria with the English and Scottish Junior national team. Mario and I managed to find out where the teams were staying, so we tracked him down at a hotel, making sure that the team managers knew that two Italians had driven from Italy to visit Ron Stanton. When we met him, he suggested we talk things over in his Jaguar rather than in the hotel lobby. We accepted, but as soon as he started driving, he started fussing for something in his car door, and I had the pretty clear impression that he had a gun there. Mario was sitting in back and was not aware of it and I didn't know how to tell him because I knew that Ron understood some Italian. I managed to stay calm, telling Ron that we had come to Austria because we wanted to lease a ski hotel. When we went to the Tourist office, we found out that the English -Scottish Teams were in town, so we assumed that his son, who was a good skier (lack of competition in England!) might be with the team. What a coincidence, so I suggested we drive back to the hotel, accepting the fact that he did not have the money with him. When we were safely back at the hotel, I told him that I knew that he had left some diamonds in Trento with a couple whom I knew well. I asked him to sign a note to allow us to pick up the diamonds as compensation for the debts he left in Italy. To encourage him, I warned him that, if he had refused, I would inform the team managers that they had an international swindler in their team. He signed and we collected the diamond from my friends. It turned out it was not worth that much, but it made a good story!

Adventure with a beautiful English-speaking model as ski assistant at the 4-star Grand Hotel Des Alpes in Madonna di Campiglio.

A friend of mine, who was an executive at the Provincial Tourist Office in Trento, knew that I needed an assistant, able to ski and speak English. Consequently, he introduced me to a stunning girl who had all the qualities and more. After a few questions, I hired her for the season for a small salary plus free room and board for the season at the four-star G.H. Des Alpes. By the way, when the director saw her, he gave me a very good deal, happy to have such a beautiful presence in his hotel. Later on, he confessed that he "had plans on her". I made sure to act very properly to avoid any type of gossip. However, whenever I was in the dining room with a group, she was often next to me, which I did not mind. Also, since she was a good skier, she did a good job at assisting everyone in our group, which pleased everyone. The season went on and I kept busy travelling to various ski hotels or accompanying shopping groups to Florence or Venice, while she was handling my groups at the Hotel Des Alpes. Toward the end of the ski season, the stunning blond disappeared. Subsequently, I got a call from Sig. Lorenzetti, the owner of the most popular ski shop in Madonna di Campiglio. He told me that my secretary had left a big debt buying fancy clothes and saying that "her boss" (me!) would pay for them at the end of the season. Evidently, he discretely thought I had something going with her, so no questions were asked. It was rather

embarrassing for me, although I had no fault whatsoever. Eventually, Mr. Lorenzetti built a beautiful hotel in Madonna di Campiglio, and every time I drive by the Hotel Lorenzetti I think of the “blond bomb” who knew how to fool people with her charms.

Entered into Japan without a visa

In the summer of 1973, instead of accepting an invitation for my whole family at a friend’s hotel on the lovely island of Ischia, I opted to fly to Tokyo, Japan. As an Alitalia Airlines collaborator, I had the privilege of flying first class, free of charge. I thought that they might have some type of Buddhist holiday that coincided with our low season. Although the flight was long, the first-class treatment and the friendly, young flight attendants, who probably thought I was some sort of millionaire, made the trip quite pleasant. We had already arranged to get together to celebrate my first time in Japan with the Alitalia group that knew how to move around Tokyo. As we started clearing customs, while happily chatting in Italian, the guards noticed that I had no visa on my American passport, so they stopped me right away. I had no idea that with a U.S. passport one needed a visa to get into Japan, while with an Italian one it was not necessary. One of the guards told me that the only solution was to fly to Seoul, Korea, get a visa from the American Embassy and return to Japan. What a situation, after such a long trip. As I was not giving up, a group of curious guards had gathered around while I was trying to explain that I had dual nationality. Then, there is no problem, the guards would smilingly say: Just show us your Italian passport! Unfortunately, I did not have it with me. I finally produced an Italian driver license, insisting with the guards that it proved my Italian nationality and was equivalent to a passport. They wanted to help me, but they were hesitant. It was getting late in the day with no more planes flying in, so other guards gathered around. I was surrounded by about twenty “friendly” Japanese guards. I finally asked to talk to their supervisor and was able to convince him to allow me to enter into Japan without a visa, showing my return ticket and hotel reservation. WOW, what a bullshitter, similar to TonyLip in the fantastic film “Green Book”.

I had the addresses of large travel agencies which I started to visit. The agents were smiling and nodding so politely that I thought I would fill Italy with Japanese tourists. After a few days, I realized that the smile and the nodding were just their rituals. Unfortunately, I also found out that their holiday periods were similar to ours. The last thing I wanted was to bring groups of Japanese skiers during the Christmas season that was already filled with Italian families.

Of course, I had no idea on how to move around Tokyo, but once I tried to use the subway. The signs were all in Japanese, with no trace of any other language. Everyone was in a hurry, and I started ambling around, hoping for an address or a sign that I’d recognize. As I was walking down some subway stairs, an immense crowd was running up the same stairs. Remembering my days as a fast soccer player, I quickly turned around and came out of the subway leading a pack of hurried Japanese. However, when I got out, I wanted to know in which part of the city I was in order to go to the closest travel agency. Finally, I saw a sign that read “Credit Suisse”. I very happily walked into their office, feeling like I had found close relatives. They gladly helped me.

While touring around, I wanted to buy a Japanese watch. The jeweler, learning that I was Italian, sporting a mustache, asked me if I was part of the Mafia. When I said no, he was disappointed, but advised me to say that I was, if I wanted to impress the girls in Tokyo.

Went out a few evenings with the Alitalia people who were working in Tokyo. Generally speaking, I found out that the Japanese really liked Italians. One pointed out to me with a wink that the three major national airlines (Japan Airlines, Lufthansa and Alitalia) had offices right next to one other. When he noticed that it meant nothing to me, he pointed out that it was the old “Axis” alliance going back to WWII. A failed mission in Tokyo, but what an experience.

Belmont Country Club near Trento: 1973-1993 A taste of politics in Italy

The city of Trento (100,000 inhabitants) had, and still does not have a country club. Just a little tennis club with only four clay courts that were always full, so I decided to create the first country club complete with all the amenities: A twenty-room motel with club house with restaurant-pizzeria, tennis courts and swimming pool. Found thirty partners who chipped in to purchase a five acre property located about 3 miles from the city. The Trentino Province gave us permission to build seven tennis courts and a motel with 20 rooms. When we asked permission to complete the project, it was delayed and finally forbidden because the political trend at the time shifted toward a Maoist political administration. In fact, the infamous “Brigate Rosse” (Red Brigades) were born at the Sociology Department of the University of Trento. Therefore, we were seen as filthy capitalists, exploiters of the masses, who wanted to cater only to wealthy people.

Realizing that a country club in Trento was not in the cards, I still had seven tennis courts that I needed to operate. As usual, my mind came up with a “Think Big Idea”:

May 1982: Representative of the International Harry Hopman Tennis Academy in Europe

As a teenager I followed the Davis Cup competition and was enchanted by the Australian tennis team that, under the leadership of the mythical coach Harry Hopman, had won 19 out of 21 Davis Cup challenges. In the early eighties Harry Hopman was running the International Tennis Academy at Largo, FL, where five out of the top ten world-ranked tennis players were training.

On March 1st, 1982, I called him person to person. I told him that, the year before, I had taken a group of about thirty young players from “Tennis Club Milano” for a two-week course at the Don Budge Tennis School in Maryland. Unfortunately, Budge’s tennis camp was rather disappointing for the spoiled Milanese rich kids. The accommodations were in a rather rustic summer school camp. The food, for Italians, was tasteless, especially the pasta. At a certain point the Italian kids started throwing the overcooked pasta around the room, which created a disciplinary problem. The coaches were mostly young students, who did not impress the Italians who belonged to one of the elite clubs, where Davis Cup matches were being held. Fortunately, the side trips to DC were interesting and partly made up for the disappointing package. Personally, I was delighted to meet the legendary Don Budge at his home. Occasionally, Don demonstrated his famous backstroke. The kids enjoyed meeting and hearing tennis stories from the legendary Fred Perry, who was visiting the States.

Somehow, I managed to convince the world-famous tennis coach Harry Hopman to fly to Italy to investigate the possibility of opening a European branch of his tennis academy. Carol and I drove from Trento to Munich to pick him up with his wife, Lucy, at the airport.

After looking over my seven tennis courts, he was interested, but needed at least three

of them covered, in case of rain. I knew that the Province of Trento would have never given me permission to cover the courts because the fine arts committee would have prevented it since they were in a scenic area near a lake. Here I was, with the most famous tennis coach in the world, coveted by international clubs like Montecarlo, Munich and Vienna, and no adequate place available. After sever-



Harry Hopman and his wife Lucy with Carol and me on the way from Munich airport to my small "Belmont Tennis Club".

al frantic phone calls, I found the "Junior President Club" in Bologna that had 15 covered tennis courts out of a total 25. Just before we were ready to start the operation, I got a "person to person" international phone call from the CEO, who represented the corporation that owned all the facilities at the Harry Hopman International Tennis Academy in Largo, FL, which included 45 courts, condos and restaurants. The CEO told me that his corporation was very reluctant to allow their employee Harry Hopman to engage in a commercial activity in Italy, due to its antibusiness reputation led by communist oriented strong unions.

Since I knew that the corporation had its headquarters in Ohio, I told the CEO that I graduated from MUC in Alliance, OH where he could check my reputation as a guarantee for the European branch of the Harry Hopman International Academy in Bologna, Italy. That did it! We reached an agreement, and the European branch of the Harry Hopman Tennis Academy was scheduled to open on May 15th with me as its European agent on a 5% commission on the gross income generated by the Academy. Mr. Hopman sent his best coaches to Bologna, including Bill Bowden and Mary Carrillo, who, in 1977 had won the Mixed



Taken at "President Junior Club" in Bologna (25 tennis courts with 15 covered) where I convinced the world famous coach Harry Hopman to open a European branch of his "Internation Tennis Academy" in Florida. I'm at Hopman's right, while President Natalino is on his left.

Undemeath, Hopman advises Rod Laver, the only tennis player who, together with Don Budge, won four "Grand Slams" in one year.

Doubles at the French Open with John McEnroe.

It was an exciting experiment with hopeful, young tennis players coming from all over Europe. When I noticed that few young Italian players were enrolling, I visited the most famous tennis clubs in Italy, where I discovered a reality that I was not aware of. The Italian Federation Club and the individual Italian tennis club managers were jealous of the Hopman Tennis Academy in Bologna and did everything possible to boycott it. Instead of seeing it as an opportunity for accessing international world tennis, they preferred to stay in their national cocoon, although they were not producing any world class players out of their clubs, since Nicola Pietrangeli in the 60s and Adriano Panatta in the mid 70s. The only people who helped me in Italy were the journalist Silvano Tauceri and Lea Pericoli, a charming Italian tennis champion, whom Harry Hopman knew quite well. I also got to meet and cooperate with Orlando Sirola, a 6.6 ft. tennis player, who, with Pietrangeli made one of the best double teams in the world. On the side, I managed to find a job for Orlando Sirola, as director of the Albarella Tennis Club, owned by Credit Suisse and run by a friend of mine.

Fortunately, we were helped internationally when Harry Hopman's top player, Andrés Gomez, won the Italian Open in Rome in May 1982. After the Roman victory, Andrés and his coach came to visit the academy and stayed for a few days, practicing with the participants. Despite the "lack of cooperation" by the Italian tennis clubs, we were quite successful with most of the players coming from Germany, after I invited a group of German tennis sport writers to visit the academy.

After about six months of operation, the Junior Tennis Club in Bologna wanted to eliminate my 5% commission and fired me despite a three-year contract. Lawsuits in Italy last about 15 years, so I did not sue them and decided to just move on with my life. I remained with the satisfaction of having been able to arrange an international, top-class tennis academy and to get to know the most famous tennis players along with the professional side of the tennis world. What a disappointment. I will not dwell on it, but my romantic side of the tennis world went up in ashes. I discovered jealousies, boycotts, and occasional dishonesty. I am still wondering if it's the same in any human endeavor if one really digs into it. In fact, Ben Franklin must have had valid reasons for the following quote: He who knows the world the most, likes it the least"!

P.S. Updated correction on my judgement on Italian tennis that goes back to 1982: As I am completing this essay in April 2024, an incredible group of world class tennis players has been emerging, starting with Jannik Sinner, Berrettini, Sonogo, Musetti ,Arnaldi etc.

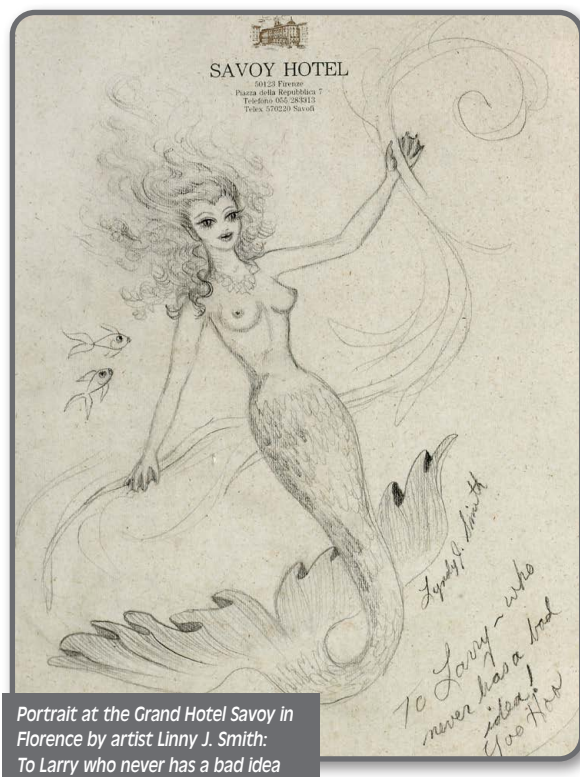
Hotel Broker, again!

The breach of contract in Bologna was quite an unexpected blow to me, after dedicating six months of my time 24-7 to the project. I took a short vacation with the family and, after a few days for evaluating the options, I wisely decided to resume my former occupation as "hotel broker and tour operator" where I was my own boss, free to organize great trips (tennis, golf, skiing, sightseeing, cooking courses) to the best places and hotels in Italy. I used my newly installed German and Italian car phones to their full extent. My souped-up

16 valve Mercedes looked quite impressive with two phone antennas on the back, plus a regular radio antenna in the middle. The Italian car phone worked only in Italy and the German one only in Germany; however, by chance, I found a “German” beam that allowed me to get a good connection while I was still in some “strategic” parts of Austria. My favorite one was one by a mountain creek that had a small, colorful parking space. While operating from the car with the roof partially open to get the fresh air and enjoy the background music of the mountain creek, I would spend hours making phone calls to the American ski clubs in Germany, without paying the high price of international phone calls. During a pause, an English gentleman, who was parked close to my car even gave me a compliment. He said, “I could not help overhearing some of your conversations, and I must tell you that your English is better than mine”. Of course, I thanked him, but wish I had taken his name and address. Little things mean a lot.

Of course, my offers always avoided “high season” so there were no crowds, and the hotel managers were delighted to have my groups fill their empty rooms. In my “lusty” days I was able to bring up to 3,000 people per year into Italy, mostly Americans in Europe. I arranged bus and train transportation, hotel accommodations, meals, and guided tours.

In the summer of 1982, the Soccer World Cup was played in Spain. The whole world, except the U.S., was glued to the TV for the exiting matches. After a slow start, the Italian team started doing very well, and eventually won the world cup against Brazil. While I was watching the semifinal game between Italy and the very strong Argentinian team, out of curiosity, I asked Carol to watch with me for a few minutes. Then, I asked her what she thought of the players. She commented that they all seemed very good except for a little guy who kept falling to the ground. Lo and behold, the little guy was Diego Armando Maradona, who is still considered, together with Pelè, the greatest soccer player ever. Unfortunately, for him and the Argentinian team, Maradona was bodily checked by Claudio Gentile, who, very skillfully and in spite of his name, used every trick in the book and outside the book, to prevent Maradona from playing the ball. None of the players were angels, but I’m afraid that is the way things go when one gets to the bottom or the top of every professional competition.



Portrait at the Grand Hotel Savoy in Florence by artist Linny J. Smith:
To Larry who never has a bad idea

Talked my way into crossing borders, in Italy, Austria and Germany with no documents

In the late seventies, our son Mark was flying from DC to Munich for the Christmas vacations. To make him avoid finding the train station from the airport, plus the five-hour train trip to Trento, I decided to drive to Munich with my father to pick him up. Getting up in the middle of the night I didn't want to wake Carol, so I got dressed in the dark and forgot to take my passport and driver license. In those days there was no united Europe and there was always a certain tension between the Italian and the Austrian border guards. When I showed up at the Italian border, I realized I did not have those two essential documents. I asked the Italian guard if he would allow me to talk to his chief to whom I explained what happened. He felt sorry for me, saying that for him it was no problem, but the Austrian guards would have NEVER let me enter Austria with no passport and no driver's license. I convinced him to let me take a step at the time, so I showed up at the Austrian border. I looked the guard in the eye and told him the story. To my great surprise, knowing their historical inflexibility, he commented, covering his face with his hands, "Let's say I never saw you. Good luck trying to get into Germany", which was my last obstacle. When I got to the German border, I explained the story again. The guard said: I will open the gate for you so you can turn around where you came from, but there is no way you can get into Germany without the proper documents. I was not giving up and kept on talking until a little group of Austrian and German guards gathered around. When I realized there was no chance, I asked to see the Chief of the border police. Reluctantly, they escorted me into his office. I repeated the story with the variation that I was willing to leave my father with them as a hostage until I picked up my son up at the Munich airport. In those days, there were no cell phones so it would have been impossible to communicate with Mark, who would not have known what to do. At a certain point the Chief was starting to lose his patience, threatening to arrest me if I kept insisting. I then noticed that he had a wedding ring, so I asked him if he had children. Yes, he replied! I looked him in the eye and said, "Suppose you were in my shoes, and I were in yours. I would find a way to allow a father and a grandfather to pick up their son and grandson at the airport. Well, he DID, giving me a "temporary emergency pass for four hours"! After thanking him profusely I returned to my car where my father was convinced that they had arrested me. The group of Austrian and German guards were astonished, but they had to let me go. As I was slowly driving away, a mean looking, small Austrian guard said loudly to make sure that everyone heard, "The Germans are letting you enter their country illegally, but I can assure you that, as long as I'm here, you will never re-enter into Austria without the proper documents. I waved with a smile and arrived just in time to finally meet Mark, who was anxiously waiting near the airport exit. Now, the big question was, how can I avoid the vindictive Austrian guard on the way back into Austria? He surely had taken down my plate number and distributed it to all the Austrian guards. However, I had a lot of experiences about crossing borders by car. Therefore, on the way back from Munich, I pulled to the side of the road just before the Austrian border, watching the lines of cars and passengers going through the five gates between Germany and Austria. In those days, you had to show the cars papers, passports, driver's license, and car insurance. Suddenly I sneaked into the longest and slowest line, probably operated by a new, harried

guard. When my turn came, I slowly handed him all the many required documents into a big pile, including the instruction manual, while the drivers behind my car were getting impatient. He looked at some of the papers on top, looked at our three generations of “clean cut passengers” and waived us through. Getting into Italy I made sure I thanked the Italian chief of the border guards who had allowed me to make the first step of “Mission Impossible”!

During my very frequent car trips to Germany, I always had to cross the Italian-Austrian border at the Brenner Pass. Unfortunately, Austria and Italy did not have a good relationship after the end of WWI and WWII. Therefore, there was frequently harassment mostly on the part of the Austrian border guards. Once I had my car full of promotional flyers and brochures of hotels and Italy in general. The guards told me that I would have to pay duty for carrying the promotional material into Austria, although Austria for me was just a 150 km geographical expression between Italy and Germany. As the guards pulled me out of the line with my car, and were going through the brochures, I had a great idea: I told them that I was a friend of Bruno Kessler, the President of the Region Trentino-Sud Tyrol. Consequently, I would make sure that no Austrian promotional material would be allowed to come into Italy without paying taxes. In addition, I told them that on my return trip to Italy I had an appointment with the Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock and his wife Edith, who were vacationing at the Hotel du Lac at Riva. I knew about the Mocks’ vacation through the director of the Hotel du Lac, who was a friend of mine. The appointment was a white lie, but it worked, and the guards let me go almost excusing themselves for inconveniencing me.

Clean Italian Flag at the Brenner Pass

During the seventies, every time I crossed the Italian-Austrian border I was embarrassed to see that the Italian flag looked like a dirty rag in the wind, while the Austrian flag was always spotless. Finally, I decided to try to correct the situation. I stopped on the Italian side and asked to see whoever was in charge of the flag at the border. I was introduced to a rough Tuscan non-commissioned officer, who received me with a slight irritation, thinking that I was a troublemaker. I pulled out my American passport, explaining that I had learned how to respect the flag in the States. I also told him that all the foreign tourists that come into Italy tend to lose respect when they see the symbol of the country so disrespected. Well, he said, the Brenner Pass is high on the mountain and has high winds that damage the flags. Fortunately, I could point out that the Austrian flag was swinging spotlessly across the border, located in full view. “You convinced me, he said. In fact, here is new flag and I’ll give instructions to hoist it immediately. We both enjoyed the ceremony, and I gave him a case of my pasta to show my appreciation. From then on, every time I pass by the Brenner, I have the satisfaction of seeing a spotless Italian flag waving in the wind. Of course, I informed all my Italian friends that it was due to my initiative. Now that Europe is united and has no border barriers, the flags are not there anymore...

Differences between Italians, Germans and Americans

Through experience I have learned that the people of the three countries that I have known socially and in business, (Italians, Germans and Americans), have their own characteristics, which I have learned to accept. If one wants to irritate Germans, tell them that it's crazy not to have speed limits everywhere on the Autobahn. Americans get irritated if you suggest that they should pay for gas just as people do worldwide. Italians get irritated if you make suggestions on how to cook and sauce pasta or how to drive a car. Italians, Germans and Austrians are impressed if you let them know that you have contacts in high places, while Americans look down on it, as if one is trying to show off. Germans and Austrians respect culture much more than money, while Americans and Italians respect money more than culture.

Of course, my observations are general and certainly do not apply to all individuals. I just wanted to express my opinion based on personal experiences.

Feeling confident after my success with a clean flag at the Brenner border, I wrote to Giorgio Napolitano, President of Italy, to promote a campaign for clean Italian flags all over Italy. No reply. Same result after a similar letter to the next Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. As a last resort, I fixed a specific appointment with the Commissario del Governo (Representative of the Italian Government at the Autonomous Province of Trento). He received me very politely and even offered me tea, saying that he would follow the proper channels to carry on my initiative. Again, nothing happened. Evidently, in Italy, how the national flag looks, is not considered important. My conclusion is that, during the Fascist era, Italians were bombarded by nationalistic propaganda with flags and symbols everywhere, trying to imitate the ancient Romans. After the war was lost, anything patriotic was considered sort of fascist, including the flag. In fact, except for the armed forces, the Italian flag is mostly waved only during the international sports events.

Inter-Dolomites Ski Operator

My customers and the ski clubs started asking me if I had other resorts besides Monte Bondone. I had to say no, but I thought: Why do I have to manage a hotel to offer variety to my customers? I figured I would visit other ski resorts and make contracts with the most beautiful hotels where I would bring groups of skiers. Of course, I had the advantage of knowing how the ski season went. Therefore, by avoiding the periods when the hotels and the ski resorts were crowded, I easily negotiated a great price in low season for my groups. Another difference between the Italian and the American groups was that the Italians paid a small deposit at the time of their reservation, with the balance at the end of their stay, sometimes months after. The Americans, once the agreement was made, always paid me in advance. Imagine the joy of the hotel managers when they greeted me at the head of my American groups. I would shake the managers' right hand, give them a check for the total payment with my left hand and order champagne for everyone, happily paid for by the hotel.

My best customers were the members of the Chicago Metropolitan Ski Council. For four consecutive years, in addition to my hotels at Monte Bondone, I took them to the three most famous ski areas in the Italian Alps: Courmayeur, Madonna di Campiglio and Cortina d'Ampezzo. They even gave me a silver plate dedicated to "Larry Pisoni, the trailblazer.

Useful "Italian Connections" in Chicago, Dallas, TX, and D.C.

I recall an odd episode that happened in Chicago, when the president of the club was driving me back to my hotel. It was close to midnight when we ran out of gas, just a few hundred yards from a still lit gas station, so we started walking. As soon as we got there the attendant turned the lights off, saying that the station was closed. I was dressed in an elegant brown suit with white stripes, sporting a fancy tie and carrying a small, elegant attaché leather case. I remained silent while the president of the club was trying to convince the station attendant to give him some gas. The attendant was rudely adamant, saying that it was time to close the station and he had no intention of re-opening it. The president kept insisting, asking if he could at least buy a small container from him with enough gas to drive me to the nearby hotel. No, the attendant said, "It's against the law". Finally, I got mad and told the guy in my Italian accented English, "F... the law, I came all the way from Italy to do business in Chicago and my Italian friends would not believe that a gas station attendant refused to sell me gas when I needed it". He started trembling and talking incoherently, while he was pouring gas in a can. After he finished, I wanted to pay him, but he refused to take any payment, even though I insisted and wanted to give him a tip too. Luckily for me, he had seen a lot of movies and didn't want to take a chance.

Since my "hotel broker" business was going very well in the late eighties, I decided to buy a home in the Washington area for Carol and the kids. In 1978 we settled for a

\$99,000.00 row-house at the newly developed “Montgomery Village”, north of Bethesda, MD. I had plenty of cash, so I committed myself for a \$33,000.00 deposit plus a 20-year mortgage for the balance. Filled out all the forms and waited with ease, since I knew I was overqualified. In fact, my American IRS returns showed an excellent income. However, I did not consider the obtuse bureaucratic procedures for an outside the box person like me. The bank did not know what to do with the fact that I really did not have a job, so the days were going bye-bye without an answer. Finally, I requested an appointment with the bank director, who was beating around the bush, coming up with all sorts of excuses. Finally, as I was shaking his hand just before walking out of the door, I commented that my friends in Italy would never understand why I was denied a loan out of mere technicalities. He started turning white and I saw fear in his eyes. As he walked back to his desk to pull out my forms, he said with a trembling voice, “Rest assured that by tomorrow morning your loan will be approved”. I never would have imagined that my innocent comment would have performed such a miracle.

Here is another minor, but physically major example of the effectiveness of the “Italian connection”: I was enjoying a beer at the counter of a bar in Dallas, TX. A good-looking girl sat right next to me, and we started chatting. The conversation was going on very well, when a huge, tough looking guy interrupted our conversation, saying: You’re getting too friendly with my girlfriend. Why don’t you step outside so I can show you how to behave in Dallas, TX! Somehow, I remained very calm and with a son of a bitch smile I replied with my Italian-American accent, “My Italian friends had recommended this bar in case I ever needed their help. Consequently, he and his girlfriend disappeared, while I finished my beer, just like in the movies!

Two episodes in which I managed to elegantly “cheat” two professionals of cheating

When it comes to winter vacations, the Italians are extremely traditional: they would arrive at the hotel the day after Christmas and leave on Epiphany. Americans in Europe were much more flexible, so I had developed a formula that allowed me to satisfy my American clients and the Italian hoteliers: During the period IN December 19th OUT December 26th, I brought hundreds of American skiers at low season prices in the most prestigious resorts. After lunch, on December 26th, the Americans would leave their hotels. As they were driving down the mountain, they would cross paths with the Italians who were driving up, in order to arrive at their hotels in the afternoon, before dinner. An engineer-builder from Marilleva, to whose hotels I had brought 300 Americans in the period from Dec 19th, 1994 to the 26th,- was making great use of his wicked intelligence in his many activities. Rumor had it that he was called the shark because of his sob ferocity with a big smile with which he managed to deceive almost everyone. Even for me he had prepared a big trap after the mutual great success of the previous year. I had naively informed the manager of the Hotel Vigo that my clients would be returning en masse since they had been very satisfied during the previous season. After learning this, the shark ordered the manager to double the prices

I had paid during December '84. Normally, prices increase by a maximum of 10% from one season to the next, so I was completely overwhelmed. In the spring of 1985, I had already made the agreements with all the groups, so I could not cancel the groups without losing my reputation. Not knowing how to resolve the blackmailing situation, I decided to talk about it at the ski school where all the instructors were very happy with my clients. Fortunately, one of the instructors suggested the solution: Why don't you talk about it with the Director of the Hotel Solaria, Mario Costa, a true professional and an excellent person? I immediately made an appointment and asked him if he had availability for about 300 people in the period from 19 to 26 December, and at what price. Certainly, he told me. Among other things, I have heard very good things about your American groups. They behave well and do not spare themselves in the consumption of beer and wine: Indeed, he said, I will also give you a great price. I was ecstatic when the price proposed to me for the 4-star Solaria was even lower than what I had paid for the year before at the 3-star Hotel Vigo. We immediately celebrated the agreement with mutual satisfaction. I only asked my new friend Mario not to talk to anyone about our agreement, as I had thought of a just revenge against the shark. I made an appointment with him. I kept complaining about his mean conditions that would cause me to lose money with every client, which kept him indifferent. However, the shark was astute in his field involving construction because he knew how to carefully choose the craftsmen, whom he forced to buy his apartments in lieu of paying them. In fact, several craftsmen and consultants were known to leave his office crying. Fortunately, this time, the shark was playing in a territory that I knew much better than he did. I told him that, despite his doubling of the price from the previous season, I was forced to accept his conditions, otherwise, I'd lose reputation with my groups. However, as customary in the hotel reservation system in Italy, I asked for an option to provide the deposit and room list with the number of people two months prior to arrival. Therefore, we established the deadline for October 19, 1985. After signing the agreement, the shark was rather surprised by my acting like such a gracious loser, with a wide smile of satisfaction. On October 18th, the day before the expiration of the option with deposit, I sent him a registered letter (special D, as Elvis used to sing) in which I informed him that, due to the price increase, all my clients had cancelled their reservations. Of course, I knew very well that, with a cancellation two months before the opening, his Hotel Vigo would remain almost empty since groups always book at least four months in advance. On December 19, we celebrated the arrival of about 300 guests at the Hotel Solaria. For the occasion, I sent my son Mark to book only eight paratroopers from the American Base in Vicenza. Knowing that I had filled the Hotel Solaria instead of the Vigo, the shark nodded with his wicked smile, commenting, "This time your daddy didn't know where to put them, huh?"

Years later, a waiter told Mark that, during a dinner party, the shark told the diners that, in his working life, only two people had managed to fool him in business: One was Enzo Larry Pisoni!

Now, here is the second episode in which I managed to "defend myself" from the exorbitant managers of the Folgarida-Marilleva ski lifts. I had made an agreement with "The International School of Munich" for a ski week in Marilleva, including full board, ski pass and ski lessons. In total there were about 250 people. Throughout the Alps, it was customary to grant a free ski pass every 25 people, in addition to a group discount. To my great disappointment, the manager of the Marilleva ski lifts told me that she was not authorized

to grant either free passes or discounts. In the agreement with the Munich International School, I had already granted the discounts to persuade their organizers to accept my offer for the ski week; therefore, I was at a loss. Fortunately, I had a very good relationship with the managers of the Madonna di Campiglio ski lifts who appreciated the business generated by the many groups I brought in from the USA, Canada and Germany. I immediately reached an agreement with Madonna di Campiglio for the “Skirama” package, which included Marilleva and Folgarida. There was only one logistical problem: The lifts started at 9:00 a.m. in the entire Skirama area, but the offices for the purchase of tickets didn’t open until 8:00 a.m. I managed to convince the managers of Campiglio to anticipate the opening for me at 7:30 am. Using all my experience in driving on the snow, along the 33 km between Marilleva and Campiglio, thanks also to an excellent front wheel drive Saab with thermal tires, I arrived right on time at the opening of the ski pass offices in Campiglio, paying in cash. At 8:00 a.m. I was already in the car for a not easy return trip, with traffic on the snow. Finally, at 8:45 I arrived triumphantly at Marilleva with 250 ski passes to hand over to the group leaders. While I was enjoying a well-deserved breakfast in the company of my friend Mario Costa, director of the Solaria, I received a phone call from the director of the Marilleva-Folgarida ski lifts, asking me to go to their offices as a matter of urgency. The lift attendants had immediately reported that 250 skiers had their Madonna di Campiglio ski passes on display, instead of the ones for Marilleva and Folgarida, where they were staying. All of this meant that the Madonna di Campiglio lifts had benefited from the total proceeds of the Skirama, while those of Marilleva-Folgarida had been left with zero! Calmly and happily, in the afternoon, I went to a meeting with the managers of the ski lifts, furious at the trick I had played on them with the complicity of the Campiglio managers. To add insult to injury, I also showed them the season ski pass that had been donated to me by the Campiglio lifts. At the end of the meeting, the director of the ski lifts changed his attitude and amicably acknowledged that I had every right to “buy pears” where it was most convenient. In the end, he was also impressed by the little feat I had accomplished with the lightning-fast round trip Marilleva-Campiglio without keeping the group waiting. With a big smile, I also advised him to buy a Saab, for driving fast and safely in the snow.

During the mid-seventies, my agreement with Alitalia and the Trentino Ministry of Tourism was producing excellent results. Everyone was extremely happy because we concentrated in low season and provided the best prices in the best hotels and locations, (Madonna di Campiglio, Courmayeur and Cortina). There was only one unfortunate episode caused by my male stupidity. A pretty girl from the Alitalia office in N.Y.C. told me that she would get a promotion if I would be able to come up with an extremely low week-price in Madonna di Campiglio, one of the most prestigious ski locations in Italy. After a long search, I convinced the owner of a centrally located hotel to give me a very low, promotional price for the Boston Ski Club for half pension, i.e., Overnight accommodation, breakfast and dinner for 6,500 lire = to \$8.00 p/person per day, WOW!

Although my decision to grant such a low price was stupid, I had the good sense to ask for full prepayment. When the group arrived at the hotel, several of the participants complained because the hotel was a bit run down. The trip captain complained to me in a very arrogant way. I told him, in vain, that I was representing a five-star hotel in the same loca-

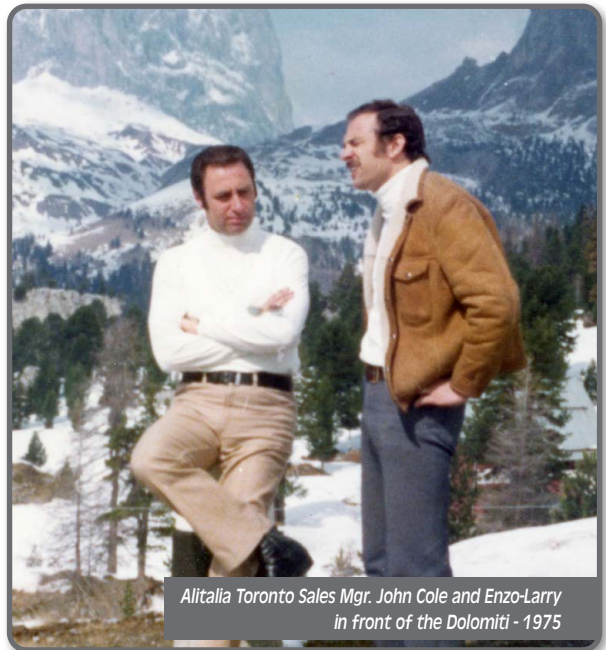
tion, just two hundred meters away, for a few dollars more. The Alitalia girl had persuaded me to grant an exceptional low price, otherwise the trip would have been cancelled. In front of his people, he told me that he had connections in high places that would have made me lose my license to operate. I was able to stay very calm, replying to him with a sweet s.o.b. smile:

“I regret to inform you that you will not be able to make me lose my license for the simple reason that I do not have a license. You could sue me, but when the Italian judges know about the ridiculous low price you paid in Madonna di Campiglio, they would just laugh at you. Since I am a reasonable, peaceful person, if you want to, I will gladly give you the address of the nearest American Consulate. End of story!

Alitalia-Canada Ski Rep

During my occasional trips to the States and Canada in the early seventies, I noticed that in the winter season the airplanes were flying more than half empty, so I contacted Alitalia, which, at that time, was a well-run company not yet ruined by politicians and unions. Alitalia granted me very low group rates that allowed me to offer fantastic packages (flight, transfers, hotels with meals and ski-passes) for my own hotels at Monte Bondone. I soon diversified and took the groups to the most famous Italian ski areas) and hotels, in Courmayeur, Madonna di Campiglio and Cortina d’Ampezzo.

In Canada I had great help in John Cole, Alitalia’s Sales Manager in Toronto. John was English, efficient and with a great sense of humor, so it was fun to work with him. We rapidly became friends and still are. He liked Italians and was intrigued by the Italian labyrinth. However, with a smile, he would recite, “An Englishman italianate is the devil incarnate”. Through John, we convinced Mr. Claudio Betta, Minister of Tourism of Trentino Province to provide free bus transfers to the Trentino ski resorts for the Canadian ski club teams that landed with Alitalia at Milan-Malpensa airport. Consequently, we were very successful in bringing Canadian skiers to the Italian Alps. By stretching the program, I extended the privilege to American Ski Clubs, even if they landed in Munich. With John we also organized tours for “interliners”, i.e., airline people



who flew free and were taken to the Trentino Alps with free busses. Their only expense was the hotels for which I'd give them a great deal since it was low season. Same for travel agents. I specifically remember one episode involving young flight attendants who, after a great Italian dinner with the proper wines, went to a local disco, accompanied by an Italian political delegation, led by the mayor of Siena, a dignified elderly gentleman. After a while he started dancing wildly, looking out of place with his white hair, cavorting with the young girls. With a condescending smile John turned to me saying "There is no fool like an old fool". I never forgot that comment and always made sure not to ever fall into that category. Thanks for the memories, John.

As "hotel broker" I made a special contract with Cavaliere (Knight of the Republic), Giuseppe Bossi, the CEO of Atahotels, the largest hotel chain in Italy that had some of the best hotels from the Alps all the way down to Sicily. My contract guaranteed me a monthly fee, trips paid, plus a percentage on the customers that I brought to the hotels.

In the cities where the Atahotels company did not have hotels, I was free to operate, so I was allowed plenty of freedom to take customers to cities and hotels where Atahotels had none, like Rome and Venice. Sir Bossi was one of the most intelligent persons I had ever met. His education was limited to the eight-grade, but he had a photographic memory (once I saw him recite verbatim a newspaper article that he had read only once) and was very street smart. Somehow, he reminded me of Ari Onassis. Here are a couple of episodes that I'd like to recall:

He wanted to hire Chef Aldo Siccardi, one of the best chefs in Italy, for his newly acquired five star "Imperial Palace" at Santa Margherita Ligure, on the Italian Riviera. At the time, Chef Siccardi was head chef at the Hotel Splendid, the most famous in Portofino, where types like Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, Rex Harrison and other famous actors stayed. Cav. Bossi made an appointment with Chef Aldo in a local café. As they walked in the door and introduced themselves, they sat down at a table, where Cav. Bossi ordered two cokes. Immediate question: How much are they paying you p/month at the Hotel Splendid? Five million lire (about \$6,000.), was the answer. "If I give you six million lire would you work for us at the Imperial? Yes, I'd be glad to, replied Aldo. Cav. Bossi got up, shook hands, told Chef Aldo that he would receive a contract the next day, and walked out of the door, without even finishing the coke. That's how Bossi operated.

On one of my car trips to visit a group of skiers at my favorite G.H. Des Alpes at Madonna di Campiglio just before Christmas 1977, the road surface was icy and treacherous. As I was carefully exiting a bridge with a sharp curve, I noticed Cav. Bossi and his secretary Maria Teresa walking up the banks of the river Sarca. His Alfa Romeo 2000 had skidded on the ice and luckily stopped on a ledge, just on top of the icy water. The accident had happened just a few minutes before my arrival. Neither Cav. Bossi nor Maria Teresa were hurt, so we celebrated their survival with a great dinner at the Des Alpes. During dinner I told Mr. Bossi that I used to have a car just like his, which I sold because it was not made for driving on snowy or icy mountain roads. Therefore, I replaced it with a brand new, splendid azure Volvo 240 GL, de-luxe, very sturdy, and reliable. He gladly accepted my offer to lend it to him for a trip to Cortina d'Ampezzo to visit his G.H. Miramonti the following day.

Consequently, Mr. Bossi immediately bought a Volvo just like mine, except for a darker blue color. My partner Mario had the Volvo dealership in Trento, so he gave him a good deal, taking back his damaged Alfa Romeo.

The ten directors of the Atahotels would meet every year for a couple of days to coordinate their operations. By the way, Mr. Bossi used to say that it takes about twenty years of hotel experience before one would acquire the ability to become the director of a Grand Hotel. There was a story in which Mr. Bossi told a deputy director that he would never be able to become the Director of a Grand Hotel. But why, the poor guy asked? Because you lack the “Physique du role”, i.e. his looks did not fit the part. It reminded me of the Director of the Hotel in L.A. in the film “Scent of a Woman”, who, instead, had the physique du role!

During one of the meetings, held at the G.H. Des Alpes, Mr. Bossi introduced me as the “Spearhead” of Atahotels in getting customers. As one can imagine, the professional directors were not happy to have a “spearhead” who knew almost nothing about running hotels. In those days, the hotel managers concentrated exclusively on managing their hotels. They had no sales managers except for established, old fashioned agencies, so they saw me as a “parvenue,” who did not follow tradition; however, they were “reluctantly” happy when I brought them customers and paid upon arrival when room occupancy was very scarce in low season.

Adventurous trip to New York to purchase the Hotel Savoy at South Central Park

In December 1978, Maria Teresa, Cav. Bossi’s secretary asked me to accompany him to N.Y.C, where his company was interested in purchasing the Hotel Savoy, strategically located adjacent to the Plaza at South Central Park. Cav. Bossi informed me that he was granted two free first-class tickets by Suisse Air, for flying from Zurich, worldwide except to the U.S. No problem, I commented, we can fly from Zurich to Montreal, sleep there, recover from jet lag, and comfortably fly to JFK the following day in a little over one hour. Consequently, we took the train from Atahotel Hqs. at Salsomaggiore to Milan Central Station for a direct train ride to Zurich. The train was supposed to wait to pause at the Milan Central Station for exactly ten minutes. Cav. Bossi told me that he had “an urgent need to satisfy”, so he got off the train.

Unfortunately, the train started moving with no Bossi in view. Having his suitcase and his R/T air ticket, I didn’t know what to do. In those day there were no cell phones, so I tried to figure out the various options. I knew that at Como (50 km from Milan) the train would stop to clear customs into Switzerland. However, if I stopped there, we would have missed the flight from Zurich to Montreal. On the other hand, knowing that Cav. Bossi was very resourceful, I figured he might find a flight from Milan to Zurich and meet me there at the airport. As I was weighing the various options, all the passengers had to show tickets, passports, and baggage to clear customs. The Swiss train conductor had reservations about allowing Cav. Bossi’s suitcase into Switzerland without its owner. As I was explaining the situation, what do I see: Cav. Bossi, illegally running across the railroad tracks toward

our train. He had managed to get a very fast taxi driver at the Milan Central station. By directing him through all the short cuts in getting out of Milan, which he knew very well, and then, Como, where he attended a boarding school as a kid, he managed to out-speed the international train. Consequently, we happily made the connection for the flight to Montreal. The following day we went to the airport in plenty of time for the flight to N.Y.C.

Unfortunately, Cav. Bossi did not have a visa to enter the U.S. I had an American passport and was not aware that he was not informed that Italian citizens needed a visa to visit the U.S. Since we were both resourceful, we grabbed a taxi to the American Consulate. There were about twenty people in front of us. All of them were families with kids from third world countries, who looked just right for the spirit of the Statue of Liberty. The exception was a nice, well-dressed German lady, who started crying because she did not have the proper papers. Finally, our turn came to talk directly with the Consul. He correctly informed us that the visa must be issued at the country of origin, so there was no way to allow Mr. Bossi to get one in Canada. I informed the Consul that Sir Bossi was the CEO of ATAHOTELS, the largest hotel chain in Italy. The purpose of his trip to the States was to purchase the Hotel Savoy in N.Y.C. I also showed the Consul the return ticket issued for just two days after our arrival in N.Y.C. The Consul was starting to get annoyed by my insistence. He told me that he was familiar with Italy, but he had never heard of Atahotels. Fortunately, he asked to list the names of some of the hotels. When, among others, I mentioned the Miramonti Majestic Hotel in Cortina d'Ampezzo his face lit up. Oh, he said, while skiing the Italian Dolomites, my Volkswagen was held up at a mountain pass due to a heavy snow fall. We were rescued by a helicopter emergency team and taken back to the Hotel Miramonti, where the director lent me money because I had left my wallet in the car. The Consul even remembered the name of the Miramonti Director, who was Bossi's employee. What an incredible coincidence. Consequently, the Consul proceeded to issue an instant visa to allow Mr. Bossi to get a flight to N.Y.C. on the same day!

The following day we were introduced to the owner of the Hotel Savoy, who asked the manager to walk us through the most important features of the 23-story building. I still remember how subservient the hotel manager was toward the owner, who looked and acted like a rather benevolent multimillionaire. For whatever reason, the owner really wanted to sell and had come down quite a bit on the price (\$8 million).

The U.S. economy was going through a malaise during the Carter Administration with hostages in Iran and long lines at the U.S gas stations. Also, the dollar was very low in comparison to the Italian Lira. Unfortunately, the deal did not work out because the company that owned ATAHOTELS fell into financial difficulties. I wish I had had the financial resources or the contacts because it would have been a great deal.

Bonanza USA November 1978

One of the things that always disturbed me, was the generally rather negative, envious opinion that most Italians had about the United States. It's a long story. For two thousand years, after the fall of the Roman Empire, Italy had been under the domination of the Catholic church. On top of that, right after the end of WWII, the Italian communists, financed and guided by the Soviet Union were ready for a military revolution that would have brought Italy into the "Soviet Paradise". Fortunately, NATO had been created and the United States had solid military bases throughout western Europe that guaranteed its freedom. However, both the Catholic and the Communist "religions" were against capitalism, which was considered immoral and sinful as the result of Satan's excrements. Well, there was nothing I could do about changing those things; however, I thought, why not arrange a deluxe trip for a group of Italians to see with their own eyes what a great country the U.S. is? Therefore, in November 1978, I organized "Bonanza USA" and took 123 hoteliers on a discovery trip, as the attached brochures show.

The participants are still talking about that trip to their children and grandchildren. At the new MGM hotel in Reno, we had a splendid dinner in a huge dining room, where, on the stage, there was a 707 Boing jet with girls dancing topless on its wings. Those were the days...

As the saying goes, "nothing succeeds like success." Consequently, the following year I organized another trip to America, that I called "Gone with the Wind". Then, one to South Africa where there was still apartheid. Many of us were shocked by this fact; however, being just tourists, we had to accept things as they were. The scenery, the food and the wines were fantastic.

Sicilian tour

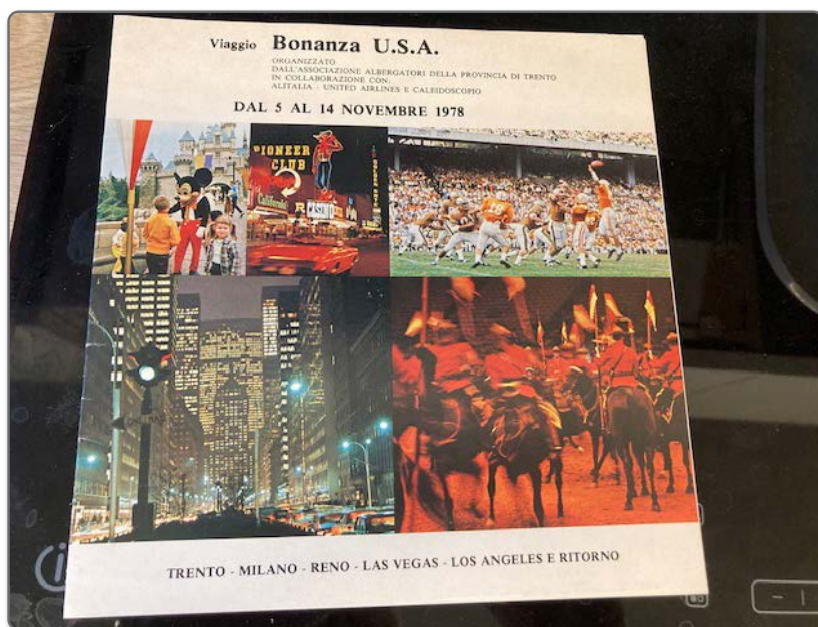
For the last trip I organized for the hotel association, I chose Sicily. That is the one I had most fun with.

We travelled on a deluxe bus, overnighiting in Rome. The following day we made sure to be on time to catch the ferry between Calabria and Sicily. We got there in plenty of time, but the ferry did not open its gangplank until a de-luxe Mercedes coach arrived with a driver and co-driver in front. It passed all the waiting vehicles, while the gangplank was being lowered to allow the coach to get onboard the ferry with almost no stopping. At the time I did not pay much attention to the odd procedure, but later on, our Sicilian guide gave us the explanation. In fact, a few days later, while we were onboard our coach on the autostrada toward Taormina, the guide pointed out the famous de-Luxe Mercedes Coach passing us way above the speed limit with one Sicilian driver and another Sicilian co-driver & mechanic, concentrated on their mission, as advertised on the sides and back of the bus: Rome-Palermo in 15 hours. Considering that along the 1,000 km route the autostrada was not finished, plus crossing the

sea on the Ferry, it was a very remarkable achievement. The guide told us that the selected drivers had to be natives from Enna, Sicily, and mechanics as well. Obviously, the police knew not to interfere with the souped-up coach, run by the “Sicilian connection”.

Our group was staying at the Grand Hotel Villa Ignea in Palermo, the most beautiful in town, obviously, run by Atahotels, so I had special prices. While walking around Palermo with our group I decided to buy the typical flat Sicilian hat, called coppola. As soon as the hotel manager saw me, he strongly advised me not to walk around Palermo with my “black coppola” because it would have seemed disrespectful since it was a sign of an “important man in the system.” Any other color would have been acceptable, but not a black coppola in Sicily.

The most memorable episode happened during our multi-course lunch, after visiting the incredibly well-preserved ancient-Roman mosaics at Villa Armerina. The lunch included excellent Sicilian specialties along with wines galore. A Sicilian bus driver with a group of French tourists, noticing that we were Italians, started singing with his beautiful Sicilian voice, accompanied by his guitar. What a memorable experience. At the end of the meal everyone was very happy and relaxed. Since everyone had paid me for the whole trip, I was responsible for paying the meals included in the program. Very unfortunately, the restaurant owner was not equipped for accepting credit cards. There was a moment of panic since I did not carry enough cash for the bill. I timidly told the owner that I had a personal check book from the local bank of the town of Vezzano. Excellent, he said with a smile, just write me a personal check. After I did, I offered to show him my passport and driver license. “Absolutely no, he replied, we trust you and are honored to accept your personal check from the local bank of Vezzano.” No further comment, except that I still remember the episode with pleasure and pride. During the return trip from Sicily to Trento, we were playing tapes and singing Sicilian songs all the way. Everyone enjoyed it so much that nobody wanted to get off the bus when we arrived at our destination in Trento.



Bonanza-USA, forty years later

During the summer of 2010, I was having dinner with a group of friends at the “Hotel alle Dolomiti” in Molveno. Toward the end of the evening, the owners, Pia and Renato, came over to greet us. After a few minutes I found out that they had been among the enthusiastic participants to the mythical Bonanza-USA in 1978. Their two beautiful daughters Serena and Chiara, in their twenties, joined the group for the nostalgic reveries. Renato even retrieved the Indian moccasins that he had been using as slippers ever since. They recalled the scary plane excursion with a wild pilot over and into the Grand Canyon. They recalled how some people in our group found out that Frank Sinatra was singing that night at the MGM hotel where we were staying. Of course, all the spots had been booked months ahead, so there was no possibility of attending the show. However, five daring characters in our group showed up, confusing the bodyguards in broken English by making up a story that their agency in Italy did not make it to send the tickets on time. They said that they had flown in from Italy just to be able to hear Frank Sinatra live! Somehow, they managed to hear and see Frank Sinatra up close from extra front seats provided just for them!

Almost every time I visited my friends Pia and Renato, they brought up the idea of another Bonanza trip, which their daughters and other friends wanted to enjoy too. Finally, during a splendid dinner, savoring “elevated conversations” with excellent wines, we all decided to organize a revival. Unfortunately, the old contacts I had with Alitalia had disappeared along with the airline. The owners of the very efficient agency “Caleidoscopio” in Milan had retired. The hotels were still there, but the management and the “hands-on” booking system had changed completely. Finally, after several months, I managed to set up almost the same package, including the Metroliner trip from New York to D.C. and the same hotels.

Result: 10 participants! Of course, I cancelled the trip and learned another lesson: One cannot relive the past because “Panta Rei”, everything changes. A good, sad example was shown in an episode of “About Schmidt”, a 2002 film with Jack Nicholson. When Schmidt showed up in his native town, he walked into a brand-new car dealership that used to be an ice-cream parlor where he and his teenage friends used to hang around. He started telling the uninterested salesman where the counter was etc. etc. Finally, Schmidt realized that there was no point in continuing the monologue. As Seneca used to say more than two thousand years ago, “The past is dead!”

Three episodes of “lucky actions outside the box.”

- I) While I was totally immersed in my creative activities for providing substance for my family, my mother died, and my father decided to retire. After forty years of being a very responsible, much appreciated doctor, he interpreted retirement as a form of not doing anything except cultivating his park and enjoying the pool where the local kids learned how to swim. For some reason, he decided to stop paying for his utilities, so we had to take care of it, to prevent his total isolation.
His electric house bell stopped working, so he just wrote a note on top, “Non funziona” (Not operational). Since my mother used to take care of everything, except for his pro-

fessional work, he did not file his tax forms and did fill out the forms for his for Social Security. Somehow, he got swindled by an accountant, and started getting big fines for not having paid his taxes.

At a certain point I had to step in to correct a situation was going from bad to worse. Non knowing what to do, I picked up his unopened tax forms and just walked into the tax office that had issued the fines in Trento. The deputy director was there alone. I explained what happened to my father, after my mother's death, adding that he even failed to fill out the forms for his change of status for Social Security. After hearing my story, the D.P. asked me to go into the filing room with him. He found my father's file and looked it over for a while. Then, he took his pen out and crossed out several lines, putting his initials over the deleted parts. Now, he told me, your father does not need to pay anything. If I had not witnessed the scene myself, I would not believe it. After thanking his profusely, I asked for his name, and it turned out that that his son was in the same Scientific Lyceum, as my son Mark. Of course, I sent him a case of champagne, anonymously. I was afraid he would have refused it if he knew it came from me, since he did it for a good cause out of his good heart. Mark and Paolo became friends, and are still in contact.

- II)** I had no idea on how to act for my father's social security. I collected the unopened letters that had received from INPS (National Institute for Social Security), and booked the first train to Rome, where the INPS's headquarters were located. As I entered the lobby of their huge "palazzo", I was somehow lost because I did not know whom to ask. I did not want to ask the receptionist because I was afraid that she would give me the run around, so I started reading the names of the various departments written on a huge billboard. Suddenly, an elegant, affable lady, who must have noticed my indecision, asked me if I was looking for someone specific. I told her that I had just come from Trento because my doctor father, after my mother's death had gone into some sort of depression and, after forty years of service, was not receiving his pension. After asking me a few questions, she smiled kindly, saying: "This must be your lucky day. I'm Mrs. Carli, the personal secretary of the I.N.P.S.'s Director. If you come with me, I'll introduce you to the Director as my favorite cousin, etc., etc. We rode up the elevator that opened up right in front of the large office of the director on the top floor. She took me by the arm, and we started walking toward the director, who was sitting at his desk. After introducing me as her cousin, who had just come from Trento, she briefly summarized the story. The director was quite affable and was able to find my father's file. After looking it over for a while, he assured me that my father would receive his pension through the local INPS branch in Trento, within a week. After thanking both profusely, I got back on the train and returned to Trento like a happy warrior. With "Planes to catch and bills to pay", I failed to get back to Ms. Carli. Unfortunately, by the time I thought of contacting her, neither she, nor her director, were at INPS anymore. As I am writing these lines, I'm still feeling guilty for not acting faster.

About ten days after my trip to Rome, since my father had not received his pension, I decided to contact the local INPS office in Trento. At the time I had a beautiful Honda motorcycle that I loved to ride on our winding roads. I put on the proper motorcycle gear and zipped into Trento. Since I did not want to leave my helmet on the Honda, I carried it with me, with my left hand inside the space left by the open visor. As I got

into the INPS's lobby, there was nobody at the reception. After waiting for a while, I knocked at one of the doors where several clerks were located. I explained my situation to one of them, who told me that I should wait for the system to process the operation. Of course, after my trip to Rome, that type of answer was unacceptable, so I started knocking on more doors and entering more rooms, with the same questions. Finally, someone indicated that the right person to talk with was Dr. Papparella, the highest-ranking officer at INPS Trento; however, he was always very occupied and would receive only after fixing an appointment. Since I was already there, with a good cause, I started looking at the names written on the doors. Finally, I found Dr. Papparella's door! I heard people talking inside his room, so I decided to wait until someone came out. After what seemed like a long enough time, I decided to put my ear next to the door to get an idea of when the conversation might end. I heard a lot of laughter, jokes and b.s. in general. Suddenly, thinking of my father's situation and my trip to Rome, my pent-up frustrations exploded. I slammed the door open, ran toward Papparella's desk and jumped on top of it with my helmet swinging from my left arm (I'm left-handed), shouting, "My father has not been receiving his pension, after working as a country doctor for forty years. I took a trip to Rome to talk with INPS's director who assured me that his pension would be paid within a week. Ten days have gone by and you're here bullshitting instead of paying my father!"

Dr. Papparella got white in the face, but he replied with a calm voice: "I understand your anger; however, I have to ask you, to jump off my desk, exit my office and knock on the door. I'll say "AVANTI (come in) and I'll listen to you. Ok, I said, as I jumped off his desk and walked normally out, closing the door behind me. Then, I knocked gently and opened the door after his "avanti". He found my father's file on his desk, saying that he was taking care of it. After your "intervention", I assure you that my staff will wire the proper amount into your father's bank account tomorrow morning. I smiled politely, shook hands, apologized a bit for my behavior and thanked him for his immediate action.

The following day, my father had his pension in his checking account. End of the story, I thought.

- III)** A couple of years later, I had just taken up cross country skiing at my still favorite Monte Bondone. While I was sort of struggling as an amateur, someone came along side me, saying that we had met before. Sorry, I replied, I don't recall having met you before. Well, he said, I'm Papparella and I remember you very well because nobody had ever jumped on my desk, before or after. I was somewhat embarrassed, but we both laughed and wished each other happy skiing.

Festa dell'Amicizia (Friendship Party) in Trento by the Christian Democratic Party (Democrazia Cristiana)

Through my cousin Carlo, who used to live in Rome, I learned that the “Democrazia Cristiana”, the most powerful political party in Italy, was planning their yearly big convention in Trento. Carlo had found out about the meeting through a friend of his who was the fiancé of the big party boss Aldo Moro, who had been murdered by the Red Brigades. I immediately contacted the Trento chapter of “Democrazia Cristiana”, offering my services. At the time I was the director of a small tourist agency. The party executives I talked with acted surprised and aloof, as if I was an intruder. Of course, afterwards, I complained with my cousin about their standoffish reception. After a couple of days, I got a call from the Director of the Democrazia Cristiana in Trento, saying that there had been a misunderstanding. Now, they were completely available to fully collaborate, including free bus transportation provided by the Province of Trento. The friendly persuasion came through a phone call from a Dr. Vulcano, who was the official in charge for the organization of the festivities. As the saying goes, it's not what you know, but who you know, especially in Italy. I was given “carte blanche” for the accommodation of all the guests in the Trento area. Since my three secretaries were not enthused about the extra work, involving thousands of guests, I came up with the following formula: Let's add a 4% commission to the hotel invoices, splitting it among ourselves. Talk of interest! We set up headquarters in the Grand Hotel Trento and everything worked out very smoothly. At the end of the Convention, we presented the individual hotel bills to the treasurer of the Democrazia Cristiana, who paid them immediately by cash and checks. In my naiveté I had no idea that the money paid was all “under the table”, since the political parties in Italy were above any financial control. Therefore, the Democrazia Cristiana was not interested in the costs. Its only concern was a smooth operation of the “Festa dell'Amicizia”. In other words, we could have charged a lot more, since there was no financial responsibility. The all-powerful party secretary, the Hon. Flaminio Piccoli, personally congratulated me for a well-organized operation. Everybody was happy, except my cousin and his Roman friend, who had expected an under the table commission for having given me such an opportunity. For instance, a guy who understood how the system worked was a famous T.V. announcer who had the Democrazia Cristiana pay for his hotel, and then presented the hotel invoice to the T.V. station that “reimbursed” him. Of course, his national reports reflected on which side his bread was buttered.

Well, I lost a possibility for making extra money and was sorry to have disappointed my cousin and his friend; however, I am still proud of having operated correctly. By the way, a few years later, I became friend with the Hon. Piccoli, after he had retired from politics.

In thinking it over, “You have to be yourself, otherwise, you're nobody” (General Patton). I have always been comfortable in being honest because it's in my nature. It's not easy in business where one is often faced with difficult situations, which could be easily solved by taking “short cuts”. Generally speaking, Italians admire people who are “furbi”

(cunning, sly). My father used to tell me that the word “furbo” comes from the Latin “fur”, which means thief. Consequently, I always made it a point not to be “furbo”. I am happy to recall many situations in which candor and honesty were appreciated and rewarded.

For instance, our canned tomato supplier is the family Marotta from Naples. In Italy, Neapolitans are considered the fastest “furbi” in the country. To make a digression, in the U.S. there are about 15 million bridge players, while Italy has just about 37,000 members. Yet, the “Blue Team” made up of four Neapolitans and a Roman, named “Belladonna”, had been world champions for about twenty years.

Getting back to Lello Marotta, my tomato supplier, he would usually deliver a full truck to the central distribution center in Gernersheim, Germany. From there, DeCA would deliver the merchandise to all its commissaries in Europe, plus Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

On one occasion I just needed six pallets of canned tomatoes delivered from Naples to Trento, from where I’d form a full truck with pasta and other items for the usual shipment to Gernersheim.

Of course, I asked Lello Marotta to quote me a good price for the transportation to Trento. “What do you mean by a good price, he said? We had agreed that transportation within Italy would always be paid by me”. We had no written contract and I had forgotten our agreement. I appreciated his honesty so much, that I often tell this story to any northern Italian, who is still prejudiced against Neapolitans.

A “Thank You America” Ceremony on 5 March, 1995

As mentioned before, through my father, I knew what the United States had done for Europe in general, and Italy in particular. However, due to the very strong opposition of the very well-organized Communist party in Italy, very weakly balanced by the leading party “Democrazia Cristiana” that was philosophically against the “capitalist economy” of the United States, I almost never heard any official act of gratefulness. Therefore, I decided to do something by my little self. As I was driving by the spot where the two American Officers were shot by the Nazis, in the fall of 1994, I stopped the car: I decided to do something concrete, as a personal sign of gratefulness. Through declassified papers at the Pentagon, my friend Col. Sid Trawick was able to retrace Bob Cravey, one of the members of the 7 crew airmen that I saw jump out of the B-25 bomber 50 years earlier. A heroic Italian family hid him, together with another crew member, John Swinson, until the end of the war. Bob agreed to come over from Georgia with a group of 20 members of his family and friends. We then retraced the other surviving members of the crew, each one with his own story of survival through concentrations camps or incredible evasion and escape into Switzerland, like pilot Jay DeBoer. He, along with former gunner Charles Reagin and their wives attended the ceremony. The two officers killed by the Nazis were Lt. Lucian Crutchfield of San Antonio, TX and F/O William Brooks of Cohoes, New York. The name of the B-25 fighter bomber was “Miss Bobby”.

At the time there was no internet; however, the mail system and the international phones were working very well. Somehow, I had a direct contact with the staff of the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvily. Since the general was a naturalized American, who had spent his youth in the former Soviet Union, he was very much in favor of anyone who expressed his gratitude toward the United States for having saved the free world. Same for Ms. Madeleine Albright, who at the time was Secretary of State. Also, the European edition of the Stars and Stripes was giving a huge coverage on the event, so everyone in the military installations would read about my initiative. For a few days in mid-February, the A-10 warthogs stationed at the Aviano A.F. flew very low just over the steeple of our church in Vezzano, waving their wings. The local people had no idea of why the pilots were making those maneuvers, but I sure did. Imagine, I was thinking, fifty years ago I was a scared seven year-old kid fearing the American planes that were bombing us. Now, the American planes were saluting me and the community. In my naivete I called the American Command in Aviano to thank them for the waving maneuvers. I had no idea that they were performed by the pilots’ initiatives with no permission to fly so low. Obviously, after my phone call there were no more low flyovers. Unfortunately, a few years later a Marine Prowler on a low-altitude training mission struck the cable supporting a cable car at the Cermis, nearby Cavalese, killing the twenty people on board, but that is another story.

On the Italian side we received an incredible support, mostly though a lucky coincidence. While planning my initiative, I mentioned it to Cesarina, a neighbor, who was cleaning our

house twice a week. She suggested I contacted Agostino Poli, the President of the Alpine Band in our valley. When I called him on the phone he was away on vacation and wanted to know who was sponsoring the whole project. When I told him that it was just my personal initiative, he was so favorably impressed that he immediately offered his total collaboration: The right man at the right time! It turned out that Agostino really knew how to move in our regional political labyrinth. The big honcho at the time was the deputy director of our Region, Nereo Giovanazzi, who was from the same town as Agostino. He immediately liked the idea, saying that it was high time that someone thanked the Americans for all they did to liberate Italy. Eventually, he introduced me to his father, who told me that his family had helped the only survivor of a B-25 that, hit by the German flak, had crashed on the side of the mountain in front of his house.

At the time, Deputy Director Nereo Giovanazzi was able to have carte blanche for whatever worthy initiatives he was in favor of. Also, since the very powerful Alpini association (20,000 members) was involved, it was a good political move. Consequently, the Trentino-Alto Adige Region financed the ceremony and hosted the surviving crew members with their families. A 37 strong Alpine band played the “American National Anthem”, “Stars & Stripes Forever” and “The Yellow Rose of Texas” in honor of the Texan Crutchfield.

What initiated as a personal act of grateful remembrance became an international event officially sponsored by the Region Trentino Alto Adige (Sud-Tyrol), as per the attached flyer.

Fortunately, a T.V station from Cohoes, NY registered the highlights of the ceremony, which one can find on the web site of my company, under “About us, Larry E. Pisoni- www.gourmet-italia.com. Here is the text that I wrote on the Memorial Plaque:

**HERE ON FEBRUARY 28, 1945
TWO AMERICAN AIRMEN WERE SHOT BY NAZIS
LT. LUCIAN C. CRUTCHFIELD, JR. OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
F/O WILLIAM F. BROOKS, OF COHOES, N.Y.
THEY WERE TWO OF MORE THAN 38,000 AMERICANS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES ON ITALIAN SOIL DURING WWII
TO HELP EUROPEANS OF GOOD WILL REGAIN FREEDOM
AND DEMOCRACY**

**QUI IL 28 FEBBRAIO 1945
DUE AVIATORI AMERICANI FURONO FUCILATI DAI NAZISTI
LT. LUCIAN C. CRUTCHFIELD, JR DI SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
F/O WILLIAMO BROOKS OF COHOES, N.Y,
DUE DEGLI OLTRE 38.000 AMERICANI
CHE DIEDERO LA LORO VITA SUL SUOLO ITALIANO
DURANTE LA SECONDA GUERRA MONDIALE
PER AIUTARE GLI EUROPEI DI BUONA VOLONTÀ A RICONQUISTARE
LA LIBERTÀ E LA DEMOCRAZIA**

Here is the speech that I gave:

I thank everyone who came from far and near, particularly the veterans of "Miss Bobby," Robert Cravey, Jay DeBoer and ChCharles Reagin.

The history of mankind is made of ideas. Good ideas and bad ideas. The bad ones lead to ruin and slavery, the good ones to li to liberty and prosperity.

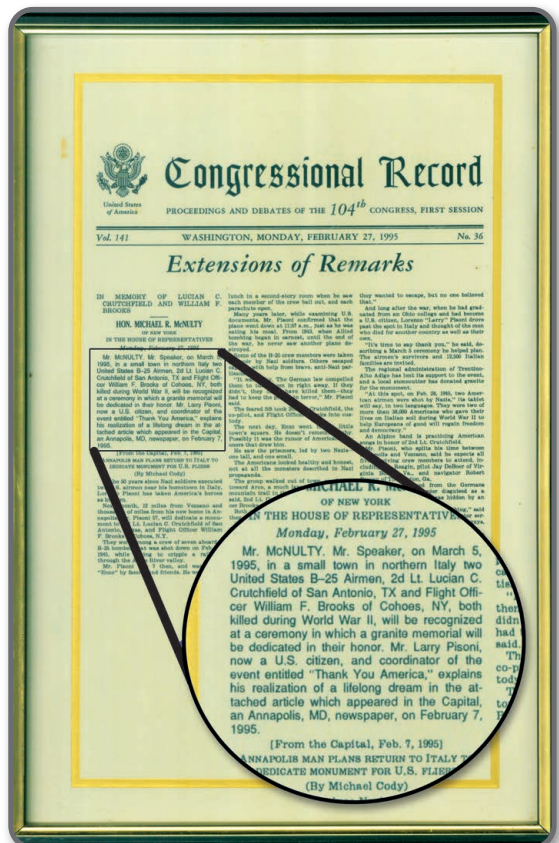
In 1776, thirteen years before the French Revolution, the Founding Fathers of the United States, among other inalienable rightrights, established those of Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Not happiness, but the pursuit of happiness. This means that that every individual must be free, within the framework of the law, to pursue his own dreams and talents.

In order to keep these inalienable rights, every person, worthy of his name, must be ready to fight and, if necessary, to die so the the torch of liberty is transmitted to future generations.

This is the reason for our commemoration. With their blood, Lucian Crutchfield and William Brookes have become a syssymbol. They and thousands like them brought back to Europe the torch of liberty and democracy, which has made it possible for for us to enjoy the longest period of peace and prosperity since the fall of the Roman Empire. To understand that, all one has to dto do is look at a map of Europe. With the benevolent wing of the United States there has been peace, liberty, democracy and prosperity. Without it, war, submission, and hunger.

The The presence of all of us here today proves that, after 50 years, Brooks and Crutchfield's sacrifices were not in vain.

THANK YOU, AMERICA.



Larry E. Pisoni

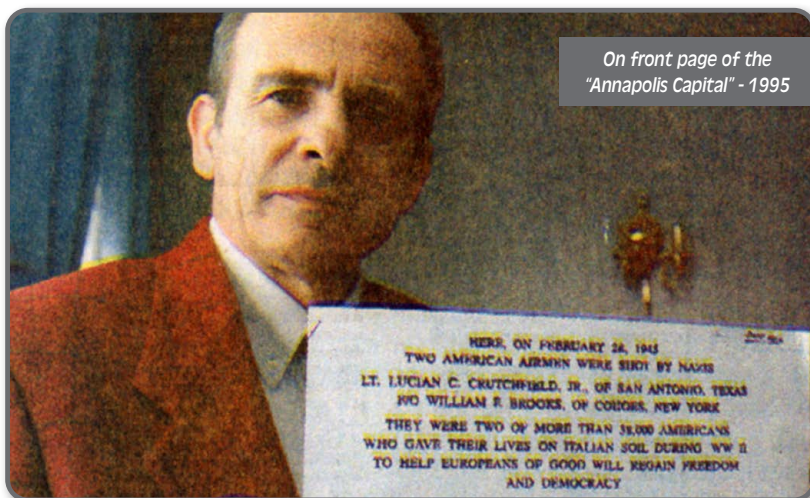
President of the "Thank You, America" Committee

March 6, 1995

More than 1,000 people attended the ceremony on March 5, 1995. The Associated Press carried the story, which reverberated in many Italian and American newspapers. We received the attached letters from the US Ambassador to the UN, Hon. M. Albright, the Chairman of the JCS Gen. J. Shalikashvili, and Members of the U.S. Congress. The American Consul in Milan, the President of the Regione Trentino-Alto Adige and other dignitaries were present along with TV crews from Italy and the U.S.



Panoramica Cerimonia Thank You America - 1995



On front page of the
"Annapolis Capital" - 1995



With Alpini Gen. Natalino Vivaldi, Pilot B-25 Jay DeBoar,
Alpino Carlo Berlanda, Gen. Sawyer USAF - 1995



Thank you America Ceremony - 1995

A Group from the Smithsonian Museum visited the "Thank you, America" Memorial on September 22, 2002

The mayors of six small towns agreed to hold a ceremony with band, speeches, and a significant participation by the local population along with Italian and American authorities, civilian and military. The event contributed to renew the gratefulness of the authorities and the population. The American participants appreciated the ceremonies and considered that day as the best part of their European tour.

I am happy to have dedicated some of my time to these initiatives as necessary reminders that someone had to sacrifice their lives to give us privileges that are often taken for granted. What gives me optimism is the knowledge that in the recently liberated countries of Eastern Europe, former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq there are people who are grateful to America for having given their countries and their inhabitants the opportunity of their "Pursuit of Happiness." As a matter of fact, I am convinced that the United States was created by the Founding Fathers as a social experiment for the betterment of mankind. Right after signing the Constitution, Benjamin Franklin wrote auspiciously to an English friend: "God grant that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere in its surface and say, "This is my country". As Monsieur Turgot, Minister of Finance just before the French Revolution, wrote: "America is the only hope for humanity".



Pasta al dente operation with Barilla, Felicetti and Gourmet Italia, Inc.

My business card said, “Hotel Broker”. We still laugh with my now friend for twenty-eight years, Carol Davis, wife of Gen. J.B. Davis, Deputy NATO Commander, when we recall her questioning me with a twinkle in her eyes: “Larry what is a hotel broker? I never met one”. Well, I replied, maybe because I’m the only one! Carol called her husband, General J.B. Davis, who said, “Get his business card”. My rule required min. 10 people to arrange for a cooking class. After a few days I got an official fax from General Davis, who announced that, regretfully, and with his wife’s disappointment, he had to cancel the class because they were only six people. I called him immediately to tell him, “General Davis, even if you came down here by your little self, I would still have a cooking class”. He laughed and attended the class with the small group of other general officers with their wives. Since he had been threatened by a Turkish terrorist group, he arrived at the Hotel Flora with two cars and three bodyguards. What impressed me was the fact that the bodyguards were carrying attaché cases with machine guns incorporated inside, which could be activated by just pressing a button on the handle. I enjoyed being driven around in his place, in his car, while he was in the back-up car, safe from the terrorists. Of course, with all due respect, I knew that there were no terrorists in Italy interested in General Davis, at the time, so we all had a great time.

During General J.B.’s stay at the Hotel Flora, I invited super-chef Aldo Siccardi to give the cooking lessons and prepare the meals. While the General was enjoying one of them, with the proper wines, he commented on the splendid quality of each meal. I took the opportunity to ask: General, is there a law that compels the American military to eat bad food? Not that I’m aware of, he replied”. Well, that’s when I decided to start introducing Italian made pasta “al dente” to the U.S Forces. I was also inspired by a story that I had read about the French Foreign Legion that have a tradition of eating gourmet meals with excellent wines and white table clothes even in the desert.

As usual my idea was great! The implementation was a long story of perseverance, but it worked. I started with selecting the logo on the Gourmet Italia pasta packages: The Roman centurion surrounded by two sheaths of wheat.

Through my experience in cooking courses, I learned that the participants, mostly Officer Wives Club members, were very interested in quality products that were hard to find in their commissaries. Therefore, in the early nineties I contacted Barilla, the largest pasta manufacturer in Italy. I offered to represent them in the American military markets. They agreed immediately since they had no idea it even existed. We exchanged several faxes for a couple of months. Then Barilla sent me a cryptic fax, which I still have, saying they were not interested in collaborating with me because I had “overemphasized the economic factor”. BTW, their proposal was a 2% commission on sales with no other support except advertising material. I did not know what to think about their change of mind, but I was determined to find an Italian pasta company for my American military clientele.

As I am reviewing in February 2025, I am happy to make the following modification: On December 5, 2024, through my friend Federico Rampini, an international journalist and writer, naturalized US citizen, who commutes between the U.S. and Europe, I was invited to one of his conferences in Parma, organized by the “Gazzetta di Parma” (founded in 1731), the oldest newspaper in Italy.

On that occasion I had a chance to hear remarks by the current Barilla’s CEO, Guido Barilla. I was very impressed by his success, values and ethical standards, confirmed to me by Claudio Rinaldi, Director of the “Gazzetta, whom I had the pleasure of meeting during an “elevated lunch” in Parma on December 13th. Had I had the opportunity of meeting Guido, I’m sure we would have become business partners and friends by representing Barilla in the U.S. back in the early nineties.

As a “food missionary” I started Gourmet Italia, Inc: The finest pasta in the world

In my region of Trentino there was a small pasta company operated by the family Felicetti whose ancestors started making pasta way back in 1908. After setting up an appointment, I walked into the office of the owner and president, Valentino Felicetti: I politely told him that I had tried his pasta, which was ok, but it would not make me go out of my way if Barilla were more easily available. Therefore, I asked him to produce the best pasta in the world, regardless of price, and call it Gourmet Italia. He smiled and said: You don’t talk like a businessman. No, I replied, I’m a quality-food missionary! That’s how Gourmet Italia was created. At first, everyone at the Felicetti factory thought that an incompetent dreamer like me had no chance to survive. Valentino’s son, Riccardo, was particularly skeptical and even antagonistic, by telling his father that he was wasting his time with me. It got so bad that Valentino had to set up secret meetings with me. However, through the years, the special pasta created for Gourmet Italia was selling well. Therefore, at first the Felicetti factory started to produce Gourmet Italia pasta type for the restaurants. After the clients and the restaurateurs started getting enthused with the new product, at the Felicetti factory they decided to go all out by producing Gourmet Italia type pasta with the Felicetti name. Following my idea, Felicetti pasta has expanded very successfully and is now considered the finest pasta in Italy and is world famous. Fortunately, they still produce Gourmet Italia for me, so we’re all happy. A few years later I read with great interest Andrew Carnegie’s autobiography.

It confirmed my intuition on quality as the most important factor, as per his following quote: *“The surest foundation of a manufacturing concern is quality. After that, and a long way after, comes cost.”*

Amazing on how too many people and companies refuse to understand a concept expressed so clearly by someone, who became the richest man in the world. As I’m writing these notes, I just dropped my “expensive” Apples mouse on the hard-wood floor. Thank you, Steve Jobs, for allowing me to keep on using it, undamaged!

Considering that I had never really looked at a food label in my life, meeting the FDA standard was quite a challenge. My daughter, Grace, who was a born artist, helped me in creating the general label. For the logo, I commissioned a professional artist to draw me

a picture of a helmeted Roman centurion, surrounded by two sheaths of wheat, with the gold and red colors, Roman symbols of prosperity. It was similar to the logo of American Express, but my artist had done a thorough historical research and created a picture with all the original details. Later, during the successful process of obtaining a registered trademark, a famous Belgian company claimed that I had copied their Centurion logo that looked very approximately like a real ancient Roman centurion. I was able to settle the issue by writing them a letter, saying that I was inspired by my family name that descended from the ancient Roman family Pisones, who produced two consuls and Ceasar's wife, Calpurnia. End of story!

Fortunately, in those days, although it was expensive, one could place international phone calls to the FDA in Rockville, MD and be able to talk with a human on the phone, willing and able to explain procedures. However, the big change from Nutrition Information to Nutrition Facts was being implemented on food labels: Precise rules that nobody was familiar with, in Italy. After months of studying FDA books, I was able to come up with a correct label in English.

Then, came the long, frustrating process of preparing the texts in English with an artist, who knew no English and kept making spelling mistakes, including the recurring problem of using full stops instead of commas, as the American system required. Occasionally, when he had to change the texts, he would even modify the figures, which I needed to double check every time. Then, I had to contact the specialist, who made the films for the pasta packages. Same problem with writing the English texts. The process took about six months. Finally, we created the masterpiece.



"Villa Alessandra": A Life Story

by Roberto Moggio

Years ago, as I was riding on my Honda bike toward Lake Garda, where the lemons and oranges grow, as Goethe recalled in his "Mignon", I pulled up at a newsstand to read the local paper. I noticed that, Roberto Moggio, the author of one of my favorite poems, "Villa Alessandra", was celebrating his 80th birthday at the elegant Teatro Sociale in Trento.

I immediately decided to attend, expecting to ask Mr. Moggio to recite the poem to me and his friends. I imagined that there would be about 20-30 people, but lo and behold, the theater was full to its 670 seats capacity. Somehow, I managed to find a spot. The city's elite was there, the Mayor, prominent business leaders, athletes, writers and many friends, eager to celebrate his extraordinary life.

Although I had never met him, I was really interested in eventually being able to talk to a man whose actions had gathered so many people for his birthday celebration.; however, as the song goes, "There were planes to catch and bills to pay" and I postponed it to an indefinite "Then".

A few days ago, I was musing about what Shakespeare wrote: "On the grand clock of time there is but one word, now". I picked up the phone and introduced myself by quoting lines from his "Villa Alessandra". We hit it off immediately and agreed to meet at 12:30 pm, at his favorite restaurant, the following day. He ordered a couple of glasses of excellent white wine and the elevated conversation never stopped. We enjoyed excellent food with more wine, until 3:00 pm, when the restaurant closes.

Although I have dedicated my life to my family, while promoting the finest products of the Mediterranean diet, mostly to the American military communities, I have always had a keen interest in literature, poems and history.

Villa Alessandra has touched my inner feelings, ever since I was a shy teenager walking by that elite club. Although I was attending the most prestigious "Liceo Classico" in Trento, my only hobby was soccer, which did not fit in with the elegant, snobbish Villa Alessandra crowd. Although I did not realize it at the time, I now wish I had taken an interest in participating. After completing my classical education, I attended College in the States, which changed the course of my life. By the time I returned to Trento, Villa Alessandra and a certain style of life with its ballroom, tennis courts, garden and club rooms had disappeared, replaced by a modern, functional condo.

Roberto's poem relives part of his life through his memories at Villa Alessandra. During lunch he told me that he was orphaned at age 7 and was sent to a boarding school run by the Salesian priests, who gave him an excellent, well-rounded education.

He learned how to study, sing Gregorian chants, play the organ, run track, and appreciate the results of hard work and good behavior in general.

At age 13, he had finished his schooling and decided to start a little business, packaging candies in his “Private Label” called Sovrana, which he successfully peddled thorough Trento. He then went to Milan to perfect his business acumen. When he returned to Trento for a visit, at age 18, he found the city and its Province under the administration of the Third Reich. Consequently, Roberto was drafted into the German Army (Wehrmacht) and sent to the Ukraine until the end of WWII in May 1945.

After the war, Roberto, who was a splendid athlete, became an Italian champion in track and participated to the 1948 Olympic games in London. He went on to become a journalist, a sports radio announcer, a sports events organizer (Marcia Longa), a poet and a well-off businessman, selling cars and trucks.

Villa Alessandra takes him through the period of his life as a poor youngster, who peered into the ballroom, from a hedge, frequently accompanied by adoring girls whom he enchanted by murmuring American songs. Since the girls didn’t know English, he made up the words, and they were fascinated. As he grew up and started having some spending money, he entered the “fancy side” of the hedge, learned how to dress and picked up dancing. The poem says that Villa Alessandra was his Paradise: Every song, a name of a girl. He made himself a successful life, but Villa Alessandra was eventually torn down, casting a shadow over his youthful dreams. In the poem, he walks under the moonlight, near Villa Alessandra, and pauses to fantasize about the music, the shimmering lights and those happy, carefree moments. Then, a big truck barrels down the road and shatters his dreams.

Shakespeare writes that life is a walking shadow, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Roberto reaches the same conclusion on the last line of his poem:

Villa Alessandra, a soap bubble!

Fortunately, today, Roberto is a serene, alert and still active gentleman at 94 years of age. I plan to spend more 12:30 lunches and elevated conversations with this Maestro.

VILLA ALESSANDRA

By Roberto Moggio

*Villa Alessandra, do you recall it?
At the corner of November Boulevard...
the orchestra, the flickering lights and,
behind it, a little lane for hidden kisses.*

*Do you recall how many losers
went there to learn how the well-to-do
danced the Charleston and the Foxtrot?
Villa Alessandra was their jukebox.*

*I remember as if it were yesterday
I was a reckless youth
I gave out sparks, had no worries
the coolest guy in town.*

*It was there that I lingered evenings
behind the hedge, with a girl;
We peeked in, I whispered sweet nothings
as we moved along the lane.*

*When they played Stardust
my voice crooned in English,
the words enchanted her;
She didn't know I had made them up.*

*But the kisses were real,
only two because she didn't allow any more...
Behind the fence covered by the mulberry trees
I was richer than the rich who were dancing!*

*Later on, when I became a man
with a freshly washed white shirt
and four lire for two drinks
I too crossed over the hedge.*

*Villa Alessandra was my paradise.
Every song the name of a girl...
Was I really as wild as they say?
Perhaps I did have the world on a string.*

*Surely, so many enjoyed that dancing hall.
Popular figures among the jerks.
Mr. Coletti, the fanciest dancer,
and Bertella, king of the boogie-woogie.*

*And the fancy evenings? It was always full:
For the occasion, all the dancing halls were opened
for the crème de la crème,
dark suit, personal invitation*

*How much happiness in that dancing hall
to the rhythm of the foxtrot and samba
how many illusions ended in the trash
for most of two generations...*

*Villa Alessandra is no more.
On top of the thirty-year old mulberry trees
the garden, the dance hall and all that blue
they have raised a ten-storey condo*

*In the summer, when the moon is full,
I like to wander around
I stand still, listen, straighten up
and close my eyes in front of this condo.*

*From the basement windows
I seem to still hear the music
“Daiana”, “Perfidia” “Stardust”
“The feuilles mortes” “Juna”
“Goodbye my beautiful lady” ...*

*And a lot of fairy lamps, red and blue
two braids, a hedge, a lane,
(this old geezer looking up
appears to be missing some marbles)*

*I open my eyes: A big truck rolls by;
it has stolen my last illusion
One more to throw into the trash:
Villa Alessandra, a soap bubble*

*Fondly translated by
Enzo-Larry Pisoni & Carol E. Nicholas-Pisoni*

My Gourmet Italia pasta into AAFES and the American commissaries in Europe

Finally, after three years of preparation, in the fall of 1993 I had everything ready for production, but had no contacts with American military distributors or brokers. I was finally able to make an appointment with an AAFES buyer for the American military shoppettes in Europe. The guy was a retired Air Force sergeant who had no idea what pasta was. I tried to explain why my pasta was created with the finest hard wheat that allowed it to remain “al dente” while American pastas were made with soft wheat and had “no al dente” at all. Since I would not give up, at a certain point he said that I was the usual salesman who was trying to sell him the moon. Fortunately, all of a sudden, I had the inspiration: Look I said, here is a picture of my friend, Air Force General J. B. Davis, during one of my cooking classes. If he knew that you called me a bullshitter, he would not be pleased. That did it! Consequently, he ordered half a container to go to all the Shoppettes in Europe. After the initial success, I went for the big target: There was Army Col. Phillips, Director of the food purchasing office located at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia. I fixed an appointment and drove up from Washington, D.C. to see him, bringing a few samples of my Gourmet Italia pasta. After exchanging the usual pleasantries, I tried to explain to him the pleasure of eating “pasta al dente” vs. the actual slob that they were giving to the military. It was like talking to a Martian. When I mentioned quality, he said that his only concern, whenever he ordered trainloads of pasta, was to make sure that it was “hygienically edible”. The “al dente” meant nothing to him. End of story!

The shoppettes turned out to be just convenience stores that produced very little food volume. I had to get into the DeCa Commissaries, where the volume was. Through the cooking courses I met a lot of people in the American military environment in Italy, so someone gave me the name and phone buyer of the DeCa Zone Mgr. for the Mediterranean. He had his secretary tell me that he did not deal with vendors. It's not easy to get information when dealing with military entities, unless you contact someone directly and specifically connected with the exact office you're looking for.

Finally, I found out that DeCa's central office was at the Ramstein AFB in Germany. I remember making phone calls from a phone booth in Heidelberg. Finally, I was given an appointment three months later, in the fall of 1993, when Air Force Sgt. Mike Yaksich picked me up at the East Gate of the A.F.B. and took me to the main office, where I made a presentation to the buyer, Ms. Christa Frentzel. She listened politely to the story of the “the best pasta in the world” but made no commitments. I left samples with the feeling that, at best, it would be a very long process before DeCa accepted my pasta.

After a wait of a few months, in February 1994, I was able to fix an appointment with Ms. Bonnie Kanitz, the merchandising manager of DeCa-Europe (30 military commissaries in Europe). I was so sure of the quality of my pasta that I cooked it and sauced it at home. Then I drove through the night the 720 km, from Trento to Ramstein to present the dish to Ms. Kanitz, first thing in the morning. She immediately said it was excellent, but she would not be allowed to have three brands of Italian pasta in the commissaries. I knew that DeCecco had been present since the end of WWII; however, I knew it was the only other non-American

pasta. Well, Ms. Kanitz said, I'm just signing a contract with another one called Barzilla or Bonilla. I said, BARILLA? Yes, she replied, Barilla, and showed me the contract on her desk in a blue file.

I said, well, Ms. Kanitz, I happen to be an enthusiastic naturalized American citizen, who read the masterpiece

"Democracy in America" by Alexis deTocqueville. He wrote that, in a democratic country like America, that has a free press, if a private citizen feels like he has a legitimate complaint against the Government, he should go to the Press and inform the readers, who would complain about such an unfair treatment. Fortunately, the Stars and Stripes had just published a full-page article on my story about my mentor Benjamin Franklin.

He emphasized doing business, following the Golden Rule, which I wanted to follow as well. Ms. Kanitz, I said, as I started going out the door, I cannot prevent you from making a contract with Barilla, which double-crossed me, as proved by their faxes that I still have; however, if you don't make a contract with me as well, I will go directly to the Stars and Stripes to tell them that the American Government does business with Machiavellian double crossers instead of honest people. She immediately replied: Mr. Pisoni, sit down and sign the contract. Thank you, Bonnie! Barilla was kept out of the American military market for seven years until they built a factory in the U.S. and came into the European commissaries as an American producer.

Another obstacle came up, unexpected. According to some bureaucratic rules established at Ft. Lee DeCA HQs., pasta was not supposed to be delivered directly from Italy to the DeCA distribution center in Gernersheim, Germany. In order to get around the problem, I shipped our Gourmet Italia pasta to a warehouse in Maryland, going through all the US regulations. Consequently, whenever DeCA-Europe ordered Gourmet Italia pasta, it left the U.S. and entered into Germany (Gernersheim) as a U.S. product:

Imagination is more important than knowledge, as Einstein used to say!

I had no budget for advertising, except weekly quotes in the Stars & Stripes, where I published short, famous quotes, under the Gourmet Italia logo and name, as follows:

"I like to play in the low 70s. If it gets any hotter than that I'll stay in the bar. (Bob Hope).

After four years of operating in the commissaries, in May 1998, Gourmet Italia had reached 11.17% of the DeCa market in Europe vs. 9.66% of the world known DeCecco. Barilla managed to come in after opening their production factory in the USA. For a couple of years, they remained around 3% until they came up with a dumping gimmick which I'm describing in the next paragraph. In the meantime, by 2007, with the help of our pasta caf  s, Gourmet Italia had reached 19% of the market.

At a certain point, there was a worldwide wheat shortage, so everyone had to raise prices accordingly. Barilla took advantage of their size and commercial experience by dumping the market with low prices. Of course, the customers started buying Barilla pasta galore, which made it gain huge space on the pasta shelves. The rest is business history.

After a couple of years of shipping my pasta from Europe to the U.S. and back to Europe, Mike Yaksich, who had become head buyer at DeCA-Europe, applied common sense and allowed me to ship directly from the Felicetti factory in Italy to the Central Distribution Center in Gernersheim, Germany. It made operations much easier to handle.

Gourmet Italia

The Pasta of the Italian National Cooking Team

In 1994 there was the Culinary World Cup with 26 National Teams competing. The captain of Italian team was Rossano Boscolo, who had won the gold medal for pastry in Singapore.

I knew Chef Rossano quite well because we had held several cooking courses at his famous cooking academy “Etoile” at Sottomarina. I convinced Rossano that Gourmet Italia, as the best pasta in the world, would be perfect for the event, although another “big pasta company (guess who), paid for the event. I went along with pasta samples and took a lot of pictures of the Italian team promoting Gourmet Italia. Consequently, whenever I offered my pasta to the buyers, it helped me to convince them. Unfortunately, I lacked the structure and the volume, and the cost of the distribution was too high to be able to get involved in a US-wide operation.



Cooking Courses Galore in Italy 1978-2010

Toward the end of the seventies, I was having dinner with Mrs. Nancy Kinchelow, the wife of Col. Carl Kinchelow, the post commander of the US Forces in Vicenza. She had just attended a cooking class in France and suggested I hold one too for Italian cuisine. Although I had no experience or interest in food or wine, I loved the challenge, and the general manager of the Atahotel chain, gave me the green light. The best hotel that the chain had was the five-star Imperial Palace Hotel at Santa Margherita Ligure, on the Italian Riviera. The hotel chef gave me the recipes, which Carol and I translated into English. It took several months for us to come up with a very attractive booklet made up of colorful detachable pages. In the spring of 1978, we held the first course for about 30 ladies of the Heidelberg Officer's Wives Club. The setting was magnificent. The film "Enchanted April" was shot right there. The chef was fantastic, knowledgeable and with a sunny personality. I was the English translator, and everyone had a grand time. The course was held in the hotel beach restaurant that overlooked the bay, similar to the one in Portofino. Along with the recipes, the wine was flowing freely, interrupted by a cappuccino pause. In the afternoon, we took excursions by foot and by boat to nearby Rapallo and Portofino. Every evening we had a gala dinner with excellent wines galore. I remember that the one evening we finished dinner around 11:00 pm. I suggested that we should all go to the pool, located in the hotel park facing the bay. Whoever followed me did not have a bathing suit, so I suggested that it was dark enough to swim in the nude. It did not take much persuasion...I was the only man, besides a Canadian Colonel too drunk to notice what was going on. There was a trampoline with a slide going into the pool. Everyone who climbed up was supposed to say her name before sliding into the pool. Of course, each one was named Ms. Smith. The whole group was having a grand time, when the concierge, fully dressed up with tie and the whole paraphernalia, knelt down near the edge of the pool, politely asking for Mr. Pisoni. He located me in the pool, where it



With one of my "cooking groups", at Rapallo, waiting for the boat ride to Portofino. While I was leading the ladies toward the boat, a joyful passerby greeted me with a smile and the words "Guten Tag, Herr Professor".

was shallow enough to touch the bottom, standing up. As I walked toward him, I lifted one of the naked ladies and literally put her in front of the concierge's face. I still remember his expression, in the semidarkness! After he recovered, somewhat, he told me that we had to break up the party because the noise disturbed the neighbors, who had threatened to call the police. We regretfully got dressed and the following morning no one ever mentioned anything. Those were the days!!!

The following cooking courses were much more sedate, especially when Carol got in charge of them.

We held an average of twenty courses per year from 1978 to 2010. The groups varied from a min of 10 pax to max 30. I figured that we entertained and exposed to the healthy, tasty benefits of the Mediterranean diet close to 10,000 people, mostly members of the American and Canadian forces in Europe.

Our favorite areas were the Italian Riviera, the Amalfi coast, the Alps (Courmayeur, Madonna di Campiglio, Cortina and other minor locations), Venice and Florence.

1976 through 1993. A wonderful 17-year connection with the Canadian military for trips to Italy:

Sightseeing including the Opera at La Scala; Cooking courses and wine seminars. Thank you, Francine, a wonderful Tour Director at Lahr.

Accidentally, in 1976, I found out that the Canadian Forces had military bases in Lahr and Baden-Baden. Consequently, I showed up to offer my trips to Italy. The person in charge of the tour programs was a colorful French-Canadian officer by the name of Capt. D'Amour. We got along very well and, consequently, arranged a three-day cooking course at the G.H. Imperial Palace on the Italian Riviera in Santa Margherita Ligure: A great success that set the tone for seventeen years of interrupted, fun trips until the Canadian Government decided to close the two bases in 1993. As usual, I had no contract, but all the Canadian Forces trips to Italy were filtered through me. Sightseeing including the Opera at La Scala, cooking courses, wine seminars, and ski trips. The tour director at Lahr was Francine Metzler Joullicour, a wonderful Director. Through the years we became friends, following Nelson Rockefeller motto: "It's better to become friends through business, than to do business with friends". We're still in contact.

The Canadians had their own de-luxe civilian buses, which they filled easily. For the cooking courses, Carol was acting as interpreter, translated the recipes, prepared the booklets, and even acted as a chauffeur, whenever a few people wanted special excursions. I arranged the accommodation and the guided side trips. Among the many remarkable episodes, I would like to recall the following one:

The Canadian bus driver was John Moore, Scottish born, with whom I developed excellent camaraderie. While the group was having a guided tour of Venice, John and I discovered the fabulous "Trattoria alla Madonna" a well-hidden place not spoiled by tourists, near the Rialto bridge. After a series of excellent dishes accompanied by the proper, fantastic wines, we started our walk back to the hotel. On the way, we saw a group of teen-agers playing soccer. Both John and I had played semi-professional, but at the time I was in my mid-fifties, while John was just past his prime. The kids were very happy to let us play with the two teams, so the game went on with shouts of joy or disappointment on both sides. At a certain point an old lady opens her window over the piazza, complaining loudly that we were disturbing her afternoon nap. We stopped until she closed her window and then went on as before until she complained again, threatening to call the police. She especially pointed at me, who was by far the oldest and the baldest, saying that at my age I should use better judgement. We kept on playing for another 10-15 minutes, then decided to stop. However, before leaving I walked underneath the window of the old lady who lived on the second story. Found her doorbell and rang it until she came out quite irritated. I told her that I took the liberty of waking her up to let her know that the score of the match was 1 to 1. Then I managed to run away before she started throwing things from her window.

Canadian Baden-Baden Christmas Ski Trip with Surprise

I had arranged a Christmas ski trip to a mountain resort in the Italian Dolomites (Madonna di Campiglio-Marilleva) from December 19 out 26 for a group of Canadian Skiers stationed in Baden-Baden. Somehow, the hotel I had reserved, directly on the slopes, due to a miscalculation by the hotel manager, got overbooked. No sense in suing, so I came up with plan B: Book the group in a deluxe hotel on the slopes at the famous mountain resort of Madonna di Campiglio for the first three days (Dec. 23rd), which was still low season. After that date, every hotel in any ski area was booked because of the high season. The only solution was the Hotel Angelo (53 km, about 1 hour from the slopes), which I used for the cooking courses. After a couple of sleepless nights, I decided to drive to Baden-Baden to give the bad news to Ms. Brown, the director of the tourist office. I was thinking of what to say during the whole seven-hour trip, unable to come up with a plausible answer. As I entered her office, after a good-humored “hallo”, I told her that, occasionally, in life things happen beyond our control. Imagine, I said, how one would feel if, entering a doctor’s office, he would, professionally and sadly, announce that you or I had cancer. Well, the good news is that none of us has cancer. The bad news is that the hotel director made a mistake and overbooked the hotel. As Ms. Brown was turning pale, I suggested plan B for the same price. I would have taken the responsibility of telling the customers as they entered the de-luxe Hotel Zeledria on the famous slope of the trendy Madonna di Campiglio. It turned out that the Canadian customers found the prices of the drinks, not included in the package, outrageous, since they loved to imbibe Canadian quantities...After a couple of days I gathered all of them with free drinks to soften the impact of plan B. I told them about the fantastic, abundant meals and the inexpensive drinks at the Hotel Angelo. To my surprise, almost everyone welcomed the change, despite the distance from the slopes. On the third day, after returning from the slopes, the bus took them to Hotel Angelo. The owner, Sergio Brunelli, a good friend of mine and former paratrooper, loved the Canadian military. We started with free drinks upon arrival, followed by a candle lit, splendid dinner, much better than at the Hotel Zeledria, where the owner took advantage of the location to overcharge.

The Hotel Angelo had a trendy disco too. At midnight, the owner announced free pizza for just the Canadian guests. To make a long story short, the following day only 4 or 5 people boarded the bus to go skiing. The Hotel Angelo became a Canadian favorite for years, with small Canadian flags adorning the bar.

Very close call with my sporty Alfa Romeo on an icy mountain road

The night of January 19, 1990, after celebrating one of those happy cooking courses for Canadians, I was driving home in my brand-new Alfa Romeo 164, an Italian work of art, equipped with two antennas for German & Italian car phones, loaded with all the extras. The road was icy, but I grew up driving on winter mountain roads, so I was comfortable as usual. However, the Alfa Romeo was a sports car with a very sensitive steering wheel that

responded immediately to the slightest touch. In approaching a curve, I lost traction. I still vividly remember thinking that the rocks I was driving toward would have surely damaged my front spoiler. Well, after I don't know how long, I remember trying to start the car in total darkness. Gradually I realized that the car had turned over on its roof and catapulted, hitting the mountain with the trunk while I was upside down like in a space capsule. Other drivers stopped and the owner of the hotel drove me home with a slight headache. The roof was slightly bent just on my side, while it was cut in half on the passenger's seat and the back seat: A miracle! The following day I went to see the destroyed car. From that day on I consider January 19, 1990 as my second birthday, which would qualify me as a "Honorary Millennial".



Miraculous survival in my destroyed 164 Alfa Romeo on January 19, 1990

Carnivals in Venice

I used to take American groups to Venice, mostly during the Carnival season. Venice itself was always fully booked, so I conveniently found the Hotel Plaza at Mestre, which gave me good rates. Trains between Mestre and Venice ran very frequently, and no one minded the 11 min ride. The first night I used to take the groups to a nearby restaurant run by three sorts of crazy brothers, tall, jolly, and built like tanks. They seldom brought what was ordered; however, they more than made up for it by quality and quantity of whatever they brought. We ended up singing in excellent spirit, paying just a flat rate. One evening, a teetotaler complained because he only had water and did not want to pay for all the drinks the others had. Ok, said Antonio, one of the crazy brothers, bringing the menu with the price list: What did you have? The teetotaler carefully indicated exactly what he had for dinner. Towering over him, Antonio added the dishes according to the price list, plus the cover charge indicated on the menu. It turned out that his price was about 50% higher than the flat rate, including wine galore, paid by everyone else. When the guy complained, Antonio told him

he was charged exactly the prices written on the menu. The others, Antonio commented, are friends of mine who don't make me waste time by making up fifty individual checks. Rules don't apply well in Italy. On the other end, when in Rome do as the Romans, as an ancient Roman proverb recites.

Spring 1996 Expedition to DeCA-HQs At Ft. Lee, VA with General (R) J.B. Davis

My friend General J.B. agreed to accompany me to present Gourmet Italia pasta and EVOO to DeCa-Conus (Continental U.S.). During the drive from D.C. to Ft. Lee, he mentioned that the day before, his Annapolis classmate, Sen. John McCain, had asked him if he would be available to assist him for a presentation of the “Star War” project at the Senate. Unfortunately, J.B. replied, “I have to decline due to a previous commitment on the same day”. I couldn’t believe that “the previous commitment” was to accompany me to the appointment at Ft. Lee. When I pointed out my surprise and appreciation for his decision, he simply commented that it would have never crossed his mind: “Commitments must be honored!” His decision reminded me of the ancient Roman Generals that we read about in history books.

When we entered the lobby of the DeCa building, and the guard saw General Davis’ I.D. he snapped to attention and picked up the phone: Mr. Charles Wicker, DeCa’s CEO, showed up immediately. He must have been waiting behind some column on the ground floor! He took us into a conference room where about fifteen DeCA VIPs were sitting around the table. After introducing everyone to us, Ms. Wicker showed a slide projection of DeCA’s global presence and progress. BTW, Mr. Wicker asked me to sit at his place while he was making the presentation, so I temporarily felt like DeCA’s “acting” CEO! After the presentation we all went to lunch at a nearby restaurant. During the meal, someone, knowing that General Davis just retired as Deputy Director of NATO, asked him for his predictions about the war against Serbia.

Well, General Davis replied, we tried our best, but the situation is so historically complicated with deep hate on all sides, that I am not optimistic about being successful. Well, I commented, with all due respect, I believe it will be successful because I lived through a similar situation as a child under the Fascists and the Nazis. Thanks to a total American commitment, democracy, liberty, and prosperity were established in western Europe at the end of WWII. Everyone looked shocked at the audacity of such a comment by some unknown visitor with a foreign accent, until General Davis intervened again: “Well, of course, I hope it will work too. And, by the way, Larry is



a patriot”. That settled it, everyone paid for their lunch, except Gen. Davis and I, who were hosted by Mr. Wicker. We said goodbye to the group with everyone returning to the workstation. Mr. Wicker then took General Davis and me to his office at the top floor where the deputy director was already waiting for us. After a few pleasantries, with a smile, General Davis said: “No b.s now, Larry has by far the best pasta I have ever tried and I think it would be a US-wide success in the DeCA-Conus. Well, Mr. Wicker replied, there have been rumors that DeCa is being influenced from the top. Therefore, we must follow the regular procedure and let the buyer decide what to do. Consequently, Gen. Davis and I went to see Mr. Angel Ramos, who was waiting for us in his buyer’s little office. We made the presentation, but Mr. Ramos told us that he cannot commit himself to pick up items that have no previous records in the civilian US market. At the most, he would be willing to place Gourmet Italia in the gourmet section. We declined because the gourmet section was considered the “kiss of death” for products. i.e. facing the costs of US-wide distribution for shipping cases instead of pallets or full trucks to each commissary.

Conclusion: A big lesson on how the American Government system is basically honest and correct. We were given the VIP treatment, out of respect for General Davis, but no favors whatsoever.

How the request for a pasta demo station in the commissaries turned into a “Pasta Café”

While visiting the various commissaries in Germany, to promote my pasta, in the fall of 1996 I ran into Hector Granado, the store director at the old Vogelweh commissary. He was very cooperative and suggested an eating place in his new, beautiful commissary that was under construction. Of course, I loved the idea. However, he wanted to do it with AAFES cooperation, which operates all the “hot food” in the military environment. I really didn’t know the huge difference between DeCA and AAFES, but I was soon to find out. In the meantime, I went on to promote my Gourmet Italia “demo area” to other commissaries. While visiting Ramstein, the largest of all, I ran into their grocery director, Randi Robinson, a wonderful, intelligent doer. By chance I mentioned to her the project at the Vogelweh commissary. She strongly suggested: Why don’t you do it here, at Ramstein, since we’re the number one in Europe? Besides, she added, if you try to do it through AAFES in the commissaries, it would be way too complicated. Randi got into my car, and we went to see the chief buyer Mike Yaksich at DeCa’s headquarters. He liked the idea, but was hesitant about doing it without AAFES, to which the military system had given the exclusive rights to serve “hot food”. Randi almost went into a tantrum banging her fist on Mike’s desk: “We have never been able to accomplish anything through AAFES. This is a great opportunity to do it on our own, right away”. Mike smiled, picked up the phone and called Bob Tate, DeCa’s director for Europe. Mr. Tate, who was a formidable, independent director, dedicated on giving the best to the military in Europe, gave his immediate approval. That’s how the Gourmet Italia Pasta Café was born. Great move, Mr. Tate, backed by his wonderful Deputy, Pat Nixon, former Marine turned lawyer.

DeCa-Europe would have provided the space inside the Ramstein commissary, while my

company, Gourmet Italia, would have built the pasta café at its own expense. I went home with the great news.

Unfortunately, my son Mark, in spite of two university degrees in economics (University of Trento and the American University in D.C.), was against the idea. Consequently, Carol, was against it too. Grace was totally involved in her acting career in Milan, so I was outvoted in the family. Frustrated, I called my old partner Mario and went to see him to illustrate the project. He immediately offered to put up whatever money was necessary. Fortunately, he also had the experience and the know-how, so we drove the 720 km to Ramstein right away to survey the area. In the meantime, I contacted my friend Angelo Foiera, a great headwaiter and chef with international experience, who had worked for eight seasons at our Sport Hotel. I asked him to bring along a substitute as a backup, so we were in business. In the meantime, DeCa started drawing up the contract. It took several months because it was very unusual, since DeCa, as receiver of appropriated funds, was not allowed to charge rent or utilities.

In essence, the contract turned out to be “a mutually goodwill operation”. In order to guarantee the top quality, I asked DeCa to trust me to be able to deliver it, provided I did not have to compete on a bidding. I don’t know how DeCA managed to accept my “unusual” proposal. My sincere and knowledgeable admiration for the Founding Fathers, as a converted American, determined to give top food quality to the military played a great part in giving me this unique opportunity. I also had established a reputation by the excellent quality of Gourmet Italia pasta selling very well in the commissaries since 1994. The very favorable responses of the cooking courses along with the numerous articles in the Stars&Stripes plus the 1995 “Thank You America” ceremony must have convinced Mr. Tate and Mr. Nixon in Europe, along with DeCA’s Director, General Beale at Ft. Lee, that “the experiment” would have been really appreciated by their patrons.

Finally, on March 1, 1997 the Gourmet Italia Pasta Café was inaugurated at the Ramstein Commissary. For special meals and visiting VIPs we used a room on the second floor equipped with a kitchen. I called it the Benjamin Franklin room and was allowed to indicate it with an elegant brass plaque on the door and my Ben Franklin story on the wall. During one of our splendid meals in which we were allowed to serve wines, the VIP was Steve Rossetti, Supervisor of DeCa and AAFES. Knowing that he was from Boston, I took the opportunity of recounting several episodes of Franklin’s life that he didn’t know, especially his fame and influence in France. I also illustrated the epic battle of the Bonhomme Richard, a battleship that Admiral John Paul Jones named in honor of Ben Franklin. Admiral John Paul Jones defeated and captured the more heavily armed English flagship “Serapis” in an epic battle off the English coast. My stories, the excellent food and service, along with the proper, abundant wines, created a convivial atmosphere. At a certain point, Mr. Rossetti remarked: “I never in my life had such fantastic food in a military installation”. That was the opportunity I was waiting for: Mr. Rossetti, I said, “if I had used the olive oil and the tomatoes available in the commissary, instead of the extra virgin olive oil and tomatoes I brought from Italy, it would have been a mediocre meal. However, if you have clout in the system, maybe we can bring them into the commissaries. Everyone appreciated the quip and had a good laugh. Mr. Rossetti was given a bottle of my EVOO, which he carried on the plane

(before 9/11, of course) and Gourmet Italia entered the new products into the commissaries with flying colors. Those were the days...

Gourmet Italia Pasta Cafes. First one in Ramstein, on March 1, 1997

A Message to Our Friends Who Appreciate Quality Food:

The Gourmet Italia Pasta Café is not just another place to eat. Our aim is to offer the healthy benefits and tasty delights of the Mediterranean Diet to our patrons. So that you can enjoy the flavor of each bite, we ensure that all ingredients are of the finest quality. Our recipes have been coordinated by Executive Director Frank Amato and Master Chef Rossano Boscolo, Captain of the Italian National Cooking Team.

Our meals are classic representatives of the Mediterranean Diet drawing from ingredients very low in saturated fat and cholesterol, rich in monounsaturated fat, carbohydrates, antioxidants, and very importantly, flavor. Pasta combined with extra virgin olive oil and other selected ingredients is a nutritionist's dream.

For more scientific information, please consult the nutrition information in this guide.

Cold pressed, extra virgin olive oil is great for cooking, seasoning and health. It is the predominant cooking medium in the Mediterranean Diet. However, while good oil enhances the flavor of any dish, a bad one ruins it. Because the quality of extra virgin olive oil lasts just over a year, one should always check the expiration date.

Gourmet Italia pasta is made with the finest amber durum hard wheat and Dolomite spring water.

Gourmet Italia sun ripened tomatoes are carefully selected. They come from southern Italy where the soil and climate are ideal.

Gourmet Italia extra virgin olive oil, pasta and tomatoes are available in your commissary.

BUON APPETITO

Larry Pisoni and the Gourmet Italia Team

What is the mediterranean diet pyramid?

The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid was created by a group of prominent scientists from the Harvard School of Public Health, the World Health Organization and the non-profit Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust. They discovered that people living in Mediterranean countries had the highest adult life expectancy in the world plus very low rates of

heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes and other conditions. After carefully reviewing the lifestyle and eating patterns of these inhabitants, they devised the Mediterranean Pyramid to teach people how to reduce their risk for these diseases.

Daily physical activity, enjoyment of meals as well as moderation in food intake is integral to the Mediterranean Pyramid.



Dear Friends,

Now is the time to thank our numerous friends who have contributed with their ideas, time, and support. Among them I must include my mentor, Benjamin Franklin, who has been a constant inspiration to my vision of Gourmet Italia's mission.

Here are some excerpts from his "Poor Richard's Almanack" that may inspire the reader to rediscover him and the Founding Fathers who, while the rest of the world lived under tyranny, created a social experiment for the betterment of mankind called the United States of America:

- There are three faithful friends – an old wife, an old dog, and ready money
- He that rises late, must trot all day and scarce overtake his business at night.
- The family of fools is ancient
- Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; Revenging one makes you but even with him; Forgiving it sets you above him.

- The poor man must walk to get meat for his stomach, the rich man to get a stomach for his meat.
- Ill customs and bad advice are seldom forgotten.
- Necessity never made a good bargain
- Caesar did not merit the triumphal parade more than he that conquers himself.
- Drive thy business or it will drive thee.
- He that waits for a fortune is never sure of a dinner.
- Perseverance is the mother of good fortune.
- Changing countries or beds, cures neither a bad manager, nor a fever.
- Genius without education is like silver in the mine.
- Great beauty, great strength, and great riches are really and truly of no great use; a right heart exceeds all.
- A brother may not be a friend, but a friend will always be a brother.
- In escaping from a fire, a woman or an enemy, the wise man will walk, not run.
- Would you live with ease, do what you ought, and not what you please.
- If a man could have half of his wishes, he would double his troubles
- To be humble to superiors is duty, to equals courtesy, to inferior nobleness.
- He that has patience can have what he will
- I see few die of hunger; of eating 100,000.
- Lend money to an enemy, and thou'lt gain him; to a friend, and you'll lose him.
- Wise men learn from others' harm; Fools by their own.
- Keep your conscience clear and never fear.

Suggestions for gifts for any occasion:

Poor Richard's Almanack by Benjamin Franklin,

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.

Miracle at Philadelphia, the story of the Constitutional Convention by Catherine Drinker Bowen.

Larry Pisoni

I wrote the following essay after studying the life of Benjamin Franklin for several years. I consider him my Mentor.

THE SPIRIT OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

by Larry E. Pisoni

Benjamin Franklin can be considered one of the most beneficial men humanity has ever known. His historical contributions and practical advice in guiding nations and people still apply today.

He was barely a teenager in Philadelphia when he learned the value of acquired wealth: "now I have a cow and a sheep, and everybody bids me good morrow". By honesty and perseverance, he built the most prosperous printing shop in America. After retiring from business, he dedicated himself to

science, public life, philosophy, music and literature, the “Embellishments of Life”, as he called them.

After signing the Declaration of Independence, in October 1776 he crossed the Atlantic Ocean infested with British warships, whose captains had orders to hang him as the most dangerous man in America. While serving as U.S. ambassador to France, he convinced the nearly bankrupt French government and wealthy idealists to send troops, money and naval forces to provide decisive help to the fledgling republic. Virtually all the outside aid to the American rebels came with Franklin's help. Admiral John Paul Jones' ship “Bonhomme Richard”, named in Ben's honor and outfitted by his friends, won a decisive battle in British waters, and sank their flagship Serapis.

In France, Franklin was considered the embodiment of the Age of Enlightenment. For the first time in history the United States was able to turn upside down the social pyramid based on hereditary privilege, and apply the ideas of liberty, equality, brotherhood, tolerance and, last, but not least, the Pursuit of Happiness. In Europe, especially in France, the intellectual middle class was ready for a radical change based on the same ideals.

Franklin joined the French Masons and became the Venerable Master of the Lodge of the Nine Sisters, the most influential in France, where he initiated Voltaire into the Order. Other members of world caliber were Diderot, D'Alembert, Lavoisier, Turgot, and Helvetius.

After contributing to sowing the seeds of the French Revolution, Franklin returned to America in 1785, adored by the nation he had left and cheered gratefully by his compatriots. He was elected President of Pennsylvania, where he attempted to abolish slavery. He was very influential during the four months it took to draft the Constitution, the universal monument that established the United States as a social experiment for the betterment of mankind.

When Ben signed the Constitution, he could not hold back the tears. To prove that what the Founding Fathers had created had universal intents, he wrote to an English friend: “God grant that not only the love of liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say, ‘This is my country’.”

The French Minister of Finance, Turgot, prophetically wrote, “America is the only hope for humanity”. At Franklin's death, the French National Assembly honored his memory with three days of national mourning. Ben's friends summarized his life with a Latin motto:

Eripuit Coelo Fulmen, Sceptrum Tyrannis - He snatched lightning from the heavens, the scepter from tyrants

Gourmet Italia Pasta Cafés story

Wiesbaden; Vogelweh; Mannheim; Heidelberg; Patch; Lakenheath (show letter to Deca director & his reply); Ft. Belvoir (convinced DeCa to spend \$350,000.00; I spent about \$50,000.00)

Franco Amato becomes Frank W. Amato. Middle name Willard, after I read J.W. Marriott's autobiography. Frank was an executive chef, but his real talent was the ability to choose the personnel and manage seven pasta cafés located in six different cities in Germany plus Lakenheath in the U.K. For a year we even opened a P.C. in Naples, but the Italian unions made it too difficult to operate so we closed it after a year of operations.

Served an average of 450 meals p/day, i.e., more than 2 million meals during the thirteen years of the Pasta Café story!

The customers were very satisfied, receiving Whole Foods Market quality at commissary prices.

Mission impossible in the U.S.

One Pasta Café at Ft. Belvoir, VA

Eighteen Whole Foods Markets in the Mid-Atlantic area,

Twenty-five Commissaries on the Eastern seaboard from Maine to Norfolk, VA

Our eighth Gourmet Italia Pasta Café was opened in February 2003 at the Ft. Belvoir Commissary in the D.C. Metro Area. Deca went out of its way, spending more than \$ 200,000.00 in preparing the space, water pipes and light connections for operating the first Gourmet Italia Pasta Café in the States. Ft. Belvoir was and still is the largest commissary, with gross yearly sales of \$ 93,000,000.00. We spent about \$ 100,000.00 for all the fancy equipment, which my daughter Grace selected and had it built with taste. It was considered the most elegant structure built in a DeCA commissary. I brought Chef Roberto from Italy, who had worked in some of the finest hotels in Italy. His fiancé came over too, acting as his assistant. I had chosen Roberto because he was skilled in preparing filled pasta, which I planned to blast freeze for take-outs. I accommodated the two of them in a fancy apartment with doorman in Bethesda, MD, and provided them with a brand-new Jeep. The operation was working out fairly well, although the clientele was much different than in Europe. The customers were mostly old, retired people who were interested in low prices, so the operation was losing money; however, my profits with the six pasta cafés in Europe were allowing me to be proudly operating a fine Gourmet Pasta Café at Ft. Belvoir. After a couple of months, chef Roberto wanted to return to Italy for a week, so I had to let him and his fiancée go and stay back in Italy. Our excellent nutrition expert, Nicole Brown, helped me run the operation, so we would have hung in there, with the idea of having established a beachhead in the Washington Metro Area. However, at the end of the year, DeCA did not renew our contract. The pressure from AAFES on its own ground was too strong. Financially, they did me a favor because I stopped all my losses and concentra-

ted on successfully operating the pasta cafés in the European commissaries until the fateful September 19 - 2010 Kaputt by the infamous SOFA agreement. Life goes on...

I made a huge, almost fatal mistake, when I initiated a mission impossible in the States in the late nineties. The idea and the products of the Mediterranean diet were great, but I lacked the necessary size to create the infrastructure for the huge American military and civilian market. Despite that, I managed to enter into 18 Whole Food Markets, and 25 commissaries in the Mid-Atlantic with my Gourmet Italia pasta, extra virgin olive oil and frozen pizza.

I needed a worldwide military broker to represent us. Gourmet Italia, Inc. was practically non-existent in the U.S. However, I knew I had a great artisan pizza that was selling well in the American commissaries in Europe.

Somehow, I managed to get an appointment for a demo with WEBCO's CEO Joe Oiding. At the time WEBCO was the largest broker, handling a \$600 million business in the military market. Joe liked the pizza and my enthusing presentation. From then on, we became business partners and good companions for elevated conversations in Europe and the in the U.S. Both of us liked good red wines, so the conversations were always "elevated". Once, Joe drove from D.C. to Richmond, VA and back, on the same day, just to host Erica and me for dinner at one of his favorites, fancy restaurants.

Our collaboration and conversations went on for the sixteen years that he was WEBCO's CEO. Lost contact since he retired, but I intend to look him up again.

The U.S. operation in the civilian market was run by my friend Karen Thomas, a very smart former American Airlines hostess, and, part-time, by her husband, Bob, who was still working for the Government. Both were very enthused and dedicated.

My goal was to open the first pasta café in the Ft. Belvoir commissary in the U.S., as I had done in Germany. With DeCa's cooperation, in the spring of 2003 we built a beautiful Gourmet Italia Pasta Café, at Ft. Belvoir. I must thank our daughter, Grace, for the fact that the Gourmet Italia Pasta Café at Ft. Belvoir was by far the most beautiful of all the pasta cafés. She designed it and, despite progressively worsening health, was able to oversee the construction. Thank you, Gracie! The equipment and the counter, as one can see in the picture, were first class, provided by Gourmet Italia, while DeCA provided the site preparation and the utilities for the operation. Customers were happy and filled out 99% positive, written reports. Unfortunately, Gourmet Italia was losing money because the costs of the personnel, transportation, and food (unlike in Europe, we were not allowed to purchase food in the commissaries, so we had extra costs in bringing the supplies in). As the months were going by, I realized that the system was slowly rejecting my "out of the box" project. A huge banner promoting the virtues of the Pasta Café, placed very visibly at the entrance, disappeared to never be found again. Gourmet Italia products on the shelves and in the freezers started missing, although they were in the commissary warehouse. After the excitement of the initial opening, I had a feeling of lack of collaboration, or even a subterranean boycott, especially at the lower operating level. Evidently, the system had its ingrained habits, and I lacked the necessary structure to operate in a well-oiled machine that did not care about my idealist goal of providing the best quality food to the commissary patrons. Our manager, who was a former, enthused customer in Europe, was overworked because he was holding down a regular job at the Pentagon. The chef, whom I had brought

from Italy with his fiancé, confessed that he was allergic to flour. I had leased a Jeep and rented an apartment in Bethesda for both. When he told me that he was allergic to flour, it meant that he would have been unable to produce filled pasta dishes, which was the main reason why I brought him over from Italy. Well, another costly mistake, so I had to let him, and his fiancé go back to Italy.

Had to hire another manager, while I was willing to bear the losses in the States, hoping that, eventually, our quality would prevail. However, after one year, DeCa did not renew our contract. The reason was due to political rivalries among the various government agencies that were not happy with our competition and possible expansion into other commissaries. Actually, it was a blessing in disguise because it forced me to close the operation and save an average of a \$15,000.00 monthly loss. Therefore, after the contract was not renewed, in the spring of 2004 I made a “strategic retreat”, and closed all my Gourmet Italia operations, military and civilian, in the U.S. Fortunately, at DeCa-Europe, Gourmet Italia was doing very well with its seven pasta cafés and food products in the commissaries, plus cooking courses and ski trips.

After a few days for evaluating the options, I wisely decided to concentrate on the Pasta Cafés in the European commissaries, very well run by my trusty, very capable Frank W.

DeCA PROFILE

Gourmet Italia Pasta Café a Ft. Belvoir, in Virginia, vicino al Pentagono

Pasta, Anyone?

“Old World” Feel Via New Concept—the Pasta Bar

• VIRGINIA BEACH

The Defense Commissary Agency’s (DeCA) Fort Belvoir, Va., commissary is trying a new concept in its store with a definite “Old World” feel. Appealing to the romantic in all of us, it recently instituted an in-store pasta bar, said to be a first for a stateside commissary. Although it is doubtful that it will conjure up images of Roma, the Colosseum or the Forum in anyone’s mind, customers have readily embraced the bar for its convenience and healthy menu attributes during its first few months of operation.

Opening Feb. 11, the Gourmet Italia pasta bar offers restaurant-quality, Mediterranean-style pasta entrees prepared by master chefs. Gourmet Italia, Inc., of Rockville, Md., the contract holder, also operates six pasta bars in the European Region commissaries. The contract runs for 18 months.

Photos: DeCA Eastern Region



Pasta anyone? The Fort Belvoir, Va., commissary’s 929-sq.-ft. pasta bar is a hit with customers.

FORT BELVOIR, VA., PASTA BAR AT-A-GLANCE

Opened: Feb. 11, 2003
Size: 929 sq. ft.
Sales: \$700 a day; projected for \$1,500 a day

Selections:
Spaghetti All Americana; spaghetti with shrimp; spaghetti with fresh clams; Penne All’ Arrabbiata; Penne Island Fashion; Linguine All’ Pesto; Linguine All’ Emiliana; Bows Primavera; Shells Alla Pugliese; Risotto Stendhal; Minestrone Alla Genovese; Pizza Margherita with fresh tomatoes; pizza with mushrooms; pizza with artichokes; pizza with bell peppers and eggplant; pizza with cheese finesse; chef’s pasta salad; Caprese salad; country style salad; Tiramisu; hazelnut ice cream cake; garlic bread; espresso; cappuccino; cold drinks

Contract Holder: Gourmet Italia, Inc., Rockville, Md.
Length of Contract: 18 months
Store Director: Randy Eller
Source: DeCA Eastern Region

Amato. I also resumed my former occupation as “hotel broker and tour operator” where I was my own boss, free to organize great trips (tennis, golf, skiing, sightseeing, cooking courses) to the best places and hotels in Italy. Of course, I always avoided “high season” so there were no crowds, and the hotel managers were delighted to have my groups fill their

empty rooms. In my “lusty” days I was able to bring up to 3,000 people per year into Italy, mostly Americans in Europe. I arranged bus or train transportation, hotel accommodations, meals, and guided tours.

Before dawn encounter with the German police on the Autobahn

In the nineties I had installed two car-phones (Italian & German) connected with two antennas installed on the back of my souped-up 16 valve sporty Mercedes that I drove up to 220 km per hour in Germany, the land of the no speed-limit Autobahns. One night, around 11:00 pm, I was driving in the Frankfurt area, after finishing my week-long visit to the various American Clubs. Somehow, I was not too tired, so I thought of driving home through the night (720 km). There was almost no traffic and no speed limit, so I was happily flying low listening to “Six days on the road and I’m going to make home tonight” and “North to Alaska”. At a certain point the Autobahn was reduced to just one lane because of work on the road, fortunately with no workers present. I saw a car in the rearview mirror that was staying a bit too close to me, so I decided to accelerate to leave it behind; however, the car kept following me, keeping the same distance. After the work area, the car managed to pass me, turning the police lights and siren on, indicating that I had to pull into a “Parkplatz”. Two fully armed policemen got out of the car, asking me for the car papers and documents. They told me that I was way, way, over the speed limit. Fortunately, I speak pretty good German. I told them that I had decided to drive home to Italy because at that time there was no traffic. Besides, my fantastic German sports car allowed me to drive fast with total control. I also told them that I tried to outdistance them because their head lights were bothering me because they were a bit too high. I managed to make them laugh when I commented that my Italian friends would never believe that “in the land of the free Autobahn” I was stopped for speeding, driving an excellent German car. I asked them for the word for “flexibility” was in German. They told me it was “Flexibilitaet”; however, they commented, you were driving 160 km p/hr in a work zone that had a speed limit of 80 km.

We started talking about several things, including the fact that I admired Germany as the best organized country in the world, which is true. Also, as a former national junior soccer player, I loved their soccer team that was among the best in the world, even though they usually lost again Italy, because the Italians played dirty, which is also true. That made them laugh. Then I started quoting Goethe, which really impressed them. In fact, Germans are very impressed and sort of intimidated by culture that divides people in classes. At the end of the story, they wished me a good trip home with a ridiculously low fine of DM 25.- (about \$10.00 at the time). Danke Schoen, to the Deutsche Polizei, that showed quite a bit of “Flexibilitaet”.

1970- 2000 Thirty years of “business & fun”

In the early eighties I decided not to renovate the management of the hotels in Monte Bondone because I realized that the mountain resort had no future. Too small and too politically influenced by the city of Trento whose administrators were more interested in keeping the area available for the local inhabitants rather than bringing tourists from the rest of Italy, Europe or the States.

For the year-round ski season, I found Val Senales, next to the Austrian border, with the beautiful Hotel Kristal equipped with all the comforts at the base of a glacier that had snow available year-round. I brought skiers from all over Europe. President Reagan had just won the elections and the dollar became very strong against the lira. Since my contracts were in dollars, I made out like a bandit, and everyone was happy. One morning the operators of the resort noticed that all the international flags flying on very high poles, were missing. Although nobody had seen anything, the operators suspected that the American paratroopers from the U.S. Army Post in Vicenza were involved in the “well-executed bravado”. To make a long story short, through their commander, I was able to recover twenty-three flags that I happily brought back to Val Senales.

Unfortunately, the company that owned the Hotel Krystal ran into huge fiscal problems and the Hotel Krystal had to close the operations. Therefore, I took my groups of skiers to other areas.

Apropos, here is another one-liner by the Great Gribble, when he was the trip captain of the Heidelberg Ski Club: “Let’s go to Italy, where the Lira outskies the Dollar”. Occasionally, Rex would bring as many as 100 skiers to my hotels. He would advise me on a variable rate of exchange between the lira and the dollar according to the snow level!

Cooking courses galore in Italy from the Alps to Sicily 1978-2010

The eighties and the nineties were the golden era of the cooking courses for Carol and me. We used to set up as many as twenty per year, for groups of min. 10, max 30 participants. Contrary to the skiers, the tennis players, the vacationers in general or even the shoppers, the participants to the cooking courses loved every minute, regardless of the weather, the location or even the hotel. In fact, I never had complaints from groups that stayed in family run hotels. The very few complaints we had came from people who stayed in de-luxe hotels like the five-star Imperial Palace at Santa Margherita Ligure on the Italian Riviera. Our guests with rooms overlooking the magnificent bay were delighted, but guests with rooms facing the back on a Riviera wall, were understandably not so happy.

At first, I let the chefs come up with their own recipes, but after a few months I discovered the publications by Dr. Ancel Keys, the inventor of the Mediterranean diet that is still considered the best. Dr. Keys noticed that in the US many people in their forties died because of clogged arteries. While he was holding an international conference in London, an Italian doctor objected that in Italy that problem did not exist. Dr. Keys and his wife, who assisted him in his experiments, took their equipment to Naples, where they tested the natives. Lo and behold, there was no trace of cholesterol in their arteries. After investigating their diet, basically pasta, tomatoes, and olive oil, he concluded that the miracle was performed by the olive oil.

Keys noticed that rates of heart disease varied tremendously throughout the world. Japan had far lower rates than Finland. The traditional Japanese diet was lower in fat, especially saturated fat. In Finland, he observed that hard-working farmers buttered their cheese, and they had heart disease. And Japanese who moved to Hawaii and changed their diet, soon developed heart problems at the same rate as their fellow Americans.

Keys promoted a “Mediterranean diet,” emphasizing unsaturated fats over saturated. Consequently, he wrote a book called “Eat Well & Live Well”. Interested in prolonging his life, he and his wife Margaret bought a home south of Naples where they spent several months every year. He died in 2004, a few months before his 101st birthday. His wife and co-researcher Margaret died a few years later at age 97. Living well is fine, but if you dare to write a diet book, living long is the best revenge of all. A few years ago, the infamous Atkins diet, based on eating animal fat, became very popular. When I was running seven “Pasta Cafés” in the American commissaries in Europe I wrote in the menu that Dr. Keys was in shape and lived 101 years. Dr. Atkins died obese at age 70, as shown on his death certificate that I was able to retrace and expose on the walls of my pasta cafés. I am convinced that the immensely powerful meat and cheese producing companies financed Dr. Atkins’ fad. As Einstein wrote, “Two things are infinite: “The universe and human stupidity; however, if I really think about it, I’m not so sure about the universe”.

Life threatening adventures on my inflatable canoa

Whenever I stayed at a hotel near the beach, I always had with me my trusty inflatable canoe produced by “Metzler”. It was a bright yellow, but I imagine that it was the same type of furtive black canoe that the German commando troops used in WWII. It was light, sturdy, very maneuverable, and unsinkable. When big waves arrived, it would buck almost to the point of turning over, but then, the water arrived from under and supported the canoe with its flexibility. Once, during the beginning of a storm on Lake Garda, as I started to jump in with my canoe, the fire brigade forced me to get out.

The only two scares occurred in the bay of Santa Margherita, near Portofino. I was in the middle of the bay when I saw a huge Canadair Super Scooper hovering over me and then landing very close to me with its huge hatch to suck the water a few meters from my little canoe. I will never know if the pilot saw me or not, but it was a close call. Later on, I read that that magnificent machine can scoop up 1,620 gallons of water during its 400-meter-long run on the water at 70 knots (130 km p/hr). Wow!

Another time, on the same bay, I was canoeing with Carol along the coast, when a group of teenagers started throwing small rocks at us from the cliffs. It was very dangerous because they could have killed us. I managed to furiously row to the shore and walk, still dripping water, into the lobby of the Grand Hotel Imperiale, full of elegant people. I asked the manager to call the “Carabinieri” because I wanted to charge the young criminals with tentative manslaughter. The Carabinieri came immediately, and I led them to the cliff with the kids still there. The Carabinieri took the names of the ones whom I identified; however, the Carabinieri convinced me to forget the whole thing because the kids were minors, and it would have been a lot of wasted time for me to start a long process. The Carabinieri knew their families and promised me that they would have reprimanded them. Also, they told us that, since neither Carol nor I had been wounded, it would have been difficult to prove the whole accident. Well, life goes on, but I’m still mad about it. During that period, it was sort of fashionable for young punks in Italy to throw rocks from the overpasses on the Autostrada. Several people were killed. In fact, since then, all the overpasses now have high metal fences to prevent such criminal acts.



With Carol on Lake Garda (1968)

How “pasta demos” turned into “Pasta Cafés

During the cooking courses, I realized that the participants were very keen about Italian pasta vs American pasta.

I found out why: In Italy, a product can be called pasta only if it has at least 98% of hard wheat in it. The difference between hard wheat and soft wheat is like granite and sandstone. Only hard wheat can produce pasta “al dente”. The FDA had no such regulation. That’s why the American old saying that the pasta is cooked when it sticks to the wall, has been such a bad example. If pasta is produced with hard wheat, it will never stick to the wall. Finally, the word “al dente” appeared in the American dictionaries in the late nineties. However, the notion that “pasta is pasta” still remains. Unlike for Italians, for Americans, pasta is and remains a side dish. Pizza has conquered the US, although the Italian version is quite different from the N.Y Pizza. To conclude with pasta, who Italians statistically enjoy six days out of seven with no obesity problems prior to fast food, here is a famous quote by Sophia Loren: “Everything you see, I owe to spaghetti”

After months of work and contractual preparations, on March 1st, 1997 we had the Grand Opening of our first “Pasta Café” at the Ramstein commissary. Here is an article that Gerri Young, DeCa’s Public Affairs Officer wrote about me and my initiative approved by DeCa. Thanks to a series of favorable circumstances with the right people at the right moment, the concept of a quality food operation materialized for the first time in an American military environment. My unwavering determination with top quality for each ingredient was a new concept. After almost two decades of experience in running cooking courses, mostly for American military club members, I knew that enough of them would have appreciated what we offered.

For the operation I hired my friend Angelo Foiera, a very intelligent, top chef & waiter, with whom I had worked for about ten years at our Sport Hotel at Monte Bondone. As support, I also hired Frank Amato, who had worked in some of the finest restaurants and hotels in Italy, U.K. and Japan.

We brought in a new wave of quality in food along with the pleasure of good service: Pasta al dente and pizza galore.

The formula was a win-win situation for everyone involved. The only regret was the prohibition to serve wine, for which AAFES would not release the exclusive, since they were livid about our competition.

After a month of operation at the Ramstein Pasta Café, Angelo found cooking pasta & pizza too boring since he was used to cooking fancy meals for his customers, so he left. Very fortunately, his assistant, Frank Amato, understood the opportunity and blossomed as a fantastic organizer. One evening, after a few beers, Franco suggested to use the American version of his name, so he became Frank. At that point, I suggested that he should complete it by adding a middle name. Since I had just finished reading John Willard Marriott’s autobiography, I suggested “Willard” as Frank’s middle name. Consequently, he built a beautiful home in Ramstein with the name Frank W. Amato elegantly displayed on an Amalfi ceramic plaque at the front gate.

Professionally, Frank was an executive chef, but his real talent was the ability to choose the personnel and manage seven pasta cafés located in six different cities in Germany plus Lakenheath in the U.K. For a year we even opened a P.C. in Naples, but the Italian unions made it too difficult to operate so we closed it after a year of operations. Our plan was to open pasta cafés in all the commissaries in Europe, except in Italy.

Mario, Frank and I worked out a perfect plan to everyone’s advantage: At the end of each day, the gross sales were to be given to the Ramstein commissary. At the end of each week, the commissary sent the total amount to our Gourmet Italia, Inc. account with Bank of America in Annapolis, MD, where we had our headquarters, as an American company. At the end of each month, Gourmet Italia would transfer the money minus a 15% commission into the account of the Café managers, who would use that money to pay the employees, and keep whatever was left for themselves.

The store director at Ramstein was Salah Ud-In, a naturalized American like me, but much more wiley. He told me point blank that I put up a good façade with the Benjamin Franklin story and the quality of the ingredients; however, in his judgement I was just a busi-

nessman trying to find a way to get into the system. I managed to stay calm, saying that, after he really gets to know me, he will change his mind. A few days later, he asked to talk to me, again, saying: "Larry I was wrong. I saw that your people truly use the finest ingredients even when they are not yours. For instance, they are using the most expensive Contessa shrimp instead of the much cheaper types." We became instant friends and still are 22 years later. Since his wife was American Indian, he proposed to go in business with me, using her as owner-president in selling mineral water and other products to all the branches of the American government. However, I was too busy in running my understaffed operation, so I did not consider the offer. Another missed opportunity?

BTW, I must go to visit him in Italy, where he is Zone Manager for the Mediterranean Region. Very unfortunately, I recently learned that Salah is now in poor health in the U.S. "On the grand clock of time, there is but one word, now, as Shakespeare wrote.

The second opening occurred at the Wiesbaden Commissary, on Thanksgiving 1998. As Director of operations, we chose Emilio, whom we had met as manager of a small restaurant near the commissary. It turned out to be a great choice. Emilio was a hard worker, had a smile like a movie star, strong as an ox, he was a former boxer and had a Calabrian temperament kept well under control when he was working. After work he would dress impeccably, go to the dancing halls, acting as an irresistible Casanova with the German girls. Emilio stayed faithfully with us until we closed the Pasta Café on September 19, 2010.

He also had a very good looking, tall son, born and grown up in Germany. Unfortunately, four thugs from Eastern Europe, envious of his looks and success, killed him in a fight outside a discotheque. After that episode, Emilio changed his personality, but life had to go on.

The third Pasta Café opened at the Vogelweh commissary with Donatella Jennings, as manager. She was Neapolitan, had a law degree, but did not know much about cooking or managing; however, she had enthusiasm and a charming personality that made her pasta café a favorite spot for everyone. After a few years, her American husband, Martin, was transferred to the D.C. area, so she regretfully had to leave, but we're still in friendly touch. As replacement, Frank found Bruno, a Calabrian man who had grown up in Germany. Bruno turned out to be an excellent worker and manager, who charmed all the customers. He also stayed with us until we closed operations on 9/19/2010.

For the fourth Pasta Café in the Mannheim Commissary, Frank chose Lucia, a German girl, married to an American military. Frank trained her to prepare our Italian dishes. Lucia managed to create a home away from home for her faithful customers. She also stayed with us until the last day on 9/19/2010.

The fifth Pasta Café was opened at the Heidelberg Commissary in January 2000. The manager was Antonio, Neapolitan, of course. Unfortunately, he was having health problems, being a heavy-smoker. He also was not a good manager or cook. Therefore, the pasta café at Heidelberg never worked well. Frank kept him anyhow, mostly because we were unable to find a good substitute, so he stayed until 9/19/2020.

The sixth Pasta Café was opened in Stuttgart at the Patch Commissary in May 2000. The manager was Stefano, a Neapolitan who we had found running a restaurant with his brother

in Germany. Patch was the EUCOM site, i.e. the Command for all the American Forces in Europe. Therefore, there were a lot of high-ranking officers with their wives, who were delighted to hold meetings at our Pasta Café. It was also my favorite restaurant both for the location and the atmosphere. It was so much fun from me to get off the Autobahn after a 500 km drive from Vezzano-Trento to Stuttgart. Stefano, immediately fixed a great dish of spaghetti, followed by Caffè Espresso alla Napoletana. We talked about business, but mostly soccer and his unforgettable idol Maradona. Stefano stayed with us until we closed on 9/19/2010.

Battle of survival in the Ben Franklin Room

The Pasta Café at the Ramstein commissary was a great satisfaction for everyone involved. Pilots and crews who flew in from the States on their way to Iraq or wherever, would be bussed from the tarmac to the pasta café to enjoy the pasta “al dente” at the counter. Most of them would also take a “Grab and Go” dish to enjoy onboard their flights. The AAFES people were livid about it because they felt that DeCA was infringing on their “eating” territory. They finally decided to send a BG general to order DeCA to close the operation. Through the grape wine I heard that something vital was in the air. The only “influential” friend I had was Lt. Gen. Robert Coffey, who was Deputy Commander of US Army Europe. My company had successfully catered his promotion ceremony, so he knew we offered quality. I called him, asking for help. He had just arrived from Bosnia and came to the pasta cafe with his bodyguards, dressed in his combat uniform. The meeting with DeCa-Europe top people and the AAFES general was taking place in the Ben Franklin room, for which I had provided an elegant brass plaque on the door and a scroll with my Franklin story hanging on a wall.

Before going into the Ben Franklin room, where Gourmet Italia was providing a “Mediterranean Dinner”, L.G. Robert Coffey asked all the customers at the pasta café what they thought of the operation. Everyone was enthused, saying that it was the implementation of the best idea DeCa ever had. Reassured with that info. Gen. Coffey was ready, willing, and able to fight AAFES. I never found out what went on, but, as he passed by the café, he told me: “This place will never be closed because it provides the best food to the military”. Thank you, General Coffey, on behalf of Gourmet Italia and the customers.

I was ready to open a Pasta Café at Vogelweh-Kaiserslautern, at the time second only to Ramstein. Somehow, DeCA was reluctant to give me permission. Later, I found out that the Store Director, Hector Granado, was rightly offended because I failed to give him credit for suggesting the pasta café operation. I was so totally involved with organizing everything that it never occurred to me to thank him. I do it now, Hector, wherever you are.

Getting back to DeCa making it difficult for me to grant me permission, the Chief of Operations, Joel McCarty indicated that the Air Force that had jurisdiction over Vogelweh, did not want a pasta café at the entrance of the commissary. The only alternative would have been to build it toward the back of the store, involving the costly demolition, at our expense, of a main wall. Fortunately, I had the intuition of calling my friend, Robert Coffey, Lt. General Army Europe. When I told him that his equivalent, Air Force General at Vogelweh, did not allow a pasta café at the entrance of the commissary, my friend Bob mentioned that

he would verify himself. Five minutes later, he called me back, saying the the US Air Force had no objection whatsoever about the location of a pasta café in the Vogelweh commissary.

Subsequently, I requested an appointment with Joel. After talking about several things, I asked him if the only obstacle about the pasta café near the front door was the Commanding General of the US Air Force in Vogelweh. Yes, he said, otherwise, DeCa would have no objection; however, we cannot go against the commanding officer. Well, I replied with my best s.o.b. smile, I just found out through General Coffey that there is no objection by the Air Force. He looked at me with a mixture of disbelief and admiration, picked up the phone to clear it with Mr. Tate, and said: “Larry, go ahead. You are the type of man who, in the corporate modern world, is not around anymore”. Thank you, Joel!

GOURMET ITALIA PASTA CAFÉ AT PATCH (STUTTGART)

Summer of 1999 in Stuttgart. I wanted to build a Gourmet Italia Pasta Café at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart, where high ranking officers were located, since it was the European Command Center. I reached a verbal agreement with DeCa’s merchandising manager Joel McCarty. If Gourmet Italia financed the construction of the Pasta Café, DeCa would have bought my frozen pizzas for their 30 commissaries in Europe. I went to work right away with Gabriele Marchesin, the owner of a small artisan pizza factory near Venice. At his factory, he had organized a pizza school for professional “pizzaioli” and, together with the University of Padua, wrote books on how to select the best ingredients for a light, nourishing pizza with a 3-day slow-fermenting process that allowed the enzymes to ferment in the dough instead of in the stomach of the pizza eaters, causing indigestion.

It took me six months to write the texts on the pizza boxes in English, complete with bar codes and Nutrition Facts. As soon as I was ready with the six types of pizzas, I happily called to fix an appointment with Joel McCarty, but was told that he was ill. It turned out that he had a very bad case of cancer that killed him in just a month. I was therefore forced to talk with Jim Clark, his replacement, who knew nothing about the verbal agreement I had made with Joel six months before. We got into an argument. Mr. Clark accused me of using the name of his dead friend for commercial advantage, so he requested that I leave his office immediately. I was deeply hurt because, in spite of my many defects, the thing that I value most is total honesty. I walked out of the office and wrote an indignant letter to the Mr. Tate, the Director of DeCa. Fortunately, Mr. Tate knew me well and honored the agreement, so I was back in the saddle again. I am happy to be able to say that, later on, Jim Clark and I cleared the misunderstanding and got along very well.

In May 2000 we finally opened the Pasta Café at Patch Commissary (Stuttgart). Frank W., our CEO, found a German architect and builder who built a little jewel. Since the commissary had limited space, the Store Director, Frank and I, decided to use part of the huge warehouse in spite of the very high, ugly ceiling. Our architect was able to create an attractive, low ceiling structure that gave atmosphere to the pasta café. The quality of the food, the atmosphere and the service made it a favorite spot for the high-ranking community. Our manager was Stefano, a true Neapolitan who made pasta and pizza meals finished by

“espresso alla napoletana”, served in the traditional ceramic cups. The only thing missing was the permission to serve wine, which, unfortunately for everyone involved, we were never able to obtain in the pasta cafés.

The Gourmet Italia name and graphics stolen by a large company in Italy

In February 2000 a friend told me that he saw products by Gourmet Italia sold in the Italian market. I looked into it and, sure enough, I saw them too. Here are the facts: Two years before, I knew that a company called Spega, located in my region, was producing frozen pasta dishes. I immediately approached them with a proposal of buying their products, provided they used the Gourmet Italia name and logo. They were willing to do it, but they requested a minimum consumption that I was not able to guarantee. Consequently, I wrote them a letter indicating that, for the time being, I was unable to use their business. Later on, the Spega manager or owners, saw that Gourmet Italia, Inc. was an American company not registered in Italy. I had spent two years getting the Gourmet Italia name and logo trade-marked in the U.S., naively thinking that it was valid for the whole western world. Unfortunately, I found out that the trademark must be registered in each country. Although I had written proofs of Spega’s dishonesty, I decided to ignore since they were operating only in Italy. Eventually, they managed to get into the American military mess halls, but only in Vicenza, and not in the commissaries.

I consulted an American lawyer, who lived in Europe, hoping that he would be able to help me. He studied the international implications that Gourmet Italia, Inc. was involved in: A contract with the U.S. military by an American company that operated in Europe but was not part of the military or the diplomatic world. His conclusion, after telling me why he would not pick up Gourmet Italia’s case: “You have problems similar to General Motors, but you are not GM”. Of course, he was right, but the Titanic General Motors went bankrupt, while the ocean raft Gourmet Italia tossed and survived on the foaming seas for thirteen years, until the German Government intervened with a political decision.

I figured I would sue Spega if they used the “Gourmet Italia” name in the States. Eventually, they started operating with the name Gourmet Italia in the States as well. Unfortunately, my lawyers in the States found out that the names “Gourmet” and “Italia” could not be protected by a trademark because they are of public domain. Eventually, companies using the Gourmet Italia name started operating in California and in Southern Italy. Well, my partner had died, and Frank had his hands full running six pasta cafes in Germany and one in the U.K., so I dropped the issue and just focused on my Gourmet Italia.

Massimo Auci: A missed opportunity?

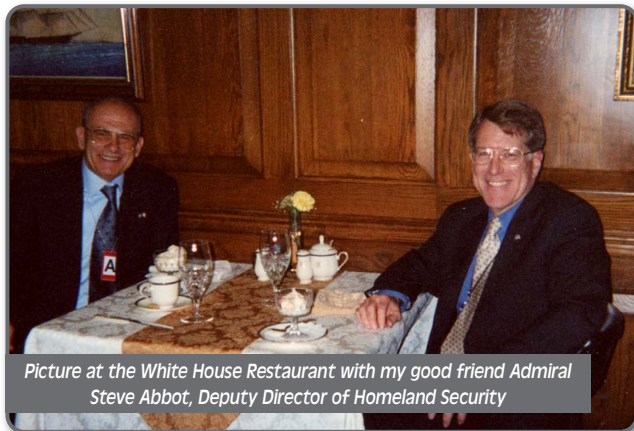
After a month of operations, Massimo Auci, a Milanese-Sicilian combination, shows up with his friend Piero at our Ramstein Pasta Café. I still don’t know how he was able to

get into the commissary, but he made me the following proposal: “The GI pasta café opens at 9:00 a.m. and closes at 8:00 p.m., but the commissary is open 24-7. Therefore, if you allow me to bring in my own team, we’ll work through the night, producing and delivering the pasta to all the other commissaries in Germany. Then, every day at 9:00 a.m. I’ll give you back a spotless operation and pay you a weekly rental. I was willing to consider the proposal, but my partners Mario and Frank did not trust Massimo, so nothing developed. Later, Massimo approached me repeatedly with the following plan that enthused me: “I’ll submit to you many Italian products, like Parmigiano-Reggiano, mozzarella etc. etc. on a 5% commission on the products that you accept. I thought it was a win-win proposal, but Mario and Frank were totally against having anything to do with Massimo. Since Massimo had no access to the commissaries, nothing developed for a year or so. Eventually, we learned that Massimo had married a Korean girl, who was an American G.I. Consequently, Massimo became a dependent, free to shop and roam the commissaries at will. After studying the Gourmet Italia operation, he convinced DeCa to let him operate a rack on wheels, full of Italian products, which he placed right in front of each Gourmet Italia Pasta Café with the sign “From Italy with Love”. Whenever customers asked him if his products were by Gourmet Italia, he would skillfully beat around the bush, saying, yes, we’re all Italians, basically selling similar products. Massimo turned out to be a very skillful “anything goes” businessman without my reservations for quality. After a couple of years, he divorced his “used up” Korean-American GI wife. He also changed residence from Germany to Italy, then to Malta, always ahead of the national fiscal hounds. Although he became my only competitor, I find him a charming guy, right out of the movies. Who knows what would have happened if I had been free to accept his 5% initial offer. Frank and Mario were sure that Massimo, eventually would have cheated us. We’ll never know...

Events with my friend Admiral Steve Abbot

Around mid-December 1999 I found out that on the following Monday there was an “All hands” conference at Patch for 700 Navy people (300 officers and 400 sailors and non-commissioned officers). I decided to introduce my new pizzas to them. However, regular trucks were not allowed to travel on Sundays. Fortunately, I found a father-son team who drove a fast, small enough truck through the night carrying enough pizzas along with four electric ovens and two chefs. When the group arrived, there was a tense procedure because the American specs for the ovens did not match the Italian ones. Finally, we found a smart electrician who was able to solve the problem just in time for lunch. Each oven produced four pizzas, which the chefs cut in 16 slices each. We had four cute, fast-moving girls who walked into the huge theater, happily carrying two trays with sixteen pizza slices in each hand. Everyone loved the pizzas and the speed of the service.

For the occasion, I was introduced to Admiral Charles Steve Abbot, the Deputy Commander of the US Forces in Europe, who had been the speaker at the event. I gave him the menu that we used at the Pasta Cafés, including the last page that had several quotes by my mentor, Ben Franklin. He read them with amused interest, commenting that there was also another American, Mark Twain, with a good sense of humor. Sure, I replied, but on a much



Picture at the White House Restaurant with my good friend Admiral Steve Abbot, Deputy Director of Homeland Security

lower scale. Everyone was sort of shocked at my talking like that to an Admiral, although it was true. He smiled, and the following day, he called me at home, thanking me for such a successful operation. Consequently, he invited me to his retirement ceremony, and we've been friends ever since, including his wife Marjorie and my Carol.

For a few months, just after his retirement, we even considered going into business together. We had the most fantastic frozen pizzas that we wanted to promote. Once we flew from D.C. to JFK to talk with the owner (forgot his name) of a prominent marketing company in Long Island, who used to race sailboats across the Atlantic. During the conversation in his office, after finding out that Steve was an Admiral, he recalled a case during a regatta from N.Y to Bermuda when the Teddy Roosevelt aircraft carrier and its naval escort were navigating in task force formation. The officer on deck allowed the yachts in the regatta to go through the naval formation. Well, that officer on deck was Steve Abbot. What a coincidence! Although we did not accomplish anything, mostly because my company did not have the budget and the production capability, I recall the regatta episode with pleasure.

Later on, right after the 9/11 disaster, Admiral Abbot became Deputy Director of the newly formed Department of Homeland Security. He graciously invited me to lunch at the White House. Of course, the visit was quite an event for me. I asked and obtained permission to park my car at the White House parking lot adjacent to the West Wing canopy. Imagine the security I had to go through upon arrival. After secret agents and dogs explored the car, I was allowed to go through the first gate. Then a similar procedure to go through another gate. Finally, I pulled into the small parking lot. As I got out of the car, I jokingly asked one of the guards: "Is it safe for me to leave the car here



At the White House West Wing Entrance guarded by a Marine

or should I lock it”? No, no he replied, the car here is very safe. Imagine...

After a very pleasant lunch, Steve took me on a tour of the White House, including the press room, where he even took the attached picture, as if I were addressing the journalists from the podium. As I drove out, going through more gates, I entered on Pennsylvania Avenue, totally closed to traffic and pedestrians. As I was driving east along a deserted Pennsylvania Avenue, I noticed many people demonstrating with plaques on Lafayette Square. Wish I had asked the guards at the gate to take my picture as I was driving out.

Here is another episode: Steve invited me to attend the historical Army- Navy game at Thanksgiving, in Baltimore. We were hosted in a booth with other Admirals and VIPs. During refreshments, I had the opportunity of meeting Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Minetta. Learning that I was Italian, he commented that it was nice to meet another Italian sounding name. Later on, I read his incredible life story, ending with the “Medal of Freedom”. In spite of all the injustices, America is a very fertile ground for producing people larger than life .

Here is another unusual episode that happened the same day: In parking the car, Steve placed it right next to the exit so it would be easy to get out at the end of the game. However, the police changed the sign and we ended up being on the farthest point from the exit. At that time, Admiral Abbot was “Acting Director of Homeland Security”, since the Director, Tom Ridge, was in Poland. As Steve’s car was almost blocked by the crowd, all of a sudden, a group of policemen with horses and cars with sirens opened up the crowd to allow Steve’s car to reach the exit with great ease. When I commented on the odd situation, Steve just dismissed it as a trivial fact. I’m sure that someone noticed that the “Acting Director of Homeland Security” should not be trapped in a parking lot full of people. Thank you, Steve, for allowing me to undeservedly be part of such movie-like episodes.

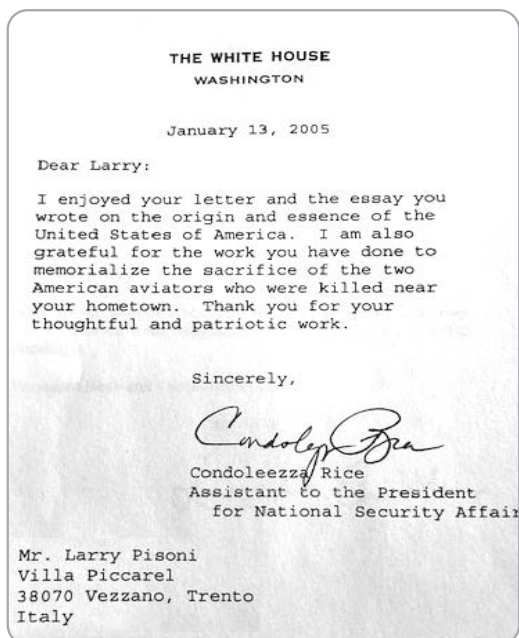
Loss of my partner, Mario

Business was good and I felt on top of the world. However, as John Lennon used to say. “You make plans, then life happens” On St. Valentine’s day of 2000, my dear friend and thirty-year old partner, Mario, died, plunging with his Jaguar into one of my favorite lakes, Toblino, that surrounds the famous castle owned by my other friend Count Wolkenstein, whose family was knighted by Charlemagne. I lost a great, irreplaceable friend and business partner, whom I still think about with nostalgia, after twenty years. Life goes on...

After reading for about eighteen years the fascinating origin of the United States of America, I decided to write a short essay with the purpose of sending it to Dr. Condoleezza Rice. I have the suspicion that my good friend, Admiral Steve Abbot, at the time Deputy Director of Homeland Security, put in a good word. In any case, here is her response that I am very proud of:

ORIGIN AND ESSENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A Social Experiment for the betterment of humanity



by Larry E. Pisoni

This essay is a work of love toward my adopted country, the United States of America, which is so frequently misunderstood, mostly due to ignorance of the facts and, occasionally, envy or bad faith.

To understand the essence of the United States one should start with its unique birth. Unlike other nations, the US is a product of ideas.

The Vikings and Columbus were the discoverers of the new continent, America, but the founder of the concept of the United States was William Penn, who landed on the shores of the Delaware River in 1682. This virgin land gave him the opportunity to put into practice the ideas of liberty, equality, brotherhood and tolerance, which he was prevented from implementing in Europe. His "Experiment" in Pennsylvania, with its capital, Philadelphia (brotherly love) established the first large communities since the Roman Empire to allow different nationalities and religious sects to live under the same government on terms of equality. Pennsylvania, as a successful experiment in the Age of Reason, deeply interested the intellectual circles of eighteenth-century Europe.

They considered the province an illustration of their belief that man could lead a better life without monarchy, feudalism, or religious uniformity.

Although the American colonists considered themselves British subjects, their ruler was far away, and communications were slow. This fact, together with the ideas and ideals of the Age of Enlightenment, which were becoming very popular, contributed to a growing feeling of independence from the mother country.

The ancient Greek and Roman classics were read avidly on both sides of the Atlantic. Starting with the beginning of the 18th century, the Masonic brotherhood with its moral commitment of improving the lot of humanity was spreading very effectively among the inhabitants of both Europe and America. The American colonies were gradually becoming ready to go on their own and the Revolution of 1776 matured and exploded as an overdue human rebellion. Very few people at the time could have imagined that the success of the American Revolution would have turned the world upside down. As the author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson predicted: "May it be to the world what I believe it will be...the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.... (Amazing how these concepts could be applied to the situation in the Middle East nowadays)

Ben Franklin was considered by the British "the most dangerous man in America" for his revolutionary ideas. To serve as US ambassador to France, he made a daring crossing of the Atlantic infested with British warships in the fall of 1776. He was able to convince the French government and wealthy idealists to send troops, money and naval forces to provide decisive help to the fledgling American republic. Franklin was so admired by the French that they elected him Venerable Master of their most prestigious Lodge (The Nine Sisters), whose members included Voltaire, D'Alambert, Diderot, Lavoisier, Helvetius, La Fayette, John Paul Jones, and the finest thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment. These men were to lay the intellectual foundations for the French Revolution, based on the same principles that the American Revolution had already implemented. It is a little-known fact that the French revolutionaries sent the keys to the Bastille to George Washington, as a tribute to the Americans who had led the way thirteen years before. These keys have been on display at his home in Mount Vernon ever since.

During the summer of 1787 the Constitution of the United States was written by the Founding Fathers. Thomas Jefferson, who was now ambassador to France and could not be present, sent James Madison many of the over 2,000 books, which he had bought in Paris. They included thirty-seven volumes on the new Encyclopédie Methodique, books on political theory and the law of

nations, histories, works by Voltaire, Diderot, Mably, Necker, Mirabeau, Montesquieu, Milton, Locke, Hume, Hobbes, Plato, Aristotle etc.

Jefferson would later comment that the U.S. Constitution, a miracle of compromise and wisdom, was the work of demigods. And, in 1887, on the one-hundred-year anniversary, British Prime Minister William Gladstone made the following declaration:

"I have always regarded that Constitution as the most remarkable work known to me in modern times to have been produced by the human intellect".

An illustration of this "most remarkable work" is the system of checks and balances in which the three branches of government control one another as follows:

(1) the States v. the Central Government, (2) the House v. the Senate, (3) the President v. Congress, (4) the Courts v. Congress, (5) the Senate v. the President (with regard to appointments and treaties), (6) the People and their Representatives, (7) the State Legislatures v. the Senate (in the original election of senators), and (8) the Electoral College v. the People.

Winston Churchill made the following comments: *"The great men who founded the American Constitution embodied this separation of authority in the strongest and most durable form. A system of law and liberty under which Americans have thrived and reached the leadership of the world. No constitution was ever written in better English."*

The USA and Europe went along their separate ways for the most part until WWI, when the U.S. decided to intervene. But already in 1915, while the US was still neutral, Herbert Hoover, as a private citizen, organized the C.R.B. (Commission for the Relief of Belgium) to feed German-occupied Belgium and northern France. In the next four years the commission fed and cared for some 10 million civilians. After WWI, President Wilson appointed Hoover US food administrator. Under his management, the US had fed and clothed over 200 million people by 1920. And, during the famine that swept the Ukraine from 1921 to 1923, the American Relief Administration fed millions of Russians, adults as well as children. However, the decisive impact on continental Europe was felt after WWII. The defeat of the Nazis and the Fascists gave the US the opportunity to diffuse its social experiment. With the help of the Marshall plan and NATO, Western Europe began an unprecedented era of freedom, democracy and prosperity.

The years from 1945 to 1989 were characterized by a balance of terror; but during that same period the fortunate European countries under the wing of the United States enjoyed the longest period of peace since the famous "Pax Romana" of 2,000 years before.

Growing up in Italy just after W.W.II, I was personally able to witness America's benevolence. It started with the care packages that the American families sent to us, followed by the Marshall plan and the constant presence of NATO, which prevented the communists from starting, and easily winning a civil war, which would have transformed the country into a "Soviet Paradise". As an act of gratefulness, in March 1995, I dedicated a memorial plaque to two B-24 Air Corp American Officers who had been captured and murdered by the Nazis near my hometown toward the end of WWII. I called the ceremony "Thank you, America". We had over 1,000 participants, including the three surviving members of the B-25 bomber. There was ample recognition both in Italy and the U.S., including a page in the Congressional Records. Here are the words that I had cast in bronze for perennial memory:

**At this spot, on Feb. 28, 1945
Two American airmen were shot by Nazis.
Lt. Lucian C. Crutchfield, Jr. of San Antonio, Texas
F/O William F. Brooks of Cohoes, New York.
They were two of more than 38,000 Americans
Who gave their lives on Italian soil during WWII
To help Europeans of good will regain freedom
And democracy.**

For several years after the end of WWII, the U.S. "strongly encouraged" the pro-western Italian parties to the point that freedom and democracy were practically imposed. In the meantime, the unfortunate countries behind the iron curtain were forced to wait until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 to begin to enjoy the taste of freedom.

In Japan, Gen. Douglas MacArthur's wise radical reforms from 1945 to 1950 transformed a semi-feudal society into a modern democracy without taking away their cultural traditions. His first move was to import 3,500,000 tons of food from the supplies that the US Army had built up in the Pacific. This decision saved the Japanese from starvation during the first winter after the war. He gave Japan a new Constitution, held free elections, enfranchised the women, released political prisoners, liberated the farmers from an almost total possession of land by feudal lords, established a free labor movement, developed a free press, liberalized education and separated church from state. In three years, the US Forces had vaccinated 70,000,000 million people for smallpox and succeeded in curbing the disease, which had been rampant. The same is true for tuberculosis. It was estimated that 2,000,000 people were saved with these health measures.

I have mentioned NATO and the Marshall Plan, but the saga of the Berlin

airlift must not be forgotten. When the Soviet Union blocked overland access to West Berlin in June 1948, the US, Britain and to a much lesser extent, France, organized an air supply operation. During the blockade, which lasted about a year, the operations were ongoing on a 24-hour schedule. Altogether, 2,325,000 tons of supplies were airlifted to West Berlin in 277,569 flights. There were 12 crashes in which 31 Americans lost their lives.

In 1973 the Canadian journalist Gordon Sinclair wrote: "I can name you 5,000 times when the Americans raced to the help of other people in trouble. Can you name me even one time when someone else raced to the Americans in trouble?" The only example I can think of was the French and the Marquis de Lafayette in 1776. By the way, the Americans have never forgotten it, as testified by their battle cry in WWI: "Lafayette, here we come".

The United States is not interested in acquiring new territories, but its DNA compels it to spread its ideas and ideals for the betterment of mankind. Of course, Americans are bound to make the same errors that afflict the rest of humanity. What counts, however is the validity of the system based on the ideas of freedom and democracy. As Churchill wrote, "Democracy is the worst political system, except for all the others".

Back in 1888, British journalist James Bryce wrote "in the works of beneficence, no country has surpassed the United States". One hundred years later, Americans had given \$104.3 billion to charity. There is a reason why the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square and in Soviet occupied Prague were flying American flags, as a symbol of freedom.

The diffusion of the English language and the Internet are gradually turning our planet into a democratic global village, and the winds of freedom have an insuppressible, almost superhuman power that cannot be stopped. Since democracies, historically, do not make war on one another this will be a very positive effect.

However, to be more convincing in winning the souls of the people, modern Americans should become more knowledgeable about the idealistic roots laid by our Founding Fathers. Too many Americans have no idea whom to thank for the uniqueness of the U.S. They say: "We are such a new country in comparison with the Europeans". Although the United States is a very young country, it is the first modern democracy with a written Constitution. As wisely predicted by Alexis de Tocqueville in his masterpiece "Democracy in America" written in 1831, democracy was destined to spread from America to Europe. The United States had implemented, for the first time in history, the finest ideas of ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

The \$1.00 bill shows the pyramid of human improvement with the motto

“Novus Ordo Saeclorum (A new Breed of People) displayed as symbols of the rebirth of people who embrace the American idealistic visions. Without the wisdom and sacrifice of the Founding Fathers, the United States would not exist as such and the inhabitants of the American continent from Alaska to Patagonia would have followed whatever destiny the European powers would have imposed.

So, let us treasure the culture and the ideals that created the “United States of America” as a social experiment for the betterment of mankind. If we are able to do that, we will provide the necessary cultural support to our economic and military might and will be able to realize the prediction of Turgot, the French Minister of Finance before the French Revolution, who wrote: “America is the only hope for humanity.”

*What could be more apropos, universal and prophetically immortal than the following wish written by Benjamin Franklin to an English friend right after signing the U.S. Constitution in the fall of 1787, “**God grant that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say, ‘This is my country’.**”*

To complete the essence of the USA that unites all Americans beyond political divisions, here is a historic quote by JFK:

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. (JFK)

Visit to the Trentino local wineries by a delegation of the “British Distillers Alliance”

Countess Maria Fede Caproni, favorite daughter of Gianni Caproni, one of the founding fathers of aviation, was a friend of mine. Back in 2003 she asked me if I would escort a group of “Distinguished British Distillers”, who were visiting the Trentino wineries. I reluctantly agreed, thinking that it would be a waste of time; however, when I met the group, I realized immediately that they were “distinguished” with true class. It turned out that I spent three days enjoying their company with very knowledgeable comments on their part. These people were the owners of the most famous distilleries in the U.K., like Grant’s whisky, Johnny Walker, Beefeater gin etc.

The Trentino wineries were all very small, but had high quality, and the English visitors showed respect for their products and family tradition. After a visit to a winery that sold about 30,000 bottles of wine per year, David Grant (Johnny Walker etc.) told the owner, Arrigo, that his company was selling one million bottles. Afterwards, during dinner, I asked David if it was really true that he sold one million bottles. With typical English understatement he told me that he actually sold two million bottles, but he didn’t want Arrigo to feel too bad!

We all had a great time visiting the beautiful countryside and the cities where the mayors received the English delegation. Finally, we had a gala dinner for the last night of their stay.

The atmosphere was very jovial, enhanced by gourmet food and splendid wines served in the proper sequence. During the course of the evening, someone started quoting Winston Churchill. Then, others picked up the opportunity, citing his most famous quotes. Over many years, I had specialized in learning by heart all the quotes I could find by Ben Franklin and Winston Churchill. Specifically, I knew by heart more than 1,000 Churchillian quotes, after reading “The Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill” by James C. Humes. Consequently, every time someone would come up with a quote, I would reply with many others, not so well known. To make a long story short I knew more quotes by Churchill than the whole English group put together.

Here is one of the quotes that was appreciated the most, since everyone was old enough to still remember what happened toward the end of WWII:

Churchill never liked his daughter Sarah’s husband, Vic Oliver, who didn’t strengthen his relationship with Churchill by his habit of referring to him as “Popsy”.

“Popsy” he said, “Who, in your opinion, was the greatest statesman you have ever known?”

“Benito Mussolini”, was the unexpected reply. “What? Why is that, Popsy?” said a surprised Oliver.

“Mussolini is the only statesman”, grumbled Churchill, “who had the requisite courage to have his son-in-law executed.”

At a certain point the trip captain proposed a toast, saying, “Larry, we are surprised that you’re not English”. Knowing how proud the English are, I took it as a great compliment, and am still pleased.

Loss of another very good friend

After Mario’s death I still had two very good friends in Italy. One was Elio Modena, a PhD water works expert who was a history and philosophy fan. How many beautiful, elevated conversations we had together. Although we, occasionally, saw things differently, we always were very tolerant about our respective opinions. The only unresolved issue was one of Goethe’s favorite quote. Elio was convinced that the quote said, “Moment stop, you are beautiful” vs. my versions, which is the right one ☺, “Moment linger, you are beautiful”.

I take this opportunity to mention Elio’s widow, Maria Rosa, as the wisest, full of common-sense person, I have ever known. I make it a point to visit her, occasionally, for sound advice. Her daughter, Sabrina, has become an excellent opera singer, and teacher. Her son, Claudio, is a successful hydraulic engineer connected with projects worldwide. They both have children, who are like a second family to me.

Temporary mental breakdown in April 2005

In April 2005, for some mysterious reasons, I came down with a nervous breakdown. I became unable to even pour a cup of coffee. One evening Carol and I went out to get a pizza, and when the waitress asked me if I’d prefer wine or beer, I started crying, unable to make a choice. At night I had to get up every few minutes to pee. In two weeks, I lost 13 lbs., and was unable to drive the car. A doctor started giving me tranquilizers with the effect that I was seeing the ceiling rotate. I thought I had a bad disease like cancer. Finally, I ended up at the hospital for three days and nights, going through all kinds of tests. My last talk was with an old psychiatrist. While he was asking me questions, he kept looking at the results of the various tests. His conclusion was that I was healthy but stressed out. I asked him: Does the stress depend on me? Surely, he said. I remember getting up from the chair with a smile, thanking him profusely and promising to “de-stress” myself, without medicines. I got dressed, packed my suitcase, called a cab, and just walked out of the hospital, waiving happily to the receptionist, who did not know what to do about my unauthorized dismissal. Before any hospital staff recovered, I was in a taxi that took me home, promising to never allow myself to get stressed again. So far, it has worked very well. If, occasionally, I feel depressed because I see everything dark, I mentally turn on a light and recover immediately. Of course, the scare that I went through and the ineffective or wrongly effective medicines that I was given, are very therapeutic for concentrating on the “Sunny Side of the Street”. BTW, I still enjoy listening to that beautiful song in the various versions.

Summer 2016, Twelve years later

My first draft of “Origin and Essence of the USA” was written in 2004. Of course, many unpredictable changes have occurred in the course of human events. As my mentor Ben Franklin would have said, “Easy to see, difficult to foresee”

The world situation looked so hopeful right after the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1989. Then came 9\11 and the subsequent reaction, which turned everything upside down.

We are now in a global semi-war state emphasized disproportionately by the 24/7 media. The acts of terrorism by a very small minority of fanatics should be considered like traffic accidents. The perpetrators should be sought and eliminated, but life must go on, regardless.

It is my hope that, eventually, through education and internet, women in the whole world reach equal rights, inspired by the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai.

The immortal ideas of the Founding Fathers for a better world for all of humanity will prevail, as long as the United States keeps on following their ideals., which are best illustrated by Franklin's prophetic words.

As a personal contribution, on May 2, 2015, on the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, I arranged an international ceremony for the unveiling of his words forged in bronze on the plaque in front of beautiful Lake Garda, depicted in the picture below:



Adventure at the airport in Napoli

The following May I was back in shape and went with Frank to the Naples commissary to open a small pasta café. However, we found that the Italian unions and other complications would have made it too hard for us to operate, so we decided to close the operation. Knowing how challenging the Neapolitan traffic is, we decided to get to the airport in plenty of time to celebrate our wise decision with a good meal enhanced by excellent wine. I accompanied Frank close to the gate for his flight to London and immersed myself in an engrossing book. Eventually, I realized that my flight to Milano was due to leave in just 25 minutes. Managed to get through security, but it was too late to board the plane. Knowing that, in Naples, there always is flexibility, if you know how to present your case, I asked to talk with the airport manager, who happened to be nearby. We introduced each other. His name was Coppola, which gave me the opportunity of saying that, with such a name, he might be able to perform a “movie trick” to help me out. He called the pilot, saying that he would have personally taken me with his service car right under the plane, but the pilot had already received clearing from the control tower, so the flight took off without me! Mr Coppola told me there was an 8:00 am flight from the same company the following day, which I could take. After thanking him for his incredible cooperation, I asked him if he could recommend a hotel nearby. Well, he replied, if you have patience for about 15 minutes, I would be glad to take you to a hotel across the Terminal, with my service car on the way home. He warned me that, at night, walking the short distance with a suitcase from the Terminal to the hotel would not be recommendable. Mr. Coppola, not only took me to the hotel, but waited in his car until he saw that I had safely entered through the revolving door. The following day I happily got in the rather long line for boarding my flight to Milano. At a certain point, I realized that all I had was Mr. Coppola’s word, so I showed my ticket to a flight attendant who happened to walk nearby. She immediately said that my ticket had expired and was not valid for another flight the following day. OMG, I told her, Mr. Coppola assured me that everything had been verbally arranged by him. Oh, she said, if Mr. Coppola said so, there is no problem; however, I replied, would you mind telling the girl at the counter that Mr. Coppola allowed me to get on the new flight with yesterday’s ticket? She walked in front of the line and indicated me to the ticket girl, who nodded to me. Low and behold, I flew “gratis” from Naples to Milano on Mr. Coppola’s word! When I got home, I sent him a case of Gourmet Italia pasta with a big thank you note. Viva Napoli!

Unfortunately, as I was driving out of the Milan airport, I was distracted and put gasoline into my SUV diesel Mercedes. Fortunately, I realized it right away and did not damage the engine. I just lost three hours and 300 euros for a professional cleaning and fuel replacement.

Missed the flight at the Boston airport because I changed flight at the last minute

What a different treatment I got at one of my trips from Boston to D.C. the following year. After a challenging drive in the snow from Haverhill, MA where I visited a pasta company, I got to the airport in plenty of time, so I asked at the ticket counter if there was an earlier flight available to D.C. There sure was, so I checked in, including my bag, and started going through security. As I got almost through, I was told to get in another line and wait. After a few minutes, I started getting impatient because my flight was due to leave in 35 min and I could see my plane just outside the gate. No one was paying any attention, so I started yelling that I was missing my plane. An armed security guard came there to tell me that they had to do some extra searching, so they very meticulously padded me all over. When I kept complaining that their “special attention” was making me lose my flight with my suitcase already onboard, he warned me that, unless I stopped, he would have called a policeman to arrest me. At that point I relaxed, missed the flight, and went for a beer with an off-duty pilot who was right there. It turned out that, changing the flight at the last minute, had put up a computerized red flag, which indicated me as potentially dangerous. When I finally got to D.C. on my “regular” flight, I found my suitcase abandoned right by the carousel, in spite of security.

To be fair, I want to point out an example of an unknown American girl who really went out of her way to help me at the Dulles airport. In the early 2000s there had been a tremendous snowstorm in the Washington Metro area. The airports closed for three days, so one can imagine the crowds on the normally crowded Dulles terminal. I got there four hours ahead of my planned Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt, but the lines started outside the airport and were inching to the ticket counter as the hours went by. At a certain point I realized I would have never been able to make the flight, so I started yelling, “Italian style”. Some official came there to no avail. All of a sudden, a group of young people, who were together started complaining loudly in my favor, saying that I had been directed to the wrong line. A girl in high heels, who was a passenger, came out of the group. Follow me she said, I used to work at Dulles, and I know short cuts to get to the shortest security line. We walked fast and went up and down stairs for quite a while. Finally, she took me to a place with almost no line. I thanked her profusely, but there was no time for getting her name. Thank you, unknown, generous high heels athlete!! I told the TRA security people that I had flown on purpose from Europe to attend the funeral of my friend, Admiral David Stone, former director of TRA. Now, please, do not make me miss the plane by just going through the usual routine procedures. I must have confused them so much that they allowed me to take my heavy suitcase on the plane along with my hand luggage. Just before takeoff, a kind flight attendant, asked my permission to put the big, heavy suitcase in the hold of the plane.

April 2010: Picture with President Clinton

While at Miami Beach, as member of the Clinton Foundation, I found out that former President Clinton was giving a speech at the Fontainebleau Hotel that I still remembered as the unforgettable setting for the “Gold Finger” movie with James Bond and “Analyze This” with Robert DeNiro. Our son, Mark, had been the interpreter at the Oval Office during an official state visit between President Clinton and the Italian President Scalfaro, a few years earlier. Of course, pictures were taken, but the only good picture involving Mark was not released by the White House because President Clinton had his eyes closed. Getting back to his visit at the Fontainebleau, my invitation, for a \$1,500.00 fee, included a picture with the former president. For another \$1,500.00 I was allowed to take a guest. Made an agreement



Mark as Hillary Clinton's interpreter at the 1984 G-7 in Naples. At first, the American embassy had chosen a staff interpreter who spoke Italian, but when Hillary heard Mark speak English and Italian, she wanted him only as her interpreter the duration of the G-7. At a certain point, the first lady's secretary told Mark, "The first Lady loves you". She asked him to accompany her to visit Gore Vidal at his famous villa "La Rondinaia". Had I been in Mark's place I would have asked for a position at the American Embassy, and proposed Gourmet Italia's pasta at the White House.



Picture with President Clinton at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach in 2010

with one of his secretaries: I will gladly pay \$3,000.00, provided the president keeps both eyes open during the picture. He laughed when I told him, when we met for a few minutes. When I mentioned that Mark had also interpreted for him and the First Lady at the G-7 in Naples, Italy, he immediately said: Yes, that was in 1994. Very impressive, immediate memory! Ever since, the picture of the three of us has been displayed in our home living room over Carol's grandmother's concert piano brought over from Salt Lake City.

Later on, at the G-7 in Canada, Mark, who is also a Canadian citizen, acted as interpreter between members of the Canadian Government and the Italian delegation. During a meeting with John Bercow, one of the longest Speakers of the House of Commons, and the Italian delegation, Speaker Bercow commented: "Magnificent translation".

The fact that Carol spoke English only and I Italian only since their birth, made Mark and Grace "mother tongues" in both languages. Even their hands and facial expressions adapted to the two languages.

An American gourmet skier

Spent the rest of 2010 and 2011 commuting between Miami Beach and Vezzano, with four trips a year to DeCa-Hqs in Ramstein to keep up and introduce new products in the commissaries. However, during the first decade of the new century a series of unexpected difficulties came along. In addition to my partner Marios' death, two other very close friends died too: Mario Costa, former director of the Hotel Solaria, where I enjoyed taking thousands of skiers and food enthusiasts through the cooking courses. BTW, among the many anecdotes, I like to recall the following story that spread throughout the ski area: An American skier stopped at one of the ski lodges on top of the local mountain, asking the waitress for the menu. When she presented it to him, he pointed out that the only dish he was interested in was not in the menu. Well, the waitress asked, "What would you like? Maybe we can special order it for you". Well, he said in his best Italian, "Spaghettoni al dente, aglio, olio & peperoncino accompanied by a flute of Ferrari sparkling wine." The waitress could not believe it. She ran into the kitchen to tell the chef, who came out to ask him where in the world an American had learned about that very typical, strictly Italian dish accompanied by such a sophisticated champagne. Eventually, a little crowd of skiers and ski instructors had gathered around. Well, the American connoisseur said with a grin: "I am attending Larry Pisoni's cooking school at the Hotel Solaria". Everyone had a good laugh followed by several bottles of Ferrari and Pinot Noir to celebrate the new convert". I am fond of recalling this incident because, unfortunately, most Americans know pasta with Alfredo sauce, a very "un-Italian" cholesterol bomb. Another bad example is the story that pasta is ready if you throw it against the wall and it sticks to it.

It reminds me of what my mentor Ben Franklin used to say, "Ill customs and bad advice are seldom forgotten". In fact, pasta made with durum wheat semolina (Gourmet Italia, of course!) will never stick to the wall.

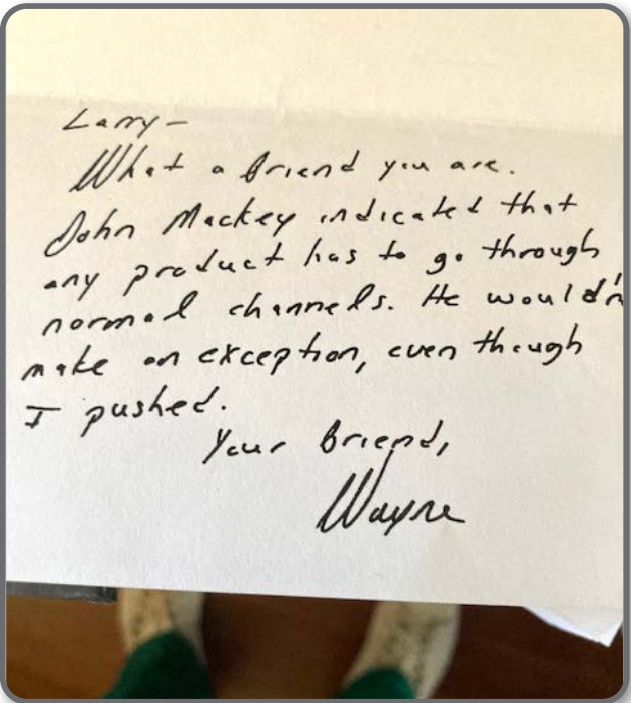
Friendship with Wayne Pacelle and Josh Balk of the Humane Society of the United States

I discovered the Humane Society in the early 2000s. After becoming members, Carol and I had the opportunity of meeting Wayne and sharing his efforts for a better world for animals. We belong to other animal friendly associations, but with Wayne I established a special relationship.

When I found out that he was presenting his first book “The Bond” at Coral Gables, FL I got in the long line to buy it and greet him. While he was busy signing copies, he looked up and saw me: He got up, we embraced each other and then he announced to everyone, “Here is my friend Larry Pisoni, the best supporter of the Humane Society in the U.S. and in the world”.

On the label of my Gourmet Italia products, I found a space to add “We support the HSUS”.

When I found out that the founder of Whole Foods Market, John Mackey, was on the board of the Humane Society, in March 2013 I asked Wayne to introduce me to John for getting my “Tasty, Healthy Eco-friendly products, US-wide into W.F.M. Wayne tried several times and here is what he wrote to me: “John was adamant that he, as the CEO, cannot circumvent the process, because that would undermine his staff”...Unfortunately, I did not have the structure and the monetary strength to go through the process, since it would have taken years to contact and convince the various regional managers. Once again, the difference between a great plan and its execution. Actually, in the early 2000s I did manage to get into eighteen WFM stores for a couple of years in the mid-Atlantic area. They were selling well, but the cost of transportation from Italy, the warehousing and the cost of distribution in the U.S. was making me lose money in the operation. In fact, to be cost effective, one must be able to ship full trucks, while I was shipping pallets or even just cases. If John Mackey had accepted my proposal to go US-wide it would have been cost effective and a great success. Once again, good old Winston, “Success is the ability to go from failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.” B.T.W., a few years later Wayne invited me to a conference held at Torino, Italy, with VIP



Larry -
What a friend you are.
John Mackey indicated that
any product has to go through
normal channels. He wouldn't
make an exception, even though
I pushed.
Your friend,
Wayne

participants worldwide. During breakfast, Wayne invited me to his table, next to his wife, Lisa, and Alan R. Andreasen, Marketing Director at Georgetown University. When I found out that Professor Andreasen had written eleven books on marketing, I commented that my experience would allow me to write a booklet on “What not to do when doing business in the United States”. He was amused and granted that it would be quite interesting.

Pleasurable car trip from Vezzano to Bologna with Prof. Stefano Zamagni

In our little town of Vezzano, a new, large theater was built in the early 2000s. The guest of honor was the distinguished Professor Stefano Zamagni, President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Oxford and Bologna University student, and teacher. I was very impressed by his illuminated speech projected on humane capitalism, stake-holders vs shareholders and Conscious Capitalism, which is the new trend for humankind and the environment. Not being shy anymore, at the end of the speech I introduced myself. When I found out that he was going to take a taxi to go to Bologna, I offered the services of my comfortable 400h Hybrid Lexus. He happily accepted and we talked a mile a minute for the 250 km trip that we covered in less than two hours, thanks to light traffic. It's amazing how much one can absorb from a free for all conversation with a brilliant mind. He expressed admiration when he learned that I was operating six pasta cafés in US military bases in Germany and one in the UK. When I told him that I was in attacked by the German government for taxes that I was paying in the U.S., he assured me that it would be easily solved with a good lawyer. Unfortunately, it did not turn out well, as illustrated in the next chapter; however, that's not the reason why I'm recalling my trip and subsequent correspondence with Professor Zamagni. During the course of the conversation, he told me that, in Italy, there was a great difference between the abilities and maturity of girls vs boys, as students and, later on, in the work activities. He said that there is no match for the poor boys, who are systematically outsmarted by the girls. Fortunately, for the boys, the girls fall in love and are happy to settle with an inferior animal. However, the situation is apt to create envy on the part of the husbands. Hard to understand for me, who is very proud to have married a beautiful, smart and well-educated woman. During the trip I mentioned that I wrote a summary of “The Origin and Essence of the United States of American”, receiving congrats from Dr. Condoleezza Rice. After I sent him the essay in English, here is what Prof. Zamagni wrote: “I read your essay with great interest. Congrats for the content and the style. It's difficult to find a more elegant and clear prose than yours. Why don't you publish it?”

Well, encouraged by such a bigwig, I'll give it a try!

September 19, 2010: Gourmet Italia Pasta Cafés “Kaputt”

A few years after we opened the first pasta café at Ramstein, we had the unpleasant visit of some German tax officials who started asking tax questions to our personnel. Fortunately, we knew our Robin Hood in the person of Gerhard von Gerichten, a German businessman, who had studied law at Stanford University. He immediately took up our case, ready to fight the German Government single-handed. I will spare the technicalities. In essence, the German tax officials wanted Gourmet Italia to pay taxes in Germany instead of in the U.S. Our case was unique: We were inside American military installations, where only American or NATO members were allowed to enter. Taxes must be paid to whomever is able to perform some type of service. In our case all the utilities were paid by the American taxpayer. Therefore, Gourmet Italia, Inc. as an American company operating inside American military installations, where Germans were not even allowed to enter, should pay income taxes to the U.S. Government only, as we did from day one. Through Mr. VonGerichten we were able to work out a system that allowed us to pay our employees through a German bank whereby they paid their personal income in Germany, so, we thought, things were working out to everyone's satisfaction. In fact, at the Lakenheath AFB in the U.K. where we had a Pasta Café since 2005, there was no interference whatsoever from the British authorities.

We were serving about 450 meals per day to everyone's satisfaction. Prices were low because our expenses were limited to personnel and food only, since the utilities were paid by Uncle Sam. Quality was high because we were using Gourmet Italia products, with no compromise, ever. In fact, the pasta had to always be “AL DENTE”. If a customer complained that it was not cooked enough, we would refund him the money, but refused to serve “over-cooked, mushy pasta”, explaining that if pasta is not al dente it cannot be called an Italian pasta meal. That way we selected our customers, who appreciated our missionary approach. Our only regret was not to be allowed to serve at least a glass of good wine, as a basic ingredient to enhance each meal.

Our General Manager, Frank W. Amato, was skillfully able to supervise seven pasta cafés located in six different German location plus the one in the U.K. We had a great formula: At the end of every day, each manager gave the gross income to the commissary. At the end of each week, the total income was sent to a Bank of America branch in the U.S. where Gourmet Italia had an account. We kept an agreed upon percentage and gave the rest to each manager, who used it to pay for food and employees. Voilà!

However, after 13 and ½ years of flawless operations at the rate of about 450 meals per day, the German tax system was able to get a German court order to garnish Gourmet Italia's income generated by the Pasta Cafés. Since DeCa did not want to get into a political conflict with the German judicial system it stopped payments to Gourmet Italia, immediately. Consequently, I had to close all the activities, letting all the personnel go (about 50 people). I could have fought it in the American courts, but I was left by myself.

The normal procedure required Gourmet Italia to turn over to DeCa the gross income received at the end of every day. Then, at the end of each week, DeCa would send the total sums to Gourmet Italia's account in the U.S. A sort of amusing episode occurred after DeCa issued orders to their accounting department in the U.S. to stop wiring funds to Gourmet Italia. Some good soul interpreted the message literally. Consequently, they substituted wires with checks, so Gourmet Italia received over \$100,000.00 of back-payments that should have gone to the German government. Unfortunately, after a couple of months, Gourmet Italia got a threatening letter intimating that it owed \$100,000.00 to the Government of the United States of America. Having the German government and the America government against Gourmet Italia, Inc. I decided to capitulate and returned the money to the U.S. What really disturbed me was the fact it was immediately turned over to the German tax system according to the so called "SOFA" (Status of Forces Agreement). BTW, the acronym is very apropos, since the "SOFA" is used by the Germans to comfortably screw the American companies and taxpayers.

Fortunately, in February 2010, fearing that Gourmet Italia, Inc would lose its fight against the German tax system, I had my business life-saving idea of splitting Gourmet Italia, Inc. in two companies: Gourmet Italia Pasta Café, Inc. for the restaurants, and a new company called Gourmet Italia-USA, Inc. for the food products on the shelves and in the freezers. Operation survival: It worked. Consequently, my "new" company was allowed to continue the operations and the customers kept on getting Whole Foods Market quality products at commissary prices.

Happy ending with an IRS investigation

Having three companies (Gourmet Italia, Inc; Gourmet Italia-USA, Inc and M2CanDo, LLC, in addition to my personal tax situation involving residences in the U.S and Italy, prompted the IRS to scrutinize the whole situation. One of their agents spent a week at Hetrick's Accounting office, which was handling my personal and corporate accounts, to try to figure out what was going on. At a certain point I decided to write a letter to the IRS, trying to explain my "odd" situation. I wrote that my company lost the law suit with the German tax office, and was trying to survive in three tax systems (U.S., Germany and Italy) plus the U.S. military to whom I had been serving excellent meals in my six pasta cafés. I explained that I had been paying both personal and corporate taxes to the U.S. only; however, not being able to afford international lawyers, I survived by just using honest common sense. The German tax system made my Gourmet Italia, Inc close-down the pasta cafés in Europe, claiming German back-taxes. Afraid that the Germans would attack my company in the U.S. I decided to take \$90,000.00 out of the Gourmet Italia account, and deposit it onto my personal account. Well, honesty and common sense paid off. The IRS wrote that they understood the situation. Consequently, they decided to tax me only on \$40,000.00 out of the \$90,000.00, explaining that I had made a good move to offset the damage done to me by the German tax system. Thank you, Uncle Sam!

In the spring of 2011, I got an e-mail from Erica, a young, self-taught sommelier, restaurant manager, who, while working full time, managed to get a University of Trento degree in psychology. She wrote that the story with her chef-boyfriend had finished, and she was looking for new challenges in America. I needed an enthusiastic young, capable person, who would bring new blood into the system. My children were engaged in other fields and Carol had never been interested in business. Erica was like a rough diamond, eager to learn. In June 2012 we formed a new company called M2CanDo, LLC, i.e., Mentor & Muse (M2), Can Do! Fixed an appointment at the “mission impossible” Ft. Lee, DeCa’s HQs. As we were driving from D.C to Ft. Lee, route #295 south east of Richmond was pretty empty and inviting with sunny weather and perfect visibility. I was driving along at a relaxed 80 mi. p/hour, when I saw flashing lights and a siren behind me. I got pulled over by a local sheriff, who told me that the fine was \$800.00 plus points on my driver’s license for “reckless driving” and a possible night in jail. Since I had a similar experience a few years earlier (\$80.00), but no points, I pulled out my European driver license, respectfully informing the officer that I was used to drive at that speed on the European Autobahns and Autostrade. I was in perfect control with a good car, excellent visibility on a beautifully paved Virginia superhighway. The fact that the sheriff had spent time as a GI in Germany, along with my Italian accent must have helped. He asked me how long I was staying in Virginia. I told him I was visiting for three days. Well, he said: “Enjoy Virginia”. Thank you, Sheriff, I commented, and left with a wave and a respectful smile. When I tell this story to my American friends, they have trouble believing me, although it’s the absolute truth.

January 2015:

In January 2015 there was a ceremony organized in honor of the crew of the B-25 “Sad Sack” that was downed by the Nazi flak on January 4, 1945. The pilot Lt. Robert G. MacPherson died in the crash, together with the co-pilot Lt. Nolan D. Pickett to give the other crew members time to bail out of the plane. Only two of the members of the crew managed to survive. They were captured, brought to a concentration camp in Germany and safely returned to America after the war. A day after the accident, two young sisters, Renata and Agnese Toccoli, while visiting the site of the crash noticed a body with a gold bracelet on his wrist. The inscription was dedicated to Robert MacPherson. They immediately took it home to their parents who gave it to a priest, who managed to return it to Robert’s family through the Red Cross. The family had already lost a son in the war. The ceremony on Jan. 4, 2015 was attended by members of Lt. MacPherson’s descendants and a good number of Italian civilians along with American & Italian military authorities.

May 2, 2015: Thank you America and Allies ceremony in Torbole on Lake Garda

After the success of the “Thank you, America” ceremony in 1995, over the following years I had been thinking of keeping the gratefulness active. We did it with the excellent collaboration provided by the Italian authorities in 2002 during the visit by a group of the

Smithsonian Institute, as per the enclosed flyer and pictures. A few years later, during a pleasant dinner with eight friends in October 2014, I came up with the idea of a bronze plaque with the sublime words written by Ben Franklin, just after signing the Constitution:

“God grant that not only the love of liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say, ‘This is my country’.”

I thought that the best place would be in Torbole, right in front of the beautiful and historical Lake Garda, celebrated in poems and battles since the ancient Romans.

Confident of the experience gained with the first ceremony, I thought that the second one would be much easier. Well, was I in for many surprises! The contacts I had twenty years before had disappeared and the political situation in Italy had changed dramatically.

Fortunately, we were able to get the support by Mr. Maurizio Pinamonti, President of the Alpini Association of the Trentino Province, that had 23,000,000 active members. Unfortunately, out of the initial magnificent eight, four pulled out for various reasons, after a couple of months.

Then, during the course of the various conferences, it turned out that the president of the Torbole chapter of the Alpini association, was strongly against the project. I never understood the real reason, but the obstacle was almost unsurmountable, since, for the Alpini association, the local chapters had the exclusive right to accept or reject whatever was proposed. Very fortunately, Giuliano Rosà, one of the Alpini, recommended that we involve a very respected authority:

Retired, two-star Alpini General Natalino Vivaldi, who had emerged as a charismatic leader, both in the military and the civilian world.

I immediately set up an appointment with him: Meeting of the minds. In fact, we have been friends ever since. We were both Trentini, who had graduated from Liceo Classico. General Vivaldi had the authority and the contacts to be able to act as “Deus ex machina”, for the entire operation, and he did.

The date of May 2nd was set because seventy years before, exactly at 2:00 pm of May 2, 1945, at Torbole, was the date of the unconditional surrender of the Nazi-Fascists forces in Italy: What a fateful coincidence!

The American Forces, especially USAFE in Aviano, were enthused about the project and even got permission for a flyover by four American F-16s from the Secretary of the Air-Force. The flyover turned out to be impossible because the Trentino government did not allow any low flights by military jets after the tragedy of Cermis in 1998.

On the Italian side, the Provincial authorities, the Alpini band, a mountain choir and hundreds of veterans participated along with the local population and tourists. On the American side we had an Honor Guard and the paratroopers stationed in Vicenza. Aviano sent a top delegation too, although the flyover did not materialize.

The sunny day contributed to the success. A short summary can be seen on our web site www.gourmet-italia.com

I plan to contact the new Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, who, in my opinion, re-

presents the very best in American diplomacy. It would be a befitting legacy to Benjamin Franklin, if his immortal words emblazoned on my plaque would be displayed in the lobbies of the Department of State and all the American Embassies and Consulates worldwide.

Connection between the Universities of Tampa and Trento

From the balcony of my apartment in Tampa I often looked wistfully at the beautiful, historical building of the University of Tampa, located across the Hillsborough river. The environment and the air of culture used to intrigue me while deambulating along the campus. I was especially attracted by a new building dedicated to the spirit of business, with facilitated inspiration. While attending a conference by Dr. Rebecca White, Professor of Entrepreneurship, and Dr. Kevin Moore, Director of Operations, I proposed a project about the possibilities of gathering venture capital for my food operation in the U.S. Both Dr. White and Dr. Moore proposed to involve four of their graduate students in the project. All of us had fun in frequenting the “Thinking Loft” on the top floor of “Entrepreneurship Building”, analyzing the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of our project. After a couple of months, we competed with other projects in the “Pitch Room” and were proud to receive the best grade from Dr. White. Unfortunately, nothing concrete materialized; however, the four graduate students got top grades on the project.

After that experience at the University of Tampa, I got the idea of connecting it with the University of Trento in Italy, which is considered one of the best in Italy. I thought it would be a fantastic international experience for both the American and the Italian students. Consequently, I managed to fix an appointment with Dr. Paolo Collini, the Rector of the University of Trento. We worked out the details and set up an appointment in Tampa between the top representatives of both universities, on March 2nd, 2017. Although the meeting went very well, the project did not materialize.



In front of the University of Tampa for a “tentative” proposal of academic twinship with the University of Trento. From left, Erica, Larry, Dr. Yvonne Franco, Dr. Roberto Napoli, and PhD from Harvard U.

March 2017: Italian solidarity along with American friendly flexibility

The reason why I am telling the following story is to illustrate the typically Italian characteristic of coming up with the best virtues when there is a real personal need, which reminds me of what Stendhal used to say: “In no country in the world, the plant man grows stronger than in Italy”.

Among the many mistakes I made, in November 2016 I delivered a container of Gourmet Italia products (about \$60,000.00) to Tampa, FL. Two years before I did the same thing, but the warehouse we found turned out to lack cleanliness, so we had to throw away most of the pasta. Luckily, we were able to find a strange operator who was willing to purchase the pasta by paying 10 cents on the dollar. Of course, I accepted the deal, losing \$54,000.00 instead of \$60,000.00.

This time the warehouse was impeccable with perfect climate control and cleanliness. However, somehow, selling the products was a very slow, costly process due to small orders. The military market, where I knew how to move, was not allowed to buy it because of Title 10, i.e., DeCa-USA cannot purchase products that are not substantially present in the American civilian market. Therefore, I offered them to DeCa-Europe that purchased them. Unfortunately, they were loaded so carelessly that, when they arrived at the U.S. Depot in Germersheim (Germany) several jars and bottles were broken, spilling tomato sauce and olive oil on other merchandise. As shown in the attached picture the U.S. Government rightly refused to accept the container, Consequently, I had two choices: Either pick everything up or have the Government “salvage”, i.e., destroy the whole shipment (\$53,000.00), charging me for the operation.

I was in Tampa, a continent away. The agency that organized the transportation told me that the insurance would not pay anything since the container was packed carelessly. Besides, the transportation was done by truck from Florida to New Jersey, where the products were reloaded on a container ship that transported them to Bremerhaven (Germany) and then up the Rhine river into the U.S. Depot at Germersheim.

While in Florida, I contacted my Italian suppliers, families with a long tradition of hard work and pride in their products. They unanimously reassured me that they would replace and repackage everything at no cost to me, if I just delivered the long-travelled merchandise to their factories. I immediately sent a driver with an empty truck to pick up the pieces. Flexibility and kindness by key people in the American and German system allowed the empty truck to enter into the U.S. Depot to be loaded with the damaged and undamaged Gourmet Italia products, which were returned to their respective points of origins in Italy, a year after I originally sent them to the States. Somehow, the merchandise was allowed to travel without going through the usual customs procedures!

Low and behold, after just a week, a truck with brand new Gourmet Italia merchandise entered triumphantly into the US Depot at Germersheim delivering \$83,000.00 worth of Gourmet Italia products vs. the \$53,000.00 that was rejected the week before. ☺

Splendid cooperation with the US Depot at Germersheim – Germany

As already mentioned, all our merchandise was to be sent to the US Depot at Germersheim. This base is the starting point for all logistical support in continental Europe, the U.K., Turkey, the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and the American diplomatic missions in those countries. The base was created right after the end of WWII for receiving equipment and supplies in support of the US Forces-Europe. The place is huge, and one needs a map to get around, even nowadays, since the GPSs are blocked by the military. Since I was new at everything, it took me a while to figure out how the system worked. First the DeCA buyer had to approve the purchases, which then went to the contracting office that issued a call number, which was faxed to the American Embassy in Rome. The Embassy issued a green form (F-301) which authorized the sealed merchandise to travel tax free through the various countries into the Germersheim depot. After the shipment had entered into the US Depot, my Gourmet Italia, Inc was authorized to issue an invoice to the DeCa accounting department, which paid within thirty days, after delivery. The system was very well organized, but I had to arrange for the production by the various suppliers, establish a central gathering point and, from there, ship by truck the exact number of units, cases and pallets ordered, which had to correspond, exactly, to what was written on the customs form #301. Occasionally, the coordination among the various suppliers was quite a challenge, since everyone had his own production plan. They had to stop production of their own lines in order to insert my Gourmet Italia labels which, occasionally, demanded different specs, since I demanded “quality with no compromise.”

Fortunately, all my suppliers were family producers who had flexibility and understood the unexpected complications.

The inconvenience was alleviated by the fact that I demanded quality, but I never questioned their prices and always paid on time. Occasionally, I would even pay immediately upon production, since I knew that DeCA’s check would come in within 30 days. Through the years I became friends with all of them, which made work a pleasing activity. I also had a lot of satisfaction from the military families, who were not accustomed to such good quality.

After the tragedy of 9/11/2001, getting the trucks into the US Depot became much more complicated. We had to give a two-day advance notice on the name, nationality, passport number of the driver plus tag number of both truck and trailer. In addition, drivers from some of the “suspicious” countries were not allowed to enter into the compound.

When the truck was not full with just our merchandise, the shipping companies would move them from one truck to another, with different drivers, to make the shipment more cost effective for them. Therefore, more often than we expected, we had to beg the well-organized people at Germersheim to use “flexibility” to allow us to deliver our products. I’m sure that, through the years, although I was always doing my best, Gourmet Italia and my name came up way too frequently.

When I described the successful solution for the damaged Gourmet Italia merchandise that was replaced, I did not mention another, almost impossible problem that had to be solved. When the container arrived at the German warehouse at Bremerhaven, the German custom authorities noticed that we had several pallets of precious Acacia honey among

pasta, olive oil and tomato jars. According to German law, honey coming from outside the European Union needed a certificate from the country where it was produced. Unfortunately, there was no way for Gourmet Italia to produce such certificate, since the Italian Acacia Honey had already produced such document to be allowed entrance into the U.S., the year before. Although the honey had been produced in Italy, a member of United Europe, and kept in sealed pallets in an American warehouse, the shipment was coming from the U.S. A real Catch 22 mess.

To add insult to injury, the German customs authorities gave us two-week time to produce the impossible original document, before “salvaging” the whole container, although the container of 26 pallets was carrying only two pallets of honey.

The German harbor broker, who was handling the situation at Bremerhaven was not too cooperative. I called him several times and finally offered him a case of our best champagne to soften him up; however, the German customs officers were adamant. Fortunately, two angels from Germersheim came to solve the problem: Mr. Bradley Fletcher, transportation officer, and Ms. Beatrix Rohrbacher, the customs officer. After many phone calls, going all the way up to the head of the German customs at Bremerhaven, they found the solution. If Gourmet Italia were able to produce an order from the U.S. Government that the container with the honey was going to travel in a sealed truck, directly into the US Depot, the German authorities would make an exception and let it go over the German motherland. Fortunately, we had such a document, so our “beat up” container was able to triumphantly enter into American territory. Thank you, again and again, Bradley and Beatrix. After a few months, Mr. Bradley retired, but I’m happy to be able to continue our collaboration with Beatrix, whom I call whenever there are “problematic situations.”

The last episode occurred during on March 16th, 2021. The delivery order was just for eight pallets, but a new officer at Germersheim informed us that the depot was overwhelmed, and not able to accept anything until the following day, March 17th. Unfortunately, the shipping company had already planned delivery on the 16th, with the name of the driver plus tag number for truck and trailer. Since Beatrix works part-time, only in the morning, I called Mr. Mike Groh, the director of the transportation office, whom I did not know. After I explained that a change of the delivery date for just eight pallets would have involved a change of driver and truck, plus a delay of a couple of day, he graciously told me that he would be glad to make an exception. Somehow, the guards at the gate, who are notoriously inflexible, had not passed Mr. Groh’s order to the next shift. Consequently, the shipping company called my partner Erica in Miami at 3:00 with the problem. Erica called me, since I was operating from Italy, so I contacted Mike with the problem. Somehow, the guards kept preventing the truck driver from entering because that delivery was scheduled for the 17th. After phone calls between Germersheim, the company in Italy, me, and the driver, Mike decided to get in his car and drive to the gate to allow the driver and the truck to enter. Unfortunately, the driver had left and could not be found. Finally, thanks to everyone’s collaboration, the eight pallets managed to be delivered. Thank you, Mike, for really going out of your way. As the Germans say it best in a concise way, “Ende gut, alles gut”.

Whenever the DeCa buyer issued a call number, i.e. an order for our merchandise, the procedure required the approval of the contracting office. It was run perfectly by Ms. Petra Pulze. Unfortunately, Gourmet Italia often came up short due to its complicated operation described before. Occasionally, small is beautiful, but it also has its downsize. For instance,

when I started in 1994 the Felicetti pasta factory was a small company, happy to halt their production, clean their dies and insert the special semolina and films for Gourmet Italia. Now they're a large company and stopping the operation is not cost effective for them. Fortunately, the family has ethics and gratitude toward me, so we're looking forward to celebrating thirty-one years of partnership on Thanksgiving 2021.

Getting back to the Contracting Office, run by Ms. Pulze, I want to thank her for her understanding and flexibility. We even share love for animals, especially dogs. Hers is Linus and mine was Duke, both Labradors. As she once said to me "we are a special breed.". I also want to thank her right-hand collaborator, Dieter Dollwett, for understanding our shortcomings in delivering exactly what was ordered.

April 4, 2017: Tragedy in our family

While in Tampa, at 4:00 am I got a call from Carol at our home in Italy: Our daughter Grace had taken her life. She had been very ill for years, even unable to sleep. I managed to scramble a flight from Tampa to Venice, just in time for the funeral. The Church was packed, which showed us the affection of the local people who alleviated our tragedy. We buried Grace's ashes at the family monumental tombstone, which my great-grandfather had built in nearby Calavino, under the shade of two gigantic cypresses, as customary in ancient Rome.

The loss and the pain are still too hard to go into details. As Rose Kennedy wrote in her autobiography, time puts a scar over the wound, so life can go on; however, the wound



Grace and her horse

remains forever. Grace had all the gifts: Intelligence, beauty, talent, and culture. She went through two marriages and a career as a model and actress on Italian T.V.

Halfway through her senior high school year in Trento, Italy, she decided to return to Bethesda, MD, to live with her grandmother, and attend High School in the U.S. She enrolled in January at Walt Whitman High School and had excellent grades during the whole semester. Unfortunately, the rules did not allow her to take the final exams since she lacked the attendance of the compulsory three years of American history. Fortunately, I found out that a private, correspondence school would have given her the possibility of taking the tests for an American High School Diploma. During an appointment with the Principal, Dr. Jerry Marco, I asked for his opinion. He said: "Grace enrolled at our school during the second semester, after attending school in Italy, and you expect her to graduate by studying just for five months"? Yes, I do, I replied! Dr. Marco looked at her grades, smiled, and said, "I'll allow her to try to take the finals together with her classmates." Lo and Behold, Grace managed to graduate!

In 2004, I found out that the Walt Whitman High School Stadium had been named in honor of Principal Jerry Marco.

My considerations after driving internationally for sixty-nine years

Had my first driver's license at age 18 in 1955. Now I'm 88 years old. Therefore, I have been driving for 70 years at an average rate of about 38,000 km per year, which makes it a total of about 2.6 million kms (1.6 million miles).

Driving experiences in Italy, Germany and the U.S (OH; MD; D.C.;VA; FL) from 1955 to 2025 and, hopefully, more...

I would like to summarize my driving experiences in the three countries, with the hope that it might help less experienced drivers.

In Italy there are traffic rules, but they are applied with Italian flexibility. In the North we are more disciplined, while the south is wilder. Most Italian male drivers consider themselves "pilots" and behave accordingly. The tendency is to tailgate, mostly because one needs to be very close and quick to pass on winding roads before the curve arrives. You must have grown up in Italy to master that technique. Unfortunately, Italians tend to tailgate on the Autostrada too, where it can be annoying and dangerous for everyone. However, in the last few years, traffic has become so intense that the art of overtaking, "Il Sorpasso", can be performed only occasionally.

Germans driving the "Autobahn" are predictable and professional. Where signs do not indicate a speed limit, one can drive as fast as he wants, according to his driving ability, road conditions and the type of car he has. However, there is a strict "unofficial" hierarchy. The left lanes are for passing. If someone, with a more powerful car comes along, he usually gives you the opportunity to move over, as soon as you can. If you don't, it's not going to be pleasant. Here is a personal experience: I was cruising along at about 160 km p/hr, with my Mercedes SUV, when I saw in my rearview mirror a fast-approaching Porsche, whose driver slowed down at a safe distance when he saw that traffic did not allow me to move over. As soon as traffic allowed it, I moved over, and he zipped by at about 250 km/per hour. I call that "modern chivalry". If one does not respect the proper distance, the road cameras figure out the min. distance, according to the speed, and one will get a fine and even a revoked license.

In the States, I find driving boring and tiring. The constant speed can be very distracting. One has to concentrate on his lane, often flanked by trucks that drive at the same speed as cars. Road rage must be avoided at all costs, considering the strong possibility of armed drivers. In fact, I remember a specific incident, while I was driving at night between Jacksonville and Tampa in December 2018. My navigator indicated a traffic jam on the interstate and suggested an alternative route on small local road. There was almost no traffic except a car with his high beams that was close behind me and made driving quite annoying. I stuck my left hand out of the window, signaling to lower his lights, but the car kept following

me with his high beams on. Finally, I moved over to let the car pass and give the driver a taste of his own medicine: I turned on all the high beams, including the fog lights, I had on my beautiful brand-new Porsche Cayenne Hybrid. After less than a few seconds the driver stopped his car a bit sideways in the middle of the two-lane road, making it very difficult for me to pass. I was tired because I had already driven from Tampa to Jacksonville and back on the same day to see some friends. Also, my car was brand new, and I did not have the confidence of engaging in some sort of dangerous challenge for nothing. I decided to lower the lights and just wait in my car without doing anything. Unfortunately, no other cars were on the road, and I was debating on what to do. Obviously, the driver was spoiling for some sort of confrontation. I was afraid that the driver might be armed, waiting inside the car. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, the driver decided to start moving slowly toward the approaching ramp to the interstate. As he got at the beginning of the entrance lane, he stopped the car, again in the middle. I cautiously stopped and waited, hoping that some other car might come. Finally, the driver gunned his souped-up car with a lot of noise and disappeared at high speed on the interstate. The driver was probably some sort of red-neck punk who wanted to drag a Porsche, but who knows. In any case, in the future I will surely let anyone with high beam pass me without any type of retaliation.

Generally speaking, American drivers are more polite, especially in local, city traffic, although old ladies might not slow down when you're trying to edge into traffic. In fact, I was surprised at how impatient old people were when driving around Naples, FL.

One of the most dangerous areas is the saturated Washington Beltway. Sunshine, rain or snow, the speed remains about the same. In a snow situation, it's very scary because one is at the mercy of too many drivers who don't know how to drive on snow or ice, as they do in Pittsburgh or Chicago. Btw, here is a wise piece of advice by Pittsburgh drivers: "It's not difficult to drive on snow or ice, but it's difficult when you have to stop".

In essence, the ancient Roman proverb should be always applied, "When in Rome live according to the Roman custom", i.e., "go with the flow" as we say in the States.

More lifesaving miracles that I remember

During one of my umpteenth trips to Germany in the late nineties, I was driving toward Munich on my recently bought Mercedes SUV Diesel: a great "all terrain" car, but not built for the Autobahn. The comfortable Autobahn speed for that car was about 140 km p/hr, while my usual comfortable speed with my other cars was about 160 km p/hr. I was getting bored, driving in the middle lane instead of the faster left lane, thinking of the time I was losing. Then, I noticed a bunch of sirens and lights by police cars whizzing by on the opposite direction. While I was distractingly looking at them, a car whizzed by me going in the opposite direction, a "ghost driver" as they call them in Germany. If I had been in my usually passing lane there would have been a head-on collision and nobody would be reading these lines! As soon as I realized the deathly danger that passed by me, I stopped under shock for a good thirty minutes in a parking area before I regained the confidence to drive on.

Another miracle happened while I was riding my bicycle in Miami in May 2011. I was pedaling north on the west sidewalk of US #1, with the idea of crossing the road (going east toward Miami-Beach) at the light. While I was pedaling, approaching the intersection, the green light for bicycles went on. My guardian angel advised me to hesitate instead of crossing the intersection, in spite of the green light for bikes. As I was wondering why I was hesitating, a pick-up truck driving north at high speed, went through the red light and turned left with screeching tires, in front of incoming south-going traffic. Had I crossed the road with the green light I would have been “dead right”. Another miracle!

Nov. 28, 2017

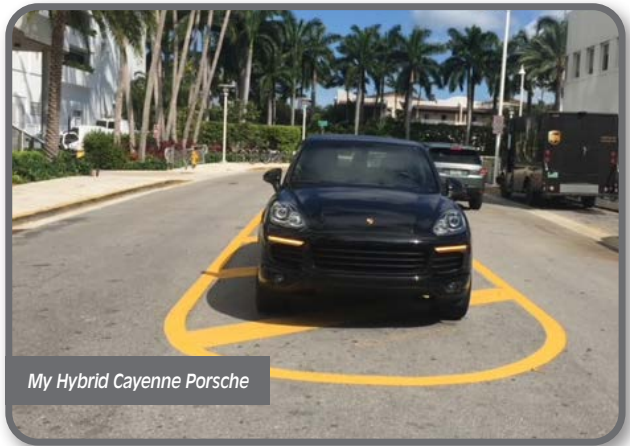
On November 27, 2017, it was my 80th birthday, which I celebrated in style, inspired by my business partner, Erica. I would have just had a bottle of my favorite “Ferrari sparkling” with a friend or two in the evening. Instead, she gave me a gift of Dom Perignon, which we had at breakfast, followed by Ferrari in the Jacuzzi with Yulia, one of her girlfriends. Then I did my usual 20 breaststroke laps plus 8 more with the butterfly style, which I love the most, although I have to do them in three installments.

Then we three went to the Opal Hotel in Clearwater for a long lunch, enjoyed by good wine. I had brought a couple of bottles of Ferraris in case they did not have it. In fact, they did not, so I got the idea of selling the Ferrari brand to the Opal. Will go back next week to see if they picked it up. Had the idea of representing the unique Ferrari wines in the military, so I sent the proposal to my friends Gino and Matteo Lunelli, owners of the century old brand.

May 2018 at Ft Lee, VA

Mini Cannonball run from Ft. Lee, VA to Tampa, FL (841mi at 64 mi p/hr average speed)

After months of trying, we finally got an appointment to sell our organic frozen pizzas US-wide through Mr. Taylor, DeCa “Frozen buyer” at DeCa’s Hqs. at Ft. Lee, VA. He was very direct and figure oriented. As a former USAF officer, we liked each other immediately. He wanted to buy the pizzas, but the national statistics showed that the Monteli brand, which we represented, often practiced a promotional 30% discount that was lower than my price offered to DeCa. Regretfully, Mr. Taylor was unable to purchase the pizzas, so I made another useless trip to Ft. Lee.



My Hybrid Cayenne Porsche

The only satisfaction I had was my new Cayenne Porsche Hybrid. On the way back to Tampa (841mi), at the beginning I was driving paying close attention to the speed limits; however, going through the different States, I was often passed by local-plated fast cars that were traveling in groups. Figuring that they knew where the speed traps were, I adjusted my speed, accordingly, figuring that the cops would have not picked up a group of five-six cars traveling 85-90 mph instead of 60-65. Well, by the time I arrived at Tampa, my average speed was 64 mph, as per the attached picture.



Kiosk adjacent to the front desk of the Tampa Airport Marriott Hotel

In the spring of 2016, a good acquaintance of mine called me at Tampa, from Italy, to recommend a Russian lady, originally from Siberia, by the name of Kristina. Her marriage to an Italian diplomat was not working out, and she wanted to start a new life in the United States, where she knew nobody. Amazing how some people have the courage to plunge into the unknown, with no knowledge whatsoever about anything, language included. Well, I thought, when I decided to study in the States, I made an emotional decision too, so I was

determined to help her. The first obstacle was getting a visa for her. In order to get one, Kristina needed to start a business operation by depositing about \$100,000.00 into an American bank. Somehow, we managed to do it, by my co-signing her bank account, since she had no Social Security or any other acceptable document. Kristina needed a car too. Having grown up in the former Soviet Union, there were two things that she desired since she was a young girl: An American Jeep and blue jeans, which were both forbidden. For the latter there was no problem, but for the Jeep there was, since she had no Social Security or an American driver's license. Even though she would have been willing and able to pay the whole amount in cash, we spent the whole day at the Jeep dealer, trying to find a solution. Finally, by my personally guarantying the operation, the dealer found a solution. The next step involved finding a business operation. By chance, I found out that the Marriott Hotel at the Tampa airport had spaces available for rental along the wide corridor leading from the terminal into the hotel.

I immediately contacted the financial manager of the operation, Ms. Di Persaud-Smayda, a very fine lady known as Ms. D. I told her that my wife's mother had attended the University of Utah and was a friend with the founder, John Willard Marriott and his soon to be wife Ms. Alice Sheets. Ms. D. was delighted to hear the story and would have liked me to narrate it to Willard's son, Bill, who was visiting the Airport Marriott. Unfortunately, he had just left in the morning before I got there. Well, Ms. D. must have been impressed by the story, and we hit it off wonderfully. She charged just a nominal fee for the space occupied by a chocolate kiosk that the Russian lady had specifically built for the operation. In spite of what we thought was an excellent location, very few people would stop on the way to or from the planes, although they passed right in front of the beautiful kiosk. Consequently, after, less than fifty days, she lost hope and quit the operation. Ms. D. was very kind not to charge me for the year-long rent. Instead, she found a divorced American guy who "adopted" her, so she got to live in the States in an easier way. Being an attractive female opens a lot of doors.

At the end of the story, my "Russian Connection" was a waste of time: Another project that did not work out; however, I had the satisfaction of having closed a contract with the huge and very reputable Marriott corporation. On March 29th, 2021, on Mr. William Marriott 89th birthday, I was delighted to receive a message from Ms. D., who thought of me and our whole story. Cheers!



Men and melons are hard to know

Life and people are so unpredictable. Last summer I composed and sent a handwritten letter to Matteo Lunelli, the CEO of the Ferrari Sparkling wine. By chance I saw his picture in the local paper online, explaining that he had just been chosen to lead the company on a worldwide campaign. Matteo's face looked like the exact copy of his father, Giorgio, whom I met for only a few minutes during the semifinals and final track races for the Provincial championship way back in 1956. He was running for Liceo Scientifico and I for Liceo Classico. Normally one does not say much during those tense moments before the race. However, somehow, we started talking and really liked each other. He was gentle and unassuming. However, when the race started, he came off the blocks with great speed and won the race. I ended up a more modest third, but we congratulated each other and talked for a few minutes. I never saw him again, except in the "reincarnation" of the picture of his son sixty-one years later.

His response was very touching, and we are looking forward to meeting each other, for the first time, when I return to Italy at the end of December. I found out that their fantastic Ferrari Sparkling Wine that had won the 2017 best sparkling wine in the world was not present in the American military market that I know so well. I will propose to represent it and we're going to talk about that possibility right after the Christmas vacation.

Nov. 30: Coalition Night at MacDill AFB: It consists of 48 countries with more than 300 military personnel, their families and children living in Tampa. Every country sets up its own stand in Hangar #1 and cooks its typical food in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. What a beautiful change to see the Japanese, Germans, Italians, and the American military fraternize after what happened in WWII. Even Sweden was there, although it's not in NATO. Of course, everyone speaks English, so one can talk and move from country to country as if the hangar were a village.

The Italian stand, along with the food and wine, was sporting a Ferrari and a Ducati, two symbols of Italian excellence. As I was admiring them, I noticed a two-star Italian Air Force General. I commented that it would have been great to display the Ferrari Sparkling wine for the occasion. Somehow, he understood that I was already representing the Ferrari sparkling wine, company, so he gave me his business card, saying that the Italian Embassy in Washington, D.C. would be happy to organize a Ferrari Sparkling Wine evening as soon as we request it. In fact, the General added, here is the Italian Ambassador, who can clear it immediately. He introduced me to the Ambassador, who was quite pleasant. He mentioned that he knew both the product and the family well and would be pleased to organize a Ferrari evening at the Italian Embassy, whenever he received all the details. I have been in sales all my adult life, and I never experienced anything like that. The Ferrari sparkling wines have acquired such a worldwide reputation that all the doors are open, especially in high places.

On January 11, 2018 Erica and I were wine and dined by the two worldwide sales ma-

nager of the Ferrari-Lunelli Corporation. We were then driven to the Ferrari headquarters to meet my old schoolmate Gino Lunelli, honorary President of the corporation. Had a very cordial revival and conversation, preceded by Gino's joking remarks that I, just after finishing Liceo Classico, had decided to go to America to escape the draft in the Italian Army with the result of being drafted for the war in Vietnam. Evidently, the fact that I had left Italy to enroll and graduate in an American College and did not go to Vietnam did not make a good enough story. I ignored the joke and the conversation proceeded quite friendly, with just a few remarks on how old we had become, which I disputed.

He was dressed like an old businessman, while I had a sporty jacket with pochette and "happy socks" like Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau and President G.H.W. Bush. Also, looking at my business partner Erica, who is a flashy 33-year-old girl, he asked if she was my care-keeper (badante, in Italian). We all laughed at the remarks and left in the best of terms. The following day, Erica and I sent two e-mails to the group with the purpose of finalizing a contract. Total silence ever since. As time went by, I started connecting the remarks that Gino had made with a s.o.b. sort of smile. I recalled that, about twenty years before, during a party with friends, he remarked that he had talked with a businessman who had just returned from the States, who convinced him that Americans were pretty dumb and ignorant, with no sense of history. He said that, although he knew that I had become an American citizen and Carol was a "native" American. Of course, we got into an argument, but then the years went by, and I forgot. However, every time we occasionally met, since Trento is a small city, there always was an uneasy truce.

"Men and melons are hard to know" as Ben Franklin would have commented. Well, life goes on and I still have many enthusing plans to pursue.

In fact, I remember my father telling me that his eighties were the best period of his life. I thought he was joking, but now I realize that he was right. He enjoyed taking care of his plants and grass in his 22-acre park, living his "Otium" (Leisure), like an ancient Roman. Every day at noon, winter or summer, rain, or shine, he would sit on a covered rocking chair placed by the side of his small swimming pool. At noon he was delighted to hear the nearby church clock strike twelve times. He used to say that those 12 chimes gave him the necessary equilibrium for the day. Unfortunately, one day the church clock stopped functioning. After a week went by with no chiming, he volunteered to pay for the repair, which was granted by the town priest. Having such a character for a father plus a mother who kicked an armed German soldier in the derriere and managed to survive, no wonder I am a bit odd, occasionally.

Fortunately, I still enjoy delivering the best Italian food products to the American commissaries. The customers through word of mouth have been appreciating them and have allowed Gourmet Italia to operate successfully for thirty-one years, so far...

TAMPA, FL 6 agosto '17

Caro Matteo, sono un coetaneo di tuo padre e sto scrivendo la mia autobiografia "A Life Outside the Box", per cui riaffiorano i ricordi. Ho conosciuto Giorgio solo per pochi minuti prima delle semifinali e finali dei campionati studenteschi del '56 a TV. Lo guardavo per il Liceo Prati, lui per il Galilei. Ci siamo avvicinati prima della gara ed abbiamo parlato un po' di tutto. Mi ha molto colpito il suo sorriso, lo stesso che vedo nella tua foto. Contrariamente a me ed agli altri concorrenti dimostrava una dolcezza e calma interiore. Nell'anno, pare, era un combattente e vinse le finali, contro un mio più modesto fregio posto. Ci congratulammo reciprocamente, senza più rivederci. Attraverso i tuoi più fraterno e Giorgio fino avevo saputo che lavorava a Milano come ingegnere. Quando ho saputo che sei diventato presidente di Cantine Ferrari ho pensato quanto ne sarebbe stato orgoglioso il mio

Amico - rivale - ostacolito, di pochi minuti. Una bellissima storia! Congratulazioni vivissime!

Colgo l'occasione, mentre mi frego a scrivere e meno, per congratularmi con tutta la famiglia Lunelli.

Siete un grande esempio del meglio delle caratteristiche trentine.

Mi piace anche la riconoscenza con cui avete dedicato al fondatore una piazza a Trento:

Bruno Lunelli - IMPRENDITORE

Credo che, a Trento, non ci sia un'altra piazza o via dedicata ad un imprenditore.

Ad maiora, semper

Ego Bruno Lunelli

enzolary@gmail.com

P.S. Sorry for the long letter, but I didn't have time for a short one (Oscar Wilde)

Thursday, August 31, 2017 at 9:47:03 AM Central European Summer Time

Subject: Un caro saluto e grazie per il ricordo che mi ha regalato.
Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 at 5:42:37 PM Central European Summer Time
From: Matteo Lunelli
To: enzolary@gmail.com
Attachments: image001.jpg, image002.jpg, image003.jpg, image004.jpg, image005.jpg, image006.gif

Gentile Signor Pisoni,
ho letto con grande piacere e un pizzico di commozione la sua bellissima lettera. La ringrazio per lo splendido ricordo di mio padre che mi ha regalato e per le parole di stima nei confronti miei e della mia famiglia. Mi sono permesso di girare la sua lettera anche a mia madre e a miei zii. A questo punto mi faccia sapere quando sarà pronta la sua autobiografia perché la leggeremo con interesse.
Cordiali saluti

Matteo Lunelli

Matteo Bruno Lunelli
Presidente & CEO

Ferrari Flli Lunelli
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Considerations

Today I was enjoying reading a book near the pool at the Element, while there was a party going on formed by about 15 teenagers, mostly girls, all in shape, good looking and well behaved. After a while, a little delegation came over to my beach chair asking me if I minded if they took a picture with me. They told me they were impressed because they saw me swimming and reading a book. The whole group wanted to take a picture with me. Of course, I was pleasantly surprised and flattered. Then I asked some of them to take the attached picture with my I-phone. As I was leaving, they all waved at me very friendly, especially the girl above my left shoulder that offered me her cheek for a kiss. As Goethe used to say, “The eternal feminine picks us up”!

Then I asked for a pen and a piece of paper because I wanted to give them one of my favorite quotes by Ovid: “Est deus in nobis, illo agitante, calescimus” (There is a god within us. When he stirs, he sets us aglow). I advised them to keep it as an inspiration for the rest of their lives. I should have been a teacher & mentor. As the song goes, “Regrets I have a few...”.

I’m enjoying reading Seneca’s letters to Lucilius, whom I read negligently as a young student, interested in soccer and other nonintellectual amenities. Here are a couple excerpts:

Dear Lucilius,

Nothing belongs to us, except time. Nature gave us nothing else. Therefore, use every minute, which anyone can steal from us. Time is the only thing that nobody can give back to us, not even the most grateful person.

Every day has 24 hours, that include everything: light and night, longer or shorter, depending on the seasons. Therefore, every day should be organized as if it were the last that concluded our life. The Roman governor of Syria, Pacuvius, celebrated the end of the day with wines and funeral celebrations; at the end of dinner, his servants would carry him into his chamber, with songs, music and applause saying: He has lived! Every day he celebrated his funeral.

In conclusion, at the end of the day, one should say: “I’ve lived! Every time one wakes up in reasonable health, the following morning should be considered quite a gain, until the end of the day.



Met Roz Savage, the ocean rower

One makes plans then life happens. Fortunately, occasionally, wonderful, unexpected things happen, like the following one, on August 7, 2018. While I was casually reading a local paper, I saw a colorful picture of a woman on a sophisticated rowboat called “RozRow-sTheBrocade”, surrounded by the deep blue ocean. The larger-than-life Roz Savage was giving a conference at the nearby mountain resort of Madonna di Campiglio. I looked up <http://www.rozsavage.com>, got into my car and managed to get a good seat in the historical “Hofer Conference Room” at the Hotel des Alpes, which I remember fondly as my favorite hotel in the lusty days when I used to bring groups of American and Canadian skiers in addition to my regular clientele from the American military ski clubs in Europe.

The very interesting video assisted conference was masterfully translated by Milena Fraccari, whom I had already met when she translated for Julia Butterfly Hill, who spent three years on a gigantic sequoia to successfully save a redwood forest in California. At the end of the conference, I was anxious to get to know her. Instead of trying to approach her directly, since she was surrounded by a lot of curious people and kids, eager to take a picture with her, I decided to talk with the distinguished looking gentleman who had accompanied her into the conference room. After a few words, I realized that he had an incredible resemblance to a famous English actor. When I mentioned it to him, he was amused, commenting that other people had noticed the resemblance; however, due to a “senior moment”, I was unable to remember the name of the actor.

I called my wife, Carol, mentioning that a few years before we read a book together about a famous English actor, who had emigrated to the States. She immediately said, Mi-



Ocean rower Roz Savage crossing “Diamond Head” in Hawaii

chael Caine, so I walked back to the “double” and we had a good laugh together. I found out that Roz with her small group including “Mike”, the interpreter Milena, her friend, a simpatico dog called Milo and a couple of other people were going to have a Prosecco at one of the local caf  s in the trendy “Piazzetta” at the center of Madonna di Campiglio. During the short walk to the caf  , I found out that Milena and her friend Laura, were dog lovers and vegetarian-vegans. We immediately broke the ice and I unashamedly sat down with them, proposing a “bubbly” celebration for the occasion. I ordered a bottle of our famous Ferrari, which everyone, agreed to, except Roz, who would have preferred a dry white wine. I didn’t want to order the usual Pinot grigio, Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc, but opted for the local, excellent “Gewuertz-Traminer” that was much appreciated.

The conversation was lively and interesting, in English, of course. All of a sudden, Giacomo Bonazza, one of the organizers of the conference, who does not speak English, made the following comment to me: Tell Roz to get into politics! She has all it takes to become a world leader: What an intuition! I immediately asked for everyone’s attention, looked into her eyes and translated Giacomo’s intuition, adding that she had all it took to become a world leader. Subsequently, we started some correspondence, which, I hope, will convince her to take immediate action to hold conferences world-wide to save the endangered environment.

Her background, personality, education, intelligence and perseverance focused on a worthy mission, would make her truly capable of improving the world.

Considerations and advice to young people:

According to my experience and studies, human life, like any form of plant or animal life is based on survival of the fittest. It's not a pleasant consideration, but it's a hard fact. Therefore, here is my advice to young people who grow up in the western world: (For other parts of the world I have not enough knowledge to express an opinion).

To be able to compete, one should use all the tools that allow him/her to climb up the social ladder, starting with elementary school. Education is the most important factor. Part of that is an excellent working knowledge of the computer and the English language, which, nowadays, is global. Social graces are also important, like knowing how to play a musical instrument, dance, sing, dress well, eat properly with some knowledge of nutritional values. Also, as one gets of age, remember that "Life is too short to drink bad wines", as my mentor Ben Franklin used to advise.

As Thomas Friedman pointed out in his book, "Thank you for Being Late" since the arrival of the I-phone in 2007, technological leaps are exponential (more changes in the last ten years that in the previous 20,000 years). Therefore, even millennials who grew up with the computer are having a hard time in keeping up with constant exponential changes. In order not to be technologically outdated and useless, one should cultivate a good classical education that provides him/her with a solid cultural base (ancient Greeks and Romans) that goes back to our western roots and will never be outdated as long as humanity is living on this planet. The classical education, including reading good books, will allow an individual to use common "historical" sense in constantly adapting and learning new techniques.

Occasionally, young parents ask my advice for their children. I try to hide my conviction that no one really knows the meaning or non-meaning of life. We just get older, but not necessarily wiser (Be not too hard for life is short, by Joan Baez), since every experience is different. However, after thinking it over, here is my advice to anyone, young or old.

Find something that really enthuses you. Listen to everyone's advice but follow your heart. No one knows your deep motivation. Remember, perseverance and determination are omnipotent. You might have to take a side job to pay for your economic survival, but never lose sight of the goal that you set for yourself. Reference a side job that pays well, learn how to be a good, knowledgeable waiter, not just "My name is John and where are you from". Remember that "No love is sincerer than the love of food". If you work in a good restaurant you get to know interesting people, who can help you in your career, especially when they find out that, being a good waiter, is just a side job for you.

Good schools are important, but I feel that there is way too much emphasis on the most famous ones. Specifically, I remember the words of Luciano De Crescenzo, one of my favorite Italian writers. During his high school, when he was sixteen, his family escaped from Naples to avoid the bombings toward the end of WWII. Unfortunately, his father, among

all the possible places, chose the area around Monte Cassino, which saw ferocious fighting between the Germans and the allies for over three months.

Luciano and his family somehow survived, but there were no schools available. By chance, he ran into an old Jewish professor, who lived nearby, hidden in a basement. For six months he instructed Luciano in Italian, Latin, Greek and Mathematics. Later on, in his autobiography, Luciano wrote that he had learned those four subjects better than in all his years in school. In fact, after becoming a Doctor-Engineer, Luciano De Crescenzo was hired immediately by IBM in Milan. After a few years he got tired of working with IBM and decided to dedicate all his time to becoming a writer. He was immediately successful and wrote many books that made him famous in Italy, and the world. In fact, his books have been translated into 19 languages and published in 25 countries. I'm convinced that the merit goes in great part to the teachings of the old professor, who lived in a basement.

The longer I live, the more I am convinced that the following quote by Winston Churchill is both an inspiration and a consolation: **“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm”**.

Therefore, I consider myself successful especially if I substitute “failure” with “project”. I certainly had the fortune of getting involved in many projects. Most of them did not work out, but I am glad I did get involved in them, following the essence of the Founding Fathers’ philosophy, “The Pursuit of Happiness”.

By delaying finishing my autobiography, which started about ten years ago, on November 27, 2024 I reached my 87th birthday, partially involved in business, fully in dinners with good wines and young friends, reading in front of the fireplace with Carol and the dogs, chopping wood and doing my regular power walks with the dogs in Vezzano, substituted by daily swims when I'm at Miami Beach, FL.

Here is a picture of the workers at the extra virgin olive oil coop at on Lake Garda. When they found out that it was my birthday, they interrupted production to take the time to organize a small party with a delightful cake and Prosecco as celebration of a twenty-year uninterrupted business relationship. That's the way I love to have a friendship generated through business.

Occasionally, people ask me why I don't want to retire,



With the EVOO producers interrupting work to celebrate my birthday

I say, “retire to what?” I recently read an article by Kathleen Parker, one of my favorite journalists. Here is what she wrote: “For many people, ceasing to work feels like ceasing to be. A lawyer friend who retired and then became deeply depressed told me: “People used to pay a lot of money for my advice, and now nobody cares what I think about anything.”

One vision that I would like to pursue is the following: Encourage the State Department to display in every lobby of the American Embassies and Consulates, worldwide, Franklin’s idealist vision that I was able to display carved in bronze in Torbole on the northern bank of Lake Garda and in the conference room of the American Consulate in Milan:

“God grant that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say, ‘This is my country’”. I am especially pleased and proud of Antony Blinken as Secretary of State. His acceptance speech was moving and inspiring. If I ever have the opportunity of reaching him, he has the vision and the ideals for displaying Ben Franklin’s quote.

November 12, 2019: The Mayor and the Administration of Torbole never replied to several letters that I personally hand carried, starting in June 2019, along with the attached project. Through unofficial channels I found out that the administration would not justify a bigger repetition of the ceremony that I organized on May 2, 2015. The fact that I was willing to personally pay about 20,000 euros for the monument generated suspicion on the project, in the sense, of “Who knows what secret, mysterious forces are behind such a project”. My conclusion is that, after 2,000 years of survival by constant compromises under foreign invasions, the Italian official or unofficial mentality can hardly conceive that someone is willing to spend his personal money on an ideal project that produces no commercial or political profit. It reminds me of the following conversation between the Mayor of Verona and my friend Doug Salter, former professional skier, CEO and a drafted US Army Captain, who had just returned from two tours in Vietnam. Ref. the second tour, he decided to return to Vietnam as a volunteer.

The mayor commented about how ineffective the American military seemed to be. My friend remarked that such a comment from a notorious weak military organization like Italy was quite inappropriate. “My friend, the mayor said, putting his hand on the officer’s shoulder, we tried to conquer the world two thousand years ago, and we’re still tired.”

For the time being my project is to finish my essay, while keeping fairly occupied with the activities in my Gourmet Italia-USA company, that delivers good food to the American military market.

Yesterday, Dec. 16, 2019, while walking along the yacht pier on the way to my condo, I noticed a group of photographers and other professionally equipped operators, who were taking pictures of a beautiful girl in various poses. I stopped out of curiosity and asked if I were allowed to have my picture taken with her.

No, the operators replied. This is set up for the official service only. Someone in the group must have seen my disappointment because a lady mentioned that it would be possible if the model was willing to have her picture with me. After finding out that she was

Dutch, I approached her saying the only Dutch word I had just learned the day before: Niksen! It's a Dutch concept, stress-reducing practice that literally means to do nothing or doing something without a purpose, like staring out the window, hanging out, or listening to music. Consequently, she was surprised and pleased to have her picture taken with me. I told her that I used to be shy until I was forty, but now that I'm eighty I found out that it's not worth it. Everyone was surprised at my age and complimented also on the way I was dressed. Then I decided to say goodbye while I still was on top. Little things mean a lot.



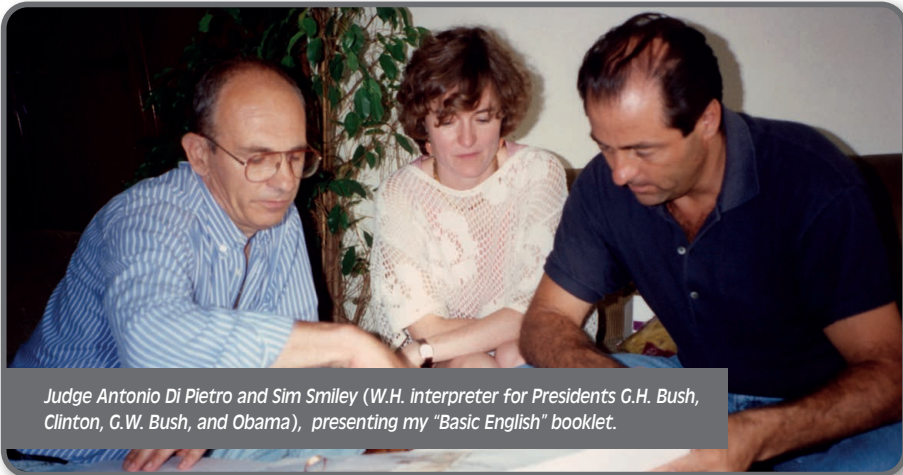
With Dutch model at the Miami Beach Yacht Club
on the way to my apartment at Sunset Harbour

Basic English

In August 2020, I was approached by my friend Sabrina, who told me that her twelve-year old daughter, Ginevra, all of a sudden expressed a deep interest in learning English. Consequently, I was very happy to re-discover my old Basic English Essay inspired by the famous Dr. Ogden: He was able to trim down the “difficulties and perversities” of the English language to just 850 words and 16 phrasal verbs, that he called operators. In the early nineties, I dedicated some time to writing a six-page booklet for Italians, who wanted to learn Basic English through Dr. Ogden’s method. Unfortunately, due to “human events” like planes to catch and bills to pay, as Johnny Cash used to sing, I did not spend the necessary time to launch the project. Now, through Ginevra, I really want to give it a try.

Fortunately, I found a 2009 speech by President Obama, delivered across America to kids from kindergarten to 12th grade. Out of 2,438 words, 75% consisted of Dr. Ogden’s Basic English. Consequently, I gave Ginevra the following task: Understand and listen to President Obama’s speech over and over, until you master all the words with perfect pronunciation. Then, tape the same speech yourself, including the way it was delivered, and practice it until you reach perfection, as if you were learning how to sing a song. It’s extremely important to keep on practicing for perfection. In fact, if one tolerates the wrong pronunciation, the correction takes about the same time and effort as learning five new words.

I’m anxious to implement this project with Ginevra, whom I consider a perfect specimen due to her intelligence and age. Unfortunately, my project did not work out because she lost interest. As the saying goes, “you can take the horse to the fountain, but you cannot make him drink”. Maybe I did plant a seed. In fact, starting in January 2025, Ginevra spent several months with a family in the States, enrolled and graduated with honors in a High School near Indianapolis, and returned enthused about her American experience.



Judge Antonio Di Pietro and Sim Smiley (W.H. interpreter for Presidents G.H. Bush, Clinton, G.W. Bush, and Obama), presenting my “Basic English” booklet.

Considerations on artificial intelligence

In his book “Falter”, published in 2019, Bill McGibben, NY. Times best seller, states that Artificial Intelligence has an IQ of 12,952 vs 130 for a smart human and 85 for a stupid one. These are frightening figures. It’s clear that computers will dominate humans since they’ll have the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly from experience, and grow exponentially. I just finished reading “Homo Deus” by Yuval N. Harari, that ends with the following, scary consideration:

What is going to happen to society, to politics and to daily life when inanimate algorithms, endowed by great intelligence, will know us more deeply than we know ourselves?

A man widely seen as the godfather of artificial intelligence (AI) has quit his job, warning about the growing dangers from developments in the field

Geoffrey Hinton, 75, announced his resignation from Google in a statement to the New York Times, saying he now regretted his work.

On May 3, 2023 he told the BBC some of the dangers of AI chatbots were “quite scary”.

“Right now, they’re not more intelligent than us, as far as I can tell. But I think they soon may be.” Dr Hinton also accepted that his age had played into his decision to leave the tech giant, telling the BBC: “I’m 75, so it’s time to retire.”

Dr Hinton’s pioneering research on neural networks and deep learning has paved the way for current AI systems like ChatGPT.

In artificial intelligence, neural networks are systems that are similar to the human brain in the way they learn and process information. They enable AIs to learn from experience, as a person would. This is called deep learning. The British-Canadian cognitive psychologist and computer scientist told the BBC that chatbots could soon overtake the level of information that a human brain holds.

Make no mistake, we are on a speeding train right now, and the concern is that one day it will start building its own tracks.

It reminds me of the Sorcerer’s Apprentice written by Goethe. Humans have created godlike creatures without a controlling Sorcerer around. At least, the wise, ancient Greeks used to say that destiny was in the hands of the gods, who lived on Mount Olympus, surrounded by clouds. And now? It’s better not to think about it, drink a bit of good wine and quote the following thought by Woody Allen:

Marx is dead, God doesn’t exist, and I do not feel very well today!

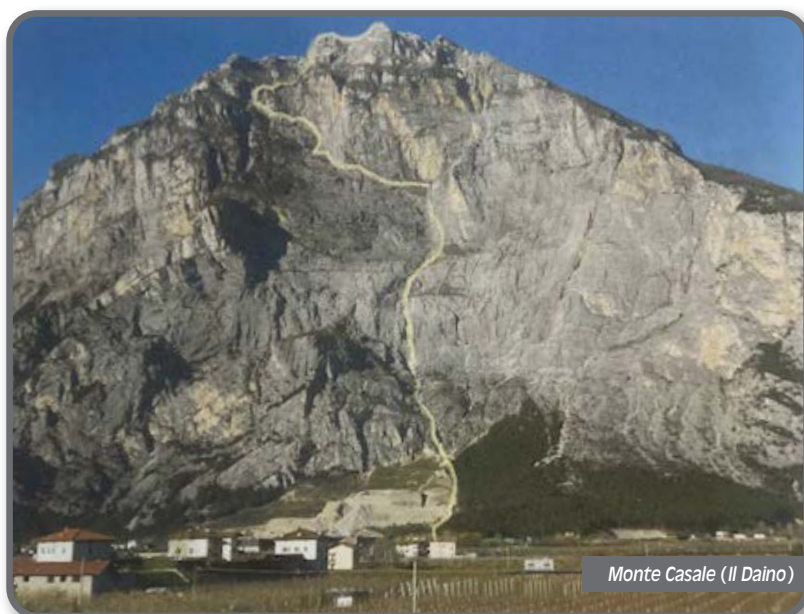
Arrigo Pisoni

In my recollections I want to include Arrigo Pisoni (very distant relationship that goes back to the ancient Roman, Pisones, who were exterminated by Nero after the failed plot organized by Gaius Calpurnius. Ceasar's wife belonged to Pisones family).

Getting back to Arrigo, who is now in his nineties, I would like to summarize some of his accomplishments, as a renaissance man. He started as a farmer and wine maker (Cantina Pisoni founded in 1862). During his long life, he took time to compete as an amateur cyclist, mountain climber, skier (24 "Marcia Longa, a 70 km cross country race), sculptor, writer and historian. Maria Romana DeGasperi, daughter of Prime Minister Alcide Degasperi, wrote the following comment on one of his books: "Arrigo, an example of one who believes in honesty, courage, and love for his terroir".

Here are some excerpts from his booklet "Daino, amore mio" (see picture of the mountain): "Huge, majestic, imposing, the good giant in front of my home, guarding the "Valley of the Lakes". It's a block of rocks, a huge wall, 1 mi. tall, 1 ½ mi. wide. How cannot such a spectacle inspire the fantasy and the admiration of someone who was born and grew up at his feet?

Consequently, a group of friends and mountain lovers decided that the time had come to embark on a courageous adventure: Climb straight up by the shortest route (see picture with the trace of the path). Imagine the emotion and the joy, when, after eleven hours of climbing, we took off backpacks, ropes, helmets, and picks.



Monte Casale (Il Daino)

Considerations on Life

Recently, while reading a book about former President Truman, I ran across the following comment: Someone asked his daughter, Margaret, about her father's idea of heaven: "Oh", she said, "To have a comfortable chair, a good reading lamp and lots of books around that he wanted to read". When all is said and done, I enthusiastically agree, with the addition of a couple of dogs, a wife, and a well-lit fireplace. In fact, after having shared my life with dogs for the last fifty years, here is a quote by Will Rogers that I find very apropos: "If there are no dogs in Heaven, then, when I die, I want to go where they went".

By constantly delaying my essay, as I am writing these lines in January 2021, the world is overrun by the Corona Virus. Since no one seems to know what to do with it, I have no comments to make, except hope for the best and wait for the vaccine. BTW, as I am writing these lines it's already February 21st, 2021 (*Comme le temps passe!*) and my first Covid-19 shot is planned for February 23rd. More ASAP!

Lifetime summary of many ideas: Some were implemented successfully, others unsuccessfully, while most of the others remained figments of my imagination. With pasta, frozen pizza, evoo and the Mediterranean diet I was at least ten years ahead of the other Italian companies (Barilla, Rana, Roncadin, Illy Coffee, Eataly) that were able to go US-wide; however, I always had the common sense to withdraw before over-extending, since I lacked the financial strength and, probably, the ability to create a US-wide infrastructure.

Nicola Pietrangeli, the best tennis player Italy ever had, before Jannick Sinner, was accused of partying, and playing soccer, instead of training in his field. His reply: "Sure, if I had only played tennis, I could have probably become #1 in the world, instead of #3 or 4, but so what? I chose to have more fun out of life instead of spending all my time hitting tennis balls all over the world".

Well, I feel the same way about having played my life according to my temperament, never forgetting to take care of my family.

As Goethe used to say, "He alone is great and happy who requires neither to command nor to obey"!

Let's put it this way: My temperament was not made for obeying or commanding. Consequently, I managed to live accordingly!

Conclusion: Occasionally, I have regrets about the ideas that I gave to people and companies with no direct benefit to me; however, experience teaches that all great ideas require great, constant commitments to be implemented and carried on. If only one of them like pizza US-wide had been carried out by my Gourmet Italia, I would have become just a businessman (busy-man). When all is said and done, by remaining small, I "almost" never had to obey or command, which allowed me to follow my pursuit of happiness.

In conclusion, I consider the following five quotes a good summary and inspiration of my life:

**Success is the ability to go from one failure
to another with no loss of enthusiasm.**

(W. Churchill)

Learn how to become old with a young heart.

(J. W. Goethe)

**If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die,
I want to go where they went.**

(Will Rogers)

**It's not what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you
know for sure, that ain't so.**

(Mark Twain)

The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.

(William James)

Before finishing my story, I want to recall the affection and stories that Carol and I shared with our dogs whom we considered part of the family. Mine started when a small group of the 10th Mountain Division stayed in our apartment and had a big “war” dog called “Herbling”, who was supposed to go to the Pacific to fight the Japanese. Fortunately, someone decided to leave him with us. We adopted him as “Erbling”, and he lived a very happy family life with all of us.

In the meantime, Carol, when living in Los Alamos with her family had a Great Dane call “Cleo”, who was Carol’s best friend and companion. When the family moved to Washington, DC, they had to leave Cleo with a nice family, but Carol never got over the shock, and still mentions her with nostalgic affection.

In the early seventies we bought a sweet boxer puppy whom we called “Flash”. She was, sensitive, obedient, and affectionate and our kids grew up with her. The whole family used to enjoy long walks up the mountains with my father and Flash. She lived a happy life for about eight years. Then, we adopted a part-German shepherd. At the time I was reading the “Odyssey” to Mark, and he decided to call her Argo, like Ulysses’ dog. She was strong and fast, able to jump on top of walls almost like a cat. She was a bit undisciplined and wild. Once, scared by the New Year’s fireworks she disappeared for three days. Occasionally, she ran away to my father’s home, located on the other side of town, across a busy road. Later, we discovered that she had found a way through the fields that allowed her to avoid traffic.

When Grace was in Milan, working on Channel 5 T.V. programs, she was given a splendid yellow Labrador, born in the U.K. Consequently, we called him “Duke”. When Carol went to the town city hall to register Duke, the clerk asked what breed he was. In those days, nobody in Vezzano knew what a “Labrador” was, and the clerk did not know how to register him, so she called her “supervisor”, a former carpenter, by profession. After thinking it over, he advised: “For the time being, register him as a Labrador. When the vet comes, he’ll tell us what it is”. People still laugh when we tell them the story.

Duke turned out to be quite a character. To start with, he got Argo pregnant. We gave away the pups except for one, whom we called “Fortunata”: Tuna for short. The combina-

tion of the Labrador and the German shepherd type produced a fantastic “hybrid”. Tuna had the best of both breeds. Gentle and obedient, but very strong and fast. With our kids we used to have the three dogs race the 100 m dash. Argo was not too fast due to age, and Duke always came in first, very proud of his performances. After a while, we realized that Tuna was purposely always slower than him, out of respect. Another trick that Duke loved to perform was to slide down a steep grass covered hill in our property. Neighbors used to come to see his performance. Tuna was shy about this, and never did it in public. But, one day, we discovered that she would go to the hill when she thought that no one was looking, and practiced sliding down by herself.

Once, Grace took Duke to the famous Hotel Danieli in Venice. At the front desk she was told that the hotel did not allow dogs. Somehow, she ignored the rule and was able to get breakfast for two in the room. Amazing, how beauty and gall can open doors.

Unfortunately, Duke died when he was only six years old. Later on, we suspected that he probably had come from a puppy mill.

Tuna, without Duke, became quite sad so we picked up two “Maremmani” puppy dogs from a neighbor: Dutch and Buck. The three of them gave us a lot of company, with their different personalities. Buck was the typical alpha dog, but he respected Tuna to the point that, before exiting the door faster than she, he would always give her a quick, friendly lick to apologize for going out first. Dutch was Carol’s dog. She lived only three years because she ate a poisoned bite put out by some stupid, small farmer.

Tuna lived about eleven years. Being partly German shepherd, she started having trouble, not able to get up on her hind legs, so we had to put her to sleep.

Since we did not want to keep Buck alone, after Tuna died, we adopted two lovely mutts, mostly German shepherds, called Daisy and Bear-Bear, with totally different looks and personalities. Daisy was friendly, but rather independent and difficult to discipline. Bear-Bear turned out to be a huge, fearsome looking black dog. He had no idea of how big and strong he was. Carol became very fond of Bear-Bear, who would have liked to be coddled like a little puppy. He loved to lie under the kitchen table, right next to Carol’s chair, and, with more difficulty, under the coffee table next to the fireplace. Bear-Bear was shy and sort of fearful, but his huge size, “dark” looks and loud bark, tended to scare newcomers. The only time he would get upset and start barking, opening his big mouth with threatening, white teeth, was when Daisy tried to take his place under the kitchen table. He lived a happy life, but died on his tenth birthday.

Daisy seemed sad, living alone. Although Carol was against it, I brought home a lovely puppy given by my friend, Giorgio Todeschini, our olive oil supplier. Right away he showed a unique personality, unsufferable for any type of leash. If treated gently, he was very affectionate. After a couple of days, Carol found the perfect name for him: Brownie! He is a constant joy, especially for Carol, whom he follows everywhere, day and night.

One accomplishment I am proud of is to have convinced my friend Gino, Erica’s father, to keep Brownie’s brother “Zeus” in the house with him, instead of leaving him in the yard by himself. It took me more than a year to convince Gino, but now they keep each other company. Gino has been able to discipline Zeus, who is happy to follow the rules.

Whenever I visit them, Zeus is very affectionate with me, who tends to spoil him. Conclusion: Gino is the father and I’m the uncle, so we’re all happy!

In October 2020, Daisy died of old age. She had really lived a happy life, and we buried

her near our perennial, spring fountain, near our “earth-born companions and fellow mortals”, (Robert Burns).

Climate Change and animal welfare

Inspired by Bill Gates’ book “How to Avoid a Climate Disaster” concerning his splendid plan to reach “Zero Green House Emissions” with max urgency, I contacted Philip Lymbery, the CEO of C.I.W.F. (Compassion in world farming) for applying the same concept to “Out-law Animal Farming”, which is one of the main causes of gas emissions and soil depletion, besides unacceptable cruelty. I was delighted by his immediate response, exactly reflecting my “revolutionary” idea:

Dear Larry

I completely agree with you on the power of the ecological argument against industrial agriculture, an issue that I brought out in my last book, Dead Zone: Where the wild things were.

At Compassion, we are pivoting in just the way you suggest, to focus our efforts on systemic change – an end to industrial farming across the board – and to that end are calling for a UN Global Agreement to end factory farming, akin to the Paris Climate Accord. In fact, to that end, we recently worked with UNEP and Chatham House on a new report showing the ecological damage of industrial agriculture. You can read more about it here:

<https://philiplymbery.com/factory-farming-has-to-end/> You will see that in the piece, I also talk about our Global Agreement call too.

So, in summary, CIWF is increasingly focused on systemic change for the range of reasons – nature, climate, health, as well as our core animal welfare – to push for the wholesale change that will be needed if we are to hand over a planet worth having as a legacy to our children.

With all best wishes

Philip

With Philip’s encouragement, Carol and I want to pursue this project. It gives us plenty of reasons for getting up every morning, as long as we can operate.

March 6, 2022

We're now in March 2022, and I interrupted my essay in August 2021. "Comme le temps passe", again, the French say, very apropos. On the other hand, so many things have happened in the course of "Panta rei". The world went through the Covid-19 epidemic, and we thought it was the scariest thing. Now the horrible war in Ukraine is upon humanity with Putin having to choose between losing small soon or losing big, as the war goes on. As Thomas Friedman writes on the March 8 issue of the NYT, Putin might prefer a nuclear worldwide holocaust, rather than admitting his total defeat, and that is very scary.

Getting back to the Covid, I got my three vaccinations, took whatever precautions were recommended and went on with my life. I was not really concerned, confident of my strong immune system. Well, low and behold, on Jan. 3, 2022, I came down with a light fever. I thought it was a normal flu and did no worry about. However, the following day, Mark found out that my oxygenation level was dangerously life threatening at 83-84. The ambulance came immediately and rushed me to the hospital in Arco. I was put in a room on the top floor, by myself, with a splendid view over Arco, the castle, and the olive grove on the north-east, and Lake Garda on the south-east. In addition to Covid, I had pneumonia. The excellent staff at the hospital saved me by using the latest technology. Thank you, Mark! After ten days in the hospital where I was treated magnificently, professionally, and empathically, Mark drove me home. After almost two months, I have recovered almost completely, and life goes on.

Getting back a few months, last fall my fraternal friend Alberto Bertoluzza, whom I have known for more than twenty years, asked me to advise Anna, a 19 year-old daughter of a good friend of his. After graduation from high school, Anna wanted to go to the States to perfect her English and work as a waitress, as she had already done for a couple of summer season. She had no idea of the near impossibility of working "legally" in the States for a non-American citizen or green card holder. Since I had to return to the States for business for a couple of weeks, and was tired of travelling by myself, I invited her to join me, so she could see a bit of America. The idea was to enroll her for a year at the Business School Department of the University of Tampa, run by my acquaintance Dr. Rebecca White. However, after long conversations on the balcony, we concluded that an American university education was too expensive and not specific for her wanting to run her own small business in Italy. In effect, nowadays, with Google and Cloud at everyone's disposal, one gets all the info directly and immediately. Consequently, we decided to enjoy Florida by travelling around from Miami to Key West, Tampa, Orlando, Cape Canaveral, and visit Henry Flagler's White Hall at Palm Beach. As soon as we got back to Italy, we funded a company called "FineFoods&More", specialized in offering the finest spices and aromas. We soon found out that the bureaucratic process in Italy is more complicated than ever, so we happily celebrated with a bottle of prosecco the closure of the company after 36 days of "operation".

The war in the Ukraine, caused by the Russian invasion, has been going on since Feb. 22, 2022. I have no words to describe the horrible cruelties suffered by everyone involved. Let's hope that the free world can help the heroic Ukrainian people stop the new Hitler-Stalin embodied by Putin. As Winston Churchill used to say to President Roosevelt, "Give us the tools, so we can finish the job."

Operation "Libertas et Prosperitas"

Together with my good friend Alpine General Lino Vivaldi, we decided to contact the Ukrainian Consulate in Milan to offer our moral and, possibly, practical support. Unfortunately, due to the emergencies caused by the war, there was no response by the Consulate. Consequently, we decided to show up, unannounced, on July 27, 2023. There was somewhat of a line of more than fifty people amassed in front of the door, so there was no chance for us to make it to the door. Fortunately, I noticed two combat-ready Italian soldiers discreetly standing next to their Jeep, overlooking the situation. Although my friend was dressed in civilian clothes, I knew he carried his military I.D. as an Alpine General, so we walked up to the higher-ranking soldier. He greeted the General with respect, but told us that he and his soldier were there just to keep order at the entrance, with no other authority. The General started talking about his past assignments, and it turned out that one of his former aide-du-camp was the commanding General of this soldier's regiment stationed near Trieste. As the conversation went on, the soldier asked his assistant to open a sealed box with a key in it. Then, he told us to follow him, as he opened a side door of the Consulate and introduced us to a receptionist, who nodded and directed us to another room. There, we were met by "Katerina" a splendid girl, to whom we explained the reason for our visit. She asked us to wait until we were introduced to the Consul General, Stanislav Plakhotnyi. He was grateful and positive about our philanthropic offer: It consisted in finding Italian companies willing to produce in the Ukraine, as soon as the war was over, benefiting from the monetary incentives provided by a future "Marshall Plan" provided by the free world./

Dear Consul General,

My friend, Alpine General Vivaldi, and I want to express our appreciation for having received us yesterday. All your staff were friendly and professional, which made our visit very pleasant.

As mentioned during our meeting, General Vivaldi and I want to embark on a philanthropic mission to help the heroic Ukrainian people benefit from work produced in the Ukraine by foreign companies that want to set up their operations in the Ukraine.

Through my American company, Gourmet Italia-USA, Inc., which has a contract with the US Government for providing food items to the American commissaries, during the last 29 years, I had the pleasure of working with the finest producers of pasta "al dente", extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, frozen pizza and bread, rice, canned tomatoes, honey, fruit-spread, kombucha,

frozen mushrooms, frozen Austrian potato dishes and frozen acai specialties.

Through the years, my connections with all the above producers, which are mostly family concerns, have become professional and friendly. Consequently, I would like to propose to most of them, the possibility of setting up a production company in the Ukraine.

I am convinced that, as soon as the war is over, Ukraine will be free and prosperous, and will benefit from a new “Marshall Plan” based on the interest of the free world. Although the war is going on, at the moment, it would be wise to make plans as soon as possible, for implementing the above operation. Through the internet, I found “Multilateral Financial Assistance to Ukraine”. However, our “Libertas et Prosperitas” operation would be more effective through a close collaboration with your Consular Office, which could officially outline the necessary procedures for accessing to financial assistance and in finding the proper locations for setting up the various factories.

With respect and admiration,

*Larry E. Pisoni - President & CEO
+ 1-813-451-8853 - +39-345-781-6543
gi-one@gourmet-italia.com - www.gourmet-italia.com*

Here is the letter that we received by the Consul General:

From: Plakhotnyi Stanislav <stanislav.plakhotnyi@mfa.gov.ua>

Date: Tuesday, August 1, 2023 at 5:28 PM

To: Larry <gi-one@gourmet-italia.com>, “tridentinavanti@gmail.com” <tridentinavanti@gmail.com>

Cc: Viktoriia Fufalko <viktoriia.fufalko@mfa.gov.ua>

Subject: RE: Operation “Libertas et Prosperitas”

Dear Sirs,

The pleasure was mine to meet such enthusiastic and ready-to-help persons like you are.

Please accept my gratitude for your pro-Ukrainian and, which means, pro-democratic position.

Definitely, Ukraine is on the road to victory, so we are happy to consider all offers of the future cooperation.

That’s why I’m glad to introduce you my colleague Viktoriia Fufalko, responsible for economic direction of the Consulate General, who reads this letter in copy.



*Best regards,
Stanislav Plakhotnyi
Consul of the Consulate General of Ukraine in Milan*

American Dinner, August 2023

And now, last but not least, is the latest surprise provided by thirteen-year-old Sophia, who, with her parents, participated to an American dinner, organized by the young American mother, Yvonne, married to an Alpine officer, who produced a beautiful boy named Giovanni (Joe for short), supervised by the friendly Dalmatian Argo.

Here is the literal translation of the paper that young Sophia wrote in school.

Last night, my family and I had a real American dinner, not just the usual imitation with French fries hot dogs etc. Here it is: We ate at our American friends' home who organized an authentic American dinner.; after having eaten everything, I understood what is meant to "live at the edge".

We ate a genuine American hamburger with bacon, cheddar cheese, fried eggs, cucumbers, fried onions, salad and, obviously, bread. When I finished, I felt full of cholesterol!

As dessert we had homemade cookies, not like the ones from the supermarket.

What made the evening special was Larry, an 85year-old gentleman, whom I met during dinner. Well, Larry lives in the States, exactly at Miami Beach, but was born in Trentino. He is an actor, a manager, a VIP.

Professor, I know that it might seem strange, but you find Larry's life on Google. Just click Larry Pisoni!

Larry struck me immediately after he heard my name, Sophia. He told me that it comes from the Greek language and means wise, knowledgeable, a good omen for me. He told me about his long life, emphasizing the cultural benefits from Liceo Classico that encourages the study of history and philosophies of the ancient classics, the basics of our western civilization. He even quoted two poems by heart: A well educated person, with so many experiences to share.

He told me, "If you set yourself a goal and you really believe in it with perseverance and determination, you'll be able to reach it". Those were his exact words. I hope that this meeting might help me to choose the best school and, who knows, I might have the possibility of studying in America.

One day I'll be able to implement my American dream! A beautiful evening. I liked the company and the interesting conversation. Soon, we'll have another brunch, and I can hardly wait to hear more about Larry's adventures.

Sophia Cipullo (8th grade, Arco). Well, no comments necessary, except my heartfelt good wishes to such a smart, wise young girl.

Unfortunately, most Americans have always had a very limited knowledge about Franklin's greatness. In fact, as the author Stacy Schiff writes in her book "A Great Improvisation", "In America he was a printer, a publisher, a civic force, a businessman, a colonial agent. The Franklin known to the French, in Voltaire's description was the discoverer of electricity, a man of genius, a first name in science, a successor to Newton and Galileo". In spite of his poor knowledge of the French language, he was elected Venerable Master of the most prestigious Masonic Lodge, the "Nine Sisters" where he introduced Voltaire and encourage a French Revolution, based on the same principles as the American Revolution started thirteen years earlier.

A forty-five year friendship with the parents of NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Christopher Cavóli. (July 4, 2022 -July 4, 2025),whom I hosted as a bright ten year old boy in my Sport Hotel

As the saying goes, it's a long story. From the early seventies to the early eighties, my friend and business partner Mario Nardelli and I were running the Sport Hotel on Monte Bondone. At that time, Lella Martin, a skier and a teacher at the American Elementary School at the U.S. Army Garrison at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, came up with a great idea: A two week "Class in the Snow" for a group of about 100 American and Italian school children to give them a chance to fraternize while studying and skiing at Sport Hotel.

At the time, the base commander was Col. Ivo Cavoli, a naturalized American citizen like me, born in Pinzolo Trentino near my town of Vezzano. Before emigrating to the U.S. Ivo had attended the same junior high-school in Trento that I had. Consequently, we had a lot in common and became instant friends. Although his wife, Rita, was born in the States, she descended from a Trentino family who also came from Pinzolo. Carol, the only WASP in the family, was very happy to "integrate". The four of us had never thought of taking a picture together. Fortunately, better late than never, in 1993, after a convivial lunch in Pinzolo, we managed to "immortalize" our friendship as shown above.

I was impressed by the career that their son. Chris whom I had known as a bright kid in our "class in the snow" at Sport Hotel, had become a Brigadier General in the U.S. Army. For the occasion, there was an official celebration in the town of Pinzolo, which I attended. Chris made a speech in perfect Italian, explaining that he was in charge of 15,000 American soldiers in Grafenwohr, Germany. He recalled when, as a teenager, he spent his "summer



Forty-five years of friendship with Col. Ivo and Rita Cavoli, parents of Gen. Chris Cavoli, NATO's Supreme Commander (2022-2025)

vacations” as an all-rounder in the Alpine lodge where he learned professional mountain climbing with ropes, along with the local dialect. While pursuing his military career, Chris had graduated from Princeton and Yale. In addition to English and Italian, he is fluent in Russian, French and German.

Over the course of the years, I kept predicting to his parents that Chris would become a four star general and even Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. On July 1, 2022, General Christopher G. Cavoli was nominated the Supreme Commander of NATO. His mother Rita sent us this picture with Chris smiling respectfully in front of the original desk of General Eisenhower, the first NATO commander.



NATO Supreme Commander General Christopher Cavoli in front original desk of General Eisenhower



Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, then supreme allied commander Europe, visits at German boys who had stared while Ike's French convoy halted in the street, near Gross-Gerau, during an autumn exercise in 1951. Behind him is Lt. Col. Vernon Walters, the SHAPE commander's interpreter in French. Today Walters is U.S. ambassador to West Germany.

This picture of a German boy greeted by Lt. Col. Vernon Walters and General Eisenhower, reminds me of when, at about the same age of the German boy, met the officers of the American 10th Mountain Division. I mailed the picture to the now Ambassador to Germany, Vernon Walters, who replied with the following handwritten words: **"To Lawrence E. Pisoni every good wish and warm regards"**. His secretary called me saying that the Ambassador wanted to write a longer message, but there was not enough room around the picture.

Out of curiosity, I started reading about Ambassador's Walters' incredible life: He spoke seven languages and was aide and interpreter to seven presidents. He also was CIA deputy Director. When he interpreted between President Nixon and General De Gaulle, the latter told Nixon: "You gave a magnificent speech, but your interpreter was eloquent". As military attaché in Rome in 1961, he proposed an American military intervention if the Socialist Party participated in the Italian Government. He smuggled Kissinger into France as President Pompidou's lover in Pompidou's private plane for secret talks with top North Vietnamese Diplomats. Mr. Walters also helped arranging the historical meeting in China between Presidents Nixon and Dictator Zedong in February 1972. I'm anxious to read some of his books, like "Silent Missions" and "The Mighty and the Meek".

June 13 and 14, 2024: Mission Impossible at the G7 at Borgo Egnazia- Puglia (Italy)

June 13 and 14, 2024: Mission Impossible at the G7 at Borgo Egnazia- Puglia (Italy)

After a wait of five years during which I presented several projects, including one of a block of Carrara statuary marble with Ben Franklin's bust, on April 18, 2024 the Administration of Nago-Torbole gave me permission to renovate the bronze plaque encased in a metal cover, as shown in the picture.



Now, Ben's immortal quote is beautifully displayed in front of Lake Garda, next to Gen. Darby's monument. The next plan is to display it in the lobbies of the American diplomatic missions worldwide, and on the American passports, where the "First American Diplomat" should have a place of honor. So far, the plaque is displayed in the conference room of the American Consulate in Milan.

Here is the letter that I plan to send to all the American entities who might be interested in, finally, honoring Benjamin Franklin:

Honoring Benjamin Franklin in American Missions and Passports

Benjamin Franklin implemented the ideals of the American Revolution, which had a worldwide moral vision, and turned upside down the social pyramid based on hereditary privileges. His mission to France, in 1776, consisted in convincing King Louis XVI and his court that an alliance with the fledging United States against the British Empire was in France's historical interest. It took two years of extremely difficult negotiations, including internal disagreements with John Adams and John Jay, to convince a financially strapped nation to provide supplies, arms, ammunition, uniforms, and, most important, troops and naval support to the beleaguered Continental Army. The fact that Dr. Franklin, "the electric ambassador", was adored by everyone in France, in addition to the victory at Saratoga and the capture of the British flag ship *Serapis* by John Paul Jones, were the turning points.

Unfortunately, most Americans have a superficial, distorted view of the essence of Ben Franklin. He is casually remembered as the guy who flew the kite and dallied with the ladies of Paris.

As a proud, naturalized American, I propose honoring "The First American" in all the American Missions and passports by displaying Franklin's immortal words after he signed the American Constitution:

God grant that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of men may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say, "This is my country".

To walk the talk, on May 2, 2015, I organized a ceremony and displayed a bronze plaque in Torbole, in front of Lake Garda with Franklin's immortal words. On September 16, the American Ambassador in Milan, the Hon. Philip T. Reeker, displayed a copy of the plaque in the conference room of the American Consulate in Milan, and wrote me a letter with the following words: **"The words of Benjamin Franklin that you chose for the memorial plaque celebrating the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII are very inspiring and we should strive to make them come true, everywhere in the world".**

Nowadays, with democracy and freedom in the balance, worldwide, Franklin's ideals need to be implemented as an inspiration for a better world.

Enzo Larry Pisoni
enzolarry@gmail.com

To speed things up, I was inspired by the idea of personally giving a copy of the plaque to Dr. Jill Biden, who was accompanying President Biden to the G7 meeting in Italy in mid-June. I convinced my good friend, Renato Mario Melfi, former chief of the Carabinieri Station in my hometown of Vezzano, to co-drive during the 1000 km car trip with my “Fiammetta” Q3 Audi.

Everyone, including my son Mark, who had acted as interpreter for President Clinton and First Lady Hillary at the G7 in Naples in 1994, tried to discourage me due to the high, impenetrable security involving access to unauthorized participants. However, during my adult life, I have always been attracted by difficult challenges, so my friend Renato and I set out at 4:30 am on Wed. June 12th, and reached our destination after a 994 Km drive at “Masseria Camarda” at 4:00 pm. Two years prior I had read an article about Cesare Fiorio, the famous car racing director of the Lancia and Ferrari racing teams. The genial engineer, after a lifetime of daring adventures, including establishing an unbeaten speed record of crossing the Atlantic Ocean (3.106 nautical miles in 58 hrs., 34 min. and 50 seconds at the average speed of 53.09 knots p/hr) from the Ambrose light house near N.Y. to Bishop Rock -Shilly Islands (UK) aboard the high performing speed boat “Destriero”, decided to buy and restructure a farm (Masseria Camarda) to cultivate the land and enjoy his “buen retiro” in Puglia. When I read the article, I was immediately attracted by the idea of visiting his Masseria Camarda, but, as Johnny Cash used to sing “There were bills to pay and planes to catch”, so I kept delaying the trip. When I found out that the Masseria Camarda was just 25 mi. from Borgo Egnazia, where the G7 was taking place, I immediately booked two rooms in a “trullo”. By the way, when we arrived, we were cordially met by Alex Fiorio, Cesare’s son, a world-famous rally- race driver himself.



After resting up a bit and enjoying the pool, we had dinner at the Fico restaurant in nearby Ceglie Messapica. During the course of our conversation, I informed Alex about our plan to donate a copy of Ben Franklin’s plaque with an accompanying letter to Dr. Jill Biden. Alex told me that his former waiter was a top receptionist at Borgo Egnazia, so we figured he would be able to deliver the package through him. Unfortunately, the receptionist informed



Picture of three VIPs at "Sala Ferrari" in Masseria Camarda. From left to right: Luca di Montezemolo, Gianni Agnelli, Cesare Fiorio. Underneath, Ferrari victory a GP Brasil with Mansell, Prost and racing director Cesare Fiorio in yellow jacket

Alex that nobody was even allowed to use cell phones to communicate with people outside the G7. Consequently, I decided to drive to Borgo Egnazia and try to talk our way through. We were impressed by the constant presence of helicopters and all types of armed Police, Carabinieri and Special Forces, supervising every intersection. As we got within a few miles of Borgo Egnazia, we were stopped by a roadblock involving about twenty policemen. A gun carrying plain clothed policeman started questioning us. By chance, my friend Renato mentioned that as a former local Chief of the Carabinieri, he had an excellent rapport with Dr. C Panetta, Deputy Chief of the Italian Police Department very high police official at the National level. Fortunately, the gun carrying official became quite friendly mentioning that Dr. F. Panetta, had been his direct supervisor. Unfortunately, he pointed out that we needed a G7 badge to get through. Then, he said, "If you're able to get a G7 badge, I will personally escort you to the gate of Borgo Egnazia. He instructed us to go the Palasport at Fasano, and wished us "good luck". After about half an hour of going through country road we got to Fasano, where we located the heavily guarded Palasport. Renato introduced me as "President of the Thank you America Committee". After showing our documents, including my American passport, the Ben Franklin plaque to be given to the First Lady, and three letters from the White House, we started going through the certification process. Somehow, we were able to talk our way in! At the end of the process, I asked permission to take a picture to include in my autobiography with one of the girls who certified us. The pretty girl shown in the picture is Maria, and I will send her a copy of my autobiography c/o Palasport Fasano.

Delighted by being able to show off our badges, we successfully went through all the check points. Occasionally, we had to go through metal structures where they checked our car. Finally, around 1:30 pm we got to the high gated iron fence of Borgo Ignazia. Surprisingly, probably because it was "Italian lunch time", there were only a few guards. After showing our badges to one of them, we told him that we were supposed to donate the plaque to the First Lady Dr. Jill Biden. Consequently, he immediately opened the gate to allow us to enter with my red-flaming Fiammetta Q3.

As soon as we entered the graveled square facing the open door of the palace where the



G7 members were having their conferences, we were surrounded by more than ten elegantly dressed security guards with coats and ties. They immediately noticed that our badges did not qualify us to enter into the “top red zone”, and were surprised to see that we had been able to enter, especially with a car. Their “top dog” was Dr. Caracciola, who politely asked me to hide my car behind some bushes while the limos with tinted car windows were unloading G7 dignitaries. I distracted him a bit by noticing that he had the same last name as the famous Formula 1 race driver Rudolf Caracciola, called the “Rain Master” for his extraordinary ability to drive on wet roads. Dr. Caracciola relaxed a bit, and started working the cell phone. He told us that the only one who might be able to allow us to deliver the gift was Dr. Max, a young, future ambassador. After a few minutes, a smiling, distinguished Dr. Max arrived at the scene, and I proceeded to tell him the purpose of our visit. Consequently, he called a very serious looking American secret service agent, who asked, “What can I do for you”? When he learned that my purpose was to deliver the plaque to the First Lady, he simply told me that the rules did not allow him or anybody to receive anything. It didn’t help when I told him that, according to Ari Onassis, “The rule is that there is no rule”. Subsequently, I asked him to allow me to talk to one of his supervisors. He turned around and, after a few minutes, a distinguished, English-speaking, Italian secret service agent politely told us that we had to be escorted out of the premises. At that point we had no choice and were escorted to the exit gate by four very polite Italian secret agents. Consequently, we drove back to our “Trullo at “Masseria Camarda”, where the entire Fiorio family and some of their few friends were very curious to hear our story. Of course, we first showed them the G7 badges, and proceeded to dwell on the details, while they were laughing during a splendid dinner with their organic products, including their delicious wine “Primitivo”. During dinner we had the privilege of meeting Alex’s daughter Maria Paolo Fiorio, a beautiful, extraordinary young lady. Among her many talents, including passion and success in racing “rally cars”, she attended Barry University in Florida on a golf scholarship, that allowed her to win the 2015 NCAA Golf Trophy at Sonoma, CA.

Looking more carefully at our G7 badges, I noticed that they were good for three days. Consequently, I proposed to Renato to take a different route and try to enter Borgo Egnazia again. We passed successfully all the check points and were stopped just for a few minutes

for the arrival of a white helicopter with the Pope, who landed less than 200 meters from us. He laboriously managed to disembark, greeted by the smiling Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, who got into a special coupe with him. After the police cleared the check point we were so excited by the events that we got lost, so we stopped at another check point to ask



Pos	Player	Score	Par	Handicap	Strokes	Score	Par	Handicap	Strokes
1	101 Maria Paola Fiorio	101	-10	1	101	101	-10	1	101
2	102 Haley Daulton	102	-9	2	102	102	-9	2	102
3	103 Francesca Pavia	103	-8	3	103	103	-8	3	103
4	104 Emma Anis	104	-7	4	104	104	-7	4	104
5	105 Crystal Wong	105	-6	5	105	105	-6	5	105
6	106 Sarah Miller	106	-5	6	106	106	-5	6	106
7	107 Madison Beckwith	107	-4	7	107	107	-4	7	107
8	108 Courtney Zachman	108	-3	8	108	108	-3	8	108
9	109 Melissa Woods	109	-2	9	109	109	-2	9	109
10	110 Liz Chavante	110	-1	10	110	110	-1	10	110
11	111 Abby Marzke	111	0	11	111	111	0	11	111
12	112 Nicole Dunn	112	+1	12	112	112	+1	12	112
13	113 Taylor Smith	113	+2	13	113	113	+2	13	113
14	114 Kaitlyn Anderson	114	+3	14	114	114	+3	14	114
15	115 Grace Longmeyer	115	+4	15	115	115	+4	15	115
16	116 Kaitlyn Anderson	116	+5	16	116	116	+5	16	116
17	117 Abby Marzke	117	+6	17	117	117	+6	17	117
18	118 Abby Marzke	118	+7	18	118	118	+7	18	118
19	119 Abby Marzke	119	+8	19	119	119	+8	19	119
20	120 Abby Marzke	120	+9	20	120	120	+9	20	120
21	121 Abby Marzke	121	+10	21	121	121	+10	21	121
22	122 Abby Marzke	122	+11	22	122	122	+11	22	122
23	123 Abby Marzke	123	+12	23	123	123	+12	23	123
24	124 Abby Marzke	124	+13	24	124	124	+13	24	124
25	125 Abby Marzke	125	+14	25	125	125	+14	25	125

for directions to Borgo Egnazia. Of course, we showed the Ben Franklin's plaque to the policeman in charge, saying that we were supposed to deliver it to the American First Lady. No problem, he said, and immediately ordered a policewoman to escort us with an unmarked car that had a flashing blue light on the roof, just like in the movies. After a few miles, the policewoman took us to a parking lot adjacent to the gate of Borgo Egnazia where we had entered

the day before. We decided to leave the car in the lot and walk a few meters to the gate. Fortunately, the gatekeepers had changed, so we went through our story again. Since several official limos kept coming in, we were really in the way, and nobody knew what to do with us. I kept insisting about my wanting to deliver the plaque with an accompanying letter to the First Lady. Finally, an American Liaison got on the line, saying that I should have contacted the American Embassy. Big deal, I thought, knowing their almost impenetrable bureaucratic procedures for anything outside box. Finally, we found out online that the First Lady did not attend the G7 in Italy, so we headed north and were back in Trento on time for dinner. In conclusion, we had a great time, happy to have been able to somehow beat the system and super happy to have met the splendid Fiorio family.

I trust that all the people of goodwill are interested in helping me to implement Benjamin Franklin's worldwide vision for a better world.



Stopped at G7 while the helicopter with the Pope is landing



June 14, 2024 escorted to the entrance to the G7 gate (Borgo Egnazia) by unmarked police car with flashing blue light



In front of Borgo Egnazia's entrance with VIP Limo arriving at G7

Victory at the Italian IRS

In December 2024 I received a frantic call from my small producer of the excellent frozen bread that Gourmet Italia sells to the American commissaries in Europe. Two members of the feared “Guardia di Finanza” (Financial Police) were in his office because they had discovered that his invoices to Gourmet Italia-USA, Inc. were issued VAT free. I decided not to get involved with the agents because they were just executing orders. They stayed in the artisan’s office several days and released a document of about 40 pages of fines due for the failed payment of the VAT(Value added tax) for many past years. The law states that all the food items delivered to the U.S-NATO Forces are tax free. All the other European countries that we work have no problem applying the above law. However, during the course of the last thirty years, a group of Italian accountants decided that the tax-ree issue applies only if the purchase is done directly by the US Forces. In their view Gourmet Italia was evading VAT through a “Fiscal Triangulation”, which sounded like some sort of a scam. /

The American military contracting officers patiently kept producing documents stating that Gourmet Italia had a contract with the US government that allowed it to be tax free since all the food items circulated exclusively in the DeCA commissaries, accessible only to military patrons. In the course of over thirty years, we were able to convince about 90% of the Italian producers, but a small 10% kept following the theory of “Fiscal Triangulation” and made us pay the VAT tax. /

Finally, one day I decided to take the issue into my own hands, and fix an appointment with an executive of the Agenzia delle Entrate (Revevue office, i.e. IRS) in Trento. The tax executive was a fine, polite lady who told me that she had consulted her fiscal team who determined that Gourmet Italia was not VAT free for food products delivered to the US Forces. I patiently explained that I had a thirty-year “solo” experience of business survival, including the civilian and military market in the U.S. At the end of the explanation, including showing VAT free invoices issued by firms of several European countries, I gave her a copy of my autobiography in Italian. She was convinced by my case my and promised to raise the issue with her fiscal team. We left in cordial terms and, low and behold, the following week she confirmed that I was right. Consequently, her office will inform the Financial Police that there were no charges to my bread producer or any other in the future. /

At the end of the story, I jokingly offered to take her out to lunch. She blushed, but refused because she was not authorized. From now on, every time I drive by the I.R.S. building, I look at it with sympathy and even take advantage of the fact that there always is free parking.

And life goes on, happily, especially with young friends

I consider Cicero, Ben Franklin, and J.W. Goethe, my mentors. All three advise older people to associate with young people, for mutual interest and joy of life, enhanced by good foods and wines. Consequently, I am happy to follow their advice as often as possible, while always being careful not to look or act like an old fool.

It's amazing how the conversation is mutually interesting. I admit that my sixty-five-year experience of business commuting and surviving between Europe and the U.S. helps a lot in the conversation with people whose life is in front of them, while mine is in back. The fact that I am no longer active in business, since my return to Italy in 2023, allows me to find time for good books in both English and Italian. My approach is to use quotes by people whom I consider wise.

Recently, since I am not completely involved in business, I discovered the pleasure of associating with young people between their twenties and thirties. It's very interesting to hear about their visions, mutually benefitting from the age difference. My international background, especially in the U.S.A, stimulates their curiosity. While most of my generation, in Italy, including people in the fifties, were strongly influenced by the remnants of the Fascist era, by the anti-capitalistic Catholic mentality and by the very effective Communist propaganda, up to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the young Italians are much more open minded. The U.S. acts like a magnet that attracts them. Unfortunately, the present political situation in the U.S. worries everyone in the free world, with the danger that a notorious, criminally involved demagogue could become the next President. Carol and I have lost several American friends, who are blind folded like the Fascists and the Nazis were before WWII in Europe. Without the American support, the situation in the Ukraine and the Middle East, along with Taiwan, would provoke the collapse of the free world. On the other hand, as Cicero used to write to his friend, Atticus, "While there is life, there is hope", so it's better to go on and look to the future with serenity.



Getting back to the young people, I am having the pleasure of enjoying the company of young Manuel Tecchiolli, who is benefiting from a PhD scholarship in Physics at the prestigious “Polytechnique” in Zurich where Albert Einstein studied and taught.

The other good friend is the classical musician Lorenzo Bernardi, who travels the world sponsored by the Italian diplomatic offices, as an ambassador of the Italian musical culture to the world.

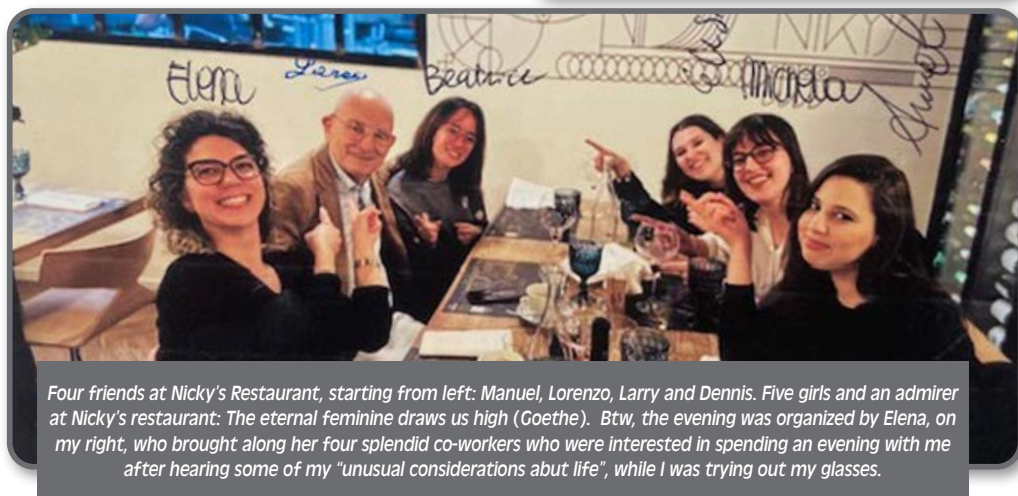
The third good, your friend is Dennis Cattoni, a recent PhD graduate in Mathematics Engineering at the University of Trento. He recently contacted me for advice on how to apply his skills in the U.S. Although I have no idea on how to go about it, we’ll work at it! In the meantime, here is a happy picture with the four of us at Nicky’s restaurant in Trento. Lorenzo sent the picture to Alex Melfi, another of my good young friends, who replied immediately: “Larry for president”!

Actually, according to Cicero, “There is no greater joy for a “senior person” than associating with young people. Can there be a more noble mission?”

When we four of us get together, our conversations are always “elevated”, even though Manuel as a teetotaler does not enjoy the pleasure of good wines. Nevertheless, we have worked out a mutually satisfactory solution. I order the wines, sharing them, moderately, with Lorenzo and Dennis. At the end of the meal, Manuel enjoys driving us home, happy, and relaxed, in my “high performing” Q3Audi, called “Fiammetta”, or the new fully electric ID-Buzz called “Papessa” due to the Vatican white and yellow colors. The name was inspired by the famous “superman” Gabriele d’Annunzio, who, in 1936



Dr. Marta and her sister Dr. Margherita, enjoying “elevated conversations.”



Four friends at Nicky’s Restaurant, starting from left: Manuel, Lorenzo, Larry and Dennis. Five girls and an admirer at Nicky’s restaurant: The eternal feminine draws us high (Goethe). Btw, the evening was organized by Elena, on my right, who brought along her four splendid co-workers who were interested in spending an evening with me after hearing some of my “unusual considerations about life”, while I was trying out my glasses.

owned an 8,000 cc V-6 yellow & white Isotta-Fraschini “Papessa” that reached 150 km/hr (93.2 mi/hr).



April 13, 2025: Tango exhibition
at Caderzone with my teacher, Carol



After Tango lesson with instructor Carol on my right, Tango partner Diana and Papessa behind us

Film project with Jacopo Rampini...?

Keep on working on the project www.greentoblinovalley.org. The video is in Italian and English, and the idea consists in transforming the “Valley of the Lakes” into a new Arcadia for humans, animals, and the environment.

So far, after three years of trying, I have received no concrete response from local, regional and European political contacts. Finally, I got the right idea, supported by my good friend, Alpine General Lino Vivaldi. We will present it to the President of the Alpini Chapter, which consists of 18,000 members.

Occasionally, a strike of good luck comes along. For the last couple of years, I have been corresponding with the world-famous US based writer, lecturer and journalist, Federico Rampini. Through him, on May 19, 2025 I made an appointment with his son Jacopo, and drove from Trento to Camogli, Liguria to meet him. Jacopo is an Italian American actor, writer and producer known for several films: *World Wars*; *FBI*; *The Black List*; *Halston*, several others, and *Catch-22* directed by George Clooney.

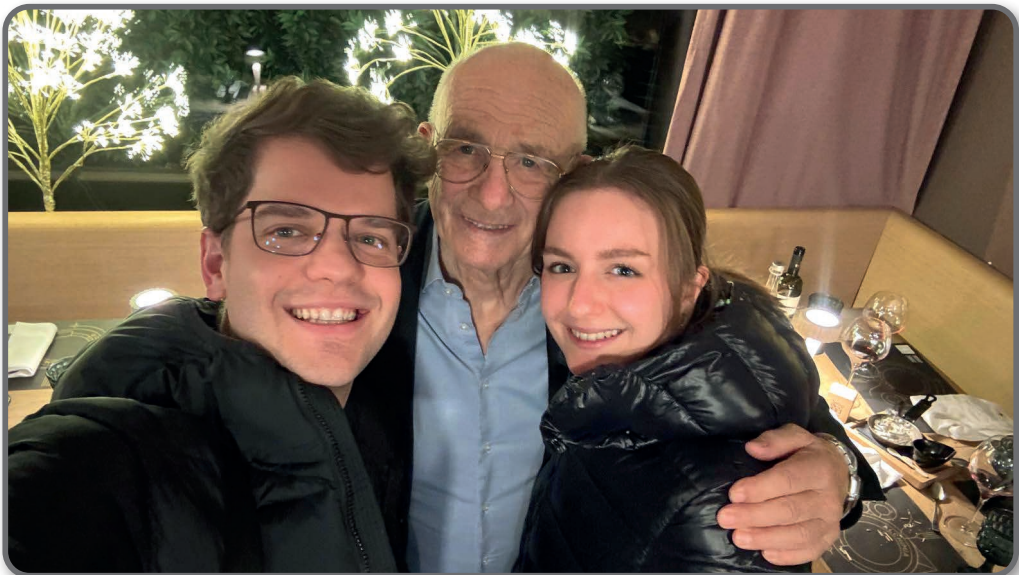
Low and behold, a significant meeting of the minds.



At Camogli (Gulf of paradise), programming a film with Jacopo Rampini and Erica

Gourmet Italia Grand Tours

While performing during his 2025 musical tour in India, my talented friend Lorenzo Bernardi was asked to organize a tour of “Italia Bella” by some of his Indian admirers. Knowing that I used to be a “Tour Operator” for many years during my “lusty days”, Lorenzo asked me for advice, which I enthusiastically offered. In India, Lorenzo met Anastasia Facchinelli, who was working as an intern at the Italian Consulate in Mumbai, and was well impressed. Anastasia is now living in Trento and will soon graduate in political science at the University of Trento. During a splendid working dinner at Nicky’s, our favorite restaurant, we decided to work together on the Gourmet Italia Grand Tours projects. /



Our first Grand Tour and the many others we plan to organize for worldwide connoisseurs, will offer the best of Italy in Art, Music, History, Wine, Food, Cooking (based on the tasty benefits of the Mediterranean Diet), Shopping, Artisanry, and Scenery from the Alps to Sicily.

Anastasia will act as a guide on board the coach transfers, while we will provide local guides for each city or general location visited.

The first Grand Tour is planned for April 2026.

Recently, I had the pleasure of associating with the talented professional guitarist Lorenzo Bernardi and Anastasia, whom he met in India where she was an intern at the Italian Embassy. Their theoretical and practical approach to international life, entails a very interesting future.



While attending a musical on January 1, 2026, I was amazed by Francesca Defant's performance and stage presence, a nineteen year old, talented violinist, whose father is a friend of mine. After the show we had a chance to talk. I was so impressed by her maturity that I suddenly decided to give her a signed copy of my "almost" finished autobiography. Her smile of appreciation is worth a thousand words.

www.GreenToblinoValley.org

In the Valley of the Lakes, located between Trento and Lake Garda, the lakes of Santa Massenza, Toblino and Cavedine are three splendid jewels connected by a small river. Their geographic position benefits by the steady summer wind called "ORA" provoked by the different temperatures of the waters of Lake Garda and the steep side mountains that flank it on the western and eastern sides. The "ORA"



Postcard of Castel Toblino 1905 - by Ecomuseo Vallelaghi

creates a unique Mediterranean micro-climate that allows the glorious growth of palms, olive groves and vineyards along the 46th parallel. Consequently, in spite of the snowy mountains flanking the Valley of the Lakes, the water temperature of the three small lakes allows swimmers to enjoy the balmy environment from March through mid-October. I wistfully remember swimming and sailing with my young friends, starting in March./

A few years after the end of WWII, between 1947 and 1957, a gigantic hydroelectric power plant was created by building a huge channel in the heart of the mountain that dropped the waters for 2,000 ft. from Lake Molveno into Lake Santa Massenza where huge steel turbines generated the electricity. From an economic point of view, the enterprise, which, at the time, was the largest in Europe, brought work and prosperity to the whole region. The funds were provided by the Marshall Plan, implemented by skillful Italian ingenuity. Unfortunately, the cold waters that barreled through the mountain, and entered into the mild waters of Lake Santa Massenza, changed the climate of the three small lakes that were transformed into a cold river. Even the climate of the whole valley was modified. To add to the above ecological damage, in the 1960s a cement factory became operational, damaging the agricultural environment. No filters were applied, causing the vineyards and the fruit trees to be covered by a poisonous white coating. Finally, the cement factory was provided with filters that limited the ecological damage, although the aesthetic picture stuck out like an eyesore in the beautiful landscape.

During the summer of 2022, a small “Let’s save the Valley of the Lakes” committee was created. Inspired by the

initiative, I managed to enthruse my two good friends, Fabrizio Gambarotta and Herman Zadra to get involved in a project that we called “Green Toblino Valley”. Fabrizio and I financed the project, while Herman, who is a “Movie Director” was able to make a professional video which is now on the internet in its Italian and English version: www.greentoblinovalley.org.

Considering the new environmental sensitivity, we trust to be able to access to national and European funds to implement the following project elaborated for his Doctoral thesis by the Architect Michele Bortoli, the present Mayor of Madruzzo. The project contemplates two underwater pipes that would carry the cold hydroelectric waters from the Lake of Santa Massenza, all the way to the southern end of Lake Cavedine, where they would join the already built pipes that channel the waters into Lake Garda.

Eventually, in place of the ugly cement factory, a golf course along with restaurants and small hotels would re-transform the Valley of the Lakes into a new “Arcadia”.



Castle and Lake Toblino with a view of the valley, all the way to Lake Garda

Over the last three years I have contacted most of the local and provincial authorities, friends, and acquaintances, to no avail. I had concluded that nobody alive nowadays remembers the beauty of lakes before the invasion of icy waters changed the temperature of the waters and the environment./

I was getting resigned to reality, when, at an Alpine reunion on January 11, 2026, I met Alessio Anselmo, the youngest mayor in the Autonomous Province of Trentino. I set up an appointment with him and Clara Stablum Cozzini, his secretary of cultural affairs. Consequently, I sent them the www.greentoblino-valley.org project for returning the entire area to its original arcadian environment for humans, animals, and vegetation. I also showed them the enclosed a painting of Lake Toblino in 1905, which illustrates the beauty of the uncontaminated area. Their enthusiastic reaction has encouraged me to pursue this noble project, which reminds me of Margaret Mead 's quote:

“Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has”.

At the end of the story, I believe that with imagination and perseverance I have reached goals beyond my capabilities.

Larry

enzolarry@gmail.com



Moments

of a life

outside the box



Carol with Argo



Carol, Karen (ex-Miss Hawaii), Tuna, Argo, Buck



With Carol, rowing on Lake Garda



Thanksgiving 1960, near Carol's home in Bethesda



At Mezzacorona Wine Festival, autumn 1960



Grace with our first dog, Flash, (1973)



Baby Mark at Lido di Pomposa (1966)



Enzo-Larry, baby Mark and Carol - Lido di Pomposa - 1966



Carol in splendid shape, canoeing on Lake Garda (1987)



Christmas 1990 at Golf Hotel (Madonna di Campiglio)

TARS and STR

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Lawrence Pisoni, president of Gourmet Italia Inc., talks about the new Gourmet Italia Pasta Cafe scheduled to open in the Wiesbaden, Germany, commissary in late November, with Heidi Green (center), commissary officer, Defense Commissary Agency, European Center, and Yong Johnson, manager of the new cafe.

New cafes put accent on pasta, Italian food

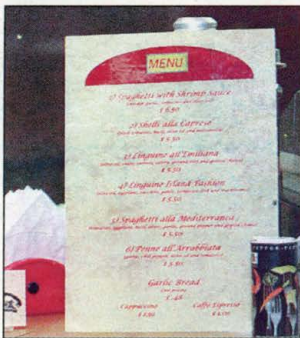
Entrepreneur aims to expand commissary line

By **STEFAN ALFORD**
Staff writer

WIESBADEN, Germany - Food vendors occasionally set up in commissary aisles to provide samples of their products, but Lawrence Pisoni has taken that marketing strategy to a new level.

The owner and president of the Gourmet Italia pasta line is opening a cafe in the Wiesbaden commissary Tuesday that features dishes made with his own line of gourmet pasta and sauces. The Wiesbaden cafe is the second of 15 he hopes to place in U.S. commissaries throughout Europe.

"The cafes are more of a school than a



The menu at this small cafe inside the Ramstein, Germany, commissary offers six standard meals and a chef's choice.

products found on the commissary shelves.

While Pisoni's line of handmade pastas, peeled, handpicked tomatoes and olive oils has been on commissary shelves since 1994, their slightly higher prices have kept some buyers away, he said.

Pisoni is hoping that once shoppers get a taste of his products, they'll want more. His cafes are open during regular commissary hours.

Pisoni, who spent 18 years teaching cooking in his family's Italian hotel chain, prides himself in the quality of his products. For instance, to make his pasta, he uses a rare, amber durum wheat that originated in the Ukraine and was introduced to Manitoba, Canada, and North Dakota in 1880. Pisoni buys it from North America.

"That area has a unique combination of soil and climate which gives it a distinct flavor," he said. "It's the best I've found, so it's what I buy for my customers."

that concept appears to be work-
Ramstein commissary manager
d-din.

Gourmet Italia products near our Pasta Café at the Wiesbaden Commissary (1997)

Gourmet Italia Pasta Cafe at the commis- And, of course, he's hoping Commissary

Viaggio U.S.A. VIA COLVENTO

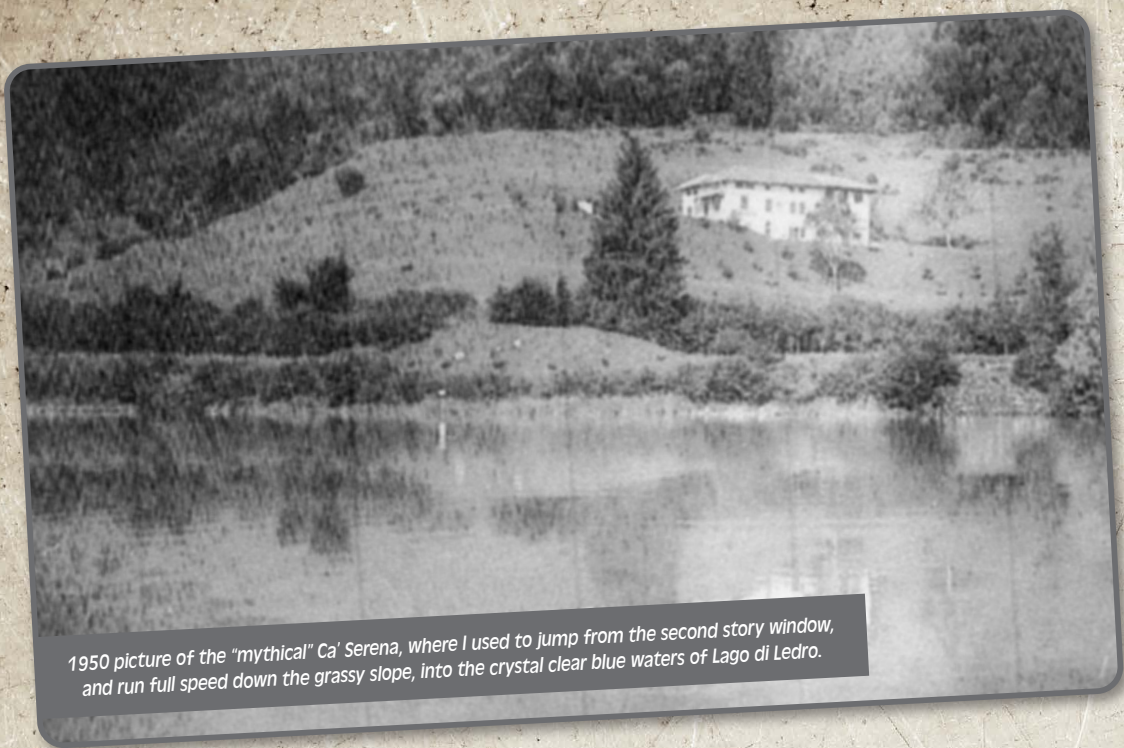
ORGANIZZATO
DALL'ASSOCIAZIONE ALBERGATORI DELLA PROVINCIA DI TRENTO
IN COLLABORAZIONE CON:
ALITALIA - AMERICAN AIRLINES E GALASSIA
DAL 5 AL 18 NOVEMBRE 1979



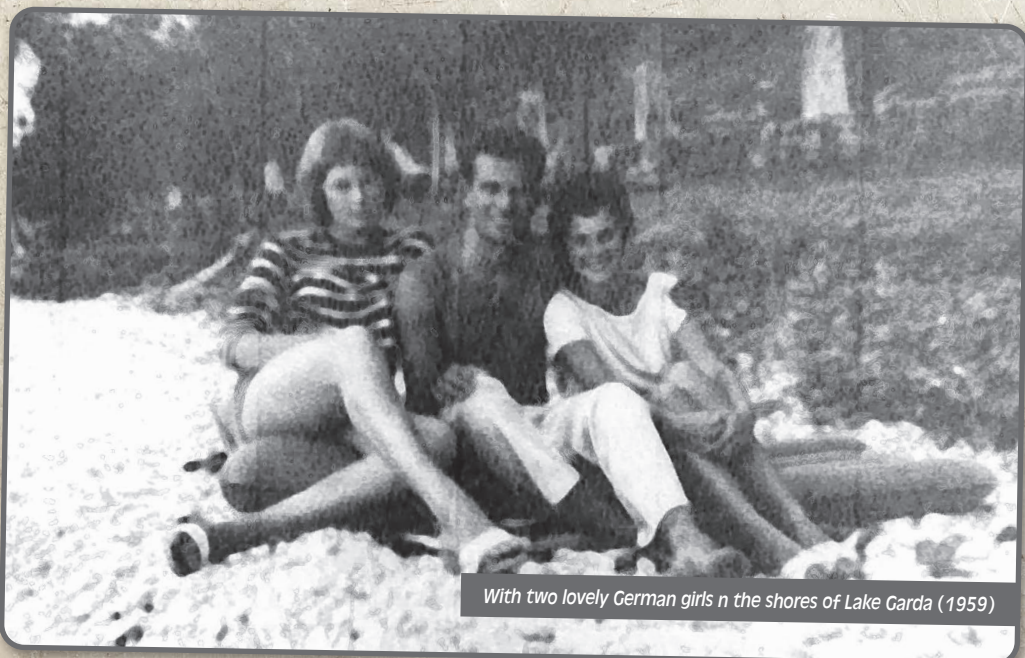
"Gone with the Wind" brochure for a grand trip to Eastern USA organized by Larry for 110 "Trentini" hoteliers (1979) followed by "Bonanza-USA" on the West Coast for 123 hoteliers (1978).



Playing tennis in Maiorca with the Frankfurt Tennis Club (1977)



1950 picture of the "mythical" Ca' Serena, where I used to jump from the second story window, and run full speed down the grassy slope, into the crystal clear blue waters of Lago di Ledro.



With two lovely German girls n the shores of Lake Garda (1959)



With my mother in front of the mountain lake "Lagolo" (1959)



Happy days with Carol and Mark on Lake Garda (1987).

September 19, 1994

The Honorable Thomas Niles
American Ambassador
U.S. Embassy
91 Vasilissis Sophias Blvd.
Athens, Greece

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

As affectionate owners of three dogs you have our admiration and solidarity for not agreeing to leave your friend alone outside the Greek monastery. We feel that it would have been like leaving a small child without his parents. When we were running our hotels we noticed that people travelling with dogs are usually considerate and respectful.

While we are writing this letter our golden labrador DUKE (the one sitting in middle of the canoe in the enclosed picture) is happily sleeping underneath our word processor and approving in spirit.

With regards,

Lawrence & Carol Pisoni
Villa Piccarèl
38070 Vezzano, Trento
Tel. +39-461-864534
Fax +39-461-864534

Letter to Ambassador Thomas Niles

Embassy of the United States of America
Athens, Greece

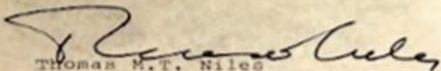
October 12, 1994

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Pisoni:

Thank you so much for your letter of September 19, 1994 in which you supported my decision to spend the night with my dog during a recent visit to the monastic community of Mt. Athos. As you suggested, it was not a very difficult decision, and the monks went to considerable lengths to ensure that we were comfortable outside the walls.

I envy you that you have three dogs, as I have only one. Duke certainly is a fine looking fellow, and the area where the photographs were taken is truly spectacular. Thanks again for having written, and please give Duke and his canine brothers/sisters pats from me and Mr. Wheat, shown in the enclosed photograph on a recent visit to Northwestern Greece.

Best regards,


Thomas M.T. Niles
Ambassador

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Pisoni
Villa Piccarèl
38090 Vezzano, Trento
Italy

Letter to Ambassador



Canoeing with our Labrador, Duke, in front of Castle Toblino (1994)



The American Ambassador Thomas Niles, with his dog "Mr. Wheat". Both slept outside the Mount Athos Monastery, where animals and women are not allowed to enter, since 1066 A.D.



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20318-9999

26 June 1995

Mr. Lawrence E. Pisoni
Villa Piccarel
38070 Vezzano, Trento
Italy

Dear Mr. Pisoni,

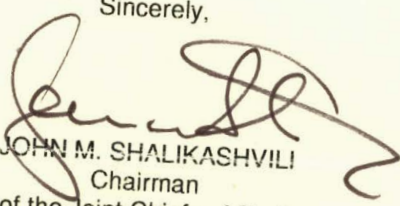
Thank you for the recent letter, video tape, newspaper articles, and photographs depicting the "Thank You America" project. I appreciate your sharing this commemorative experience in honor of those brave individuals who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

You are right--I don't have the opportunity to ski as often as I would like, but hopefully I will be able to take advantage of skiing opportunities in the future.

It was thoughtful of you to send the linguine--Mrs. Shalikashvili and I look forward to enjoying it.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,


JOHN M. SHALIKASHVILI
Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Letters from General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint
Chiefs of Staff (1995 and 1997)



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20318-9999

18 September 1997

Mr. Larry Pisoni
Villa Piccarel
38070 Vezzano, Trento
Italy

Dear Mr. Pisoni,

Thank you for the kind words in your recent fax. Congratulations on the success of the Gourmet Italia Pasta Café in the Ramstein Air Base commissary! Trust that military men and women will recognize and enjoy good food.

Although the offer to arrange a Mediterranean luncheon for my retirement celebration is greatly appreciated, the day's events have already been planned.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

JOHN M. SHALIKASHVILI
Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

*Letters from General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint
Chiefs of Staff (1995 and 1997)*



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 13, 2005

Dear Larry:

I enjoyed your letter and the essay you wrote on the origin and essence of the United States of America. I am also grateful for the work you have done to memorialize the sacrifice of the two American aviators who were killed near your hometown. Thank you for your thoughtful and patriotic work.

Sincerely,



Condoleezza Rice
Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

Mr. Larry Pisoni
Villa Piccarel
38070 Vezzano, Trento
Italy

Letter from the White House by Condoleezza Rice, Assistant to the President



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

January 26, 2005

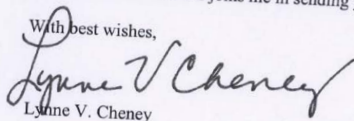
Mr. Larry Pisoni
Villa Piccarel
38070 Vezzano
Trenton
ITALY

Dear Mr. Pisoni,

I received your letter and your fine essay today. They were sent to me by Admiral Abbot. As you know, any writings about America, the people or history, is especially dear to me. Therefore, I thoroughly enjoyed reading both.

I also appreciate the work you have done to honor the two American Air Corps officers with a memorial near Vezzano. The Vice President and I share your admiration of our founding fathers and the influence of their ideas on this nation. He joins me in sending you our very best.

With best wishes,


Lynne V. Cheney

*Letters from the First Lady Laura Bush
and Lynne V. Cheney*

THE WHITE HOUSE

January 28, 2005

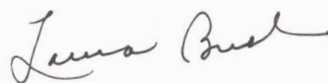
Mr. Larry Pisoni
Villa Piccarel
38070 Vezzano, Trento
ITALY

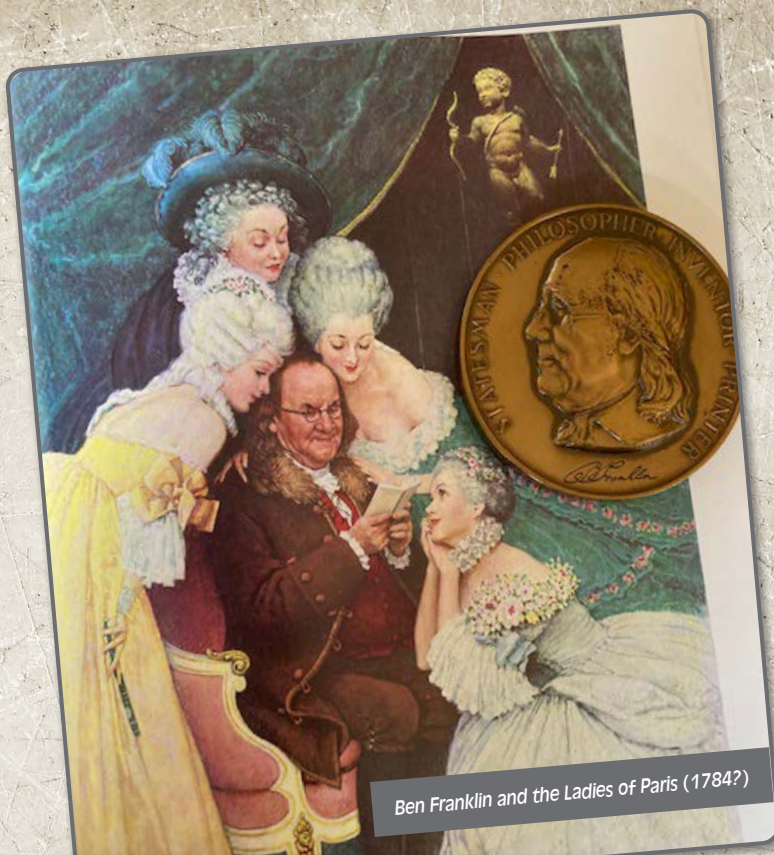
Dear Mr. Pisoni,

Your friend Admiral Abbot has forwarded your letter and essay about America. I am delighted to receive it and look forward to reading it.

President Bush and I send best wishes.

Sincerely,





Ben Franklin and the Ladies of Paris (1784?)



Larry Pisoni and four ladies at the cooking school at Hotel Gaarten in Gallio- Asiago



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Milan,
September 13, 2016

Mr. Larry Pisoni
Villa Piccarel
38070 Vezzano (Trento)

Dear Mr. Pisoni,

Thank you for the very touching photograph you presented to the American Consulate in the meeting with my colleague Rami Shakra. I enjoyed reading your essay on the essence of the United States. Your love for America and your understanding of historical facts makes for very inspiring reading.

The words of Benjamin Franklin that you chose for the memorial plaque celebrating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II are also very inspiring and we should all strive to make them come true, everywhere in the world.

Your compassion for those who perished in pursuit of freedom and democracy does you credit. The ideals and actions of those men and women have contributed to make America a great country.

I hope to have the opportunity to visit Torbole and view the commemorative plaque in person. Best wishes for your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Philip T. Reeker

Ambassador Philip T. Reeker
Consul General

Congrats letter by Ambassador Philip T. Reeker for Ben Franklin's bronze plaque at Torbole, in front of Lake Garda



Carol with baby Grace (1970)



Ca's Serena in 2019



Carol in 1960



Carol (17 years old)



Grace on the front page of Italian magazine "Epoca".

Anyone?

el Via New Concept—the Pasta Bar

VIRGINIA BEACH
ssary
Belvoir, Va.,
ew con-
finite
he

Photos: DeCA Eastern Region

Pasta anyone?
The Fort Belvoir, Va.,
commissary's 929-sq.-ft.
pasta bar is a hit with customers.

supplies. The
company also p
forms its own clean
Gourmet Italia receives weekly deliveries
for its products, and all sales are subject
the 5-percent surcharge, which is retained

in its European stores paved the way for
the contract holder, also operates
ries. The contract runs for 18 months.

Gourmet Italia Pasta Café at the Ft. Belvoir commissary on 2002.

SELECTIONS



With our Super 88 Oldsmobile
in Bethesda (Christmas 1963)

In shape for snowshoeing at Viote- Monte Bondone (2013)



With baby Mark at "Villaggio Adria" in 1966

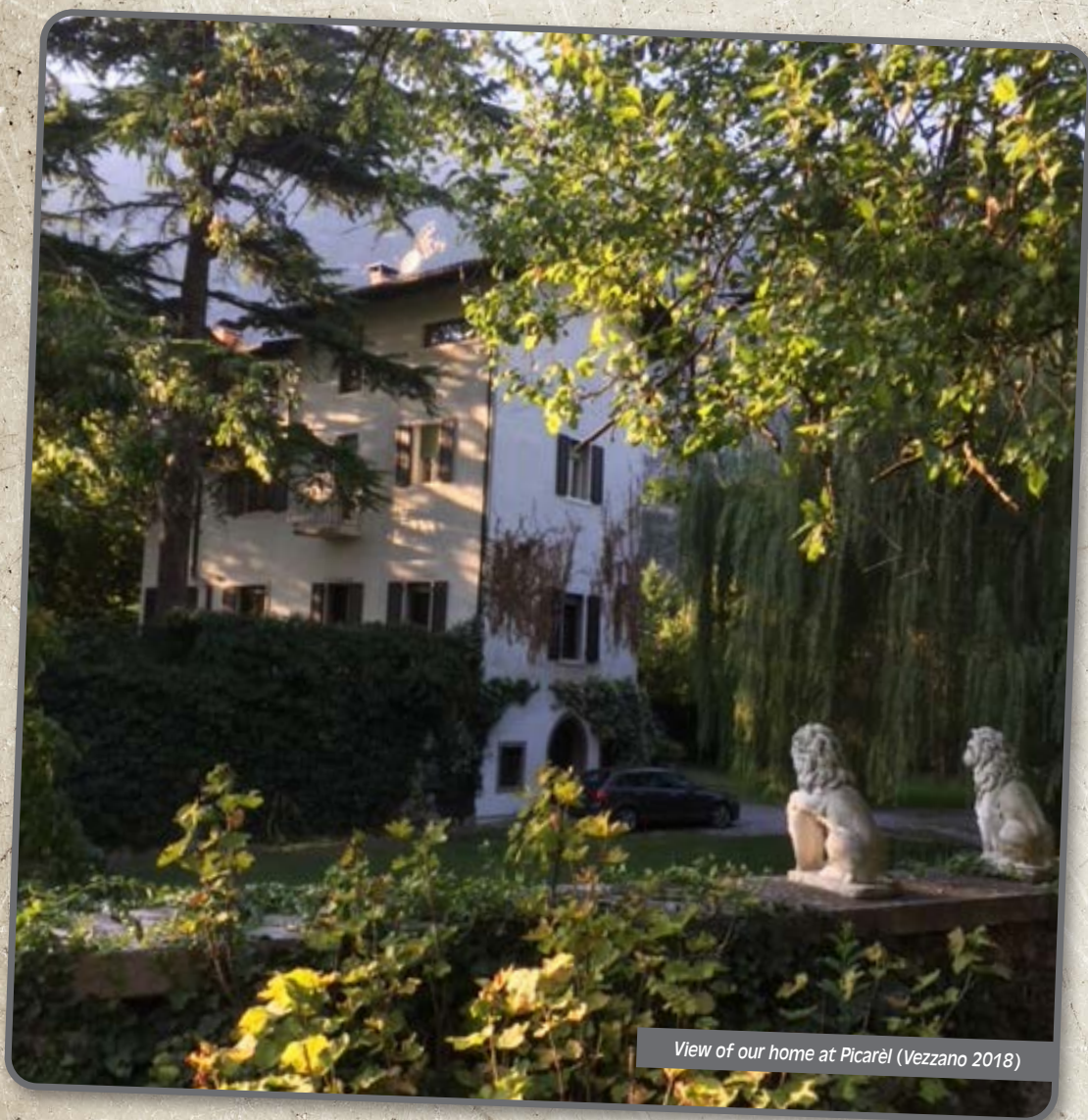




View from the balcony at Miami Beach (2020)



Business trip with Gino at Cascais (Portugal)



View of our home at Picarèl (Vezzano 2018)

QUOTES

Quotes or aphorisms have always fascinated me. They represent the thoughts of people whom I have come across, mostly through books, movies, or personal interaction. Once a quote is thoroughly digested, it becomes a treasured personal possession that can guide us through life, occasionally with humor. Aphorisms are the literature's hand baggage. I listed the chosen quotes at random, crediting their authors. Nowadays, through internet, everyone can look up anything he wants. Hopefully, one remembers that "The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing". (Socrates)

- **William James**

- *The art of being wise, is the art of knowing what to overlook.*

- **Joseph Joubert**

- *To penetrate a thought and to produce a thought are almost the same action.*
- *A thought is as real as a cannonball.*

- **Friedrich von Schlegel**

- *Aphorisms contain the greatest quantity of thought in the smallest place.*
- *Aphorisms give us the world in a phrase.*

- **Chateaubriand**

- *As long as the heart preserves desire, the mind preserves illusion.*

- **James Geary**

- *Aphorisms are the real elixir of life*

- **Winston Churchill**

- *Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.*
- *My tastes are simple. I am easily satisfied by the best.*
- *A lie goes around the world before truth gets its pants on.*
- *We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.*
- *An appeaser is one who feeds the crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.*
- *After a dinner party he had attended the night before, a friend asked Mr. Churchill if he had enjoyed it:*
- *"Well, it would have been splendid if the champagne had been as cold as the soup, the beef as rare as the service, the brandy as old as the fish, and the maid as willing as the Duchess".*
- *Comment about Clement Attlee, Socialist Leader, and Prime Minister: He is a modest man with much to be modest about.*
- *During a long session in the House of Commons, one of Churchill's opponent was droning on in a tedious discourse. Churchill started sleeping. Noting the nap, the*

speaker said, "Must the honorable gentleman fall asleep when I am speaking?"

- Churchill blithely replied, "No, it is purely voluntary".
- At a Richmond, Virginia, reception in Churchill's honor, fried chicken was served.
- When he approached the table, he asked, "May I have a breast"? A lady of Victorian sensibility politely replied: "We southern ladies use the term white meat". The next day, Churchill sent her a corsage with a note: "I would be most obliged if you would pin this on your "white meat", Winston Churchill, M.P.
- You can always count on Americans to do the right thing, after they've tried everything else.
- G.B. Shaw sent two tickets to Winston Churchill for the first night of his new play, with an accompanying note, "I'm enclosing two tickets. Bring a friend, if you have one".
- Winston's reply: I'm sorry that a previous engagement precludes my attending your opening night. I shall be happy to come to the second night, if there is one. (W. C.)

- **May West**

- I only like two types of men, foreign and domestic.

- **Walter Lippmann**

- Life is mortal. Ideas are immortal.

- **Dr. Adriano Pisoni, my father**

- Health is the digit that gives value to all the zeros of life.

- **John Maynard Keynes**

- When the facts change, I alter my conclusions

- **Ralph W. Emerson**

- Common sense is as rare as genius.

- **Somerset Maugham**

- I've always been interested in people, but I never liked them.
- Who am I to explain the infinite complexities of human nature?

- **Peter Ustinov**

- On no account is this man to be put in charge of others (From Peter Ustinov's autobiography, while performing U.K Army training).

- **William Buckley, Jr.**

- Language is an aesthetic as well as an analytical tool. And to slur language is as painful to the well-tempered ear as to slur music
- Ben Franklin
- Bad humor is a vice, an uncleanness of the soul.
- There never was a good war or a bad peace

- **Ludwig Wittgenstein**
 - *If you can't learn to do it well, learn to enjoy doing it badly.*
 - *I used to think I was indecisive, but now I am not so sure.*
- **Simone Weil**
 - *The future is made of the same stuff as the present.*
- **Written by young G. H. W. Bush to his mother:**
 - *Tell the truth. Don't blame people. Be strong. Do your best. Try hard. Forgive. Stay the course*
- **Montesquieu**
 - *I have never known any distress that an hour's reading did not relieve.*
- **Michael Montaigne**
 - *Ignorance is the softest pillow on which man can rest his head*
- **Charles Francis Adams**
 - *Queen Victoria: "Nothing more than a slightly annoying woman"*
- **Ari Onassis**
 - *At your job you must be serious, but at life you must be crazy*
 - *If there weren't any women, all the money in the world wouldn't matter*
 - *The rule is there is no rule*
 - *To be successful you have to act big, think big and talk big.*
 - *The best deals and the best sex happen outside of boundaries*
 - *The secret in business is to know something that nobody knows*
- **Enzo Ferrari**
 - *Without women, the engines don't start.*
- **Zsa Zsa Gabor**
 - *People say I'm a bad housekeeper, but actually I'm a very good one: I kept all the houses of my former husbands.*
 - *How many husbands did you have? Other than my own? Zsa Zsa Gabor*
 - *One of my husbands told me, "It's me or the cat. I miss my husband, occasionally".*
 - *Macho does not mean mucho*
 - *I know nothing about sex, because I was always married.*
- **Hedy Lamar (Actress and mathematician)**
 - *The ladder of success in Hollywood is usually agent, actor, director, producer, leading man. And you are a star if you sleep with them in that order. Crude but true.*

- **Arnold Schwarzenegger**
 - *No matter the nationality, no matter the religion, no matter the ethnic background, America brings out the best in people.*
 - *There is no place, no country, more compassionate, more generous, more accepting and more welcoming than the United States of America.*
- **Swami Sivananda, Hindu spiritual leader**
 - *Put your heart, mind, and soul into even the smallest acts. This is the secret of success.*
- **Groucho Marx**
 - *I have had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it.*
 - *I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet. I have just one day, today, and I'm going to be happy in it.*
 - *Why should I care about posterity? What has posterity ever done for me?*
 - *Please accept my resignation. I don't care to belong to any club that will have me as a member.*
 - *These are my principles, and, if you don't like them, well, I have others.*
- **Galileo Galilei**
 - *I have never met a man so ignorant that I couldn't learn something from him*
 - *You can't teach anybody anything, only make them realize the answers that are already inside them.*
- **Life by anonymous**
 - *The Past is a vague memory*
 - *The Future is an indomitable hope*
 - *Only the Present is,*
 - *But disappears in a flash*
 - *On nothing's wings.*
 - *So, life is but a memory, a hope, and a flash!*
- **Vincent van Gogh**
 - *Normality is a well paved road. It's easy to walk on, but no flowers grow*
- **Anonymous**
 - *The past is history, the future is mystery, the present is a gift: That's why it's called present*
- **Clement Freud (English M.P, writer, journalist, TV personality, master chef etc...)**
 - *If you resolve to give up smoking, drinking and loving, you don't actually live longer; it just seems longer.*
 - *If you mind losing more than you enjoy winning, don't bet.*

- **Ada Levenson**
 - *You don't know a woman until you've had a letter from her.*
- **Calvin Coolidge**
 - *"Perseverance and Determination are omnipotent"!*
 - *Provided one stays healthy, does not run out of money, and perseveres in the right direction (L. E. Pisoni)*
- **Marilyn Monroe**
 - *It would be wonderful to enjoy success without seeing envy in the eyes of those around you.*
 - *I have always had a talent for irritating women since I was fourteen.*
 - *Hollywood is a place where they pay you a thousand dollars for a kiss and fifty cents for your soul.*
 - *I've been on a calendar, but I've never been on time.*
 - *I don't mind living in a man's world, as long as I can be a woman*
- **Michael Caine**
 - *Save your money. You're going to need twice as much money in your old age than you think*
- **George Bernard Shaw**
 - *There is no love sincerer than the love of food*
 - *Animals are my friends, and I don't eat my friends.*
 - *Think of the fierce energy concentrated in an acorn! You bury it in the ground, and it explodes into an oak! Bury a sheep and nothing happens but decay.*
 - *If the English can survive their food, they can survive anything.*
- **William Shakespeare**
 - *How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.*
 - *When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it.*
 - *On the grand clock of time there is but one word, now!*
- **Rose Kennedy**
 - *It has been said, 'time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But it is never gone.*
- **Clara Boothe Luce**
 - *No good deed goes unpunished*
 - *Nature abhors a virgin, a frozen asset*
 - *There is nothing like a good dose of another woman to make a man appreciate his wife.*

- **Albert Einstein**

- *Time is an illusion.*
- *The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits*
- *Try not to be a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value*
- *The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge, but imagination*
- *It's better to be an optimist and be wrong, than to be a pessimist and be right.*
- *Nothing will benefit health or increase chances of survival on earth as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.*
- *If you want a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things*

- **Giacomo Casanova**

- *Nobody can deprive me of the fact that I had a good time.*
- *Those who do not love life, do not deserve it.*
- *Praise the beautiful for their intelligence and the intelligent for their beauty.*

- **Leo Tolstoy**

- *The strongest of all warriors are these two -Time and Patience*

- **John Wayne**

- *I've loved reading, all my life.*

- **Walt Disney**

- *There is more treasure in books than in all the pirates' loot in Treasure Island.*

- **Margaret Thatcher**

- *Knowing how bossy P.M. Margaret Thatcher was, a reporter asked her husband Denis:*
- *Mr. Thatcher, who is really wearing the pants at your home? I do, he replied, and I iron them too.*
- *If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.*
- *I am extraordinary patient, provided I get my own way in the end.*
- *Europe was created by history. America was created by philosophy.*
- *The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money.*
- *I usually make up my mind about a man in ten seconds, and I very rarely change it.*

- **President G.H.W. Bush's letter to his mother when he was a teenager:**

- *Tell the truth. Don't blame people. Be strong. Do your best. Try hard. Forgive. Stay the course*

- **J.W. Goethe**

- *Doubt grows with knowledge.*
- *It is better to be deceived by one's friend than to deceive them.*
- *One always has time enough, if one will apply it well.*
- *One must ask children and birds how cherries and strawberries taste.*
- *Goethe's daily recommendation:*

- *Hear a little song, read a good poem, look at a fine picture. If possible, speak a few reasonable words.*
- *Only he who does not need to command or obey is really great.*
- *Learn how to become old with a young heart.*
- *Goethe was asked which three things he would take to an island. He stated: Poetry, a beautiful woman and enough bottles of the world's finest wines to survive this dry period!" Then he was asked what he would leave back first, if he was allowed to take only two things to the island. He replied: "The poetry!" Slightly surprised, the man asked the net question: "And, Sir, what would you leave back if only one was allowed?" And Goethe thought for a couple of minutes and answered: "It depends on the vintage!"*
- **Ernest Hemingway**
 - *Wine is the most civilized thing in the world*
- **Katharine Hepburn**
 - *If you always do what interests you, at least one person is pleased.*
 - *Life is hard. After all, it kills you.*
- **Dr. Paul D. White**
 - *A vigorous five-mile walk will do more good for an unhappy but otherwise healthy adult than all the medicine and psychology in the world.*
- **Doris Day**
 - *I find beauty in animals. I find beauty everywhere. I find beauty in my garden*
 - *I never met an animal I didn't like, and I can't say the same thing about people.*
 - *I have found that when you are deeply troubled there are things you get from the silent devoted companionship of a dog that you can get from no other source*
- **Anonymous**
 - *He who is content with little has everything*
- **Leonardo da Vinci**
 - *A well-spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings happy death*
 - *You can have no dominion greater or less than over yourself.*
- **Michelangelo**
 - *There is no greater harm than that of time wasted*
- **Pablo Picasso**
 - *Good artists copy, great artists steal*
- **Anonymous**
 - *Humans and animals float along the unknown river of life at different speeds until the end, which, sooner or later, is the only certainty.*

- **General Frido von Senger und Etterlin**
 - *At the end of an interview by a British historian who had fought in Italy during WWII, the German General Frido von Senger und Etterlin, former Oxford Scholar and Commander of the Panzer Corps in Italy, commented:*
 - *“May I give you a word of advice? Next time you invade Italy, do not start at the bottom.*
- **John Rockefeller**
 - *A friendship founded on business is better than business founded on friendship*
- **Famous vegetarians:**
 - *Buddha; Pythagoras; Leonardo da Vinci; Gandhi; G. B. Shaw; Albert Einstein*
- **Benito Mussolini**
 - *To govern Italy is not impossible, it's useless.*
- **Will Rogers**
 - *A fool and his money are soon elected*
 - *I am not a member of any organized party, I am a democrat.*
 - *Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgement.*
- **Clint Eastwood**
 - *My whole life has been one big improvisation.*
 - *Chasing fame is like chasing ashes blown away by the wind; it neither ignites a fire nor stays put.*
- **Jack Nicholson**
 - *When you look at things retrospectively, you rarely regret the things you did, but you might regret things that you didn't do.*
- **Michel de Montaigne**
 - *Ignorance is the softest pillow on which a man can rest his head*
 - *Confidence in others' honesty is no light testimony of one's own integrity*
 - *I quote others in order the better to express myself*
 - *The most certain sign of wisdom is cheerfulness*
 - *Rejoice in the things that are present; all else is beyond thee*
 - *A wise man sees as much as he ought, not as much as he can*
 - *The world is but a perpetual see-saw*
 - *The whole world is all carcass and vanity, the shadow of a shadow, a play and in one word, just nothing.*
 - *There is nothing more notable in Socrates than that he found time, when he was an old man, to learn music and dancing, and thought it time well spent.*

- **Andrew Carnegie, the richest man in the world in 1903.**
 - *All achievements, all earned riches have their beginning in an idea.*
 - *Watch the costs and the profits will take care of themselves.*
 - *The man who dies rich dies in disgrace.*
 - *You cannot push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb a little.*
 - *People who are unable to motivate themselves must be content with mediocrity, no matter.*
 - *It's easier to change the course of a river, than the nature of a man (Chinese proverb)*
 - *Two things have always surprised me: the intelligence of the animals and the bestiality of humans. (Anonymous)*
 - *Humans are the only animals who make themselves uglier than they are (Bubba)*
- **Will Durant (historian, writer, philosopher, teacher)**
 - *There have been only 248 of the past 3,421 years free of war.*
 - *Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.*
- **Daniel J. Boorstin**
 - *A wonderful thing about a book, in contrast to a computer screen, is that you can take it to bed with you.*
- **Giuseppe Prezzolini:**
 - *In Italy, nothing can be obtained legally, even legal things . Even these are obtained through illicit ways: Favors, recommendation, pressure, blackmail, etc...*
 - *Italian citizens are divided in two categories: Furbi (sly, cunning, crafty) and fessi (fools, goofs, suckers)*
- **Diogenes (410-323 B.C)**
 - *When the lamp goes off, all the women are the same*
- **Woody Allen**
 - *I don't know the question, but the answer is sex*
 - *The difference between sex and love is the fact that sex relieves tension and love causes it.*
 - *My films are the therapy for my debilitating depression. In institutions people weave baskets. I make films.*
 - *I should go to Paris and jump over the Eiffel tower. If I took the Concorde, I could die three hours earlier.*
- **George Best**
 - *I spent 90% of my money on women and booze. The rest, I just squandered. (This quote was suggested by Marco Berlanda, a master pizza maker at his "Boccon d'Oro Restaurant" in Arco.*
 - *On David Beckham: He cannot kick with his left foot, he cannot head a ball, he cannot tackle, and he doesn't score many goals. Apart from that he's all right.*

- **Seneca**
 - *Learn to like yourself. What you think about yourself is much more important than what others think of you.*
- **Indro Montanelli**
 - *Italians lose soccer matches as if they were wars, and wars as if they were soccer matches.*
- **Adriano Pisoni**
 - *Health is the unit that gives value to all the zeros of life*
 - *One must accept whatever everyone can and is willing to give*
- **Teddy Roosevelt ‘s “The Man in the Arena”, delivered this message at the Sorbonne on April 23, 1910**
 - *It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”*
- **Bertrand Russell**
 - *The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.*
 - *The secret to happiness is to face the fact that the world is horrible, horrible, horrible*
 - *Man is a credulous animal and must believe in something; in the absence of good grounds for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones.*
 - *We love our habits more than our income, often more than our life.*
 - *A smile happens in a flash, but its memory can last a lifetime.*
- **Luciano De Crescenzo, Italian writer**
 - *Wealth is a relative condition; one is rich if he earns more than he spends. Vice versa, one is poor if his needs are higher than his income.*
 - *Dogs are superior to men because they learn more things from us than we learn from them.*
- **Theodore Roosevelt**
 - *The courage to dream mighty things*
- **Walt Disney**
 - *If you can dream it, you can do it.*
 - *It's kind of fun to do he impossible*

- **Oscar Wilde**
 - *He has no enemies, but he's intensely disliked by his friends.*
 - *Sorry for the long letter, but I didn't have time for a short one.*
- **Epicurus**
 - *Not what we have, but what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance*
- **Mahatma Gandhi**
 - *You're serene when, what you say, what you think, and what you do, are in perfect harmony.*
- **Mark Twain**
 - *When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have him around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned.*
 - *It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble, it's what you know for sure that ain't so!*
- **Alphonse De Lamartine**
 - *We cannot have two hearts, one for the animals and one for men. In cruelty towards the former and cruelty to the latter there is no difference, but in the victim ...*
- **Jacques Barzun**
 - *Old age is like learning a new profession, and not one of your own choosing.*
- **Cicero**
 - *There is no place more delightful than one's fireplace.*
 - *Nobody can give you wiser advice than yourself*
- **Charles D. Warner**
 - *To poke a wood fire is a more solid enjoyment than almost anything else in the world*
- **Marcel Proust**
 - *Like many intellectuals, he was incapable of saying a simple thing in a simple way.*
 - *Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were.*
 -
- **(Anonymous)**
 - *Train your mind to always see the positive side of every situation*
- **Marcus Aurelius**
 - *Felicitas tuae vitae a natura mentium tuarum pendet*
 - *The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.*

WINE QUOTES BY PEOPLE WHOM I WOULD HAVE BEEN DELIGHTED TO SHARE AN EVENING WITH:

- **Aristophanes**
 - *Bring me a cup of wine, so that I may wet my mind and say something clever*
- **Donald Sutherland at Miami Beach**
 - *Hey man, I'm drinking wine, eating cheese, and catching some rays*
- **Zorba the Greek**
 - *How simple a thing is happiness: a glass of wine, a little bread, the sound of the sea*
- **J. W. Goethe**
 - *Wine rejoices the heart and joy is the mother of all virtues*
- **Robert Louise Stevenson**
 - *Wine is poetry in a bottle*
- **Cardinal Richelieu**
 - *If God forbade drinking, would He have made wine so good?*
- **John Maynard Keynes**
 - *My only regret in life is that I did not drink more Champagne*
- **Thomas Jefferson**
 - *I think it is a great error to consider a heavy tax on wines as a tax on luxury. On the contrary, it is a tax on the health of our citizens*
- **Dom Perignon at his first sip of champagne**
 - *Come quickly! I am tasting stars!*
- **Sir Alexander Fleming**
 - *If penicillin can cure those that are ill, wine can bring the dead back to life*
- **Leonardo da Vinci**
 - *I believe great happiness is with people born whence the good wine comes*
- **Louis Pasteur**
 - *Wine is the most hygienic and healthy of drinks*
- **Lorenzo Da Ponte, Don Giovanni**
 - *Long live women and good wine, the glory and livelihood of humanity*

AL PACINO IN SCENT OF A WOMAN

The are no mistakes in the Tango, darling, it's not like life. It's simple. If you get all tangled up, just tango on.

- **Walter Bagalot**
 - *The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do*
- **Ryan Blair**
 - *If it is important to you, you will find a way. If not, you'll find an excuse*
- **Confucius**
 - *It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop*
- **Einstein**
 - *If you want a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things*
- **Lao Tzu**
 - *If you are depressed, you're living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.*



14 Habits Of Phenomenally Likable People

1

They develop a positive mental attitude and let it be seen and felt by others.

2

They always speak in a carefully disciplined, friendly tone.

3

They pay close attention to someone speaking to them.

4

They are able to maintain their composure in all circumstances.

5

They are patient.

6

They keep an open mind.

7

They smile when speaking with others.

8

They know that not all their thoughts need to be expressed.

9

They don't procrastinate.

10

They engage in at least one good deed a day.

11

They find a lesson in failure rather than brood over it.

12

They act as if the person they are speaking to is the most important person in the world.

13

They praise others in a genuine way without being excessive.

14

They have someone they trust point out their flaws.

Author's comments

When I read other people's autobiographies, the last page is filled with names of people who helped them to compose it. In my case, it has been a fifteen-year long journey by myself, frequently slowed down by "life commitments", mostly due to business survival. In fact, I often compared the adventure of Gourmet Italia to a raft tossing in the ocean.

Considering that I am a poor organizer, it's a miracle that Gourmet Italia has been able to survive in the international business world. In addition to the products on the shelves and in the freezers, we had seven "Gourmet Italia Pasta Caf  s" to run in the American commissaries in Germany, one at Lakenheath (UK), and one at Ft. Belvoir, near the Pentagon, in Virginia. Fortunately, in running the restaurants, my friend chef Frank W. Amato had a gift for selecting and managing the personnel. When I had real problems with the personnel at Ft. Belvoir, he flew over to remedy the situation. From 1997 to 2010 the quality of our meals based on the best products of the Mediterranean diet was triumphantly successful. An oasis of quality in the desert of big company mediocracy./

Unfortunately, although Gourmet Italia was paying taxes in the U.S. and operating only in the American military installation, the German fiscal system came into the picture and convinced the DeCA (Department of Defense Agency) lawyers to withhold our income in order to give it to the Germans. On that occasion, small was not beautiful, since I did not have the economic strength to start an international litigation. None of the lawyers that I consulted were able to find a solution. Finally, after several sleepless nights, the solution came to me: Liquidate the corporation Gourmet Italia, Inc., close the Pasta Caf  s and operate with a new corporation, which I called "Gourmet Italia-USA, Inc. That allowed me to continue the activity of providing the finest products to the DeCa commissaries on the shelves and in the freezers. The fact that the new company had the same people (me), accountant and address was conveniently overlooked by some unknown good souls, who appreciated the excellent products that I was providing to the American military environment: i.e. Whole Foods Market-type products at commissary prices./

Carol used her editing skills to improve my text, especially regarding the nuances that only a well educated mother tongue possesses in order to navigate through the difficulties and perversities of the English language. /

I am also grateful to my good friend Elke Glavan who used her professional skills to eliminate several editing errors./

Finally, the young Italian editor Michele Saltori skillfully managed to place the pictures and their stories in a better order than I would have been able to do.

*Enzo Larry Pisoni
enzolarry@gmail.com*

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Carol Elizabeth Nicholas, was born at Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital, NYC. The family later moved to Houston, Texas and Salt Lake City, Utah, and when she was nine years old, to Los Alamos, New Mexico, where her father, Warren Nicholas, a nuclear physicist, worked with Enrico Fermi and other eminent scientists.

Her mother, Elizabeth Perkins, graduated from the University of Utah. Her fellow students and friends were John Willard Marriott and Linda Sheets, who later founded the worldwide Marriott hotel and restaurant chain.

When she was thirteen Carol's family transferred to Washington D.C. and at eighteen, she became the first female disc jockey in the Washington area. She attended the American University and graduated with a degree in English Literature.

Her family was part of the social scene and in 1956 she briefly met Ethel, Bob, and JFK Kennedy. She also met U.S Senator Estes Kefauver (Tennessee), who offered her a job as his junior assistant during his later unsuccessful campaign for President of the U.S. She decided not to accept the offer.

The rest of the story continues when she met Enzo Pisoni on board Queen Elizabeth I on June 8, 1960.

Enzo "Larry" Pisoni" was born in Roncesgno (Trento), where his father, Dr. Adriano Pisoni, met the vivacious Amelia Bazzanella, a local actress and singer. When Amelia was sixteen, she spent a year with relatives in Nice (France). She never forgot that experience that she summed up with the following expression of the Italian immigrants who lived in France: "Bon Dieu de la France, celui d'Italie n'est pas bon". Enzo grew up in Vezzano (Trento) and completed his classical studies (Italian, Latin, Greek and German) at the Liceo Classico G. Prati in Trento.

Inspired by his idealistic, philosophical father, who saw the United States of America as heaven on earth, at age twenty, Enzo decided to attend Mount Union College-University in Alliance, Ohio, although the only English word he knew was "OK". Eventually, he managed to get a small financial help from the Salem Rotary Club, and graduate with a B average.

The "total immersion" in America, in competition and friendship with the "natives", opened his mind and allowed him to wander with imagination and no limits between the USA and Europe.

At 87 years, Enzo-Larry is still an active consultant to his www.gourmet-italia.com American corporation, run now by his "female-Schwarzenegger" partner, Erica.

Recently, he decided to return to Vezzano, where, together with Carol, he works on improving the environment for humans and animals. Last, but not least, he's still dancing the Argentine Tango with "mucha pasion".