

BOLOGNA

When I arrived at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the fall of 1967, as an Assistant Professor, there were over one thousand students enrolled in Italian classes but there were no opportunities for these students to study in Italy. I thought that this situation should be rectified and, as any neophyte would do, I rushed to the Office of International Studies and Programs and spoke to the Dean, Henry Hill. The Dean agreed with me that we should provide our students of Italian an opportunity to study in Italy, but he felt that we should start with a summer program rather than an academic year, as I was suggesting. If the summer program worked well, he reasoned, we can always expand it to an academic year. I accepted his views.

We also agreed that I should explore the possibility of establishing the summer program either at the University of Siena or the University of Pisa. The University of Siena gave a prompt and positive reply to our inquiry and thus, began the process of working out the details and the logistics for the implementation of the program. The problem was that every time I provided positive answers to our questions, the Dean, a very resourceful person, would come up with additional questions to be submitted to the University of Siena. This process went on for months. It reminded me of the Roman general, Quintus Paulus Maximus who sought every possible excuse not to engage Hannibal in battle. In reality, Dean Henry Hill wanted to make sure that the program would be a success, and that I not be associated

with a program that failed. So, he was really trying to protect me. Nevertheless, these negotiations went on for several months until one fine day, in the fall of 1968, I received a telephone call from Dean Henry Hill telling me that there was a person in his office whom I would be interested in meeting. I went to his office and there was this handsome, affable gentleman, Walter Nugent, a Dean at Indiana University. Dean Nugent explained that Indiana University had a very fine academic year program in the city of Bologna where students took regular classes at the University alongside Italian students. He went on to explain that their faculty members in Italian who wanted to serve as resident directors had already done so; therefore, they were in need of a director for 1969-1970 and a number of qualified students to participate in order to keep the program financially viable.

I do not believe in miracles, but if there is such thing, a miracle did take place that day in that office. I could not believe my ears! Our students of Italian were going to be given the opportunity to study in Italy not in a seven week summer program but for an entire academic year; not as a group in classes specifically designed for them, but they were going to be taking classes alongside Italian students at the university; not in a provincial city of some 50,000 people, but in a cosmopolitan city of a half million people. It was truly an incredible opportunity.

I was selected to serve as director for 1969-70, and with my directorship began the long, harmonious collaboration with administrators and professors at Indiana University.

After my directorship, six other professors of Italian at the University of Wisconsin served as directors. This gave an opportunity to professors of Italian to spend an academic year in Bologna, in the city with the oldest university in the world, to develop professional working relationships with their counterparts at the University of Bologna, and to work with the same group of students for the academic year.

The academic year program in Bologna was also a defining time for the participating students who clarified in their minds the careers they wished to pursue while mastering the finer points of the language, understanding and appreciating Italian culture, performing academically at the university and, as some Athenian philosophers would have it; the students saw themselves as citizens of the world at the end of this experience.

I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking Indiana University for providing such an enriching and transformational experience to students and faculty. I would also like to thank the University of Wisconsin for its commitment to study abroad programs and international studies in general and finally, I would like to thank the University of Bologna for being such welcoming and cooperative host.