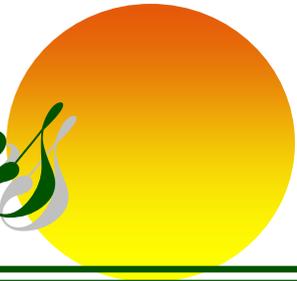


Lifestyles



Sunday, June 23, 2001

Buongiorno!

***Russellville
native
takes comfort
in the goodness
of people on a
trip to Italy***



Story and pictures by Paul Vitale

ROME - As I stare out the opened *persianas* (shutters) in my room at the Hotel Gioberti in Rome, Italy, I am fascinated by the sure hustle yet simplistic way of European life.

At the late hour of twenty past one, I hear the sounds of motor scooters racing down Via Gioberti towards the city's major train station. The trash and debris are no match for the street sweeper weaving in and out of garbage dumpsters while its flashing yellow lights warn pedestrians of each move.

Tour buses one by one arrive

at their final destination for the evening and small cars sounding their horns jet through the traffic lights that now blink continuous "red."

A way of life that seems so hectic, yet simple. Especially if you are like me and are experiencing Europe for the very first time.

I have been one of the fortunate individuals who have traveled the United States extensively at a fairly young age. From Los Angeles to New York, I have seen spectacular sights and experienced

extraordinary landscapes. The tides crashing against the rocky shoreline of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are powerful. The snowcapped mountains in Colorado and Nevada are breathtaking. The festive atmosphere and history of New Orleans's French Quarter appeal to a cheerful mood.

However, as extraordinary as the landscapes are and how powerful the tides' thrust is, this world revolves around people. That is, "the goodness of people."

Throughout all of my travels,



The beauty of Florence includes bridges with residences built onto them.

a common theme exists in my mind. No matter where you travel or where you live, this world revolves around those who occupy space and those who bring it to life.

My two cousins from Pennsylvania and I came up with the idea to travel to Italy during a conversation last summer. My grandparents, who set sail for America in the late 20's, originated from Calabria, Italy. When they left their southern village, for the promise of a better life in America, the remainder of the family stayed behind. As a generation passed, our family in America lost touch with our Italian relatives. That was, until the summer of 2000 when a new connection was made thanks to an Internet search engine and the Yellow Pages. Rome is where our newfound relatives make their home today.

It did not take me long to realize the beauty of the country where I landed while peering out the window of our *tassi* (taxi) in transit from Rome International Airport to our hotel. Fields of red poppy, graceful trees and flowers, rolling hills of green and grape vines galore. I had never seen

anything quite like this. A landscape where not only plants and trees dwelled, but where history was built one stone at a time. Rome, which was founded in 753 BC, originated when groups of shepherds and farmers settled on the hill known as the *Palatine*. With this, the history book of Western civilization was opened and many lifetimes lived out.

The emotions that occur when you begin to discover the art, history and archaeology found in *Roma* are beyond words. The closest description – it's a holy experience. The city's religious and civil architecture, the churches, the palaces, the monuments, the squares, villas and parks all make up incredible sites to see. *Piazza San Pietro* (Saint Peter's Square) in the Vatican City, the Spanish Steps or *Scalinata di Trinita dei Monti*, the ancient Roman Coliseum, the Forum and Palatine and the *Fontana di Trevi* are all truly amazing. The Basilicas inspire, the statues are astonishing and the springs gushing from the fountains refresh you

during your journey in this hectic, yet simple city.

As I walked up the street towards the train station to board the *Euro Star*, bound for Florence, I began to discover something truly special. The sounds of the *una motorettas* (motor scooters) subsided, the smell of the buses and cars faded, the fascinating sites and architecture stood still and the goodness of people came to life.

"Buongiorno" (good morning), the shop owners said as I entered their boutiques. "How can I help you?" or "What would you like?" were asked with a grin and a smile. A true feeling of pride could be felt as I began to experience people with different colors of skin, hairstyles new to me and fashion, oh fashion that's simply elegant.

Mothers and daughters holding hands as they walked down the narrow cobblestone streets window shopping for the perfect find. Men and women alike greeting one another with a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Couples lounging around coffee



St. Peter's Cathedral in Vatican City.

shops drinking cappuccino, sharing *gelato* (Italian ice cream) and enjoying each other's



A window with planters, a not uncommon scene in Italy.

company. Romantic wedding ceremonies taking place in neighborhood churches while the *bambini* (children) play kick ball in the streets. Family and friends not seeming to be so caught up in time, but in conversation as they share a toast at their favorite restaurant before the *tortellini*, *spaghetti*, or *cannelloni* is served.

A place where the breeze still dries clothes hanging on lines strung above the flower boxes on each window. Where beggars, business people and explorers all meet at the end of the day to catch the streetcar or metro while musical notes from an accordion ring from a corner cafe. Where the type of car or

scooter you drive is not seemingly important to the average person. Where fashionable sunglasses and shoes are noticeable, but where the joy of family stands out.

For me personally, traveling to Italy for the first time and meeting my relatives has been something extraordinary. An adventure that intrigues a person like myself, for as the simple things in life are clearly becoming much more important.

Touring the world can be exhilarating, exploring the landscapes and sites memorable, but observing people from all different cultures and languages not only occupying space, but bringing it to life – now, that's unforgettable. For our world revolves around the goodness of people and for that, I'm thankful.

About the author

By following his dream of helping others find their niche in life, Paul Vitale has become one of America's most sought-out training and motivational speakers.

A native of Russellville, Arkansas, Vitale graduated from the University of Central Arkansas in 1995 with a degree in mass communications & journalism.

Since founding Vital Communications, Inc. in 1996, Vitale has authored two books and has delivered his message of affirmation to thousands of people throughout America. His stress on the importance of a positive attitude, a strong work ethic and other vital concepts, coupled with his energetic and enjoyable presentation style have made him one of the most popular keynote speakers at hundreds of meetings, conventions, seminars and training conferences across the country.

For additional information, visit paulvitale.com or call 501-663-1454 or 501-868-8195.



People congregate in a park in Rome.