

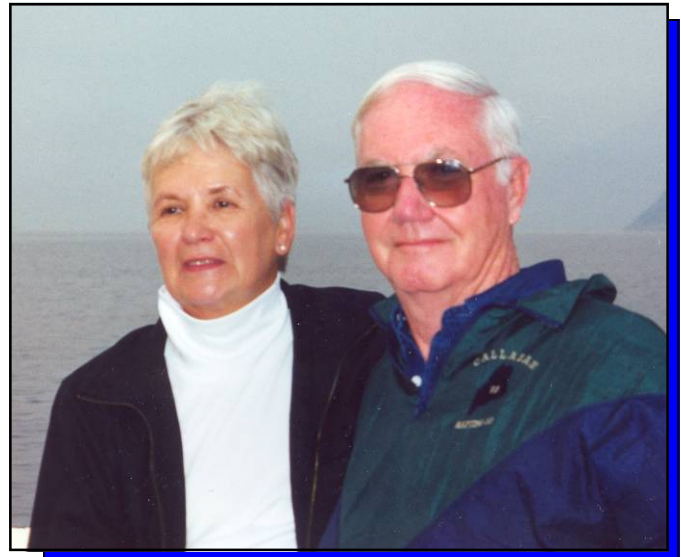
Once upon a time long, long, ago. Jack and Janet went to Italy. They went on a tour and had a wonderful time. So good, in fact that Janet wanted to do it again some day. That “someday” came around in 2006. They decided to go again around the same time. Late September.

Dick Poirier had mentioned to Jack Jr. that the next time your folks go to Europe they would like to go. Seemed like a good idea. Karen heard, and said “How about the Murphy’s”. OK said Jack and Janet. Can you see where this is headed? ‘What about the Mantil’s” said Ken? OK. Now Jack & Janet seldom traveled without their regular traveling companions the Manzi’s. Soooo send out an email Janet said. They probably will not want to go. Jack did. It simply said...We are planning to go to Italy in September. Anyone interested? The Mantil’s were first to respond. Joe had other travel plans around the same time, they declined. Then in what seemed like a flash...Yes, yes, yes. All three were on board...What had we done?

And so it began.....

We decided to begin with a compatibility weekend at Jeanne’s place on the Cape in June. With the exception of Joan Murphy’s, “brain tumor” it went rather well. Looked like we could make it for two weeks. The dinner at the Chart room was the clincher. Joan’s Dr. cleared her for takeoff a few days later and we were golden.

Janet did most of the leg work with the travel agent. Mary, the agent, was most helpful all along the way. Jack was elected as “Group Leader” a very wise choice. We were pretty much done late in the summer when some terrorists decided to irritate Lorinda and were arrested with a plan to blow up an airplane in Heathrow airport. “That’s it I’m out” was Lorinda’s response. A little dicey for a while, but someone made the suggestion, (Jeanne, I think) to change from



British Airways and go Delta to avoid Heathrow. Good idea. Everyone settled down and we were back on plan (Whatever that was).

We were to meet at Logan for lunch since our plane left at 5:00 for JFK to connect with our Italy flight leaving at 7:25. Jack & Janet arrived a little early at 11 AM. Poirier's a little later and then the Manzi's. We went to Legal Seafood for lunch. No Murphy's yet. They arrived in plenty of time and we joined them for desert.

We just hung out and chatted in the Airport. For some reason Bob went up to the boarding crew and asked about the flight. There was an indication that it might be a little late. OH OH. Not so, it left about 15 minutes late. Still plenty of time. Ya right.

We arrived at JFK around 6:00 to 6:15. We're OK. Then the plane sat on the runway waiting for a parking spot. Now it was getting close. We waited for 1 hour.

7:15. I asked where we were coming in. The Stewardess said gate 3. We left from gate 6. Should be easy. We had 15 minutes to go 3 gates. She missed her gate by 20!! We came in at gate 23!! I don't have to explain, (Nor could I) what it was like to see 8 old farts running to catch the flight. To give you an idea, Jack was first, followed by Jeanne and Lorinda. Jack was carrying two bags and dropped one for Jeanne. What a guy!

We made it. We boarded, they closed the doors and we took off. WHEW.

The seat assignments were all screwed up. Callahan's and Poirier's together that's all. It was a long (7 hrs 15 min), boring and uneventful flight. Lorinda did her best to get juiced up on wine, but it tasted so bad she could not.

Day 2 Tuesday 9/26/06

We arrived in Rome at 10AM Italy time. We were met by a greeter. She was less



than gracious and Dick asked if she would be our guide. I assured him that she would not. Good thing. We went for the luggage and Lorinda had a bag missing. Our greeter was not too helpful, but they assured Lorinda that the bag would show up and they would deliver it to the hotel. It did and they did before we left Rome.

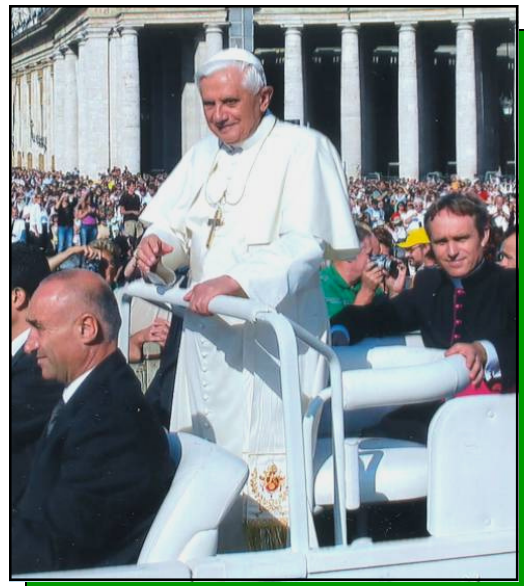
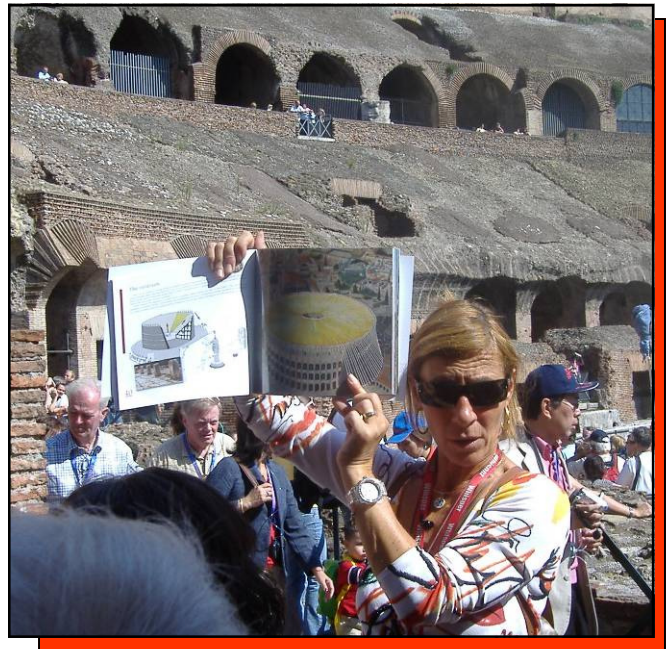
We crashed for the afternoon waiting to meet with our tour guide. Millie (Meelee in Italian).

Millie was great and just got better as the time went on. We broke up the meeting and went for a welcome dinner at Due Fontanelle.

It was the first of a succession of very good Italian cuisine. It was also the beginning of the “Elite Eight” getting to sit together. Millie did her best to keep us together the whole trip. Met some nice folks who joined our table. Back to the hotel for a needed good nights sleep.

Day 3 Wednesday 9/27/06

Split off to another guide for the Vatican tour. She too was excellent. We saw the Sistine chapel St. Peters Sq. and the Popes library. It was very nice. We went out to the Sq. This was a day for the Popes blessing. I think the Pope saw Dick and said “What the hell, I’ll give it my best shot”. The guide told us just where to stand when the Pope was in the “Popemobile”. Sure enough he came right in front of us. We were no where near the front, so Jeanne, Dick and I just held up the cameras and shot. Dick got a great one. Took a short shopping break and then left for the Coliseum. And the Roman Forum. Hard to explain the history that you are looking at. Given what went on at the Coliseum it’s an unusual tourist attraction. The Forum always fascinated me. That’s where Brutus really stabbed Julius Caesar! Back to the hotel for a break and lunch. We went to a small sidewalk café’ just across the street from the hotel. “Gratta Azzurra” The tables were all tables for



2. We asked the waiter if we could move to tables of 4. He seemed to ignore us, so we started ourselves. Sure enough he came to help and got another guy to help as well. They had to get more tables and chairs from down in the restaurant. He was a character. Bob asked in Italian what his name was. "Tonino" or Tony as we know it. He was straight out of central casting. Making faces at all the girls walking buy. Grabbing the air at their butts. Dick kept asking for a picture, and again he seemed to ignore him. Then he grabbed Lorinda and posed for a picture with her. Great spot lots of laughs.

4PM;

Walking tour of Rome. 2 ½ hours. Saw many sights including the Spanish Steps and the Pantheon.

The history of all these places is hard to comprehend.

We did get an appreciation of our group, when another tour group passed us all wearing orange hats.

Now that's tacky!!!

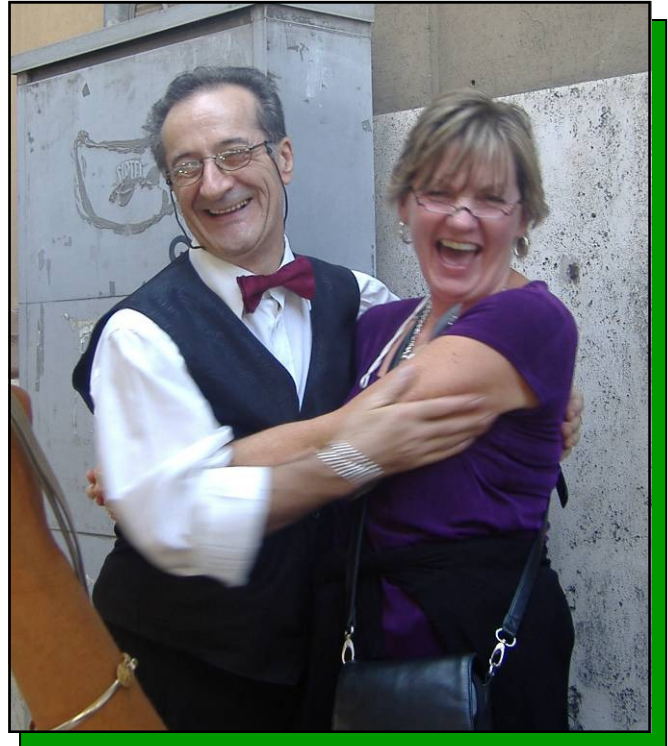
Went to dinner with the group at Quo Vadis. We were late getting there. There was at least one other tour already seated. There were tables for six. But, as usual Millie had a table for eight for us. We laughed the whole night. They had a group going from table to table singing. I couldn't remember the song that "Raymond" did on their Italy show. I hummed it and Bob (again) knew it in Italian. They played it for us. Dennis asked for "When Irish Eyes are smiling" He knew it, but not all the words. We did and the whole place joined in. Someone told them about a honeymoon couple with our group and they played "Buona Notte" from the "Lady and the Tramp". The lead singer sang a nice rendition of "Return to Me" to Lorinda and Joan.

Ended the night with a beautiful rendition of "Ave Maria".

Great way to start the tour.

Day 4 Thursday 9/28.06

Off to Pisa and Florence. Leaning Tower was interesting. Mostly a pit stop on the

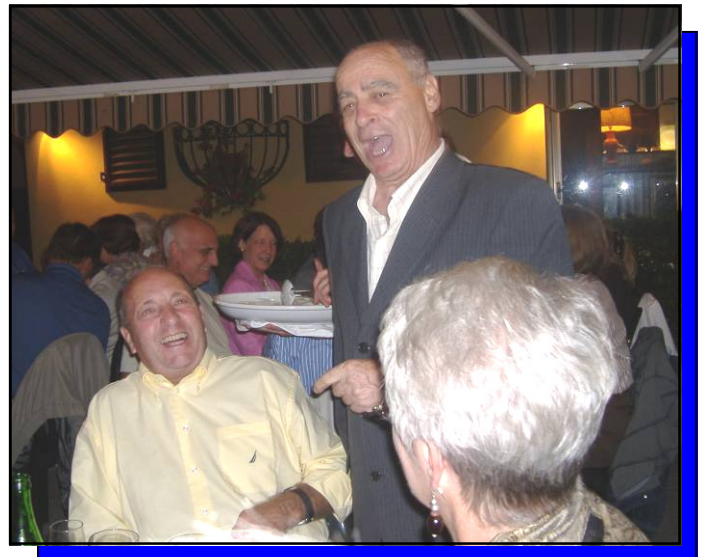


way to Florence. A real tourist trap type of place. But interesting none the less. Took the obligatory pictures and left. Arrived at the Mediterraneo Hotel in Florence. Very nice place as usual. Dinner at the hotel. First time there was no table for 8. Millie set up 2 tables for 4. Callahan-Murphy and Manzi-Poirier. Ordered wine, naturally. Our waiter brought it to the table. No price list. He said 15.00, Bob complained that his was 20.00. Waiter said OK he'd charge us 20.00 also. Good food, good time. Off to bed.



Day 5 Friday 9/29/06

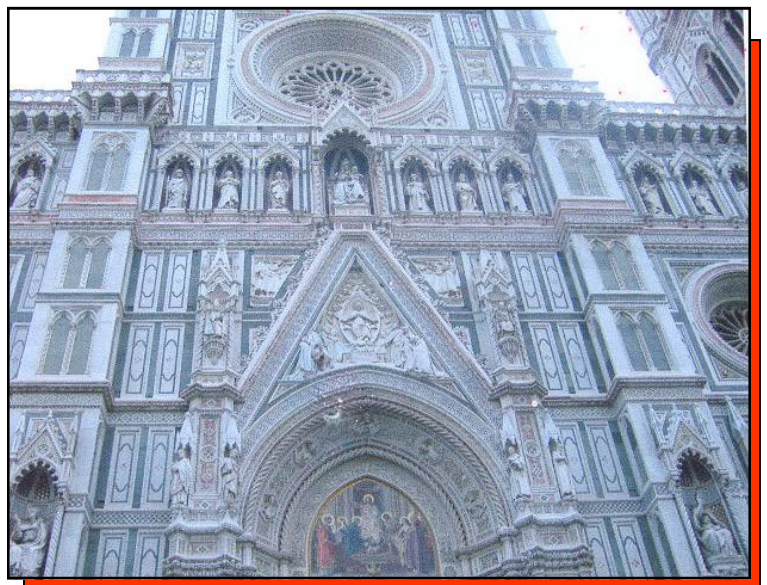
Went to meet our guide. He was excellent. A real passion for what he did. Got a detailed history of the David Statue, and of Michelangelo. Had the afternoon to shop. Bob, Jack & Dennis went to a wine tasting thing. Not bad. Then joined the rest for shopping. Back to the hotel, which was in walking distance of the square. Had drinks at the outdoor bar waiting for the bus for dinner. Great spot again. Had an Italian tenor. Another party asked for "Danny Boy" no chance. He was very attentive to Jeanne. Good taste I thought. She was, after all, a McCarthy girl. Found out later that Bob had given him a good tip early on. Sorry Jeanne. Another fun night!



Day 6, Saturday 9/30/06

Left Florence and headed for Milan, Switzerland, and eventually Lake Maggiore.

The Poirier's and the Callahan's had the front seats. Great view, but under pressure to keep awake during Millie's history lessons. Mind you, they were very interesting, but her soothing voice had an effect, and you had to close your eyes. When she knew she was losing the group, she'd abruptly quit for a break. Dick said that she quit once when my head slumped. There is no hard evidence to support that claim. However. I did

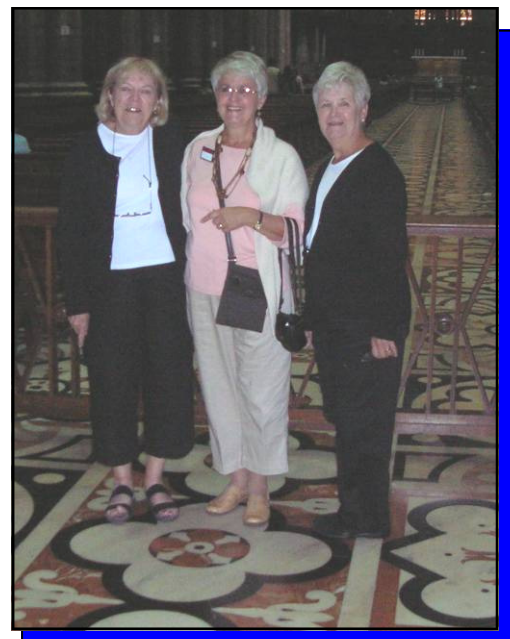
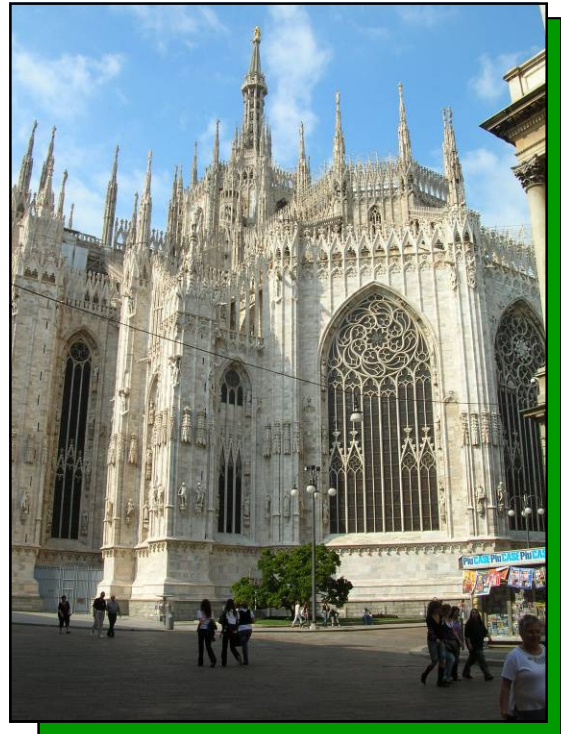


see Lorinda gently close Dick's mouth on a few occasions.

It was a beautiful ride up through the mountains to Milan. Milan was mostly a lunch break stop. Short sightseeing trip with Millie then lunch. Cathedral took four hundred years to build. By the size of it, I'd say it should have taken six hundred. But, then I've built very few Cathedral's. When we were inside there were many people taking photos. We asked a young man to take ours. He nodded and the asked the same of us. We did, but Dennis managed to get in their photo. You wonder where the "Ugly American" came from? Millie told a story about Milan's involvement in the celluloid business. She substantiated it by the story of where the word film came from...

Fabric, Italian. Laminated, Milan. Ergo FILM. I said she made it up. She counted with "A certain member of the group may be walking soon." I was quiet the rest of the way. She had a sense of humor.

We left Milan and headed for Switzerland. Very nice, right on a lake. I think it's on the tour for the sake of saying we were in Switzerland. Very nice spot though. We just walked around and shopped for a while. Managed to get in a quick glass of wine. The Boarder crossing in Switzerland was without incident. Our driver seems to know everyone!! We left Switzerland and headed south down the east coast to Lake Maggiore. We went along the shore route and it was beautiful to say the least. The road was narrow and some of the passing with other tour buses was interesting. The Hotel (The Grand Hotel Bristol) was magnificent. Good size rooms and all. However, NO CURLING IRONS... A near tragedy for our coiffure conscious wives. They somehow managed to look great as always. I think the solution was "curlers" of all things. While taking a stroll that night along the lake, I noticed one of the hotels was run down and abandoned. Seem odd amid such luxurious ones. I asked out loud why? Dick said they used curling irons...



Had a great meal. Table for ten this time. Dianne and her husband joined us. We later found out that she had taken 3000 pictures. And you thought Lorinda was bad!!

Day 7 Sunday 10/1/06

We went out to “Isola Bella” for a tour. The Poiriers went shopping!! It was the family of St. Charles Borromeo. (Jack & Janet's Church in Brunswick.) As always they showed unbelievable wealth. But it was interesting. The family stayed there 4-5 weeks of the year. They were there while we visited.. That afternoon the six of us went shopping . (Dick and Lorinda had opted out of the boat trip). After a nice lunch in a quite garden where the guys and gals sat at different tables. I got to chat with Gus, who was originally from Greece and very interesting. A real gentleman. But, he was a Jerry Seinfeld “close talker”

We took a stroll along the lake. We met a group of Italian tourists who needed to have their picture taken. So naturally Dennis volunteered. One of them was outgoing to say the least. All this was done with no language skills on either part. After a few hugs, Dennis got in their picture and she got in ours. We got the better of the deal. No offense Dennis.

Day 8 Monday 10/2/06

Left Lake Maggiore and headed to Venice. Bob and Dennis had the front seat duty. We made a stop at Verona. The home of Romeo and Juliet. Bob the Literature teacher stepped up and recited the beginning of the play. I’m not sure I got that right, but he’ll know what I mean. It was the first time I ever knew the story. Bob’s a handy guy to have along!! With his limited knowledge of the language (More than anyone else) and his history background, I kept checking Millie’s facts. I think Bob



agreed she knew it cold.

We went straight to the Gondola rides. Four in a boat. They are a little tipsy, but Joan stepped up again and handled it great.

Jack & Janet were with Bob * & Jeanne. We had the music and the singer. They were very good. It was a long ride through the canals, but really nice. Romantic, even for old duffers like us !! Went back to the Hotel to settle in.

Headed out again for the water for a boat cruise and a 4 course dinner.

Had our usual table for eight. One man band. He was excellent. Played all kinds of songs. Janet & Jack were the only ones who dared to try the Polka. The Old guy still has it??

Finally Lorinda must have found just the right level of wine spritz. She was in rare form. Leading the conga line no less!!

The boat dropped us off at St. Marco's Square. Just a short stay. We were going back on Tuesday.

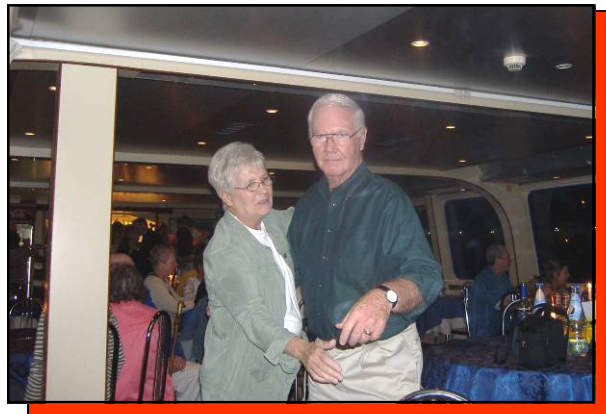
It was great. I wanted the gang to get to see Venice at night. This worked out just fine. We listened to the band at the Florian Cafe. Did a little Christmas shopping and then boarded the boat to return to the hotel.

Day 9 Tuesday 10/03/06

Back to Venice. Had a tour planned of another church. I suggested that we skip the tour. All agreed. We spoke to Millie. OK with her.

We headed off to shop in the narrow streets of Venice. Sometimes a real challenge. Joan needed a suitcase. Found one that she liked. We took turns pulling it. Came in very handy. We carted all the stuff we bought

(T shirts mostly) in Joan's new suitcase. We stopped in a sandwich shop for lunch. There were no tables visible, and Janet asked the guy behind the counter if the tables were "downstairs". He looked puzzled, so Janet emphasized the question with a little sign language, and asked again, in her best Italian.. "are the



tables down a stairs?" No response. Changed course and went to a place called Bora Bora for pizza and coke. While we were waiting for a table, It suddenly struck Janet that "down a stairs" in Venice would require a snorkel. It's underwater!!!!

Walked and shopped. We went to St. Mark's Sq. to listen to the music and have a glass of wine (naturally) at the Florian Café'. Young man came over to take our order. We wanted a bottle that would serve 7 (Joan had coke).

He said OK. Janet asked if he had Small glasses?? E46 for the bottle.

OK we ordered and enjoyed the music. Really nice. Bill came to Janet. E97!!! E44 for the music?? After all it was worth it.

Janet & Jack wanted to see the paintings that Dick had seen. He said I'll take you back. Lorinda was in the rest room at the time. Dick said to Bob, "I'm going with them." Bob apparently wasn't listening. When Lorinda came out she asked "Where's Dick" "In the men's room" says Bob.

She waited, and waited. She was afraid he'd had a heart attack. We all met in front of the church. All's well that ends well.

Headed for the boat. Janet & Jeanne were talking to one of the girls about Dot. She looked at Janet and in a very surprised tone said.. "Your Mother's still alive"?? They were not offended.

On the boat headed for the bus to the hotel. As we were crossing the street, Jeanne was first, a car came too close for comfort. He was going too fast. Dennis hit the hood of the car with his fist. The guy pulled over and got out. He was in his 70's . He started to raise his fist. Bob hollered.. "ANDIAMO" that's Italian for "move on" or "I had you sister", we're not sure, anyhow it seemed to calm the situation.

On the bus back we told our Florian Café story about the E97 for wine. Gus said that they had lunch at "Harry's Bar" for E240 for 4. Dick said use his story in the journal.

Back to the hotel for dinner and sleep.



Phew what a day!

Day 10 Wednesday 10/4/06

We left Venice and headed for Ravenna and Assisi. Stopped at the Basilica of St. Apollinaris and lit a few candles. On to Assisi.

I was the feast day of St. Francis or we would have stayed right in the village where the church is. Too bad. Assisi is impressive. Stopped for a quick break and we were there for a procession of the faithful. Jeanne was especially moved. Spent some time shopping.

Then off to the Hotel for dinner.

There were three sisters from Australia with us. I had explained a few times how were we all related. Heather just couldn't get it. She referred to us as the "Inbred group"

Day 11 Thursday 10/5/06

Up early as usual and headed for Sorrento. Stopped at Pompeii for a quick visit. What impressed me the most was the size. As I said early on, Janet and Jack were there 6 years earlier. Nothing that they saw was the same. Either that or the memory was gone. Probably the latter.

Arrived at Sorrento and made ready for what was to be our last dinner with entertainment. (Not counting Dennis).

We went to what seemed to be the back of a restaurant. There was another group there. They had a single guitar player. And that's all we needed. He was great. He went to every table, but I think he favored ours. He asked how long we were married. When I said 46 years, he made a face. We brought up Bob's birthday again and he immediately became a "paissan". They sang that "Mama Mia" song again. Bob is getting good at it by now. He had an American flag type strap for his guitar. He asked if we knew why. We could not guess. "It's for 9/11" he said.

Nice. He went to a table from the other group and they were trying to be louder than we were. They were funny. They started to wave napkins, and somehow



Dennis took that as a challenge!! Yup! He was up on the chair waving the napkin and singing. The place gave him a big hand. Somehow, I think I would have been disappointed if he did not. Again, an outstanding evening.

Off to bed to get ready for the Isle of Capri on Friday.

Day 12, Friday 10/07/06

We got an early boat and a tour guide and headed to Capri. The bus ride up to the Villa of San Michele was a little scary, but fun. After the tour, we were free to go as we pleased. Shopping as usual. Janet bought two coffee cups.

Back to the hotel.

There was a great pool at the hotel that Jack & Bob wanted to go in all day. By the time we got back the sun had gone down a little and it was not as good an idea. But...we headed down. It was deserted. Janet asked if it was open, because there was "no one there". Yes it's open said the clerk. But it is a "little cool".

They counted on it being heated noooo not so. Bob & Jack went in anyway.

WOW!. Dick came down later and the boys tried to be cool and convince Dick that it was heated. I think it was Jack's blue fingers that gave it away. Tough ole Dick went in anyway.

In Sorrento on our own for the evening.

Sopped at a nice pizza spot. Everyone was served at different times, and Dennis never got his, Not bad anyway. Walked and shopped on the back streets of Sorrento. Murphy's and Poirier's opted back to the hotel. Manzi's and Callahan's continued. Stopped for a "Lemon Cella" great new drink introduced by Bob. Back to the hotel to get ready for Rome in the AM.

Day 13, Saturday 10/8/ 2006

Headed for Rome via Montecassino.

On the way back got the call about John's accident. Thank goodness for cell phones.

We all opted out of out of a farewell dinner. Janet & Jeanne & Co. wanted to go the Trevi fountain and St Peter's. The



rest opted for a rest. Too late for St. Peter's so we took a cab to Trevi Fountain to toss a few coins. Legend says if you toss a coin, you will be back. Worked for Janet & Jack!!

Stopped for a last pizza and a glass of wine. Very nice.

Day 14, Sunday 10/9/06

“Arrivederci Roma”

Seemed to end too fast. Flight home was uneventful as well. By the time we boarded, I think everyone was ready. There may have been things we could have done, but did not, but I cannot think of any right now.

As I said at the beginning of this epistle, Janet and I were going to go.

We could never tell you how glad we are that you joined us. To say that you all made the trip memorable is an understatement. Might be in the Hall of Fame for vacations.

Start saving your pennies. I have the feeling we may do this again some time.

Isn't there an old song that says,

“Memories are made of this??”

Thanks again... Your Group Leader!!!

NEXT TIME WE'RE GETTING OUR VERY OWN PERSONAL GUIDES.....

(SHOWN BELOW)

