

"We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place, we stay there, even though we go away. And there are things in us that we can find again only by going back there."~ **Pascal Mercier**

Memories of Italia

As some of you know, I posted pictures and comments on Facebook during our three months away, but I've decided to post here an early sample as it's taking me a while to process everything we saw and experienced on our epic journey. More to come...

"In our first stop in Milan, we saw **The Last Supper** at the ancient **Church of San Angela di Grazie**, which was faded but still impressive -- like me. We also saw the ballet **Don Quixote** at the famed **La Scala** theatre; but the ballet is less about the Don and more about the handsome young barber who dances his tights off for the feisty daughter of the village innkeeper, re-imagined as **Dulcinea** by the lanky knight, who basically is rolled around mounted on a stuffed stallion and watches others dance -- gypsies, wenches, toreadors and ballerinas -- while a padded Sancho handles his lance, so to speak.

"The choreography by **Rudolph Nureyev** was energetic, sexy and constantly inventive, and the corps de ballet executed his dynamic movements, punctuated by claps and clicks and leaps and stamps, with awesome integrity.

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DRAGODENA

Melinda contemplates
the adventures to come
on a drizzly day.



"We had a great box on the ground floor in the rear and surprisingly, the audience was free to take pictures. They also love *looong* curtain calls, so we left 10 minutes into it to wrap our swollen mitts around some cool drinks.

"After Milan, we stayed with **Paul Magid of The Flying Karamazov Brothers** in his fantastically reinvented 600-year-old farmhouse in **Dragonena** – once Nazi occupied – and even went together to commemorate a wartime massacre at the nearby town of **Marzabotti** that occurred 70 years ago. An untold number of people were killed in retaliation for the deaths of two German soldiers, possibly as many as 1,830. Whatever the toll, 45 were under 2, 110 were less than 10, 95 were less than 16, 142 were over 60, 316 were female and five were Catholic priests.

"**Don Giovanni Fornasini**, a parish priest and member of the Resistance, risked his life to protect the defenseless population and while he was burying the bodies of those killed, which was forbidden, he was discovered by an SS officer who shot and killed him.

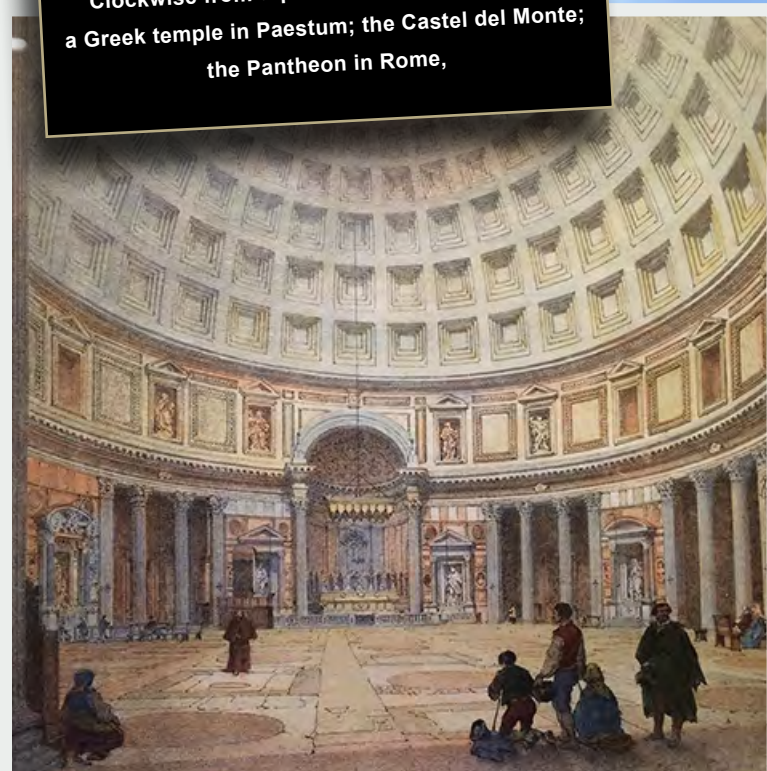
"We visited the site of his execution on **Torture Mountain**, and saw bullet-scarred ruins. We also found **Bob Dole's** memorial where he was wounded in the final assault to rid the area of the Nazi scourge."

Welcome to Italy. Welcome to history.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." ~ **Margaret Mead**

SIGHTS SEEN

Clockwise from top left: Soglia, Switzerland;
a Greek temple in Paestum; the Castel del Monte;
the Pantheon in Rome,





ACCOMMODATING
Our host, Paul Magid, above, and our big room in Dragodena. Right, still life and La Scala nightlife.

OH, MY WORD

Lexophile” is a word used to describe those who love expressions such as “You can tune a piano, but you can’t tuna fish,” or “To write with a broken pencil is pointless.” A competition for the best lexphillies is held yearly, so here are some entries sent on by my hometown planeteer, **Dr. Robert Riddle**.

“When fish are in schools, they sometimes take debate. A thief who stole a calendar got 12 months. When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A. The batteries were given out free of charge. A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail. A will is a dead giveaway. With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.

“A boiled egg is hard to beat. When you’ve seen one shopping Center you’ve seen a mall. Police were called to a daycare Center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest. Did you hear about the fellow whose whole left side was cut

off? He’s all right now. A bicycle can’t stand alone; it is two tired. When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.

“The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine is now fully recovered. He had a photographic memory, which was never developed. When she saw her first strands of grey hair she thought she’d dye. Acupuncture is a jab well done. That’s the point of it. Those who get too big for their pants will be exposed in the end.”

And finally, here’s Dr. R’s favorite: “As a dentist, my best work was my crowning achievement.”

Cotton candy was invented by a dentist and was originally called fairy floss. ~ **Phil’s Phunny Phacts**

IT’S IN THE MALE

It was the mailman’s last day on the job after 35 years in one neighborhood. When he arrived at the first house, he was greeted by a big family who had gotten him a generous gift certificate. At the second house he received a box of fine imported cigars and the folks at the third house handed him a selection of terrific fishing lures. At every house along his route, he was met with congratulations, farewells, cards, and gifts of all kinds.

And at the last house on his route, he was met at the door by a beautiful young blonde in a revealing negligee, who took him by the hand and led him upstairs where they had a surprisingly passionate liaison.

Afterwards she fixed him a giant breakfast of eggs, potatoes, ham, sausage, blueberry waffles, and fresh-squeezed orange juice, topped off by a cup of steaming coffee, when he noticed a dollar bill stuck under the cup.

“I’ll never forget my last day on the job, thanks to you,” he said. “But what’s the dollar for?”

“Well,” she answered, “last night, I told my husband that today would be your last and we should do something special for you, and he said, “Screw him, give him a dollar.”

“But the breakfast was my idea.”

“Doesn’t just have to be a comedy actor or improv guy... Sometimes the non-actor might be funnier.”

~ **V.O. casting call**

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THROUGHOUT THE ‘PLANET,’ CLICKING **DARK RED TYPE** OPENS A RELATED INTERNET LINK.



ON THE ROAD

The church at Trani, harvesting olives on Greg Snegoff's farm in Ceglie-Messapica and startling art in Florence.



ALL WET

Children write about the mysteries of the seas:

"If you are surrounded by ocean, you are an island. If you don't have ocean all round you, you are incontinent. When ships had sails, they used to use the trade winds to cross the ocean. Sometimes when the wind didn't blow the sailors would whistle to make the wind come. My brother said they would have been better off eating beans.

"The ocean is made up of water and fish. Why the fish don't drown I don't know. My dad was a sailor on the ocean. He knows all about the ocean. What he doesn't know is why he quit being a sailor and married my mom. Mom went water skiing. She fell off when she was going very fast. She says she won't do it again because water fired right up her big fat ass.

"Some fish are dangerous. Jellyfish can sting. Electric eels can give you a shock. They have to live in caves under the sea where I think they have to plug themselves in to chargers. Divers have to be safe when they go under the water. Divers can't go down alone, so they have to go down on each other.

"When you go swimming in the ocean, it is very cold, and it makes my willy small. My uncle goes out in his boat with two other men and a woman and pots and comes back with crabs.

"This is a picture of an octopus. It has eight testicles. A dolphin breathes through an asshole on the top of its head. Oysters' balls are called pearls. Sharks are ugly and mean, and have big teeth, just like Emily Richardson. She's not my friend any more. Mermaids live in the ocean. I like mermaids. They are beautiful and I like their shiny tails, but

how on earth do mermaids get pregnant? Like, really? "

And they say kids today aren't smart...

"Stuff your eyes with wonder, live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories." ~ Ray Bradbury

BIRTHDAY SUIT

Last week was my birthday and I didn't feel very well when I woke up on that morning. I went downstairs for breakfast hoping my husband would be pleasant and say, "Happy Birthday!" and possibly have a small present for me. As it turned out, he barely said good morning, and I thought, well, that's marriage for you, but the kids, they'll remember. But when the children came bounding downstairs to breakfast, they didn't say a word; so when I left for the office, I felt pretty low and somewhat despondent.

As I walked into my office, my handsome Boss, Rick, said, "Good Morning -- and by the way Happy Birthday!" It felt a little better that at least someone had remembered. I worked until one o'clock, when Rick knocked on my door and said, "You know, it's such a beautiful day outside, and it is your birthday, what do you say we go out to lunch, just you and me..."

I said, "Thanks, Rick, that's the greatest thing I've heard all day. Let's go!" But we didn't go where we normally would; he chose instead a quiet bistro with a private table. We had two martinis each and I enjoyed the meal tremendously.

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SNAPPED SHOTS

Memories of Firenze and a sunset
from our hotel's rooftop bar

On the way back to the office, Rick said, "You know, it's such a beautiful day, we don't need to go straight back to the office, do we?" I responded, "I guess not. What do you have in mind?" He said, "Let's drop by my place, it's just around the corner."

After arriving at his house, Rick turned to me and said, "If you don't mind, I'm going to step into the bedroom for just a moment. I'll be right back."

"OK." I nervously replied. He went into the bedroom and, after a couple of minutes, he came out carrying a huge birthday cake, followed by my husband, my kids, and dozens of my friends and co-workers, all singing "Happy Birthday."

And I just sat there – on the couch...naked.

"Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." ~ **Winston Churchill**

SHAKES WAS ITALIAN

See for yourself, **HERE**.

"Please send your gifts to me on a long memory."
~ **A Russian fan**

THEY'RE ALL GOOD SPORTS

Football commentator and former player **Joe Theismann** once said, "Nobody in football should be called a genius. A genius is a guy like **Norman Einstein**." Well, the following sports quotes clearly illustrate his point:

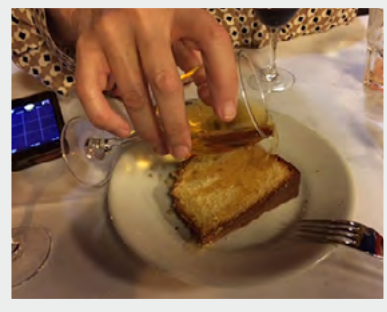
"I wan' all dem kids to do what I do, to look up to me," said Chicago Cubs outfielder **Andre Dawson**. "I wan' all the kids to copulate me." To which **Lou Duva**, veteran boxing trainer, might add, "He's a guy who gets up at six o'clock in the morning, regardless of what time it is."

So boxing promoter **Dan Duva** was probably right when he said about **Mike Tyson's** jail time: "Why would anyone expect him to come out smarter? He went to *prison* for three years, not Princeton." Or **Shelby Metcalf**, basketball coach at Texas A&M, who once told a player who got four F's and one D: "Son, looks to me like you're spending too much time on one subject." And when **Frank Layden**, Utah Jazz president, asked a former player, "Son, what is it with you? Is it ignorance or apathy?" he replied, "Coach, I don't know and I don't care."

"I want to rush for 1,000 or 1,500 yards, whichever comes first," commented New Orleans Saint RB **George Rogers**; which likely inspired a Senior basketball player at the University of Pittsburgh to state, "I'm going to graduate on time, no matter how long it takes."

And here's Chicago Blackhawks left wing, **Stu Grimson**, explaining why he keeps a color photo of himself above his locker: "That's so when I forget how to spell my name, I can still find my clothes." In the words of NC State great **Charles Shackelford**: "I can go to my left or right, I am amphibious." And, upon hearing **Joe Jacobi** of the 'Skins say "I'd run over my own mother to win the Super Bowl," **Matt Millen** of the Raiders added, "To win, I'd run over Joe's Mom, too."

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VERNAZZA

Dining in Vernazza, now restored after a devastating flood 3 years ago.

But here's my favorite from **Bill Peterson**, a Florida State football coach: "You guys line up alphabetically by height, and you other guys pair up in groups of three, and then line up in a circle."

"For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning." ~ T.S. Eliot

DON'T ASK

You'll be fine," the doctor said after finishing the young blonde woman's surgery. "But," she asked, "How long will it be before I'm able to have a normal sex life again doctor?"

The surgeon seemed to pause, and a small tear ran down his cheek from the corner of his eye, which alarmed the girl. "What's the matter, Doctor? I *will* be all right, won't I?"

He replied, "Yes, you'll be fine. It's just that no one has ever asked me that particular question after having their tonsils removed."

"A thousand candles may be lit by a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." ~ Buddha

OUR NEXT TRIP

My Amish ancestors come from Bern in Switzerland, and after visiting the town of Soglio in the Alps on a day trip from Lake Como, we hope to go there in the future, especially

since Switzerland might just be the most progressive and least sexually repressed country in the world.

Between liberal views on pornography and prostitution, and sex education that starts in kindergarten, over a fifth of the population consider their sex-lives "excellent." They even recently opened up a very successful array of tax-funded drive-in "sex boxes" in Zurich. (Is that like a Happy Meal?)

And Switzerland also has one of the lowest teen birth rates in the world.

"Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind." ~ Seneca

USE IT OR LOSE IT

The wife came home early and found her husband in their bedroom making love to a very attractive young woman. "You are a disrespectful pig!" she cried. "How dare you do this to me — a faithful wife, the mother of your children! I'm leaving you. I want a divorce right away!"

"Hang on just a minute love," he replied, "so at least I can tell you what happened."

"Go ahead," she sobbed, "but they'll be the last words you'll say to me!"

"Well, I was getting into the car to drive home," he began, "and this young lady here asked me for a lift. She looked so down and out and defenseless that I took pity on her and let her into the car. I noticed that she was very thin, not well

■ **CONTINUED**

SEA AND SEEN

Memories of Southern Italy.



dressed and very dirty. She told me that she hadn't eaten for three days.

"So, in my compassion, I brought her home and warmed up the enchiladas I made for you last night, the ones you wouldn't eat because you're afraid you'll put on weight. The poor thing devoured them in moments. Since she needed a good cleanup, I suggested a shower, and while she was doing that, I noticed her clothes were dirty and full of holes, so I threw them away.

"Then, as she needed clothes, I gave her the designer jeans that you have had for a few years, but don't wear because you say they are too tight. I also gave her the underwear that was your anniversary present, which you don't wear because I don't have good taste. I found the sexy blouse my sister gave you for Christmas that you don't wear just to annoy her, and I also donated those boots you bought at the expensive boutique and don't wear because someone at work has a pair the same."

The husband took a quick breath and continued, "She was so grateful for my understanding and help that as I walked her to the door, she turned to me with tears in her eyes and said,

"Do you have anything else that your wife doesn't use??"

"It's amazing how much mature wisdom resembles being too tired." ~ **Robert A. Heinlein**

IRAQ AND RUIN

My classmate, **Steve Buck**, wrote the following on the Yale

'62 website:

"Saddam's Iraq was a brutal dictatorship. It was based on the tenets of the Ba'ath (Arabic for Renaissance) party, founded by a Muslim and a Christian who agreed to a secular, highly nationalistic ideology. This produced the most nationalistic of the eight Arab countries I served in, as well as a highly professional and proud army and a large, technocratic middle class. In the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, Iraq's Shi'a supplied the majority of the Iraqi army that defeated Iran. Saddam's Iraq was adamantly opposed to Islamist extremism and al-Qaeda. It was the worst place in the world for al-Qaeda. The U.S. invasion of Iraq and subsequent U.S. actions produced:

"The destruction of a largely technocratic middle class. The destruction of Iraq's professional army. Ending a secular ideology and hyping religious affiliation. In a country where Sunni and Shi'a mixed and married, a mini-civil war pitting Sunni against Shi'a. A Prime Minister from a militantly Shi'a exile group, ad-Da'wa, who had spent decades as an exile in Tehran. Disillusioned Sunnis who had been promised participation in government during the U.S. surge but got nothing. A power vacuum in Iraq's Sunni areas, leaving the field open to the Islamic State (IS), formerly called the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"The U.S. spent trillions and committed tens of thousands of soldiers and advisors over 11 years to build an Iraqi army. Elements of that army fled at the sight of the Islamic State (IS) in the Mosul region. How can reduced U.S. money and fewer trainers produce a better result? Americans love to have winners and losers. While talking about a large



PUGLIA

Our devilishly modern Trullo House in Puglia



coalition, the discussion among the talking heads is about our winning a war. The focus is all about us, not about a little understood "them." A majority of Americans now support the bombing of Syria but have no idea where it is located.

"Nearly 30 years ago when I was Deputy Chief of Mission in Iraq, my Ambassador liked to say 'In Iraq there are no good solutions, only least bad solutions.' Could it be that there are unlikely to be any real winners as war continues in Iraq and Syria? Our invasion in 2003 led to tens of thousands dead, millions displaced, a country and society dismantled and destroyed.

"Perhaps rather than a debate, don't we need a conversation?" **MORE**

"I feel like an outsider who got on the inside, so I'm inside out...Or outside in." ~ **Al Pacino** in the **New Yorker** profile by **John Lahr**

READ ALL ABOUT IT

The **Wall Street Journal** is read by the people who run the country. **The Washington Post** is read by people who think they run the country. **The New York Times** is read by people who think they should run the country, and who are very good at crossword puzzles

USA Today is read by people who think they ought to run the country but don't really understand **The New York Times**. They do, however, like their statistics shown in pie charts. **The Los Angeles Times** is read by people who wouldn't mind running the country, if they could find the time -- and if they didn't have to leave Southern California to do it. **The Boston Globe** is read by people whose parents used to run the country and did a poor job of it, thank you very much.

The **New York Daily News** is read by people who aren't too sure who's running the country and don't really care as long as they can get a seat on the train. **The New York Post** is read by people who don't care who is running the

country as long as they do something really scandalous, preferably while intoxicated. The **Chicago Tribune** is read by people who are in prison that used to run the state, and would like to do so again, as would their constituents that are currently free on bail.

The Miami Herald is read by people who are interested in another country, but need the baseball scores. The **San Francisco Chronicle** is read by people who aren't sure if there is a country or that anyone is running it; but if so, they oppose all that they stand for. (There are occasional exceptions if the leaders are gay, handicapped, minority, feminist, atheist dwarfs who also happen to be illegal aliens from any other country or galaxy, provided of course, that they are not Republicans).

The **National Enquirer** is read by people trapped in line at the grocery store. **The Seattle Times** is read by people who have recently caught a fish and need something to wrap it in.

And I know it must be true, because I read it in **The Toilet!**

"The man whose career started with suspenders, ended with a belt." ~ Comedian **Steven Alan Green** on **Robin Williams'** tragic suicide

LAST YEAR'S TEARS

While we were away, many friends and acquaintances went away as well. First, my one-time live-in lover, **Marcia Strassman**, who after leaving me went on to have a fabulous career befitting her brains, beauty and talent. I still also have a cool shirt she made for me, even though it doesn't fit any more.

Then, **Skip E. Lowe**, whose real name was **Sammy Labella** -- a quaint, dedicated little fellow who hosted a weekly celebrity talk show in LA for more than 35 years, offering a promotional outlet for stars and many others -- even me. "He was on television," his friend and publicist **Alan Eichler** said, "and he never gave up thinking



something big was going to happen."

And **Christine Cavanaugh**, the voice of **Chuckie** on *Rugrats*, who died too young at 51, but left behind a glorious array of beloved

characters like "Babe" brought to life through her voice.

And finally, director/actor **Sage Allen**, who introduced me to my darling wife, **Melinda**, whom she cast to replace another actress in a play for the Actors' Studio called **Nude Radio**. How appropriate. It was about love at first sight, and happily, life imitated art... Thanks, Sage.

"Use what talent you possess. The woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best."
~ **Henry Van Dyke**

EVERYONE KNEW ME AS NANCY

The most prominent awards worldwide for original radio drama – The **MARK TIME AWARDS** are adding four new awards to honor the historic

contribution of **The Firesign Theater** to radio and audio production. The **Nick Danger Prize** for the best audio production in the mystery/detective

fiction category, which is named after Firesign's famous satire of radio detectives of the 1950s. The original "Nick," **Phil Austin**, and his wife **Oona** will be part of the judging team. The **Bradshaw**, an award named after the late **Peter**



PLANETCLICK MESSAGES

**DOODY
BOO
PINUP
SIMON SAYS
VROOM
CANTI TUTTI
OUT ON A LIMB
SBs
ENGLISH
DUET4ONE
WACKY
BIGDADDY
TESLA
HANDS
NOTHING**

Bergman's cop character in the **Nick Danger** episodes, will be given for "service to the field" and chosen by the MTA's advisory

board. The **Runyon**, an award named for a beloved character created by **Norman Corwin**, the grand patriarch of radio theatre who died in 2011 at the age of 101, will be given to producers younger than 18. And **The Betty Jo (But Everyone Knew Her as Nancy) Prize** honors the multi-gender vocal skills of **Phil Proctor** and will be awarded for best performances. He and his wife, **Melinda**, will be among the judges.



The new awards and the long-established **Mark Time Award** for the year's best science fiction production and the **Ogle Award** for for fantasy/horror will be presented during the **2015 HEAR NOW FESTIVAL** in Kansas City, Missouri June 12th. Stay Tuned!

"Sometimes you never realize the value of a moment until it becomes a memory" ~ **Dr. Seuss**

MESSENGERS

Thanks to **Spider Robinson**, **Kenneth Wilhite, Jr.**, **Victor Kopcewich**, **Keith Hebble**, **Magic Mike Berger**, **Lee Kagan**, **Joan Allemand**, **Nick Oliva**, **Bob Wayne**, **Alan Sharpe**, and probably more whose names I lost on our journey. You know who you are. Also, I will be appearing in the **Laguna Beach Music Festival**, participating in seminars and performing with the amazing **LA Guitar Quartet** in a one-man reading of *Don Quixote* originally created for Monty Python's **John Cleese**, mid February. Come see us! **CLICK HERE FOR TICKETS!**

"People with opinions just go around bothering one another." ~ **Shunryu Suzuki Roshi**

"There is nothing we have that hasn't been given." ~ **Paul Gorman**

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FUNNY TIMES: <http://www.funnytimes.com>

FST: <http://www.FiresignTheatre.com>

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