

Ex-Pavia Student Describes Italy

Editor's Note: Ron Terpening, a former Emerald staff writer, studied at Pavia, Italy, last year. Here Terpening relates some of his impressions of the country.

By RON TERPENING
Emerald Contributor

In Pavia, the first month is usually associated with confusion and re-adjustment.

This stage is characterized by a wild-eyed student vainly searching for an already demented mind for the right conversion table. The most common problem involves computing dollars to lire. Then there are elusive figures for changing gallons to liters, miles to kilometers, and pounds to kilos or ettos.

Freeways Exciting

Perhaps one of the first things learned in Italy is the importance of taking the right kind of train, almost all of which surprisingly run with electric power. The difference between a "direttissimo" and an "accelerato," for example, is drastic. Dismayed students find that acceleratos are

the slowest trains, stopping at nearly everybody's back yard. A direttissimo, however, will take the student directly from Pavia to Milan.

For the excitement-loving student, autostradas (freeways) are a constant pleasure. Unlimited speed and the Italian drivers can provide an excellent workout for one's adrenalin. The student becomes accustomed to finding Fiats in the right lane and Alfa Romeos and Ferraris in the left, often flashing by at speeds over 100 mph. Occasionally one hears and, if he's quick, maybe even glimpses the tail-lights of a fast-moving test car.

Enotria, which means land of wines, was Italy's most ancient name. The whole world knows what a source of inspiration and imagination the Italian wines have always been, from the grapes that ripen on the sides of volcanoes, along the warm seacoast, and on the slopes of the picturesque hills.

This abundant source of stimulation is fortunately available to all. Students under 21 in Pavia no longer have to struggle for inspiration! From the Barbera of Piedmonte and the Chianti of Toscana to the Lambrusco Amabile of Bologna and the Frascati of Lazio (Rome), aspiring students can seek relaxation at the weekly "feste."

Local Cuisine

One of the many pleasures of studying in Pavia is found in the local cuisine. While each area has its own specialties, the student always has a wide variety of food to choose from. Within a week a student may savor such delights as tagliatelli (noodles made with egg), ravioli, pasta al forno (layers of cheese, tomatoes and pasta), risotto (rice), gnocchi (pasta made with potatoes), spaghetti and, of course, pizza.

Italy is, above all, the classic land. The most ancient archaeological finds of Etruscan civilization date back to the 9th century B.C. Excellent specimens of Greek art and the magnificent ruins of their colonies can be admired in Sicily, Naples, Paestum and in many museums throughout Italy, especially Rome.

Everywhere one turns the imprint of the Roman Empire lies on the land—in the roads, bridges, aqueducts, triumphal arches and theaters. And, from Early Christian art and Byzantine works to art of the Gothic period and the Middle Ages, the student

finds masterpieces within easy traveling distance. In Pavia the student need not go to a book to study art; he may go to the original.

For the history student, Pavia means a strong Marxist approach to historical problems. The student sees and understands the European viewpoint in relation to such things as the French revolution, liberalism, socialism, nationalism, "raison d'etat," the relations between Church and State in Italy and the origins of fascism.

An unusual number of holidays is one of the more notable characteristics of Italy, and festivals are also numerous.

The student in Pavia, having classes only four days a week, has the opportunity to travel as far as Florence, Rome, or even Naples in a weekend.

Travel Methods

On vacations students can see most of Western Europe. Most students travel through France, Spain, Greece, and Italy and a few manage to get to such places as Russia, Turkey, and Africa.

Travel methods vary widely. While some prefer to hitch-hike and let fortune have a hand in their affairs, others enjoy the ease of trains or planes.

As an example of what is possible, I spent the Christmas vacation hitch-hiking down the western coast of Italy, through Sicily and back up the middle and Eastern side of the country.

Italian Trickery

The weather was magnificent; trucks rolled through the dark streets of Naples stacked high with oranges, lemons, pineapples, tangerines, and melons. Palms and bright flowers bloomed along the countryside. Christmas Day in Catania dawned bright and hot and ended in Siracuse, the sun shedding a warm glow over the colorful fishing boats floating in the harbor.

It was in Sicily that I became aware of the fabled Italian trickery.

Beware of Giovanni Pivelli! — the plot began innocently enough.

I had left Taormina in the morning and arrived in Catania at noon on a warm, pleasant Saturday. I was accosted by a weather-beaten man asking in English for the Turkish embassy.

He launched into a long explanation of his problem. Being a Turkish sailor in port for just a few days, he needed money and was selling some cloth for a sick shipmate.

I was not interested, but just as I was preparing to leave the Turkish gentleman, he noticed an Italian walking by and requested me to do a little translating for him since he spoke no Italian.

Help Mankind (?)

I gladly accepted. Here was my chance to help mankind! Subsequently I had to explain the whole affair to the Italian.

Needless to say, the Italian had an uncle who just happened to be a tailor and therefore he was interested in buying the Turkish man's cloth. We ducked into the darkened entrance way to an old pension, leaving the door ajar. A thin streak of sunlight gave us enough light to see by yet allowed us to maintain a little privacy.

Because of all our precautionary measures, I had by this time imagined the cloth to be stolen. The Italian, who told me his name was Giovanni Pivelli, very eagerly told me the cloth was worth at least 120,000 lire (\$192).

Agreed on Price

Eventually we agreed on 80,000 lire. Since Giovanni, who was buying the material, had only 40,000 lire on hand, I offered to pay half. He told me that if I carried the cloth on down to Siracuse he would pick it up that evening at his shop, paying me back my 40,000 lire plus 10,000 for my help.

I tried to split the cloth with Giovanni so he wouldn't think I would run out on him. "No," he said, "ho fiducia in lei" — I trust you. I couldn't help the

feeling of brotherhood that overcame me.

When I reached Giovanni's shop on Via Roma in Siracuse, the sky was dark; a light mist was falling. The shop was closed. At 10, Giovanni still hadn't shown up but I didn't mind. I was enjoying myself watching the Sicilianos.

Fulfilled Obligation

Finally I stuck a note in the door telling Giovanni if he wanted his cloth to be at the Central Station at 5 o'clock the next morning. I was happy. I had fulfilled my obligation. If Giovanni didn't show up, I knew I would get all the cloth for 40,000 lire, leaving me a profit of at least \$64.

In the morning Giovanni didn't appear. I felt a little guilty because of my happiness.

Six days later I was in Galatina, a small village in the very bottom of the heel of Italy. I spent New Year's Day celebrating with the families of two of my Italian friends.

When I explained my good luck in relation to the cloth I had gotten for so little, I noticed my friends eyeing each other. They asked to see the material.

Taken In

I had, of course, been taken in. The cloth was worth no more than I had paid for it. I contemplated the two extremes for several days—the generosity of my southern Italian friends and the almost humorous adeptness of Giovanni Pivelli.

Italy means many different things for each student. For me, it is the land of a thousand images.

The impressions are almost innumerable; many are indescribable. Above all, Italy to me is the land where throughout history man's intellectual and spiritual life has received its fullest expression. Italy is the immortal soul of the Western World—a land where the ancient and the modern constantly mingle to produce an ever-varying, eternal freshness.

SU Art Gallery Features Prints

An exhibit of the work of Robert Browning Reed is continuing through November 21 in the Student Union Art Gallery, second floor SU.

Prints of 30 woodcuts, etchings, and lithographs are included.

Reed's prints reveal a concern for the condition of man. Some are a subtle commentary on the self-imposed situations that plague mankind. Others are a sensitive probing of the make-up of individual members of the human race. Reed's technique is disciplined and never allowed to overpower the idea he means to communicate.

Reed is an Indiana native and is now teaching printmaking at Purdue University.

This exhibit is on national tour from Old Bergen Art Guild of Bayonne, New Jersey.

Blood Bank

The Lane Memorial Blood Bank needs the following types of blood for its special account which serves the faculty, students, and staff of the University.

Donor hours are 1:30 to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and by appointment from 3 to 7 p.m. Friday. The Blood Bank is located at 790 E. 11th Ave., next to the Mayflower Theatre. Phone 345-0336 for further information.

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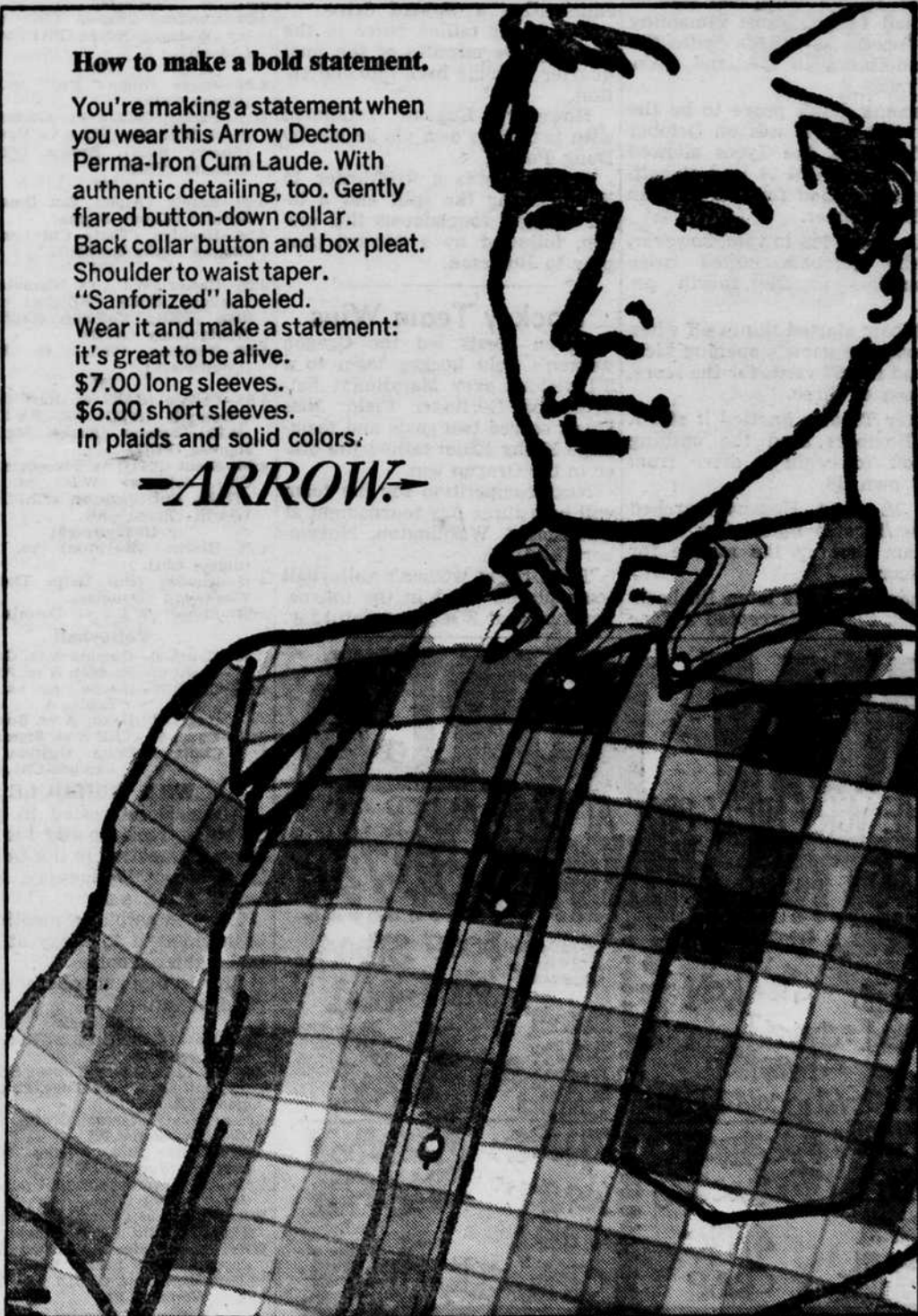
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