

## A Eulogy for Michael Campo

*Trinity College Chapel*

February 4, 2017

Machiavelli tells us in *The Prince* that fate (*fortuna*) determines about half of our lives. *Fortuna* intervened in Michael Campo's life in 1941 and brought him to Trinity College. Mike planned on entering Amherst that Fall, but his father's tailor shop on the corner of Asylum and Trumbull suffered a fire. Mike turned to Trinity in August and entered the College the next month. Trinity had again beaten Amherst!

Mike was a visionary, an entrepreneur, and an improviser. In the late 1960s, he talked enthusiastically about starting a Trinity program in Rome. The College had not commissioned him to do so. It was his idea, his vision, and his love of Italian culture and drove him. Lo and behold, the first Rome program began in the summer of 1970. The year before, Mike had visited a number of possible locations in the Eternal City, but nothing seemed quite right to Mike, until he visited the Camoldolese order of nuns on one of Rome's seven ancient hills, the Aventine, overlooking the *Circus Maximus*. Mike examined the site and, like Brigham Young seeing the Great Salt Lake, said: "This is the place."

The visionary now put all his entrepreneurial efforts into organizing the program, including an archeological program separate from the Aventine site. Over a hundred students came that first summer; with thirty-two signed up for archeology. That summer tested every fiber of Campo the improviser. His report to the College revealed that just about everything that could go wrong did. That was especially true on the archeological site, where facilities were not finished and where the students had trouble following the lectures, which were in Italian. Back on the Aventine, some students were put off by the strange Italian habit of serving pasta every day at lunch. Rooms were not ready for occupancy. Students became ill. Mike, moving back and forth

between the two sites, listened patiently to student complaints and worked on solutions, hired more Staff and improvised to meet every challenge. On top of it all, he taught introductory Italian to over thirty students. Through it all, the students were learning about Italian culture both in and out of the classroom. Mike noted that “The Roman male population discovered our presence and descended like a pack of wolves, swarming all over the Aventine Hill.”

After the summer of 1971, Mike organized the first full semester program. Soon, the Trinity Rome Program was going full steam in Fall, Spring, and Summer. Mike recruited a first-class Staff and Faculty, both Italians and Americans. They established a program with academic integrity—a program that has proven itself for nearly five decades.

In 1958, Mike obtained a grant from the Cesare Barbieri Foundation that allowed him to establish what is now the Cesare Barbieri Endowment for Italian Culture, which sponsors lectures, symposia, performances, and research projects. For ten years, Mike edited a semi-annual journal, *The Cesare Barbieri Courier*, which gained an international reputation until he ceased publication because of the press of other activities.

One of those activities was a new, major undertaking: the development of programs for Elderhostel, the pioneering organization providing educational travel programs for senior citizens. Elderhostel, now called Road Scholar, would add thousands of adult learners to the thousands of undergraduates from Trinity and other colleges who experienced Italy first-hand.

I worked with Mike in many of those programs, observing again and again his constant attention to detail, his ability to improvise when necessary, and his contagious enthusiasm. For example, we arrived a day ahead for a program in Verona, only to learn that the lecture room, which Mike had booked, was not available. Mike loved this kind of challenge. We began a walk through downtown, with Mike making inquiries and new friends until he found a place.

As the pitchman used to say, “And that's not all folks.” The Elderhostel experience led Mike to initiate the Academy of Lifelong Learning (ALL), which now serves up courses about myriad subjects for adult learners here in Hartford.

Mike of course was never alone in his journey. Inez was always an integral part of his work, especially in Italy. She did the packing and organizing for the trips to Italy. She was invaluable in the Elderhostel programs, befriending participants, giving them advice, taking them on shopping expeditions. Many of those friendships continued after returning home.

Machiavelli recognized the influence of *fortuna* on our lives, but he strove in *The Prince* to show leaders how to master the situation through their own skill and prowess, by sizing up a situation, acting, and improvising when necessary. Machiavelli called it *virtù*. Mike was a Machiavellian in that best sense of leading, setting goals, inspiring others, and being ever ready to deal with whatever *fortuna* might serve up.

Eat your heart out Amherst! Michael Campo became a Trinity man, whose legacy left an indelible mark on his *alma mater* and changed, indeed transformed, the lives of so many of us and so many others.

I know—because he changed my life. I sat in on his introductory course in Italian, then began teaching Modern Italian History, then started doing research in Italy as I worked in Elderhostel programs. Ann and I spent two semesters at the Rome campus and together became Anglo-Saxon converts to all things Italian. Thank you, Michael, for what you have done for your *alma mater* and for all of us whose lives were transformed because of you.

*Borden W. Painter, Jr.*