

## 2008 TUSCANY

Wednesday, May 7, 2008. They have combined the Crown Room Lounge and Business Elite Lounge on Concourse E. I checked out the Crown Room but hastily retreated to the old Elite lounge. It is much nicer and roomier.

I am off to Tuscany<sup>1</sup> with Betty Baxter on an Emory University travel program<sup>2</sup>. We will stay in the Hotel San Luca<sup>3</sup> in Cortona<sup>4</sup> for the week making side trips. She is on the group air with Lufthansa but I am flying Delta. I had some time to kill so walked over to the Lufthansa gate to be sure she had arrived okay. She was there and introduced me to our leader, Aimee Bowles Nix.

The flight to Milan was pleasant. Most of the people in business class were on their way to a big trade show.

Thursday, May 8, 2008. A wheel chair took me on a circuitous walk through the Milan airport. There seemed to be something wrong with my boarding pass for the connecting flight to Florence<sup>5</sup>. Alitalia wanted something more than the Delta boarding pass I had been given. However, after a time, they finally issued me a new boarding pass.

Then I was taken to a holding area for the wheelchair people to wait for my flight. The wheelchair van carried me out to the commuter flight to Florence. I sat with a young woman who was in Florence on a study abroad program from the University of South Florida<sup>6</sup>. The flight was just a little over an hour. We arrived 20 minutes ahead of time so of course there was no one to meet me. I found a sitting area and after a time Leah from AHI<sup>7</sup> arrived with a sign reading Cortona. AHI runs the Cortona program 25 weeks a year for Alumni and other groups. I am the first to come. Betty is not due for an hour. I bought some water and settled down to read while I waited. There were about ten who came in on the group flight. We were taken to the bus and left our bags but then we had to wait another hour for the last couple that did not arrive until two! To think I worried at one time if the bus would wait for me!

We went into the coffee shop and Betty got some coffee. Met Inger Takle, a Norwegian lady, who is traveling with her brother Leiv Takle who lives in Griffin, GA. Leiv is an ophthalmologist.

At last we boarded the bus for the hour and a half drive to Cortona. I was too tired to admire the scenery and dozed most of the way.

Cortona perches on the side of Monte S. Egidio (3467 Ft) and was a commanding presence in the medieval days. Its wealth came from making dyestuff<sup>8</sup>. Today it calls itself the "city of art". In the summer they have a crossbow<sup>9</sup> contest that dates from the Middle Ages. Many of the hill towns of Tuscany preserve some sort of medieval pageant. Frances Mayes<sup>10</sup>, who wrote *Under the Tuscan Sun*, has a villa called Bramisole here but she does not live in it any more because she got tired of the constant flow of tourists who came to peer into her garden. Nothing is more illustrative of this than the link in the footnotes, which takes you to hundreds of photographs of Bramisole that have been posted on the web. The film *Life is Beautiful* was made in Cortona<sup>11</sup>.

The Hotel San Luca is upside down. That is the lobby is on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor and the other rooms are below it. We rode a tiny elevator down to the fourth floor and found our room. All I can say is that it is fairly basic. It must measure 10 X 10. It's a good thing Betty and me are such good friends! There must be a view out of the window but it is difficult to get to it since it is curtained and shuttered. We found the safe but it had no key. When we asked the bellman he went and got us the key mechanism and told us it would be 10 Euro! When I tried to use the contraption, it all came out in my hand, so we returned it to the desk for credit and will just lock everything in the luggage.

We went up to the lobby and admired the wonderful view from the terrace. Below the town is the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuscany>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.alumni.emory.edu/careers/travelschedule.php?section=careers&sub=travel>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.sanlucacortona.com/cortona\\_eng.php](http://www.sanlucacortona.com/cortona_eng.php)

<sup>4</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cortona>

<sup>5</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence>

<sup>6</sup> <http://w3.usf.edu/iac/studyabroad/summer.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ahitravel.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/dyestuff>

<sup>9</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossbow>

<sup>10</sup> <http://images.google.com/images?q=Frances+Mayes&ie=UTF-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1>

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life\\_Is\\_Beautiful](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_Is_Beautiful)

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Renaissance Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie al Calcinaio. In the shape of a Latin cross, its transepts extended, it looks like a penitent prostrate before the mighty Cortona. It is on the site of a miracle. A farmer was plowing and his ox fell. Picking itself up the ox fell again. Since the beast was in a genuflecting position it was deemed a miracle had occurred.

Looking out one can see fields of oats and wheat. There are olive trees. Growing out of the old walls caper bushes are growing. The Etruscans laid the large stones at the bottom of the wall. The medieval walls rise from this base.

Then there was a welcome reception. There are 46 of us. Most are from the Emory Alumni group but there are people from Northern Michigan University<sup>12</sup>, which includes four young women who are sorority sisters. There is one couple from Johns Hopkins<sup>13</sup> and two Delta Tau Delta<sup>14</sup> couples.

The hors d'oeuvres were varied. I particularly liked the ones that seemed to be made from an anchovy and olive paste. The ones that were fried squash blossoms were also interesting. The Pinot Grigio was excellent. I did not try the champagne.

Then we went down a flight to the dining room which doubles as a wine cellar. We sat with Luther and Elaine Beck. He is a retired pharmacist from Commerce Georgia. He loves to garden but has developed a bad knee and is walking with a cane. The other couple was Richard and Katherine Zorn. He is a general surgeon. Kathy Zorn, who is a nurse, didn't feel well and left after the pasta course. Again the wine flowed like water. The dinner started with a disappointing pasta and tomato sauce. The sauce was excellent but the pasta was tough. Roast turkey and peas followed this. At last there was a delicious desert.

Betty and I came back to the room and fell right asleep.

Friday, May 9, 2008. Louise Maciejewski, our Campus Director, held an orientation meeting. From Oxford, England, her background is in archaeology and fine art restoration. She told us that we would use headphones so we don't have to stand close to the guides to hear.

Then we all introduced ourselves. While they talked about their PhD degrees, several mentioned they were lawyers and we have at least one doctor and one retired navy chaplain. I had to confess that I didn't go to Northern Michigan or Emory but to Swarthmore and that this was my second trip with Emory. My tenuous relationship with Emory dates from a donation I made many years ago to the Michael Carlos Museum<sup>15</sup> that had put me on their mailing list for life.

Then Jeanette Wong was introduced. Originally from San Francisco she came to Cortona 13 years ago and married an Italian. She has just finished converting one of the buildings in town into a Bed and Breakfast. She is an official tour guide and has translated books from Italian into English. She started by giving us a brief history of Cortona.

Legend tells us that Dardanus<sup>16</sup> founded the city. He is also credited with being the founder of Troy<sup>17</sup>. Archaeologists have found traces of a town here that dates from 600 BC. It was one of the twelve great cities of Etruria<sup>18</sup> the land of the Etruscans<sup>19</sup>. Herodotus said that the Etruscans came from Lidya,<sup>20</sup> which was in modern day Turkey. The distinctive Chianina cattle<sup>21</sup> that they brought to Tuscany have a DNA that connects them to cattle in Turkey. Since they left few written records, not much is known about the Etruscans. It is known they were traders and they traded timber and grain for salt and other things they needed. Their pottery shows Greek influence but it is not as fine.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nmu.edu/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nmu.edu/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.delts.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.carlos.emory.edu/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dardanus>

<sup>17</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troy>

<sup>18</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruria>

<sup>19</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan\\_civilization#Ethnic\\_formation\\_hypothesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_civilization#Ethnic_formation_hypothesis)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.allaboutturkey.com/lidya.htm>

<sup>21</sup> <http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&hs=Glh&resnum=0&q=chianina+cattle&um=1&ie=UTF-8>

The Romans conquered the Etruscans. Then the Punic Military commander Hannibal<sup>22</sup> crossed the Alps and defeated Gaius Flaminius<sup>23</sup> and the Romans in the battle of Trasimeno in 217 BC. We can see Lake Trasimeno from our hotel.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Italy was divided between the Guelphs who supported the Pope and the Ghibilines<sup>24</sup> who supported the Holy Roman Empire. The struggle ended in 1258 when Cortona was pillaged by the Aretini that sent almost the entire population into exile. In 1261 the Cortonesi managed to throw out the invaders and recaptured the city. The walls were repaired and many of the beautiful buildings were built. In 1325 the Caselli family came into power and ruled Cortona for about a century. Cortona became a strong city-state, the most powerful in Tuscany. The end of the dynasty came when a weak man murdered his uncle to take the crown.

The city-states of Italy became one country in 1850 under the House of Savoy. It was the last country in Europe to become united. However, even today there is rivalry between the various provinces. The Tuscans feel their olive oil is superior to the Umbrians and so forth.

Luca Signorelli<sup>25</sup> the Renaissance artist was born in Cortona. He painted the Moses painting in the Sistine Chapel<sup>26</sup>. There were other artists who left their mark on the town.

Today Cortona is one of the largest regions in Italy although only 2000 people live in the city proper.

Jeanette then entertained us with a slide lecture showing scenes of Cortona.

After a long drawn out lunch we set out on a walking tour of the town. Outside our hotel is Garibaldi<sup>27</sup> Square with its obelisk. Nearby we can see St Dominic's Church<sup>28</sup> that was constructed in the Gothic style in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. We walked the Via Nazionale, commonly known as the "flat street" for it is the only level street in town. With 47 people crowding down the narrow street we caused a lot of congestion and I was glad for the headphone. There are many inviting shops and vistas of narrow side streets.

At one point we stepped off the street to enter the courtyard of the Questo Palace where Jeanette showed us how the building had windows painted on it to give it symmetry. This was a style done during the Renaissance to give the illusion of light to a building with few windows.

We reached the Piazza de la Republic that is dominated by the 13<sup>th</sup> century Town Hall with lovely Renaissance buildings around it. Jeanette made arrangements for us to enter the council chambers in the oldest part of the building. We entered through the historic old doors. There is one councilperson to represent every 1000 people in the province. The general public can attend the meetings but cannot participate.

We walked beyond the city hall to the Piazza Signorelli. Luca Signorelli <sup>29</sup>(1445-1523) was a Renaissance painter and architect. At one time the two squares were joined and much larger but after the King of Naples sold Cortona to Florence, the city was heavily taxed to repay what it had cost. At this time land was sold and buildings were built into the original square.

Our goal was the Museum of the Diocese where we entered to see some amazing Medieval and Renaissance paintings. Jeanette pointed out how the Medieval painting were stiff and somewhat un-lifelike but during the Renaissance the figures came to life. Mary could show her joy with her baby. People could show their sorrow at the death of Jesus. Pride of the museum is Fra Angelo's Annunciation. Fra Angelo<sup>30</sup> who lived from 1400 to 1445 was a Dominican monk in Florence. He was one of the pioneers in Renaissance art.

We walked back to the hotel for a long drawn out lunch. I can't begin to eat what they are serving us.

Then we boarded our bus for an hour and a half drive into the hills. The bus swayed on the curves and put me to sleep. Poor Betty felt carsick. But at last we arrived at the Montalcino

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<sup>22</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibal>

<sup>23</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius\\_Flaminius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Flaminius)

<sup>24</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guelphs>

<sup>25</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luca\\_Signorelli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luca_Signorelli)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/sistine/0-Tour.html>

<sup>27</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe\\_Garibaldi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Garibaldi)

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.cortonaweb.net/eng/guida/guida\\_eng23.php](http://www.cortonaweb.net/eng/guida/guida_eng23.php)

<sup>29</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luca\\_Signorelli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luca_Signorelli)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/angelico/>

winery<sup>31</sup>. We were given a tour of the cellars but they were small and we couldn't all crowd in to see. I've seen countless other cellars so was not too disappointed.

And then we were allowed to taste one Chardonnay wine and two red wines. They are very proud of their Brunello di Montalcino<sup>32</sup>.

On the way back to Cortona, Louise put Betty and me in the front seat so she wouldn't be sick again. I found the front difficult for I had to brace myself on all the curves. I was tired and sore by the time we reached the hotel and my ankles had swollen.

Betty and I decided we weren't up to another long dinner and they got us some soup in the bar. It was wonderful minestrone<sup>33</sup>, thicker than ones I have had before with a bread crust in it. It was very filling. Then we went to our room and I worked on my journal and pictures while Betty read a book.

Saturday, May 10, 2008. Boarded the buses at 8:00 am and headed for Perugia. On the way we passed Lake Trasimeno. No river feeds this lake so it was much bigger in Hannibal's day. It is thought the battle was fought a few miles away where one town still bears the names of Ossaia (Ossuary). The lake is beautiful, the largest in Italy.

Perugia<sup>34</sup> was another Etruscan city and is the capitol of Umbria<sup>35</sup> one of the twenty regions of Italy. Our guide Verna met us at the bus and we headed for the Etruscan Museum. His intention was not to go inside but to see a few monuments in the courtyard. The Etruscans had an alphabet but no one has deciphered it. It looks like an early version of Greek. Unfortunately some of the exhibits he wished to show us were swathed in canvas for the building was being painted. A lovely sarcophagus had been cleaned with sand blasting which had ruined the patina. They do not sandblast anymore.

Outside the museum was the unfinished San Domenico Basilica<sup>36</sup>, designed by Giovanni Pisano<sup>37</sup>. We were told that the money had been spent on the inside decorations. There was an old well fed by cisterns where the town used to get its water.

Then we started up. Pope Paul 111<sup>38</sup>, born Alessandro Farnese, was made a cardinal when only 25. He led the worldly life of a Renaissance nobleman, and had at least two illegitimate children whom he recognized. He was elected Pope in 1534. He built a papal residence on top of the original town of Perugia. Now the way up to the new top is through a series of tunnels and escalators. Occasionally you could see remnants of the original houses.

On top, modern Perugia is relatively flat. A long boulevard stretches from the elevators all the way to the 4<sup>th</sup> of November Piazza. In Italy the end of WW 1 is celebrated on the 4<sup>th</sup> while the rest of the world celebrates on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

We were taken to a café for a restroom stop and refreshments and then started the tour. The City Hall has a lovely arched doorway.

Central to the 4th of November Piazza is the Fontana Maggiore designed by Pisano. This beautiful fountain was built to celebrate the construction of an aqueduct that brought water to the city in 1278.

Along one side of the huge square is the Duomo (cathedral). For a major Italian city and provincial capital, Perugia has a disappointing cathedral. First raised in the early 14th century on the Gothic model of the German hall churches, it didn't take its present form until the 16th century. Unsure whether the front on Piazza Danti or the flank facing Piazza IV November should be the facade, Perugians slapped a bit of desultory decoration on both. On the Piazza IV November side is a statue of Pope Julius III giving benediction.

Poorly constructed, metal bars had to be inserted through the walls to hold it together. Inside half the church was covered with scaffolds for the reconstruction work going on. The interior is a bit

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.cellartours.com/italy/wine-tours/siena-montalcino-tuscany-tasting.html>

<sup>32</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunello\\_di\\_Montalcino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunello_di_Montalcino)

<sup>33</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minestrone>

<sup>34</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perugia>

<sup>35</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbria>

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.perugiaonline.com/perugia\\_chiesadisandomenico.htm](http://www.perugiaonline.com/perugia_chiesadisandomenico.htm)

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni\\_Pisano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Pisano)

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,940278-2,00.html>

gaudy (those columns are painted, not real marble), but there are a handful of good paintings including a lovely Madonna done perhaps by Pisano. The relic of the cathedral is the ring of Mary but the Vatican does not confirm or deny its authenticity.

We were then given a half-hour for independent activities. I looked around for Betty and she was gone. Aimee was also looking for her. We looked all around with no success. Then Aimee went to check out the paintings in the art gallery. My more plebian tastes ran to a gelato shop where the man was making his own ice cream. I had a delicious pistachio cone. Then I walked down the long boulevard to the meeting place and was relieved to find Betty sitting on a bench.

We retraced our steps down the escalators and ramps to the bus and traveled on to Assisi. Outside the city we stopped at the Paradiso restaurant, reached by climbing down three flights of stairs. Lunch was pleasant with the first course a pasta dish. The sauce was very light and meat and tomato based. The Strozzapreti pasta itself was large and heavy which gives it the popular name of "strangle the pope". A delicious tuna salad was the best part. The promised ice cream turned out to be a fruit cup.

Assisi<sup>39</sup> was not an Etruscan Town for the Tiber River marked the end of the Etruscan settlements and the beginning of the Roman ones.

St Francis of Assisi<sup>40</sup> (1181-1226) was the son of Pietro di Bernardone a wealthy cloth merchant. He went off on a crusade but disgraced himself in battle and came home ashamed. He heard a voice from God and devoted his life to spreading the word. He gave away all his possessions and went as far as Egypt preaching and converting people to become Franciscans. He is also the Saint of Ecology for he was very aware of nature and the need to protect the wildlife. Many Franciscan Monasteries today are surrounded with lovely woodlands for the monks would only take the dead wood and nurtured the living. He was the first to make a crèche<sup>41</sup> for use at Christmas.

Also born in Assisi was Saint Clare<sup>42</sup> (1194-1253) daughter of Count Favorino Scifi. She was one of the first followers of St Francis and established the Order of Poor Ladies known as the Poor Clares for women who wished to live a monastic life. When the Muslims came to Assisi she took the monstrance (host) and held it in front of them, which caused them to withdraw.

The Poor Clare Sisters<sup>43</sup> are part of my life, for the Monastery in Ft Myers; FL used my daughter Mary for their computer technician. Mary has had problems in selling a house or her health all of which has been helped by the prayers of the good sisters. After my experience in Uganda when the guerillas came and killed some Americans, the sisters put me on their permanent prayer list as well. Although they live in seclusion, I was privileged to meet them on one visit to Ft Myers.

Saint Clare's church<sup>44</sup> was also poorly designed and buttresses had to be added to help shore it up. Inside it was lovely and we made the pilgrimage down into the crypt to see the remains of Saint Clare. Her face is covered with a mask.

We then walked on toward the main square. The town is having a festival and one man in medieval clothing was riding a motorcycle that I found amusing. We could not enter the main square but on a side street found two Chianina cows being readied for the parade. There were lots of people in medieval dress also getting ready for the parade.

Another side street took us to the opposite side of the square and there we got a peek at the Roman temple thought to have been dedicated to Minerva<sup>45</sup>. Known also as Pallas Athena in Greek mythology, she was the goddess of warriors

We continued on toward the Basilica<sup>46</sup>. Verna's method of sightseeing was to move a few feet then pause and talk a few minutes before moving on another few feet. What he said was interesting but it was extremely tiring even though I was able to sit on my stool.

I finally walked ahead to the Basilica and waited for the group to come. The basilica is in two

<sup>39</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assisi>

<sup>40</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_of\\_Assisi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_of_Assisi)

<sup>41</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity\\_scene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_scene)

<sup>42</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare\\_of\\_Assisi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare_of_Assisi)

<sup>43</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor\\_Clares](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_Clares)

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.bellaumbria.net/Assisi/st\\_clare\\_eng.htm](http://www.bellaumbria.net/Assisi/st_clare_eng.htm)

<sup>45</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Umbria/Perugia/Assisi/Assisi/Roman\\_Temple\\_of\\_Minerva/home.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Umbria/Perugia/Assisi/Assisi/Roman_Temple_of_Minerva/home.html)

<sup>46</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica\\_of\\_San\\_Francesco\\_d'Assisi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_San_Francesco_d'Assisi)

parts an upper and a lower church set on top of one another. In the upper church are murals by Giotto<sup>47</sup> di Bondone (1267-1337) depicting the life of St Francis. Here we found the famous picture of St Francis with the birds<sup>48</sup>. September 26, 1997, St Francis' 816th birthday there was an earthquake and the Basilica was badly damaged. Four people were killed and the paintings were badly hurt. It took two years for the restoration. The frescos have oxidized and the colors seem washed out but until better techniques of restoration are invented it has been decided to leave them in their present state. We walked around the upper basilica while Verna talked about the frescos.

Then we went to the lower basilica where more murals depicted the life of Jesus. These were done by the Maestro di S. Francesco<sup>49</sup> an anonymous Italian painter whose works date from 1260 to 1280. On each level there was a tomb directly over crypt where the actual tomb of St Francis rests. We were too tired to clamber down yet another flight of steps to see it.

At the end of the tour we found a shop where Betty could buy St Francis medals for some of her friends and then I treated us to some pistachio cups of ice cream. Two in one day! I hate to think of the calories!

Then it was back on the bus for the hour and a half ride back to Cortona, only pausing briefly at the end so we could get a photo shot of Cortona perched on the mountain. The countryside is beautiful with poppies and iris in bloom.

Betty was so tired she skipped the cocktail party and dinner. After a shower I decided I could go to the last few minutes of the party. I sat with the four young sorority women from Northwestern who are on our tour. Most of them seem to be between jobs and they are thoroughly enjoying the trip.

At dinner I sat with the Flicks, as well as Nancy and Carman and Henry Snell and Dianne Tobin from Lake Havasu City, AZ. The last two are newly weds having been married only five months. Each had lost their mate of some 40 years and in the process of consoling each other fell in love. Much wine had been consumed and the conversation was lively. Desert was interesting. A plate of hard biscuits was brought to the table and we were invited to dip it in the sweet sparkling wine. It was delicious.

Sunday, May 11. Betty and I slept in while the group went to Montepulciano<sup>50</sup>. It was billed as a pretty hill town but our aching bones needed a rest.

We walked into town hoping to find the Internet-café open but had no luck. We did sit in the Town Hall Square and had cappuccinos. They were served with a heart shape in the milk and even the sugar packet looked like a coffee cup. I had an opportunity to improve some of the photos I had taken on our earlier walk. It is so hard to get a decent picture when 45 people are milling around. Then I stopped at the bank for more money and we rested in our motel room until it was time for lunch.

We sat with Blair and Emily Ferguson. He was in investment banking until they retired to Black Rock, NC. Next to me were Meg and Jeff Multer who live in Decatur, GA. She has retired from work at the CDC and we share an interest in yoga. We decided we needed to have a "yoga" trip with someone along to guide us through the exercises. She and her husband have a cabin in North Carolina.

In the afternoon, Louise gave a lecture on the Etruscans. The Arno River on the North and the Tiber on the East define Etruria. They were an interesting culture in that they traded with the Phoenicians and Greeks. In some ways they copied the other cultures but they had a unique culture of their own. Unfortunately very little written record remains so much has to be speculated about them.

Then we walked into town for a look at the Etruscan Museum<sup>51</sup>. The lower level is a modern museum beautifully displayed and we saw tools and artifacts from gravesites. Their graveyards are about the only source of our knowledge about them. They built beehive shaped tombs and

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<sup>47</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giotto\\_di\\_Bondone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giotto_di_Bondone)

<sup>48</sup> [http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/St.\\_Francis.html](http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/St._Francis.html)

<sup>49</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maestro\\_di\\_San\\_Francesco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maestro_di_San_Francesco)

<sup>50</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montepulciano>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.cortonaweb.net/eng/musei/index.php>

there are many of them. Most interesting was the Etruscan Chandelier where some 20 lamps could burn. A lost wax process had made it<sup>52</sup>.

We clambered up two flights of stairs for the rest of the museum but this part is like an old fashioned museum. It houses various individuals' collections, most of which has lost its provenance.

Being Sunday, Betty wanted to go to church and Louise informed us that the Cathedral had a 6:00 PM mass. It was early but we walked over and sat in a pew. Tourists came and went but there was only one lady that seemed there for the service. Finally another woman joined us. She is a composer, here on a retreat to compose. I was the one who finally deciphered the Italian sign at the door and declared the service was at St Dominic's across from our hotel. We walked back across town and sure enough the door was open and the service was under way. The service was in Italian and I didn't even recognize when the Lord's Prayer came but I obediently got up and down with the congregation. The elderly priest had a voice that resonated in the church. One of the Sisters led the singing.

Behind the altar was a beautiful triptych signed by Lorenzo di Niccolo that was donated in 1440 by Cosimo and Lorenzo de Medici (1449-1492)<sup>53</sup>. There were other paintings on the wall. It was a lovely experience.

We went back to the Internet café but it was closed. Then we went to a wine bar, the Caffe la Saletta, for pizzas. The hotel dining room is closed tonight. I was not impressed with the pizzas, which had a thin hard crust and not much cheese to go with the sausage flavoring.

Monday, May 12, 2008. Richard Freemantle addressed us. He has both a Bachelor of Art and Master of Art degrees from Columbia University and did extensive work on a PhD at London University. He has published four books and numerous articles on the history of art.

He pointed out that the Roman Empire did not survive but the Catholic Church did. Cities almost disappeared during the Middle Ages because of the Black Plague<sup>54</sup> and War. From a population of several million only a few thousand people survived. 80% of the people in Siena died of the plague. After the Schism in the Catholic Church (1378-1417)<sup>55</sup> when there were four Popes, the world changed. Cities sprang up in the agrarian landscape. The middle class became the backbone of Europe and money was the name of the game. The church never regained the power over the people it once had. The Renaissance had become a bridge between religion and science.

One cannot help but compare that time to now when we have AIDS and wars and with our weak dollar power is shifting away from the US.

We boarded the bus and headed for Siena<sup>56</sup>. As usual the bus had to drop us off on the outskirts and we had a long walk into the center of town. We saw the Dominican Church of Saint Catherine of Siena<sup>57</sup> but no stop had been planned.

Saint Catherine (1347-1380) was born in Siena, daughter of Giacomo di Benincasa. From her earliest childhood she began to see visions. At the age of sixteen she took the habit of the Dominicans. She heard a divine command to enter the public life of the world and tried to heal the Schism dividing the Catholic Church. She implored Pope Gregory XI to leave Avignon. She tried to stop the Wars between Florence and the Pope. She wrote books about her visions and meditations. She was the first female Doctor of the Church. Her hand and thumb are enshrined here, the rest of her remains are in the Vatican.

I was here more than 30 years ago but remember nothing except the Piazza del Campo<sup>58</sup>, the huge shell-shaped square in front of the town hall where in the summer the Palio horse races<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost-wax\\_casting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost-wax_casting)

<sup>53</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo\\_de'\\_Medici](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo_de'_Medici)

<sup>54</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death)

<sup>55</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\\_Schism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Schism)

<sup>56</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03447a.htm>

<sup>58</sup> <http://images.google.com/images?q=siena+piazza+del+campo&ie=UTF-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.ilpalio.org/palioenglish.htm>

are held. The word Campo means field and originally the horse race was held in a field but the city has built up around the campo so now they race in urban conditions. We found a table in the Bar il Palio and watched the world go by while we had our lunch.

Then we started our tour. Donatella, our guide, tells us you must be Sieneese to get excited by this Middle Ages sport, the Palio. The Contradas of the town, each having their own government, coat of arms and so forth, compete in this race, which was first, run in 1701. Since the oval square is paved in stone, dirt must be brought in and a track created where the horses won't slip. A lottery is held to determine the horses that are eligible. Then a preliminary race is held and 16 horses qualify for the race. The steeds are ridden bareback and if the jockey falls off it doesn't matter for the horse can win without a rider. Bribery enters into the sport as the jockeys are bribed. We saw a picture of thousands of people in the infield who can only share the excitement but not see the race. I'm sure the occasional balconies around the square are filled with people.

She walked us to the Academy of Music<sup>60</sup> and in a pleasant courtyard with a carved marble well she briefed us on Sieneese history. Siena was very wealthy since it was in the path of the Crusaders and the pilgrims would change their money here. The first bank in the world was established here and today each of its many branches around the world has a resident citizen of Siena. The Music School attracts people from all over the world.

We walked on to the Cathedral<sup>61</sup> and paused in the beginnings of an unfinished church for more explanation. The cathedral was planned to be the largest church in the world but only the nave was built. It is made of black and white polychrome marble. The front façade is wonderful and covered with figures and sculptures.

We went into the chapel of the old Roman Catholic Charity Hospital established by the Church in 1090 to treat the people on crusades<sup>62</sup>. It was the first public hospital in Europe. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century two doctors were always in residence, the first time this was ever done. This was the original hospital of Siena and it was only in 1997 that it moved into a modern building. Now the building is being renovated into a museum.

A beautiful fresco is over the chapel altar. There are more frescos in the antechambers, which were used as emergency wards. How wonderful for a patient to look up and see the frescos in the cross-vaulted ceiling.

The Cathedral was amazing. The floors are inlaid Italian marble and they depict many scenes from mythology. Black marble dust and silver were blended so that lines could be drawn to accent the figures. Romulus and Remus<sup>63</sup> are among the scenes. There are pagan figures such as Hermes<sup>64</sup>. One rose window illuminates the long nave and there are busts of all the popes in a frieze near the ceiling.

Nicola Pisano<sup>65</sup>, the father of Giovanni Pisano, designed the pulpit<sup>66</sup> that looks a bit like a carousel. We entered the small Piccolomini Library<sup>67</sup> and found wonderful frescos on the walls and manuscripts on display in glass cases. Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464) was the Cardinal of Siena who became Pope Pius 11<sup>68</sup>.

Retuning to the main square we sat in a café having cappuccino until the tour was ready to return to Cortona.

I went straight from the bus to the Internet café and found it open for a change. Caught up with my mail and then Betty and I went out for dinner in a bar called Caffe degli Artisti. The group was having pizza at the hotel and it looked like it would be a long evening with an oven that could only cook four at a time.

I took a much-needed shower and climbed into bed to work on this journal while Betty went up for the visitation. Louise had arranged for some locals to come and meet us. I didn't have any idea what I could say to them so I passed. Apparently I was wrong for Betty reported it was very nice

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.sienaschool.com/new-projects/june-2008---music-in-siena.aspx>

<sup>61</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena\\_Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena_Cathedral)

<sup>62</sup> <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0DE7DB113AF931A35751C1A9659C8B63>

<sup>63</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romulus\\_and\\_Remus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romulus_and_Remus)

<sup>64</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes>

<sup>65</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicola\\_Pisano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicola_Pisano)

<sup>66</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena\\_Cathedral#Pulpit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena_Cathedral#Pulpit)

<sup>67</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena\\_Cathedral#Piccolomini\\_Library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena_Cathedral#Piccolomini_Library)

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12126c.htm>



to meet two of the locals

Tuesday, May 13. We were up early for the trip to Florence. We picked up Maria Elena our guide and drove to a nearby hill for a panoramic view from Michelangelo Park<sup>69</sup> with its bronze statue of Michelangelo's David. Aimee our leader got out the Emory banner and we all dutifully posed for a group picture. There were some startling aprons with David's torso imprinted on them. I had lost my umbrella so I bought a new one with the Florence skyline imprinted on it.

The Etruscans never lived in Florence for the area was a swamp at that time. The Romans named their new city Firenzi that we call Florence for Flora, Goddess of spring. The violet wild iris is in bloom everywhere and is the symbol of Florence and appears on the Coat of Arms.<sup>70</sup>

Then we drove back into the city for our walking tour. In the late 1800s Florence was the capitol of Italy and this is when her ancient walls were torn down. Today 360,000 people live in Florence but once it was one of the largest cities in Europe. The terrible flood of the Arno in November 1966<sup>71</sup>, when the water stood fifteen feet high in the city, destroyed and damaged many of the art works for which Florence was famous. Today there is no sign of the flood except that many statues and paintings that were outdoors are now in museums with replicas showing where they once stood.

We started out and passed the Academy<sup>72</sup> continuing on through the medieval section of Florence where the streets became very narrow. Then we reached the Cathedral<sup>73</sup>. It is beautiful in three-color marble: black, pink and green, which represent faith hope and charity. Filippo Brunelleschi designed the dome<sup>74</sup>. He invented a hoisting mechanism to raise the masonry used in it and no scaffold was used in its construction. He designed many other Renaissance buildings in Florence.

The Baptistery<sup>75</sup> nearby is believed to be the oldest building in Florence. The beautiful bronze Doors of Paradise by Lorenzo Ghiberti<sup>76</sup> have been replaced with duplicates. The duplicates are pretty good but there were such crowds of people it was difficult to admire them. I am so glad I have been able to see Florence twice before, when the crowds were much less. I also cannot imagine what it is like in the tourist season in the summer. Even today, the heat made me shed my jacket and still I was hot.

We continued on to the Palazzo Vecchio or old City Hall<sup>77</sup>, which looms over a large piazza. The first part of the palace was built between 1299 and 1302 to be a meeting place for the representatives of the various Guilds. The Renaissance Arnolfo tower was completed in 1308 and is 94 meters high. It was placed off center to fit better with the lack of symmetry in the square in front of it.

Nearby on the Loggia dei Lanzi<sup>78</sup> many sculptures are displayed. The original statues have been moved to museums but the copies of Michelangelo's David and Giambologna's<sup>79</sup> Rape of the Sabine's<sup>80</sup> are pretty good. I admired the magnificent bronze of Benvenuto Cellini's<sup>81</sup> Perseus and the head of Medusa<sup>82</sup>.

Then we passed on to the long corridor that passes the eminent Uffizi Gallery<sup>83</sup>. Mounted on

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.travelpod.com/travel-photo/kelseylynn/studyabroad-08/1208705280/from-michaelangelo-park.jpg/tpod.html>

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.crwflags.com/FOTW/flags/it-flore.html#coa>

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.florence-flood.com/>

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.florenceacademyofart.com/>

<sup>73</sup> <http://images.google.com/images?q=Florence+Cathedral&ie=UTF-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1>

<sup>74</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filippo\\_Brunelleschi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filippo_Brunelleschi)

<sup>75</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battistero\\_di\\_San\\_Giovanni\\_\(Florence\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battistero_di_San_Giovanni_(Florence))

<sup>76</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo\\_Ghiberti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo_Ghiberti)

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.citymayors.com/cityhalls/florence\\_cityhall.html](http://www.citymayors.com/cityhalls/florence_cityhall.html)

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.mega.it/eng/egui/monu/ssstatue.htm>

<sup>79</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giambologna>

<sup>80</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape\\_of\\_the\\_Sabine\\_Women](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape_of_the_Sabine_Women)

<sup>81</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giambologna>

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/lanzi/lanzi.html>

<sup>83</sup> <http://www.uffizi.com/>

pedestals outside are statues of all the great men in Italian history from Michelangelo to Galileo. At last we reached the Arno with a magnificent view of the Ponte Vecchio<sup>84</sup>. We said goodbye to Maria Elena. She wasn't the best guide on the trip.

Our next problem was to get back to the Academy for our 1:15 reservation. Along with Kathy and Richard we backtracked. It hurts when I move too fast but we didn't want to be late. Kathy pleaded for a beverage stop and when we stopped, they got drinks I got a pistachio cone. It was white in color and the salesman told me it is only green when they add food color. It was delicious regardless. Except you shouldn't try and eat ice cream as you hurry across Florence!

We got to the Academy on time but there were many people there. We admired the beautiful paintings but skipped the musical instruments to enter the sculpture gallery. Here were the originals of the copies in the square. David dominates the room and I felt they had done a great job displaying him although Betty disagreed. Regardless there is no way he can stand outdoors as he originally did.

We then entered a gallery of Lorenzo Bartolini's<sup>85</sup> (1777-1850) paintings and behind was a gallery of the plaster molds he used for his sculptures.

Two other galleries were closed for renovations and we soon were back on the street. Betty spotted a shop where they were selling religious medals and wanted to stop. I misunderstood what she had found and she was most displeased with me as we passed it by. Later when I wanted to go back she would not do it. As a result we never did find another shop. Rule I of travel: If you see it and want it, buy it for you will never see it again!

We headed back toward the river and stopped for lunch at the Academy cafe. I had a delicious Brie and ham sandwich while Betty had a yummy looking salad.

Then we went back to the Town Hall Square and stopped at a cafeteria for a drink and to rest. Continuing on we came to the Ponte Vecchio<sup>86</sup>, the old bridge, and window-shopped a bit. The prices were extraordinary so we did not buy. Then we started the long walk back along the Arno River<sup>87</sup> to the bus pickup stop. It must have been a mile. We did stop once at a park next to the Evangelical Lutheran Church<sup>88</sup> but there was no other place to rest at all.

The bus stop is near an International flea market and we found unsavory toilets and uninteresting flea bargains so we sat on a wall and waited for the others who did come dribbling in. Once we were on the board the bus we were told we could have caught a city bus but no one told us this.

Back at Cortona I went to the Internet café and the restaurant where we ate last night in search of my lost umbrella but they did not have it. Tonight we had a buffet supper with a large variety of food for a welcome change.

Wednesday, May 14. The last day. We had a funny if incomprehensible lecture by Giovanni Adreani on the state of modern Italian politics. Even though the country has been unified for 150 years there are still regional rivalries. I got the impression that the government is incompetent and corrupt. He was very cynical. We laughed and laughed but I was never sure what we laughed about!

This was followed by a cooking demonstration but Betty and I decided we wanted to pay our respects to Santa Margarita de Cortona<sup>89</sup> (1247-1297), the patron saint of the town. At the age of seven she lost her mother and her father married again. She did not have had a good relationship with her stepmother. At the age of 17 she ran off with a nobleman. For nine years she lived with him in a castle near Montepulciano<sup>90</sup> and had a son. Her lover never married her. He was murdered and she moved to Cortona living in the Franciscan monastery. She joined the Third Order of St Francis and took the vow of poverty. She prevailed upon Cortona to build a hospital for the poor and devoted her life to their care. In 1289 she moved to the ruined church of St Basil

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<sup>84</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponte\\_Vecchio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponte_Vecchio)

<sup>85</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo\\_Bartolini](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo_Bartolini)

<sup>86</sup> <http://images.google.com/images?q=ponte+vecchio&ie=UTF-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1>

<sup>87</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arno\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arno_River)

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.florencephotos.com/pic.asp?iCat=50&iPic=311&offset=8>

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09653b.htm>

<sup>90</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montepulciano>

above the city and had it repaired. After her death it was rebuilt in more magnificent style and renamed in her honor.

The church is at the highest point of the town and it seemed expedient to take a taxi to the top and walk down. The taxi had to circle around the wall to get us there so we saw some views that were new to us. The cost was 10 Euro and the driver tried to point out the sights as we drove.

The church is lovely and sits all by itself. It sits on the site of an earlier church that dates from 900 AD. Inside the murals and paintings were hard to see but the mummy of the Saint was clearly lit for us to view. Betty found a Sister and was taken to the area where medals and rosaries were sold so she could stock up on gifts to take home.

Then we walked down. The road is steep and cobblestone with a more or less level stone walkway in the center. The Stations of the Cross, mosaics by Gino Severini<sup>91</sup>, line the road. Of course we did them in reverse but we paused at each one to marvel at the mosaics and I tried to photograph them but there was too much reflection in the protective glass for that to be very successful. On the walk down we noted a small angel painted on one of the stones. Then we passed the University of Georgia campus in Cortona. Someone told us they are studying winemaking at the moment. We also passed the convent where Santa Margarita lived. It was a nice walk but tiring. After a last stop at the ATM we were happy to reach the hotel.

After lunch there was time to pack and a short nap before our graduation ceremony. Over cocktails we were asked a series of questions. Betty and I drew a difficult one on how to describe the different architectures we had seen. In any event we faked our way through it and received an Emory banner and a graduation certificate.

Then it was back on the bus for an hour-long trip into the country to the Ristorante alla Corte del Sole<sup>92</sup> near Petrigiano. The hotel was originally built as a monastery. It is set in an amazing rose garden. Some of the roses were the biggest I had ever seen and we approached the elegant dining room through a rose arbor. The dinner was wonderful. We started with a spinach soufflé. Then we had some roast beef cooked with lots of herbs. Desert was a chocolate concoction that melted in our mouths.

We were back in the hotel at 9:00 for a short rest before our wakeup call at 2:30. I would have slept better if it were not for the four young girls on our trip having a noisy party in their room.

Thursday, May 15. We boarded the bus at 3:15 for the hour and a half drive through the sleeping countryside. There was someone at the airport to assist with check in and I was soon ensconced in the departure lounge.

I boarded the commuter flight to Paris and then we sat and sat. There was an air traffic controller strike in Paris. I never pass through Charles de Gaulle Airport without trouble! At last we got clearance and got to Paris an hour late. A wheelchair van whisked me through the airport and with the help of a wheel chair I reached the Atlanta flight as they were boarding. I could not sleep on the plane but watched the movie 27 Dresses<sup>93</sup> and dozed and read. Arrived in Atlanta in a heavy rainstorm and the limo driver told me it had rained hard all day.

Betty had really bad luck as Lufthansa developed engine trouble and the flight to Atlanta was cancelled. After hours of waiting in the Frankfurt airport they were finally put on a plane to New York where Lufthansa put them up for the night. They had to come home the next day.

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<sup>91</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gino\\_Severini](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gino_Severini)

<sup>92</sup> [http://www.intuscany.net/hotels/corte\\_del\\_sole.htm](http://www.intuscany.net/hotels/corte_del_sole.htm)

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.27dressesthemovie.com/>