

From the “Inside Tuscany: A Second Time Around Series”

*Walking the Aqueduct:
Tuscan Adventures and Culture*

Scott Tiezzi Grabinger

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Cover Photos:

Traveler walking across Vasari's aqueduct in Arezzo.

Vasari's aqueduct.

*To Luke Scott Otipoby,
may you grow up with an enthusiasm for travel.*

The “Inside Tuscany: A Second Time Around” Series

Print Books:

The following can be found at <http://www.createspace.com> or Amazon.com. Search for “Scott Tiezzi Grabinger.”

Central Tuscany: A Guide to Arezzo

Central Tuscany: Valdichiana Hill Towns — Cortona to Civitella

Central Tuscany: A Guide to Cortona

Central Tuscany: Chianti to the Val d’Orcia

Central Tuscany: The Casentino and Valtiberina

From the iTunes Bookstore:

The following can be found at iTunes for an Apple iPad or iPhone. Search for “Scott Tiezzi Grabinger.”

Inside Tuscany: Best of Cortona

Inside Tuscany: Arezzo Churches

Inside Tuscany: Arezzo Museums and Sites

For the Kindle:

The following can be found at Amazon.com. Search for “Scott Tiezzi Grabinger.”

Walking the Aqueduct: Tuscan Adventures and Culture

Table of Contents

The “ <i>Inside Tuscany: A Second Time Around</i> ” Series	iv
Preface.....	ix
Part I: The Aretine.....	11
1 Arezzo.....	13
Brief History.....	14
Lunch Hour Tradition	15
Festivals.....	15
Sites and Art	16
Location.....	17
Less Expensive.....	17
2 Fiera Antiqueria.....	18
3 Sabado Mercato	23
4 La Giostra del Saracino.....	29
5 Civitella’s Day of Infamy	34
Justice was Slow	39
The Pity of June 1944.....	40
Part II: Culture and People	43
6 Everybody is Catholic.....	45
7 Customs and Courtesies.....	49
Using Ciao	49
Ci Vediamo.....	49
Pronto and Dimmi.....	49
Greetings.....	50
Titles.....	50
Kiss Kiss	50
Personal Space.....	50
Being on Time.....	51
Appearance and Dress	51
Communicating or Pushy Pushy.....	51
Body Language.....	52

Talking Politics.....	52
Standing in Line	52
Shhhh.....	53
Humor.....	53
Being a Guest and Table Manners.....	53
Flowers and Gifts.....	54
Visiting Churches	54
At the Store.....	54
Eating and Drinking.....	55
At the Restaurant.....	55
Tipping.....	56
Gelato	57
Smoking	57
Learn a Few Words.....	58
8 All I want is a Matita.....	59
9 A Week in Italian School.....	62
10 Passeggiata	70
11 Oh my God! I'm in Italy!.....	74
12 Vendemmia.....	78
13 Don Francesco.....	86
14 Nando and Marisa.....	94
15 The Guest's Program.....	104
16 Codice Fiscale.....	108
Part III: Food and Dining.....	111
17 Ristorante Capannaccia	112
18 Cappuccio!.....	117
The Steps.....	118
The Drinks.....	119
Bar Food.....	121
19 Coffee O Clock	122
20 Staff of Life.....	127
21 Our First Italian Meals	131
22 Surviving a Family Meal	136
The Tricks.....	136
Tips for Survival	138
Part IV: Traveling and Living.....	141

23 La Grotta Azzura.....	142
24 A Bad Feeling.....	146
25 Santi Fabiano e Sebastiano.....	150
26 Reality Bites.....	155
27 Photography Hints.....	160
DSLR vs. Point-and-Shoot Cameras.....	160
Megapixels.....	160
Batteries and Recharging.....	161
Memory Cards.....	161
Flash Photography.....	162
Tripods and Cable Release.....	162
Camera Bags and Covers.....	162
Lenses and Filters — Information for DSLR Shooting.....	163
Light.....	163
Printing.....	163
RAW vs. JPG — Information for DSLR Shooting.....	164
Important Things to Remember.....	164
Courteous Tourist Photography.....	164
28 Culture Shock.....	166
29 Traveling and Connectivity.....	170
30 Il Telefonino.....	175
Telefonino I.....	175
Telefonino II.....	176
Telefonino III.....	176
Telefonino IV.....	177
Telefonino V.....	177
Telefonino VI.....	178
Addendum 2012 — Telefonino VII.....	178
31 You've Gone Native . . .	179
Part V: Driving.....	181
32 Autostrada.....	182
33 Navigating.....	188
34 Roma.....	191
35 Other Driving Hints.....	194
Narrow Lanes.....	194
City Driving and Navigation.....	194
Traffic Control.....	195

<i>Creeping into a Turn</i>	196
<i>Mirrors</i>	196
<i>Motorcycles and Scooters</i>	197
<i>Short Term Thinkers</i>	197
<i>Courtesy</i>	197
<i>Part VI: The Aqueduct</i>	199
36 <i>Walking the Aqueduct</i>	200

Preface

I fell in love with Italy upon our first family visit in 1992. I found several cousins in Arezzo and Foiano della Chiana (my maternal grandparent's home). As my visits multiplied I kept showing up like a bad penny to tour Tuscany and study Italian so I could talk with my family who only spoke Italian — or so I thought. I found out several years down the road that they would rather listen to my bad Italian than use their English. I got serious about studying the language in 2004 when I began attending immersion school for two or three weeks at a time each year, slowly forcing my old mind to learn.

The idea for a series of books on central Tuscany came after I retired from my associate professor position at the University of Colorado Denver. I sat down and thought about what to do. I asked, "What do I know best?" The answer: Arezzo and Tuscany. So, I started on my first book of a planned series, *Central Tuscany: A Guide to Arezzo*. I had a lot to learn and it took a couple of years to finish the first book, which I published in May 2010 with new editions in 2011 and 2012. My next three books came out in 2011 with new editions in 2012. This book, although not a tour guide is an offshoot of the series.

This book is highly personal as I describe my experiences living in and learning about Tuscany. I had lots of help from my many cousins as they showed me places I would never

find without them; they taught me about food and dining; and helped me blend in the culture to the point I wasn't always immediately identified as an American. Thanks to them I developed a new philosophy of traveling — slow travel — to accompany Italy's "slow food" movement to.

Few in America know about the "inner Tuscany." They take a one or two week vacation to Tuscany and race to visit the grandest sites of Florence, Siena, Cortona, San Gimignano, and Pisa. They eat great food, see the beautiful landscapes, and meet a friendly people; but they learn little of the day-to-day culture in the Tuscan heartland. Those who catch the "Tuscany Bug" want to return and learn more about the art, people, festivals, markets, hill towns, and food and that's what all my books try to do.

Remedying my travel ignorance and dealing with my misadventures play a large role in the following stories, almost all of which take place in Tuscany with brief diversions to Capri and Sicily. It's not just a book of nonstop thrills and excitement; it is also takes a look at daily life in its excitement, frustration, and boring times. There are some travel hints in the section, "Traveling." I hope that you enjoy a revealing look at my experiences.

If you'd like to talk and share experiences write to:
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Part I: The Aretine

Setting up a base is part of my “slow travel” strategy and I have settled on the *Aretine* area in Tuscany, initially because I have family there who help me. The Aretine is an area of Tuscany that spreads from Cortona in the south to La Verna in the north. The population center of the area is Arezzo, not the equal of Florence or Pisa in popularity but one of the most important cities in Tuscany with plenty of culture and restaurants to keep any discerning traveler happy. This first section describes various features of Arezzo and the Aretine province as a central location for exploring many popular parts of Tuscany. Visit the huge Antique Fair, the exciting weekly Saturday Market, the twice yearly medieval festival, the Joust of the Saraceno, and a nearby Aretine town’s terrible World War II experience.

The point of travel is to get lost.

I Arezzo

In my guidebooks, I recommend that travelers going to Tuscany set up a base rather than travel from one place to another every day — it saves time, money, and energy — and Arezzo is my choice. Larger than most hill towns at about 90,000 it is neither too small nor too large and rich in art, culture, traditions, typical restaurants, festivals, shopping, and services. Once in the old *centro* you'd never guess there are more than a thousand people around; it is secluded and protected from the daily bustle that goes on in newer parts of the city that sprawl out from the bottom of the hill.

I didn't have much of a choice when it came to adopting Arezzo as my Italian home. The one cousin who speaks fluent English, Don Francesco, has a small parish outside of town and offered me his rectory as a free place to stay, so "free" seemed a logical stop. It gave me the opportunity to learn one place well — and to learn about the advantages of creating a base. This is where the size of the town becomes important. Most hill towns are very small, perhaps with a few hundred inhabitants, mostly elderly; the young have usually moved to larger cities to find jobs. These small towns are charming and make wonderful places to stay for a couple of days, but their lack of size makes a long stay less interesting. Arezzo is full of nooks and crannies, churches and museums, and shops and

palazzi to explore. After living there for almost a year in the last five years, I can still go out for a walk and discover something new.

Arezzo's atmosphere is different from Tuscany's major sites; it feels dignified without being snooty. It isn't swamped with tourists like Florence and Siena, so visitors don't have that nervous, jumpy feeling of being hustled, nor do they rush madly from one site to another afraid that they might miss something. The local *Aretini* (the Italian name for people living in the Arezzo province) appreciate the business tourists bring without pandering to the lowest level. Tourists come to Arezzo to visit the churches, museums, and antique studios, so you don't find dozens of cheap souvenir shops hawking T-shirts, calendars, baseball caps, and scarves. In other words, it maintains an identity separate from being a "tourist town," proud of its ancient heritage.

Brief History

Arezzo sits on a small hill like a bubble in the center of a flat plain encircled by mountains and hills. Four valleys intersect at Arezzo: Valdarno (west), Casentino (north), Valtiberina (east), and Valdichiana (south). This strategic communication and transportation position made it one of ancient Etruria's and Rome's most important cities.

The Etruscans, who controlled the areas of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna between the ninth and fourth centuries BC had twelve major cities, and Arezzo was one of them. In the fourth century BC, Rome conquered Etruria and maintained Arezzo's importance throughout the Imperial Roman era. Then, beginning in the sixth century, northern invading tribes plundered the town and destroyed the infrastructure — along with the rest of the Roman Empire. At various times, Arezzo was under Goth, Lombard, Byzantine, and Frankish rule before becoming a free city state in the late eleventh century. This was the town's golden age before intercity conflicts, primarily with Siena and Florence, created cycles of prosperity and impoverishment. The rivalry with Florence, marked by

Arezzo's defeat at the Battle of Campaldino (1289), led to a gradual decline until Florence took control of all of Tuscany in the fifteenth century. Today, Arezzo is a prosperous city with an economy based on antiques, gold work, pottery, tourism, agriculture, and leather and clothing factories. With its long held traditions, museums, churches, and medieval buildings, Arezzo offers the visitor an inside glimpse into Tuscan life.

Lunch Hour Tradition

The larger tourist sites in Tuscany have gradually lost some of their quaint traditions like closing for the lunch hours. Tourists in heavily visited spots like Florence and Siena demand 24/7 services and don't want to spend two to three hours every afternoon at lunch. They have places to go and things to see and not enough time. Arezzo still hangs on to its tradition of closing for two to three hours every afternoon for *pranzo*, forcing visitors to slow down, make new friends, and enjoy the Tuscan lifestyle.

Festivals

An integral part of that Aretine lifestyle is the frequent festivals hosted by Arezzo. There is something special happening almost every weekend through the spring, summer, and fall. On the first weekend of every month is the *Fiera Antiquaria* (Chapter 2), the most important antique fair in Italy. Thousands of people visit over 150 antique dealers who spread their wares throughout the *centro* streets. Shoppers can find everything imaginable from furniture to chandeliers to lace to music to copper sinks for washing hair.

At least one, but usually more, of a month's weekends is given over to a special festival, like the annual "Taste of the World" in October. More than a hundred booths representing countries from all over Europe sell their native foods from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. It's a gastronomic marvel bringing English cheeses, German sausages, Guinness, French bread, and Spanish paella to the eager Aretini.

Even without a special festival there is the open air Saturday

mercato held in the Zona Giotto, just outside the *centro*, where over 100 vendors line both sides of the Via Giotto, two deep on one side, selling meats, fish, cheese, sandwiches, clothing, household items, toys, hardware, and more (Chapter 3). Most likely you'll find that special thing that you didn't know that you needed and enjoy being part of the daily life of a Tuscan city.

Arezzo's grandest medieval festival, *La Giostra del Saraceno* (Chapter 4), is held twice a year, in June and September. The city celebrates its medieval past with parades in which over 300 people in costume march through the *centro* as the *Araldo* invites each of the four traditional neighborhoods to the Joust. At the competition, two riders from each of the neighborhoods gallop with a long lance toward a shield held by a model of a Saracen. They try to hit the shield, gain points, and win the *Lancia d'Oro* (Golden Lance) — and gain the right to celebrate every weekend until the next competition.

And don't miss the daily *passaggiata* along Corso Italia every evening before dinner (Chapter 10). Walk with the locals as they meet their friends, show off the latest styles, and work up an appetite.

Sites and Art

Although Arezzo was damaged in WW II, most of the medieval buildings and piazzas in the old *centro* remain. Piazza Grande is one of the most unique piazzas in Italy and the center of city activities including markets and the monthly Fiera Antiquaria. Along the sides of the piazza are the graceful Vasari designed loggia and the apse of the beautiful Romanesque church, the Pieve della Santa Maria.

Museums and churches offer countless masterpieces including frescoes, paintings, sculpture, and stained glass. The church of San Domenico holds Cimabue's Crucifix and the Basilica di San Francesco has Piero della Francesca's great masterpiece fresco cycle, *La Leggenda della Vera Croce* (The Legend of the True Cross). The antique museum, *La Casa Museo di Ivan Bruschi*, is one of the best private museums in the country.

The *Museo Statale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna* holds masterpieces from virtually all of Tuscany's great masters.

The most charming part of Arezzo is the old *centro*. Pedestrian only, except for residents and deliveries, it's narrow streets and medieval buildings cover the ancient hill. This is where the locals come for the daily *passeggiata*, the daily market in Piazza Sant'Agostino, restaurants, and shops. There are a number of reasonably priced hotels in the area putting the visitor in the center of all the important sites, churches, and museums.

Location

As a base for exploration, I like the proximity of Arezzo to other fantastic sites in central and southern Tuscany (by car): 45 minutes from Florence, 30 minutes from Cortona, 45 from Montepulciano, 60 from Montalcino, 60 from the heart of Chianti, and 20 from Castiglion Fiorentino and Poppi, to name a few. Lucca and Volterra are a little further out, but still a long day trip's distance.

Less Expensive

Since Arezzo is smaller than the "majors," hotels and restaurants are less expensive. Agriturismos sit all around the city outskirts providing nightly, weekly, and monthly rooms with kitchens. Sitting up in the foothills, these places provide calendar picture views of the countryside. Why stay in expensive and jam-packed, expensive Florence when it is an easy, cheap 45-minute train ride away?

Arezzo is the kind of place that grows on you. The more you explore and make an effort to get to know it, the more you see its advantages and beauty and the more comfortable you become in whiling away the hours over your cappuccino at your favorite local bar. For me, that's Coffee O Clock (Chapter 19).

2 Fiera Antiquaria

During the first Sunday of every month (and the preceding Saturday) the whole of the old city center, the *centro*, of Arezzo celebrates one of its grandest traditions, the *Fiera Antiquaria*. Considered by many antique collectors and dealers to be the finest antique fair in Italy, over 150 vendors come from all over Italy and Europe in vans, trucks, and RVs — taking over almost all the city’s precious parking spots — to display their wares to some 20,000 visitors who reserve hotel rooms months in advance and wait in lines to get into bustling restaurants. The fair’s not just a bunch of tables with merchandise, it pulsates with its own energy drawing in the visitors who not only revel in the excitement but become part of the show.

Centered on the Piazza Grande, the fair is an octopus spreading its arms throughout the ancient, narrow streets. To walk along all the streets and view the wares, sometimes on both sides of the street, takes at least three kilometers of slow walking.

I always start my visit to the fair in sunny Piazza Grande, which is bordered by medieval buildings, a grand loggia, and the apse of a Romanesque church. The ground floors of these ocher, grey, and shining golden façades are now antique shops and restaurants seeking the tourists’ and collectors’ euros. The open space of the piazza is given over to large objects includ-

ing tables, armoires, statues, fountains, and glass chandeliers. It seems a miracle that the dealers can get limestone fountains, ancient sarcophagi, doors, and chairs from their vans at the bottom of the hill to almost the top into the Piazza — about a kilometer. It happens Friday night in a deftly choreographed dance where each dealer has a scheduled time to drive up the streets and unload objects. Each dealer in the Piazza also has a few small items interspersed, like an antique bamboo bird cage complete with antique guano, a small, three-legged toilet chair with a hole over a ceramic basin, mirrors, statuettes, door hardware, and ropes for drawing curtains.

The Piazza also adds its own character to the fair with its steep south to north incline. As I stand and look at the goods I feel like I'm standing on the deck of a listing ship. If the incline were any steeper, everything would fall over like rows of dominoes.

Running along the north side of Piazza Grande is Vasari's dramatic and graceful loggia, a gallery about 10-feet wide and as long as two swimming pools linked by seven connected arches with an arched ceiling two stories above. The gallery is the most coveted location for dealers of small items where their tables run side-by-side along some of Arezzo's most expensive restaurants (though not necessarily the best). Each dealer leaves just enough space between her table and the next to be able to pass between when she isn't sitting critically appraising the passersby, "Are they customers or looky-loos?" It's crowded in the gallery as I try to pass by people examining the wares and couples linked arm-in-arm as they slowly stroll through the narrow walkway, oblivious to others behind them. I remind myself to take a deep breath, soak in the atmosphere, and experience the event — not to fight it. Unlike the Piazza, there is no logic to the displays under the loggia where I find lace, cameras, baseball cards, carnival glass, vinyl LPs, eighteenth century typewriters, Roman coins, drawings from antique books, music, and WW II artifacts.

I leave the loggia and walk out of Piazza Grande onto one

of the narrow arms of the octopus. As narrow as the old *centro* streets are, a dealer can take up more than half its width with his tables, wares, and large twelve-foot square umbrella leaving only a narrow walking area about 10-feet wide. Walking through the streets tests my patience; I feel trapped in a slow moving river's strong but slow current of thousands of people ambling along looking, stopping to talk in the middle of the lane, or negotiating with a dealer. Even though I might want to walk faster than the current, it's losing battle, the current always wins. There are also boulders in the river. It seems that every mother in Arezzo with a child is out pushing her *bambino* or *bambini* in a stroller — the worst being the double-wides with twins sitting abreast. If I'm behind them I can't move, in front and I get my heels clipped.

It's in these steep, narrow streets, though, that I begin to discover things that I didn't know existed or that could even be antiques. I wager there is nothing of interest you can't find along these streets: records, porcelain, glass, posters, statues, African masks, comic books, lamp globes, Persian carpets, electronics, table cloths, jewelry, and on and on and on. Do you want the Beatles' first album? €90.00. A nineteenth century typewriter? €150.00. A lace bedspread? €500.00. Swords? €200.00. A hand or foot from a saint's statue? €25.00. Mirrors? €10.00 to €7000.00.

One Sunday I passed by a large (three-feet in diameter) four-feet high copper basin with a top that spreads from its basin like flower petals, separated by gently sloping curves. Much of the copper was covered with an aged, green patina. I had no idea what it was, it was as mysterious as a modern piece of sculpture. I asked the dealer, "*Che cos'è questo?*" "What is this?" The dealer looked at me, smiled, and said, "It is a large copper sink for washing hair in a beauty salon." The bottom of each petal's arc curved into the basin, wide enough for a customer to lean her head back, rest her neck on the edge, and have her hair washed. I was incredulous, thinking that he was pulling the "dumb American's" leg and said, "*No, fai un*

scherzo.” “No, you are making a joke.” But no, that’s what it was. Why anyone would buy it, I don’t know, maybe as a large flower pot for the front yard to sit next to the 1950 rusting Buick sitting on blocks. Who knows? There are probably salon sink collectors all over the world lusting for it.

Each dealer on the steep, narrow streets, uses a large umbrella (about 12-feet X 12-feet) to protect their wares from the elements: the heat in the summer and rain during the rest of year. Standing atop the Arezzo hill, I look down Corso Italia, the only through-street in the *centro*, and see a sea of uninterrupted umbrellas stretching for at least 300 yards down the hill. If the umbrellas were strong enough I could have easily stepped down from my perch and walked down the street stepping from one umbrella to another skirting the crowds.

The fair has a carnival atmosphere. Street vendors sell candy, balloons, belts, henna tattoos, and fresh roasted chestnuts in the fall. One enterprising individual was braiding women’s hair while a partner applied red, green, and blue mousse. My favorite is the public library’s cloister that is set up with vendors making fresh prosciutto sandwiches for only €2.00 and farmers bringing in their wines and honeys for tasting.

Though the fair is famous throughout Italy, few tourists know about it, only those who have an antique-freak in their party. On one visit I noticed that there was a group of about ten older men and women speaking American English. I approached them and asked, “How did you find out about the fair? Why did you come?” One man answered, “One of our group knew about it so we came down from Florence for the day to visit the flea market.” Flea market?!? I took immediate umbrage at the rather unflattering term and replied snobbily, “This is an antique fair, not a flea market, the most important in Italy.”

Parking is like trying to find a stretch of free sand in Waikiki in high season. Most of the streets and parking lots are full of vendors’ vans and RVs. It is easier to come to the fair from Florence or Cortona, for example, because you can take a 30

minute bus ride from Cortona or a 45 minute train ride from Florence and don't have to worry about parking. I drove into town one day and searched for a parking place for half an hour before giving up and parking at my cousin's and walking one kilometer back into town.

The fair is on the first Sunday of the month and previous Saturday. The locals call that Saturday "*Sabado Nero*," "Black Saturday" because the fair and Saturday Market overlap. Parking is impossible and the gridlock around the city doesn't loosen until after 8:00 pm, the dinner hour.

I also view the fair as rare opportunity to take pictures of people and things. However, dealers are rather sensitive about having pictures made of them and their merchandise. I strike up a conversation first, ask about an object, exclaim its beauty, and then ask for permission. Usually they agree once I put smile on my face and ask about what they clearly love.

It's not just fun examining the objects, it's just as much fun to watch the people: the old and young, grandparents, kids, and boys and girls doing their flirtation dances. Stop and watch a buyer negotiate with a dealer and watch the back-and-forth conversation, the move by the buyer to walk away, the sudden new offer of "just for you," and the final agreement. The *Fiera Antiquaria* is another of those priceless and rare opportunities to dive deeply into the culture of the country and its old traditions.

www.fieraantiquaria.org

3 Sabado Mercato

Isabella, my Il Palazzo agriturismo host and manager of the vineyard and olive farm, asked me one Saturday morning, “Where are you going today?”

I replied, “To Montepulciano. I am going to visit some cousins.”

She asked, “Have you seen the Arezzo Saturday market? You must visit the market. It’s open from 9:00 to 1:00, then you can go to Montepulciano.”

I took her advice and after finding out where the *mercato* was I drove off. It wasn’t hard to find, I just had to find where the traffic was tied up and cars were double and triple parked, or parked on the sidewalks. After I found my own legal parking spot a kilometer from the market in the community rec center parking lot the thrill of discovery began.

I thought that I’d find a few places to buy some fresh fruit and vegetables; I didn’t expect to find an open-air Wal-Mart. Standing at one end of the market, I looked up the street to see that it went at least ½ kilometer with stalls on both sides of Via Giotto, then at the end where I was standing, it sprawled into two adjoining side streets like the letter Y. The area of the street between the stalls was only about twelve-feet wide and crowded with shoppers.

A specially built truck and several tables make up each stall.

The trucks are about twelve-feet long and parked parallel along the curb. One entire side of the truck opens to make it easy to pack and unpack the wares. Each truck sets up four tables: two perpendicular to the sides of the truck and two parallel creating an enclosed area for the vendors to stand and oversee their products. An awning stretches the length of the truck and extends far enough (about eight-feet) to shield the tables from the hot sun and rain.

To walk the length of the market looked daunting, like running a gauntlet. Immediately after stepping into the mass of shoppers I realized that I wouldn't be able to meander back and forth to look at both sides of the street, I would have had to squeeze through people stopping for conversations, dodge a few baby prams, and avoid heavy shopping bags.

Like the *passaggiata*, this is a social event, especially for the older women who make up most of the hard core shoppers. They tend to walk in pairs, arm-in-arm, down the center of the street both chattering at the same time, then stopping suddenly in the middle of the street to make a point or to look at some merchandise. They should be required to have brake lights to prevent the people following from running them over. Also coming down the street are the "movers," the elderly in wheel chairs pushed by their daughters or sons, and young mothers pushing their single or double baby strollers taking up a large portion of the narrow pathway.

Many come to the market solely to meet friends, show off babies, trade gossip, talk politics, and simply to enjoy a morning in the open air after the long work week. To me, it looked like ten percent of the people were shopping and the rest were ambling down the street talking and laughing. Most of the older men sit on the sidelines on benches in the shade or at bars drinking espresso waiting for their wives to finish. I imagine that they are talking about Berlusconi's latest adventures, the dire condition of the Italian economy, the weather, or the upcoming wine and olive harvests. How many bottles of olive oil will you get this year? Will the rain slow the wine harvest?

It's a bad year for porcini mushrooms, isn't it?

The vendors' ages range from twenty to eighty. They either stand behind the tables walking back and forth, ready to help a prospective buyer, or sit on a chair talking to a visitor, waiting for a shopper to ask for a price. There are markets every day of the week except Sunday throughout Tuscany, so they travel to a different town every day to sell their goods. Each truck has a preassigned spot, so it is easy to find your favorites on the next market day. They are universally chipper, always with smiles, and if you ask politely after buying something they will pose for a picture.

Interestingly, it isn't a place for negotiating. Prices are posted and that's what people pay. If you plan to buy more than one of an item, ask if there is a quantity discount.

With all of these people in the street you need to be patient and, at the same time, assertive. The rule "the downhill skier has the right of way" applies here. The person in front of you has the right of way. As long as you are behind someone you have to watch out for her, then when you pass, she has to watch out for you. The best strategy is to move with the flow — stop and go traffic — taking advantage of any openings that come by. If you are in a hurry, move off the street to the sidewalks and walk along the back side of the parked trucks.

Crawling along I found more clothing vendors than any of the others combined. They showcase their wares formally or informally. In the formal displays, the space other trucks use for tables is taken up by organized racks of jackets, coats, hats, scarves, dresses, socks and, briefs arranged by type and size. Other clothes hang neatly from ropes tied under the awning. Lingerie, however, is neatly arranged in its own stalls and usually mixed in with beauty products including lotions, makeup, and perfumes.

About half of the vendors use an informal way of displaying their clothing. They come in with large boxes of women's clothing and dump them into unorganized two-foot high piles upon the tables. These clothes are cheaper than the organized

vendors and always attract a crowd, which digs through trying to get as far into the pile as possible. There is an urgency about what they are doing, perhaps fearing that another will find the perfect item before they do. You'd think that there is €100 hidden in one of the piles as clothes fly all over the tables until someone finds something the right size, then steps away from the fray, holds it up, and checks the size or discretely tries it on.

Shoes have their own stalls and they are displayed neatly so matching pairs don't get mixed up. The shoes are always the latest styles, boots one year or six-inch high stilettos another. Other leather goods like jackets, belts, wallets, and purses either have their own vendors or are mixed in with the neatly arranged clothing booths.

Continuing to the end of the street I discovered a collection of stalls selling curtains, linens, blankets, bed spreads, and table cloths. The sheets ranged from plain and simple to those with lace edges. Most of the table cloths have grape, lemon, and olive motifs. My wife likes the table cloths, so I bought a couple to take home.

I turned around to walk along the other side of the street and found one of the most interesting stalls selling hardware. Not small tools like pliers, wrenches, and screwdrivers but heavy pieces of metal that come out of a blacksmith's shop. Huge copper pots (2-feet across and 18-inches deep) sit on the ground near the truck. Chimney sweeping tools are stacked against the truck beside weed whackers. Shelves hold brass door knockers, cast iron frying pans, Dutch ovens, and other iron works. Iron grills, fireplace tools, and wrought iron decorative gates are propped up on the street under the awning. It is a stunning display of craftsmanship, though I've never seen anyone buy any of it and I seemed to be the only person admiring the works.

Since I'm not much of a clothes shopper — my sloppy American traveling attire is scandalous — I enjoy looking at the toys, gadgets, and kitchen wares. The toys are small and cheap, almost like you would find in a MacDonald's happy

meal — probably a bulk buy from a Chinese company. The electronic gadgets include flashlights, small cameras, MP3 players, and music CDs. One year I picked up a good miniature tripod for my camera.

But my favorite stalls are those selling kitchen goods: espresso makers, pots and pans, flatware, large spoons and ladles, pasta rollers and cutters, a rolling pin for making ravioli, and oil and vinegar cruets. I wondered, should I buy tagliatelle cutters for my kids? They are light and small and easy to carry. Would my wife like the ravioli rolling pin? No, that's too long and heavy to put in my bag. There are several sizes of espresso makers from one cup to six cups (remember, a cup of espresso is only a couple of ounces), but none the quality of a Bialletti. I picked up the tagliatelle cutters and parmigiano knives for gifts, and some wooden spoons for my sparsely equipped apartment kitchen.

As I walked near the end of the street, I discovered a second set of stalls. Hiding behind a section of vendors parked on the street was another row of ten food trucks parked on the verge. They are a different style of truck. Almost the whole side of the truck raises up like an awning exposing a high counter (five-feet) where food is displayed and the vendors fill orders. Behind the vendors are ovens, sinks, and a barbecue spit roasting chickens. Almost any Tuscan food could be found in the trucks including fresh cheeses like parmigiano and pecorino — whole large rounds if you like. The pecorino's sharp odor contrasts with the salty and sweet parmigiano. Another truck has a display case filled with ice on which rest sea bass, calamari, crab, eel, trout, shrimp and prawns, and a dozen others fresh from the Tyrrhenian Sea only a couple of hundred kilometers west. Sitting outside the seafood truck is a gallon-sized can with perhaps a hundred layers of tiny anchovies packed in salt. Other vendors sell fresh meats, porcini, sausages, salami, and mortadella. My favorite trucks sell *porchetta*, a Tuscan delight, from several areas of Tuscany. (*Porchetta* from the Monte San Savino region is supposed to be best.)

Porchetta is an entire young pig (about 3-feet long) split open, boned, spread with rosemary and garlic, and then tied back together to roast slowly over an open wood fire. The pig sits whole on the counter with an apple or orange in its mouth. The vendor slices pieces of porchetta vertically through the body of the pig. The taste is exquisite, moist, tender, and subtly flavored with herbs and garlic. It's sold by the *etto*, a hundred grams (about one-quarter pound), or you can buy a tasty sandwich for a picnic.

The food trucks are always busy with a crowd of people standing in front of them looking up to the salesperson towering above them standing on the truck's floor. There is no semblance of a queue. If you want to buy a *porchetta* sandwich, you slowly push your way forward until you are next to the counter and can get the seller's attention. If you are polite, you'll go hungry.

After picking up my sandwich, it was time for some fruit. The two side streets at the end of the market are filled with vendors selling vegetables, fruit, potted flowers, cut flowers, herbs, and landscaping plants. There are no real bargains here, the prices are usually the same as in the grocery store, but it is fresher. Each vendor has a different policy regarding handling the merchandise. Some let you pick your own fruit and vegetables and put them into a bag to be weighed; others don't want you touching the merchandise and select the produce for you. Much of the food like chestnuts, figs, plums, mushrooms, apples, tomatoes, and summer squash come from Tuscan farms while warm climate fruits including bananas, blood oranges, and grapefruit come from Africa.

Even though I seldom buy anything other than fruit, vegetables and a *porchetta* sandwich, I always walk through the market's whole length taking pictures of goods and people, searching for a leather jacket, and trying to find gifts for people back home. For me, though, it's not about shopping or bargains. Mixing with locals and wandering on the streets make me feel part of the larger community of Arezzo.

4 *La Giostra del Saracino*

After sleeping quite late a June Saturday morning, my family, some friends, and I left the Il Palazzo agriturismo and went into Arezzo about 10:30. We parked at the base of the north side of the Arezzo hill beneath the Duomo, climbed the steep path, and found the parade for the *La Giostra del Saracino* just beginning. The participants in the Joust of the Saracen, had just been blessed inside the cathedral and as we walked into the bright piazza they were leaving the church in front of us and marching in groups across the piazza about 50 yards to the *Palazzo del Comune*.

Originating from the ancient Crusades, the Joust of the Saracen competition began in the Middle Ages after the Christian Crusaders battled with the Moors, attempting to drive them from southern Italy and Europe. The first documented event was 6 August 1535 when a majority of city magistrates (26 black stones vs. 3 white stones) initiated *La Giostra* with a prize of one arm of purple satin: .3364 sq m (.4 sq yd). During the eighteenth century, popularity of *La Giostra* declined and the contests did not resume until 1931. Today it takes place twice a year: on the third Sunday in June (in honor of the patron saint of Arezzo, San Donato) and on the first Sunday in September. It's popularity couldn't be higher ranking right up there with soccer as a focal point for the avid fans and partic-

ipants.

We found five groups participating in the parade that we had walked into: each of the official four *quartiere*, neighborhoods, and the *comune* group, the officials of the joust. The Comune is the largest group and includes twelve drummers and twelve trumpeters along with all the local dignitaries, officials, and attendants. Each neighborhood has its own drummers and trumpeters and marches to a unique beat of its drums. We had arrived just in time to watch the assembly in the piazza at the Palazzo Comune where the *Araldo*, Herald, speaking from a window on the second floor, officially opened the contest reading the Challenge of the *Buratto*, a poetic composition written in octaves. The Captains of each neighborhood took an oath in the square and the order of competition was drawn up.

The parade groups include over 300 costumed participants: valets, drummers, trumpeters, pages, squires, cross bowmen and soldiers with lances and shields, noblemen and women, and finally the knights with their horses and lances. They march in their heavy, woolen, medieval costumes under the hot sun to the headquarters of each neighborhood where the *Araldo* makes a formal challenge inviting the neighborhood to participate in the *Giostra*. Bystanders, like us, race through the streets following the parade, taking pictures, and showing up at each of the *quartiere* headquarters to watch the ceremonies. Everything is choreographed. After marching through the *quartiere* people enter the piazza according to rank with the magistrates, jury, and president of each *quartiere* entering first. Then follow the musicians and flag wavers representing 39 municipalities of the *Aretine*, Province of Arezzo. At this point the other marchers from the *quartiere* enter. Each neighborhood has a pageboy, four drummers, standard bearers carrying the emblems of historical houses, four ladies accompanied by pages, and twelve soldiers and archers. Lastly, the knights of the contest enter into the piazza to the cheers of their neighborhood. The contest is held at 9:00 in the evening after the sun has gone down and it is a little cooler. After the officials

arrived in the Piazza, the internationally known flag throwers entertained the public with their flag throwing and acrobatics. Then festivities adjourned until later in the evening.

Piazza Grande takes on a new appearance. A curved, dirt, ten-foot wide track, the *lizza*, for the horses extends from the southeast corner of the piazza, curves past the Saracen model in the center, and ends in the northwest corner where the riders slow down. Bleachers for the dignitaries and audience extend along the south and north sides of the track.

Two contestants from each of Arezzo's four neighborhoods (Porta Sant'Andrea, white and green; Porta Crucifera, red and green; Porta del Foro, crimson and yellow; and Porto Santo Spirito, yellow and blue) compete for the *Lancia d'Oro*, Golden Lance, and bragging rights until the next *Giostra*. The Golden Lance is specially made for each contest, carved from wood by a local artisan honoring the chosen theme, such as Piero della Francesca, L'Accademia di Petrarca, the *Nazione* newspaper, and the thousandth anniversary of the Monastery at Camaldoli.

The goal of the joust is to hit a small shield (about 12" X 18") held by a wooden model of a Saracen. The knights take two turns each, galloping toward the target to score points on the shield. The tip of the lance is rubbed with ink that transfers to the shield's target when hit by the knight. The rotating model Saracen, *Buratto Re delle Indie*, Puppet King of the Indies, holds the shield in his left hand and a leather thong with three lead and leather balls, a *mazzafrusto*, in the other. He is slightly bigger than the actual size of a man. His torso is covered by metal armor. The right hand is outstretched with the *mazzafrusto*, which hang down about eighteen-inches. The left arm is just a shield holding the target. The idea is to hit the shield in a place with the highest point value (from one to five) and gallop away before the *Buratto* rotates to hit the rider on his back with the leather/lead balls.

The horsemen start their horses by the well in the southeast corner of piazza and reach a full gallop by the time they reach

the *Buratto*. Even at a fast gallop, they hold their lances still enough to hold a glass of wine aiming for the five-point mark in the center of the shield. Bam! The lance hits the shield, the *Buratto* spins, and the leather balls reach out, barely missing the successful rider.

The rules of this tournament were taken from a joust of 1678. A rider can be disqualified, lose his score or double it, when he breaks his lance in one of his assaults. If there is a tie, a runoff between the tied neighborhoods continues until one scores more points.

If hit by the *mazzafrusto*, two points are deducted. The balls have blue ink on them that transfers to the knight's uniform to erase any doubt about whether he was hit or not. The Jury may decide to deduct points anyway if the knight's run to the Saracen was too slow. The highest possible score of a run is fourteen: five for striking the center of the target and bonus points if the lance breaks and the balls of the *mazzafrusto* detach from the Saracen.

The crowd is rowdy. They cheer when the knight hits the target but remain silent when he misses. They attempt to distract the knights from other *quartiere*. The Piazza holds only a few of the fans while the majority cluster in the streets and piazzas around the *quartiere* headquarters watching on large screen TVs. The people paint faces, wear neckerchiefs, and wave banners. When the winner is announced the winning neighborhood goes into a frenzy. The *Lancia d'Oro* is passed into the crowd where everyone passes it overhead trying to touch it.

The winners march off from Piazza Grande to celebrate in their neighborhood. Each weekend for several weeks community meals for hundreds are held in outside meeting areas to relive the conquest. One year I was lucky (or unlucky) enough to have my apartment about fifty feet from the winning neighborhood's celebration area. There was good food each weekend, but the cheering, trumpeting, and drumming go on into the early morning hours.

This is one of most enjoyable ways to experience the age-old history and traditions of the old city. Arezzo is not alone with its traditions. Almost every old city in Italy has its own competitions, the Palio in Siena or the crossbow competition in Gubbio are best known.

5 Civitella's Day of Infamy

Will we go to Civitella?" asked an upcoming client. I said, "Sure, we'll go wherever you want." However, I knew it would take all of five-seconds to tell him everything I knew about Civitella in Chiana. I hadn't even planned to include the tiny town in my next book, so I needed to make a scouting trip before the client arrived — it's always better if you sound like you know what your are talking about when guiding clients.

October may be the best month to visit Tuscany: cool and mostly dry with a low sun that makes it possible to take good pictures all day long. The grape harvest is finished and the leaves change into glowing shades of yellow, gold, and bright red. I left my base in Arezzo on one of those gorgeous mornings for Civitella in Chiana, programmed the GPS, circled Arezzo on the periphery road, and headed west.

As I approached Civitella at the northern end of the Val di Chiana, I stopped just below the Civitella's densely forested hill. The early morning sun glinted off the town's walls and buildings in a soft gold shine. Looking up, the town dominates the valley sending out the message that it was supposed to in the Middle Ages, "I control this valley."

After a few pictures I drove up the switchbacks to a parking

lot below the arched Porta Senese (Siena Gate) and walked through the ancient wall. It's not like Cortona with endless streets and steps climbing the steep hill; instead, the town is so small that it is only a short fifty-foot walk from where the gate opens to the town's main street.

I stopped first at the *fortezza* at the western edge of town and then walked to the church on the opposite end of the elliptically shaped tiny *borgo* — a short, flat, two-minute stroll.

I stopped outside to take in the façade of the church of Santa Maria Assunta. The façade had been restored with new blocks of ivory and gold Tuscan stone. The skinny bell tower behind the church is of a mismatched, rough light red brick. The front entrance had been remade into a small, simple arch with a brass door depicting the crucifixion. The mishmash of old and new didn't feel right, it was like looking at two feet, each with a different shoe and I was coming to the conclusion that this would not be worth the client's time.

I stepped through a side door into the church. A quick look showed the same incongruous style, modern white plastered walls, simple altars, with a fourteenth century cross over the high altar and old stained glass windows. I walked to the side altar on the right. The old altar has legs like Corinthian columns sitting in a curved niche. Above the altar is a large crucifix with gold beams radiating from the intersection of the cross and behind it hang seven tall grey tablets carved with names, in red, of *Civitellini* who died in World War II. Not unusual, most small churches have a memorial to those who died in wars. However this turned out to be a special list and I was about to learn the importance of Civitella.

I was looking at the wall with another couple from Israel and snapped a few pictures capturing the names of four Tiezzis (the name of my maternal grandparents) who had been killed. Just then the caretaker in a red cardigan sweater and faded jeans, looking to be in his late seventies, walked up to us. He greeted us and I answered in Italian and that was the key. He became excited that I could understand and speak to him and

began to tell me the story of Civitella as I translated for the Israeli couple.

He moved us to the side of the altar and pointed up to the center tablet behind the crucifix. The title said that this altar was dedicated to the *Civitellini* who died on 29 June 1944 — 176 innocent people in one day. He began to tell us the history of that horrific day from the point of view of one of the survivors (he was around 10 or 12 at the time). The story that follows is a mix of what the caretaker told me and research I did after returning to the US.

The event began on 18 June 1944. In the hot humid afternoon, four German soldiers who had lost contact with their unit, climbed the hill to the village, still under German control. They stopped at the Nazi “*Dopo Lavoro Club*” (After Work Club) off the central piazza and proceeded to get drunk.

At sunset Italian partisans attacked the soldiers. Their goal was to capture the weapons, however, the Germans unexpectedly resisted and two of them were killed immediately and another seriously wounded. The unharmed man made his way down the hill with his wounded friend who later died from his severe injuries.

The Germans demanded the town name the culprits within twenty-four hours. At the same time the Germans started searching the homes in Civitella, and the nearby *borgos* of Cornia and San Pancrazio (today Bucine) for partisans and weapons. No civilian dared collaborate so most of the residents, out of fear of retaliation, fled into the forests. Those remaining tried to show to the Germans their disapproval of the partisan attack by holding a memorial for the dead soldiers. The next day came and went without any punishment. It seemed that the city would be safe from German retaliation. General Schmalz assured the town that there would be no reprisal suggesting that a number of partisans had been killed in clashes and that that was sufficient to avenge the three soldiers killed the day before. It was, however, a trap to encourage the

hiding *Civitellini* to return.

Ten days later at dawn 29 June during a Saturday morning mass and feast day celebrating Saints Peter and Paul the SS units of the Hermann Goering Division surrounded Civitella and the small burghs of Cornia and San Pancrazio. In Civitella, they charged through the town gates and, moving from house to house, broke through the entrances and shot down men as they jumped from their beds in front of their wives and children. When they reached the church they drove the people inside attending mass out into the central piazza and divided them by gender and age. They pushed the women and children aside lining up the men in groups of five, including the priest, and wearing rubber aprons to avoid staining their uniforms, made them kneel, and shot them in the head. The priest, Don Alcide Lazzeri, would have been spared since he was a priest, but he chose to join the fate of his townsmen. They then looted, blew up, and burned homes and public buildings.

The killing was also going on in San Pancrazio and Cornia. In Cornia, it became an uncontrolled slaughter with women and children dying alongside the men. They also took a small group of men and women to Monte San Savino to question about the partisans, their size, arms, and location. All the cities were looted and buildings blown up. Later that day, the roaringly drunk troops returned to Monte San Savino carrying bicycles, food, china, silver, and almost anything that wasn't nailed down.

At the end of the 29th, there were more than 117 dead in Civitella, 67 from San Pancrazio, 45 from Cornia, and an unknown number from local farms. In all the number killed was estimated at 250 — one of the worst war crimes in Italy. A first person account:

“While we were in the square, we were frisked by the German soldiers who took our wallets and our watches and put them in their pockets. A German screamed in Italian: “Cinque! (Five).” So five Italians were led to-

wards the backyard of the school.

Then a German soldier came ahead with a gun and aimed it to the back of the man's neck who was on the right side of the row, Don Alcide Lazzeri [the parish priest], then he pressed the trigger, so the soldier passed along the line, behind the Italians from right to left.

In the square we were grouped in five and led towards the backyard of the school. So, the same German soldier raised up his revolver. I saw Daniele Tiezzi, who was one of the five in the row, throw himself to the left and run. I was the second from the left. My turn had arrived. I saw him aiming the revolver to my head. I put my hands on both sides of my face and I turned towards the left. Immediately I felt a piercing pain on both of my hands, my face, my mouth and my throat, and, realizing that I was still alive, I slid down to the ground and laid there pretending to be dead.”

Bartolucci Gino
English Inquiry Commission
15 November 1944

The horrific nature of the attacks is all the greater for three reasons. First, the massacre came ten days after the incident catching the town in the church during a festival day. Second, the Germans were in full retreat. It was clear that they had lost the war in Italy and were losing the war in France; yet they continued wreaking murder and destruction on innocent civilians. Third, the area was liberated by the British 8th Army only a few days later.

The story wasn't over. The caretaker took me outside to show me a street sign with an English name on it. He told me how a few days after the massacre a member of the British 8th Army, Captain John Percival Morgan, came to help them. Captain Morgan brought food to the starving people of the

town. As a young child at the time, the caretaker remembers that Morgan gave chocolate to the children. Civitella named a small street next to the church in his honor — the “*Costa Capitano John Percival Morgan*.” A sign dedicates the street to the memory of:

“Captain John Percival Morgan and their friends in the 8th British army who offered precious help to the survivors of the slaughter of 29 June 1944.”

The street was dedicated on 6 May 2001. Though Captain Morgan has died, his son returns for the annual memorials honoring the victims.

Justice was Slow

The town was awarded the Gold Medal for Civil Valor in 1963 — it hangs on the center panel of the memorial in the church. It wasn't until October 2006 that Nazi SS commander Max Josef Milde was convicted by the Italian military court in La Spezia for his role in the Civitella massacre. In October 2008, the Italian Court of Cassation ruled that Germany was to pay one million euros to the victims of the massacre. Germany protested.

[Note: During the war in Italy, the Germans committed over 400 mass killings involving the loss of over 15,000 civilians.]

Suddenly the town that I thought had little value was as important as Arezzo, Cortona, or Montepulciano because it explains more of the culture of the Aretine. Civitella deserves time to see its buildings and, more importantly, to learn its terrible history. My client? He loved the visit and was touched by Civitella's history.

The massacre still weighs heavily on the memories of the *Civitellini*. The town holds annual memorials to honor the dead. A dramatic and touching bronze memorial sculpture by Mario Moschi is on the gold Tuscan stone wall outside the church. The sculpture shows fleeing women and children in front of a silhouette of burning Civitella. The memorial describes the event in a poem by Franco Antonicelli:

The Pity of June 1944

The following poem is on the wall of the memorial outside the church.

*The morning of the 29th was a feast day in the parish for
Saints Peter and Paul.*

*But the day that opened beautifully became dark with
smoke and blood and the thunder of machine guns and shouts
of the dying.*

*To be men meant death and the killers were not men but
crazy beasts*

*The parish priest falls, sacrificed while blessing the people
The shells of the houses are burning the living and the dead*

*“Goodbye Civitella, what will become of us?” was the
lament of the women remaining alone*

Now Civitella has risen from the fires and stinging nettles.

The tears have dried on the flower’s petals

The babies that I saw pale and quiet are growing

The memory is ash that a wind scatters from day to day

But the crime that torments the helpless is not forgotten.

The guilt that stains the innocent has flown

The crime and guilt are injustice and intolerance

The father and mother of war.

You may have the universe if I may have Italy.
Giuseppe Verdi

