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# ENZO MAZZESCHI: PERSONAL MEMORIES

Jane K. Whitehead

Etruscan archaeology has lost its most passionate amateur and advocate, and this writer has lost a dear mentor. Enzo Mazzeschi, *Ispettore Onorario* of archaeology in the region of Siena, died on March 11, 2000 after a long illness.

Many of us who began our field careers in Tuscany in the 1960s to 1980s owe much to him, although he was not himself an archaeologist, nor did he train to be one. He was born in the Istrice Contrada of Siena on January 20, 1922, and his early education tended toward more practical ends. He studied art history and applied art, then pursued architecture at the Istituto d'Arte in Siena and the Accademia di Belle Arte in Florence. His architectural studio, charmingly located in the very core of Siena, was for me a generous source of gridded papers, metric measuring devices, surveying equipment, and hilarious conversation.

He worked as an architect, but his true interests lay in archaeology. Enzo's son, Marco, recalls his father's love of all the processes of field archaeology: reading the ancient authors in order to glean traditional lore, searching out strange topographic formations, walking remote sites in search of surface evidence. He seemed to know everyone; he maintained a network of local landowners, young children, scholars—anyone who shared his fascination—who could bring him information about ancient traces in the landscape. In 1965 the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione recognized the value of his efforts and designated him an honorary inspector for the Soprintendenza Archeologica della Toscana.

He thus became the first reference for archaeologists working in the region. Through his friendship with Ferdinand Cinelli, who established the Etruscan Foundation in 1958, he was especially helpful to many Americans working in Tuscany for the first time. It was Enzo Mazzeschi who first took Kyle Phillips up to Poggio Civitate, I am told; he also called attention to the site of La Befana, which came to be excavated by John Dobbins. With Alfonz Lengyel and George Radan he excavated or surveyed several *castellieri*, at San Fedele, Santa Colomba, and Siena Vecchia. He also excavated with Italian archaeologists of the Soprintendenza, Anna Talocchini and Giorgio Monaco, who also worked under

the aegis of the Etruscan Foundation at Vetulonia and Orgia, respectively.

Most of the sites that he excavated himself were rescue projects. Marco says, “He was always involved in excavations that had to be done quickly, because some Caterpillar in some field had fallen into a tomb, or something like that.” He recruited volunteers for his projects by founding, in the late 1960s, the *Associazione Ricerche Archeologiche di Siena*. Still today, in the villages of Rosia and Sovicille, I encounter people who dug with him. Others—bartenders, shop keepers, car mechanics, farmers whose names I do not even know—come up to me with glistening eyes to ask for news of local archaeological finds; I credit Enzo with nurturing that interest.

The only site that he discovered and excavated on his own from the laying out of the grid was La Piana, in 1974. I inherited that project from him in 1982, along with all his exquisitely drawn plans and renderings. Enzo remained close to the project, and extremely generous with his time and advice; my debt of gratitude to him is enormous.

He would visit the site every year, and because he loved to joke and laugh it was an occasion of much merriment. My excavation crews were convinced from the way he spoke—slowly, somewhat stentoriously, with a thick Sieneese accent—that he moonlighted as a stand-up comedian. I must record for posterity a conversation that I overheard between Enzo and Gino, the *fattore* at Spannocchia, as they were driving me out to La Piana for the first time, and we passed by a newly-built race course. Both men spoke with the local accent, which turns hard *c*'s into *h*'s. Enzo: “*Che cos'è?*” Gino: “*Una corsa.*” Enzo: “*Una corsa?! Di che cosa?*” Gino: “*Di cavalli.*” Enzo: “*Una corsa di cavalli?! Ma per che...*” It was a conversation worthy of Fernandel.

The depth of feeling that Enzo inspired among those who worked with him is illustrated by this letter, addressed to him posthumously, by Dr. Alfonz Lengyel, now of the Sino–American Field School of Archaeology:

Dear Departed,

In your whole life you demonstrated a true love for Toscana. Our lives crossed when I directed the excavation for the Etruscan Foundation in Rosia with the help of our field director, Professor George Radan. You, as Honorary Superintendent of Antiquities of the Siena area, gave us valuable advice, since at that time we were neophytes in Toscana.

It is very painful to say goodbye to you, who departed to the “Great Unknown,” a humanly quite incomprehensible place. My soul tries to touch yours in your ce-

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lestial journey, to thank you for your friendship, which went much beyond mere professional contact. We developed a certain brotherhood, you as an Italian and I as a former Hungarian. Our catalyst was the traditional Hungarian-Italian friendship that culminated during the reign of "Matthias Rex," the Renaissance king of Hungary.

You imprinted into the psyche of the Sienese people not only the love, but a keen desire to protect the great Roman and Etruscan past in their area and to conserve as well the cultural heritage of Italy. Therefore, you will live forever, not only in the memory of the people of Siena, but also in your contribution to all Italians.

With a sorrowful heart,  
Alfonz

Archaeology in Tuscany is turning into a major tourist attraction these days, but in the leaner years of postwar Italy it was relatively in the shadows. The effects of Enzo's passion and energy during those crucial years must not be underestimated. No single person today has the impact that Enzo had in bringing foreign scholars and the Sienese people alike to an awareness of the great treasure that is Tuscany's ancient past.

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